



BOOK REVIEWS

Words That Heal: Preaching Hope to Wounded Souls. By Joni S. Sancken. Nashville: Abingdon, 2019. 978-1-50184-968-8, 128 pp., \$18.99.

Reviewer: H. Jared Bumpers, *Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO.*

Joni Sancken, associate professor of homiletics at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, wrote *Words That Heal* in the aftermath of an unexpected loss. She explains, “On July 4, 2016, my sister-in-law died from a brain aneurysm.... After this heartbreaking experience, I became more attuned to the wounds that other families and individuals carry and how these wounds can affect relationships with God and the church. Those who write about healing from trauma often have a personal catalyst. Our family’s journey through trauma toward healing is traced in these pages” (xiii).

Given this background, Sancken’s book is unavoidably personal. At the same time, it’s broadly applicable. Even if there are only a few people in a congregation who have experienced a major traumatic event, she observes, “lower levels of pain and bitterness are widely present in our congregations” (11). Unfortunately, preachers often lack the knowledge or tools to address trauma from the pulpit. Sancken set out to fix this problem by writing a book that “equips preachers to help individuals and congregations heal from traumatic experiences and develop resilience” (xiii).

One of the primary keys to equip preachers to aid others who have experienced trauma is to raise their awareness about trauma and how it affects those in the pew. To raise awareness, Sancken defines trauma, lists its common causes, describes its various effects, and provides a theological framework for addressing trauma. She does not provide this information to turn

the pulpit into “a trauma center” but to inform preaching practices and enable preachers to deliver trauma-informed sermons (17). Armed with the knowledge of trauma and its effects, she believes, preachers can deliver sermons that are sensitive to those who have experienced major traumatic events, as well as those who have experienced lesser levels of pain and bitterness.

Another key to equipping preachers to address trauma from the pulpit, according to Sancken, is to read the Bible “through the lenses of trauma and resilience” (26). She offers the following five interpretive tools to guide the process: (1) Scripture as a source of the language of faith, (2) assigning the blame, (3) focusing on the power of God, (4) typology, and (5) cross and resurrection. At times, these tools are explained and powerfully applied. For example, Sancken quotes Lamentations and Psalm 137, then encourages preachers to “use biblical language to externalize the pain of wounding experiences today” (27). By identifying texts that contain language expressing devastating experiences and the resulting pain, preachers can provide a vocabulary for trauma survivors to verbalize their internal suffering and anguish. At other times, however, the tools are unhelpful and distract from the point of the text. For example, Sancken applies the tool of “assigning blame” to the narrative of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22 and concludes, “As a fallible human, Abraham may have mischaracterized God’s call” (42). Nothing in the text or the remainder of Scripture indicates Abraham “mischaracterized God’s call.” In this case, Sancken’s interpretive tool led her astray. This does not render her interpretive tools useless, but preachers should use them judiciously.

While *Words that Heal* is designed to help preachers address trauma from the pulpit in a healthy way, Sancken acknowledges the trauma caused by the church throughout history. She writes, “Racism, sexism, colonialism, participation in cultural genocide, anti-Semitism, and complicity in the face of clergy sexual abuse are examples of traumatic wounds caused in part by or deepened by the church” (49). Instead of acting as

agents of healing, pastors and church leaders have been guilty of inflicting pain on the vulnerable. Sancken encourages Christian leaders to listen to survivors, confess and apologize for abuse, and preach about justice. Ignoring the reality of trauma caused by the church is simply not an option. Yet preachers are not constrained to lamenting previous abuses in the church. They can build resilience in their people by preaching the hope of the gospel. As Sancken observes, "The good news of the resurrection never gets old or tiresome, and listeners struggling with wounds of all kinds need to hear it" (77). This is the heart of her argument. In the face of trauma, preachers can address the pain and suffering of survivors with the hope of the gospel and build resilience in their listeners.

This volume makes a unique contribution to the field of preaching. While conservative evangelical preachers will undoubtedly disagree with certain theological convictions and statements contained in the book (for example, God is described as one who takes risks and a reference is made to the feminine Spirit of God), the book will stimulate their thinking about trauma and how it impacts the task of preaching. At the very least, readers will come to possess an increased understanding of trauma and its effects and will be encouraged to preach the gospel in order to develop resilience in their listeners.



Practicing the Preaching Life. By David B. Ward. Nashville: Abingdon, 2019. 978-1-5018-5494-1, 178 pp., \$29.99.

Reviewer: Glenn Watson, *Canadian Baptist Theological Seminary, Cochrane, AB.*

Who among us has not heard (or preached!) sermons that were exegetically accurate, homiletically correct, thoughtfully applied, and adequately delivered, yet which still seemed to fall flat? All the essential pieces are in place, yet there is a sense that some intangible quality (authenticity? credibility? wisdom?) is

missing. David Ward, Professor of Homiletics and Practical Theology at Indiana Wesleyan University, addresses this problem with the principled assertion that “preaching is more about life than it is about skills” (ii).

In *Practicing the Preaching Life*, Ward offers a philosophy and practice founded on the assumption that preaching’s proper aim is not merely a good sermon but “living well as a worshipping community for the sake of the world” (2). His philosophy consists essentially of four preaching functions (healing, teaching, saving, freeing) that shape a preacher’s doing, and four “contextual virtues” (centered humility, compassionate empathy, participatory wisdom, courageous justice) that shape a preacher’s being. He urges preachers to pursue the “good life” above the “good sermon” (79) through Christian practices of devotion (spiritual disciplines) and practices of compassion (serving the needs of others). These practices he calls “means of grace,” helping the preacher to “practice the presence of God” and to enter a cycle of Christian formation: “The preaching life is embedded within a Christian life, a Christian life funds a rich preaching life, and a rich preaching life points the church to a comprehensively Christian life” (93).

In the final chapters, Ward gives practical tips for integrating these functions, virtues, and practices into a sermon development process. He offers the practices of devotion and compassion as the context in which a “hermeneutic of tradition” and a “hermeneutic of suspicion” work together to lead to fresh insight. He proposes a “delay” between insight and sermon through a four-week preparation process to allow the time for the contextual virtues to shape the preacher’s perspective. He suggests a process of oral preparation that locates the sermon by “sounding it out,” affirming that “for most preachers, the sooner orality is injected into the preaching process, the better” (124). He discusses three preaching voices (herald, witness, testimony) and develops each insightfully, including pitfalls to avoid. Finally, a chapter on sermon form explores a variety of possibilities ranging from inductive to deductive, with an emphasis on a sermon logic that undergirds each.

Though Ward clearly writes from the perspective of his Wesleyan tradition, expressed through the New Homiletic, he makes efforts to converse meaningfully with a broader readership. He also exhibits a keen conviction that issues of racial and social justice should occupy a prominent place in today's Christian pulpit. He emphasizes this theme by devoting an entire chapter to the virtue of "courageous justice," covering the other three virtues in a single chapter. Readers who oppose the use of Critical Race Theory will likely find fault with some of his comments regarding the need to address systems of injustice, but his perspective is compelling and worth considering.

The book includes a "For Reflection" section at the end of each chapter with a series of exercises and questions to help process the chapter's content, either with a class or as an individual. Five appendices also provide helpful handles for the reader through exercises, assessments, summaries, and diagrams. Though the insights of the book are of value for preachers of all levels, the fact that it does not address basic homiletical skills might preclude it from being the primary textbook for a beginning preaching course. It might serve best as a supplementary or secondary text, or perhaps as a primary text for a more advanced course. Preachers who have been at the task for a while will also find here an important perspective for deepening their preaching life and practice.

In this work, David Ward has taken an aspect of preaching that is universally recognized as crucial but which is often neglected in books on preaching, and he has put it at center stage. He reminds us that preaching is not merely a skill to be mastered but a life to be lived, that sermons flow best from a life lived faithfully before God and among his people.



Father Taylor: Boston's Sailor Preacher. By William H. Armstrong. Amazon Self-Publishing, 2020. 979-8060-3960-067, 496 pp., \$19.95.

Reviewer: *Martin L. Knox, Lakeshore Baptist Church, Hudson Oaks, TX.*

In his tribute to Boston preacher Edward Thompson Taylor, William Armstrong opens with a nineteen-page overview of his subject's life. Here he details what little is known about Taylor's early history, including the fact that he spent eleven years at sea working on ships after beginning at the age of seven. When he finally returned home, Taylor was unable to find anyone he formerly knew nor the graves of his own parents.

Late in 1811, he entered the Broomfield Lane Methodist Church to listen to a young preacher. Thomas Tucker, who would also become a preacher, noticed the emotion aroused in Taylor by the message and helped him to the altar and his conversion. Tucker later wrote of Taylor that he was "one of the roughest and most unpromising specimens of a sailor that he had ever seen, and gave but faint promise of a brilliant career (2)."

Taylor's journey into the pastorate and preaching was challenging. He was uneducated and lacked experience. He struggled to obtain his license and to keep it.

In 1828, the Methodists formed a Port Society in Boston due to their concern for sailors. Father Taylor, as he came to be known, was invited to preach to a group of those men. Immediately upon hearing Taylor's sermon, all knew they had the right man to lead this new ministry. For the next forty years, he served in this position while the ministry and his congregation grew significantly. Sadly, his last few years were plagued with declining mental and physical health. An assistant pastor was called to work with him until his death.

The greater part of Armstrong's book, pages 39-405, are historical accounts by various people familiar with Taylor. Each contributor is named and a brief description of her/his connection to Taylor is given when possible. These accounts range from local people of no apparent significance to luminaries like Ralph Waldo Emerson who enjoyed listening to Taylor preach.

Father Taylor provides a brief history of but one local pastor in Boston in the 1800s. He was regarded as a fine orator by the sailors to whom he ministered. His popularity and service to the larger community earned him influence across his city. Armstrong's record of this preacher provides another entry into the history of homiletics, which often overlooks men of Taylor's stature. Readers will find Father Taylor's story to be of interest but will likely find the testimonials from those who knew him to grow increasingly tiresome with each passing page.



Communicating with Grace and Virtue. By Quentin J. Schultze. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020. 978-1-540-96127-3, 160 pp., \$18.99.

Reviewer: *Randall A. Boltinghouse, Windsor Road Christian Church, Champaign, IL.*

In *Communicating with Grace and Virtue*, Quentin J. Schultze offers a readable, values-based text for students of communication. Schultze (Ph.D., University of Illinois) taught for forty years in higher education (most recently at Calvin College) and now mentors, speaks, and writes in his field. From his Judeo-Christian worldview, Schultze sees "servant communication" as a God-endowed stewardship to benefit others (16).

In chapter one, Schultze invites the reader to view communication as a calling, essential to every area of life. He lists twenty-two vocations involving communication, as well as everyday interactions ranging from "mealtime" to "worship communication" (27). In chapter two, Schultze contends that "our best communication flows from grateful hearts" (38). He is thankful that humans cannot only communicate but talk about how to improve communication with the help of the Holy Spirit. In effective "servant communication," the speaker understands the importance of symbols, their shared understanding, and the wisdom of an "active listening heart" that picks up cues beyond the spoken words (49).

In chapter three, Schultze discusses the ethics of communication, a chapter which this reviewer found difficult to track. For instance, the discussion begins with communicating ethically but shifts abruptly to listening effectively. After six pages, the chapter unexpectedly returns to ethics. The chapter's main ethical dilemma left this reviewer confused as to what boundaries demarcate responsible communication. Is Schultze really recommending that we intentionally do sloppy work (i.e., deliberately write "unintelligible" ad scripts for "massage parlors") as a way of appeasing our consciences before an undesirable client? A separate chapter on listening as a pathway to better communication would strengthen this book.

In chapters four and five, Schultze soars as he urges transparency and vulnerability in the context of community. Servant communicators are broken vessels who strive to be self-aware of their blind spots and imperfections. Their presentations avoid "always," "never," and "you." They speak and write, building relational bridges instead of inciting chaos. In chapter six, Schultze effectively explicates Aristotelian *ethos*, urging the servant communicator to be the same person always: "Integrity is all about integrating our words with our hearts" (105). In chapters seven and eight, he discusses the importance of storytelling as a medium of communication, then offers guidelines for utilizing technology. "Fittingness" is his key word, whether choosing to use PowerPoint in a sermon (maybe) or texting an employment termination notice (definitely not!) (138).

Best used as an undergraduate text for speech communications or pre-homiletics, discussion questions after each chapter provide for robust teacher-student interaction. Also, the various window-in-text discussions further explore each chapter's theme. Topics include (1) careers in communication, (2) non-verbal communication by one's attire, (3) effective story-telling, (4) "listening beyond our tribe," (5) communicating in first person plural, and (6) why Christians should enter the gaming industry. Throughout his book, Schultze rightly stresses the character of the communicator over performance mechanics. "Whom did I serve?" takes priority over

“How well did I speak?” Additionally, Schultze’s instructive video lessons, articles, and blog posts can be found at Quentinschultze.com, where the reviewer found his lesson “How to eliminate Ums, Likes, and Ahs” very useful.

Schultze’s text reminds this reviewer of C. S. Lewis’s “need-love” versus “gift-love.” Is the speaker communicating out of some need to extract *love from* or offer *love to* the listener? Schultze conveys the latter with a pastor’s touch. In doing so, he equips future public speakers and preachers with their most important tools, neither podiums nor PowerPoints, but towels and basins.



The Big Idea Companion for Preaching and Teaching. Edited by Matthew D. Kim and Scott M. Gibson. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021. 978-1-5409-6179-2, 625 pp., \$39.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: Michael Duduit, *Clamp Divinity School of Anderson University, Anderson, SC*.

Haddon Robinson’s 1980 book *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* became a foundational book for the teaching of homiletics in evangelical colleges and seminaries. In that book Robinson introduced his term the “big idea” to refer to the central idea of a biblical text, shaped for effective preaching. The concept was not new—John A. Broadus emphasized the same idea in different words a century before—but since then, “big idea preaching” has become a popular methodology in many evangelical pulpits.

Several books have been produced in recent years building on Robinson’s methodology, and the latest volume is *The Big Idea Companion for Preaching and Teaching*. The book is edited by two preaching professors with ties to Gordon-Conwell Seminary, where Robinson concluded his teaching career—Matt Kim is currently on the preaching faculty there, while Scott M. Gibson taught there many years as a colleague of Robinson’s

until recently joining the faculty of Baylor's Truett Theological Seminary.

The *Big Idea Companion* is a tool designed to guide preachers and teachers in understanding the key concepts of biblical texts and to help them narrow down to a preachable big idea. As Kim explains, the hefty volume is designed to give readers "an insider's view of the process of determining the main idea of a passage in its context (i.e., subject, complement, exegetical idea, and homiletical idea). In addition, for each book of the Bible you will have access to several features: (1) a brief introduction to the big idea of the entire book, (2) tips on how to divide the book into teaching and preaching pericopes, (3) guidance on difficult passages and verses, (4) cultural perspectives to facilitate faithful application, and (5) recommended resources for interpreting, preaching, and teaching each book" (1-2).

The book moves from Genesis to Revelation, covering selected chapters and texts. Each book is written by one of a large team of contributors (several have written on more than one biblical book). For example, the book of 1 Corinthians is analyzed by Joel Gregory. Here is his text for 1 Corinthians 16:

SUBJECT: What does Paul tell the Corinthians is God's will for stewardship of life and time?

COMPLEMENT: God intends people who believe in the resurrection to give in a timely and proportionate way.

EXEGETICAL IDEA: Paul tells the Corinthians God's will for stewardship of life and time is that God intends people who believe in the resurrection to give in a timely and proportionate way.

HOMILETICAL IDEA: Manage your money and minutes well.

Readers of Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* will recognize here elements of his suggested process for developing an expository sermon. The homiletical idea is, of course, the "big idea" of the sermon that forms the foundation of the expository sermon.

This volume promises to be a useful resource for preachers and teachers as they approach biblical texts. The material provided here is not a replacement for one's own exegetical study but does provide a spark for deeper study and understanding. Given that the best big ideas are short and memorable, many of the ones offered here tend to be a bit on the long side, so preachers will want to use these as a starting point, then develop their own big ideas that are more tightly crafted.

As with any book involving multiple contributors, quality will vary from book to book, though readers will find value in each section. Contributors include preaching professors, pastors, and a graduate student in preaching. They reflect different denominations, ethnicities, and locations, but all are "committed to the authority of God's Word and trust its effectual work in the lives of those to whom we teach and preach" (604).

As Scott M. Gibson points out in the book's conclusion, this volume is meant to be a "guide in helping you teach and preach God's Word. It does not replace good, hard work as one studies in preparation for teaching and preaching" (603). Nevertheless, the *Big Idea Companion* will find a welcome spot on the desk of expository preachers as they study God's Word.



Predicadores: Hispanic Preaching and Immigrant Identity. By Tito Madrazo. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2021. 978-1-481-31390-2, 199 pp., \$39.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: Kerwin Rodriguez, Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Tito Madrazo's *Predicadores* explores Hispanic Protestant preaching through the lives and practices of immigrant preachers living in North Carolina. Through collaborative ethnography, Madrazo provides an understanding of Hispanic preaching that is both personal and insightful. The study reveals that Hispanic immigrant pastors are shaped "by [their] migration stories and

bicultural realities” (15). For most of the pastors, their migration journeys produced various traumas, for which they found healing through personal relationship with God, and their callings.

The preaching Madrazo observed during his study was a complex blend of traditional and liberative preaching. Most of the sermons were based on traditional interpretations of Scripture, “yet they also affirmed the worth of their hearers, incorporated themes of solidarity among immigrant communities, and even called for social change” (75). Their sermons exhibited a “strong focus on personal salvation along with a highly contextualized understanding that salvation extend[ed] into all areas of life” (80). Madrazo noticed that the preachers related certain truths about God to their context of migration and feelings of marginalization. He identified five recurring themes in their preaching which addressed their own context and that of their hearers: Christ as savior and friend; God as miracle worker on behalf of the marginalized; God as gatherer of his people; God as lawgiver and provider of structure in the midst of chaos; and God as healer of the family.

Predicadores provides a fresh exploration of Latino/a preaching practices. Its use of collaborative ethnography is honoring to the ministers involved in the project and the communities they represent. As a way of honoring his collaborators, Madrazo includes responses and sermon excerpts in Spanish with an accompanying English translation. The bilingual excerpts invite readers to hear directly from the participants who might otherwise remain invisible.

Hispanic population in the United States has experienced significant growth in recent years. From 2000 to 2015, the Hispanic population grew from just over thirty-five million to over fifty-six million people. In North Carolina, where Madrazo conducted his study, the population of Hispanics in 1990 was just under seventy-seven thousand. In 2015, it grew to over nine-hundred thousand people (4). Hispanic religious identification as Protestants has also increased. Despite these increases, few studies have been done on Hispanic Protestant preaching. The

most popular work by Justo González and Pablo Jiménez was published in 2005.

Predicadores is a welcome addition on the subject to the field of homiletics. Despite its title, the book's usefulness should not be limited to Hispanic readers. Anyone who ministers in a community with a growing Latino/a population would find the book insightful. Additionally, teachers of preaching should read the book as an example of contextual preaching. The book does leave a few unresolved questions that need exploration. Almost all of the pastors who participated in the study are first generation Hispanic immigrants. Throughout the book Madrazo hints at the generational fragmentation the Hispanic immigrant church faces. The study does not address how these churches might address these challenges, but the book raises the need for more study on the subject of Hispanic Protestant preaching and ministry.



To Aliens and Exiles: Preaching the New Testament as Minority-Group Rhetoric in a Post-Christendom World. By Tim MacBride. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2020. 978-1-5326-9683-1, 237 pp., \$31.00.

Reviewer: Casey Barton, North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL.

In *To Aliens and Exiles*, Tim MacBride makes the case that the New Testament speaks to the church and its people as those who represent a *minority people* in their culture; believers in this moment find ourselves as this same minority people in relation to our cultures; and the *minority rhetoric* utilized by Scripture's authors is an important biblical and rhetorical lens for preaching to God's people today. MacBride's observations are both poignant and pragmatic for the Western church in general, and for the white evangelical church in particular.

MacBride presents the community of the church as "aliens and exiles," relying on Peter's designation in his first epistle. In a

post-Christian world, “we can no longer preach with the assumption that we are part of the dominant culture. Increasingly, we preach conscious that we belong to a minority...one that is being pushed unevenly yet undeniably from its former central place in society toward the margins” (ix). From here, MacBride’s take on post-Christendom preaching is altogether valuable because of the lens of *minority rhetoric* he gives preachers.

When MacBride uses the term *minority*, he is not primarily speaking in terms of ethnic minorities as our dominant usage of the term may indicate. He is speaking of the church and of Christians as those who stand in a minority position to the thoughts, practices, and values of the world. Even while on one level we may think of ourselves as a “Christian country,” there is a reality in which our culture would dictate to us the terms of this faith. In this sense, the church is now, and always has been, a minority people.

Within this ecosystem, MacBride identifies the dynamic of minority rhetoric in the New Testament, exploring this rhetorically, sociologically, and theologically. Once a group recognizes its minority status there are generally three trajectories it can take: the group will seek to minimize differences with the dominant culture, often resulting in capitulation; the group will embrace inherent differences with the larger society, often distancing itself beyond accessibility; or, the group will seek to become *attractively different*, the most difficult yet also most biblical strategy (xiii).

The first two chapters establish how the minority rhetoric of the New Testament has as its aim this goal of creating a community that is attractively different to the dominant culture, maintaining unique beliefs while evangelizing the world beyond its walls. The group must answer questions of approval, disapproval, identity, practice, worldview, and salience (14). Attentiveness here helps preachers craft and preach sermons with the goal of forming the church’s identity as attractively different. The value of these first chapters is amplified by

MacBride's practical exploration of minority rhetoric throughout the New Testament, which occupies the balance of the book.

I strongly recommend this book to preachers and teachers of preaching. One of the weaknesses of the contemporary pulpit (or church generally) shaped by modernity is that there is a tendency to believe that we are very different from our brothers and sisters who preceded us. Yet, in more ways we are similar than different. MacBride's study helps to cut some of the distance that we (artificially) insert between the first communities and today. He brings us back to some New Testament roots of how the church is created to be a different structure and system—body, bride, family, aliens, strangers—than the structures and systems that the world has built and into which it would force the church to assimilate.

The work is helpful as well to those of us preachers who increasingly feel like a minority within our own tribe, as branches of Christian faith have sought to eliminate distance between the church and segments of political belief. When the church fights the reality of post-Christendom, it can seek to hold on to a perceived power and privilege that may be viewed as a civic right. Pastors preaching in opposition to the church's politicization, syncretism, or nationalism will benefit greatly from MacBride's exploration of and exhortation to minority rhetoric for the church today. One of the most important chapters in this regard is the last one which seeks to give a perspective of the African-American church for the (especially white evangelical) church struggling with its majority heritage. MacBride's lens of minority rhetoric has the potential to give preachers tools to help the church re-locate from a perceived majority position to its minority roots and to preach in such a way that would help form that community as attractively different in the world today.



The Overshadowed Preacher: Mary, the Spirit, and the Labor of Proclamation. By Jerusha Matsen Neal. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020. 978-0-8028-7653-9, 249 pp., \$25.17 (hardback).

Reviewer: *Dwayne Milioni, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC.*

A new book exploring a new biblical metaphor for preaching by Jerusha Matsen Neal, assistant professor of homiletics at Duke Divinity School, encourages the preacher to seek the presence of the living Christ in proclamation. The unused metaphor connects the story of Mary's conceiving, bearing, and naming Jesus in Luke's gospel account to the preaching event. This book is a rendition of Neal's dissertation. It is well-researched and includes helpful footnotes.

Neal encourages the preacher to identify fully with their humanness and claim the promise that God's Spirit will "overshadow" their preaching. In a manner similar to Barth, the preacher who embodies the Spirit-filled life through acts of hospitality, dependence, and discernment will also embody Christ in the proclamation of the gospel.

Eight chapters align the preacher to Mary's experience in becoming Christ's mother by the Spirit's promise and power. This metaphor is challenging for a male preacher and, to Neal's purpose, an encouragement and empowerment for the female preacher who can more easily identify with the concept of labor when considering sermon preparation and delivery. Neal tells her own story of the burden of bearing and conceiving her sermons like she did her children throughout the book.

A preacher's physical body matters to Neal, and she desires more female bodies to be ordained and take on the responsibility of preaching with the full blessing of the church. The ecclesial oppression of women and minorities past and present has hindered the progression of women in pulpit ministry. Neal does not want to make an exegetical or theological

justification for ordained women preachers, she assumes the importance of this and wants Mary's story of vulnerability to empowerment to become the story of any woman desiring a public preaching ministry.

Neal believes there has been an unfortunate partition between rhetoric and the living word in Protestant preaching. A thread from John Calvin to John Broadus to Peter Adam (even David Buttrick) reveals the influence of rhetoric in preaching apart from divine revelation. The author says, "When rhetoric's primary function becomes the exertion of power, performances that appease and entertain become a preacher's bread and butter. But the result can also be performances that manipulate and divide" (40).

The relationship between the Spirit of God, the resurrected Christ, and humble "handmaids" who preach are explored in this work. Mary's pregnancy is used to show how the three work together in the preaching event. Neal rejects the Roman Catholic ideal of Mary so she can represent the common person. Mary receives Christ's bodily presence by the Spirit's aid, which should encourage any woman who may feel intimidated to preach. Preaching becomes a mystical union of Christ and the preacher, a type of Protestant sacrament to the church.

It is helpful to hear Neal speak of preaching as proclaiming life and to deal honestly with its messiness and costs. Also helpful are statements like, "Sermons do not live on the page. They live in time. They are material, embodied events that unfold, moment by moment" (165). Even the metaphor of preaching as giving birth connects with anyone who regularly experiences the regular burden of bringing the living Christ to a congregation.

In the end, the task of the preacher is to bear the resurrected Christ to the world: the particular, permeable, and provisional Christ. Preaching is not about performing, manipulating, or domineering over vulnerable people, but experiencing the shadow of God's Spirit to preach a message of relationship rather than deliver a performance. Though several of Neal's assumptions ought to be critically challenged, if one is

looking for fresh insight on the labor of proclamation, this book will be useful.



The Beauty of Preaching: God's Glory in Christian Proclamation. By Michael Pasquarello III.

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020. 978-0-802-82474-5, 288 pp., \$26.99.

Reviewer: *Charlie Ray, III, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA.*

In *The Beauty of Preaching*, Michael Pasquarello III attempts to show “that responding to the beauty of God’s glory is the heart of preaching as human speech” (xxii). “This book invites preachers to behold the beauty of Christ, which is inherent to the gospel we proclaim. It does this by offering a ‘homiletical aesthetic’ that returns preaching to the joy of knowing and making known God’s glory to the world” (xv). Pasquarello is reacting against much modern preaching, which he considers to be “devoted to topics, ideas, principles, positions, and programs in the name of being relevant” (6). Instead, he seeks to call preachers to a form of preaching that upholds the beauty of Christ, leads to doxology, and ends in a church that lives out the beauty of the message. “*The Beauty of Preaching* is an invitation to ‘see’ afresh the heart of the church’s vocation of preaching: to know, love, and enjoy God in all we think, say, do, desire, and suffer” (24).

Much of Pasquarello’s work is essentially character studies: of the widow and the widow’s mite, the woman who anointed Jesus with oil, Augustine, Welsey and the Wesleyan tradition, and Martin Luther. He examines each of these characters to demonstrate either how their actions displayed the beauty of the gospel or how their preaching was doxological in nature. Each of these characters helps build toward a “homiletical aesthetic” that is not just about the acquisition of

more knowledge but is about beholding the glory of Christ and being transformed into his image.

The Beauty of Preaching would best serve the experienced preacher who does not need another book on homiletical method but who needs to be reinvigorated by the proper aim and end of preaching. This book is not a how-to on preaching, but it is a reminder that the goal of preaching is the glory of God in Christ, and the end of preaching should be a church transformed to live for the glory of God in a broken and sinful world.

Yet, one of the tensions every preacher must face is how to preach a beautiful message of a glorious Savior that the world often perceives as a scandal or an offense. Pasquerello has reminded preachers of the beautiful message of a glorious Savior, but I would have liked to see him wrestle more with how to balance the glory of the message with the offense of the gospel. In his endorsement of the book, Jason Byassee asked, "Imagine if we asked the average passerby what they thought of Christianity, and they responded, 'I don't know if what they are saying is true, but wow, is it ever beautiful?'" (back cover). While this idea is certainly appealing, we recognize that the gospel is a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles (1 Cor. 1:23). It is only the wisdom of God to those who are called (1:24).

Pasquerello says of 2 Corinthians 2:15-16, the "proclamation of the 'fragrance' of the knowledge of Christ is a sweet 'aroma' that overcomes the foul odor of death." Yet the whole point of that passage is that unbelievers hear the gospel and smell the stench of death. Paul asks "who is sufficient for these things" (2 Cor. 2:16) because of the great paradox of proclaiming a beautiful message to a world that tends to hate that message. I was encouraged by Pasquarello's emphasis on proclaiming the beauty of Christ, but I think we also need to be reminded that the world will not always see this beauty but, in fact, will often see ugliness in its place.

This leads to my second criticism of the book. I consider pastoral preaching to be primarily geared towards the believer. While this preaching should be sensitive to unbelievers in the midst of the assembly of the church, this pastoral preaching is

primarily directed toward the people of God. Many of Pasquarello's biblical examples focus on evangelistic preaching and not pastoral preaching. These two forms of preaching are obviously related, but they are not identical. I think highlighting this distinction would have helped with my first criticism. Since pastoral preaching is primarily geared toward the church, the preacher should be concerned that the church beholds the glory of Christ, but the preacher cannot become enslaved to the reactions of unbelievers. Pasquarello does well to remind us of the beauty of preaching which should lead to a beautiful church, but we must also be reminded that the world will often see ugliness where God's people find beauty.



How to Preach the Psalms. By Kenneth J. Langley. Dallas: Fontes Press, 2021. 978-1-948048-53-8, 185 pp., \$18.95.

Reviewer: Gregory K. Hollifield, Memphis College of Urban and Theological Studies at Union University, Memphis, TN.

Readers will find in Kenneth J. Langley's first volume of the ongoing *Preaching Biblical Literature* series, edited by himself and Jeffrey D. Arthurs, a treasure trove of insights, examples, suggested resources for further study, possible student assignments, sample sermons, and two helpful indices. The author is senior pastor at Christ Community Church in Zion, Illinois; an adjunct professor of homiletics at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; past president of the Evangelical Homiletics Society; and, as is evident from his writing, a long-time and serious student of the Psalter.

Concerned that preachers tend to ignore the "poemness" of the psalms and treat all genres of Scripture the same in their preparation of sermons, Langley sets to his work by first pointing out the distinctive features of poetic literature—to wit, affect, imagination, and aesthetics. According to the author, the psalms speak to the heart by captivating the imagination with their

beauty and eloquence. Sermons that are true to the genre will do the same.

Having made the foregoing argument, Langley presents fourteen strategies to help the reader craft genre-sensitive sermons that pay attention to each psalm's imagery, moves, poetic devices, word usage, orality, emotion, and context. His strategies offer a blend of advice on what to look for when exegeting a psalm and techniques to consider for reflecting a psalm's rhetorical affect. For example, in his chapter on the "poetics" of psalms, Langley identifies those devices, like refrain and chiasm, that survive translation and others that don't carry over into English. Afterwards, he recommends that sermons use those devices that do translate and, for those that don't carry over, to employ similar English poetic devices, explicate the untranslatable, or make judicious use of English poetry to recapture the poetic tone and theme of the psalm under consideration.

Langley's writing style is direct, engaging, and clear. His book is laid out well. The table of contents is exhaustive, making it easy to track his development of thought; footnotes cite a variety of sources and offer additional information at a glance; each chapter ends with suggestions for further reading, a question for group discussion or personal reflection, and an assignment for applying the chapter's contents. In his book's first appendix, Langley weighs the questions of whether one should preach all of the Psalter and whether to preach whole psalms. In his second, he offers three sermon manuscripts—one on Psalm 131 by Thomas H. Troeger and two of his own from Psalms 84 and 130. Out of the concluding materials, researchers will most appreciate the seventy-eight titles found in the select bibliography, while preachers will gravitate towards the index of psalms discussed throughout the book.

How to Preach the Psalms will serve well both homiletics professors, especially those in doctoral programs, and practicing preachers. The book is ready made for inclusion in a seminar on genre-sensitive preaching. (One hopes that the other volumes in this series, growing out of an Evangelical Homiletics Society

discussion group, will prove to be just as handy. If they are, what a seminar they will create!) Practicing preachers will want to revisit what Langley says about any given psalm as they begin preparing a sermon thereon. Taking what he offers in this little gem and adding it to his chapter on the Psalms as found in Matthew Kim and Scott Gibson's *The Big Idea Companion for Preaching and Teaching* (Baker, 2021), the reader will be well on his or her way to composing a sermon that sings!



Using Our Outside Voice: Public Biblical Interpretation. By Greg Carey. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2020. 978-1-451-49633-8, 192 pp., \$28.60.

Reviewer: Gary T. Alley, *New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA.*

In *Using Our Outside Voice*, Greg Carey, professor of New Testament at Lancaster Theological Seminary (Pennsylvania), shines a light on an important topic for our times. Pointing out how so many contemporary cultural issues are impacting our relationships, influencing our nation's legislation, and threatening the sustainability of our society itself, Carey maintains that biblical texts have much to contribute to the conversations regarding these issues. His book challenges Christians to learn how to interpret Scripture for the public square.

A twenty-five year veteran of the classroom, Carey broadly describes the framework of his academic mission as being public biblical interpretation. He is the author or co-editor of nine books and serves on the editorial boards of *Biblical Interpretation*, *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, and *Review of Biblical Literature*. Much of Carey's work demonstrates a keen interest in the interface of contemporary Christianity and politics.

In chapter one of *Using Our Outside Voice*, Carey builds his argument for the concept, definition, and application of public

biblical interpretation. He bases his argument on his observations of cultural dynamics and his personal experiences as an educator. Carey makes the case that developing the capacity to engage theological materials in everyday life is a prerequisite for effective public biblical interpretation and should not be the exclusive domain of professionals. In chapters two and three, he discusses the roles that higher criticism and literary genres play in biblical interpretation. Chapter four highlights broad personal characteristics that may predispose readers to be more or less effective in their public biblical interpretation, while the following chapter digs deeper in its consideration of how a person's social class, ethnicity, or family background may influence their ability to interpret a text accurately and apply it contextually. Chapter six concludes the book by challenging readers to do the work necessary for effective public biblical interpretation and to embrace the need to bring biblical interpretation into public conversations.

The premise of this book is its strength. Public biblical interpretation will bring a much-needed voice to dialogues involving contemporary issues. As suggested by the author, interpreting biblical truth in the public square is not just for professionals. This book challenges the non-professional to become involved in this interpretive exercise and shows a path towards that end.

Although the concept of public biblical interpretation is needed, conservative evangelicals will likely find Carey's critical approaches to that interpretation to be a weakness. This is most noticeable in chapter two where he promotes interpretive methods typically advocated by more liberal theologians and scholars, such as the documentary theory related to the Pentateuch (68).

Those interested in the intersection of a biblical worldview and secular culture will appreciate this book. Its overall premise warrants attention in seminary classrooms. While appropriate for doctoral and master's level courses, professors will need to consider carefully how to handle the book's overall hermeneutical approach to Scripture.



The Gospel People Don't Want to Hear: Preaching Challenging Messages. By Lisa Cressman. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2020. 978-1-5064-5639-3, 143 pp., \$18.99.

Reviewer: *Michael H. Mills, Greensport Baptist Church, Ashville, AL.*

Lisa Cressman in *The Gospel People Don't Want to Hear* provides a succinct look into the difficulties preachers face when approaching topics that their congregations might find sensitive. She explains why listeners sometimes react strongly to their preachers' sermons and suggests several tools and strategies that she believes preachers can use when addressing difficult topics.

Her work contains much that successfully addresses the problem of preaching on subjects that audiences want to avoid. She pictures her audience as living in a world where their sky is falling, much like in the fictional character Chicken Little. Change can make people feel as if their world is falling apart. This metaphor shows why some topics are sensitive to audiences. Consequently, preachers should be empathetic when they notice members struggling to accept the truth. Cressman argues that a preacher's ethos in particular influences the likelihood that such messages will be accepted. In fact, her emphasis on the preacher's ethos is a strength of her work. She rightly states, "If listeners are going to place their trust in us to go places they don't want to go, we need to make a concerted effort to build that trust. It's too critical to leave it to happenstance" (29). She insightfully argues that audiences will have more trust if preachers prove themselves to be faithful and dependable, show a hopeful spirit in the future, and genuinely love and care for others. While Cressman's later chapters can be useful, her metaphor of the "falling sky" and her emphasis on ethos especially should be considered when approaching a sensitive issue.

Despite these positive elements, evangelical preachers may be disappointed by the overall thrust of her work. The book's title makes it appear that the author will address how to

preach challenging Bible passages or how to apply the gospel to sins which are uncomfortable to address. This, however, is not what Cressman has in mind.

First, she is mostly concerned with sermons that speak to social issues (50). Moreover, Cressman wants pastors to take a progressive stance on these issues. For example, on human sexuality, she challenges pastors to ask individuals which pronoun they prefer be used when addressing them. She posits that the pastor should then use that same pronoun when speaking about God so that those hearers will “recognize themselves (their sexual orientation) as an expression of that aspect of God’s image” (131). If a preacher wants to learn about how to address the difficult orthodox doctrines of Scripture, much of what Cressman says offers little help.

The second reason the work can fall flat for an evangelical audience involves what Cressman means by the “gospel.” In her title, she claims to be sharing how to preach the gospel people don’t want to hear. This sounds noble until she gives her definition of the gospel. She says, “What do you believe is the gospel? ...I believe the good news is God’s love, mercy, justice, and compassion are applied equally to every human being, and that through Jesus Christ nothing, not even death, can separate us from God” (57). Since she believes that Christ’s atonement already is applied to all humans equally, this affects what she sees is the purpose of preaching: “Preaching is the art of communicating the Spirit’s desires to persuade listeners that they are loved and forgiven more than they realize. It is the art of persuading listeners to believe something they didn’t before; and then they are converted.” In other words, since all people are already saved, then preaching is persuading people to believe that they are already saved. Thus, the theology which drives Cressman’s work runs counter to the doctrine that the atonement is applied only to those who are in Christ by grace through faith.

Cressman’s work certainly contains much that can help preachers understand how their ethos makes a difference when preaching on difficult topics. Her theology, however, will make her book off-putting to many evangelicals.



Intentional Preaching: A View from the Pew. By Meirwyn Walters. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2020. 978-1-68307-268-3, 184 pp., \$24.95 (hardback).

Reviewer: *Christopher Priestaf, Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, Waco, TX.*

It has been said that you never really know a person until you have walked a mile in their shoes. In *Intentional Preaching: A View from the Pew*, Meirwyn Walters invites preachers back into the shoes—or seats—of their listeners, providing a perspective that is easy for the pulpiteer to forget, particularly over time.

Walters is not a preacher, at least by trade; he is a trial attorney and law professor at a Christian liberal arts college. He is active in his local church and often called to consult within other churches. But his upbringing as the son of famed Welsh preacher and teacher Gwyn Walters has developed in him a passion for “preachers, preaching, and everything that comes with it” (8). That passion is tangibly clothed in love throughout the book’s pages. The preacher-reader will learn, laugh, and perhaps occasionally disagree with Walters’ assertions, but he will never feel condemned or judged. This is a book meant to encourage, refortify, and increase the preacher’s effectiveness in the pulpit to the benefit of everyone involved.

Walters’ premise for writing the book is straightforward: “Everything you do with respect to your preaching should be the product of an *intentional* choice” (4). The preacher desiring to communicate with the greatest effectiveness should make every decision “deliberately, consciously, intentionally” (4). Walters unearths literally dozens of areas of focus, from facial hair to funerals, from elephants in the room to airplanes overhead, from detailed descriptions to distracting dress, all while seeking to examine those areas which most significantly affect those in the pews. In all, the book oscillates between the simple and the profound, oftentimes combining the two extremes into one.

The format of the book makes it easy to pick up and set down, as none of the considerations are overly lengthy. Such a construction is intentional on the part of Walters, who wants the preacher to be able to read the book “on the fly,” reading a section or two in the morning, and chewing on it during the day (11). The sheer quantity of topics makes such an approach appropriate, preventing the suggestions from becoming too overwhelming or too easily overlooked. As Walters helpfully acknowledges at the book’s end, “there is no way you can do everything in this book.” Yet, as he continues, “you *are* doing everything in this book in some fashion or another” (184).

Such a poignant concluding statement is worth consideration. Are preachers like us already doing, either intentionally or unintentionally, either successfully or unsuccessfully, much of what Walters writes? As I read through the book, I could not help but examine my own preaching ministry. I found myself needing to wrestle through my convictions relating to preaching’s purpose (12–14), asking how much attention I give to helping the listener visualize that which I am describing (149–150), and perhaps most importantly, recognizing the enormity and solemnity of the task of handling God’s holy word (68–72). I was also glad I did not struggle with the far less noble issues like blowing my nose (29) and having a wasp fly up my trousers (93), but I know some people have.

While opinions will certainly vary on Walter’s suggested number of points in a message, or getting to Christ every time, or the use of visual aids—either material or technological—each of the areas is worthy of consideration. Regardless of where one lands on the numerous and respective issues, at least they are being considered *intentionally*, which is the whole of Walters’ purpose in writing the book.

For the preacher prone to forget or unconsciously ignore the perspective of those we most want to affect, namely those sitting in the pews before us, this book is well worth the read—for your sake and theirs.



Misreading Scripture with Individualist Eyes: Patronage, Honor, and Shame in the Biblical World. By E. Randolph Richards and Richard James. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2020. 978-0-830-85275-8, 304 pp., \$28.00.

Reviewer: *Timothy Ward, Oak Hill College, London, UK.*

Richards and James intend to demonstrate to Bible readers from individualist societies that they are prone to misread certain things in Scripture because biblical texts carry the stamp of having being written in collectivist societies. Cultural features of texts are often missed, they argue, because they lie unarticulated, below the surface. They define an individualist society as one in which community is “the sum of the individuals” and a collectivist as one in which “the individual is the sum of the community” (22). This book is an expansion of sections of a previous work, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*, which Richards co-authored with another.

The authors identify the following features as distinctive in collectivist societies: kinship, patronage, brokerage (or mediation), honor, shame, and boundaries. Each section is nicely structured. Anecdotal examples are given from the authors’ own long experience in collectivist societies. These are all well-chosen, and I found them hugely helpful in grasping in practical terms what was being described. I was regularly shown that aspects of life and biblical interpretation which I easily assume are just “normal” are anything but. Then from Scripture come examples of that collectivist feature evident in a text, with suggestions of what readers from individualistic societies might miss or distort.

I found a number of the biblical examples persuasive and insightful. Highlights were the reading of the book of Ruth as reworking kinship ties (60-63) and the explanation of Paul’s different attitudes to receiving gifts in light of ancient patronage practices (95-97). With other examples I was less persuaded that knowledge of the text’s cultural background is as crucial as was

claimed in preventing misreading. The authors appeal to the use in ancient patronage practices of the Greek word *pistis* (usually translated “faith” in the NT) to argue that it means not bare assent but something closer to loyalty (109). Many Bible readers from individualist cultures have grasped this point from Scripture’s own use of the word. Similarly, I struggled to see just what misreadings of the Last Supper I am prone to if I’m not aware or persuaded that Jesus is presented analogously to an ancient patron (73). On other occasions, some ancient cultural background was brought forward to justify an unusual reading of a text, such as Nicodemus’ motives in John 3 (167-9). Perhaps I’m too locked into my culture to be able to see these as legitimate readings, but the authors lacked space here to make these persuasive.

In summary, I think that this book sometimes overreaches itself with implausible or at least unpersuasive examples. The title itself exaggerates a bit. The best biblical examples given are ones not so much ones of *misreading*, that is, distorting the point of a biblical text, but of *under-reading*, that is, grasping the central point but missing further color and angles through lack of cultural awareness. The basic message of the book though—that people from individualist cultures will often miss things in Scripture, and may sometimes distort it, if they lack awareness of their cultural distance from the world in which it is written—is a vital one, and the book serves well to press it home. Homiletically, trainee preachers who enjoy the book may need help in discerning wisely how much cultural background to explain in preaching, lest the helpful insights they offer lead to sermons that suggest that the Bible is safely handled only by experts in culture and history.



Spiritual Practices of Jesus: Learning Simplicity, Humility, and Prayer with Luke’s Earliest Readers. By Catherine J. Wright. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Academic, 2020. 978-0-8308-5226-0, 210 pp., \$25.00.

Reviewer: *Nathan Wright, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina.*

Have Christians historically understood the Gospel of Luke to commend to us the spiritual practices of simplicity, humility, and prayer? In her insightful book, Catherine Wright draws Luke's gospel into dialogue with Greek and Jewish literature, in addition to early church fathers, in an effort to argue that the ancient Church did exactly this. Her discussion aims to suggest what it looks like for contemporary Christians to see in Luke's Jesus a "model of the ideal king." The book takes form around three practices which Wright finds central to that model: simplicity, humility, and prayer; and the three sections of the book correspond with these three practices. The first chapters of each section (chapters 1, 4, 7) consist of commentary-like explication of Lukan texts pertinent to each practice. Chapters 2, 5, and 8 introduce a wealth of insights from ancient Greek philosophy and intertestamental Jewish writing, comparing and contrasting the messages of Jesus with those insights from the same time period. The final chapters of each section (3, 6, 9) outline how each of the three practices were discussed by Church fathers of the first five centuries of the Church.

In the author's own words, "[t]his book invites readers to explore the spiritual disciplines of simplicity, humility, and prayer with Luke's earliest readers... The book is written with the hopes that the practice of reading with Luke's earliest interpreters will expand the horizons of our understanding, enabling us to embrace the power of Jesus' example" (xxx).

This reviewer welcomes particularly several aspects of the work. First, the book is interested in how Scripture—especially Luke's gospel—was understood by its earliest readers. Further, the work traces out how Luke's gospel was interpreted by the earliest writers of the Church. If responsible conservative exegesis involves engagement with the scriptural texts while attending to how the Church has engaged with the same texts

during its two thousand-year history, this book is thoroughly conservative.

The work is also, however, unique in its frame and scope. To put it simply, this reviewer is unaware of any similar studies, particularly those wherein quotes from such a wide variety of writers—both biblical and extra-biblical—are brought to bear on the scriptural text on nearly every page. Cyril of Alexandria, Philo, Epictetus, Thomas Merton, Plutarch, Chrysostom, and John Cassian are just a few of these, and the depth of discussion reflects the breadth of great minds which Wright has brought to the table. The results of her work surprised this reviewer at several points, including, for example, the congruence between many of Christ's teachings with other writers of that time period.

In all, a welcome and helpful book.



Hebrews: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching. By Herbert W. Bateman and Steven W. Smith. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021. 978-0-825-45839-2, 389 pp., \$36.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: *Cisco Cotto, Village Bible Church, Sugar Grove, IL.*

Each volume of the Kerux Commentary series features one author who focuses on exegesis and another who focuses on homiletics. The book's back cover states: "Each volume is divided into distinct preaching segments, in which the authors guide the reader through a well-tested sequence: exegetical analysis, theological focus, and teaching strategy." The entire series is squarely focused on providing help to the preacher. The structure of each commentary is uniform, so the reader knows what to expect in each new addition.

In the present volume, Herbert W. Bateman is the exegetical author, and Steven W. Smith is the homiletician. Bateman, a Ph.D. graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, is president of the Cyber-Center for Biblical Studies. Smith, a Ph.D.

graduate of Regent University, is senior pastor at Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, AR.

Any commentary on Hebrews must address the issues of authorship, literary genre, and interpretation of the five warning passages. Bateman and Smith do this thoroughly.

In their introduction, the authors provide historical and exegetical support for their conclusion that Hebrews was written by Barnabas. Though they acknowledge there is no concrete evidence for this position, Bateman and Smith structure the commentary in order to reinforce their view. Nearly every paragraph contains Barnabas's name. Sentences which include the phrases "Barnabas contrasts," "Barnabas explained," and "Barnabas continued" are found on almost every page. This may feel awkward to the reader who is not as certain of Barnabas's authorship.

Bateman and Smith include a balanced treatment of the many arguments for the genre of Hebrews being either midrash, epistle, or sermon. The authors conclude that all three are found in Hebrews, thus maintaining it should be viewed as "a sermon-like letter with midrashic-like methods of interpretations." The authors acknowledge the description is cumbersome, but they feel as though it best explains the diverse literary structure of the book.

The use of multiple genres and ample inclusion of OT quotes in Hebrews lead Bateman and Smith to follow a threefold hermeneutical reading strategy in interpreting the book. This strategy begins with the Hebrew Bible, then moves to the LXX and noncanonical Jewish literature, followed by NT observations and theological development. The authors employ this method throughout the commentary in order to discern the reasons for the biblical author's inclusion of each OT quote.

Rather than include a section with an overview of their methodology for interpreting the five warning passages, Bateman and Smith handle each passage in its context. They take each warning passage through the same "hermeneutical reading strategy" and allow their exegesis of the individual passage to determine its theological meaning and homiletical application.

This leaves open the question of whether the warnings are issued to believers who can apostatize, non-believers who are in the gathered assembly for worship and may walk away from Christ, or whether the warnings are simply issued to believers who are secure in the faith but need to be spurred toward perseverance. Those issues were already well handled in *Four Views on the Warning Passages of Hebrews*, edited by Bateman and also published by Kregel.

This latest volume in the commentary series is to be commended for its dedication to helping preachers prepare exegetically faithful and homiletically creative sermons. It is challenging to find weaknesses in it. Personally, this writer and other preachers at Village Bible Church consulted the volume during a recent preaching series through Hebrews and found it helpful throughout. Readers will benefit from Bateman's many years in the text of Hebrews and Smith's many years of preaching and teaching preachers at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.



Echoes: The Lord's Prayer in the Preacher's Life. By Geoff New. Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Preaching Resources, 2020. 978-1-78368-812-8, 168 pp., \$15.99.

Reviewer: *Rock LaGioia, Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, IN.*

This book is not about the craft of preaching but the character of the preacher. Geoff New, minister in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand, focuses on the preacher's spiritual formation and foundation. To stimulate formation (2 Tim. 1:6) and establish foundation (2 Tim. 1:9) in the life of the preacher, New has written twenty-four devotional meditations on the Lord's Prayer, or the Disciples' Prayer as some refer to it. Pastor New expresses his intent saying, "...this book is written in the

prayerful hope that it will help you deepen and widen your character and call as a preacher" (xvii).

The Introduction offers a helpful explanation of the nature of the Lord's Prayer and the significance of its strategic placement in the center of the Sermon on the Mount. The text's main body is arranged in three sections: Chapters 1-8: The Lord's Prayer as Seen in Jesus' Life (Luke 18:1-19:10); Chapters 9-16: The Lord's Prayer as Seen in Jesus' Death (the Seven Cries from the Cross); and Chapters 17-24: The Lord's Prayer as Seen in Jesus' Resurrection (John 20-21). All eight petitions of the Lord's Prayer are examined from three distinct angles in the three sections respectively.

New points out that the Sermon on the Mount is "bookended" by references to the future Messianic Kingdom (Matt. 5:3, 5; 7:21-22). Yet, when commenting on the petition "Your kingdom come," his emphasis decidedly favors the "already" over the "not yet." In fact, New describes the petition with an exclusive focus on the future Messianic Kingdom as "a prayer of faith for a later time but not for this time" (82). Perhaps a more balanced approach would have been to acknowledge that when believers concern themselves with the future Messianic Kingdom, it should impact their present walk with the Lord (Isa. 2:1-5).

The strengths of this book are many. For example, New skillfully asks perceptive questions which probe the preacher's soul. "If the only teaching someone were to have access to about our Father in heaven were to be based on your prayer life as a preacher; what would they learn?" (19). Reflecting upon diagnostic questions such as the following can be spiritually salutary. "A question to test ourselves is 'How much money would it take for me to stop preaching?' ...I wonder what you expect from God as a result of the sacrifices you have made as a preacher" (40-41).

The reader will also be delighted to discover a wealth of practical wisdom: "There is only room for one Messiah in the pulpit" (24). "All forgiveness is at someone's expense ...Asking for forgiveness is costly ...Granting forgiveness is costly" (45-46).

“As a preacher, you are limited in who you can confide in, and your current despair is hardly material for a sermon illustration. To speak of it publicly while in the midst of it could cause harm for others. Perhaps you can refer to it at a later time when you preach. But you need to be on the other side of despair. You have a pastoral responsibility to be wise in what you say and when you say it” (78).

One of the greatest strengths of these rich devotional studies is the illustrative material. In fact, the book’s opening illustration about a pilot’s early life experiences which prepared him for an in-flight emergency forms an *inclusio* with the book’s closing illustration about his co-pilot who helped save the lives of the passengers and crew. This illustrative *inclusio* powerfully reinforces the book’s overarching theme of how formation and foundation prepare the preacher for the present. New offers many helpful illustrations from his personal life which illumine the biblical text and inspire the reader.

Most diligent preachers give their lives over to sharpening their preaching skills. Their calling, gifting, and passion for preaching compel them to do so. Sadly, however, many preachers do not invest as much time and energy in stimulating their own spiritual formation. The craft of preaching gets attention far more often than the character of the preacher. Thoroughly digesting the contents of *Echoes: The Lord’s Prayer in the Preacher’s Life* can help to correct this imbalance.



Nehemiah: A Pastoral and Exegetical Commentary. By T. J. Betts. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020. 978-1-68359-393-5, 235 pp., \$28.99.

Reviewer: Si Cochran, Cornerstone Baptist Church, Orange City, IA.

For readers seeking to exposit the book of Nehemiah in a *lectio continua* series, T. J. Betts provides a multifaceted commentary thoughtfully designed to aid the preacher. The multifaceted

approach of Betts's commentary is evidenced by his focus upon "the literary, canonical, historical, [and] theological contexts," along with "exegetical and expository concerns" (1). Betts's analysis of Nehemiah is not presented as the reworking of a sermon manuscript, which is then edited into an expository commentary. Rather, Betts seeks to assess each literary thought unit within Nehemiah through the method of "careful exegesis and exposition" (1). This methodology is intended to occupy a "middle" ground between a "devotional" and "technical" commentary (1-2).

With Betts's goals in mind, he succeeds in addressing the relevant exegetical details of each literary unit of thought, while avoiding unnecessary discussions on matters unlikely to be addressed in an expository sermon. His analysis does not negate the value of consulting a technical commentary during the exegetical phase of sermon preparation, but it does help to center the preacher upon the relevant data that needs to be communicated from the pulpit. Betts also succeeds in presenting the exegetical data in a manner that is structured to prepare the preacher for exposition. To accomplish this, each literary thought unit includes the following sections: an introduction, structure, summary of the passage, outline of the passage, development of the exposition, and conclusion. While the reader may quibble with some of the interpretive moves presented in each section, Betts helpfully navigates the reader through the biblical text and its contexts via these sections. However, Betts also includes an additional section entitled "final thoughts" which seems out-of-place. This section does not actually provide "final thoughts" by Betts on the respective literary thought unit but is rather a series of questions more akin to discussion questions placed at the end of chapters in a classroom textbook. Because the inclusion of this section distracts from the commentary's overall format, it can be ignored without compromising the helpfulness of the remaining work.

As a whole, Betts's commentary on Nehemiah is a valuable addition to the pastor's library. This is especially true for those preaching an expository series through Nehemiah.

Betts's commentary is particularly helpful in the task of delimiting the biblical text via literary thought units. Here, he does not atomize the text to mute the literary features within each respective thought unit but faithfully delimits the text to preserve the divine and human author's intended theological thrust uncovered in the literary thought unit. If the preacher is to exposit the biblical text faithfully in a *lectio continua* series, he must simultaneously delimit the text with utmost literary care. Here, Betts provides an invaluable contribution for the preacher as he interpretively discerns the literary boundaries of the text. To say nothing of the many other valuable contributions in this commentary, his navigation of the text delimitation of Nehemiah is alone worth the book's price.



Pages from a Preacher's Notebook: Wisdom and Prayers from the Pen of John Stott. Edited by Mark Meynell. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020. 978-1-683593-898, 297 pp., \$24.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: Akintayo Emmanuel, Columbia International University, Columbia, SC.

Pages from a Preacher's Notebook is a compendium of nuggets of wisdom drawn from John Stott's archives. Photographs of his actual notes are interspersed throughout the book, enhancing its authenticity. Stott's insights are presented here in short paragraphs, making them simple and quick to read, and his prayers concluding the volume are both thoughtful and reverent.

Stott's notes are meticulously and topically arranged by the editor, Mark Meynell. Following his introduction, Meynell organizes the notes into four main sections: "God and the Gospel," "Church and Christian," "World and Worldviews," and "Prayers."

The book includes seventy-eight entries on various topics including courting, dating, romantic relationships, and marriage among others, and thirty-five prayers. According to Meynell,

anyone who reads the book will come to appreciate Stott's early-formed, disciplined, and rigorous habit of writing illustrations and talk outlines on notecards. About Stott's notes Meynell writes, "Those who knew John Stott well would hardly expect to find trivia, let alone shopping lists. Furthermore, instead of using notebooks, he jotted down a whole range of thoughts on 4x6-inch index cards, which he arranged under various topical headings or biblical references. He also used these cards for his notes when preaching" (xiv).

Although Meynell arranges Stott's notes according to their topics and themes, he doesn't indicate the dates of their composition. Readers are left to wonder how often Stott wrote and the circumstances under which he wrote. Nevertheless, what they will discover here is evidence of Stott's teachable spirit, flexibility, and hunger for learning. His sources included those with whom he would otherwise disagree on the controversial issues of his time as well as individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences from North and South America, Africa, Asia, and Europe.

While the book covers several important topics, today's hearers might not readily appreciate the significance of Stott's thoughts or his sources. Preachers will have to work to show their relevance if they wish to incorporate them into their sermons. Apart from that, *Pages* serves as a model to preachers for developing the discipline of carefully recording their own ideas, observations, and discoveries, while simultaneously providing a glimpse into the mind and heart of Stott himself.



Small Preaching: 25 Little Things You Can Do Now to Become a Better Preacher. By Jonathan T. Pennington. Bellingham: Lexham, 2021. 978-1683594710, 119 pp., \$18.99.

Reviewer: *Scott M. Gibson, Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Waco, TX.*

This compact book is published by Lexham Press, a publishing house that is increasingly building its catalog with helpful resources in the field of homiletics. This short hardback is packed with insights on what preachers can do to develop into better preachers. The author, Jonathan T. Pennington, associate professor of New Testament interpretation and director of research doctoral programs at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, is also a preaching pastor at Sojourn East Church in Louisville, Kentucky. Pennington states, "My goal in this book is to help you make some small ball/small teaching steps toward intentionally better preaching." He continues, "This is not a book about a whole philosophy and practice of preaching...Instead, this is a book of small ideas that you can try today" (3).

Pennington's field of specialty is New Testament studies, not homiletics, but he offers insights from the depth of his own preaching experience that may be of help to preachers who struggle in the areas he addresses. Pennington's title and the concept of his book is based on the work of James M. Lang in *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning* (Jossey-Bass 2016). Lang, director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at Assumption College, Worcester, MA, was inspired by the 2014 success of the Kansas City Royals as they made their way to the World Series using the concept of small-ball, which is "the simple, incremental strategies that enable baseball teams to move runners from one base to the next and keep the other team from scoring: bunting, stealing bases, hitting sacrifice fly balls, and playing solid defense" (Lang 1). Reflecting on the lessons he learned from observing small-ball, Lang recognized the opportunity of changing one's course or teaching strategy. He notes, "My reflections on this dilemma led me to consider whether I should incorporate into my workshops [on teaching] more activities that instructors could turn around and use in their classrooms the next morning or the next week without an extensive overhaul of their teaching—the pedagogical equivalents, in other words, of small ball" (Lang 4). Pennington aims in his book to do the same with preaching.

There are three sections that comprise the volume: The Person of the Preacher, the Preparation for Preaching, and the Practice of Preaching. The chapters vary in their emphases, topic, and content. The author provides insights and advice for the young and more mature preacher. If indeed the author's perspective is true—which I think it is—every preacher can benefit from making small-ball changes in his or her preaching. I know I can! For one, Pennington encourages readers to, “[I]earn to ask thoughtful questions that invite your hearers to ponder and anticipate what you’re discussing” (87). His angle on plagiarism is helpful in light of preachers studying with each other: “Each sermon was the work of each preacher—don’t plagiarize, please!—but each sermon benefitted from the group’s collective wisdom, integrative wrestling, and homiletical moves” (19). See also chapter 25, “Stealing as Sub-Cheating” (107-110).

A small critique may be that sometimes the author writes with an imperative yellow-highlighter tone employing “should” and “need to” in some of his advice, which may come across as an admonition or a necessity. This is a small stylistic aspect that certainly does not take away from the thrust and positive impact of the book.

This practical volume can, as Pennington writes, “[Provide] Small adjustments...where we must focus our energy” (112). For, as he concludes, “today is the moment to be intentional about the task of preaching” (113). *Small Preaching* can provide big changes for preachers—and seminary students—as they take small-ball steps to preach the word faithfully and skillfully.



Creative Bible Teaching. By Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfeldt. Chicago: Moody, 2020. 978-0-80241-959-0, 378 pp., \$32.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: Mark Drinnenberg, *Living Word Fellowship (formerly), Volo, IL*.

This book is a revised and updated version of a work originally written by Lawrence Richards and published in 1970. A second edition was released in 1998 with Gary Bredfeldt doing the updated writing and being listed (with Richards' blessing) as the co-author. The edition under review here is a further update by Bredfeldt and was published in 2020, four years after Lawrence Richards' passing. Over the years, *Creative Bible Teaching* has been widely used in Christian Education classrooms.

The book is not aimed at homileticians. The philosophy of teaching it puts forth places great value on the kind of interactive learning that can take place in a classroom or a home study but not in a pulpit. A pastor or teacher of homiletics may find some value in the book's treatment of subjects such as how people best learn or how to bridge the gap between the biblical world and the present-day audience, but plenty of other books exist that address such issues as they relate specifically to preaching.

For pastors who might want to direct their Christian Education leaders to *Creative Bible Teaching*, they will find a well-written, easy-to-read book that uses many true-to-life stories about Bible teaching to illustrate the points that are made. The book is laid out as "a five-step process by which the Christian teacher can construct a bridge across time, language, geography, and culture" (14).

Step One is "Studying the Bible." It stresses that the teacher must seek "to identify what the author" of the biblical text being studied "actually said to the original recipients of the text" (68). The idea is that "those who teach the Bible well do so with authority," and that authority comes from teaching "only and always what the Word of God intends to teach" (20). There is an explanation of how to do inductive Bible study, along with a sample study of Hebrews 10:19-25. This could provide helpful training for the Bible study aspect of pastoral ministry, but, here again, plenty of books about preaching do the same thing.

Step Two is "Focusing the Message." It urges that the Bible be taught not just as factual information but as useful information that addresses the needs of the students. The authors

state, "The ultimate objective in teaching the Bible is not Bible knowledge, though that is very important; it is *applied* Bible knowledge in the student's everyday life" (104). Much is made in this section on the importance of the teacher knowing students' needs on a level that may be possible in a small group situation but would not seem feasible for many pastors with their congregations. The section stresses the value of doing needs-assessments and provides charts and tools for help with that.

Step Three is "Structuring the Lesson." It presents a plan for grabbing the students' attention, teaching what the text says, figuring out implications of the text for the students' lives, and encouraging the students to take what they have learned and apply it in their daily lives. Those principles certainly apply to preaching as well, but the means and methods of teaching described here are presented with direct student involvement in mind (e.g., group discussion). One chapter deals with how to evaluate and choose curricula. While the authors state this book "is written for both the layperson's use and professional training" (12), their 37-question "Curriculum Evaluation Guide" (228-229) seems best suited for the latter. It certainly does not apply to the task of homiletics.

Step Four is "Teaching the Class." It looks at "common practices of truly great teachers" (235) and then discusses how to motivate students to learn. The principles covered could be helpful to anyone who teaches, pastors included. For instance, "An effective approach to teaching is to start with what a student knows and move to what he does not know. That is true not only in Bible study, but in all kinds of learning situations" (264). Then follow four chapters that each deal with teaching the Bible to a particular audience: adults, youth, children, and preschoolers.

Step Five is "Evaluating the Results." It includes a tool for teacher evaluation and concludes with some guidelines for improving as a teacher.

All in all, *Creative Bible Teaching* is a good book for what it seeks to do. It does not present itself as a book on preaching. The church ministry it addresses is that which goes on in the Christian Education department. As such, the book is highly

respected and has been widely used. For homiletics, though, one ought to look elsewhere.



The Heart is the Target: Preaching Practical Application from Every Text. By Murray Capill. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2014. 978-1-59638-841-3, 258 pp., \$16.99.

Reviewer: *Quentin Self, Shiloh Terrace Baptist Church, Dallas, TX.*

Murray Capill contributes an immensely helpful book on the theory and practice of sermon application. He addresses the problem of expository preaching that neglects application and ends up as “little more than an information dump” (14). The renewed interest in expository preaching in recent decades is fueled by the reality that God’s word is powerful and, “when it is proclaimed clearly and its message is applied pertinently to those who listen, it has massive, Spirit-laden potential to change lives” (13). The desire for biblical faithfulness, however, can inadvertently cause preachers to overlook the essential task of application. According to Capill, neither biblical faithfulness nor relevant application can be neglected. Rather, “Effective expository preaching takes place when biblical faithfulness and insightful application are inextricably bound together” (14). In *The Heart is the Target*, he presents the “Living Application Preaching Process” (53), which he describes as a “model of expository sermon application” (257).

Chapter 1 lays a foundation for this model by providing readers a thorough yet concise theology of application. Part 1 then describes the Living Application process according to its three components—the living word, the life of the preacher, and the lives of our hearers. The preaching process begins in the word, passes through the preacher, and then lands in the lives of those who hear.

Chapter 2 describes “The Living Word” according to the fundamental conviction that “[the living word] has work to do”

(57). Based primarily on 2 Timothy 3:16, Capill identifies four primary purposes God intends to accomplish through the Bible. These include: 1) teaching the truth and rebuking false doctrine, 2) training believers in godly living and correcting wrong patterns of behavior, 3) testing the state of people's hearts and bringing conviction of sin, and 4) encouraging and exhorting people according to their particular needs (62). The Living Application Preaching Process begins by identifying which of these purposes God intends to accomplish through a given text and how God intends to accomplish this purpose (or purposes) through that particular text.

Chapter 3 moves on to the second component of the preaching process—the life of the preacher. Capill argues that effective, living application occurs when a preacher works “from a full reservoir” (81). By “reservoir” Capill means “all that lives within a preacher” (81). A preacher fills the reservoir through “our own walk with God,” “experiencing life richly,” “learning to be close observers of life,” and “our knowledge of theology, church, and culture” (84–92).

Chapter 4 addresses the lives of our hearers by considering the biblical description of the heart and what this means for preaching. A biblical vision of the human heart consists of four quadrants: 1) mind, 2) conscience, 3) will, and 4) passions (103). Preachers should consider how the Holy Spirit intends the text to impact each of these four faculties of the heart by “asking the right questions”—that is, questions regarding each quadrant (114–115). The heart is the proper target for preaching because it is only by moving the heart that people are actually moved to action.

Chapter 5 continues to discuss the lives of our hearers with the recognition that “one size doesn't fit all” (129). Like other homileticians who have resounded the importance of being specific with application, Capill acknowledges, “Living application must speak to the real-life issues of our hearers. But their lives differ” (129). The lives of our hearers consist of two parts: “the faculties of the heart and the spiritual conditions of our people” (130). He recognizes several homileticians

throughout Christian history who have provided categories for types of hearers, and then offers his own. All hearers fit within four categories: 1) those who are going well and know it, 2) those who are going well and don't know it, 3) those who are not going well and know it, and 4) those who are not going well and don't know it (137). When coupled with the faculties of the heart, preachers are giving a detailed and thorough grid by which to analyze the varied conditions of their hearers.

Part 1 then concludes with Chapter 6, which offers a list of nine "arrows" that describe living application (152). Throughout Part 1, Capill progressively builds a visual diagram of the living application process, which he provides in full on page 170 (a strength of the book is its consistent use of helpful diagrams). Part 2 includes four more chapters that further explain how to put the living application process into practice.

In conclusion, this book is well-researched and spiritually rich. It balances well the philosophical and practical aspects of sermon application and provides a treasure of wisdom for the novice preacher and experienced homiletician alike. Readers are sure to benefit from Capill's invitation to think deeply on the subject of sermon application.



So Everyone Can Hear. By Mark Crosby. London: SPCK, 2019. 978-0-281-08214-8, 245 pp., \$10.82.

Reviewer: *Jonathan Holder, Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, Waco, TX.*

One would assume that a book titled *So Everyone Can Hear* would deal directly with the subject of preaching. Surprisingly, this book does not, but its subject is something that is just as important for churches. The author, Mark Crosby, addresses how churches communicate the message of who they are and what they stand for "so everyone can hear." His concern is how

churches plan, strategize, and make use of resources at their disposal to reach diverse groups of people with the love of God.

Crosby works for Vineyard Churches UK & Ireland as the Director of Communications and serves on the staff at Vineyard Church Cardiff. He studied marketing and public relations, writing his thesis on "How Churches Should Be Communicating in the 21st Century." His expertise is evident in a clearly written book that balances text and pictures. In a work on clear communication, there is no doubt as to what is being communicated here!

So Everyone Can Hear is split into 14 chapters, moving from Chapter 1 – What's the Point? to Chapter 14 – Outwardly Focused, Inwardly Strong. It covers digital communication comprehensively but also deals more widely with other forms of church communication such as posters, bulletins, announcements, etc. The book is essentially a step-by-step primer on church communication, asking readers to consider their vision and values, the kind of stories they're telling, how they engage with visitors, and how they present themselves on social media. It is a book that really engages churches in thinking about ways they present the gospel and the steps they need to go through to present it more clearly

So Everyone Can Hear communicates simply and intelligibly, clearly and colorfully. As for weaknesses, if the reader is expecting a book heavy on endnotes or footnotes, this is not it. It is not, in that sense, a scholarly work. Whether that's an advantage or disadvantage depends on one's viewpoint.

Crosby has produced a reference work for how churches communicate that can be returned to time and again. It isn't a book one reads then forgets but a helpful step-by-step resource to help churches communicate more effectively in a digital culture. Crosby's insights will challenge church leaders to examine how they are communicating and why they are communicating in that way. He is to be commended for tackling a subject that can seem so complicated and making it accessible through his clear writing style. Highly recommended!



Christ-Oriented Expository Preaching: Preaching the New Testament Use of the Old Testament. By Kyoochan Lee. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020. 978-1-7252-7767-0, 186 pp., \$25.00.

Reviewer: *Todd H. Hilkemann, Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University, Waco, TX.*

In this wide-ranging adaptation of his dissertation research, Kyoochan Lee adds his voice to the growing literature on both the redemptive-historical homiletic and the hermeneutics of the New Testament [NT] use of the Old Testament [OT]. His book “aims at showing homileticians and preachers how to bridge the gap between biblical interpretation and proclamation when preaching the NT use of the OT” (5). Lee contends that contemporary interpreters ought to follow the interpretative methods of the NT authors who “interpreted the OT in line with the original intention of the OT authors” (5). Lee’s proposition “that unfolding the self-attesting Christ of Scripture is the most appropriate biblical approach to contemporary hermeneutics and homiletics” (9) is nothing new. What is new is his application of that premise to the NT use of the OT. Lee maintains, “Preaching the NT use of the OT becomes accurate in exposition, effective in faith response, and practical in pulpit ministry, as long as preachers faithfully unfold the self-attesting Christ of Scripture” (10). In other words, accurate expository preaching of the NT use of the OT is Christ-oriented.

Lee organizes his book in three parts. He begins the first part (chapter 2) by reasserting the well-trod redemptive-historical hermeneutic from Luke 24:27, 44. He extends that hermeneutic to intertextuality and argues that “Jesus Christ...becomes the unbreakable continuity between *what a text meant* and *what a text means*” (32). He concludes the first part (chapter 3) by addressing challenges to his proposed hermeneutic including issues of *sensus plenior*, typology, redemptive history, and biblical continuity.

In the second part, he applies his hermeneutic to homiletics. The high point of the book is chapter 4 where he examines the intertextuality in Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:1-36). Lee proposes a "sevenfold expository model" (82) that "enables contemporary preachers to accomplish accurate exposition of the NT use of the OT" (87). Lee argues that his model allows preachers to "effectively present the meaning and significance" (141) of the text. He concludes the second section (chapter 5) by discussing homiletical implications including sermonic purpose, illustration, and application.

In the final part, Lee moves from theory to praxis. In chapter 6 he takes his readers through his sevenfold expository model in his treatment of Mark 14:22-25; in chapter 7 he evaluates three sermons by John MacArthur from the book of Revelation; and in chapter 8 he summarizes his findings, suggests some benefits for the church, and offers suggestions for further research. The book contains two appendices: a discourse on Christian epistemology and a sermon from Lee's exposition of Mark 14:25.

Christ-Oriented Expository Preaching has several strengths. It is a thoroughly-documented and thoughtful addition to homiletics. Lee summarizes the important issues for christocentric preaching and intertextuality. He also synthesizes the two fields in an important dialogue. Lee acknowledges many of the challenges of christocentric hermeneutics but refutes them with thoughtful Christian charity. Furthermore, he moves beyond academic theory by engaging with pastoral concerns. He consistently demonstrates passion for preaching that connects with the hearers and helpfully proposes a nuanced view of the telos of preaching, "which is none other than the authorial intention of the whole Bible, Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, who encourages the audience to pursue Christ-likeness in genuine transformation" (117). Although Lee is unlikely to persuade skeptics to embrace his "Christ-oriented" homiletic, those who already embrace a christocentric approach will find his methodology of the preaching of the NT use of the OT a

helpful development. Lee addresses two important fields with thoughtful engagement.

Unfortunately, the book has a number of weaknesses. In his desire to address these two significant fields, Lee's arguments are complex, wide ranging, and quick moving. At times his synthesis lacks clarity and becomes cumbersome as he tries to account for a multiplicity of issues. The results are dizzying. His multi-step practical suggestions are sometimes more cumbersome than workable for the busy preacher. Lee's weakest chapter is the hagiographic analysis of John MacArthur's sermons. His "critical evaluation" (146) here lacked criticism and left this reviewer wondering how sermons preached in 1992 and 1999 perfectly matched Lee's model which he developed ca. 2020. Finally, Lee's writing contained a small handful of repeated stylistic inconsistencies which this reviewer found distracting.

Preachers who are curious about Christ-centered preaching will find Lee's work a helpful scholarly overview of many of the major hermeneutical and homiletical issues involved. Those who are already committed to this approach to preaching will appreciate his expansion of the field into intertextuality and voice a hearty "amen" to the glories of preaching the self-attesting Christ of Scripture.



Biblical Storytelling Design: Understanding Why Oral Stories Work. By Jim Roché. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020. 978-1-7252-5811-2, 138 pp., \$21.00.

Reviewer: Philip Long, Infinity Church, Fountain Inn, SC.

Jim Roché's *Biblical Storytelling Design* is written to address an urgent need. He quotes Charles Madinger saying, "At least 80% of the world cannot or will not hear and understand our message when we communicate in literate ways and means. These people function as oral-preference learners" (32). Roché continues by describing these oral learners as "those who are illiterate and

cannot read or write, and those whose learning preference is oral though they can read or write" (32). For this reason, finding non-literate ways to communicate the gospel and the broader biblical message is critical to missions to the majority of the world today!

Roché's aim is to offer "ways to craft biblical stories that engage the listeners' minds and begin new generations of disciples who can continue to retell the stories and lessons and thereby bring change to their own lives and, eventually, their communities" (xv). He later restates and shortens his purpose saying, "The objective of this book is to encourage spiritual generations to multiply by enabling each generation to teach others also" (69). Roché builds this model off of the four generations of gospel multiplication found in 2 Timothy 2:2—Paul to Timothy to "faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (xvi).

The book's first chapter may prove helpful to the widest audience. With missionaries and mission sending organizations in mind, Roché outlines "The Process of Creating Story Lessons" that can empower anyone to craft and communicate biblical stories for oral learners. Given that even in highly literate societies many people are oral preference learners, there is much wisdom here not just for the missionary but for every preacher and teacher. Roché's seven step process is: 1. Misconceptions, 2. Main Points, 3. Biblical Passage, 4. Story, 5. Questions, 6. Scripture Memory, and 7. Hook Questions. This thorough process pushes past telling biblical stories "too casually" with "discussions unplanned and pointless that result in limited influence" (xvii). That's especially critical for highly literate people who may be new to oral cultures.

Chapter two introduces a helpful framework for "creating story lesson sets." This chapter is filled with examples of mission work that benefited from the missionary having a group of stories related to the listeners' situation—such as sharing a set of stories about strong women in the Bible with a group of oppressed Muslim women. Roché also points out a number of helpful organizations and resources in this chapter that use

storytelling in missions, such as Cru's StoryRunners, st4t.org, and noplacelleft.net.

Part 2 (chapters three-nine) is the bulk of the book where Roché names seven potential negative influences on storytelling, and Part 3 (chapters ten-eleven) shows how his model for curriculum design can overcome these negative influences. Given Roché's goal of storyteller multiplication, these sections may be overly technical and academic for the average reader. However, a missions organization crafting a curriculum for missionaries who are coming from a literate preference culture and entering an oral preference culture would highly benefit from the in-depth nature of these chapters. It is obvious that Roché is drawing here from his extensive experience both in the academy and in cross-cultural missions. His wisdom is most evident in his warnings about mismatched teaching and learning practices (chapter three) and worldviews (chapter four).

Chapter six raises the important point that in missions and all other forms of ministry we should be aiming for multiplication, not addition. "Multiplication is not telling people what you know, but enabling other people to do what you did" (80). That heart for multiplication is clear throughout the book, and it's one of the primary motivations for a storytelling strategy: "Our primary strategy is to encourage and enable new converts to introduce Jesus quickly to their own relational networks using stories about God (particularly the gospel). Therefore, it is more effective and achievable to have people learn, retell, and discuss stories that to learn theological propositions that become subject to challenge, debate, and potential defeat for the new believer" (43).

As stated above, the highly detailed nature of the later chapters may be best aimed at a mission sending organization. Still, there is pastoral guidance for all here when Roché reminds readers "the power of telling biblical stories does not rest upon the greatness of the storyteller but on the greatness of the stories!" (43)