

THE HISTORY OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

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The history of expository preaching begins with an understanding of the revelatory and explanatory preaching recorded in Scripture. Legitimate preaching in the Church Age continues the expository preaching begun in the Bible. History unveils a limited but rich ongoing legacy of biblical expositors up to the present day. These men who poured their lives into expounding God's Word command careful attention from today's biblical expositors.

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The rich heritage of expository preaching in church history stems from a relatively small number of men who have committed themselves to this type of preaching.¹ These men, devoted to expounding the Scriptures, are an encouragement and a challenge because of the profound results of their ministries. Dargan notes that "preaching is an essential part and a distinguishing feature of

¹No work in the English language is devoted specifically to the history of expository preaching. This includes dissertations, definitive monographs, and surveys. The reader is referred to the works of Edwin Charles Dargan, *A History of Preaching* (2 vols., reprint; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968); Ralph G. Turnbull, *A History of Preaching, Volume III* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974); and Frederick Roth Webber, *A History of Preaching in Britain and America* (3 vols.; Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1957), for their indexed references to expository preaching. Warren W. Wiersbe and Lloyd M. Perry, *The Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching and Preachers* (Chicago: Moody, 1984) have a limited treatment of the history of expository preaching. See also William Toohey and William D. Thompson, *Recent Homiletical Thought, A Bibliography, 1935-1965* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967) and A. Duane Litfin and Haddon W. Robinson, *Recent Homiletical Thought, An Annotated Bibliography, Volume 2, 1966-1979* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983).

Christianity, and accordingly the larger history of general religious movements includes that of preaching."² He further observes that "a reciprocal influence must be reckoned with: the movement has sometimes produced the preaching, the preaching sometimes the movement, but most commonly they have each helped the other."³ This profound influence of preaching in general applies especially to expository preaching. It has been a significant factor in the history of the church, earning a role as a worthy topic of study.

The apostle Paul spoke of his preaching as "not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor 2:4). In establishing the pattern for the church, he instructed Timothy to "preach the Word" (2 Tim 4:2). God has used the faithful efforts of expository preachers of His Word to bring honor to His name and to increase the faith of His saints (1 Cor 2:5) throughout history.

²Dargan, *History* 1:12. See also Edwin Charles Dargan, *The Art of Preaching in the Light of Its History* (Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention, 1922) 14-15.

³Ibid.

The *history* of expository preaching is a principal division of the overall science and art of homiletics.⁴ In emphasizing the importance of such a study, Garvie wrote the following over seventy years ago:

The best approach to any subject is by its history; if a science, we must learn all we can about previous discoveries; if an art, about previous methods. The Christian preacher will be better equipped for his task today, if he has some knowledge of how men have preached in former days. . . . While in preaching even, as in human activities of less moment, there are fashions of the hour which it would be folly to reproduce when they have fallen out of date, yet there are abiding aims and rules of preaching, which must be taken account of in each age, and which can be learned by the study of the preaching of the past. Admiration of the great and the good, even without imitation, makes a man wiser and better; the Christian preacher will enrich his own manhood by intimacy with those in whose worthy succession he stands. . . . He will be least in bondage to the past, who is least ignorant of it, and he will be most master of the present whose knowledge is least confined to it.⁵

Indeed great value results from understanding those who have given themselves to a life of biblical exposition. The current generation whose history has yet to be written can learn much from those whose history is now complete. Time yet remains to change, refocus, improve, and be moved to greater accomplishment. An exposure to the history of expository preaching furnishes a context, a reference point, and a basis for distinguishing the transient from the eternal. It will motivate a person toward and increase his confidence in faithful Bible exposition. In the words of Stott, he will glimpse "the glory of preaching through the eyes of its champions in every century."⁶ The history of expository preaching has an abundance of principles and lessons to teach those who study it.

THE BIBLICAL PERIOD

⁴R. W. Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1890) 93-94.

⁵Alfred Ernest Garvie, *The Christian Preacher* (London: T. & T. Clark, 1920) 22.

⁶John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 47.

Historical study of expository preaching must begin with a proper understanding of the record of preaching in Scripture. Preaching in the Bible is in two basic forms: revelatory preaching and explanatory preaching. All post-biblical preaching has the backdrop of the preaching recorded in Scripture and must trace its roots to this source.

Those originally charged with the task of proclaiming God's Word revealed God to man as they spoke. This Word from God came through different instruments, including the prophet who spoke a divine word from the Lord, the priest who spoke the law, and the sage who offered wise counsel (Jer 18:18). The OT is replete with the utterances of these revelatory preachers who accurately conveyed God's message to men.

One of the earliest examples of revelatory preaching is the final charge of Moses to Israel (Deuteronomy 31-33). This address was delivered with tremendous ability and clarity by one who once described himself as "slow of speech and slow of tongue" (Exod 4:10). In his two farewell addresses Joshua offered profound words of revelation and explanation to his people (Josh 23:2-16; 24:2-27). Broadus points to the "finely rhetorical use of historical narrative, animated dialogue, and imaginative and passionate appeal"⁷ in these messages from the Lord.

David and Solomon gave profound examples of revelatory and explanatory preaching of the Word in poetic form. David devoted many psalms to revealing the nature and character of God (Psalms 8, 9, 16, 22, 24, 34, 68, 75, 89, 93, 105, 110, 119, 136, 145). An equal number explained God to the people (Psalms 1, 23, 32, 37, 40, 46, 50, 66, 78, 92, 100, 104, 106, 118, 128, 150; see esp. 32:8). The Psalms provide an extraordinary wealth of instruction about the nature and content of preaching.⁸

Solomon used proverbs to provide instruction (Prov 1:2-3) and

⁷John A Broadus, *Lectures on the History of Preaching* (New York: Sheldon, 1886) 7.

⁸See Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (3 vols., reprint; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1966). Note his "hints to preachers" under each Psalm.

taught through an address at the dedication of the temple (2 Chr 6:1-42). "The Preacher" of Eccl 12:9-10 also gave an explanatory discourse on the philosophy of life in which he sought by wisdom (Eccl 1:12-13) to deliver "words of truth correctly" (12:10) and was eminently successful.

Perhaps the greatest examples of OT preaching are found among the prophets. An examination of their messages reveals both revelation and explanation. Broadus points to this fact and its relevance for today's preachers:

Alas! that the great majority of the Christian world so early lost sight of the fact, and that many are still so slow, even among Protestants, to perceive it clearly. The NT minister is not a priest, a *cleric`* except in so far as all Christians are a priesthood`he is a *teacher* in God's name, even as the OT prophet was a teacher, with the peculiar advantage of being inspired. You also know that it was by no means the main business of the prophets to predict the future . . . but that they spoke of the past and the present, often much more than of the future.⁹

Prophetic messages were not only predictions of the future (e.g., Isaiah 9, 53), but often called the people to repentance and obedience (Isa 1:2-31) or offered the people an explanation of the Word of the Lord (Isaiah 6). "The prophets were preachers."¹⁰ A number of passages in which explanation was the focus and purpose of the messages include Josiah's command to repair and reform the house of the Lord (2 Kings 22-23); Ezra's study and teaching of the law (Ezra 7:10); Nehemiah's comments about the law (Neh 8:1-8); and Daniel's explanation of his vision of seventy weeks (Daniel 9). Prophets who spoke of their work as instruction are Samuel (1 Sam 12:23), Isaiah (Isa 30:9), Jeremiah (Jer 32:33), and Malachi (Mal 2:9). John the Baptist has a special place because he blends fearless determination with deep humility (John 1; 3:22-30) as he "bore witness" to Christ and called men to repentance and faith (Mark 1:4; John 1:15, 29).

What is clear in the OT is that after a body of revelation had

⁹Broadus, *Lectures* 11.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 12. See also Leon J. Wood, *The Prophets of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 94.

been given, the people would return to it with a need to have it expounded or explained. This was particularly true of the hard-to-understand portions. OT preaching provided necessary clarification.

A history of Bible expositors must include Christ, who is both the model of preaching and the message preached. Jesus came preaching (Mark 1:14) and teaching (Matt 9:35). He was quite young when He began to display his understanding of Scripture (Luke 2:46-50). As with earlier spokesmen, His preaching included both revelation and explanation. The sermons of Christ, such as in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and the one at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30), are models of explanation and exposition for all time. In Matthew 5 Jesus said, "You have heard that it hath been said . . . but I say to you. . . ." In so doing He instructed and enlightened His listeners and amplified the text, much to the people's amazement. He stands head and shoulders above all who share the title "preacher" with him.¹¹ Many qualities of Christ's teaching and preaching can be quickly identified. Among them are the following: (1) He spoke with authority (Matt 7:29); (2) He made careful use of other Scriptures in His explanations; (3) He lived out what he taught; (4) He taught simply to adapt to the common man (Mark 12:37); and (5) His teaching was often controversial (Matt 10:35-37). To be understood properly, Christ must be seen "not as a scientific lecturer but as a *preacher*, a preacher for the most part to the common people, an open-air preacher, addressing restless and mainly unsympathizing crowds."¹² He taught His listeners the truth and explained it to them in simple but profound words. Some were confounded (Luke 4:28) while others rejoiced (Matt 15:15). Today's expository preacher should model his ministry after the expositional work of Christ. He should study His method carefully, "not as an example to be slavishly imitated, but as an ideal to

¹¹Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Lord of Glory* (reprint; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974) 8-9. See also H. E. W. Turner, *Jesus Master and Lord* (London: Mowbray, 1954) 129-55.; Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount, a Foundation for Understanding* (Waco: Word, 1982) 43-46.

¹²*Ibid.*, 33-34.

be freely realized."¹³ The teaching of Christ shows that exposition can take various forms, as long as it is faithful to the distinct purpose of explication of Scripture.

The preaching of the apostles and other early church leaders contributes significantly to the history of expository preaching. The messages of Peter (Acts 2:14-36), Stephen (Acts 7:2-53), Paul (Acts 17:16-31), and James (Acts 15:14-21) have elements of both revelatory and explanatory preaching. The epistles are, for the most part, written expositions designed to teach various lessons. As Barclay points out,

Paul's letters are sermons far more than they are theological treatises. It is with immediate situations that they deal. They are sermons even in the sense that they were spoken rather than written. They were not carefully written out by someone sitting at a desk; they were poured out by someone striding up and down a room as he dictated, seeing all the time in his mind's eye the people to whom they were to be sent. Their torrential style, their cataract of thought, their involved sentences all bear the mark of the spoken rather than of the written word.¹⁴

Paul in particular gave his life to preaching Christ (1 Cor 1:23; 2:2; 2 Cor 4:5) to reveal who He was (Rom 1:18; 1 Cor 2:10; Eph 3:5) and to explain Him to people (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11, 17; 1 Thess 4:1; 2 Thess 3:14; 1 Tim 1:5). A careful study of this apostle as a teacher and expository preacher of Christ yields deep insights regarding that preaching.¹⁵ As Broadus said of Paul, "Thousands have unconsciously learned from him how to preach. And how much richer and more complete the lesson may be if we will apply ourselves to it consciously and thoughtfully."¹⁶

¹³Garvie, *Christian Preacher* 43.

¹⁴William Barclay, "A Comparison of Paul's Missionary Preaching and Preaching to the Church," *Apostolic History and the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) 170.

¹⁵See Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Christ that Paul Preached," *The Person and Work of Christ* (reprint; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970) 73-90; R. H. Mounce, *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960); Ralph Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 66-71.

¹⁶Broadus, *History* 40.

Paul told Timothy to "preach the Word" (2 Tim 4:2), to "teach and preach these principles" (1 Tim 6:2), and to "instruct" (1 Tim 6:17; cf. also 1 Thess 5:15). Revelatory preaching was not involved here. While earlier preachers of Scripture gave both revelatory and explanatory messages, the "Timothys" sent out by them were to concentrate on explanations, expositing the Word to people who needed to understand the truth (1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 2:15; 4:2-5). As the NT era drew to a close, the work of biblical preachers became that of explanation only rather than of revelation and explanation.

The preaching in the Bible mandates *only one biblical response* for the post-biblical age: continue to explain and exposit the message now fully revealed (Heb 1:1-13). *All preaching must be expository preaching* if it is to conform to the pattern of Scripture. It is an extension of the explanatory or expositional dimension of preaching by OT and NT preachers.

Since exposition is rooted in Scripture, a study of its history in the church is against this background. A commitment to expository preaching as well as the quest to identify the thread of expositors throughout church history is possible only in light of preaching as seen in the Bible.

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH, 100-476

The rapid deterioration of primitive Christianity has been well documented.¹⁷ A lack of expository preaching in the post-apostolic period is an evidence of this, but it is not the only problem. The ordinance of believer's baptism rapidly turned to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. The Lord's Supper shifted from being a

¹⁷William R. Estep, "A Believing People: Historical Background," *The Concept of the Believers' Church* (Scottsdale: Herald 1969) 35-58; Franklin Hamlin Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism* (New York: Macmillan, 1964); Earl D. Radmacher, *The Nature of the Church* (Portland: Western Baptist, 1972); Johannes Warns, *Original Christian Baptism* (reprint; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1962); E. C. Whitaker, *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy* (London: SPCK, 1970); Kurt Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963); Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (Westminster: Dacre, 1945); J. B. Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry* (New York: Whittaker, 1879).

memorial for believers to being viewed widely as a sacrament conveying saving grace. Christian leadership rapidly changed from the offices of elder and deacon to sacerdotalism with the rise of the "bishop" along with his "apostolic succession." One of the major causes of deterioration was the importation of Greek philosophy into Christian thinking by the Church Fathers. This attempted "integration" resulted in a complete erosion of biblical theology in the perspectives of many of the Fathers. Concerning this shift, Hatch writes,

It is impossible for any one, whether he be a student of history or no, to fail to notice a difference of both form and content between the Sermon on the Mount and the Nicene Creed. The Sermon on the Mount is the promulgation of a new law of conduct; it assumes beliefs rather than formulates them; the theological conceptions which underlie it belong to the ethical rather than the speculative side of theology; metaphysics are wholly absent. The Nicene Creed is a statement partly of historical facts and partly of dogmatic inferences; the metaphysical terms which it contains would probably have been unintelligible to the first disciples; ethics have no place in it. The one belongs to a world of Syrian peasants, the other to a world of Greek philosophers.¹⁸

The three products of the Greek mind were abstract metaphysics (philosophy), logic (the principles of reasoning), and rhetoric (the study of literature and literary expression). The addition of Greek rhetoric into Christianity brought great emphasis on the cultivation of literary expression and quasi-forensic argument.¹⁹ "Its preachers preached not because they were bursting with truths which could not help finding expression, but because they were masters of fine phrases and lived in an age in which fine phrases had a value."²⁰

A significant indication of this adaptation is the turning away from preaching, teaching, and the ministry of the Word. Into its place moved the "art of the sermon" that was more involved with rhetoric

¹⁸Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages Upon the Christian Church* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1914) 1.

¹⁹Ibid., 30.

²⁰Ibid., 113-14.

than with truth.²¹ The Greek "sermon" concept fast became a significant tradition. In his well written article, Craig concludes that the "sermon" was the result of Syncretism`the fusion of the biblical necessity of teaching with the unbiblical Greek notion of rhetoric."²² He continues,

These sermons were not just a setting forth of Greek-influenced theology. They were in fact external copies of the rhetorical manner of the most popular Greek philosophers of the day. *It is not just what was said in the sermon, it is that the entire presentation and format was carried over from paganism.*²³

The same secularization of Christian preaching has dominated the church until the present day. The committed biblical expositor has often been the exception rather than the rule. Thus expositors mentioned here deserve special attention as representatives of a rare and noble group.

The first four hundred years of the church produced many preachers but few true expositors. The Apostolic Fathers (ca. 96-125) followed a typological method of interpretation in their works. Second-century Fathers (ca. 125-190) such as Justin Martyr and Tertullian composed apologies in defense of Christianity. Third-century Fathers (ca. 190-250) such as Cyprian and Origen were polemicists, arguing against false doctrine. Origen's utilization of an allegorical method of interpretation stimulated an increased interest in exposition of the text. Unfortunately, his allegorizing was detrimental to true biblical exegesis and reduced interest in exposition among his followers in the Alexandrian School.

In the fourth century (ca. 325-460), a significant group engaged in serious Bible study. Six notable preachers in this period were Basil, Gregory of Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, John Chrysostom, and Ambrose. In addition to his theological writings Augustine (354-430) produced over six hundred sermons. Among his works

²¹ Kevin Craig, "Is the 'Sermon' Concept Biblical?" *Searching Together* 15 (Spring/Summer 1968) 25.

²²Ibid., 28. See also Lawrence Wills, "The Form of the Sermon in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity," *HTR* 77 (1984) 296-99.

²³Ibid., 24.

were expositions of the Psalms, 1 John, and the Gospels and homilies on John's Gospel. Some of his sermons could be described as exegetical,²⁴ but his interpretations were usually allegorical and imaginative, as was true of others of his day.

The most significant exception in the early period was John Chrysostom (347-407). Along with Theodore of Mopsuestia, he headed the Antiochene school of interpretation, which rejected the allegorical approach. In sharp contrast to his contemporaries, Chrysostom preached verse-by-verse and word-by-word expositions on many books of the Bible. Included were homilies on Genesis, Psalms, Matthew, John, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and the other Pauline epistles.²⁵ He has been called "golden-mouthed" because of his great ability to attract an audience and hold them spellbound throughout a sermon. Schaff remarks, "He is generally and justly regarded as the greatest pulpit orator of the Greek church. Nor has he any superior or equal among the Latin Fathers. He remains to this day a model for the preacher."²⁶

Chrysostom's preaching was characterized by simple Bible exposition,²⁷ fearless proclamation of morality rather than dogma, deep earnestness, and application directed to the common man. This powerful expositor once said, "You praise what I have said, and receive my exhortation with tumults of applause; but show your approbation by obedience; that is the only praise I seek."²⁸

THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD, 476-1500

This period was perhaps the sparsest for expository preaching. Philip describes it as follows:

²⁴G. Wright Doyle, "Augustine's Sermonic Method," *WTJ* 39 (Spring 1977) 215, 234-35.

²⁵Some have concluded that he wrote commentaries on the entire Bible. E.g., Philip Schaff, *A Selected Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 9:17.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 22.

²⁷He emphasized grammar and history rather than the allegory of the school of Alexandria.

²⁸Schaff, *Selected Library* 9:22.

The influence of the scholastic theology of the universities, which from the beginning were clerical institutions, took over, and the combination of theology and philosophy, and the application of Aristotelian logic to the interpretation of Scripture, with its speculation, analysis and ratiocination imposed an intolerable incubus upon preaching which virtually destroyed it as an effective means for communicating the gospel. It is not surprising, therefore, that hardly any counterparts to the comprehensive patristic expositions of complete books of the Bible are to be found in medieval ecclesiastical literature.²⁹

Late medieval sermons were characterized by allegorical interpretation with its faulty exegetical method just as employed by the interpreters of Homer and introduced into the church by the second and third century fathers.³⁰ While the period produced some famous preachers such as Peter the Hermit, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Thomas Aquinas, none handled the text in an expository fashion. Faint hints of Bible exposition have been detected among independent groups such as the Paulicians, Waldenses, and Albigenses, despite the fact that these groups are commonly dismissed as "heretics."³¹

As the medieval period drew to a close, several pre-Reformation leaders rekindled the fire of expository preaching. Among these was John Wyclif (1330-1384) who was deeply concerned about proclaiming the Word. He denounced the preaching of his day, stating that all sermons that did not treat the Scripture should be rejected.³² William Tyndale (1494-1536) held a similar opinion. A glimpse his preaching is reflected in this comment on methods of interpretation in his day:

They divide scripture into four senses, the literal, typological, allegorical, and

²⁹James Philip, "Preaching in History," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 8 (1984) 300.

³⁰Erwin R. Gane, "Late-Medieval Sermons in England: an Analysis of Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Preaching," *AUSS* 20 (1982) 201, see also 202-3.

³¹Dargan, *History* 218; Garvie, *Christian Preacher* 108; Peter Allix, *Some Remarks upon the Ecclesiastical History of the Ancient Churches of Piedmont* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1821); Peter Allix, *Remarks upon the Ecclesiastical History of the Ancient Churches of the Albigenses* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1821); F. C. Conybeare, *The Key of Truth, a Manual of the Paulician Church of Armenia* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1898).

³²John Stacey, "John Wyclif and the Ministry of the Word," *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 190 (1965) 53.

analogical. The literal sense is become nothing at all: for the pope hath taken it clean away, and hath made it his possession. He hath partly locked it up with the false and counterfeited keys of his traditions, ceremonies, and feigned lies; and driveth men from it with violence of sword: for no man dare abide by the literal sense of the text, but under a protestation, 'If it shall please the pope.' . . . Thou shalt understand, therefore, that the scriptures hath but one sense, which is the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth, whereunto if thou cleave, thou canst never err or go out of the way.³³

Others including John Huss (1373-1415) and Girolamo Savonarola (1452-98) became students and preachers of Scripture.³⁴ Unwittingly, humanists like Erasmus (1469-1536) and John Colet (1466-1519) helped lay the groundwork for expositional preaching to come.³⁵ Their emphasis upon the publishing and study of original documents such as the Greek NT had this effect. Erasmus' *Novum Instrumentum* (1516) and *Novum Testamentum* (1518) led to an intense study of Scripture. Despite their contributions, however, none of the humanists became faithful expositors. Instead, they provided a basis for the revival of expository preaching during the Reformation.

THE REFORMATION PERIOD, 1500-1648

The Reformation was built on the foundation of the centrality of the Bible. Principles such as *Sola Deo Gloria* ("glory to God alone"), *Sola Gratia* ("by grace alone"), and especially *Sola Scriptura* ("the Scriptures alone") resulted from the study and teaching of the Word. *Sola Scriptura* meant "the freedom of Scripture to rule as God's word in the church, disentangled from papal and ecclesiastical magisterium and tradition."³⁶ It viewed the Word as supreme over tradition and the

³³William Tyndale, "The Obedience of a Christian Man," *Doctrinal Treatises* (Cambridge, 1848) 303-4. See also J. W. Blench, *Preaching in England in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964) 1-48.

³⁴James M. Hoppin, *Homiletics* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1883) 123-24.

³⁵Frederick Roth Webber, *A History of Preaching in Britain and America* (3 vols; Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1957) 1:150.

³⁶David F. Wright, "Protestantism," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (ed. by

sacraments. Several important Reformation leaders are noteworthy.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) spoke of the supreme importance of the Word when he wrote, "The Word comes first, and with the Word the Spirit breathes upon my heart so that I believe."³⁷ He also noted,

Let us then consider it certain and conclusively established that the soul can do without all things except the Word of God, and that where this is not there is no help for the soul in anything else whatever. But if it has the Word it is rich and lacks nothing, since this Word is the Word of life, of truth, of light, of peace, of righteousness, of salvation, of joy, of liberty, of wisdom, of power, of grace, of glory, and of every blessing beyond our power to estimate.³⁸

Luther became a believer through his efforts to learn and expound the Scriptures.³⁹ His words were, "I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but one expression, 'the justice of God.'" After his conversion he added, "The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the 'Justice of God' had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love."⁴⁰

Luther proved himself an expositor by producing commentaries in Genesis, Psalms, Romans, Galatians, Hebrews, and 2 Peter and Jude as well as sermons on the Gospels and Epistles. Luther stressed the importance of preaching to the simple, not the learned,⁴¹ the importance of humility in the study of the Bible,⁴² and that preaching should be simple, not erudite.⁴³ He also spoke of "How to Preach in Three Brief Steps": "First, you must learn to go up to the pulpit. Second, you must know that you should stay there for a time. Third, you must learn to get down again."⁴⁴ In his famous reply before the

Walter A. Elwell; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 889.

³⁷Martin Luther, *Table Talk* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967) 63.

³⁸Martin Luther, "A Treatise on Christian Liberty," *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1947) 23.

³⁹Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1950) 60-67.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 65.

⁴¹Luther, *Table Talk* 235.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 378-79.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 382-84.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 393.

Diet of Worms, he said, "My conscience is captive to the Word of God."⁴⁵ He later said, "I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word: otherwise I did nothing. . . . The Word did it all."⁴⁶

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) also studied the Bible carefully in its original languages and applied to the text his "considerable linguistic and exegetical abilities."⁴⁷ He set about to preach,

simple didactic Bible lessons, moving to more difficult subjects only after his hearers . . . had adequate instruction. His chief objective in preaching was to repeat the Word of God unabbreviated and unadulterated, clearly setting out the Law and the Prophets, vehemently calling his hearers to repentance and, with the gentleness of a shepherd, guiding the community to salvation. The actions of the preacher should correspond to his words, and he must be prepared, if necessary, to accept a martyr's fate.⁴⁸

Influenced by Zwingli was the Anabaptist, Balthasar Hubmaier (1485-1528), who despite heavy persecution produced writings filled with the exposition of Scripture.⁴⁹

The most significant expositor of the Reformation era was John Calvin (1509-1564). In the first edition of his *Institutes*, concerning ministers Calvin wrote, "Their whole task is limited to the ministry of God's Word, their whole wisdom to the knowledge of his Word: their whole eloquence, to its proclamation."⁵⁰ In 1559 he added other relevant comments: "Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard . . . there it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists, cf Eph 2:20," "the pure ministry of the Word," and words about the importance of "the ministry of the Word and sacraments, and how far our reverence for it should go, that it may be to us a perpetual token

⁴⁵R. C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1985) 111-12.

⁴⁶As quoted by Ernest Gordon Rupp, *Luther's Progress to the Diet of Worms 1521* (London: SCM, 1951) 99.

⁴⁷G. R. Potter, *Zwingli* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1976) 92.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 61.

⁴⁹H. Wayne Pitkin and John H. Yoder, trans. and ed., *Balthasar Hubmaier, Theologian of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale: Herald, 1989).

⁵⁰John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (trans. and annotated by Ford Lewis Battles, reprint of 1536 ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 195.

by which to distinguish the church."⁵¹

In the preface to his Romans Commentary Calvin stated "that lucid brevity constituted the particular virtue of an interpreter."⁵² Parker summarizes Calvin's method as follows: "The important thing is that the Scripture should be understood and explained, how it is explained is secondary."⁵³ Calvin was most concerned with clarity and brevity in declaring, "The chief virtue of the interpreter lies in clear brevity."⁵⁴ He described the paramount duty of the expositor: "Since it is almost his only task to unfold the mind of the writer whom he has undertaken to expound, he misses his mark, or at least strays outside his limits, by the extent to which he leads his readers away from the meaning of his author."⁵⁵ He delineates the preacher's task of speaking for God in his comment on Isa 55:11: "The Word goeth out of the mouth of God in such a manner that it likewise 'goeth out of the mouth' of men; for God does not speak openly from heaven, but employs men as his instruments, that by their agency he may make known his will."⁵⁶

The evidence of his sincerity was a life spent expounding God's Word. As senior minister of Geneva, Calvin preached twice each Sunday and every weekday on alternating weeks from 1549 until his death in 1564. He preached over two thousand sermons from the OT alone. He spent a year expositing Job and three years in Isaiah.⁵⁷ In addition to his preaching were lectures on the Bible that led to his

⁵¹John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (*The Library of Christian Classics*, 2 vols., ed. by John T. McNeill, trans. by Ford Lewis Battles; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960) 4:1:9 (2, 1023); 4:1:12 (2, 1025); 4:2:1 (2, 1041).

⁵²John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians* (ed. by David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) 1.

⁵³T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 50.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 51.

⁵⁵Calvin, *Romans* 1.

⁵⁶John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah* (22 vols., reprint; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 8, 2, 172. See also Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957) 82-95.

⁵⁷Marvin Anderson, "John Calvin: Biblical Preacher (1539-1564)," *SJT* 42 (1989) 173.

biblical commentaries.⁵⁸ Said Calvin, "Let us not take it into our heads either to seek out God anywhere else than in his Sacred Word, or to think anything about him that is not prompted by his Word, or to speak anything that is not taken from that Word."⁵⁹

Calvin influenced many of his contemporaries, including Henry Bullinger (1504-1575)⁶⁰ and John Knox (1513-1572).⁶¹ Knox argued that he was called to "instruct . . . by tongue and lively voice in these most corrupt days [rather] than compose books for the age to come."⁶² Several Anglican preachers, including John Jewel (1522-1571)⁶³, Hugh Latimer (1485-1555)⁶⁴, and Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603) also practiced expositional preaching.⁶⁵

THE MODERN PERIOD, 1649-PRESENT

The post-Reformation era produced a number of important expositors, a number of them being Puritans. More than anything else, the Puritans were preachers. Preaching was so central that many of the Puritans emphasized it by moving their pulpit to the center of the church so as to focus attention on the pulpit's open Bible instead of on an altar.⁶⁶ To the Puritans, "true preaching is the exposition of the Word of God. It is not a mere exposition of the dogma or the teaching of the church. . . . Preaching, they said, is the exposition of the Word of

⁵⁸Ibid., 176.

⁵⁹Calvin, *Institutes in Christian Classics*, 1:13:21 (1, 146).

⁶⁰Heiko A. Oberman, "Preaching and the Word in the Reformation" *TToday* 18 (1961) 26.

⁶¹John Knox, *The Works of John Knox* (6 vols.; Edinburg: Thin, 1845), also Dargan, *History* 1:513-14.

⁶²Clyde E. Fant and William M. Pinson, *Luther to Massillon 1483-1742 (20 Centuries of Great Preaching*, 13 vols.; Waco: Word, 1971) 2:189.

⁶³Erwin R. Gane, "The Exegetical Methods of Some Sixteenth-Century Anglican Preachers: Latimer, Jewel, Hooker, and Andrewes," *AUSS* 17 (1979) 33.

⁶⁴Ibid., 32.

⁶⁵Erwin Gane, "Exegetical Methods of some Sixteenth-century Puritan Preachers: Hooper, Cathwright, and Perkins," *AUSS* 19 (1981) 32-33.

⁶⁶D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987) 375, 378.

God; and therefore it must control everything."⁶⁷ Lloyd-Jones also suggests that the Puritans saw preaching as the distinguishing mark of true Christianity as compared with Religion. While Religion (Islam, etc.) puts its emphasis on what man does in his attempt to please and placate his God, Christianity is primarily a listening to God as "God is Speaking": "Religion is man searching for God: Christianity is God seeking man, manifesting Himself to him, drawing Himself unto him. This, I believe is at the back of the Puritan idea of placing in the central position the exposition on the Word in preaching."⁶⁸

William Perkins (1558-1602), an early Puritan expositor, had a profound influence on the entire Puritan movement.⁶⁹ He viewed preaching of the Word as the giving of the testimony of God Himself, thoughts developed in *The Art of Prophesying*, the first manual of its kind for preachers in the Church of England. Perkins identified four principles to guide the preacher:

1. To read the text distinctly out of the canonical Scriptures.
2. To give the sense and understanding of it, being read, by the Scripture itself.
3. To collect a few and profitable points of doctrine out of the natural sense.
4. To apply the doctrines, rightly collected, to the life and manner of men in a simple and plain speech.⁷⁰

Perkins also taught that the insight to expound Scripture belongs only to Christ. Man receives the capacity of interpreting one Scripture passage by another, but only as a gift from Christ.⁷¹

Many followed this humble but noble tradition. They sometimes preached for several hours at a time believing that "no great

⁶⁷Ibid., 379.

⁶⁸Ibid., 380.

⁶⁹Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution 1603-1714* (New York: Norton, 1980) 68. See also Gane, "Puritan Preachers" 27, and Ian Breward, ed., *The Work of William Perkins* (Berkshire, England: Sutton Courtenay, 1969) 331-49.

⁷⁰M. William Perkins, *The Works of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the Universitie of Cambridge, M. William Perkins* (3 vols.; Cambridge: 1608-9) 2:762.

⁷¹Gane, "Puritan Preachers" 34.

Scriptural truth can be presented in less than an hour or two."⁷² Concerning the Puritans Webber observes,

Some of the preachers of those days derived their divisions and subdivisions from the text, but more often than not, the divisions and subdivisions were based partly upon the thoughts of the text and partly upon ideas suggested by the general nature of the subject. This rage for minute analysis was often at the expense of literary style and clearness.⁷³

Nevertheless, the Puritans as a whole were dominated by a sense of the presence of God. They sought to be faithful to the Word and to the plain practical preaching of the Word.⁷⁴ Some major Puritan preachers who demonstrated great ability as expositors were Joseph Hall (1574-1656),⁷⁵ Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680),⁷⁶ Richard Baxter, (1615-1691),⁷⁷ and John Owen (1616-1683).⁷⁸ Speaking of Goodwin, Brown comments,

Comparing him with eminent contemporaries like John Owen and Richard Baxter, it has been said that Owen preached earnestly to the understanding, reasoning from his critical and devout knowledge of Scripture; Baxter preached forcibly to the conscience, reasoning from the fitness of things; while Goodwin appealed to the spiritual affections, reasoning from his own religious experience and interpreting Scripture by the insight of a renewed heart.⁷⁹

The diversity of style among the Puritans is remarkable in light of the thread of commitment to a faithful explanation of the text common to them all. Each had his own emphasis as exemplified in the famous

⁷²Webber, *History* 1:204.

⁷³Ibid., 1:202-3.

⁷⁴Lloyd-Jones, *Puritans* 388.

⁷⁵Joseph Hall, *Works of Joseph Hall* (12 vols.; Oxford, 1837-39).

⁷⁶Thomas Goodwin, *Works of Thomas Goodwin* (12 vols.; Edinburgh, 1861-66).

⁷⁷Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter* (23 vols.; London, 1830).

⁷⁸John Owen, *The Works of John Owen* (16 vols.; ed. by William Goold; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965[rpt.]); cf. also John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (4 vols.; Wilmington: Sovereign Grace, 1969[rpt.]).

⁷⁹John Brown, *Puritan Preaching in England* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1901) 101.

phrase of Baxter who said, "I preach as never like to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men."⁸⁰

Other significant Puritan expositors were Thomas Manton (1620-1677),⁸¹ John Bunyan (1628-1688),⁸² and Stephen Charnock (1628-1680).⁸³ Also William Greenhill (1581-1677), a Puritan expositor, preached a major series of lectures on Ezekiel.⁸⁴ All these were diligent students of the Word, seeking to explain the truths of Scripture clearly to others.

As the Puritan era gave way to the preaching of the Evangelical Awakening, preaching that was generally topical, such as that of Wesley and Whitfield, replaced exposition. Nevertheless, several nonconform-ists during this period were Bible expositors. The most notable were John Gill (1697-1771),⁸⁵ who published 9 volumes of biblical exposition between 1746 and 1763, and Matthew Henry (1662-1714).⁸⁶ Both were heavily influenced by the Puritans. In the next fifty years other notable exceptions to topical preachers were Andrew Fuller (1754-1815),⁸⁷ Robert Hall (1764-1831),⁸⁸ John Brown (1784-1858),⁸⁹ John Eadie (1810-1876), and Alexander Carson (1776-1844). Eadie is well known for his commentaries that resulted from his remarkable preaching ministry. Carson was often regarded as

⁸⁰Cited in

Fant, *Luther to Massillon* 238-39.

⁸¹Thomas Manton, *The complete Works of Thomas Manton* (22 vols.; London: Nisbet, 1870-75).

⁸²John Bunyan, *Complete Works* (3 vols., ed. by George Offer; London, 1853).

⁸³Stephen Charnock, *The Works of the Late Reverend Stephen Charnock* (9 vols.; Leeds: Robinson, 1815).

⁸⁴William Greenhill, *An Exposition of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Edinburgh, 1863).

⁸⁵John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament* (4 vols.; London, 1852) and *An Exposition of the New Testament* (2 vols.; London, 1852).

⁸⁶Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (6 vols.; New York: Revell, n.d.).

⁸⁷Andrew Fuller, *Works of Andrew Fuller* (London, 1838).

⁸⁸Robert Hall, *The Works of Robert Hall* (6 vols.; London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1832).

⁸⁹John Brown, *Analytical Expositions of Saint Paul to the Romans* (1857), *Expository Discourses on First Peter* (3 vols.; 1848), *Expository Discourses on Galatians* (1853), and *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1862).

a master of expository preaching on a level with Alexander Maclaren.⁹⁰

The later nineteenth century produced several important biblical expositors in Britain and America, including James H. Thornwell (1812-1862)⁹¹ and John A. Broadus (1827-1895). Broadus has been termed "The Prince of Expositors."⁹² He described his principles of expository preaching in *On The Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* in 1870. Subsequent revisions of this book have reduced its original thrust and value.⁹³ Broadus's view of preaching was to preach "the definite doctrines of the Bible, and . . . [an] abundant exposition of the Bible text."⁹⁴

Others in this period were John C. Ryle (1816-1900),⁹⁵ Charles J. Vaughan (1816-1897), Alexander Maclaren (1826-1910), Joseph Parker (1830-1902),⁹⁶ and Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892). The period ends with the founding of the *Expository Times* in 1889 by James Hastings.⁹⁷ Hastings was the editor of several dictionaries, encyclo-pedias, and commentary sets that along with the *Times* promoted expository preaching. William Robertson Nicoll (1851-1923) was a biblical expositor and also edited a journal called *The Expositor*. Published from 1886-1923, it also promoted the exposition of Scripture.

Several expositors of this period are notable. Alexander Maclaren achieved international fame as an expositor. After 1869 he preached to over two thousand each week at Manchester. Beginning in obscurity, he preached for sixty-three years. He read one chapter of

⁹⁰Webber, *History* 2:631.

⁹¹Ibid., 3:350.

⁹²Nolan Howington, "Expository Preaching," *RevExp* 56 (1959) 60.

⁹³John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (1870), cf. John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (rev. ed. by Jesse Burton Weatherspoon; New York: Harper, 1943).

⁹⁴Broadus, *History* 232. See also Turnbull, *History* 108-9,

⁹⁵John C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (7 vols.; 1856-1873), often available in reprint editions.

⁹⁶Joseph Parker, *Preaching Through the Bible* (28 vols., reprint of 1896-1907 ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956-61).

⁹⁷L. E. Elliott-Binns, *Religion in the Victorian Era* (London: Lutterworth, 1946) 336-37.

the Hebrew Bible and one of the Greek each day throughout his life.⁹⁸ In 1896 he penned these words:

I believe that the secret of success for all our ministries lies very largely in the simple charm of concentrating their intellectual force on the one work of preaching. I have tried to make my ministry a ministry of exposition of Scripture. I know that it has failed in many respects, but I will say that I have endeavored from the beginning to the end to make that the characteristic of all my public work. I have tried to preach Jesus Christ, and the Jesus Christ not of the Gospels only, but the Christ of the Gospels and Epistles: He is the same Christ.⁹⁹

Maclaren's thirty-two volumes of sermons as well as his contributions to *The Expositor's Bible* are highly regarded even to this day.¹⁰⁰

Charles Haddon Spurgeon is highly respected as a preacher and expositor.¹⁰¹ He preached over 3560 sermons which comprise the sixty-three volumes of the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* published between 1855 and 1917. Though insisting he was a faithful expositor of the text,¹⁰² his exegesis is at times difficult. Webber makes the following comparison:

In his preaching, he differed from F. W. Robertson. Robertson made a painstaking study of his text, probing it, and drawing out of it the truths that were in it. Spurgeon reversed the process. He selected his text, and then strove to group about the text closely related Bible truths . . . [at times stressing teachings] even though his text made no mention of [them].¹⁰³

⁹⁸Webber, *History* 1:575.

⁹⁹E. T. Maclaren, *Dr. Maclaren of Manchester, a Sketch* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911) 151.

¹⁰⁰Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture* (32 vols. in 16; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1932[rpt.]); William Robertson Nicoll, ed., *The Expositor's Bible* (25 vols. in 6, reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965). Maclaren contributed Psalms and Colossians in the latter work.

¹⁰¹Horton Davies, "Expository Preaching: Charles Haddon Spurgeon," *Foundations* 6 (1963) 15.

¹⁰²C. H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography, Volume 2: The Full Harvest 1860-92* (reprint; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976) 50, 346-47.

¹⁰³Webber, *History* 1:602. Also note the careful analysis in Davies, "Expository Preaching" 18-25.

Spurgeon viewed Whitfield as a hero and a preaching model,¹⁰⁴ though the latter was more topical and theological than expositional. Spurgeon's genuinely expositional work was his *Treasury of David*,¹⁰⁵ in which he provides a careful verse-by-verse exposition along with "hints to preachers."

The twentieth century has produced a few significant biblical expositors, some of whom have been outstanding: Harry Allan Ironside (1876-1951),¹⁰⁶ Donald Grey Barnhouse (1895-1960), James M. Gray (1881-1935), William Bell Riley (1861-1947), Wallie Amos Criswell (1909-), James Denny (1856-1917), George Campbell Morgan (1863-1945), William Graham Scroggie (1877-1958), D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981), John Robert Walmsley Stott (1921-), and James Montgomery Boice (1938-).

G. Campbell Morgan was a powerful expositor of the Word whose works are rich in explanation and textual illustration. Morgan read and studied the entire Bible and his exposition was based on a careful exegesis viewed in light of the whole Bible.¹⁰⁷ Morgan expressed this thought:

It will be granted that preachers are to preach the Word. You say that means the Bible. Does it? Yes. Is that all? No. Yes, it is all there. But you want more than that, more than all. The Word is truth as expressed or revealed. The Word is not something that I have found out by the activity of my own intellectual life. The Word is something which my intellectual life apprehends, because it has been expressed. . . . And that is what we have to preach. God's revelation, the truth, as it has been expressed. We must enter upon the Christian ministry on the assumption that God has expressed Himself in His Son, and the

¹⁰⁴Davies, "Expository Preaching" 17-18.

¹⁰⁵C. H. Spurgeon, *Treasury of David* (7 vols. in 3, reprint; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1966).

¹⁰⁶For a brief description of the following preachers see Turnbull, *History*; Horton Davies, *Varieties of English Preaching 1900-1960* (London: SCM, 1963); Wiersbe and Perry, *Preaching and Preachers*; and William Preston Ellis, "A Study of the Nature of the Expository Sermon in the United States from 1940-1968" (ThD dissertation, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1971).

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 435.

Bible is the literature of that self-expression. The minute we lose our Bible in that regard, we have lost Christ as the final revelation. . . . Every sermon that fails to have some interpretation of that holy truth is a failure. . . . Preaching is not the proclamation of a theory, or the discussion of a doubt. . . . Speculation is not preaching. Neither is the declaration of negations preaching. Preaching is the proclamation of the Word, the truth as the truth has been revealed.¹⁰⁸

Morgan believed that the Bible was absolutely true¹⁰⁹ and spent his life in careful exposition, as evidenced in his numerous published expositions.¹¹⁰

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was a gifted expositor who saw preaching not as "preaching a sermon for each service, but simply [as] continuing where he was in the ongoing exposition of a book of the Bible."¹¹¹ His preaching stemmed from careful exegesis and featured a careful setting forth of the meaning and application of his texts. This continued the rich tradition of Joseph Parker and Alexander Maclaren.¹¹² Lloyd-Jones produced a significant book on expository preaching in which he wrote the following in the chapter entitled "The Primacy of Preaching":

To me, the work of preaching is the highest and the greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called. If you want something in addition to that I would say without any hesitation that the most urgent need in the Christian Church today is true preaching, it is obviously the greatest need of the

¹⁰⁸G. Campbell Morgan, *Preaching* (New York: Revell, 1937) 17-21. See also G. Campbell Morgan, *The Study and Teaching of the English Bible* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910) esp. 72-95.

¹⁰⁹Jill Morgan, *A Man of the Word, Life of G. Campbell Morgan* (New York: Revell, 1951) 39-40.

¹¹⁰G. Campbell Morgan, *The Westminster Pulpit* (10 vols.; New York: Revell, 1954). See *idem*, *Studies in the Four Gospels* (4 vols.; Old Tappan: Revell, 1929), along with his various other biblical expositions. Note also Don M. Wagner, *Expository Method of G. C. Morgan* (Westwood: Revell, 1957).

¹¹¹Turnbull, *History* 442-43.

¹¹²James Melvin Keith, "The Concept of Expository Preaching as Represented by Alexander Maclaren, George Campbell Morgan, and David Martyn Lloyd-Jones" (ThD dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1975).

world also.¹¹³

Lloyd-Jones knew of no substitute for the task of expounding the Word in the church.¹¹⁴ He identified three types of preaching (evangelistic, instructional teaching, and purely instructional), but he held that all preaching must be expository, both in its preparation and in its presentation to the people.¹¹⁵ For his life the highest priority was biblical exposition, an evident fact to anyone investigating his life.¹¹⁶

Greatest caution is necessary in a survey of this nature when it arrives at the point of commenting on contemporary expositors. The history book on them cannot be closed because additional ministry remains for them to fulfill. A historical survey would not be complete without a tentative word regarding the apparent contribution of several representative preachers of the present era to expository preaching, with due recognition that much may yet transpire before the "history book" on their ministries is closed.

John R. W. Stott, one such example,¹¹⁷ has followed in the same expository tradition as Lloyd-Jones. Concerning preaching he said:

True Christian preaching (by which I mean `biblical' or `expository' preaching, as I shall argue later) is extremely rare in today's Church. Thoughtful young people in many countries are asking for it, but cannot find it. Why is this? The

¹¹³D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971) 9.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 26-44.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 63, 75-76. See also Robert L. Penny, "An Examination of the Principles of Expository Preaching of David Martyn Lloyd-Jones" (DMin dissertation, Harding Graduate School of Religion, 1980).

¹¹⁶Iain H. Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1990) 697-713. This book along with Iain H. Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, The First Forty Years, 1899-1939* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982) is worthy of special attention.

¹¹⁷Stott's recently declared rejection of an orthodox doctrine of eternal punishment for the lost (David L. Edwards and John Stott, *Evangelical Essentials* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988] 319-20) illustrates the need for caution in endorsing contemporary expositors. Hopefully he will repudiate his approval of annihilationism and turn back to the orthodox view he seems to have espoused earlier.

major reason must be a lack of conviction about its importance.¹¹⁸

Stott dwelt on the importance of expository preaching as follows:

I cannot myself acquiesce in this relegation (sometimes even grudging) of expository preaching to one alternative among many. It is my contention that all true Christian preaching is expository preaching. Of course, if by an 'expository' sermon is meant a verse-by-verse exposition of a lengthy passage of Scripture, then indeed it is only one possible way of preaching, but this would be a misuse of the word. Properly speaking, 'exposition' has a much broader meaning. It refers to the content of the sermon (biblical truth) rather than its style (a running commentary). To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view. The expositor prys open what appears to be closed, makes plain what is obscure, unravels what is knotted and unfolds what is tightly packed. The opposite of exposition is 'imposition,' which is to impose on the text what is not there. But the 'text' in question could be a verse, or a sentence, or even a single word. It could be a verse, or a paragraph, or a chapter, or a whole book. The size of the text is immaterial, so long as it is biblical. What matters is what we do with it.¹¹⁹

Stott offers the contemporary student of expository preaching a cogent argument as to the nature and content of true biblical preaching. He is worthy of careful attention.

Another current example of Bible expositors is John MacArthur, Jr. For some he has emerged as a notable American expositor at the end of the twentieth century, continuing in the heritage of Lloyd-Jones. He is currently publishing a commentary of expositions on the entire NT.¹²⁰ He has described this commentary in the following way:

My goal is always to have deep fellowship with the Lord in the understanding of His Word, and out of that experience to explain to His people what a passage means. . . . The dominant thrust of my ministry, therefore, is to help make God's living Word alive to His people. It is a refreshing adventure. This NT commentary series reflects the objective of explaining and applying Scripture.

¹¹⁸Stott, *Two Worlds* 92.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 125-26.

¹²⁰John F. MacArthur, Jr. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1983-).

Some commentaries are primarily linguistic, others are mostly theological, and some are mainly homiletical. This one is basically explanatory, or expository. It is not linguistically technical, but deals with linguistics when this seems helpful to proper interpretation. It is not theologically expansive, but focuses on the major doctrines in each text and on how they relate to the whole of Scripture. It is not primarily homiletical, though each unit of thought is generally treated as one chapter, with a clear outline and logical flow of thought.¹²¹

MacArthur sees expository preaching as concerned primarily with the content of the Bible.¹²² He notes,

The Bible is the Word of God. It emanates from the holiness of God. It reflects the mind and the heart and the will of God, and as such, it must be treated with a tremendous amount of respect. The Bible is not to be dealt with flippantly, it is not to be approached with lack of diligence, it is not to be dealt with in a cursory manner, it is to be dealt with tremendous commitment.¹²³

This emphasis upon precision in handling the Scriptures has characterized MacArthur's ministry.¹²⁴

Other contemporary preachers could be identified by name as expositors, but enough characteristics of Bible exposition have been mentioned in this survey and are elaborated upon in other parts of *Recovering Expository Preaching* to facilitate recognition of who they are. It is hoped the number of such individuals will increase dramatically.

AN INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION

¹²¹Ibid., *Matthew 1-7* vii.

¹²²Ben E. Awbrey, "A Critical Examination of the Theory and Practice of John F. MacArthur's Expository Preaching" (ThD dissertation, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1990) 17; cf. R. Keith Willhite, "Audience Relevance and Rhetorical Argumentation in Expository Preaching: A Historical-Critical Comparative Analysis of Selected Sermons of John F. MacArthur, Jr., and Charles R. Swindoll, 1970-1990" (PhD dissertation, Purdue University, 1990).

¹²³John F. MacArthur, "Principles of Expository Preaching" (Audio Tape GC 2001; Panorama City: Word of Grace, 1980) 1.

¹²⁴John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Our Sufficiency in Christ* (Waco: Word, 1991) 129-37.

A study of the history of expository preaching makes it clear that such preaching is deeply rooted in the soil of Scripture. Thus it is the only kind that perpetuates biblical preaching in the church. Throughout history, a few well known men in each generation representative of a larger body of faithful expositors have committed themselves to this ministry of biblical exposition.

Their voices from the past should both encourage the contemporary expositor and challenge him to align his preaching with the biblical standard. Scripture demands nothing less than God-enabled exposition as demonstrated by those worthy saints who have dedicated their lives to this noble task.