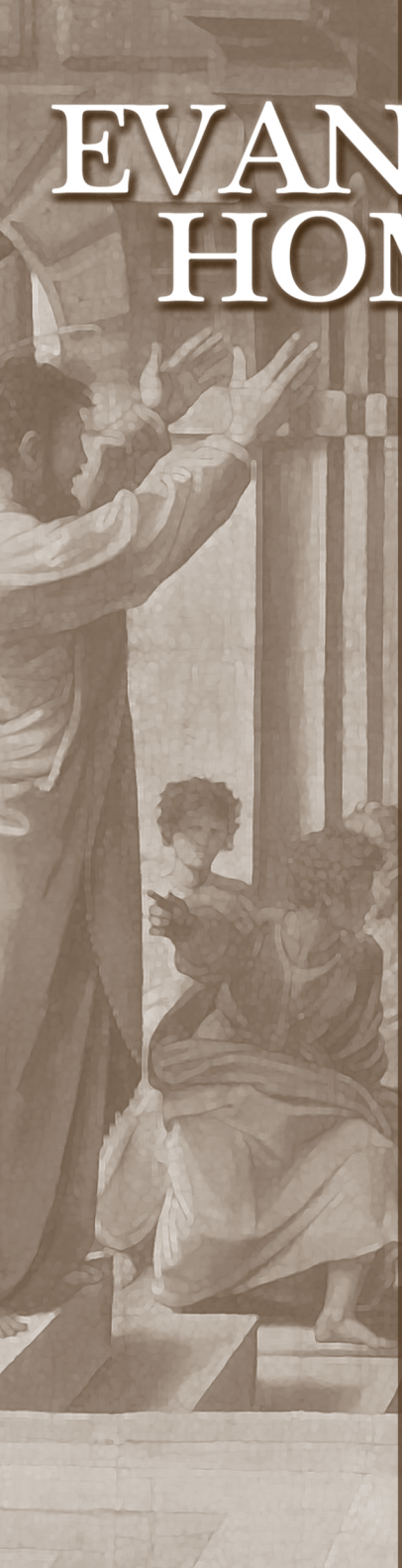

THE JOURNAL OF THE

EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS SOCIETY

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Manuscripts: Though most articles and book reviews are assigned, submissions are welcome. They must by typed and double-spaced. All articles will be juried to determine suitability for publication. Please send articles to the General Editor, Scott M. Gibson, at 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PREACHERS AS THEOLOGIANS

SCOTT M. GIBSON
General Editor

The 2019 Evangelical Homiletics Society annual meeting took place at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 17-19 in Wake Forest, North Carolina. The theme of the meeting was "The Pastor as Theologian." The two plenary addresses provided by Charlie Dates and Bryan Chapell are included in this edition. Their insights for preachers and for this society are important for readers' consideration.

The Keith Willhite Award, established in 2003 in memory of Dr. Keith Willhite, co-founder of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, recognizes the outstanding paper presented at the annual gathering. This past October, Russell St. John's paper, "Big Ideas and Bad Ideas," was awarded the Keith Willhite Award, as voted by those in attendance at the meeting. St. John's analysis and critique of Abraham Kuruvilla's proposal to kill Big Idea preaching, as suggested in a paper presented to the Evangelical Theological Society, "Time to Kill the Big Idea? A Fresh Look at Preaching" is thoughtful and stimulating.

At the closing luncheon of the 2019 Annual Meeting, Winfred O. Neely gave an address on "The Wife of Uriah the Hittite: Political Seductress, Willing Participant, Naïve Woman, or #BatheshebaToo? The Preacher as Sensitive Theologian." Neely's presentation urged preachers to careful, thoughtful and thorough exegesis which is included in this edition.

Next, the article by Ian Hussey speaks to the role of preaching in discipleship, noting that the whole life of the church is at stake. Hussey suggests that preachers can address the frontlines of discipleship by engaging a whole life hermeneutic,

a whole life perspective and a whole life of application. Readers will be encouraged by Hussey's observations, insights and suggestions.

At the conclusion of each president's term the society joins in worship to hear the president preach. Michael Duduit served faithfully as president of the Evangelical Homiletics Society (2018-2019). Duduit's presidential sermon, "Why We Preach Christ" is a solid reminder of why we do what we do—communicate Christ in our preaching with fidelity.

This March 2020 edition marks the final editorial contribution of the Book Editor, Abraham Kuruvilla, who has faithfully served as Book Editor for *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* for the last ten years. Abe's skillful and insightful fingerprints are all over some twenty editions of the journal. He was served the society and scholarship with care in this important role. Thank you, Abe, for your most excellent work. We are all grateful for your years of service.

The idea of preacher as a theologian is not new. Gregory the Great, John Chrysostom, Jonathan Edwards, John Owen, Richard Baxter, among many others, excelled in the melding of the roles of a preaching/pastoring theologian. Although not new, the practice has waned. Now is the time for men and women who serve as preachers/pastors in the twenty-first century to settle into the role of preacher as theologian with confidence. The past has mandated it and the present—and the future—desperately need preachers/pastors who engage with scripture and theology, who understand how to apply it practically in the present.

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THE PASTOR THEOLOGIAN: HOW CONTEXT INFLUENCES THE THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF PREACHING

CHARLIE DATES
Progressive Baptist Church
Chicago, IL

INTRODUCTION

Not long ago, Kirstie, Charlie, Claire and I stood on the grounds of the McCloed Plantation in Charleston, South Carolina. A plantation that began in 1858.

It is a majestic ground in a beautiful city; trees bending upon the waves of the wind across the anvil of time. Epic church structures of meticulous colonial architecture. It is a city that boasts of history both inglorious and majestic.

There we stood on that plantation, some 400 years after the first Dutch Slave ship arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, trying to reconcile the beauty of the Charleston churches and the horror of Charleston's slavery.

As you may recall, through the port of Charleston came more Africans stolen in the act of slavery, than any other port in the colonies. It was that inhumane enterprise that Denmark Vesey called, "America's Original Sin."

There we stood on that plantation, after having visited 4 churches built by Christian settlers who owned slaves. What a thought! Slave-holding Christians. Charleston was the kind of city of which Frederick Douglass said that the church bell rung in concert with the slave auctioneer's bell. Standing there, showing Charlie and Claire the quarters, the shanties, and the shacks in which entire families lived—like the cotton they picked in the sacks they filled—stilted each of us. I won't soon forget the

tears my son cried at dinner that night trying to wrap his 8-year old mind around how little boys his age were snatched from parents like his mother and me.

There we stood on that plantation. Being a student of history, I was overcome by some strange overlaps of the American Evangelical timeline. The Great Awakening – that series of revivals, which started in Northampton with Jonathan Edwards and trailed south to take the Eastern seaboard by storm—gave birth to what we now know as Evangelicalism in a modern sense.

Evangelicalism! What a name. *Euan-gelion-ism*. Gospel people. Good news people. People marked by personal conversion and a deep personal commitment to Christ. It was an emphasis on personal, vertical Christianity. Edwards and Whitefield, and both Wesley's preached this message to crowds too large to number. Outdoor crusades, orphanages, and churches were erected in lighting speed. It was period marked by open air revival meetings to which horses instinctively raced their own masters to hear to the gospel message. You know it's a revival when the horses run to the meeting!

Some of the most popular of American sermons ever preached were delivered in that era. Who can forget sermons like, "Natural Men in a Dreadful Condition," "Marks of a True Conversion," "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," or "God's Sovereignty in the Salvation of Men." Edwards himself was caught up in a litmus tests of genuine religious affection. He would write and preach about the defining signs a legitimate of conversion and passion for God. Dismissing fluency and fervor, gyrations of the body and zeal in duty were no signs at all, Edwards said. Moral excellence, change of nature, conviction of certainty – these were the distinguishing signs of a truly gracious and holy affection.

Some of the brightest theology emerged from that era. It was an era of soaring intellect in Christian Doctrine. It was distinctive and contributive to the narrative of what became American Evangelicalism.

Reading some of the theology of that era one gets the feeling that its birth was a reaction against a religion of the state. These were people of reformation. They believed that God revealed Himself through the scriptures and that to know God was to know Him through His self-disclosure within the Scriptures.

Edwardsianism was the first indigenous theological movement in America.[1] Puritanism, when understood as heirs of the protestant reformation, likewise emphasized personal salvation almost to the exclusion the corporate implications of salvation.

The question that haunted my mind as we stood on that plantation was, "How do we reconcile the original sin of America with some of the bright theology that emerged from that era?" How could slavery and orthodox theology coexist? This was a church that not only survived the sin of slavery, but it also undergirded the very institution of chattel slavery itself.

Lest anyone accuse me of being the angry black preacher, unable to relinquish the debts of the past, let me say straightaway that Biblical theology has always urged the Christian to reckon both with the slavery of sin and the sin of slavery. We, who are preachers of the book; we who have a high view of scripture and a high Christology must wrestle with the cultural contexts out of which our Evangelical theology emerges. But not only that, we need to check the biases which may linger in present day.

THESIS

The preacher as theologian has the responsibility not only to rightly divide the truth, but also to rightly apply the character of God to the people they serve.

I recently read of a seminary, one that trains preachers, that refuses to discuss the tenets of Black Liberation Theology. It is, as some have suggested, a too ethnically-focused theology. I can appreciate that assessment, but what is the rest of our Evangelical theology? So, although we do not have to agree—and should not agree at some points—with James Cone, a voice

who's echo still reverberates through the corridors of the academy—we should still ask the question, what made James Cone's theology necessary in the first place? That's a question worth asking and one to which I hope we can give some careful attention. We must appreciate the voice of a James Cone, even you reject his theology, because some pronounced failures within the practice of the orthodox pushed him and many like him to look outside of orthodoxy to find answers. The powerful evangelical churches and church leaders of his era—through their complicity with culture—permanently disenfranchised the very people it said are made in the image of God on the basis of their skin color.

Why is that during the greatest recorded revival in America, 310,000 Africans were snatched from their native land and brought to the American colonies by 1750? How is it that the supremacy of God in both personal conversion and the erection of a national government as a theological tenet grew in prominence at the same time that the slave market grew? How is it that Reconstruction failed and Jim Crow flourished in the same corners of a nation whose leaders attended churches maned by some of our strongest pulpiteers? How is it now that there seems to be a strange convergence between nationalism and Christianity in America?

I want to propose an answer.

The preacher—within their personal and local context—must steward their gospel proclamation by permitting the canon to interpret culture, and not letting culture interpret the canon. We cannot develop a culturally absent hermeneutic, but we can in conversation with Christian thinkers outside of our own cultural norm, engage the Biblical text and history in a way that exposes our blind spots. We need to develop a hermeneutic of suspicion; not one that comes to the text questioning its authority or mythologizing its content or denying its truth, but a suspicion of our personal preference upon the interpretation we make and the application we take.

Bruce Fields, of whom I am fond of quoting—because he gave his career in the academy as a black man in white evangelical spaces—lectured to us something this: the formulation of doctrine, the relationship between doctrines, and the application of doctrine lead to very different emphasis depending on who is doing the theology.

Hear the wisdom in these words: "[Many] think that social, cultural, and religious factors do not affect theological formulation. Many do not understand that the formulation of doctrine, the exploration of the relationships between doctrines, and the commitment to applying theology to life can lead to different emphases."[2] Who you are, where you live, what privileges you enjoy or don't enjoy, what challenges you face or do not face, have a corresponding impact on the emphases which emerge from your theology. We all have this challenge.

All forms of preaching are in some way affected by the color of theology we practice. The influence, impression and subtleties of the preacher's theology can be felt in his preaching. That means that the application of the sermon, in theory or in practice, is likewise shaped by the preacher's theology. For that reason, the work of our preaching is informed by how the preacher does theology.

For instance, I practice theology from the black experience. This fact is inescapable. And in some circles, it creates a kind of scholarly discomfort. It should not. It should create a humility in our work of theology. I was once asked by my systematic theology professor if all people could do black theology. I understood what he was asking. Implicit in that question, however, was a kind of hidden assertion that all theology is somehow neutral or devoid of cultural influence. That is a privileged assumption. For all theology is affected by our cultural lenses, good and bad.

Is it possible to get the text right and the application of God's character wrong? Is it possible to read the text in its context and misread our context for application for the people to whom we preach? I think so. There are many examples we can use to draw this out, but I think Edwards and Whitefield within early

Evangelicalism help us to view this challenge of the preacher as theologian. How might we have the best of orthodoxy and the worst of corporate, social orthopraxis? It happens because we abandon the line of scripture for the advancement and protection of our dearly held, but flawed privileges.

And I think this is where we might benefit from, among other things, a look at theology in the black church context. It may be helpful to quickly define black theology. The definition is my own. Black theology is a practice of biblical theology that arises from the black religious and cultural experience in America. It is not a theology that paints God black. Rather, it is a way of doing theology that interprets God's word through the lens of a people systemically and intentionally marginalized by the political and racial structure of the United States of America.

In Black theology, liberation is a dominant theme explored and searched out in Scripture. Any Christian, by the way, who seeks to diminish the bright light of liberation from the Scriptures, especially for selfish gain, undermines the efficacy of their own salvation. In like manner, liberation is not so emphasized that the theme of liberation causes the interpreter to rip Scripture from its appropriate context—which leads to misappropriating its application. One can easily perceive how such a theology of liberation is attractive to an oppressed people. Like water to a parched land, liberation becomes the sole desire of the oppressed. The compassion found in liberation theology is remarkable. It speaks of a God who cares about the powerless and helps them in their quest for freedom. It says that in Jesus God identifies with the meek, lowly, and dejected. It strongly promotes features of God's nature often unmentioned to the poor and exploited.

How might reading a minority theology benefit the preacher in a local church? Might it give us a deeper understanding of God's work for and among people? I'll tell you what I think it might do. It might give us a greater appreciation for the breadth of God's character. I think it might challenge us to resist favoritism, privilege, and the sins of injustice. It might make us more willing to invite unheard voices into the confines

of our classrooms and congregations. With all of its glorious benefits to me, I still sure wish I had that as a student at TEDS.

In no way, am I suggesting that we develop a kind of canonical-cultural homiletic, where culture and experience comes first. That was the case with both Jonathan Edwards and James Cone. But I am suggesting that we develop a canonical-cultural homiletic that takes into serious consideration the intersection of Scripture with the sociological, racial, and systemic oppressions of our times as we study. We need to know both what the Bible says about soteriology and love of neighbor. We need to know scripture not just to answer the key Christological question, but also the key social questions. We need James 1:22-25, to keep us from what Kevin Vanhoozer calls spiritual amnesia.

This will help us to discern the ways of God as we preach, and urge our congregations to know Him more fully through our preaching.

Another gift of black theology is that in its declaration are tools for handling suffering.

Human suffering is witnessed throughout the canon, especially in the liberation passages Cone cites in his writings. When men and women are being murdered, children are tortured and those inflicting the terror claim to use God-language, claiming belief in Jesus Christ, it becomes very difficult for Cone to talk about divine providence.[3] Cone rejects what appears to be the biblical view of providence. That is that God is in control and allows human suffering. He cannot imagine God allowing and therefore approving the infliction of oppression among black people. Cone does not understand Paul's words in Rom. 8:28 to mean that suffering is in accordance with God's divine plan. He could read culture well, but stumbled at the omniscience and omnipotence of God. Without a Biblical foundation, he failed. At the same time, if one has a Biblical foundation but only reads the scripture in a way that benefits their bottom line, they too have failed. The problem in our day is that its either/or. I suggest we need both/and. If the evangelical academy does not find a way to redeem its social conscious by

doing both: reading the scripture right and standing for justice on behalf of the oppressed, future generations will resort to other sources for comfort.

CONCLUSION

This kind of theology, the kind that reads the text aright and examines real life issues impressed by culture and sustained by government, will make of our hearers a people ready for God-ordained action in the world. It brings The Body of Christ into better body-shape. Kevin Vanhoozer has helped me to think through turning hearers into doers. He has urged us to get God's people in shape.[4] It makes me think of a friend who recently retired from the NFL. He played 10 seasons and was arguably the best Chicago Bears' running back since Walter Payton. His name is Matt Forte. He recently shared some of his fitness routine with me. The kind of conditioning required to play as an elite athlete in the NFL defies fatigue and mental limits. To reach his level of performance requires an unusual dedication to prepare the body for action. It's a strain unlike much else. He had to be able to run, catch, block and take a hit. As he explained some of this to me, I began to think about my church. I wonder how many of those who sit under my preaching on a weekly basis are fit to take a hit, can run to win even when life squeezes them in, and can stay the course with endurance. I wonder how many of them, based upon my exposition of scripture and the God of Scripture, can identify wrong and are willing to stand against it? If after having heard me preach for several years, where should the body be? That's what the pastor as theologian has to consider. We are called to equip the saints with a Biblical vision of God that makes them fit for the age in which we live.

NOTES

1. Douglas Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story: A History of a Movement* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005). This is a summary of what I remember studying under and reading from Dr. Sweeney.
2. Bruce L. Fields, *Introducing Black Theology: Three Crucial Questions for the Evangelical Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 11.
3. James H. Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1970), 83–86.
4. Kevin Vanhoozer, *Hearers and Doers: A Pastor's Guide to Growing Disciples Through Scripture and Doctrine* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2019).

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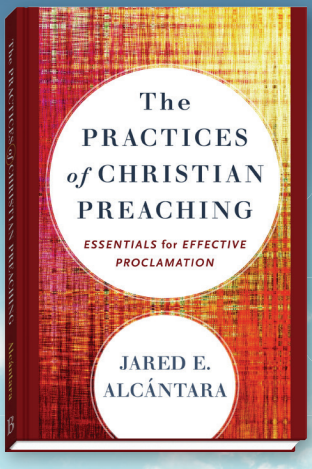

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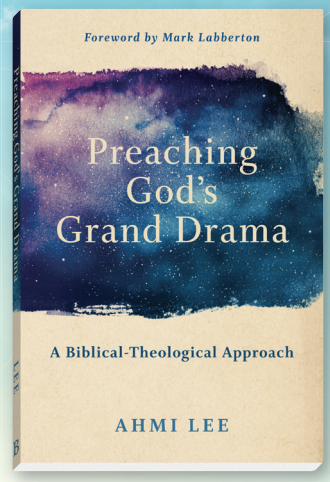

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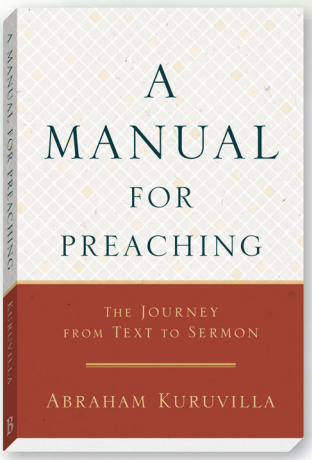

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THE PASTOR AS SCHOLAR/THEOLOGIAN

BRYAN CHAPELL
Grace Presbyterian Church
Peoria, Illinois

DISTINCTIONS

Defining and defending the distinctions of a pastor/scholar (or, minister/theologian) can easily take us to presuppositions groomed more by our contexts than we may realize. In his *Princeton Seminary: A Narrative History*, William Selden, describes the academic context that may forge and fudge our understanding of the credentials that the Bible intends for ministers to have in order to be responsible expounders of God's Word:

> Of the some thirty Protestant seminaries that were in existence by 1840, six were Presbyterian of which Princeton was the largest. …[D]aily schedules included rising bells at five followed by chapel, breakfast and then classes…. While there were no charges for room or tuition, students paid from $6 to $10 a year for wood, from $1.25 to $2.50 a week for meals….

Student James Waddell Alexander reported on the curriculum:

> . . . We recite … Hebrew, … Greek, … the Confession of Faith, … Biblical History. [We] hear lectures…on Theology, …on Biblical History, …on Criticism of the Original Scriptures, … on Jewish Antiquities. On Monday, I attend a Society for Improvement in the Criticism of the Bible. . . . On Tuesday night, the Theological Society…., On Thursday night, I am *at liberty* – to attend evening

> lectures at the College. On Friday night, [again] the Theological Society, where questions in ethics and divinity are discussed. On Saturday night a weekly prayer meeting. On Sunday we have sermons from our three professors….
>
> . . . We live in a kind of *literary atmosphere*; all the conversation carried on here is of a *literary* kind…. [Italics mine]

By the 1870s this *classical curriculum* that framed the "literary atmosphere" for pastoral preparation also included course work in church history and history of religion, and – wait for it—the theory and practice of homiletics, along with elocution, pastoral and ecclesiastical theology, apologetics and ethics, and systematic theology. Students were permitted to enroll at the College in various elective courses including revealed religion, ethnological science, metaphysical science, and philosophy. The seminary faculty, though small, also offered Arabic, Chaldee, and Sanskrit.

This classical curriculum began to receive serious challenge during the first decade of the twentieth century, when students, supported by the Board of Directors, was so *impudent* as to appeal for inclusion of courses in "English Bible." And in a classic example of "everything old is new again," the Board also appealed for courses dealing with pastoral issues and ministerial responsibilities *outside* the pulpit. But most startling to the faculty were student petitions that actually requested professors to be pastoral in their teaching and to offer practical instruction in the life and leadership of the local church.

Issues (that will seem uncomfortably contemporary) came to a head in the 1920's and 30's, under the presidency of J. Ross Stevenson. Stevenson got the leverage for change as a consequence of declining enrollments, exoduses of students over objections to the "impractical," *classical* curriculum, and exoduses or estrangement of professors who were aligned with Bible-believing church movements that championed the classical curriculum (which had become co-identified with commitment

to biblical fidelity). All of these led to the so-called "new curriculum" with "practical" pastoral courses that were designed to rescue the Seminary and better prepare pastors for local churches.

Causing considerable debate then and now is the question of whether the "classical" emphases of the Bible-believing faculty hastened or hindered the movement of the wider church from biblical orthodoxy. Did the "literary atmosphere" accelerate departure from biblical loyalty, in reaction against a pastorally inept and out-of-touch scholarship; or, did the solid scholarship of the early Princetonians, create a foundation for biblical fidelity upon which later generations of evangelicals could build, at institutions such as Westminster, Biblical, Calvin, Covenant, Reformed, and similar seminaries after theological Liberalism's houses of sand lost their luster? Did the "classical curriculum" lead *to* or *from* faithful Christianity in the local church?

We will not resolve that debate tonight, but should consider why the issues that have had such a profound impact on our society, our churches, and our institutions continue to vex us. We know that sound exposition of Scripture requires, "being prepared in season and out" to give a "reason" for the hope that is in us, and we know that we must "rightly divide the Word of truth," but do these responsibilities require "scholarship," and, if so, of what nature is that theological endeavor?

PASTORS AS SCHOLARS

Why should pastors be *scholars*, and in what way should ministers be theologians (and are those even the right terms to use in tandem for describing *local* church leaders)? The discussion seems ever new. We actually are in the midst of a flurry of articles and books on the subject as persons like John Piper and D.A. Carson flesh out what it means to be a pastor/scholar, or a scholar/pastor, respectively. Owen Strachan and Kevin Vanhoozer argue that the pastoral office is a *theological office*. Strachan quotes both David Wells and Douglas Sweeney in support. Their discussions cite such notable figures as Calvin,

Luther and Augustine in defense of the idea that the work of the church is best advanced by those who are both able pastors *and* theologians.

Andrew Wilson takes these notables, and makes the case that they are the exceptions that prove a very different rule—this rule: most pastors (who do not expect to make the history books like the notables just mentioned) must be *generalists* who can grasp the issues necessary for the pastoral endeavor, but do not aspire to be *scholars* whose careers in specialization inevitably diminish pastoral energies and distract from pastoral duties. Michael Kruger does us all a favor by offering a taxonomy for pastor-scholars, or scholar-pastors, or pure pastors, or devoted scholars, or something between that allows appropriate honor for differing positions, personalities, callings and, even, stages of life.

Still, the questions remain about whether the in-the-trenches, weekly-preaching, congregation-shepherding, soul-winning, sin-challenging, hope-dispensing, I've-got-*four*-messages-*five*-committee-meetings-*six*-counseling-sessions-*seven*-deacons-dancing-*one*-wife-expecting-and-*three*-french-hens pastor should be a theological scholar to any degree *and*, if so, why?

The first question about whether we need to be any kind of a scholar/theologian is easiest to answer because we can readily root our answer in scriptural priorities.

To expound from Scripture, we have to be able "rightly to divide the Word of truth." We know that the 2 Tim. 2:15 phrase, "rightly dividing…" means to "cut straight" or "plow a straight furrow." Paul contrasts this kind of accurate and life-producing preaching with inaccurate teachers, whose mouthings are as life-threatening as gangrene in the church. We are thus called to be faithful and precise in our understanding and presentation of biblical truth, necessitating scholarship that involves *a degree* of expertise in language, history, and theology. Biblical pastoring requires a degree of scholarly understanding of the text in its Biblical context. We are called to be scholars of the *biblical world*.

We also have to be able to "give a *reason* for the hope that is in us." We are not called only *to divide* the Scriptures but *to defend* their truths. This necessitates understanding how people reason in specific times, situations and cultures. Paul's various gospel approaches in different cultural setting are clear examples of how we must be prepared to understand our times and our world in order to penetrate its strongholds and take every thought captive with the truths of God's Word. Biblical pastoring requires a degree of understanding our times and contemporary thought. We are called to be scholars of the *current world*, especially our people's current world.

Current world understanding can be overplayed so that our preaching and teaching become indistinguishable from the secular or the profane in the name of relevance, authenticity, and attraction. Paul was wise enough to warn of itching ears and profit motives. But the Biblical world understanding can be over emphasized in a manner that produces the scribal conceits and dead letter-ism the Bible does not shy from condemning. Neither a message on the hottest apps for my smart phone or the greatest insights of Hittite-tology are likely to produce the spiritual maturity that is the goal of faithful pastoring.

What can keep our pastoring responsibly scholarly, and our scholarship faithfully pastoral? The answer is being scholars not only of the Biblical world, and not only of the contemporary world, but also being wise concerning the world of the Spirit.

I love the older, *NIV* translation of Philemon 6: "I pray that you be *active in sharing your faith*, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ." That translation has been updated and made more accurate by good scholarship to read, "I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ." The essence is clear in both translations: involvement in spiritual mission deepens gospel understanding. Here pastoring and scholarship or ministry and theology are not in tension, and are certainly not pitted against one another. Rather, fullness and depth of scholarship (i.e., "deepening" understanding of the spiritual

reality that biblical truth conveys) is a product of the mission of faith that pastorally seeks the spiritual transformation of others.

Wrestling for souls is key to understanding the Word with the gospel scholarship that is the mark of faithful pastoring. Those whose goal is transformation as much as information – those whose aim is attraction to Christ more than attraction to pews—will know something about the *significance* of the Word that careers driven only by intellectual endeavor or personal reputation cannot know.

None of this should surprise us. If we are called to expounding and defending of truth, then we should be "apt to teach." Being able to instruct, necessitates being able to organize, communicate ideas, and *show their significance*. This latter responsibility moves us beyond the merely academic definitions of scholarship or routine definitions of pastoring.

If we take the Nehemiah 8 specifics as a helpful model for the preaching task, then we should focus on *all* the elements that passage identifies as necessary for making pastor/scholars faithful in theology and fruitful in ministry. Remember that Nehemiah is describing a time that the people of God are coming back from exile and do not recall the law of God or, even, the language in which it was first given. So, the Levites, "instructed the people" (vs. 7). What did this instruction involve?

> [8]They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.

Thus, the exposition of the Word included aspect of:

1. What the Word says (Word Presentation) "reading" and "making it clear" = *parash*, to distinguish or specify clearly—perhaps translate
2. What the Word means (Explanation) "giving the meaning" = *sekel*, to give the sense of meaning requiring perception or insight

3. How the Word can be understood (Exhortation) "causing" to understand = *bîn*, to separate mentally (for use) or assist in understanding (for personal use) = significance

This model was so helpful, it became the pattern of biblical preaching for following centuries, and should influence our own understanding and practice of biblical exposition. In order to pastor the people, the instructors of Nehemiah's time made clear what the Word said, gave the meaning, and showed the significance for personal use. It was not enough to communicate academic definitions or abstract theology (though these were necessary); it was also necessary to say what difference biblical truth made in the lives of God's people. Further (as we apply the Philemon insight about how sharing one's faith results in a deepening of understanding), we understand such a process not only made the Word clear to God's people, it gave deeper understanding to God's instructors.

So how does this discussion apply to our understanding of what is needed for someone to be a biblically-credentialed pastor/scholar or minister/theologian? It certainly means that preacher and teachers of God's Word are to have sufficient knowledge of the biblical world and the current world to explain the *meaning* of the text. It also means biblically-qualified pastor/scholars must have sufficient knowledge of God's people (their lives, their language, their struggles, their doubts, their fears, their pain) to explain the *significance* of the text. Previous generations described pastors as "doctors of souls," helping ministers to understand the nature of scholarship that is true stewardship of the Word.

Still distressing to many of my Presbyterian brothers are the words of our *Directory for the Publick Worship of God* [sic], written by our Reformation forbearers, who advocated preaching to "the necessities and capacities" of the people. We are usually quite happy to preach what the people *need* to hear—that requires only that we examine the beauties of the text and the corrosions of the culture. But, addressing what people are

capable of hearing requires a scholar's insight with a shepherd's heart.

What does preaching with "insight" *and* "heart" now mean for us?

1. It means that, as pastors, we cannot just "wing it" and be faithful. Rightly dividing the Word is a scholarly task that involves theological understanding of Scripture and culture. I grieve for the pastors who have become so pragmatic that they are not studying the Scriptures for current depth of insight, and I grieve for those who have become so routine that they are repeating theological clichés of their pasts without understanding the world of their people. These are not simply the temptations of local pastors, but also the temptations of those who teach pastors. We can also rest upon unexamined or unengaged presentations of lectures, arguments, and approaches that are merely pragmatic, traditional, or preferential.

2. Insight and heart commitment require that we, as scholars, cannot just "teach it" and be faithful. Deep understanding of "every good thing we share for the sake of Christ" requires partnership in ministry, being "active in the sharing of our faith," becoming a doctor of souls, as we regularly consider the "necessities and capacities" of God's people. Such ministry means daring to consider that our theological scholarship will be limited, even hindered, if we do not pastor in some way. In this regard, the Puritan William Ames's definition of "theology" is profoundly helpful and challenging. He said, "Theology is the science of living to God." Without that *living* intention, our theological scholarship inevitably degenerates into a love of reputation, novelty, or controversy—as we, too, become more enthralled with what the Gospel can provide for our careers than what it can provide for God's people.

Deep understanding of the Word requires some "partnership" in the gospel in your local church, in your local prison, in your local soccer club, in your three-year-old's Sunday School. I recognize that we professors will tend to say that our students are our ministry, and that may well be if you are truly involved in their lives beyond the lectern. Are you? Do you know whose wife miscarried last week, whose parents are divorcing, whose job is in jeopardy, whose child has autism, whose neighbor is addicted, or poor, or needing bail money—and, if you know, are you pastoring those students beyond the lectern and the mandatory office hours (for which hardly anybody shows up)?

Immediately the reaction of many theological scholars, even those who train preachers can be, "That's not my job. Pastoral care is for the local church pastor, not the one training pastors." But "deepening understanding" of Gospel truth is our job, if we are preparing pastors with biblical scholarship that is spiritually astute as well as academically refined.

If our seminaries and Bible schools simply follow a university model of offering "divinity courses," where a few experts dispense scholarly gems for the informationally deprived, then we may be allowed to *survive* in "a kind of literary atmosphere." But, if we, our students, and God's people are to *thrive* in the Spirit then our pastors must be scholars of the Word, the World, and God's people. This understanding requires that scholars with a "deepening understanding" of the matters of the Spirit must be pastors of somebody—a calling made all the more difficult by hybrid—and distance-models for classes, and by commuter seminaries!

CONCLUSION

My own recent discovery, by way of confession and rejoicing:

After pastoring for a decade, I went into seminary teaching and administration for 30 years. In that time frame, I became a jack-in-the-box preacher, preaching in a different pulpit almost every week to represent the seminary, answer invitations, or advance a cause.

Only in the last seven years have I returned to local church ministry. I still preach in a lot of different pulpits, but most Sundays I am in the same church ministering to the same people that I have gotten to know and love. It is hard for me to put into words the difference. For thirty years, I preached to raise funds, spread influence, or advance causes. For most of the last decade, I have learned again what it means to wrestle for souls: to preach to parents whose child has cancer about the hope that is real despite their pain and fear; to preach to a couple who come to church together despite his recent affair; to preach to teens I know are sleeping together, or doing drugs, or being abused by their father and, despite, all that, cling to them for Christ's sake.

I don't know how much longer the Lord will give me this ministry, but I look at the likely possibility of returning to the preaching circuit in retirement years with a certain dread. The prospect rattles an emptiness in me. I cannot tell you the exhilaration of people turning to the gospel, the pain of people leaving because they didn't get from me what they wanted, the beauty of relationships being healed, and the fear that this week's message won't be as good as last week's, or the last pastor, or the visiting jack-in-the-box preacher who only has to roll out his best stuff the way I used to. Pastoral preaching with a deepening understanding of the matters of the soul is the thrill of a roller coaster ride that puts me on my knees before the Spirit of God, and deepens my appreciation of Him and His work in profound ways that I had forgotten, if I ever knew them. I praise the Lord

for still teaching me that I am not yet the scholar or theologian I thought I was, and that there is still new, precious ground to plow and harvest by the Spirit through the pastoral proclamation of His Word.

BIG IDEAS AND BAD IDEAS

RUSSELL ST. JOHN
Twin Oaks Presbyterian Church
Ballwin, MO
Covenant Theological Seminary
St. Louis, MO

ABSTRACT

Abraham Kuruvilla has proposed an alternative to "Big Idea" preaching, in which he rejects both the practice of distilling a proposition from a text and also the subsequent preaching of the proposition, that is, the Big Idea.[1] Kuruvilla proposes instead that a preacher is a "curator," who must help congregants to "experience the text+theology—the agenda of the A/ author—in all its fullness."[2] Asking whether it is time to kill Big Idea preaching, Kuruvilla urges a sea change in evangelical homiletics. After summarizing his proposal, this paper offers an alternate understanding of the hermeneutical foundations that undergird Kuruvilla's disagreements with Big Idea preaching. In so doing, this paper ultimately rejects Kuruvilla's proposal while reaffirming the value of propositional preaching for evangelical homiletics.

THE KURUVILLA PROPOSAL

Kuruvilla proposes that preachers should neither distill propositions from texts nor preach the propositions they have distilled:[3]

> My concerns with this approach . . . stem from the assumptions that behind every text is an essential truth that can be reduced and expressed in a propositional form as a Big Idea (distilling the text), and that the Big Idea is what is to be preached to listeners (preaching the distillate).[4]

Against the practice of distillation, Kuruvilla asserts that texts are irreducible to propositional forms, that a proposition necessarily results in a loss of meaning, and that a proposition "overdetermines" the text, subsuming its specificity under a too-broad generalization.

Against the practice of preaching the distillate, Kuruvilla asserts that Big Idea preaching fails adequately to address authorial "doings," fails to understand the text as art, that is, as a vehicle of non-discursive communication, and fails to demonstrate the pericopal theology of the text, which can only be expressed by the text *qua* text.

This paper briefly summarizes each of these points before engaging their respective value for evangelical homiletics.

AGAINST DISTILLATION

Texts are Irreducible

Kuruvilla is convinced that texts are irreducible, and he states: "The text is what it is and will suffer no transmutation into anything else."[5] Arguing that "changing any word in the account alters the text's thrust in some way,"[6] he asks: "[I]s it even possible to reduce [the text] into a Big Idea propositional statement that fully captures the thrust of the text and which needs to be conveyed to sermon listeners as the all-important take-home truth? I think not."[7] Instead, he asserts, "The text . . . is inexpressible in any other form, and cannot be substituted by a condensate, reduction, or distillate thereof."[8] He summarizes, writing:

> I am registering my opposition to distilling the text: pericopal theology (irreducible) cannot be expressed in a Big Idea (a reduction) without crippling loss of power and pathos, and without denuding the text of its experience-creating thrust and force; a distillation of a text can never be an adequate substitute for the text.[9]

According to Kuruvilla, texts are irreducible to propositional forms.

Propositions Result in a Loss of Meaning

Kuruvilla's conviction regarding the irreducible nature of texts means that any attempt to create a proposition from a text will necessarily result in a loss of meaning. Arguing that the formation of a Big Idea tends toward a form of "eliminative reductionism,"[10] Kuruvilla cautions that "to convert a text into a Big Idea is surely going to entail significant loss of its details, meaning, power, and pathos."[11] He reiterates:

> Since distilling the text into a Big Idea entails considerable loss when compared to its source—loss of meaning and power and pathos, not to mention attenuation of filigrees of structure and nuances of language that contribute to the experience of the text—such reductionistic operations cannot be condoned.[12]

Kuruvilla thus agrees with Fred Craddock, who alleges that in Big Idea preaching "the minister boils off all the water and then preaches the stain at the bottom of the cup."[13]

Kuruvilla does not reject all propositions, noting, "I am not against reductions *per se* in homiletics," and he encourages preachers to develop a "Theological Focus," which is "a lossy reduction of the irreducible pericopal theology."[14] Whereas Kuruvilla describes a Big Idea as a "distillation of what the author is saying," his Theological Focus represents "a reduction of what the author is *doing*," and Kuruvilla uses it only for

"sermon shaping,"[15] not for preaching. In other words, the Theological Focus helps the preacher to map out the curation of the text, but is never shared with listeners in the sermon, lest it misrepresent the pericopal theology of the text.

Reductions have no place in the act preaching itself, for according to Kuruvilla, a Big Idea necessarily "result[s] in significant loss of textual meaning."[16]

The Danger of "Overdetermination"

Kuruvilla therefore warns Big Idea preachers against that which he calls "overdetermination," in which "the specificity of a particular pericope is . . . lost with its reduction into a Big Idea."[17] Because Kuruvilla "is convinced that no two biblical pericopes can ever have the same thrust or force,"[18] he cautions that "reductions raise the possibility of *other* texts having the same Big Idea."[19] This possibility strikes Kuruvilla as an "untethering"[20] of the particulars from the text, for the "uniqueness of wording and structure and context of any given passage renders is impossible for one pericope to have the same thrust/ force as another."[21] The preacher can avoid this error only by allowing the "precision" of the "wording [in] the sacred text"[22] to stand as is, *without* propositional reduction.

To Kuruvilla's mind, Big Ideas overdetermine the text, washing out the inspired particulars of a pericope with a too-general proposition.

AGAINST PREACHING THE DISTILLATE

Authorial "Doings"

Kuruvilla suggests that Big Idea preachers have fallen prey to "a misunderstanding of how language functions, why texts work, and what a sermon does."[23] Citing the lingering influence of classical rhetoric, Kuruvilla maintains that "we still remain burdened" by an understanding of "preaching as argumentation."[24] He therefore urges preachers to adopt a "new

rhetoric" centered on the recognition that "[a]uthors, including those of the Scripture, *do* things with what they say."[25] Asserting that this "*doing* of the authors ought to be the interpretive goal of preachers,"[26] Kuruvilla laments: "I suspect that, fundamentally, Big Idea advocates have not understood pragmatics, authorial doings, and pericopal theology."[27]

Describing that which he believes the biblical authors to be doing with their texts, Kuruvilla asserts that each pericope "is projecting a transcending vision—what Paul Ricoeur called the *world in front of the text*."[28] Describing in full the interaction of authorial "doings" and evangelical preaching, Kuruvilla writes:

> For Scripture, this *world in front of the text* is God's ideal world, individual segments of which are portrayed by individual pericopes. So each sermon on a particular pericope is God's gracious invitation to mankind to live in his ideal world by abiding by the thrust and force of that pericope—that is, the requirements of God's ideal world as called for in that pericope's world-segment. As mankind accepts that divine invitation and applies the call of the pericope (its thrust/ force), week by week and pericope by pericope God's people are progressively and increasingly inhabiting this ideal world and adopting its values. This is the goal of preaching.[29]

According to Kuruvilla, this kind of preaching, which demonstrates authorial "doings" in the sermon, "facilitates the conformation of the children of God into the image of the Son of God."[30]

The Text Acts like Art

Continuing his emphasis on the distinction between authorial sayings and authorial doings, Kuruvilla suggests that the "doings" of the biblical text stand akin to art, writing: "Hermeneutics for homiletics involves more than just decoding the semantics of a text to decipher and comprehend its saying

(science). Additionally, it involves discerning the pragmatics of a text to infer and experience its *doing*/ theology (art)."[31] Stating, "Pictures, photographs, painting, and poetry . . . differ significantly from a linear, verbal code that must be deciphered,"[32] Kuruvilla explains that whereas "a discursive symbol is rational, denoting something,"[33] and is useful for the formation of propositions, "there are [also] non-discursive symbols capable of addressing nuances of mental states and emotions unavailable to purely discursive modalities."[34] While these non-discursive symbols do things to a reader, Kuruvilla sees Big Idea preaching as having largely ignored non-discursive realms of communication. He asserts:

> I claim that a canonical text such as Scripture is both discursive (authorial sayings with tangible information that deals less with images, and that must be deciphered: science) and non-discursive (authorial doings with intangible experiences that deal mostly with images, and that must be inferred: art). Preachers are not simply to major in the science of semantics, but must graduate in the art of pragmatics, discerning authorial doings and the theology of the pericope so as to experience the text as intended. And this calls for a major shift in how preaching is conceived.[35]

According to Kuruvilla, the Big Idea hermeneutic "does not see texts as non-discursive *objets d'art*, but only as discursive subjects for scientific examination."[36]

The Text qua *Text*

If the artistic and non-discursive nature of texts is as Kuruvilla describes them, then Kuruvilla argues that only the text—in all its fullness—can convey the text. The "intangible experiences"[37] that the text produces in the reader are not simply irreducible to a proposition, but are also inexpressible with human language. Kuruvilla therefore asserts that the text's theology is

"inexpressible in any format other than the text itself,"[38] such that no reduction can substitute for the "inexpressible text+theology."[39] Rather, the theology of the text is "inextricably interwoven with and inexpressible apart from, the text."[40] Kuruvilla concludes: "To think that pericopes of Scripture can be distilled into Big Ideas without loss, and that those Big Ideas are what need to be conveyed sermonically to an audience is, in my opinion, a misconception of both hermeneutics and homiletics."[41]

In essence, Kuruvilla asserts that the reader's experience of the non-discursive thrust of the text is part of its theology, and that this text+theology can only be experienced by the text *qua* text.

PREACHING AS CURATION

That being the case, Kuruvilla proposes nothing less than a redefinition of "theology." Theology, according to Kuruvilla, includes the reader's experience of the inexpressible, non-discursive, force/ thrust of the text. If this is true, then it demands a redefinition of preaching itself. Kuruvilla offers that redefinition by suggesting that preachers view themselves as curators of the text.

The Preacher is a Curator

Kuruvilla proposes a model of preaching in which the "primary role of the preacher" is the "curation of the text: discovering textual clues for listeners, thereby facilitating their discernment of pericopal theology."[42] He therefore states: "I propose the analogy of a curator guiding visitors in an art museum through a series of paintings," and, fleshing out this analogy, Kuruvilla explains:

> I invite my audience to zoom in on the critical details—*how* the story is told—in order to discern pericopal theology, to catch the author's agenda, his *doing*, how he wants his text to be experienced, how he intends it to hit

> us. This is text curation, just as a museum docent does for, say, Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* . . . . These textual curators are enabling the word of God to be apprehended by the people of God for its thrust.[43]

Thus viewing preachers as "handmaids to the sacred writ, as midwives to Scripture,"[44] Kuruvilla describes the preacher as "facilitator,"[45] and explains the work of curation through an anecdote Eugene Lowry shared about the self-conception of a fellow preacher: "'I see myself as a stagehand who holds back the curtain so that some might be able to catch a glimpse of the divine play—sometimes—perhaps—if I can get it open enough.' . . . If we could just get a better handle on how to pull back the curtains."[46] To which Kuruvilla replies, "Precisely—that's the role of the preacher . . . pulling back the curtains!"[47]

Preaching Aims at Listener Experience of the Text

Kuruvilla envisions this curtain-pulling as a demonstration of the pericopal theology of the text, writing that "Scripture calls for its experience to be demonstrated, not for any Big Idea to be argued,"[48] such that by faithful curation of the text "the theology of the text may be demonstrated to listeners who are unable to see the clues in the text that point to pericopal theology."[49] This demonstration facilitates listener experience of the text in its fullness, for "preachers facilitate listeners' experience of the text as they encounter God and his ideal *world in front of the text*—the theology of the pericope."[50]

According to Kuruvilla's proposal, preachers should curate the text *qua* text—which is irreducible to any other form—thereby demonstrating the inexpressible text+theology so that listeners might experience the force/ thrust of the text in the only way possible, according to "the agenda of the A/ author—in all its fullness."[51]

SUMMARY

Homiletical models stand on hermeneutical commitments. Abraham Kuruvilla is to be commended for recognizing this truth, for articulating his own hermeneutical commitments, and for self-consciously building a homiletic to serve his hermeneutical convictions. Unfortunately, the hermeneutical commitments on which Kuruvilla has chosen to take his stand suffer deep flaws. The remainder of this paper will offer an alternate way to understand the hermeneutical foundations that undergird Kuruvilla's disagreements with Big Idea preaching, and will ultimately reject his homiletical proposal.

IN DEFENSE OF DISTILLATION

Texts are Reducible

Biblical authors, by skillfully employing rhetorical strategies—literary forms or genres, with all their attendant features—"*do* things"[52] to readers, and Kuruvilla is therefore correct to give careful attention to textual details. Both *what* an author means and *how* he means it matter. But Kuruvilla goes too far.

The New Homiletic of the late twentieth century taught that literary form is not merely a rhetorical strategy for *how* an author means, but also a part of *what* he means.[53] To alter the form of the text is thus to alter the meaning of the text. In response, preachers attempted to replicate the literary form of the text in the form of the sermon, believing that literary form comprises a part *what* the author means.[54] Narrative sermon forms multiplied, even as homileticians struggled to produce workable sermon forms for poetic, proverbial, or apocalyptic literature. The mistaken hermeneutical conviction that literary form comprises a part of *what* the author means, and not simply *how* he means it, sent evangelical homiletics on an impossible rabbit trail.

A more nuanced understanding recognizes that literary forms comprise rhetorical strategies that authors use with skill to predispose readers to yield to the author's intent and to receive

his ideational content as he desires. Jeffrey Arthurs therefore suggests that literary forms represent "means of managing a relationship with readers and listeners, moving them toward predetermined beliefs, values, and actions."[55] Biblical authors manage these relationships skillfully, *doing things* to a reader—in ways the reader may not recognize—to influence the reader to receive the text as the author intends. Homileticians therefore strive to address not only *what* an author means but also *how* he means what he means—his "doings." That, however, is very different than saying that an author's rhetorical strategy is a part of his ideational content. *How* a text means and *what* a text means are not the same thing. Mike Graves notes:

> The form and content go together, but do they have to? No. The factual information conveyed in an obituary could be reported in story form (which often happens when celebrities die). The story would have to be sensitive to the mood of the death announcement. But sensitivity to mood does not require *duplicating* structure.[56]

Simply put, meaning transfers across literary forms. A skillful author can retain *what* he says even when he alters *how* he says it.

Kuruvilla's proposal therefore represents yet another iteration of an old hermeneutical error. He teaches that a listener's *experience* of the author's "doings"—rather than the literary form itself—is not just *how* an author means, but also a part of *what* an author means. In either case, the result is the same: a change in the literary form of the text—or even in the wording, details, or structures of the text—alters the meaning of the text.[57] Texts are therefore irreducible, and distillation is necessarily bad. The New Hermeneutic, and the New Homiletic which served it, travelled this path decades ago. With a subtle change, Kuruvilla is asking evangelical preachers to travel it once more.

Consider Kuruvilla's dialogue partners—Fred Craddock, Eugene Lowry, Henry Mitchell, William Willimon, Paul Ricoeur, David James Randolph, David Buttrick—all of whom are either

liberal or neoorthodox in their view of Scripture, and each of whom wrote during the heyday of the New Homiletic. These men rejected the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, and opposed propositional preaching, not so much because they—like Kuruvilla—were concerned to protect the uniqueness of each pericope, but because they repudiated propositional truth. Self-consciously building homiletical models on the hermeneutical conviction that the Bible is not the very Word of God,[58] these men stand far from offering sure guidance for evangelical preachers. At the same time, Kuruvilla rejects the testimony of evangelical hermeneutical and homiletical luminaries—John Broadus, Haddon Robinson, Bryan Chapell, John Stott, Sydney Greidanus, John MacArthur, Walter Kaiser—in favor of appropriating the hermeneutical commitments of men whose doctrine of Scripture is antithetical to evangelical Christianity.

Kuruvilla's appeal to Paul Ricoeur is especially troubling. When Ricoeur speaks of the *world in front of the text*, he, unlike Kuruvilla, does not use that phrase to describe "God's ideal world."[59] To the contrary, Ricoeur personifies the text, ascribing to it intentions distinct from authorial intent,[60] describing the text as projecting new ways of the reader being in the world, such that for Ricoeur meaning is "dynamic," and signifies "the direction of thought opened up by the text."[61] When Kuruvilla appropriates Ricoeur's phrase, but imbues it with his own meaning, he is using Ricoeur's *saying* but ignoring his *doing*, while at the same time castigating evangelical homileticians for ignoring doings. The irony is potent.

Kuruvilla's commitment to the notion that a text is irreducible has forced him to lodge with odd hermeneutical bedfellows. But as Steven Mathewson correctly asserts in his reply to Kuruvilla's proposal, reductions are not reductionistic.[62] Reductions, in fact, recognize a fundamental truth that Kuruvilla rejects: Neither that which authors "do" with their texts—*how* they mean what they mean—nor the listener's experience of the author's "doings," alter *what* the author means. To reduce a text alters *how* an author means, and changes the rhetorical effects exerted upon the reader, but it does not alter *what* the author

means. Again, a skillful author can retain *what* he says even when he alters *how* he says it. To reduce a text is not to lose or to alter meaning, but to impart the same *what* using a different *how*. For, whether Kuruvilla recognizes it or not, a proposition is a legitimate rhetorical strategy.

Propositions Result in a Clarification of Meaning

When preachers understand that authors can transfer information across forms, then it is clear that a Big Idea does not necessarily lose *what* an author means. Instead, it marshals the details of the text—using a different *how*—to clarify and reinforce the same *what*.

This is, in fact, how theology works. From the details of the text, comparing text with text, theologians identify broader principles—doctrines—that capture the sum of all the detailed information pertaining to a given subject. If, as Kuruvilla asserts, the "uniqueness of wording and structure and context of any given passage renders it impossible for one pericope to have the same thrust/ force as another,"[63] then no two passages of Scripture actually teach the same doctrine. The Bible offers no single doctrine of justification: there are multiple, unique, individual doctrines of justification, for no two pericopes teach the same theology. By redefining theology to include the listener's experience of the non-discursive, affective qualities of the text, Kuruvilla precludes the possibility of theology as traditionally understood, and forbids the preacher its use in the pulpit.

Propositions, however, are necessary, not only for the work of theology in the pulpit, but also because the people of God must be taught, and thus the Scripture shows that Jesus himself used propositions to clarify his meaning. In Mark 4:3-8 Jesus told the Parable of the Sower, and because his disciples did not understand it, he explained the parable in the form of reductions, that is, propositional statements that clarified what he meant. In fact, Mark reveals in verse 34 that "privately to his own disciples," Jesus "explained everything."[64] Jesus used

propositions to clarify the meaning of a story, and contemporary preachers can use propositions too, for far from representing a loss of meaning, propositions use a different *how* to clarify the same *what*.

"Overdetermination" is a Good Sign

No doubt Kuruvilla is correct that any given Big Idea can be too generic. But the presence of generalizations *per se* does not indicate an inherent weakness in Big Idea preaching. Evangelical Protestant hermeneutics stands on an interpretive principle called the analogy of Scripture. It is a simple principle: Scripture interprets Scripture. Because this is true, a preacher knows that if he or she has "discovered" something in one passage of Scripture that contradicts the plain teaching of another passage, this "discovery" is in fact a false interpretation. The Scripture agrees with itself, and this internal consistency means that we ought to find any given doctrine or teaching of Scripture in multiple places in the Bible.

Mathewson therefore rightly notes, "[S]ome overlap between big ideas . . . of multiple pericopes is inevitable since the same themes keep re-surfacing in the Scriptures."[65] If a given Big Idea bears striking similarities to the Big Idea from another text, then the preacher should rejoice! The sermon is probably on the right path. The Scripture teaches the same principles and doctrines again and again and again, and like a good preacher the Lord uses repetition and restatement, teaching the same truths through a variety of literary forms in a variety of places in the Bible. Evangelical preachers should fear an absolutely unique Big Idea far more than an overdetermined one.

IN DEFENSE OF PREACHING THE DISTILLATE

Big Idea Preachers Already Address Authorial "Doings"

Kuruvilla emphasizes the distinction between authorial sayings and doings, stressing the latter almost to the point of ignoring the

former, while charging evangelical homiletics with a near exclusive fixation on sayings.[66] As Mathewson notes: "[T]his is too simplistic,"[67] for doings and sayings work together, and have in fact worked together in evangelical homiletics.

Mathewson likewise recalls a classroom discussion on Mark 4:35-41, in which Haddon Robinson demonstrated significant concern for the authorial "doings" of the passage,[68] and while Kuruvilla disputes Robinson's hermeneutical conclusions,[69] Mathewson's point stands: Big Idea preachers care both about what the text says *and* what it does.

It bears mention, moreover, that Bryan Chapell's teaching on the Fallen Condition Focus represents a clear concern for authorial "doings." Whereas the Proposition answers the What question—What is this text saying?—the FCF answers the Why question—Why was this text written? In other words, what is the author *doing* with the information he is presenting? How does he intend it to address these particular recipients in their human need? Chapell insists, "Until we have determined a passage's purpose, we are not ready to preach its truths, even if we know many true facts about the text," and he states in no uncertain terms: "We must determine the purpose (or burden) of the passage before we really know the subject of a sermon."[70]

Despite Kuruvilla's assertion to the contrary, Big Idea preachers suffer no lack of attention to authorial doings.

The Text Acts like More than Art

The biblical authors employ literary forms with skill and artistry, and Kuruvilla is therefore correct that biblical texts are artistic, but they are not purely art. Kuruvilla does not suggest that biblical literature is mere art,[71] but his emphasis on the artistic features of biblical texts, almost to the exclusion of their ideational content, runs the danger of equating a biblical text with a sculpture, painting, or song. Kuruvilla's proposal heavily emphasizes the *how* of the text over against the *what* of the text.

Kuruvilla insists that Big Idea preaching "does not see texts as non-discursive *objets d'art*,"[72] but also suggests that the

experiences produced in the reader by these non-discursive elements of the text are, in fact, inexpressible, such that human language cannot capture them, except by the text *qua* text. But preaching, which is more than mere reading of the text, necessarily employs human language. Kuruvilla's argument is therefore oddly self-defeating. If the experience of the non-discursive, artistic "doings" of the text is inexpressible, and can only be experienced through the text *qua* text, then the preacher can do nothing but read the text, or point out particular details of the text, hoping that congregants will "experience" what the preacher believes they should.

Contrast that with Scripture. John describes with artistic skill several signs that Jesus performed, but in John 20:30-31 he writes: "Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John's texts, which artfully describe Jesus' signs, are more than mere art. They are discursive texts, intended to communicate information—a truth with which Kuruvilla no doubt agrees—and John summarizes his own texts with a propositional statement, teaching what they mean and how his readers should respond to Jesus. Whatever the experience a reader enjoys of the non-discursive elements of John's texts as *objets d'art*, John purposes his narratives for more than listener "experience"—he purposes them to convince the reader that Jesus is the Christ. Kuruvilla's insistence on the text *qua* text forbids the apostle from doing that which he clearly has done.

Texts Demand Interpretation

Nineteenth century Congregationalist preacher, R.W. Dale, asked: "Have we any reason to believe that even intelligent Christian men and women read the Scriptures intelligently?"[73] His question contains his answer, and it is an answer that many preachers can confirm. The text *qua* text does not explain itself. Preachers must interpret and teach.

Consider the resurrection of Jesus. Matthew 28:11-15 reveals that the unbelieving Jews offered an alternate explanation for Jesus' empty tomb. The tomb did not explain itself, but required explanation. The New Testament offers the divinely inspired and authoritative interpretation of the person and work of Jesus—including the one correct explanation for his empty tomb. The preachers of the New Testament did not leave that event to explain itself.

Neither did they leave Scripture to explain itself. When Peter preached at Pentecost, he employed Psalm 110:1, interpreting the text, teaching clearly what it meant and how it was fulfilled in Christ. So far from expecting the text *qua* text to teach his listeners, Peter understood that Psalm 110:1 had in fact been a mystery to Jews for centuries. "The LORD says to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.'" How could David refer to his own descendant as "Lord?" Peter answered in verse 36, declaring, "God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." *That* is why David called him, "Lord." The descendant to whom David referred is the resurrected and reigning Christ. Peter did not fear that his propositional statement represented a "loss of meaning and power and pathos, not to mention attenuation of filigrees of structure and nuances of language"[74] because his purpose was to proclaim salvation, not to help his listeners experience the "filigrees" of Psalm 110.

In a similar act of interpretation, Paul, in 1 Corinthians 10:7, quotes Exodus 32:6, which says, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." Paul in fact says, "Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.'" In a single verse Paul gives a reduction of a narrative text, stating in a propositional form the meaning of Exodus 32:6. The meaning is that some of them were idolaters. Again, Paul does not appear concerned that he is violating the text as an *objet d'art*, but that his readers stand in danger of violating the 2nd Commandment.

The entire Book of Hebrews proceeds in the same vein. The author to the Hebrews employs Old Testament Psalms,

narratives, and prophecies, interpreting them for his audience, explaining them in propositional terms. Scholars debate whether Hebrews was initially a sermon,[75] but whether or not it was, the author is clearly uncomfortable with the assumption that the text *qua* text of the Hebrew Bible is sufficient to instruct the people of God in the way of Jesus.

CURATION IS INADEQUATE

The Preacher is Not a Curator

Mere "curation" of the text, as Kuruvilla describes it, is thus an inadequate understanding of preaching. Among the New Testament descriptions of the various tasks associated with preaching are the following:[76]

> *kerusso*—to proclaim
> *euangelizo*—to announce good news
> *diermeneuo*—to unfold the meaning of
> *dianoigo*—to open up or thoroughly disclose
> *dialegomai*—to reason or discuss
> *diangello*—to declare
> *katangello*—to proclaim
> *parresiazomai*—to preach or to speak boldly; to correct or reprove
> *elencho*—to expose or to correct; to convict
> *epitimao*—to rebuke or warn
> *parakaleo*—to encourage or comfort
> *martureo*—to witness
> *homologeo*—to say the same thing with or to agree
> *homileo*—to converse; to talk with
> *laleo*—to speak
> *didasko*—to teach
> *suzeteo*—to examine together or to dispute
> *metadidomi*—to share the gospel as a gift

Notably absent are "curating," "facilitating," "discerning," "portraying," and "mediating," which are the words Kuruvilla uses to describe the preaching he envisions. The Scripture simply bears no witness to the preacher as "docent,"[77] and gives no example of preacher-as-chaperon of non-discursive experiences. The preacher is described neither as a handmaid nor a midwife.[78]

Nearly all the terminology Kuruvilla chooses to employ to describe his homiletic, and the images and comparisons he provides, stands at odds with the plain terminology of, and the images and descriptions provided in, the Bible. Kuruvilla's proposal appears to have been built on contemporary language theory rather than direct biblical testimony, and the result feels oddly out-of-touch with the teaching of Scripture about the role and calling of a preacher.

Preaching Aims at Listener Obedience to the Text

In emphasizing the necessity that preachers help listeners to "experience the text as intended,"[79] Kuruvilla does not ignore listener obedience, but he appears to expect obedience to be the natural byproduct of "experience." Kuruvilla suggests that as God's people "appl[y] the call of the pericope," they "are progressively and increasingly inhabiting" the *world in front of the text*, "align[ing] themselves to the requirements of that ideal world,"[80] such that "sermon by sermon, God's people become progressively more Christlike as they align themselves to the image of Christ displayed in each periscope."[81] The Bible, however, gives little reason to believe that human beings willingly "align themselves" to righteousness,[82] and every reason to believe that preachers must warn,[83] correct,[84] exhort,[85] reprove,[86] implore,[87] point out sin,[88] step on toes,[89] and use the Scripture to probe the conscience,[90] all while trusting the Holy Spirit to wield the Word as a sword, "piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."[91] Biblical preaching does not so much aim at facilitating an experience of the text, through which self-

"aligning" takes place, as much as it aims to call men and women to trust and obey Jesus Christ, directly applying the Scripture to the often-resistant hearts of listeners.

Even when people in the Bible display conviction by and interest in listening to the Scripture, the Bible does not depict them as having a moving, non-discursive experience. In Acts 17:11, the Jews at Berea, after listening to Paul preach, "received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." In other words, they did not search the Scriptures to see if Paul accurately curated the text *qua* text, but rather to discern if the information Paul presented was true. Why? Because each of us understands intuitively that the artistic components of the literature of the Bible serve its ideational content. In other words, *how* the text means serves *what* the text means, and listeners rightly privilege the *what*.

Kuruvilla's proposal specifically precludes the question of application, which he intends to treat elsewhere.[92] But one wonders why and how application could proceed under Kuruvilla's conception of curation. Why seek to apply the text if its theology, which includes the listener's "intangible experiences,"[93] is in fact "inexpressible"[94] in any other form than the text itself? If the preacher states the theology that his or her congregation is supposed to apply, the preacher has changed that theology *by* stating it. Kuruvilla is adamant that any change to a single word of the text alters its pericopal theology:[95] only the text *qua* text can express it. The preacher cannot retell the text,[96] summarize the text in his or her own words,[97] or state it as a proposition. Exactly what, then, can a preacher do to "apply" the text when any language other than the text *qua* text alters the very theology that the preacher purports to apply?

CONCLUSION

Perhaps the most striking feature of Kuruvilla's proposal is its impracticality to a parish preacher. A pastor who weekly stands before a congregation, refusing to tell the flock plainly what the text means, instead "curating" their theological experience of the

text *qua* text, might not remain long employed. Kuruvilla's "curator" does not feed hungry sheep the Word of God as much as he or she invites the sheep to look upon a Thanksgiving feast, facilitating their appreciation of the culinary expertise of each dish, while in fact feeding them none of it.

In describing his turn toward preaching as curation, Kuruvilla asserts: "With the blossoming of language philosophy in the late twentieth century, our understanding of how language works has grown considerably."[98] But that is not true. *Theories* of language have "grown considerably," and each preacher and homiletician must submit those theories to the light of Scripture, searching the Bible to confirm or deny the accuracy of the theory in question. The way that Kuruvilla asks preachers to understand and to employ language in preaching simply does not reflect the way the Bible understands and employs it, and he appears uncritically to have accepted theories of language that simply do not agree with the Word of God.

Kuruvilla asks if it is "Time to Kill the Big Idea?," to which evangelical preachers should politely reply, "No."

NOTES

1. Abraham Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill the Big Idea? A Fresh Look at Preaching," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 61, no. 4 (December 2018): 825-46. Steven Mathewson offered a reply to Kuruvilla. See Steven D. Mathewson, "Let the Big Idea Live! A Response to Abraham Kuruvilla," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 19, no. 1 (March 2019): 33-41. Kuruvilla subsequently issued a rejoinder to Mathewson. See Abraham Kuruvilla, "Big Idea—*Requiescat in Pace!* Authorial Rejoinder to Steven Mathewson," at www.homiletix.com. Accessed 5 August 2019.

2. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 842.

3. "These are the two problems I inveighed against in my original essay: distilling the text and preaching the distillate." In Kuruvilla, "*Requiescat in Pace!*," 10, note 47.
4. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 828.
5. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 836.
6. Kuruvilla, "*Requiescat in Pace!*," 7.
7. Kuruvilla, "*Requiescat in Pace!*," 10.
8. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 839, note 86.
9. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 843-44.
10. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 829.
11. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 832.
12. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 835.
13. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 829. Cited from Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 123.
14. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 844.
15. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 845 [emphasis original].
16. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 841.
17. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 834.
18. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 834.
19. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 833 [emphasis original].
20. See Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 834, note 53.
21. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 834.
22. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 834.
23. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 836.
24. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 837.
25. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 838 [emphasis original].
26. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 838 [emphasis original].
27. Kuruvilla, "*Requiescat in Pace!*," 2.
28. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 839 [emphasis original].
29. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 839 [emphasis original]. Kuruvilla helps to clarify his terminology when he writes, "For all practical

purposes, the theology of the pericope, the *world in front of the text*, the thrust/force of the text, and its pragmatics (i.e. what the author is doing), may be considered equivalent terms." In "Time to Kill," 839, note 86 [emphasis original].
30. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 840.
31. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 840 [emphasis original].
32. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 841.
33. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 840.
34. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 840.
35. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 841.
36. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 845.
37. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 841.
38. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 844.
39. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 844.
40. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 846.
41. Kuruvilla, "*Requiescat in Pace!*," 11.
42. Kuruvilla, "*Requiescat in Pace!*," 6.
43. Kuruvilla, "*Requiescat in Pace!*," 7, note 33.
44. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 843.
45. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 843.
46. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 843. Cited from Eugene L. Lowry, *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 52.
47. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 834.
48. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 842.
49. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 842.
50. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 842 [emphasis original].
51. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 842.
52. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 838 [emphasis original].
53. For one such example, see Ronald J. Allen, *Patterns of Preaching: A Sermon Sampler* (St. Louis: Chalice, 1998), 73; 216.

54. Dennis M. Cahill, *The Shape of Preaching: Theory and Practice in Sermon Design* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 133-34; J. Kent Edwards, *Effective First-Person Biblical Preaching: The Steps from Text to Narrative Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 126.
55. Jeffrey D. Arthurs, *Preaching with Variety: How to Re-create the Dynamics of Biblical Genres* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 24.
56. Mike Graves, *The Sermon as Symphony: Preaching the Literary forms of the New Testament* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1997), 22 [emphasis original].
57. Kuruvilla, "*Requiescat in Pace!*," 7.
58. Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority: Revised and with New Sermons* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2001); David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Move and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); David James Randolph, *The Renewal of Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969). For a fuller critique, see Scott M. Gibson, "Defining the New Homiletic," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 5:2 (September 2005): 19-28.
59. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 839.
60. Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 1976), 29.
61. Ricoeur, *Interpretation*, 92.
62. Mathewson, "Let the Big Idea Live!," 34.
63. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 834.
64. All Scripture references in this paper reflect the English Standard Version of the Bible.
65. Mathewson, "Let the Big Idea Live!," 35.
66. Kuruvilla, "*Requiescat in Pace!*," 3-4.
67. Mathewson, "Let the Big Idea Live!," 37.
68. Mathewson, "Let the Big Idea Live!," 37.
69. Kuruvilla, "*Requiescat in Pace!*," 2-4.

70. Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 2nd Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 49.
71. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 841.
72. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 845.
73 R. W. Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching* (Berkley: University of California Libraries, 2015), 226. Originally published as *Nine Lectures on Preaching* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1877).
74. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 835.
75. See among others Donald Guthrie, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1983).
76. This list, which is not exhaustive, is borrowed and adapted from Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 96-97.
77. Kuruvilla, "*Requiescat in Pace!*," 7, note 33.
78. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 843.
79. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 841.
80. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 839.
81. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 840.
82. Romans 3:10-11.
83. Colossians 1:28-29.
84. 2 Timothy 3:16.
85. Acts 2:40.
86. 2 Timothy 2:4.
87. 2 Corinthians 5:20.
88. 1 Corinthians 5:1-3.
89. Galatians 1:10.
90. Romans 2:15.
91. Hebrews 4:12.
92. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 835; see also "Time to Kill," 839, note 85.

93. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 841.
94. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 844.
95. Kuruvilla, "*Requiescat in Pace!*," 7. "[C]hanging any word in the account alters the text's thrust in some way."
96. Kuruvilla, "*Requiescat in Pace!*," 7.
97. Kuruvilla, "*Requiescat in Pace!*," 11. "No humanly created verbiage . . . can substitute for" the text.
98. Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill," 838.

THE WIFE OF URIAH THE HITTITE: POLITICAL SEDUCTRESS, WILLING PARTICIPANT, NAÏVE WOMAN, OR #BathshebaToo? THE PREACHER AS SENSITIVE THEOLOGIAN

WINFRED OMAR NEELY
Moody Bible Institute
Chicago, IL

וַיְהִי לְעֵת הָעֶרֶב וַיָּקָם דָּוִד מֵעַל מִשְׁכָּבוֹ וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ עַל־גַּג בֵּית־
הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּרְא אִשָּׁה רֹחֶצֶת מֵעַל הַגָּג וְהָאִשָּׁה טוֹבַת מַרְאֶה
מְאֹד: וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד וַיִּדְרֹשׁ לָאִשָּׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הֲלוֹא־זֹאת בַּת־שֶׁבַע
בַּת־אֱלִיעָם אֵשֶׁת אוּרִיָּה הַחִתִּי: וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד מַלְאָכִים וַיִּקָּחֶהָ
וַתָּבוֹא אֵלָיו וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּהּ וְהִיא מִתְקַדֶּשֶׁת מִטֻּמְאָתָהּ וַתָּשָׁב
אֶל־בֵּיתָהּ: וַתַּהַר הָאִשָּׁה וַתִּשְׁלַח וַתַּגֶּד לְדָוִד וַתֹּאמֶר הָרָה
אָנֹכִי:

And it came to pass at the time of the evening, and *David* rose up from his bed and *he* walked around on the roof of the house of the King, and *he* saw a woman bathing/washing from the roof, and the *woman* was beautiful of appearance—exceedingly.

And *David* sent and *he* inquired about the woman. And he said "is not *this* Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

And *David* sent messengers and *he* took her and *she* came to him and *he* lay with her, (and *she* was purifying herself from her uncleanness) and *she* returned to her house.

And the *woman* conceived and *she* sent and *she* told David and *she* said, "*pregnant* I am (2 Samuel 11:2-5, *writer's translation*)."

ABSTRACT

What role, if any, did Bathsheba play in one of the most egregious moral periods in the life of King David? Is Bathsheba herself culpable in the catastrophic moral failure of David in 2 Samuel 11 and 12? Standing at one end of the exegetical continuum on these questions are those scholars who answer by asserting that Bathsheba was a seductress. Her bathing on the roof was a trap she set to seduce the King. Since Bathsheba tempted the King and enticed him with her seductive bait, she bears some of the blame for what happened in 2 Samuel 11 and 12.

In one of his sermons on this text, John Calvin took something comparable to a middle of the road position on these questions and maintained that while Bathsheba was not an enchantress, she was naïve, thoughtless, evincing a disturbing lack of awareness about the seductive implications of bathing outside. She should have known better.

Somewhat outraged at the other end of the continuum are those exegetes who claim that Bathsheba was neither a seductress nor naïve, but a victim. According to these scholars, all of the blame should be placed at the feet of King David. David abused his power, raped Bathsheba, murdered her husband. David alone was culpable.

This paper will revisit the issue of Bathsheba's status (seductress, naïve woman, victim) in 2 Samuel 11 and 12 and attempt to shed more light on this concern by using some exegetical tools from Cognitive Hermeneutics and present some homiletical implications for the preacher as a sensitive theological expositor a #MeToo and #ChurchToo world.

INTRODUCTION

Next to Genesis 3, Second Samuel 11 and 12 may be one of the most disturbing accounts in Hebrew narratives[1]. In 2 Samuel 11, David's sin is so sudden, brutal, and unexpected, and so devastating in its outcome that according to Brueggemann "it

rivals in power the original act of Adam and Eve."[2] In 2 Samuel 12, the forgiveness granted to David (2 Sam 12:13-14), and the close narrative proximity of grace (2 Sam 12:24-25) and victory (2 Sam 12:26-31) to the sordid affair seems to be as scandalous as the sins committed.[3]

But what role did Bathsheba play in this sordid affair? Does Bathsheba share some of the blame in King David's shocking moral failure and egregious abuse of power in 2 Samuel 11? Across the centuries, exegetes have offered a number of answers to the Bathsheba question, answers ranging from labelling Bathsheba as a seductress to sympathizing with her as a victim of the royal abuse of power.[4] This paper will summarize some of the interpretive positions about Bathsheba's exegetical status, i.e., seductress, willing participant, immodest naive woman, and victim in 2 Samuel 11 and attempt to shed some fresh light on these questions by examining these issues in light of some assumptions and exegetical tools from Cognitive Hermeneutics.

INTERPRETIVE READINGS

Seductress and Temptress

Branding Bathsheba as David's seductress is ancient as Rabbinic exegesis. These Jewish scholars could not deny David's egregious sin and high crimes in 2 Samuel 11. However, due to the way the narrator depicts David in the preceding chapters of 2 Samuel 11, and because of their commitment to David and his line, they concluded that some mitigating external circumstance must have occurred to explain how David, Israel greatest king, could succumb to such an egregious act of adultery that culminated in premeditated murder. Their exegetical solution was to claim that Bathsheba deliberately bathed on the roof where the king could see her, using her visible beauty and physical assets to set a trap to seduce the King.[5] Since Bathsheba tempted the King, enticing him with her seductive bait, she bears some of the blame for David's moral failure. Note that this exegetical attempt does not eliminate David's guilt and

responsibility, but minimizes it at Bathsheba's expense. A number of scholars still espouse some version of this reading. For example, Eugene Merrill in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* on Samuel writes:

> One may not fault David for perhaps seeking the cooler breezes of the late afternoon, but Bathsheba, knowing the proximity of her courtyard to the palace, probably harbored ulterior designs toward the king. Yet David's submission to her charms is inexcusable for the deliberate steps he followed to bring her to the palace required more than enough time for him to resist the initial, impulsive temptation (cf., James 1:14-15).

Willing Participant

Other scholars draw an inference from the narrative that although Bathsheba was not a temptress, she was a willing participant, nonetheless. They base this inferential reading on verse 4: "David ***sent*** messengers and he ***took*** her and *she came to him* and he ***lay*** with her." Three verbs in rapid succession, sent, took, and lay, show the lustful rush of David's passion, but between the taking and the laying is the statement that "*she came to him*." Thus, in the mind of some readers, that fact that the narrator says "she came to him" means that this was not completely a matter of force. Bathsheba came willingly. Moreover, in this inferential reading, Bathsheba considered it an honor to be noticed by the king. She, therefore, participated of her own free will in the adulterous act, sharing the blame and guilt with David, and the same time lessening David's culpability. Erdmann's words in Lange's Critical Commentary represent this view:

> The *narrative leads* us to *infer* that Bathsheba came and submitted herself to David without opposition. This undoubtedly *proves* her participation in guilt, though we are not to assume that her bathing was "purposed," in order to

be seen. She was moved by vanity and ambition in not venturing to refuse the demand of the King.

Naïve and Immodest Woman

Reformer, systematic theologian, pastor, and expositor John Calvin in a sermon on 2 Samuel 11 does not accuse Bathsheba of deliberate seductive behavior. However, he faults her for a lack of discretion and a lack of modesty that a resulted in her inadvertently becoming in Calvin's words "a net of the devil,"[6] igniting a fire of lust in David's heart. She was naïve, thoughtless in this regard. She should have known better.

Following Calvin's interpretation of Bathsheba, 20th century American Radio Bible teacher, J. Vernon McGee, across national and international radio waves also faulted Bathsheba for her lack of modesty and discretion. He then applies this understanding of Bathsheba's immodesty to contemporary life by saying:

> At the risk of sounding like a prude, let me say we are living in a day when women's dress has become a great temptation to men. I wonder how many women, even Christian women, realize what they are doing when they wear certain types of apparel. I have attended services in many churches in which the soloist would get up and carry you to the gates of heaven. Then I have *seen* her sit down and carry you to gates of hell. It is my opinion that this women Bathsheba was partially guilty. What was she doing bathing in public?[7]

Victim

For centuries one the above three reading of Bathsheba was common, with pride of place being given to the first reading, but this interpretive situation changed with the advent of feminist interpretation of the Bible and emergence of other voices in the interpretive process. In an effort to redeem the reputation of Bathsheba and clear her name from what was considered to be

the mainly male interpretive misrepresentation of her character, these women scholars proposed another interpretive reading—Bathsheba was not a seductress, she was not a willing participant, she was not an immodest woman, she was victim. Even some women interpreters who were not a part of the critical feminist movement in biblical studies as such, did not embrace the traditional reading of Bathsheba. In the Tyndale Old Testament Commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel, Joyce Baldwin (former principal of Trinity College) argues that in 2 Samuel 11 Bathsheba is not a seductress or a willing participant or an immodest woman, but a victim of David's lust and abuse of power.[8]

In short, these are four reading of Bathsheba. It is outside of the scope of this paper to include other reading, but these are offered to set the stage for the next section of this paper.

COGNITIVE HERMENEUTICS

In light of this discussion, how should we understand Bathsheba's role in 2 Samuel 11? Is our construal of her simply a function of male and female interpretive lens? Recently cognitively oriented literary scholars and interpreters have argued that the assumptions and analytical tools of cognitive grammar enable biblical scholars to place their interpretive conclusions on a firmer footing. In order to see if this argument holds up, Cognitive Hermeneutics in the framework of Cognitive Grammar will be applied to the Bathsheba question in 2 Samuel 11.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss all that is involved in cognitive hermeneutics, but what is offered here are some assumption and a basic interpretive posture that will be applied to the issues raised about the role of Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11.

Guiding Assumptions

The following are three guiding assumptions that shape the exegetical analysis in this paper.

Grammatical and Syntactical Structure is Overt

The first assumption is grammatical structure is overt and does not conceal a deep or underlying structure. What the interpreter actually sees in a text is what is there. Therefore, the need is skill in interpreting the overt grammatical and syntactical organization of texts and sensitivity to the stylistic and rhetorical strategies of the surface structure. In this paper the focus is on the overt grammatical and syntactical realties of 2 Samuel 11 and the way the narrator has organized the narrative to construe Bathsheba through overt grammatical organization.

Grammatical and Syntactical Structure is Semantically Motivated

The second assumption is **g**rammar, syntax, and word order are semantically motivated. Grammar, syntax, and word order are the linguistic means that people use to construe reality. Through the use of word choice, grammar, and word order people have the ability to highlight one aspect of a given situation at the expense of another aspect of the same situation. The construal of reality through grammatical and syntactical organization is semantic in motivation.

Semantics is Encyclopedic in Scope

The third assumption is meaning in encyclopedic in scope. While overt grammatical and syntactical surface structure is the concern in this paper, surface grammatical structure and syntactical details suggest more than their apparent compositional semantic content. The overt grammatical structure may activate larger and relevant networks of knowledge stored in a reader's mind, making meaning comprehension possible and enriching the meaning of the surface structure.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Close Reading of the Surface Structure

Based on the linguistic assumptions of this paper, the method proposed is the following: Close reading[9] of the surface structure. Take the surface structure seriously.

1. Follow the grammar and word order of the text—semantic motivation
2. Allow the surface structure to suggest gaps[10]
3. Allow the surface to active larger networks of shared meaning between the writer and the reader. Some of these larger networks include conceptual categories and knowledge of Scripture that make the use of intertextual echoes and allusions possible in narrative texts.

A Close Reading of 2 Samuel as it Relates to Bathsheba

A Close Reading Overview

A close reading of the surface structure of 2 Samuel 11 is itself a challenging exercise. But if we follow the grammar, word order, and rhetorical strategy of the narrator as expressed in the surface structure of the narrative the following is obvious: David stays in Jerusalem while his men are away at war. After an afternoon siesta, he rises from his bed, takes a casual stroll on the roof of his palace, and sees a woman bathing. At this point, the surface structure narration gives the impression that the actions so far in the narrative are not premeditated.[11] This is not a bare and neutral description of the facts.

Bathing

But what about the issue of Bathsheba's Bathing? The Hebrew term translated by "bathing" is *rāḥaṣ. It is used three times in the account, first as a participle in verse 3, as an imperative in verse 8 where*

it is translated as 'wash,' and as a wayyitol in 12: 20: Then David arose from the earth and washed….." The term means to cleanse with water. Sometimes *rāḥaṣ* was used for the cleansing of a part of the body with water in routine (Gen. 43:31) and ritual contexts (Exo. 30:19-21, 40:32). In some circumstances, the cleansing of the feet was an expression of hospitality (Gen. 18:4, 24:32, 43:24). In these cases, *rahas* is translated by the word "wash." In other surface structure syntactical contexts, *rahas* was used for the cleansing of the whole body in routine (Exo 2:5, Ruth 3:3) and ritual contexts (Lev. 14:9, 15:16, 16:4, 24). In these contexts, *rahas* is translated as "bathe." The surface structure use of *rahas* does not indicate if Bathsheba's washing or bathing was routine or ritual in nature nor does it indicate that she was nude. But as we will see the larger suggests that it may have been a ritual washing.

Moreover, the larger contextual background information activated by this statement includes the notion that Middle Eastern homes did not have indoor plumbing. Thus, Bathsheba was probably washing at home in her courtyard, in the privacy of her own home. Furthermore, it was inappropriate to look and gaze into another person courtyard under these circumstances. Bathsheba is not being immodest here nor should she be faulted for bathing or washing in her own home. David's voyeurism is the problem.

Descriptive Statement

Following the surface structure, we note that the narrator stops the action at the end of verse 2 and makes a descriptive comment about the woman: "And the woman was beautiful of appearance—exceedingly." The physical description of people is rare in Scripture and these rare physical depictions call reader and listener attention to them for interpretive reasons. These descriptions set up initial reader expectations or signal motivations for the action of other characters in the account. The surface structure physical description activates this larger network of understanding for those who were familiar with the use of physical descriptions in Book of Genesis and in earlier sections of Samuel.

Relational Identification

Thus motivated by the visual, David sends and inquires of the woman and learns who she was. She has a name, Bathsheba. She is the daughter of Eliam. It is likely that Eliam named here is the Eliam, the son of Ahithophel of 2 Sam 23:24. Bathsheba then is the daughter of one of David's mighty men and granddaughter of one of his most trusted advisors. She is also the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of David's mighty men. She is married, and is associated with the loyal men of his inner circle. The overt grammatical identification of Bathsheba serves as a trigger to activate shared knowledge of the Decalogue and texts in Leviticus: Ex. 20:14; Lev. 18:20, 20:10. Under no circumstances was adultery to be engaged in. This information should have stopped David.

But in spite of this information, David sends, takes her, she comes to him, and he lays with her. The surface narration of the act is very short, five *wayyiqtol* verbs in rapid sequence. David sent, David took, she came, David lay, and she returned.

Coming to David

The surface structure of the narrative as a whole clarifies what is involved in Bathsheba's coming to David in verse 4. The close reading of the surface structure makes clear that several people come to David in these two chapters: in verse 6 Joab sent Uriah to David, and Uriah came to David. Verse 22: and the messenger went and he came and make known to David, and in 12:1 YHWH sent Nathan to David, and he came to him. A close reading of the surface structure implies that coming to David on the part of Bathsheba, Uriah, Joab's military messenger, and Nathan are not that these characters are willing participants as such. Coming to David in context is coming in the context of power and authority. Bathsheba comes to David for the same reason that Uriah came—the King has summoned them both. The only willing participant is when David is the subject of the verb came in 2 Sam. 12:24.

The Circumstantial Participle

But between the rapid fire of the verbs in verses 4 and 5, the narrator inserted a circumstantial verbal participial clause, a clause that slows the narrative pace in the midst of the rapid verbs. And David sent messengers and he took her and she came to him and he lay with her and *she was sanctifying herself from her uncleanness* and she returned to her house. This circumstantial participial clause placed here in the context of these other verbs has perplexed interpreters; it does seem out of place. Some focus on the fact that she was purifying herself from her ceremonial impurity after her period was over, and thus underscoring that David is no doubt the father of Bathsheba's baby. But this is the language of ritual and ceremonial sanctification, involving washing with water, and may be what the bathing was about in verse 4. Also, the reflexive participle 'purifying herself' in the context of the five verbs indicates that this sanctifying herself was simultaneous with the actions of the five rapid verbs. This circumstantial clause is placed to make salient that her actions of sanctifying herself from her uncleanness, and engaging in ceremonial washing out of reverence for the presence of God was simultaneous with David actions of sending, taking, and laying. By narrating in this manner, the prophetic narrator construes David actions not only as an abuse of power, but as sacrilege, an impious violation not only of Bathsheba, Uriah, and her family, but as an affront to YHWH himself. This was desecration.

Much more could be said here, but suffice it to say that the narrator's surface structure rhetorical strategy guides the reader along the interpretive path—David alone is guilty. At the end of chapter 11, the narrator stops the action and makes an interpretive judgment about what has occurred so far in the story. "The thing that David did was evil in the sight of the Lord." The narrator's surface structure rhetorical strategy is such that by the time the interpretive judgment is made about David's actions, we agree with the narrative assessment. The narrator's surface structure assessment trumps all other interpretive

considerations. The close reading of the surface structure supports Baldwin's conclusion.

Wrestling with the fact that the prophetic narrator does not deal with Bathsheba's point of view, Baldwin writes:

> Every sensitive reader must also wonder what the whole episode looked like from the point of view of Bathsheba. She was the *victim* of David's lust, but the narrator deliberately omits her feeling from consideration, in order to *focus* on David. Nevertheless, she suffered much, losing her integrity, bearing an illegitimate child, losing her husband, marrying her lover and then losing her child. All the ingredients for a drama are here, and invite exploration, but the biblical narrator resisted any invitation to sidetrack. By treating Bathsheba with clinical objectivity, the writer cleverly conveys the self-centeredness of David's lust.[12]

It is precisely the terrible unmitigated reality of David's sin and the enormity of his guilt the makes the grace of God and forgiveness granted to him so underserving and so unexpected. At the same time, over the head of Bathsheba we could put up this inscription written in English, French, and German: #BathshebaToo. In short, it seems that at a minimum some scholars and preachers owe Bathsheba an interpretive and homiletical apology for crucifying her on the cross of incompetent exegesis and inept exposition! Our 21st century #MeToo world requires sensitive theologians, who preach these kinds of texts with exegetical sensitivity, accuracy, grace, and compassion. Otherwise we will continue be construed as sexist and misogynistic, and in the process, hinder the gospel and misrepresent God's character.

NOTES

1. Genesis of course is the first book of the Torah, and Samuel is one of the Book of the Former Prophets.
2. Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 272.

3. Ibid, 284.
4. Of course, not all exegetes blame Bathsheba. Ronald Youngblood says that it was the heat that made David susceptible to sexual temptation.
5. Menahem Perry and Meir Sternberg, "The King Through Ironic Eyes," *Poetics Today* 7:2 (1986): 288, n. 13
6. John Calvin, *Sermons of 2 Samuel* (Edinburgh: Banner of Trust, 1992), 481.
7. J. Vernon McGee, *I and II Samuel: Messages Given on the 5-Year Program of Thru The Bible Radio Network* (Pasadena: Thru The Bible Books, 1976), 220-221.
8. Joyce G. Baldwin, *1&2 Samuel*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 214.
9. The term close reading is not original in this research, but its use in Cognitive Hermeneutics is. It is connected with the framework of CG and rooted in a linguistic assumption about language itself. Grammatical and overt realities are all that is there, and they are semantically motivated. Semantics is at the heart of an informed close reading of text in Cognitive Hermeneutics.
10. I wonder if the gapping strategy of OT narrators may be overstated.
11. Yee claims that this is just a bare description of the action.
12. Baldwin, *1&2 Samuel*, 2144

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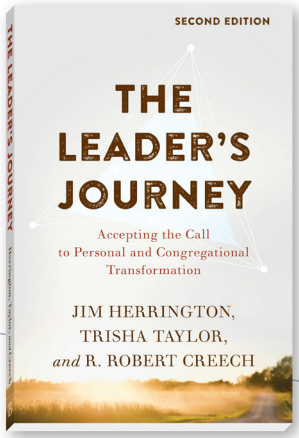

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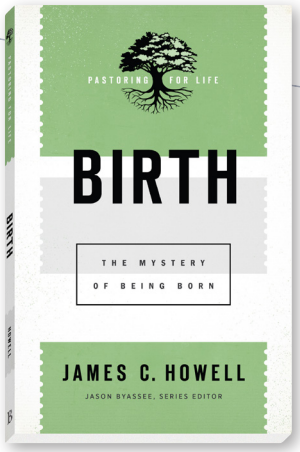

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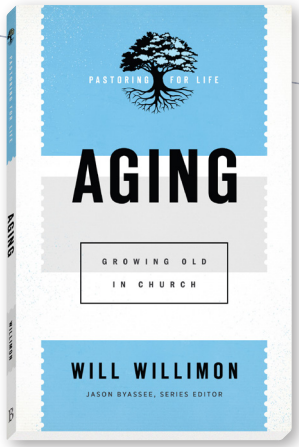

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PREACHING FOR THE WHOLE OF LIFE

IAN HUSSEY
Maylon Theological College
Gaythorne, Queensland
Australia

ABSTRACT

There is a growing awareness of the importance of churches discipling people for their whole lives instead of solely focusing on discipleship for church life. This growing awareness is being driven by the faith-work integration and the whole life discipleship movements. The London Institute of Contemporary Christianity has introduced the language of "frontlines" to describe the multitude of places where Christians engage with non-Christians. With the recognition that preaching is a crucial element of discipleship this article suggests that preachers need to do three things in order to be able to ensure that their sermons equip congregations for ministry on their frontlines. Preachers need to develop a whole life hermeneutic when approaching the Scriptures looking not only for examples of work in a text but seeking to understand how every text relates to the whole of life. Preachers also need to develop a whole life perspective by deliberately engaging with their congregations in their frontlines. Finally, preachers need to develop intentional whole life application. The article suggests an "application grid" that can be used for this purpose.

INTRODUCTION

In the midst of the multitude of topics that preachers may focus on as they prepare their sermons, this article suggests there is one more worthy of consideration. In his famous apology, Tom Nelson confessed to "pastoral malpractice" in having committed himself to discipling his congregations for church ministry while neglecting discipling them for their God given vocations.[1] Nelson's confession and his subsequent work helped birth what is now called the faith-work integration movement. This movement elevates work above merely providing a source of income to fund the activities of the church or as a place to evangelize. Rediscovering Luther's insights on work, writers like Tim Keller have been able to articulate a far more inspiring understanding of work and its alignment with God's purposes in the world.[2]

Alongside Nelson, the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC), and several other writers and organizations,[3] have also been drawing attention to the issue of discipling Christians for their "whole of life," not just for their church ministry.

The fundamental issue that the faith-work integration and whole-life discipleship movements have addressed is the sacred-secular divide.[4] Advocates have pointed out that God is as active in the workplace, or other vocational setting, as He is in the two hours spent in church on Sundays. It has been argued that the sacred-secular divide shrinks our ecclesiology, our pneumatology and our missiology. In the words of Dorothy L. Sayers, "How can anyone remain interested in a religion which seems to have no concern with nine-tenths of his life?"[5] The result of this atrophied theology has been a reduced evangelistic vigor and effectiveness.

This journal has already carried articles on the importance of "relevance" in preaching. As Willhite argues, "Expository preachers must accurately convey the meaning of a Bible passage, but they must also demonstrate the relevance of the biblical text to their audience."[6] Preaching for whole-life

discipleship is one way of enhancing sermon relevance to the whole of life.

The LICC and others have produced a range of resources which have helped pastors and churches to develop whole-life disciples. Amongst these have been books like "Whole-life Worship,"[7] which have sought to help worship leaders to be able to disciple Christians for the whole of their life, especially their workplaces. However, based on his research, Alistair Mackenzie concludes that many Christians cannot remember hearing a sermon about the meaning of work from God's perspective.[8] Although there has been a series of videos and a themed edition of *Preach* journal[9] dedicated to the matter of whole-life preaching, there is scope for more work to be done in this area. This article will suggest some further ideas on how preaching can foster whole-life discipleship more effectively. It will do so based on broad a definition of sermon preparation that does not limit it to the actual writing of the sermon but to the broader activities of the preacher's life including hermeneutics, reading, observation and pastoral care.

PREACHING FOR DISCIPLESHIP

The goal of the whole-life discipleship movement is to form disciples who:[10]

- Have embraced their everyday contexts in such a way that they believe that God could use them there for his purposes.
- Have prayers that are less defensive ("Lord help me to get through the day") and more desirous of discerning what God might do ("Lord help me to understand what is happening so that I can be for your glory").
- Have a renewed understanding about why their everyday frontlines matter to God.
- Are aware of the ongoing call to be a disciple of Jesus—a continuous lifestyle of allowing their characters and

> actions to be shaped by a profound understanding of Jesus and the demands of the kingdom.

Preaching has an indispensable role to play in Christian discipleship. Alongside tools like mentoring, personal devotions, conferences and small groups, preaching needs to be valued and utilized for forming mature Christians.

> Preaching is not all of what it means to shape believers in Jesus Christ, but it certainly is integral, and its role in discipleship is a presupposition that is often overlooked. If more preachers came to the responsibility of preaching—text selection, planning, sermon construction—with the understanding that they are nurturing disciples, their preaching might be different.[11]

Preaching for the whole of life will involve crafting sermons that deliberately disciple towards a broader understanding of discipleship and ministry. For example, I recently heard an excellent sermon, diligently engaging with the text and reaching practical applications for the congregation. As the preacher finished his sermon, he was discussing the nature of true greatness. He pointed out that his work as a church leader was no "greater" than that of the people serving morning tea after church or those who came in early to set up the facility. Although a perfectly valid example and application, it unintentionally marginalized the multitude of other non-church contexts where humble service is a manifestation of greatness. It made the sermon a "church life" sermon rather than a "whole life" sermon.

Preaching for the whole of life calls for more than just a series of sermons on work, or even a yearly series on the topic. It involves a change in the way we prepare and preach *all* of our sermons. Although this change is "fundamental" it need not be dramatic. The different approach to preaching is a nuance rather than a total abandonment of previous practice.

It will be suggested that whole-life discipleship preaching has three elements. First, whole-life preachers will need a whole-life hermeneutic as they approach the Scriptures. Second, they will need a whole-life perspective in order to be able to bring the message of Scripture into the worlds of their congregation. Thirdly they will need a process whereby they can develop whole-life application.

A WHOLE-LIFE HERMENEUTIC

The performance of the hermeneutical task is a crucial dimension of the sermon preparation process. However, as Gibson points out, "The hermeneutical lens through which the preacher preaches can come from any number of perspectives."[12] Although many preachers already seek to draw potential applications to the vocations of their congregations, including the workplace, a fully developed whole-life discipleship approach requires the preacher to use a hermeneutical perspective that unearths all that Scripture reveals about vocation. Such a hermeneutic involves the use of a whole-life discipleship "lens" as we examine Scripture.

Preachers are, hopefully, aware that when they come to the Scripture, they bring their own interpretive framework. "We always access the biblical story in dialogue with our theological tradition."[13] These frameworks focus our interpretation of a text. They are helpful, but they do cause us to see some things in the text and not others. For example, the great work of Christopher Wright[14] has helped theologians and preachers to see the overarching missional intention of God throughout the Scriptures. A preacher alerted to this theme is able to readily discern the mission of God in many texts where they would have missed it otherwise. Similarly, Biblical Theology has helped alert preachers to the grand narrative of Scripture and helped them to be able to interpret Scripture in light of the Gospel, as it should be.[15] When a friend said to me, "the Bible is full of migration," I was alerted to this theme in Scriptures and found that it was

indeed a prominent feature of many passages I had preached before but not seen the migrational aspects of.

In order to be consistent and effective whole-life disciple-makers through their sermons, preachers need to have a hermeneutic which uncovers and highlights what the Bible has to say about the various vocations where Christians find themselves spending most of their time, especially work.

Few would disagree that context is a crucial factor in faithful interpretation of Scripture. The preacher should always invest time in understanding the historical and cultural background of texts. In particular, the whole-life preacher will be alert for the workplace contexts which lay in the background of many narrative passages. For example, as Mark Greene[16] has pointed out, the conduct of Boaz in the book of Ruth is an excellent example of ethical workplace leadership. David was a soldier—that was his vocation for much of his life. Many of his Psalms come from his vocation, especially the conflict related to it.

A helpful resource in alerting the interpreter to the work context of Scripture passages is the *Theology of Work Bible Commentary*.[17] In its introduction it says:

> The Theology of Work Project's mission has been to study what the Bible says about work and to develop resources to apply the Christian faith to our work. It turns out that every book of the Bible gives practical, relevant guidance that can help us do our jobs better, improve our relationships at work, support ourselves, serve others more effectively, and find meaning and value in our work. The Bible shows us how to live all of life—including work—in Christ.[18]

The usefulness of resources like the *Theology of Work Commentary* is not just in the insights they bring on any particular text, but the sensitivity to, and awareness of, the themes related to whole-life discipleship which occur throughout Scriptures.

When we put on the glasses of "whole-life discipleship," as my friend suggested about migration, "we will see it everywhere."

However, in his series of videos about whole-life preaching[19] Antony Billington from the LICC highlights that there are three ways that the Bible talks about work:

1. Passages that are *about* work—there are a number of passages which are very specifically about work, for example Genesis 1-2.
2. Passages that *assume* work—there are a number of passages where work is mentioned or assumed as part of the narrative, for example the parables.
3. Passages that are *applicable* to work—there are a number of passages where principles can be derived which are applicable to work, for example the Beatitudes.

Whole-life preachers need to keep these distinctions in mind when they are approaching a passage. In particular they need to be aware that not all passages are specifically *about* work although many, if not all, of them will be *applicable* to the whole of life, including work.

The distinctions are particularly important when it comes to preaching narratives. They may often *assume* work, in that they describe a person who is doing some sort of work, but this does not usually mean that work is the primary focus of the passage. The Bible is theocentric not ergocentric. Most passages have as their central focus the action of God in the world, not teaching Christians how to function in their workplace. Certainly, some narrative passages in the Scriptures will give some good examples of godly workplace practice, but as we preach we must be careful not to make that their central focus when there is in fact a different theological point being made.

A more helpful approach to the interpretation of texts in sermon preparation in the light of whole-life discipleship is to consider the unifying theological themes of the Bible. As Hollinger points out, "… while exposition of given texts is

essential in transforming minds, we cannot overlook the role of a Christian world view and the larger over-arching drama of Scripture in which to place that exposition."[20] In particular, two themes in this overarching drama of Scripture are especially helpful when interpreting texts in sermon preparation: the creational mandate and the kingdom mandate.

Evangelicals have correctly placed a great emphasis on the missional mandate of Matthew 28:19: "Going[21]/go, make disciples of all the nations." However, there is a second mandate in the Scriptures which predates the Great Commission—what can be called the creational (or cultural) mandate: "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground'" (Gen 1:28). Humans are told to "subdue and rule" the earth and its animal inhabitants, so fulfilling their role as God's image-bearer on earth.[22] Further, "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it" (Gen 2:15). This is the mandate which lies behind humanity's call to be fruitfully engaged in work, just as God is. The implications of this mandate are unpacked through the rest of the Scriptures. The Bible explains how those created in the *imago Dei* are to go about being fruitful and working and ruling in ways consistent with the will of God.

A related overarching theme of the Bible is the kingdom of God. Jesus announces and embodies the arrival of the kingdom and invites his followers to participate in God's actions to bring it to consummation. Matthew says in 10:7-8: "As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons." This kingdom produces spiritual, physical and social transformation. It has a set of values, including grace, forgiveness and equality, which reflect the values of the King. Members of the kingdom are to live according to these values and work with God to transform their places of influence to align with His purposes for His kingdom.

These two mandates, the creational mandate and the kingdom mandate, are two lenses that whole-life preachers need to wear when interpreting passages of Scripture. They are looking for how the particular passage in focus relates to how disciples join God in these two overarching purposes to which we are graciously called to work with Him in fulfilling. This perspective allows preachers to help disciples see how their everyday life fits in with God's overarching plan for the world and also motivates them to join with God in his plans.

One of the particular challenges of developing a whole-life discipleship hermeneutic for preaching is that much of the New Testament, especially the epistles, is addressed to church congregations. It is easy, then, to preach from these books in such a way that they only address the issues relevant to congregational life, not to the whole of life. Because, for example, 1 Corinthians specifically addresses the issues that are manifesting themselves in the assembly of believers, it is easy for us to limit our application of messages from this epistle to church life. The challenge is for preachers to take principles that emerge from Paul's teaching, like humility, and to draw out the implications not just to life in the church but also in the various vocations, including work, where people live most of their lives.

This issue is equally pertinent for preaching from the Old Testament. A sometimes default approach to preaching from the Old Testament is to roughly equate the people of Israel with the Church. Although there are a host of theological issues related to this assumption, it does prove to be a very helpful approximation when preaching these passages. However, this approach does have the disadvantage of again drawing the application of a sermon towards congregational life rather than the whole of life that is addressed by much of the Old Testament. It is worth the preacher remembering that within the "people of Israel" were both faithful and unfaithful people—just have a look at the book of Numbers! The "people of Israel" were far more heterogeneous, and far more like a workplace, than they were like a church. The books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers which specify how the "people of God" are to live can easily become solely about church

life, when a whole-life hermeneutic would open up their application to relationships in every context. Similarly, the prophetic critique of Israel can become a prophetic critique of the church, rather than how the everyday Christian in their vocation can "speak truth to power," for example. Looking at the text through the lens of the creational and kingdom mandates will help the preacher avoid preaching for a narrow church-only discipleship.

A WHOLE-LIFE PERSPECTIVE

Most people employed by their churches end up spending most of their lives with Christians and in Christian environments. This means that it is possible for a preacher to become disconnected from the world of their congregation. One way that preachers can develop a whole-life perspective is through reading about contemporary culture. There is a growing awareness of the value of "cultural exegesis" in order to be able to see more deeply into the world in which our congregations spend most of their lives.[23] Preachers also need to be involved in pastoral care in order to be able to accurately hear what life is like for members of their congregations.[24] As Kern says, "Study people; know the souls before you. Know what they read; know their doubts, there besetting sins, their spiritual aspirations, their state of mind is influenced by circumstances and current events."[25] In order to disciple people for the whole of life through preaching we need to be aware of the maturity level of the congregation as well as the matters that are impacting their lives so that we can develop preaching plans that will bring Christian maturity.[26]

Apparently, it was Barth who said that we should prepare our sermons with both the Bible and the newspaper open in front of us, although it may have been Spurgeon's idea.[27] However, whole-life preaching requires preachers, especially those who are employed full time by a church, to also engage with a third source. They need to understand what life is like for the congregation who are spending 90% of their lives outside of the

"church bubble." Whole-life preachers need to have a "third ear."[28]

However, as Hudson has highlighted, pastors can spend most of their time in pastoral care with either those who are going through crisis or with the leaders of their church.[29] Such allocation of pastoral care time makes perfect sense but it may mean that the preacher spends very little time with "everyday Christians" going about their everyday vocations. This means that even though the pastor is working hard at pastoral care they can remain disconnected with what life is like for the vast majority of the congregation for most of their time.

One of the most effective ways that preachers can develop a whole-life perspective is to visit members of the congregation in their workplaces. This may not always be possible due to technical, security and safety issues related to some workplaces, but many people in our congregations would welcome a visit from their pastor in their workplace or at least in a nearby café. A commitment to visit one member of the congregation in their workplaces each week would not only be a blessing to those they visit but would also be the opportunity for the pastor to ask, "What are the issues you face being a Christian in your workplace?"

This engagement with Christians in their workplace would also be an invaluable source of illustrations for whole-life discipleship sermons. Stories are a powerful way to influence people's lives. The stories of Christian faith being expressed in often difficult frontlines have a huge potential to empower other members of the congregation in their vocational ministry. Pastors should be looking to collect and use the stories in their sermons as a way of discipling others for their whole of life.

WHOLE-LIFE APPLICATION

As useful as it is to do a series of sermons on work or vocation the ongoing transformation needed to develop effective whole-life disciples requires persistence over extended periods of time. Hence preachers need to be drawing applications for work and

other vocations consistently from their sermons, not just in short bursts.

Of course, there are a variety of positions regarding the role of application in sermons. At one end of the spectrum are those preachers who say that application should be specific and comprise a significant portion of the sermon. At the other end of the spectrum are those who argue that the Scripture is sufficient in itself and argue that their role is faithful exposition and it is the responsibility of the Spirit and the listener to apply the truth of the Word of God in their context. However, Chapell highlights the importance of application when he says, "Application—at least it's general direction—must proceed final decisions about the structure, exegetical emphasis, wording, and even the tone of the message, or else a preacher will be designing a highway without knowing its destination."[30]

The first thing to consider in whole-life sermon application is language. The LICC's language of "frontline" has been extremely helpful because it encompasses the variety of contexts where whole-life disciples will be operating: family, community groups, school, university and workplace. Whole-life preachers can work on answering the question, "How does this biblical principle work itself out on the frontline?" in each sermon. Correspondingly, they can aim to say, "I would now like to suggest how this principle might work itself out in your frontline."

In unpacking the principle of "Fruitfulness on the Frontline" Mark Greene has identified six expressions of Christianity on the frontline:[31]

- Modelling Godly Character
- Making Good Work (There is dignity and value in the everyday tasks we do)
- Ministering Grace & Love
- Molding Culture (We influence the culture on our frontlines so people flourish)
- Mouthpiece for Truth & Justice (Be champions of right living and fair dealing on our frontlines)

- Messenger of the Gospel (Talking about Jesus with people on our frontlines)

As well as providing useful suggestions for applications in many sermons, the language contained in these expressions, if consistently used by the preacher, can be the language of discipleship across the life of the church.

In contrast to the use of this helpful language, whole-life preachers need to avoid language which highlights the sacred-secular divide. Talking about "ministry" as only something that occurs in a church, or as something only done by those who are employed by the church, is unhelpful. Whole-life preachers will talk about whole-life disciples who are involved in ministry wherever it may be.

However, for focused and useful application to nurture whole-life disciples, tools to help preachers apply the key theology emerging from a text may be necessary. Daniel Doriani laments:

> In too many churches, people hear the same applications, in much the same words, week after week. Week by week they hear that they should pray more, evangelize more, serve more; be more holy, more faithful, more committed. Contaminated by traces of legalism, such messages grow dull and predictable.[32]

Since application often occurs at the end of the sermon writing process it can sometimes not receive the attention it deserves. It is also one of the more difficult homiletical tasks because it requires courage to make specific suggestions for how people should live their lives. Yet, emerging from the authority of Scripture, that is exactly what preachers are called to do.

In order to ensure thoughtful, varied and specific applications, a number of homileticians have developed application questions or grids. Chappell says that preachers need to ensure that the applications they make answer four key questions: *What* does God require of me? *Where* does he require

it of me? *Why* must I do what he requires? *How* can I do what he requires?[33]

Doriani developed a model based on a seven by four matrix with seven biblical sources of application and four questions that people ask. He says the Bible generates applications seven ways: through rules, ideals, doctrines, redemptive acts in narratives, exemplary acts in narratives, images, and songs and prayers. There are four types of questions people ask: (1) What is our duty? (2) What is a noble character, and how can we obtain or develop it? (3) What goals should we pursue? (4) In a cacophony of competing voices, how can we distinguish right from wrong?

Daniel Overdorf utilizes a Sermon Application Worksheet[34] to help preachers apply sermons. In question five of the worksheet he asks, "What should my listeners think, feel, or do differently after having heard a sermon from this text?" But then in question six he narrows the focus of the sermon application by asking "If the sermon accomplished its purpose in specific listeners dealing with specific life situations, how might it look?" He does this for three different listeners: a high school senior, a 55-year-old mother, and a young stay-at-home mother, for example.

Capill also prompts preachers to ask questions of the text as a way of developing practical application.[35] He identifies a series of "heart questions":

- What are the central truths of the text that people must know and believe?
- What in the text should conflict and challenge us?
- What are the key actions and responses this text calls for?
- What are the passions of the text and the passions it should produce?
- What heart idols does this text confront and what true worship does it call for?[36]

He then develops a "Application Chart" to help preachers apply systematically and thoroughly.

Inspired by these ideas and seeking to adapt their them for a whole of life preaching approach I propose the following grid of questions based on Rudyard Kipling's six honest friends:

When?	Now		Later
Where?	Home	Church	Frontline
Why?	Creational mandate		Kingdom Mandate
How?	Word		Action
What?	Greene's six Ms; Capill's Heart Questions		
Who?	Specifics		

Some sermon application involves the congregation responding "now" while in the church context. This would usually mean that the aim of the sermon is that members of the congregation simply "know" something at the end. This is based on the rationalist assumption that knowledge will automatically transform, and that knowledge means maturity. Although some may hold to this philosophy many believe that transformation involves "doing" and that simply knowing something does not constitute discipleship (Jam 2:10).

So, it is helpful for preachers, in framing application, to think *when* the action corresponding to the orthopraxy emerging from the text will actually manifest itself. Sometimes this may be *within* the church service. For example, a sermon about the holiness of God may prompt the congregation to respond by joining with the angels and singing "holy, holy, holy" immediately after the message. More creative churches may end up praying with one another or washing one another's feet! But the idea is that the response occurs within the church community.

However, much application of church sermons should be aimed at what happens *outside* of the church service time. This would align more closely with the idea of whole-life discipleship. There will be times when the application of a sermon should be

"internal" to the life of the church, but if this occurs too frequently it can reinforce the sacred-secular divide and produce emaciated Christian discipleship where a person's conduct on Sunday is disconnected from the way they live the other six days of the week. Given that people spend most of their time outside of church services, it would make sense that *most* application should apply to life outside of church services as well.

The second line of the application grid asks "Where?" the application takes place. Again, application into church life, or domestic life, is perfectly appropriate. But the whole-life preacher will be seeking for application to the frontlines of people's lives.

The third line of the application grid addresses the motivation for the application. Certainly, this will come from the truth emerging from Scripture. However, reflection on the creational mandate and the nature of the kingdom of God helps the preacher identify and motivate whole-life application. The redemption mandate ("go and make disciples…") has tended to predominate—we do good deeds in our workplaces, schools and so on only as a way of laying the groundwork for the verbal proclamation of the gospel. However, the lenses of the creational mandate and the kingdom of God mean that we are motivated not only to "go and make disciples" but also to "go and make good work" as the image of our Creator and as we join Him in the work His Kingdom.

The fourth line of the application matrix asks "How?" Words are extremely powerful. They can not only destroy but they can heal (James 3). However, an overemphasis on the application of a sermon being something that we *say* to somebody can produce disciples whose actions do not match their deeds (hypocrites). Sermons that produce whole-life disciples will also challenge congregations to perform deeds that embody their good words.

The next line of the application matrix asks "What?" Greene's six expressions of frontline Christianity, discussed earlier, provide both the stimulus and the language for application here. Capill's questions will also stimulate excellent

heart application. The whole-life preacher can also provide stories which illustrate the application of the principles derived from the exegesis of the Scripture. For many people the way they most effectively learn is through practical examples. An abstract theory will make little difference in their lives until it is concretized in a real-life scenario. Although the stories may relate to specific contexts, many members of the congregations will be inspired and empowered by those examples and be able to adapt them to their own particular life contexts.

The final line of the application grid asks the question "Who?" Here the preacher may be able to suggest some general answers, such as "workmate," "child," or "fellow student," but it may also be a task that the preacher asks the members of the congregation to perform. "Who, specifically, in your world, does this application specifically relate to?"

An application matrix like this one might be considered too restrictive, especially for those who have been preaching for some time. However, like a therapeutic brace it can introduce new approaches to sermon application that is worn for some time but is then discarded once it has reshaped the limb in a better direction.

CONCLUSION

There is a dimension to whole-life discipleship unmentioned up till this point. That is the concept of vocation as the place of spiritual formation. Perhaps as a product of the sacred-secular divide we have come to assume that the place where spiritual formation occurs is in one's private devotions or in the gathered church. However, at the risk of laboring the point, people spend most of their time outside of these contexts. Does this mean that we are "writing off" most of people's lives when it comes to spiritual formation and discipleship? To the contrary, the workplace can be a "formational conduit."[37] The workplace not only provides the opportunity to love and serve others but also to examine personal motives, actions and reactions. Preaching for the whole of life means acknowledging that God is at work

sanctifying His people when they exist as the scattered Church just as much as when they are the gathered Church.

When whole-life preachers are speaking to the gathered church they have one eye on the congregation gathered in the church building, and the other on them as scattered disciples on their frontlines. Such a posture requires an intentional change in approach to preaching—one that embraces a different hermeneutic, perspective, and, approach to application. However, the fruit of this alternative approach is a style of preaching that really does speak to whole of the life of our congregations. And as Hollinger says, "…we would more readily produce whole Christians with a steady diet of holistic preaching."[38]

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WHY WE PREACH CHRIST

MICHAEL DUDUIT
Clamp Divinity School
Anderson University
Anderson, SC

The movie Apollo 13 retells the real-life story of the 1970 Apollo launch intended for the moon. Two days into the flight, something went terribly wrong when a rupture in the oxygen tank damaged the spacecraft. Instead of landing on the moon, the mission now changed to a desperate effort at survival.

The crew had to preserve their last bits of power and oxygen for the final moments of reentry into the atmosphere, so they used the Lunar Module as a lifeboat while the NASA engineers back on earth tried to figure out some way they could survive and return to earth safely.

The astronauts had to shut down the Command Module to save power for reentry, then had to figure out how to restart it on just 12 amps of electricity – less than was used to power a vacuum cleaner, as one engineer pointed out.

While the drama was unfolding in space, the NASA team worked furiously to solve the problem. Their challenge was to trim everything that was not absolutely necessary, to get down to the absolute essential functions – otherwise, the crew would die in space.

Good news: they made it. But the message is clear: sometimes success is only possible by trimming away all the extras and identifying that which is absolutely essential.

A lot of families are discovering that reality today in the financial realm. While some people are doing well in today's economy, lots of other folks are pressed, cutting costs and discovering what they really *need* to live on. Sometimes success

is only possible by trimming away all the extras and identifying that which is absolutely essential.

In the last recession you'll remember that businesses and organizations were trimming back as far as they could in order to survive the downturn in sales and receipts. Even in churches, many were forced to cut staff in order to get through the downturn as tithes and offerings dropped. One pastor of a larger church even told me that in one way it had been a helpful time, as they had to analyze their situation and discover what people and programs were really central for them, and which were peripheral to the main mission. Sometimes success is only possible by trimming away all the extras and identifying that which is absolutely essential.

Is there a message here for us as preachers? The message is this: in an age of increasing secularization and declining discipleship, when students and young adults are abandoning the church in droves while we try to maintain the status quo and preserve the past, we just can't play games anymore. We have to identify what is essential.

That is vitally true in our preaching. God has said that it is through the foolishness of preaching that people will hear, but sometimes we seem to get locked on the foolishness part and not the preaching. We are past the day when we can play games with preaching. We can no longer preach to entertain, or to maintain, or to sustain dying structures and dated programs. Sometimes success is only possible by trimming away all the extras and identifying that which is absolutely vital. In preaching, we must get down to what is essential.

So what is the essential in our preaching? When we trim away all the non-essentials, what is the primary focus of our preaching? Just one thing: Christ. We must preach Christ!

Why is it so urgent for us to preach Christ? We find the answer in the opening chapter of Paul's letter to the Colossians. Join me as we read from Colossians 1, beginning in verse 15, as Paul speaks of Jesus Christ. Paul writes:

> [15] He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. [16] For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. [17] And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. [18] And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. [19] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, [20] and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.
> [21] And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, [22] he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, [23] if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. (Colossians 1:15-23)

Why do we preach Christ? We preach Christ because He alone is sufficient to meet every need. Why is Christ alone sufficient to meet every need? First, because

CHRIST SHOWS YOU WHO GOD IS

There are few passages in all of scripture more majestic than these verses in Colossians 1, for they paint a vivid portrait of a God who holds the universe in the palm of His hand.

Why is Paul offering us this picture of God? In the preceding passage, he told the Colossian Christians of his prayers for them, that they may "walk worthy with the Lord," that they might be "strengthened with all power according to his glorious might." Then it is almost as if Paul pauses to say: you don't have any idea of how much power I am talking about, do you? You have no conception of how big God is, do you?"

My sons are now 23 and 19, but I remember when they were small and thought $100 was a huge amount of money. For them, $1,000 would have been an incredible treasure. Imagine if I had a million dollars in my pocket – that would take a pretty good imagination – and I invited one of those young boys to ask me for money – any amount he would like. He might ask for $1,000 or even $10,000, thinking that was a sum beyond imagination, never realizing that I had much, much more available to him.

That is what it is like when we think of God's power and glory – whatever we can imagine, God is so much more. And that is the God who has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the image of the invisible God. Phillips translates that word "image" as "visible expression." Jesus is God shown to us in a way we can see Him.

But Paul wants to make sure we understand that just because God has allowed us to see Him in Christ, that does not mean Christ's power can be measured in earthly terms. No, in Christ dwells all the power and glory of God. He is the "firstborn of all creation" – here the term "firstborn" does not imply birth order but implies superiority; Christ is over and above all of creation; He is preeminent over every created thing. Christ helps us see a bit of this God who is beyond our comprehension.

CHRIST SHOWS WHO GOD IS AS CREATOR

Paul writes in verse 16: "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him." In other words, if it exists, God created it.

What does it mean when Paul says, "For by him all things were created"? It means that Christ was the active power in creation, planning and shaping the entire created order. He is the architect, construction crew, and interior designer; He is the animating and energizing force of creation. Creation happened through the power and ability of Christ.

Got any Legos in your house? When our sons were younger we made some significant investments in Legos, those little building blocks in varying sizes and shapes that you can use to create a house, a ship, or the Death Star, depending on how many blocks you buy! My guys tended to stay pretty close to the directions provided, tracking down all those individual pieces and putting them in the right order.

But when Jesus sat down to make it all, there were no blocks to connect. He created the building blocks of creation – He crafted the atoms and the molecules from nothing. He conceived of DNA and shaped that double helix all by Himself. There were no directions to follow – He wrote the directions, designed the created order in His own omnipotent imagination. He conceived of stars and planets, shaped them, and hung them in place in a universe that served as His canvas.

He crafted the Earth with special care, for He knew that one day He would make a people to love and lead, and one day He himself would take on flesh and walk on the ground He created. He invented trees, because He knew one day He would be a young man who would use that wood as a carpenter, learning to make chairs and tables. He also knew that one terrible day, He would hang on such a tree, paying a ransom caused by the sin and rebellion of the very people He created and to whom He gave life. He made it all; it is all His. All of creation bears His imprint and carries his signature of authorship.

But Paul says creation is not only "by Him" but also "for Him." That means, as Rick Melick observes, that, "Jesus is the goal of all creation. Everything exists to display his glory, and ultimately he will be glorified in his creation. . . . Jesus is the central point of all of creation, and he rules over it." (R. Melick, NAC, *Vol. 32*: *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*)

But not only is Christ the animating force behind creation, He is also the sustaining force behind it all. That's why Paul says in verse 17, "And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." Not only did Christ create all that is, and not only does He have preeminence over the entire created order, but He is himself the power source that sustains creation.

"In Him all things hold together." He is the One who creates and He is the One who enables the creation to continue. He created the laws of physics that manage the movement of stars and planets and cosmos. He created the balance that allows nature and living things to adapt and survive. Have you ever thought about what a miracle it is that plants make pollen, and that wind and bees carry that pollen to other plants to make it possible for them to produce the food that enables us to survive. That is a miracle of creation that happens day by day, and it all originated in the mind of Christ. So the next time you eat an apple, thank the Creator Christ who made it possible! "In Him all things hold together."

Have you ever heard someone say, "I wonder what life is all about?" The answer is: Jesus. It is all about Christ — He is the originator and sustainer and purpose of it all. It is His work. It is by Him and for Him. He crafted it, shaped it, and is the purpose of it. No wonder we preach Christ! We preach Christ because He alone is sufficient to meet every need, including showing us who God is as Creator.

But in addition to that,

CHRIST SHOWS WHO GOD IS AS REDEEMER

Not only did Christ create everything that exists; not only does He sustain the creation by His own power. He also has redeemed His people from the terrible price caused by their own sin and rebellion. And ultimately, He will redeem the creation itself from the scars and chaos caused by human sin.

I do find it interesting that when Paul begins to talk about Christ as Redeemer, the first thing he says is that "he is the head of the body, the church." That is, Christ not only redeemed us with His own blood, but He has created the church, the Body of Christ, to be an ongoing instrument of His redemptive power.

Your church and mine are to be in the business of redemption. Our churches are not here for the purpose of preaching or worship or Bible study or dinner on the grounds or anything else. You exist to be a redemptive tool in the hands of

Christ, sharing the love of Christ and drawing people into His family — your work and mine is the work of reconciliation. We do all those other things — including preaching – not because they are the primary mission, but because they are tools by which Christ uses us to achieve His mission, which is redemption. Christ is all about redeeming what was lost, and if we want to be on His team and be used for His glory, then that must be your mission and mine.

So Paul explains, "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" (vv. 19-20). So just as all things were created by Christ, so all things will be reconciled through Him. The creation itself has been marred, tainted by the corruption of sin; in the redemptive work of Christ, that creation will be reconciled, set right, restored to its original intention. Through the shedding of His own blood in payment for our sin, Christ reconciles us to God; and, ultimately, not only us, but the entire creation. So just as He acted as Creator, Christ also acts as Redeemer.

And how does this redemption take place? The Greek text literally says, "through the blood of His cross." Jesus took upon Himself the price of sin — He bore the wrath of God toward our sin, knowing that we could not. With the "blood of His cross" Christ purchased our redemption, and ultimately that of all His creation. The most amazing act of creation was when Jesus created a path of reconciliation back to God through His own sacrifice on the cross.

That is the only message we have to preach: Christ and His cross. Wherever we may be in God's Word, we always preach in light of Christ's redemptive work. Do you preach about stewardship? Remember that biblical stewardship is rooted in the creative and redemptive work of Christ. Do you preach about justice? Remember that there is no justice apart from the reconciling work of Christ on the cross. Do you preach about discipleship? Remember that we can be disciples only because of what Christ accomplished through the blood of His cross.

Whatever the theme, we always preach in the shadow of the cross.

We preach Christ because He alone is sufficient to meet every need. He shows us who God is, both as Creator and Redeemer.

Yet not only does Christ show us who God is, in addition…

CHRIST SHOWS US WHO WE ARE

Why do we preach Christ? One major reason is that He shows us who God is. But also vital is that He shows us who *we* are. In this paragraph of Paul's letter, he is reminding the Christians at Colossae what their life was like before they knew Christ, and how it had changed through their faith in Christ.

What is life like apart from Christ? Paul points out in verse 21: "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds . . ." He uses two key terms here; the first is alienated, or alienation. The word means to be excluded or estranged, to be like a foreigner in a strange land. Have you ever gone to some event where you didn't know anyone, and you stood there and watched everyone engaged in their own conversations, and you felt lost, alone, alienated? That's a little of the flavor of what Paul is suggesting here.

Apart from Christ, we were alienated from God — estranged, distant, separated. Some of you might be old enough to remember the old Three Dog Night song that said, "One is the loneliest number." That's where all of us are without Christ – lost and alone by our own doing, alienated by sin from the God who loves us. And there is nowhere on earth or in the universe that is a worse place to be than alienated from God.

The book *Jesus Manifesto* tells about "a billboard in Oklahoma that reads, 'Eternity is hell without Jesus.' But in truth, every place is hell without Jesus. The Ritz Carlton is hell without Jesus. And a 'church' is hell without Jesus. There is no hope in this life or in this world apart from Christ."

So Paul says that before Christ we were alienated from God. But there's another phrase he uses — he says that before Christ we were "hostile in mind." Literally, you were an enemy of God in your mind, in the way you thought, and that resulted in doing evil things. One translation (TNT) puts it "your thinking was all against him."

One of the results of sin in your life is that it impacts the way you think, and that impacts the way you live. Apart from Christ, your thought patterns are hostile to God — your thoughts and attitudes are at odds with Him. You are disposed toward evil rather than good. That's why religion isn't enough to set things right; you don't simply need to add something on to what you already are — you need a complete change of mind and heart. You don't need a pacemaker; you need an entirely new heart. You don't just need some additional thoughts; you need a mind transplant. And that only happens through the transforming work of Christ in our lives.

No wonder Jesus said you are to love the Lord with all your "heart, mind, soul and strength." You can't love God with your mind when your thoughts are enemies of God; that can only happen when you receive a new mind, the mind of Christ. Before Christ, you and I were alienated and enemies of Christ. That is a terrible place to be — but there is good news coming!

We preach Christ because He alone is sufficient to meet every need. He shows us who God is, and He shows us who we are apart from Christ. Now here's the good news:

CHRIST SHOWS US WHO WE CAN BE

We preach Christ because He alone is sufficient to meet every need. Not only does Christ show us who God is, as Creator and Redeemer; He also shows us who we are apart from Him, alienated and enemies of God in our thoughts, our attitudes and our deeds. But thankfully, Paul does not leave us there, for He helps us understand that there is one more amazing thing God does for us — He helps us see who we can be. And better yet, He

does a transforming work in our lives through His sacrificial death on the cross.

Picking up again in verse 21, we read, "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him" (vv. 21-22).

What does Paul mean by "his body of flesh"? It's a Hebrew phrase which refers to Christ's human body — His earthly, physical existence. Paul is reminding the Colossian believers that Christ was not just a spiritual being who appeared to suffer and die; He was fully human, incarnated in flesh and blood.

It is in that death on the cross that Jesus brought about reconciliation, as He spent those agonizing hours in which He paid the price for our sin. Too often when we talk about the cross we emphasize the physical pain and neglect the heart of what happened on the cross. When Jesus sweat drops of blood in the Garden and said, "Father, if you are willing take this cup away from me," it wasn't fear of physical punishment that He was talking about. Many have willingly faced brutal death as martyrs for the faith, and it would be foolish to say they were braver than Jesus.

No, what Jesus knew was coming on the cross was not simply physical torture, but far worse — the wrath of God toward sin was to be poured out on Him. The "cup" He sought to avoid was the cup of God's wrath toward sin. He who knew no sin was to have the impact of all our sin poured out on Him, as God's righteous wrath exacted the just penalty for that sin. That is the "cup" that Jesus saw coming, and though He knew and dreaded what it would cost, that is the cup that He willingly accepted in order to ransom us from eternal death.

And because He paid that terrible price on the cross, He accomplished what was needed, as Paul says, "in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him" (v. 22). Because of the cross, He made it possible for you to stand before God one day holy and blameless and above reproach. Is

that because *you* are all those things? No, because *Christ* is all those things, and He holds you in His arms and takes you into the presence of the Father. When the Father asks if you are worthy to enter into His holy presence, Jesus reaches out nail-scarred hands and says, "I have paid the entry fee for Him." And when the Father asks if you have the proper attire to enter into eternity, Jesus will say, "I have clothed him in my righteousness."

From alienation to acceptance, from enemy of God to His adopted child — that is what Christ makes possible through His precious blood shed on the cross. That is the "hope of the Gospel" which Paul preached, which we preach, and which you and I are privileged to teach others to preach as well.

We preach Christ because He alone is sufficient to meet every need. He shows us who God is, He shows us who we are apart from Christ, and because He shows us who we can be in Christ.

The story is told about a brother in a monastery who was assigned to preach. All the brothers came into the chapel and found the lights off. The brother who was supposed to preach lit a candle. He took that candle and held it up to the crucifix. There he illuminated the thorn crowned brow, the pierced hands and feet and after doing so for a few seconds he extinguished the candle and dismissed the audience. He said that it was a sermon on the love of Christ. And so it was.

Our calling, our challenge and our privilege is to lead people to the cross. We preach Christ because He alone is sufficient to meet every need.

Why do we preach Jesus? Because He is our only message worth sharing. Because He is all we have, and all we need. As Gardner C. Taylor said of Jesus:

> He is light for darkness.
> Strength for weakness.
> Peace for confusion.
> Hope for despair.
> Bread for the hungry.
> Water for the thirsty.

> And at last the way to a taller town than Rome and an older place than Eden.
> (*Our Sufficiency is of God*, p. xviii)

So preach Jesus. Preach Jesus, for it is in Christ alone that we find the answer to every question worth asking. In Christ alone we find life in a dying world. In Christ alone we find hope, for now and forevermore.

BOOK REVIEWS

Training Preachers: A Guide to Teaching Homiletics. Edited by Scott M. Gibson. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018. 978-1683592068, 209 pp., $19.99.

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

"This book was developed to help a first-year preaching professor get started. If you do not have a background in educational theory, this book is for you. The intention is to help you get a handle on what it means to *teach* preaching" (2). Its nine contributors are experienced preachers and seminary teachers who also have at least an undergraduate degree in education. They hail from with seven different evangelical institutions; one is a lead pastor. They met for a one-day consultation, funded by a Lilly grant, and wrote their respective chapters, meeting once more to discuss what they learned from writing and reading each others' chapters. The data for the book came from a survey which asked teachers of preaching, "What do you wish you knew when you first started teaching preaching?" (3). Respective chapters place the subject in historical context, engage with educational theory, clarify what beginning professors of preaching might reasonably expect, offer guidance in constructing syllabi and framing learning objectives, as well as offering feedback and promoting lifelong learning. I found each chapter to be carefully researched and clearly written, something a reader cannot always count on in an edited volume. Moreover, the range of content was appropriate in that it featured items that some might not think to include but which I found important to explore. The chapters were long enough (but not too long) to introduce the beginner to their respective subjects. I was glad to see these evangelical practitioners engage secular education theorists

respectfully, for the most part aware of the latter's worldview assumptions that needed critical engagement. But I was surprised that there was not a chapter or section on the so-called "flipped course" strategy popularized by Salman Khan who developed the Khan Academy. His approach radically minimizes lectures and makes students responsible to access course content in preparation for class-time interaction with peers and professor that helps them assimilate and master the subject under discussion. This approach revolutionized my own course planning, eliminated the (rightful) complaint that I tried to cover too much material, and helped my students grasp material and implement it.

Readers of this volume will likely value some parts of it more than others. Having taken a few less-than-memorable education courses as an undergraduate and a seminarian, I read this book with a slightly jaundiced eye. Perhaps for that reason, though I found the chapters on educational theory to be helpful background information for reading the rest of the book, they were less useful in equipping me to teach preachers than chapter four on learning styles by John Tornfelt, chapters five and six on what a professor needed to know by Tony Merida and Blake Newsom, and chapters seven and eight by Sid Buzzell on developing syllabi and arriving at course outcomes.

I appreciated the editor's stated aim and target audience (first-year preaching professors), but I found the volume did a good job of challenging some of my own longstanding habits and assumptions and stretched me to add an item to a course Moodle page before I had finished reading the book. I suspect other senior members of our guild might also have a similar experience. This is a very worthwhile book and will repay the time invested to read it.

Preaching to be Heard: Delivering Sermons that Command Attention. By Lucas O'Neill. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019. 978-1683592365, 152 pp., $13.32.

Reviewer: *Rodney A. Palmer, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

No matter how important or relevant the sermon is, it will not be heard if preachers fail to capture their listeners' attention in the first thirty seconds. Consequently, every preacher wrestles with the all-important question: how do I preach so my congregants will always want to listen? In attempting to answer this question, Lucas O'Neill, clinical associate professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, provides preachers with salient insights on how to use tension "to win their [listeners'] attention via interest, focus it on a passage of Scripture, and sustain that engagement throughout the sermon" (8). The tome consists of five chapters, a preface, conclusion, and an additional resources section containing practical exercises and sermon outlines based on the principles he espouses in the book.

Drawing on the expertise of homiletical giants such as Haddon Robinson, Sidney Greidanus, and Bryan Chappell, the author reinforces the importance of expositional preaching that is biblical, has a "big idea," and is Christ-centered. So as to avoid any misunderstanding that may arise in the mind of the reader as it relates to Christ-centered preaching, O'Neill is quick to highlight that "not every passage necessarily reveals a type of Christ. Not every passage serves as an analogy. Preaching Christ does not mean that Jesus is to be injected into the text without regard to the original author's scope of revelation or immediate intent" (123). Furthermore, in distinguishing the nuances that exist between Christ-centered preaching and Kuruvilla's christiconic approach, the author must be applauded for not pitting one approach against the other. Instead of highlighting the differences, O'Neill underscores the positives by

emphasizing that both approaches agree that: (1) Christ should be central to the interpretation of the biblical text, and (2) that the local meaning of the text must be protected (125).

The overarching arguments of *Preaching to be Heard* are predicated on three main principles: "First, discovering the problem-solution heart of the passage and expressing it in one clear thesis statement; second, identifying the point of tension and expressing it in the overarching question; and third, determining which structure would best carry tension for the particular text of Scripture" (142). Hence, rather than relying on illustrations or analogies to arrest the interest of listeners during the sermon, preachers are to strategically use the tension, ambiguity, or deep need that is inherent in every biblical text to capture attention. O'Neill demonstrates how these principles are to be employed regardless of the sermonic structure—be it inductive, deductive, inductive-deductive, or subject-completed (84–115).

While preaching to command attention might at first appear to be a daunting task, it can be mastered over time through intentionality and ongoing practice. O'Neill reminds readers that since a new way of thinking about sermon preparation might feel overwhelming, they should "focus on one thing at a time" and demonstrate proficiency in that area, before moving on to other principles. As the reader masters each principle, "the next will be adopted more easily, learned more quickly" (158).

This theoretical, methodical, and practical volume on preaching will prove beneficial to both seasoned and novice preachers who are desirous of honing their preaching prowess to become more effective expositors of the Scriptures, and to present the gospel in a captivating manner.

The Power of Preaching: Crafting a Creative Expository Sermon. By Tony Evans. Chicago: Moody, 2019. 978-0802418302, 145 pp., $12.99.

Reviewer: *Gregory K. Hollifield, Memphis College of Urban Theological Studies, Union University, Memphis, Tennessee.*

For those familiar with the basics of constructing an expository sermon, the book's title and subtitle are somewhat misleading. To be sure, faithful exposition gives preaching its power. But readers hoping to find insights into how to expound the Scriptures creatively will be disappointed by this slender volume.

A better indicator of the book's contents and purpose are to be found on its back cover. To wit, *The Power of Preaching* is the latest volume in Tony Evans' *Kingdom Pastor's Library*, a consolidation of "information and resources from the author's classes, personal notes, and 40+ years of ministry experience." Through his *Library* Evans hopes to equip pastors who "can't afford the time or money required to get formal biblical training." The pulpit ministries of such men and women should profit greatly from reading thoughtfully and applying consistently the insights of the author as recorded here.

He spends a little over half of *The Power of Preaching* laying a "foundation" for understanding and appreciating expository preaching, outlining a plan for "organization" of the preacher's study time, digging into some of the details of sermon "preparation," and calling for a sermonic "presentation" that is made relevant through the use of appropriate illustrations and effective delivery techniques. Evans devotes the latter half of his book to a discussion of "preaching resources," revisiting previously raised subjects like the preaching calendar and types of outlines. Two appendices round out everything with a list of recommended resources for further study and an overview of the author's philosophy of ministry and available practical tools.

Haddon Robinson's influence on Evans' conception of expository preaching is obvious, as seen in his call for preachers to ask two questions of their preaching text: 1) "What is the main subject of this passage?" and 2) "What is this passage saying about this subject?" (45). He parts from Robinson in his promotion of thoughtful sermon titles as one way to "make a relevant sermon" (79). This reviewer has found sermon titles to be of far greater importance among certain audiences than others and appreciates Evans' including this emphasis.

The Power of Preaching would be a great little book to place in the hands of men and women who've recently answered the call to preach. It will help get their pulpit ministries started on the right foot.

Encountering the Living God in Scripture: Theological and Philosophical Principles for Interpretation. By William M. Wright IV and Francis Martin. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019. 978-0801030956, 253 pp., $26.99.

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

Upon seeing the title of this work, I hoped it would be a promising read for preachers. After all, preachers want to encounter God in Scripture, and help their listeners do so as well.

But I had mixed reactions to *Encountering the Living God in Scripture,* the product of a pair of well-known Roman Catholic scholars. In the first place, "Scripture" (mentioned in the title) shows up significantly only in one of the two parts of the book. The other part deals almost exclusively with philosophical and metaphysical matters. In the second place, "Principles," part of the subtitle, did not really fit the book's schema: I never saw any principles that I needed to attend to. In the third place, this book is not really about the "Interpretation" (also part of the subtitle) of Scripture. It is more an attempt to enable an encounter with

God, mostly in real life, in the universe, rather than in Scripture per se.

The authors' bias: "We firmly believe that it is very important for interpreters of Scripture to be familiar with philosophical and theological thinking" (6). *Very* important? In the abysmal dearth of hermeneutical thinking about Scripture these days (and these decades and centuries and millennia!), I would rather interpreters, particularly preachers, be familiar with language philosophy, especially pragmatics and how authors *do* things with what they say in Scripture, for without such an acquaintance with this all-important matter, there can be no deriving valid application in the sermonic undertaking. And Scripture, if I may say so, was *primarily* given to be applied, so that the children of God would be conformed into the image of the Son of God. So while Wright and Martin "hope that this book will serve a practical and pastoral purpose" (9), I remain unconvinced. A philosophical and apologetic purpose perhaps, but decidedly not pastoral. I doubt if those taking to the pulpit week after week have time to delve into the matters addressed in this work, however interesting and substantial they may be.

In the first four chapters of Part 1, the authors distinguish (rather inappropriately and naively, I thought) between "the Word spoken directly by God," "God's Word given through human intermediaries (e.g., prophets and apostles)" (13), and "the Word of God as given in inspired written discourse" (references in Scripture to its own writings, e.g., Heb 4:12, etc.) (79). Wright and Martin show how these facets of Scripture address divine power and presence. These chapters made up about 40% of the book, but there was nothing new here. The sacred writ, *entirely* mediated by Spirit-inspired humans (without distinction or differentiation), does evidence divine power and presence; readers of this *Journal* will have no question about that.

To me the next four chapters (making up Part 2) were the most interesting sections of the book, albeit divorced from "Scripture," "Interpretation," and "Principles." There is an absolute distinction between God and the world, "a matter of …

otherness" (114), the ramifications of which are critical: God can "'enter into his creation without suffering limitation in his divinity'" (115); "God's relationship to the world is one of "'noncompetitiveness'" (116); "human beings cannot think or speak about God in the same manner that we do about things in the world" (118); and the fact of the "giftedness of creation," the graciousness of a Being that did not need world (119). Borrowing from Aquinas, the authors also point out the entailment that "God is the source from which all things continually receive their own act of existing" (135). And they establish, *pace* Kant, that humans can "possibly get beyond their historical and cultural circumstances and cognitively access ontological truth as it is on its own terms" (176). Good stuff, I thought, but not particularly relevant to homiletics—but that's just my bias.

"What remains is for us to approach … sacred Scripture … with a faith-filled, receptive, and obedient heart" (248). Wonderful concluding words … but how is this obedience to be accomplished? For that matter, what exactly in the text are we to obey? Unfortunately, the absence of any recognition of authorial *doings* or textual pragmatics leaves preachers (and their listeners) hanging, for without those essential interpretive modalities, valid application (and thus obedience) cannot be accomplished according to the A/author's textual agenda.

The Letter and Spirit of Biblical Interpretation: From the Early Church to Modern Practice. By Keith D. Stanglin. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018. 978-0801049682, 288 pp., $26.99.

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

Stanglin's work is a concise review, "from the early church to modern practice," of the art of interpreting, literally and otherwise. I came to this book as a preacher, asking: How do we interpret Scripture *now* for ourselves and for our listeners in the

pews? In light of the recent blossoming of language philosophy and our clearer understanding of how texts work, our conception of how Scripture works has also significantly improved in this century by leaps and bounds. Therefore, I have trouble with reliance on historical modes of interpretation, most of which are not congruent with our contemporary (and, dare I say, better) understanding of how language functions.

As an example, in the early days of medicine, physicians were prescribing mercury for sexually transmitted diseases, employing animal excrement for all kinds of injuries, performing skull boring (trepanation) for epilepsy, and engaging in other assorted grisly practices. No doubt, these morbid undertakings are of considerable historical interest. But surely, they are best avoided today, in light of our better understanding of medicine and therapeutics.

Stanglin confesses: "One cannot get away from the fact that the earliest Gentile Christians did not know exactly what to do with the Old Testament" (28)! Indeed, it is the rush by christocentric interpreters to find Christ in the Old Testament that led (and still leads) to most of these kind of abuses, for "the truth about Christ justified the exegetical methods" (22). But, do notice Stanglin's affirmations: "If Scripture indeed has to do ultimately with Jesus Christ, then one must account for the fact that the Old Testament, with the exception of a few fairly overt messianic prophecies, is silent about him" (42). Quite right, yet he affirms that "there is no book of the Old Testament, no matter how intimately tied to its ancient Near Eastern context, that is not finally about Christ" (43). One has to engage in some serious hermeneutical contortions to make those two affirmations of Stanglin work together.

"Words can play and gain new meaning," declares our author (26). That, unfortunately, sounds exactly like Humpty Dumpty in Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass:* "When I use a word … it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." When Alice responded: "The question is … whether you can make words mean so many different things," Humpty countered, "The question is … which is to be master—that's all."

Yes, indeed, that is the real question: Who is the master A/author, the one(s) who wrote the texts or I, the interpreter?

Stanglin also considers Jesus' own parabolic interpretation (or that of NT authors) as "imaginative" and "allegorical," thus justifying early Christians' own odd approaches to the text (90), including the claim that the Good Samaritan's two coins indicates the two sacraments (à la Augustine). But one must make a distinction between illustrations/applications of the OT made in the NT and valid expositions of the OT in the NT (the latter are few and far between: 1 Tim 5:17–18 comes to mind). However, Stanglin does not seem to be leaning in the direction of illustration or application: "Spiritual interpretation is something more, though, than application of an ancient text. It is the willingness to say that, while this Old Testament text is about David, it is also about Christ" (217). Not illustration, not analogy, not application, but "it *is* … about Christ." Calvin was right; on the florid interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan by his predecessors, he writes: "I have no liking for any of these interpretations; but we ought to have a deeper reverence for Scripture than to reckon ourselves at liberty to disguise its natural meaning" (137).

That is not to say modern interpretation is free from errors. Here are some: faulty notions of the supremacy of reason and ideals of objectivity; the misguided goal of being purely academic to the exclusion of faith; an ill-advised inclination towards individualistic, rather than communitarian, interpretation; the unhappy penchant for the world behind the text (the non-inspired, actual historical bases for the text); etc. (160–77). But the remedy for these errors is not interpreting Scripture rather arbitrarily as was the wont of much historical exposition.

The rest of Stanglin's historical survey takes us from patristic to modern exegesis. In brief, there is increasingly greater emphasis upon authorial intent, and increasingly lesser focus on allegorical reading. You can either read the text as it is meant by the A/author to be read or read it entirely as you wish, deploying

your creative imagination. You can either catch the A/authorial *doing* within texts, or you can do things with texts yourself. I'd rather stick with the former option in either case.

A Manual for Preaching: The Journey from Text to Sermon. By Abraham Kuruvilla. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. 978-0801098635, 316 pp., $29.99.

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

In this volume Abraham Kuruvilla builds on what he began in *Privilege the Text!* and *A Vision for Preaching*. The earlier works established a hermeneutical/theological "philosophy" of preaching; this one shows how to put it into practice.

From what to do in the weeks leading up to the sermon, through the moment of delivery and afterward, Kuruvilla coaches readers through stages of sermon preparation and execution. Discerning the thrust of the text and deriving valid application are most essential. Once the student has learned how to make these crucial moves (admittedly difficult and more art than science), lessons follow on sermon mapping, fleshing out the map, illustrations, introductions and conclusions, manuscripting, and delivery. Diagrams and shaded text reinforce key ideas. The process is illustrated from expositions of the Jacob Story and Ephesians. How to make "the journey from text to sermon" is clearer for having each step demonstrated from these narrative and epistolary case studies.

Strengths include: Kuruvilla's insistence on close attention to the details of the text and to what the author/Author is *doing*; his vision for pericopal theology in the service of the pulpit; his suggestion that preachers "curate" the text, helping listeners see what's there; advice on how to make valid application; and many specific suggestions that have worked for the author, himself a disciplined student and preacher. He even tells you what to do if you're a guest preacher and have a flat tire on the way to church!

Kuruvilla advocates preaching sequentially through books of the Bible, pericope by pericope, and objects rather strongly to topical sermons (while acknowledging that they might be fitting on rare occasions). He defines "pericope" practically, as a reasonable preaching portion and, as in his previous homiletics texts, urges preachers to discern and expound not the broad sweep of systematic or biblical theology, but the theology of this week's pericope for this week's sermon.

Though the book is intended as a text for homiletics students, seasoned pastors can pick up some tips. I appreciated a couple of reminders: even if I wait till my conclusion to make application, I need to demonstrate *relevance* throughout the sermon; and how I apply the thrust of the text depends on my audience (creatively illustrated from Kuruvilla's dermatology practice).

Some readers (not I) may disagree that pastors don't need to know much Hebrew or Greek. Others will wonder whether every sermon should include one concrete application for listeners to act on. A few might quibble over the author's advocacy of manuscript preaching, or specific percentages of pulpit time devoted to introduction, body, and conclusion. But he notes that these are personal preferences. Experienced preachers will know what works for them; beginners will benefit from the specific guidance.

I envision Kuruvilla's trilogy of preaching texts forming a solid homiletics curriculum for seminaries and Bible colleges.

Jump Into the Story: The Art of Creative Preaching. By Ray R. Friesen. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019. 978-1532670404, 251 pp., $25.00.

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

All preachers want their sermons to be relevant and engaging. The sacred task of preaching is to bring the word of God to

people today so that they may understand it and live it or, as John Stott famously put it, to connect the world of the Bible with the world of the hearer. This means it is the preacher's responsibility to work at communicating the word of God so that it can be heard, understood, and practiced. This requires not only exegetical skill and theological acumen, but also Spirit-directed imagination, creativity, and language.

Ray Friesen, now retired, served for over twenty years as a pastor of two Mennonite Church Canada congregations. He wrote *Jump into the Story* to help preachers write relevant and engaging sermons that capture the imagination of those who hear them. The book is a collection of Friesen's sermons, with commentary and context, explaining why and how he wrote each of them the way he did. He not only instructs, but models what he believes preaching should look like, with the hopes that his creativity will inspire others'.

The title of the book comes from the name of one of the sermons Friesen preached during his ministry and is included in chapter 1 of the book. As Friesen recounts, his text was John 21:1–19, and a "here are three things you can learn from this story"-sermon held no interest for him. So he decided to write a two-person dialogue, between Peter and Martha, having Peter tell the story as Martha draws it out of him. Friesen used the phrase "jump into the story" as a creative way to decide to follow Jesus, to start living your story inside his story. We must be so into the story that we can invite others to join with us.

Over twenty chapters, Friesen includes other sermon examples that illustrate his method and philosophy. There are story sermons, where he writes a story and then incorporates some Scripture into that story. There are sermons developed around contemporary books, songs, and movies. There are sermons that are autobiographical scenes from Jesus' perspective. There are sermons for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Thanksgiving, and funerals. There is even a chapter on preaching children's stories, on preaching to the community, on dramatic readings of Scripture as sermons, and about writing songs as sermons.

Unfortunately, Friesen has no place for expository, text-driven preaching that opens up the word of God and then applies it, pericope by pericope, week by week: he understands such an approach as boring, lacking in both imagination and creativity. Though his sermons incorporate Scripture, they are not based on exegesis, but rather his own imaginative interpretation of what he believes the text says. This comes from his deficient, non-evangelical view of Scripture that Friesen articulates both in the introduction and at length in an appendix. Friesen does not believe the Bible contains the word of God (he repeatedly calls this understanding of the Bible idolatry); rather, he proclaims the word of God, and asserts that sermons are inspired in the same way as the Scriptures, if not always or ever to the same degree.

As excited as I was to pick up this book from the description (what preaching pastor doesn't want some more tips and direction on how to preach more engaging and relevant sermons?), the rejection of text-driven preaching coupled with a deficient theology of Scripture severely limited the book's utility. Friesen at other points casually rejects doctrines evangelicals hold dear, such as penal substitutionary atonement and the reality of hell as a place of everlasting punishment. He also frequently lambasts complementarianism, rejects support of Israel, and overemphasizes the humanity of Jesus to the detriment of his deity (at one point labeling Jesus wrong and mistaken). Those who hold to these elements of the faith will at best be distracted by this, and at worst will simply put the book away. While I appreciated Friesen's emphasis on how preachers have a responsibility to connect with their hearers and never be boring, replacing biblical preaching with plays, songs, stories, and secular entertainment explained through a biblical lens is not what God calls us to do as preachers. Preachers wanting help to be more creative in their preaching would do much better to look to Warren Wiersbe, Zach Eswine, Calvin Miller, or a host of others who understand Scripture as the word of God.

Seasoned Speech: Rhetoric in the Life of the Church. By James E. Beitler III. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2019. 978-0830852444, 256 pp., $25.00.

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

Anybody who has taught a first-year homiletics class knows that rhetoric is important. We probably don't call it rhetoric. We may call it the "big idea" or the outline or pitch or volume. But we know—if not instinctively, then eventually through painful hours of listening—that an important part of the teacher's job is to disabuse young preachers of their natural penchant for the ahs, uhms, unnecessary pauses, and meaningless tangents. Phillips Brooks famously defined preaching as the communication of truth through personality, but that does not mean that preaching should be expressed without giving attention to vocabulary, structure, and style. What is true of writing is also true of public speaking. In the majority of cases, the more natural it sounds, the more craft goes into it. What is also implied in Brooks's definition, and cannot easily be taught or evaluated in the classroom, is the role the person plays in the success of the sermon.

In *Seasoned Speech*, James Beitler, associate professor of English at Wheaton College, where he is director of the first-year writing program, hopes to provoke readers to consider "the church's need for greater rhetorical reflection" (6). He does this by highlighting the rhetorical practice of five noted Christian communicators. Beitler's vision of the church's rhetorical duty goes beyond the twenty to forty minutes in the service that we usually devote to the sermon. He observes, "Practicing rhetoric is not simply about flavoring the truth with a dash of eloquence; it involves the discovery, invention, analysis, interpretation, construction, recollection, arrangement, *and* presentation of information, knowledge, and wisdom" (19). By his definition, the

rhetorical activity of the church includes the whole worship event, and eventually, its entire engagement with the world.

This more expansive view of the church's rhetorical task is reflected in Beitler's choice of examples. Only three of the five communicators he highlights, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Desmond Tutu, and Marilynne Robinson, are preachers in the conventional sense. The other two, C. S. Lewis and Dorothy Sayers, considered themselves laypersons. Like Robinson, Lewis and Sayers are as famous for their fiction writing as they are for their theological essays.

Beitler's book is thoughtful and scholarly. The observations he makes will help readers develop a more expansive view of what it means to communicate the church's message to a post-Christian world. The book will challenge students of homiletics to look beyond the bare mechanics of sermon structure and consider the larger issues of communication, particularly those of ethos, energy, and action. Beitler organizes his chapters in a pattern that follows the church calendar and shapes the theme of each chapter around a different element of the worship service: collect, creed, sermon, confession, Eucharist, and benediction. Readers who do not come from liturgical traditions may find this structure something of a distraction. Nevertheless, *Seasoned Speech* will be a thought-provoking read for anyone interested in sharing God's truth. It promises to be an ancillary text for courses in communication, homiletics, the theology of preaching, apologetics, and evangelism.

So, Tell Me A Story: The Art of Storytelling for Preaching and Teaching. By Stephen Farris. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018. 978-1532637490, 79 pp., $21.37.

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

Preaching is one of the most daunting tasks faced by a pastor. To be faithful to a holy God who has made himself known in Scripture and to be sensitive to the minds of the audience who are living on the turf of life is no small task. Many books on preaching focus on the first challenge, how to prepare sermons that are faithful to the biblical text. Stephen Farris, former Dean of Saint Andrew's Hall and Professor of Homiletics at Vancouver School of Theology, has focused on the latter in *So, Tell Me A Story*. Rather than being a theology of narrative literature or a step by step guide on the proper techniques of crafting and communicating a story, this work is simply a collection of stories. "There are guides to the skills of storytelling, both inside and outside the church. For the most part, this isn't one of them. I am convinced that the best way to learn to tell stories is to listen to them or to read them, and then try to tell your own stories for yourself" (xi). These are personal stories that come form Farris' ministry experience in the classroom, church, and life.

The first four chapters contain his stories and theological reflections. These chapters are filled with practical pointers like the skills and the attitude one should have for the art of storytelling. The remaining chapters of the book are collections of stories. Chapter five tells stories that follow the church calendar. Chapter six is a story that follows the life of Simon, an imaginary character, through the life of Jesus. Chapter seven deals with church life. Chapter eight deals with stories of grace, very vivid illustrations of what grace "looks like." Chapter nine's stories have to do with sacraments, and chapter ten's stories deal with bicycles—geared towards children. Chapter eleven includes narratives that can be told to those outside the church, and Farris highlights how stories have a way of disarming non-Christians without using religious jargon. Throughout his work, Farris addresses the ethics of storytelling while presenting the reader with healthy guidelines for self-disclosure, pitfalls to avoid, and when to tell the entire story not just the positive side (63–64).

To the traditional expositor (such as myself): Relax! Farris is not making a case for the story to become the sole focus of the sermon. Rather, the heart of the sermon for Farris is the encounter

with the living and powerful word of God who speaks through the written text. Stories should never overshadow the fruit of careful exegesis, theological reflection, and application, but they may serve to illuminate those truths and often draw the main point home. Farris' wisdom on storytelling is practical and one can tell they are the fruit of decades of cultivation. Unlike many books on preaching, where the author is not necessarily a gifted expositor, in *So, Tell Me a Story* Farris models what he is teaching. He not only promises a good story, he delivers on that promise in a way that inspires the reader to hone the craft of storytelling. The book is refreshing, enjoyable to read, and the student of homiletics will find it a healthy challenge. Potential stories are all around us, if we simply take time to observe, record, and re-work. "In the end, storytelling is an art that must be learned by observation and by practice. Storytellers are artisans, similar to potters. We learn by watching a master artisan and then by getting our fingers into the clay" (33). As a preacher and teacher of preachers, I was challenged by this work to refocus my attention on the power of stories within my messages to add greater light, not just length, and more creativity.

Toward a Homiletical Theology of Promise. Edited by David Schnasa Jacobsen. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018. 978-1532613913, 140 pp., $19.00.

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

Jacobsen, Bishops Scholar of Homiletics and Preaching and Director of the Homiletical Theology Project at Boston University School of Theology, currently serves as President of the Academy of Homiletics. This is the fourth and final volume he has edited in the Homiletical Theology Project series.

The tone of this volume of essays is definitely scholarly. "Scholarly homiletical theology is then essentially critical

research at the service of the practice" in which "homiletical theologians have the opportunity to dig more deeply into [the influences] that shape preaching and are crucial for its working theological method" (110). In an introductory chapter Jacobsen asserts that while the concept of promise is essential to the gospel, it takes on different meanings in different contexts. The essays that follow are meant to present a variety of homiletical theologies that in some way reflect promise as both grace and justice. The expectation is that different contexts surface different meanings of promise and create different expressions of the tension often perceived between divine grace and divine justice.

Sunggu Yang addresses promise from an Asian American immigrant context. "The immigrant's spiritual experience of pilgrimage . . . determines the constructs of faith. . . . Having been uprooted from their original lands [they] have developed a triple consciousness as a socio-ecclesial coping mechanism, adding the third identifier of Christian pilgrim to their dual social identities of Asian and American. . . . [so that] the Promised Land [is] both this-earthly and other-worldly" (10, 26).

Kenyatta Gilbert reflects on the African-American preacher's tri-vocal or holistic role as prophet, priest, and sage, offering "a promissory message of hope in a deathly world" (29). Concerns that emerge out of this context include divine justice, spiritual transformation, and realistic hope.

Ruthanna Hooke considers the embodied, that is, the breathing and speaking, practice of preaching as analogous to the coming of the Spirit in the Eucharist. In both liturgical practices the promise of the divine presence is experienced. Preachers become "channels for the divine presence and Word" since "preaching rests upon . . . the promise of God's presence" so that preaching becomes "an event in which God speaks through human bodies and words" (51, 52).

Paul Scott Wilson encourages an approach to homiletical theology that labors "somewhere between the academic essay and the sermon" (69), acknowledging the multiple genres of interpretation available to the theologian. Wilson argues that poetics and rhetoric have a role to play in any homiletical

theology in general even as he develops a homiletical theology of promise in particular. Preaching "does not just talk about promise, it becomes promise-giving and hopeful" (85).

James Kay leans on Rudolf Bultmann's notion of *Entweltlichung*, a freedom from the accepted norms of the world, in order to resist the tyrannies that entrap the disenfranchised. Preaching promises a gospel consisting of both grace for the oppressed and justice for the oppressor. Kay's concept of promissory kerygmatics includes both the "fixed doctrinal content about Jesus Christ" and "the contemporary event of Jesus Christ" (90). Preachers draw upon a predetermined reservoir of doctrine as they speak promise into the context before them.

In a final chapter Jacobsen borrows Luther's concept of *Anfechtung* (challenge), envisioning the work of homiletical theologians of promise as a struggle to grasp the mystery of grace and justice in coexistence. In this struggle, preaching promise must move beyond theoretical inquiry to actual practice so that the gospel promise becomes actualized through preaching. As a result, "both preacher and homiletician" must be "theologians of the Word and not simply engineers who move from text to bridge to sermon" (109). It is through the preaching of any theological concept into an ever changing/developing context that the struggle surfaces for the homiletical theologian. In this sense, the work of the homiletical theologian is an unfinished task.

Mature students of preaching will benefit by the scope and diversity of this volume. Beginning students will likely be overwhelmed. The four texts produced by the Homiletical Theology Project have made a major contribution to their readers' reflections on the relationship between theology and preaching.

The Preacher's Catechism. By Lewis Allen. Wheaton: Crossway, 2018. 978-1433559358, 224pp., $22.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: *Scott Donahue-Martens, Boston University School of Theology, Boston, Massachussetts.*

Based on the Westminister Shorter Catechism, *The Preacher's Catechism* offers a fresh approach to the spiritual formation of preachers. Allen recognizes that the tasks of preaching are arduous and require faithfulness on the part of the preacher. The work challenges preachers to reflect deeply on their faith and discipline, especially as it pertains to the practice of preaching. The three major insights that inform the work are that preaching is essential to the formation of people in the church, that preachers must understand preaching and themselves, and that the Westminister Catechism can be reworded to reflect the homiletical situation and address preachers.

In each of the 43 chapters, Allen retains the question-answer format of the Catechism, provides scriptural support, and expounds on the topic. The questions and answers are inspired by the Catechism but are rephrased to reflect preachers and preaching. This means that the author addresses many familiar theological topics and areas of concern, but with preaching in mind. The first section revolves around God and the proper place of preaching in the life of the church, and by extension, the life of the preacher. Allen reminds the reader that preaching should bring glory to God. The second part of the book explores the centrality of Christ. Christ is the Word who must be proclaimed, even as preachers must not approach the word only to preach. The third section uses the Ten Commandments to assert that the ministry of preaching should be informed by God's Law. For example, the answer to the question about what the first commandment teaches us about preaching is: "You shall preach as a love expression to the Lord your God" (120). The final section offers realistic perspectives on what God can accomplish

through preaching. This part recognizes that preaching plays a significant role, but by no means the only role, in the life of the church.

The many, but concise, chapters permit a wide array of topics to be discussed and the format of the work allows it to be read devotionally. This approach is compelling because it speaks to the heart and soul. However, the topics are only covered briefly and there is little attention given to homiletical theory. The book is less a how-to preach or even a practical guide to preaching. Its central purpose is to frame faithfully the tasks of preaching and the formation of the preacher. This means that the audience of *The Preacher's Catechism* is primarily made up of those who are preaching or who have preached. Nonetheless, students of preaching and novice preachers can still learn from the work and heed many of the wise warnings presented. One of the most valuable contributions of the work is the sustained engagement with the weariness preaching often brings. Because of that focus, I recommend this work to those feeling worn out by the demands of preaching. Another strength of the book is its honesty in naming and addressing the doubts and fears of many preachers. Whether it is the initial call to preach or the Monday blues, *The Preacher's Catechism* offers a word of hope through faith for those who enter the pulpit. Allen's compelling argument is that preaching can be a spiritual discipline where God speaks life into both the preacher and the church.

Reformed Preaching: Proclaiming God's Word from the Heart of the Preacher to the Heart of His People. By Joel R. Beeke. Wheaton: Crossway, 2018. 978-14335-59280, 504 pp., $ 40.00.

Reviewer: *Scott A. Wenig, Denver Seminary, Denver, Colorado.*

Joel Beeke has a stellar resume. He is president of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary where he serves as professor of systematic theology and homiletics. He is also a pastor of the

Heritage Reformed Congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan, editor of *Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth*, editorial director of Reformation Heritage Books, the president of Inheritance Publishers, the vice president of the Dutch Reformed Translation Society, and the author of over a hundred books. This tome is his latest and, in some ways, appears to be his *magnum opus*. In the Preface he notes that he has wanted to write the book for over twenty years and been pecking away at it for longer than that (14).

Beeke's goal is to explain, promote, and illustrate Reformed experiential preaching which he defines as "preaching from the preacher's heart to the hearts of God's people" (14). To accomplish this, the book is structured in three main sections: Reformed Experiential Preaching Defined and Described, Reformed Experiential Preaching Illustrated, and Preaching Experientially Today. Each unit is composed of anywhere from four to nineteen chapters which explicate the component parts of its overarching theme. All this is rounded out with an excellent bibliography and indexes.

Part of what drives Beeke's approach is the common experience most of us have had listening to sermons. Sometimes the sermon grabs our minds by giving us some new and helpful content but leaves us emotionally untouched. Others touch our hearts, perhaps even moving us to tears, but lack a Scriptural basis or are weak in theological depth and insight. Beeke's goal is to overcome this unfortunate discrepancy between the head and heart. In his view, "Reformed experiential preaching uses the truth of Scripture to shine the glory of God into the depths of the soul to call people to live solely and wholly for God" (24). True to the claims of the Reformed tradition, this approach tries to bring the preacher and listeners face to face with the sovereign God and the wickedness of their own lives. Thus, in the midst of such preaching, men and women are drawn into the embrace of God's grace as demonstrated by Christ and his atoning work on the cross.

After defining and describing the nature of Reformed experiential preaching, Beeke illustrates it from the pulpit

ministries of numerous preachers spanning the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Here we're given glimpses into how influential pastors such as Zwingli, Calvin, Perkins, Bunyan, Edwards, Ryle, and Lloyd-Jones both informed the minds of their congregants as well as moved their hearts towards greater godliness. True to his own denominational context, the author also devotes three chapters to the Dutch Reformation and its preachers in Europe and America. For those who want a primer on some of the major players in the Reformed tradition of preaching, this portion of the book will serve them well.

In the final section, Beeke focuses on how to leverage this methodological approach in the contemporary context. Here he speaks to those of us who preach on a regular basis, encouraging and exhorting us to preach with balance and solid application, all the while striving for greater personal and congregational holiness. Beeke's heart for preaching, for people, and for the theological tradition he has devoted his life to, shine in these five chapters.

While clearly directed to those in the Reformed camp of evangelicalism, this work contains some valuable homiletical nuggets for those in the Wesleyan tradition as well. But one will not find any discussion of those itinerant preachers who, by the power of the Spirit, transformed eighteenth-century England and nineteenth-century America from ungodly cultures into societies where Christianity was exalted and the rule of law implemented. We cannot fault the author for this lack since it clearly wasn't in his purview. But the historical effectiveness of the circuit-riding Methodist and Baptist preachers does raise some significant questions about the wider applicability of the homiletical approach Beeke champions.

For those who are proudly in the Reformed bloc, this book will be viewed as a major contribution to the practice of better preaching and homiletical methodology. Given the in-depth nature of its research and the author's long term tenure as both a professor and preacher, it certainly deserves that kind of praise.

Christ Has Set Us Free: Preaching and Teaching Galatians. Edited by D. A. Carson and Jeff Robinson Sr. Wheaton: Crossway, 2019. 978-143356261, 170 pp., $19.99.

Reviewer: *Jeremy M. Kimble, Cedarville University, Cedarville, Ohio.*

In the spring of 2017, the Gospel Coalition held a preaching conference (TGC 2017) that consisted of the exposition of the entire book of Galatians by six plenary speakers. Carson and Robinson explain that "this book has been adapted from those talks and supplemented with important introductory material to give pastors and teachers a resource to help them interpret and apply Galatians faithfully to a new generation of Christians who desire to breathe the rich gospel air of the Reformation" (9).

Their purpose is accomplished over nine chapters, the first two covering introductory material (by Thomas Schreiner) and historical considerations (by Gerald Bray). The bulk of the book, chapters 3–8, are the sermons given at TGC 2017, with each speaker (John Piper, Sandy Willson, Peter Adam, D. A. Carson, Thabiti Anyabwile, and Tim Keller) taking an entire chapter of Galatians. The book concludes with thoughts from Galatians on the errors of legalism and antinomianism (by Sinclair Ferguson).

The expositions contained within these chapters are biblically faithful and would certainly aid young preachers. Some may quibble over certain interpretive decisions, but these messages are clear and demonstrate focused attention to the text at hand. The additional chapters on background material, as well as on thinking about the issues of legalism and license, offer the kinds of resources one may find in a commentary on Galatians. They are brief, and thus do not go into the depth that commentaries would, but are informative enough to get someone started as they begin to study the Epistle.

It is wonderful to hear from myriad voices on the preaching of the word. Here we have sermons that are quite diverse in nature, showing that there are different ways to

approach exposition and that no one "style" is superior to another. However, with such diversity also comes a potentially missed opportunity to show how to work through a book of the Bible with a single unified approach. For example, Piper's sermon is well thought out, following the logic of Paul as opposed to verse ordering, whereas others adhere to working through the passage in the order Paul has presented his material. Then there are the variances in sermonic styles. All this is not to level a dismissive critique of the work, but simply to say there are strengths and weaknesses in books with multiple authors. In sum, the benefits here surely outweigh potential weaknesses.

Anecdotally, I myself taught through Galatians this summer at camps and to my adult Bible class at church, and found the content of *Christ Has Set Us Free* quite useful. Considering the brevity of the book, it may have been helpful to have the six speakers include an introductory or concluding section about why and how they approached their assigned chapter of Galatians the way they did. That would have allowed teachers of preachers and students of preaching to see "under the hood" and get into the mindset of those preaching. Regardless, this work offers a faithful model of how to understand and apply the Epistle to the Galatians in our own preaching ministries.

A Legacy of Preaching: Volume One–Apostles to the Revivalists and *A Legacy of Preaching: Volume Two– Enlightenment to the Present Day*. Edited by Benjamin K. Forrest, Kevin L. King, Bill Curtis, and Dwayne Milioni. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018. 978-0310538226 and 978-0310538264, 528 pp. and 560 pp., $44.43 (set).

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

The four editors, two from Liberty University and two from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, have gathered some sixty scholars, mostly historians and theologians, from a variety

of institutions and representing a variety of Protestant traditions, to overview a history of preaching from Paul to the present day.

Both volumes follow the same helpful format. After a brief introduction aquaints readers with each of the nine historical divisions surveyed, every one of the sixty chapters provides a brief characterization of the preacher, his/her historical background, theological foundations, methodology for preaching, contributions to preaching, a short sermon excerpt, and a bibliography.

These volumes are intended to provide pastors with insight and encouragement as they pursue their calling to preach. Reading a chapter in the evening just before retiring should prove inspiring. Students will discover a variety of models as they develop their own preaching voice, considering both strengths and weakness of many influential pulpiteers of the past. Teachers of Christian history and preaching will find these chapters a source for both initial instruction and further research.

As all histories of preaching must decide not only the number of preachers reviewed, but also the breadth of denominational representation therein, the editors of this set have intentionally narrowed their focus. Beyond the Middle Ages, only a single preacher outside the Protestant tradition is represented. Additionally, only European and North American preachers are reviewed after Part One of Volume One. Five African American and two women preachers are considered. The volumes' greatest weakness is the brevity of sermon excerpts, leaving readers scarcely be able to grasp the preaching content and style of individual preachers. Fortunately, the bibliographies point readers to sermon anthologies that may help resolve that deficiency.

Taking into account Edwin Charles Dargan's two volume *A History of Preaching* (a classic for over a century), David L. Larsen's two-volume *Company of the Preachers* (from an evangelical perspective), Hughes Oliphant Old's seven-volume series *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church* (an exhaustive account of preaching that addresses African, Asian, and Latin American representatives

and a wide range of denominations), O. C. Edwards' two-volume *A History of Preaching* (containing many original writings and sermons), readers of this *Journal* looking for an initial exposure to the history of preaching or a classroom text should find *A Legacy of Preaching* a sound choice.

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."

Captalization

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

Direct Quotes

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

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

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

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

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