

---

# Preaching — Alive and Lively

---

by Donald E. Demaray

Talk about the lively arts! Preaching is one of them. An abundance of works, old and new, covers the market. Blackwood and Scherer revive in reprints; the contemporaries Cox and Massey publish with freshness and vigor; George Sweazy, dean of American homiletics, has come out with *Preaching the Good News* (Prentice-Hall).

But no longer do we have the lazy luxury of surveying the field's literature under a single head. Today preaching, like the other lively arts, divides into many disciplines: speech, exposition, body language (kinesics), culture and communication, communication theory, history . . . the list seems never ending and ever capable of expansion.

Nor are we confined to print. Cassettes and video bring models into our clergy conferences and student seminars.

Preaching suffered through decades of disgrace earlier this century. Integrity is one of the problems; now the ethics of preaching is discussed (see, e.g. Raymond W. McLaughlin's recent book), and "scientific" homiletics finds support from the world of biblical scholarship. Dullness, too, plagued the pulpit in past years; but television shows us how to capture and hold attention; experts write to capitalize on TV as teacher. Irrelevance angered listeners once; today's seminary graduate has heard the word "relevant" so many times he can't miss the point. In summary, it need only be said preaching is quickly coming out of the doldrums and literature fills with all kinds of suggestions for complete liberation.

Examples abound. Dialogical preaching has been vigorously discussed in both the 60's and 70's (see Conley's *Two in the Pulpit*, e.g., published by Word). Another man (Pennington) attempts to show creative possibilities and publishes under the title *God Has A*

---

*Donald E. Demaray is the Granger E. and Anna A. Fisher Professor of Preaching at Asbury Theological Seminary and Chairman of the Department of Preaching.*

*Communication Problem* (Hawthorn). The Yale lectures continue and a volume such as David H. C. Read's *Sent From God*, beautifully combines analysis of the contemporary situation but none are so full of meaning and rich in content as those of James S. Stewart. Now retired, his preaching continues in his sermon books and will long live in them. (See, e.g., *King For Ever* and *Wind of the Spirit* both published by Abingdon.)

And how do we keep perspective while we search for the finest preaching? Of great help is Ralph G. Turnbull's *A History of Preaching*, vol. three (vols. one and two are the celebrated Dargan works). Turnbull's massive work, published by Baker of Grand Rapids (they have reprinted the two Dargan volumes, too), made its appearance in 1974 and should be on every minister's reference shelf.

We have a long way to go in the homiletical field; but we have come a great distance in a few years. Called men have today at their disposal the most remarkable resources in the history of their craft.

Reviews of other significant recent works on preaching follow. Each book is reviewed by a member of the Asbury Theological Seminary faculty.

*Walking With the Giants: A Minister's Guide to Good Reading and Great Preaching*, by Warren W. Wiersbe, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976. 284 pp. plus index. \$7.95.

Pastors must buy, read, and keep this book for these reasons: the depth of background and insight reflected in Warren Wiersbe's writing, the rich store of information and accompanying inspiration, and the extraordinarily useful bibliographies at the ends of chapters.

Divided into two parts, the first section provides discussions of 18 preachers from Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661) to A. W. Tozer (1897-1963), and the second division offers 13 perceptive discussions of the literature in as many fields, including preaching, death and dying, discouragement (ministerial depression), and prayer.

Always there exist problems when putting together a series of articles (these appeared first in *The Moody Monthly*, 1971-75) in a single volume.

Unity is the single most difficult goal to achieve under these circumstances. While Dr. Wiersbe would have achieved by mood, toning and writing a different product if he had set out to do a book, one is amazed at the degree of harmony that exists in this volume. No

serious reader can be other than grateful for the achievement.

One is also delighted at the openness of the author. Quite freely and admittedly, he treats men and books that differ from his own convictions to enrich his own perception of ministry and life.

Altogether, this book is a must, especially for young ministers not yet thoroughly at home with great preachers and great ideas relating to ministry.

*Donald E. Demaray*  
*Granger E. and Anna A. Fisher Professor of Preaching*

*Preaching the Good News*, by George E. Sweazey, Prentice-Hall, 1976. 339 pp. \$9.95.

If preaching today lies marooned on the reefs of a deserted island, Sweazey sails to the rescue. What hope he has. What a high view of preaching.

Chapter after chapter commandeers pleased attention by good writing, vital content, gripping examples and clear application. He answers the questions preachers ask.

Here is a helpful pastoral book sharing experience, training, insight, and wide reading. See the array of material old and new on sermon, preacher, hearers and occasions.

*Basics* — Chapters on Importance of Preaching, New Developments, Purpose, Authority, The Bible, Power of God and Communication.

*Techniques* — What to Preach, Structure, Introducing, Concluding, Preparing, Timing, Working, Styling, and Wording.

*Materials* — Use of the Bible, Sources, Illustrations, Humor and a good chapter on Controversial Preaching.

*Subjects* — Great Beliefs, Individual Morality, Social Morality, Christian Disciplines and Special Occasions.

*Participants* — Chapters on The Preacher and The Hearer. He overlays the objective accent of Reformed tradition with his subjective Methodist thrust here. He deals with the minister's character, manner and mannerisms, qualities, criticism and spiritual life.

Up-to-date emphasis on the hearer concludes the book. He underscores listeners getting ready for sermons in advance, helping with the sermon, and what to do during and after the sermon.

Here's a broad, deep, long and good book. It will wear as a useful tool. The author seems to slight hearers' motivations and their logical

*Preaching — Alive and Lively*

processes. The chapter on Controversial Preaching deals with the minister's attitudes. A nine page index reads like a preacher's *Who's Who* with over 230 proper names scattered in its contents.

Ralph L. Lewis  
Professor of Speech-Preaching

*In the Biblical Preacher's Workshop*, by Dwight E. Stevenson.

The resurgence of interest in biblical preaching, triggered four decades ago by theologian Karl Barth, has produced many good books for the thoughtful preacher. It is somewhat paradoxical, however, that notwithstanding these significant works there are still many complaints that much pulpit talk sadly neglects the printed Word. Such complaints may indicate a heightened sense of need on the part of many people, and that not just any kind of preaching will do. While one can find help in preaching from the Scripture from any one of a dozen or so contemporary authors, none is better than Dwight E. Stevenson's excellent title, *In the Biblical Preacher's Workshop*.

Stevenson, long recognized as one of America's leading teachers of preaching and author of many books on the subject, has provided us in this volume with insight not just on the importance of biblical preaching, but helps on how to do it. Chapter four, "The Minister as Biblical Student," is the heart of the book. Stevenson suggests a system of seven steps which help the biblical text unfold. After explaining the steps in some detail he proceeds in Part II of the book to apply his method to different types of biblical material (Psalms, miracles, parables, personalities, etc.). The special value of the book is the way it helps the minister with limited critical resources plumb the depths of the meaning of passages for the proclamation of God's Word.

This book was first released in 1967, and although much has been printed since on preaching from the Bible, Stevenson's suggestions are unsurpassed. Stevenson is reverent and critical in his handling of biblical materials. His concerns for spiritual development and social responsibility are evident. The continuing quality of *In the Biblical Preacher's Workshop* is indicated by the fact that we use it as a text here at Asbury Theological Seminary.

J. L. Mercer  
Associate Professor of Preaching

*A Guide to Biblical Preaching*, by James W. Cox, Nashville: Abingdon, 1976. 138 pp. plus index. \$6.50.

This is a downright helpful book on how to do Bible preaching. I am happy to recommend it.

Dr. Cox, Professor of Preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, treats exposition, homiletics, speech and language. In addition, he attempts to come to grips with kinds of preaching and their definitions.

A weak part of the book is Cox's definition of expository preaching; it neither comes to terms with exposition as a distinctive type of preaching, nor makes clear precisely what it is. Aspects of the definition could, in fact, relate to any sermon. But this is a minor flaw in an otherwise truly helpful work.

In addition to useable suggestions for preaching, Dr. Cox provides three appendices: 1) an exemplified pattern for working out sermon titles, lessons, texts, central ideas, and purposes; 2) the guiding principles of Bible interpretation from the Ecumenical Study Conference at Wadham College, Oxford (1949) — those principles bring together balanced and highly practical hermeneutical laws; 3) a three year lectionary, now used by a number of denominations. More, an index is included, unfortunately excluded in most preaching books.

Teachers of homiletics will want to consider the book as possible textual matter, pastors will want it for stimulus to both time-honored and creative preaching approaches, evangelists will find it suggestive for fresh ways to go about their pulpit duties which can so easily become routine.

*Donald E. Demaray*  
*Granger E. and Anna A. Fisher Professor of Preaching*

*As One Without Authority*, by Fred B. Craddock, Phillips University Press, 1974.

The title is a bit surprising but the book is about preaching. Forget it if you are looking for another preaching book that defies Aristotelian rhetoric and syllogistical reasoning. For decades seminaries have been entrenched with the staid writings of the likes of Broadus and Sangster. Professors in preaching departments have been likened to "toothless reminiscences of a kindly old pastor re-activated from retirement." Over-drawing the scene, Craddock paints a rather sad picture of the pulpit but also suggests that it is in

## *Preaching — Alive and Lively*

the spotlight: “Judgments against the pulpit are the first strings of new life for preaching.” For him the problem is methodological.

For generations preaching was taught using the deductive approach. Neat, well-reasoned syllogisms were the ingredients for prowess in the pulpit. Craddock challenges the deductive approach, placing inductive methodology in its place. Deductive movement is from the general truth to the particular application while inductive is the reverse. Homiletically, deduction means stating the thesis, breaking it down into points, explaining them to the particular situation of the hearers. Inductive preaching presents the particulars first, and moves on to the conclusion. Since this is often the way the sermon originates in the mind of the preacher, to present that sequence to a listener gives the listener a chance to share the excitement of discovery and come to his own conclusions. Such preaching does not present “authoritatively” what was discovered by the preacher experientially. The sermon is a discovery. Beginning with the particulars of life and arriving at the “theme” together with the audience suggests that the preacher wants the congregation to “take the trip” with him. A corruptive deductive approach dogmatically and authoritatively “dumps” on the congregation truth, often without regard to persons. The congregation is not a javelin catcher. They are more than the destination of the sermon. They are a vital link in the sermon-event.

Craddock challenges the preacher to do more analysis of his own preaching. I now ask myself the following questions about my preaching: 1) What was my “ah-ha” and how did I get it? 2) What was going on in my life that made it important to me? 3) Why was it an important idea that should be taken seriously by others? 4) What did I finally decide to communicate to the congregation? 5) What result did I hope to achieve?

The world may not need another book on homiletics, but we who teach it ought to give Craddock a serious pondering. I agree with David Buttrick that it may be the most important book on homiletics published in our land in the last 20 years.

*Charles Killian*  
*Associate Professor of Speech-Preaching*

The following books are reviewed by Donald E. Demaray, the Granger E. and Anna. A. Fisher Professor of Preaching.

*Expository Preaching: Plans and Methods*, by F. B. Meyer, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974. 127 pp. \$1.95.

Meyer's work, reprinted as part of *The Notable Books on Preaching* series, deserves a place in the preacher's library. The contemporary minister of the gospel, however, will find the older expression of principles and their application good as background but not always translatable for man in the 70's.

Recommended: the whole of *The Notable Books on Preaching* series published by Baker Book House of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

*When Life Tumbles In*, by Batsell Barrett Baxter, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974. 136 pp. \$3.95.

This is a good little book of sermons on crucial issues — alcoholism, loneliness, the golden years, etc. Pastors will find guidance in working out their own sermons on these contemporary and ever-relevant concerns.

*His Name is Wonderful*, by Warren W. Wiersbe, Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1976. 101 pp. \$3.95.

Pastors will warm to the rich content of this little book of sermons, but laymen will be especially helped because the material will be freshest to the non-professional. Wiersbe, pastor of famed Moody Church, treats Jesus as Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Rich in content and beautiful in format (photos are included), this little book makes an appealing gift, especially at Christmas.

*The Essence of Spiritual Religion*, by D. Elton Trueblood, New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1975. 156 pp.

The concerned pastor will read Trueblood with profit — always. Don't miss this little volume, now available in a low cost paperback edition.

The chapter on worship will provide a new dimension in terms of both thought and practice. The material on sin and salvation (chapter VI) cannot fail to stimulate.

Of help not only to the minister, this would be a good volume to place in the hands of thoughtful parishioners.