AN OLD TESTAMENT PATTERN
FOR EXPOSITORY PREACHING

by David C. Deuel
Associate Professor of Old Testament
The Master's Seminary

Ezra provides an unusually clear and inspiring pattern of expository preaching in his ministry to the people of Judah at the outset of the postexilic period. He models an expositor's commitment to studying, practicing godliness, and teaching which leads him to perform an expositor's task—reading distinctly and explaining the Scriptures. In so doing, he challenges expositors of all generations to handle accurately the Word of truth.

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Was Ezra an expositor of the Word of God? If so, what can preachers learn from one to whom both Christian and Jewish expositors look as a prototype?

In a true sense, expositors today stand in a succession which

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1Williamson argues that Ezra was an "expositor of the word of God for the community of the faithful" (H. G. M. Williamson, Ezra and Nehemiah [Sheffield: JSOT, 1987] 70). The term "expositor" in some respects affords too much latitude of definition. By "expositor" the present writer has in mind one who uses exegesis to determine the normal meaning of a text: "It is evident from Ecclus. 39:3 that detailed exegesis was part of the scribal expertise" (Christopher Rowland, Christian Origins: From Messianic Movement to Christian Religion [Minneapolis: Augsburg 1985] 48). Talmon maintains that the writings of this period also reveal the development of certain exegetical principles (Shemaryahu Talmon, "Ezra and Nehemiah," in The Literary Guide to the Bible [ed. by Robert Alter and Frank Kermode; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1987] 357).

2Yamauchi argues that it was Ezra's celebrated scribal role that "attracted various attempts to ascribe all kinds of writings to him" (e.g., the books of Esdras) (Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Postbiblical Traditions About Ezra and Nehemiah," in A Tribute to Gleason Archer [ed. by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Ronald F. Youngblood; Chicago: Moody, 1986] 174).
spans from before Ezra down to the present. According to Rabbinic tradition, Ezra introduced many basic tenets out of which the "Great Synagogue" and its preaching developed. Centuries later the early church borrowed much of its polity, order of worship, and even its preaching from the synagogue. If Judaism followed the pattern established by Ezra and if the church took many of its first practices from Judaism, is it possible that expository preaching has enjoyed an unbroken succession of "pulpiteers" from this early period?

3If the Talmud is correct, Ezra was an understudy of Baruch, scribe of Jeremiah (Megilla 166).


5Regardless of the answer to this question, Larsen's point still holds: "Preachers today stand in this awesome [but perhaps broken] succession. We are the descendants of those incendiary spokesmen for God in all their variety and diversity" (David L. Larsen, The Anatomy of Preaching [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989] 15). The crucial issue in the question of succession is hermeneutical: have expositors since Ezra used exegesis as their bases for exposition? Early expositors do seem to have been concerned about perpetuating hermeneutical skills along with their recopying of the text. In fact, "part of the task of the later Sages was to teach and to assemble pupils who would be sufficiently well equipped with exegetical skill and knowledge of earlier ideas..." (Rowland, Christian Origins 49).
This essay argues that Ezra embodies an early and inspiring example for expositors of all ages. Scripture never explicitly affirms that Ezra was the first true expositor, that Ezra's expository method has been followed by an "unbroken" succession of preachers, or that Ezra gives a complete picture of what an expositor should be and do. Rather than search for precedents or unbroken successions that cannot be proven, the significant lessons regarding the OT pattern of expository preaching should be sought in Ezra's example: the book

6"Since Ezra the scribe not only returned from Babylon with a knowledge of the ancient law, but also as head of an established retinue of levitical interpreters (Neh. 8:1-8), there is little support . . . that Ezra's work as a 'Shriftgelehrter' was a new activity. . . . Ezra inherited a venerable Israelite tradition of scribal and textual scholarship" (Michael Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel [Oxford: Clarendon, 1985] 37). Failing to distinguish exegesis from the product called an "exposition" results in much confusion. The former is a method of study; the latter is the public delivery of a message. Discussing details of sermon delivery is beyond the scope of this study.

7When entertaining thoughts about establishing precedents and successions based on Scripture, one should learn from the misguided efforts of Christopher Columbus who also used a passage attributed to Ezra (2 Esdr 6:42) in an attempt to win support from Ferdinand and Isabella for his 1492 voyage (S. E. Morison, Christopher Columbus, Mariner [New York: New American Library, 1955] 19, 115). Speaking of Columbus' common misuse of Scripture, Fleming has written, "It is accordingly extremely difficult to demonstrate that he embraced a coherent and definable set of interpretive principles as opposed to a kind of middle-brow exegetical opportunism with which he attempted to aggrandize the significance of his experience" (John V. Fleming, "Christopher Columbus as a Scriptural Exegete," Lutheran Quarterly 5/2 [Summer 1991] 187).

8Does Ezra's example suggest that something might be lacking from the reader's own commitment and practice in Bible exposition? What does Ezra's example challenge one to ask of his own preaching? This writer uses Ezra the way that the writer of Hebrews uses the examples of faith. They did not have perfect faith; they had exemplary faith at certain times. Even William Perkins known for his exemplary emphasis "to followe good examples" guarded against exegetical abuse with his dictum, "As the examples of wicked men are every way to be eschewed, so good mens are to be followed." Perkins' sermons were so exegetical in nature that when published posthumously by his students, they served as commentaries. The method he used for setting apart the examples of good men from bad men was by applying the teaching of other and clearer biblical teaching regarding their behavior (William Perkins, A Commentary on Hebrews 11 [n.p., 1609] 14). From the standpoint of
Ezra-Nehemiah sets forth in the person of Ezra an expositor's commitment (Ezra 7:10) that leads him to perform an expositor's task (Neh 8:1-8).

Thematic intention, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are about God's sovereign care, but by illustration they tell us about exemplary leaders (even listeners!) from many perspectives. Ezra is a model because he lives up to standards of what an ideal expositor should be and do based on other passages of Scripture and theological inference. The complexity of thematic intention and informational relevance are examined in Larry Jones and Linda Jones, "Multiple Levels of Information Relevance in Discourse," in Discourse Studies in Mesoamerican Languages (Summer Institute of Linguistics Publication 58; Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics and University of Texas, Arlington, 1979) 1:3-28.

I. THE EXPOSITOR'S COMMITMENT

Ezra was both a priest and a scribe, but he is remembered primarily as an "expositor of the Word of God for the community of the faithful." As an expositor he models a commitment followed by men of God who have read the Scriptures and explained to others what God would have them believe and do in service for Him. Ezra had received a mandate, albeit indirectly, from Moses to read the law during the Feast of Booths (a mandate unquestionably relevant to all occasions), an occasion commemorating God's provision in the wilderness (Deut 31:11-12). According to Moses, the purpose for this reading was "in order that they [the people] may hear and learn and fear the Lord your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law" (Deut 31:12b). To hear, learn, fear, and do what is written: this is the passion of expository preaching.

Israel was not willingly submissive to God's Word during the period between Moses and Ezra. Bright spots, such as Josiah's reform, were exceptional. Many of God's priests failed in their assignment to read and teach His Word. Besides, the people often disobeyed what teaching they had received. The culmination of this sad stewardship of God's revelation was Judah's seventy-year exile.

After the slavery in Babylonian exile, He restored them, leading them like sheep back to Zion. God used enemy nations to escort His people to and from exile to fulfil His covenant judgments and blessings. When a portion of the promised land had been repopulated by His people, the sacrificial system re-instituted, and the yearly cycle of feasts and sabbaths re-established, God used Ezra to call His people to a covenant renewal. This invitation to renew the relationship entailed a restatement of God's law, though in practice it would not completely replace that of the Persian provincial system.

Just as God had prepared and commissioned Moses to be the law giver of the first Exodus, He prepared and commissioned Ezra to be the law restorer for the second exodus of the people of Israel (2

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10H. G. M. Williamson, Ezra and Nehemiah 70.

11While it is easy to force correspondences between Moses and Ezra, "what is at least clear is that the mission represented . . . for Ezra . . . a new beginning, a replica of
Esdras\textsuperscript{12,14}. The Bible clearly states that the king permitted Ezra to go assist his people in their homeland and even gave him the qualified help and needed financial support "because the hand of the Lord his God was upon him" (Ezra 7:6). But God's hand was upon Ezra singularly, "because (yH [k+]) Ezra had set his heart to study the law of YHWH, to practice, and to teach statute and ordinance in Israel" (7:10).\textsuperscript{13}

In the eyes of men several of Ezra's other qualifications might have made him better suited for the task, but the passage says God chose Ezra because he had resolved\textsuperscript{14} to study, practice, and teach the law, not because he had magisterial leadership ability or a commanding stature. His advanced training (priestly and scribal) and exposure to both Israel's and Persia's aristocracy, while quite impressive, seem not to have affected God's choice. In fact, even though the genealogy found in the preceding verses (7:1-5) establishes his venerable ancestry, and even though his immigration document (cf. 7:11-26, a decree) establishes his mission as sanctioned by the king of Persia, God selected Ezra because of his personal commitment to study, live out, and teach God's Word.

Ezra had and would continue to "set his heart" to the ministry of the Word. To set one's heart is to "direct his heart constantly the first Exodus to be followed, then as now, by the giving of the law" (Joseph Blenkinsopp, Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988] 139). Williamson attributes the clear correspondences to the fact that "the people will constantly have needed reassurance that they and their institutions indeed stood in direct line with those of pre-exilic Israel" (Williamson, Ezra, Nehemiah li). Ezra's reading and expositing God's Word were understood against the backdrop of Mosaic analogy.

\textsuperscript{12}"Esdras" is transliterated from the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name for "Ezra."

\textsuperscript{13}Extrabiblical literature makes Ezra's threefold commitment a preecedented ideal to which all scribes after Ezra must aspire (Sir. 38:24`39:11).

\textsuperscript{14}"All emphasis was laid upon Ezra's mission and upon his fitness for its accomplishment" (Batten, The Books of Ezra-Nehemiah [ICC; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913] 306).
towards a goal. For Ezra, the commitment was both deep and long-term. Quite commonly "heart" (bE l/bE l, leb/lebab) is used to describe the very center of human life. Ezra, or anyone who would follow his example, directed the core of his being constantly toward the task of Bible exposition. To say that this function was "his ministry" is to miss the passage's emphasis. One might say that it was his life—his all-consuming passion. Little else commanded his attention like the task that God had set before him. Ezra gave his best effort to study, practice, and teach God's law, each activity being observed completely and in order.

A. Studying God's Word

Ezra qualified for the mission because he had a deep desire to expost God's Torah, "i.e. to learn and interpret" Genesis through Deuteronomy, particularly the legal portions although not excluding the narratives. Interestingly, the Bible preserves no record of Ezra

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16Both the term vâh (darâš, "he inquired") employed here as well as the term vâf (pârâš, "he made known") in Neh 8:8 undergo a significant shift in meaning from inquiring directly from God in an oracular sense in Exod 18:15 and Lev 24:12, respectively, to inquiring of God's law "as an entirely rational mode of explanation or exposition" (Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation 245). This shift in meaning corresponds to the development of a need for exegesis of the revealed text.


18Yamauchi lists the four major hypotheses and their proponents regarding the identity of 'The Book of the Law of Moses' "which Ezra read (Neh. 8:2-15) to the assembled multitude for about five hours. Ranging from the minimal to the maximal they are: (1) A collection of legal materials: Rudolph Kittel, Gerhard von Rad, Martin Noth; (2) The Priestly Code: Abraham Kuenen, Bernhard Stade, W. H. Koster, Eduard Meyer, W. O. E. Oesterley, Adolphe Lods, Hans-J. Kraus; (3) Deuteronomic Laws: Laurence Browne, Raymond Bowman, M. F. Scott, Ulrich Kellermann; (4) The
spending the long and arduous hours laboring in God's Word. The details of his training as an understudy, perhaps beginning at a tender young age, are likewise unavailable to the modern reader. What the Bible depicts clearly in Ezra is a man resolved to study. His earlier priestly and scribal preparation, which must have been quite extensive, does not exhaust his desire to study more. But a clear understanding of the message alone was not enough.

B. Living out God's Word

Ezra was not satisfied to be well-informed about God's law. In the very difficult moments that lay ahead, Ezra proved himself to be committed to living out the ethical/theological principles he learned


19The term "study" (נָדַע [dāras]) is a word that generally means "to search," perhaps focusing on Ezra's quest for God's message. "The scholarly activity on the Torah centered on the conviction that God's revelation was deserving of the most careful study and, what is more, would yield to those who searched carefully enough the insights which would enable man to live according to the divine will" (Christopher Rowland, Christian Origins 52, emphasis added).

20Several alternative translations have been suggested. Michael Fishbane translates רכש (la#$e$t, "to do") as "to compose" (Michael Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation 36). Speaking of the authorial and/or editorial work of Ezra on the Scriptures, Meyers combines la#$e$t with מָלָל (mālam, "to teach") for a hendiatrys translated "to teach effectively" (Jacob Meyers, Ezra-Nehemiah [AB; New York: Doubleday, 1965] 58). However, the meaning "to perform or do" is well-
from his study. Ezra himself not only adhered to God's Word, but also expected those to whom he expounded it to do the same. Ezra's zeal, both for himself and for others, to do what he had learned from the Word of God required that he teach others.

attested especially in contexts where the term describes an ethical response to the Word of God such as is found here in Ezra 7:10 (cf. also Deut 31:12b).
In spite of many efforts to draw sharp distinctions between preaching and teaching in the Bible, a great deal of overlap apparently exists with the two functions. In fact, the difference between them appears to be only quantitative, with preaching exhibiting a more hortatory type of delivery.

Ezra's teaching was rooted in God's revealed will, as found in the first five books of the Bible. This may not seem like much to teach in comparison to the 66 books of the Bible that the church now possesses, but one must keep in mind that many of the major doctrines resident in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation appear in seed form in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Ezra had plenty to read and expound from those chapters alone!

Both the contents and the ordering of Ezra's threefold commitment are an ongoing challenge to expositors of God's Word: is

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21A preference for taking the Hebrew word usually translated “teach” (dE l) in the piel stem to mean "to make (someone) accustomed (to something)" sidesteps the issue of rhetorical form by focusing on the recipients' new state of being rather than the act through which that state was attained (Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990] 401).

22This conclusion is based primarily on a seeming distinction between New Testament terms (e.g., khrygma [kerygma] and didaxh [didache]). At least three passages use the two terms somewhat interchangeably (i.e., Matt 4:23 and 9:35; Luke 4:15, 44; Acts 28:31). R. C. Worley argues convincingly that preaching and teaching were never sharply separated by the first Christians (R. C. Worley, Preaching and Teaching in the Earliest Church [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967]).

23D. J. A. Clines, The Theme of the Pentateuch (Sheffield: JSOT, 1978).

24“Statute” (qoi [heq]) and “ordinance” (taPh [mispal]) (Ezra 7:10) refer to very specific aspects of God's law, “the former referring to the basic provisions or stipulations of the law, the latter to their application in judicial cases” (Blenkin-sopp, Ezra-Nehemiah 139). “But efforts to distinguish clearly between their connotations have not been entirely successful” (Jack P. Lewis, “qoi,” in Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament [ed. by R. Laird Harris et al; Chicago: Moody, 1980] 317). Clines views the two terms as a hendiadys for “the totality of the law” (Clines, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther 101).
teaching without careful study possible? Is godly living possible without first knowing God's standards for living? Is teaching based on careful study possible without being lived out first in the life of the teacher? The admonition to "practice what you preach" is quite apropos here.

When each phase of Ezra's example is kept completely and ordered correctly, following his threefold commitment will prevent many expositional shortcomings: "Study is saved from unreality, conduct from uncertainty, and teaching from insincerity and shallowness."25

Theoretically speaking, the book Ezra-Nehemiah portrays God's sovereign power in fulfilling his covenant promises. It is but another link in the chain of God's story from paradise lost to paradise restored (viz., Genesis through Revelation). But within this chain the person Ezra offers expositors an example of ordered priority, for one day the people called upon him to read the Law of YHWH publicly.26 This is one of the critical moments for which God prepared Ezra and upon which Ezra fixed his sights. Ezra, a man with a commitment to study, practice, and teach the law of YHWH, must now present the fruit of his labor. In Augustine's terminology he must offer his "sacrifice." In the simplest terms, he must read and "expose" the Word of God.27

II. THE EXPOSITORS TASK

One day approximately 42,360 people gathered at the square in front of the Water Gate, a site selected perhaps because of its proximity to the newly rebuilt temple. They approached Ezra and made their

25 Derek Kidner, Ezra and Nehemiah (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979) 62.


27 So crucial is Ezra's threefold resolve that one author has said, "Ezra's actions in the rest of the book must be interpreted in light of this verse," i.e., Ezra 7:10 (Fensham, Ezra and Nehemiah 101).
The purpose for the platform may have been mere practicality, but McConville sees more: "The effect was to show that those who wielded authority in the community were themselves under the authority of God, and that therefore it was the word of God that regulated the whole life of the community" (J. G. McConville, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985] 116).

Perhaps "a brief thanksgiving for the law, such as are given in the Talmud for use before reading Scripture" (TB, Berakot 116) (D. J. A. Clines, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther 184).

The people's response was an affirmation to the benediction. At about the same period in Israel's history, this is the response given in a court case as the witnesses affirm the truth of the plaintiff's statement before the court official. The connection is simply that stating the facts accurately deserves an affirmative "Amen," i.e., "This is true." The court statement reads, "All my companions will testify for me, all who were reaping with me in the heat of the sun they will testify for me that this is true" (lit., "they will say, 'Amen'") (Yavneh Yam Inscription, in Dennis Pardee, Handbook of Hebrew Letters [Chico, CA: Scholars, 1982] lines 10-11).

The people's role in Nehemiah 8, though much of it was ritual protocol, furnishes a good example for twentieth-century listeners. It has been frequently observed that though the number of good preachers has declined in recent times, so has the number of good listeners. Good listeners are also vital to an effective expository preaching process.

The Aramaic form of the term as it appears in Ezra 4:18 should be rendered "translated," but "the basic meaning still remains, 'to make/ be made clear' (by revelation, explication or translation)' (V. P. Hamilton, "vrbh," Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament [ed. by R. Laird Harris et al; Chicago: Moody, 1980] 740).
Scriptures before the congregation? More specifically, how does his commitment find expression in his preaching?

A. Read the Book

Reading the scroll (Neh 8:8) would hardly seem to require comment, but this is where any discussion of expository preaching should begin. Well-intentioned expositors often read Scripture\(^\text{32}\) as if the reading were qualitatively inferior or at least secondary to the sermon. Torrey’s translation of Neh 8:8 rightly demonstrates that the exposition which follows Ezra’s reading is but the handmaid of the reading itself: “And they read in the book of the law distinctly and gave the sense so that the reading was understood.”\(^\text{33}\)

In other words, Ezra and his assistants took great pains to achieve “exact pronunciations, intonation and phrasing, so as to make the units of the piece and its traditional sense readily comprehensible”\(^\text{34}\) before they expounded the cited text. Interpretive comments served only to enhance the reading, not the other way around.

By implication, it is inevitable that the further the preacher moves away from reading the text, the greater the risk of adding superfluous, incorrect, and distracting comments. The extreme example occurs when the preacher uses no text whatsoever and the congregation is left to judge the truthfulness of the allegedly biblical message on the basis of its memory of Scripture. Placing the priority on reading is one safeguard against imposing extraneous ideas on the

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\(^\text{34}\)Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation 109.
text.

B. Exposit the Book

After "reading distinctly" a portion of Scripture, Ezra and others35 "gave the sense" (لاه <روه m$ ek$) and "expounded the recited text" (אונע ינבר, wayyabiynu bemmiqr@) (Neh 8:8).36 Forty-three thousand people require much explanation! Few other passages in either the OT or the NT depict expositional preaching in such detail for what it truly is, i.e., "exposing" the written Word of God to the community of faith so that the people hear with a view to learning, learn with a view to fearing, and fear with a view to practicing godliness, as Moses had instructed (Deut 31:12). In short, exposition assists the reading process whether the written Word is read individually or corporately, as was the case here. Ezra did not expose to God's people what was traditional or fashionable, the latest literary masterpiece from metro-Persia, or the musings of Father Abraham. He expounded clearly37 only what he read in God's Word.

35Ezra was "head of an established retinue of levitical interpreters" (ibid., 37). Williamson offers a convincing argument for including Ezra in the interpretive or explanatory activity (H. G. M. Williamson, Ezra-Nehemiah 290).

36Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation 109. Both verbs are explicitly exegetical and indicate the addition of clarifications and interpretations to the text where intonation and phrasing and traditional meanings were not sufficient" (ibid.). Much early Jewish and early Christian interpretation was fanciful and allegorical, but the "Antioch school" of interpretation was not the first to espouse a "normal" reading of the Scriptures. Very early the Sadducees "in so far as we can reconstruct their beliefs represented a more literalistic approach to the interpretation of Scripture (Ant. 13.297) and their attitude may have been more widespread than we sometimes suppose" (Rowland, Christian Origins 47).

37The Puritans spoke of "opening" a passage of Scripture so as to make it clearly understandable. Some were inclined to make their sermons literary masterpieces. In response to such literary aspirations, the sage counsel of Elisha Yale offered to the young preachers he had trained in upstate New York is worth remembering: "Whatever attention you may see fit to give to your style and diction, let it be only with the holy view of making your sermons more effectual to the good of souls. Feed not the flock of God with sound and shadows and flowers instead of the substantial meat of the Word . . ." (from a plaque at the base of Elisha Yale's statue in
and based his exposition on what he had learned through careful study.

What is more, his application of the passage was both current and relevant. Although it is difficult to determine exactly what Ezra said in conjunction with the reading, the book of Ezra-Nehemiah models a reapplication of the law to a new situation. This is evident from its Pentateuchal citations which are not quoted verbatim. The way they are modified reflects reapplications to the new situation of Ezra's post-exilic community much the same as the laws recorded in Deuteronomy are reapplications of the original law given at Sinai to the new situation on the plains of Moab. Moses was the source of both the latter sets of laws.

But this is not where the teaching/preaching stopped. Ezra also had a ministry of teaching among the heads of the households, the priests, and the Levites, i.e., the other teachers (Neh 8:13). This pattern of preaching to the masses as well as teaching smaller groups of leaders was not unlike Jesus as He expounded the law both in His Sermon on the Mount and in His more intimate discipling sessions with the twelve. Ezra did not stop short of doing his very best to make certain that his people understood and applied the written Word of God.

Gloversville, NY).


39Williamson, Ezra and Nehemiah 93.

40"As a priest-scribe he became the model for a later class of religious professionals whose sole task was the study and exposition of Scripture (cf. Ezra 7:10)" (Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, A Survey of the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991] 236).

41Wolff's comments in this regard are both convicting and encouraging: "Of course it is quite possible to stop halfway in this laborious process. This is undoubtedly the danger that confronts us every day: the danger of all 'scribes': the danger of straining at gnats and swallowing camels, of disputing about the letter and burying the treasure with which we have been entrusted. The work of explaining the text is often so laborious that the preaching of it can get lost in the process. And yet the hour always comes when the text itself drives us to preaching. And we are challenged too
While on the one hand Ezra's proclamation is not a Sunday sermon delivered to a local church, it does manifest a timeless and universal quality as regards the nature of exposition. Ezra models an expositor's commitment: studying, practicing godliness, and teaching. This leads him to perform an expositor's task: reading distinctly and explaining the Scriptures so that his congregation may hear with a view to learning, learn with a view to fearing, and fear with a view to practicing godliness.

To the encouragement of expositors, God's people still repent and rejoice as they did in Ezra's day when a well-prepared teacher helps them understand Scripture. Fellow expositors, set your heart to preach the Word.

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by the congregation, and by the need of men and women round about us. So then the silence must be broken, and research and enquiry must turn into a passing on to other people" (Hans Walter Wolff, Old Testament and Christian Preaching [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986] 103).

MUST EXPOSITORY PREACHING
ALWAYS BE BOOK STUDIES?
SOME ALTERNATIVES

Irvin A. Busenitz
Professor of Old Testament
The Master's Seminary

To be truly biblical, preaching can and should be expository, even if it is thematic, theological, historical, or biographical. Expository sermons of these types must be thoroughly biblical, not only in their foundation but in their superstructure as well. The effectiveness of the messenger and the power of the message depend upon a close attention to the Word presented with grammatical, historical, literary, and contextual accuracy. For these special kinds of expository messages, certain guidelines must prevail, and many tools are available to assist the research process, but there are no shortcuts. The path to powerful preaching inevitably demands diligence in the Word.

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Just as preaching that is verse-by-verse is not necessarily expository, so also preaching that is not verse-by-verse is not necessarily non-expository. It is granted that some topical approaches are not expository, but such need not be and certainly should not be the case. No book deals with topics that directly impact daily life more than the Bible. Thus, to be effective, all topical preaching and teaching, whether the topic be thematic, theological, historical, or biographical, must be consumed with expounding the Word.

Jesus expounded the Scriptures powerfully (Mark 1:22), but not always verse by verse. As an expositor, He sometimes spoke topically, using many different OT Scriptures as the basis of His teaching. Sometimes He touched on a specific theme or aspect of theology, such as the nature of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13), divorce (Matthew 19), or how to pray (Matthew 6; Luke 11). At other times He employed a historical event (Luke 13:4 ff.) or character (Matt 12:41 ff.). Yet He always used the Word as the foundation and as the building blocks of His instruction. On the basis of Jesus' example, it can be
unequivocally asserted that all truly biblical preaching is also expository and is not necessarily restricted to a verse-by-verse format. It can take alternative forms, too.

Topical preaching has many benefits. First, used at the end of one book study and before starting another, it provides variety. The change from one type of presentation to another often contributes freshness and causes increased attentiveness. Preaching on a theme or salient point of doctrine can give people a greater understanding of a particular subject, resulting in a greater impact on their lives. Larsen observes,

Topical preaching has a venerated place in the history of the craft. Its legitimacy is seen in the validity of biblical and systematic theology. While this should not be the first choice of the pastor-teacher, every pastor will preach topically on occasion... Because the topical sermon can be more relentlessly unitary, one discovers that any list of the ten sermons which have most decisively influenced world culture and society consists mostly if not entirely of topical sermons.²

Second, restricting preaching solely to the verse-by-verse method without including any kind of didactic treatment of major biblical themes, doctrines, and ethical teachings is to make an unbiblical distinction between preaching and teaching, thereby withholding from a congregation essential perspectives on the Word. Stevenson asks,

Is there any reason why he should meet them week after week but leave them ignorant of doctrinal meanings...? The didactic and kerygmatic sides of the gospel cannot be separated, one to be assigned to the pulpit, the other to the church school. To separate one from the other is to kill both.³

PRECAUTIONS

Contrary to what is frequently thought (and, by the preponderance of its usage, apparently taught), topical preaching is not always the easiest. In many respects, it is the most difficult when done with correctness and accuracy. Consider these reasons. First, the biblical text often used for topical homilies is merely a springboard for launching a selected topic and has no inherent relationship to the topic of the message. When this happens, the preacher draws from his own personal perspectives, ideas, principles, and world view to develop the subject. This is not expository preaching. The preacher's proper task is to deliver the goods, not to manufacture them. He is the waiter, not the chef. Therefore, the biblical text must be his resource, the fountain of truth to which he constantly resorts, from which he himself continually drinks, and from which he faithfully draws to satisfy the thirst of others. Exercising this kind of control over topical preaching is hard work.

Second, the Scriptures garnered to support the emphasis of a topical message are many times wrested from their context, forcing them to teach something they do not. The memorization of selected verses of the Bible, beneficial in and of itself, frequently exacerbates the problem. For example, how often has Matt 18:20 ("For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst") been employed to console the faithful few at poorly attended prayer meetings rather than to assure divine presence and enablement in implementing church discipline? This type of pitfall is most common, often capturing its victims unwittingly. Noting its dangers, Stevenson asserts, "To the extent that this kind of preaching uses the Bible at all, it does so to exploit or devour it and not to listen to it, let alone to stand under it and be guided by it." In such cases, pastors "are using the text as its masters rather than serving the text as its ministers." Avoiding this type of danger is very time-demanding. Whether the subject is thematic or theological, each Scripture must be thoroughly researched so as to do justice to its historical and literary context.

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4Ibid., 13.
5Ibid., 155-56.
Third, though "problem preaching" or "life-situation preaching" may bring much contemporaneity to the pulpit and thus capitalize on relevant issues, it often generates greater focus on the problem than on the solution. It may also occasionally expose the preacher to a "he's-preaching-at-me" accusation. Broadus cautions against a restricted focus on one's immediate concerns:

Subject preaching is the orator's method par excellence. It lends itself to finished discourse. But it has its dangers. The preacher easily becomes interested in finding subjects that are interesting and readily yield a good oration rather than such as have a sure Christian and scriptural basis or such as come close home to the needs of his people. He is tempted to think more of his ideas and his sermons than of "rightly dividing the word of truth" and leading men into the Kingdom of God. He is in danger also of preaching in too narrow a field of truth and human need, since of necessity he will be drawn to those subjects that interest him personally or with which he is already familiar. Unless, therefore, he is constantly widening his horizon by diligent study, he will soon exhaust his resources.6

Consequently, great diligence is required to avoid a "problem only" orientation when using this method. With a reasonably broad coverage of the Bible in one's preaching, a wide variety of problems and life situations can be addressed naturally and delicately without violating expository boundaries in employing a "topical" approach.

When preaching on a theme, a theological doctrine, or a historical event or character, the expositor must endeavor to utilize Scripture fully in his preaching. His task is to unfold the Scriptures, not merely to enfold them into a topic. The latter will bend the Word to conform to the preacher's perspective; the former will bend the preacher's perspective to conform to the Word. This is important, because it is the Word that is "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12). It is the Scriptures that bear witness about Christ (John 5:39). It is the Gospel that is "the power of God for salvation" (Rom 1:16). Desire to be relevant or current must not

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Some Alternatives

prevail over biblical authority. Through the knowledge of the Word, the Spirit of God convicts, directs, and strengthens for Christian living.

Consequently, unless the Scriptures constitute the basis for all the structural elements of a sermon and unless the expositor labors diligently in the context of each of the texts he cites, a sermon will inevitably lack the power of the Word of Truth rightly divided, and hearers will be misled, both in the substance of what is taught and in the example of Bible study methodology. As Koller has poignantly noted, "The preacher must lead his people into the text, not away from it."7

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Sermons are classified in different ways, so it is not always evident what category a sermon falls into. Some are categorized on the basis of content and others according to homiletical style. Most classifications must be viewed as nothing more than a skeleton, rough sketches around which the artist crafts the findings of his study. Consequently, the type of sermon chosen depends on which type will match the message to be preached. The sermon-type is to serve, not dominate. Hence the underlying commitment must not be to the class of sermon, but to the sine qua non dictated by biblical hermeneutics and the sermon-preparation process. As a respected authority has noted, these must guide the craftsman:

[Sermon structures] are always secondary to purpose and utility. They are tools, and in the shaping of tools and the techniques for handling tools experimentation and invention are desirable. But these require intelligence and faithfulness to underlying principles.8

Some underlying principles are well defined and very specific, applying more directly to one type of sermon structure than to another. Other guidelines are more generic and give equally

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8Broadus, Preparation 133.
significant direction for all types. General principles will be reviewed next and, after this, specific guidelines will be outlined.

When?

The times when a preacher may wish to present an expository sermon with a thematic, theological, historical, or biographical structure are many and varied. A most effective, and probably the easiest, time is when one is preaching through a book and arrives at a subject requiring greater depth of explanation. For example, when preaching through the Gospel of John, one may pause at 1:1 for an extra message (or extra messages) on the deity of Christ, including a discussion of the related Jehovah’s Witness errors; at 1:12-13 to treat the subject of divine election; at 1:14 to discuss the incarnation of Christ; or at 4:24 for a series on worshiping God.

A pastor must be careful, however, not to become too involved with every topic that stems from the text. Too many topical messages along the way cause the audience to lose the train of thought of the ongoing consecutive exposition. In the return to book exposition after a topical study, it is imperative to review the structural and thematic flow of the book.

Other occasions for topical sermons include times of significant events in the life of a church, a community, or the world. The death of a church-family member or a tragedy in the community are also suitable occasions for topic-centered messages. Wars (especially those in the Middle East) give unsurpassed opportunities to focus on subjects like eschatology, the return of the Lord, the omnipotence and sovereignty of God, and the holiness and judgment of God. Major earthquakes give similar openings to treat earthquakes of the Bible, including the significance of such an event and the time-frame of its biblical occurrence.

Special days like Christmas, Easter, and Mother’s or Father’s Day are the most obvious times for topical sermons. Such occasions often generate increased church attendance and greater attentiveness to the teaching of the Word. They can be strategic occasions for greater effectiveness. However, though one does not want to miss the opportunities such times afford, it is not necessary to produce a special sermon for every special occasion. Pressure to generate something
new every time can lead to eisegesis\(^9\) rather than exegesis. Unger warns,

Topical sermons most readily suggest themselves for special days and events of the year. But the faithful preacher must beware that the incessant clamor of special days and events of the year for recognition does not prove a temptation to lure him from true Bible exposition. [Special days] tend to crowd out solid exposition of the Bible and to displace it with superficial preaching deficient in Biblical content and appeal.\(^{10}\)

Special days and events bring with them significant beneficial effects, both to the process of sermon preparation and to the hearers. People are often caught up with the significance of the day or moment, allowing the pastor to build his sermon from the foundation already in place. The joy of Mother's Day or the excitement generated at Christmas often enhance the impact of a message.

How?

Some very basic principles must undergird all preaching of God's Word. Because it is His Word, it must be studied and presented with care and accuracy. James 3:1 is an ever-present warning and should not be overlooked or underestimated! These underlying principles are, in many respects, the same for all sermons, regardless of their homiletical structure or manner of textual focus. However, sermons that focus on particular subjects or issues are by their very nature extremely vulnerable to particular shortcomings. Consequently, the fundamental principles of preparation require constant attention in this type of preaching.

The first of these principles is contextual analysis. Whether one is preaching thematically, theologically, historically, or biographically, he must give close attention to the context of each verse or phrase used in preaching. This is especially true if he is using other passages and

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\(^9\)I.e., a reading of meaning into the text rather than obtaining meaning from the text.

\(^{10}\)Merrill F. Unger, *Principles of Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1955) 52.
cross-references to develop a subject. It is dangerously easy to slip into "proof-texting"\(^{11}\) when developing this kind of message. A verse in support of a sermon point may contribute to great oratory, but be wrong for expository preaching!

Contextual analysis requires attention to both the immediate and the remote contexts. The remote requires attention to the thematic unfolding of an entire book. For example, understanding 1 John as setting forth various tests which people may apply to see whether they are in the faith, as Robert Law convincingly demonstrates it does,\(^{12}\) will significantly influence the interpretation of individual texts within the epistle.

A study of the immediate context will yield equally significant benefits. For example, Heb 13:5b ("I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you") is frequently quoted meaninglessly and applied inaccurately, because it has been detached from v. 5a ("Let your way of life be free from the love of money, being content with what you have"). This principle is often paid lip service, but the actual expending of energy toward its true implementation is far more difficult and too rarely practiced. Researching the context of narrative and biographical passages, especially of the OT, can demand extra effort because they are frequently lengthy.

The second principle is historical analysis. While often overlooked or summarily passed over lightly, this kind of study can generate tremendous insight into a passage and result in a significantly improved comprehension of the text. For example, a historical study of the Feast of Tabernacles and the ritual reenactment of God's provision of water from a rock in the wilderness furnishes a sharpened perception of John 7:37-38: "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, `From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" In the preaching of Matt 19:1-12, the text comes alive with the observation

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\(^{11}\)The severity of wrongdoing when proof-texting should not be underestimated. Stevenson (Preacher's Workshop 157) defines it as "using a text to silence opposition and compel consent. . . . This kind of preaching uses the Bible not as 'a searchlight to be thrown upon a shadowed spot,' but as a bludgeon to gain mastery."

\(^{12}\)Robert Law, The Tests of Life (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982[rpt]).
that the Pharisees' query regarding divorce takes place in Perea, the precise region where Herod Antipas beheaded John the Baptist after being confronted by John regarding his divorce (cf. Matt 14:1 ff.). It is obvious that the Pharisees were attempting to lure Jesus into a situation where Herod might kill him, too.

A third general principle is literary analysis which basically looks at the type of literature in which the text is found. Is it biography, history, letter, proverb, parable, or what? Aune notes the importance of carefully observing the literary form of a passage:

Literary genres and forms are not simply neutral containers used as convenient ways to package various types of written communication. They are social conventions that provide contextual meaning for the smaller units of language and text they enclose. The original significance that a literary text had for both author and reader is tied to the genre of that text, so that the meaning of the part is dependent upon the meaning of the whole.13

Each genre embodies characteristics which are distinctive and thus requires attention to its own unique interpretive principles. For instance, Jesus' teaching on prayer in Luke 18:2 is prefaced with these words: "Now He was telling them a parable" (18:1). The interpreter is informed that the teaching is to be construed in keeping with principles of parabolic hermeneutics. Therefore, the interpretive strategy has obvious differences from one adopted in Exod 20:15: "You shall not steal." Recognizing and understanding the genre of a given passage prompts a reading strategy, rules out false expectations, and represents an entry to the meaning of the text.14

In the final analysis, placing the preaching text within the broader contextual, historical, and literary framework of the biblical author simply extends to the Bible the same courtesy that we extend to the morning newspaper. Only when that is done will one grasp the

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authorial intent and release the power of the "rightly-divided" Word. These principles elicit a commitment of time and energy, and generally do not yield instant results. Yet their fruit is sweet and the rewards great for using them.

SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES

Thematic Preaching Guidelines. As a safeguard against selecting a text that does not accurately undergird the subject under consideration, the first principle for thematic preaching requires that the primary text for the sermon be chosen contextually, i.e., as faithfully reflecting what the text means in its own context. Too often in thematic preaching, a sermon is prepared on a purely topical basis, and the text chosen as a "motto" to sound the theme and bless the preacher's ideas.

Unfortunately, this is an exploitation of the biblical text. The text "simply serves as a catalyst; the actual content of the sermon is derived elsewhere and frequently could have been suggested just as well by a fortune cookie."15 Instead of accurately expounding the Scriptures, the would-be expositor heralds nothing more than personal or cultural values saturated with randomly chosen Bible verses.

Preachers are called to be ministers of the word of God. This means that the sermon should be much more than "one man's opinion"; the sermon should be the word of God. . . . A sermon is the word of God only to the extent that it faithfully proclaims the word of God in the Bible.16

The Word of God rightly divided brings authority to the sermon, thereby protecting the preacher from heresy and, at the same time, giving the audience a means to validate and defend the instruction.

A second principle for thematic preaching is to focus on biblical word (or sometimes, short phrase) studies, researching in particular

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those words around which the theme is built. For example, when preaching on 1 Thess 5:16 ("rejoice always"), one researches the meanings and biblical usage of the words "rejoice" and "joy," and the general exhortations in Scripture to be glad. In the process, various aspects of rejoicing will emerge, such as its source(s), its hindrances, its rewards, and so on. This method incorporates the important element of using Scripture directly to obtain guidance and teaching for a sermon and avoids the danger of falling into wayward philosophical abstractions. Where an abundance of biblical information exists on a given theme, the expositor will need to sift and select the parts with more significant suitability. At the same time, thoroughness should not be sacrificed.

A third thematic principle requires that a subject of appropriate size be chosen. The broader the topic, the more difficult it is to cover the pertinent material with justice and cohesiveness, and the more difficult it is to instruct people, generate understanding, and foster retention. Alexander notes,

> The more special the subject, the more you will find to say on it. Take it as a general rule, the more you narrow the subject, the more thoughts you will have. ... It requires vast knowledge and a mature mind to treat a general subject, such as virtue, or honor, and it is much better to begin with particular instances.17

It is sometimes desirable to preach on a broad subject, such as an exposition of a whole book of the Bible in one sermon. The benefit of this type of message is that it affords people a comprehensive grasp of the contents and significance of the whole before it is broken into its parts.

This "macro" approach, however, intensifies the preparation demands on the expositor, for unless he understands the constituent parts, he cannot present the whole accurately. Furthermore, the temptation of a busy pastor is to present the obvious, reciting facts and details already known to his people, thereby sacrificing the primary value of exposition, i.e., telling the audience more than they can glean

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from a casual reading. This has the disastrous effect of leaving both himself (in the preparation process) and the audience without meaningful interaction with the Word and thus without instruction, increased comprehension, and opportunity for spiritual growth.

To restrict the scope to be covered allows for depth of research and precision in instruction. Broadus adds, "It is usually better that the subject should not be general but specific. This not only promotes variety in successive sermons but really makes each subject more fruitful." 18

Ultimately, such preaching can and should be expository—a rich development and presentation of the Word of God. Regardless of one's specific homiletical approach, preaching must be biblical or it is not expository. It must be filled with teachings from the Word, not with humanistic perspectives or cultural philosophies.

Tools. The expositor has many tools at his disposal when researching a particular theme. Listed below are just a few of the basic ones:

a. A good English concordance.
d. Treasury of Scripture Knowledge (Revell).
g. Numerous books on preaching for special occasions, such as Herbert Lockyer, All the Holy Days and Holidays (Zondervan).
h. Your own file is one of the best, if you have been faithfully reading, clipping, and storing away. It is imperative that you have a good filing system—one that permits you to retrieve the appropriate materials quickly.

18 Broadus, Preparation 134.
Theological Preaching

Guidelines. Preaching a theological expository sermon is very similar to thematic preaching. For the most part, the principles given there apply here, too. However, some additional elements apply specifically to theological topics and thus require separate explanation.

Theological instruction transpires continually within a verse-by-verse expository sermon in brief excurses, paragraphs, or sentences. Nevertheless, to furnish perspective, expand theological understanding, and provide greater appreciation for the nature and character of God, such doctrinal teaching occasionally requires specific unified attention in a sermon devoted exclusively to it. Theological preaching is often shunned because of a pastor’s lack of theological acumen and his unwillingness to pay the cost of preparation. But despite its high price tag, it needs to be done. The health of the church necessitates it.

Doctrine, i.e., teaching, is the preacher’s chief business. To teach men truth, or to quicken what they already know into freshness and power, is the preacher’s great means of doing good. The facts and truths which belong to the Scripture account of sin, Providence, and redemption, form the staple of all scriptural preaching. But these truths ought not simply to have place after a desultory and miscellaneous fashion in our preaching. The entire body of Scripture teaching upon any particular subject, when collected and systematically arranged, has come to be called the “doctrine” of Scripture on that subject . . . ; and in this sense we ought to preach much on the doctrines of the Bible. We all regard it as important that the preacher should himself have sound views of doctrine; is it not also important that he should lead his congregation to have just views?19

Theological sermons need not be dry. Broadus observes that it “all depends on the way in which it is done. The dry preacher will make all subjects dry; dull anecdotes and tame exhortations have sometimes been heard of.”20 Conversely, theological sermons can and

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19Ibid., 60.

20Ibid.
should be as fresh and vibrant as the pastor's own zeal for knowing God, his zest for discovering the deep riches of God's Word, and his passion for preaching the whole counsel of God. Much more than a theological lecture is required; mandated is a treatise passionately delivered and overflowing with evidence that the subject has captured the heart and life of the pastor and now begs to infiltrate the innermost being of the hearer.

By way of caution, the expositor must avoid making a single doctrine his hobby horse. The Word of God in its entirety is to be explained, not just one favorite portion of it. Nor should one avoid those doctrines which may be controversial with some audiences. They too must be taught.

It would seem to be a just principle that a preacher should never go out of his way to find a controversial matter or go out of his way to avoid it. He who continually shrinks from conflict should stir himself up to faithfulness; he who is by nature belligerent should cultivate forbearance and courtesy. When the text or topic naturally leads us to remark upon some matter of controversy, we should not, save in exceptional cases, avoid it. We should of course be mainly occupied with the advocacy of positive truth; but . . . in many cases we cannot clearly define truth save by contrasting it with error. And since errors held and taught by good men are only the more likely to be hurtful to others, we are surely not less bound to refute them in such cases than when advocated by bad men. . . . While faithfully and earnestly opposing error, even as held by Christian brethren, let us avoid needlessly wounding the cause of our common Christianity.²¹

Elsewhere Broadus appropriately cautions, "Be faithful and fearless, but skillful and affectionate."²²

Tools. Topics on which to preach theological sermons are seemingly innumerable. Included in the great doctrines of the faith would be the attributes of God, the doctrine of the church, the Holy

²¹Ibid., 65-66.

²²Ibid., 61.
Spirit, and the inerrancy and trustworthiness of the Bible and its transmission to us. One could preach on each of the key points in the doctrinal statement of his church, and so on.

Resources for this type of preaching are many, including the following:


d. John MacArthur, God, Satan, and Angels (Moody).

e. John MacArthur, God With Us (Zondervan).


i. Thomas Watson, A Body of Divinity (Sovereign Grace).

However, it is best to begin with the Scriptures themselves and thereby, in essence, write one's own theology. This cannot be encouraged too strongly! The freshness of the material and the rewards of discovery will exceed what can be gained from a study of theology books. After one's own study, theology books become an excellent source for reinforcement and enhancement. As Unger has wisely admonished, "The best work in this field will carefully expound what the Scriptures themselves reveal more than what might be gleaned from books of theology."\(^{23}\)

Historical Preaching

History rightly presented has tremendous attractiveness to an eager-to-learn mind. Nor does it lack power to impact and generate understanding. History is the ultimate teacher, patiently waiting in the wings of life until one opens to its persistent knocking. Unfortunately, the old saying is all too applicable: "The only thing we have learned from history is that we have learned nothing from history."

But this need not be the case. To a greater degree than secular

\(^{23}\)Unger, Principles 49.
history, biblical history generates great attraction to the truth and is imbued with great power to produce spiritual discernment and influence. Most appropriate are the words of Paul in 1 Cor 10:11: "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction."

In the Bible the designs of Providence are not left to be judged of by our sagacity but are often clearly revealed, so as to show us the meaning of things obscure and the real co-working of things apparently antagonistic. Thus the Bible histories act like the problems worked out in a treatise of algebra, teaching us how to approach the other problems presented by the general history of the world. The oft-quoted saying of an ancient writer that "history is philosophy teaching by example" applies nowhere so truly as to the inspired records, which are God himself teaching by example.24

Consequently, with so much valuable data at his disposal, it behooves the expositor to research the biblical archive and expound the biblical histories that were sovereignly commenced and which have providentially transpired.

Guidelines. Historical preaching requires an acquaintance with the physical surroundings of a context. A Bible expositor should review geography and topography, together with the manners and customs of Israel and her neighbors. He should study them industriously so that he can visualize the scenes so as to re-create them vividly in the minds of the hearers. When preaching from historical books such as Ruth, Esther, Jonah, or Acts, for example, he should incorporate both the setting and the substance of the text in his sermon. Included with the content, the setting provides an expositor with a wealth of historical information from the surrounding physical realm and with an opportunity to present the sermon in dramatic storybook fashion.25

24Broadus, Preparation 71.

25This type also allows the preacher to conceal his thesis until the end of the sermon. Although the thesis should be kept in mind throughout the sermon, it would not be revealed until the close, when the case has already been made. This approach
Tools. Commentaries will generally include some historical and geographical information. Topographical and archeological assistance is usually more difficult to retrieve. However, a number of excellent works that have this information are available for the expositor researching the historical.


d. Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Eerdmans).


f. Michael Grant, The History of Ancient Israel (Scribners).

g. F. F. Bruce, New Testament History (Doubleday).


i. Everett Ferguson, Backgrounds of Early Christianity (Eerdmans).

Biographical Preaching

It seems that nothing interests people more than stories about other people. News (or gossip, for that matter) about another is like honey to flies—it rarely fails to attract a crowd. When tirelessly researched and skillfully presented, an invitation to peer into the life and character of a biblical personage brings with it an unveiling of sin and motivation toward maturity. Biblical principles are not abstract only; they occur on the stage of living history displayed in biblical personification. Since this is true, biographical preaching is a powerful true-to-life instrument eagerly waiting to be used as an effective tool in an expositor's repertoire.

26Discussions here are limited to preaching biblical personalities. Extra-biblical stalwarts of the faith furnish some additional excellent instruction and examples. But the history of Christianity outside the Bible is best left for illustration and elucidation.
Guidelines. Generally speaking, biographical sermons are constructed and delivered in one of two ways. One way is to tell the story of the person and then to follow it with the lessons drawn from his experience. Another is to draw one lesson from each point/stage of a biblical character's life. The lesson is extracted and applied at each stage of the description before moving on to describe the next stage. The reverse is equally effective. The lesson is stated and then followed with a portion of the life story to illustrate it. If the story has been properly told, the truths one wishes to enforce will already be so clear that they can be driven in and clinched quickly.27

Biographical preaching faces the same primary concern that confronts all topical preaching: being true to the context. Because of the ease with which one can extract "juicy" vignettes for a sermon, preachers may be tempted (often unconsciously) to make the life of a biblical character teach lessons it does not teach. The temptation is especially strong when illustrating from a single incident or characteristic from a biblical individual's life.

Consequently, it is generally safer to use the biblical character's entire life as an illustration rather than extracting a single point. And since the Bible frequently furnishes only brief and incomplete sketches, filling in the gaps must be strictly compatible with known or recorded facts. Biblical biographical preaching must be seen first within the context of the Bible's theme. Biographies form an integral part of the whole of sacred history and serve a very specific purpose in the delineation of that history. For this reason, they must be seen first as a part of the larger picture.

Some preachers abuse biographical preaching by shunning it, because they feel they have little talent for description and storytelling. Others abuse it by focusing only on the historical person without teaching anything substantial. A chief benefit of describing lives in the Bible is from character analysis, a study of God's sovereign, providential workings in their motives and actions, both good and bad. Koller has aptly cautioned,

It must be remembered that the Bible was not given to reveal the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but to reveal the hand of God in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; not as a revelation of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, but as a revelation of the Savior of Mary and Martha and Lazarus.28

Furthermore, biographical preaching must have more substance than just a rereading of the text in a Sunday School fashion. It must teach insight into the sovereign workings of the hand of God’s insight that comes only through diligent research and faithful study.

Tools. The pages of Scripture abound with men and women from every walk of life—e.g., kings, beggars, housewives, zealots, and servants. Biblical material from which to preach is not lacking in this area. Though tools to assist in preparation are not quite as numerous, many are still available. In addition to Bible encyclopedias which generally provide good historical background material, the following are quite helpful:

c. Gene Getz, Joseph (Regal).
e. Herbert Lockyer, All the Apostles of the Bible (Zondervan).
f. Herbert Lockyer, All the Men of the Bible (Zondervan).
g. Herbert Lockyer, All the Women of the Bible (Zondervan).
h. Herbert Lockyer, All the Children of the Bible (Zondervan).
i. Herbert Lockyer, All the Kings and Queens of the Bible (Zondervan).

SUMMING UP

28Koller, Expository Preaching 32.
Whether preaching thematically, theologically, historically, or biographically, the bottom line is that the Scriptures must be the primary resource and contextual guidelines must be observed. They are the expositor's chief source of spiritual insight and teaching, the place to which he turns first before studying the many available helps. And once in the Scriptures, the expositor must take great pains to utilize them in a fashion that will reflect the authorial intent.
Spiritual gifts have long been a major topic of discussion in evangelicalism, but in recent years the focus has shifted somewhat from a discussion of gifts like tongues to the gift of prophecy. Wayne A. Grudem has proposed a novel definition of prophecy that he attempts to support from the NT. He traces part of his definition to cessationists and part to Charismatics in hopes of finding a middle ground acceptable to both. A central platform in Grudem's hypothesis is Eph 2:20, a verse whose interpretation he misrepresents because of a grammatical misunderstanding. Other weaknesses in his theory include his assumption of a strict discontinuity from OT to NT prophecy, a mistaken understanding of the prestige of the NT prophet, and a misapprehension of the need of continuous evaluation of NT prophecy.

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SPIRITUAL GIFTS AS A CENTER OF CONTROVERSY

Controversy and crisis are no strangers to the Christian church. When Paul penned 1 Corinthians, this first-century church was already embroiled in turmoil over the nature and practice of spiritual gifts. Misconceptions and abuse of the gifts in Christian worship were rampant. A three-man delegation from the church (1 Cor 7:1; 16:17) asked Paul for clarification on gifts such as prophecy, tongues, and knowledge (1 Cor 13:8). The outcome of the turbulence in Corinth is unknown, but the second century saw the same confusion in the

1Dr. Farnell is a recent graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary where he completed his doctoral dissertation on the subject "New Testament Prophecy: Its Nature and Duration." The timeliness and quality of his treatment of Wayne A. Grudem's The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today and related writings prompted the staff of The Master's Seminary Journal to incorporate this essay in the present issue.
Montanist heresy. Now the tumult has re-emerged in the twentieth century in the form of Pentecostalism, Neopentecostalism, and movements variously labelled as "Charismatic," "Vineyard," "Signs and Wonders," and "Third Wave."

The gift of tongues (cf. Acts 2:1-13; 1 Cor 14:2 ff.) has drawn a disproportionate amount of this debate until about the last fifteen years. Most recently, however, several books have dealt with the gift of prophecy. Since the nature and purpose of this gift had not been closely defined by either side of the controversy, this gift has provided a fertile topic as a new phase in the discussion of temporary and permanent spiritual gifts. Fundamental questions about the nature of this gift now threaten to become, if they have not done so already, a major storm center in NT theology and church worship. Recent works have challenged long-held views of what NT prophecy is. Among noncharismatics it has been relatively standard to regard the gift as foundational for the church and temporary in nature. Charismatics who may be loosely labelled "noncessationists," i.e., they deny that any of the spiritual gifts ceased after the first century, generally see prophecy as presently active as it was during the first seventy years.

—Exemplifying standard noncharismatics, Ryrie writes, “The gift of prophecy included receiving a message directly from God through special revelation, being guided in declaring it to people, and having it authenticated in some way by God Himself. The content of that message may have included telling the future (which was what we normally think of as prophesying), but it also included revelation from God concerning the present. This too was a gift limited in its need and use, for it was needed during the writing of the New Testament and its usefulness ceased when the books were completed. God's message then was contained in written form, and no new revelation was given in addition to the written record” (Charles C. Ryrie, The Holy Spirit [Chicago: Moody, 1965] 86). Other prominent dispensational noncharismatic works are John F. Walvoord, The Holy Spirit at Work Today (Chicago: Moody, 1965); Robert G. Gromacki, The Modern Tongue Movement (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967); Robert L. Thomas, Understanding Spiritual Gifts (Chicago: Moody, 1978); Merrill F. Unger, The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit (Chicago: Moody, 1974); John F. MacArthur, Jr., The Charismatics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978); Charles R. Smith, Tongues in Biblical Perspective (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1972). Works by noncharismatics who are Reformed and covenant theologians are B. B. Warfield, Counterfeit Miracles (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1918); Anthony Hoekema, What about Tongues-Speaking? (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966); J. I. Packer, God Has Spoken (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958).
NEW CONTROVERSY OVER THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

The recent surge of interest in the prophetic gift has witnessed a crossing of the traditional boundaries by some individuals in an apparent attempt to find a mediating position between the two perspectives. A prominent example of this is Wayne A. Grudem. Belonging to the Reformed tradition that is cessationist in background, Grudem has crossed traditional lines of understanding in proposing a compromise between the cessationist and noncessationist viewpoints regarding prophecy. In his recently published work on the subject, he writes,

In this book I am suggesting an understanding of the gift of prophecy which would require a bit of modification in the views of each of these . . . groups. I am asking that the charismatics go on using the gift of prophecy, but that they stop calling it "a word from the Lord" simply because that label makes it sound exactly like the Bible in authority, and leads to much misunderstanding . . .

On the other side, I am asking those in the cessationist camp to give serious thought to the possibility that prophecy in ordinary New Testament churches was not equal to Scripture in authority, but was simply a very human and sometimes partially mistaken report of something the Holy Spirit brought to someone's mind. And I am asking that they think again about those arguments for the cessation of certain

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3Kirby, a non-cessationist, laments that the cessationists, especially those of the dispensational persuasion, have hindered the present usefulness of spiritual gifts: "Early on, I had a hunch that more had been lost to humanistic enlightenment, dispensationalism, liberal or existential theology, and fear of the loony fringe than we had guessed" (Jeff Kirby, "The Recovery of the Healing Gifts," in Those Controversial Gifts [ed. by George Mallone; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983] 102). By erroneously linking the cessationist beliefs of some dispensationalists with those of existentialism, liberalism, and humanism and with fear of the "loony fringe," he illustrates the sharp cleavage that exists between the cessationist and noncessationist camps. He also reflects a basic misunderstanding of broader theological issues, because cessationism is not a dispensational issue, i.e., many non-cessationists are dispensational, and many cessationists are non-dispensational.
I should make it very clear at the beginning that I am not saying that the charismatic and cessationist views are mostly wrong. Rather, I think they are both mostly right (in the things they count essential), and I think that an adjustment in how they understand the nature of prophecy (especially its authority) has the potential for bringing about a resolution of this issue which would safeguard items that both sides see as crucial.4

By calling for a compromise between cessationists and noncesationists regarding the prophetic and other related gifts, Grudem has stirred up a "hornets' nest" of discussion on the gifts once again.5

He offers his own new definition of Christian prophecy, one that differs markedly from a traditional understanding: "prophecy in ordinary New Testament churches was not equal to Scripture in authority, but was simply a very human and sometimes partially mistaken report of something the Holy Spirit brought to someone's


5Other recent writers who have helped bring the prophecy issue to the forefront of discussion include H. A. Guy, David E. Aune, David Hill, Theodore M. Crone, Eduard Cothenet, and Gerhard Friedrich. These more notable ones serve as examples of a number of others. Guy is usually cited as responsible for the most recent round of scholarly debate regarding prophecy (H. A. Guy, New Testament Prophecy: Its Origin and Significance [London: Epworth, 1947], but his work has now been largely superseded by more recent research. Crone has been praised for his useful, scholarly, and thorough research in the field (Theodore M. Crone, "Early Christian Prophecy: A Study of Its Origin and Function" [PhD dissertation, Tübingen University, 1973). Other significant works include David E. Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983); David Hill, New Testament Prophecy (Atlanta: Knox, 1979); Eduard M. Cothenet, "Prophétisme dans le Nouveau Testament," in Dictionnaire de la Bible 8:1222-337; Helmut Krämer, Rolf Rendtorff, Rudolf Meyer, and Gerhard Friedrich, "profhthw," TDNT 6:781-861. The last of these works is not as recent as the others, but it is still one of the most basic and best treatments on the subject. Another recent work by Grudem is "Why Christians Can Still Prophesy: Scripture Encourages Us To Seek the Gift Yet Today," CT 32/13 (Sept 16, 1988) 29-35.
mind." In other words, prophecy consists of "telling something God has spontaneously brought to mind."7

He traces his definition to both the cessationists and the charismatics. In common with the former he takes prophecy as noncompetitive with the authority of the canonical NT because of the close of the canon at the end of the apostolic era, but he concurs with the charismatic understanding that prophecy preserves "the spontaneous, powerful working of the Holy Spirit, giving 'edification, encouragement, and comfort' which speaks directly to the needs of the moment and causes people to realize that 'truly God is among you' (1 Cor 14:25)."8 OT prophets are not comparable to NT prophets, but to NT apostles, according to his theory.9

Consequently, NT prophets were "simply reporting in their own words what God would bring to mind, and ... these prophecies did not have the authority of the words of the Lord."10 Grudem writes,

Much more commonly, prophet and prophecy were used of ordinary Christians who spoke not with absolute divine authority, but simply to report something God had laid on their hearts or brought to their minds. There are many indications in the New Testament that this ordinary gift of prophecy had authority less than that of the Bible, and even less than that of recognized Bible teaching in the early church.11

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7Grudem, "Still Prophecy" 29.


10Accordingly, the NT prophets at Corinth were "speaking merely human words to report something God brings to mind" (Grudem, Prophecy in the New Testament 67). That is, sometimes the prophet was accurate and sometimes not. In some circumstances, the prophet could be "mistaken" (Ibid., 96).

In other words, prophecy depended on a revelation from the Holy Spirit, but the prophet could either understand it imperfectly or report it inaccurately, or both.\textsuperscript{12}

Only NT apostles spoke inspired words.\textsuperscript{13} The very words of NT prophets were not inspired as were those of OT prophets.\textsuperscript{14} This leaves Grudem with two forms of NT prophecy: nonauthoritative and authoritative (i.e., apostolic).

The crucial point of his thesis is that the apostles, not the NT prophets, were the true successors of the OT prophets and, like their earlier counterparts, spoke under the authority derived from the plenary verbal inspiration of their words.\textsuperscript{15} This kind of gift is distinguished from that exercised at Corinth (cf. 1 Corinthians 12-14), Thessalonica (1 Thess 5:19-21), Tyre (Acts 21:4), Ephesus (Acts 19:6), and other places (e.g., Agabus, Acts 11:28; 21:10-11). Only the general content of this secondary prophecy can be vouched for, with allowances made for its being partially mistaken.

It was therefore allegedly open to being disobeyed without blame (Acts 21:4), critical assessment by the whole congregation (1 Cor 14:29), and outright rejection as subordinate to Paul’s apostolic revelation (1 Cor 14:37-38). According to Grudem, “these prophecies did not have the authority of the words of the Lord.”

**GRAMMATICALLY RELATED WEAKNESSES OF GRUDEM’S HYPOTHESIS**

The newly proposed theory of a respected professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School has multiple weaknesses, only a few of which can be treated here. A discussion of these weaknesses affords

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 40-41.

\textsuperscript{14}Grudem, Prophecy in 1 Corinthians 69-70. Grudem draws upon 1 Corinthians 12-14 as his principal source regarding “secondary” (i.e., nonapostolic) prophecy.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 7-113.
an excellent opportunity to present by contrast a clearer picture of NT prophecy by focusing on characteristics that heretofore have been largely overlooked in discussions of this subject.

Misuse of Sharp's rule. Grudem's most significant argument stems from Eph 2:20 and an application of a grammatical rule dealing with two nouns connected by the Greek word for "and" and governed by only one article. This argument is seriously flawed as will be shown below.

Regarding Eph 2:20 he writes,

The absence of the second article in τον ἀποστόλον καὶ προφήτην [ὁν ἀποστόλον καὶ προφήτην, "the apostles and prophets"] means that the writer views the apostles and prophets as a single group, and that we cannot immediately be sure whether that group has one or two components. But the grammatical structure clearly allows for the possibility that one group with one component is meant, for there are several instances in the New Testament where one definite article governs two or more nouns joined by καὶ and it is clear that one group with only one component (or one person) is implied. In Ephesians 4:11 it is noteworthy: ἐδόθην τοῖς μναστήρας, τοῖς δὲ προφήταις, τοῖς δὲ εὐαγγελισταῖς, τοῖς δὲ ποιμήνας καὶ διδασκάλοις [ἐδόθην τοῖς μναστήρας, τοῖς δὲ προφήταις, τοῖς δὲ εὐαγγελισταῖς, τοῖς δὲ ποιμήνας καὶ διδασκάλοις, "he gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers"]. The pastors and teachers are the same people but two different functions are named.16

At this point Grudem lists "most of the clear examples of this type of construction from the Pauline corpus, along with some scattered examples from elsewhere in the New Testament."17 His list includes examples of the same person described with two or more titles (Rom 16:7; Eph 4:11; 6:21; Phil 2:25; Col 1:2; 4:7; Philm 1; Heb 3:1; 1 Pet 2:25; 2 Pet 3:18), of phrases in which God is named with a similar form (Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; 11:31; Gal 1:4; Eph 1:3; 5:20; Phil 4:20; Col 16)

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16Ibid., 97, transliterations and translations added.

17Ibid., 97-98.
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1:3; 3:17; 1 Thess 1:3; 3:11 [2x]; [1 Tim, sic] 6:15; Tit 2:13; 2 Pet 1:1, 11), of nonpersonal objects occasionally referred to in this way (1 Thess 3:7; Tit 2:13), and of participles and infinitives in this type of construction (1 Cor 11:29; Gal 1:7; 1 Thess 5:12). From these usages Grudem concludes,

This does not imply that Eph. 2:20 must mean "the apostles who are also prophets," for there are many other examples which could be listed where one group with two distinct components is named (cf. Acts 13:50). Nevertheless, it must be noted that I was unable to find in the Pauline corpus even one clear example analogous to Acts 13:50 or 15:2, where two distinct people or classes of people (as opposed to things) are joined by καὶ and only one article is used. This may be more or less significant, depending in part on one's view of the authorship of Ephesians. But it should not be overlooked that when Paul wants to distinguish two people or groups he does not hesitate to use a second article (1 Cor. 3:8; 8:6; etc; cf. Eph. 3:10). And I have listed above over twenty Pauline examples where clearly one person or group is implied by this type of construction.

So Eph. 2:20 views "the apostles and prophets" as one group. Grammatically, that group could have two components, but such an interpretation would not be exactly in accord with Pauline usage. If the author had meant to speak of a two-component group he certainly did not make this meaning very clear to his readers (as he could have done by adding another τον (τον, "the") before propheton (propheton, "prophets"). On the other hand, the large number of NT parallels shows that "the apostles who are also prophets" would have easily been understood by the readers if other factors in the context allowed for or favored this interpretation.

From this reasoning he concludes that Eph 2:20 is speaking of apostle-prophets who are distinguished from those who are simply prophets described in such other passages as 1 Corinthians 12-14. Apostle-prophets, he says, were limited to the first century church, but the other kind continues to the present day.

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18Ibid., 98-100.

19Ibid., 100-1; transliterations and translations added.
Though the case for this interpretation of Eph 2:20 may appear impressive, it is problematic for a number of reasons. Most basically, it rests on a fundamental error and a commonly misunderstood application of Sharp's rule.20 The rule is as follows:

When the copulative καὶ connects nouns of the same case [viz. nouns (either substantive or adjective, or participles) of personal description, respecting office, dignity, affinity, or connection, and attributes, properties, or qualities, good or ill.] if the article, or any of its cases, precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle: i.e., it denotes a further description of the first named person. . . .21

Though challenged repeatedly, no one has succeeded in overturning or refuting it insofar as the NT is concerned.22 Yet four lesser known stipulations of Sharp's rule are often overlooked. These must be met if the two nouns in the construction are to be referred to the same person. The four are (1) both nouns must be personal; (2) both nouns must be common nouns, that is, not proper names; (3) both nouns must be in the same case; and (4) both

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20Grudem does not specifically mention the name "Granville Sharp," the person whose formulation of this grammatical phenomenon is widely recognized, but he appears to base his interpretation on principles derived from that rule.

21Granville Sharp, Remarks on the Definitive Article in the Greek Text of the New Testament: Containing Many New Proofs of the Divinity of Christ, from Passages Which Are Wrongly Translated in the Common English Version (1st American ed.; Philadelphia: B. B. Hopkins, 1807) 3. This is the first of six rules articulated by Sharp whose feeling was that the other five merely confirmed his first.

nouns must be in the singular.\textsuperscript{23} Sharp did not clearly delineate these stipulations in conjunction with his first rule, so most grammars are ambiguous in these areas.\textsuperscript{24}

Most exegetes, including Grudem, reflect no awareness of the qualifications, and hence apply Sharp's first rule hastily and without proper refinements. For instance, though the fourth stipulation about the rule's limitation to singular nouns only was not clearly stated in the first rule, a perusal of Sharp's monograph reveals that he insisted that the rule applies absolutely to the singular only.\textsuperscript{25} The limitation may be inferred via an argument from silence in his statement of the rule: "the latter always relates to the same person . . . i.e., it denotes a further description of the first-named person."\textsuperscript{26} Later in the monograph he offers this clarification: "There is no exception or instance of the like mode of expression that I know of, which necessarily requires a construction be different from what is laid down, EXCEPT that the nouns be proper names, or in the plural number, in which there are numerous exceptions."\textsuperscript{27} Again at another point he states that impersonal constructions are within the purview of the second, third, fifth, and sixth rules, but not the first or fourth.\textsuperscript{28}

Middleton, whose early study on the Greek article is still highly

\textsuperscript{23}Wallace, "Semantic Range" 62. The present discussion is limited to the issue of the singular number of the nouns (i.e., qualification "4" in the listed stipulations). For further discussion of the other three qualifications, see ibid., 62-63, and idem, "The Validity of Granville Sharp's First Rule with Implications for the Deity of Christ" (unpublished paper presented to Southwestern Section of the Evangelical Theological Society, Mar 4, 1988) 15-31.

\textsuperscript{24}Wallace, "Semantic Range" 62.

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., 63.

\textsuperscript{26}Sharp, Remarks 3.

\textsuperscript{27}Ibid., 5-6.

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid., 120. For an excellent discussion of these important qualifications regarding Sharp's rule, see Wallace, "Validity" 4-5.
respected,\textsuperscript{29} was the first Greek grammarian to accept the validity of Sharp's rule. He notes many exceptions to Sharp's rule when plural nouns are involved:

What reason can be alleged, why the practice in Plural Attributives should differ from that in Singular ones? The circumstances are evidently dissimilar. A single individual may stand in various relations and act in diverse capacities... But this does not happen in the same degree with respect to Plurals. Though one individual may act, and frequently does act, in several capacities, it is not likely that a multitude of individuals should all of them act in the same several capacities...\textsuperscript{30}

On the basis of an extensive analysis of plural nouns in comparable constructions in the NT, Wallace has confirmed that plural nouns are an exception to Sharp's rule. He has cited many passages where the members of a construction cannot be equated with each other and thus constitute clear exceptions (e.g., Matt 3:7, 17:1, 27:56; Acts 17:12).\textsuperscript{31} His conclusion is, "Granville Sharp applied his rule only to singular, non-proper, personal nouns of the same case."\textsuperscript{32}

He has catalogued the abuse of Sharp's rule by several grammatical works considered standards in the field of NT grammar. Regarding this abuse he notes,

But what about the abuse of the rule? Almost without exception, those who seem to be acquainted with Sharp's rule and agree with its validity


\textsuperscript{30}Thomas F. Middleton, Doctrine of the Greek Article (ed. by H. J. Rose, 1841) 20. Wallace, "Validity" 8, cites this quotation from the "new edition" of a work originally published in 1808.

\textsuperscript{31}Wallace summarizes, "There are no clear instances of the plural construction involving nouns which speak of identity, while plural constructions involving participles, where the sense could be determined, always had identical referents" (Wallace, "Validity" 10).

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid.
misunderstand and abuse it. Virtually no one is exempt from this charge: grammarians, commentators, theologians alike are guilty. Typically, the rule is usually perceived to extend to plural and impersonal constructions in spite of the fact that the evidence of the NT with reference to plural and impersonal nouns is contrary to this supposition.33

He cites several well known grammarians to illustrate his point.34 Wallace also focused specifically on the relevant passage in Eph 4:11 where Sharp's rule is often applied. His comment is,

Although most commentaries consider the two terms to refer to one group, we must emphatically insist that such a view has no grammatical basis, even though the writers who maintain this view almost unanimously rest their case on the supposed semantics of the article-noun-ka3i-noun construction. Yet, as we have seen, there are no other examples in the NT of this construction with nouns in the plural, either clearly tagged or ambiguous, which allow for such a possibility. One would, therefore, be on rather shaky ground to insist on such a nuance here (Eph. 4:11), especially if the main weapon in his arsenal is syntax!35

Wallace affirms the validity of the rule for plural adjectives or participles, but indicates he has found no clear instances of the rule's applicability to plural nouns in the NT Koine, Papyri, Hellenistic, or Classical Greek.36

This refined application of Sharp's rule removes Grudem's major foundation for equating apostles and prophets, since the rule is not applicable to Eph 2:20. In this verse Paul designates two separate

33Ibid., 12.
35Wallace, "Semantic Range" 83.
groups, apostles and prophets, without equating one to the other.\textsuperscript{37} Since the passage labels prophecy in itself as a foundational gift, the inevitable conclusion is that NT prophecy has ceased along with the gift of apostleship.

Disregard for Eph 4:11. Another weakness in Grudem's reasoning regarding the equation of apostles and prophets in Eph 2:20 lies in his use of Eph 4:11 for support. Two aspects of Eph 4:11 can militate against his conclusion: (1) He argues, "When Paul wants to distinguish two people or groups he does not hesitate to use a second article. . . ."\textsuperscript{38} On this basis he concludes that the single article with apostle and prophet dictates that Paul intended to equate the two to each other. Yet in Eph 4:11 a verse that he uses in another way as a supporting grammatical analogy Paul uses two articles, one with "apostles" and one with "prophets":\textsuperscript{5e} dvken to?yw apostoloyw to?yw de profh taw (dvken tous men apostolous tous de prophetas, "on the one hand he gave apostles, and on the other, prophets"). It is cogent reasoning that since Paul thus distinguishes between apostles and prophets in 4:11, he must have intended the same distinction in 2:20. This belies Grudem's interpretation. (2) As noted above, the grammatical analogy that Grudem cites in Eph 4:11, i.e., the identification of "pastors" and "teachers" provides no support for his theory, because the plural nouns forbid the pressing of Sharp's rule here, too.

Invalid cross-references. Furthermore, Grudem's cross-references cited to support an equation of apostles and prophets\textsuperscript{39} are invalid, because every one of the examples is semantically unparallel. Not one

\textsuperscript{37}Had Paul wished to equate the two, he could have done so clearly with the insertion of a participial phrase (e.g., t;vn5o ntvn [ten ontten, "those who are"]) or through a relative clause (e.g., "apostles who are also prophets"). This would have removed any doubt about the two groups being equivalent (cf. Dan McCartney, "Review of Wayne Grudem's, The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians," WTJ 45 [Spring 1983] 196).

\textsuperscript{38}Grudem, Prophecy in 1 Corinthians 101.

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., 98-100.
is a clear example of an application of Sharp's rule to plural nouns as Grudem's position on Eph 2:20 would require. Many of the cross-references are singular nouns governed by a single article to which Sharp's rule does apply, so long as the nouns are personal and not proper nouns or plural in number. These, however, are a quite different grammatical entity from the plural-noun construction in Eph 2:20 and do not support his view of this verse. Sharp's rule is applicable to a few plural adjectives (e.g., Rom 16:7; Col 1:2), but the same principle does not apply to plural-noun constructions. The same difference holds between plural participles (e.g., Gal 1:7; 1 Thess 5:12) and plural nouns. Grudem's use of impersonal nouns as a grammatical parallel is also inaccurate (e.g., 1 Thess 3:7) because Sharp's rule requires personal nouns. Space forbids an exhaustive citation of all the alleged parallels, but every one of them is nonparallel for one of these reasons.

So none of the cross-references cited supports the case for identification of prophets with apostles in Eph 2:20. None presents an instance of analogous construction. It is wrong, therefore, to found such a conclusion on this verse.

Improper differentiation between Eph 2:20; 3:5 and 1 Cor 12-14. Besides the alleged grammatical reason, this proposed identification also rests on differentiating prophecy in 1 Corinthians 12-14 from prophecy in Eph 2:20 and 3:5, the latter being apostolic prophecy and the former congregational prophecy. An inherent weakness in this distinction is reflected in a close scrutiny of technical terms used in both sections. The same "clusters" of revelational-type words occur in 1 Corinthians 12-14 as occur in the context of Ephesians 2-3. For example, prophētēθω (prophetes, "prophet") and prophēteυμ (propheteue, "I prophesy") (cp. 1 Cor 12:28; 13:9; 14:1-6, 24, 31-32, 37, 39 with Eph 2:20; 3:5) are used in both. So are οἰκοδομή (oikodome, "building") and οἰκοδομέω (oikodomee, "I build up, edify") (cp. 1 Cor 14:3-5, 12, 17, 26 with Eph 2:20-21), mystήριον (mysterion, "mystery") (cp. 1 Cor 13:2; 14:2

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41Grudem, Prophecy in the New Testament 64.
with Eph 3:3-4, 9), a pokalyciw (apokalypsis, "revelation") and a pokalyptw (apokalypte, "I reveal") (cp. 1 Cor 14:6, 26, 30 with Eph 3:3, 5), kryptw (krypte, "I hide") and its cognates (cp. 1 Cor 14:25 with Eph 3:9), a pò stolow (apostolos, "apostle") (cp. 1 Cor 12:28-29 with Eph 2:20; 3:5), and sofía (sophia, "wisdom") (cp. 1 Cor 12:8 with Eph 3:10). The grouping of such technical terminology in a single context signals a reference to direct divine communication to an authoritative prophetic instrument. The presence of this type of communication in Ephesians 2-3 is not in doubt, and no significant basis exists for questioning a reference to it in 1 Corinthians 12-14.42 So the case for contrasting "congregational" prophecy with "apostolic" prophecy falters at another point.

EXEGETICALLY RELATED WEAKNESSES OF GRUDEM'S HYPOTHESIS

NT Prophecy founded on OT Prophecy. Grudem's case for an unauthoritative "congregational" prophecy in 1 Corinthians 12-14 and elsewhere in the NT also rests on positing a strong discontinuity between OT prophecy and NT prophecy. Unfortunately, he does injustice to the fact that NT prophecy is founded upon and has a significant continuity with the OT prophetic phenomenon and experience. An important passage in this regard is Acts 2:17-21 where Peter's Pentecostal sermon cites Joel 2:28-32.43 The earlier part of Acts 2 has just described manifestations of the Holy Spirit (e.g., speaking in tongues, prophesying) witnessed by Jewish onlookers outside the circle of the 120 Christians who had been gathered for prayer (cf. Acts 2:1-11). Some outsiders were amazed, but others mocked and said the Christians were "full of sweet new wine" (Acts 2:13). Empowered by the Spirit, Peter stood and offered an explanation by relating the charismatic phenomena being witnessed to the prophecy of Joel 2. It is highly significant that Peter linked this beginning of NT prophecy


43In the Masoretic Text and the LXX, Joel 2:28-32 in English translations corresponds to Joel 3:1-5a.
with prophetic phenomena of the OT. The same word for "prophecy" is used to depict NT prophecy as is used in the LXX translation of Joel: profhte/yv (propheteu~o, "I prophesy") (cp. Acts 2:17 with Joel 3:1[LXX, 2:28 in English]).

A revival of the prophetic gift has been long expected in Israel, and Peter ties the prophecy experienced at Pentecost to that promised revival of OT prophecy. Gentry accurately assesses the situation:

Thus, here we have prophecy of the Old Testament type . . . entering into the New Testament era . . . . And this is according to Peter's divinely inspired interpretation of Joel . . . .

This establishes a fundamental continuity linking Old Testament and New Testament prophecy . . . . This divinely expected prophetic gift appears in numerous places in Acts, 1 Corinthians, and other New Testament books . . . .

NT prophecy is fundamentally a development and continuation of OT prophecy.

The NT does not conceptualize any substantial differences in kind between prophetic expressions in the OT and those in the NT. The vocabulary and phraseology are the same. Aune notes, "The early Christian application of the designation profhthw to individual Christians, then, was originally determined by the prevalent conception of the prophetic role of the Old Testament." The NT's application of the term prophets to its contemporary prophets (e.g., in 1 Corinthians 12-14) makes it evident that NT authors conceived of the existence of a fundamental continuity between these two eras of prophecy. Use of the term in fulfillment formulae in NT citations of the OT are indicative of this. OT prophets were seen as writing the

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45This continuity does not rule out minor differences. It only excludes any differences substantial or crucial enough to warrant a distinction between two kinds of prophetic gifts or expressions that were operable in the OT or the NT.

46Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity 195.
very words of the Lord in regard to future happenings.47

This continuity of OT prophecy to NT prophecy is borne out elsewhere in the NT. The NT prophet Agabus modeled his prophetic style after the OT prophets. The historian Luke relates that Agabus "indicated by the Spirit" that a famine was about to occur in the world (Acts 11:28a).48 He then records the occurrence of the famine in accord with Agabus's prediction (Acts 11:28b). Later Agabus introduces a prophecy with the words, "This is what the Holy Spirit says" (Acts 21:11), an expression that reflects a pattern similar to Matthew's fulfillment formula when introducing OT prophecies (e.g., Matt 2:15, 17; 3:3). It also parallels the OT prophetic formula, "Thus says the Lord."49 It is significant also that no attempt is ever made to distinguish between OT and NT prophetic expression in the vocabulary of introductions to NT prophecy. The cognates of prophetēs are used for NT prophecy as they are for OT prophecy.

Prestige of the NT prophet. Another weakness in Grudem's hypothesis is his failure to recognize the high degree of prestige enjoyed by NT prophets in the Christian community. As already shown from a correct understanding of Eph 2:20, they in association with the apostles held the honorable status of helping lay the foundation of the church. Their ranking in the list of gifted persons in 1 Cor 12:31 (cf. 1 Cor 14:1) places them second only to the apostles in usefulness to the body of Christ.

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47Two examples are sufficient to illustrate this point: ἐν ὁπλίσει τοῦ ἱεροῦ πρὸς τῷ γενήσεως τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος, "in order that the word spoken by the Lord through the prophet should be fulfilled," Matt 1:22), a reference to Isaiah, and ἐγραμμένα τοῖς προφήταις (ἦγραμμένα τοῖς προφήταις, "having been written in the prophets," John 6:45), a reference to the prophets as a group.


Prophets also joined the apostles as recipients of special revelation regarding Gentile participation in the church (Eph 3:5-10). The doctrine revealed through them in the context of Ephesians 3 concerned the mystery of the inclusion of Jews and Gentiles in one universal body of Christ. The presence of Gentiles in such a relationship was unrevealed before the NT era (cf. Eph 3:5), but came to apostles and prophets as inspired utterances and writings such as the canonical epistle of Ephesians.

The reception and propagation of such revelations constituted the foundation of the church universal throughout the present age. Prophets were vehicles for these revelations and held a high profile among early Christians for this reason. Grudem’s words do not match the high status of prophets upheld in the NT: “Prophecy in ordinary New Testament churches was not equal to Scripture in authority, but was simply a very human and sometimes partially mistaken report of something the Holy Spirit brought to someone’s mind.” Such a relegation of prophecy to a lesser status raises the question of how the early church could have guarded itself against hopeless doctrinal confusion. If prophets at times were used to convey inspired revelations and at other times were non-authoritative and mistaken, who could distinguish their authoritative accurate messages from the other kind?

Need for constant evaluation of NT prophecy. A primary argument for the existence of non-authoritative congregational prophecy comes from the call for evaluation of prophetic utterances in 1 Cor 14:29-31. The needed critical evaluation resulted from a changed status of believers under the new covenant. In accord with Joel 2:28-32 and Acts 2:17-21, the Holy Spirit was poured out on all believers. This did not mean that all Christians would be prophets, a possibility that Paul rejects in 1 Cor 12:29: “all are not prophets, are they?” It did, however, create the potential, according to the Joel and Acts passages, that the gift of prophecy would be much more widely disseminated than to a


51 Ibid., 70-79.
limited group of prophets like those who spoke for the Lord in the theocratic community under the old covenant. The expanded sphere of prophetic activity increased the need for greater care in discerning true prophecies from false prophecies.

This is the need that Paul attempted to meet in 1 Cor 14:29-31. The larger the group of prophets became, the more potential there was for the abuse of prophecy by those who were not NT prophets at all. This danger became a vivid reality in the latter part of the first century A.D. as evidenced by John's warning: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1; cf. 2 Pet 2:1-22; Jude 4, 11-16).

Grudem maintains that OT prophets were never challenged in this way because of the high regard in which they were held. For him, this signalled a great difference between OT and NT prophets, i.e., NT prophets were not so prestigious. After evaluation and acceptance as a prophet, an OT prophet's words were never questioned, but each prophecy of a NT prophet had to be evaluated. Herein lies a contrast, causing Grudem to conclude that the NT gift operated at a lower level of authority.

Yet Grudem's picture of OT prophecy and its prestige is highly idealized and rather unrealistic. His idealized picture is obtained substantially from historical hindsight rather than from an examination of the actual state of affairs existing at the time of the OT prophets. A brief review reveals four relevant features of OT prophecy: (1) The Israelites frequently disobeyed OT prophets like Samuel, Elisha, and Jeremiah, to name only a few, even when their proclamations were authoritative as the very words of the Lord (e.g., 1 Sam 13:8-14; Jer 36:1-32), and put them to flight, threatening to kill them (e.g., 1 Kgs 19:1-3). Also, Amos's preaching in Bethel aroused

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52Grudem, Prophecy in the New Testament 17-23; idem, Prophecy in 1 Corinthians 82-105.

53Grudem, Prophecy in 1 Corinthians 58-66.

such opposition that he had to flee from Bethel for his life (Amos 7:10-17).

(2) Some prophets enjoyed greater status and prestige than others who were less famous (e.g., an unknown prophet in 1 Kgs 20:35-43; cf. also 1 Kgs 19:10).

(3) The people threatened and otherwise strongly opposed some prophets like Jeremiah because of their status as prophets of the Lord. Jeremiah could hardly have been said to have enjoyed much of an authoritative status in Israel at such times, because his hearers disobeyed him, despised him, rejected him, beat him, and imprisoned him because of his prophetic ministry (e.g., Jer 11:18-23; 12:6; 18:18; 20:1-3; 26:1-24; 37:11–38:28).

(4) According to Jewish tradition, some prophets like Isaiah were tortured and assassinated rather than given great honor (cf. 1 Kgs 18:13). Under some kind of duress, some prophets may even have lied or even apostatized (cf. 1 Kgs 13:18).

Jesus recalled that Israel had consistently despised, rejected, and killed her prophets: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her" (Matt 23:37). Such a picture hardly conveys the impression of great respect afforded the OT prophets by their contemporaries. Nor does it suggest that their messages were never questioned or rejected (cf. Heb 11:33-40).

Old Testament prophets became revered only by later generations of Jewish people. They had no such preeminence during their lifetimes. Only as later generations realized their ancestors had been disobedient idolaters who failed to recognize the prophets' advice (cf. Ezra 9:1-11) did the prophets ascend to a place of esteem in the eyes of the people. This elite group of OT spokesmen for the Lord experienced the anointing and influence of the Holy Spirit in a way that was not appreciated by their immediate listeners.56


56David, Moses, and other leaders experienced the anointing of the Spirit too, but not in the special way of the true prophets of the Lord, both the canonical ones like Isaiah and the non-canonical ones like Nathan and Gad.
The NT standard for evaluating prophets is comparable to relevant guidelines in the OT. The OT laid down certain rules in Deuteronomy 13 and 18 that were always taken as requirements for OT prophets. False prophets were frequently identified by an application of these rules. The rules were applicable even to established prophets like Isaiah and Samuel. In spite of their reputations, they still had to speak the truth. At the very least, the stated requirements served to reinforce the genuineness of the true prophet, because they stressed that a true prophet must accurately proclaim the truth.\footnote{Cf. 1 Sam 3:19. The mere fact that the writer of 1 Samuel could assert that Yahweh did not let Samuel's words fail indicates that some form of evaluation of Samuel by the people had been going on to provide for such a reply. This may be in some form of hindsight, looking back over Samuel's life.

\footnote{Grudem, Prophecy in 1 Corinthians 60-62; transliteration and translation added.} So even though OT prophets were not evaluated formally or constantly as NT prophets were in Corinth, they were still subject to the background requirements of Deuteronomy 13 and 18. The NT furnishes no indication that NT-era Jews, particularly those who became apostles in the early church, considered the requirements for prophets in the OT to have been abrogated or substantially modified.

Identification of evaluators. This survey must content itself with noticing one final weakness in Grudem's theory regarding NT prophecy. It regards his method of handling 1 Cor 14:29 which reads, "And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment." A critical question in this statement concerns the identity of those "passing judgment" or "discerning" the validity of alleged prophetic pronouncements. Grudem raises a psychological point:

If we understand οἱ ἄλλοι [hoi alloi, "the others"] to be restricted to a special group of prophets, we have much difficulty picturing what the rest of the congregation would do during the prophecy and judging. Would they sit during the prophecy waiting for the prophecy to end and be judged before knowing whether to believe any part of it? . . . Especially hard to believe is the idea that the teachers, administrators and other church leaders without special gifts of prophecy would sit passively awaiting the verdict of an elite group.\footnote{Grudem, Prophecy in 1 Corinthians 60-62; transliteration and translation added.}
Aside from the fact that this argumentation is non-exegetical in nature, it is weak in that reason and logic, to which he appeals, can also dictate that not everyone in the congregation would be in a position to evaluate the prophecy, especially in a public setting.\textsuperscript{59} Admittedly, 1 John 4:1-3 urges a testing of spirits in a general sense by all Christians because of false prophecy and teaching, but Paul is very clear in this context at 1 Cor 12:10 regarding the "distinguishing of spirits" that everyone did not possess that special ability. The gift of doing so was dispensed to a limited number according to the sovereign will of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:11; cf. 1 Cor 12:18). It is conspicuous that those possessing special ability in discerning were better equipped to pass judgment on congregational prophecies than the ones who did not possess the gift. This differentiation in valuative capabilities within the congregation raises a loud contextual objection to understanding that all members of the congregation were supposed to evaluate in 1 Cor 14:29.

In the immediate context of 14:29, the most natural grammatical and contextual antecedent of hoi alloi ("the others") is profh\thetai (prophetai, "prophets") in the first half of v. 29. Paul's use of allos ("another of the same kind") instead of t\thep\thy (het\thetos, "another of a different kind") indicates his intention to designate the same category of persons as those prophets referred to just before. Referring "the others" to other prophets is further confirmed by the use of allo ("another") immediately afterward in v. 30 where it is an evident reference to "another" prophet. This repetition of the same adjective, "other" or "another," shows that Paul still had prophets in mind when he used hoi alloi in v. 29. In this statement, then, where interpretation is tedious, the contextual probabilities rest on the side of identifying those who evaluate prophetic utterances of others as being the prophets who apparently possessed the gift of the discerning of spirits along with their prophetic gift.

They were to pass judgment on what other prophets said to

\textsuperscript{59}In addition, Aune notes, "The observation in verse 31 that `you can all prophesy one by one' cannot mean everybody present, but `all upon whom the spirit of prophecy comes'" (Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity 133).
ascertain whether their utterance came from the Holy Spirit or not. Just as hermēneia (hermeneia, “interpretation”) was needed in conjunction with the exercise of glōssēn (glossen, “tongues”) (1 Cor 12:10c), diakrīseis (diakrises, “discernings”) needed to accompany profētai (prophetai, “prophesies”) (1 Cor 12:10b).60 Inspired spokesmen were in the best position to judge spontaneously whether a new utterance agreed with Paul’s teachings (cf. Gal 1:8-9; 2 Thess 2:1-3) and generally accepted beliefs of the Christian community (1 Cor 12:1-3).

The context surrounding 1 Cor 12:3 sheds light on the situation addressed in 1 Cor 14:29. Apparently false prophets had preached that Jesus was “accursed” (12:3) even though they professed to be true prophets. The person making such a startling statement must have been a professing Christian. Otherwise, his statement would not have been tolerated in a Christian assembly and would not have been attributed to the Holy Spirit, as he apparently claimed. In the face of such starkly erroneous prophesying, Paul warned the congregation to evaluate each prophecy carefully to ensure that a genuine prophet was speaking a genuine prophecy. Some recognized voice was needed to declare that the Spirit was not the source of such a statement and that the person voicing it showed himself to be a false prophet. First Corinthians 14:29 does not necessarily mean established prophets had to be verified continually.

Yet it does set down the general principle that any potential prophet needed to be scrutinized by other potential prophets. This principle invalidates Grudem’s conclusion that a genuine prophet’s message contained a mixture of truth and error. The guideline established merely enforces the need for careful analysis of any prophet who claimed to speak by the Spirit of God to determine the source of his message. Once his source was identified as God, further examination was most likely unnecessary. Yet, according to 2 Cor 11:13-15, even false prophets had potential to feign a true prophecy, so Paul encouraged a continued vigil. The regular ministry of prophets

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60 This correlation is not explicit in 1 Corinthians 14, but it is strongly implicit by virtue of the contextual flow of chapters 12-14 and the use of cognate words in 12:10 and 14:29 to depict the gift of discernings and the exercise of discerning (cf. A. T. Robertson and Alfred Plummer, First Corinthians [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914] 267, 321-22).
was to ensure the genuineness of prophets and prophecies as a safeguard against doctrinal heresies.

The fact that a prophecy could be interrupted (1 Cor 14:30-32) does not contradict this picture of prophecy and discernment. The permissible interruption did not mark the prophecy as non-authoritative or fallible, i.e. as not from God. The apparent thrust of v. 32 is that if a revelation is from God, the prophet will remain in conscious control of his mind and will. In other words, a true prophecy from God can wait to be given in an orderly manner.

In summary, judging a prophecy does not imply that the gift could result in errant pronouncements. The responsibility of NT prophets to weigh the prophecies of others does not imply that true prophets were capable of giving false prophecies, but that false prophets could disguise their falsity by occasional true utterances.

Grudem observes that Paul rates the authority of Christian prophets below his own in 1 Cor 14:37-38. He uses this to support his view that NT prophetic authority was inferior to that of the apostles and hence the OT prophets also. This understanding of Paul's words is not probable, because Paul is here more likely asserting that if a Christian prophet is truly from God, his prophecies will concur with apostolic truths (cf. Gal 1:8-9). False prophets and teachers consistently challenged apostolic authority and doctrine (e.g. Gal 2:4-5; 2 Tim 2:18; cf. Jude 3). In light of his own apostolic office, Paul's comparison between the Corinthian claims of authority and his own is best understood to teach that true prophets and their prophecies would be consistent with apostolic truth and would recognize Paul's words and commandments as coming directly from the Lord Jesus Christ. Any alleged prophet opposing apostolic standards and elevating himself to the role of God's only spokesman (1 Cor 14:36) was to be recognized as false, and his authority rejected (1 Cor 14:38).

A CONCLUDING WORD ABOUT GRUDEM'S HYPOTHESIS

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The above discussion of Grudem's theory about NT prophecy, both the detailed criticisms and the summary observations, shows the idea of a bifurcation of the prophetic gift to be suspect at many points. His central thesis that the NT apostle be equated with the OT prophet in terms of prophetic activity and that a second kind of prophetic gift consisting of "speaking merely human words to report something God brings to mind" be recognized is extremely weak and therefore unconvincing. His grammatical basis for equating NT apostle with NT prophet in Eph 2:20 is flawed, and in relevant passages, particularly 1 Corinthians 12-14, his evidence crumbles in comparison with interpretations that provide explanations with more exegetical coherence. His basic conclusion regarding the nature of NT prophecy, therefore, cannot be endorsed.
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXEGESIS AND EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Robert L. Thomas

The distinctive characteristic of expository preaching is its instructional function. An explanation of the details of a given text imparts information that is otherwise unavailable to the average untrained parishioner and provides him with a foundation for Christian growth and service. The importance and centrality of thorough exegesis in preparing the expositor for this service cannot be overstated. Exegesis must itself be on a solid footing and must lead to development in supplementary fields that, in turn, provide important data for expository preaching, too. With the raw material of sermon preparation thus obtained, common-sense principles must be applied in putting the material into a form that the congregation can receive with ease and learn from.

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The distinguishing mark of expository preaching, also called Bible Exposition, is the biblical interpretation communicated through the sermon. The expositor must teach his audience the meaning of the text intended by its author and understood by its original recipients. Because the original languages of the Old and New Testaments are inaccessible to almost all congregations, precise and detailed interpretations of Scripture will be also. So a Bible expositor's central responsibility is to acquaint them with these interpretations previously unknown to them. The final test of the effectiveness of Bible Exposition is how well individuals who hear the sermon can go home and read the passage with greater comprehension of its exact meaning than they could before they heard the message.

The point that differentiates expository sermons from other types is not the cleverness of their outlines or their "catchy" clichés. Neither is it the relevance of the message to everyday life. These are helpful and necessary as communicative tools and devotional helps, but they do not distinguish expository preaching from other kinds of sermons. A sermon could still be expository without them, but if the
explanation of what the author meant is missing, so is the heart of Bible Exposition.

The unique contribution of Bible Exposition is its substantial enhancement of the listeners' comprehension of Scripture's intent. Such a service is the ideal way to cooperate with the Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture as He takes an improved grasp of the text's meaning and shows its applicational significance to individual listeners. That is the best avenue for building up the saints. The NT puts heavy emphasis on using the mind as the principal avenue to Christian growth (e.g., Rom 12:2; 1 Pet 1:13), so the preacher should do the same.¹

BUILDING TOWARD BIBLE EXPOSITION

¹Stott has written, "The great doctrines of creation, revelation, redemption and judgment all imply that man has an inescapable duty both to think and to act upon what he thinks and knows" (John R. W. Stott, Your Mind Matters [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1972] 14). Keiper concurs: "If we fully enter into the power of biblical thinking, we shall become a miracle people, having a healthy mind in Christ, being an example of our heavenly citizenship on earth, and continually and daily cleansed by His Word (see John 15:3)" (Ralph L. Keiper, The Power of Biblical Thinking [Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1977] 159). Hull is more specific: "Transformation comes through the commitment of the mind. Without the proper knowledge and thinking we have no basis for personal change or growth. The mind is the pivotal starting place for change" (Bill Hull, Right Thinking [Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1985] 8).
The Critical Role of Exegesis. The responsibility on the shoulders of one who preaches this kind of message is heavy. He must have a thorough understanding of the passage to be preached before devising the mechanics for conveying his understanding to the congregation. He must be a trained exegete with a working knowledge of the biblical languages and a systematic method for using them to analyze the text.

An essay of this nature cannot provide a program of exegetical training. Theological seminaries exist for this purpose. It is also beyond the present scope to formulate a system of exegesis for the Greek NT (or the Hebrew OT). A few suggestive comments regarding exegesis are in order, however, so as to identify what this foundational process entails.

Accurate exegesis is ultimately dependent on the leading of the Holy Spirit in the exegete's research. Apart from His guidance, not only does the meaning of the text evade him, but also valid applications of the text will prove elusive (1 Cor 2:14). Since God is a God of order (1 Cor 14:33, 40) and rational creatures created in His image and regenerated by His Spirit are capable of grasping divine logic, the leading of the Spirit in exegetical study will be in accord with divine reason accessible to the exegete.

Exegesis deals with the original languages of Scripture, Greek

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2"Cheater's Greek (or Hebrew)," an expression coined to describe alleged time-saving methods of learning and using the original languages, is not adequate for this purpose. Reputed shortcuts to learning a language have proven themselves time and again to be counterproductive in the study of Scripture. If the expositor has laid the right kind of foundation in his training and has maintained his familiarity with the languages through a disciplined program of a few minutes of review a day, several days a week, he will not need to rely constantly on "crutches" to translate his text in the original languages. Those who pretend to know the languages of Scripture but rely on such crutches are the ones to whom the well-known warning is appropriately applied, "A little knowledge of Greek (or Hebrew) is a dangerous thing." The combination of a solid foundation in Greek and Hebrew training and a consistent review program has proven itself to be sufficient for many expositors of the Word. Those for whom circumstances have made this combination an impossible goal to achieve should be extremely cautious in their use of the biblical languages and should avail themselves of every opportunity to check and double-check opinions about the text before sharing them with others.
in the NT and Hebrew and Aramaic in the OT. It does not content itself with the uncertainties of working from a translation or translations. Translations can never cover all the nuances of the original text. This is the key area in which an expositor can add to his listeners’ knowledge of the text, because they usually will be limited to what they can glean from a translation in their native tongue.

Exegesis also builds upon sound hermeneutical principles. Probably the greatest breakdown in biblical studies at the close of the twentieth century is in this field. Challenges galore have been launched against time-honored guidelines for interpreting the Bible. These challenges come from a wide variety of sources. The average pulpiteer may easily be “blown away” if he is not alert to detect the widespread aberrations that are in circulation. The importance of vigilance in this regard merits the inclusion of several illustrations of the contemporary problem among evangelicals.

OT scholar Lasor says that NT writers did not follow a grammatico-historical method in their use of the NT, so Bible interpreters today should not be limited by that method. What he fails to observe, however, is that NT writers received direct divine revelation whereas contemporary interpreters do not. They therefore cannot take the liberties with the text that the NT writers took with the OT text.

Theologian Jewett understands Paul to be inconsistent with himself regarding the role of women in the church, concluding that Paul advocates sexual equality in one of his books (Gal 3:28) and inequality in another (1 Cor 11:3). This opinion in essence dispenses with the well known “analogy of faith” principle in biblical interpretation. It sees the Bible as inconsistent with itself.

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5Paul K. Jewett, Man as Male and Female (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 133-35, 142.
Philosopher Thiselton informs us that hermeneutics is a circular process and human prejudgments make objective interpretation impossible. Such a pronouncement discourages attempts to learn the original meaning of the text and opens the floodgate for uncontrolled interpretive subjectivism. At best it has the effect of destroying the goal of objectivity that traditional Protestant interpretation has always pursued, and at worst it signals an end of rationality in studying the Bible.

Missiologist Haleblian advocates the principle of contextualization whereby each culture is allowed to form its own system of hermeneutics based on the praxis of ministry in meeting its own peculiar needs. Yet if each culture formulated its own principles of interpretation to make the Bible mean something conceived as necessary for its own isolated situation, objective control of what the Bible means is terminated. The connotation for the original recipients of the writings has become completely irrelevant.

Redaction critic Marshall cites as non-historical a number of sayings attributed to Christ in the Gospels, viewing them to be later additions added by the church for clarifying purposes. Traditional interpretation, on the other hand, views the gospels as containing accurate historical data about Jesus.

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9The scope of this essay does not permit a full portrayal of all the current hermeneutical pitfalls. A few more examples from other recent sources may help to show what to look for and avoid:

(1) Anthropologists Smalley and Kraft say that changes in culture necessitate alterations in the meaning of divine revelation to adapt it to a new cultural situation (William A. Smalley, "Culture and Superculture," Practical Anthropology 2 [1955] 58-71; Charles H. Kraft, Christianity in Culture [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979] 123). In other words, divine revelation is non-absolute. In contrast, the grammatical-historical method of interpretation assumes the absolute nature of divine revelation.
The circulation of subtle hermeneutical variations such as the above has contributed heavily to the interpretive confusion prevalent in evangelicalism in the 1990's. These can become a serious hindrance to accurate exegesis and ultimately to expository preaching if they are not shunned.

Exegesis also presupposes a text that is fixed through a valid application of text-critical principles. The canons of the OT and NT are also in place and are the object of the expositor's interpretive efforts. A thorough background knowledge of authorship, date of writing, destination, and the like, i.e., the field called Biblical Missiology.

(2) Missiologist Bonino contends that there is no truth in the Bible apart from its application in a present-day situation (J. M. Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975] 88-89). This position overemphasizes the role of application and makes it determinative of the historical interpretation. Application should follow interpretation and be based upon it, not vice versa.


(4) Philosopher Thiselton presupposes something in the interpreter's present experience, i.e., assumptions made or questions asked by the interpreter as interpretation's starting point (Thiselton, "New Hermeneutic," 316). The grammatical-historical approach says that the text must be the starting point. Thiselton's theory forces the text to deal with an issue that is probably irrelevant to the original intent of the writer.

(5) Exegete Carson sides with secular modern linguistic theory in questioning the time-honored practice of distinguishing slight differences in meaning between synonyms used side-by-side in the text (D. A. Carson, Exegetical Fallacies [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984] 48-54). His position is fallacious because it does injustice to the precision of inspired Scripture. Grammatical-historical interpretation has upheld the validity of these distinctions between synonyms, but Carson disagrees.
Exegesis . . . Expository Preaching

Introduction regarding the book under scrutiny is also a necessary foundation for exegesis.

Exegesis itself incorporates a study of individual words, their backgrounds, their derivation, their usage, their synonyms, their antonyms, their figurative usages, and other lexical aspects. Elaboration on Greek and Hebrew words in pulpit exposition is by far the most frequently encountered homiletical use of exegesis, but it is only a small beginning. Of at least equal, and probably greater, importance is the way the words are joined in sentences, paragraphs, sections, etc. This area of "syntax," as it is called, is too frequently overlooked. Yet only a full appreciation of syntactical relationships can provide a specific understanding of the flow of thought that the Spirit intended in His revelation through the human writers of the Scripture.

A thorough familiarity with the historical background of each book is also imperative. Without this, the meaning to readers in the original setting is beyond reach of the expositor and, hence, of his audience, too.

The church at the end of the twentieth century is the beneficiary of a rich treasure of Bible teaching published throughout the centuries of the Christian era. Gifted teachers whom Christ has placed in the church have preserved their interpretations on the printed page. It behooves the exegete to take full advantage of these God-given sources of enrichment in acquiring a keener mastery of the meaning he must teach.

It is naive to assume that these gifted writers never disagree in their interpretations. It is the challenge of the Bible expositor under the guidance of the Spirit to evaluate each of the conflicting opinions in light of sound hermeneutical principles and exegetical procedures and to settle on the one that he feels to be correct. That is what he will preach to his congregation as the true interpretation.

After the tedious process of exegetical analysis, the expositor will have amassed an immense amount of data, much of it technical, but he should also have arrived at a detailed comprehension of the Scripture's interpretation. He must now select from this massive

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10As a service to expositors everywhere, an ongoing project of the New Testament faculty and students at The Master's Seminary is the production of "exegetical
accumulation of material the parts that are most significant to transmit to his listeners.

A major precaution to observe is not to preach exegetical data from the pulpit. Because the expositor has been enlightened so much by what he has discovered, his initial impulse may be to pass on to his people the excitement of his discovery in the same terminology as he received it. This is a major mistake. Very few in the pew have a background sufficient to enable them to comprehend the kind of technical data derived from exegesis. So the minister of the Word must adapt his explanations to suit the vocabulary and interest level of those to whom he speaks. He must develop a technique of conveying in the language of a non-specialist what he has learned from his specialized analysis. How he does so may vary. It may be through paraphrase, description, analogy, illustration, or in a multitude of other ways. Yet he must explain the text in a way that is interesting and understandable to his people. This explanation is the core of Bible Exposition.

Auxiliary fields of study. Yet Bible Exposition includes much more. In a logical development of theological and ministerial disciplines, it is built upon other fields of investigation besides just exegesis. These other fields of study are based on exegesis too, but they amplify exegesis by stipulating different ways of applying it. The other disciplines include the following:

(1) Biblical and Systematic Theology. One cannot reach an accurate perception of God and His works without basing it on a correct interpretation of the Bible. It is vital that these theological perspectives be incorporated into expository preaching at appropriate times.

(2) Church History. The doctrinal and ethical development of
the Christian church from century to century can be evaluated properly only through the eyes of the Bible correctly understood. Lessons learned by earlier generations of believers, both good and bad, make excellent sermon illustrations. They also provoke imitation of exemplary behavior of saints of the past and guard Christians from repeating the mistakes of those who have gone before.

(3) Apologetics. The NT is clear in its instruction to Christians about defending the faith against attack (Phil 1:7; 1 Pet 3:15-16). Philosophies of religion vary widely because the nature of philosophy lends itself so readily to mere human reasoning. Logic is not necessarily purely secular, however. Under the control of conclusions reached in biblical exegesis, apologetical methodologies can apply sound logic in responding to those who attack the integrity of the Bible and the Christian faith. Well-rounded expository preaching will incorporate these biblically oriented answers whenever necessary.

(4) Applicational ministries. Also based on exegesis is a wide assortment of services in which the principles of Scripture rightly interpreted are applied to human experience. Practical uses of the Bible are multiple and varied, but they must be controlled. Correct interpretation is the only suitable control. If the meaning of the text in its original setting does not regulate application, applications become extremely subjective and essentially invalid. Applicational ministries include the following:

(a) Homiletics. The field of sermon preparation and delivery is broad, but the structure of the sermon and the motivation for its delivery must be rooted in the text. All too often, secular methodologies and ideas that are only human have been determinative of the shape of a sermon. If thorough exegesis is the foundation of a message, this will not happen.

(b) Counseling. The counsel that the Bible prescribes is administered most effectively through members of Christ's body who possess the gift of exhortation. This gift along with the gift of teaching form an effective combination that makes up what we call preaching (Rom 12:7-8). Exhortation, or "encouragement" as the Greek term can also be rendered, includes rebuke to the wayward Christian and comfort to one beset by grief. It covers the broad spectrum of advice on how to live the Christian life. Unfortunately much of what passes itself off as Christian counseling is more secular than it is biblical. That
is because it is not on a solid exegetical footing. Expository preaching does well to include the right kinds of application to the assembled group, just as it should be done on an individual or small-group basis, i.e., a counseling situation.

(c) Christian Education. Education that is really Christian will derive from exegesis. What is true of secular educational methodologies will not necessarily apply in efforts to impart biblical truth. For example, the secular assumption that something must be experienced before it can be learned is the reverse sequence of what the Bible prescribes. Doctrine precedes and determines practical experience in the biblical pattern. Utilization of biblical principles of education in messages whose purpose is to teach the meaning of Scripture is another supporting element of Bible Exposition.

(d) Administration. Unfortunately many have attempted to incorporate secular administrative philosophies into local-church operations. Pragmatism has often been given as a reason for this: "If it works in the business world, use it." Such reasoning is ethically inferior, however. The biblical dimension in administration gives first attention to this principle: "Is it right according to Scripture?" The Bible has much to say about how to rule or govern. In fact, it designates a special gift of the Spirit for carrying out this function (cf. Rom 12:8; 1 Cor 12:28). Since under normal circumstances the Bible expositor will serve his church in an administrative capacity, it can be expected that exegetically based principles of leadership will sometimes be reflected in his preaching.

(e) Missions and Evangelism. Missions and evangelism are proper goals in Christian service, but the means used to reach these goals are not always so proper. Even here manmade schemes have replaced scripturally prescribed methods of winning lost people to Christ. When missionary methods and evangelistic techniques are based on what the Bible teaches, however, both the means and the end are God-honoring. Hence exegesis must also be the footing on which Christian outreach is built. Expository preaching will in turn build on missions and evangelism rightly construed in those aspects of the sermon devoted to bringing an offer of salvation.

(f) Social Issues. How Christians should involve themselves in combatting the ills of society and helping meet the multiplied
needs of the world as a whole must stem from an accurate understanding of the Word too. Scripture clarifies certain causes that are very worthy and supplies outlines of how God's people can help alleviate suffering and rectify injustice. Christians have responsibilities as citizens in the world. The preacher who features Bible Exposition should amplify these responsibilities when they are appropriate to the passage he is developing.

The breadth of Bible Exposition is enormous, yet its central core is always biblical exegesis. In review, the relationships of various disciplines and their climax in an exposition of the Word may be shown in the following schema:
Schema of Relationships Between Fields of Theological Study
The schema above reflects the building blocks that eventually lead to Bible Exposition, beginning at the first level and progressing to the fourth. It also shows the crucial role of biblical exegesis in the process. With a breakdown in exegesis comes a collapse of the whole structure of which expository preaching is the climax. Based on thorough exegesis, Bible Exposition can fruitfully draw upon the full spectrum of theological disciplines.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR EXPOSITORY PREACHERS

The above remarks reflect that Exegesis and Bible Exposition are not the same. Exegesis may be defined as "the critical or technical application of hermeneutical principles to a biblical text in the original languages with a view to the exposition or declaration of its meaning." Since exegesis leads to exposition but is not identical with it, a few suggestions about how to make the transition from one to the other are in order.

As in the process of exegesis, it is also true of the transition from that point to sermon preparation and delivery that the leading of the Spirit of God is indispensable. This is the only way of accomplishing the work of God in the lives of people through preaching (cf. 1 Thess 1:5). The preacher must be a man in whom the Spirit has been and is at work before he can be an instrument through whom the Spirit will work in the lives of others as he preaches.

A warning issued above is worth repeating. A transition from exegesis to Bible Exposition is mandatory. Pulpiters who are fluent enough to expound the technical data of exegesis and still hold the attention of an average congregation have been and are extremely rare. The information gleaned from exegesis must be put into a format that fits the understanding of the person in the pew and is applicable to his situation.

As the above schema reflects, exegesis must also be expanded to embody other fields of doctrinal and ethical relevance. A preacher

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need not include every field in every sermon he preaches. These are areas that may be introduced as the nature of the passage and the occasion of the sermon require.

Beyond these general suggestions, some specific pointers may be beneficial. These miscellaneous guidelines are the ones that have seemed most apropos to this writer in over thirty years of personal preaching, listening to other preachers, and preparing would-be expositors:

(1) The preacher should review the results of the exegetical study and select parts that will most typically represent his detailed interpretation of the passage. Time will not allow him to include everything he has learned, so he must select what is most important for his congregation to hear.

(2) In his sparing use of technical terminology that may be unintelligible to his audience, the expositor should not shy away from referring occasionally to Greek words that lie behind the English translation. When doing so, he can help his cause by comparing the Greek term to an English word derived from it. For example, 

\[ \text{dynamis} \]  

could be compared to the English word "dynamic." This gives the listeners a point of reference to facilitate recollection of what the Greek term is. To repeat an above-mentioned precaution, however, this type of sermon material must be used only occasionally. The expositor must be careful not to overuse Greek terminology.

(3) The Bible expositor should describe as best he can the thoughts of the human writer of Scripture that resulted in his writing what he did. These subjective impressions were products of the Holy Spirit's inspiration and are key elements in a precise understanding of accurate interpretation. A writer's logical developments are best captured through close attention to features of syntactical exegesis referred to above. The use of conjunctions in the NT is particularly strategic in cultivating a sensitivity to movement of thought in the text. This type of information is most effectively passed on to the audience

\[ ^{12}\text{Caution needs to be exercised in choosing English words that are analogous to Greek words, however. "Dynamite," for instance, conveys a markedly incorrect impression of what the Greek word dynamis connotes.} \]
Exegesis . . . Expository Preaching

in the form of descriptions or paraphrases of the text.

(4) Public presentation is not the proper forum to resolve in
detail difficult interpretive problems, but an expositor's awareness of
the problems should be reflected in his presentation. After surveying
the possible viewpoints, he should include one or two good reasons
why he has selected a solution as the correct one. If he were to skim
past a problem in the text without noticing it, he would shake the
confidence of those listeners who may be aware of the problem.
Tough issues should not be left unsolved, no matter how difficult they
are. If the preacher is indecisive, his indecision will be multiplied into
outright confusion among his hearers who have nowhere else to turn
for an answer. They have nothing comparable to the tools of a trained
exegete to grapple with obscure passages. With particularly difficult
matters, the expositor does well to admit publicly his personal struggle
in reaching a decision, but he should nevertheless not shy away from
expressing his own preferred answer in each problem passage.

(5) A careful personal translation of the passage to be preached
based on thorough exegesis is a primary prerequisite in sermon
preparation. In producing it, the preacher should read the text
repeatedly in the original language and then turn to English
translations for further enlightenment on how others have rendered
the words. As opportunity arises, the expositor's personal translation
may be made available to the congregation in a published form.

(6) The sermon’s proposition and outline should have an
interpretational rather than an applicational orientation. This
reinforces the central purpose of the sermon as a teaching device. It is
primary that listeners should carry away an understanding of the
text's meaning. Suggestions of practical effects on Christian living are
quite appropriate in the message, but without being founded on the
original intention of the author, they will be short-lived. Besides, long
after the sermon is over, the Holy Spirit will add to these suggested
practical lessons others of an individual nature as people reflect on
what the text means. Preaching is first and foremost a service to the
mind as groundwork for a service to the heart. The will and emotions
are influenced in a lasting way only in proportion to the degree that
the mind has learned correct biblical teaching and the level of behavior
consonant with that teaching.

(7) In an ideal situation the sequence within the sermon
structure should follow the sequence of the passage of Scripture being treated, but sometimes the nature of the passage and/or the occasion of the sermon may require a sermon outline that draws upon emphases within the passage in a non-sequential order. The latter approach may sometimes be the best pedagogical tool for helping the audience grasp the fundamental thrust of the passage. Whenever the out-of-sequence outline is used, a tracing of the passage’s sequential flow should be included in the introduction or elsewhere in the sermon. A combined emphasis from the sequential summary and the text’s underlying principles tendered non-sequentially will greatly benefit the hearers when they are reviewing the passage privately after the sermon.

(8) An expositor should make every effort not to preach preconceived notions of what a given text may say. His sacred trust is to let the text speak for itself and not impose on it what he thinks or wishes it said. Much too frequently a preacher conceives of what his congregation’s needs are and rushes naively to a text to support his conception. The results are tragic for the exegetical process, and beyond this, the preacher’s prime reason for standing before people has suffered abuse.

(9) The proper choice of an English translation on which to base a sermon is important, but whatever version is chosen, the preacher will have to correct or clarify the translation during the message. He must be careful to limit these corrections, perhaps to only two or three, during the process of a message for fear of shaking the confidence of his listeners in the Bible they hold in their hands. After all, part of his goal is to cultivate a hunger among his people to study the Bible privately. Too many criticisms of that Bible will undermine their dependence on a given translation and fuel a “what’s the use?” attitude on their side.

(10) Contemporary preaching is best done by people who possess the spiritual gifts of teaching and exhortation (Rom 12:7-8; 1 Cor 12:28-29; Eph 4:11). It combines a ministry primarily to the human intellect with one addressed primarily to the will. Teaching provides

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13See “Bible Translations: The Link between Exegesis and Expository Preaching,” The Master’s Seminary Journal 1/1 (Spring 1990) 53-73.
instruction in doctrine which is the basis for exhortations on how to live more consistently for Christ. No two people have these combined gifts in equal strengths, nor do they have the gifts in the same proportions. So each person is completely unique and need not try to produce an exact imitation of someone else's preaching. Among prospective preachers in particular the tendency is to observe a preacher with a strong "charisma": an indescribable appeal and attractiveness with listeners and to try to imitate him. This is a mistake because no two members of the body of Christ have identical functions or were meant to be clones of one another.

(11) The speaker should have a general idea of the average level of comprehension of those addressed. He should gear most of his remarks just below that level, but periodically he should rise above that level a bit. This will challenge his people and keep them from getting bored with hearing so much that they already know. If he stays above that level too much, they will become frustrated and lose interest because they are in the dark about what is being preached. Balance is the key.

(12) Every expository message should teach something that the recipients did not already know before hearing the sermon. To some congregations unaccustomed to an expository ministry this may be uncomfortable at first. They have not come to the church service to be instructed because sermons they have heard in the past have consisted of a series of personal experiences or a string of platitudes without a firm biblical basis, and not of instruction about the meaning of the text. Their orientation has been reflected in the oft-repeated philosophy, "Our problem isn't that we don't know enough, but that we don't put

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14Wonderly refers to this level of what consumers may tolerate as either a "horizon of difficulty" or a "threshold of frustration" (William L. Wonderly, Bible Translations for Popular Use [vol. 7 of Helps for Translators; London: United Bible Societies, 1968] 37-39); cf. Eugene A. Nida, Toward a Science of Translation (Leiden: Brill, 1964) 132-44.

15A preacher who prefaces his sermon with "I don't have anything new to give you today, but . . .," has in essence told his congregation, "We may as well pack up and go home right now." He is confessing that his training for sermon preparation has been inadequate or that he has not been disciplined enough in his schedule to prepare the way he should have.
what we do know into practice." This ill-conceived philosophy assumes that knowing and doing are antithetical, i.e. an "either-or" pair when in reality they are not. The real situation is better stated, "Our problem is that we don't know enough and that we don't put what we do know into practice." Instruction must be the prime objective if long-lasting, spiritually-improved behavior is to result. Meeting the challenge of Bible Exposition to teach the previously unknown is facilitated by the expositor's familiarity with the original text. Usually he will have more than he can teach in his allotted time. As the saying goes, "His sermon barrel will never run dry."

(13) The preacher of God's Word should take care not to overload his congregation. The average Christian can digest only so much at one sitting, particularly when he is being taught previously unfamiliar material. The messenger must be very sensitive to the capacity of those who sit under his ministry and govern his teaching accordingly.

(14) How much a Bible expositor can teach effectively in one sermon is the function of a wide variety of factors. It will depend upon his combination-giftedness in teaching and exhortation, the nature of the sermon text, his method of preparation, the attention-span of his hearers, and other factors. As a general rule, with most congregations in the American culture, the first fifteen-to-twenty minutes is the best time to emphasize teaching in a message. After this listeners tend to become mentally fatigued, so to speak, and added effort is necessary to hold their attention. More applications of the text and illustrations of its principles are good ways to spark attentiveness. This does not mean that the first half of the sermon must be devoid of applications and illustrations, nor that the last half must completely ignore teaching. It is rather a matter of the proportional emphasis to be given to each in successive parts of the sermon.

(15) In expository preaching, teaching of the "not already known" should be mingled with what listeners do already know or

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16The interest-span of a given audience can be increased by patiently and gradually increasing the amount of instructional emphasis from message to message. Progressively listeners will grow in their ability to sustain concentration on a passage under discussion over longer and longer periods. Of course, in other cultures the attention span may vary considerably from what most Americans can tolerate.
what they can glean for themselves from reading an English translation. This familiar material furnishes them with a point of reference to which they can relate the new instruction received. Without this anchor they have no way to assimilate the message with their already formulated Christian beliefs. With this reference point their broad comprehension of Christian doctrine as a whole can be expanded.

(16) The expositor should avoid the pitfall of sensationalism. The temptation to gear one’s message for novelty is strong. Forcing upon the original text a spectacular connotation that it was never intended to convey is all too common. A preacher may do this sort of thing for the shock-effect and consequent popularity it produces. If he opts for this route to gain applause or acceptance by his listeners, he has abused his responsibility and privilege as a proclaimer of God’s Word. The line separating the selfish motives of a sensation-seeker and the unselfish motives of a humble attempt to maintain audience attention is sometimes very fine. God’s servant must be careful not to cross that line in the wrong direction.

OUR CHALLENGE

In summary, the preacher’s God-given responsibility is to deliver accurately and effectively to his listeners what the Holy Spirit meant when He inspired the writers to pen the Scriptures. Anything short of this is not expository preaching and falls short of fulfilling the divine mandate to “preach the Word” (2 Tim 4:2). To communicate accurately and effectively through the power of the Holy Spirit what has been written in Scripture is the most fulfilling service that a person

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17Guarding against selfish motives and pride and at the same time trying to maintain the interest of listeners for their benefit is probably the greatest challenge for the preacher. It entails self-examination to determine whether his motivation is from his “crucified with Christ” self for the purpose of self-aggrandizement or his “raised with Christ” self for the purpose of edifying others (cf. Rom 6:11). The Spirit-controlled expositor will defer only to the latter type of motivation in this decision as well as in all decisions of his Christian life (cf. Robert L. Thomas, “Improving Evangelical Ethics: An Analysis of the Problem and a Proposed Solution,”)JETS 34/1 [March 1991] 17-19).
can render to others.

In any book about the "how to's" of preaching, goals so high that they are unattainable are usually upheld. This criticism is applicable to the above remarks. One offering this kind of advice lays himself open to the charge of being so idealistic that he is not realistic. Yet to lower the standards just because human imperfections prohibit perfect achievement is to sacrifice the high ideals that befit the calling to preach the whole counsel of God. The man of God engaged in preaching must continue his efforts to improve his role in this eternal service for the benefit of other human beings and the glory of God. When the final tally is in, he recognizes, of course, the Holy Spirit as ultimately responsible for giving the increase through the proclamation of the Word of God. In the process, however, he will have done his best to be a vessel fit for the Master's use (2 Tim 2:21).
BOOK REVIEWS


The author, presently a counsellor with "Insight for Living," is best known for his work The Minister's Library. To his prolific list of books he here he adds fifteen readable chapters expounding the whole book of Judges. His exposition displays the high relevance of Judges to Christian life today, showing that present problems were problems in Israel, too: problems such as depression, lukewarmness, idol worship, homosexuality, rape, etc. He directs attention to spiritual solutions for these both in the days of the Judges and now.

"Many see Judges as a dismal record of Israel's failure, but to me it illustrates God's power, a message both timely and relevant" (p. 9). God's Spirit, operating through ordinary men and women, can accomplish the will of God. The work's introduction discusses various views of Judges' theme and concludes it is the power of God displayed through His representatives (p. 24). Barber gears his book for Christian lay people, not scholars or seminarians (p. 9).

Spiritual lessons are plentiful throughout, and aptly worded headings in bold-faced print mark out subdivisions. Short paragraphs carry the reader's thought through the text quickly. Frequent illustrations spice the content. For example, Pogo the cartoon character returns from a battle saying, "We have met the enemy and he is us" (p. 53). A line at the bottom of each page shows the exact verses dealt with on that page. Barber weaves in timely quotes from other sources.

Graphic sections depict Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. Along with Gideon's faith, commitment, and perseverance, Barber is quite candid about the ephod marring his later years (p. 108). He favors the view that Jephthah gave his daughter over to perpetual virginity (pp. 149-50), but his reasons for doing so are sometimes rather arbitrary and not difficult to answer for those who hold the popular view that Jephthah gave the girl as a burnt offering (cf. among evangelicals, J. J. Davis, Conquest and Crisis [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1969] 124-28; F. D. Lindsey, "Judges," in Bible Knowledge Commentary.
A better balance in supporting both views would strengthen the book here. It seems arbitrary to argue, as Barber does, "It is difficult to imagine the Holy Spirit using Jephthah [a man who sacrificed his daughter] as an example of faith if his act was so contrary to God's revealed will" (p. 150). What, then, of other characters who are noted for faith in Hebrews 11, but who also failed miserably at times?

Some will also feel uncomfortable with the book's attempt to bring Samson into a good light, even in cases of possible sexual impropriety (pp. 155-56). An example is Samson's relations with the woman from Timnah, where Barber stresses Samson's good design to bring peace between the Philistines and Israel (pp. 170-74). Here, Barber sees a Sid=IQ marriage arranged between the groom and the bride's family. Barber does not condone Samson's immoral conduct with the prostitute at Gaza, but many will not agree that Samson was not motivated by lust (p. 199), but by a desire to ravish her to show his power in defying the enemy. Barber likens this to Absalom's show of authority over David by going in to David's palace concubines in 2 Samuel 15-17. A more balanced view is that Samson was lustful, even if the power factor was present (cf. the recognition of lust by Davis, Conquest 138; Paul Enns, Judges [Zondervan] 111; Leon Wood, Distressing Days of the Judges [Zondervan] 325-28).

The section on Samson includes much that is helpful. Barber is sensitive to many areas readers want discussed. No writer covers everything because of space limitations. Still, one could wish that the book offered some explanation for how Samson may have caught and managed three hundred foxes to send on a fiery mission through Philistine fields (p. 185).

Barber sees as reprehensible and unconscionable the Levite's act in submitting his wife to the men of Gibeah for a night of using her for sexual pleasure (p. 227).

Many fine discussions popularly written help the book offset the few places of possible disagreement. Overall it has much to stimulate and benefit preachers, Bible study leaders, and Christians in general who appreciate the colorful tracing of a passage's flow. Barber's endnotes for each chapter reflect his use of good sources. A Scripture index and a person/title index are also beneficial.

The author, Associate Professor of History at the University of Delaware, has revised her dissertation for publication. The present volume offers a perspective of Sunday School heretofore unresearched. While professedly not a history, "it examines the creation and evolution of Sunday schools in five evangelical Protestant denominations . . . and through the inter-denominational Sunday School Union" (p. 1).

Although its true origins remain uncertain, Sunday School impacted the social climate of nineteenth-century United States. In this respect the Sunday School takes its place as a social reformer alongside "houses of refuge, reform schools, orphanages, old age homes and modern hospitals" (p. 2). The book does not ignore the spiritual impact of the Sunday School, but it focuses on the social dimension.

Interestingly, the state"in some cases by its own choosing, in others by pressure from individuals and groups of private citizens""assumed the functions of many institutions only after decades of management by private volunteers" (p. 2). But unlike many other institutions, the Sunday School remained a voluntary and independent organization, mostly because of its affiliation with the evangelical church, which the author defines broadly as Baptists, Congregationalists, Low Church Episcopalians, Methodists, and Presbyterians (p. 1).

Boylan's work has much information about the British and American Societies as well as the social force of the American Sunday School as an aggressive and sometimes independent agency. For instance, "If the central symbols of British efforts to bring their brand of enlightenment and civilization to the world were the army officer and the bureaucrat, American `civilizers' were more likely to be missionaries bearing Bibles and Sunday School books" (p. 169).

The book is a fascinating piece of research. Those interested in history, particularly American, and to a lesser extent, British, will find that the present volume fills gaps in one small area: the contribution that the evangelical Sunday School, broadly defined, has made to the
social and intellectual growth of the United States. Evangelicals will be encouraged to discover how their spiritual forefathers impacted their society broadly while maintaining their evangelistic fervor. The book is highly recommended for those whose motivation will sustain their reading through a revised dissertation.


These twenty chapters by different writers will stretch readers through their breadth of teaching about prayer. This is the third volume by the Faith and Church Study Unit of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship. Carson, Professor of NT at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, wrote Chapter 1, "Learning to Pray." Edmund Clowney, former Dean of Westminster Theological Seminary, contributed Chapter 8, "A Biblical Theology of Prayer." Most contributors to the book are not well known in America. They hold key positions, mostly in schools outside this country. Topics discussed include Biblical Theology of Prayer, Prayer and Biblical Notions of Spirituality, Lessons in Prayer from the Worldwide Church, and the Challenge to Pray (testimonies to prayer). At the end are notes for each chapter plus indexes of names and biblical passages.

The book is a very helpful small encyclopedia on important aspects of prayer. Much of the writing, however, is so matter-of-fact and academic in style that this reviewer fears will be too general, scholarly in tone, and abstractly heavy for all but the well-educated and seriously-persevering. Yet all who stick with the book will mine an abundance of gold.

The sixteen points about OT prayer (pp. 22-28) are highly profitable: prayer is not restricted to great saints; it transcends national/racial barriers and exposes the heart; it should not be an escape or excuse; it is hindered by unbelief; it should be exercised at all times, all places, and in any reverent posture. Also one should pray and fast, pray and tithe, and pray in the name of the Lord. Further, prayer fights anti-prayer forces, prayer is a cry for miracles in
desperate times, does not always have a happy ending, produces monuments of gratitude, and moves God to send revival. "Rarely will you find regular nights of prayer and fasting in churches and organizations in which nothing is happening" (p. 28). "Who would have thought that the round-the-clock prayer meetings begun in Count Zinzendorf's community in 1727 would have continued for 100 years! The community was, aptly enough, called Herrnhut, 'the Lord's Watch' (cf. Isaiah 62:6-7)" (p. 33).

Fine chapters deal with Prayer in the Psalms, Gospels, and Acts, Paul's writings, the General Epistles, and the Book of Revelation. Knowledgeable discussions also treat a Christian view of prayer and spirituality in Hindu thought, Buddhist thought, Muslim thought, and Roman Catholicism. A moving chapter gives lessons from prayer habits of the church in Korea. This chapter attributes spiritual birth and growth to scriptural preaching and united prayers (p. 231). The prayer was characterized by confession and accompanied by transformed lives. Often in the early work in Korea (1903, etc.) prayer extended from 1:00 a.m. to 4:30 a.m. or overnight. Also, later revivals were steeped in prayer. One section sketches some of the great men of prayer in Korea (pp. 235-39). Current habits there include prayer at daybreak or overnight and fasting.

The chapter on lessons from China is also stimulating. China has had perhaps the most Christians of any country. Conservative estimates claim about 50 million Christians there today, in a population of one billion (pp. 247, 250). Amazing growth has characterized China's churches since as late as 1976 when believers faced persecution. House churches sprang up, and the vast majority worship in these, though others attend open churches. Prayer meetings are as much as 3-4 hours long, most Christians fast often, the tone and volume is intensely earnest, and the spirit is one of unity. Scriptural language is used, with long quotations interspersed and promises claimed. Prayer is on all occasions, in accord with Eph 6:18, with heavy reliance on the Spirit. "Answered prayer is probably the most common cause of new conversions in China" (p. 253). Christians talk to God with empathy, crying while they pray, interceding for persecuted believers and backsliders, and expressing their thankfulness.

Other chapters recount prayer habits of Latin America, Africa, and the Puritans (a chapter just as stimulating as the ones on Korea
The Puritans prayed fervently with an awareness of God's majesty and presence. They were persistent and sensitive to God's will as revealed in His Word. They prayed to enhance God's glory and advance His kingdom. Some gave such a large place to intercession that they had hourly communion with the Lord.

Felicity Houghton, a member of the South American Missionary Society, describes her personal experience. She finds much help in the prayers of others (church and family), praying with others, and letting the Word fill her heart and shape her prayers. A prayer notebook is an asset, in addition to books on prayer, hymns, and prayer letters. Commitment to honor God's name according to the Disciples' Prayer of Matthew 6 is beneficial. A factor that draws out her prayer is the sense that others are counting on her intercessions.

The valuable book has one puzzling statement: "Prayer in Habakkuk, in a country overrun by godless, foreign armies . . ." (p. 20). The foreign army of Babylon was yet to come, but Habakkuk 3 shows Habakkuk's preparedness for it because of God's sufficiency. Not everyone will agree with the writer who says prayers of adoration represent "an advanced and higher form of prayer than those prayers that are full of complaints and requests" (p. 56). If requests are God's will, prompted by His Spirit for His glory, why are prayers of adoration necessarily a higher form? In either case, the person praying is highly pleasing to God. Scripture does not rank the aspects of prayer (praise, thanksgiving, confession, petition, intercession, etc.) in this manner.

All in all, the book blends so many features of prayer that it can be of immense spiritual benefit to a serious Christian who patiently reads it.


The author is currently Professor of Preaching at Asbury Theological Seminary with over twenty years experience in teaching homiletics. The present volume is a thoroughly revised version of his
previous work with an updated bibliography and supplementary readings for each chapter. The author draws heavily from history's gallery of preachers and their experiences. A plethora of brief discussions is arranged sequentially under the headings "the preacher," "the sermon," and "the delivery."

An example of the book's numerous helpful correctives occurs in its discussion of illustrations. In asking the question "Do my illustrations persuade?" the author warns against the potential for abuse with illustrations: "Stories can prove, refute, dissuade or persuade. Make certain your depictions do march toward real persuasion of authentic truth" (p. 147). The tendency to use an illustration as evidence in support of an apologetical or polemical point is an all-too-common preaching abuse that should be avoided.

A helpful but controversial contribution is the book's view of pictorial description. The author argues, "Preaching communicates best by pictures" (p. 14). The example of Jesus's teaching as related to left-brain/right-brain research, supports the notion that people think in pictures. "Abstractions deaden; cinema enlivens" (p. 14).

"Growth Sheets" provide the reader with a self-help opportunity to develop more skill in homiletics. Convinced that beginnings and endings are of utmost importance, the author gives substantial practical advice on how to write them. The book concludes with a generous and fairly current bibliography and a topical index.


Two well-researched and readable books evaluate the Christ that New Age writings portray. Both show why Christians believe their Christ, the true Christ, is far superior. Groothuis is known for two of the best previously written responses to New Age beliefs (cf. James E. Rosscup, "Christian Books on the New Age, A Review Article," The Master's Seminary Journal 1/ 2 [Fall 1990] 177-200). Rhodes
is associate editor of the Christian Research Journal. His doctoral dissertation at Dallas Theological Seminary in 1986 was on New Age leader David Spangler.

Groothuis, making intelligent use of good sources, informs readers of NA claims about a Jesus with beliefs different from those of the NT Jesus. He uses NA documents that claim to present the words of Jesus. In Chapters 2-3 he lays the foundation of who the real Jesus is and what He taught according to the Bible. Chapter 4 then critiques the Gnostic heresy of early Christian history, which spawned some of the writings New Agers use. One Gnostic source is leather-bound papyrus books, dated ca. A.D. 350 and found near Nag Hammadi, upper Egypt, in 1945 (p. 77). Elaine Pagels' The Gnostic Gospels (New York: Random House, 1979) won favor with many Americans for Gnostic beliefs about Jesus (p. 78). This favorable spirit surfaces in NA perspectives today.

Groothuis concentrates on Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection, what Gnostics make of these, and what they mean in the NT. Chapter 5 tests the reliability of Gnostic documents that present a Jesus so radically different from the NT picture. Groothuis concludes that the Gnostic texts have no place in the NT canon. Chapter 6 tests the NT witness to Jesus, noting its reliability and superiority to false ideas. Chapter 7 examines NA claims that Jesus between the ages of 13 and 29 studied with Eastern holy men, as those in India, and picked up some of their ideas. The chapter also evaluates the teaching that Jesus survived the crucifixion, slipped away to India, and died there.

Chapter 8 investigates whether or not Jesus was an Essene related to a cult of Jews near the Dead Sea and concludes He was not. Chapter 9 focuses on the 3-volume, 1,200-page work, A Course in Miracles, published beginning in 1965. This set that professes to give transcribed words of Jesus has sold more than 160,000 copies (p. 195). Chapter 9 also deals with Edgar Cayce (1877-1945), "the sleeping prophet," who has influenced many with his concepts of Jesus and His teachings. The chapter adduces strong historical evidence for the truth of NT teachings about Jesus. By contrast, A Course in Miracles avoids historical detail about the "Jesus" it portrays, detail by which a reader could authenticate its claim to be His voice (cf. p. 210). Chapter 9 also argues for accepting consistent OT and NT warnings about a supernaturalism that denies the true God and the claims of the Bible, one that has its source in supernatural beings called demons (pp. 211-
Finally, Chapter 10 is a probing assessment of the credibility of the biblical and NA brands of Christ. Groothuis reasons that the NT doctrine of Jesus's resurrection is more convincing than the NA theory of reincarnations. He says that if Jesus did rise from the dead as the NT claims, reincarnation is not really possible. Jesus was not reincarnated, but incarnated once for all.

As in his books, *Unmasking the New Age* and *Confronting the New Age*, Groothuis offers brilliant and arresting comments. They arise from a thorough grasp and evaluation of NA thought. He is clear about different kinds of NA belief, as NA writers attack Christianity from many angles, yet have basic beliefs in common. A typographical error in documentation was observed: W. E. Vine is listed as A. E. Vine (p. 44, n. 10). An annotated bibliography and a subject index of nearly 80 topics enhance the book's value.

Rhodes discusses the question, who do people of the NAM (i.e., "New Age Movement") say the Son of Man is? Norman Geisler rates the work as "by far the most comprehensive, biblical, and scholarly critique of any central New Age teaching available today" (Foreword, p. 8). The subtle danger of the NAM is that it says it believes in God, the soul, prayer, life after death, and Jesus Christ. But it invests the terms with a very different theological connotation.

Twelve chapters fit under three sections, the Jesus of the NAM, the Christ of the NAM, and a Look at the Biblical Jesus. Five appendices focus on special issues, such as "The Christ of *A Course in Miracles*.

Rhodes explains that the NAM Jesus is a way-shower to Christhood. As Jesus became Christ, all men may become Christ, and we will be the collective Christ (p. 14). NAM people substitute their Christ for the biblical Christ by (1) discovering hidden writings, (2) transferring primary allegiance from the biblical revelation of Christ to new revelations via channelers and psychics, and (3) using an esoteric system of interpreting the Bible, reading in hidden and mystical meanings to make Jesus into a NA evangelist (p. 15). Jesus who in NA teaching is distinguished from the Christ (contrary to 1 John 4:1-6) became the Christ by any of several methods. Elizabeth Clare Prophet, for example, claims that he went to India as a child and gained Christhood at the end of a learning process (p. 16).

Rhodes traces NA roots to ancient Gnosticism (chap. 1), and
then gives a Christian response to NA beliefs about Jesus's lost years as proposed in Levi Dowling's The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ. He compares the lack of good evidence for the NA case with evidence from the NT Gospels. Chapter 3 argues that Jesus is not the Teacher of Righteousness of the Dead Sea Scrolls and not an Essene, contrary to some NA belief. It closes with twelve contrasts between Jesus and the Teacher.

New Agers rely on, for example, the claims of David Spangler, Elizabeth Clare Prophet, and rediscovered sayings in the Akashic Records for their view of Jesus. Rhodes describes these claims in Chapter 5 and answers them in Chapter 6. He argues that NA esoterism in these sources is unreliable in its interpretation of the NT Gospels. He dismantles the Akashic Records, a source to which New Agers look as a record of truth from a realm outside this world. Part of his case is to show contradictions between NA false gospels and the NT gospels. Chapter 7 traces NA thought to roots in Theosophy (1875-the present), Anthroposophy under Rudolf Steiner (1912-the present), and the Arcane School and the "I AM" movement with their versions of the Christ. New Agers syncretize elements of these sources. Chapter 8 reveals how Spangler and Prophet as "Evangelists of the Lie" draw from these sources. Then Rhodes delineates reasons for believing that the Jesus of the NT alone is the Christ. Chapters 10-12 offer positive evidence for the kind of Jesus the NT gospels portray, drawn from His words, works, and resurrection. The final chapter, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," contains interesting contrasts between the coming king of the Apocalypse and the counterfeit king of the NAM. Rhodes closes with a brief glossary of NAM terms and a classified bibliography of sources related to the NAM.

Both books have strong argumentation, a readable flow, and broad yet penetrating studies in the principal sources. Groothuis seems to get to the heart of issues a bit faster and to flow better for the reader. Yet both are first-rate in building the case for the authenticity of the NT Jesus Christ and showing how the NAM Jesus and Christ do not measure up.

James E. Rosscup, Professor of Bible Exposition.

This work is a vigorous attempt to state principles to help expose the meaning of God and His human author in the biblical text (p. 23). The writer is Professor of Bible Exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary.

Fourteen chapters are arranged under five headings: Bible Study and Hermeneutics, Recognition, Exegesis, Application, and Validation. The book is printed two columns per page, with documentation in obvious interaction with good scholarship in page-by-page footnotes.

A few of the volume’s abundant good features include the following:

(1) Johnson cites six ways that proper use of historical criticism illuminates the historical meaning of a text (pp. 42-43). (2) He demonstrates the oneness of meaning even in biblical poetry, such as in Psalm 46 which can have a unified meaning even with its distinctive components (p. 45). The three interpretations are part of a comprehensive whole, a blend of several aspects. This unity also applies to prophecy, as when Abraham’s “seed” turns out to be those of faith among his physical descendants and also those of faith among other peoples, as in Galatians 3 (pp. 47-48). Johnson sees both physical and spiritual aspects as parts of a composite oneness, in harmony with each other.

(3) Though sometimes unclear in his wording, Johnson argues that the human author did not grasp the full import of every detail God used him to write (p. 51; cf. 1 Pet 1:10-11). For instance, if the writer of Dan 9:24-27 did not know the date of the decree, he wrote more than he knew but what God fully knew (p. 52). (4) Chapter 4 energetically answers eight objections to finding a single and unified meaning intended by God in His use of human authors. (5) Chapter 10, among many other things, deals with prophecy. Johnson agrees that Isaiah was fulfilled when the Medes struck Babylon (13:17), but he finds phrases that point to a more ultimate judgment against the wickedness of Babylon. The passage has a single sense judgment against Babylon but with different times of expressing the judgment (pp. 196-97). Johnson does not say whether literal Babylon must be rebuilt to fit the demands of Isaiah 13 and Jeremiah 50-51.

(6) He states reasons for a literal understanding of the thousand
years in Revelation 20 and of the animals in Isa 11:6-9 (pp. 198-200). (7) He sees four defining characteristics in OT typology (providence, historicity, resemblance, and dissimilarity in extent and effectual fulfillment, pp. 208-9). The fourth is an example of much in this work that needs to have the wording clarified. Why not refer to the "dissimilarity" element by some simpler term such as "elevation"? (8) Pages 278-88 provide help in understanding specific passages. The correction of the Jehovah's Witnesses error about Jesus Christ being a created being in John 1:1 is helpful (p. 280). Further, such explanations would help clarify the writer's point more. (9) The glossary is quite beneficial, defining nearly seventy terms. (10) Indexes of persons, subjects, and Scriptures are a valuable addition.

Johnson's emphasis on a single meaning for each passage is well taken (chap. 3). He contrasts this with multiple meanings as proposed by Origen and Augustine. But the illustration from Jas 2:14-15 is misleading (p. 32) in taking "save" to refer to the salvation of a person from his lack of food or clothing through another person's act of faith in performance of works to relieve (i.e., save) him. That meaning strangely clashes with what the text says, because v. 14 deals with whether faith can save professing Christian A and v. 15 introduces professing Christians B or C as the ones who are in need. So the issue is, can the faith Christian A professes save him (professing Christian A, not the ones in need) when that faith allows him to shun B or C? Rather than giving a textually based meaning, the discussion changes what the text says.

Sometimes the book uses many sources, reflecting various views. This at times works against clarity for readers by its ponderous complexity and verbosity. Laborious discussions linger on and bring in numerous issues. Yet in this maze of details the serious student with strong perseverance will find considerable valuable information.

The title of Chapter 5 is too general to be definitive: "The Task of Recognition." A recognition of what? Why not use a more direct title such as "Recognizing the Meaning of the Text"? The author eventually states this as the topic (pp. 75, 82).

Why is "Recognition" listed in sequence (p. 75) after "Meaning" and before "Exegesis"? It would appear to belong before "meaning" or after "exegesis," because preliminary-reading recognition suggests the meaning and some exegesis must be done before an interpreter can recognize the essential point of the text? Further, what is the
difference between (1) "Meaning," (2) "Recognition," and (3) "Comprehension" (p. 76)? Recognition is defined in the book as recognizing the divine author/human author's intended meaning by grasping the general meaning of the whole text, i.e., in an essential summary (p. 76). Following a listing of these items in an apparently arbitrary and repetitive order is not easy. Much clarification is needed here. On the other hand, discussion under some subpoints is clear and rewarding. For example, the section about discerning the "Subject" has a helpful list of what this entails (pp. 83-84).

A better title for Chapter 6 would be "Literal and Historical Premises in Recognizing the Meaning," and for Chapter 7 "Literary and Theological Factors in Recognizing the Meaning" would be an improvement.

Why is it necessary to complete one's inductive study of a text before doing exegesis (cf. p. 135)? Is this not included in exegesis, i.e., a part of "leading out" the meaning of the text?

The treatment of application in Chapters 11-12 is sometimes too complex. Chapter 12 is too long and tedious (41 double-column pages). A possible remedy would be to divide it into smaller segments to highlight each idea more effectively.

Much of Chapters 13-14 is cast in complicated phrases that hinder readability. On the subject of "validity" Johnson has an extensive section on a biblical worldview. For purposes of hermeneutics, the discussion is too general, and affords little direct help for interpretation.

To single out ten interpretations of John 15:1-7 is arbitrary. Several of the ten only partially represent what authors hold, because some may actually be in agreement with others, while simply stating a view differently from someone else. One of the ten might actually concur with another of the ten if more of what he holds were correlated (pp. 292-93). This possibility could reduce the number of different "views." The rest of the comments on John 15 add to the confusion. They do not teach clearly what John 15 in the context of John or the Bible is saying because of an artificial control on some of the chapter's ideas and an omission of elements that could lead to a different conclusion. Selection of a simpler passage would illustrate the relevant hermeneutical principle better than the book's discussion of this allegory.

This reviewer has commented on both positive and negative
aspects. All in all, the book is of a ponderously informative nature. Interpreters seriously willing to think, weigh, and persevere will often find it very rewarding. That the author has read relevant literature is plain, and that he has given much thought to many issues is apparent. With the high value of this edition, perhaps a later edition can improve a good book into a better book, even one of a quality usable as a primary seminary text. The author's painstaking work earns the volume a right to be read, though improvement in several areas is needed. One need is smoother readability; another is to show the relevance of long sections that go into minute detail. Chapter titles can be more specific, and more discussion of specific passages to illustrate hermeneutical principles would be beneficial.


The author, Professor of Practical Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and a former pastor of nine years, observes that preachers "need a sharply focused awareness of the key issues facing the pulpit today" (p. 9). Consequently, each of the fifteen chapters of his book "seeks to identify a pressing current issue and to chart a reasonable and prudent course for preachers today" (p. 9).

The author builds his discussion of various issues on a theology of preaching. Beginning with a historical survey of Ezra's rudimentary principle (Ezra 7:10) and practice (Nehemiah 8), he selectively surveys the history of Christian preaching. Several objectives characterize the biblical preacher of all ages: "He keys his message carefully to his audience, his aim is clear (Acts 2:36), he uses a definite arrangement in his argument, and he moves aggressively to his conclusion and application" (p. 16). A brief history of preaching after the biblical era follows.

In the third chapter the author reviews extensive recent research on what the preacher faces as he addresses a congregation. On the one hand, he must not shrink from being counter-cultural in embracing and proclaiming the Bible's message, but on the other, he
must be aware of the obstacles to clear and cogent communication. Pulpiteers face an onslaught of opposition: overstimulation, desensitization, enervation, depersonalization, preference for the nonverbal, and confusion all wage war against effective communication. In response, preaching should be pictorial, personal, practical, participative, and pointed.

Other helpful discussions include spirituality, sermon structure, sermon flow, variety, relevancy, creativity, intentionality, manipulation, story preaching, Christocentricity, style, and improved delivery.

Several themes appear sporadically throughout the book. The author's discussion of the relationship between the New Hermeneutic and the New Homiletic warns of the ways Bultmann's influence has affected the preaching process from interpretation to delivery. A second pervasive theme is the requisite commitment of the preacher as a whole person. Spirituality, including the preacher's prayer life, has sadly been omitted from homiletical discussions. Yet personal relaxation and voice care, although lesser issues, are not to be ignored either.

The book is clearly and interestingly written, and offers numerous helpful suggestions, often neatly structured in lists. The volume is indexed at the back by subject and Scripture reference. The author does not pretend to address every issue or any one issue exhaustively, but seeks to stimulate further research and reflection.


Reviewed by David C. Deuel, Associate Professor of Old Testament.

Thirty leading Reformed pastors and homiletics professors were consulted regarding their opinion about the primary deficiencies in Reformed preaching. Each chapter was written by an author regarded as the most competent to write on each of the topics emerging from the poll.

The introduction, fittingly written by J. I. Packer, responds to the question "Why Preach?" Surprisingly, Dr. Packer first speculates
about why so few seem to believe in preaching. This leads him to define what preaching is in contrast to other modes of Christian instruction and should accomplish: "Preaching is God's revealed way of making Himself and His saving covenant known to us" (p. 15); "preaching communicates the force of the Bible as no other way of handling it does" (p. 17); "preaching focuses the identity and clarifies the calling of the church as no other activity does" (p. 19); and "preaching has some unique advantages as a mode of Christian instruction" (p. 21).

The book's organization follows the cherished and conspicuous three-point alliterated outline: I. The Man, II. The Message (subdivided into discussions of message content and message form), and III. The Manner.

Lack of extensive footnoting and in some cases little or no footnoting marks the volume as fresh and creative. Each of the contributors draws upon his breadth of experience and years of research. The more technical entries, such as Samuel Logan's "The Phenomenology of Preaching" and Hendrik Krabbendam's "Hermeneutics and Preaching," are exceptions to the sparse-documentation characteristic. Both of these are stimulating and clearly written, and organize discussions that focus on current issues related to their respective topics. Samuel Logan challenges readers to reconsider the issues distinguishing existentialist and more traditional preaching epistemologies; Hendrik Krabbendam discusses the question of intentionality and its implications:

The meaning of the text is to be discovered, recognized and validated by means of the grammatical, syntactical and semantic study of the text, which ought to account for the total linguistic structure in general and for every linguistic component in particular (p. 217).

Careful readers may discover discrepancies between these two furtive entries, but such merely underscores the freedom of conviction permitted by the editor, Samuel Logan himself. Krabbendam pursues the current and not happily-resolved issue of the "exemplary" versus "redemptive" historical methods. Readers may not agree with the either of the authors, but the discussion is stimulating.

To those not familiar with Jay Adams work on sense appeal in
preaching, his essay on "Sense Appeal and Story Telling" will be interesting. His suggestions are aimed at correcting the tired, banal lectures too often heard from the pulpit.

David A. Dombek's "Reading the Word of God Aloud" addresses the sadly neglected need for appropriate public reading of Scripture. The embarrassing way in which the Word of God is often read, merely as a warm up for the sermon, is disheartening. Dombek's practical suggestions, particularly the admonition to read interpretively, provides instruction that will inspire public reading of a quality befitting the Word of God.

This volume is enthusiastically recommended to all who proclaim God's Word. Some may not agree with its every detail, but breadth and freshness make this a significant contribution to the field of preaching.


This recently begun series seeks to justify its place among an already existing glut of commentaries on NT books by writing concisely for the church an explanation of the text and showing its present relevance and application (p. 9). It is based on the NIV, and geared for pastors, students, Bible teachers, and small-group leaders. The exposition appears on the upper part of each page with more special detailed comments at the bottom in notes.

Marshall believes that if a Christian were "to be ship-wrecked on a desert island and allowed to have only one of the New Testament letters... 1 Peter would be the ideal choice..." (p. 12). It takes up many subjects vital for Christians.

The author pays tribute to outstanding, detailed, older commentaries by E. G. Selwyn and F. W. Beare, to J. N. D. Kelly for his helpful work for students, and to C. E. B. Cranfield for his exegesis and exposition of 1 Peter as God's Word for today (pp. 11-12). The epistle, he says, has three lines of crucial instruction: help for recent converts, direction in Christian ethics, and aid for facing persecution.
He furnishes a good five-point defense of authorship by Peter versus a pseudonymous writer (pp. 22-23), a nine-point list of key points in Peter's theology, and a six-part outline. The main headings for the core of the book are basic characteristics of Christian living (1:13'2:10), social conduct (2:11'3:12), and the Christian attitude to hostility (3:13'5:11).

The book is concisely articulate regarding Peter's message. Much of the commentary is excellent, written in a clear and stimulating style. Valuable remarks about trial are in 1:6-7, a very profitable section on "Purity and Growth" in 2:1-3, and many worthwhile tie-ins with life today. He often points out a number of views on how a text has been interpreted, as in the five possible interpretations of Christ's suffering in the flesh in 4:1. He does not favor a link with Paul's idea of death/life with Christ in Romans 6, but favors saying that the Christian's preparation to suffer unjustly shows his commitment to a principle of opposing and refusing sin, an ideal but not universally true fact (pp. 133-34). Perhaps he dismisses too quickly the similarity to Romans 6.

The commentary on 3:19-21 is good (pp. 122-29). He explains the main views, but prefers the concept that Christ went to a prison in the heavens after His resurrection as He ascended, and proclaimed His victory of the cross and God's defeat of disobedient spirits (evil supernatural beings). He objects to a universalist view that allows a second chance for the lost to hear and be saved (p. 128). On 4:6, he sees a reference to Christians who now are dead physically, but had received the gospel before death (p. 137). His discussion of the "crown of glory" (5:4) is general and obscure, and does not offer a good explanation of a possible relation in this same context between leaders receiving this crown and believers in general receiving glory (v. 10). On 5:13, he says "She who is in Babylon" is the church at Rome. "The Jews applied the nickname to Rome after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, but long before this date Roman writers themselves had begun to characterize their own city as another Babylon in view of its luxury and increasing decadence" (p. 175). He does not document his reference to Roman writers.

Marshall is usually an excellent commentator even when brief, but as all writers do, he sometimes offers an arbitrary opinion. An example is his fault-finding with Christians who pray, "Lord, we just want to praise you, Lord, for this, and, Lord, we just want to ask you
for that, and Lord, we ask you to bless so-and-so." Perhaps he finds this too general at times, but fails to explain why it is necessarily weak before the Lord who knows the heart's intent (p. 35). One of his more helpful statements is that salvation can have various thoughts, "rescue from danger, healing from illness, deliverance from the threat of death and entering into a state of well-being" (p. 39).

As a whole, this is a richly stimulating, brief commentary that hits the target much of the time. It will be useful to those for whom it is chiefly designed. It freshly shows the relevance of Peter's first-century words to the twentieth century.


This is an insightful and creative approach that models the freshness it prescribes. The book narrates the trials of a young preacher. These serve as a vehicle for prescribing homiletical principles. Paul, a frustrated pastor about to leave his church because he has lost his zeal for the pulpit and pastorate, meets with his former homiletics professor while visiting the old seminary campus. Dr. Vickerson seizes the opportunity to encourage his former student before he joins the ranks of countless others who found the hurdles of ministry insurmountable. Paul soon discovers that he has given up the ministry of the Word to serve tables, the exact opposite of what the Scriptures prescribe, but the course that too many preachers choose because of a wrong view of servanthood. The book is both a homiletics text with life and breath reality clothing its bare-bones principles and a story whose characters live out a successful conclusion to the tensions that so often ruin preachers.

The book concludes with a "preaching with freshness checklist" which ties together in one outline (two formats) the principles taught in the narrative. Because Bruce Mawhinney's new book is enjoyable and helpful, it deserves a place in a preacher's library. Hopefully, it will help preachers whose seemingly unending pulpit struggles could be reduced with a little encouragement and some sage advice.
The purpose of this book by the Director of The Institute for the Study of American Religion and others is to furnish reliable information on the New Age Movement (hereafter NAM). It seeks an "objective, nonjudgmental approach" (p. vii). The authors say, "The overwhelming majority of literature on the movement has been extremely hostile particularly the books produced by Evangelical Christians who feel threatened by it" (p. vii). This conclusion is borne out in an earlier article by this reviewer ("Christian Books on the New Age, a Review Article," The Master's Seminary Journal 1/2 [Fall 1990] 177-200). Other literature on the NAM, such as works by religious skeptics, dismisses the movement as a result of psychological aberrations and social dysfunction (p. vii). So this encyclopedia seeks "a balanced, objective, and comprehensive overview" (p. vii). It gives no opinions on the NAM viability or its ultimate religious or philosophical value.

Over three hundred alphabetically listed articles give information on NAM themes, practices, spokespersons, organizations, and terms needing definition. Before this listing the work has a 21-page essay, "An Overview of the New Age Movement," that deals with origins, history, roles of main leaders, and capsule statements on the distinctive tenets and ideological loyalties. A list of chief works definitive of the NAM that the authors consulted is included. Also, a four-page "Chronology of the New Age Movement" (pp. xxxv-xxxviii) lists dates and developments from 1875 to 1990. The encyclopedia provides great clarification on the NAM relation to other movements such as the occult and metaphysical. It shows that some in occult and metaphysical groups embrace selected NAM features; it also reflects that some disclaim any association with NAM thought or practice (p. viii).

The encyclopedia begins with "A. R. E. Clinic" (a holistic health center in Phoenix, AZ) and ends with "Zone Therapy." The latter cross-references "Reflexology," which is a form of therapeutic massage based on ten zones in the body and believed to lead to better
functioning of other body parts (p. 379). Definitive entries deal with topics such as acupressure, acupuncture, Aquarius (Age of), applied Kinesiology (bodywork that combines aspects learned from chiropractic and acupressure), art therapy, astrology in the New Age, Atlantis, Blavatsky, cancer cures, holistic health, Edgar Cayce, Channeling, Chinese medicine, A Course in Miracles (nearly 1,200 pp. produced in 1965-1973 claiming to give words of Jesus), Benjamin Creme, Crystals, John Denver, Marilyn Ferguson, Findhorn Community in Scotland, Firewalking, hypnosis and self-hypnosis, integral yoga, other forms of yoga, J. Z. Knight, Maitreya, Ruth Shick Montgomery, Music and the New Age, New Age Politics, Past-life therapy, Elizabeth Clare Prophet, Reincarnation and Karma, Kevin Ryerson (channel/medium of Shirley MacLaine), David Spangler, Theosophy Society, UFO Abductions, etc.

The entries on NAM leaders provide basic information on their birth, career, marriage, when and how any NA experience began, success in writings, tapes or seminars, schools they founded, societies they started or shared in, etc. At the end of each entry the book lists bibliographic details on sources for further study. Further sections at the end list U. S. institutions that offer NA courses, and alphabetical and keyword indexes.

The entry "Christianity and the New Age" appears on pp. 111-15. It offers basic information and lists the top authors responding against the NAM as Russell Chandler, Constance Cumbey, Douglas Groothuis, Karen Hoyt, Walter Martin, Paul and Terri Reisser and John Welton, and Ruth Tucker.

If the book is used to gain basic, reliable, compact information about persons, organizations, and definitions, it is a very handy source. For example, if one wishes information about Shirley MacLaine's NAM connection, he would turn alphabetically to "MacLaine, Shirley" (pp. 270-72), and even find a listing of five of her books as well as other key sources that discuss her. The article "Skeptics and the New Age" covers pp. 417-27. Data about David Spangler is on pp. 428-29. That about Firewalking is on pp. 175-77, about Benjamin Creme pp. 135-37, and about Helena Petrovna Blavatsky on pp. 71-74. But evangelical perspectives and evaluations based on Scripture must be sought elsewhere. It is beneficial to compare the encyclopedia's entry on a NAM leader with reactions in books by evangelical Christians. Thirty-two of these books are

Twenty years of labor went into this monumental work on Genesis by Claus Westermann. The original German publication appearing in the series *Biblischer Kommentar Zum Alten Testament* has been translated into English by J. J. Scullion. The present volume was preceded by two others, *Genesis 1-11* and *Genesis 12-36*, published in English in 1984 and 1985 respectively. Upon publication the first volume was declared by some to be the most exhaustive and finest work on Genesis 1-11.

The commentary abounds with shrewd comments from many perspectives. Several examples bear this out: historically the title "Pharaoh" often is followed by the individual name (e.g., Raamses), but "before the 22nd dynasty he is always without a proper name" (p. 74, citing O. Procksch). Philologically, the author's knowledge of the Hebrew language extends to the advanced discussion of terms relating to Joseph's prison experience. The use of the Hebrew term mshmr in 40:3 "does not describe a place, namely, the prison, but a situation, detention" (p. 74). Literally and critically, the author is also sensitive to literary cues such as the role of Gen 40:23 in providing a transition to Chapter 41. In the first episode Joseph's rise is followed by an undeserved fall. In the second a well founded expectation of release is followed by disappointment. This prepares for the turn of fortune in Chapter 41 (p. 78) where Joseph will be led from danger to Pharaoh's court. Text-critically, variants are brought out in a clear and accessible manner: "The Greek, Syriac and Samaritan Pentateuch all have 'without God one can give no assuring answer’" (p. 84). Theologically, the author challenges the reader to look beyond explicit references to God in the Joseph narrative to see God at work behind the scenes. "God was with Joseph: His path leads into the depths, but God's support accompanies him even there" (p. 250); "God is also with Joseph as he undertakes to interpret the dreams" (ibid.) and "God's..."
action also follows the steps of the brothers," for example, when the brothers cry out in their guilt, "What has God done to us?" (Gen 42:28).

Westermann treats the Joseph story as a literary unit and places it within the Jacob episode of the patriarchal history (p. 45). His discussions of Tradition History, literary form, and redaction critical issues may prove foreboding. Also, several typographical errors confuse the sense of the commentary (e.g., "They thus intend to destroy the dreams [should be "dreamer"?] and his dreams" (p. 41). But for the careful student of Scripture, Westermann's work is a wellspring of helpful philological and theological insights. A good working knowledge of critical methodologies is essential to a prudent use of Westermann's work.


The author, known for his ability to draw together textual and archaeological data, writes so that "readers of such books as Daniel, Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah may better appreciate their historical and cultural backgrounds" (p. 12).

Biblical persons and events are viewed within the larger framework of Persian history. This fresh perspective sheds light on the causative elements within the Persian experience. Biblical references to the Medes, Cyrus the Great, Darius, Xerxes, Artaxerxes I, Susa (the capital of Elam), and Ecbanta (the capital of the Medes) are interspersed throughout. Several studies focus on biblical issues: the order of Ezra and Nehemiah; Ezra and the renewal of the Law; Nehemiah the cupbearer of Artaxerxes I; Nehemiah a Eunuch? Nehemiah the Governor; Nehemiah's opponents; Nehemiah the Reformer. Several studies in the Book of Esther examine the identity and roles of Ahasuerus, Vashti, Haman, Esther, and Mordecai.

The author chronicles the scholarly debate and makes his own contribution regarding the identity of "Darius the Mede" (Dan 5:31; 6:1-2; 9:1-2; 11:11). He also draws together recent research regarding the Behistian inscription and the Delphic Oracle. Other helpful discussions include the Greek words in Daniel, the Magi including
their historic relationship to the origin and dissemination of Astrology, and Zoroastrianism and Mithraism, including the latter's connection with fixing December 25 as the date of Jesus's birth.

In the appendix, the author discusses the once-widespread Apis cult which eventually interfaced with and was rivaled by Christianity at Alexandria in A.D. 391, and then finally on the island of Philae near Aswan about one-half century later.

The book is indexed by subject, place name, and other geographical designations including rivers, deserts, mountains etc., author, and Scripture reference. A select bibliography, combined with meticulous documentation, offers a wealth of primary and secondary source material.