



BOOK REVIEWS

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Simplify the Message: Multiply the Impact. By Talbot Davis. Nashville: Abingdon, 2020. 978-1-5018-8460-3, 116 pp., \$17.99.

Reviewer: *Christopher Priestaf, Mt. Bethel Lutheran Brethren Church, Mt. Bethel, PA.*

One of the most immediately noticeable elements of Talbot Davis' *Simplify* is that it is written by a preacher who loves to preach. Davis' love of preaching was fostered by listening to and emulating the likes of Chuck Swindoll and Rick Warren, but then was radically transformed by an auditory introduction to Andy Stanley and his powerfully moving one-point sermons. Davis' preaching would never be the same. *Simplify* succinctly walks the preacher-reader through the benefits and process of developing and delivering one-point sermons, considering topics ranging from the exegesis of both text and audience, to the preparation of a manuscript, to preaching without notes. There is also the unique inclusion of a section devoted to preaching at funerals.

One of the benefits of *Simplify* is its brevity. The busy pastor can easily read this book in a day or two, although the implementation of its lessons will take much longer. Davis does not dwell on any aspect of persuasion or instruction long, content to say what he needs to say and then support it with ample illustrations from past sermons. While the sheer quantity of illustrations seems at times excessive, they ultimately serve as a powerful reminder of that which is possible when sufficient time and energy are devoted to the task of sermon development.

As can sometimes be the case in a book's creation, a clear strength can simultaneously be a challenging weakness. Such is true of *Simplify's* brevity. Unlike seminal textbooks such as Haddon Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* or other more thorough textbooks written in a similar vein, the preacher looking to transition to the creation of one-point sermons may need more help in navigating the process than *Simplify* provides. To be fair, the same could be said of Stanley's *Communicating for a Change* or Keller's *Preaching*. In the end, these works whet the appetite more than serve as a complete meal, but they do so incredibly effectively and in so doing, achieve their intended purposes.

Ultimately, that which Davis proports is not new. It comes in a long line of preaching texts advocating the power, process, and benefits of preaching one-point sermons. For the preacher trained in such a philosophy, *Simplify* is a good library addition that will stir up by way of reminder the benefits and beauty of such an approach. For the preacher trained in a different philosophy and perhaps looking for an alternative, *Simplify* will provide a persuasive option that could radically change how sermons are prepared and more importantly, received.



Preaching for a Verdict: Recovering the Role of Exhortation. By J. Josh Smith. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019. 978-1-4627-8123-2, 180 pp., \$29.99.

Reviewer: Jody Alan Wolf, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA.

J. Josh Smith clearly states his desire that *Preaching for a Verdict* "might be the beginning of a conversation about the distinct role of exhortation in preaching" (2). He references foundational and influential written works which, with minimal deviation, describe the standard three-fold components of a biblically expository sermon: explaining the text, illustrating the text, and applying the text. Smith's desire to establish a conversation that

would reinstate the element of exhortation in biblical exposition to those three areas stems from his concern that many preachers and writers have allowed the structure and function of the application in a message to supplant the necessary element of exhortation. Smith contends that there should be a clear demarcation between application and exhortation when he states that “exhortation must stand alone as a distinct and necessary practice in preaching” (9). This clarity is illustrated in Smith’s definition of exhortation: “persuading the listener to respond to the call of the text through proclaiming the point of the text in the voice of the text” (93). He concludes that the necessity of exhortation is of such importance that “no faithful text-driven preaching exists without text-driven exhortation” (19).

In his first chapter, Smith provides a brief history of preaching that culminates in what he describes as a twenty-five-year absence of homiletical writings on exhortation (10). He views this current void in light of the history of preaching. Preachers such as Augustine, Luther, Fenelon, Edwards, and Spurgeon, emphasized the appeal to the hearer in their writings. Smith contends that “exhortation is a necessary element of preaching and needs to be restored to its rightful place” (18).

Upon showing the emphasis of exhortation throughout preaching history and the lack of its prominence in current discussions, Smith builds both a theological basis and a biblical basis for the necessity of exhortation. His theological basis is that God’s word is inspired, authoritative, sufficient, and powerful. As such, the exhortation is not only necessary but essential to reflect the purpose of Scripture (34). To provide the direct support of a biblical basis for exhortation, Smith provides a summary word study of *parakaleo* in the pastoral epistles.

To elucidate further the place of exhortation in sermons, Smith briefly examines the characteristics of preaching events in Scripture. He engages in a brief sermon analysis which includes three of Moses’ messages in Deuteronomy, the Sermon on the Mount, and the structure of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Smith concludes that both Old and New Testament preaching

demonstrate that “exhortation is not seen as an option, but as a necessary element to preaching” (92).

Smith’s methodology of putting exhortation into practice is derived from four convictions: 1) the text drives everything in the sermon; 2) the appeal is found within the text; 3) the exhortation is driven by the text; 4) the exhortation is related to, but distinct from the application (93-95). Those four convictions produce four steps to discovering the exhortation in any given passage: 1) find the point of the text; 2) find the voice of the text; 3) find the call of the text; 4) clarify the exhortation of the text (97-106).

To display the practicality and consistency of finding exhortation in every passage, Smith models his vision by choosing passages from the seven genres in Scripture (109). For each passage, Smith lists the point of the text, the voice of the text, and the call of the text, followed by word-for-word exhortations of each passage. He concludes his book by noting that regardless of the passage of Scripture preached, the objective of every preacher should be that the hearer leaves the sermon knowing what the text says *and* knowing the response required by that text (153).

Smith rightly identifies the connection between exhortation driven by the text and the authority of Scripture. He states that “application without exhortation makes proclamation more like a suggestion” (6). Smith’s high view of Scripture necessitates a clear exhortation “for a response that the text itself demands” (34). For preachers or teachers of preaching, this book is a pertinent reminder to convey the intrinsic authority of God’s word to the hearers.

Smith’s work is equally valuable to those beginning a preaching ministry and those desiring to hone a seasoned preaching ministry. Even though he does not address the catalyst for the twenty-five-year neglect of exhortation, Smith tasks text-driven preachers with separating the role of application and exhortation as necessary distinctives of faithful text-driven preaching. Smith’s work is a positive contribution to the field of

homiletics, and this ongoing conversation will significantly profit expository preaching.



Preaching to People in Pain: How Suffering Can Shape Your Sermons and Connect with Your Congregation. By Matthew D. Kim. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021. 978-1-5409-6129-7, 223 pp., \$24.99.

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

Preaching to People in Pain is a fine example of practical theology. Matthew Kim thoroughly covers the Bible's teaching on suffering and shows how to convey those texts and theology to the people in the pews, especially the people who are hurting. Kim does not soft-sell or dumb-down the Bible's teaching, acknowledging that followers of Christ *do* suffer and *will* suffer. Kim does not promise more than God promises (such as a health and wealth preacher might), but neither does he promise less. To help us in our suffering, God offers things like the example and sympathy of Christ; the presence of the Holy Spirit; the promise of eternal life and reward; the reminder that suffering can sanctify us; and the strength of the body to weep with us as we weep. God does not offer a pain free existence, and I appreciate how Kim stays true to the Word.

This is a medium-length book (223 pages), but it covers a lot of ground. In addition to topics you would expect such as "Painful Health Issues" (Chapter 6) and "Painful Relationships" (Chapter 8), we also read about things I had not considered before such as "Painful Finances" (Chapter 5) and "Painful Decisions" (Chapter 4). Kim is not afraid to name the elephant in the room—that much of our pain comes from our own sin and foolishness.

Four worksheets in the Appendix take the theology and make it practical. The worksheets help the preacher name his or her own pain and the congregation's pain. Particularly helpful is

the worksheet that offers nine analytical questions to help the pastor teach and preach about painful finances, painful decisions, and so forth. Kim uses those questions in each chapter and then presents sample sermons on each topic to provide models for preaching with high pastoral relevance. In passing, I should note that I have a small bone to pick with the sermons. I feel that a few of them stretch the biblical text to fit the topic. Those sermons could be classified as “principle-driven” (not a term that Kim uses) rather than strictly “expository.” Christ-centered expositors will probably pick the bone even cleaner because those sermons have little Christology or historical-redemptive grounding.

I will conclude by mentioning two more strengths of the book. The first is cultural awareness. Matthew Kim is an expert in homiletics and culture, and that comes through in consistent but subtle ways. For example, those of us from a majority culture (racial, socio-economic, and so forth) might not think of how suffering is often experienced by minorities *because* they are minorities; but Kim does not miss this. Along with examples of suffering such as dementia, cancer, and betrayal, he mentions prejudice and discrimination. However, one cause of suffering, quite prevalent in the Bible, receives just a passing reference in the book (p. 15): persecution.

The other strength is the author’s personal transparency. This may be the most outstanding feature of a book filled with good features. Matthew shares his own pain, and it is moving. Somehow, he is able to walk a tightrope of honest lament without being maudlin, and candid revelation of health and family tragedies while still expressing trust in God and the hope of eternal life. Highly recommended.



Apostle of Persuasion: Theology and Rhetoric in the Pauline Letters. By James W. Thompson. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020. 978-0-8010-9972-4, 320 pp., \$36.99 (hardback).

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

Paul, the apostle of persuasion, was at the same time both theologian and rhetorician. His letters addressed specific yet different situations demanding rhetoric that strategically summoned his various readers to enter his rhetorical-theological vision of Christlike maturity. "Starting with his basic convictions, he both makes theological arguments and speaks for rhetorical effect with the larger aim of ensuring the transformation of his churches into the image of Christ" (271).

Those who read Paul to discover a systematic theology and those who seek to trace apparent inconsistencies in or a development of his theology by tracing theological themes through a chronological reading of his letters will be disappointed. Thompson argues, correctly, that the apostle's theological themes were expressed only in light of the rhetorical situation of the churches and individuals he was seeking to persuade. "His treatment of these [theological] topics corresponds to his rhetorical aims in each letter" (124). "Paul demonstrates rhetorical competence in his invention and arrangement. The argument employs numerous features that were commended in the rhetorical handbooks . . . and the arrangement corresponds in some ways to ancient ideals for speech. . . . He employs premises based on the witness of Scripture and on the traditions that he received from earlier believers. He not only articulates theological ideas but also crafts them to fit his rhetorical and pastoral needs" (218).

Thompson labors, not without result, to validate his claim. His arguments are both extensive and effective, providing hundreds of insights into Paul's pastoral aims, rhetorical strategies and vision, and theological themes evoked by his readers' situational challenges. His text overflows with intellectual and spiritual stimulation. Readers would not be disappointed reading chapters devotionally. An extensive Bibliography, helpful Name Index, exhaustive Scripture and

Ancient Sources Index, and slight Subject Index add value for the scholar.

The preacher's intention today replicates Paul's first century intention: "the moral formation of the community" (104), moving believers toward maturity in Christ. We would do well to consider how the apostle employed the tools of rhetoric (specifically invention and arrangement) to persuade his readers of this theological vision. As rhetoricians we must grasp the current theological "situation" of our hearers. Only then will we understand what theological themes must be envisioned and how to persuade our hearers to enter that ideal world. If nothing less, this volume should encourage us to choose strategically the pericopes we preach.

To sum up: James W. Thompson, distinguished senior scholar of New Testament studies, has gifted the church with what should prove a seminal work expounding Paul's interweaving of theology and rhetoric.



Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Theology of a Preaching Life. By Michael Pasquarello III. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2017. 978-1-4813-0751-2, 296 pp., \$39.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: Alex Kato, Trinity Baptist Church, Renton, WA.

When my heart to preach faltered this year, *Dietrich* revived me. Through Pasquarello's survey of his homiletical theology, Bonhoeffer reminds the church that preaching has a power beyond success: the power of fidelity to Christ.

Though both the right and the left in America often claim this Confessing Church leader, readers across the theological spectrum likely will find in Pasquarello's *Bonhoeffer* both encouragement and critique. Many EHS readers will appreciate his focus on Christ before culture, Scripture over human musings, and the urgency of preaching. That said, these emphases grow from a less familiar—though perhaps timely—

Barthian and sacramental homiletic. He recognizes the church as really Christ's body and preaching as really Christ's word. Because Bonhoeffer treasures preaching, he challenges it, especially when it resembles political trends or religious proclivities more than Christ's call.

Bonhoeffer's broad theological relevance is rooted in Pasquarello's adherence to primary sources, leaving some sections comprised almost entirely of quotes and paraphrases. This maintains a certain rigor, making the book useful for historians and theologians, but also separates it from squarely homiletical or pastoral literature. The dense prose will tax the theological literacy of many seminarians, pastors, and even homileticians. Many will wish Pasquarello had added more biographical context and commentary on the contemporary relevance of Bonhoeffer's homiletic.

For all that, the weight, creativity, and courage of Bonhoeffer's thought charge the book such that homiletical sparks can fly from any page. Throughout, with wisdom and tenacity, he critiques not only the culture but also the body of Christ, for the sake of the body of Christ and for Christ himself. As Pasquarello writes, "This meant showing the church how to read Scripture against itself rather than in support of its own desires—as an external word" (104). In America today, most Nazi comparisons are hasty and inflammatory. Nonetheless, attending to Bonhoeffer for courage and clarity is always worthwhile. Preachers and homileticians willing to engage this serious text will find both insight and inspiration to persist in preaching, especially in challenging times. As Pasquarello and Bonhoeffer declare, even if preachers face opposition, even if the church appears to be dying, we can look to Christ and remember: "the church is always dying; it is joined to him in his death and resurrection" (102).



7 Lessons for New Pastors: Your First Year in Ministry, 2nd ed. By Matthew D. Kim. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2021. 978-1-7252-6857-9, 140 pp., \$25.95 (CDN).

Reviewer: *Blayne Banting, Briercrest College and Seminary, Caronport, SK.*

Matthew Kim has updated his primer for new pastors from the previous edition (2012) with additional material as well as by reflecting the seasoned perspective of one who has gained more pastoral experience and who now trains pastors as a seminary professor. This edition reflects a sensitivity to the rapidly changing context of pastoral ministry and draws upon voices from a broad diversity of denominational, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds and genders. He has written this guide during the COVID-19 pandemic, so it reflects some of the contemporary challenges faced by those heading into the pastorate for the first time in this unprecedented season. Wise young pastors will seek out seasoned guides to help them navigate the important transition from the world of the seminary into that of congregational leadership. Kim's book serves this purpose well.

After addressing seven common misconceptions of pastoral ministry, Kim develops his content in respective chapters, each dealing with a particular theme relating to issues of pastoral identity and ministry. Two additional chapters are included in this second edition, giving the reader more than the title of the book suggests. And who doesn't like getting more than he/she expected? The chapters address the issues of calling, candidating, acclimating to the pastor's life, creating healthy habits, cultivating leadership skills, compassion, and capacity to deal with the unexpected, respectively. The two bonus chapters address issues of character and a call to practice important pastoral skills.

Kim develops each chapter with a combination of biblical input, support from varied secondary sources, personal

experiences, and an empathetic and culturally sensitive perspective for which he is becoming well-known. The chapters vary in length and detail, but each contain sage advice and direction for those transitioning into the pastorate. The tone of the book rings with a sense of one “who has been there” and is invested in helping others “get there” as well. Kim’s use of pronouns reflects the inclusion of women in pastoral roles as well as men but does not venture into any of the specific challenges that women might encounter as they move into these roles. There is also an implicit assumption that new pastoral candidates have attended a residential seminary for a season and then must acclimate to the role of pastoral leadership. A growing number of seminarians, however, take their education in non-residential formats and often are practicing pastors while taking their courses. This might affect the process of transition from class to congregation, especially in the current circumstances affected by the pandemic.

Kim has written, and now rewritten, a helpful book to give the novice pastor needed guidance in the critical shift from student to shepherd. This work is a helpful guide to that end and makes an excellent book to require for courses in pastoral theology (which this reviewer has done already).



1 & 2 Timothy, Titus: A Theological Commentary for Preachers. By Abraham Kuruvilla. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2021. 978-1-7252-7517-1, 261 pp., \$33.00.

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

1 & 2 Timothy, Titus is the fifth title in Abraham Kuruvilla’s ongoing series of theological commentaries, following *Mark* (2012), *Genesis* (2014), *Ephesians* (2015), and *Judges* (2017). Readers familiar with those earlier volumes will find the same depth of scholarship, attention to detail, elevated diction, and

arrangement of contents here. His purpose to establish and explore the theological focus of every pericope as the bridge between text and application remains unchanged. Those unfamiliar with Kuruvilla's previous commentaries may turn to Don Sunukjian and Greg Scharf's reviews of the same in past editions of this journal for excellent summaries of the author's aims, methods, resources, etc. Much of what they said there applies here.

As to the particulars of his newest commentary, Kuruvilla divides Paul's pastoral epistles into eighteen pericopes—1 Timothy into ten, 2 Timothy into five, and Titus into three. He tags the first epistle "Shepherding the Saints," the second "Completing the Course," and the last "Exemplifying the Excellent." His bibliography includes two hundred forty-three sources; his Scripture index lists multiple references to twenty-six Old Testament books, every book of the New Testament, and five books from the Apocrypha; while his ancient sources index cites contributions from more than fifty different authors. A scholarly work, indeed! But Kuruvilla's commentaries, this one being no exception, are more than that. They are fine examples of scholarship in service to the pulpit, the academy in service to the church. Any preacher developing a stand-alone sermon from one of Paul's pastoral epistles or a series covering any or all of these three letters would do well to read Kuruvilla's insights, consider his suggested sermon maps, and drill down into the various supporting materials for further research included throughout the book's footnotes.

For this reviewer, what sets this commentary apart from those that have gone before is its potential as a supplemental source for assigned reading in a seminary course on pastoral ministry. Instructors looking for a resource that will unpack how Paul in his own words conceived of this sacred calling and what he said to his young associates as he guided them in the fulfillment of their individual ministries in Ephesus and Crete need look no further. Kuruvilla's commentary provides that information here, while simultaneously modeling how a preacher might fulfill the apostle's charge to "rightly divide the

word of truth.” As with all of this author’s works, highly recommended!



Ethical Approaches to Preaching: Choosing the Best Way to Preach About Difficult Issues. By John S. McClure. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2021. 978-1-7252-7453-2, 152 pp., \$21.00.

Reviewer: Scott Lucky, Parkway Baptist Church, Clinton, MS.

Preachers play an important role in shaping the thoughts and behaviors of their congregations. Their listeners regularly face challenging moral issues and take their cues from preachers about how their faith should impact their lives and the choices they make. Since people are increasingly divided over moral issues in the public sphere these days, it is essential for preachers to handle moral issues with care and skill. John S. McClure (Ph.D., Princeton Theological Seminary) wrote *Ethical Approaches to Preaching* to be an accessible guide that helps preachers discern the best ethical approach for handling a variety of issues and contexts.

McClure is the Charles G. Finney Professor of Homiletics, Emeritus, at Vanderbilt Divinity School and served as the past president of the Academy of Homiletics (2003) and the co-editor of the Academy’s journal, *Homiletic*. His many books include *The Four Codes of Preaching: Rhetorical Strategies* (1991), *The Roundtable Pulpit: Where Preaching and Leadership Meet* (1995), and *Other-wise Preaching: A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics* (2001). McClure’s research interests of ethics and homiletics are wed together in this introductory handbook that summarizes and organizes the various ways preaching is currently being demonstrated to be an ethical practice.

McClure believes different ethical situations demand different homiletical responses. Christian ethicists help homileticians to understand their task as an ethical practice. McClure says, “My overarching purpose for writing this book is

to provide an overview of four kinds of ethics that have been shaped by contemporary scholars into ways to help working preachers approach difficult ethical issues: (1) communicative ethics, (2) witness ethics, (3) liberation ethics, and (4) hospitality ethics" (xiv). McClure does a good job defining each approach. A communicative ethic is an intersubjective ethic "focused on searching for and applying universally acceptable moral norms" (2). A witness ethic is a virtue ethic that hopes "to construct a countercultural community of Christian virtue" (37). A liberation ethic is a social ethic aimed "primarily at the unmasking, critique, and change of current social systems (economic, political, religious, educational, health care, etc.)" (61). A hospitality ethic is an interhuman ethic focused on "cultivating relationships grounded in moral reflection" (90). McClure applies four questions to each of the four kinds of ethics: (1) How do preachers theologically frame an ethical problem so listeners can identify the best *way out* of the problem? (2) How do preachers create a personal and communal experience of this problem and provide the best *way into* understanding and engaging it constructively? (3) What signposts help the preacher organize the best *way through* the problem or issue? (4) How do preachers articulate a final destination and the best *way toward* it?

The structure is one of the book's strengths. Every chapter offers a description of the ethic, applies the four questions to each ethic, provides a sample topical sermon on immigration from McClure, explains the situation most suitable to the approach, and gives a situational sermon best exemplifying each approach. The additional reading at the end of each chapter is helpful and allows readers to engage McClure's sources. Additionally, McClure is to be commended for challenging his readers to mirror God's care for the least, lowly, and too often ignored people in the world.

Evangelical homiletics will have a number of fundamental disagreements with McClure's work. Among these, he uses the word "convert" to mean a change of mind or perspective, rather than regeneration (5, 40, 68, 76); some of his exemplary sermons advocate non-evangelical views, including

those of liberation theologians; the topical sermon examples are neither text-driven nor expository—revealing an important difference in the author’s conception of preaching; McClure encourages reading the Bible through “the christological lens of the non-violent character and paradigmatic witness of Jesus” (53), suggesting his understanding of Christ-centered preaching differs significantly from that of most evangelical preachers; the author encourages preachers to utilize a hermeneutic of suspicion toward biblical texts and commonly accepted theologies (65, 70) and to fill their bookshelves full of commentaries “written from many perspectives informed by critical theories: feminist, postcolonialist, queer, and others” (65); and he calls the task of preaching into question when he says, “Homiletical forms themselves have a hegemonic aspect” and that exploring new forms of preaching “can disassociate the pulpit from practices of oppression” (64).

Anyone involved in weekly pastoral preaching knows that the world our congregations inhabit is broken and ravaged by the effects of sin. Important moral issues continue to be raised as Christians seek to live for Christ in an increasingly hostile world. Preachers are responsible to help their congregations think through these difficult issues. Unfortunately, preachers need to look beyond McClure for help with this important task.



Third Voice: Preaching Resurrection. By Michael P. Knowles. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2021. 978-1-7252-6579-0, 263 pp., \$34.00.

Reviewer: *Jeremy McClung, Wycliffe College, Toronto, ON.*

In *Third Voice*, Michael P. Knowles offers an extended reflection on the theological implications of Christ’s resurrection for the act of preaching. Decades of preaching and training preachers have convinced Knowles that over-reliance on human agency is a widespread phenomenon and a hidden danger to the souls of preachers. In response, he shines the light of resurrection into the

nooks and crannies of the homiletical world, exposing human presumption and turning attention back to God's singular power to raise the dead. Addressing a diverse theological audience, he interacts with a dizzying range of material—including biblical studies, homiletical scholarship, ancient and modern theologians, linguistics, postcolonial theory, popular music, poetry, and literature. Yet again and again he returns to his central thesis: "Spiritually transformative preaching depends above all on divine power, not human agency alone" (xiii).

After establishing the physical resurrection of Christ as the necessary foundation for preaching, Knowles begins by problematizing the concept of authority in the pulpit. Calling into question the Reformation assertion that "the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God," he turns to missional theology to suggest that *participation* in the *missio Dei* is a better way to understand the preacher's task. Because of this, "preaching must always be a kind of humble listening even as it is more obviously a form of speaking" (57).

He then explores speech-act theory, concluding that, while preachers may have some control over words (locution) and their intent (illocution), they are powerless when it comes to their effect (perlocution). Instead, preaching may be seen as "a form of 'appropriated discourse,' one which embraces the words of Scripture in its own attestation of Jesus as the embodied Word of God, and on this basis becomes liable to appropriation by God" (80).

Though the spread of the gospel has always depended, in part, on human testimony, preachers must turn attention away from themselves and invite their listeners to respond to the Risen One directly. The use of threats, coercion, and verbal violence in the pulpit are not in keeping with the cruciform way of Jesus, thus preaching must non-coercively "invoke rather than to impose or impel, relying for affirmation solely on God's own gift of life" (150).

Preachers, Knowles insists, perform their task in what postcolonial theorist Bhaba described as a "Third Space"—the unique cultural reality of immigrants, who do not fully belong to

their place of origin, nor to their new home. Because Christians live in an in-between space, neither fully at home in this world, nor yet a part of the next, so “preaching in a ‘Third Voice’ is always poised between cultural particularities and the Christocentric relativizing of all cultures” (188).

In his final chapter, Knowles engages Barth to argue that, since human agency cannot prove the truth of God, create the reality of God, nor bring forth the Word of God, preachers can do no more than “create space” for the Word to speak. Preaching is therefore “an assertion of trust and expectation: trust in Christ to supply our lack, accompanied by a robust expectation that Christ and the Spirit will continue to work out God’s purpose in the space we have vacated” (207).

Third Voice (the third volume in a loosely-related series) does not offer commentary on methods or techniques. Rather, its burden is for an inner transformation of “spirituality, identity, and existential orientation more than of language, method, or homiletical technique alone” (231). Knowles is more concerned with the heart-posture of the preacher—humility, dependence, and trust—than the “proper” form of the sermon. It is up to readers to decide how the implications of resurrection will concretely affect their own preaching.

This is not light reading, but a work of serious theology. The journey, while worthwhile, can be winding and arduous. Knowles is not always explicit about where he is leading the reader, or why. Yet, with each new turn the resurrection sheds new light on both long-standing and recent homiletical conversations. *Third Voice* is an important—and humbling—contribution to homiletical theology, as it gradually but persistently exposes the degree to which contemporary preachers have strayed from dependence on God’s power in favour of their own efforts. For preachers burdened by the power of death they see all around them, and discouraged by their own inability to produce new life, Knowles’ vision of resurrection preaching is good news for the poor. It is an invitation to repent of self-reliance, to trust fully in the power of God, and “to rest

with [Jesus] in the assurance that he does not need them to accomplish his finished work all over again" (215).



What's Right with Preaching Today? The Enduring Influence of Fred B. Craddock. Edited by Mike Graves and André Resner. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2021. 978-1-4982-9501-7, 238 pp., \$31.00.

Reviewer: David Reese, *Evangelical Seminary, Myerstown, PA.*

What's Right with Preaching Today? is a subtle festschrift in honor of Fred B. Craddock, the wise sage of inductive preaching. In true Craddockian style, the book is a collection of ten essays on various aspects of modern preaching interspersed with personal remembrances of Fred; in other words, it tells a story. The chapters are a relatively quick read, but why rush? It is best to linger over the essays on preaching, marinating in their claims, and taking nourishment from their encouragement that there is, indeed, something right with preaching today.

This is not the first volume to honor Fred Craddock and his contribution to homiletics. In a similar festschrift-like compendium, Gail R. O'Day's and Thomas G. Long's *Listening to the Word: Studies in Honor of Fred B. Craddock* (Abingdon, 1993) provided a focused look at inductive preaching. Graves and Resner, however, offer a more cohesive narrative of Craddock's continuing influence on preaching. As a counterpoint to Harry Emerson Fosdick's 1928 *Harper's Magazine* article, "What Is Wrong with Preaching Today?" familiar homileticians such as Debra Mumford, Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm, Luke Powery, and Ron Allen, among others, write to encourage and affirm preachers.

Each contributor, in turn, addresses those elements of narrative preaching that characterize the best of Craddock's call to upend the direction of the sermon, moving it from a set of "universal principles illustrated in particular cases" to concrete, familiar experiences that reveal the larger truth of the gospel (107). The reader will find here familiar themes, such as the

power of imagery, the auditory nature of the sermon, enlivening delivery with a soulful appeal, and keeping the sermon relevant to the context. These themes are undoubtedly familiar to preachers, but the essays offer a new, encouraging perspective on them.

What distinguishes *What's Right with Preaching Today?* is the interweaving of "Craddock encounters" offered by pastors and less familiar homileticians. Most recount meeting Craddock at a conference or worship service, sharing in warm tones how Fred inspired them, encouraged them, or, at times, gently admonished them. These reminiscences add depth, warmth, and color not necessarily found in a staid festschrift. They serve to invigorate the book's subtitle: "the enduring influence of Fred B. Craddock." Thomas Long captures this sense of a cohesive narrative between academic essays and home-spun stories in his Foreword. He uses the metaphor of an elliptically-shaped room in which "the acoustics are such that if someone whispers at one end of the oval it can be heard perfectly by someone at the other end. Just so, to speak in this book of what's right with preaching at one focal point resonates fully with Fred B. Craddock at the other, and *vice versa*" (xii-xiii).

Though the book was written before the onslaught of COVID-19 and the ravaging nature of the political and racial strife that marked 2020, the essays nonetheless were prescient in their analysis of the power of narrative preaching during these crises. Resner's concluding chapter provides an insightful, hopeful assessment when he writes of the creativity of preachers in adapting their sermons, their liturgy, and their incarnational theology to the challenges of insulation and isolation (227). To this point, Craddock's insistence on integrating the story of the Gospel with the story of the listeners is paramount.

What's Right with Preaching Today? is a worthwhile and thought-provoking read for preachers and teachers of preaching. Expositors can benefit from the book's insistence on dynamic, relevant preaching that enhances the bridge from "then to now." Inductive preachers will appreciate the affirmations it offers to strengthen their craft. Both will gain encouragement from

learning more about Craddock, who would stand on a Coke box behind the pulpit to tell his gospel-laden stories.



Preaching Christ from Leviticus: Foundations for Expository Sermons. By Sidney Greidanus. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021. 978-0-8028-7602-7, 313 pp., \$35.00.

Reviewer: *Paul A. Hoffman, Evangelical Friends Church of Newport, Rhode Island.*

Greidanus states this is his “final book on biblical interpretation and preaching” (xvii). If that is true, it is the feather in the cap of his illustrious career. This work is clear, thorough, practical, and includes helpful resources such as diagrams, illustrations, and four sample sermons in the appendixes.

Chapter 1 begins by underscoring two “Difficulties in Preaching Old Testament Law:” the issues of “Continuity and Discontinuity” and “Law and Gospel” (2-5). Greidanus argues that the tripartite distinction comprised of the moral law, civil law, and ceremonial law employed by John Calvin and others is insufficient at resolving this longstanding hermeneutical challenge. Instead, he argues it is more profitable to search for “the principles behind the individual laws” (12). He then describes how Leviticus occupies the structural (chiastic) and thematic center of the Pentateuch due to its role in delineating the requirements for Israel to enter and enjoy God’s holy presence. Indeed, God’s holiness is the main subject of Leviticus. The second half of chapter 1 details the four dimensions required to interpret this Old Testament book (literary, historical, theocentric, and christocentric) and ten steps to preach Christ from Leviticus.

Then, in chapter 2 and going through chapter 11, Greidanus exegetes eight chapters of Leviticus, employing a template he consistently applies to each chapter. This is as follows: Text and Context; Literary Interpretation; Theocentric

Interpretation; Textual Theme, Goal, and Need; Ways to Preach Christ; Sermon Theme, Goal, and Need; and Sermon Exposition. To give an overview of texts and themes, he interprets Leviticus 1 (The Burnt Offering), 8 (The Ordination of Priests), 9 (The Lord Accepts the First Offerings), 10 (The Lord's Judgment on Unholy Offerings), 11 (Be Holy, for the Lord is Holy), 16 (The Day of Atonement), 19:1–18 (You Shall Love Your Neighbor as Yourself), 19:1–2, 19–37 (You Shall Love Aliens and Enemies as Yourself), 25:1–7, 18–22 (The Sabbatical Year), and 25:8–17, 23–55 (The Year of Jubilee). The benefit of this selective approach is accessibility: he avoids the tedious task of exegeting all twenty-seven chapters of Leviticus, which might have produced a massive—even unwieldy—tome.

That accessibility gestures toward one of the notable strengths of this book: Greidanus demystifies Leviticus, taking a book notoriously difficult to preach and making it approachable for pastors and teachers. Furthermore, he pulls a coup by making Leviticus *attractive* and refreshing in its *relevance* for modern people who lack connection to the tabernacle or sacrificial system.

Still, one slight criticism is in order. This book omits a proper concluding chapter. In the final chapter, chapter 11, Greidanus masterfully explores Lev. 25 and the Year of Jubilee. He takes the christocentric turn, contending that we entered the age of jubilee upon the arrival of Jesus Christ (264–270). A key gospel implication is for God's people in the West to “share our wealth and forgive those indebted to us” (269) as those who “represent Jesus (feet, voice, and hands) in spreading the joy and hope of jubilee around the globe” (270). I heartily agree! The final sentences highlight the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 and encourage us with these words: “Jesus began jubilee with his first coming. Soon Jesus will come again and bring his grand jubilee to completion” (270). While accurate and inspirational, it feels abrupt, not just in terms of this book but also considering Greidanus's long and storied career. He might have given the reader a stronger sense of completion on multiple fronts by adding a formal conclusion, epilogue, or afterward to this

volume. Nevertheless, in the final analysis, this is a worthy work, one that reflects the beauty of Leviticus and Greidanus's faithful and rich ministry to the academy and church.



Tethered to the Cross: The Life and Preaching of Charles H. Spurgeon. By Thomas Breimaier. Downers Grove: IVP, 2020. 978-0-8308-5330-4, 288 pp., \$35.00 (hardback).

Reviewer: *Eric Price, formerly, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.*

Thomas Breimaier, lecturer in systematic theology and history at Spurgeon's College in London, has written a scholarly yet accessible overview of Charles Spurgeon's biblical interpretation and preaching. *Tethered to the Cross* is a revision of the author's Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Edinburgh.

Breimaier summarizes the goal and thesis of his study as such: "The primary goal of this book is to identify and analyze C. H. Spurgeon's approach to biblical hermeneutics. It will argue that Spurgeon...viewed the entire Bible through the lens of the cross of Christ, with an aim to bring about the conversion of sinners" (3). The introductory chapter situates the book within broader Spurgeon scholarship. Each of the following six chapters then surveys an aspect of Spurgeon's life and ministry, with attention to his biblical interpretation. Chapter 1 discusses Spurgeon's family heritage, personal conversion, and theological influences. Chapter 2 focuses on Spurgeon's biblical interpretation in his early ministry, with attention to debates regarding Calvinism.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on Spurgeon's interpretation of the Old and New Testaments, respectively. In each chapter, Breimaier helpfully situates Spurgeon's biblical interpretation against the backdrop of academic biblical studies at the time. He shows that Spurgeon had some level of interaction with higher critical commentaries. While Spurgeon occasionally found such commentaries helpful, he was also concerned that they

unnecessarily raised doubts about the authority of Scripture and the doctrine of the atonement. "Spurgeon regarded a conservative interpretation of penal substitutionary atonement as equally important to that of plenary inspiration" (133).

In the chapters on Spurgeon's OT and NT interpretation, two conclusions about Spurgeon as a preacher emerge. First, in Spurgeon's sermon preparation, "text selection was viewed with conversionistic intent" (91). Because of this, Spurgeon's sermon texts were usually "drawn from either single verses or small groups of verses," rather than complete passages within their context (91). Second, and related, "Christocentrism was central to Spurgeon's engagement with the biblical text" (91). Consequently, he "would...include discussions of Christ in texts where Christ did not appear either explicitly or implicitly" (91). Comparison with contemporaneous preachers and commentators shows that Spurgeon's interpretation was more christocentric than much biblical interpretation at the time.

While *Tethered to the Cross* is largely a descriptive study, Breimaier offers some evaluative summary: "Spurgeon's interpretative method was not without its drawbacks. His almost singular focus upon the cross of Christ and the offer of the gospel occasionally led him to downplay or sidestep more straightforward interpretations of the biblical text in his insistence upon crucicentric and conversionistic readings" (166). For those of us who seek to learn from the history of preaching, this raises the perennially important question of how we can incorporate canonical insights into sermons while respecting the integrity and particularity of individual texts.

Chapter 6 discusses Spurgeon's biblical interpretation during the Downgrade Controversy, a theological dispute within the Baptist Union that led Spurgeon to depart from the organization. Finally, chapter 7 discusses Spurgeon's biblical interpretation as a teacher in his Pastors' College, which "provided accessible instruction for students for whom the traditional venues of education were out of reach" (240). Spurgeon's work as an educator led to a proliferation of his

crucicentric and conversionistic biblical interpretation among pulpits throughout Great Britain.

In his conclusion, Breimaier notes that scholarship on the history of biblical interpretation has tended to neglect studying “the sermons of influential preachers who were not professional philosophers or theologians” (250). This neglect is a lacuna in scholarship because such preachers “would have in many cases held far more popular influence in their respective times than academic writers” (250). Breimaier’s helpful insight in this regard will hopefully spur similar historical studies at the intersection of homiletics and hermeneutics.

Tethered to the Cross is an ideal scholarly introduction to Charles Spurgeon. It would be useful in courses on the history of biblical interpretation and homiletics, as well as in courses on the hermeneutics of Christ-centered proclamation. Breimaier commends Spurgeon’s focus on the cross while judiciously noting its potential excesses. Readers will find in this study encouragement and motivation to remain tethered to the cross in their own lives and ministries.



Ephesians: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching. By Gregory S. MaGee and Jeffrey D. Arthurs. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021. 987-0-8254-5834-7, 281 pp. (hardback).

Reviewer: *Tim MacBride, Morling College, Sydney, Australia.*

This new volume in the *Kerux* preaching commentary series has much to commend it. The collaborative approach, pairing a New Testament scholar with a practitioner in homiletics, provides a solid exegesis of the text of Ephesians as well as ideas for sermonic structure and application.

The commentary divides Ephesians into thirteen preaching units, and helpfully opens with a summary preacher’s overview of each: it outlines the exegetical idea of the passage and a theological focus, from which is formed a brief “preaching

idea," in line with Haddon Robinson's approach. A summary of "preaching pointers" bridges the world of the first century with our own and suggests lines of application. This is one of the great strengths of this series, as it provides preachers with an overarching framework for each textual unit prior to their dive into the details of the text.

The introductory section (31-46) argues persuasively for Pauline authorship, before providing a concise and informative picture of the letter's historical and rhetorical setting. MaGee rightly identifies the key theme of Ephesians as being "in Christ," using the language of sitting (our united position in Christ), walking (our behavior as those who are in Christ), and standing (our ability to stand strong in Christ), although the significance of being united in Israel's Messiah at the climax of her story could have been foregrounded a little more in the commentary itself. Pleasingly, the commentary signals its intention to pay attention to authorial doings (45) and evidences rhetorical-critical insights such as Ephesians as a eulogy inspiring us to praise (49).

The exegetical sections are clear and compact—a dozen or so pages per preaching unit—explaining the meaning of the text within a traditional evangelical framework. Being a preacher's commentary, there is not a lot of critical engagement with exegetical alternatives, meaning most preachers will want to supplement this with a more technical commentary, but MaGee provides an excellent starting point. He also includes discussion of the Greek text with some asides about translational issues, making it useful both for intermediate Greek students and busy pastors wishing to maintain their Greek. There are also brief, highlighted excerpts on relevant cultural and theological issues. Each exegetical section ends with several paragraphs summarizing the theological focus of the passage, which function as a bridge to the preaching and teaching strategies.

The preaching sections begin with an articulation of the preaching idea and suggestions on how this idea might connect with contemporary audiences. Arthurs then provides examples of illustrations and lines of application that preachers might take as they construct their sermons. This last section is potentially the

most difficult to navigate for any commentary, as it depends more on the personality and context of the preacher than what precedes it; perhaps inevitably, then, it is where I have most of my reservations about an otherwise useful resource. I also acknowledge that the primary contemporary audience appears to be North American, which may well explain some of my responses as a reader on the other side of the Pacific.

Firstly, the application seemed weighted toward the actions and attitudes of the individual rather than the “both... and...” of Scripture; there was a focus on personal morality without much said about corporate justice. Ephesians 2:1-10 was about how God saves individual sinners like Paul and his readers, rather than how God saves both Paul, a Jew, and his Gentile readers through the sacrifice of the one Messiah. Surprisingly, the application of 2:11-22 was almost silent on race relations in the USA, except when speaking of divisions—such as separate drinking fountains—as a past state of affairs which has been rectified (115). Instead, it was heavy on illustrations drawn from post-Cold War reconciliation. Any challenge to present behavior was again only at the level of individual attitudes and actions. Similarly, the discussion of slaves and masters (6:1-9) acknowledged past slavery and quickly drew lines of analogous application to employers and employees today (240), without reference to the slavery and human trafficking that still exists in many parts of our world today.

Secondly, some of the illustrations sounded (again, from the other side of the world) a little tone-deaf: Arthurs cites Bryan Loritts’ discussion of the British colonization of Australia and the imposition of its customs on indigenous peoples as a positive metaphor for how we, as citizens of heaven, are similarly called to take “the culture, customs, and practices of a faraway place called ‘heaven’ and inject them into a place called earth” (116). Another, in the context of roles within marriage in Eph 5:22-33, suggests visual aids to represent wives and husbands: “a wedding veil and bow tie, or rolling pin and hammer,” adding the parenthetical comment, “but we will want to be careful of stereotypes” (237).

At the end of each preaching unit, the commentary provides an up-to-date bibliography for further reading, and a very handy set of discussion questions that could be set for Sunday school classes or home Bible study groups. Overall, this is a worthwhile preacher's commentary that will help pastors understand the text, create a clear sermon structure, and think carefully about what it means for us to walk "in Christ" today.



Ministers of Reconciliation: Preaching on Race and the Gospel. Edited by Daniel Darling. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021. 978-1-6835-9477-2, 151 pp., \$21.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: Kristopher Barnett, Clamp Divinity School, Anderson, SC.

In the foreword to *Ministers of Reconciliation*, Russel Moore relays a conversation with a Christian minister who warned that the topic of racial reconciliation was "perilous waters" for the Christian preacher (ix). Moore agrees but reminds the reader that Jesus often leads his people into and through perilous waters (x). What follows in this thin volume provides insight and encouragement for ministers willing to follow Jesus' lead.

The editor, Daniel Darling, serves as Director of the Land Center for Cultural Engagement at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has authored numerous books and makes regular contributions to leading outlets like *Christianity Today*, *World* magazine, and *USA Today*. Darling's writings address the local church, politics, and government policy. These interests position him well to edit the current volume. He has assembled a diverse group of contributors who cross demographic, geographic, and ethnic lines. Some contributors serve the church as pastors, while others serve from the academy. The diversity adds depth and substance to the project.

Each contributor provides a chapter. Each chapter analyzes a unit of Scripture, one verse or an entire chapter depending on the author's assignment. Most chapters follow a

similar pattern of introducing the text, providing an exegetical analysis thereof, and then offering potential applications. The exegetical analysis and applications are presented through the lens of racial reconciliation.

The pericopes selected include several that often appear in conversations pertaining to the subject at hand: Genesis 1:27, Psalm 139, John 4, and Acts 10. However, the pericopes also include some “unexpected” passages: Matthew 28:19-20, Jeremiah 38-39, and 1 Corinthians 12. The unexpected passages are one of the book’s strengths. Some critics of racial reconciliation claim that preachers should “just preach the text.” They warn that considering issues of race and ethnicity will distract from the text. However, *Ministers of Reconciliation* shows that analyzing the Bible through the lens of culture reveals how issues of race and ethnicity permeate the biblical narrative. The authors do not import their discoveries into the text; instead, they make their discoveries in the soil of the text.

For example, J. Daniel Hays points out the ethnic identity of Ebed-Melek the Cushite, who rescues Jeremiah from the cistern in Jeremiah 38-39. Hays provides the reader cultural context to understand the role Ebed-Melek, a black African, played in the Hebrew court. This critical information provides color and depth to the character and reminds the preacher of the value in portraying biblical persons accurately and the danger inherent in painting all biblical characters with the same, often white, brush.

Preachers will appreciate Darling’s work, as it provides the reader with thirteen “sermon starters.” A preacher seeking to develop a sermon series on racial reconciliation could utilize this volume to launch their thinking on the topic. The chapters could serve as starters for sermons and as examples to help cultivate the ability to discover the ethnic and racial issues organically embedded in most biblical texts. This helps the faithful preacher address issues related to reconciliation, even if that is not the primary focus of the sermon series.

Ministers of Reconciliation provides the pieces and parts for future sermons on each text it treats. However, each chapter

leaves the reader with a question, “How would this contributor preach this passage to their congregation?” The book could have aided readers by providing a sermon brief at the end of each chapter. This suggestion comes with the knowledge that space is limited and giving preachers too many pieces might lead to plagiarism. However, sermon briefs could have at least given readers one more aid in seeing how the exegetical analysis might be translated to the pulpit.

Darling’s collection of essays will help teachers of preaching to think deeply on the topic of reconciliation. The principles modeled in this book could easily be incorporated into course content. Some instructors might require this book in an elective preaching course to initiate classroom conversation on the topic.

This small book provides solid insight on addressing racial reconciliation. Engaging and well-written, it deserves a place on the preacher’s bookshelf. It both encourages readers to wade into the perilous waters and provides guidance for getting their feet wet.



Theology Is for Preaching: Biblical Foundations, Method, and Practice. Edited by Chase R. Kuhn and Paul Grimmond. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021. 978-1-6835-9459-8, 343 pp., \$29.99.

Reviewer: Keith Essex, The Master’s Seminary, Los Angeles, CA.

Theology Is for Preaching was one of the most significant books on preaching published in 2021. The volume had its genesis in the Moore College (Sydney, Australia) School of Biblical Theology in 2019. The papers presented there and resulting conversations were prompted by the desire to address the topic of the significance that theology has for a pastor’s preaching. The original essays were augmented by other voices that were solicited by the editors to produce the present written work. “The intention of this volume is to provide a resource to pastors and

students that sets out the theological foundations of preaching, so that we might be more faithful practitioners" (xx). The overarching thesis of the book is that preaching and theology are mutually informed; this basic principle unites the twenty-one authors of the individual chapters. The book is written from and for a reformed, evangelical theological constituency, though any evangelical preacher can find much profit in its pages.

The volume is divided into five parts. The first five chapters constitute Part One, Foundations. Part Two, Methodology, incorporates chapters six to twelve. Chapters thirteen to sixteen comprise Part Three, Theology for Preaching. Part Four, Preaching for Theology, encompasses chapters seventeen to nineteen. Two sermons are presented in chapters twenty and twenty-one in Part Five, Theology Preached. It is impossible in this limited review to summarize and interact with all that is contained in these separate essays and sermons; therefore, only one chapter from each part will be noted.

The first chapter by Chase Kuhn, "Theology for Preaching, Preaching for Theology," introduces the concept of recursion which reoccurs in a few other chapters. Since both systematic theology and exegesis are based on the authority of Scripture, the practical result is that they inform each other. However, theology is preeminent because every interpreter comes to the biblical text with presuppositions which guide the interpretation. Thus, "Systematic theology does not do away with exegesis or biblical theology but works with them to give voice and order to the truths they uncover" (11). Therefore, a theological (i.e., Reformation) interpretation, or ruled reading, of Scripture "will guard against error and serve as the anchor point for faithful biblical preaching" (14). That the aim of the book "has been to argue for the importance of systematic theology and to reflect on the significance of dogmatics for the preaching task" (296) is reaffirmed by Paul Grimmond in chapter nineteen, "Letting the Word Do the Work: A Constructive Account of Expositional Preaching." In response, while affirming the concept of recursion, a better understanding is to begin with an

exegetical theology as the foundation for biblical and systematic theology (see Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!*).

Daniel Y. Wu's, "Old Testament Challenges: Christocentric or Christotelic Sermon?" (Chapter Eight) tackles the contemporary discussion on how to preach Christ from the Old Testament. Wu gives an outstanding analysis of both the christocentric and christotelic approaches to the Old Testament, concluding that neither is completely adequate as a hermeneutic for every text (he cites Proverbs 19:24 as an example). He affirms preaching Christ in every sermon, noting that a multiplicity of hermeneutical strategies may need to be employed. Wu's essay is a balanced approach which will probably leave the purists on either side of the debate unconvinced.

"The Priority of Proclamation: Preaching in a Liturgical Context" is the contribution of David G. Peterson in Chapter Sixteen. Peterson describes how pastoral preaching developed in New Testament times from the primary task of proclaiming the gospel to unbelievers. Following the synagogue pattern, preaching was associated with the public reading of Scripture and involved proclamation, teaching, and exhortation. As Christian worship progressed, preaching became a part of a liturgical event. For those preachers in a liturgical tradition, it is demonstrated from both the Scripture and tradition that the sermon should have the decisive influence in the service. Those preachers in non-liturgical churches need the reminder that the New Testament puts the sermon in a place of priority that does not negate praise, prayers, and the ordinances. Peterson's essay is biblical and balanced.

The final two chapters record two sermons, one OT and one NT. After the sermon transcripts, the preachers, Simon Manchester and Phillip D. Jensen give personal insight into the decisions made in the preparation and presentation of the messages. This demonstration of the principles and methodology espoused in the previous essays is a fitting conclusion to the volume.

This book is a good addition to any preacher's library. The twenty-one authors present their vision for theological

expository preaching. They interact with both the biblical text and contemporary homiletical thought in an engaging manner. The readers may not agree with the book on all points, but they will be challenged to deepen their own understanding of theology and preaching through engagement with this volume.



Preaching Hope in Darkness: Help for Pastors in Addressing Suicide from the Pulpit. By Scott M. Gibson and Karen E. Mason. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020. 978-1-6835-9411-6, 259 pp., \$23.99.

Reviewer: *Kyle Lincoln, North Point Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Danvers, MA.*

When I first started working in the field of suicide prevention and intervention, I was surprised that churches and church leaders were not recognized as players in the crisis system of care. I was surprised because, having grown up in church, no physician was as relevant to my life as the Great Physician; and my childhood pastor was, at least in my eyes, highly involved and respected in our community. The church provided a lot of support, and I imagine, even though the subject of suicide was homiletically taboo, this support protected against suicide. Times may not have changed so much as my view from within the church has been complemented by a view from outside of the church. Mason's earlier research has shown that pastors and preachers feel ill-equipped to become players in the work of crisis care (whether in suicide prevention, intervention, or recovery) and so may sit on the sidelines. This work is too important to leave on the backburner, which is why this book matters.

In *Preaching Hope in Darkness*, Gibson and Mason address a gap in homiletical literature. Perhaps even more than this, they invite preachers to join this holy work in the ways the church is best positioned to do. Preaching that addresses suicide is a difficult task, but it is among the first tasks for pastors hoping to

protect against suicide and to provide care for the victims of suicide loss. A notable inclusion in the book is the seven fences of suicide prevention (for example, fence #2 is to “Preach and teach on the worth and dignity of every person”), matched with practical pastoral intervention strategies. These seven fences carry over into the Bible studies appended to the book.

Gibson and Mason frame their collaboration as a “conversation” between practitioners in “two fields that don’t typically interact—homiletics and psychology” (back cover), though in fact it is more like a playbook handed down from seasoned coaches. This is a multifaceted resource compiled with theological and clinical sensitivity, which includes digestible guidance for preachers, example sermons, Bible studies, worship outlines, sample prayers, and more. The authors’ main conviction is that the hope of the gospel protects against suicide and is the surest comfort for victims of suicide loss within the church. This hope should infuse pastoral care before and long after the sermon event. Gibson and Mason model the relevance of “conversations” like this, and I hope there are more to come.

Those most affected by suicide are blessed by words marked by sensitivity and directness, incarnational empathy and transcending hope. Gibson and Mason are well suited to this task. I found their tone and message to be balanced, the content to be carefully researched (25 pages of references, plus over a thousand interviews and surveys!), and the hope of the gospel to be central. I believe it will be accessible for pastors of multiple sized churches and different denominations. If you are a preacher, this book is likely to open up new avenues of thought—it did for me—though perhaps not directly answering every question that suicide surfaces.

More critically, some example sermons run the risk of implying the sufficiency of private spirituality in the face of suicidal ideation, others commending the sufficiency of the body of Christ. Sadly, each sermon neglects mentioning the existence of mental health professionals. One way that the included sermons could be strengthened is by leaning into Fence #7 “Encourage congregants to reach out for help.” Beyond pastoral

care, preachers can directly recommend help from mental health professionals. Such homiletical directness beneficially addresses the stigma of help seeking (which can be prevalent for laity and pastors alike) *and* promotes cross-sector collaboration to work against the silo-ing of protective efforts mentioned above.



Living in God's True Story: 2 Peter. By Donald L. Morcom. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2021. 978-1-6835-9483-3, 113 pp., 14.99.

Reviewer: *Nicholas B. Marnejon, Community Christian Fellowship, Edmonds, WA.*

In *Living in God's True Story*, Donald L. Morcom reminds readers that books like 2 Peter help reorient Christians to the true story of the world, God's story. As Morcom puts it, 2 Peter "recombobulates" us, amid competing stories, so that it becomes "a valuable primer on the sort of people we ought to be as Christ-followers" (5).

Living in God's True Story is a short, one-hundred-page book that's part of the Transformative Word Series by Lexham Press. In each book of the series, authors trace a key theme of a biblical book that provides a helpful orientation to it. For instance, Morcom unites 2 Peter around the question, posed from 2 Peter 3:11, "What kind of people ought you to be?" (9). Morcom walks through 2 Peter, section by section, thematically exploring this forgotten epistle. At the end of each section, the Transformative Word Series has authors give suggested Bible reading and reflection questions that help facilitate interaction and retention. The book concludes with some recommended reading, another series distinctive, that points readers to resources for further study. This suggests that the Transformative Word Series knows its books are thematic primers, not full-bodied exegetical commentaries. The size of Morcom's book alone indicates that, but anyone who comes

looking for a thorough and deeply exegetical book will be left wanting.

Sticking to his theme, Morcom ably weaves together personal stories, illustrations, and even solid reflection questions that go beyond the restate-what-the-author-said variety, producing a very readable book. Morcom does enough to make the argument of 2 Peter alive to its readers without bogging them down with the details of date, authorship, and textual criticism. However, Morcom did his homework. An appendix shows that he is conversant with the critical issues surrounding 2 Peter, like authentic Petrine authorship, and comes to his own conclusion that, “[T]here is no definitive reason to reject the authenticity of 2 Peter and that the claims the letter makes for itself may be taken at face value” (94).

Preachers will find several uses for Morcom’s book, and really the entirety of the Transformative Word Series. They could easily take this book and read it in an hour or two to help prime or refresh themselves for preaching a series in 2 Peter. They could also hand this book to small group Bible study leaders and trust that this will give them no more or no less than what they need. Even teens would benefit from reading this approachable book and engaging with its thematic approach to 2 Peter.

Living in God’s True Story: 2 Peter can find a place on the preacher’s full shelf, or in the hands of their parishioners, reminding them of the value of this oft-neglected epistle’s transformative power for the lives of all God’s people.



1–2 Timothy & Titus. By Andreas J. Köstenberger. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020. 978-1-6835-9431-4, 544 pp., \$49.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: Steele B. Wright, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The renewed interest in biblical theology in recent years, particularly among evangelicals, has led to a wealth of publications seeking to equip pastors and church leaders with the necessary skills to teach the overarching story of the Bible to their congregations. Following in this stream, the Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary series aims to analyze carefully each biblical book and situate it within the context of the entire canon. As a well-established New Testament scholar and editor of the EBTC, Andreas Köstenberger is uniquely positioned to write the present volume on *1–2 Timothy & Titus*. Additionally, Köstenberger's desire to see Christians cherish the Scriptures and pastors proclaim them faithfully means the present work is no mere academic exercise, but a labor of love for those serving the Lord at the ground level.

Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus (LTT) represent the culmination of the apostle's ministry. As Paul's apostolic delegates, Timothy and Titus were sent to ensure that churches order themselves according to his instructions and prepare themselves to combat false teaching (1). Rather than see the LTT as separate epistles detached from the rest of Pauline literature, Köstenberger situates these two books within the context of Paul's larger ministry (6). When analyzing the text of the LTT, Köstenberger adopts "a balanced interpretive approach that investigates in depth the matrix of the historical setting, literary character, and theological message of each letter" (2). Köstenberger's exposition largely follows this pattern as he discusses relevant background material for each letter before examining the text in more detail. His expertise with the Greek language enables him to highlight significant words or phrases without descending into a dense technical discussion. In addition to Köstenberger's intimacy with the original language, his awareness of the wider scholarship provides readers with an excellent working knowledge of the key issues in the LTT.

Given the biblical-theological focus of the commentary, Köstenberger carefully and consistently connects the text of Paul's letters to relevant Old Testament passages that illuminate the apostle's message. One example of this is found in

Köstenberger's discussion of 2 Timothy 3:1–9 where Paul assures Timothy that the false teachers will not succeed in his day any more than they did in the days of Moses. Relying on both the Old Testament and extrabiblical material, Köstenberger draws a typological connection between Moses and Aaron and Paul and Timothy (260). Following his analysis of these verses, Köstenberger models the kind of theological application he expects pastors to emulate; "In vv. 1–9, then, the storm clouds grow even darker. Eschatology takes center stage and casts its shadow on ecclesiology, with the effect of throwing the need for the life of faith, the pursuit of virtue, and faithful gospel ministry into even sharper focus" (260).

Following the Introduction (1–54) and Exposition of the LTT (55–355), Köstenberger concludes with a section on the letters' Biblical and Theological Themes (357–544). Here, Köstenberger makes his unique contribution to the scholarship on the LTT as he unfolds in considerable detail relevant theological themes such as mission, teaching, God, Christ, salvation, God's household, the Christian life, the last days, and the LTT's contribution to the canon. What makes this section immensely helpful for teachers and preachers is Köstenberger's ability to show how each theme is distinct and yet related to one another. If the Bible is ultimately the work of a single divine author who has designed each individual text with a purpose, then it is incumbent upon pastors to alert their listeners to the unity of the biblical message and apply it accordingly.

1–2 *Timothy & Titus* is a worthy resource for pastors striving to equip their congregations with a connected view of the Scriptures. Köstenberger's work will ensure that pastors do not miss the forest for the trees when preaching on a particular passage. Those concerned that the emphasis on biblical theology may detract from the passage at hand will be encouraged by Köstenberger's incisive exegetical work. One never gets the sense that Köstenberger imposes his biblical theology on the text. Rather, his biblical theology flows from his exegesis to produce profound theological and practical fruit for his readers to digest.



Preaching with an Accent: Biblical Genres for Australian Congregations. Edited by Ian Hussey. Macquarie Park: Morling, 2019. 978-0-9945-7266-0, 310 pp., \$35.00.

Reviewer: Rodney A. Palmer, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

Several books have been produced on preaching to different cultural and ethnic groups in recent years, and *Preaching with an Accent* is another such volume targeting Australians. The book is edited by Ian Hussey, a lecturer and director of Post-Graduate Studies at Malyon Theological College, an affiliate institution of the Australian College of Theology. It is a compilation of thirteen contributors from different denominations who all possess depths of knowledge about the Australian culture.

The book focuses on aiding Australian preachers with the important tasks of hermeneutics and contextualization, which will result in biblically sound sermons that are appropriately applied to twenty-first century Australia. The first chapter provides a cultural exegesis of Australians. The typical Australian is characterized as individualistic, egalitarian, rule-based, monochronic, secular, postmodern, pluralistic, anti-institutional, multicultural, wealthy, consumeristic, anxious, depressed, and time-poor. This chapter also lays the foundation for the proceeding chapters, as the highlighted cultural characteristics form the basis for the contextualization process conducted by each contributor.

Each of the remaining twelve chapters focuses on a specific biblical genre and follows a similar structure as outlined by Hussey:

1. Introduction: discussion of the general issues related to preaching this collection of books
2. The hermeneutical task: insights into the interpretation of these books

3. The contextualization task: insights into the particular message of these books for Australian culture
4. A sample sermon: an example of the type of sermon that can be preached to an Australian congregation, provided with some comments on the hermeneutical and contextualization tasks that have influenced the shaping of this particular message (7).

One of the apparent weaknesses of the volume, which the editor was quick to admit, was the gender imbalance among the contributors. In acknowledging this weakness, Hussey explained that there were very few “women preaching academics in Australia to draw on” (7). This revelation underscores the need for greater intentionality in the recruiting and mentoring of Australian female scholars in the field of homiletics.

Although *Preaching with an Accent* was primarily written for Australian preachers, it should not deter non-Australians. In addition to obtaining a concise overview of the Australian culture, readers will also better understand how to preach sermons that will connect with Australians scattered across the globe. This volume serves as an excellent template for homileticians who are desirous of producing a guide for preaching from their respective cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Overall, the book will aid preachers in avoiding the pitfall of preaching biblically sound sermons with “accents” their listeners cannot comprehend because the messages are misapplied contextually. This tome is well-suited as a supplemental text in a contextualized preaching class.



Preaching in/and the Borderlands. Edited by J. Dwayne Howell and Charles L. Aaron, Jr. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2020. 978-1-5326-6465-6, 167 pp., \$24.00.

Reviewer: Jesse Welliver, Luther Rice College and Seminary, Stonecrest, GA.

J. Dwayne Howell is Professor Emeritus of Old Testament and Hebrew at Campbellsville University. Charles L. Aaron, Jr. is co-director of the Intern Program at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University. Together, the editors organize their book into four sections.

The contributions in the first section address legal and ethical issues surrounding immigration. The second section addresses the concept of immigration in the Old and New Testaments. The third speaks to the intersection of immigration and homiletics, which includes three sample sermons on the topic of immigration. In the last section, two contributors offer reflections on their experiences of integrating ministry to immigrants in their local church.

Several of the book's contributors confront cultural issues they see as prevalent in American society, issues that the majority culture might not notice. In Robert Hoch's chapter "Being White These Days," pastors, especially white pastors, are encouraged to name and confront whiteness in the pulpit. Though the preacher's dialogue on the subject will be imperfect and will make white-dominant churches uncomfortable, Hoch argues it is necessary if one is "to return whiteness to the rainbow; or as a pastoral theologian might say, return whiteness to the rainbow, part and parcel of the diversity of God's creation" (35).

Gerald C. Liu's chapter, "Making U.S. Protestant Disciples of ALL Nations," highlights the way in which Protestant ideals, religious liberty primarily, have been co-opted to fuel imperialistic and violent tendencies in America's foreign relationships and immigration policies. Preachers, according to Liu, must learn from America's tendency toward violent imperialism in the name of Protestant ideals and learn to be "effective proclaimers who nurture people of faith while not excluding followers of other faiths" (50).

Sarah Adkins' "An Overview of the Current Landscape of Immigration Law" provides helpful insight into immigration law in the United States. Adkins argues that understanding immigration law is essentially to the prospect of preaching or

speaking on immigration (52). Knowing the challenges of immigrants will produce a more informed homiletic. Adkins attempts to demonstrate the difficulty of pursuing citizenship or legal status in the United States and argues that pastors must remember the humanity of those who are pursuing immigration in America (65).

Many people who cross political borders often experience abuse in the process. Lis Valle's "Toward a Border-Crossing Homiletic: Building Blocks for Trauma-Informed Preaching Practices" aims to help preachers build a homiletic that is informed by the research of Judith L. Herman in trauma recovery. Valle excels by highlighting the level of sensitivity a preacher/pastor should have toward those in the congregation and some aspects of trauma theory that can help the preacher craft and deliver sermons. However, given the complexity of trauma recovery, many preachers may feel inept or unqualified at integrating the concept in their preaching.

Throughout the book there are some hermeneutical and homiletical moves that warrant questioning. Owen Ross's "Moving from Caution to Faithful Proclamation: One Pastor's Story," for example, aims to equip preachers to preach biblical texts on immigration by offering a one-to-one comparison between the nation of Israel in the Old Testament and nations today (94). While Ross's concerns are understandable, assuming or positing this kind of comparison between the theocratic nation of Israel and the United States is overly simplistic (99). Further, as other chapters in the book have made clear, *immigration* itself is a pregnant term that involves many factors, including ways of immigrating. Preachers should avoid over-generalizing the issue; more nuance is required in applying Old Testament laws regarding immigration to nations in our contemporary society.

Preaching in/and the Borderlands is a valuable contribution to the conversation between homiletics and immigration. Not all readers will agree with some of the interpretations, suggestions, and applications of theology and Scripture found in the essays in this book. However, the authors are correct; immigration is both a personal and policy issue that occupies much space in

contemporary political discussion. As the book recommends, preachers and pastors should give more thought to how their congregations and denominations will be involved in caring for the immigrant, refugee, and others at risk.



Expository Preparation: Preparing Your Soul to Preach. By Benjamin G. Campbell. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2021. 978-1-6667-3023-4, 140 pp., \$17.00.

Reviewer: *Tony A. Rogers, Southside Baptist Church, Bowie, TX.*

Benjamin G. Campbell will invigorate every preacher in this new work. This pre-homiletic primer, exploring spiritual disciplines and how they relate to preaching and pastoral ministry will inform, encourage, and convict. Campbell is pastor of Arbor Grove Free Will Baptist Church in Hoxie, AR. “If pastors are called to preach, they will (or should) strive to prepare their souls *and* their sermons well” (xii-xiii). Herein lay Campbell’s dilemma, the gulf between soul and sermon which he sees as the cause of much fruitless preaching (xii). His answer—spiritual disciplines both as preparatory *to* and mandatory *for* the preaching endeavor. He states his aim as “the preparation of the pastor’s soul is of *utmost* importance. If the pastor’s soul is not in union with the Lord Jesus, he will have a difficult time shepherding the flock of God” (xi), further if there is no expository preparation, there will be no expository preaching (85).

Chapter one (Biblical Authority: A Review) sets the authority of Scripture as foundational to true sermon preparation (xiv), viewing propositional revelation as necessary because the Bible is about fact, not theories (10). In the second chapter (The Pastor and the Spiritual Disciplines) Campbell sees spiritual health preceding sermon prep (xiv). The disciplines of Bible intake, prayer, and meditation (21) aid the pastor in soul preparation (12). Chapter three (Preparation and the Pastor’s

Personal Life) addresses areas such as rest and family (xv). In all disciplines, Christ and His likeness are essential to preparation (25). Chapters four and five (The Disciplines of Expository Preparation) view specific disciplines in lieu of sermon preparation (xv). Chapter four focuses on the personal nature of soul care, while chapter five has an outward focus (54).

Chapter 6 (Preparation as Worship) addresses the preacher's sanctification, proper hermeneutics, recognizing theological themes within the passage, applying the selected text to his congregation, and being able to observe life with his congregation (xv). Chapter seven (Basis for Worship) presents pastoral soul care as worship (xv), a lifestyle of manifesting God's work of grace (75). Chapter eight (Why Expository Preparation?) is a systematic approach to viewing preaching as worship, which pastors oft see as work instead of glorious proclamation on behalf of Christ (xv).

Do not let the book's diminutive appearance fool you—there is much to quarry. Campbell shines the light on several areas, one of those being plagiarism. He asserts, "This problem of preaching someone else's sermon entails more than the sin of stealing someone else's material, but it deals with the pastor's heart condition. A pastor who is consistently neglecting to preach and prepare his own sermons is one who consistently neglects his holiness" (38).

Further compounding this is the fact that sermon preparation is preeminently a personal act of worship and failure here will bring uncertainty of calling within one's life (69).

Another positive is Campbell's stress on Bible intake, an area where some preachers may be self-deceived. You cannot preach what you do not know, and Campbell warns against going to the Scriptures solely for sermon material. "This trickery will, then, eventually come through how one preaches ... [creeping] into how a pastor prepares himself to preach. When preparation is fraudulent, so is the pastor's spirituality ... [ministers then] will eventually become a poison to their congregations" (28).

A final area to underscore—Campbell raises prayer as the *sine qua non* of expository preparation (48). This is true of the pastor's prayer life—personally, familially, and, pastorally for: (1) the health of his soul depends upon his prayer habits, (2) his sermon preparation is dependent on his vibrant prayer life, and (3) what is in the well is what comes up in the bucket (32-33).

It is a small work, and one might have wished for some beefier chapters especially considering much of the appendices (30 pages) are already chapter material. Though picayunish he uses the phrase "in other words" thirty-six times which can be distracting. However, these do not detract from the book's rich content. Other works speak to these issues but not in the way that Campbell addresses them. It is a quick read for all preachers and would be a nice companion text in a homiletics or pastoral ministries class. It would fit nicely in the pastor's bookcase next to Rick Reed's *The Heart of the Preacher: Preparing Your Soul to Proclaim the Word* (Lexham, 2019). God both requires and desires spiritual growth from His ministers, it is essential because the pastor's: (1) personal life depends upon it, (2) impact in the church depends upon his spiritual growth, and (3) sermon preparation depends upon it (14-15, 97-98). Campbell has done a needed service for a noble task and all of God's preachers should declare, "I will do this thing because I love God and want to please Him" (19).



Always a Guest: Speaking of Faith Far from Home. By Barbara Brown Taylor. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2020. 978-0-6642-6170-2, 242 pp., \$25.00 (hardback).

Reviewer: Arica Heald Demme, *St. Veronica's Anglican Mission, Bear, DE.*

Barbara Brown Taylor, an Episcopal priest and academic, is one of four individuals to be named among the twelve most effective preachers in the English speaking world by both the 1996 and

2016 surveys of the Kyle Lake Center for Effective Preaching at Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary. She is also the only woman to have been named to that prestigious list either time. It is with these distinctions in view that her recent collection of sermons is worthy of examination by EHS members despite any discomfort with her hermeneutic or exegetical conclusions.

The thirty-one sermons contained in *Always a Guest* were all preached by invitation after Taylor left the full-time pastorate for academia, and they span from 2006 up through 2020. The date and location of delivery as well as any useful context for the occasion are provided for each sermon. The settings vary widely and include college chapels, Sunday morning services of various denominations, seminary graduations, the Chautauqua Institution, radio programming, and a certain English Cathedral.

The biblical text specified for each sermon is more than decoration for the page or springboard to a topic of choice. Taylor engages with Scripture, walking through the passage in a loosely expository manner and addressing textual and theological issues as appropriate to the audience. She utilizes a conversational style unburdened by theological jargon. She repeatedly draws the listener into encountering the people in the text and experiencing their emotions. One effective example is her brief, first-person voicing of James or John's thoughts throughout the transfiguration account.

Taylor writes in the preface, "The most surprising gift [of always being a guest] was the freedom to preach without fear of being fired—or if not fired, at least roundly criticized with apparent relish" (x). She expresses this freedom homiletically by tending to dive into the deep end of discomfort. She describes the human condition with all its doubts and fears. She questions common assumptions and rejects pat answers. She draws pointed attention to how her listeners may be internally squirming, and she presses in to challenge them spiritually. These are not necessarily "safe" sermons, and that may feel like a breath of fresh air to readers.

Nonetheless, this collection feels consistent with her earlier work for which she has been amply recognized and awarded. In particular, Taylor's facility with language and imagination is exceptional. One of my favorite moments in the book is when she describes creation from the point of view of birds, if birds had the same intellectual and spiritual capacities as humans. The description paints a delightfully fun and thought-provoking picture. Even an illustration that would seem like a last-minute addition – an experience on the plane ride to the venue – is seamlessly woven into the tapestry of her words.

These sermons are on the shorter side, so one or more could easily be read and evaluated in a homiletics class activity or included in a course packet as an exemplar of an esteemed preacher. Given that Taylor is now retired to some extent, this book is a valuable contribution toward formal analysis of her preaching corpus. For example, I found it interesting to compare her treatment of the parable of the Good Samaritan in *Always a Guest* ("The Good Heretic") with that of "Do Love" in *The Preaching Life*, published in 1993.



Lies My Preacher Told Me: An Honest Look at the Old Testament. By Brent A. Strawn. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2021. 978-0-664-26571-7, 116 pp., \$15.69.

Reviewer: Soloman R. Patrick, Jr., Luther Rice Bible College and Seminary, Lithonia, GA.

Brent Strawn, Professor of Old Testament and Law at Duke University, seeks to set forward the true beauty of the Old Testament by exposing ten mistruths presented about it in the church by both Sunday school teachers and preachers, whether intentionally or not. He gives ample space to the examination of each mistruth as it is often presented in a familiar cliché before challenging it with simple logic.

After a brief introduction, Strawn explains in chapter one that the Old Testament is not someone else's mail; it stands as the holy word of God for all. In chapter two, he challenges the idea that the Old Testament is a boring history book by pointing to some examples of the action and intriguing accounts recorded in the Old Testament. Chapter three challenges the claim of the first Testament's obsolescence, showing that it has a place in the life of Christians today. In chapter four, Strawn defends God against the charge of meanness as depicted in the Old Testament by explaining how God is not pleased with injustice and sin throughout all of Scripture. Chapter five, similarly, speaks to the alleged violent nature of God by showing that there are violent passages throughout both testaments. In chapter six, he dispels the notion that David wrote all of the Psalms by pointing to the clear indications of other psalmists. Strawn challenges the idea that the Old Testament is not spiritually enriching in chapter seven. The relevance of the Old Testament is the focus of chapter eight, while chapter nine challenges the view that the Old Testament is both burdensome and impossible to keep. Finally, chapter ten addresses the claim that everything in Scripture is about Jesus.

Lies My Preacher Told Me is a unique work. Among its strengths is that it grabs the reader's attention by discussing statements that most Christians have previously heard, if not made themselves. The biggest weakness of the work is that it is not long enough. The author does not explore the impact of the mistruths on the body of Christ.

Although Strawn's work is interesting, it does not provide any new ideas for preachers. It does, however, challenge readers to reflect on the statements that they make to their parishioners about the Old Testament to ensure that they are grounded in truth.



Let the Legends Preach: Sermons by Living Legends at the E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference. Edited by Jared E. Alcántara. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2021. 978-1-7252-6689-6, 254 pp., \$29.00.

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

Books of collected sermons, some would argue, are becoming increasingly passé. “Who wants to read a bunch of printed messages? Isn’t that so nineteenth century?” The answer to that question, for this reviewer, is this: not so in every case. *Let the Legends Preach* is a salient volume that any preacher who values biblical preaching should pick up and read.

Jared E. Alcántara, holder of the Paul W. Powell endowed chair in preaching at George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Baylor University, serves as the editor of this important contribution to the field of homiletics. Highlighting the life, ministry, and sermons of homiletical “legends,” or to use the metaphor of baseball “hall of fame” preachers, this collection of biographies and sermons brings to our focus the fruit of decades of sermonic brilliance from the annual E. K. Bailey Conference on preaching.

In the excellent foreword, written by one of these preaching legends, Joel C. Gregory emphasizes the impact that Bailey had on expository preaching, generally, and African-American expository preaching, more specifically, during his time in the pastorate which prematurely ended with a battle with cancer. Bailey’s preaching ministry exemplified the best in the African-American preaching tradition.

The twenty-four legendary preachers, some known to this reviewer more than others, highlighted in this book include: Ervin Kinsley (E. K.) Bailey, Gardner C. Taylor, Henry H. Mitchell, James Earl Massey, Haddon W. Robinson, Robert Smith Jr., Joel C. Gregory, and many others. To begin each chapter, Alcántara does a fine job of providing succinct biographies on the

preachers, their lives, pastorates, and sermonic influence. The legend's sermon preached at the E. K. Bailey Conference immediately follows his biography. To be fair, some sermons are more expositional than others, as some readers of this journal would undoubtedly agree. However, there is no doubt that we can learn from each of these preachers to grow in some facet of our common desire to faithfully preach God's word.

I am grateful for the vision of Bryan Carter and the execution of Jared E. Alcántara in furnishing our guild and pastors with this significant resource. My only wish is that there could have been an audio/video companion to this printed book so that preachers could hear and/or watch the sermons in their original setting. Perhaps the organizers of the E. K. Bailey Conference would be able and willing to share sermon links for such aspiring minds. I would highly recommend this work and encourage you to pick it up for yourself and for the sake of your congregations and students not just as an introduction to the world of African-American homiletical excellence, but also as a place to linger and learn from some of the most effective preachers in our day.