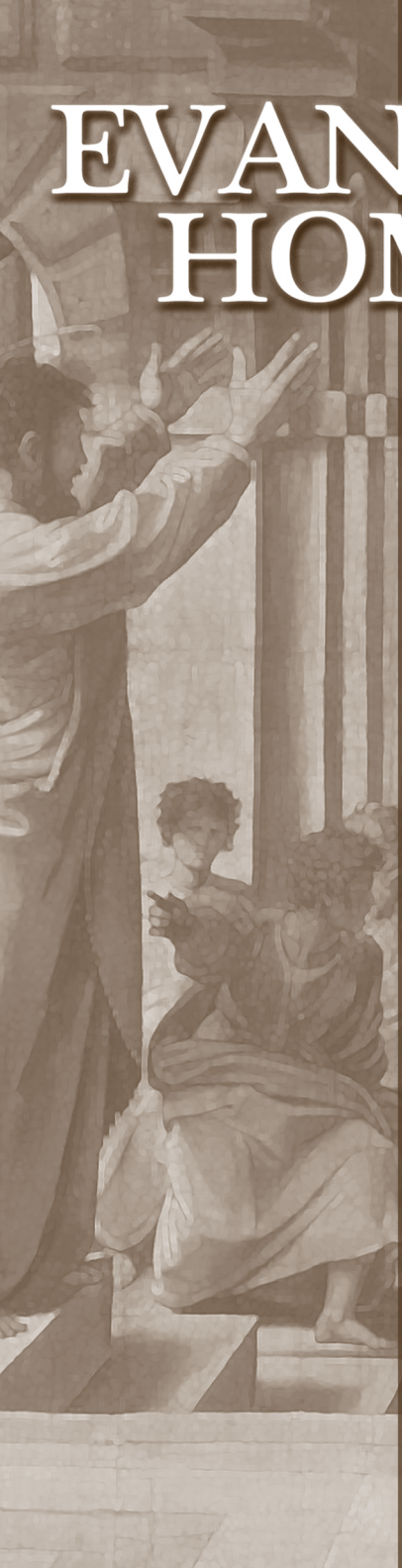

THE JOURNAL OF THE

EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS SOCIETY

Sept 2022, Vol. 22 No. 2

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Manuscripts: Though most articles and book reviews are assigned, submissions are welcome. They must by typed and double-spaced. All articles will be juried to determine suitability for publication. Please send articles to the General Editor, Scott M. Gibson, at scott_gibson@baylor.edu. Letters to the editor are also welcome. Those who have material of whatever kind accepted for publication must recognize it is always the editor's prerogative to edit and shorten said material, if necessary.

Publishers should send catalogs and review copies of their books to Gregory K. Hollifield, Memphis College of Urban and Theological Studies, 2181 Union Avenue, Memphis, TN 38104.

Publication: *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* is published twice a year, September and March, and is published by the Evangelical Homiletics Society. The Journal is open access online. For advertising information, please contact Scott M. Gibson, General Editor at scott_gibson@baylor.edu, Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary, One Bear Place #97126, Waco, TX 76798-7126.

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

THE JOURNAL OF THE
Evangelical Homiletics Society

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society
Baylor University's Truett Seminary
One Bear Place #97126
Waco, TX 76798-7126
ISSN 1534-7478

ehomiletics.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE PREACHER AND THE TEXT

SCOTT M. GIBSON
General Editor

For homileticians, there is the preacher and the biblical text. Without these there is no mouthpiece, but, more importantly, without the text there is nothing to preach. The preacher needs the text and the texts needs a preacher. The two are integrally intertwined. Paul reminds us in Romans 10:14, "And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" Yet, as we know, God empowers the Word itself to speak, even to preach to people in far-flung places where the flesh of a mouthpiece is absent. We're told that the Lord's word goes out from his mouth: "It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Is. 55:11).

These are reassuring words. God's Word read or preached accomplishes the purposes of the Lord in the lives of men and women, boys and girls. And, amazingly, the Lord uses the preacher and the text to achieve his desired intentions. This edition of *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* both preacher and text are explored.

First is an editorial. Beginning in the previous edition (21:1 March 2022), an occasional editorial section was added to the offerings in the journal. In this edition, Winfred Omar Neely reflects on the lessons learned from the speech given by Britain's King Charles III, following the death of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II. These are lessons preachers can employ for better preaching.

There are two articles on specific preachers in this edition. The first is a helpful examination of John A. Broadus's homiletics. The author, Michael Cooper, argues that Broadus's work bridges

the older preaching of the nineteenth-century to the modern expression of expository preaching.

The second article on a preacher is provided by G. Brandon Knight. His exploration of J. Gresham Machen's final sermon preached at Princeton Theological Seminary, "The Good Fight of Faith," yields an interesting examination of rhetoric and homiletics in light of Machen's time and context.

The third article is by Timothy Yap. This article is a case study of preaching biblical lists—names—something with which many preachers struggle or even avoid. The case is a list of names taken from Ezra 2. Yap makes the claim that the list of names in Ezra 2 is not happenstance but through the list God is communicating the message of redemption found in Jesus Christ.

The final article, also engaging a biblical text, is written by Casey Barton, the Keith Willhite Award winner from the 2021 Evangelical Homiletics Society meeting at Baylor University's Truett Seminary. The award is named after society co-founder, Dr. Keith Willhite (1958-2003), and is given to the author of the paper that is recognized as having the most impact among papers presented at the conference. Barton's paper, "On the Willows We Hung Our Harps: Preaching the Lament and Hope of Psalm 137," explores imprecatory lament for preaching with the intention to assist preachers to deal with tragedy by giving their listeners hope.

Gregory K. Hollifield, Book Review Editor, has curated another fine grouping of book reviews for our readers' consideration. One can see from the books evaluated by our members that careful thought is given to each entry. Additionally, the variety of books brought to consideration are varied—not only preaching-focused publications, but also books that have a bearing on the wider field of homiletics. Readers will appreciate the insights, commendations, and critiques noted in the different reviews. This section of *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* is always a rich resource for professors of preaching and those interested in expanding their knowledge of the field.

The preacher and the text are features of this edition of *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society*—two preachers examined and biblical texts explored. These two elements are always in conversation in homiletics. The Lord uses men and women to communicate the biblical text. And this is the way the Lord intended it to be.

MAY "FLIGHTS OF ANGELS SING THEE TO THY REST" MY REFLECTIONS ON THE SPEECH OF KING CHARLES III

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Queen Elizabeth II was the longest reigning monarch in British history. After serving her people well for 70 years, on Thursday, Sept. 8th, 2022, at the ripe age of 96, Queen Elisabeth II passed away at her summer home, Balmoral Castle in Scotland. Immediately after her passing, her heir, Charles, the Prince of Wales, ascended to the throne, becoming King Charles III. In this momentous historical context, fraught with sorrow over the queen's passing and laden with questions about the future of the British monarchy, one of the new king's first responsibilities was to deliver a speech. It would be a speech that could make, break, or damage his reign and the future of monarchy. The delivery of the new king's speech was no light matter.

The long historical arc of communication has taught us that some speeches outlive their delivery, impacting people for good for years and for generations to come; the *Gettysburg Address*, delivered by Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States in 1863, and the *I Have a Dream* speech, delivered by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a Baptist Minister, 100 years later in 1963, serve as classic examples.

With so much at stake in this moment, what would the new king say? What would be the content of the speech? Would he use vivid verbs and robust nouns? What imagery would he employ to make clear his ideas and thoughts? Will he speak in such a way that the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth, and the world will listen? I watched the video of King Charles III

speech several times. In my professional judgement, the speech was wonderful, powerful—well delivered. As I watched and listened, I concluded before God that biblical preachers and communicators could learn a number of important lessons from the new King's speech. In the remainder of this editorial, I will focus on two lessons.

BIBLICAL PREACHING IS DIRECT, PERSONAL, AND VULNERABLE

One lesson we may learn from the speech is that biblical preaching should be direct, personal, and appropriately vulnerable. For many of us as preacher and trainers of preachers this is not a new homiletical insight, but it is good to see competent models of this principle. Preachers need good models of effective communication. King Charles exemplifies this principle when he opens his speech with these words: "I speak to you with feelings of profound sorrow." At the very outset he lets us know what his emotional state is. He is grieving the loss of his "darling mama" (his words). I am glad that King Charles admitted and shared with the world his emotional state of sorrow. With these words he connects with all of us who have experienced sorrow or lost a loved one to death. His disclosure reminds us that kings, princes, people, and yes preachers are not robots. All of us are human beings in the thick of life's ups and down with our own internal mental and emotional journeys. In order to help others through our preaching ministries, in the sermonic moment, it may be appropriate to be honest with where we are emotionally provided the disclosure is designed to help advance the purpose of the message (2 Cor. 1:8-10, 2:12-13). I have learned through years of pastoral preaching that my appropriate self-disclosure in the preaching moment helps people, may give people courage, and a listener may take hope, realizing that the preacher too stands in need of God's grace and mercy.

ELOQUENCE MATTERS

The second lesson we may learn is that eloquence in oral discourse still matters. The king's speech is an example of eloquence. The transitions in the speech are robust, strong, and flawless, barley drawing attention to themselves. You have to pay attention to perceive the subtle transition in subject matter. The movements of the speech through the opening tribute to the queen, through the changes required in King's own life, and in the lives of the new Prince and Princess of Wales, were communicated well because of the robust transitions and pauses in the speech. The subtle shifts in vocal dynamics and the deliberate stretching of some words for emphasis were remarkable.

In my view, the most eloquent and moving part of the speech was the conclusion:

> And to my darling Mama, as you begin your last great journey to join my late dear Papa, I simply want to say this: thank you. Thank you for your love and devotion to our family and to the family of nations you have served so diligently all these years. *May flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!*

I can still hear the King's voice in my head as I read these lines. Watching him, his whole person seemed elevated in these concluding words. His vocal dynamics and pathos captured the depths of his thanks; his facial expression and well of gratitude in his eyes (eye contact is the most powerful form of nonverbal communication) were the nonverbal wings that carried his words even higher in the sky of eloquence. Then to top it off, the king lifted a line from Shakespeare's Hamlet, Act 5 Scene 2. With Hamlet dead, Horatio utters these words to him: "And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!" This line is used in the speech but in a stroke of rhetorical genius, the "And" is omitted and "May" is added in the speech. "May" is more suitable here and does

justice to the circumstances and rhetorical purpose and preserves the allusion to Hamlet. I wonder how many people know that the last sentence of the speech was from Hamlet. For those who did know, the echo makes the speech richer and even more eloquent. For those who do not, the meaning of the line is still clear. I was also struck by use of "thee" and "thy" in this context. Someone still dares to use old English in a speech! Yes, when the occasion demands it, and meaning is clear. Thus, the use of Shakespeare in sermons may still be useful provided preachers chose lines that are clear, adjust them to fit the preaching moment in order to serve the purpose of the sermon. Why not experiment with making a line more suitable by substituting a more appropriate word at the beginning or end of the line, preserving the echo, heightening the eloquence, and concluding with power.

This speech is a good model of starting with a bang and quitting all over. I encourage biblical preachers and communicators to view King Charles III's speech to see what you may learn about preaching from this very powerful and wonderful oration and tribute from King Charles III. It may even serve as a teaching tool for beginning preaching students.

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"A SOLEMN THING" JOHN A. BROADUS'S HOMILETICAL THEORY, PEDAGOGIAL METHOD, AND CONTEMPORARY IMPACT

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ABSTRACT

John Albert Broadus writes, "It is a solemn thing to preach the gospel, and therefore a solemn thing to attempt instruction or even suggestion as to the means of preaching well."[1] While many contemporary preachers may not be familiar with Broadus, modern evangelical preaching is largely shaped by his homiletical influence. For example, Fasol in his work, *With a Bible in Their Hands* comments, "Generations of preachers—Southern Baptist and many others as well—have stood and now stand on the shoulders of John A. Broadus."[2] Broadus's broad shoulders have held up preachers through his influential homiletical work, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (1870). As Thomas R. McKibbens argues, "He was a Baptist of international stature, to be held above all others in his influence on preaching from his day and well into the twentieth century."[3]

This article will argue that *the solemn thing* of Broadus's preaching theory is an intersection of ancient rhetorical elements, Reformational/Post-Reformational homiletical methodology, and the expository preaching tradition that is sensitive to the history of preaching. Thus, Broadus serves as a bridge between an older preaching methodology and the modern expository

sermon model.[4]

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John Albert Broadus (1827-1895) was born on January 24, 1827. He was baptized at age 16 and became a member at New Salem Baptist Church in 1843.[5] In August of 1846, he was called to preach under A. M. Poindexter.[6] Broadus's father, Edmund, served as a leader of the Whig party and as a member of the Virginia state legislature for eighteen years.[7] His mother was a woman "of godly character."[8] In 1845 he entered the University of Virginia to study Greek.[9] He married in 1850 and was called to Charlottesville Baptist Church in 1851, serving the church for eight years.[10]

The same year he began pastoring, the University of Virginia hired him as an assistant professor of Latin and Greek. This allowed Broadus to "combine his dual loves of preaching and teaching."[11] However, McKibbens notes, "Broadus seemed during those early years of ministry to struggle over the exact nature of his calling. He was pulled in two different directions: when in the pastorate, he longed for the classroom; in the classroom, he yearned for the pulpit."[12] This conflict was further complicated when James P. Boyce extended the invitation to Broadus to become part of the founding faculty of the newly formed Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1859.

Though Broadus initially declined in 1858, he along with Boyce, Williams, and Manly appropriately called, "the faithful four," comprised the founding faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In a letter written to Boyce, Broadus writes, "But . . . if elected, I am willing to go. May God graciously direct and bless, and if I have erred in judgment, may he overrule, to the glory of his name."[13] Broadus would preach his final sermon to the Baptist Church in Charlottesville on August 28, 1859 and moved to Greenville, South Carolina where the new seminary as initially located.[14] Southern Baptist pastors were in need of ministerial and theological training, since most were ill-equipped and lacked sufficient education. As a result, Southern

Seminary sought to provide theological education for these ministers. "The faithful four," along with twenty-six students constituted the first SBC theological institution in 1859.[15]

Arriving at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary offered Broadus and the three others the opportunity to spearhead Southern Baptist theological education. According to Mueller, these were "men of large vision and noble courage."[16] Of the faithful four, two in particular, stand out—Broadus and Boyce. Mueller states, "If James P. Boyce was the head of the seminary, John A. Broadus was its heart."[17] However, during this period, the brewing tensions between the North and the South over the issue of slavery prompted the seminary to shut its doors in 1861. While the faithful four departed in different directions during the Civil War, Broadus served as the pastor of Cedar Grove Baptist Church and the chaplain of the Virginia Northern Army.[18] Following the War, Broadus returned to the seminary to serve as a professor and administrator. A.T. Robertson says of his father-in-law and professor, "I fell at once under the spell of this magnetic teacher who radiated light and stimulus to all the class. I have never lost the intellectual impulse from the impact of Broadus…"[19]

In the founding of the seminary, this "magnetic teacher who radiated light and stimulus" held two major academic chairs. Robertson says, "Boyce planned for a faculty of four and that meant that each professor had to have two chairs…Only in the case of Broadus both his chairs were majors…His knowledge of Greek pointed plainly towards him for the New Testament chair and his brilliant preaching marked him out for Homiletics."[20] After the death of Boyce, Broadus served as the second president of Southern.[21] He would continue to serve the seminary until his death in 1895. As an educator, Broadus sought to encourage confessional and academic rigor.[22] As a scholar, he was capable and brilliant.[23]

HOMILETICAL PEDAGOGY

The brilliance of Broadus's homiletical scholarship is found in his work, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons.* 1870 saw the publication of the *Treatise,* despite difficult circumstances. Nettles recounts ironies of the publication, one of which includes Broadus's own financing of the *Treatise*.[24] Another irony, or obscurity, is the inception of the work itself. Robertson provides clarity,

> It happened that, when the Seminary at Greenville reopened after the Civil War, Broadus had only one student in Homiletics and he was blind. So he wrote out the entire course for this one blind young preacher and then published his lectures as a book. In teaching this one blind preacher he has taught many thousands of preachers for two generations, a lesson for preachers who do not give a small audience their best sermons.[25]

Despite the providentially peculiar circumstances surrounding the publication, the *Treatise* has providentially prepared preachers for over 150 years. Preaching professor Scott M. Gibson states, "…*On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* [is] one of the most influential trans-denominational textbooks on preaching in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."[26] Likewise, Nettles suggests, "Virtually every section of Broadus's resilient *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* finds expression in the developing corpus of evangelical works on homiletics."[27] A brief survey demonstrates the impact of the *Treatise* upon contemporary homiletics:

- Jerry Vines in his work *A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery* draws from Broadus's ideas related to imagination, rhetoric, and dramatic effect.[28]
- John MacArthur and the Master's Seminary Faculty in their book, *Expository Preaching*, approvingly quote Broadus multiple times.[29]

- The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary faculty has historically drawn from Broadus, beginning with B. H. Carroll,[30] Jeff Ray,[31] and the Brown-Clinard-Northcutt-Fasol era,[32] to the present day.
- The first quote in *Engaging Exposition*, written by Southern Baptists preachers, is from Broadus.[33]
- Bryan Chapell, in *Christ-Centered Preaching*, approvingly refers to and engages Broadus.[34]
- Grady Davis, in *Design for Preaching*, commends Broadus in his biography on sermon craftsmanship.[35]
- Haddon Robinson, in the first edition of *Biblical Preaching*, states Broadus advocated that a sermon must have a "central unifying idea."[36]

Robertson states that Broadus "was predestined to be a teacher."[37] In the classic work, *Baptists and the Bible*, Bush and Nettles provide the specific grounds for Broadus's classroom instruction: "A man of gigantic intellect, Broadus had a very simple and yet profound basis for his scholarship—the divine inspiration of the Bible."[38] The authority of Scripture laid the foundation for Broadus's classes and teaching method.

Robertson gives insight into this pedagogical method.[39] Broadus assigned "Homiletics, or Preparation and Delivery of Sermons," "Ripley's Sacred Rhetoric," and "Vinet's Homiletics." He had "numerous lectures" and "ample exercises in the formation of skeletons." He would also require students to critique and critically evaluate "printed sermons" along with topics such as "general composition" of sermons. Lastly, he would provide "opportunities for students to preach…" In his preaching, as well as his Greek classes, Broadus stressed the application of "principles" rather than "rules."[40] Broadus cared deeply for his students, which prompted him to teach them to excel. In 1890 Southern students spoke of Broadus as "magnetic and scholarly…"[41] In his final preaching lecture, he said, "Young gentlemen, preach the very best that you can for Christ's sake, and then preach a little bit better for the sake of your old teacher

who would love to be in the pulpit himself, but has to do most of his preaching through you."[42] With this, McKibbens notes that Broadus's pedagogical influence can be observed in three ways.[43] First, Broadus's commitment to the faithful interpretation of Scripture shaped the subsequent generation of Baptist preachers. Second, Broadus provided his students with a distinctive sermonic shape. Finally, Broadus gave Baptist sermons a distinctive style.

THEOLOGICAL AND HOMILETICAL INFLUENCES

There are at least four major influences that shaped Broadus and his homiletical methodology. First, is the Reformed nature of preaching. Broadus states, "Preaching is characteristic of Christianity…the great appointed means of spreading the good tidings of salvation through Christ is preaching…"[44] Foundational to Broadus's understanding of preaching is its primacy. Stanfield writes,

> He [Broadus] declares that preaching is central in Christianity and that nothing can ever take its place or supersede it. Broadus could not have had a higher view of preaching and the preacher's task. This exalted view of preaching permeated everything he said. It was an unconscious influence which an audience did not see but instinctively felt. It gave authority to what he had to say. It was a basic element of strength in his preaching.[45]

Broadus argues, "To explain the Scriptures would seem to be among the primary functions of the preacher…What nobler work than that of opening the Scriptures as Paul did at Thessalonica."[46] This explanatory element of preaching is deeply embedded within the Reformed tradition of *explicatio verbi Dei*.[47] Broadus explicitly states that printed sermons will not possess the same effect as oral proclamation.[48] He further concludes that while pastoring is important, "it cannot take the place of preaching, nor fully compensate for the lack of preaching in the pulpit."[49]

Likewise, religious ceremonies do not replace preaching.[50] For Broadus, his high view of preaching was grounded in a high view of Scripture.[51]

Second, Broadus relates preaching and the study of rhetoric. Specifically, Broadus follows Augustine's understanding of rhetoric and eloquence.[52] He lists Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Cicero's *Treaties on Oratory*, and others as recommended works on general rhetoric.[53] Thus, he concludes that homiletics and rhetoric as two related disciplines. He states, "The preacher can be really eloquent only when he speaks of those vital gospel truths…A just rhetoric, if there were no higher consideration, would require that a preacher shall preach the gospel…"[54] However, he argues, "Homiletics may be called a branch of rhetoric…Still, preaching is properly very different from secular discourse."[55] Nevertheless, "they [homiletics and rhetoric] ought to be constantly borne in mind by the student of homiletics and by the working preacher."[56] As Fasol writes, "The genius of *A Treatise* lies in its view of preaching as sacred rhetoric."[57]

Third, a brief survey of Broadus's homiletical recommendations reveals his rigorous scholarship and intellectual vigor. He recommends preachers read Chrysostom's *On the Priesthood* and Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*.[58] He suggests several French authors: Fenelon's *Dialogues on Eloquence* and Claude's *Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*.[59] Of interest is Vinet's *Homiletics,* of which Broadus writes, "…on some subjects is the best treatise on homiletics in existence…"[60] Additionally, he draws from a wide range of homiletical traditions: Baptist,[61] Lutheran,[62] Reformed,[63] Presbyterian,[64] Methodist,[65] Anglican,[66] and Roman Catholic.[67] While Broadus is a confessional Calvinist, he does not explicitly appeal to the homiletical tradition of William Perkins.[68] He commends the sermons of Andrew Fuller as an example of expository preaching.[69] It is apparent that he had deep admiration for Robert Hall.[70] Also, he appeals to Spurgeon on several occasions.[71]

Lastly, as Bumper observes, "He [Broadus] grounded his interpretive methodology in five presuppositions…The five presuppositions are: objectivity, singularity, intentionality,

spirituality, and Christocentricity."[72] He maintained an emphasis upon a traditional grammatical-historical hermeneutic with a Christocentric application. In sum, he was an exegete, who was devoted to the right interpretation of Scripture. As a Reformed churchman and trained classicist, who was deeply committed to homiletical scholarship and exegetical precision, his contribution to the field of preaching has proven its worth throughout the late 19th – 21st century.

THE SOLEMN THING OF BROADUS'S HOMILETICAL THEORY

David Larsen in his book, *The Company of Preachers*, writes that Broadus is considered the "father of American expository preaching."[73] Ralph Turnbull argues, "Broadus embodied what he taught and gave excellent examples in his sermons of the art and discipline of the interpreter in expository preaching."[74] Thus, it is imperative to unfold Broadus's theory of preaching.

Sermonic Method

Broadus, "introduced to preaching the four 'elements': explanation, application, argumentation, and illustration."[75] Each of these elements is significant to the overall sermon, but Broadus seems to emphasize the *explanation* and *application* components. Beginning in chapter 1 of the *Treatise*, Broadus begins with a discussion on the meaning of *the text*. He claims, "Thus we speak of the text of Scripture, the Greek text, the sacred text, as opposed to comments, translations, and other modes of using it. So as to oral exposition, comment, etc, and in any such case, the text which one treats, in a written or an oral exposition or discussion, might be not necessarily the whole text of Scripture, but the text of a particular book, paragraph, or sentence."[76] Broadus comments, "The history of the word [text], like that of homiletics, points back to the fact, which is also well known otherwise, that preaching was originally expository."[77] This understanding leads Broadus to state,

> To interpret and apply his text in accordance with its real meaning is one of the preachers' most sacred duties. He stands before the people for the very purpose of teaching and exhorting them out of the Word of God…using a text, and undertaking to develop and apply its teachings, he is solemnly bound to represent the text as meaning precisely what it does mean.[78]

Further evidence shows Broadus's understanding of expository preaching. In his section on the 'Different Species of Sermons,' he identifies three specific models: 1) A subject-sermon; 2) Text-sermon; 3) Expository sermon.[79] Broadus argues that the primary difference between the "topical and textual" sermons relates to the "plan of discourse," specifically the divisions.[80] He specifically claims, "If we simply take the topic and the heads which the passage affords, and proceed to discuss them in our own way, that is not an expository sermon, but a text-sermon."[81] In discussing expository preaching, he quotes Alexander's six advantages of expository preaching.[82] Broadus also footnotes Francis Wayland's discussion on expository preaching.[83] In his recommended sources, he cites Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, sermons from Richard Fuller, and Chrysostom's *Homilies on Matthew*.[84]

He states that an expository sermon is different from a "commentary or an exegetical essay."[85] Thus, he claims, "an expository discourse may be defined as one which is occupied mainly, or at any rate very largely, with the exposition of Scripture."[86] Additionally, he argues that an expository sermon contains two primary elements: *unity and structure*. Of the first, Broadus writes, "unity in a discourse is necessary to instruction, to conviction, and to persuasion…Let there be unity at whatever the cost."[87] Second, in regard to structure, Broadus posits, "Thanks to the influence of the schoolmen, the modern mind greatly delights in the analysis [of structure]."[88]

In this discussion, Broadus critiques the homilies of the Early Church Fathers stating, "The homilies left us by the Fathers

are frequently quite deficient in respect of orderly structure, and sometimes even destitute of unity."[89] He claims that these two aspects, unity and structure, are the "prime" elements to the "effectiveness of an expository sermon."[90] Broadus then exhorts, "Let us carefully observe, then, that an expository sermon may have, and must have, both unity and an orderly structure…"[91] In commenting upon continuous exposition, he states, "To view every book as a whole, to grasp its entire contents, and then trace in detail the progress of its narrative or argument, is a method of Scripture study for too little practiced. It is one of the benefits of expository preaching that it compels the preacher to study in this way."[92]

He continues, "What we are supposed to be aiming at, is a strictly expository sermon, in which not only the leading ideas of the passage of brought out, but its details are suitably explained, and made to furnish the chief material of the discourse."[93] Furthermore, he writes, "In the progress of an expository discourse, it is often desirable to keep the connection of the whole text before the minds of the audience…"[94] He concludes his section on an expository sermon by appealing to application. He claims, "Much pains should be taken to point out and apply the lessons which the text may afford."[95] Broadus argues, "The application in a sermon is not merely an appendage to the discussion, or a subordinate part of it, but is the main thing to be done."[96] In sum, Broadus's expository preaching sought to: 1) Represent "the text as meaning precisely what it does mean;" 2) Maintain "Unity and Structure;" 3) Communicate the "leading ideas" as well as "details;" 4) Keep the "connection of the whole text;" 5) Apply the "lessons which the text may afford."

Broadus the Expositor

Broadus scholar, Jared Bumper's extensive research on Broadus's interpretive method and its impact on his preaching leads him to conclude, "Although Broadus encouraged preachers to avoid parading their exegesis in the pulpit, Broadus's sermons were full of exegetical details…Broadus embodied the careful exegete

that he desired other preachers to be, both in his exegetical works and in his sermons."[97] Thus, "Broadus's practice of preaching was consistent with his theory of preaching…"[98] Turnbull also demonstrates this as he compares Broadus's sermon on Matthew 1 to his *Commentary on Matthew*. Turnbull concludes, "Preparing for a sermon as an exegete of the text, he did not aim for a cleverness which could obscure the subject, but rather for a simple elucidation of the passage."[99]

Broadus's understanding of expository preaching corresponds to his own contemporaries. Consider R. L. Dabney as he writes on expository preaching: "Single sentences, or even clauses of the Scriptures, setting forth transcendent truths…may well receive the exclusive treatment of a whole sermon."[100] He continues, "The pastor may adopt this single verse [Romans 6:1] as his text. But it is then his duty to unfold the argument of the Holy Ghost upon it, and not one of human device; so that his sermon is substantially an exposition of the whole passage."[101] J. W. Alexander also states, "It is true that a man may announce as his text a single verse or clause of a verse, and then offer a full and satisfactory elucidation of the whole context…so far as this is done, the sermon is expository…"[102] Most often, this was Broadus's practice.[103]

Broadus stands in conformity with the expository preaching method of his own day but also with the tradition of Chrysostom and Calvin. This is evident in his *Lectures on the History of Preaching*. Broadus states concerning Reformation preaching, "There was also at the basis of this expository preaching by the Reformer a much more strict and reasonable exegesis than had ever been common since the days of Chrysostom…Calvin gave the ablest, soundest, clearest expositions of Scripture that had been seen for a thousand years…"[104] He continues, "It may be said that the best specimens of expository preaching are to be found in Chrysostom, in the Reformers, especially Luther and Calvin, and in the Scottish pulpit of our own time."[105] In the notes of the *Treatise*, Broadus states, "The most instructive example, however, of expository discourse, both doctrinal and historical, is the homilies of

Chrysostom."[106] Additionally, he asserts, "With the possible exception of Chrysostom, I think there is, as already intimated, no commentator before our own century whose exegesis is so generally satisfactory and so uniformly profitable as that of Calvin."[107]

There are apparent similarities between Chrysostom, Calvin, and Broadus. First, all three preachers understood that preaching is the explanation and application of Scripture. Second, in many cases, Chrysostom and Calvin's expository sermons were focused on a single clause within a larger context, the model that Broadus followed.[108] Thus, in a sense, Broadus saw himself carrying on the expository tradition of these two preachers of the Church.

Sermonic Arrangement

As stated, Broadus introduced a four-part sermonic arrangement (explanation, illustration, argumentation, and application). While both Chrysostom and Calvin followed the ancient homily, Broadus advocated for a more structured and unified model. With the advent of the early modern sermon structure (The New Reformed Method or Doctrine-Use scheme), the sermon tended to follow a threefold arrangement of *doctrine, reason, and uses.*[109]

Yet, through the work of French Reformed preachers like Jean Claude (1619-1687), a new sermon model emerged.[110] As Dargan notes, "Claude marks the transition between the earlier and later method of preaching…In Claude we find the beginning of the newer method, which deduces a subject from the text and discusses it on its merits."[111] Dargan's statement lacks nuance since the "New Reformed Method" also deduced a subject from a text (doctrine). Yet, Vinet provides clarity, "He [Claude] marks, therefore, the transition of the old form/method of preaching to the new (method), from the sermon on the text (a running homily), to the sermon on the subject of the text."[112] The specific distinction between the New Reformed Method and the latter method could be stated: 1) The latter method has a particular awareness of the linguistic context of the text;[113] 2) Sermonic

divisions are based upon the text itself;[114] and 3) The categorical proposition (the subject) aims to explain a text, not merely a doctrine.[115] The move is defined as a transition towards a more textually oriented sermon.

By adopting this new method, Broadus calls for a "plan of discourse."[116] This plan must be "simple" and must avoid "great formality."[117] Specifically, it includes the introduction, body, and conclusion. The plan will include: 1) A Proposition[118] and 2) Divisions.[119] He claims that these divisions should be simple and possess logical order. Moreover, these divisions should flow naturally from the text or subject under consideration. He writes, "In general, then, one should make the most natural division, considering the subject and the practical design of the discourse, but not often allowing the number of heads to exceed four. That in so doing the number most frequently occurring will be three, and next to that two, is what he may expect."[120] While he argues that divisions are not entirely necessary, he writes, "distinctly marked divisions will usually be of service."[121] As a result, Broadus seems to suggest a middle way between Fenelon's rhetorical approach[122] and Claude's textual divisions.[123]

CONTEMPORARY IMPLICATIONS

Robertson asserts, "There is consummate art in the preaching of Broadus matched with the highest order of genius and the ripest scholarship."[124] In considering the various contemporary implications, some obvious ones have been noted by scholars. For example, York writes, "Broadus's commitment to the authority and careful exposition of Scripture, the thorough and logical preparation of the sermon, and a passionate, engaging delivery by the preacher still provide a model for preaching today."[125] There are other various implications that should be considered by contemporary preachers and professors.

First, Broadus calls preachers to think deeply about preaching. A contemporary preacher would be wise to examine his own preaching preparation, plan, and purpose. The question of *how* is important but a preacher should ask *why* regarding his

homiletical methods. Just as a surgeon will be up to date on the current trends in his particular field of expertise, so the preacher must be aware of current, but also, historic trends of preaching. Broadus's homiletical well was vastly deep. He was conversant with the Patristics writers, Medieval preachers, the Reformers, and preachers of his own day.[126] Moreover, Broadus adopts an ecumenical and gracious approach to the task of preaching. He was deeply confessional, convictional, but charitable. Contemporary preachers and those who teach preaching should cultivate a charitable disposition to the larger homiletical discourse.

Second, Broadus encourages a sacredness to preaching. While the *Treatise* is to be a textbook, it invites the preacher to embrace the homiletical heritage and mantle of the Church. Broadus sees continuity between the preaching of the ancient church and the present day, as his *Lectures* demonstrate. This, therefore, creates a sacred gravitas to the preaching event. While theories of communication and popular-level books on public speaking are helpful, preaching carries with it a divine mandate. At the foundation of all preaching stands the redemptive deed of Jesus Christ. As such, preachers stand in the stead of Christ as his ambassadors, announcing the message of reconciliation. Broadus encourages a scared seriousness to the task of preaching.

Third, Broadus's reliance upon ancient rhetoric is open to critique, particularly from those who advocate for a more inductive or narrative approach to sermonic communication.[127] It is true, Broadus's homiletical theory naturally leads to a more deductive sermon approach.[128] In many cases, preaching can simply be reduced to a rational syllogistic argument of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. As Larsen points out, "Preaching has historically overemphasized the parts, making the preacher a lecturer whose fine-lined analysis too easily became the end in itself."[129] However, it needs to be acknowledged that Broadus was not completely subservient to the sermon structure of "formal divisions and equally formal sub-divisions."[130] Furthermore, he was often critical of excessive sermon forms.[131] However, while the new homiletic has introduced helpful

considerations into current homiletical theory, in a postmodern context, Broadus's more direct approach to communication should be considered anew.[132] Given the radical paradigm shift within the present culture, biblical preaching will by necessity be confrontational. Given Broadus's view, preaching is sacred rhetoric, which calls for a specific verdict from those who hear. Thus, logical argumentation need not be divorced from experience or emotion. Consider Broadus's own words describing the preaching event: "When a man who is apt in teaching, whose soul is on fire…speaks to his fellow-men, face to face, eye to eye, and electric sympathies flash to and fro between him and his hearers, till they lift each other up, higher and higher, into the intensest thought, and the most impassioned emotion – higher and yet higher…there is power to move men…"[133] Broadus's theory invites the contemporary preacher to surrender his communication to the text of Scripture in which the structure aids sermon composition and delivery.

Lastly, Broadus serves as a bridge between an older preaching methodology and the modern expository sermon model. For Broadus, the text of sacred Scripture serves as the bases for preaching. Christian preaching is biblical preaching. Furthermore, biblical exposition is grounded in biblical exegesis. Righty so, exegesis fuels exposition. While one should resist the urge to parade his exegetical process in the pulpit, the preacher must devote himself to the serious study of the text under consideration. Thus, somewhat prophetically, the principles established by Broadus lead him to claim boldly, "For one, I am quite sure that expository preaching will become increasingly popular in our country throughout the next generation of ministerial life."[134]

In a profound sense, every 20th- 21st century preacher has been directly and indirectly shaped by Broadus. As Robertson once again states, "…thousands upon thousands of preachers have preached because of John A. Broadus…"[135] From the *Treatise* and his *Lectures* to his sermons, Broadus's homiletical influence is sensed throughout seminary classrooms. Even those who reject the "old homiletic" in favor of the "new homiletic" must reckon

with Broadus.[136] As such, preachers should conclude that their preaching is, as Robertson states, "To the memory of John A. Broadus, scholar, teacher, preacher."[137]

NOTES

1. John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 3rd edition (New York: Sheldon & Co, 1871), viii. Broadus's *Treatise* was originally printed in the summer of 1870. The book has undergone three revisions: Dargan (1897), Weatherspoon (1943), and Stanfield (1979). Dargan writes, "…The book was a great success. It became the most popular and widely read textbook on Homiletics in the country…It has been adopted in many theological seminaries of different denominations as the textbook…" John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, edited by E. C. Dargan (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1926), iii. For this paper, *Treatise* will be used as shorthand to refer to the original 1870-1871 text of Broadus. Broadus intended to revise his own original publication but passed away prior to completing it. The first revision fell upon Dargan, associate professor of Homiletics at Southern Seminary. Dargan notes that his revision added material that Broadus gathered prior to his death. See, *Preparation and Delivery* (Dargan), v. The material that Dargan included was a collection of Broadus's lectures and personal notes, which has been proven to be similar material found in the "Lost Yale Lectures." See Mark Manley Overstreet, "The 1889 Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching and the Recovery of the Late Homiletic of John Albert Broadus (1827-1895)," (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005). The Dargan edition provides the mature homiletical thought from Broadus. Writers have suggested that the subsequent revisions by Weatherspoon and Stanfield do not fully represent Broadus's original thoughts and err in reproducing Broadus faithfully. See Robert L. Compere, III, "Revisions of John A. Broadus's Classic

Work, A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons, Miss the Mark: Definitions for Preaching and Eloquence," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society*, 16:1 (March 2016): 47-54.
2. Al Fasol, *With a Bible in Their Hands: Baptist Preaching in the South 1679-1979* (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 1994), 80.
3. Thomas R. McKibbens Jr., "John A. Broadus: Shaper of Baptist Preaching," *Baptist History and Heritage* 40:2 (Spring 2005): 18. Also see, Thomas R. McKibbens, Jr, *The Forgotten Heritage: A Lineage of Great Baptist Preaching* (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 187-97. Also see David Alan Smith, "Introductory Preaching Courses in Selected Southern Baptist Seminaries in Light of John A. Broadus's Homiletical Theory," (PhD. diss., University of Michigan, 1995).
4. This article is a shortened form of a doctoral seminar paper. I want to express my thanks to Dr. Matthew McKellar, Preaching Professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, who encouraged me to write on Broadus for his History of Southern Baptist Preaching class.
5. H. Jared Bumpers, "John the Baptist: The Denominational Convictions and Evangelical Influence of John Albert Broadus," unpublished paper presented at the Evangelical Theological Society, Fort Worth, TX, November 2021, 2. I appreciate and have greatly benefited from my personal correspondence with Dr. Bumpers, professor of preaching at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.
6. Timothy George, "Introduction to John A. Broadus: A Living Legacy," in *John A. Broadus: A Living Legacy*, Studies in Baptist Life and Thought, edited by David S. Dockery and Roger D. Duke (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 3.
7. Timothy George and David S. Dockery, "The Broadus-Robertson Tradition," in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition* (Nashville: B&H, 2001), 92.
8. George and Dockery, "The Broadus-Robertson Tradition," 92.
9. George and Dockery, "The Broadus-Robertson Tradition," 93.
10. George and Dockery, "The Broadus-Robertson Tradition," 94.
11. George and Dockery, "The Broadus-Robertson Tradition," 94.
12. McKibbens Jr, "John A. Broadus," 19.

13. Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Life and Letters of John Albert Broadus* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1901), 159. Also see A. T. Robertson, "Broadus in the Classroom," *Review & Expositor* 30: 2 (April 1933): 157.
14. Robertson, *Life and Letters*, 166.
15. For a more detailed and up to date historical survey of Southern's founding see Gregory A. Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
16. William A. Mueller, *A History of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959), 2.
17. Mueller, *A History of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*, 61.
18. Bumpers, "John the Baptist," 5. It must be acknowledged that Broadus, as a Virginian from a wealthy family, owed slaves. As a result, he was pro-Confederacy and opposed to Lincoln. The author of this paper acknowledges that Broadus's pro-slavery position prior to and during the Civil War will cause many to cast suspicion upon his scholarship and influence. Indeed, Broadus's pro-slavery stance should be viewed as a morally reprehensible position, standing in contrast to the gospel that he preached. Yet, it should be noted that Broadus's attitude towards slavery changed after the war. Robertson records that Broadus confronted Ku Klux Klan members publicly, offering a rebuke to them. *Life and Letters,* 221-222. Nevertheless, despite his sin, it is evident that Broadus's influence should be studied, critiqued, and appreciated. For more information see "Report on Slavery and Racism in the History of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary."
19. Robertson, "Broadus in the Classroom," 157.
20. Robertson, "Broadus in the Classroom," 161.
21. Bumpers, "John the Baptist," 6.
22. *The Abstract of Principles* played a significant role in the resignation of Crawford Toy in 1879. "Boyce and Broadus…held that persons who dissented from the denomination's fundamental beliefs, especially preachers and teachers, had a duty to resign or withdraw. They held their positions in trust

with a commission to inculcate and promote orthodox doctrine." See Wills, *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary 1859-2009*, 127.
23. Mueller provides a list of Broadus works: *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (1870); *Lange Commentary on 1 and 2 Samuel* (1874); *Lectures on the History of Preaching* (1876); *Sermons and Addresses* (1886); *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (1886*); St. Chrysostom's Homilies on Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* (1889); *Jesus of Nazareth* (1890); *Memoir of James Petigru Boyce* (1893); and *A Harmony of the Gospels* (1893). Mueller states, "These larger works, some of them running beyond five hundred pages, were supplemented by extensive monographs dealing with a variety of subjects." *A History of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*, 65-66.
24. Thomas J. Nettles, "The Enduring Impact and Relevance of A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons," in *John A. Broadus: A Living Legacy*, edited by David S. Dockery and Roger D. Duke (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 180.
25. Robertson, "Broadus in the Classroom," 161.
26. Scott M. Gibson, "The Place of Preaching Professors in Theological Education," in *Training Preachers: A Guide to Teaching Homiletics*, edited by Scott M. Gibson (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 8-9.
27. Nettles, "The Enduring Impact," 210.
28. Jerry Vines, *A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 65; 83; 106.
29. John MacArthur, Jr, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Dallas: Word, 1992), 380.
30. Robert Baker, *Tell the Generations Following: A History of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary 1908-1983* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1983), 96. "He [Carroll] constantly expressed his deepest admiration for two men who had greatly influenced his theological mind-set and who, in the theological struggles in which they had engaged, stood firm on the basis doctrines of Scripture. One of these men was John A. Broadus…"
31. Jeff D. Ray, *Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1940), 14.

32. H. C. Brown Jr, H. Gordon Clinard, Jesse J. Northcutt, *Steps to the Sermon,* Edited by Al Fasol (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1996), 47.
33. Daniel L, Akin, Bill Curtis, and Stephen Rummage, *Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 9-10.
34. Bryan Chapell, *Christ Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 3rd Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 415.
35. H. Grady Davis, *Design for Preaching* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1958), 295.
36. Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1980), 35. Robinson writes, "To ignore the principle that a central, unifying idea must be at the heart of an effective sermon is to push aside what students of preaching have to tell us." In later editions of *Biblical Preaching*, the Broadus footnote is removed.
37. Robertson, "Broadus in the Classroom," 158.
38. L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible: The Baptist Doctrines of Biblical Inspiration and Religious Authority in Historical Perspective* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 224.
39. Robertson, *Life and Letters*, 168.
40. Robertson, "Broadus in the Classroom," 165.
41. Mueller, *A History of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary,* 52.
42. Robertson, "Broadus in the Classroom," 167.
43. McKibbens, Jr, *The Forgotten Heritage,* 193-96.
44. Broadus, *Treatise*, 17.
45. Vernon L. Stanfield, "Elements of Strength in the Preaching of John Albert Broadus," *The Review and Expositor*, 48:4 (Oct 1951): 384.
46. Broadus, *Treatise*, 146.
47. John Carrick, *The Imperative of Preaching: A Theology of Sacred Rhetoric* (London: Banner of Truth, 2016), 14. Also see Nettles, "The Enduring Impact," 203.
48. Broadus, *Treatise*, 18.
49. Broadus, *Treatise,* 18.
50. Broadus, *Treatise*, 19.

51. Stanfield, "Elements of Strength in the Preaching of John Albert Broadus," 385.
52. Broadus, *Treatise*, 20-21.
53. Broadus, *Treatise*, 31.
54. Broadus, *Treatise*, 22.
55. Broadus, *Treatise*, 30-31.
56. Broadus, *Treatise*, 31.
57. Al Fasol, "Broadus, John Albert 1827-1895," in *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*, Edited by William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 46.
58. Broadus, *Treatise*, 32-33.
59. Broadus, *Treatise*, 33.
60. Broadus, *Treatise*, 33. See Alexandre Rodolpho Vinet, *Homiletics or The Theory of Preaching*, Translated and Edited by Thomas H. Skinner (New York: Ivison & Phinney, 1870). Alexandre Vinet (1797-1847) was a literary critic, author, and preacher. Dargan writes, "…Vinet is worthy of the highest respect and of careful study…" E. C. Dargan, *A History of Preaching, From the Close of the Reformation Period to the End of the Nineteenth Century 1572-1900*, Vol II (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1912), 455.
61. Henry J. Ripley, *Sacred Rhetoric or Composition and Delivery of Sermons* (Boston: Gould, Kendall and Lincoln, 1849).
62. Christian Palmer, *Evangelische Homiletik* (Stuttgart: J. F. Steinkopf, 1845).
63. K. R. Hagenbach, *Grudlinien Der Liturgik und Homiletik* (Leipzig: Berlag von G. Dirzel, 1863).
64. James W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Preaching* (New York: Charles Scribner & Co, 1869).
65. Daniel Kidder, *A Treatise on Homiletics Designed to Illustrate the True Theory and Practice of Preaching the Gospel* (London: Hamilton, Adams, Co, 1866), 3-4.
66. W. Gresley, *Ecclesiastes Anglicanus: A Treatise on Preaching as Adapted to a Church of England Congregation in a Series of Letters to a Young Clergyman* (London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1840).

67. Thomas J. Potter, *Sacred Eloquence or the Theory and Practice of Preaching* (Troy NY: James Duffy, 1866).
68. It is assumed that Broadus is influenced indirectly by Perkins through Kidder, who references Perkins's book *The Art of Prophesying* saying, "As this work is the most celebrated of its date, and is now extremely rare…" Kidder, *A Treatise on Homiletics*, 331-332. Furthermore, Broadus had a profound appreciation for many French Reformed preachers directly influenced by Calvin and Perkins (See his *Lectures on the History of Preaching*).
69. Broadus, *Treatise*, 307.
70. Broadus, *Treatise*, 291; 331-332.
71. Broadus, *Treatise*, 41.
72. H. Jared Bumpers, "A Man 'Mighty in the Scriptures': The Hermeneutic of John A. Broadus and Its Impact on His Preaching" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018), 95. In the *Treatise*, Broadus presents six principles: 1) Interpret grammatically; 2) Interpret logically; 3) Interpret historically; 4) Interpret figuratively where there is sufficient reason; 5) Interpret allegorically where that is clearly proper; 6) Interpret in accordance with and not contrary to the general teaching of Scripture. See Broadus, *Treatise*, 78-86.
73. David Larsen, *The Company of Preachers: A History of Biblical Preaching from the Old Testament to the Modern Era* (Kregel Academic, 1998), 551.
74. Ralph G. Turnbull, *History of Preaching: From the Close of the Nineteenth Century to the Middle of the Twentieth Century,* Vol III (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 110.
75. Fasol, *With a Bible in Their Hand*, 79. One can see the relationship between the "canons of rhetoric."
76. Broadus, *Treatise*, 38.
77. Broadus, *Treatise*, 38.
78. Broadus, *Treatise*, 51.
79. Broadus, *Treatise*, 288.
80. Broadus, *Treatise*, 288-289. According to Broadus, a subject-sermon will be divided based upon the specific subject being

considered. He relates this model to the "topics" of ancient writers.
81. Broadus, *Treatise*, 309. Dabney makes a similar observation, *Sacred Rhetoric or A Course of Lectures on Preaching* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph & Co, 1870), 76-79.
82. Broadus, *Treatise*, 300.
83. Broadus, *Treatise*, 300. Of interest, Wayland begins his expository preaching discussion by stating, "As I have said before, in preparing to preach, the minister should ascertain, as far as possible, the very idea communicated by the Spirit in the text which he has chosen. If he have done this, the text will fasten itself upon the mind of the hearer, the sermon will enable him to understand the text, the text will enable him to remember the sermon, and both will be treasured up for spiritual instruction." Francis Wayland, *Letters on the Ministry of the Gospel* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1864), 82-83.
84. Broadus, *Treatise*, 317.
85. Broadus, *Treatise*, 299.
86. Broadus, *Treatise*, 303.
87. Broadus, *Treatise*, 305.
88. Broadus, *Treatise*, 305.
89. Broadus, *Treatise*, 305.
90. Broadus, *Treatise*, 305.
91. Broadus, *Treatise*, 305.
92. Broadus, *Treatise*, 307.
93. Broadus, *Treatise*, 309-310.
94. Broadus, *Treatise*, 313.
95. Broadus, *Treatise*, 313.
96. Broadus, *Treatise*, 230.
97. Bumper, "A Man Might in the Scriptures,"191.
98. Bumper, "A Man Might in the Scriptures,"187. Bumper evaluated 203 Broadus sermon manuscripts. See 195-206 of his dissertation for a more detailed analysis.
99. Turnbull, *History of Preaching*, 108-109.
100. Dabney, *Sacred Rhetoric,* 77.
101. Dabney, *Sacred Rhetoric*, 78.
102. Alexander, *Thoughts on Preaching*, 239.

103. It should be noted that Broadus rarely preached from a full sermon manuscript. Therefore, one cannot rightly deduce that Broadus failed to treat the larger contextual unity. To the contrary, of the majority of sermon outlines and notes, there is clear evidence that Broadus attempted to follow the larger flow of the text, even if the sermon text was limited to a single clause.
104. Broadus, *Lectures on the History of Preaching*, 115.
105. Broadus, *Lectures on the History of Preaching*, 116.
106. Broadus, *Treatise*, 215.
107. Broadus, *Lectures on the History of Preaching*, 121.
108. T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 117.
109. James Thomas Ford, "Preaching in the Reformed Tradition," in *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period*, edited by Larissa Taylor (Boston: Brill, 2001), 65-85. The doctrine-use method is popularity called the "Puritan Plain" style. However, this is not historically accurate. Kneidel asserts that at the beginning of the seventeenth century there were four basic sermon forms: the homily, the thematic sermon, the classic oration, and the doctrine-use scheme, see Greg Kneidel, "Ars Praedicandi Theories and Practice" in *The Oxford Handbook of The Early Modern Sermon*, edited by Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington, and Emma Rhatigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17. Historians have demonstrated that the "plain style" was not exclusively Puritan. See Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and their Audiences, 1590-1640,* Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 96.
110. For a scholarly analysis of Jean Claude's homiletical methodology and his impact upon Broadus see, Denny Autry, "Factors Influencing the Sermonic Structure of Jean Claude and His Influence on Homiletics (Ph.D. diss, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 199-205.
111. Dargan, *History of Preaching*, 125.
112. Alexandre Rodolpho Vinet, *The History of Preaching Among the Protestants of France in the Seventeenth Century* (Paris: Rue de Rivole, 1860), 297-98.

113. Jean Claude, *An Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, Edited by Charles Simeon (New York: Lane & Scott, 1849), 30.
114. Claude, *An Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, 31.
115. Claude, *An Essay on the Composition of a Sermon*, 40.
116. Broadus, *Treatise*, 258
117. Broadus, *Treatise*, 259.
118. Broadus, *Treatise*, 261.
119. Broadus, *Treatise*, 262.
120. Broadus, *Treatise*, 267-268.
121. Broadus, *Treatise*, 264. See Broadus's footnote which reads, "The author once received, as a homiletical exercise, the sketch of a sermon containing four divisions, but with subdivisions and divisions of these again and again, till the whole numbered more than a hundred and twenty. The analysis was almost faultless, but it would have made an intolerable sermon." 269.
122. Broadus states that Fenelon sought to return to the method of the ancient orators, with less ridged divisions. Broadus, *Treatise*, 264.
123. Broadus critiqued Claude in his *Lectures on the History of Preaching* stating, "Claude's Essay on the Composition of a Sermon was for a century and a half the favorite Protestant text-book…Its great fault is that it teaches the construction of sermons on too stiff and uniform a plan." 174.
124. Robertson, "Broadus as Scholar and Preacher," 139.
125. York, "John Albert Broadus: Carefully Expositing the Authoritative Scriptures," 225.
126. Broadus sought to master the subject of preaching, consider his *Lectures on the History of Preaching*. Robertson states of Broadus, "One knew in every lesson that our teacher was a master of the whole subject, not just of this one lesson." "Broadus in the Classroom," 163.
127. For an insightful critique of the "new homiletic" see David Allen, "A Tale of Two Roads: Homiletics and Biblical Authority," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 43:3 (September 2000): 489–515.
128. Joel Gregory, "Expository," in *The New Interpreter's Handbook of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), 382. "John Albert

Broadus represents the flower of 19th cent. American exposition, although his *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* introduced generations of American preachers to a Hellenic rhetorical applique that made American exposition more argumentative than analytic of the text." It should be noted that Broadus himself listed three dangers of rhetoric: 1) Thinking more of the form than the matter; 2) Imitation; 3) Artificiality, see *Treatise*, 25-30.
129. David Larsen, *Anatomy of Preaching: Identifying the Issues in Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1989), 61.
130. Broadus, *Treatise*, 264-265.
131. Broadus, *Treatise*, 269. In a footnote Broadus humorously states, "The author once received, as a homiletical exercise, the sketch of a sermon containing four divisions, but with subdivisions and divisions of these again and again, till the whole numbered more than a hundred and twenty. The analysis was almost faultless, but it would have made an intolerable sermon."
132. On preaching within a postmodern context see, Robert Kysar and Joseph M. Webb, *Preaching to Postmoderns: New Perspectives for Proclaiming the Message* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006). Ronald J. Allen, Barbara Shires Blaisdell, and Scott Black Johnston, *Theology for Preaching: Authority, Truth, and Knowledge of God in a Postmodern Ethos* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997). Also see Paul Scott Wilson, "Postmodern or Radical Postmodern," in *Preaching and Homiletical Theory* (St. Louis: Lucas Park, 2019).
133. Broadus, *Treatise*, 18.
134. John A. Broadus, "On Expository Preaching," *The Old and New Testament Student*, 1:4 (Oct. 1890), 213-216.
135. Robertson, "Broadus as Scholar and Preacher," 139.
136. O. Wesley Allen, *The Renewed Homiletic* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 1-4.
137. Archibald Thomas Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1915), dedication page.

WHEN THE LEVEE BREAKS: J. GRESHAM MACHEN AND "THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH"

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I rhetorically analyze J. Gresham Machen's final chapel sermon at Princeton Theological Seminary entitled "The Good Fight of Faith" to reconstruct and situate a watershed moment in the American church. Machen, although unknown to many rhetorical scholars, was one of the most important evangelical voices in the cultural shift that occurred at Princeton theological seminary during the early twentieth century. As the threat of Modernism overtook the conservative orthodoxy of the school through a scientistic discourse, Machen vigorously defended the boundaries of historic Christianity both in his speaking and writing. In this final sermon before the seminary's reorganization and his resignation, Machen employs a rhetoric of orthodoxy to clarify the reformed faith's doxa and thus draw distinctions between historical Christianity and Modernism. "The Good Fight of Faith" uniquely demonstrates the ritualistic nature of celebrating orthodoxy and how, in doing so, interlocutors can be called to stand and struggle for the continuation of tradition. Such research also calls for a renewed interest in the intersection of rhetorical tradition and homiletics in lieu of their profitable relationship for drawing boundaries, maintaining orthodoxy, and advancing the gospel.

INTRODUCTION

On March 10, 1929, J. Gresham Machen stood up and delivered one of his final sermons to the student body in chapel at Princeton Theological Seminary. In a few short months a reorganization was about to take place at Princeton shifting away from more conservative ideas in theology to a more liberal form. In what seemed like a death of the Princeton theological tradition, numerous faculty members and students would resign with Machen, later resulting in the creation of Westminster Seminary—a rebirth or resurrection of sorts. In this final address, Machen's rhetoric notes an internal and external tension facing the church. In light of the tension, Machen charges interlocutors to fight rather than be spectators in a sermon entitled "The Good Fight of Faith." With only three months before the reorganization and his resignation, Machen posits that, "The church is now in a period of deadly conflict. The redemptive religion known as Christianity is contending, in our own Presbyterian Church, and in all the larger churches in the world, against a totally alien type of religion."[1] Due to this threat, Machen encourages students to stand and contend for the faith by aptly defining the battle during what would become a theological and doctrinal crossroads within evangelicalism. As Noll contends, the intellectual rigor of Machen and other Princetonians set them apart from Modernists and even Fundamentalists during this controversial moment in public memory by combining "confessionalism with a dominant place in American intellectual life."[2] Rhetorical and homiletical scholars have much to learn from Machen and other Princeton theologians who uniquely fought for the reformed doxa amid denominational conflict during the early twentieth century.

The relationship between the rhetorical tradition and homiletics historically seems to be all but severed due to a false understanding of rhetoric as *deception* originating from the second sophistic period. Although Augustine rejected rhetoric in *Confessions*, he endeavored to educate Christian leaders of the great need and use for rhetorical training in *On Christian*

Doctrine.[3] Similarly the apostle Paul seems to reject eloquence in *1 Corinthians* all the while persuasively preaching throughout the Roman empire.[4] These seeming inconsistencies reveal a rejection of the second sophistic period which disconnected rhetoric and philosophy entirely. Similarly, homileticians should likewise reject any articulation of rhetoric bereft of truth; while, at the same time, embracing its classical uses for the advancement of the gospel. Ben Witherington, a leading New Testament scholar, has written comprehensively regarding the importance of rhetorical education in the Greco-Roman world and its evident influence in the ministry and writings of Paul as well as the other New Testament authors.[5] Therefore, like our predecessors, we too must realize the importance of rhetorical scholarship and its historic relationship to solidifying and defending the faith. Similarly, rhetorical criticism, a tool encouraged as early as 1969 by James Muilenburg in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* because of its importance to hermeneutics and homiletics, seeks to illuminate an artifact—textual or verbal—through a historical reconstruction of the discursive moment.[6] In doing so, rhetorical strategies and argumentation lost to history can be learned and used for instruction in similar contemporary moments by practitioners. Interestingly, both biblical and rhetorical scholars have long called for a rekindling of rhetoric and homiletics due to their interconnectedness in early Christianity.[7] Noticeably, the present is not unlike that of Princeton Seminary in the 1920s especially when considering the current impact of postmodernity on language.[8] Within evangelicalism today, many leaders are purposefully unclear and reject doctrinal boundaries.[9] Even more significant, there is much negotiation and reluctancy as to where lines should be drawn on controversial topics.[10] Thus, as Augustine argued many centuries ago: because many people continue to use rhetorical training for wickedness, Christians likewise should learn and use it in defense of the gospel.[11]

In a stroke of rhetorical creativity, Machen offers a potent simile describing this historic moment: "It is as though a mighty flood were seeking to engulf the church's life; dam the break at

one point in the levee, and another break appears somewhere else. Everywhere paganism was seeping through; not for one moment did Paul have peace; always he was called upon to fight."[12] From this understanding, those students preparing to serve in presbyter roles, who seemingly felt detached from the political disagreements currently ensuing, were rhetorically called to spiritual arms by Machen as necessary contenders in the fight for faith. To not join in the struggle would mean an eventual break in the levee. To crystallize this understanding, Machen refers to Church history and the various champions of the faith who fought for preservation denoting a historic path tread by orthodox heroes. By noting such figures and the possibility of interlocutors entering the very same defense of orthodoxy, a form of communion was made available thereby creating a sacred space. Sides were inevitable, Machen contended, and in the current rhetorical situation, he sought to influence students to stand up and fight just as he had been doing: "God grant that you students in the seminary may be fighters, too!"[13] In what follows, I examine the epideictic performance of Machen as he sought to persuade students to contend for the faith during the Princeton controversy. By speaking in a celebration of orthodoxy, he demonstrates a ritualistic performance whereby he sought to create a "rebirth in those who already [dwelt] within the tradition" so that they might fight the good fight of faith.[14]

J. GRESHAM MACHEN, THE CONFESSIONAL THEOLOGICAN

John Gresham Machen was born in Baltimore in 1881 and was steeped in Presbyterianism, giving him a religious and intellectual depth that would be reflected in his scholarly work later in life.[15] He performed his undergraduate work studying classics at Johns Hopkins beginning in 1898 and finishing in 1901 graduating with highest honors. Following this point, he reluctantly entered Princeton in 1902 and upon graduation continued his scholarly activities in Europe both at Marburg and Goettingen Universities, where he experienced one of the most

influential moments of his young life studying under a liberal professor of theology, Wilhelm Herrmann. Stonehouse notes a letter from Machen to his mother in response to Herrmann's lectures: "Such an overpowering personality I think I almost never before encountered—overpowering in the sincerity of religious devotion. Herrmann may be illogical and one-sided, but I tell you he is alive."[16] From his time with Herrmann, Machen grew in admiration despite major theological disagreements. In fact, for Herrmann, religious experience was not a matter of history but rather a matter of individual experience. These views challenged Machen in an unusual way, preparing him for future controversy with similar proponents of theological liberalism.

Upon B. B. Warfield's request, Machen was called back to Princeton Seminary. Yet, even after his acceptance of an instructorship in New Testament studies for a year, Machen was adamant about the short tenure of the position questioning if he would return to Germany for further study. His parents, especially his mother, did not desire for him to return to Germany in fear of a lapse of faith. Nevertheless, it is obvious Machen was seeking clarity in his faith for the future and unwilling to proceed into a career without a settled mind on the matter. Despite her concerns that his faith might lapse, his mother, likewise, rejected any notion that one should see merit in a faith that has not been investigated. For example, in a letter to Machen she writes, "My son… Certainly if a man is to be a scholar and a teacher he cannot investigate too much."[17] Little did he know that his one-year instructorship at Princeton Seminary would last over two decades as his continued intellectual investigation resulted in a grasp and certainty of the orthodox faith.

Machen's return to Princeton Seminar, in many ways, was fluid. Longfield argues that the influence of Armstrong, Patton, and Warfield resulted in him becoming "a staunch defender of the scholarly, Old School Calvinism Princeton Seminar espoused."[18] Of the intellectual influence and camaraderie of these three, B. B. Warfield had the greatest impact upon the life

of Machen. Warfield's insistence on the importance of apologetics and thus the rhetorical defense of the faith would become a mainstay in the mind of Machen and his future work at the seminary. Longfield states that, "Warfield accentuated and expanded the role of apologetics in his work, demanding that it was the primary and preeminent task of the Christian theologian."[19] Such an interesting tie between theology and rhetoric helps explain and underscore the potency of Machen as he fought against modernism at the end of his Princeton career: "Having won the struggle for his soul, he now set forth to win the soul of the church."[20] In a famous address at Princeton called "Christianity and Culture", Machen turns his attention to the chief task of the seminary which was to instill intellectual and spiritual values: "Instead of making our theological seminaries merely centres of religious emotion, we shall make them battle-grounds of the faith … and in the hard school of intellectual struggle learn to substitute for the unthinking faith of childhood the profound convictions of full-grown men…"[21]

In 1914 Machen would be elected as the Assistant Professor of New Testament, licensed, and finally ordained in Plainsboro, New Jersey. Additionally, Machen is still known widely in evangelical circles for his definitive work entitled *Christianity and Liberalism* in 1923. From this perspective, one can note that Machen uniquely embodied the doctrine of the reformed faith through his experiences, scholarly work, and in the controversial fight at Princeton. As Moore bluntly maintains, "For Machen to have taught in a seminary which stood upon the Confession while personally denying its veracity would have been unthinkable. Consequently, Machen had little patience with those who claimed to adhere to the Westminster Confession in order to gain a position of employment while redefining its terminology."[22] If anything, he was a true apologist and confessor who sought to instill the reformed orthodoxy in others.

SCIENTIFIC RHETORIC AND RELIGION: EARLY HISTORY AND RECENT TRAJECTORIES

To many, when science and religion are spoken of in America they are categorized as holistically different with no overlapping connections. In many ways, the Scopes Trial of the early twentieth century only amplified these differences and crystallized the dialectical tension. However, historic perspectives were quite different in their distinctions between the natural and the supernatural.

Lessl reminds readers of the earliest growth of science through Sir Francis Bacon and its inherent link to religious belief.[23] Whereas theology, before modernity, was the supreme field of study and science peripheral, science ultimately gained a robust stature in the mind of the public, making it eligible to supersede theological grounds. Bacon, sometimes referred to as the father of empiricism, saw science as a similar form of sacred study not unlike theology. The two, in his mind, were to work hand in hand. Whereas scripture was to be read by clergy, nature was to be read by scientists. Lessl adds that this epochal shift was notably imitative of the theological understanding gained by the Protestant reformation: "If the new science had opened up a 'second scripture,' its coming also signaled the beginning of a new Christian age, one that Bacon identified with the millenarian culmination of history into which Protestants had already written their unfolding movement."[24] Therefore, science, through a Baconian perspective, was a new type of revelatory field of study that unveiled the truths of nature and creation harmonizing with the Christian faith. Lessl, however, contends that the powerful force given to science eventually allowed for the possibility of displacement now evident in the modern world. As a result, he argues that many scientific proponents today seemingly have forgotten this historic connection and hardly recognize the classical relationship between the two. Using the iconic Darwin Fish, Lessl shows evidence of such displacement even as it is employed to satirize religion. Yet, this icon uniquely represents mimetic significance and thus a type of "scientific

blackface" whereby the historic connection between Christianity and science is all but remembered.[25] Historically speaking, society is unable to completely disconnect the functions of classic scientific study and Christianity because the new epistemic paradigm shift of the reformation, in fact, opened-up the possibility for Bacon and others to see science through the same sacred and, even, revelatory lens. More significantly, it is important for readers to understand that the often spoken of conflict between religion and science cannot be historically accounted for in its origin. Yet, late scientific discourse, even while being hostile to conservative religious beliefs, is imitative of religion as it seeks to replace metaphysics with an "orthodox scientific symbolism."[26] However, what is of particular interest for this research is the forged partnership between science and modernism to bolster their *doxa* as well as castigate those on the outside. By better understanding the growth of this relationship, insight may be afforded to the realm of religious orthodoxy and the boundary work performed in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy at Princeton Seminary.

CREEDS TO SCIENTIFICE LAWS: THE RHETORICAL DISPLACEMENT OF CONFESSIONAL CHRISTIANITY

Of the various voices of modernism, Harry Emerson Fosdick was one of the first rhetors to publicly amplify the controversy. In the sermon "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?," he underscores the necessity of leeway in the Christian faith in matters where participants disagree thus repudiating the notion of doctrines. The main question to be asked of his perspective, however, is causal. What led to the understanding that certain religious ideas must be relinquished? To Fosdick and other modernists, science beckoned the need for changes to be made to ancient religions. For instance, he claims the progression of knowledge and insight recently gained through science placed an insurmountable obstacle in front of fundamentalists:

> Science treats a young man's mind as though it were really important. A scientist says to a young man, 'Here is the universe challenging our investigation. Here are the truths which we have seen, so far. Come, study with us!' … Can you imagine any man who is worthwhile turning from that call to the church if the church seems to him to say, 'Come, and we will feed you opinions from a spoon.'[27]

The partnering of modernism with science is evident in Fosdick's discourse requiring a move beyond the supernaturalism of conservative doctrines. However, these lines of demarcation drawn by modernists through a partnership with science is often overlooked, especially as the negotiations resulted in a severing of ties between many within religious communities. Yet, similar to Lessl's argument in the case of modern science's displacement of Christianity, modernism through science sought to displace fundamentalism. In other words, modernists feeling the pressure of scientific growth wanted to advance into a more progressive mindset as a means to maintain the importance of the faith. To do so, they enacted a form of historical displacement drawing lines through a new doxastic rhetoric: "Instead, liberalism made the distinction between religious and scientific truth, insisting that the Bible was still true in spiritual matters. Thus, Christianity could still be true even though Scripture might be scientifically false."[28]

In the year following Fosdick's divisive address, J. Gresham Machen published his famous work *Christianity and Liberalism,* endeavoring to dispel the notion that modernism was able to supersede and displace the historic faith. In doing so, he places a prime importance on the notion that modernism through lip-service advocates for intellectual liberty, while, at the same time, pressing others to accept its own formulated doctrines. "There are doctrines of modern liberalism, just as tenaciously and intolerantly upheld as any doctrines that find a place in the historic creeds. … In seeming to object to all theology, the liberal preacher is often merely objecting to one system of theology…"[29] What can be understood from Machen's argument is the

centralizing factor of boundary work in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy at Princeton specifically. As a result, one can presume that much of the discourse during this time was carefully analyzed through a *hermeneutics of suspicion* as a means to identify the other person's doxa. With increasing tensions at Princeton, Machen felt a creeping distortion in the community even by those within Presbyterianism. Therefore, his rhetoric sought to reinforce the boundaries of creedal Christianity by celebrating the unique history of the faith. Machen, unlike some fundamentalists, felt strongly about the employment of the scientific method and has distinguishable rhetoric through Common Sense Realism which continued the Baconian perspective via an emphasis on universality, human language, and history. As a result, Hart argues that Machen was able to draw clearer lines regarding doctrine and thus protect students and, more broadly, the church from distortions already in their midst. Interestingly, even nearly a century later, many are asking the same questions as Machen during his fight for the faith at Princeton: "What is the relation between Christianity and modern culture; may Christianity be maintained in a scientific age?"[30]

A SHIFT AT PRINCETON SEMINARY

Princeton Seminary was founded in 1812 and overtime has become one of the most important symbols in American history—growing into a central battle ground between modernists and fundamentalists vying for the academic institutions as well as the authority to rhetorically define Christianity. Hart, in fact, argues, "The reorganization of Princeton Seminary was a watershed in the theological battle of the 1920s, and the beginning of a decisive shift in the major denominations towards a broader construction of the historic Christian faith."[31] Of course, the reorganization was in relation to the historic founding principles of the seminary crystallized by its seminal leaders—Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander Hodge, and B. B. Warfield. As Noll notes in

reference to the inaugural sermon of Archibald Alexander in 1812, Princeton's theology was evident from the beginning via a "blend of reasoning and piety, evidentialism and fideism, defense and proclamation."[32] In his inaugural sermon, Archibald Alexander exhorts students to contemplate the importance of scholarship, faith, and the Christian scriptures: "Food to the hungry is not more pleasant, nor cold water more refreshing to the thirsty, than evangelical truth to the pious mind."[33] However, these foundational ideals would ultimately be called into question during this tumultuous decade.

From the founding of Presbyterianism in the seventeenth century following the historic reformation and the influence of John Calvin, there were multiple moments of disagreement, especially as the Great Awakenings took place, forcing participants to choose between old and new sides.[34] Whereas some voiced support of the revivalism of that era, others within Presbyterianism sought to continue under the old banner. Although this tension troubled many within the denomination broadly, the seminary unified under the *Westminster Confession of Faith* with a conservative majority. At its core, Princeton remained rooted in Calvinistic Christianity. As time progressed, Princeton was characterized by growing scholarship in biblical criticism and various understandings between science and religion, extending beyond traditional Calvinistic understandings. Liberal forms of theology, therefore, started to challenge foundational understandings of religion within the denomination as well as others creating a "tropical storm" during the 1920s.[35] In fact, prior to the Princeton controversy, many denominations had already broadened their theologies to ease tension; however, such changes over time have had a dastardly effect primarily because of lacking linguistic and doctrinal precision, thus resulting in "theological fragmentation" untenable to many like Machen.[36] Princeton was reaching a boiling point.

As tensions grew outside the seminary, conflict was emerging between colleagues at Princeton. One of the most significant moments of Princeton history was the General

Assembly, the annual meeting of the seminary's sponsoring denomination, the Presbyterian Church, of 1910 in which articles of faith were accepted by which faculty had to sign and give confession, thus creating a safeguard against the growing influence of modernism. The articles included "the infallibility of the Scriptures, the virgin birth of Jesus, the vicarious atonement, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and the historical reality of the miracles of Jesus."[37] However, confessional signatures were held in contempt by many faculty members seeing them as creedal tests. Adding to the tension, Machen published *Christianity and Liberalism* in 1923, reinforcing the importance of these articles by arguing that to reject one is to possess a faith entirely alien to Christianity. In response, the *Auburn Affirmation* was published in 1924 by modernists, formally calling the articles into disrepute. Among its proponents and signees was Henry Sloane Coffin, a professor at Union Theological Seminary and pastor, who is often viewed as the leader of the modernist movement. Hart posits that the *Auburn Affirmation* "challenged the constitutionality of the Assembly's reaffirmation of the five points, and went on to declare these doctrines were only 'particular theories' of the truths taught in Scripture."[38] Obviously, such divisions were only crystallizing with no sight of a truce in the future.

In light of such deep divisions, the General Assembly of 1925 sought resolution announcing a Commission that would investigate these happenings. Hart points to this instance as being a decisive moment in the controversy as a whole, wherein Machen's theory was repudiated, tolerance encouraged, and the articles delegitimized. However, the greatest moment of tension emerged at the 1926 General Assembly as then—president Dr. J. Ross Stevenson challenged the nomination of Machen for the Chair of Apologetics, resulting in a new focus for the Standing Committee on Theological Seminaries and halting his appointment. These incidents only led to rising suspicions amongst conservatives about theological differences. The end result of the Committee's investigation concluded that the "only solution to the existing problems was the reorganization of the

seminary," with much of the blame focused on structural problems caused by having two boards.[39] Conservatives, however, maintained skepticism because of the continued delay of Machen's nomination. These matters would not be resolved until the General Assembly of 1929, as the Thompson Committee led to a reorganization of the boards at Princeton in a five to three vote only a few short months after Machen's delivery of his final sermon before students.[40] As a result of the reorganization and its overall legitimization of modernists, Machen and three other professors left Princeton in hopes of founding Westminster Seminary, which they saw as a rebirth following the death of Princeton. To better understand Machen's final performance requires a turn toward scholarship involving the epideictic genre of classical rhetoric.

THE EPIDEICTIC GENRE AND RHETORICS OF ORTHODOXY

In *The New Rhetoric*, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca discuss the importance of the epideictic genre as well as the need to correct some misunderstandings in the modern mindset.[41] Whereas forensic and deliberative forms of discourse seek primarily adherence or agreement with the rhetor following a debate, epideictic rather centralizes the bolstering and reinforcement of values. Therefore, the role of the audience is a type of spectatorship which the authors argue historically resulted in the neglect of the genre. Nevertheless, such rhetoric is vital in the relationship between attitude and behavioral consistency "because it strengthens the disposition toward action by increasing adherence to the value it lauds."[42] From this perspective, critics must note the importance of the maintenance and reinforcement of values for a community, especially as it directly relates to their actions. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca adamantly assert that the ultimate goal of the epideictic rhetor is none other than the crystallization of community as "the speaker tries to establish a sense of communion centered around particular values recognized by the audience…"[43] Therefore, if the speech act is epideictic, it follows that the rhetor is seeking to

bolster the identity of the community through a celebration of already recognized values. As a result, the identities of communal members are reinforced as they watch the rhetorical spectacle unfold before their eyes with the net impact being behavioral change. A significant part of these performances, therefore, is a type of invitational rhetoric whereby interlocutors are summoned to participate in the *doxa* of the community.[44] Beale progresses this understanding by conceptualizing the "rhetorical performative act" which is to participate "in the reality to which [the speech] refers."[45] Such acts extend beyond mere speech acts because locution—or what is said—becomes less important as illocution—the performance itself—becomes central. Understood from this perspective, the rhetor enacts a role very similar to the way that the "priest celebrates the mass."[46] Nevertheless, because epideictic speeches can mirror the harshest characterizations of rhetoric, the genre has come to possess quite a bit of baggage even as many scholars continue to urge a reconceptualization.

A major facet that comes into play in reconceiving the epideictic genre is the role of ritual in such performances. In many ways, the genre has been held in contempt because of its lack emphasis on rationality, or logos. Nevertheless, there seems to be more to this genre than what is normally sought in Western scholarship. Carter, for instance, posits that ritual is the primary aim for epideictic speeches resulting in "a meaning and function that is beyond the potential of ordinary, pragmatic language."[47] Ritual, which surrounded the ancient world and its practices, is evident in such speeches thus revealing a now neglected form of rhetoric that "*creates* the occasion and serves a truth that is removed from everyday reality."[48] Of the various functions discussed by Carter, a transcendent principle, the sacralization of time, and the unification of contradictions seem most pertinent to this research. A transcendent principle, Carter notes, is a repetitious act that allows participants to "mimic a founding act," thus embodying a form of transcendence in life.[49] Next, the sacralization of time acts as a rhetorical tool whereby past, present, and future can be brought into one moment. Third and

finally is the power of ritual to unify notable paradoxes perceived in reality, thereby garnering order magically from chaos. Such notions of ritual coupled with the genre bring into frame questions regarding the overall purpose and act of these particular addresses rather than mere content.

Although the notion of orthodoxy is no longer in vogue, the concept bears an important relationship to rhetoric that merits further research. According to Sullivan, the epideictic genre best encapsulates *rhetorics of orthodoxy* because it "builds cultures by establishing and maintaining beliefs, values, and ways of seeing that serve as a form of life for everyday activities."[50] Rhetorics of orthodoxy exist everywhere both in religious and secular realms as communities hold to their *doxa*, or protected opinions and ideology. One specific context to which Sullivan has devoted much time and attention is none other than the orthodoxy of science.[51] In orthodox rhetorics, the rhetor's ethos is a major feature that offers a challenge with particular purposive goals in mind: "preservation, education, celebration, and aesthetic creation."[52] Because of the uniqueness of the situation, Sullivan contends that, "A successful epideictic encounter is one in which the rhetor, as a mature member of the culture, creates an aesthetic vision of orthodox values, and example (*paradeigma*) of virtue intended to create feelings of emulation, leading to imitation."[53] In other words, the performative role of the rhetor is vital to moving the audience to action, or orthopraxy, through a type of experience. To accomplish this task, the ethos of the rhetor must set forth five different features in the speech act: reputation, vision, authority, good reasons, and shared substance with the audience.

In relation to reputation, Sullivan distinguishes the two types of ethos and presses readers to understand the importance of *habit* as opposed to mere character for the first criterion. For instance, when speaking about habit he argues that, "Ethos in the sense of reputation (opinion of others) is dependent on the speaker's perceived moral makeup, his or her habitual actions."[54] In other words, this form of ethos is the perceived history and reputation of the rhetor and whether they inhabit the *doxa* being

espoused. Next, the rhetor's vision must demonstrate an understanding about reality that is proleptic for the audience. Historically, this concept contains a cultural connection to seers whereby the rhetor opens up a new understanding of reality through an inspired connection to the divine which can impact the audience "as a sort of unveiling by those who share a less sophisticated version of the same interpretation."[55] Authority, the third feature, deals with the rhetor's connection to the overall sentiment and cultural tradition. Because the audience is present to hear a reflection of their own beliefs and sentiments, acts of authority can trend toward broad generalizations due to the lack of critique. Next, the rhetor must employ good reasons in their argumentation which, in essence, distinguishes the continuity in teaching and passing down an understanding of the tradition, as well as warrant for its acceptance in what is defined as a *rhetoric of assent*. The last and most holistic facet of such speech contexts is the notion of consubstantiality, or shared substance, between the audience and the rhetor. Uniquely, the idea of shared substance in epideictic discourse connects to *kairos* in that the tradition being espoused is felt by interlocutors in such a way as to somehow bring about consubstantiality even through a rhetorical changing of time. For example, Sullivan argues that such consubstantial moments can be seen as speakers point to "the ongoingness of a moral tradition, the consubstantiality of rhetor and audience as members of the same tradition, and the emphasis on attitude affecting moral action."[56] In other words, through a rhetoric of orthodoxy, the history of the community is uniquely caught up in the present, thus illustrating continuity. When a rhetor embodies these characteristics, a rhetoric of orthodoxy is employed, eligible to build community through a reappraisal of their values, vision, and discourse. As Sullivan contends, "It is primarily the rhetor's responsibility to carve out a consubstantial space in which the epideictic encounter can take place, but it is up to the audience to enter that space and participate in the celebration. One can almost call such a place sacred…"[57] Machen's discourse at Princeton in 1929 uniquely embodies this performative role as he hoped to challenge

interlocutors to fight modernism through a rhetorical celebration of the orthodox faith.

WHEN THE LEVEE BREAKS: THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH

In what follows, I analyze Machen's sermon entitled "The Good Fight of Faith" at Princeton Seminary, wherein he attempts to create a sacred ritualistic space so that the reformed orthodoxy could be given a "rebirth in those who already [dwelt] within the tradition," thus causing students to stand in the good fight against modernism.[58] Such esteem for Christian orthodoxy can be heard as he argued for the historic continuity of doctrine despite numerous conflicts and lost battles. From this perspective, the only way to continue the work of the Church was to set itself apart from modernism through a rhetoric of orthodoxy clarifying the *doxa* of the reformed faith similar to past historic moments. In what follows, I will utilize Sullivan's *ethos of epideictic encounters* which centralizes the role of the rhetor in attempting to lead the audience in a celebration of orthodoxy. To do so, I will look at the five different criteria discussed by Sullivan: reputation, vision, authority, good reasons, and a shared substance.

The Reputation of Machen: A Fighter for the Faith

To begin, the reputation of Machen must first be understood as something obtained by interlocutors prior to the performative address. Therefore, a quick discussion of Machen's achievements and experiences interrelated to the Princeton controversy will be given as a means to establish his perceived reputation.

By 1929 Machen had already published three famous works pointing to his intellectual understanding surrounding the New Testament and Christian doctrines: *The Origin of Paul's Religion* in 1921, *New Testament Greek for Beginners* in 1923, and *Christianity and Liberalism* in 1923. In fact, only one year following this address he would publish *The Virgin Birth of Christ* in 1930, centralizing one of the primary doctrines under debate between fundamentalist and modernist camps. As a result, Machen

exuded an ethos that dwelt rhetorically within reformed doctrine unlike the average layperson, thereby adding to his perceived reputation as a valid representative of fundamentalism and Princetonians as he spoke before the students and faculty. Of most importance, Machen's work *Christianity and Liberalism* in 1923 drew distinct lines of demarcation between fundamentalist and modernist camps resulting in even greater conflict. As already discussed, in this work he lays out a strong historical foundation of several reformed doctrines ranging from the relationship between God and man, the Bible, and the vicarious atonement. He challenged current trends through these works arguing that, "If we are to be truly Christians, then, it does make a vast difference what our teachings are, and it is by no means aside from the point to set forth the teachings of Christianity in contrast with the teachings of the chief modern rival of Christianity."[59] As a result of this publication, a modernist response was given through the creation of the *Auburn Affirmation* which only inflamed the growing contestation between sides. Therefore, Machen was a central figure in the current controversy because of the value placed on doctrines.

Machen's reputation was also amplified in a unique way through various conflicts while at Princeton. He faced harsh criticisms throughout his career by identifying as one who holds to doctrines and orthodoxy. For instance, while minister of the First Presbyterian Church at Princeton, Machen's preaching made news when an influential liberal professor, Dr. Henry Van Dyke, left the church due to Machen's distinctions regarding doctrine. Interestingly enough, following Machen's resignation, Van Dyke returned to the congregation following the new leadership of Dr. Eerdman. Such an occurrence was thought by many faculty and students as a sign of Eerdman's liberal standing and was noted as much by *The Presbyterian* resulting in a back and forth between him and Machen and greater consternation between the availing sides.[60] More significantly, Machen's final address came at a unique time because of the political stalling of his nomination as the Chair of Apologetics by president Stevenson despite having already been approved by

both boards. Machen's continued perseverance, however, displayed the distinctions of the reformed community and his ability to be a valid representative.[61] Thus, many interlocutor's high regard for Machen helped set the stage for the overall ritualistic performance possessing a strong "public image" as one who resided firmly within the reformed community.[62]

Machen's Vision: The Accent of Modernism and the Battle of Love

As Sullivan acknowledges, the rhetor's vision must "interpret reality convincingly."[63] Therefore, the rhetor must display qualities of divine inspiration undetected by other members, thereby illuminating a new contemplation of reality. Throughout the sermon, Machen summarizes the current conflict challenging the traditions of the Church, whereby modernism accentually met the parameters of orthodoxy but practically acted against these beliefs. Such a nuance was strategic in its employment because it allowed for the possibility of influencing doctrinal ideas without detection. From there, Machen interprets the current disagreements as a "period of deadly conflict" thus amplifying the context through *kairos*.[64] Due to their lack of understanding, he charges interlocutors to open their eyes to the current circumstance engulfing the church. To prove this point, he seeks to demonstrate how Modernists often hid differences through linguistic similarities. Adding to its potency, he couches this strategy in the Hebrew term *shibboleth* implying that accentual differences result in deception both at Princeton and the church abroad:

> The *shibboleths* of the adversary have sometimes a very deceptive sound. 'Let us propagate Christianity,' the adversary says, 'but let us not always be engaged in arguing in defence of it; let us make our preaching positive, and not negative; let us avoid controversy; *let us hold to a Person and not to dogma*…' Such are some of the *shibboleths* of that agnostic Modernism which is the deadliest enemy of the Christian religion today.[65]

This discussion helped expose the hidden doctrinal differences and thus uncover the alter-ideology of Modernism already in the community's midst. He continues this focus emphasizing use of the term "tolerance" and its deceptive dual meaning. For example, instead of tolerating diversity of ideas and differences, he contends that tolerance really meant that, "A man may believe what he pleases, provided he does not believe anything strongly enough to risk his life on it and fight for it."[66] In other words, tolerance was wielded as a rhetorical tool with the underlying connotation that doctrines and dogma are insignificant. For many, this insight into the moment would have been received as revelatory as ideological differences were exposed.

As a means to further awaken the audience to the current conflict, Machen strengthens the image of the ego-ideology by contending that Christianity is antithetical to the modernist form of tolerance. Pointing to history, Machen reveals that the church's proclamation of the gospel more often resulted in conflict because it was proclaimed as truth: "Always the gospel would have been received with favour by the world if it had been presented merely as one way of salvation; *the offence came because it was presented as the only way, and because it made relentless war upon all other ways.*"[67] Therefore, the historic Christian message was antithetical to such a notion of tolerance. With the newfound awareness of the current age and the existence of an *alter ideology* within the community, interlocutors found themselves in the midst of a fight for the church's preservation similar to other paradigmatic moments in history. However, such insight went beyond being descriptive to also revealing prescriptive measures.

Next, Machen sets forth a missional vision for the audience by reframing the connotative understanding of conflict in order to remove any initial barriers. First, he underscores the necessity of love rather than hate. This importance is clarified when he states that, "I do not think that we shall obtain courage by any mere lust of conflict."[68] In other words, it is possible to stand against modernism incorrectly implying that many in the

fundamentalist camp were doing so. This moment of irony would have served an important purpose as students reflected on their own motives for engaging in conflict. Yet, Machen continues to purge egoistic intentions by noting that the church's battle to defend doctrine has love as its ultimate end: "For this battle is a battle of love; and nothing ruins a man's service in it so much as a spirit of hate."[69] Machen's unification of these contrary ideas—battle and love—distinguishes the ritualistic characteristic of the moment as he helped afford the audience "an awareness of both opposition and unity that logic cannot offer."[70] Therefore, as modernists desired "peace" through the avoidance of "conflict" within the community, the audience was given a fuller expression of reality by distinguishing that peace was, in fact, the conduit to conflict. To give depth to this perception, Machen grounds this insight from Paul's scriptural writings wherein he wrestled with this very conundrum: "The answer is paradoxical; but it is very simple. Paul was a great fighter because he was at peace. He who said, 'Fight the good fight of faith,' spoke also of 'the peace of God which passeth all understanding'; and in that peace the sinews of his war were found."[71] In other words, defenders of the faith—like Paul—were historically driven to conflict because of the peace obtained by the truth of Christianity. From this exposition, students would have questioned their own positionality and possession of peace. "Those who have been at the foot of the Cross will not be afraid to go forth under the banner of the Cross to a holy war of love."[72] To be complacent meant one had not experienced salvation.

Machen further directs attention to this divine peace by reflecting on the contentious doctrine of Christ's vicarious atonement: "How then can we sinners stand before that throne? … It is not our answer. Our wisdom could never have discovered it. *It is God's answer.* … We deserved eternal death because of sin; the eternal Son of God, because he loved us, and because he was sent by the Father who loved us too, died in our stead, for our sins, upon the Cross."[73] This divine framing is significant because Christ's vicarious death emphasized a divine knowledge that superseded normal rationality. The verbal performance of this

doxa was sacramental whereby Machen evoked "the numinous experience in others through the use of symbols."[74] Adding to the sacred moment, he further taints Modernists in claiming they consider this most central doctrine as foolish: "That message is despised today; upon it the visible church as well as the world pours out the vials of its scorn, or else does it even less honour by paying it lip-service and then passing it by."[75] Machen's vision, therefore, sought to lay bare the lines of demarcation and how one's defense of the faith acted as proof of a sacred peace: "If you have the peace of God in your hearts, you will never shrink from controversy; you will never be afraid to contend earnestly for the faith. Talk of peace in the present deadly peril of the church, and you show…that you have little inkling of the true peace of God."[76]

The Logic of Preservation: Good Reasons for a Defense

In rhetorical fashion, Machen seeks to invest in the rationale of the interlocutors resulting in a *rhetoric of assent* rather than arguing from authority. To firm up the importance of doctrinal demarcation, he focuses on the life and ministry of Paul arguing that his life as a Christian was "hardly a peaceful life, but [was] rather a life of wild adventure."[77] Next, Machen signals his overarching purpose by pointing to the church's "chief battle" of dealing with heresy: "Far more trying was the battle that he fought against the enemies *in his own camp*."[78] Machen places the onus on those battles internal to the church because of the ever-enduring possibility of perversion. In fact, Paul's writings describe many of these critical moments: "Everywhere his rear was threatened by an all-engulfing paganism or by a perverted Judaism…"[79] Here, Machen enacts *anamnesis* to remind interlocutors of such conflict filled writings: "Read the Epistles with care, and you see Paul always in conflict. At one time he fights paganism in life … At still another time, he fights the effort of human pride to substitute man's merit as the means of salvation for divine grace…"[80] Such a biblical basis would have proven powerful due to familiarity, especially as it was framed

in connection to the ongoing conflict. To Machen, Paul's conflict-filled life in defense of truth summarized the Church's need in the modern age—preservation through struggle rather than indifference. Uniquely, he empowers this logic through a *transcendent principle* that distinctively engaged the student's motives of emulation: "Everywhere we see the great apostle in conflict for the preservation of the church. It is as though a mighty flood were seeking to engulf the church's life; dam the break at one point in the levee, and another break appears somewhere else. Everywhere paganism was seeping through; not for one moment did Paul have peace; always he was called upon to fight."[81] From this understanding, those students preparing to serve in presbyter roles, who seemingly felt indifferent regarding such differences, were offered a coherent logic couched in the *transcendent principle* of which they could imitate and enact for the preservation of the Church. Therefore, Machen's message went beyond mere manipulation to a *rhetoric of assent* as it synthesized the inherent nature of conflict and defense for a community desiring to preserve truth.

Sacred Time and Authorization: Many Voices Becoming One

Throughout the sermon, Machen has attempted to create a space of consubstantiality with the audience by "enfold[ing] participants in [the] epideictic exchange."[82] To create such an occasion, the communities' values are revealed through a sacred time that connects the audience to the transcendent church via past, present, and future.

First, one can view an intertwining of the past with the audience. In discussing the life of Paul as integrally connected to preserving the church, Machen carries this same "fighter persona" to other moments in history. In doing so, a sacred harmony was formed as many voices became one:

> The real companions of Paul are the great heroes of the faith. But who are those heroes? Are they not true fighters, one and all? Tertullian fought a mighty battle against

> Marcion; Athanasius fought against the Arians; Augustine fought against Pelagius; and as for Luther, he fought a brave battle against kings … and we love him for it. So was Calvin; so were John Knox and all the rest.[83]

With all these voices configured together, the audience was shown an epic lineage of orthodox heroes fighting to preserve the truths of God. Machen's rhetorical problem, however, was instilling this same purpose to those listening: "God grant that you students in the seminary may be fighters, too!"[84]

To accomplish this task, Machen turns his focus toward the future to denote the importance of their actions in preserving the church: "Where are you going to stand in the great battle which now rages in the church? Are you going to curry favour with the world by standing aloof…"[85] Such a point would have served to alienate mere spectators implying that they lacked care for the church's preservation. Adding injury, he then signals the hardships awaiting them and their congregants if they refused to take a stand: "Many have been swept from their moorings by the current of the age; a church grown worldly often tyrannizes over those who look for guidance to God's Word alone."[86] However, as history had shown, their inaction would not keep the church from completing her mission of proclaiming eternal truths even if some battles were lost. On the other hand, if a stand was taken, they—like Paul, Athanasius, and others—could keep the levee from breaking during their lifetime. It is in this same moment that Machen gains authorization by placing value on the expansive tradition of defending the church. As a means to draw interlocutors in harmony with the orthodox tradition, Machen speaks to them in a familial way:

> There are many hopes that I cherish for you men, with whom I am united by such ties of affection. I hope that you may be gifted preachers; I hope that you may have happy lives … But I hope something for you far more than all that. I hope above all that, wherever you are and however

> your preaching may be received, you may be true witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ…[87]

To end the sermon, one of the most important ideas becomes clear. All of the heroes mentioned were consubstantial through more than just the belief of doctrine. Machen instead saw a community connected through the divine substance of peace obtained by the salvific wonder of the cross at salvation: "'He loved me and gave himself for me,' says the sinner at last, as he contemplates the Saviour upon the Cross. The burden of sin falls from the back, and a soul enters into the peace of God."[88] To Machen, it was the substance of peace that led heroes of the faith to stand in unison against Marcion, Arius, Pelagius, and other heretical teachers all throughout history. In fact, Machen's performance that day too put on display this very same divine peace and tradition as he praised truth in the midst of opponents. More significantly, this peace from God united the whole community for the sake of fighting the good fight: "Peace is indeed yours, the peace of God which passeth all understanding. *But that peace is given you, not that you may be onlookers or neutrals in love's battle, but that you may be good soldiers of Jesus Christ.*"[89] Machen concludes with a desire for interlocutors to be enveloped in a sacred atmosphere of the Church's eternal truths as a means for renewal. Similar to the heavenly host looking-on at ancient Christians in the book of *Hebrews*, many were caught up in a similar collective vision. In other words, all of the orthodox heroes—Paul, Athanasius, Augustine, and so on—were watching, waiting, and hoping that the students would stand and take their rightful place.

CONCLUSION

J. Gresham Machen was one of the most important voices during the twentieth century modernist-fundamentalist controversy. Although his influence is quite expansive, little to no rhetorical scholarship has been put forth attempting to greater elucidate his voice in the midst of a denominational controversy that still

influences many even today. Among fundamentalists of the time, Machen was a rarity both in his rhetorical argumentation as well as his overall scholarship as a defender of the Princeton tradition. Uniquely, this controversy is directly connected to many of the current discussions and topics of impasse between varying perspectives of Christianity, thus illustrating the relevance of orthodox rhetorics. Machen's last address to the students at Princeton Seminary, therefore, reveals a unique understanding of the rhetorical moment as he sought to persuade students to see the importance of doctrine in defense of the Christian faith. Not only that, but this analysis has given insight into modernism and its doxastic linkage to late scientistic discourse. Rhetorically speaking, viewing Machen as a "confessional theologian" helps underscore much of his discourse as he saw modernism as the rising tide threatening to break the levee of orthodoxy and engulf the church with heresy.[90] Uniquely, this analysis adds to attempts at reconceptualizing the epideictic genre as the power of one's ethos, like Machen, can create a sacred occasion allowing for a rhetorical flourishing of *doxa* that bolsters the communal identity during hardship. If Machen was correct, the fight continues today and must be maintained primarily through language which is particularly important for homileticians. Therefore, a reinvigoration between rhetoric and homiletics is vital and, indeed, answers the question proposed by Augustine many centuries ago in *On Christian Doctrine*.[91]

Machen truly shaped this last performance at Princeton Seminary into a rhetorical space of consubstantiality ritualizing a "mutual contemplation of reality" as the sermon itself acted as an emblem of his overall purpose.[92] Among the faculty members that left Princeton, twenty students found themselves also following Machen in his resignation.[93] By celebrating the reformed tradition of Christianity as many others scorned doctrinal values, Machen performed the good fight against modernism through a *rhetoric of orthodoxy* so that others could emulate his actions and harmonize with the reformed tradition of history. However, many argue that the sacred discourse of Machen still lives on through Westminster Theological Seminary

and other countless voices as the reformed community still continues in their mission to keep the levee from breaking.

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WHAT EZRA 2 HAS TO TEACH US ABOUT PREACHING BIBLICAL LISTS[1]

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ABSTRACT

Lists of names in the Bible can often be a stumbling block for many preachers. This article is an attempt to help preachers read and preach biblical lists by using Ezra 2 as a case study. First, this paper will provide a series of questions to ask the text in an attempt of exegeting it. Questions such as, why does Ezra use a list in chapter 2? What are the names included in the list? What is highlighted or downplayed in this list? How are the people in the list arranged? How is Ezra 2 connected to the surrounding narratives? Second, attention will be paid as to how we as New Testament believers should understand Ezra 2. Third, we will transit from the text to a sermon, where suggestions will be offered as to how a sermon can emanate out of our study of Ezra 2. This paper will argue that Ezra 2 is more than just a list of unrelated names. Rather, it encapsulates a powerful message that God is using you and me to show the world that he is in the process of bringing his restoration in Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

Some biblical texts are deadly, and they should be avoided at all costs. This is the view of Fred Craddock, the Bandy Distinguished Professor of Preaching and New Testament Emeritus in the Candler School of Theology at Emory

University. In reference to Romans 16, where Paul sends his greetings to his list of cohorts and friends, Craddock comments,

> I hope you will not feel guilty if your heart was not all aflutter during the reading of the text. It's not very interesting. It's a list of strange names. I always tell my students in preaching class, `When you're preaching from the biblical text, avoid the lists. They're deadly.' Here it seems that Paul is calling the roll, which is a strange thing in itself. I have never worshiped in a church in which someone got up and called roll.[2]

Sharing the same pessimism is David Buttrick. Lists by themselves are nondescript, according to Buttrick, because they fail to capture the matrixes of emotions and the complexities of nuances. He writes,

> But ask yourself, do you speak of the deepest, the dearest moments in your life by listing descriptive categories? No, you tell what happened as a story or you try to open up meaning through a series of interrelated, probing descriptions. We human beings save categorical thinking for trivia, for grocery lists or sorting out laundry—so many bras, so many shirts, so many socks.[3]

Evangelical scholars and preachers are by no means more enthusiastic about biblical lists. Derek Kidner calls Ezra 2 "uninviting,"[4] while Adrian Reynolds admits that at first glance "chapter 2 (of Ezra) does not seem of great interest or significance."[5] Most telling is Charles Swindoll's *Hand Me Another Brick: Timeless Lessons on Leadership*, which is a collection of his revised sermons on the book of Nehemiah. In the book, he completely bypasses Nehemiah 7 (a chapter comprising of a list of names) with no explanation offered.[6]

If these lists are indeed "deadly," what are we to do with the countless lists in the Bible? Should these texts be quarantined and be in lockdown like some contagious virus? Are names in

biblical lists as trivial as "bras, shirts and socks"? Are the litanies of biblical names so boring that they cannot make our hearts flutter? Central to such concerns is that we are often at a loss as to how we can interpret such a literary genre. Scott M. Gibson places his finger on the pulse of the problem when he diagnoses that we are often uncomfortable to preach the Old Testament because we are not familiar with it and its various genres.[7] Further, unlike the exegesis of narratives or poetry or didactic prose, seminaries and colleges seldom offer classes or even host stand-alone lectures on how we should approach biblical lists.

In this article, it is my intention to offer some suggestions of how we can read biblical lists, by using Ezra 2 as a case study. Moreover, I want to show how we can transition from the text to a sermon, by offering some suggestions as to how a sermon can emanate out of our study of Ezra 2.

EXEGETICAL QUESTIONS TO ASK EZRA 2

When tasked to preach Ezra 2, a preacher has two options. First, he or she can jettison the text by bypassing it. If one chooses this option, he or she has the antecedent support of Josephus. In his re-telling of the Jewish return, the Jewish historian omits this list completely, because, as he admits, he does not wish to distract his readers from the main issues (*Ant*. XI.68).

Alternatively, the preacher can start your exegesis by asking the text a series of five questions. First and foremost, why lists? Why do biblical authors indulge in long list of names? Ezra 2, as Charles Fretheim observes, contains a register of the names of 367 men and one woman.[8] Instead of presenting a statement about the community of returnees, Ezra-Nehemiah goes into the specifics, naming the families and their locales. In calling up the various names, Ezra-Nehemiah conjures up memories in his readers' recollection, their activities, their characters, and their faith. Hence, this list gives depth and dimension to what might otherwise be a nondescript bunch of people. This is in stark contrast to the common misconception that lists are trivial.

Second, what is the list about? Ezra 2 comprises of a rollcall of "the sons of province" (בני המדינה) who have come back from the exile (Ezra 2:1). They comprise of the laity (2:2-35), the cultic leaders (comprising of the priests, Levites, and the temple personnel) (2:36-58), and those who cannot prove their priestly lineage (2:59-63).[9] The passage concludes with the sum totals for the "whole assembly'" (כל־הקהל) (2:64-67), followed by a note on the donations given to the building fund (2:68-69). It is important to be able to articulate what the list is about.

Third, what is downplayed or highlighted in the list? Lists in the Bible are rarely exhaustive: for instance, not everyone who has had returned from the exile under the watch of Zerubbabel and Joshua is included in Ezra 2. Ezra-Nehemiah has a rhetorical choice of selecting who he wants to include and who he wants to leave out. In his selection, the author reveals his *tendez*. If a list comprises of the names of kings, for example, this may convey the idea that kings or kingship or leadership are important to the writer's ideology. Or if a list comprises of the sons of David, such as 1 Chr 3:1–24, this means that the Davidic covenant or David is paramount to the author's concerns.

By identifying the list of returnees as "the sons of province" (בני המדינה), Ezra-Nehemiah underscores what is important about the return: the community.[10] The community, which is made up of the laity (occupying 81% of the names), the cultic leaders, and even those whose lineage are dubious. They are the protagonists of the book. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi concurs, "The people who will build the house of God are the central focus of the book. They are the ones who went up to Jerusalem, in compliance with divine and royal decree, to restore Jewish life."[11]

Ezra 2:1 begins a queue of eleven leaders; they are charged with the leadership in bringing the caravan of Jews back to Jerusalem. Even though Zerubbabel and Joshua are mentioned, they are part of the team, and they not elevated with special titles or genealogies.[12] Zerubbabel's Davidic origin which the Chronicler makes much of and which Haggai and Zechariah imply, is never mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah.[13] He is not even designated with the titular "governor" (פחת), a title Haggai

applies to him (Hag 1:1). In contrast to 1 Esdras which attributes the governorship to Zerubbabel, governors remain anonymous when they are mentioned in Ezra-Nehemiah (Ezra 2:63 and 6:7).

Rather, the emphasis of Ezra-Nehemiah is on the community. It is the people (עם) who gather as "one man" (כאיש אחד) in the erection of the altar (Ezra 3:1). "Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jozadak and the rest of the people" are being credited as the rebuilders of the temple (Ezra 3:8). Moreover, it is the "people" (עם) who give a shout of praise when the foundations are laid (Ezra 3:11).

When we cross over to Nehemiah, it is the people who were the builders of the wall (Neh 4:19-22). The "people" (עם) are also the ones who request Ezra to bring out the Torah to read in the hearing of the entire assembly (Neh 8:1). While Ezra is the one who initiates the reading (Neh 3:8), it does not take long for the entire community to join in (Neh 8:8).

Fourth, how are the people in the list arranged? If Ezra-Nehemiah's purpose is to present the returnees, there are many ways he could have presented the list. He could have arranged the list in the order of the people's names or their tribes or their gender or their job descriptions or their positions within the society, but Ezra-Nehemiah organizes the list via cultic lines. The list is essentially divided between the laity (2:2-35), the cultic leaders (comprising of the priests, Levites, and the temple personnel) (2:36-58), and those who cannot prove their priestly lineage (2:59-63). Additionally, the gifts that the people bring in 2:69 comprises of expensive "priestly garments" (וכתנת כהנים) made with gold and silver. This reveals Ezra-Nehemiah's concern not only for the community, but also how the priests and the lay people can function together as God's people in the rebuilding of Jerusalem's temple and the city.

This list, albeit with some minor changes, is repeated in Nehemiah 7. Jacob Wright is on target when he mentions that it is not coincidental that the list of returnees in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 are not only almost identical, but they are also strategically placed.[14] Ezra 2 is placed at the commencement before the construction of the temple. While the completion of

the house of God in Nehemiah 7 concludes with the same list. Significantly, the Feasts of the Tabernacles are celebrated after the lists. In a previous article, I have shown that even the opening words of both accounts are striking similar.[15] Ezra 3:1 begins at the seventh month with Israelites settled in their towns, where the people gather as "one man" (כאיש אחד) in Jerusalem. Similarly, Nehemiah 8:1 begins at the seventh month with the Israelites settled in their towns, where the people gather as "one man" (כאיש אחד) at the front of the Water Gate.

However, there are also differences in the way the same feast is celebrated. In Ezra 3, the focus is on the cultic personnel (specifically, Joshua son of Jozadak, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and their fellow priests and Levites) and their responsibilities in the administration of the Feast of the Tabernacles. Five times within the first six verses of Ezra 3 we are told that the religious leaders sacrifice burnt offerings (צלה) to God. Twice they offer sacrifices "in accordance with the law of Moses" (Ezra 3:2, 4). More cultic details follow when we are told that the newly constructed altar is on its "original bases" (מכונתו). This means that the temple personnel placed the altar on the "precise spot that the altar had occupied before the Babylonians destroyed it along with the time."[16] The attention paid to the cultic specificity illustrates that the cultic officials are the ones to take the lead in administration of the feast here in Ezra 3.

When we come to the Nehemiah 8 where the same feast is celebration, the emphasis is on the laity. While the Feast of Tabernacles in Ezra 3 is celebrated in the temple precincts of Jerusalem, the same feast is now celebrated at the Water Gate, a much more assessable public location. This is to ensure that no one, especially the women (who are mentioned twice in the first three verses), is barred from the celebration.

Unlike Ezra 3 where the Levites are the only participants, Nehemiah 8 lists among the assembly "men, women, and all who understand." As Eskenazi observes word "people" (צם) appears thirteen times in the first twelve verses of the chapter, while the expression "all the people" (כל־העם) is repeated nine times.[17]

Avrid Kapelrud states, "the focus is upon the fact that it is the people themselves who take the initiative"[18]

Torah occupies a central role in both Ezra 3 and Nehemiah 8. Wright notes that just as the sacrifices are offered "each day" (יום ביום) in Ezra 3:4, the Torah is read "day after day" (יום ביום) in Nehemiah 8:18.[19] However, Torah serves different purposes in the two passages. In Ezra 3, the law functions to serve the priests as they ensure that the right sacrifices are carried out (see v.2). In Nehemiah 8, the focus is on the laity as the Torah is being read in their presence. Moreover, instead of reading the law as an end in itself (Neh 8), the people read the law with "a clear intention of putting it into practice." In fact, after the reading of the Torah and without any cajoling from Ezra, the people go out and built shelters for themselves (Neh 8:16).

Therefore, the two celebrations of the feast are in Ezra-Nehemiah are purposeful. With the emphasis of the first feast (Ezra 3) on the cultic leaders and the second on the people (Neh 3), Ezra-Nehemiah shows us both the religious leaders and the laity have a vital role to play in the restoration of Israel.

Fifth, how is Ezra 2 connected with the preceding and proceeding narratives? A biblical pericope functions as a two-way street; its meaning is influenced by the passages that precedes and proceeds it. Ezra 2 does not appear in vacuum; it is part of the narrative flow of the story of Ezra–Nehemiah. In relation to its relationship to chapter 1, this list gives illustration to 1:5, which tells us of how God has stirred (העיר) the spirits of the family heads of Judah and Benjamin to return.

Ezra 2:3-35 can be divided into two sub-categories: first, there are the names of the lay returnees listed by descent (vv. 3-20). These seventeen or eighteen families most likely have ancestors who had been deported by Nebuchadnezzar. While the second part of the list contains laity listed by their ancestral cities (2:21-35). These twenty-two cities, according to Andrew Steinmann, are all located in Judah and Benjamin.[20] Two of them are located south of Jerusalem in Judah with the remaining all located in Benjamin, north of Jerusalem. The list functions as an

illustration of how God's promise in 1:5 is being fulfillment: Jews from Judah and Benjamin are returning from the exile in droves.

Ezra 2:3-20 also functions as a prolepsis of what is to come. A careful analysis of the text reveals that eleven out of the seventeen or eighteen names on the list are repeated in Ezra 8:1-14. Prior to the eighth chapter, we get to meet Ezra for the first time (7:8). To say that Ezra's resume is outstanding is an understatement. Unlike Nehemiah who is only introduced with his patronym, Ezra receives a fourteen-name pedigree.[21] More importantly, Ezra is the only priest within Ezra and Nehemiah that is linked to Aaron (7:5).

The narrator is not the only one smitten by Ezra's superlative credentials, even king Artaxerxes is impressed. Expressed in his letter, Artaxerxes heaps upon Ezra silver, gold, freewill offerings, money, and anything the scribe wanted. As if these things were not enough, in 7:24-26, Artaxerxes grants Ezra the authority to take people back to Jerusalem, to levy taxes, to appoint judges, to teach God's law, and to lead the people of Israel.

However, despite the overhaul of accolades, gifts and authority, Ezra does not horde them all to himself. Neither does he act autonomously. In 7:7 when Ezra arrives in Jerusalem, he travels within the company of priests, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, and temple servants. Then in 8:15-20, Ezra goes out of his way to recruit Levites to carry the cultic treasures back to the temple. Instead of administrating the gifts himself, Ezra delegates them to the twelve priests and the Levites.

It is within this context of the transfer of power and gifts to the community that we have some of the names from Ezra 2 repeated. The list in 8:1-14 exists to show how the mission of Ezra is integrated with the work of other specific individuals within the community. Thus, repetition of the names in 8:11 is used to reinforce the point that it is entire community and not just Ezra that will be the builders of God's house.

Finally, some of the names in Ezra 2 are also repeated in chapter 10. In Ezra 2:3-20, we first encounter these names: Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani, Bebai, and Hashum. These

names are going to be singled out as the ancestors of the people who break the Mosaic covenant in the marrying of foreign wives.[22] As early as the beginning of the Ezra and Nehemiah, the narrator is going to remind us that the restoration is only going to be partial or at best progressive.[23] There is already a "shadow" of failure that is already looming in the opening chapters of Ezra-Nehemiah.[24] Though the people are going to be central in God's restoration, they are not perfect. They (or at least a portion of them) are bound for sin and disappointment. In other words, the narrator does not leave all the "bad" news towards the end.[25] Rather, the depravity of the people is already hinted throughout the narrative.

Such a view is further supported with the list's use of numbers. Relative to the book of Numbers where 603,550 Israelites came out of Egypt, the 42,360 returning in Ezra 2 is trifling.[26] Moreover, the list is prefaced by the names of eleven (rather than the symbolic twelve) leaders in Ezra 2:2. This can be another indication that though even at this early stage in the narrative, there is already problems and inadequacies among the leadership. Besides in Ezra 2:68 when we are told that only "some of the heads of the families" give freewill offerings towards the building of God's house. The offering is meager in comparison with Exodus 36:3-4 where people continue to bring freewill offerings morning after morning until Moses has to say, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done."

After we have allowed our questions to expose us to the different elements and aspects of Ezra 2, it is now important to put all our study together. Ezra 2 teaches that God is fulfilling his promise to the Jews by bringing them back from exile. In his graciousness, God is including the entire community—laypeople, cultic leaders, and those whose lineage are nebulous—to rebuild his temple and the city of Jerusalem. Even though some may ultimately rebel against him and even when the returnees are not as generous and numerous as in the time of the exodus, God is still committed to his people. Therefore, to paraphrase the exegetical idea in a succinct sentence, we may

surmise: God is committed to bring about his restoration through his people, regardless of their vocations and weaknesses.

LOOKING AT EZRA 2 AS NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS

Before we can entertain any homiletical question, we need to ask, how are we as New Testament believers to understand Ezra 2, especially with its concern about the exile and restoration? Douglas McComiskey believes that exilic theology forms part of the foundation for the teachings and actions of Jesus.[27] In Richard Hays' opinion, Matthew frames Jesus's identity and mission against the exile of Israel and the eschatological hope of Israel's restoration.[28] This is most evident in another list of names as recorded in Matthew 1. The genealogy presents a sad and tragic tale of Israel's downward spiral into sin. Despite God's promise to Abraham and David, the history of Israel hits a nadir during the time of Jehoiachin (1:11), when the hope of blessing and rest is dashed in the wake of rebellion and the ultimate loss of the promised land. The exile, in Mervyn Eloff's view, is the *crux historiae* of Israel's story.[29] It is of such importance to Matthew that the words "exile in Babylon" (μετοικεσίας Βαβυλῶνος) appear four times in the first chapter.

Announced right at the end of the exile is the Messiah (1:17). The timing of Jesus' arrival could not have been more purposeful. This Messiah, says Matthew, augurs the end of the exile by coming "to save his people from their sins" (1:21). N. T. Wright aptly remarks, "The genealogy says to Matthew's careful reader that the long story of Abraham's people will come to its fulfilment, its seventh seven, with a new David who will rescue his people from their exile, that is "save his people from their sins.'"[30]

However, the New Testament also presents an "already, but not yet" perspective to the exile and its ensuing restoration. Though Jesus has come to rescue believers from sin, we are not completely free from it. Until the day when we are finally reconciled to Jesus at the eschaton, we are still living in exile. The Apostle Peter, for instance, refers to his audience as "elect exiles

of the dispersion" (Ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις Διασπορᾶς) (1 Peter 1:1). Just as the Jews lived in a land that was not their own, the church is now scattered around the world as exiles. As Matthew Harmon elicits, the Greek word for "dispersion" (Διασπορᾶς) stresses the temporary nature of a person's stay in a foreign land.[31] Peter repeats the theme of exile, when he writes, "And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile… ." (1:17).

As the letter unfolds, Peter continues to use the language of exile and restoration for the church.[32] When Peter describes believers as being born into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus and have received a great inheritance (1:3–5), we hear connotations of Ezekiel's promises of restoration from the exile in 37:1–14. Isaiah's promise that God will end Israel's exile and restore them in 40:6–8 is echoed in 1 Peter 2:23–25.

Additionally, when Peter refers to believers as living stones and a holy priesthood (2:4–5), he bases such statements from Isaiah 28:6. Here the prophet promises that God will one day establish for the remnant a sure foundation for them. "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: `See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic.'"

MOVING FROM EXEGESIS TO HOMILETICS

How then do we preach Ezra 2? The advice of Abraham Kuruvilla bears repetition: the mandate of the preacher is more than explaining the text.[33] Utilizing the metaphor of translation, Kuruvilla believes the task of the preacher is to "say the same thing" as the text would do to a new audience. With the angst, disappointments, sufferings, and hopeless the Jews faced during their Babylonian exile, how does that translate for us today? In accord with the Jews, we are also not spared from the ravages of sin. The prevalence of illnesses—some caused by our own misdoings and others that come because we live in a fallen world—makes us anxious for our eternal home. Our misplaced

trust in the idols of this age (whether it is in ourselves, finances, sex, drugs, and others) have often leave many of us battered and bruised. If we are to be "good translators" of the text, we need to help our audience identify, understand, and feel the gravity of what Lloyd Bitzer calls the "rhetorical situation."[34] This should be done in the introduction and ideally also throughout the sermon, with the use of stories, statistics, personal testimonies, and so forth.

After the rhetorical situation is identified, we need to figure out how Ezra 2 speaks specifically to such a situation. Whether one is a supporter of Haddon Robinson's "big idea"[35] or Kuruvilla's "pericopal theological" approach,[36] we need to decipher the homiletical thrust of Ezra 2. For that, the homiletic idea, based on the exegetical idea, is this: *God uses you and me to show that he is restoring this world.* In a time when we feel "exiled" from the God due to the brokenness and sinfulness of this world, Ezra 2 offers to us three reminders.

First, God has already began his process of restoration through Jesus Christ. Ezra 2, as we have discussed earlier, is a vivid illustration of how God fulfills his promise to Jeremiah as he allows the Jews to return after the exile. The names, especially the names of the towns, is a demonstration of how Jews have returned, particularly from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Ezra 2 is not only a list, but also a demonstration of God's faithfulness in fulfilling his promise to restore his people.

In the New Testament, there is also another list of names, Matthew 1 tells the story of Israel. The narrative is full of woes and heartaches as the Israelites constantly rebel against God until the nation ends up in exile in Babylon. Instead of abandoning his wayward people, God in his faithfulness, sends his son to save the Jews and all of us from our sins.

Second, God wants to use us—you and me—to tell the good news of his restoration. Ezra 2 is segmented into three sections: the names of laypeople, the cultic leaders, and those whose lineage are unclear. Both the laity and the clergy are called to rebuild the temple. This explains why the list is repeated twice in Ezra-Nehemiah. Following Ezra 2, priests are reported to

celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (Ezra 3). Meanwhile, immediately following the list in Nehemiah 7, the lay people commemorate the same feast. The task of speaking of God's kingdom is the duty of both the pastors and the laity.

Third, in choosing to use imperfect people like us, God shows his grace. Even though the numbers and amount of their offerings in Ezra 2 pales in comparison to the first exodus, God still values his people's contribution. Even when some will later betray God in indulging in sinful behaviors, they are still tasked with the re-building of God's house. Our weaknesses do not preclude us from the Gospel. Rather, our weaknesses ought to drive us to surrender to Christ's strength.

Finally, a word about illustrations. Since Ezra 2 thrives on names of families and individuals, how are we to translate this for our audience today? One way is that in our illustrations, we can also use stories of individuals (both clergy and laity) to speak about his restoration. To give our sermons an even more personal touch, we may consider using stories of our own church members and former pastors who have had lived lives that speak of God's restoration.

CONCLUSION

If some texts, according to Fred Craddock, are "deadly" because they "bombard" the congregation with tedium and they dampen the excitement of a preacher's sermon, they are not the biblical lists. In this article, I have tried to show how Ezra-Nehemiah uses a list in Ezra 2 spotlight of God's graciousness in selecting his people *en bloc* to re-build his house. Derek Kidner is right on when he says that Ezra 2 presents "a monument to God's care and to Israel's vitality."[37] To caricature such a moving picture of grace as trivial does a disservice to the text and ultimately to God. Moreover, to designate this list together with a laundry list belies the grace of God. For Ezra 2, at the end of the day, is more important than "bras, socks and shirts."

NOTES

1. I would like to express my appreciation to my brother Terence Yap for his invaluable feedback on this article. Special thanks go to my parents Robert and Siew Hiong Yap for their constant prayers and encouragements. This paper is dedicated to the memory of the late Bill Brown, whose love for the preaching of God's word was unparallel.
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23. This is in contrast to the view held by Douglas J. E. Nykolaiston, "The Restoration of Israel by God's Word in Three Episodes from Ezra-Nehemiah," in *Unity and Disunity in Ezra-Nehemiah: Redaction, Rhetoric, and Reader* (Hebrew Biblical Monographs 17; ed. Mark J. Boda and Paul l. Reddit; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008) who holds that the restoration as promised by Jeremiah has already been fulfilled in Ezra-Nehemiah.
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ON THE WILLOWS WE HUNG OUR HARPS: PREACHING THE LAMENT AND HOPE OF PSALM 137

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ABSTRACT

A genre that poses particular difficulty for preachers is *imprecatory lament*. Psalms that call for vengeance are often a mystery as we plan and prepare to preach. Yet if we are committed to preaching the whole of the canon we must be willing and able to preach these hard and sad texts to our listeners. This paper will explore imprecatory lament for preaching, first considering different lenses for their interpretation and adoption in worship, and then working through one of the most violent, Psalm 137, in a covenantal context as an image of how we might engage these texts for proclamation. We can faithfully preach the terrible beauty of Psalm 137, and other imprecations, by aligning with the psalmist's pain and anger within the context of God's indelible faithfulness. This is timely as we are inundated with news of tragedy, injustice, and pain in areas such as pandemic deaths, racial division and violence, mass shootings, and war. The lament and hope of Psalm 137 gives the preacher something to say in the midst of tragedy as he or she seeks to bring hope to the congregation.

WHEN GOD'S WORD REPULSES: IMPRECATORY LAMENT

The book of Psalms is treasured as the hymnbook of God's people. The church begins much of its liturgy with the reading of a psalm. Many of our hymns and worship songs find their lyrical roots in the songs of the Old Testament. It's a statement on the book's importance that when it's deemed necessary to print the New Testament in such a way that it fit in one's pocket the book of Psalms is the collection from the older part of the book that enduringly makes the cut.

Imprecatory prayer, however, in which the singer prays for harm to come to enemies in protection or vengeance, tests feelings about the psalms particularly and the whole of God's Word by extension. Psalms such as 69, 109, or 137 tend to be ignored or carved up in order to avoid difficult questions about the goodness of God or His Word. Daniel Nehrbass notes that fully 20% of the psalms are either full or partial imprecation.[1]

Yet, lines such as "May no one extend kindness to [my enemy], or take pity on his fatherless children," (Psalm 109.12) do not find their way to the Sunday school lessons of Psalty the Singing Songbook.[2] What can we say when God's Word repulses?

The Problem with Imprecatory Lament

Erich Zenger makes broad observations about the friction caused by imprecatory psalms, and indeed the whole of the psalter, as one considers their adoption in Christian worship and prayer.[3]

First, he says, the book of Psalms on the whole can cause problems for practical theologies as it contains imprecation, cursing, and the constant presence of one's enemies throughout the whole and not just in select passages. Throughout the corpus even in the psalms that the church considers most beautiful lurk enemies (Psalm 23, for instance). Nehrbass echos this dissonance in discussing the pastoral task of selecting a psalm to read aloud at the beginning of Sunday worship: "Why is it so difficult to pick one I can read aloud from start to finish without editing out at

least a few verses?"[4] The grit and grime of living in the midst of enemies is the constant subject of the psalms which can make many difficult for worship without the impulse to edit.[5]

A second observation Zenger makes about the restriction or rejection of specifically the imprecatory prayers for worship is that there is a perceived need to protect the reputation of Christianity from repulsive parts of the Old Testament. This has rootedness in an interpretive view that sees an inequality between the New Testament and Old Testament, emphasizing the discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity. The offending psalms are then required "to stand before the judgement seat of New Testament christology and ecclesiology, there to be 'Christianized' or even rejected as partly 'unchristian.'"[6] These particular psalms are often treated as pre-Christian relics, "and they reflect a type of piety that Christians *as Christians* must overcome and leave behind them."[7] Once deemed less important, inspired, or "Christian," it becomes easier to edit or ignore stories that repulse, seeking to save the text from itself.

These difficulties highlight the need to engage these texts with an interpretive framework that is able to give both historical and biblical context to them. For the one who holds a high view of scripture, and especially for the pastor shepherding her or his congregation into greater biblical literacy, we must have an answer for why and how to read these troubling texts.

Interpreting the Imprecatory Psalms

Surveying the interpretive history of the imprecatory psalms Nehrbass has identified no less than 13 different ways of reading the texts to answer the difficulties raised above and others.[8] We can look at four broad streams of interpretive thought focusing on the practical question of how the texts are to be used in preaching and worship. Two related lenses either excise these texts from our worship or baptize them for acceptability. A more extreme reading that seemingly justifies the fears that lead to the first two approaches occurs when one weaponizes the biblical

text irresponsibly. A fourth approach allows the writers to speak out of their unfiltered pain within the context of covenant.

Interpreting the Imprecatory Psalms: Approaches that Excise or Baptize

Two broad readings of the imprecatory psalms (and other difficult canonical texts) make a practice of either excising the offending portions or baptizing them. Christopher Hays sums these lenses saying, "There are two common ways of getting rid of a biblical passage one doesn't like: one can refuse to read it, or one can 're-read' it."[9] When confronted with the question of whether these songs can be used in Christian prayer and worship one camp acknowledges the passages are terrible and therefore unsuitable for worship, the other affirms scripture is suitable for worship and that therefore the passages are not as terrible as one might think they are.

Leaning toward a refusal-to-read, Bernard Anderson makes the observation: "It is surely proper to question whether all 150 psalms should be retained in Christian worship, including these troublesome passages, or whether the Psalter should be censored at those points that seem to be inconsistent with God's revelation in Jesus Christ." He goes on, "Two of them–Psalm 69 and especially 109–are almost impossible to use in Christian worship."[10] This inclination to make selections for worship from the nicer parts of the psalms is evident when one surveys books of worship from differing ecclesiastical traditions. Zenger acknowledges that in his own Catholic tradition the words of the imprecatory psalms were either changed in order to be more palatable, verses removed from particular psalms, or entire psalms taken out of the liturgical readings altogether.[11] Nehrbass makes the same observation in comparing the United Methodist Hymnal, the Revised Common Lectionary, and the Episcopal Sunday Lectionary.[12]

Related is the practice of baptizing, or "re-reading," the imprecatory prayers. Methods here are diverse. Walter Kaiser insists that the author of Psalm 137 did not really want violence

to befall Edom and Babylon. Against appearances, the psalmist is praying for the Messiah's kingdom to not be "trampled underfoot by the arrogant despisers of those who currently hold that office and throne."[13] Spurgeon and Augustine made the prayers allegorical. Others consider them pre-New Testament and therefore primitive and immature, superseded by Christ and written in language that "is sub-Christian, . . . out of place in the new age governed by the commandment of the Sermon on the Mount."[14] John Calvin argued that at least some of the psalmists were only speaking of a reality over an eschatological horizon, with Matthew Henry identifying the cursing spoken as indicative of God's eschatological judgment upon those that persecute the church.[15]

This is not to say that these interpreters offer us nothing by way of understanding the psalmists' words.[16] These readings do, however, come with a cost. Ignoring the texts may work towards covering the symptom but does nothing to cure the perceived problem that the texts in fact exist. As Hays notes, "since [these psalms are] in the Psalter–rather than, say, Numbers or Chronicles–readers tend to find [them] anyway."[17]

Re-reading as allegory diminishes the voice of the author in favor of the subjective perspective of the reader. Particularly problematic may be approaches that relegate these texts to a lower status than the New Testament (or even other psalms), viewing them as pre-Christian and as exhibiting an ethic inferior to later, more highly developed revelation. This particular attitude may reflect an overweening Modernity rooted in a myth of progress, as well as a surviving strain of the Marcionism.[18] Significantly, these commitments raise "problems for those who see continuity in the theology of the Bible, since it is inspired by a coherent God who does not change."[19] Further, there is a lurking undercurrent of anti-Jewish bias identifiable, if not in the interpretations themselves then in the potential consequences of them, when a constructed hierarchy casts Jewish thought as primitive and Christian thought as superior. Finally, it is untrue that the imagery or sentiments raised in the imprecatory texts find no parallel in the New Testament. As Hays notes, "what will

a church that cannot face Psalm 137 make of the harder teachings of Jesus, with their furnaces and lakes of fire, their wailing and gnashing of teeth?"[20]

Interpreting the Imprecatory Psalms: Weaponize

Another way to read these psalms is to adopt them as justification for vengeance. David Augsburger recounts two instances of the use of Psalm 109 in such a way that reinforces the instinct to remove or ignore these imprecatory texts. In a high-profile incident that made its way into court, a Navy chaplain invoked the words of Psalm 109 to curse a Jewish agnostic rival, calling the wrath of God to come upon him and his family. The Jewish man then "received numerous death threats, had swastikas painted on his house, had his windows shot out and animal carcasses left on his doorstep." In another instance it was reported that a member of the Kansas state House of Representatives cited the psalm to colleagues, concluding "At last—I can honestly voice a biblical prayer for our president [Obama]."[21]

Weaponizing any portion of scripture against another should be an impetus for the preacher to refuse to excise or ignore difficult texts. In a vacuum of orthodox biblical interpretation there is opportunity for misinterpretation or manipulation that can be damaging, inspire violence, or advocate oppression.

Interpreting the Imprecatory Psalms: Allow Them to Stand

A fourth stream of interpretive thought seeks to allow the psalmists' words to stand in all their terrible depth, preserving their place in prayer, worship, and preaching. Nehrbass names this a Covenantal framework as it seeks an understanding of the psalms within the covenantal life experience of God's people.[22] At its core, this lens holds that these are prayers of God's people crying out for God to be true to Himself in keeping His

covenantal promises, acting in accordance with His own character as just.

John Day advocates that these psalms be preserved in practical theology today:

> …the imprecatory psalms have a place in the New Testament church [on the basis] (a) that they root their theology of cursing, of crying out for God's vengeance, in the Torah–principally in the promise of divine vengeance expressed in the Song of Moses (Deut. 32:1-43), the principle of divine justice outlined in the lex talionis (e.g., 19:16-21), and the assurance of divine cursing as well as blessing in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen.12:2-3); and (b) that this theology is carried largely unchanged through the Scriptures to the end of the the New Testament (Rev.15:2-4; 18:20), thus buttressing its applicability to believers today.[23]

The psalmists have a consistent covenantal theology that, in the face of injustice, tragedy, and pain, appeals to the same God who swore by Himself that He would fulfill His promises to His people. Included in these promises are "the prosperity of God's people, judgment of the wicked, blessing of the righteous, and that God would be slow to anger, and abounding in love."[24] Within a covenantal context the psalms are centrally about God.

There are several aspects of this lens that commend it. It holds Old and New Testaments together, allowing the author to speak and allowing the reader to hear the raw nature of his speech. The approach accounts for imprecatory language in the New Testament (Galatians 1:8-9; Revelation 6).[25] This framework acknowledges that imprecation is not simply a pre-Christian problem to overcome, it is rooted in God's character as faithful to His promises, especially for justice.

Additionally, this mode of reading acknowledges that there is indeed hatred and anger in the psalmist's words, that these emotions arise from suffering violence, oppression, and injustice,

and the proper place for these emotions is in God's presence. Enemies exist, and the desire for wrongs to be righted and for wrongdoers to be punished is acceptable for God's people. When one moves too quickly in removing, judging, or allegorizing the anger and pain felt at injustice and violence, very real victims are left behind both then and now. There is an appropriateness in one's anger toward those committing infanticide, the rapist, the school shooter, slave trader, sex trafficker, perpetrator of racial violence (individual/s and systems). To diminish the words of the psalmist is also to diminish the experience of the oppressed on the whole. This is a point that those not oppressed, and/or the oppressor, will often miss.

This view, against those who would weaponize these texts, importantly observes that the psalmists who pray these imprecations do not engage in the acts that they seek from God. There is a deep dependence in these prayers upon God to be true to His own character and fulfill the promises God's people would expect God to fulfill. The prayer is for God to act, not a call to action.

These texts in their context then, may inspire a practical theology that frees the reader to feel the depth of pain and anger inflicted by violence and injustice, pray against their instigators, and trust the coming of justice to God rather than take the work of vengeance upon themselves.

INTERPRETING AND PREACHING PSALM 137

Even while one might adopt an exegetical lens that allows the psalmist's words to stand the question still remains of how might these texts be used in worship. What place do these imprecatory laments hold in the preaching calendar? The balance of this article will look at Psalm 137 through the Covenantal lens offered above, and then offer observations for preaching this lament.

An Overview of Psalm 137

Space here does not allow for a thorough exegetical treatment of Psalm 137.[26] What follows is a sketch focusing on the psalm's historical and canonical settings, as well as the practical theology of the singer.

An Overview of Psalm 137
Historical Setting: Prayer of the Oppressed and Powerless

Psalm 137 begins with some of the most beautifully haunting imagery in the hymnbook of God's people and ends with some of the most disturbing. The psalm is a communal lament structured in three stanzas. It is unique among the psalms as it announces its specific location and time of writing: Babylon in the time of the exile. Israel has been carted off hundreds of miles from home, Jerusalem, the city of God and the seat of God's very presence. The psalm is written out of the devastation of a people who have suffered God's judgment for their idolatry and are now conquered and powerless in the mocking presence of their oppressors.

The first stanza sets out the people's predicament. Defeated, they sit by the canals of Babylon, enslaved by their conquerors who demand that they sing for them the songs of Zion. In protest the musicians have taken their harps and hung them in the trees. It's an act of protest by a powerless people. They possess no power to change their situation but they will not give their oppressors this indignity. If they sing the songs of Jerusalem it will not be in Babylon for the Babylonians.

The second stanza serves as a call to remember Jerusalem and, ultimately, to remember God. The singer boldly pledges the loss of skill as a musician if they forget Jerusalem and assimilate into the body of this foreign land. This is a witness against self. The singer will lose his very identity if he betrays this fidelity to God.

The final stanza prays the imprecation to God for justice according to the covenant that God has made with His people.

The Babylonians, with the help of Edom, had decimated Israel and ensured the debilitation of the next generation by killing the nation's children.[27] The singer has composed this song out of the deep trauma of a war in which he witnessed infanticide against God's people. In response the words are penned "…blessed shall be he who repays you what what you have done to us! Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!" (vs. 8-9, ESV). The song concludes with this curse prayed against a national enemy who had harmed the whole of God's people.

An Overview of Psalm 137
Canonical Setting: Plea for Covenant Fidelity

Reading verses 7-9 outside the context of God's covenant and law yields shock at the naked brutality of the request, especially on the present side of the Sermon on the Mount. Within covenantal context, however, interpretation shifts to the psalmist's hope. Here, as with other imprecatory psalms, the context lies in God's covenant promises for justice to be done.

"The basis on which the psalmist pleaded for such horrid retribution, though interlaced with emotion, is not the vicious fury of bloodthirsty revenge but the principle of divine justice itself,"observes Day. In the text are the marks of God's own words in His foundational covenant with Abraham, and the principles of justice codified in the law given to Moses. When the psalmist is calling out for God to "do to them what they did to us," he is calling for God to be faithful to God's covenant words, "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse," (Genesis 12:3). For the author the very character of God demands that He bring justice to the imbalance inflicted by the Babylonians. It is notable that *how* God will respond in fulfilling His covenant is only God's privilege. While the psalmist's request is within the scope of the covenant, it is God who will decide how and when justice is ultimately allotted.

An Overview of Psalm 137
Practical Theology: Surrender to God

As the psalmist's pain comes to intersection with God's covenant promises the practical outworking of his theology comes to life. His appeal out of powerlessness and oppression is for God to act. While one understandable act in the face of unimaginable tragedy such as witnessing the infanticide of one's people is to abandon all faith in a good and loving God, the singer here has instead found his way forward in God's promise for justice. This is a deliberate faith response to the theodicy question, "*Si Deus, unde malum?*" While the words themselves reflect the repulsiveness of the acts that inspired them, central is the singer's hope in this hopelessness that God would act for justice.

The psalmist and the nation are far from home and taunted by their oppressors, powerless to effect meaningful justice in a cruel land (vs. 1-3). The singer invokes a curse upon himself if he were to forget Jerusalem and by extension God (vs. 4-6). In response he prays for God to act according to His own character and fulfill His promises of judgment and justice against the enemies of His people (vs. 7-9). As a communal lament that responds to the affliction of the whole of God's people, then, the call to the people is to remember and call upon God's presence and promise even while wounded and far from home.

Preaching Psalm 137

What, then, might this psalm (and other imprecatory prayers), say to God's people in this present moment of God's story? And how might the preacher take this "song of violence *par excellence*,"[28] into the pulpit for proclamation and worship?

With its elevation of trauma, violence, oppression, and injustice, Psalm 137 comes to life now, in a moment of the story punctuated by trauma, violence, oppression, and injustice. We are living in the midst of a global pandemic that has claimed millions of lives and continues to do so. The United States is facing a reckoning over racial injustice and systemic racism that

has come to the surface after historical wrongs have been newly captured in cell phone videos of black men and women being killed, such as George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown Jr., Eric Garner, and too many others. Further in the US, this moment of the story finds forces such as white nationalism battling for political power, with factions of the church too often adopting a nationalistic aspiration alongside these forces. Acts of terrorism across the globe populate the news, school shootings continue with legislators seemingly unable to pass meaningful legislation to prevent the next one, and systemic religious genocide is ongoing against Muslims in China, Myanmar, and elsewhere.

Rooted in the deepest pain and tragedy and deliberately confronting it with God's covenant promise for justice, the singer whose harp hangs in a tree may have something to say to God's people. I'll offer four considerations for preaching Psalm 137, and psalms like it.

Preaching Psalm 137: Choose the Occasion

While the psalmist has something to say to God's people right now and these texts are appropriate for worship, it's important to choose the occasion on which we bring these words for proclamation. Important here is to respect the depth of pain suffered by the writer, refusing to trivialize his suffering by applying the words to any and every perceived hurt. It is appropriate to pray and preach for the plans of the wicked to be frustrated and justice to be leveled against them. It is not always the appropriate occasion to do so.

While I don't propose to simply list occasions in which this text is appropriate for worship like a Book of Worship does for weddings and funerals, considering the occasion of Psalm 137 as a communal lament is notable. The sin addressed was inflicted upon the whole of the nation, the injustice widely suffered. Day suggests this communal nature of Psalm 137 is distinct from Psalm 109, which serves as a curse against a personal enemy, or Psalm 58, which curses a societal enemy.[29] This particular psalm

may be most appropriately preached in response to large-scale tragedy, injustice, or violence, which crashes into us all.[30]

Wise discernment will allow the psalmist to speak into present-day pain and injustice in such a way that taps into our emotional core, and which leads us into God's presence as our highest and only hope for justice and relief.

Preaching Psalm 137: Allow the Tragic to be Tragic

It is important to allow the author to speak about the tragedy that has befallen God's people without editing or softening his language. Preach verses 1-9; refuse to stop reading at verse 3 or 6. Surveying published sermons on the psalm reveals a large number that never attempt to make it to the end. This may be uncomfortable for the preacher, but it is faithful to the author and preaching isn't a comfortable calling.

Allowing the author to speak through the sermon out of raw pain and suffering has a number of effects. It respects the text as the account of a very real event, a moment in time that actually happened as opposed to objectifying the text as a container from which to squeeze a disembodied meaning. The psalmist's moment is an event in time and giving the author a voice remembers and mourns his tragedy. It is in the pain of his moment that the singer is pressed closer to God's character and presence and it is often in our own moments of deepest pain that we find a deeper hope in Christ.

In this sense especially, we must refuse to ignore or dilute these texts, or to ignore or diminish the experience of violence, oppression, and pain today. If we cannot in church talk about the experience of God's people with infanticide, the very raw and real anger and hatred they felt toward the murderers, and the very nature of God which guarantees justice, we cannot hope to address the experience of our people with rape, racially motivated violence, the murder of innocents in an elementary or high school, or any number of radically tragic events.

On the other side, the preacher cannot use the language of shock for shock's sake which, again, would trivialize the author

and his words. Instead, she or he would embody a pathos and empathy that reflects honestly the tragedies of both God's people then, and God's people now.

Preaching Psalm 137: Consider the Oppressed and The Oppressor

Psalm 137 has at its core the relationship between the oppressed, the oppressor, and the God of covenant and justice who stands between them. God speaks both to the oppressed and the oppressor in this song. When reading and preaching this text, the psalmist's revelation of the perspectives of the oppressed and oppressor invites reflection on how we engage with one another today.

The psalmist, by virtue of his experience, is the oppressed. He is powerless to effect any real change or justice, and has been at the mercy of oppressors who have shown no mercy. The oppressors in the song simply mock the oppressed and take delight as those who witness but who never must experience that pain because of the power that they wield. Seeing this dynamic is an invitation to consider the experience of the oppressed and powerless, and to consider whether and in what ways we occupy roles as oppressors and power wielders.

Much of the preaching on Psalm 137 that gives voice to the final verses originates in communities that have most suffered oppression. Hulisani Ramantswana reads Psalm 137 alongside South Africa's "Struggle Songs" against apartheid. He presses against interpretations that minimize the experience of the psalmist as ignoring "colonial dynamics involved in the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor, the colonizer and the colonized, which continually pushes the oppressed into the zone of non-being."[31] Nehrbass insists that the question of whether the imprecatory psalms can be voiced in worship today can be most appropriately answered by the victims of violence. He surveys Latin American liberation theologies which see in Psalm 137 an eschatological hope for deliverance and align with the psalmist's cry for the righting of wrongs. The words of the psalm were taken up by Frederick

Douglas in 1852 in his sermon "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?," decrying slavery and calling for justice.[32]

Examining the pain and perspective, the cry and the hope, of the psalmist opens the oppressed to hope in a God who swears by Himself to bring justice. Truly listening to the psalmist can also reveal that pain to those who can not readily see it. For those in a position of privilege the cry of the oppressed may go unnoticed because they simply do not have to encounter the same struggles or injustices. Privilege unexamined can perpetuate oppression creating more oppressors. An example of this dynamic was expressed recently by faith and political commentator David French. Discussing the rising murder rate in the United States French noted the cultural divide that makes it difficult for a meaningful conversation about justice to occur at a political level:

> …if people of faith are to be concerned about justice (and they are!), then justice is rarely more immediate and important than when confronting both the scourge of crime and the tragedy of excess enforcement and mass incarceration. Compounding the challenge [for justice], the class of Americans most engaged in politics (disproportionately white, educated, and well-off) are often the least impacted by crime. They're less likely to feel either the effects of crime or the effects of stepped-up law enforcement. Thus we often find ourselves talking *about* communities rather than *with* communities and making mistakes accordingly.[33]

The words of the psalmist invite us to consider ourselves and our own place in God's story. For those who have suffered generational, communal oppression, leading to present suffering and anger, the psalmist invites them to cry out to God who has promised justice. For others, the psalmist invites them to consider whether they are involved in creating or perpetuating events or systems that cause pain, to consider God's disposition towards injustice, and turn towards working with God in the

direction of justice. As discomforting as it may be, the psalm asks us to consider where we, our churches, our communities stand in relation to the oppressed and the oppressor.

Preaching Psalm 137: Preach from this Side of the Cross

The psalmist looked out of his pain back to God's words to Abraham and to His people through Moses. In our moment of the same story we look back upon Christ's cross as the reference point for our understanding of God's covenant with us, our experience of suffering, and the promise of full justice and recompense at the eschaton. The cross does not change the meaning of the psalmist's words, as some interpreters might insist. But, it does influence our experience of those words as they intersect with God's people today.

Christ is the mediator of a new covenant in which His people are invited into relationship with God through the forgiveness of sin, atoned for in Christ's death and resurrection. At the cross we come into the presence of a suffering God who has entered into the pain and injustice of His people, both feeling and bearing the weight of humanity's sin. The cross reveals that God knows the pain of the psalmist who has witnessed the infanticide of His people, He has entered the pain of the victim of rape and violence. God suffers with communities experiencing racial bigotry and economic injustice. The psalmist was sure of God's presence in exile. At the cross we can be sure of His presence in suffering right now.[34]

Simultaneously, the resurrection gives us hope that the life, justice, righteousness, and equality that we seek are right now coming as God's Kingdom overcomes the world from Christ's cross until His return. We see new creation prolepticly present in the resurrected Christ. God's people in this moment of His story are invited to bring their suffering to the crucified God and there be given assurance that the world will be put to rights, hope for life, for righteousness, for renewal. The psalmist was able to count on God to be the one to act. On our side of the cross we see that God has acted, and promised to continue to act. In

response to suffering we preach Christ crucified and the hope of resurrection.

Psalm 137 can lead us to this hope, and so we preach the lament and terrible beauty of the psalm by aligning with the author's pain and anger within the context of God's indelible covenant faithfulness.

NOTES

1. Nehrbass lists: 5, 6, 7, 10, 17, 25, 28, 31, 35, 40, 54, 55, 56, 58, 59, 68, 69, 70, 71, 74, 79, 83, 94, 109, 119, 129, 137, 139, 140, 143. He notes that this listing is somewhat subjective, yet each of the psalms listed display some measure of imprecation. Daniel Michael Nehrbass, *Praying Curses: The Therapeutic and Preaching Value of the Imprecatory Psalms* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013), 122.
2. Psalty, for those unfamiliar, is a blue anthropomorphic book, existing in both animated and live action incarnations, that has been teaching children the Bible in church children's programs for 35 years. See, www.psalty.com.
3. Erich Zenger, *A God of Vengeance? Understanding the Psalms of Divine Wrath* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 1-23.
4. Nehrbass, *Praying Curses*, 1.
5. Zenger, *A God of Vengeance*, 13. Zenger argues that violence and revenge are not sub-motifs but part and parcel of the whole of the book of Psalms.
6. Ibid., 13.
7. Ibid., 14. John Day describes the accusation more simply: the imprecatory laments express "a morality consonant with the Old Covenant but inconsistent with the New." John N. Day, "The Imprecatory Psalms and Christian Ethics," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159 (April-June 2002), 166.
8. Nehrbass, *Praying Curses*, chapter 2.
9. Christopher B. Hays, "How Shall We Sing? Psalm 137 in Historical and Canonical Context," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 27 (January 2005), 36.
10. Bernard Anderson, *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 70.

11. Zenger, *A God of Vengeance*, 26.
12. Hays, "How Shall We Sing?," 122.
13. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Hard Sayings of the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 175.
14. Anderson, *Out of The Depths*, 70.
15. Nehrbass' survey of literature at this point is thorough and impressive. See, *Praying Curses*, chapter 2.
16. For instance, Anderson's observations about the imprecatory laments highlight the care with which they must be handled. Kaiser helps us to rightly see Christ as a part of the horizon of interpretation.
17. Hays, "How Shall We Sing?" 36.
18. The Modern myth of progress is discussed thoroughly in J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995).
19. Nehrbass, *Praying Curses,* 29.
20. Hays, "How Shall We Sing," 37.
21. See David Augsberger's Introduction to Nehrbass, *Praying* Curses, ix. Beyond the Psalms, Matthew Rogers has highlighted in a sermon addressing the events of September 11, 2001 a letter written to the *Chicago Tribune* in which the author used another piece of scripture as a rallying cry for violence. The letter stated, "It's time for revenge, not justice. Terrorists do not deserve the justice of a civilized society. An eye for an eye might be appropriate. Better yet, let's make it two eyes for an eye." This makes the judicial principle a call to violent action, unintended by the lex talionis. Matthew Rogers, *God's Message to a Nation Under Attack*. https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/god-s-message-to-a-nation-under-attack-matthew-rogers-sermon-on-god-in-the-hardships-41691?page=1&wc=800. Accessed September 1, 2021.
22. Nehrbass, *Praying Curses,* 43-49.
23. Day, "Imprecatory Psalms," 168.
24. Nehrbass, *Praying Curses*, 44.
25. Day's treatment of these texts is insightful. "Imprecatory Psalms," 183-185.

26. There are several significant exegetical treatments of Psalm 137. See especially Daniel Simango, "A Comprehensive Reading of Psalm 137," *Old Testament Essays* 31:1 (2018): 217-242; Hulisani Ramantswana, "Song(s) of Struggle: A Decolonial Reading of Psalm 137 in Light of South Africa's Struggle Songs," *Old Testament Essays*, 32:2 (2019): 464-490; David Stowe, *Song of Exile: The Enduring Mystery of Psalm 137,* (Oxford: Oxford, 2016), as well as the many commentaries on the Psalms such as James L. Mays, *Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994).
27. There is nothing to suggest that the singer's words are hyperbole. The imagery is not foreign to the Bible. 1 Kings records the act in 8:12 and 15:16. Hosea speaks of the act in judgment against Israel (13:15). Isaiah speaks this punishment against Babylon (13:16). Day notes that "siege warfare in the Ancient Near East; was frighteningly cruel; and the most brutal and all-too-common practice of conquerors was the dashing of infants against rocks in the fury and totality of war's carnage," "Imprecatory Psalms," 173-174.
28. Zenger, *God of Vengeance*, 47.
29. Day, "Imprecatory Psalms," 175.
30. I have preached this text on one occasion in an effort to make sense of the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, and on another in response to terror attacks in France in 2015. The second sermon is reprinted in my book, *Preaching Through Time: Anachronism as a Way Forward for Preaching* (Eugene: Cascade, 2017).
31. Hulisani Ramantswana, "Song(s) of Struggle," 464.
32. Accessible at:
https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/what-to-the-slave-is-the-fourth-of-july/
33. David French, "The Mistakes We Cannot Make Again," https://frenchpress.thedispatch.com/p/the-mistakes-we-cannot-make-again, September 26, 2021.
34. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

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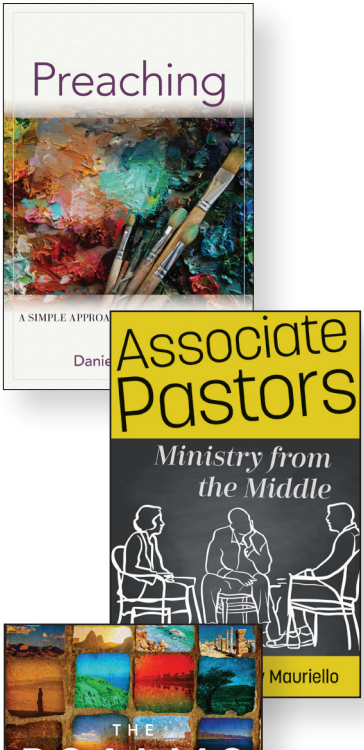

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BOOK REVIEWS

GREGORY K. HOLLIFIELD
Book Review Editor
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The God of the Dangerous Sermon. By Frank A. Thomas. Nashville: Abingdon, 2021. 978-1-7910-2022-4, 158 pp., $19.99.

Reviewer: *Lawrence E. Aker III, George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Waco, TX.*

In *The God of the Dangerous Sermon*, Frank Thomas completes his trilogy begun in his 2018 book *How to Preach a Dangerous Sermon* and continued through his 2020 work *Surviving a Dangerous Sermon*. Thomas's focus throughout is on equipping preachers to use theological/rhetorical skills to confront controversial issues of the day. He defines the term theological/rhetorical as "a lived and experienced-based theology, a liberation theology, seeking expressions of faith outside the normative construct of theology as historically delineated by the theological academy" (4). Because such action is outside of the "normative construct," he maintains that preachers are emboldened to speak truth to power.

The book is divided into three sections—"Homiletical Theory: Conversation Partners with Rhetorical Theory," "Close Readings of a Universal and Tribal God," and "The God of a Dangerous Sermon." Section one is similarly divided into three chapters. In chapter one, Thomas responds to a critique by Cleophus LaRue. LaRue argues in *Re-thinking Celebration: From Rhetoric to Praise in African American Preaching*, "[C]elebration as defined by [Henry] Mitchell and Thomas is a quasi-theological concept based in the misplaced importance attached to evocative rhetoric" (24). Thomas concurs with LaRue by "calling for a

return to theological substance and interpretation" in preaching (34).

In chapter two on "Black Sacred Rhetoric," Thomas claims that a partnership was "forged between theology and rhetoric in the deepest bowels of the African American preaching tradition" (35). He uses the works of William Pipes, Isaac Clark, James Cone, and womanist preaching to make his point.

In chapter three, "Why Have Some So Much and Others So Little?" the author explores the "enduring inequalities of race" (63). Using Reinhold Niebur's thoughts on Christian realism to buttress his chapter, Thomas suggests that "God's revelation transvalues human values and turns them upside down by a death on the cross" (71).

Section two consists of two chapters. In the first, "Abraham Lincoln's Moral Imagination: Slavery, Race, and Religion in the Second Inaugural Address," Thomas offers a rhetorical analysis of Lincoln's speech. Moral imagination is explored here, along with African American responses to Lincoln's address. One these men, Frederick Douglass, is quoted as saying "too much forgiveness led to too much acceptance" (97). Thomas argues, "The result of too much acceptance by the North without any punishment for the South would be enslavement and re-enslavement for Black forced captives by different means" (97). The actions of John Wilkes Booth in assassinating Lincoln are explored here as well. Thomas claims, "The loss of Lincoln's moral imagination is a tragedy from which our nation has never fully recovered" (101).

In chapter five, "White Christian Nationalism, Whiteness, and the Rhetorical Construction of Tribal Gods," Thomas critiques the Trump presidency and the inhumane death of George Floyd. Seeking to distinguish between civil religion and Christian nationalism, Thomas states, "Ironically, Christian nationalism is focused on preserving a perceived Christian identity for America irrespective of the means by which such a project would be achieved" (114). The chapter concludes with Thomas's assessment of what he terms Trump's "performance of whiteness" at St. John's Church in 2020 (115). He argues, "Trump

is rhetorically constructing a tribal god and asking the audience to serve his god" (126).

The book's final section "lays out critical points of the theological side of rhetorical theology" (129). Here Thomas pulls together key thoughts from throughout his work.

The God of the Dangerous Sermon is important to homiletical scholarship in that it provides key insights on the reasons for societal divides. The preacher who judiciously applies Thomas's wisdom will be better equipped to communicate hard truths in love.

How Women Transform Preaching. By Leonora Tubbs Tisdale. Nashville: Abingdon, 2021. 978-1-7910-1336-3, 93 pp., $29.99.

Reviewer: *Caroline Smith, George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Waco, TX.*

Leonora Tubbs Tisdale's work *How Women Transform Preaching* was developed out of her 2019 Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale Divinity School. She explains that she wanted to consider the realities of preaching for clergywomen in the United States, identifying their challenges and victories. She also wanted to explore the impact that women have had and continue to have in the field of preaching, both as scholars and pastors.

The three chapters of her book coincide with her three lectures. First, Tisdale provides a sixty-year retrospective of clergywomen in America. She looks at four previous studies that surveyed the field with varying degrees of depth and purpose. The thirty-year-old research published in *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling* was "the most extensive survey of clergywomen from predominately white denominations ever undertaken" (1). The study revealed many of the challenges women were facing in the profession. At about the same time, a similar study was done among African American clergywomen and was published in *A Time for Honor: A Portrait of African American Clergywomen*.

This study revealed a picture of clergywomen persevering in their calling despite significant pay differences, family challenges, and a lack of denominational support. Eileen Campbell-Reed's "State of the Clergywomen in the U.S.: A Statistical Update October 2018" provides a broad range of statistics concerning clergywomen across denominations across the nation. The last study considered by Tisdale is one published by two political scientists. *She Preached the Word: Women's Ordination in Modern America* provides further statistics across denominations revealing growth in some traditions but not in others. Tisdale completes this chapter with stories obtained in personal interviews. These stories paint a collage of clergywomen who have persevered and helped blaze the trail for women who have followed in their footsteps.

In the next chapter, Tisdale looks at the scholarly reclamation of the history of clergywomen, what she calls "herstories" (24). Her review includes an early Quaker study, an Evangelical study, an African American work, and early European scholarship. From these she identifies three patterns as to when women have been allowed and even encouraged to preach. All three are noted as periods of transition. The first is a period of ecclesial and theological transition before movements had the chance to become institutionalized. Then, as "movements became institutionalized, the more the preaching of women was silenced and their preaching herstory eliminated from church records" (35). The second is a period of political and geo-political transitions. This type of transition is seen in the American colonies and in the experience of missionaries. The third transitional period that has opened doors for women to preach is personal transitions in the women's lives. These women were empowered to preach despite difficult circumstances and persecution because of "their deep-seated belief that they had been called by God to do so" (37). They often preached in unconventional ways, but these women would not deny their calling.

In her final chapter, Tisdale considers how preaching has been transformed because of the women who have answered

God's call on their lives. She makes ten claims on how the presence of clergywomen have made an impact on the way the gospel is heard and understood. The list includes expanding the number of role models that children, especially girls, can look up to and broaden "their understanding of who can speak for God" (51).

This book is a must read for anyone in denominational or educational leadership. Tisdale's tiny volume is full of firsthand experiences that many women have faced in the church. The women whom she interviews share their stories of perseverance and strength, stories of the roadblocks placed in their way to keep them from being obedient to God. These are women who were told that their voices were not the right pitch or women who shared about the liberties people in the congregation took by touching them while they were pregnant in ways they would never have touched their male preachers. The book is a must read because it is the story of every clergywoman. It is my story. We can read these stories and honor these women. We must prepare the women that we lead and teach for what they can expect, and we must learn from scholars like Tisdale in order that we can better recognize their calling.

The Bible Expositor's Handbook: Old and New Testament. By Greg Harris. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020. 978-1-4336-4302-6, 644 pp., $49.99.

Reviewer: *Drew Tillman, Potomac Heights Baptist Church, MD.*

Few resources are as thorough as *The Bible Expositor's Handbook*. In addition to the author's own insights, Greg Harris combines several of his sermons, journal articles, and content from previous books to establish biblical boundaries for expositing God's word. Throughout the book, Harris covers a variety of difficult passages, debated topics, and provides a summary and question section at the end of each chapter.

The book's goal is to "establish some biblical boundaries based upon several divine, and immovable, truths for understanding and expositing God's Word" (4). Three decades of experience serving in churches and theological education—including serving as department chair and professor of Bible exposition at The Master's Seminary for over a decade—combined with an evident love for Christ and Scripture, provide Harris with a tested perspective for writing a book on exposition. A summary of the Bible for Harris is "The Glory of God Changes Everything" (291). His is a refreshing handbook calling its readers back to the foundational truths of Scripture to help pastors better exposit this truth and others.

While the length of this book may cause some to hesitate, three observations may encourage the reader. First, the book contains lengthy biblical references from start to finish. These long quotes from the Scriptures can seem devotional. Harris uses these references because he believes "too often, the more students progress in theological training, the less they use their Bibles" (3-4). Additionally, Harris focuses "primarily on the content part and secondarily on the methodology undergirding that content" (8). For Harris, "A major part of 'preaching the Word' is to drop down into the world of whatever chapter we are in, as much as possible, to see with the character's eyes and hear with their ears" (122). Harris's consistency with this goal is evident in his use of lengthy biblical references throughout the book.

Second, Harris quotes at length from his other books. For example, at one point, Harris includes over twenty pages from *The Darkness and the Glory* (342-365). Third, his Old and New Testament handbooks were previously published separately but are now available in one volume. Therefore, this book combines many resources and provides the reader with more than a single monograph often contains. Readers can appreciate Harris's commitment to the truths of Scripture, his thoroughness in covering a variety of passages, and his care in dealing with difficult issues.

This volume can serve as a good biblical introduction for new students or young pastors, though Harris does not cover much new ground. He does not nuance several of his remarks, opting to footnote his works instead of other sources. Furthermore, he never cites anyone specific when he criticizes a different position. Therefore, many comments are generalized, and the reader is not assisted in thinking more deeply about the topic. Including the broader context for some of his claims would help provide clarity because anyone unfamiliar with current conversations about preaching may struggle to discern between Harris's personal view and an explicit biblical boundary.

A few examples of Harris's personal views and presuppositions guiding this book include: a narrow definition of Christ-centered hermeneutics (20), a rejection of biblical covenants before Noah based on a "normative literal-grammatical hermeneutic" (27-31), and use of a literal-grammatical hermeneutic, so nothing needs "to be pounded into an interpretation" (31), allegorized (35), or spiritualized (97). Harris often mentions this conviction when he dismisses opposing views. He also rejects replacement theology (141-145) and affirms a literal rapture after which only the lost will enter the tribulation (547).

Any reader looking for principles for establishing biblical boundaries on their own or a manual for preaching an expository sermon in its context will be disappointed. This book does not offer a step-by-step method; instead, it is a book on how Harris has dealt with various passages and topics. If readers are curious about Harris's view, this book will be a helpful and thorough resource. However, readers should not purchase this book with the expectation of reading a comprehensive handbook interacting with new challenges and current scholarship on preaching.

The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative, 2nd ed. By Steven D. Mathewson. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021. 978-1-5409-6202-7, 242 pp., $30.00.

Reviewer: *Will Wilson, First Presbyterian Church, Kilgore, TX.*

Steven D. Mathewson's *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* constitutes his attempt to help preachers get their "hermeneutical and homiletical acts together" concerning Old Testament stories (xviii). This second edition includes additions to and subtractions from the first. Mathewson adds a chapter titled "The Christ-Centered Preaching Debate," wherein he offers a fair summary of the theocentric and christocentric viewpoints, makes the wise claim that the two views ought not to be mutually exclusive, and argues effectively for a mediating position that he terms the christotelic approach (23). This edition only includes one sample manuscript in the appendix, contrasting to five in the first.

Overall, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* is a strong book for several reasons. First, Mathewson's love of both Old Testament narrative and the practice of preaching is manifest in the book's well-balanced organization. He devotes around the same number of pages to both the hermeneutical and exegetical issues in interpreting Old Testament narrative texts and the steps involved in preaching those texts. Secondly, Mathewson does not oversimplify the complexity of exegesis. Still, he offers the reader a simple way to remember which roads to travel in the interpretive process by utilizing the acronym ACTS (Action, Character, Telling, Setting). Thirdly, Mathewson does not just tell the preacher how to preach an Old Testament narrative but shows how to do so by including a sample sermon on Judges 17-18 in the appendix. Furthermore, the appendix also has two other helpful sections on using Hebrew in exegeting Old Testament

narratives and a section on commentaries that, in his opinion, are the best for use in interpretation.

As the title makes clear, not only does *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* offer wisdom for preaching *Old Testament narrative,* but also on *the art of preaching.* However, the section on preaching would benefit by keeping the focus on integrating interpreting the Old Testament and preaching. At times Mathewson's counsel on preaching had little or nothing to do with preaching *the Old Testament.* For example, several pages in the last chapter are devoted to preaching without a manuscript. While Mathewson's wisdom on how to preach without notes is valuable, it is tangential to his overall purpose of providing the preacher with the hermeneutical and exegetical tools for preaching Old Testament narratives.

Mathewson states in the preface that he wrote this text for pastors and teachers who preach weekly (xviii). It certainly will benefit any preacher who wants to probe the depths of Old Testament narratives for the edification of themselves and their congregation.

The Ministry of Women in the New Testament. By Dorothy A. Lee. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021. 978-1-5409-6308-6, 240 pp., $24.99.

Reviewer: *Bearett Wolverton, Grace Covenant Church, So. San Francisco, CA.*

Prominent Australian theologian and Anglican priest, Dorothy Lee has composed a comprehensive study of the ministerial work and leadership of women in the world of the New Testament church. Women have long been sidelined and relegated from leadership in many segments of the Christian church. *The Ministry of Women in the New Testament* pieces together elements from Scripture, church history, and theological tradition to make

a case for the ordination of women in our current church contexts.

Lee opens her book by exploring the roles that women play in the Gospels. Much is recorded there about Jesus' openness to women, which was counter-cultural to his first-century society. Another two chapters focus solely on Luke's writings. The women portrayed in his Gospel and those who appear in his book of Acts feature in Lee's observations regarding church leadership and ministry.

After a careful review of the Gospels, Lee turns her attention to Paul's writings. Historically, the Apostle Paul has been made out to be the misogynist of the New Testament and the leading voice of keeping women voiceless in the church. Lee shows that these assertations are not viable and that quite the opposite is true. She gives evidence through careful exegesis that Paul's views of women in ministry are actually consistent with Jesus' interactions with women in the Gospels. The remainder of the New Testament canon is also considered, as well as the historical and theological contexts of the early church.

Homileticians should particularly find this volume helpful as they seek to promote the pulpit ministries of the many capable female preachers among us. Lee's book serves as a renewed reminder to egalitarians and a competent challenge to complementarians that women should have a place in all aspects of ministry. *The Ministry of Women in the New Testament* should be carefully considered by all. As a male egalitarian myself, I find Lee's book to be a valuable resource as I continue to be an ally with my female colleagues who strive to serve the church in the pulpit and in all the roles of pastoral ministry.

Preacher Girl: Uldine Utley and the Industry of Revival. By Thomas A. Robinson. Waco, TX: Baylor, 2016. 978-1-4813-0395-8, 320 pp., $59.99 (hardback).

Review: *Heather Joy Zimmerman, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL.*

In *Preacher Girl: Uldine Utley and the Industry of Revival,* Thomas A. Robinson respectfully recounts the rise and fall of a forgotten revivalist childhood preacher through a careful examination of primary source materials and provocative analysis of her life and ministry. The book begins by presenting Utley as an embodiment of the King David archetype—an underdog slaying the giants of modernism and the devil himself.

In chapter one, Robinson summarizes her rise to prominence, what Utley herself would call her journey "from dugout to pulpit." From her humble Oklahoma roots to Hollywood, Robinson particularly highlights her family heritage as well as the cultural influences that developed the phenomenon of a child star.

Chapter two provides a brief overview of her life from her "call" at age eleven to her first collapse at age twenty-four. Utley's conversion and call to ministry began under the influence of Pentecostal leader Aimee McPherson's summer school. After gaining a platform throughout the West Coast, Utley moved eastward toward Kansas City and eventually New York City. Her time in New York City was marked by the mentorship and advocacy of Baptist fundamentalist pastor John Roach Straton. Utley ultimately landed in the "Sin City" of Chicago in 1930, where she became one of the early women ordained in the Methodist church.

The remaining chapters explore the trajectory of her life through several different lenses. Chapter three explores how Utley, like other revivalists of her times, had to navigate promoting Jesus and promoting her own platform to proclaim her message about Jesus. Chapter four studies Utley's personal religious journey, from West Coast Pentecostalism to East Coast Fundamentalism to Midwest Methodism. Yet, Robinson identifies how Utley's Pentecostal roots persisted throughout her denominational transitions. Chapter five compares Utley's revivalism with other revivalists of her time. Although she was described as "emotional" and "spirited," Robinson insists that a careful examination of descriptions of Utley depict her as more

measured and reserved than her contemporary revivalists like Billy Sunday. Chapter six respectfully retells Utley's collapse into mental illness, particularly through her poetry. Her line "kindly remove my halo" provides the heavy halo motif throughout the book. The conclusion thoughtfully engages the implications of her story while resisting exploitative or sentimental principles.

Robinson's endeavor to recount Utley's rise and descent from religious prominence leaves little for substantive criticism. My main criticism may simply be a stylistic preference. At times, rhetorical questions were used almost pedantically for transitions. Aside from this writing style quirk, some may find this book historically helpful yet homiletically wanting. Robinson separates the "style" of Utley's preaching from her "substance," claiming "elements of style evaporate into the air unless the performance is captured by some video or audio recorder" (151). Those who study sermons from John Chrysostom to John Edwards may be disappointed with Robinson's governing assumptions. Although he observes a few characteristics of Utley's preaching (priority of Scripture, use of hymns, presenting a salvation message, reviving the saints, and emphasizing the second coming of Jesus), Robinson's book leaves room for a further examination of Utley's homiletic.

Still, *Preacher Girl* warrants high commendation by historians and homileticians. Robinson's greatest contribution is respectfully studying Utley's life in its own terms. He resists the assumptions of other scholars who project the "child star" stereotype on Utley without seriously considering her ministry in her twenties. Robinson rightly compares her career with not only childhood movie stars but also with adult revivalists of her time. For example, he observes that the declining numbers at her rallies in the 1930s matched similar declines with other notable revivalists of the era. Further, Robinson takes great care to resist exploitative sensationalism in recounting Utley's tragic decline into debilitating catatonic schizophrenia. He confronts stigmas of mental illness not only in Utley's time but even how they persist

today in our own ministries as well as in exploitative retellings of history.

Further, Robinson assesses Utley's life and ministry through a variety of themes relevant to homileticians today. He examines denominational intersectionality and discusses the revivalists' need to platform self in order to platform the gospel. Robinson purports that Utley's story should be carefully considered in three present-day conversations: the role of children in religion, the workload expectations of religious workers, and a still-persistent stigma of mental illness.

Thus, *Preacher Girl* provides substance for provocative discussions relating to homiletics. As colleges and seminaries increasingly offer accelerated M.Divs. to twenty-four-year-old graduates, homiletics professors should carefully consider Robinson's account of Uldine Utley–how might we perpetuate a culture that platforms young ministers too early and liturgizes them into a frenzied ministry pace that leads to quick burnout or worse?

Preaching Second Corinthians. By James W. Thompson. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2021. 978-1-7252-5834-1, 114 pp., $17.00.

Reviewer: *Meghan Bishop, Moody Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL.*

Preaching Second Corinthians is the inaugural title in the new preaching series *Proclamation: Preaching the New Testament*, edited by James W. Thompson and Jason Myers. In this first work, Thompson stirs anticipation for the volumes to come with this compact yet comprehensive teaching and preaching guide to Second Corinthians.

Though only one-hundred fourteen pages long, Thompson manages to craft a dynamic combination of key insights and homiletical suggestions in this compact resource. The introduction offers a condensed overview on Second Corinthians including relevant background details, rhetorical

analysis, exegetical issues, and major themes. Thompson warns his readers against the preacherly temptation to pluck out rhetorically powerful verses without proper appreciation for the complexity of the text. He is not willing to dodge some of the major scholarly debates, even within the limited parameters of his book. For instance, Thompson argues for a chronological reading of the epistle despite popular scholarly opinion that tries to address textual problems by reconstructing the letter's sequence. Nevertheless, he is careful to limit technical discussions so as to prioritize his main objective here—that is, to offer an approachable guide for the sake of preaching.

The remaining chapters follow a consistent three-part structure. For each discourse unit, Thompson begins with a section on key insights including Paul's rhetorical strategy, main arguments, cultural details, and linguistic analysis. The second and third sections are where this book stands apart from other more traditional commentaries. The second section is devoted to reflections for preaching and teaching. Here Thompson offers a suggested hermeneutical orientation for the passage along with options for shaping the sermon, keeping strategies like tension management in mind. Thompson is helpful in providing tangible sermonic ideas as well as pitfalls to beware, particularly regarding the notoriously challenging texts to preach, like Paul's autobiographical sections. Thompson is sensitive to give the preacher the agility to cater to the needs of his or her congregation while remaining within the bounds of faithfulness to the text.

Concluding each chapter is a third section containing excerpts from a sample sermon including illustrations and applications. Thompson takes his own homiletical guidance and puts it to work. This section is bound to stimulate fresh vision and creativity for the preacher taking on Second Corinthians. The author's demonstration of how to cross the bridge from exegesis to sermon makes this book a helpful guide for any preacher, whether novice or seasoned.

Though this resource should not replace other necessary exegetical commentaries and technical sources, *Preaching Second*

Corinthians is a must-have for the preacher's library. Perhaps the only area for criticism is the bibliography. Though admittedly a short text and not the type of book for technical footnotes, nearly all of Thompson's resources are more than twenty years old. A list of current scholarship on Second Corinthians would serve the reader well. Nevertheless, Thompson's work should stay close at hand for any student of Second Corinthians, and especially for the purpose of sermon preparation.

Unspeakable: Preaching and Trauma-Informed Theology. By Sarah Travis. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2021. 978-1-7252-6797-8, 121 pp., $19.00.

Reviewer: *Joshua Peeler, Mount Olive Baptist Church, Pittsboro, NC*.

Sarah Travis uses her own personal experiences with suffering and pastoring those who have suffered as a backdrop to discuss the theological implications of preaching and trauma. Travis clearly articulates a problem that most, if not every pastor encounters in ministry—"beautiful words are not enough to atone for the effects of trauma" (3). In this work, she advocates a trauma-informed preaching model that adequately prepares pastors to preach sermons in light of "the trauma that is experience[d] by listeners, avoid[ing] retraumatizing, [while] participat[ing] in a healing discourse" (7). Ultimately, her work seeks to answer the question "What is a credible expression of the gospel for those who have experienced an absence of grace, especially when the imagination may be incapacitated, and language loosed from its moorings?" (7) In this book, Travis defines and introduces trauma, explores the theological implications of trauma for preaching, develops a working definition of trauma-informed preaching, considers the role of imagination in preaching, and brings contemporary biblical studies scholarship into her discussion.

Writing as a postcolonial theologian, Travis argues that trauma should be defined widely to communities, individuals, and families, rather than narrowly just to the individual. While initial uncertainty regarding the parameters of her definition of trauma abound in the early pages of this work, Travis does a remarkable job later articulating her views. She explains that her view of trauma includes the suffering experienced by individuals, those related to the individuals, and is experienced to a lesser degree by the rest of the world through the news and social media. While most evangelical theologians may not agree with all the implications of her widened definition of trauma, in particular her emphasis on trauma created by colonialism, they should at least consider the effects of secondary trauma experienced by family members or trauma communicated through the media. Racial violence, political upheaval, and COVID-19 are practical examples that pastors have experienced in recent years which support her definition.

Travis succinctly argues in chapter two that pastors should testify to the power of the resurrection, while simultaneously remembering that members of their audience are actively suffering (49-54). She expands this concept in chapter three calling pastors "witnesses" to the trauma around them, arguing that they occupy a "middle space" between life and death. Holding the narratives of trauma and grace together simultaneously embraces the wounds of traumatized people, while offering them healing words from the pulpit. "While preaching must find a word to speak, in the end, it is not our words no matter how beautiful that will promote healing from trauma. It is the word of God acting in and through history in ways that we cannot always see or name" (76).

Moving beyond the metaphor of the witness, Travis argues that preachers also act as a midwife. In chapter four she writes that preachers must help victims of trauma imagine a future where hope, resilience, and recovery create healing. Travis contends that the church should be a "safe place" where people are encouraged to find healing (88-98). Evangelical scholars will certainly find issues with her use of language and "trauma-

sensitive hermeneutics." Her use of "Bibliodrama" in particular could be especially troubling to some evangelical readers.

Despite these areas of possible disagreement, this work should be read. The practical considerations for preaching to people who have experienced trauma alone make this a worthwhile read. Throughout this work, the author reminds pastors that trauma is often found in many forms, across all ages, and backgrounds in our congregations today.

Travis's early self-disclosure regarding the death of her infant son provides much needed depth and heartful compassion to her analysis. These components underscore her desire to bridge the gap between trauma and preaching. By including her experiences in pastoral counseling with refugees, as well as victims of abuse, Travis creates an atmosphere of empathy that pairs well with the more academic sections of her work. Even if one does not agree with every aspect of her approach, it is a valuable endeavor, worthy of further study and consideration.

Her Preaching Body: Conversations About Identity, Agency, and Embodiment Among Contemporary Female Preachers. By Amy P. McCullough. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018. 978-1-4982-9163-7, 178 pp., $24.00.

Reviewer: *Nathan Wright, Ordinand, Anglican Diocese of Christ Our Hope (ACNA).*

"How might gender inform and form the preacher's capacities for embodiment?" (3) Amy McCullough writes that there is a good deal indeed to be learned from the female body's experience of preaching, and implies that insights so garnered grant a unique, generative view into the essence of what Christian preaching is. McCullough writes that women who preach pay a lot of attention to their own bodies (7). This is because the standard preaching "body" for the majority of church history has been a man's body (3), and so the female body

of the woman preaching necessitates navigating ecclesiastical and social challenges in a perpetual manner. Further, its ability to bear children inflects her self-awareness, identity, and function as a preacher in a wide variety of ways (116-38) as childbearing gives opportunity for "deeper embodied knowledge" (138). This reviewer notes particularly this work's proximity to Alla Bozarth-Campbell's 1979 work exploring embodiment, *The Word's Body*. While Bozarth-Campbell also brings phenomenological analyses into conversation with Christian theological concepts, McCullough's aim is more practical as she draws the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (7-8) into conversation with anecdotes from four female preachers regarding their own decisions and experiences as they preach. In the author's own words, "We preach in and through, with and as bodies, and thus every aspect of what we think about our bodies, every decision we ponder about our bodies, and every way we bring our bodies into the preaching space is bound up with the essence to be uncovered about preaching, even if that essence only can be partially uncovered" (10).

This reviewer welcomes this work for several reasons, not least of which is that this reviewer finds himself with a body, and has likewise found his preaching students to have bodies—both male and female among them. The choice to understand and discuss the act of Christian preaching in relation to the body of the preacher, and moreover the body of the female preacher, is one which may seem inherently progressive to some members of this academic society. (This reviewer has no desire to relitigate here the excruciating contortion of Pauline minutia quoted by both sides of the "does the Bible say women can preach?" conversation.) Regardless of where one sees oneself in that conversation, it seems unwise to shy away from such a practical and philosophically engaged discussion of the many issues that women must consider, or at least are led to consider, when they stand before a body of believers to unfold Scripture. The asking of such questions reveals a particular respect for preaching and a connected willingness to examine deeply our practices of preaching as acts that inherently involve more than the

conveyance and receipt of divinely inspired ideas, information, and theology. There is an honesty spoken to us by these women: we humans have bodies, and inasmuch as those bodies themselves become the preaching when we preach, we are obligated to examine and consecrate them to the task.

Galatians. From *Commentaries for Christian Formation*. By N. T. Wright. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021. 978-0-8028-2560-5, 419 pp., $39.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: *Todd H. Hilkemann, George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Waco, TX.*

Prolific author N.T. Wright offers the first volume in the newly established *Commentaries for Christian Formation* (CCF). The CCF aim to promote "faith formation" by "showing how sound theological exegesis can underwrite preaching and teaching" (xi). With lucid prose written for both layperson and preacher, Wright aims to nurture the seeds of Christian maturity through this commentary on Galatians.

Drawing upon his substantial background with a "fresh perspective" (19) on Paul, Wright asserts that the Protestant tradition has erred in its interpretation of Galatians by exaggerating the gospel as primarily focused on individual salvation. Wright suggests that Luther and his theological successors asked the text questions about the assurance of personal salvation. Those questions were vital in the sixteenth century but were largely foreign to Paul's first-century recipients. Therefore, Galatians is properly understood in its historical context of Second Temple Judaism, particularly the eschatological messianic hopes paired with the socio-political realities of imperial Rome. Galatians is not primarily about individual justification, "how we can leave 'earth' and go to live with God in 'heaven.'" Instead, it is about inaugurate eschatology begun in Christ, "how God gets to come and live

with us" (12). Paul announces good news to his first century hearers, news of "messianic eschatology, resulting in personal and communal transformation" (32). According to Wright, the radical good news of Galatians is that "the Messiah-people, from whatever background or ethnic origin they [come], [form] the people through whom the One God [is] even now inaugurating his sovereign rule over the world" (35). Galatians functions in contemporary faith formation when Christians comprehend God's love and recognize their place in God's story as Messiah-people.

After his foundational introduction, Wright provides a formal commentary dividing Galatians into nine sections. Each section begins with Wright's translation, a set of introductory remarks, and a verse-by-verse prosaic commentary. Wright reserves most of his comments regarding "faith formation" for the conclusion of each section. *Galatians* offers robust scholarship, while avoiding many features of more technical commentaries making this volume accessible to a broad audience. For example, *Galatians* contains little analysis of textual issues and offers transliteration of Greek words. The commentary has a special emphasis on theological reflection. The book includes a substantial bibliography as well as detailed indices by subject, author, and Scripture passage.

Wright is at his best in providing a rich description of the socio-historical context of Paul and his recipients. Preachers will find here contextual insights to enrich their understanding of the epistle. Wright's analysis and accompanying theological reflections demonstrate his "fresh perspective" applied throughout the epistle. As such, *Galatians* is both an accessible introduction to and demonstration of Wright's perspective on Paul. That strength is also a weakness since it functions most effectively as a monograph. Busy preachers who want to consult this volume when they engage in occasional exegetical work in Galatians may find it challenging to follow Wright's comments on individual passages without a refresher on Wright's overall perspective.

As the first of the CCF, *Galatians* aims to contribute to faith formation. On that front, *Galatians* delivers for those who agree with Wright's perspective and are formed by robust theological reflection. Readers, like me, who disagree with Wright's perspective, as well as those who experience faith formation through practical application, contemplative reflection, or other means may be disappointed with the hoped-for faith formation element of this book. Overall, *Galatians* would not be my first choice for a commentary when preaching from Galatians, but it is a helpful additional work which provides insightful nuance for robust exegesis and a winsome "fresh perspective" on the epistle.

Writing for the Ear, Preaching from the Heart. By Donna Giver-Johnston. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2021. 978-1-5064-6323-0, 135 pp., $19.99.

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

Donna Giver-Johnston recounts an experience familiar to many pastors. Looking up from reading her sermon manuscript to the congregation one Sunday, she made a discovery. Few parishioners were following her skillfully selected words. Despite her sermon's precision, the message failed to connect with its audience.

She feared that her use of a manuscript contributed to the disconnect with the pew. Unlike many pastors, Giver-Johnston decided to test her theory by ditching her manuscript to increase connection with her congregation (57-58). She recounts her journey and encourages others to join her. Her thesis from the introduction claims, "This book, *Writing for the Ear, Preaching from the Heart*, is, as the name suggests, a guide for helping preachers write sermons for the ear so that they can be remembered and preach sermons from the heart, without a manuscript, so that they are memorable" (xix).

Writing for the Ear, Preaching from the Heart begins with a refrain familiar to preachers. Diminished attendance and dwindling attention spans necessitate changes in homiletics. Giver-Johnston suggests that improved oral proclamation can help. She builds her case by analyzing how God speaks to humanity, showing that God practices revelation by communicating with man. That revelation becomes more specific through the incarnation of Christ. The incarnation communicates "God's desire and the lengths to which God will go to be in relationship with creation and all of humanity" (42). The incarnation reveals God's communication through embodiment. Giver-Johnston contends that the church as a whole, (missions and ministry), and the preacher specifically, (oral proclamation), carries out revelation via embodiment.

The book provides readers with practical instructions for embodying the sermon through oral proclamation. Preachers should utilize "extemporaneous preparation … the crafting of the sermon is done by speaking the words while preparing it and with the intention of delivering it extemporaneously, without reading a manuscript" (65). Giver-Johnston provides an overview of her own weekly process of extemporaneous preparation and then expands on her process by describing practices like personalizing, collaborating, illustrating, and testifying. The author includes exercises to help readers implement these practices into their own preaching.

Later, the author encourages preachers to increase their investment in sermon delivery. She points out that preachers often invest most of their sermon preparation time on a manuscript (101). Areas of focus include personal spiritual preparation, practicing delivery in the pulpit, and performing the sermon via embodiment or animation (119).

Writing for the Ear, Preaching from the Heart offers preachers and teachers of preaching an instructive testimonial for preaching without dependence on a manuscript. Giver-Johnston shares personal experiences, which engage the reader, but her experience finds a foundation in homiletical scholarship. The work is less testimonial and more scholarly dialogue with

personal illustrations, which provides the reader with substance beyond one preacher's experience. The references Giver-Johnston cites reflect a heavy New Homiletic influence, but she does include insight from EHS scholars like Dave McClellan. In addition, she accurately notes that some of the foundational assumptions of the New Homiletic—"that listeners know the Bible and that they can connect the Biblical stories to their own stories"—are no longer true today (25).

Rooted in her philosophy of embodying the sermon, Giver-Johnston correctly emphasizes the value of personal spiritual self-care for the preacher. She states, "Throughout the week, the preacher prepares by attending to prayer and self-care and by asking and seeking God's presence" (102). While many homiletics texts provide brief allusions to spiritual self-care, Giver-Johnston builds these actions into her sermon-development process. She equates sermon preparation to training for a marathon; it is "a weeklong process that requires not only dedicated exegetical work but also spiritual preparation" (103).

One area of concern appears in chapter two as it builds the case for embodying the sermon by highlighting the incarnation of Christ. While the incarnation certainly supports the overall case, the author quotes Emily Holmes, "The story of Jesus is as much about the flesh becoming word as it is the Word becoming flesh" (44). Later, the author takes this statement a step further by saying, "Jesus in the flesh, became the Word by which people were healed" (45). The theological implications of Jesus becoming the Word seem to push the incarnation a bit further than necessary.

Overall, Giver-Johnston's work provides readers with a practical guide filled with examples and exercises. *Writing for the Ear, Preaching from the Heart* offers preachers and teachers of preaching helpful rationale and guidance for moving away from manuscript dependence. This book could find a home in a second-level preaching course emphasizing sermon delivery.

Hiding in the Pews: Shining Light on Mental Illness in the Church. By Steve Austin. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2021. 978-1-5064-7048-1, 230 pp., $23.00.

Reviewer: *Field Thigpen, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA.*

In *Hiding in the Pews*, Steve Austin addressed the topic of mental illness in the church not from the perspective of a psychologist, theologian, or clinical researcher. Rather, he wrote from the perspective of one who had himself suffered. He was open about his own mental health struggles, sexual abuse, childhood trauma, and a failed suicide attempt. Such details are even more poignant with the knowledge that the book was published posthumously after he had tragically taken his own life in 2021.

The authority, then, to which the author appeals is not so much Scripture and clinical research as it is personal experience. Theologically, he has a "big tent" background with broad denominational experiences. He was raised Baptist, became Pentecostal, preached at a Methodist church, and attended an Episcopal church at the time of writing. Austin references the works of Brené Brown, Rachel Held Evans, and Baxter Kruger frequently and with high regard. Through eleven chapters he shares insights from his own experiences as well as the experiences of others. He offers churches and church leaders advice about what and what not to do in response to mental health issues. He urges leaders to be open, vulnerable, and trauma informed. He encourages them not to brush away matters of grief and depression, but to lament with the sorrowful, listening to their stories, checking on them, and inviting them to spend time together. He argues that when church leaders care for the mental health of others and are open about their own mental health struggles, the church can only then take steps toward becoming a safe space for transparency, support, and healing for those suffering from the affliction of mental illness. Austin's stated intent was that his book would aid church leaders "at the

intersection of faith and mental health" by equipping them "to better integrate and support mental, spiritual, and emotional health" (17).

Evangelicals are likely to contend with some of the exegetical conclusions presented throughout the book. At times, the author seems to project assumptions into the biblical text based on personal experiences or feelings. Examples include his sympathetic reading of Judas as a misunderstood victim of mental illness and his view on the lack of consideration given toward the safety of women when the biblical account of Sarah and Hagar was written, an account which made him admittedly uncomfortable. Nevertheless, Austin's book is worthy of being a resource on any pastor's shelf for two reasons. First, Austin gives pastors open access to the mind of one actively struggling with mental illness. Such a thought-process and emotional struggle is likely present within each congregation. Pastors are given insights which can enhance their understanding and empathy. Second, his suggested steps for pastors to address suicidality and suicidal ideation (216-19) are by themselves worth the cost of the book. Every pastor would do well to reference Austin's steps and be prepared to implement them at any unexpected moment.

Sermons that Sing: Music and the Practice of Preaching. By Noel A. Snyder. Downers Grove: IVP, 2021. 978-0-8308-4933-8, 181 pp., $30.00.

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

Underlying Noel Snyder's contribution to the *Dynamics of Christian Worship* series is the conviction that homiletics can learn from music, much as it has benefitted from conversation with rhetoric and theater arts. He may be right. But this particular conversation is heavy going for someone unfamiliar with music theory and its specialized vocabulary.

Snyder aims to account for "the ways in which musicology might be found to enrich homiletical theory by providing a unique interdisciplinary perspective" (171). His first chapter analyzes contributions of other scholars who have written on the intersection of music and preaching. He appreciates valuable insights from these authors and practitioners but aspires to develop more fully a homiletical theory through musicology. The rest of the book does this by examining three characteristics music and preaching have in common: synchrony, repetition, and teleology. Snyder hopes preachers who draw on these "singular powers" of music will learn something about fostering worship, forming worshippers, and enhancing the church's witness (4, 162).

Under the rubric "synchrony," Snyder analyzes time in music and preaching: how the use of time, rhythm, pause, pacing, and so on unifies listeners in a shared experience, an experience that, ideally, is not limited to passive listening but active, even kinesthetic participation.

The chapter on repetition explores ways in which both music and preaching shape listeners, reinforce virtues, and appeal to our aesthetic sense. Positive repetition occurs both in the individual piece (or sermon) and in a music culture (or ecclesiastical culture), without degrading into cliché.

Chapter four, "The End[s] of the Sermon," argues that both music and sermons are teleological; both are going somewhere–or should be. Per Snyder, the overarching end toward which preaching should move is hope. As an experienced listener to music learns to expect resolution, congregants learn to expect sermons to turn from trouble and sin and brokenness to gospel hope. Preachers possessing the teleological instincts of music will find it more natural to craft and deliver sermons that achieve this.

Snyder draws on neuroscience, evolutionary biology, ethnomusicology, and other disciplines to bolster his case; the Bible, not so much. A Scripture index has only twenty-six entries and most of these point to footnotes or parenthetical references the author does not unpack. Snyder is certainly biblical in his

theologizing; he just doesn't engage much with biblical texts in this book.

Who might most appreciate this book? Scholars seeking to understand "the hum" and other participatory aspects of African American preaching. Homileticians with a music background who can translate Snyder's theory for students who lack that background. Some who come to seminary with no exposure to rhetoric and other traditional homiletical conversation partners but who do know musicology.

Who might least appreciate this book? Preachers with minimal background in music theory, who will be put off by strange concepts and unfamiliar vocabulary, who can probably arrive at the same valuable insights Snyder finds in musicology, but by a different route.

The Manifold Beauty of Genesis One: A Multi-Layered Approach. By Gregg Davidson and Kenneth J. Turner. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2021. 978-0-8254-4544-6, 210 pp., $22.99.

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

A two-hundred-page book that covers only one chapter of Scripture?!? Yes, and what a book it is. Gregg Davidson, geologist, and Kenneth Turner, Old Testament scholar, have combined to produce a volume that peels back seven layers of Genesis one in a way that respects the reliability of the record of events it describes while exposing the chapter's intricate structure and substrata of themes. In the process, they bring forward aspects of God's character that manifest themselves through each stratum.

In their book's opening, the authors liken their analysis of Genesis one to a scientist placing a fluorite crystal under different types of lighting in order to see the various colors it radiates. As they explain, the different lights do not change the essence of the

crystal itself. One light does not contradict the color radiated by a different light. Instead, each type of light accentuates a different element within the composite mineral, adding to the viewer's understanding and appreciation of the fully formed crystal. So, they maintain, the Bible's opening chapter may be studied under different lights exposing different layers of meaning that do not contradict but complement one another while enhancing the reader's appreciation for the chapter as a whole.

Accepting Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and arguing that it be interpreted as a single composition whose parts inform the whole and vice versa, *The Manifold Beauty of Genesis One* shows that narrative and law are interwoven, along with poetry and prose, to produce an opening chapter that informs and echoes what follows throughout the remainder of Moses' literary corpus. The seven layers, explored separately in each of the book's chapters, and the corresponding aspect of God's character laid bare here are: song (God as artist), analogy (God as farmer), polemic (God as "I am"), covenant (God as suzerain), temple (God as presence), calendar (God of sabbath), and land (God as redeemer). Entire books may be found that explain and champion each of these layers over against the others. Davidson and Turner's book takes a different approach, briefly explaining each layer's constitution and appreciating the insights found therein without setting forth any one layer as the best way for interpreting Genesis one.

The strengths and potential uses of this thin volume are many. Preachers will find here fresh, new, but archaeologically substantiated ways of approaching a portion of Scripture that many hearers mistakenly believe they already understand exhaustively. Preachers will also appreciate how the book does not argue for a particular theory of origins but chooses instead to illuminate the theology, yea Christology, found in each interpretive layer.

Professors of preaching in doctoral programs will find the book a welcome source for prompting discussion around the topics of authorial intent, polyvalent meaning, and how texts can do a number of different things at once. They will appreciate the

discussion questions at the end of each chapter, the two helpful appendices, extensive bibliography, and concluding indices.

Any study of the Pentateuch, be it in the church or academy, will benefit from Davidson and Turner's in-depth analysis of Genesis one. Enlightening and highly recommended!

The Parables: Jesus's Friendly Subversive Speech. By Douglas D. Webster. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2021, 978-0-8254-4690-0, 347 pp., $22.99.

Reviewer: *Russell St. John, Twin Oaks Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, MO.*

Webster's brief Introduction describes the nature of, and his approach to, Jesus' parables. Twenty-two chapters of pastoral commentary follow, in which Webster explores parables from Matthew and Luke before closing with an appendix titled "Preaching the Parables."

Several features of *The Parables* deserve commendation. Webster writes with simplicity and clarity. Pastors and lay readers alike will find him accessible. He shuns allegorical interpretation, strives to ground each parable in the redemptive-historical context of Jesus' atoning work, and helps his readers to hear the parables with the ears of a first-century listener. Webster also honors the structure of the Gospel of Matthew by refusing to divorce those parables that Matthew grouped thematically together.

Two broad weaknesses may render Webster's work less-than-helpful to readers of this *Journal*. First, Webster treads well-worn ground. The New Homiletic movement of the late twentieth century explored parables, and the possibilities of parabolic preaching, extensively. Webster shows familiarity with this literature but not necessarily discernment in its use. Primarily viewing parables as a communication strategy rather than a theological judgment, Webster writes: "In the face of

growing opposition, Jesus's communication strategy hit the wall. Straight-up authoritative teaching was becoming counterproductive. This is why I think Jesus switched to parables" (10). But when asked about his use of parables, Jesus replied:

> This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:
>
> "You will indeed hear but never understand,
> and you will indeed see but never perceive."
> For this people's heart has grown dull,
> and with their ears they can barely hear,
> and their eyes they have closed,
> lest they should see with their eyes
> and hear with their ears
> and understand with their heart
> and turn, and I would heal them (Matthew 13:13-15, ESV).

Jesus cited Isaiah 6:9-10, leaving his disciples to fill in the remainder of the LORD's words in Isaiah 6:11-12:

> Then I said, "How long, O Lord?"
> And he said:
> "Until cities lie waste
> without inhabitant,
> and houses without people,
> and the land is a desolate waste,
> and the Lord removes people far away,
> and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land."

Jesus specifically described his use of parables as a sign of impending judgment against the unbelief of God's people. Yet

Webster states that parables are "time bombs that only explode after they have penetrated our hearts," claiming that they "effectively penetrate people's defenses" (14), and therefore "shatter . . . preexisting understanding" (20). While these statements *may* be true, they come at the expense of Jesus' explicit explanation of his use of parables. Inasmuch as the New Homiletic desired to employ the parabolic form as a communication strategy, Jesus spoke in parables primarily to conceal truth from those over whom judgment loomed, while revealing it to him "who has ears" (Matthew 13:9).

Second, the bulk of Webster's work functions as pastoral commentary on the parables, and one wonders whether he intended pastors or lay-persons as his target audience. If the former, which his appendix on preaching seems to indicate, then his commentary offers surprisingly non-technical, non-academic, accessible counsel, better suited to a lay-led Bible study than to the pulpit. But if the latter, then why press the parables as a communication strategy and include an appendix about preaching?

The appendix offers "[t]en reasons for using parables" in preaching (340), but Webster does not indicate whether he desires pastors to preach sermons shaped as parables or merely to employ parables in an illustrative capacity within a non-parabolic sermon form. Whatever his intent, most of Webster's "reasons" offer theological reflections on Jesus' use of parables rather than homiletical instructions to preachers.

In the end, *The Parables* left this reviewer confused about Webster's intended audience and wary of his parables-as-communication-strategy approach, but also impressed by his clarity of expression and deference to the redemptive-historical context of the parables. If one is looking for a pulpit commentary or a book that sharpens one's homiletical skills, let the reader look elsewhere. But if one is looking for a lay-level Bible study or a few pastoral insights into how a first-century listener may have heard Jesus' words, then *The Parables* might prove worthwhile.

Sermon Listening: A New Approach Based on Congregational Studies and Rhetoric. By Enoh Šeba. Carlisle, UK: Langham, 2021. 978-1-8397-3221-8, 285 pp., $37.99.

Reviewer: *Jeremy Kimble, Cedarville University, Cedarville, OH.*

Many studies in the field of homiletics focus primarily on the task and role of the preacher, and rightly so. It is the rare work that gets into any detail about the responsibility of the hearer of sermons, as well as how preachers should consider not merely the text they are preaching but also how their listeners might receive it. Enoh Šeba has written a book in the latter category.

Šeba's work grows out of a qualitative research project, focusing on preaching within the context of the Croatian Baptist church. His primary research question is: "What are the real expectations and receptiveness of Croatian Baptists as sermon listeners, and how can these findings be used to improve the quality of preaching?" (3) After raising the question, the author then speaks to the contemporary turn in homiletics to the listener as a primary concern (chapter 2); relates homiletics to classical rhetoric (chapter 3); offers some brief data regarding congregational studies and preaching (chapters 4-5); considers the context of the Croatian Baptist church (chapter 7); presents the findings of his qualitative study with data, conclusions, and theological reflections (chapters 6-10); and finally, offers suggestions for the improvement of preaching (chapter 11).

At its heart, this study demonstrates a desire for preaching to truly have an impact on listeners. The need is for preachers to be aware of their audience, to hear from their audience, and to preach in a way that connects with their audience. The book's call for listeners to better engage with preaching and to prepare themselves for its reception is noteworthy. Without question, Šeba's calls for greater interaction between preacher and listener should be heeded, for preaching is an essential ministry that God has ordained for the salvation and ongoing transformation of his people (Rom. 10:14-17; 2 Tim. 3:16-4:4). As such, preachers

should heed some of the suggestions given at the end of this work—to receive feedback, listen carefully to their parishioners, and keep the diversity of their people in mind as they preach. Hearers should also be encouraged to heed the needed wisdom articulated here—in coming prepared to receive from God's word through preaching and in giving constructive and appropriately timed feedback to the preacher.

Despite its strengths, there are some limitations to this study. First, the author seems to draw a great deal from the New Homiletic and all that it entails in terms of a more subjective and existential approach to literature and, ultimately, preaching. It would be better in many ways to make readers aware of this movement in briefer fashion, then to root the call to keep our hearers in mind as preachers by virtue of the call to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Secondly, more could be said about what the Scriptures teach concerning preaching. Yes, our people matter, and yes, their hearing of the word and how they receive it matters. It would have been good, however, to have been reminded that our call as preachers is to make known the truth of God's word *as it is*. If we drift from this, our preaching may become no more than social commentary. While we are called to know our people and relate well to them in preaching, we must also create biblical categories in their minds and draw them into communion with the living God.

Third, Šeba focuses his theological reflections in connecting preaching and listening by speaking of the image of God, the incarnation, and the priesthood of all believers. These are all legitimate categories, but it would also be helpful to include the doctrine of Scripture. What is Scripture, and how does it actually transform people?

Finally, the author could have devoted more space to a consideration of how pastoral ministry affects one's preaching. We will preach more effectively, congregants' voices will be heard, and they will receive the sermon more readily when we engage in the shepherding work God has assigned us. This point

should have been made more clearly and consistently than it was.

It is crucial that pastors shepherd their people, that they know the power of the word, that they preach with humility and courage, and that they continue to receive the feedback needed as they continue to engage in preaching. While not always offering the most reliable of insights, listeners can, indeed, offer valuable input to their preachers as they work diligently to proclaim the whole counsel of God.

The Third Room of Preaching: A New Empirical Approach. By Marianne Gaarden. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2021. 978-1-7252-7700-7, 158 pp., $22.00.

Reviewer: *J. David Duncan, The Church at Horseshoe Bay, Horseshoe Bay, TX*.

Every preacher has had the experience of preaching the sermon, standing near the door afterwards, and hearing one of the listeners share a word of gratitude about something that was said. Except you knew that you did not say those words during your message. On another occasion, maybe you told a story in your sermon and a departing listener shared her own similar story or an unrelated story that was triggered by what you said. Have you ever had an honest listener share that he did not understand the sermon, had a hard time concentrating, or had a heavy heart from grief that prevented him from listening to your sermon?

Marianne Gaarden names these kinds of experiences "the *Third Room* of preaching." She argues that the collision of the preacher's words and the inner experience of the listener fashions a third room. She writes, "I call a *Third Room*…the listeners' 'internal dialogue' that 'creates a surplus of meaning that was previously not present in either the preacher's intent or the preacher's frame of reference'" (xi). Gaarden believes the

preaching event is shared, emergent, interactive, and supplies biblical content for the hearer's own inner dialogue.

Her book, *The Third Room of Preaching*, reads like an air conditioner repair manual. Like any reliable air conditioner, this book provides fresh air, that is, fresh ideas and a new perspective on preaching. It is an excellent book that one must read and re-read to digest properly.

At the same time, Gaarden's work is challenging to read for three reasons. First, the book summarizes the author's doctoral dissertation. Second, it presents cross-cultural insights from a Danish pastor (Gaarden) in a Danish context and tracks listener information from the Danish Lutheran Church in Denmark, while drawing comparisons with data from other Nordic countries and North America. Third, English is the author's second language. Readers must admire the author's depth of research, widespread audience, and her acknowledged struggle to perfect the manuscript in her non-native tongue.

Still, the book supplies fresh air, a new perspective, and remarkably fresh insight into preaching. This reviewer found the author's general distinction and explanation of types of preaching helpful: (1) the traditional transfer of information model, where the preacher digests the text for the listener; (2) the New Homiletic, where preachers connect with the audience by supplying human interest through narrative discourse like that of Thomas Long, through storytelling like Fred Craddock, or through Eugene Lowry's parabolic homiletical loop or plot; (3) John McClure's other-wise preaching, which struggles to "get into the lives of people" by connecting the preacher-listener with real lives, real experiences, and in close proximity to how they live; and (4) *Third Room* preaching, that is, the preacher as a tool held by Christ the carpenter and a preacher who relinquishes him or herself to God who speaks to each human heart.

Third Room preaching differs from the first three aforementioned preaching types in that it focuses on how the listener "actually listens to a sermon" (xii). One thing stands clear in Gaarden's thesis: the preacher sets asides ego, preaches the sermon, does not worry about how good the sermon appears in

the eyes of the beholders, but rather gives freedom for God to work in individual lives. God speaks through the sermon. The sermon creates new meaning for the listener ("incarnation," 133). Communication is a "meaning-making process" (102).

Gaarden offers an intriguing thought, "Not surprisingly, the starting point for the churchgoers' internal dialogue is their own life situations, their personal experiences with joys and sorrows and current challenges" (94). Listeners enter church to worship, to find meaning in their lives, and the sermon creates meaning (103).

Gaarden sets forth as her focus in the book "…not what they have heard, but *how* they listened" (41). No doubt the author understands preaching. She even adds insight from Aristotle, his discussion on the importance of practical skill, virtue, and the speaker's goodwill toward the audience. The author believes preaching is "embodied as an interactive event" (43). Also, the preacher facilitates the listener's "internal dialogue" amid the servant-preacher's and the listener's participation with God as "a gift of divine grace" (73, 128).

Nevertheless, "Faith (still) comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Read this excellent book. It will cause you to think of God's word preached, the listener in the pew, and God's Spirit as the unseen wind at work in indescribable ways.

The Rhetorical Approach to 1 Thessalonians. By Ezra JaeKyung Cho. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2020. 978-1-7252-5888-4, 285 pp., $35.00.

Reviewer: *Derek Kitterlin, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA.*

In his rhetorical evaluation of First Thessalonians, Ezra Cho views the epistle through the lens of epideictic rhetoric, specifically funeral orations. His methodology is influenced by the work of Ben Witherington at Asbury Seminary.

Cho's thesis is that "Paul employs elements of epideictic funerary oratory to persuade his audience in 1 Thessalonians, although the letter itself in not a funeral oration" (8). Cho begins his work by providing a history of his methodology. He gives three reasons why his method improves on other approaches. These include the place of oral proclamation in the New Testament world, Paul's use of rhetorical conventions in his letters, and the presence of rhetorical education in Tarsus.

The book consists of eight chapters. The first five chapters address pagan beliefs about the afterlife and funeral oratory. Here Cho contrasts Stoic and Epicurean beliefs with Pauline teaching, the former offering limited hope after death while the later claims a union of the living with the dead. The author's treatment of funeral oratory includes a short section on the species of epideictic rhetoric. This valuable section describes the uniqueness of this form of rhetoric apart from the more renown and commonly utilized judicial and deliberative species of rhetoric. Cho's section on funeral oratory includes Greek, Roman, and Jewish orations. He also discusses the rhetorical handbooks of the day penned by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, along with other lesser known works.

Cho's application of his methodology to First Thessalonians takes place in chapters six and seven. Here he points out elements within the epistle that overlapped elements of funeral orations from the Greco-Roman world. Cho claims that Paul's Thessalonian letter is composed like a funeral oration for three reasons—first, because of their overlapping subject matter, that is, their discussion of what happens to those who die; second, because of the rhetorical situation, or exigency, in Thessalonica; and third, because of his desire to achieve his persuasive goals of consoling and exhorting his readers.

This is a commendable work for the following reasons. First, Cho successfully situates Paul's epistles in their context in a manner that other modern approaches do not. The modern epistolary approach fails to recognize sufficiently the social situations of Paul and his audience. The people of Paul's day were oral people. Rhetoric served as their preferred means for

public proclamation. Accounting for such conventions in the New Testament world yields more accurate results in interpretation. Second, Cho's work offers better explanations for certain concepts in First Thessalonians, such as the "parousia" and the "snatching" in 4:13–18. Third, Cho's methodology causes one to reconsider the form of other Pauline epistles. If Paul employed the elements of funeral oratory in his first Thessalonian epistle, what rhetorical forms did he use in his other works?

That said, this reviewer must give this caveat when recommending Cho's work. If the reader is unfamiliar with rhetorical criticism, an introductory reference book to the subject should be kept close at-hand. Although Cho does define and describe many of the rhetorical terms he uses, his level of rhetorical criticism will frustrate the novice reader.

Revival Preaching: Twelve Lessons from Jonathan Edwards. By Ernest Eugene Klassen. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2021. 978-1-6667-1147-9, 282 pp., $29.00.

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

The revivalist preaching of Jonathan Edwards has captured the imagination of heralds and scholars across the globe since his death in 1758. So, what more could be said about this titan who is arguably the most famous and greatest theologian in American history?

Revival Preaching does not seek to add anything new as much as distill some of Edwards' concepts and methods. Ernest Eugene Klassen, who has served as a pastor, missionary, professor, and evangelist, has provided the reader with a thorough resource on Edwards' practice of "revival preaching." More specifically, he has synthesized Edwards' homiletical approach into twelve categories or characteristics: "Pathetic

Preaching" (that is, passion or pathos), "Prayer and Fasting," "Preaching on Hell," "The Role of the Word," "The Role of the Holy Spirit," "The Word/Spirit Blend," "The Supremacy of God," "Edwards the Man," "Correlating Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility," "The Importance of Application," "Spiritual Pride," and "Christocentrism."

This book has much to commend. Klassen is knowledgeable about preaching that God's Spirit blesses and uses to spur revival. This is evidenced in the ways he employs the biography, sermons, and writings of Edwards while also drawing from a wide array of biblical texts and examples from church history and contemporary homiletics. Helpfully, he provides clear definitions of preaching, revival, awakening, and revival preaching. This reviewer particularly appreciated chapter thirteen's summary of key concepts and the offering of twelve eloquent prayers, which correspond to the outlined lessons.

On the other hand, a few criticisms are in order. This book often seems dense and clunky, reading like a dictionary, compendium, or annotated bibliography from a stylistic perspective. For instance, pages fourteen and fifteen contain four lists: Pre-reformation preachers, Reformation Preachers, Revival Preachers of the nineteenth century, and Modern Preachers and Revivalists. It is unclear what value these lists add to the author's overall argument. Moreover, the book's didactic style might hamper the reader's ability to comprehend and digest the vital information Klassen seeks to convey.

Klassen's volume would certainly have benefited from tighter editing. To wit, Introductions A, B, C, D, and E occupy the first fifty pages. Further, Introduction D devotes fourteen pages to a "Biographical Sketch of Edwards," which seems unnecessary or could have been placed in the appendices. Regardless, if the reader looks past these foibles, he or she will discover this book provides quality information and insights regarding the revival preaching of Jonathan Edwards.

Making a Scene in the Pulpit: Vivid Preaching for Visual Listeners. By Alyce McKenzie. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2018. 978-0-6642-6156-6, 218 pp. $21.99.

Reviewer: *Dave Bland, Harding School of Theology, Memphis, TN.*

Alyce McKenzie is distinguished teaching professor of preaching at Perkins School of Theology. Among her other accomplishments, she is also known for the multiple volumes she has published on implementing the wisdom books of the Bible into the life of preaching and the church. In the current book, McKenzie uses the theological platform of wisdom theology as the underpinning for the art of creating scenes in the pulpit.

She challenges the New Homiletic's emphasis on narrative preaching for the sake of enabling contemporary listeners who, she maintains, are no longer capable or interested in following a metanarrative (2, 90). Her goal is to invite listeners into scenes from Scripture, history, and contemporary life, then to point listeners to the larger story of God's transforming work (6).

Unlike an illustration, which tells us about something, McKenzie defines a scene as a small but complete segment of a larger story that invites listeners into something and identifies with someone (2). Contemporary listeners think in terms of bursts of episodes in their lives. Rather than criticizing listeners for this tendency, McKenzie wants to capitalize on it in preaching, using scenes to connect listeners to the larger biblical story.

In chapter one, McKenzie critiques the New Homiletic with its stress on narrative preaching. She believes more attention needs to be given to the smaller scenic unit. She advocates combining these scenic units with "teaching and touching emotion, and will" (24).

Chapter two describes the main resource involved in scenic preaching, which calls for developing the skill of a "knack for noticing." McKenzie shows how the sages of Proverbs, Job,

and Ecclesiastes demonstrate this skill. She identifies three areas on which preachers must focus to develop the knack for noticing: inscape (the preacher's inner life); landscape (the preacher's context); and textscape (the world of the text; 34). From these three sources, preachers create scenes.

McKenzie devotes chapter three to the theological underpinnings of this knack for noticing with God's intimate awareness of human sin, suffering, joy, and goodness. Jesus also mirrors the divine attentiveness to human sin and human need (65). Taking his cue from the wisdom playbook of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, Jesus demonstrates his knack for noticing in both his life and his parabolic teaching (66).

Chapter four gets down to the practical elements of how to create a scene. For McKenzie, scenic preaching can include deductive sermons. Scenes can use propositions but not as hammers that demand submission, rather as keys that offer proposals. McKenzie finds an important place for deductive sermons when scenic and imaginative elements are used creatively (81). She spends much of the chapter providing guidelines for preaching both single-scene sermons and multi-scene sermons.

In chapter five, the longest chapter (fifty-eight pages), McKenzie includes nine different sermons. She preached all these sermons on different occasions and to different audiences. They include a deductive scenic sermon, multi-scenic sermons, and single-scenic sermons. They illustrate well the principles laid out in the previous chapters.

Because it is foundational to her work, this reviewer would like to have heard some dialogue regarding the relationship between inscape, landscape, and textscape. Do they all carry the same weight when it comes to creating scenes? Be that as it may, McKenzie makes a significant contribution to the discipline of homiletics and to the task of preaching. She writes with clarity, creativity, and humor that engages the reader. All through the book, McKenzie intersperses her descriptions of scenic preaching with scenes from her own experiences,

observations, and study. It is a must read for homileticians and preachers.

Preaching and the Thirty-Second Commercial: Lessons from Advertising for the Pulpit. By O. Wesley Allen and Carrie La Ferle. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2021. 978-0-6642-6544-1, 153 pp., $25.00.

Reviewer: *Cameron R. Thomas, George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Waco, TX.*

The Perkins Center for Preaching Excellence in partnership with John Knox Press has worked to produce a series of scholarly titles that connect homiletics with other disciplines to foster better preaching. Each volume brings together a homiletician and a contributor from another discipline to discuss what preachers might learn from the other field of expertise.

O. Wesley Allen, series editor and professor of preaching at Perkins School of Theology, in conjunction with Carrie La Ferle, professor of ethics and culture specializing in adverting, discuss in *Preaching and the Thirty-Second Commercial* what preachers might learn from the practices of advertisers. Their book presents preaching and advertising not as competitors but as similar "communicative endeavors aimed at persuading the audience to consider new options for their lives" (1). Stories, examples, and supporting evidence fill their volume to support this thesis.

Chapter one, "The Problem," argues that the audience for preaching and advertisement has changed due to multimedia noise, postmodernism, and pluralism. Successful preachers and advertisers alike must account for these societal influencers.

Chapter two, "How Communication Has Changed," outlines today's communicative realities. Linear and multidirectional communication represent the evolution in communication over time and space. In traditional advertising,

potential customers received information as sender oriented. They, in turn, were expected to decode it. More recently, technology and other influences have shifted this responsibility from sender to receiver. Multidirectional communication promotes the consumer's involvement in the process and final product, placing the receiver in partnership with the sender. Homiletics has not been unaffected by this communicative transformation. Fred Craddock's *As One Without Authority* began reorienting homiletics away from deductive propositional statements that the audience receives to a place where the audience determines the sermon for itself. Others have since followed Craddock's lead, as noted by the authors.

Chapter three, "Understanding the Hearer," discusses how the audience plays a major role in advertising and in the consideration of preachers. The target audience's needs must be carefully considered in order to forge a connection and persuade hearers to a desired outcome.

Chapter four, "Advertising and Sermonic Forms," introduces how advertisers develop their message by appealing to consumers' attention, interests, desires, and action (AIDA). The authors compare this to both a traditional African American sermon form and the Lowry Loop as models that emphasize tension building in sermon preparation.

Chapter five, "Sermonic Imagery and Narrative Advertising," traces advertising's use of storytelling to create experiences that produce a response. Despite their limited time with which to work, advertisers have understood the power of story. Stories transcend technology because they give something tangible for people to consider. Preaching, likewise, benefits from including stories that connect with people's real lives.

Chapter six, "Advertising Campaigns and Cumulative Preaching," delves into the necessity of variety in advertising campaigns connected to any brand. Ongoing campaigns must be prepared to adapt in order to connect to shifting demographical needs. Nonetheless, they must maintain a "common objective with a unified theme" (125). Advertising campaigns establish a standard and from that point work towards accomplishing a

singular goal. Applied to preaching, the authors observe, "Differences among preachers is not a problem. But the same preacher offering conflicting gospels is" (126).

The world in which we preach is constantly changing. Allen and La Ferle offer helpful insights on how to preach to that world by taking a page from advertisers' playbook. Their work is easy to read and stimulating for thought.

The Return of Oral Hermeneutics: As Good Today as It Was for the Hebrew Bible and First-Century Christianity. By Tom Steffen and William Bjoraker. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020. 978-1-5326-8480-7, 392 pp., $42.00.

Reviewer: *Eric Price, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL.*

The field of orality studies seeks to articulate how the development of written communication has changed the nature of human communication in general. Preaching, as a spoken medium, is a form of oral communication that exists in a contemporary world dominated by written mediums.

In *The Return of Oral Hermeneutics,* Tom Steffen and William Bjoraker—professors at Biola and William Carey Universities, respectively—seek to show that Scripture emerged in an oral culture, and this has relevance to biblical interpretation and communication. In an oral culture, communication is more relational and story-based, whereas print culture prioritizes abstraction and linear thinking. As story, Scripture communicates in largely oral ways: "The Bible is a story primarily featuring relational events about the Supreme Authority encountering humans and humans encountering him" (7). Thus, exegetes and teachers should attend to how Scripture teaches theology in narrative fashion. The failure to do so has led to sermons "laced with abstractions" (4) rather than the concreteness characteristic of oral culture. Notably, Steffen and

Bjoraker do not make a total disjunction between proposition and story; rather, they encourage readers to view didactic and narrative genres as equally valid mediums of truth. "Logical analysis can render much of the meaning implicit in Scripture, but not exhaust it" (13).

Two key characteristics of oral hermeneutics are notable. First, "textual hermeneutics represents a rational text, while oral hermeneutics represents a relational text" (18). Throughout the book, the authors offer suggestions for how Bible teachers can utilize literary features such as character dialogue to draw out the human aspects of biblical texts. For example, chapter six focuses on character theology, which Steffen defines as reliance upon "earthly, concrete characters to frame abstract truths and concepts, thereby providing ideas a home" (168). One pedagogical implication of character theology is that Bible teachers should tell stories as stories rather than propositions (176).

A second key characteristic of oral hermeneutics is its allowance for multiple meanings in a text. Oral hermeneutics "recognizes possible multiple interpretations (multivocal) within author-provided parameters (which preserves the historical and present meaning)" (126, parentheses original). Narrative texts should not prematurely be reduced to singular summary statements, as this may flatten the author's intent. Related to this, oral hermeneutics provides room to connect individual biblical narratives into a unified tapestry: "OH not only investigates individuals in a single story, it is also interested in how all the individual stories and their controlling characters form a grand narrative" (129).

An important pedagogical implication of oral hermeneutics is that Bible teaching should be more of a dialogue than a monologue. "Oral hermeneutics attempts to discover the answers to the questions raised by the biblical narrators through co-participation with them" (18). The theoretical discussion of dialogical teaching is informed by author Tom Steffen's experience as a missionary to the Philippines, where he ministered in oral cultures.

While the intended audience for *The Return of Oral Hermeneutics* is broader than homileticians, the book has obvious relevance to our discipline. It is a helpful work that lends theoretical rigor to the practice of narrative homiletics. This book can help homiletics teachers think about ways to aid students in making the transition from the exegesis classroom to the pulpit. In theological education, the contrast between written and oral cultures corresponds well to the distinction between composing a research paper and delivering a sermon. The book can provide teachers with ideas for homiletical strategies to help students traverse this divide. As a lengthy technical work in intercultural studies, the book's value in the homiletics classroom may be more limited. Nonetheless, it may find a place in upper-level courses on homiletical theory or intercultural communication. *The Return of Oral Hermeneutics* helpfully ties together orality studies and biblical exegesis, making it a valuable resource for the field of evangelical homiletics.

Paul and the Hope of Glory: An Exegetical and Theological Study. By Constantine R. Campbell. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020. 978-0-310-52120-4, 503 pp., $34.99.

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

First, a few disclaimers: Constantine Campbell was a valued colleague and friend at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School where our services there overlapped. Secondly, I offer this review not as New Testament scholar, but as a homiletician and therefore direct my comments to preachers and teachers of preaching.

In the same vein as his earlier *Union with Christ,* this volume tackles the daunting task of "bringing together every Pauline text that impinges on [Pauline eschatology]," exegeting and then synthesizing these texts (xxi). Despite the scope of the

undertaking, this 503-page volume is a model of clarity. In part one, Campbell spells out his methodology, reviews recent scholarly writing on Paul's eschatology, and then, in part two (65-321), provides wonderfully accessible exegetical studies of *all* the relevant texts! These are handled in canonical order but are grouped according to theme. For instance, he assembles those passages that address the last day, those that speak of judgment, and those that address inheritance. There are eleven such thematic groupings. The chapter that addresses each grouping has an introduction and a summary. In between these bookends, each passage to be exegeted is printed in Greek and in English with bold type employed to underscore those parts of the passage that address the theme under consideration. Then follows the exegesis in clear, concise, accessible language. The thematic organization means there is some overlap and repetition, but these are purposeful. In part three, pages 325-451, Campbell synthesizes the fruit of the exegetical studies under four major headings: Christocentric Eschatology, Apocalyptic Eschatology, The Age to Come, and This Present Age, to take the titles from the detailed Table of Contents. Under these headings are over fifty more specific entries and each major heading has an introduction and conclusion. Chapter eighteen, "Conclusions," has ten parts. The bibliography is extensive and up to date. The volume concludes with an eleven-page Scripture index, a twelve-page subject index, and four-page author index.

Campbell is exceptionally well qualified to write this book. To offer but one reason among many that could be given, when he explains why recent research on Greek aspect theory clarifies conclusions that may be made from a given text, the widely recognized current authority on this subject to which a footnote refers is a volume he himself wrote (120). Indeed, he refers to seven of his works some thirty-eight times according to the author index.

What might be the value of this volume to homileticians and preachers? Much in every way, to paraphrase the Apostle Paul. Foremost, Campbell models how to handle Scripture. He reads attentively and contextually. Preachers can learn a lot

about how to do this by following his example. Second, his systematic theology is based on Scripture. This cannot be said of every writer. He lets Scripture dictate his theology, which in turn appropriately disciplines his exegesis. For instance, on page 311, he lets 1 Thess. 2:19-20 lead him to an unexpected conclusion that he then integrates into his larger understanding. Third, he writes with exceptional clarity, defining terms and articulating the steps in his thinking. The way he gets from the Bible to his conclusions is spelled out in words that leave little room for misunderstanding. And he is willing to say so when the Pauline texts do not lead to definitive conclusions, as he does in the case of annihilationism. Readers may disagree concerning conclusions in some cases, but they will need very good reasons for doing so. Fourthly, he offers well-reasoned correctives of commonly assumed interpretations or theological positions, such as the timing of Christ's return. Fifthly, he spells out some implications of individual texts in ways that interweave those ideas with assertions from other passages. Sixth, the Scripture and subject indexes make the volume genuinely useful for the preacher seeking to expound biblical texts or to treat related themes. Seventh, those who want to dig deeper will find copious footnotes that point the way.

Weaknesses of this book? The fact that it addresses *Pauline* eschatology is an inherent limitation that could make it less useful. But Campbell acknowledges this potential hazard and more than compensates for it by careful interaction with the rest of the canon. The book's comprehensiveness could be seen as a shortcoming because of the sheer volume of material. If one attempts to digest it in a few sittings, one may indeed feel overwhelmed. It *is* comprehensive. On the other hand, readers who treat it as a reference book and a methodological guide will not be disappointed. Are there gaps in this book that other volumes address? This is really a question for New Testament scholars and systematicians. I would only mention one recent volume that may have escaped our readers' notice, viz. *Biblical Eschatology*, second edition, by Jonathan Menn.

Topical Preaching in a Complex World: How to Proclaim Truth and Relevance at the Same Time. By Sam Chan and Malcolm Gill. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2021. 978-0-3101-0887-0, 288 pp., $29.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: *Reginald D. Taylor, Memphis College of Urban and Theological Studies at Union University, Memphis, TN.*

Topical Preaching in a Complex World is a unique contribution to the homiletics field. It positively concerns the use of the topical sermon to communicate biblical truth in redemptive, transformative, and responsible ways. The authors offer explanations, illustrations, and examples throughout the book to help clarify the subject matter of each chapter. Novice and seasoned preachers, pastors, professors, and students of preaching will benefit from the fresh perspective and approaches to topical preaching presented here.

In chapter one, Malcolm Gill dismantles the divide between topical and expository preaching. He argues that it is unnecessary to see the two approaches to preaching as competitors and better to see them as siblings. He argues that both types of sermons can and should be biblical and beneficial to the hearer.

In chapter two, Chan offers the reader four approaches to delivering a topical sermon. He proposes that the preacher show people how Christ either opposes, replaces, fulfills, or affirms the topic through the message. Later, in concert with Chan, Gill highlights how flexible topical preaching is in that it can simultaneously evangelize the lost and edify and equip the saints.

Chan then shifts to the issue of theology and culture. He offers six steps to address a topic theologically and responsibly in chapter four. Then, in chapters five and six, drawing from his vast cross-cultural experiences, the author helps the reader see the relationship between culture and preaching, the need for

contextualization, and a means to connect with the audience in a transformative way for the hearer. Next, he offers tips on preaching with high cultural intelligence. Afterwards, he outlines and illustrates eight approaches to Christ-centered topical preaching.

Drawing from years of pastoral ministry and training pastors in the classroom, Gill takes the following three chapters to impart wisdom to those who lead through their preaching. First, he shows the reader how to be pastorally sensitive when discussing difficult topics. Then, Gill argues that for the preacher to connect with the audience, she or he must know oneself, be oneself, and reveal oneself through transparency in the sermon. Next, he urges pastors and preachers to be real, be receptor-oriented in their sermon preparation and delivery, and be relevant. Finally, in chapter ten, he declares that "[t]o preach effectively, we must take seriously not only the content of material but also the best form in which we might communicate" (212). Essentially, he challenges preachers to give themselves to communicating with clarity and conciseness and committing to continued learning as it relates to the craft of preaching. He closes chapter ten by highlighting seven characteristics of effective communicators.

Chan and Gill provide an appendix apiece. The former offers insights on maximizing the new norms brought about by COVID-19. The latter shares four benefits and four limitations of expository preaching. These appendices are beneficial in assisting the preacher in understanding the potential and limitations of preaching in the twenty-first century.

The book's strengths are the detailed explanations, personal and sermonic examples, real-life illustrations, and the plethora of how-tos throughout. One weakness is that, while the authors seek to dismantle the divide between expository and topical preaching, they do not speak to the practice of nor need for topical exposition in preaching. This reviewer maintains that one can and should preach using various sermon forms in an expository manner. One can preach biographical expositions, doctrinal expositions, dramatic-monologue expositions,

narrative expositions, and topical expositions. Unfortunately, the authors did not affirm or address this. That said, practitioners, professors, and students of preaching will all benefit from this book.

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society

History:

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

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

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

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

Purpose:

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

Vision:

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

General Editor:

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

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The Managing Editor has oversight of the business matters of the journal. The Managing Editor solicits advertising, coordinates the subscription list and mailing of the journal, and works with the General Editor and Book Review Editor to ensure a timely publication of the journal.

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The Editorial Board serves in advising the General Editor in the publication of articles for the journal. The Editorial Board serves as a jury for articles considered for publication. The Editorial Board consists of no more than five members. Board members are approved at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Homiletics Society and hold a two-year appointment.

Frequency of Publication:

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is published twice a year: March and September.

Jury Policy:

Articles submitted to the Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society are blind juried by members of the Editorial Board. In addition, the General Editor may ask a scholar who is a specialist to jury particular articles.

The General Editor may seek articles for publication from qualified scholars. The General Editor makes the final publication decisions. It is always the General Editor's prerogative to edit and shorten said material, if necessary.

Submission Guidelines

1. Manuscripts should be submitted in electronic form. All four margins should be at least one inch, and each should be consistent throughout. Please indicate the program in which the article is formatted, preferably, Microsoft Word (IBM or MAC).

2. Manuscripts should be double-spaced. This includes the text, indented (block) quotations, notes, and bibliography. This form makes for easier editing.

3. Neither the text, nor selected sentences, nor subheads should be typed all-caps.

4. Notes should be placed at the end of the manuscript, not at the foot of the page. Notes should be reasonably close to the style advocated in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* 3rd edition (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1988) by Joseph Gibaldi and Walter S. Achtert. That style is basically as follows for research papers:

   a. From a book:

   note: 23. John Dewey, *The Study of Ethics: A Syllabus* (Ann Arbor, 1894), 104.

   b. From a periodical:

   note: 5. Frederick Barthelme, "Architecture," *Kansas Quarterly* 13:3 (September 1981): 77-78.

   c. Avoid the use of op. cit.
   Dewey 111.

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Abbreviations

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

Captalization

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

Direct Quotes

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

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

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Manuscripts should be sent to the attention of the General Editor. Send an email with attached Word document to: scott_gibson@baylor.edu

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

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