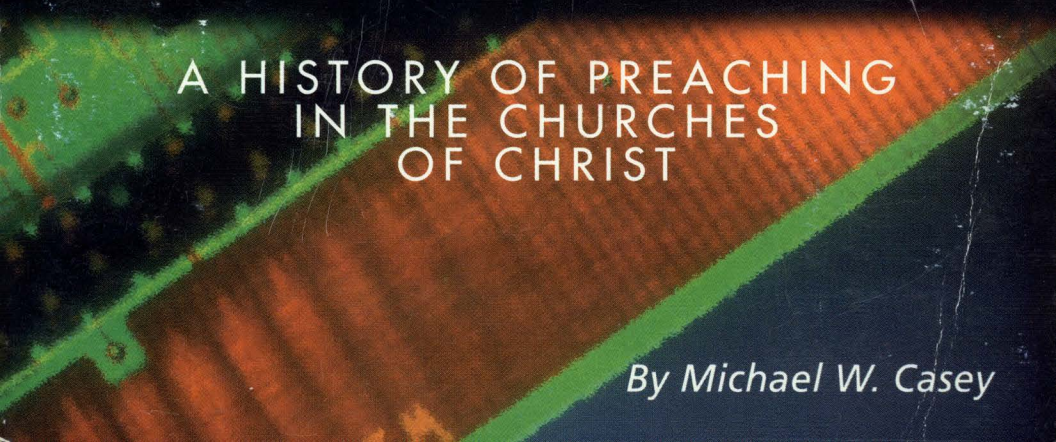


*Saddlebags,
City Streets &
Cyberspace*

A HISTORY OF PREACHING
IN THE CHURCHES
OF CHRIST

By Michael W. Casey



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A·C·U
PRESS

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN **0-89112-017-3**

Library of Congress Card Number **95-78970**

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Dedication

For Judy

Acknowledgments

.....

I owe a debt of gratitude to many people for making this book possible. Conversations with Don Haymes, Fred Bailey, R. L. Roberts, Tom Olbricht, and Dwayne Van Rheenen have helped me formulate many of my ideas. Don Haymes was especially helpful with the material on African-American preaching and the material on N. B. Hardeman. The monthly Restoration History seminars held at Pepperdine since 1988 also have given me time to reflect and refine many concepts.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to David Fleeer, Doug Foster, André Resner, and Dwayne Van Rheenen for reading the manuscript and giving me invaluable criticism. I have not always agreed with their suggestions, but the book is much better because of their input. Shaun Casey, Dan Anders, Joe Powell, John Barton, and David Bland have also read the manuscript and encouraged my efforts to write this history. Carolyn Thompson's skill and meticulous care as editor was invaluable, and I also appreciate the efforts of Thom Lemmons, editor at ACU Press, in making improvements in the book's writing style.

I especially would like to thank my wife Judy and my son Neil for their patience as I wrote and revised the manuscript. I know they often wondered if the book would ever be finished.

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Introduction



As I grew up, I always heard that the Churches of Christ never changed and that the church should remain the same. I have seen a lot of change even in my short life, however, and many readers will readily recognize that many aspects of the church are different today than what they were just a few years ago. One area of substantial change is in preaching. The sermons I hear today all over the United States are very different from the ones I heard as a youth in the early 1960s. A professor of preaching at one of our colleges once remarked to me that many preachers were confused by the changes. They were having difficulty deciding what was appropriate to preach on Sundays. The days of the three-point logical sermon seemed over, but what in the world was replacing it?

Many believe that the change in the pulpit is only a recent phenomenon. However, as I have explored the preaching in our past, I have found that preaching has always changed and adapted. All of the different preaching styles described in this book were influenced by the surrounding culture and intellectual currents although many of the preachers were probably unaware of these influences. One hope is that the preachers, elders, and church leaders of today will become more aware of cultural influences, both good and bad, on preaching. What we need is preaching that is faithful to the gospel regardless of the cultural form that preaching takes.

In 1985 when I assisted Professor Dwayne Van Rheenen of Pepperdine University with the Conference on Religious Communication in the Restoration Tradition, I realized that a comprehensive overview of preaching in the Churches of Christ was long overdue. The need is even greater now. Despite the large number of theses, dissertations, and books from the academic areas of religion and communication about Restoration preaching, no overview of the history of this preaching exists. Most of the scholarly work focuses on individuals and specific events, and much of it does little to place the rhetoric of these individuals and events into a larger context. Additionally, most of the efforts are either unpublished or found in obscure academic journals and are generally inaccessible to most preachers and church leaders.

I have attempted to weave together a narrative that focuses on different styles, forms and patterns of preaching that have developed over time. The patterns of preaching that have evolved in history I am calling “traditions of preaching.” By this term I mean to indicate particular ways of preaching shared by individuals, sometimes contemporaries. Each person was free, of course, to develop his own manner and content of preaching, but many still had similarities of style. Additionally, significant forms, often called genres of preaching, emerged for periods of time in our history. Most of these preaching forms were adaptations of a particular tradition of preaching. In these forms of preaching, informal “rules” developed about the proper way to preach. Speakers had the ability to be quite creative with these rules, but they stayed within the bounds of particular forms, which evolved and changed over time in response to changing social and cultural conditions. While some forms completely disappeared, others endured.

One of the hallmarks of preaching in the Churches

of Christ is the insistence that it be biblical. The problem is that the definition of the term “biblical” varies widely. Often I have heard, along with the insistence on biblical preaching, that there is only one way to preach correctly. But as a church we have never preached with only one style. I believe that biblical preaching can take many different forms, and I hope that one result of this book will be a greater appreciation for those different forms. I also hope that the ideas in this book will result in more creativity in the preaching and homiletics of the church.

I have reflected on the concepts in this book for a long time. Some trends I noticed during my high school years. Many of the ideas have come from my own observations as I immersed myself in graduate training in both religion and communication. Some of the ideas have come from countless discussions with friends—both academic and nonacademic. I have also drawn heavily on scholarly studies of Restoration preaching.

Despite the wealth of studies, I cannot claim that this history is comprehensive. Some readers have asked me about particular preachers and influential Christian colleges neglected in the narrative. More studies are needed to fill the gaps. Even with the incompleteness of the scholarship, I have tried to make representative selections of key preachers and trends. One hope I have is that more scholarly studies will be made of those important preachers not included in this narrative.

First we will look at the early preaching during the era of the Stone and Campbell movements to see how styles of preaching emerged and then blended together. We will survey the rational tradition of Campbell and look at the changes that occurred from Campbell to the twentieth century, including the emergence of the debating tradition. We will then examine T. B. Larimore and K. C. Moser,

representatives of an irenic alternative to the debaters. In the early twentieth century, we will notice the successful adaptation of the revival techniques of Dwight Moody and Billy Sunday to the rational tradition. This modification led to the development of the tabernacle meetings—later called campaigns—and the beginning of the urbanization of the church.

In more recent times preachers have turned their energy from debates to political issues. Therefore, we will explore the origins of the political pulpit. We will also notice the profound impact of two groups: a generation of preachers and homiletics teachers who had training in rhetoric and speech and a generation of biblical scholars who came to the Christian colleges and who still are dominant in many of our schools. We will explore the way our black brethren have taken the rational tradition and creatively combined it with traditional black preaching, and we will look at the revolution in the preaching of the 1960s which was heavily influenced by the rise of radio and television. Finally, we will notice how preaching today is in ferment, partially due to the further development of communication technology with computers and the huge information network they represent. I will offer some related suggestions about the future of preaching.

As a result of my studies, I am convinced one can faithfully preach the gospel in many ways. Churches of Christ have followed Paul's declaration in 1 Corinthians 9:20: "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (NIV).

1

Pentecost: The Stone Tradition and Its Transformation

.....

The preaching of the Stone Movement (named for Barton W. Stone, one of the founders), sometimes called the Christian Connexion, is a good example of the ungentle style of preaching—“rough” and very emotional. The frontier where this preaching occurred helped frame this style. When people came to America, they frequently saw the United States, the New World, as a Garden of Eden. Here was a chance to start over and completely recreate society. They saw America as a utopia in contrast to Europe, the Old World, which was seen as fallen and corrupt. Due to such factors, many religious renewal movements found fertile soil on the American frontier.¹

One of the most powerful motives in starting over was the search for primitive models that had been lost over time. Many Christians thought that the Old World had corrupted religion and lost biblical Christianity. Many

immigrants longed for the chance to return to the Christianity of the Bible and to restore what had been lost in Europe. The pristine New World offered the chance to wipe the slate clean and try again.

The Methodists, probably the most successful of the early frontier religious groups, were restorationists seeking to be guided by the Bible only. Methodists sought to reenact the book of Acts and the works of the Holy Spirit; to restore pentecostal religion.

James Finley, an early Methodist preacher, described the camp meeting as a “revival of pentecostal times” in which “shouts of saints and the cries of sinners were mingled together and went up to heaven.”² Continuing the pentecostal theme, he described one revival:

While one addressed the congregation on the subject of the judgment, there was scarcely an inattentive soul on the ground, and the whole congregation seemed to be melted into tears...Soon after our ring was formed, and we had begun our humble addresses to the throne of grace, the Holy Spirit came upon us; and those on the outside of the ring as well as those within, felt awful shocks of divine power. The voice of joy and praise was soon mingled with the cry of penitence. Many were slain and made alive by the power of God! This work continued all night.³

Finley saw the camp meeting as a place where pentecostal Christianity was being restored and reenacted.

The Christian Connexion preachers borrowed their methods of preaching directly from the Methodists. John Rogers, in his account of Christian Connexion camp meetings, explained that before going to a revival he had gone into the woods and “poured out [his] soul in fervent prayer” about “the sinners” gathering at the revival. He then went to the service “under the influence of deep concern

for sinners.” He continued:

Someone preached, and the meeting was about to be dismissed. With feelings unutterable, I arose and spoke a short time with deep emotions and tearful eyes (for my heart was filled to overflowing). The effect was wonderful. The preacher and the Christians generally were bathed in tears and cut to the heart...I came down from the stand, and in harmony with the customs of the times, invited mourners. I never witnessed such a scene. They crowded around me, bathed in tears, and fell before God in the dust.⁴

Christian Connexion preachers conducted their meetings quite differently from the way we think preaching should be conducted today.

One of the important distinctions they made was between preaching and exhortation. An experienced preacher would speak on the theme of the gospel, then the younger preacher would exhort, usually extemporaneously. Women as well as the young men “prayed and sometimes exhorted with great warmth.”⁵ Rogers said on one occasion that he had nothing prepared and that he spoke from the heart because the speech was designed to get the audience worked up into an emotional frenzy to help them respond to the gospel. Rogers continued:

I was young, beardless, ignorant, but my heart was full of the great theme of redemption. So it was, I had not spoken long till the whole camp was ablaze of feeling [sic]. The first thing I knew David Purviance and David Wallace were dancing behind me in the stand, shouting at the top of their voices. And in a few minutes the entire area before the stand was filled with men and women dancing and shouting. The result was I was silenced and gave place to the preachers and people to carry on the meeting as seemed good to them.⁶

The preachers, who felt very strongly and deeply about what they were doing, had a deep spirituality and concern for sinners. For this reason, they were very evangelistic in their preaching.

The content of their sermons focused on Christ and the cross. Samuel Rogers, John's brother, reported about one of his earliest sermons:

I began to exhort sinners to contemplate Jesus, bleeding and dying for them on the cross...I felt the Spirit of the Lord was upon me. Calling upon sinners to behold the Saviour in his suffering, I felt the warming influence of the cross upon my heart. I now have no recollection of what I said, or how I said it; I only remember my theme, and the transports of my soul in beholding the bleeding, dying One.⁷

Their conception of restoration was different from Alexander Campbell's idea of restoration. Samuel Rogers wrote about their idea of restoration and its effect on their preaching:

Many of us believed that we were the successors of the Apostles, and, therefore, that we had the right to expect the same signs that attended their ministry, and to have all their functions and powers. True, we were quite sensible of the fact that, as yet, the signs of our apostleship had not been given; that we had not yet been able to demonstrate our call by the exercise of miraculous powers; but we believed that, when the Church should have come to a certain degree of perfection, which we anticipated, then these powers would attend its ministry. Meanwhile we contented ourselves with dreams and strong impressions, in the absence of higher evidences of our divine call. Some even attempted to work miracles.⁸

Rogers reflected later that while he and other Connexion preachers were "quite deficient in knowledge," they "knew enough . . . to tell 'the story of the cross' in a simple manner,

and were not slow in pressing the claims of Jesus upon all [they] met.”⁹

William Kinkade, an early Stone preacher, wrote that the “ancient order” was the “order of the New Testament; one inch short will not satisfy me.” He included a restoration of the miraculous works of the Holy Spirit: “Of course it must be the privilege and duty of [Christ’s] ministers in the present day to look to [Christ] for the same Holy Spirit and supernatural power with which his primitive ministers were blessed.”¹⁰ Kinkade believed that preachers could perform miracles and heal people. He thought that David Haggard, Rice Haggard’s brother, “had the gift of healing” that “the Apostles had.” He claimed: “There were many alive who saw him perform cures; and what I saw myself puts the matter beyond doubt with me.”¹¹ Kinkade, like the Methodist preachers, saw the revivals as Pentecost restored:

Since the revivals commenced, in the beginning of this century, there [have] been, under the preaching of the gospel, many miraculous displays of supernatural power of congregations and individuals. We have seen hundreds stricken down and lying under the great power of God, unable to move hand or foot, and to all human appearance breathless for several hours, and then to rise, praising God and speaking a wisdom and power of which they were no more capable that day before than the most illiterate man is capable of delivering a well ordered discourse on astronomy. The jerks is [sic] a great miracle. I have seen people jerked by an invisible power with such velocity that if it had been done by an external force it would have killed them in a minute; and still they received no injury.¹²

In this preaching genre, the sermon itself was a “miracle,” according to Kinkade, “delivered in the power of the Spirit.” Sermons were “superhuman” because the

preacher “could not have done it of himself.” The sermons also had “miraculous effects” because they were “often the means of making those do good who had been long accustomed to do evil.”¹³ Very early in the Restoration movement the Stone preachers were restorationists, but they were emotional, pentecostal restorationists, not the familiar rational restorationists of later years. They followed very closely what the Methodists believed and practiced.

These early Restoration preachers were often also circuit riders, wandering over wide areas. The three groups of the Christian movement—Elias Smith in New England, James O’Kelly in Virginia, and Stone in Kentucky—had more contact than most realize. The preachers rode in pairs, the older man preaching and the younger man exhorting. The Christian Connexion converted thousands to their ideas. Congregations were strong in Tennessee, Alabama, Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri, areas in which both the Christian Church and the Churches of Christ developed strength. The Stone movement set the stage for the entire Restoration Movement as we know it today.¹⁴

James Finley, a Methodist preacher in Ohio, described the impact of the circuit riders:

This region was overrun with New Lights, and everything that could be persuaded to go under the water was immersed. This was all the rage, and the highest ambition of the preachers of that faith, was to get people dipped... Those who know anything about this people, especially the preachers, know that, like the doctor who was death on fits, they are great on argument. These are two things generally against which they leveled their artillery, and these were first, Church government, and secondly, creeds, etc.¹⁵

The Stone movement used the notion of restoration

negatively: they berated the corruptions of the other churches—their church government and creeds. What should replace the corrupt beliefs and practices was not always made clear.

Then Alexander Campbell entered the scene. Campbell had a different background from the Stone preachers. He had received a classical education in Scotland and had an “old world” orientation. Since he was not formed by the frontier, his assumptions about preaching were quite different from Stone’s. He was thoroughly grounded in the Presbyterian form of preaching based on classical rhetoric and Cicero, a style of preaching favored by educated people and high church traditions, particularly on the East coast of the United States and in Britain.¹⁶ This type of preaching, later pejoratively called “text-preaching,” based the entire sermon on a verse of scripture or a part of a verse. Campbell described such preaching:

When the text is once or twice read, the preacher proceeds to his introduction, which resembles the exordium of a pagan oration, then comes to his method or distribution, in which he cuts to pieces the text, and after having considered its metaphysical, literal, anagogical [sic], spiritual, and practical import, and having cautioned his hearers on the great danger of resting on the literal meaning of the text, and of the great necessity of looking through the letter (which is sometimes called dead) to the spirit of the text, which gives life, he proceeds to the improvement of his subject, and having deduced the necessary inferences, he concludes with a fervid and pathetic exhortation.¹⁷

These sermons were usually read from a manuscript and repeated to different congregations.

When Campbell came to America and moved to the frontier, he very quickly realized his style of preaching had

to change. His first sermon in this country was one he had written ten months prior to crossing the Atlantic Ocean, but he soon shifted to an extemporaneous style. Discovering that the classical style of preaching did not work in America, he completely changed to what he termed a “natural” style of preaching.¹⁸ The new form for his sermons usually was a well-developed, topical sermon that had a brief introduction to the subject followed by an appeal to the emotions. The body of the sermon focused first on the gospel “facts” or historical testimony, followed by argument or reasoning about the facts to move a person toward acting on those facts.¹⁹

The idea of “natural” style was important. Now in a land viewed as a utopia where people were trying to go back to what was natural, original, pure, and unstained, Campbell rejected a European model of preaching for an American one. He turned to a rational approach with which many of us are familiar today—to John Locke and Scottish Common Sense Realism.

Locke and the Realists believed that humans approached reality or nature as a set of discrete bits and pieces of “information.” Taking that view and applying it to scripture, Campbell thought each verse of scripture, when rightly understood in its context, was a “fact”—an individual piece of reality—or a single “law.” He conducted inductive searches of scripture for biblical doctrine and preached “concordance sermons.” He located all the relevant verses on a particular subject to develop a conception of biblical doctrines such as faith or baptism. Campbell saw the Bible as puzzle pieces to assemble into the correct pattern; an approach to preaching that was more intellectual than emotional. This anti-emotional tradition still dominates many pulpits in the church. We want to be rational and straightforward and let people make intellectual choices

about Christianity. Campbell believed this was a rational, scientific, natural form of preaching; there was nothing artificial about it.

Campbell's program for restoration was positive, but his churches were not converting anyone. They had not been evangelistic. In contrast, the Christian Connexion²⁰ had moved into Ohio with great success. When Campbell heard of the evangelistic success of the Stone Movement, he became interested in the work of John Secrest, the leading preacher of the Christian Connexion in Ohio. They met, and Secrest came to accept Campbell's views on baptism before Walter Scott's famous preaching tour on the Western Reserve in Ohio. However, Campbell had no control over Secrest and was concerned about Connexion successes. In 1827, under Campbell's prodding, churches in the Mahoning Association discussed the Christian Connexion's success and decided to employ Scott as an evangelist. The contrasting styles of Stone and Campbell eventually merged in the preaching of Walter Scott.

Scott's efforts as an evangelist changed the Campbell churches. Scott chose Joseph Gaston, a young Christian Connexion preacher, to accompany him because Scott did not know how to exhort, how to stir people up emotionally to respond to the gospel. Scott preached the intellectual message; the young preacher stirred people to respond in the exhortation. On this tour Scott developed a six-step "plan of salvation": faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, receipt of the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. It balanced what God and humans do in the process of salvation. Uniting the intellectual with the emotional, this evangelistic approach helped the Restoration Movement. It gave stability to the Stone churches, which had been overly negative and emotional in their concept of restoration. The Stone preachers became more confident

in their preaching, and even in their salvation: they now knew they were saved at the point of baptism. The Campbell churches, in turn, became more evangelistic and mission minded. They had been overly intellectual and now became more practical. A few years later Scott summarized: "The Christians, in their excessive zeal to convert the world, did to a wonderful extent overlook the order of the church; while our churches paid such unbounded regard to the ancient order of the church as wholly to forget the preaching of the gospel."²¹ The Christian Connexion churches were able to help transform the Campbell movement from an obscure group in Ohio and Pennsylvania to a major religious force on the American frontier.²²

Even though Scott combined the rational and emotional, the emergent style was mostly rational with an emotional appeal appended to the end of the sermon. The emotional appeal, designed to persuade listeners to act on their agreement with the rational content of the sermon, slowly gave way to the rational.

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2

Come, Let Us Reason Together: The Rational Tradition

.....

We have briefly explored how the rational approach of Campbell triumphed over the emotional preaching of the Stone movement. This chapter will explore some of the origins of the rational tradition and its impact on our preaching. The rational approach originated from a philosophical tradition that dominated America in the first half of the nineteenth-century: Scottish Common Sense Realism. American philosophy, science, education, and religion were so thoroughly grounded in this Scottish tradition that Perry Miller called it the “American ideology.”¹

Thomas Reid, professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow University and founder of Scottish Realism, argued that all normal or common people are endowed with the

ability to reach “common sense” conclusions on which everyone could agree. This Common Sense was a source of knowledge common to all persons in all cultures of all history. All people believed in the existence of the external world, in causation, continuity between the past, present, and future, the reliability of the senses, the reliability of testimony, and of reasoning in general. All these Common Sense assumptions would lead a person to sure and certain knowledge. The Realist philosophers rejected Locke’s notion that humans perceive only “ideas” of objects and argued instead that the human mind can actively perceive the real world directly. Reid invoked the “scientific method” of induction as the cornerstone of the Common Sense Philosophy:

By our constitution, we have a strong propensity to trace particular facts and observations to general rules, and to apply such general rules to account for other effects, or to direct us in the production of them. This procedure of understanding is familiar to every human creature in the common affairs of life, and is the only one by which any real discovery in philosophy is made.²

Even though Francis Bacon had died over a century before Reid and almost two centuries before Scottish Realism spread to America, Reid saw this philosophy as the “enactment of the inductive plan of research set forth in Bacon’s *Novum Organum*.”³ While Bacon’s name was invoked to legitimize Scottish Realism and the name “Baconianism” was used to describe the Scottish Realist philosophy, Reid and other Scottish thinkers were its intellectual founders.

Theodore Bozeman documents this concern for Baconian induction which quickly dominated the American intellectual scene. The Baconianism that the Scottish philosophy organized and the Americans adopted had four

principal elements: (1) an “enthusiasm for natural science,” (2) a strict empiricism because of the trust in the senses to interpret the external world, (3) a love for induction (generalizing from empirical facts) and a resulting distrust of abstract concepts or hypotheses in science, and (4) the celebration of Bacon as the father of inductive science.⁴

While the Scottish Realists considered themselves rational, they distrusted the traditional, deductive rationalism of the Deists and skeptical rationalists. Instead they believed in a chastened, inductive logic or rationalism. Most rejected the use of the syllogism in reasoning.

This Scottish Common Sense philosophy influenced American Protestant theology and resulted in a distinctively Baconian hermeneutic (systematic way of interpreting Scripture). American Protestants began to equate the verses of Scripture with scientific, historical facts. By using what they perceived as an “empirical” approach to Scripture, they tried to demonstrate harmony between science and religion. Protestants also believed this approach to Scripture would overthrow skepticism and everyone would agree that Christianity was historically true and scientifically certain. Restoration Movement preachers followed suit.

Alexander Campbell studied under George Jardine, protégé of Thomas Reid, at one of the centers of Scottish Common Sense philosophy, the University of Glasgow.⁵ Campbell learned his lessons well, for his basic Scottish Realist outlook never changed.

Campbell viewed a human being as “a rational agent.” Humans had the free will to use correct reasoning and inductive logic.⁶ Repeatedly, Campbell called himself a Baconian and a follower of the Scottish Realist program. Like Thomas Reid, Campbell invoked Bacon as the founder of the inductive method, saying that Bacon had laid “the

foundation for correcting our reasonings” about human experience. In his debate with the skeptic Robert Owen, Campbell stated he would “make the principles of the inductive philosophy . . . my rule and guide in this investigation.”⁷ Later, in good Baconian fashion, he said that guesses or conjectures were to be avoided by staying in the “certain limits of experimental truth.” Campbell proposed: “Any argument, therefore, which we may offer, we wish to be examined by the improved principles of the inductive philosophy, by those very principles which right reason and sound experimental philosophy have sanctioned as their appropriate tests.”⁸ Like other Realist Protestant churchmen, Campbell believed that the Bible contained empirical “facts.”⁹

Campbell developed his Christian beliefs in a “scientific” manner. To develop the biblical doctrine on a topic such as baptism, he studied inductively all the scripture references on baptism and then generalized a conclusion from the particular scriptures. He thought that only by a “full induction” of a subject in the Bible could he develop a doctrine “complete and fully comprehended” and that after he had reached a conclusion no more “divine light upon that subject” was possible. According to Campbell, “This is our method of teaching what the Holy Spirit has taught on any given subject.”¹⁰

Campbell also incorporated the Enlightenment ideals of John Locke in his belief that a person could eliminate any of his or her own prejudices and preconceptions and study the biblical text objectively. Campbell stated: “I have endeavored to read the Scriptures as though no one had read them before me,” and remained “on my guard against reading them today, through the medium of my own views yesterday, or a week ago, as I am against being influenced by any foreign name, authority, or system whatever.”¹¹

Preconceptions or prejudices included any creedal or church tradition that might cloud biblical study. Campbell thought that the “colored glasses” of “speculative” systems and their creeds distorted the biblical teachings.¹² However, with the concept of Baconianism, the interpreter did not wear glasses or have any theological bias; thus he or she could see the real or true meaning of the text. Campbell’s aversion to speculation and his belief that real meaning of the text could be perceived directly without any personal bias or prejudice show the influence of Scottish Common Sense philosophy on the way he interpreted Scripture. He believed that direct or express commands and examples or actions of the apostles were the most important scientific “facts” in the Scripture.¹³ Only through an examination of all the scriptural evidence on a particular theological topic could one find the truth.

Campbell wanted to abolish all the creeds of Christianity and base Christian beliefs on inductive, “scientific” facts through which all Christian believers could “objectively” reach the same conclusions about the meaning of Scripture and unite into one church. Campbell held to this view throughout his career. In 1834 he urged: “The inductive style of inquiring and reasoning is to be as rigidly carried out in reading and teaching the Bible facts and documents, as in the analysis and synthesis of physical nature.”¹⁴ As a result, Campbell tended to quote frequently the “facts” or verses of Scripture in his sermons. He rarely used stories or narration; as a result, his sermons lacked emotion. Instead, they were filled with rational appeals and arguments based on his inductive analyses of topics.

Campbell’s enthusiasm for the Baconian method of interpretation spread in the Restoration Movement.¹⁵ Tolbert Fanning, the most influential preacher of the Restoration Movement in the South before the Civil War,

was a Baconian who feared the new transcendentalist movement because it “necessarily” excluded “knowledge from observation, or the Baconian philosophy, and all revelations through the Bible.”¹⁶ He warned, “Lot’s wife was philosophical, so is Theodore Parker.”¹⁷ Instead, Fanning was a committed biblicist, saying that the Bible “is but a transcript of the mind of our Heavenly Father” and that, when scriptures are “fairly translated,” they “need no explanation.”¹⁸

Robert Richardson—a science teacher, physician, and Alexander Campbell’s biographer—advocated the inductive method. He praised the genius of Bacon for discovering the inductive method and cited Bacon’s belief that induction was “the most important instrument of Reason in its search for truth.” Through this method of gathering facts by observation and experience, the interpreter would arrive at certain truths and “infallible conclusions.” Buttressing his arguments, Richardson claimed that the apostles “began with facts and drew from these by induction the proper inferences and rules of action.”¹⁹ Induction then was the “true logic,” the logic which the apostles used and the logic which would arrive at correct conclusions. Anyone could use this method and achieve certainty in interpretation, thus leaving “no opportunity for disagreement.”²⁰

The clearest example of the entrenchment of this approach to understanding the Bible is found in James Sanford Lamar’s *Organon of Scripture: Or the Inductive Method of Biblical Interpretation* (1859), probably the height of the development and popularity of Baconianism in American religion.²¹ Lamar, a graduate of Campbell’s Bethany College, believed that his book would usher in Campbell’s great program of unity, since division was primarily due to the “uncertainty of biblical

interpretation.”²² He urged “the Method of Biblical Interpretation,” which was Baconian induction applied to scripture,²³ and placed the blame for faulty interpretation upon the “mystic method” and the “dogmatic method” of interpretation. “The logic of science,” he said, quoting J. S. Mill, “is the universal logic, applicable to all inquiries in which man can engage.”²⁴ According to Lamar, one should use the scientific method to study both nature and the Bible. Lamar also contended that the Baconian method emerged from the scriptures themselves. “The materials” of the Bible “are accurately fitted, marked and numbered”; and if the reader is careful, “it is next to impossible for him to mistake their method or to fail to arrange them in the precise order designed by their Author and Giver.”²⁵ Lamar appealed both to the intellectual who would be interested in scientific knowledge and to the pious who wanted to follow the Bible. He summarized:

[T]he scriptures admit of being studied and expounded upon the principles of the inductive method; and that when thus interpreted, they speak to us in a voice as certain and unmistakable as the language of nature heard in the experiments and observations of science.²⁶

Naturally this approach to understanding the Bible affected Restoration preaching. Lamar emphasized the literal scripture (historical narratives and epistolary writings) over the figurative (apocalyptic literature and parables). The “parables and figures do not...teach new truth; they illustrate the truth elsewhere taught without a figure... Figurative language must always be interpreted by literal, or in harmony with the doctrine of non-figurative Scripture.” Literal scriptures are the “touchstone of all sound interpretation.”²⁷ He believed that if one used the literal scriptures to interpret the figurative scriptures, disagreements would disappear. Literal Scripture “must

teach the same thing to every man of common sense who thus construes them."²⁸ Therefore, Lamar and others within the Restoration tradition gave the apocalyptic literature and the parables secondary status in preaching. Further, Lamar defined "all doctrinal truth"²⁹ as "something practical, not speculative,"³⁰ "taught in literal and plain language."³¹ According to Lamar, the "practical" was the pattern in the New Testament which the church was to follow. This claim, along with the tradition's New Testament ecclesiastical emphasis, caused the Restoration Movement to focus upon Acts, the writings of Paul, the Pastoral Epistles, and Hebrews. Rarely did rational Restoration preachers use other scripture in the creation of their sermons.

J. W. McGarvey, an important scholar in the Restoration Movement, summarized the tradition's standards. The speaker first obtained "all the statements of Scripture" on the topic with the use of a concordance to determine the exact thought of the passage by applying the "rule of exegesis." Then he adopted statements of Scripture as conclusions. Next, the speaker drew "from them all necessary (or logical) deductions." After he had collected all the thoughts, he organized the ideas-either by chronological sequence, cause and effect, or a series of topics. Finally, the speaker reflected on the sermon topic by "reviewing each part and with reference to the whole." After completing these stages, the preacher proceeded "to write or speak on the whole or any part." McGarvey saw three advantages in the Baconian approach to understanding the Bible for preaching: "It furnishes all God sees fit to say on the subject-that is enough." "It makes Scripture form the theory, rather than conform to it." "When preaching thus, we are preaching the Word."³²

Campbell's Scottish Realist outlook provided an objectivistic, religious foundation for the Restoration Movement. Campbell rejected the prevalent revivalist view that the Holy Spirit's direct operation on a person converted him or her to Christianity. Following Locke's idea that all knowledge came through the human senses, Campbell believed the Holy Spirit operated only through words and arguments.³³ Many Restoration preachers agreed with Campbell and even carried copies of John Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* beside the Bibles in their saddlebags.³⁴ Rejecting the emotional revivalism of orthodoxy, they taught that a person became a Christian only by reading the Scriptures or by hearing preaching based upon the inductive method.

This entire outlook tended to make Campbell's followers reject the vague and emotional conversion experience and to make conversion to Christianity a concrete, objective act, clarifying to the potential convert and to the religious community the precise point at which a person became a part of the Christian community. This approach had a strong appeal to people who were not sure about their conversion experience. Nathan Mitchell, a grass-roots Restoration preacher, typifies someone who espoused this idea of conversion. Mitchell, raised in eastern Ohio where the Methodist circuit riders dominated the religious scene, reported:

Preachers, with stentorian voices, would depict the writhings and contortions of the damned in the flames of an ever burning and inextinguishable, literal hell, the devil and his imps, with red-hot pitchforks, tossing into the interior of the horrible pit those who had reached the walls, and were endeavoring to escape. The marvelous power of the Holy Spirit to come down, convict and convert the sinner, and save him from the tortures of this fearful hell, would be declaimed with great

vehemence, until terrified sinners came to look upon the Spirit as the real Savior.³⁵

Mitchell became despondent when he began to worry about his salvation. Faith “had no object,” was a direct gift from God, and was essential to salvation. However, “[w]hat it was, and how it might be identified, were mysteries known only to the initiated.”³⁶ When Restoration preachers, influenced by Campbell, moved into the area, Mitchell eagerly accepted their message that salvation was obtained through the “positive” institution of baptism, and all his fears, doubts, and difficulties fled.³⁷ The salvation process lost its mystery and vagueness and became a concrete objective act that was performed after a person had made the decision to become a Christian.

The interpretive stance of the Restoration preachers under Campbell’s influence elevated the dignity of the common man and set these preachers distinctly apart from the emotional frontier revivalists. This distinctive, rational, restoration preaching tended to comprise quotations of large amounts of Scripture and to be topical in nature. A sermon consisting solely of scripture quotations gave the impression that the preacher was not using any human reasoning, but was simply following the Bible. The audience was allowed to make decisions based on an inductive gathering of the relevant scriptures with little or no emotional appeal by the speakers. Those troubled by excessive emotionalism in frontier preaching flocked to this rational tradition of preaching.

Notes

1. Perry Miller, *American Thought: Civil War to World War I* (New York: Rineholt and Co., 1954), xi.

2. S. Morris Eames, *The Philosophy of Alexander Campbell* (Bethany, WV: Bethany College, 1966), 54.
3. Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 7.
4. *Ibid.*, 21.
5. Michael Casey, "The Origins of the Hermeneutics of the Churches of Christ, Part Two: The Philosophical Tradition," *Restoration Quarterly* 31 (1989): 193-206; and James Noble Holm, "Alexander Campbell: A Study in the Value of Effective Rhetorical Training," *The Forensic* (1976): 10-13, 31.
6. Alexander Campbell and Robert Owen, *Debate on the Evidences of Christianity*, vol. 2 (Bethany, VA: Alexander Campbell, 1829), 242-43.
7. Campbell-Owen, Vol. 1, 248-49.
8. Campbell-Owen, Vol. 2, 5-6.
9. Alexander Campbell, "The Confirmation of the Testimony," *Millennial Harbinger* (January 1830): 8; and Robert F. West, *Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 143.
10. Alexander Campbell, *Christian Baptism with Its Antecedents and Consequents* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1951), 184-85.
11. Alexander Campbell, *Christian Baptist* (July 1826): 229.
12. Alexander Campbell and John Walker, *A Debate on Christian Baptism* (Pittsburgh, 1822), 184-85.
13. Alexander Campbell, "Anecdotes, Incidents and Facts, No. 1," *Millennial Harbinger* (May 1848): 280-81.
14. Alexander Campbell, "Essays on the Style of the Living Oracles, No. 1," *Millennial Harbinger* (May 1834): 199.
15. The first Restorationist college was named Bacon College in honor of Francis Bacon. Dwight Stevenson, *The Bacon College Story, 1836-1865* (Lexington, KY: College of the Bible, 1962), 10.
16. Tolbert Fanning, "Spiritual Light, No. 10," *Religious Historian* (October 1872): 289-95.
17. Tolbert Fanning, "Metaphysical Discussions," *Gospel Advocate* (November 1856): 326-29.

18. Tolbert Fanning, "A New Book on 'Interpretation,'" *Gospel Advocate* (1860): 30.
19. Robert Richardson, "The Gospel, No. 2," *Millennial Harbinger* (April 1839): 146. Richardson and Fanning did differ sharply over the role of the Holy Spirit; Richardson clearly departed from the rationalist point of view for a more mystical view. For a discussion of the controversy, see James R. Wilburn, *The Hazard of the Die: Tolbert Fanning and the Restoration Movement* (Austin: Sweet Publishing Co., 1969), 198-201; and Pat Brooks, "Robert Richardson: Nineteenth Century Advocate of Spirituality," *Restoration Quarterly* 21 (1978): 135-49.
20. Richardson, "Gospel", 149.
21. Bozeman, 144-45.
22. James Sanford Lamar, *The Organon of Scripture: Or the Inductive Method of Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1859), 24.
23. Lamar, iii. The inconsistency in capitalization occurs in Lamar's book.
24. *Ibid.*, i.
25. *Ibid.*, 188, 41-42.
26. *Ibid.*, 176.
27. *Ibid.*, 106.
28. *Ibid.*, 107.
29. *Ibid.*, 105.
30. *Ibid.*, 106.
31. *Ibid.*, 107.
32. J. W. McGarvey, *Sacred Didactics* (Murfreesboro, TN: Dehoff Publications, 1954), 51-53.
33. Alexander Campbell and Nathan Rice, *A Debate on the Action, Subject, Design and Administrator of Christian Baptism; Also on the Character of Spiritual Influence in Conversion and Sanctification and on the Expediency and Tendency of Ecclesiastic Creeds as Terms of Union and Communion* (Lexington, 1844), 613.
34. Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* 2 (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1868), 356.
35. Nathan J. Mitchell, *Reminiscences and Incidents in the Life of a Pioneer Preacher* (Cincinnati: Chase and Hall, 1877), 23-24.
36. *Ibid.*, 28.
37. *Ibid.*, 34-35.

Professionals and Plowboys: The Rise of Institutionalization

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During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Restoration Movement gradually took two different courses as America slowly changed from a frontier to an urban culture. Although a vociferous minority wanted to maintain rural customs in the face of change, the majority in the Restoration Movement wanted to assimilate into the modern culture. This process of assimilation had its roots in Campbell's intellectual approach to Christianity.

With the uniting of some of the Stone and Campbell churches, Campbell and other leaders became concerned about maintaining the integrity and energy of the overall movement. As is inevitable with all organizations, the search for order and stability was rooted in bureaucratic methods and organizational structure. A concern for institutional stability and professionalism in preaching slowly began to emerge. The intellectual approach to preaching helped set the stage for this institutionalization.

The rational approach of Alexander Campbell and his followers melded with the emotion that the Stone churches brought to the union, eventually leading to the movement's success in attracting better educated and wealthier members. Preachers used the principles of faculty psychology to harness the emotional content of their preaching. Faculty psychologists argued that the human mind consisted of different faculties and that the intellect or rational faculty was the primary faculty of the mind. A persuader or preacher, therefore, appealed to the intellect first through logic or reason to win a person's belief. Only after a person believed would the preacher seek to move the passions through an emotional exhortation in order to persuade a person to act on his or her beliefs.¹

Alexander Campbell described and used faculty psychology in his own prescription for proper preaching: Preachers should "first address themselves to the understanding" by stating and proving "the great facts of the gospel." Then "they exhort their hearers on these premises and persuade them to obey the gospel" and to "surrender...to the guidance and direction of the Son of God." Preachers "address themselves to the whole man, his understanding, will and affections and approach the heart by taking the citadel of the understanding." Campbell attacked the "declaimers" who were "rhetorical upon the joys of heaven and the terrors of hell" and first "address themselves to the passions."² He believed the faculty of understanding should be addressed first, not the passions; "therefore an appeal to the latter, before the former is enlightened, is as unphilosophic as it is unscriptural."³

Many believed that a simple appeal to the facts of Scripture was sufficient for preaching. Samuel Rogers recalled that he looked for dreams and visions as evidence for his calling to preach. In his autobiography he tells two

stories about two different people who had dreamed about a preacher at a revival. Both of these persons later went to hear Rogers and responded immediately to his preaching because he was the preacher they had seen in their dreams. Rogers saw these stories as evidence for his calling. Therefore, “[w]hen Brother Campbell taught me that I must not look for the signs of an Apostle, not rely upon vague impressions or dreams, or visions, I was sorely tried,” he later recalled. However, Rogers recognized that the Stone preachers “were slaves to our religious experiences,” and when Alexander Campbell came with his rational approach and “took up the Bible, and unfolded its truths with power and simplicity, many of us, with a ready mind, received his teachings and rejoiced in the light.”⁴ The preacher now sought more actively to use his own intellect in preaching.

The same was also true for the listener. A person had to be able to read to be a part of the Restoration Movement because of the emphasis on a rational understanding of Scripture. Each person was to study the Bible individually. Potential converts had to read their Bibles carefully. Those primarily moved by emotion and the Spirit did not have to read to understand and accept the revivalist’s preaching. As a result, the Restoration Movement appealed to people who were slightly more “middle class,” although still largely agrarian.⁵ As the members became more affluent and better educated, they demanded different methods of evangelism and better educated preachers.

At the same time the members were changing, a subtle shift in evangelism from outdoor camp meetings to indoor protracted meetings also occurred. These protracted meetings seem to have reached their height of effectiveness in 1838. However, unlike the protracted meetings of the 1930s, ’40s, and ’50s, these early meetings were usually

only three or four days in length and took place on weekends.⁶

Another subtle shift was in the traveling and location of preachers. Campbell began to argue for evangelists and ministers who would preach and minister to nearby congregations. In the Christian Connexion, preachers were completely chaotic in their attempts to evangelize and minister, wandering over wide areas. The Stone preachers received “impressions” about where they should preach. For example, once Samuel Rogers met three other Connexion preachers who wanted to go on a “summer campaign” in Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri, “declaring that they had been impressed so deeply that it was the will of God that they should go and take me with them.” At the same time, Rogers had received impressions that he was to go to “Old Virginia.”⁷ This practice of roaming widely over large areas continued even after they had rejected the idea of impressions. Campbell, concerned that the newly emerging group under his leadership attain some permanency, began to argue that evangelists should stay in one area, establish congregations, and then remain there to strengthen them. Nathan J. Mitchell recalled visiting Campbell, telling him where he had gone and that his “labors had been scattered over a large area.” Campbell replied, “Do you not scatter your labors too much? I would advise you to cultivate a smaller field.” Mitchell resolved “to follow this advice of Brother Campbell.”⁸

More calls for institutional stability and professionalism in preaching began to emerge. In 1830 the Mahoning Association dissolved itself, primarily at the urging of Walter Scott, because there was no precedent in the New Testament for churches to meet together. Alexander Campbell became alarmed, knowing that the newly emergent movement needed stability and direction.

Campbell spoke to the group: “Brethren, what are you going to do? Are you never going to meet again?” At Campbell’s suggestion they decided to meet annually to listen to preaching and hear reports of various evangelists. In 1831 the first “yearly meeting” was held on the Western Reserve in Ohio. In 1833 yearly meetings were held in the eastern and western parts of the Western Reserve, and in 1834 annual meetings were held in four different places in the Western Reserve. Soon many counties had their own annual meetings. Also, these meetings began to spread to Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, Missouri, and New York.⁹

With the rise of protracted and annual meetings, Campbell became concerned about improving the training of preachers and recommended that a conference be held to critique the sermons of various preachers. Many of the preachers had “literary deficiencies,” while others, according to Campbell, had problems with their hermeneutics: “There are some who have acquired various improper phrases—got into ill habits of quoting and applying scripture—of interpreting words and phrases—and in their addresses are rather repulsive than conciliatory.” Campbell believed that “by a free and full exchange...many of these faults and foibles may be healed, and the proclaimers of the Word will be every way better qualified for the work.”¹⁰ The first meeting of the “School of Preachers” took place in Lisbon, Ohio, in 1835. During the six days, fourteen preached their sermons the first part of the day, and the second part of the day older, experienced evangelists reviewed them. The criticism of the preaching, according to Campbell, included “the subject matter, the manner,” and even “the minutia of the pronunciation of a word.”¹¹ “School of the Preacher” meetings were held until the 1840s, when several colleges were established that replaced them in training ministers.¹²

These various meetings gradually led to the founding of the first state organization of churches in Indiana in 1839. The state organizations began to finance a "state evangelist" to travel around the state to hold protracted meetings, especially in communities that did not have a Restoration Movement church. As the state organizations grew, the demand came for a national organization to supply missionaries to states and countries without restoration churches, finally culminating in the first missionary society in 1849.¹³

Most preachers began to follow Campbell's suggestion of staying in one location to preach. By the 1840s most preachers had set up a monthly circuit in which they would preach for a number of congregations. Since most of these men could not live on the money this provided, they took secular work during the week to support themselves. Regular church members, usually elders, taught congregations on the Sundays that the evangelist was unavailable. Larger churches, especially in the cities, became dissatisfied with this system, and began to employ ministers to preach every Sunday. According to Franklin and Headington:

In the days of log-cabins and clapboard-roofs and puncheon-floors, any earnest and fervid preacher, who was a godly man, was listened to with patient interest, regardless of ungrammatical language and uncouth gestures. But the refinements of social life, and the culture coming from schools, lectures, concerts, and general reading, made awkward pulpit manners intolerable. The people began to demand a cultivated ministry, and to despise the unstudied efforts of their "elders."¹⁴

In the 1840s these cultural changes brought about a concern for better teaching in the congregations and a

shift in the type of preaching. Until then elders had been the only teachers, but in the 1840s preachers began to take over that role. Strict restorationists disapproved of the change in the role of preachers from evangelism to teaching and tried to reassert the primary role of evangelism. Two different styles of preaching emerged.

The strict restorationists, or conservatives, developed the model of the “farmer preacher,” a practice that was to dominate congregations which became the Churches of Christ in the twentieth century. Moses Lard nostalgically described this approach:

The preacher of that golden age was a farmer...He geared his horses with dexterity, plowed with as much skill as ever did Lycurgus, and could whistle “old Father Grimes” with an unction which will never be equalled by Bro. Moore’s organist in Cincinnati...But he was more. He was the neighborhood Justice of the Peace; in winter, the country school master, and always, on big meeting occasions, innkeeper of the church. He was useful, popular, and tenderly loved. As a rule, he was kind hearted, deeply pious, and always hospitable even to a fault...From his lips they caught lessons of wisdom which guided them in death. Their hearts grew stout as he philosophized on life’s ills; their resolutions petrified as he counseled them to be true to the Master, and as, in his artless but often eloquent style, he pointed them to the time when they should all meet in the Saviour’s presence, and neither go out nor part more, they wept as if their hearts would break.¹⁵

The moderate restorationists, on the other hand, were advocates of an educated ministry. They believed that preachers should be “professionals.” One writer for the *Christian Standard*, the paper that championed the moderates’ cause, believed there was too much preaching on “first principles,” or “our distinctive plea”; in other words,

too much emphasis on evangelism. Instead, more time in preaching should be used for common principles of health such as proper diet and exercise.¹⁶

The strict restorationists severely criticized the moderates for their secular speech. John F. Rowe argued:

Better be content with godly men without a college education, who faithfully serve the interests of the Church, than to educate a class of men who, without grace and godliness, only seek an education that they may become professional men and lord it over God's heritage.¹⁷

The strict restorationists said that the moderates' preaching gave too much attention to "exquisite speech" and popular topics such as "the petals of the flower, or geographic stratifications, or the three sides of a triangle." The moderates did not use "loyal words," "Thus it is written, Thus saith the Lord, etc."¹⁸ One restoration leader in 1869 accurately summarized:

There are really two schools of ideas within us. These we may designate as the old and the new, the technical and the practical, the conservative and the progressive, the "old fogy" and the "young American" and the more accurately still as the school of strict construction and the school of flexible expediency on the other.¹⁹

These differences were later manifested in the division between the Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ. The Disciples of Christ increased in wealth, used instrumental music in worship, supported the missionary society and other institutions, and pursued assimilation with mainstream America. The Churches of Christ after the division were poorer, more southern, rural, and uneducated, and resisted the assimilation into newly urban America by rejecting instruments in worship and all

institutions such as the missionary society.²⁰ The farmer preachers developed the debating tradition as a part of that cultural resistance and dominated the Churches of Christ through the 1930s.

Notes

1. Nan Johnson, *Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric in North America* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1991), 5, 21-24.
2. Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1974), 260.
3. *Christian Baptist* (March 1830): 184.
4. John I. Rogers, ed., *Autobiography of Samuel Rogers* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1909), 40, 41, 126, 127.
5. T. Scott Miyakawa, *Protestants and Pioneers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 157.
6. Ron Bever, "An Analysis of Speaking in the American Restoration Movement, 1820-1849" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1968), 169-78. Many of the insights and evidence in this chapter are derived from Bever's excellent study.
7. Rogers, 76.
8. Nathan J. Mitchell, *Reminiscences and Incidents in the Life and Travels of a Pioneer Preacher* (Cincinnati: Chase and Hall, 1877), 120.
9. Bever, 138-40, 151-58.
10. *Ibid.*, 166.
11. *Ibid.*, 167.
12. *Ibid.*, 168.
13. See Bever for the development of the institutionalization of the Restoration Movement.
14. Joseph Franklin and J. A. Headington, *The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin* (St. Louis: John Burns, 1879), 257-58.
15. Moses Lard, "Pioneer Preaching in the West," *Apostolic Times* 3 (February 1872): 346; quoted in David Edwin Harrell, Jr., "The Agrarian Myth and the Disciples of Christ in the Nineteenth Century,"

Agricultural History 41 (April 1967): 184.

16. J. Fraise Richard, "A Neglected Theme," *Christian Standard* (21 September 1872): 298; quoted in Wendell Willis, "A Sociological Study of the Restoration in the North, 1866-1878" (M.A. thesis, Abilene Christian University, 1966), 94.

17. John F. Rowe, "The Perplexities of the Pastorate," *American Christian Review* (17 June 1873): 189, quoted in Willis, 93.

18. R., "Choking the Word," *American Christian Review* (18 July 1871): 228; and Benjamin Franklin, "Bible Men and Bible Things," *American Christian Review* (7 September 1869): 284; quoted in Willis, 94.

19. Junior, "Preacher Elders," *American Christian Review* (18 May 1869): 155.

20. David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *The Social Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ, 1865-1900* (Atlanta: Publishing Systems, Inc., 1973). Harrell traces the path of assimilation of most of the Restoration Movement into the business culture of America as well as the resistance by the Churches of Christ to that assimilation.

Skinning the Sects: The Debate Tradition

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The colorful Texas preacher J. D. Tant claimed that for every person who would go to a protracted meeting, four would attend a religious debate. He also claimed that the number of converts from a debate was 500% higher than from any other means.¹ The age of debates is past, but they were once a significant form of communication in the Churches of Christ.

When the Churches of Christ emerged as a separate group from the Disciples, almost all American religious groups were struggling with the effects of the rise of industrialization. Most religious traditions used their own theology or beliefs to shelter their members from the attacks of modern life on religion.² Partially protected by the “agrarian style of life” of the South which resisted “Yankee” intrusions of modern ideas, the Churches of Christ worried less about higher criticism, Darwinism, and secularism and concentrated more on converting others through religious debate.³

Debates, political and religious, have a long history in our society. In the democratic context of the free marketplace of ideas, religious groups as well as political parties have had to compete with each other for adherents. Not surprisingly, Americans, having established democracy based on the Greek model, also used debate (a prominent feature of Greek democracy) for religious and political discussions. In rural America before the technological revolution, debates were a chief means of entertainment. While the debaters were deadly serious, the debates served an entertainment function and mushroomed in popularity on the frontier in early nineteenth-century America.

Alexander Campbell quickly discovered the value of religious debate in challenging the leading religious thinkers of his time, and many restoration preachers followed his lead. Most of the early debates were conducted in a fairly dignified manner, focusing on the merits of the ideas of each side. However, as the years passed, the divisive nature of debate with its implicit argumentative image of “war” and “combat” relegated the quest for truth to a secondary position. Instead of the old idea of debate as a collaborative search for truth, most participants believed they possessed all truth. If one possessed truth, then the destruction of all falsehood was an imperative. Debates became more shrill and laden with invective. The idea of demolishing arguments—and foes—became common. The nature of such confrontation in debate began to preclude it from being a means of civil resolution of differences.

As the Restoration Movement divided into the Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ, the conservatives began their attack on “soft” preaching and hardened their own attitudes toward outsiders as well as the “soft” insiders. In the early days of the movement Campbell and others had appealed to the “facts” of scripture

and made reasoned appeals to outsiders. Now the debaters transformed the gospel "facts" into gospel "bullets." One preacher urged: "Let the siege guns which God put in our hands for devastating use against enemies be now unlimbered and volley forth the word... Let the gospel projectiles be hurled against the ramparts of entrenched wrong."⁴ Thus, the rational approach of Campbell, which had engulfed the emotional preaching of the Stone preachers, eventually gave way to the debating tradition. B. F. Manire recalled:

Most of our pioneer preachers were good exhorters, and to that fact their success in a great measure was due. Since that day our preachers have developed a logical ability that is truly wonderful, but have lost, it seems to me, almost unanimously, the power to move the hearts of men... We have debaters enough, in fact enough on hand to last a generation.⁵

With an emphasis on the rational and the loss of the emotional, the debating tradition, grounded in the harsh conditions of rural America, developed the use of bitter satire and ridicule, thus heightening the adversarial nature of restoration preaching. J. D. Tant was probably the master of this type of ridicule among the Churches of Christ. On one occasion he was debating a Mormon, an Elder Wyatt, who was known for his ridicule and sarcasm. At first Tant wanted to keep to the issues of the debate, but when the Mormon would not relent, Tant began to return the ridicule. Wyatt complained that Tant had called him "every kind of belittling and ridiculous thing" and animal possible except for a tumble-bug. He added: "I guess now that I've mentioned it he will be calling me a tumble-bug in his next speech." (Tumble-bugs are known for "rolling" bits of dung around on the ground.) Tant denied it: "Why, before God, friends, I thought everybody recognized what is happening in this debate-J. D. Tant is the tumble-bug, and Elder Wyatt

is the stuff the tumble-bug is rolling down the road!!”⁶

In Kentucky and Tennessee several preachers held debates with a Methodist preacher named R. H. Pigue. Tant reported about one debate that Joe Warlick had had with Pigue, “At times the debate was too tough to come under the head of a religious discussion; but a man can no more meet Pigue successfully and occupy a high plane than one could kill a polecat with a yardstick and not smell bad.” Tant took his own advice in his debate with Pigue in Crockett County, Tennessee, in 1910. Pigue arrived at the debate “dressed in elegance and style,” but Tant was nowhere to be seen. As Pigue began to boast that Tant was too afraid to debate, “a figure arose from the back of the assembly, a lanky, dirty, unshaven farmer dressed in ragged overalls and dirty sweat-stained shirt of a field-hand.” The farmer spoke: “My name is J. D. Tant, and I am ready for the debate to start.”

Pigue responded in disgust that he thought the debate demanded more respect from Tant. “I grew up on a farm,” Tant replied, “and my old pappy always told us boys to dress for the kind of work we had to do. I come down here to do a hog-killin’ job on a fat, over-grown, over-stuffed ‘pigue,’ and I dressed for the occasion. Let’s get on with the job!”⁷

A hard preaching style evolved out of this debating attitude of satire and ridicule. The main idea was to “skin the sects,” implying that the religious neighbors were not only unreasonable but also subhuman or merely animals whose positions needed to be devastated, not respected. (Even though the Churches of Christ have been characterized as uniformly holding this view, dissenters have always been present—see chapter 5.)

The debaters were vociferous in their defense of the

tradition. They were the “real” men, the militants, while the opponents of debates were weak and feminine. One writer complained of “soft” preaching: “Let us forever have done with pop-gun and irrelevant sermonettes on piffing, sub-minor topics, which can have no more weight against sin and the world than peas shot at a mountainside.”⁸ As early as 1920, John T. Lewis attacked “sissyism” in the church. He complained that twenty years before a preacher would “hold a two-weeks meeting” and “skin the sects ‘all from stem to stern’” and be the “most sought after preacher.” However, “that kind of preaching is not wanted now.” Instead “the good brethren” wanted “a preacher to ‘preach the word,’ and not be telling what the Baptists, Methodists, and ‘digressives’ (of course this last was the meat in the coconut) are doing.” He lamented: “The preacher that is in demand today is the one who preaches all the time on the goodness and mercy of God, telling sinners how God loves them, but never says anything about the ‘wrath’ and ‘vengeance of God.’” In a final jab at the “soft” members, Lewis concluded: “As the modern society woman thinks more of the charge and care of a poodle dog than she does of a baby made in the image of God, so the average congregation thinks more of ‘sissyism’ in religion than they do of the old Jerusalem gospel.”⁹

The debating tradition argued that biblical truth did not have to be adapted to audiences or the times. Cled Wallace protested in 1919:

There is a lot of foolish talk in the air to the effect that the gospel and the church of today must adapt themselves to the changing demands of a new age. The man of God must contend for the “old paths.”... Those who try to make the church “attractive” by means of novel appeals to the sensuous are guilty of sacrilege. Neither church nor gospel of the New Testament can be improved upon.¹⁰

Wallace urged preachers instead to “have a genuine fighting spirit.”¹¹

The debaters appealed to scriptural example for their preaching. In 1935, Yater Tant, J. D.’s son, warned the church about the “evil spirit of tolerance.” He pleaded: “It should hardly be necessary to say that the spirit of religious tolerance is the very antithesis of the spirit of Christianity.” He urged: “We must keep the church militant.” This appeal to scripture even caused some of the debaters to attack preachers who used the rational style of preaching, but used it in a positive way. One writer claimed that the first-century preachers “provoked and participated in open and at times violent public debate.” They spread the gospel “to the ends of the earth” using this method. “[I]nstead of living beside error in peace and respectability,” he continued, “inspired men and their co-workers waged aggressive war on all error.” Sometimes first-century preachers denounced their enemies so forthrightly “that auditors became enraged and slew them.” He concluded, “Then how shall we excuse some among us, though they profess loudly to go by the Bible and follow inspired men, yet charge the rest of us who do follow inspired precept and precedent with being possessed of a bad spirit?”¹²

Many people, even in some Christian colleges, deeply distrusted and opposed the college education of preachers. Price Billingsley frequently complained bitterly and sarcastically: “I’d like to have the M.A. degree myself, but first I am interested in being a MAN as Jehovah sees me, even if I have to wobble a little in my spelling.” He continued:

We’ve a veritable epidemic nowadays, specially among the younger preachers, to go almost any length to break out in college degrees—which is all very well—*provided*.

But I will hope they will excuse me, veritable red-neck and born insurrector that I am, for inquiring as to just what they intend to do with the degrees. I am a little doubtful of such equipment making them more effective gospel preachers.¹³

He also said:

We are told that the common people heard the Master gladly. A little learning, however, is dangerous, and the little fellow can't carry much of it—everybody within sight and hearing of him share[s] the misery of his being weighted down. This is why we are a little slow to warm up to these hand-me-down, six-for-a-nickel preachers whom the colleges turn loose upon us.¹⁴

Eventually attitudes began to change, and the preachers advocating a different tradition of preaching finally began to prevail. L. L. Brigrance, a longtime professor at Freed-Hardeman, provided an explanation in the *Gospel Advocate* in 1941:

There are places where the church has grown strong numerically and economically. Among its members are men prominent in the business world. It is an important factor in the civic and social life of the community. Some members are elected to public office. All of these relationships tend to weaken its stand against sectarianism. To condemn it is unpopular. Consequently the church lets up in its condemnation of denominational doctrines and practices. It selects those preachers that are known to be "sweet-spirited."¹⁵

After World War II, the church entered a new phase of prosperity and change. A new South emerged that was more homogenized with the rest of America, and the Churches of Christ were part of that new, modern South. The Christian colleges grew in power and prestige, seeking academic accreditation. Members became better educated

and moved into professional careers. The rural world of the debaters was passing away. Even before World War I, many in Tennessee had not been comfortable with J. D. Tant. Yater Tant, speaking about his father, said:

He was a son of the frontier, with all the blunt "earthiness" and plainness of whence he came... "Bulls," "polecats," "tumble-bugs," and castrated pigs might be fit subjects for parlor conversation or pulpit eloquence in the wilds of Texas, but they obviously were not proper topics for the cultured sons and daughters of the "Athens of the South."¹⁶

In addition to the changing social climate, some were concerned about the lack of grace in the debating tradition. Fred Rowe, longtime publisher of the *Christian Leader*, invited one of the writers of the *Bible Banner*, which defended the debating tradition, to hold a meeting in his congregation: "He preached four very forceful sermons, largely pugnacious, and I asked him at the supper table to preach a sermon on the Prodigal Son. He hesitated a minute and then said, 'Brother Rowe I cannot do it, I have never studied that subject.'"¹⁷ The debating tradition, so well suited to rural and small town contexts, was to fade slowly into oblivion as the world changed around it. Preaching in the Churches of Christ was about to enter the twentieth-century world.

Notes

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2. Martin Marty, *Modern American Religion: The Irony of It All, 1893-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 93-190.
3. Samuel S. Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 11.

4. Price Billingsley, "Billingsley Appeals to Busby," in John P. Lewis Papers, Center for Restoration Studies, Abilene Christian University, Abilene.

5. B. F. Manire, *Reminiscences of Preachers in Mississippi*; quoted in Colby Hall, *New Light Christians: The Initiators of the Nineteenth Century Reformation* (Fort Worth: C. D. Hall, 1959), 104.

6. Fanning Yater Tant, *J. D. Tant—Texas Preacher: A Biography* (Erlanger, KY: Faith and Facts Press, 1958), 305.

7. Ibid.

8. Billingsley, "Appeals."

9. John T. Lewis, "Sissyism," *Gospel Advance* 1 (January 1920): 2.

10. Cled Wallace, "The Well-Armoured Man," *Abilene Christian College Lectures*, 1919 (Cincinnati: Christian Leader, 1919), 81.

11. Ibid.

12. Yater Tant, "The Evil Spirit of Tolerance," *The Gospel Guardian* 1 (October 1935): 23; and Billingsley, "Appeals."

13. Price Billingsley, *Gospel Advance* 1 (July 1920): 7.

14. Price Billingsley, *Gospel Advance* 1 (December 1919): 7.

15 L. L. Brigance, "Liberalism in the Churches of Christ," *Gospel Advocate* 83 (22 May 1941): 486.

16 Tant, *Texas*, 315.

17 John F. Rowe to J. Edward Meixner, June 23, 1939, in the records of the Fifth and Beechwood Church of Christ, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Center for Restoration Studies, Abilene Christian University, Abilene.

*Grace
in the Face of Fire:
The Early Irenic Style*

.....

While I was an undergraduate at Abilene Christian University, Lynn Anderson, then the minister of the Highland Church of Christ, said that T. B. Larimore was one of his heroes and that he modeled his preaching after him. He commended F. D. Srygley's *T. B. Larimore and His Boys* to us for reading. Unfortunately, it was several years later before I took his advice. Larimore is one of the bridges from the spirituality of the Stone Movement to today's efforts to rediscover spirituality and grace.

T. B. Larimore was one of the most popular and beloved preachers of his generation. In 1903 someone wrote: "Brother Larimore is known to our entire brotherhood and has no superior as a writer [or] speaker. His pleasant delivery, his kind and persuasive language, his mild and gentle manner, endear him to hearts of all who have ever been privileged to hear him."¹

Born in 1843 in Tennessee, he lived until 1929 and influenced many leading preachers of the Restoration Movement. J. M. McCaleb, the “dean” of missionaries in the Churches of Christ, said that Larimore, “by the life he lived and the gentle nature of his teaching,” was able “to deepen the spiritual life of many.”² G. C. Brewer, one of the leading preachers of the movement in the twentieth-century, acknowledged his debt to Larimore: “You baptized my mother when she was a young girl, . . . and your name has been a household word with us always.” In addition, Larimore’s “preaching and writing” influenced Brewer “marvelously.” Brewer “always read [Larimore’s] articles with pleasure and profit” and recalled “sad, sweet memories . . . when as a boy I used to sit at your feet—literally, sitting on the edge of the platform at old Mars’ Hill—and hear you preach the gospel with eloquence, pathos and power.”³

Larimore’s preaching style and content were different from that of the debaters. James M. Sewell, one of Larimore’s “boys,” captured Larimore’s contrast with the debaters well:

I remember when as a youth my heart would thrill to his powerful and eloquent presentation of the simple gospel story. I noticed one thing then, and have ever since, that the burden of his message at all times was Christ. Other preachers often discussed many and various theological subjects, but not brother Larimore. Christ crucified, Christ raised, Christ exalted, Christ our tender loving Savior, was the burden of his heart and of his preaching.⁴

The fact that Larimore’s background was unlike that of many of the great debaters of his generation may account for his irenic, peaceable style. After Larimore’s father had abandoned the family when Larimore was young,

Larimore's mother brought him up in an atmosphere of "sweet piety"⁵ with a total absence of combat (His personality was one the debaters sneeringly referred to as "sweet-spirited"). Larimore entered Mossy Creek Baptist College (now Carson-Newman University) in Jefferson City, Tennessee, in 1858: a time when revivals were sweeping college campuses. Although he did not experience a conversion during college, he was finally baptized 10 July 1864, at Hopkinsville, Kentucky, after accepting the "plan of salvation." He then studied for one year at Franklin College in Nashville under Tolbert Fanning, a Restoration Movement preacher who had originally preached in the Stone Movement.⁶ Through Fanning, Larimore may have been exposed to some of the evangelistic and spiritual ideals of the Stone Movement. Fanning deeply impressed Larimore, for Larimore wrote that Fanning "preached as no other man I have ever heard could preach the gospel, 'the power of God unto salvation.'"⁷

Larimore was aware of issues raised by the new intellectual and social changes, and like most Southerners he had conservative views. He attacked higher criticism and evolution in sermons late in the nineteenth century⁸ and rejected some of the efforts by the Disciples of Christ to assimilate into mainstream American culture. Doug Foster aptly explains why Larimore would not agree with the mainstream liberal Protestant perspectives of the late nineteenth century: "Larimore's solidarity with the 'simple' culture of the South, his identification with the rural, agrarian values and simple, fundamental religion made such a turn [toward assimilation] unlikely."⁹ However, unlike the debaters, Larimore was not a "radical" who thought that Christianity should always oppose culture. Instead, he was a "conversionist," one who believed that Christianity could transform culture.¹⁰

Ironically, his accomodating personality may have contributed to his failure in religious journalism. He published *The Angel of Mercy, Love, Peace and Truth* and announced at its beginning that it “possesses not the slightest belligerent proclivity.” The journal would “avoid all unpleasant discussion and personal references. One harsh, unkind or unpleasant word will be sufficient reason for consigning to the flames any articles written for its pages.”¹¹ F. D. Srygley in *Larimore and His Boys* rightly judged that the journal’s “noncombative tone was not in harmony with the spirit and genius of the reformation at that time,” and the periodical’s content “read like a new departure in the style of our journalism. Our papers had always been thoroughly representative of a people decidedly argumentative in their theology.”¹² As we shall see, in contrast to his journalism, this irenic stance made his preaching highly successful.

Larimore was often asked, “How shall we stand on this question?” His reply was always, “Better not stand on that question at all; stand upon Christ and him crucified.” His “boys,” or students, followed suit. Srygley said, “They preached the gospel in gentleness and love.” As for Larimore, Srygley added, “No word of bitterness or semblance of anger ever marred one of his sermons.”¹³

Larimore’s sermons were not as logical as most Restoration preaching; however, “in word-painting and persuasive pathos it would be difficult to find his superior.”¹⁴ Srygley pointed to the positive use of emotion in Larimore’s preaching as the key to his popularity:

When he speaks from the top of the mountains his sermons encourage, elevate, inspire and electrify an audience; when he preaches from the bridge of sighs his hearers are subdued, deeply moved with sympathy, impressed with the worthlessness of this world and its

joys sobered down to a deeper piety and firmer faith... [T]he heart warmly responds to the tenderness of his appeal.¹⁵

Michael Ireland, in his study of Larimore's preaching, also points to his use of emotion,¹⁶ especially in the exhortations which followed every sermon. Srygley stated:

In exhortation, he melted an audience to tears as if by magic, and the love of God, the death of Christ and the hope of saints were the only themes he chose during all that meeting for the exhortations that followed every sermon with such good effects. He preached to us earnestly and spoke to us so kindly, that we all began to love him from the very first.¹⁷

A faint echo of the old preaching pattern of the sermon followed by the emotional exhortation was present in Larimore's preaching. Like the Christian Connexion preachers of old, Larimore was very effective in his emotional appeals.

Larimore clearly focused on the cross, God's grace, and love; themes that are readily apparent in his published sermons. In a typical passage, Larimore talked about a statue that had the engraved verse "Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Then he added:

Why not, then, go beyond that and above to the source from which that language, spirit, and thought emanated, and realize that Jesus is a sublime and blessed reality, and that the language is the language of the Man of sorrows who died upon Calvary's cross to save you and me, and save all we love and all that love us? Jesus bled and died upon the cross to ransom the lost; to lift us up from our fallen condition; to roll back the tide of sin and sorrow threatening to engulf the human race and envelop

the globe; to set our souls free to float above the sorrows and sighs of this world, that we may nestle in the bosom of the love of God, and be with the angels and archangels while the eternal ages roll on.¹⁸

Besides a different content, Larimore developed a different style: he filled his sermons with narratives. Srygley noted that “in his illustrations he used only such things as were perfectly familiar to every body in that country.”¹⁹ Often they were biblical stories, but Larimore mostly used “everyday life” stories “which could not help but pull the listener into the lesson.”²⁰ Ecclesiastes 12 is the text of “The Whole Duty of Man,” the first sermon in his first published volume of sermons. Larimore narrated the story of Solomon as five brief acts in a play, with each of the five scenes played out before the audience.

Larimore clearly understood the power of narrative. Ireland attributes Larimore’s success as a preacher to his use of narrative: “Few could tell a story as well as Larimore. He made the hearer feel that he [or she] was there. Using the present tense and graphic language, Larimore made the story real.”²¹ He knew that through story, people could see future possibilities without having to go through the experiences themselves, and he knew that people could identify with stories; learn, and be molded by them. For example, in a sermon he told the true story of a man he had met on a train to Louisville. The man was forty-four years old and had spent twenty-two years hunting for gold in Mexico. His parents and sister had died; only his brother remained. Larimore asked him if it had been worth it for him to be gone so long for that money. “He thought seriously for a second and said: ‘No, it has not paid... [T]hings about home have changed, so that... I cannot be happy.’” Larimore said that, when he saw him get off the train and be embraced by his brother, he thought he “could go into the

house and see the vacant seats of the absent loved ones; he could go to the orchard back of it and see the graves of father, mother, and sister, and then remember that he had robbed home of the joy and sunshine and gladness with which he might have filled it for twenty-two years."²² Larimore went on to develop the idea that the search for wealth is "the history of the world." However, the narrative caused all who heard it to picture it as if it were happening to them.

Larimore was a man of peace who had a great love for the poor and the powerless. Srygley noted that Larimore had "never forgotten those trials and hardships of early life. They [had] taught him to sympathize with the poor and unfortunate in life. And it is his deep and tender sympathy for suffering humanity that makes the people love him so."²³ After visiting men in prison, he spoke out against the harsh conditions he had found and advocated prison reform. His concern for the oppressed was a common theme in his sermons.²⁴ His love for the powerless even extended to the animals around Mars Hill College; wild things were attracted to his gentleness in a manner reminiscent of St. Francis of Assisi. He had fought in the Civil War before becoming a Christian and was always thankful he had not killed anyone. He believed that Christians should not be involved in politics or fight in war.²⁵ Because he believed that the gospel could transform people, he usually approached the pulpit with positive messages "which would serve to give hope to the struggling listener and encourage the response Larimore was seeking."²⁶

Larimore's love for the poor, his belief in pacifism, and his positive preaching reflected a deep spirituality. He knew that he had been saved by grace, and he believed in the special providence of God. He never thought he deserved merit, and when praise came, according to Srygley, he

received "it by faith as of grace from God."²⁷ Larimore wrote shortly after he had recovered from a serious illness:

My faith has never been stronger; my hope has never been brighter; my head has never been clearer; my heart has never been calmer; my life has never been purer. I love all; I hate none. My love for some lifts my soul into the realm of the sublime. I am willing to die today; I am willing to live a thousand years, to tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love... [M]y sympathy for suffering souls is stronger; my love for all the pure, the true, the beautiful, the good, and the sublime... is truer, tenderer, sweeter, than ever before. Not a mist floats between me and the land of love and life divine. I'll never turn back. I'll never stop to consider what the enemy may think, or say, or do. I shall simply do as much good and as little evil as possible all the remnant of my days, and gladly leave all results with God.²⁸

This spirituality permeated Larimore's sermons. In contrast to the debate tradition, he addressed controversial issues with a loving spirit, repudiating the approach of the debaters.

One of the older controversies in the Restoration Movement was whether communion was open or closed. Open communion meant that the Lord's Supper was offered to all who attended worship and each individual decided whether to participate. Closed communion meant that only baptized believers in good standing with the local congregation were permitted to take the Lord's Supper. Larimore explored the issue in a novel way in one sermon:

So I will just have to ask you what you mean by that untaught question. If you mean by "close communion" a communion in which every soul communing is in close, sympathetic union with every other soul communing, and where all who are communing love each other with pure hearts fervently, and long to get closer to each other, the

sentiment of each soul being, “Nearer to God every moment”—not only during the communion, but at all other times... now if that is the sentiment to which you refer when you ask if we believe in close communion, then I can safely say that the communion should be close; and the closer, the better for all concerned.²⁹

Larimore developed similar points about open communion. He was cleverly telling the debaters that they were missing the whole point of communion in their argumentation. Yet he did not attack the debaters directly; he expressed his view in a quiet, sophisticated, and very understandable manner and left the results with God.³⁰

When I went to Abilene Christian College in the 1970s, a friend advised me to try to hear K. C. Moser if I had the chance because he was one of the early “liberals” in the church. In my freshman year Moser spoke at the World Missions Workshop. When I heard his message of grace, it did not strike me as unusual or liberal at all. Only years later did I realize that his message during the 1930s had stood in stark contrast to the debating tradition of that era.

One of the forgotten stories of Restoration history is that of Kenny Carl Moser, who rediscovered and preached the gospel message of spirituality and grace in a time when it was not fashionable. K. C. Moser was born near Johnson City, Texas, on January 23, 1893. Baptized in 1912, he began preaching in 1917. He attended Thorp Spring College from 1915 to 1918 and was listed as a faculty member for the 1918-19 academic year. Most of his life was spent preaching in Oklahoma and Texas, with some of the last years of his life teaching at Lubbock Christian College. He died February 17, 1976.³¹ Moser was attacked often, and even after he died some thought him a heretic; yet by the time he died, most revered him as a spiritual man who preached

a spiritual message. Three qualities made Moser the man he was: spirituality, grace, and peace.

Through a study of the biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Moser began his rediscovery of the Spirit, grace, and spirituality.³² In October 1929 he wrote "The Spirit of Adoption," defending the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Moser encouraged the brethren to "welcome this heavenly guest" and argued that "the indwelling spirit is a present witness testifying as to our present relationship to God and not a past relationship." He delineated some of the actions of the Spirit: helping us to pray "when we do not know how to pray (Rom. 8:26, 27)," crucifying "the lust of the flesh" and bringing "forth the fruits of holiness (Gal. 5:15-24; Rom. 8:13)," and shedding "abroad in our hearts the love of God (Rom. 5:5)." The Spirit is also "God's stamp of ownership on our hearts and His pledge of our future inheritance (Eph. 1:13)." He added, "I am exceedingly afraid of the religion that denies the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the children of God and knows nothing of its witness to the soul that is approved of God."³³

F. L. Colley responded in February 1930, demanding an explanation. For Colley the Spirit and the Word were synonymous; the only time the Spirit dwelt in the Christian was when one read the Bible. He wrote, "I believe the spirit dwells in us, but I do not believe it is a personal direct indwelling."³⁴ Moser's position was heresy, and he was virtually blacklisted from most periodicals of the Church of Christ until the 1960s.

How could Colley's belief be so widespread in the Churches of Christ? Moser provides a clue because he had once denied the indwelling of the Spirit himself. In response to Colley, he wrote: "I was brought up at the feet of teachers who denied the indwelling of the Spirit, and for no better reason I denied it too. After I began to study for myself, I

soon discovered that no doctrine is more plainly taught than the doctrine of the indwelling of the Spirit in the child of God."³⁵ When Colley continued to press, Moser pointed out that it was "only comparatively recent [sic] that anyone has denied the indwelling of the Spirit as I teach it." McGarvey, Lard, and others had shared the same views as Moser, but "[s]ome debaters among us who fought an abuse of the doctrine in other religious people swung to the opposite extreme and denied the personal indwelling of the Spirit at all."³⁶

Moser had grown up in a time when the Churches of Christ were competing with the Pentecostals for church members. In the debates against Pentecostals, the idea became popular that the Holy Spirit was co-terminous with the Word only or the Bible.³⁷ Debaters were able to convince many that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were no longer available because the Spirit operated only through the Word of God and, in fact, was the Word of God.

Moser's study of the Holy Spirit led him into more controversy. Later in a reply to Colley, Moser wrote:

Logically those who deny the indwelling of the Spirit leave grace for law, and would exchange the safety under Christ for the wretched condition described in Romans the seventh chapter... I see a more fundamental trouble than a failure to believe in the indwelling of the Spirit. Legalism is the father of the denial of the personal indwelling of the Spirit. [T]hose who deny the indwelling of the Spirit conceive of Christianity as one law superseding another, and teach that salvation is upon the principle of works. The indwelling of the Spirit has no place under law, but it naturally belongs to grace, a spiritual religion. God is Spirit; under Christ the birth is spiritual; our citizenship is spiritual; circumcision is spiritual; the priesthood is spiritual; our sacrifices [are] spiritual; our virtues are produced by the Spirit. We are

sons under grace—not sons under law.³⁸

In 1932 Moser expanded these themes in *The Way of Salvation*, in which he emphasized grace as opposed to legalism.

Moser believed that part of the problem was the traditional understanding of the gospel in the Churches of Christ. He argued that the “plan of salvation” produced a “crude legalism” and a “degenerate Christianity” which separated “repentance, faith, confession, and baptism” and “assigned each a separate and distinct office.” This separation created the false notion “that faith starts one on his way to Christ, gets him so far and stops, then turns him over to repentance.” Repentance, then, “takes him up and gets him still nearer Christ, but stops short of him.” The process continues until “baptism is reached, which puts one ‘into Christ.’”³⁹

In 1934 he wrote another article in the *Firm Foundation*, “Can the Gospel Be Obeyed?” Here he attacked traditional ideas further. As shown in chapter two, many in the Restoration tradition argued that the Bible consisted of a compendium of “facts” to be believed and “commands” to be obeyed. They saw the Bible as a giant jigsaw puzzle in which the “facts” had to be arranged in the correct configuration. One of the approved ways to organize the “facts” and “commands” of the scripture was through the “steps” in the plan of salvation. Moser rejected this approach to the Bible and salvation:

The gospel does not consist in the detached facts of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The gospel is not simply facts about Jesus. The good news of salvation is Jesus crucified for our sins, buried and raised for our justification. The gospel consists in a person in whom to trust, not simply in one command to be obeyed. Commands are not the gospel... The gospel concerns a

person not mere facts. The gospel is appropriated by obedience to commands, and as a result of obedience to the gospel we enjoy the promises of God.⁴⁰

For Moser the “steps” to salvation were not isolated “commands” or “actions” separate and apart, but they occurred together and were inseparable: “Therefore to believe the gospel is to obey the gospel. To believe the gospel is to believe in, trust in, Christ crucified, buried and raised for our justification.”⁴¹

Moser also challenged the debating tradition and the type of preaching it emphasized. In the 1937 booklet *Are We Preaching the Gospel?*, he complained that the emphasis on a “plan” caused preaching to neglect the gospel of Christ. The “conditions of salvation” were being preached without any reference to the cross of Christ. “Man’s savior,” he said, “is not a ‘plan’ but the Man, Christ Jesus. Inspired preachers preached ‘Jesus’, not a ‘plan.’ They first preached Jesus then the conditions of salvation.”⁴²

Moser wanted sermons to focus on preaching Christ: “Preaching upon present day topics, a masterly handling of other timely themes, or the exposing of religious error, might, regardless of the need, cause us to lose sight of the gospel and forget that it is not being preached.” Whenever “a failure to preach the gospel” occurred, “the mistake” would be “fatal” because “proselytes and sectarians” would be made instead of Christians. Moser went “to considerable pains to read written sermons, to study sermon outlines and to listen to sermons preached” after he had “observed that the gospel was being neglected in many sermons which were supposed to be gospel sermons.” He recalled a meeting in which he, “as well as others, noticed that the gospel was not being preached.” The preacher at best made only a passing reference about the death of Christ or the gospel of Christ. Moser argued: “Making a brief reference to the

gospel is not PREACHING the gospel.” To go through a gospel meeting “and have no use for the words grace, blood, and cross, except merely to mention them a time or two, there is something fundamentally wrong.”⁴³

Moser, like Larimore, was a “conversionist,” a person who believed that Christianity could transform culture. His position on peace clearly manifests this belief. In the early 1920s, after most in the Churches of Christ had rejected pacifism,⁴⁴ Moser wrote:

“If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Now, if the spirit of war is not the Spirit of Christ, then a Christian cannot engage in war. But what is the Spirit of Christ? “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness,” etc. (Gal. 5:22). The spirit of war is the spirit of hatred and confusion. Therefore the Spirit of Christ is not the spirit of war, unless love is hatred.⁴⁵

He believed that “Christians are too slow to take advantage of the opportunity now afforded them to speak out on the subject of disarmament.” He thought they “should manifest a greater interest in the disarmament of nations than others” and argued that disarmament was important for “preserving peace”: “It takes no logician to see the connection between preparedness and war.” Even if it did not work, “[i]t would at least postpone them and thereby give time for serious thought that might lead to arbitration.” He argued for disarmament:

Billions of dollars are spent yearly for the construction of battleships that become obsolete within ten years or less time. Taxes are high and going higher because of the mad rivalry between the nations to excel each other in the building of navies. Past war debts and expenditures for future wars are sapping the very life of nations. No prosperity can finally endure it.⁴⁶

Moser believed that Christians could “help create sentiment against war and for disarmament.” He concluded: “Let disarmament be talked in the schools, proclaimed from the pulpit, championed by the press, ‘till nations shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and learn war no more.’”⁴⁷

Moser’s Christ centered beliefs put him ahead of his time and outside the mainstream of the Churches of Christ until the 1950s and 1960s. However, with the help of G. C. Brewer, who agreed with Moser’s stand on grace, and who, as we shall see in a later chapter, was influential in introducing another preaching tradition, Moser was able to regain the trust of many in the church.⁴⁸ Brewer defended and promoted *The Way of Salvation* and *Are We Preaching the Gospel?* when others attacked them. When Brewer moved to Lubbock, Texas, where Moser lived, his friendship helped Moser through the difficult times, and Brewer continued to promote Moser’s ideas.⁴⁹ In the 1960s and early 1970s Moser began to be invited to speak at lectureships again. He also became a popular speaker and teacher at Campus Evangelism Seminars, World Mission Workshops, and other renewal enterprises in the church. Eventually he was invited to teach Bible at Lubbock Christian College, where he influenced Steven Lemley (now provost of Pepperdine University), Charles Siburt (now professor of Bible at Abilene Christian University), and other important church leaders.⁵⁰ Moser, like Larimore, was a bridge to present day concerns about grace and spirituality.

Both Larimore and Moser exhibited an alternative to the debate tradition, an alternative which believed that preaching could transform culture, not merely oppose and attack. It is important to remember this spiritual, irenic, grace-oriented, culture-transforming tradition of preaching,

which has been present in the Restoration Movement for as long as the debate tradition.

Notes

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1. "Larimore's Sermons," *Christian Leader* 17 (26 May 1903): 5.
 2. J. M. McCaleb, "Theophilus Brown Larimore," *Gospel Advocate* 86 (2 November 1944): 715.
 3. G. C. Brewer in T. B. Larimore, "Greetings from the Golden West," *Firm Foundation* (18 September 1928): 2.
 4. James H. Sewell, "Brother Larimore's Influence," *Firm Foundation* (16 April 1929): 2.
 5. Douglas Foster, "The Struggle for Unity during the Period of Division of the Restoration Movement, 1875-1900" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1987), 347.
 6. *Ibid.*, 279-82.
 7. F. D. Srygley, ed., *Letters and Sermons of T. B. Larimore* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1900), 323.
 8. Foster, "Struggle," 306-9.
 9. *Ibid.*, 370.
 10. *Ibid.*, 342. See also H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), 190-229.
 11. Douglas Foster, "T. B. Larimore and Disciples Division," *Discipliana* 47 (1987): 52; and F. D. Srygley, *Smiles and Tears, or T. B. Larimore and His Boys* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1889), 194.
 12. *Boys*, 194.
 13. *Ibid.*, 151.
 14. *Ibid.*, 197.
 15. *Ibid.*, 10.
 16. Michael W. Ireland, "A Content Analysis of the Preaching of T. B. Larimore" (D.Min. thesis, Harding Graduate School of Religion, 1987), 82-97.
 17. Srygley, *Boys*, 31.
 18. Srygley, *Letters*, 49-50.

19. Srygley, *Boys*, 33.
20. Ireland, "Content," 87-88, 144.
21. *Ibid.*, 89.
22. Srygley, *Letters*, 23-24.
23. Srygley, *Boys*, 61.
24. Ireland, "Content," 182-84.
25. Srygley, *Boys*, 279, 273-75, 250-54.
26. Ireland, "Content," 188.
27. Srygley, *Boys*, 64.
28. Srygley, *Letters*, 140.
29. *Ibid.*, 293.
30. *Ibid.*, 140.
31. Bill Swetmon, "K. C. Moser," *Firm Foundation* (23 March 1976): 190; Batsell Barrett Baxter and M. Norvel Young, *Preachers of Today* (Nashville: Christian Press, 1952): 241; and John Mark Hicks, "The Man or the Plan? K.C. Moser and the Theology of Grace among Mid-Twentieth Century Churches of Christ," paper presented at the 18th Annual W. B. West, Jr. Lectures for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship, Harding Graduate School of Religion, Memphis, TN, October 1993.
32. Conversation with Silas Shotwell. This study was probably prompted by his teacher at Thorp Spring, R. C. Bell. See Hicks, "The Man," 45-46. Moser first wrote about the Spirit in 1925: "Brother Kidwell's Position Reviewed," *Firm Foundation* 42 (16 June 1925): 2-3.
33. K. C. Moser, "The Spirit of Adoption," *Firm Foundation* (8 October 1929): 3.
34. F. L. Colley, "Brother Moser, Please Explain," *Firm Foundation* (25 February 1930): 5.
35. K. C. Moser, "Brother Colley Seeks Information," *Firm Foundation* (11 March 1930): 3.
36. Moser, "Reply to Brother Colley," *Firm Foundation* (6 May 1930): 3.
37. The idea that the Word and Spirit were synonymous had been around from the early days of the Restoration Movement. See Pat Brooks, "Lockean Epistemology and the Indwelling Spirit in the

Restoration Movement" (M.A. thesis, Abilene Christian University, 1977).

38. Moser, "Reply." See also "The Gift of the Holy Spirit," chap. in *The Way of Salvation* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1932), 125-45.

39. Moser, *Way*, 107-8.

40. Moser, "Can the Gospel Be Obeyed?" *Firm Foundation* (6 February 1934): 2.

41. *Ibid.*

42. Moser, *Are We Preaching the Gospel?* (1937), 7.

43. *Ibid.*, 7, 8, 9.

44. Michael Casey, "From Patriotism to Pacifism: The Emergence of Civil Religion in the Churches of Christ," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 66 (July 1992): 376-90.

45. K. C. Moser, "Should a Christian Engage in War?" *Gospel Advocate* (16 November 1922): 1094.

46. K. C. Moser, "Disarmament of Nations," (14 December 1922): 1188.

47. *Ibid.*

48. Richard Hughes, "Are Restorationists Evangelical?" in *Varieties of Evangelicalism*, eds. Donald Dayton and Robert K. Johnson (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 124-25.

49. Leonard Allen, *Distant Voices: Discovering a Forgotten Past for a Changing Church* (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 1993), 162-70. See also Hicks, 14-15, 22, 26-27, 32-34.

50. Steven Lemley, "K. C. Moser: A Personal View," paper presented at the Christian Scholars Conference, Pepperdine University, July 1994.

*We Have Arrived:
The Legacy of the
Hardeman
Tabernacle Sermons*

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LeMoine Lewis, professor of Bible at Abilene Christian University, loved to tell the story of the young ACU Bible student who went out to preach in small, rural Texas churches. To cut short his sermon preparation time, he memorized sermons from various sermon books. One of his favorites was the Hardeman Tabernacle sermons, which he recited word for word, even down to references to the balcony, as he preached in many small, one-room, frame buildings.

Hardeman's sermons were apparently plagiarized by a whole generation.¹ Hugo McCord recently admitted that in his first gospel meeting in Holland, Missouri, in June 1930, he "virtually recited from memory Brother Hardeman's sermons in Volume I of his Tabernacle

Sermons.”² Hardeman’s biographers report that once while traveling in Arkansas, Hardeman stopped to worship at a church. After Hardeman had identified himself as a church member, the preacher called on him to pray, “then mounted the pulpit and proceeded to preach a Tabernacle sermon almost verbatim never realizing that his visitor was N. B. Hardeman, author of the Tabernacle Volumes.”³ As late as 1959, Guy N. Woods praised the reprinting of the sermons, not only for their truth, but also as “models of homiletic skill” that younger preachers should “master.”⁴ According to George DeHoff, “hundreds of young preachers have preached them sometimes by memorizing them!”⁵

The Tabernacle Sermons clearly announced, first to Nashville, then to Tennessee, and finally to the whole South that the Churches of Christ had arrived. They had achieved respectability, and the church was going to be a religious force in the South for years to come. The “gentleman theologian” to counter the rough-and-tumble, embarrassing Texas debater’s style of J. D. Tant, Hardeman, through his sermons, presented a reasonable, genial, and respectable Christianity to the South. The cultured sons and daughters of Nashville brought Hardeman to Ryman auditorium to put the ghosts of uncouth debaters to rest.

What caused this rise of respectability? After the bitter split from the Disciples of Christ, most congregations in the South met in ramshackle buildings on the wrong side of the tracks. Starting in the first decade of the 1900s and continuing into the 1920s, congregations became progressively more affluent. Many longed for better buildings and eventually, better preaching. In 1906, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Churches of Christ had 159,658 members, and the value of the typical church building was \$1,302. By 1916 the membership was 317,937, and the average value of a church building was still \$1,300.

In 1926 there were 433,000 members, and the value of the average church building had grown to \$3,223.⁶ Throughout the 1920s congregations in small and large towns left their “shanties” and moved into nice brick edifices.

With this modest rise in affluence, patterns of preaching began to change. Frank Pack remarked that most urban churches in the Churches of Christ “by 1930 had full time ‘located preachers’ with the notable exception of the churches in Nashville, Tennessee.” Nashville, clearly still under the influence of David Lipscomb’s ideas, resisted these trends (Lipscomb believed that located preachers were a sign of worldliness). Earlier than 1930 most “rural churches followed the pattern of having an annual gospel meeting of several days’ duration and local preaching once a month by part time ministers who were engaged in other work during the week.”⁷

Several men in leading urban churches paved the way with the first located ministries: M. C. Kurfees at the Haldeman Avenue church in Louisville, Kentucky; F. W. Smith with the congregation in Franklin, Tennessee; L. S. White at the Pearl and Bryan Street congregation in Dallas, Texas; and Jesse Sewell at various Texas congregations. These men bore the heat of criticism for their efforts, but slowly the idea of a located ministry gained acceptance in smaller cities and towns and eventually in rural congregations.⁸

The Goebel Avenue congregation, established in Paducah, Kentucky, in 1906, for example, had monthly preaching, after the pattern of rural congregations, for the first few years. Then, in 1912, C. M. Stubblefield became the regular minister, preaching at Goebel Avenue two Sundays of the month. The other two Sundays he would preach at mission points or at “weak” congregations. The Paducah newspaper reported in 1914 that Stubblefield had

“changed his schedule from the first and third Sundays to the second and fourth Sundays of each month. On the first and third Sundays he will preach at Florence Station and Lowes.”⁹ This pattern continued in Paducah until 1923, when the paper announced that Charles Taylor, evangelist for the congregation, would speak “first, second, and third Sundays of each month.”¹⁰ A few months later, as was happening all over the country, the Goebel Avenue church moved from its one-room, wood building to a large, new, brick building in a better part of town. The congregation was moving up the social and economic ladder. Within five years the minister was preaching almost every Sunday morning at the new building.

Soon the located preachers began to take part in civic affairs and local politics, thereby building the image of the churches in the community. G. C. Brewer, among others, began to take the lead in promoting the Churches of Christ, both in local communities and nationally. He organized large congregations and began to introduce the practices of “respectable” denominational churches into his local church ministries. Specifically, he introduced individual communion cups and church budgets.¹¹

Even though Nashville churches resisted the located preacher until the 1930s, for many years they had desired to hold a great evangelistic meeting “to get the church before the people.”¹² In 1921 they finally organized the effort through a committee of representatives from several churches. They chose one of Goebel Avenue’s favorite visiting evangelists: N. B. Hardeman.

Hardeman was well suited to the task. Born May 18, 1874, the son of a country doctor, he became, in 1921 at age 47, president of Freed Hardeman College in Henderson, Tennessee. J. W. Roberts said that at his peak, Hardeman “always prided himself on being an Old Southern

gentleman.”¹³ He raised and showed Tennessee Walking horses and often used his winnings to help Freed-Hardeman meet its expenses.¹⁴ Hardeman associated with the powerful in Tennessee, knowing all the governors of Tennessee since the early 1900s and others who had national power: Senate majority leader and candidate for president, Lyndon Johnson came to Memphis to honor Hardeman on his 85th birthday, one year before Johnson was elected vice president of the United States.¹⁵ Most scholars recognize Hardeman as one of the most important preachers of the Churches of Christ in this century.¹⁶

The advertising campaign by the Nashville churches “set a new precedent” for the Churches of Christ.¹⁷ Notices, advertisements, and articles appeared in the city newspapers several weeks before the meeting, which was held from March 28 through April 16, 1922. One hundred thousand blotters and 65,000 personal invitation cards were distributed. Several illuminated signs were strategically placed on city streets around Nashville. A half-page ad was placed in both the Nashville *Tennessean* and *Banner*. Everyone in Nashville who had a phone was called and given a personal invitation. During the meeting, both Nashville papers, each with subscriptions of over 40,000, printed fully transcribed texts of all the sermons. One writer was probably accurate in saying: “It is doubtful whether any preacher of the Restoration movement previously was ever so extensively quoted or had his sermons printed in full for so long a series by the secular papers.”¹⁸

The place for the meeting was the historic Ryman auditorium. Ryman had been built in the nineteenth century to accommodate the great southern revivalist, Sam Jones. Originally named the Union Gospel Tabernacle, it was designed specifically to hold revival meetings. The auditorium became “a religious center for Nashville and

the South”¹⁹ and eventually “contributed much to the cultural development of Nashville during the first part of the twentieth century.”²⁰ The very choice of Ryman by the Nashville churches was highly symbolic of the acculturation of the Churches of Christ.

The Nashville churches were determined to present a rational alternative to the excessively emotional revivals, but they also wanted to adapt whatever methods they could from the revivalists. Sam Jones, the revivalist whom the Nashville churches wanted Hardeman to emulate, was known as the Dwight Moody of the South.²¹ After a successful revival in Nashville in 1885, Jones had become a nationally prominent revivalist. Jones’s style and content of preaching were similar to another famous contemporary, Billy Sunday. Both men were theatrical, and both preached on prohibition and other moral issues, along with the message of conversion. One scholar wrote about Jones, “Critics censured his slang and folksy humor in the pulpit, but thousands appreciated his eccentric combination of popular entertainment and persuasive zeal.”²²

Hardeman, following the rational tradition, toned down the theatrics, but he borrowed from the revivalists and was innovative in his preaching. Near the end of his career, he told Bible students at ACU that the preacher who

centers all his thoughts simply upon the Bible and that alone, he’ll not get anywhere. You want to mix and mingle with the world in general, with the “brethren, and with the sisteren,” all along the line. You’ll need to know things that are interesting to them and from which you will find that you will draw some of your finest illustrations and that of the simplest kind. And those are they that the world appreciates more than anything else.²³

Barnhart, in his study of the Tabernacle Sermons, shows that Hardeman followed his own advice. While his principal source was the Bible, he also used history, geography, literature, and personal experience.²⁴ This material was cast into the form of logical proofs, as Barnhart concluded, "to form tightly-bound argument."²⁵

I will analyze only the first three meetings since the final two meetings focused on internal matters within the tradition and do not fit the revival meeting pattern that Hardeman used and others in the church later copied. Hardeman's approach in the first series was strikingly different from all the later series. These first sermons stressed the role of the individual's response to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, only hinted at the distinctive nature of the church, and did not develop the practices of the church, except how one became a Christian (In the later series, Hardeman began to stress the church rather than response to Christ). Hardeman clearly wanted the widest possible receptivity to what he was saying and was trying to be as noncontroversial as possible.

The first sermon focused on the Bible, stressing its greatness and uniqueness. Knowing that most people around Nashville were religiously conservative, he established strong common ground, creating a sense of identification or "oneness" with the audience. The sermon contained nothing distinctive about the church, not even in his brief invitation. Any religiously conservative preacher could have delivered it. Hardeman acknowledged that for many of his ideas he had used the fifth volume of *The Fundamentals*,²⁶ a series of pamphlets published by two conservative Southern California businessmen (Milton and Lyman Stewart) from 1910 to 1915, defending the Bible from liberal attacks. Most scholars recognize that these pamphlets played a significant role in creating the Fundamentalist movement of the 1920s.²⁷

Over the next few sermons he slowly unfolded the rational approach to salvation. He first devoted a whole sermon to “rightly dividing the word.” Then, he introduced the Restoration Movement’s traditional dispensations of biblical history: patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian. Each dispensation had a covenant which superseded the covenant of the prior age. Christians were to follow only the rules of the Christian dispensation. Hardeman also offered a tripartite division of the New Testament: the evidence proving Christ (gospels), the conversions (Acts), and the epistles which show the churches how to live. He ignored the book of Revelation and moved on to the necessity of trusting God’s word and the need for a strict construction of interpreting it. At one point Hardeman made this strategy plain:

I have tried during the entire week to give a connected series of talks with one point in view, and that is to get into the minds of those who have so kindly attended the absolute and all-sufficiency of the word of God and to take that as our standard by which we are governed in our journey across the pathway of time.²⁸

In his seventh sermon Hardeman introduced the concept of conversion for the first time. Most of the rest of the sermons addressed the need to respond to the gospel. Twice he returned to the need to follow the laws of Scripture, allowing him to strengthen his argument for the need to make an intellectual decision to respond to the gospel.

In only two sermons did he focus on the church. In “Which Church to Join?” he stressed that a Christian is born into the church. Only in the second sermon on the church, “Reformers and Restorers” (the next-to-last sermon), did he begin to stress the distinctive nature of the church. Even here he did it in general terms, making sure to praise Calvin, Luther, and Wesley for their positive

contributions to biblical truth.²⁹ It was truly a refined, polite, and genial approach which contained no “skinning the sects” or colorful language of the debate tradition.

The careful orchestration through advertising, promotion, and earnest, polite, rational appeal worked beyond the hopes of most of the Nashville churches. The average attendance at the evening sermons was around 5,000, and an average of 3,000 came for the afternoon sessions. Hardeman preached 39 sermons to an aggregate total of 160,000 people. On several nights an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 people were turned away after the auditorium filled.³⁰ More than 200 people were baptized in a special, portable baptistry constructed especially for the location.³¹ The 22 evening sermons were published as a book, and 5,000 copies were made of the first printing in 1922, 2,000 copies were made of the second printing in 1924, and a third printing of unknown number was made in 1958.³² The reaction of most “brethren” was “jubilant” according to Hardeman’s biographers: “This was a show of strength. It was an indication that in Nashville, at least, the churches of Christ could match the crowds that only such men as Sam Jones, Billy Sunday, and Gypsy Smith could draw.”³³

The following year the Nashville churches brought Hardeman back by popular demand. The promotion of the meeting was the same as the first one, including the full printing of his sermons by both Nashville daily newspapers. The sermons were printed as a book, and in general the same methods were employed. One significant difference emerged in Hardeman’s approach from the first Tabernacle series: a change in emphasis. After establishing common ground by exploring Bible history in the first two sermons and focusing on evangelism through the next twelve sermons, Hardeman turned to the church in the fifteenth through twenty-second sermons.³⁴ The final sermon was on instrumental music.

The attendance of the meetings the second year surpassed the first. Ryman was opened to overflowing audiences that averaged 6,000 during the evening sermons. Again, 3,000 was the average for the afternoon sessions. Many were turned away at the evening services, and an aggregate audience of 190,000 people attended. The first and second printing numbers matched the first volume, and 100 people were baptized.³⁵

The 1928 meeting copied the methods once again, except that the sermons were broadcast over the radio for the first time. Around 120,000 persons attended the meetings. One major change did occur in the focus of the sermons: Hardeman said on the opening night that his purpose was “to begin a series of studies regarding first, the establishment of the Church of the Bible, to be followed by its subsequent history, its gradual apostasy, the rise of ecclesiasticism, the development of the great hierarchy, and finally the dawn of the great Reformation, culminating with the Restoration Movement of more than one hundred years ago.”³⁶ The sermons reflected this focus. The first fifteen were on the church; then of the final six sermons, four turned to Christ and the need to respond to the gospel, and two were on the Bible. Significantly, the number of baptisms was not reported for the meeting. One other major difference was the response of the public. Debate over the content of Hardeman’s sermons and attacks by the denominational clergy filled the newspapers.³⁷

Not everyone was pleased with the expense and the methods used by Hardeman in the Tabernacle meetings. Ernest C. Love, who stood in the debate tradition, wrote about the first meeting:

All the latest methods [of advertising] were used, such as billboards, banners, streamers, newspaper space, window cards, etc. The audiences were good, but the large

majority were already Christians. After all, the persons who most needed that kind of preaching were not there... Take our big meeting again. Thirty-nine sermons by one of our best preachers; backed up by the press of the city and by forty congregations, besides visitors from distant states and nearby places; five thousand dollars and twenty days; and only two hundred baptized. It does not look very big to me. I still insist that something else must be done to win the masses.³⁸

His voice was clearly in the minority; the churches had found a new, very effective tool that, according to DeHoff, "made the members feel proud of the church."³⁹

The Tabernacle adaptation of the revivalist meeting spread. In 1927 the brethren in Texas, not to be outdone by the Tennessee churches, chose G. C. Brewer, the other great preacher of the 1920s, to hold a similar meeting in Ft. Worth. They secured the First Baptist Church, home pulpit of the great fundamentalist preacher, John Frank Norris. Brewer followed Hardeman's example of establishing common ground by first preaching on evolution. The Texans used the same promotional methods and published a book of Brewer's sermons.⁴⁰

Over the next few decades a spate of copycat meetings sprang up in major urban centers all over the South. Brewer, Foy E. Wallace Jr. (a leading Texas preacher), Hardeman, and later Willard Collins (vice president of David Lipscomb College), Batsell Barrett Baxter, and Jimmy Allen were featured evangelists.⁴¹ In the 1960s the term "campaign" became the preferred designation for the large meetings. Jimmy Allen, professor of Bible at Harding College, became the leading campaign preacher. He held forty campaigns in twelve states from 1964 to 1970.⁴² Allen's preaching tended to be more emotional than Hardeman's, especially with his use of fear

appeals.⁴³ But the campaigns also became more and more expensive, ranging from \$20,000 to \$50,000 dollars each,⁴⁴ and these efforts began to diminish in their effectiveness. A study of one of Allen's campaigns in Memphis by a student at Harding Graduate School of Religion found the following:

There were 270 baptisms, of which 85% were children of Church of Christ members. About 7% were husbands and wives of members and 5% had either been coming to Sunday School or had been attending the Church of Christ prior to the campaign. Less than 3% of those baptized came from a non-Church of Christ background.⁴⁵

With the rising costs and fewer responses, the campaign efforts were dead by 1971. Floyd Merritt was correct when he concluded about the Hardeman Tabernacle Sermons that they "served as a 'catalyst' and model for subsequent meetings."⁴⁶ However, E. C. Love's evaluation ultimately proved true, for the "bigness" of the meetings was fleeting.

Besides Hardeman's influence on the large meetings and campaigns of the 1960s, he was a model to the hundreds of preachers who studied at Freed-Hardeman College. For many years after his death, the published versions of the Tabernacle sermons were used in the Bible classes there and at other Christian colleges. Unknowingly, these preachers spread Hardeman's creative adaptation of great American revivalists and helped produce a more refined, aristocratic pulpit for the church. Jimmy Allen, Willard Collins, and others gave the Churches of Christ an even greater sense of accomplishment with the "campaigns" of the 1960s. The Churches of Christ were becoming a more important and powerful church in the South and would play an increasing role in social and political affairs.

Notes

1. Gary Holloway, *Saints, Demons and Asses: Southern Preacher Anecdotes* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 26.
2. Hugo McCord, "Sixty-Five Years as a Preacher," *The Spiritual Sword* 26 (January 1995): 3-4.
3. James M. Powell and Mary N. Hardeman Powers, *N. B. H.: A Biography of Nicholas Brodie Hardeman* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1964), 355. See also Holloway, 26.
4. Powell and Powers, 182.
5. George W. DeHoff, "I See My Time Is Up:" *DeHoff Autobiography* (Murfreesboro, TN: Dehoff Publications, 1989), 227.
6. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, *Religious Bodies: 1906, 1916, and 1926* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910, 1919, 1930).
7. Frank Pack, "Ministry in Our Movement," paper presented at the Christian Scholars Conference, Abilene Christian University, July 1982.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Paducah Evening Sun*, 5 January 1914, p. 8.
10. *Paducah Evening Sun*, 29 December 1923, p. 3.
11. Norman Parks, "G. C. Brewer, Controversialist," *Discipliana* 44 (Winter 1984): 56.
12. Powell and Powers, 183.
13. George Raymond Smith, "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Concept of Ethos in the 1954 Abilene Christian College Lectures on Preaching" (M.A. thesis, Abilene Christian College, 1972), 49.
14. Powell and Powers, 306-14.
15. *Ibid.*, 2-9, 347.
16. Bill Love, *The Core Gospel: On Restoring the Crux of the Matter* (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 1992), 200-207; Richard Hughes, "Are Restorationists Evangelicals?" in *Varieties of American Evangelicalism*, eds. Donald Dayton and Robert K. Johnson (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 124; Robert Hooper, *A Distinct People: A History of the Churches of Christ in the Twentieth Century* (West Monroe: Howard Publishing Co., 1993), 70-81; and Earl West, *The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration*

Movement, 1900-1950 (Germantown: Religious Book Service, 1987), 99-103.

17. J. E. Acuff, "History and Description of the Meeting," in N. B. Hardeman, *Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons* Vol. 1 (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1924), 10.

18. *Ibid.*, 12.

19. Jerry Henderson, "A History of the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee: 1892-1920" (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University, 1962), 5. For Jones and his relationship to Ryman Auditorium, see 11-122. See also Henderson, "Nashville's Ryman Auditorium," in *More Landmarks of Tennessee History*, ed. Robert M. McBride (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Society, Tennessee Historical Commission, 1969), 285-308.

20. Henderson, "History," 1.

21. Moody was one of the greatest revivalists of the nineteenth century. Billy Sunday, Moody's successor as the leading American revivalist, was Jones's contemporary on the revival circuit.

22. Henry Warner Bowen, "Jones, Samuel Porter," in *Encyclopedia of Religion in the South*, ed. Samuel S. Hill (Mercer University Press, 1984), 367.

23. N. B. Hardeman, "The Unpublished 1954 Abilene Christian College Lectures on Preaching," Lecture 1, pp. 2-3, quoted in Smith, 37.

24. Elbert G. Barnhart, "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Preaching of N. B. Hardeman" (M.A. thesis, University of New Mexico, 1953), 57, 58. See also Elbert Barnhart and Wayne C. Eubanks, "N. B. Hardeman, Southern Evangelist," *The Southern Speech Journal* 19 (December 1953): 98-107.

25. Barnhart, "Rhetorical," 65.

26. Hardeman, "The Bible," Vol. 1, 26.

27. George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: University Press, 1980), 118-23.

28. Hardeman, "Federalists and Antifederalists," Vol. 1, 76.

29. My findings have to qualify Bill Love's conclusion in *Core Gospel* about Hardeman's preaching: "The atonement was, in theory, the center of his preaching. But in fact, the church was his main message" (207). Hardeman focused on the atonement when the purpose of the meetings was seen as evangelistic. Only later as the purpose of

the meetings shifted did the ecclesiastical emphasis emerge.

30. Floyd E. Merritt, "The Hardeman Tabernacle Meetings," paper presented at the Conference on Religious Communication in the American Restoration Tradition, Abilene Christian University, 1985. Also see Merritt, "An Institutional Study of the Hardeman Tabernacle Meetings" (M.A. thesis, University of Kansas, 1964).

31. Powell and Powers, 173.

32. Merritt, 5.

33. Powell and Powers, 173.

34. Hardeman, *Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons*, Vol. 2 (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1958).

35. Merritt, 9.

36. *Ibid.*, 10.

37. *Ibid.*, 13, 11-12.

38. Powell and Powers, 175.

39. DeHoff, 261.

40. G. C. Brewer, *Christ Crucified* (Cincinnati: Christian Leader Corp., 1928).

41. On Collins' campaign efforts, see Hooper, *Distinct*, 190-94.

42. Dan Cottrell, "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Mid-South Coliseum Campaign Sermons of Jimmy Allen, April 11-18, 1965" (M.A. thesis, Abilene Christian College, 1972), 2. Cottrell gave a good but incomplete history of the campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s, but he overlooked similar efforts of the 1930s and 1940s. See Cottrell, 16-26.

43. Jimmy Allen, *What Is Hell Like? and Other Sermons* (Dallas: Christian Publishing Co., 1965).

44. Cottrell, 23-25, 33.

45. Joe Perry Sisson, "Campaigns for Christ" (M.A. thesis, Harding Graduate School of Religion, 1966), 28, quoted in Cottrell, 38.

46. Merritt, "Institutional," 65.

The Kingdoms of This World: The Rise of the Political Pulpit

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Don Haymes, in his article on southern religious debating, makes the perceptive remark that the “energy once devoted to airing of doctrinal differences is now channeled into televised assaults against social and political targets.”¹ The Churches of Christ have clearly followed the social and cultural trends of the rest of the South on the preaching of political topics.

The Churches of Christ were mostly apolitical and pacifist until World War I.² David Lipscomb had argued that Christians were citizens of a different kingdom and should have nothing to do with any worldly institutions, especially political and moral institutions. He thought that it was wrong for Christians to vote, even on moral questions. Lipscomb cared nothing for prohibition or any other moral issue as a part of politics. The business of Christians was to spread the kingdom of God, which would eventually

overthrow all political kingdoms. The hope of believers was in the other world, the heavenly kingdom. As a result, Christians also could not participate in war.³

After 1900, however, the entire South began to endorse efforts at moral legislation. Increasingly, Southerners began to see America as a Christian nation and to believe that issues of liquor consumption and the teaching of evolution were important, both spiritually and politically.⁴ The increasing affluence in the Churches of Christ also began to dictate a change in preachers' interest in political issues. The preachers of the Churches of Christ became more aware and concerned about the surrounding society, a factor which contributed to the emergence of the political pulpit.

Throughout the history of the Churches of Christ, leaders and preachers have spoken and written about theological topics in order to define acceptable positions. But because of the debating tradition and the practice of congregational autonomy in Churches of Christ, individual preachers have been able to rise in popularity if they could convince most in the churches to agree with them (they have also fallen if they were not able to convince them). Convincing them, however, has often been tricky and treacherous business, for many who have wanted popularity and power have found themselves on the unpopular side of controversies. Most preachers have called these theological topics "issues." They discuss political questions as theological "issues" that have to be settled among the churches. This style became one more way for some preachers to build popularity among the Churches of Christ.

G. C. Brewer was clearly the key person to introduce the political pulpit. He studied under David Lipscomb at Nashville Bible School (now David Lipscomb University) and took the pacifist position, agreeing with Lipscomb that

a Christian should not vote. During World War I, he tried unsuccessfully to prevent his brother, a conscientious objector, from being inducted into the military.⁵ But Brewer underwent a transformation in his beliefs and practices; and while he claimed never to have completely shed his old beliefs, neither did they ever fit very well into the political preaching he helped to pioneer.

The “red scare” of 1919 and 1920 transformed many conservative Protestant Christians into fundamentalists. They became concerned about the threats of Russian Bolshevism and Darwinian evolution to American civilization. The future of Christianity was seen as being involved deeply with the fate of America.⁶ During this same period, G. C. Brewer became concerned about the fate of American society and began to turn his attention to socialism and Darwinianism, which he thought was rampant in American universities. While studying at the University of Texas, he became alarmed at a professor who was “lauding Russia to the sky” after the Bolshevik revolution. Brewer even “went to the governor” of Texas about it.⁷ In a speech at Abilene Christian College in 1920, Brewer stated that “the only way we could save civilization [would be] to destroy our present system of education [and] overthrow our universities.”⁸ But the lukewarm reception of his speech by ACC’s faculty caused Brewer to keep his focus on local church ministry until 1925, when the evolution issue was heating up across the country, especially in the South.

The famous Scopes Trial took place in Tennessee in the summer of 1925, after anti-evolution legislation was passed with the help of individual members and congregations of the Churches of Christ.⁹ After William Jennings Bryan died at the end of the Scopes trial, Brewer attempted to replace Bryan among the fundamentalists and

advertised himself as the “Bryan of the Southwest.”¹⁰

By September 1925, Brewer had begun traveling around the United States, giving, according to a letter by T. B. Larimore, “his famous lecture on Evolution versus Christianity.”¹¹ Stephen Eckstein reported in early 1926 that Brewer had preached his lecture on evolution at the Sherman, Texas, church building to an overcapacity crowd. Brewer, according to Eckstein, fearlessly defended the Bible from “the claims of Evolution,” which were “trying to defeat our spiritual structure.”¹² Patterning his efforts after the Hardeman Tabernacle meetings (see previous chapter), Brewer continued his efforts against evolution, lecturing in 1927 in Texas, Tennessee, and Michigan, and drawing large crowds.¹³

He started in Lubbock, Texas, where 4,000 people attended his anti-evolution lecture. From Lubbock he went to Fort Worth, Texas, where he held a meeting at J. Frank Norris’ First Baptist Church.¹⁴ Norris, a leader among the fundamentalists of the Southern Baptists, supported the meeting over his radio station and allowed Brewer to preach at his church building. He complimented Brewer as “the leading factor in fundamentalist doctrine in America today.”¹⁵ After preaching in Fort Worth, Brewer went to Lebanon, Tennessee, where he invited the “leading educators and scientists” in Tennessee to hear him speak about evolution. Over 1,500 people from Kentucky, Alabama, and Tennessee came to hear him.¹⁶

Brewer then went to Michigan, where he delivered his lecture on evolution at Pontiac. Dr. William S. Savage, a leading Baptist fundamentalist, gave publicity to Brewer’s speech over his radio program. The congregations in Windsor, Canada, and in Detroit and Pontiac, Michigan, decided to cooperate in sponsoring Brewer at a bigger presentation in Detroit. With the help of “influential

brethren and businessmen” of Detroit, they secured one of the largest auditoriums in Detroit. Around 3,000 people, one of the largest audiences ever to hear a preacher from the Churches of Christ in Detroit, attended.¹⁷

Several local congregations of the Churches of Christ in Detroit appealed to the church all across the country for the “Church of Christ” to put Brewer forward as a man to fight for all fundamentalists against evolution. They thought Brewer could “gain the confidence of all the fundamentalists if he were pushed forward as he should be.”¹⁸ Brewer did debate several leading modernists and atheists during the 1920s.¹⁹ However, evolution and other fundamentalist issues began to lose steam after the 1920s, and Brewer had to find some other issue on which to build the political pulpit.

In the 1930s, Brewer first attempted to revive an old issue: prohibition. The *Firm Foundation* published some of his prohibition articles after the *Gospel Advocate* refused to do so. He wanted the brethren of Texas to “fight the devil” and to “vote now and vote right” to keep Texas from falling victim to the “ballyhoo” of the alcohol brewers.²⁰ However, this issue also was declining in significance, and Brewer continued his search for an issue.

Finally, while preaching in Southern California from 1934 to 1936, he found it. The United States was in the throes of the Great Depression while at the same time (mostly due to effective propaganda) Stalin’s “five-year plans” appeared to be bringing prosperity to the Soviet Union. American intellectuals and many in the labor unions became attracted to communism, and membership in the Communist Party reached one million. Brewer, while he preached for the Central congregation in Los Angeles, may have encountered church members who were members of the Communist Party. Some dust bowl migrants from

Oklahoma and Texas were members of a California labor union that had ties to the Communist Party.²¹ When Brewer saw the activities of the Communist Party in California, he knew he had found his platform. He began a fight against communism before anyone else in the Churches of Christ recognized this ideology as a threat.

In 1936 at the Central Church of Christ in Los Angeles, he debated Dr. J. C. Coleman, the executive secretary of the Friends of Soviet Russia. Brewer, in an interview near the end of his life, described the scene at the debate:

The audience filled up [the building] made up of Communists and our brethren... and the Communists would raise their red flag and shake it right there out in the audience as I was speaking. If I made mention of "Old Glory"—I had "Old Glory" hung up behind me right there—they'd swear and jeer. When you mentioned the American flag [they] raised the red flag and shook it. Old Jimmy Lovell... had gotten himself deputized to be an officer. He had a big 45 strapped under his coat and... [Lovell told Brewer], "I was sitting right behind you. I was looking at everybody in the eye out in that audience."²²

Brewer wrote a series of articles for the *Gospel Advocate*, which it published as a pamphlet entitled *Communism and Its Four Horsemen: Atheism, Immorality, Class Hatred, Pacifism*. Despite claiming that Christians were "peacemakers" and that their weapons were not carnal, he condemned the communists as political pacifists. He condemned college students who were pacifists and who took "the Kirby Page pledge against war, which binds them not to participate in any war or to support war even in a moral or financial way."²³ Brewer was alarmed that this pledge included a "war of defense when our country and our homes are invaded."²⁴ Support of this philosophy meant

that the communists would be able to overthrow the American government.²⁵

Brewer began to be in demand to speak before the American Legion and other patriotic groups. Sometimes his anti-communist speech was titled "No -ism but Americanism." In 1936 in a speech in Nashville before the American Legion, Brewer said he was "ready to give the last drop of blood in my veins" to defend America against Communism: "I for one, will fight, and I know every red-blooded American citizen will do likewise."²⁶ Foy Wallace Jr. criticized Brewer: "Did Jesus Christ die for 'Americanism' on the cross of Calvary? What about Christians in other nations what should they shed every drop of their blood for... Such blustering from a gospel preacher... ought to make every Christian who reads it blush with shame."²⁷ F. B. Srygley was astounded at Brewer's political preaching and added that the hope for the world was "in the gospel of Christ and not how much blood Brother Brewer is willing to spill."²⁸ Brewer claimed that his speech was inaccurately reported, but many recall the times that Brewer preached on political issues when he spoke at churches.

In 1952 Brewer founded and edited *Voice of Freedom*, a journal devoted to exposing the threats of communism and Catholicism. B. C. Goodpasture, editor of the *Gospel Advocate*, was the president, and Batsell Barrett Baxter served as the secretary of Freedom Press, the non-profit organization that sponsored the *Voice of Freedom*. As the editor, Brewer said that Christians "as the light of the world should work for political and social reform in the world, not of a few pious individuals in the *world!*" He also appealed to the example of Jesus in claiming that Christ effected social and political change by sending Rome to destroy Jerusalem—by war.²⁹

Assimilating the traditional conscientious objector's position of Lipscomb with his own "militant anti-communism greatly troubled Brewer."³⁰ Most of those who followed Brewer in political preaching, however, readily shed the inconsistency by jettisoning Lipscomb's pacifist position. George Benson, who succeeded the pacifist J. N. Armstrong as president of Harding College, founded the National Education Program, which promoted free enterprise and "Americanism."³¹ James Bales, professor of Bible at Harding, changed from an ardent pacifist in World War II to an outspoken anti-communist and pro-American speaker and writer. Benson and Bales, friends and admirers of Brewer, preached on these themes in churches and at lectureships.³²

Soon other preachers began to pick up on the same themes. George Bailey, a well-known Texas preacher, delivered the sermon "Will God Always Bless America?" on hundreds of occasions.³³ Wayne Poucher, another Texas preacher, spoke frequently against the communist threat.³⁴ Eventually, Poucher became a speaker on "Life Line," a nationwide radio program sponsored by the archconservative Dallas businessman H. L. Hunt. The program, according to Poucher, emphasized "the fundamental principles of Christianity and the fundamental principles of Americanism."³⁵ George DeHoff, a Tennessee preacher and publisher of Brewer's autobiography, also developed a reputation for speaking about Americanism and anti-communism.³⁶

Many other preachers followed Brewer in developing a "God and country" preaching tradition. Only in America, it was supposed, could true Christianity flourish, and only in a free-market economy, not in a Communist system, could Christianity survive. The political preaching tradition equated concern for America with church concerns. The

political preachers sought and found respectability for their local congregations and the church as a whole. The debaters had focused their combative energies on defending the kingdom of God, while this new tradition of preaching focused on the kingdoms of this world.

Notes

1. Don Haymes, "Debates, Interdenominational," in *Encyclopedia of Religion in the South*, ed. Samuel S. Hill, Jr. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 196.

2. For the change see Michael Casey, "From Pacifism to Patriotism: The Emergence of Civil Religion in the Churches of Christ during World War I," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 66 (July 1992): 376-90.

3. David Lipscomb, *Civil Government: Its Origins, Mission, and Destiny* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1889).

4. R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 155.

5. Norman Parks, "G. C. Brewer, Controversialist," *Discipliana* 44 (Winter 1984): 56; and G. C. Brewer, *A Story of Toil and Tears, of Love and Laughter: Being the Autobiography of G. C. Brewer, 1884-1956* (Murfreesboro, TN: DeHoff Publications, 1957), 60-63.

6. George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 153-64.

7. G. C. Brewer. Interview by Warren Jones, 22 March 1956, audiotape copy in possession of author.

8. G. C. Brewer, "What the Colleges Are Doing for Religion," *Gospel Advocate* (14 July 1932): 794.

9. Michael Casey, "Fundamentalism and the Churches of Christ," in *Encyclopedia of the Fundamentalist Modernist Controversy*, ed. James Lewis (Simon and Schuster, forthcoming).

10. Warren Jones, "G. C. Brewer: Debater, Lecturer, and Preacher" (Ph.D. diss., Wayne State University, 1958), 153, 155.

11. Jones, "Brewer," 148.

12. Stephen Eckstein, "News and Notes," *Word and Work* (February 1926): 39.
13. Warren Jones transcribed notices and ads about Brewer's trip from Brewer's personal scrapbook. I have pieced together the trip from these sources. See Jones, "Brewer," 149-60.
14. Jones, "Brewer," 109, 150, 152.
15. *Ibid.*, 150.
16. *Ibid.*, 150, 157.
17. *Ibid.* See also W. S. Long, "G. C. Brewer's Lecture in Detroit," *Gospel Advocate* (5 January 1928): 22.
18. Claud F. Witty, John T. Smith, W. S. Long, Claude B. Thomas, C. B. Clifton, E. G. Rockliff, "Here and There," *The Way of Truth* 4 (January 1928): 35.
19. Jones, "Brewer," 160.
20. Ron Halbrook, "G. C. Brewer: Perennial Protagonist," in *They Being Dead Yet Speak: Florida College Annual Lectures, 1981* (Temple Terrace, FL: Florida College Bookstore, 1981), 205.
21. James N. Gregory, *American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 150-64.
22. Brewer interview. See also James L. Lovell, "Brewer Coleman Debate," *Gospel Advocate* (12 March 1936): 262.
23. G. C. Brewer, *Communism and Its Four Horsemen: Atheism, Immorality, Class Hatred, Pacifism* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co, [1936]), 37-38.
24. *Ibid.*, 38.
25. *Ibid.*, 39.
26. F. B. Srygley, "G. C. Brewer's Lecture," *Gospel Advocate* (26 November 1936): 1133, 1141.
27. Foy E. Wallace, Jr., "Doctor G. C. Brewer, LL.D., and Harding College," *Bible Banner* 2 (April 1940): 3.
28. Srygley, "Brewer," 1141.
29. Halbrook, "Brewer," 206.
30. *Ibid.*
31. The U.S. military used N.E.P. anti-communist films in

the 1950s and early 1960s. See L. Edward Hicks, "*Sometimes in the Wrong but Never in Doubt*": *George Benson and the Education of the New Religious Right* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994).

32. George Benson, "Christ and the Problem of Human Progress and Welfare in the Present Day World," *Harding College Lectures* 1951 (Searcy, AR: Harding College Press, 1952), 136-49; and James D. Bales, "Communism Confronts Christianity," *Lubbock Christian College Lectures* 1962 (Lubbock, TX: Lubbock Christian College, 1962), 77-91.

33. George W. Bailey, "Will God Always Bless America?" *Abilene Christian College Lectures* 1963 (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian College Student Exchange, 1963), 156-73.

34. For example, see Wayne Poucher, *The Wondrous Story* (Carthage, TX: Ark-La-Tex Publishers, 1964), 20-21.

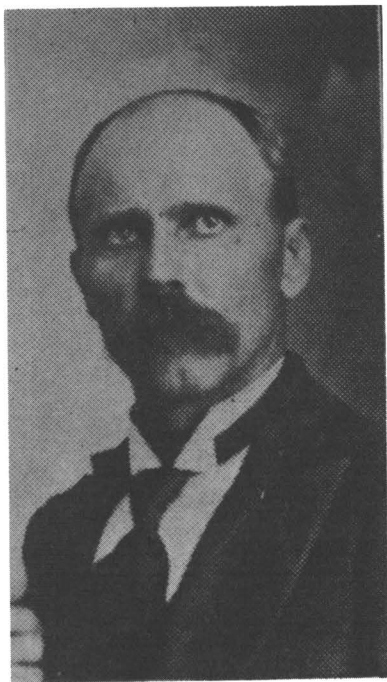
35. M. Norvel Young and Batsell Barrett Baxter, *Preachers of Today*, vol. 2 (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1959), 351.

36. See his sermons "What Made America Great" and "The Christian and the Government," in George W. DeHoff, "*I See My Time Is Up*:" *DeHoff Autobiography* (Murfreesboro, TN: DeHoff Publications, 1989), 446-55, 490-92. See also Barry Cole Poyner, "The Secular Speaking of Evangelist George W. DeHoff" (M.A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 1986).

Photographs



T.B. Larimore, 1902. —*Courtesy of Abilene Christian University.*



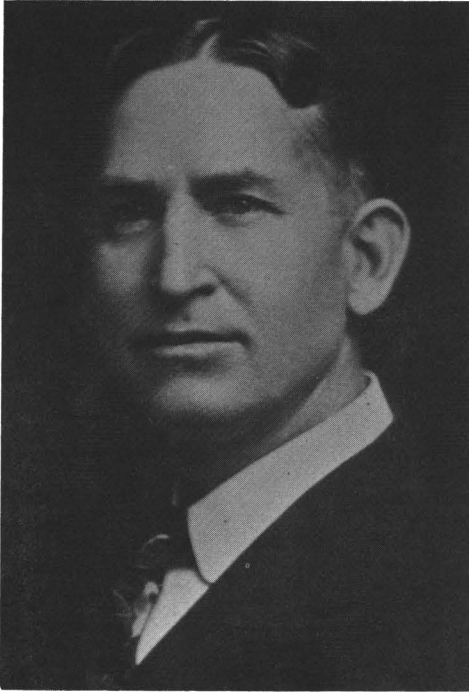
J.D. Tant, 1903.

—*Courtesy of Pepperdine University.*



G.P. Bowser and wife Fannie Rebecca.

—*Courtesy of Vernon Boyd.*



N.B. Hardeman, 1923.
—*Courtesy of Boswell-Hardeman
debate.*



N.B. Hardeman's 85th Birthday, 1959, Peabody Hotel, Memphis, Tennessee.
L to R seated: Mrs. Lyndon Johnson, Mrs. N.B. Hardeman, N.B. Hardeman.
L to R standing: Dorsey Hardeman, J.M. Powell, Tenn. Governor Buford Ellington, Memphis Mayor Orvell, B.C. Goodpasture, Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, Senator Albert Gore, Sr.
—*Courtesy of J.M. Powell.*



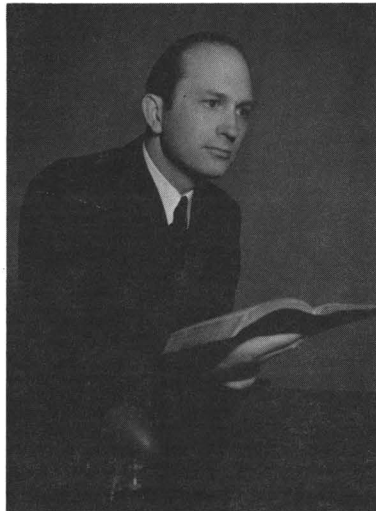
G.C. Brewer, 1928.
—*Courtesy of Elizabeth Brewer Mason.*



R.N. Hogan (left) tent meeting Los Angeles, California, late 1930s with Fred C. Lee (right), minister of Compton Avenue Church of Christ.
—*Courtesy of Jerry Rushford.*



K.C. Moser, 1940s.
—*Courtesy of Fran Moser Winkles.*



J.P. Sanders, 1941 Pepperdine yearbook photo.
—*Courtesy of Jerry Rushford.*



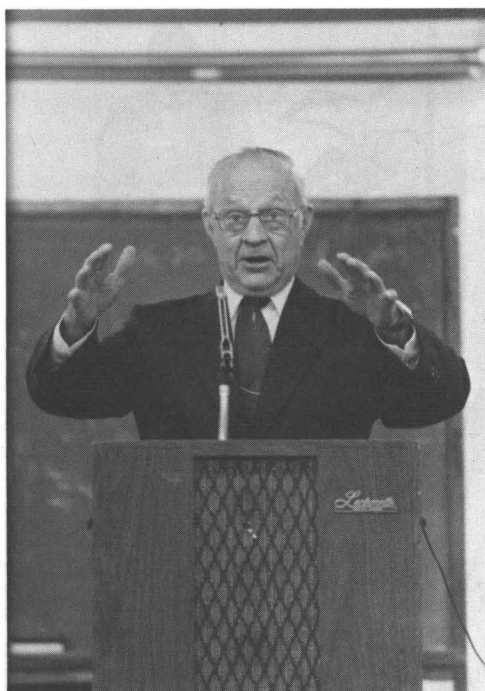
Marshall Keeble.
—*Courtesy of Abilene Christian University.*



Frank Pack, 1960s.
—*Courtesy of Abilene Christian University.*



Jimmy Allen, 1960s.
—*Courtesy of Abilene Christian University.*

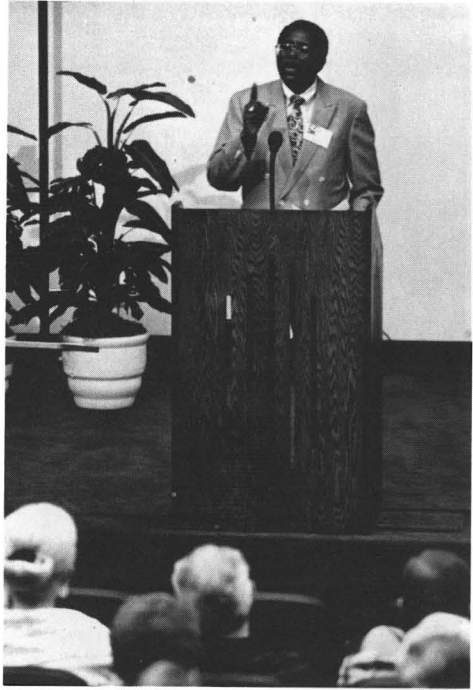


LeMoine Lewis, 1980s.
—*Courtesy of Abilene Christian University.*



Batsell Barrett Baxter. —*Courtesy of Gospel Advocate.*

Fred Gray speaking at Pepperdine University, 1995. —*Courtesy of Pepperdine University.*



Lynn Anderson.
—*Courtesy of Lynn Anderson.*

The “Soft” Gospel: The Impact of Speech Training

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In the mid-1980s I had a conversation with a friend who was teaching at Freed-Hardeman College. When the conversation drifted to preaching, he remarked that at one time he could tell if a preacher was a David Lipscomb College graduate because Lipscomb alumni would usually tell several stories or anecdotes in their sermons in contrast to most preachers in the church, who would usually state propositions and prove them by quoting scripture. He attributed this “Lipscomb factor” to Batsell Barrett Baxter. However, by the 1980s he could no longer identify Lipscomb graduates because most preaching in the church was anecdotal. At that point I realized that the speech training of a large number of our preachers under homiletics teachers trained in the neo-Aristotelian method of rhetorical criticism has had a profound influence on preaching in the Churches of Christ.

Before I explain this, I need to define two contrasting approaches to preaching in the Churches of Christ. Samuel Hill, professor of religion at the University of Florida, has a useful taxonomy of southern religion. He maintains southern religion falls into four categories: truth-oriented, conversion-oriented, spiritually-oriented, and ethics-oriented. The first three are important for the Churches of Christ. The traditional approach of the Churches of Christ, grounded in the frontier and rural contexts, fits best into Hill's truth-oriented category. This type views Christianity as the divinely revealed truth of Scripture, a truth which is rationalistic and is revealed as a series of laws, propositions or facts that must be given assent. This type of southern religion will not be open to dialogue, will be "tough," and prefers to be didactic. It will "build true, pure—'correct'—Christianity" and expose, attack, undermine, or debate "false teachings and corrupt churches and opinions."¹ We have already explored this aspect in a previous chapter with the discussion of the debating tradition.

The conversion-oriented and spiritually-oriented categories typify some of the new directions of preaching in the Churches of Christ today. Conversion-oriented southern religion places the emphasis on personal salvation; thus evangelism is at center stage. The focus of preaching is to make "individuals aware of their eternally lost condition before God" and to acquaint them with the forgiveness of sins available through accepting Christ as their Savior. The "new birth" and conversion to Christ are the center of the preaching. Hill notes that this type is less sectarian than the truth-oriented group and will cooperate with others who have similar goals. Southern Baptists are the best example of this category.²

Hill's third type, the spiritually-oriented, is the least radical and sectarian. People of this type are "expressive"

and “soft.” Their focus is on devotion to Christ and “living by the Lord’s intimate and constant presence.” The distance between God and people narrows greatly. The pious will have their hearts filled with sweet peace and joy. God “empowers [the individual] through prayer to overcome temptation, to live in communion with his Spirit, and to know his guidance through every event and decision of life.” The focus of this preaching is on the experience of knowing Jesus and his joy. Piety and devotion characterize the personal relationship of the believer to God. The spiritually-oriented tend to be more person-centered, more open to dialogue, and less didactic than the truth-oriented type.³

Increasingly since the late 1960s, preachers in the Churches of Christ have been an amalgamation of the conversion-oriented and spiritually-oriented types. Some of the more aggressive churches and preachers, enamored of church growth, evangelism, and quantities of baptisms, typify the conversion orientation. The more passive churches tend to emphasize family values, positive thinking, big budgets, spiritual values, and trendy worship styles and are more spiritually-oriented. Many congregations mix both approaches, but what is important is that both center more on the “person” than “truth”; therefore, the preaching focuses more on the audience’s response than on simply stating correct propositions with little or no thought about how the audience will react.

Until Edwin Black’s *Rhetorical Criticism*, published in 1965, neo-Aristotelian criticism was the dominant method of rhetorical criticism in the field of speech communication; and for twenty-five years after Wichelns’s 1925 essay, “The Literary Criticism of Oratory,” it was practically the only method available to rhetorical critics.⁴ Wichelns’s call was to evaluate a speech by its immediate effects upon the audience. The “point of view” of rhetorical

criticism was "patently single" according to Wichelns:

It is not concerned with permanence, nor yet with beauty. It regards a speech as a communication to a single audience and holds its business to be the analysis and appreciation of the orator's method of impacting his ideas to his hearers.⁵

In 1948 in *Speech Criticism*, the standard work of neo-Aristotelian criticism, Thonessen and Baird continued the emphasis on analyzing the immediate effects of a speech upon its audience. Under these standards of criticism, the speech that was best adapted to its particular audience would be evaluated as successful.⁶

This approach obviously privileged certain aspects of rhetorical theory and neglected others. As college students gave speeches in their public speaking classes, they learned certain ways of speaking which neo-Aristotelian standards emphasized. According to these standards, the rhetoric focuses on the audience and immediate effects. Therefore, the best rhetoric in a sermon focuses on the techniques of the sermon that best adapt the message to people who listen. The message is ever adaptable, and the audience acts as the final judge on the sermon. In contrast, the emphasis of rationalistic, truth-oriented preaching is on the content of the sermon and its permanency. Truth is truth, it is supposed, and since reasonable people will automatically accept truth whenever they clearly perceive it, the perspective of the audience does not matter. The same sermon can be preached over and over again to several different audiences, even to the same audience.

I can vividly recall in my undergraduate preaching class at Abilene Christian University a debate between my neo-Aristotelian professor and some truth-oriented

students. The students thought that adapting the sermon to the needs and perspectives of the audience was “compromising the gospel,” while the professor was concerned about “making the truth more understandable” to a variety of audiences. It is doubtful that any significant difference in opinion existed between the neo-Aristotelian teacher and his non-Aristotelian students as to the nature of truth and theology. However, the rhetorical assumptions of the two groups were radically different propositions. One was hearer-centered and the other message-centered. The dominant view of rhetoric in the early years of the speech discipline held that rhetoric made the truth effective.

The beginnings of hearer-centered preaching were subtle, and it is likely that speech scholars in the Churches of Christ did not envision the ultimate rhetorical impact of such views. Holding that truth should be adaptable to circumstances, especially the views, prejudices, and perspectives of an audience, leads to a very different type of sermon from a rational one that can be preached “anywhere to any audience.”

A casual glance at Pepperdine communication professor Dwayne Van Rheenen’s bibliography of communication scholarship about the Restoration Movement shows the overwhelming presence of neo-Aristotelian studies.⁷ A quick survey of people who have taught speech and preaching classes at Church of Christ colleges indicates that the neo-Aristotelian scholars dominated until recently (Batsell Barrett Baxter and Carroll Ellis at Lipscomb; Evan Ulrey at Harding; Tom Holland at Freed-Hardeman and Lipscomb; Stafford North and Ron Bever at Oklahoma Christian College; Ed Enzor and Fred Barton at Abilene Christian; Warren Jones and Morris Womack at Pepperdine). Several leading preachers and professors also received neo-Aristotelian training in

the 1950s and 1960s: Bill Banowsky, Ira North, Tom Olbricht, and Prentice Meador. Of all the neo-Aristotelian preachers and professors, the most important was Batsell Barrett Baxter, who excelled at both teaching and preaching.

Baxter was born 23 September 1916, in Cordell, Oklahoma, and had a lifelong association with Christian education. His father, Batsell Baxter, was involved in teaching or administration at various colleges all of Batsell Barrett Baxter's life. Baxter attended Abilene Christian College, where he was the debate partner of LeMoine Lewis (see the following chapter on the scholarly tradition). After graduating in 1937, he earned an M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Southern California, becoming the first member of the Church of Christ to receive a doctorate in speech. For most of his career he taught at David Lipscomb College. In addition to his teaching, Baxter was a preacher at the Hillsboro Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee, the key speaker on the *Herald of Truth* radio and television programs, and the author of several sermon books and one textbook on religious speaking.⁸ Baxter was clearly one of the most influential persons in the Churches of Christ during his lifetime.⁹

Baxter influenced the very first neo-Aristotelian book on homiletics in the Churches of Christ, *Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (1945). In the book, Baxter's good friend J. P. Sanders wrote an essay that introduced neo-Aristotelian approaches to preaching. In it he gave many stock pieces of advice, easily found in most traditional public-speaking textbooks of the time: the introduction should be interesting; the organization should be logical and coherent; the conclusion should have an effective, emotional appeal to action; the illustrations should be well chosen; and the delivery should be conversational and

extemporaneous.¹⁰ But Sanders was cautious in his advice on illustrating the sermon: He believed illustrations should not be used for their own sakes, since the purpose of preaching was not to entertain, “but to inform, clarify and to interest.” However, “well-chosen illustrations, properly spaced or scattered throughout the sermon, will help to retain attention all the way through.”¹¹

Sanders’ conclusion about the effectiveness of a sermon has a clear, neo-Aristotelian ring to it: “What changes are taking place in the lives of those who are listening to the preaching? Whatever these changes are, they show the effectiveness of the preaching.” Additionally, Sanders said the “salvation of people... indicate[s] that the test or measure of the sermon is not found in the sermon itself, but in those persons who have listened to its delivery. If no change has taken place, no effective preaching has been done.”¹² That final standard was neo-Aristotelian: the immediate effects of the sermon on the audience. While Sanders was cautious, his essay indicates that a subtle but real shift had taken place: The evaluation of the sermon was not solely based on the truth of the sermon, but also on the impact it had on the audience. Sermons were moving from being “truth-centered” to being “person-centered.”

Baxter provided a bibliography on preaching for *Preaching in the Twentieth Century*, one of the first indications that he was beginning to emerge as an important figure in preaching in the Churches of Christ. During the 1950s, as Baxter rose in prominence as a preacher and college teacher, he wrote *Speaking for the Master* (1954).¹³ The book has a significant characteristic: It is thoroughly grounded in neo-Aristotelian methods and reveals some of the preaching philosophy that dominated David Lipscomb College and spread to the other Christian colleges.

The book covers the entire speaking process, but I want to focus on three significant characteristics of this neo-Aristotelian approach: the focus on the audience as center, the use of illustrations, and the conversational style. Baxter, in advising his students, probably had a profound influence on the prevalent "cool," evangelical, conversational style of preachers. He had this to say about the optimal style of sermon delivery:

In our age the simple, direct, conversational style is best. Say what you have to say in animated, enthusiastic fashion, and as simply and directly as you can. A speaker who likes people and lets them know it will be liked in return.¹⁴

Baxter was the master of this relaxed style, which played so well on television.¹⁵ His content fit this genial style of delivery. John Barton, in his study of *Herald of Truth* radio sermons, noted that, in contrast to the earlier speakers, "Baxter's style was marked by absence of controversy" and that his disagreements with others "were implied rather than bluntly stated."¹⁶ His habit was to ascribe "the best possible motives to those with whom he disagreed."¹⁷

Baxter counseled the prospective speakers that they must construct the speech with a goal in mind. It could not be just any goal; it must be focused "on the response they wish to win from the audience." The "success of the speech, then, is measured in terms of the degree to which the goal is achieved. The only valid criterion by which to measure is, 'Did the speaker do what he set out to do?'"¹⁸ Persuasion was the highest type of speaking, according to Baxter, and he offered advice on persuasion in preaching. The preacher had to understand human motives and desires. After listing some of these from standard public-speaking texts of the day, he added:

To achieve a high degree of effectiveness in persuading hearers, one must learn to appeal in terms of these basic motives or desires, most of which yield themselves either directly or indirectly to the high purposes of the religious speaker, though some of these are less suited than others.¹⁹

Baxter never identified which motives were less suitable, but it is striking that he assumed that one can adapt message content or truth to audience motives.

The key technique of making the truth effective or adapting it to audience motives was the use of illustrations or stories. Baxter followed this prescription:

Christ used parables extensively to convey most profound truths. The story of the Good Samaritan, the story of the Prodigal Son, and the Parable of the Sower have made deep impressions on countless... people. They are clear, powerful, and easily remembered. Illustrations serve as windows to let light into speeches. In addition, they are in such form as to create a mental picture that is concrete and specific. The four chief reasons for the use of illustrations are:

1. They make the speaker's meaning clear.
2. They help the listeners remember.
3. They exert a force of proof or persuasion.
4. They awaken and sustain interest.²⁰

Baxter and most speech teachers in the 1950s still viewed public speaking as a rationalistic enterprise. The speaker selected a thesis that would be developed by three or four points or propositions. This view of speaking, developed in the Enlightenment, saw stories or narratives as simply the means to shed light on otherwise difficult points or propositions. Baxter quoted Matthew Simpson in

Heart of the Yale Lectures: "Every sermon should have illustrations. They are like pictures to the eye that rivet attention, and help to fasten the truth in memory."²¹ The stories were one way to adapt truth to an audience.

Baxter, in his own preaching, used stories in a style he called "life-situation preaching." In *Heart of the Yale Lectures*, he cited Ralph Sockman, who developed the term:

When we start with life situations we start where men live, then lead the questioning soul to the doctrinal and Biblical sources. Instead of the traditional expository type of preaching which spends the first paragraphs explaining the Hebrew and Greek roots while listeners' minds rove over greener pastures, the sermon will arrest the attention of the hearer with a real issue and then direct the quest to the ever satisfying Scriptures.²²

Baxter followed this form most of the time in his preaching. He usually had a story or illustration to begin a sermon or a new idea in the body of the sermon. These included stories from current events, everyday life, and the Bible. After the story he would develop a biblical or doctrinal proposition.²³ Baxter summed up his overall philosophy for success in preaching: "It is simply learning *to preach to the needs of the people*... When one learns *to preach to the needs of the people* he never wants for next Sunday's sermon, for people always have needs."²⁴

Later critics of neo-Aristotelianism in the communication field point out its necessarily conservative function. If effective rhetoric merely adapts and reflects what audiences believe, very little change will take place, and the rhetor who tries to move audiences beyond what they already believe will be judged as poor. In other words, a prophetic voice will not be judged favorably by the neo-Aristotelian. Also, with the final standards residing in the audience's response, speakers who take popular stances will

be judged as successful, while speakers who champion unpopular causes will be judged negatively. The neo-Aristotelian may be accused of making political judgments and neglecting the worth of the ideas of the unpopular speaker. Many preachers in the church, trained in neo-Aristotelian methods, made political decisions about different ideas and movements in the church, supporting them when they were popular and then abandoning them when they came under attack. If a preacher becomes too audience-centered in his evaluation of ideas, his preaching and actions can become opportunistic. Neo-Aristotelian criticism gives priority to immediate effects and offers little guidance to long-range effects or other standards for criticism. A preacher operating with this evaluative method in his own rhetoric cannot adequately evaluate important issues or his own rhetoric with long-term or other consequences in mind.

Besides being susceptible to opportunism and blind to long-range consequences, preachers who adapted their sermons to their Church of Christ audiences reflected the changing social and economic status of the members of their congregations. The preaching in many places has speeded the change of the Churches of Christ from a sociological sect to a sociological denomination.²⁵

Again, because the neo-Aristotelian method says nothing about the correctness of the content (for preaching the theological grounding for the contents of the sermon), the Church of Christ preacher or teacher trained in traditional speech is largely unaware of the theological and sociological consequences of his preaching and the changing sociological circumstances of the Churches of Christ. The preacher and his church become sociologically trapped in their own rhetoric. They drift along and change without realizing why.

In their efforts to adapt to the audience, several preachers have assimilated the southern evangelical style of preaching, the most popular form of preaching in southern culture. A description of southern preaching can now accurately describe a significant portion of the preaching in the Churches of Christ. The emphasis in sermons is on evangelism, "warning recalcitrant men of their foredoomed situation, and sharing the joyous news that trust in Christ issues in heavenly reward." The preacher's moving presentation becomes paramount: "What he says is far less important than his effectiveness in saying it, for it is what the hearer can be prompted to do through hearing the message that overshadows all else."²⁶ Samuel Hill further describes the southern evangelical preacher:

In the case of many, their aim is to glamorize the Christian way. Adept in illustrating their messages with stories which make great appeal to the emotions—to humor and nostalgia, no less than to fear and pathos—many of them are first-rate entertainers, displaying remarkable skills in turning a phrase, in regaling an audience, in attacking evils adroitly, in manipulating emotions.²⁷

This "hot" gospel style fits Hill's "conversion-oriented" category of southern evangelicalism. In contrast to this "hot" gospel is a mellower, "cool" version that is more devotional and fits the "spiritually-oriented" style articulated by Hill. He describes the "cooler" preaching:

Here the message centers on Jesus of Nazareth, his kindly and transforming dealings with his contemporaries, and the exemplary quality of his relation to his Heavenly Father. Expounding upon the perfection of Jesus in his obedience to God's will in subdued and often moving manner, the preacher urges his hearers to imitate the Master in their personal relationships with God and their fellow men.²⁸

In this shift from the “truth-oriented” to “hot” and “cool” versions of evangelicalism, what is said is less important than how it is said. Motivating the audience becomes all-important. By using entertaining or emotional support material, the speaker holds the auditors’ attention and glamorizes Christianity. The “hard” gospel of the debaters-the “truth-oriented” approach-has changed into the “soft” gospel that is more person-centered. The neo-Aristotelian training of preachers and homiletics teachers with its emphasis on adapting the speech to the audience has been significant in precipitating this change.

Notes

1. Samuel S. Hill, “The Shape and Shapes of Popular Southern Piety,” in *Varieties of Southern Evangelicalism*, ed. David E. Harrell, Jr. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1981), 100.

2. *Ibid.*, 100-101.

3. *Ibid.*, 100-101.

4. Edwin Black, *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method* (New York: Macmillan, 1965; reprint, University of Wisconsin, 1978); and Herbert A. Wichelns, “The Literary Criticism of Oratory,” in *Studies in Honor of James Albert Winans* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962).

5. Wichelns, 209.

6. Lester Thonessen and A. Craig Baird, *Speech Criticism* (New York: Ronald A. Press, Co., 1948), 449, 460.

7. Dwayne Van Rheenen, “Bibliography of Research on Religious Communication in the American Restoration Tradition,” unpublished bibliography, 1982. See also Van Rheenen, “Communication in the Restoration Tradition: Current Research and a Selected Bibliography,” *Mission* (May 1987): 17-19.

8. Macmillan published Baxter’s doctoral dissertation as *The Heart of the Yale Lectures* in 1947.

9. Batsell Barrett Baxter and Norvel Young, eds., *Preachers of Today* (Nashville: Christian Press, 1952), 31; and Baxter, *Every Life a Plan of God: The Autobiography of Batsell Barrett Baxter* (Abilene: Zachary Associates, 1983), 53.

10. J. P. Sanders, "The Art of Preaching," in *Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Rosemead, CA: Old Paths Book Club, 1945), 35, 37, 39, 41, 47.
11. *Ibid.*, 43.
12. *Ibid.*, 64.
13. Batsell Barrett Baxter, *Speaking for the Master: A Study of Public Speaking for Christian Men* (New York: Macmillan, 1954).
14. *Ibid.*, 50.
15. A Gordon Conwell seminary professor made this remark to me in 1985. See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964).
16. John Barton, "The Preaching on *Herald of Truth* Radio, 1952-1969" (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1975), 163.
17. *Ibid.*, 164.
18. Baxter, *Speaking*, 56.
19. *Ibid.*, 113.
20. *Ibid.*, 117.
21. Baxter, *Heart of the Yale Lectures* (New York: Macmillian, 1947), 148.
22. *Ibid.*, 276-77.
23. John R. Butts, "A Rhetorical Study of the Preaching and Speaking of Batsell Barrett Baxter" (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 1970), 275-83; and Barton, 147.
24. Baxter, *Every*, 117-18. Italics in original.
25. A sect, according to this approach, is a religious group that stands in tension with the dominant values of society. A denomination is a religious group that embraces the values of the culture in which it lives. The sect battles society, while the denomination embraces it.
26. Samuel S. Hill, Jr., *Southern Churches in Crisis* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), 81.
27. *Ibid.*, 82. See also Hill, "Shape," 100.
28. Hill, *Southern*, 83; and Hill, "Shape," 100.

*Seeking
Enlightenment: The
Scholarly Tradition of
Preaching*

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When I was in junior high school in the 1960s, a new preacher came to my congregation in Kentucky. He brought with him a different style of preaching from that of the previous minister. Our previous minister had followed the pattern of the rational approach and occasionally of the debaters and represented some of the best preaching of those traditions. The new minister had been trained at Abilene Christian College and started to preach sermons on themes from entire books of the Bible rather than topical sermons that explored scripture from a variety of books in one sermon. One series on Hosea was very memorable; I had never heard the story of Hosea and Gomer and their stormy relationship or of the fact that that story stood for the on-again, off-again relationship of God and Israel. I

learned the truth that God always sought to reconcile himself with his unfaithful people, and I began to get a glimpse of the extent of God's love and grace for the church and each Christian.

A few years later I had my first college course in Bible with LeMoine Lewis of Abilene Christian College, who had been a major influence on this preacher of my junior high years. Brother Lewis had all of us read a gospel through in one sitting before discussing it with the class. It was a new way of studying Scripture. I had grown up with the *Gospel Advocate* lesson series, which we used to study whole books of the Bible, but the focus was usually on individual verses and topical parallels in other books. With Brother Lewis we focused on the overall message and themes of each gospel. He showed us that each book of the Bible had its own context, theme, and audience. New, exciting vistas were opened for all of us.

As I continued to study under Brother Lewis and other Bible professors at Abilene Christian College, I began to learn about an entirely new way to approach preaching, a model or tradition of preaching practiced by many Bible professors at Abilene, Harding, David Lipscomb, and Pepperdine. This tradition emphasized focusing a sermon on one paragraph or a complete chapter of Scripture, rather than a single verse or series of verses from different biblical books. The preacher would exegete the text (tell what the paragraph meant to the original audience of the first-century church) and then draw parallels or analogies for the present-day audience. The professors emphasized the need for rigorous study of Greek and Hebrew as well as historical-critical methods that helped one understand the original meaning of the passage. This tradition, while under serious attack today, still has many supporters and is strongly advocated by most of the biblical scholars in our

colleges. The story of its rise and perspectives deserves attention.

The Church of Christ enjoyed the boom of prosperity after World War II. Church members flocked to colleges and began pursuing careers in prestigious professions: law, medicine, communication, education, business, and the sciences. Congregations in the urban areas of the United States swelled as people moved in from the rural areas. Both of my parents, college graduates just as World War II broke out, left their family farms and small towns, and sought teaching jobs in the city. They also left small, rural churches and began to attend larger, city churches (it was in a city church that I learned the Christian faith). As the education level of church members increased and urban churches grew, most church members and congregations wanted preachers who had a similar level of education. Most churches turned to the colleges to fill the need in the pulpit.

Before World War II, most of the church colleges were struggling institutions that were barely able to meet their payrolls or pay their bills. Most were not accredited, and most of the teachers had only a bachelor's degree (their formal education level was barely above that of the students in their classrooms). While a few had a master's degree, for any member of the church to have a doctoral degree was rare. The colleges needed faculty who had the highest degree in order to gain accreditation.

Historian David Edwin Harrell Jr. describes the changes at Abilene Christian College, a key place for the development of this tradition of preaching:

By 1950, ACC was a college on the make. As Dean Walter Adams put it, during the early fifties the school "grew from a Bible College to an emerging university." ACC began a major fund-raising campaign in 1946 aimed at

gaining accreditation... Guided by Dean Adams, ACC gained full accreditation from the Southern Association at its 1951 meeting in St. Petersburg. It had been a difficult struggle. The college had supported a number of faculty members with paid leaves to earn graduate degrees; in 1951 thirteen members of the faculty had earned doctorates. Each year new faculty members joined the Bible department with doctorates from major institutions.¹

Abilene Christian had the good fortune to hire two of the key men who would train future preachers in the scholarly tradition: Frank Pack, who had earned a Ph.D. in New Testament from the University of Southern California, and LeMoine Lewis, who eventually earned a Ph.D. from Harvard University. Lewis, Pack, and J. D. Thomas, who earned a Ph.D. in New Testament from the University of Chicago, were all hired to teach Bible at ACC in 1949. Many people contributed to the development of biblical scholarship and the scholarly tradition, but because of their central role I will focus the story on the contributions of Pack and Lewis to show the focus of this preaching tradition.²

Frank Pack was born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1916. As a teenager, Pack came under the influence of G. C. Brewer, who encouraged him to attend David Lipscomb College. While at Lipscomb, Pack had the good fortune to study Bible under Hall Laurie Calhoun, a former student of J. W. McGarvey at the College of the Bible. Calhoun had earned a Ph.D. in Old Testament at Harvard University under George Foote Moore, a leading Old Testament scholar,³ but had turned against training in modern Biblical studies and was fearful of the theological "liberalism" of higher criticism. Pack and the other Lipscomb students received no encouragement from Calhoun to pursue biblical scholarship. Calhoun was a relic of an earlier age, and time

had passed him by. He made no attempt to relate his academic training to the study of the Bible in his classes at Lipscomb, but simply repeated the content of the courses that he had taken under McGarvey in the nineteenth century. Only in retrospect did Pack realize the significance of studying under Calhoun.⁴

After earning an A.A. degree at Lipscomb in 1935, a B.A. (University of Chattanooga, 1937), and an M.A. in sociology (Vanderbilt, 1939), Pack, with the encouragement of Batsell Baxter, decided to pursue a Ph.D. in speech at the University of Southern California in 1945. But after one of his speech professors died of a heart attack, W. B. West Jr., a Bible professor at Pepperdine, persuaded Pack to shift to New Testament studies at USC. Pack explained: "Dr. West told me that I should not be afraid of what criticism might come about from my studying for an advanced degree in New Testament."⁵ Overcoming both the fear of "liberalism" and possible criticism from his brethren, Pack completed his Ph.D. in New Testament and had a successful career teaching Bible at ACC and Pepperdine and preaching in Texas and California. Abraham J. Malherbe, professor of New Testament at Yale Divinity School, who studied with Pack at ACC in the 1950s, recalls:

That was a transition period in both the church and Christian education, and Pack was important in that transition. College education had just become accepted as preparation for ministers, and Christian colleges were beginning to develop graduate programs in religion. As one of the very few teachers in Christian colleges who had earned a doctorate in religion, he became a role model for young preachers and students who saw in him the value of further education. His example was equally important to college administrators who had to be persuaded of the value of advanced programs and be

encouraged when they had to come to terms with a conservative constituency which was, on occasion, suspicious of the increasing emphasis on academic training... Frank Pack's personal qualities, in particular his extraordinary intellectual capacity and commitment to the church, and his very presence on the scene have made it easier for those who have followed him.⁶

Pack, along with LeMoine Lewis, introduced the methods of historical criticism and exegesis into preaching. Pack insisted that preaching be based on the text of scripture, regardless of the type of sermon preached. However, in opposition to the rational approach, he called for far more than simply bringing together all the individual verses about a particular topic. Pack began the sermon preparation process by "going first to the Bible" (a phrase which sounds familiar), but he laid out a rigorous intellectual and critical process.⁷

He insisted: "The preacher should be a good exegete of the Bible and should be acquainted with the exegetical controls that provide a proper exegesis of scripture." The exegetical controls were "textual, linguistic, grammatical and syntactical, the contextual, historical backgrounds and introductory problems" of the passage under consideration.⁸ The goal of this process was to discover "what the original text meant to those to whom it was addressed. I must be careful to listen to what the writer has said." In order to accomplish this task, the "preacher must not allow his prejudices to impose upon the biblical text a foreign element. He must clear his mind from preconceptions so that he may be able to hear what the Lord said through the writer."⁹

The preacher was to begin the process by exploring the Greek and Hebrew texts to see if there were any textual problems (variant readings present). He was also to consult the Greek or Hebrew lexicons "to study the meanings of

words” and compare a number of translations. After his own analysis of the text, then the preacher should read the commentaries and “specialized studies” of the text.¹⁰

Pack did not leave the preaching process with exegesis, but said that he “must relate this message to the congregation *in its present situation.*” While he did not explore how one does this, clearly Pack did not think that an exegesis of a passage constituted preaching. He, then, jumped too quickly to homiletical form: The speaker must think about ways to phrase the major ideas of the sermon so that they would be remembered. He must ask: “What illustrations do I need to enlighten my argument, and where do I need them?”¹¹ Illustrations were not simply from the Bible, although they were the “best”; they came “from one’s reading, his personal life, his conversations with others, from events of the day, from history.”¹² While the preacher was not to become a professional scholar and exegete of scripture, Pack advocated a rigorous intellectual approach that would bring enlightenment to both the preacher and his audience. Such an approach meant that one could not easily attain the standards of excellence implicit to it. Preachers would need a rigorous and difficult course of study. Higher education and theological training were essential.

Another scholar who made a great impact in the development of theological education in our movement was LeMoine Lewis. Born 9 February 1916, in Midlothian, Texas, Lewis, like so many of his generation, was raised on a farm by parents who struggled to make ends meet yet encouraged his education. He graduated as high school valedictorian and entered ACC in 1932. The college, as with all other Church of Christ schools, was not accredited and during the depression years struggled even to survive. Lewis vividly recalled the day in 1934 when the bell rang

out over campus as the Baptist John G. Hardin gave the money to ACC that saved the school from going under.¹³

In those hard times, Lewis knew that men and women in the church were going to have to pursue graduate education in all fields if the church schools were to survive. Deciding to pursue the best possible education, he approached his Bible professors about doing graduate work at Harvard. His professors were cool to the idea and made Lewis go preach for at least three years before they would write letters of recommendation for him. Lewis complied, shocking his professors when he came back asking for the letters. Reluctantly, they wrote them for him, and Dean Willard Sperry of Harvard Divinity School admitted Lewis.

Lewis completed his S.T.B. degree in 1944 and did the coursework for his Ph.D. in church history by 1949, completing the Ph.D. in 1956, all at Harvard. He, Pack, and J. D. Thomas took the lead in developing graduate work in Bible at ACC in the 1950s. Lewis' contribution was pivotal. According to one writer:

LeMoine Lewis surveyed the wreckage of human hopes and divine dreams that is the history of the Christian church, and saw his duty plain. He returned to his alma mater . . . as a man seized by a mission, and the fruits of his labor are visible on the faculties of several major American universities, as well as the Christian colleges... [I]t is his almost single-handed creation of a new *tradition* of scholarship that will remain his legacy.¹⁴

Dozens of Christian scholars and preachers owe their careers to Lewis's encouragement and teaching.

In 1964 Lewis set out his vision of education for preachers in "Training Young Men to Preach," a speech given at the ACC Bible lectures. The intellectual quest tied to the life of the congregation was at the heart of preaching,

according to Lewis:

The function that distinguishes the calling of the preacher from all other callings is the public proclamation of the Word. A man must earn the right to stand in the pulpit to expound the Word. He has no business in the pulpit unless his scholarship in the Word surpasses that of those who sit in the pew. The preacher's scholarship should command respect and inspire confidence. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic and the New Testament in Greek. Every week the preacher needs to wrestle with the originals to make sure that it is the Word of God that he proclaims. His is a double task: first, the scholarly search of the word to learn God's message; second, a deep understanding of the needs of the people, so that he may bring God's word to bear on their problems.¹⁵

Unlike many of Lewis's students who pursued degrees in New Testament and Old Testament, for Lewis the intellectual quest of preaching went far beyond exegesis. The preacher needed to know church history, philosophy, psychology, the sciences, literature, sociology, economics: "He must bring to his work a broad scholarship that will command respect and confidence as he opens the Word and applies it to modern problems."¹⁶

To realize this vision, the prospective preacher needed a broad liberal arts education, but that was "only a beginning." According to Lewis, "The distinctive thing about his education must be his professional training."¹⁷ This meant seminary training centered in the Bible, with courses in the introduction to the New Testament and Old Testament, the theology of the Old Testament and New Testament, language preparation in Hebrew and Greek, and "intensive exegetical courses" in order "to learn the scholarly method of studying a passage from the Bible."¹⁸ Additional areas of study included "two to three years" of

church history, including “a semester or two on the Restoration Movement, philosophy of religion, theology, psychology of religion, world religions, homiletics, worship, counseling and Christian education.”¹⁹

Hundreds of ministers and many Bible professors at various Christian colleges strongly support this tradition of preaching. While most of the Christian colleges have not put in place a faculty or curriculum with the breadth and depth advocated by LeMoine Lewis, most generally emphasize a rigorous process of exegesis as the basis for preaching. In a later chapter we will look at some of the weaknesses of this tradition, for its potential has never been fully realized in either the churches or the colleges.

Notes

1. David Edwin Harrell Jr., unpublished biography of Homer Hailey, ch. 2, “Texas Preacher and Professor,” 61-62.

2. W. B. West Jr., J. D. Thomas, and Jack Lewis also had major roles in training, encouraging and later hiring some of their students at Pepperdine, Harding, and Abilene. Anyone who does a comprehensive history of the development of biblical scholarship must analyze their indispensable contributions. For an assessment of J. D. Thomas, see Jim Mankin, “The Influence of J. D. Thomas on the Restoration Movement,” *Image* 11 (March/April 1995): 36-38.

3. On Calhoun’s life, see Don Haymes, “Hall Calhoun and His ‘Nashville Brethren,’ 1897-1935,” *Restoration Quarterly* 27 (1984): 37-48; and Adron Doran and J. E. Choate, *The Christian Scholar: A Biography of Hall Laurie Calhoun, Protégé of John William McGarvey* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1985).

4. Frank Pack, interview by author, 25 July 1982; and notes taken by Frank Pack in Hall Calhoun’s Bible class, copy in possession of the author. Pack graciously photocopied his Lipscomb class notes for me.

5. Elizabeth Whatley, “Frank Pack: Preacher, Scholar and Writer” (M.A. thesis, Pepperdine University, 1987), 14.

6. Whatley, 89.

7. Frank Pack, "One Man's Way of Working," in Frank Pack and Prentice Meador, *Preaching to Modern Man* (Abilene: Biblical Research Press, 1969), 110.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 111.

10. Ibid., 112. Obviously Pack is giving only a very simplistic overview of the exegetical process that he followed and advocated.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., 113.

13. Unfortunately no master's thesis or biography of LeMoine Lewis exists. What follows is mostly from the author's own memories of Professor Lewis's class lectures and private conversations. For another worthwhile assessment of Lewis, see Shaun Casey, "Living the Legacy," *Integrity* 18 (July/August 1988): 55-56.

14. Don Haymes, "The Silence of the Scholars," *Mission* 8 (September 1974): 9.

15. LeMoine Lewis, "Training Young Men to Preach," *Abilene Christian College Lectures*, 1964 (Abilene: ACC Student Exchange, 1964), 88-89.

16. Ibid., 89-90.

17. Ibid., 92.

18. Ibid., 94.

19. Ibid., 94-95.

Say Amen, Brother!
The African-American
Tradition

.....

Foy E. Wallace Jr., in March 1941, became enraged when he heard that the rising young black preacher R. N. Hogan had slept in the same bed with Ira Rice Jr. When Hogan had been caught during a storm at Rice's house late at night during a gospel meeting in the Rio Grande Valley, Rice had invited Hogan to stay. Wallace protested:

Aside from being an infringement on the Jim Crow law, it is a violation of Christianity itself, and of all common decency. Such conduct forfeits the respect of right-thinking people, and would be calculated to stir up demonstrations in most any community if it should become generally known.¹

Wallace then attacked Hogan for being "too much inclined to mix with the white people and to favor, in attitude, a social equality."² Wallace turned his attention to one of the great black preachers he knew well:

I have always said that Marshall Keeble and Luke Miller could not be spoiled, but if I ever hear of them doing anything akin to such as this I will take back every good thing I have ever said of them. Keeble should teach these negro preachers better than that, even if we cannot teach some young upstart among the white preachers. Their practices will degrade the negroes themselves. It is abominable.³

Wallace was hopeful that Keeble, a black accommodationist, would keep in check militants such as Hogan. Keeble's response to Wallace was predictable:

For over thirty years I have tried to conduct my work just as your article in the *Bible Banner* of March suggested. Taking advice from friends as you have been for years has been a blessing to my work. So I take the privilege to thank you for that instructive and encouraging article.⁴

Keeble, for whom Booker T. Washington was a hero, knew his place in the Jim Crow South. Hogan, who stood in the tradition of W. E. B. DuBois, was a different story. He never would give an inch to racism of any sort, even in the face of white power brokers such as Wallace. The prophetic power of the gospel permeated his life and preaching. Hogan followed his mentor G. P. Bowser: He took on racism long before it was fashionable or safe to do so.

African-American preaching in the Church of Christ is a story of two streams of thought. G. P. Bowser, who trained the militant preachers opposing racism, stood independently of racist white brethren. Marshall Keeble, better known among white brethren, accommodated the racist power structure and attempted to preach a subtle gospel of gradual independence. Keeble, less threatening to whites, was lionized by white Southerners, while Bowser was generally ignored. Both men had significant but differing influences on African-American preachers.

Bowser was born 17 February, 1874, in Maury County, Tennessee. Despite the fact that most of his family were members of the Christian Church, his mother raised him as a Methodist after she moved to Nashville when Bowser's father died. Bowser, a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, received a classical education at Walden University and became licensed as an A.M.E. preacher.⁵

Bowser's A.M.E. connection was significant. The A.M.E. Church was the oldest exclusively African-American denomination in the United States, founded in 1816, a few years after Richard Allen had been expelled from the white St. George's Church in Philadelphia in 1787. Allen and, later, other black bishops of the A.M.E. Church, took a strong abolitionist stand. The A.M.E. Church also became a leader in educating African-Americans before and after the Civil War.⁶

But Bowser became dissatisfied with the A.M.E. Church and eventually was baptized in 1897 after studying with members of the Christian Church. When he and others became alarmed over the use of instrumental music, a group led by S. W. Womack and Alexander Campbell, two prominent black preachers, broke away and formed what later became the Jackson Street Church of Christ in Nashville. Here Bowser and Marshall Keeble worshiped and worked together for several years.⁷

In 1909 Bowser left Nashville to run the Silver Point Christian School in Silver Point, Tennessee, but in 1920 the churches in Nashville convinced Bowser to return to be the principal of Southern Practical Institute, a new school for blacks. A. M. Burton and other whites helped underwrite the costs, and C. E. W. Dorris, a well-known white preacher, was appointed as the superintendent to gain the favor of whites.⁸ Dorris insisted that the black students enter the

school through the back door, a custom of the segregated South. Dorris was afraid that if whites saw black students enter the front they would be offended and not support the school. Bowser countered that this was a black school and that the students should not have to suffer such humiliation. Marshall Keeble urged Bowser to accommodate Dorris so that the students could get the education they so badly needed. When Bowser refused, the school closed. Bowser's biographer reports that this event was the turning point in his career. Bowser was entirely content to work among poor blacks to be as free as possible of the constraints of racist society and churches.⁹

This event was also a turning point for R. N. Hogan, Bowser's key protégé. Born 30 November 1902, in Monroe County, Arkansas, Hogan went at age fourteen to live with the Bowser family in order to go to Silver Point Christian. Bowser took Hogan with him on preaching tours and gave him opportunities to preach. Soon Hogan became known as the "boy evangelist" and converted over seventy people in his first three years of preaching.¹⁰ Bowser schooled Hogan thoroughly in the art of preaching, and Hogan mastered the creative synthesis of the rational and black preaching traditions that Bowser taught (This synthesis will be described shortly when we look at Hogan's preaching).

Hogan went with Bowser to attend Southern Practical Institute in Nashville. According to Hogan, the students rebelled over Dorris' orders, and Hogan, preferring principle over a free education, was instrumental in getting them to go home. For the rest of Hogan's life, he felt "his refusal to submit to racist actions was more important than the education."¹¹

The closing of the school enraged most blacks and created significant distrust of whites among black

preachers and church members, but Bowser and Hogan had long careers among the poor blacks and stayed free of white control because of this mistrust. Bowser lived in various places: Louisville, Fort Smith, Chicago, Detroit, and Fort Worth, and was a leading evangelist, educator, and publisher (*The Christian Echo*). He was instrumental in the founding of Southwestern Christian College in Terrell, Texas, but died on March 23, 1950, a few months before its opening.¹²

Since 1937 Hogan has ministered in southern California, building one of the largest congregations of the Churches of Christ in the nation. He also has preached meetings all over the country, but mostly in Oklahoma, Texas, and California. Hogan continued Bowser's outspokenness in challenging racial prejudice. Calvin Bowers noted that Hogan often came into "conflict with white brethren in the churches of Christ." In *The Christian Echo* he attacked "Christian colleges who would not open their doors to black students." As early as the 1940s Hogan "refused to help provide housing for black students who entered Pepperdine College, insisting that the dormitories should be open to all races." Eventually "the school responded in favor of his suggestions."¹³

Hogan also followed Bowser's style of preaching. Since Hogan's sermons have been preserved and, unfortunately, Bowser's have not, we turn to Hogan's preaching. William H. Pipes (*Say Amen, Brother*) and Henry Mitchell (*Black Preaching*), in their pathbreaking studies, point to the emotional nature of most black preaching; however, Hogan does not fit the model. He stands clearly in the rational and debating traditions. Some of the topics in his published sermons are very familiar: "The True Church," "Can We All See Alike," "Baptisms of the Bible," and "Instrumental Music in Worship." Most of his sermons

are topical, follow very logical, rational patterns, and are filled with scripture quotations and arguments.¹⁴ Calvin Bowers, in his study of Hogan's preaching, argued: "His logic is a contributing factor in convincing many to visibly respond to his preaching."¹⁵

With the orientation of most African-Americans to emotional and dramatic preaching, how did Hogan have any appeal? Bill Banowsky provides a clue by crediting Hogan's success to his ability to use "great illustrations, simple organization and logical development."¹⁶ Bowser, coming out of the A.M.E. church, emphasized education. Unlike many racist whites, Hogan knew that blacks had great reasoning abilities, and he appealed to their intellect. Hogan stressed this in his first published sermon:

We want to beg you to make this meeting a meeting of investigation. It does not hurt to investigate. In fact we are living in an age of investigation. Therefore, I beg each of you to bring your Bibles each night as you come to study with us the word of God. I want to impress the importance of reading for yourselves. The trouble with my people is that they have put too much confidence in the preacher and are too much interested in what "my pastor" says.¹⁷

Blacks who converted had to be able to read, and Hogan was subtly encouraging all of the people in the audience to think for themselves and to gain literacy so that they could read their own Bibles.

The rational approach of Hogan may explain why he was outspoken on the race issue. Pipes, in his study of black preaching, lamented that the emotionalism served mainly as a means of escape for blacks from an "impossible world."¹⁸ The traditional preaching encouraged a black person "who must *feel* but not *think*."¹⁹ In the traditional preaching no criticism was made of the white power

structure.²⁰ In contrast, Hogan believed that blacks should think before feeling, and he clearly attacked racism. His different assumption about the rationality of black audiences meant he was not afraid to argue openly against racism. While sermons with “dual” messages (messages with hidden attacks on racism) were more prominent with Keeble and other accommodationists, Hogan only occasionally used them.

Still Hogan incorporated many elements of traditional black preaching. He generally followed the traditional introduction outlined by Mitchell. The preacher needs “to establish a kind of intimate fellowship—a rapport traditionally easily established, but in-depth.”²¹ The speaker must have an introduction and “must win his way inside the outer defenses and get close to the hearts of the audience.” Also, the introduction must have the more traditional “launching of the text.”²² Hogan had these elements in his first printed sermon. Before he stressed the rationality of his audience noted above, he welcomed them and thanked them for coming and for their “fine interest.” He also called them “honest souls.” After stressing their rationality, Hogan said:

I wish to call your attention to the question privilege. You may notice that we have a couple of query boxes attached to yonder posts. You may write out your questions and deposit them therein and we will get them and be glad to give you a Bible answer if possible. Not only do you have the privilege to write out your question and put them in the query boxes, you also have the privilege of calling me in question during the highest speed of my sermon. I assure you that it will be no insult to the meeting and no one will call the police.²³

His invitation to open and complete investigation was probably different from the emotional preachers, but

it served the same function to create rapport with the audience. Even the last reference to the police operates at two levels, showing his openness and his opposition to violence that some might have suffered from racist whites. Most would have responded favorably to Hogan's introduction. This accomplished, he announced the topic—"The Ark and the Church"—launching into the text and completing the introduction.²⁴

Mitchell also describes the storytelling tactics of black preaching. Hogan again combined these tactics with the rational approach, usually relying on either biblical or everyday-life stories and analogies to illustrate his arguments. Although many of the stories clearly originated in rural or African-American life, they still pointed to the enlightenment ideal of ridding oneself of all prejudgment. In a sermon on baptism, Hogan told the following parable to illustrate why people could not see the plain biblical teaching about baptism:

I was preaching a meeting down in East Texas a few years ago and in my sermon Brother Jasper Moss came to me and said, "Brother Hogan, I appreciate you giving us the Bible on why people can't see, but I already know why people can't see." I said, "Brother Moss, then you tell me why people can't see." He said, "Well, Brother Hogan, you see I am a horse trader and one day I went over into the next county and traded a man a horse for a mule, and when I brought that old mule home and turned him loose in my lot, he walked over stumps, tubs, logs, and stumbled over everything that came in his way. So I concluded that I traded for a blind mule. Therefore I caught him and took him back to the man and told him that old mule couldn't see. So he said, 'Yes that mule can see, but I'll tell you what is the matter with him: He is just too mean to see, that's all.' I am about to conclude that as plain as the teaching of God is, those that claim that they can't see are just too mean to see, that's all."

Now, my friends let's move self out of the way, and we can easily understand the plain word of God.²⁵

Analogies and parables about cars, watermelon seeds, dyeing clothes, and biblical stories occur in strategic places in Hogan's sermons.

Hogan's word choice in combination with his analogies also emphasized his familiarity and identification with his audience. In an analogy designed to show that instrumental music was appropriate at home, but not in church he said:

For instance: what if you were to be here on the first day of the week... and this table was supposedly veiled with the Lord's supper, and Brother Winston would come forward and administer it; and when he unveiled it, instead of the Lord's supper... it would be hog jowl and black-eyed peas? What would you think of it, friends? Why, doubtless your eyes would stretch in amazement, for you know that such would be out of place in the church, but it would go mighty nice in the home, wouldn't it. The home is the place for instrumental music too, friends.²⁶

Bowers perceptively says that Hogan's "reference to 'hog jowl' and 'black-eyed peas' showed the audience that he was one of them and knew the kinds of food that black people frequently ate." Additionally, Hogan's phrase, "would go mighty good", showed "that he is not looking with disdain on this kind of food."²⁷

All of his illustrations, analogies, parables, and even humor were intertwined with relentless argument to make the points of his sermons. Hogan even used criticism of his tactics as a form of humor, showing his "bulldog" approach:

I am like the man selling peanuts on the corner. I am sure you have seen this man. He continues to turn his

machine while the peanuts are roasting. Do you know why he does this? He keeps his peanuts from burning. With these funny things that I say, I am turning you to keep you from getting angry with me... But I am going to roast you.²⁸

Hogan best exemplified parts of the black “style” of preaching in his delivery. He used the “call and response pattern.” Mitchell says, “Many preachers who pause momentarily for breathing and other reasons receive a response from the audience.”²⁹ Many places in Hogan’s printed sermons lend themselves to a response from the audience. Bowers points to Hogan’s short sentence structure and use of a series of questions and answers as his attempt to build feeling in the audience. For example, in the following passage I have inserted possible responses by the audience:

How many bodies are there? The Holy Spirit says: there is one. [Amen!] The Body and the church being the very same thing: therefore one church. [That’s right!] Notice: “. . . so we being many are one body in Christ. . .”, Romans 12:4, 5. How many bodies are there? [One!] The Holy Spirit says there is one again, I Corinthians 12:20, “. . . but now are there many members yet but one body.” [Preach it!] How many bodies are there? [One!] The Holy Spirit says “One!” [Amen!] What is that one body? The Holy Spirit says that its the church. Ephesians 1:22-23. [Amen!]³⁰

Bowers points out also that the “constant returning to a common thought, word, or phrase, such as ‘How many bodies?’ sets up a rhythmic pattern that heightens emotional response.”³¹ Hogan also called his own delivery “emotional.”³² Molefi Asante, chair of the Department of Black Studies at Temple University, noted that Hogan “possesses a dynamic, staccato-like delivery which seems to indicate the urgency of his message.”³³

Bowers believes that Hogan's rational style, molded with some of the elements of traditional black preaching, contributed to Hogan's success:

Hogan's balance of intellect and emotion appealed to all levels of people. Numbered among his converts were Holiness [Pentecostals], Methodists, university heads, school principals, and city officials, thus indicating that his preaching was emotional enough for the highly emotional and logical enough for the academician.³⁴

Marshall Keeble was born 7 December 1878, in Rutherford County, Tennessee. Only four years younger than Bowser, Keeble lived until 20 April 1968, and was active as a preacher until the day he died.³⁵ Unlike Bowser or Hogan, Keeble was distinctive, according to Molefi Asante, because he was the "first preacher to appeal to audiences" of African-Americans and whites.³⁶ Keeble, aware of what had happened at Southern Practical Institute in 1920, was wary of whites. In May 1921 Keeble held a meeting at a white church in Birmingham, Alabama, and the white members attended and even helped Keeble with the song leading and other duties. Because of their support, Keeble decided that "he could trust his white brethren."³⁷ No one in the Churches of Christ has ever come close to equaling Keeble's popularity with both races, and it will be difficult for anyone ever to accomplish that again, for Keeble's preaching uniquely fit the era and culture in which he lived.

All who have studied Keeble have noticed that he did not offend white audiences by speaking about race,³⁸ but what explains the success and uniqueness of the preaching of this complex man? While Keeble "knew his place" and was manipulated by his white brethren, he made the most of the opportunities whites gave him to improve the situations of his own people. Some of his tactics date

back to the slave era and earlier. A. B. Lipscomb, in praising Keeble's preaching, set forth the white paternalism that enthusiastically supported Keeble:

Not only have hundreds of souls been converted to Christ; but as a further result of the meetings a new citizenry has been created among our Negro population. We have better workmen, better porters, better farm hands, better cooks, better nurses, better housemaids. Verily it pays to preach the gospel to them and teach them how to think and work in terms of the grand old Book.³⁹

Keeble stayed within the bounds of this paternalism and walked a difficult tightrope between the white and black audiences. Ultimately, Keeble knew who called the shots: "You have to know how to work with both races. The white people had control at that time and still do." Keeble said about preaching to blacks in the presence of whites: "I had to know how to meet him or I'd get hurt."⁴⁰

Keeble's worries were not idle imagining. The Ku Klux Klan threatened his life on more than one occasion. His biographer reports that at one meeting the Klan interrupted and forced him to read aloud the words, "The Ku Klux Klan stands for white supremacy. Be governed accordingly." Keeble then told the audience: "I have always known that the white man is superior. They brought us from Africa and have lifted us up." Satisfying the whites, Keeble turned to the blacks and added: "Now you treat these white folks right and they'll treat you right."⁴¹

Keeble's preaching is almost identical to Hogan's. The content of his preaching was rational and very traditional. Keeble emphasized reading and studying the Bible. He used the language of African-Americans, a dynamic, emotional delivery, illustrations, and analogies as Hogan did.⁴² However, one significant difference exists between Hogan and Keeble. Keeble used a specific

technique in his storytelling and analogies that Hogan apparently did not use: his stories or “parables” were filled with double meanings. The Ku Klux Klan story is an good example. While it satisfied the demands of white supremacists, Keeble was also telling the oppressed blacks that they would be “lifted up”—they would one day reach a higher status. Exactly what this meant was deliberately left ambiguous, giving blacks hope but not arousing the suspicions of whites. Whites would see it as A. B. Lipscomb: Blacks would be better workers, doing the sort of hard labor that was beneath the lot of whites.

Henry Mitchell’s study of black preaching again is helpful. Mitchell illustrates the “double code” of black preaching:

Their spirituals attest to the fact that they seized on the Moses narrative and sang, “Tell ol’ Pharoah to let my people go!” as a demand for their own liberation. When they sang about “stealing away,” they no doubt had some notion of the prayer closet, but there is some reason to believe that to steal away to Jesus was to escape to freedom! Similarly, to sing, “I ain’t got long to stay here” is not exclusively other-worldly escape. It is code language of the gospel of self-liberation.

Indeed, even the outstanding spiritual of accommodation, “Humble yourself,” was a message designed to keep more people from being slaughtered like Nat Turner and his followers. It meant, “Cool it—for the time being!”; a temporary capitulation to the status quo... It was... addressed to the Black man’s condition, and committed to changing that condition.⁴³

Keeble said that his greatest asset as a speaker was “knowing how to make parables and [I] always make my sermons plain so men and women can easily understand the gospel without excitement.”⁴⁴ His “parables,” either

illustrations or analogies, often had the black double code.

The best example of Keeble's double code is in the sermon series that A. B. Lipscomb praised. The first sermon, "Power of the Written Word," had a spiritual message for both blacks and whites and an underlying one for blacks. Keeble had a series of "parables" from everyday life. He told his audience to be sure they had a written contract. He knew a man in Nashville who bought some property from a friend. The friend said, "You don't need a written deed; I will treat you right, John." John took him at his word, but his friend died, "and poor John lost his property because he had nothing in writing." Keeble turned to the task of keeping receipts; "When paying a debt, you get a receipt." A woman in Florence, Alabama, left twenty-five cents with a little child to pay her insurance agent. The child paid it but forgot to get a receipt. The agent had not "registered it on his book," so he came back for the money again and she lost twenty-five cents. Keeble added, "Well now, friends, I want to say that in everything you do, especially in paying debts, get a receipt." Keeble then said his wife once was paying for furniture "on the installment plan." He sent her the money from his trips, and she made payments. She and Keeble decided to go to the store and make the final payment, but were shocked when the bookkeeper said they still had one more payment. They went home and found all the receipts.⁴⁵ Keeble continued:

We went right in the store and presented all the receipts. The bookkeeper checked up on it and said, "That's right, Minnie, it's all paid. I don't see why it wasn't registered on the book." The proprietor of the big concern said, "Minnie, anything you want, come and get it, it was just a little mistake of the bookkeeper. But what was the truth? Minnie had kept the receipts. Above everything keep your receipts."⁴⁶

Keeble went on to make a spiritual point that a person needed a receipt from God (baptism) in order to enter heaven, a message for both blacks and whites. But the message for the blacks was to keep their receipts because they could not really trust whites. He told them to remember that whites had the power and if they wanted to protect their hard-earned interests they should document everything. They should get it in writing, keep all their receipts from purchases and business transactions, take responsibility, and be smart so they would be liberated from white oppression.

Because of the threat to the stability of black family life caused by drinking, gambling, and adultery, Keeble attacked these vices with the approval of many racist whites, who thought if these vices were eliminated it would help keep blacks in their place. However, Keeble stood in the tradition of the "Black Fathers," the early black preachers who served black churches from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century. They preached to "the needs of Black people in a hostile white world." Their concern, according to Mitchell, "was to comfort and strengthen and guide their hearers, in a way not spelled out for them by the white religious tradition but forged in the crucible of the Black experience in America."⁴⁷ Keeble knew these vices actually kept blacks from improving themselves; he hoped that instead of staying in "their place," blacks would throw off white oppression by eliminating vice. He creatively used the "double code" to make his message far more revolutionary than whites realized.

Keeble even at times had a double message for whites. Forrest Rhoads notes that sometimes Keeble made "an oblique attack on segregation and social discrimination." Here he would use the double code where the "hidden meaning or a second meaning" was for whites.⁴⁸ Once he

attacked the custom of making blacks enter through the rear door (which had caused Southern Practical Institute to be closed):

Negro can't borrow anything up North. Come down South, go to the back door with hat in your hand and they'll give you anything you want. The white man in the South wants you to respect him. Up yonder they ain't caring nothing about respect. They're hard boiled.⁴⁹

As Keeble got older and the Civil Rights Movement started, many blacks began to see his methods as outdated. Many lost the ability to see the double code, and others preferred men who were more outspoken on the race issue and who would confront racism directly. Fred Gray, one of Keeble's students, later became a lawyer for Martin Luther King Jr. and defended King and Rosa Parks in court. Gray eventually became a prominent politician and lawyer in Tuskegee, Alabama, home of Booker T. Washington.⁵⁰ However, while Keeble's students moved beyond Keeble, they stand squarely in his preaching legacy.

Keeble, as well as Bowser, did not like racism. Both attacked it, but in different ways. African-Americans who followed Bowser and Keeble creatively combined black patterns of preaching with the rational approach of the white preachers to forge a unique tradition of preaching in the Churches of Christ. Keeble, in particular, did it in such a way as not to offend whites while subtly challenging southern racism. The following Keeble parable, designed for whites, shows the motivation of much of the African-American preaching in the church. After quoting Mark 16:15-16: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel unto every creature..." Keeble said:

Now some of the white brethren not so sure 'bout whether to preach the gospel to black folk, but right here

in the Great Commission, the Lord already include us in. Maybe we not white, and maybe even we don't got no "soul" to save, but we "creature" just like the Lord say, and we in the world and we can believe and we can be baptized, so Christian better preach the gospel to black folk.⁵¹

Notes

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1. Foy E. Wallace Jr., "Negro Meetings for White People," *Bible Banner* 3 (March 1941): 7.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.
 4. "From M. Keeble," *Bible Banner* 3 (April 1941): 5.
 5. R. Vernon Boyd, *Undying Dedication: The Story of G. P. Bowser* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1985), 15-22.
 6. Carter Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church* (Washington: Associated Publishers, 1921), 72-85, 205-6.
 7. Boyd, 24-29.
 8. Ibid., 64-66.
 9. Ibid., 66-67, 104.
 10. R. N. Hogan, *Sermons by Hogan* (Los Angeles, by the author, 1961; reprint of 1940 edition), vii.
 11. Calvin Bowers, "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Preaching of R. N. Hogan" (M.A. thesis, Pepperdine University, 1972), 15-16.
 12. Boyd, 69, 81, 97, 99, 101-102.
 13. Ibid., 35.
 14. These qualities are evident even in a quick reading of Hogan's sermons. Also see Bowers, 52-53, 60-62.
 15. Bowers, 48.
 16. Bowers, 64.
 17. Hogan, 1-2.
 18. William H. Pipes, *Say Amen, Brother! Old Time Negro Preaching: A Study in American Frustration* (New York: William-Frederick Press, 1951; reprint, with introduction by Cornel West,

Detroit: Wayne State University, 1992), 156. Also see Pipes, "Old Time Negro Preaching: An Interpretive Study," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 31 (February 1945): 15-21.

19. Ibid., 155.
20. Ibid., 86-87.
21. Henry Mitchell, *Black Preaching* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1970), 185.
22. Ibid., 187.
23. Hogan, 2.
24. Ibid., 2-3.
25. Ibid., 16.
26. Ibid., 115-16.
27. Bowers, 67.
28. Bowers, 49.
29. Mitchell, 167.
30. Hogan, 25, 26.
31. Bowers, 69.
32. Ibid., 70.
33. Ibid.
34. Bowers, 22.
35. B. C. Goodpasture, "Marshall Keeble," in *Biography and Sermons of Marshall Keeble, Evangelist* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co, 1978, original ed., 1931), 9; and Willie Cato, *His Hand and Heart: The Wit and Wisdom of Marshall Keeble* (Winona, MS: J. C. Choate Publications, 1990), 8-10.
36. Arthur L. Smith [Molefi Asante], "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Speaking of Marshall Keeble" (M.A. thesis, Pepperdine College, 1965), 16.
37. J. E. Choate, *Roll Jordan Roll: A Biography of Marshall Keeble* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1974), 48.
38. Smith [Asante], 115.
39. *Biography*, 15.
40. Choate, 79.
41. Ibid., 54.

42. The best overall study of Keeble's preaching besides Asante's is Forrest Neil Rhoads, "A Study of the Sources of Marshall Keeble's Effectiveness as a Preacher" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Illinois University, 1970).

43. Mitchell, 29-30.

44. Smith [Asante], 156.

45. Goodpasture, ed., 23-25.

46. *Ibid.*, 25-26.

47. Mitchell, 53.

48. Rhoads, 25.

49. Choate, 107.

50. Fred D. Gray, *Bus Ride to Justice: Changing the System by the System: The Life and Works of Fred D. Gray* (Montgomery: Black Belt Press, 1995).

51. My thanks to Warren Lewis of Bloomington, Indiana, for sharing his memory of Keeble's parable.

Exodus: The Rise of the Evangelical Tradition

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“**E**xodus... a word fraught with meaning. It denotes the separation, the singularity of a people, the marching out *en masse* of a large company...” So spoke Dwain Evans in his 1966 ACC Bible Lecture entitled, “Exodus with the Bible.”

In the 1970s, spirituality was alive and well at Abilene Christian College. Devotionals took place every night—on the administration building steps on Tuesday nights, at Mission Outreach on Fridays, and at innumerable student houses and dorms on the other weeknights. New and exciting songs were being sung. Missions, evangelism, prayer life, and quiet time were on everyone’s lips. Students heard the charge to view their lives, especially their career objectives, in light of God’s will. Many committed their summers and sometimes spring vacations for campaign efforts where the church was weak. Grace was everywhere

being proclaimed. All of this was a bit overwhelming for an eighteen-year-old from a solid, but slightly staid congregation. New, unheard-of vistas opened up, and renewal was apparent everywhere. Unknown to me at the time, this quest for renewal had been underway for some time—for at least a decade by the 1970s.

The 1960s were a time of social and political upheaval for America, and the Churches of Christ did not escape. The Civil Rights Movement, the antiwar protests, and various countercultural movements challenged the assumptions of the dominant society. A generation of college students and many young professionals began to question many of the ideas of the church. They questioned the racism, lack of spirituality, and lack of social concern exhibited by some in the church. Preachers and students began to look to the emerging evangelicals for renewal and new perspectives. A new tradition of preaching was one result of this societal upheaval.

As in so many of the other traditions of preaching, the evangelical tradition had many men who played prominent roles in its history. I follow the church historian Martin Marty by defining evangelical as “a Jesus-centered form of Protestantism” that

is generated through the call for a turning from the old self and world, in a conversion through an intense experience of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.... Evangelicalism then issues in a plea for ordered moral behavior and efforts to witness to and share the faith in the form of evangelism.¹

Strangely, unlike the common evangelical experience of dramatic conversion, the search for renewal was gradual for most in the Churches of Christ. However, the emphasis on spiritual experience and evangelism became the means for some to challenge a number of the

established ideas of the church in the turbulent '60s. Again, for the sake of simplicity and not to slight anyone, I will narrate the story of two men: Dwain Evans and John Allen Chalk, both of whom played seminal roles in this new evangelical tradition of preaching.

Evans was born in Palmer, Texas, on 4 April 1933, graduated from Abilene Christian College in 1954, and, at age twenty-two, went to Augusta, Maine, to do mission work. After World War II, the Churches of Christ had come alive with interest in missions. Thousands of men had fought all over the world, and as Evans put it in his recruiting speech for his Exodus-Bayshore mission effort, these men "were appalled by what they saw...millions who had not that first opportunity to hear Christ preached." The soldiers "had come home to arouse a sleeping church to the need of the world for the gospel of Christ."² Evans was clearly caught up in the postwar excitement over missions.

After a difficult "tour of duty" at Augusta, Evans was convinced that the approach of sending a single, untrained family out into a mission field was a mistake. He returned to Texas and preached with congregations in Sweetwater and Lubbock, all the while dreaming of taking a team of families to a mission point. With the encouragement and help of Walter Burch, a public relations expert at ACC, Evans began to put the Exodus-Bayshore project together in 1962, the first of several "exodus movements" from the South to the Northeast and Canada.³

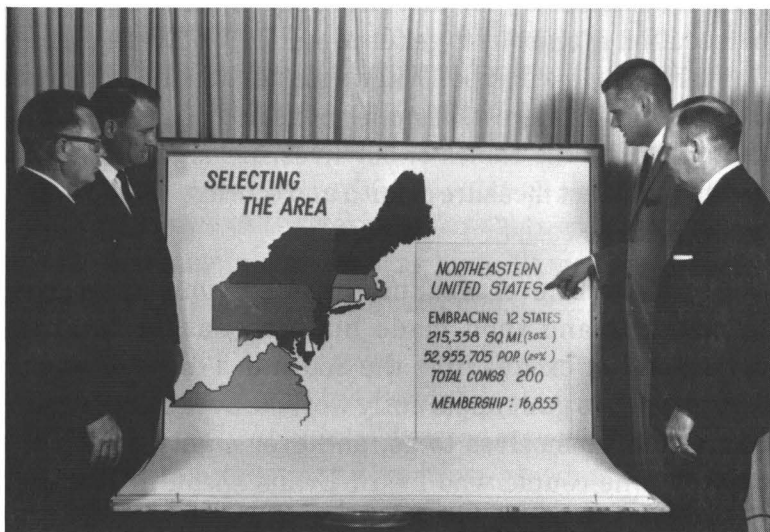
Because of his first mission experience, Evans was open to new thinking. He considered most of the standard journals "rehashes of what had been said before"; as a result he began to search for new ideas to help with his ministry. Even before Evans had moved to Maine, he had begun to read Carl Ketcherside and *Mission Messenger*.⁴ Evans read

a series Ketcherside “had done on the Holy Spirit that shook the foundations, as far as I was concerned, in my preaching and teaching. I had begun to move theologically from legalism to grace and it was not something that happened overnight. I was in transition.” Evans became convinced about the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the importance of grace.⁵

Evans now believes he had still not completely left his orientation toward rational and legal approaches. Nevertheless, he preached more and more about grace and trust in God’s power: “God gives his power to those who need it. For those self-sufficient, who have enough wisdom, courage and faith, God has no power.”⁶ Despite this belief, Exodus Bayshore had plenty of human help and American ingenuity. *Time* reported in 1963: “The exodus was planned as carefully as a corporation hunts out a new plant site.” Evans “and a committee of elders scouted six other communities before choosing Bay Shore, which has the advantage of being near Long Island’s aircraft and electronics plants.”⁷ Surveying the entire United States, the committee selected twenty-two cities of over 100,000 in population that had no Church of Christ. After obtaining the same demographic and economic information that corporations use to expand into new territory, the group developed their own questionnaire and used it to narrow the list to seven cities. A team of four men visited each city and talked with the Chamber of Commerce, school system officials, realtors—people who gave them background information on the cities. After conducting these personal interviews and spending time in fasting and prayer, they selected Bay Shore, New York.

They used some of the best promotional methods available to get the project rolling. Walter Burch often came up from Abilene to consult with Evans. They both wanted

to go beyond the usual slide show presentations that missionaries used to raise money. Larry Cardwell, an assistant to Burch, designed large (4' x 5'), attractive posters of professional quality that could be mounted in church auditoriums and seen by the entire audience. The fact that the audience was able to see the speaker, unlike in an auditorium darkened for a slide show, helped the recruiting, for Evans was a dynamic and earnest speaker who was capable of effectively using his audience's feelings of guilt.



Dwain Evans (pointing) with three elders of Richland Hills Church of Christ. Exodus-Bayshore recruiting poster, 1962. —*Courtesy of Gospel Advocate.*

Burch also helped Evans write promotional materials, including his “stump” or recruiting speech, “Advancing a Bold Idea in Evangelism,” which was organized around the fifteen large posters.⁸

Evans traveled all over Texas and several other states, speaking at churches and recruiting. He traveled to all the major Christian colleges and spoke at many lectureships. After briefly stressing the need to depend on

God's power, he shifted to a crisis theme: God acts when his people forget his purpose. The Church is blessed with material prosperity and yet "in all this time we have not preached the gospel to the whole creation... How long will God continue to be patient with us?"⁹ He told the story of the persecution of the first Christians in Jerusalem because "in spite of their love and enthusiasm" they "forgot the commission of Christ when He said, 'Go.'"¹⁰

He pressed his audiences with the modern analogy: "Will it be necessary for God once more to bring some great persecution against us to get us to scatter?"¹¹ Evans pressed further: "Which will it be? Will we scatter or will God scatter us?... Do not mistake it! Jesus is not asking of us the crumbs that fall from the tables of our lives, He is asking of you and me that last measure of faith and courage and devotion. He will not be satisfied with less."¹²

He went over weaknesses in previous approaches to missions and then made his proposal for "a group movement" or exodus from the South to a mission point.¹³ The appeals to guilt apparently worked: over sixty families committed themselves to go, and over eighty-five finally went.¹⁴ One couple who heard Evans speak in Houston, Texas, later reported:

As... he unfolded the statistics and presented his plea, to help establish a New Testament church in a growing area devoid of such a church, we were impressed. We were impressed and saddened because there was no one to preach the word to many people who were spiritually lost and were searching as we had been, less than a year before that time. Those millions who did not have a chance of hearing the truth and making a choice haunted us. Already the Holy Spirit was moving in our hearts, but we were not fully conscious of him yet.¹⁵

After receiving national press attention in *Time* and

in the brotherhood periodicals, the Exodus movement started in August 1963, with tremendous energy and enthusiasm. Away from the brotherhood centers of power, Evans and his group were free to think for themselves. Evans recalled that reading Ketcherside had caused him to have “an openness to changing [his] thinking about the Holy Spirit and how the Holy Spirit works in the lives of Christians” and to be “open to spiritual experience and we had plenty of them in the Exodus development.”¹⁶

One hundred thirty-six people attended the first worship service conducted by the fledgling church in Bayshore; many members held home Bible studies, and over two hundred people were baptized in the first eighteen months. The church grew and eventually moved from Bay Shore to West Islip. Many who had come on the exodus had choral experience at the various Christian colleges, so the quality of singing in worship was high. “It was an exciting thing,” Evans recalled, “almost too much.”¹⁷

About this time David Wilkerson, a Pentecostal preacher associated with the Assemblies of God, wrote *The Cross and the Switchblade*. Wilkerson was in nearby New York City in the midst of an exciting, growing, inner-city ministry with gang members, drug addicts, and other victims of urban society. Evans recalled:

[We] went in to visit with Dave and told him we would like to know more about what they were doing. I wanted to go with him on one of his street meetings, and so he invited me but said ‘You will have to go to the prayer meeting first.’

I invited three men from the West Islip church who went with me to this prayer meeting. It was something like I had never heard before because it was Pentecostal... Then after the prayer meeting we drove through the streets of Brooklyn and on into the Bronx and found a

corner where there were a lot of tenements and people were sitting out on their steps... I would say there were about a dozen of these young people from Wilkerson's church who just spread out in the community inviting people to come to this meeting. Before long there were about thirty-five or forty people gathered around, and I was very skeptical about what could happen in a situation like that. Then they began giving their little talks and testimonies.

I was watching the faces of the people, and I did not think that a whole lot was happening. Then a Latina girl started talking in Spanish, and after she finished, she said it in English: "I am one of you. I lived in this apartment up there" and pointed to the apartment. "I was a dope addict, and I did everything under the sun to support my habit. And then I found Christ, and he has delivered me and set me free." It was very obvious at this point she was getting across to the audience. One of the young men told everyone that he was going to pray the sinner's prayer and added, "I want you to hold up your hand if you want to know more about this Jesus Christ." Nobody held up a hand. He asked the question three or four times, and then they started holding up their hands. When people would hold up their hand, the workers would take them aside and talk with them. It was absolutely the most amazing thing I had ever seen... In our mind the Holy Spirit was clearly at work in that group that night... About the same time Pat Boone got involved with Wilkerson, so he and Shirley Boone came to West Islip and they gave their testimony.¹⁸

While Evans admired Wilkerson and Boone, he never did develop any charismatic views of the Holy Spirit; rather his views remained "fairly conventional for evangelicals, but unconventional for the Churches of Christ." Another evangelical influence on Evans and the West Islip church was the Park Street Church in Boston, where Harold John Ockenga preached for many years.

Evans took some of the West Islip elders with him to a conference hosted by the Park Street Church.¹⁹

Evans recalled the work of the Park Street church:

[The church] was supporting over one hundred missionaries. They were doing it on subsistence salaries. You would hear those missionaries speak... from all over the world. It was an eye-opening experience for me and all of us. I did not know that all of those missionaries existed at the time. These people would speak about what God was doing with them... just fantastic stories of how God was using them... We came away from the meeting saying that if these folks are not going to heaven we sure don't have any chance... These people all talked about the influence and the leadership of the Holy Spirit in their lives.²⁰

Evans took these ideas and developed an innovative evangelical approach to missions and evangelism at West Islip. Following the pattern of the Peace Corps, he developed the Faith Corps, a program which recruited college students to come to Long Island to train for a two-year commitment to overseas missions. By 1965 he had laid out his vision for evangelism:

Let me say to you, young people, that if you have not seen Jesus Christ raised from the dead in your own life, if you have not seen the evidence of the living faith within your heart, then you need tonight to be converted to Jesus. To this testimony we give ourselves the power of Jesus that has worked indeed in our lives and the testimony that you give from His word as we lead men to know about our Lord and our Savior.²¹

Evans pushed evangelical doctrine: "One of the very first commands that Jesus gave in the Sermon [on the Mount]... was to give witness. He said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and

give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” Evans battled the privatization of religion: “We want to avoid at all costs seeming pious, but the witness of Jesus Christ seems to be a public declaration about piety.” He also attacked the idea that one’s life and actions alone can be a witness to Christ:

You[ve] heard other people say, and maybe you say it: “I don’t talk to others about Jesus Christ. I just let my life speak... [B]ut the more you [say] that statement the more arrogant it becomes. Which one of us here tonight can say that our lives are sufficient witness? Which one of us can say that we have incorporated Jesus Christ so much into our personality that we don’t need to speak... [If you think] you can live a good life before your associates and never talk about Jesus Christ, then I assure you, you are not going to win many people to Him and that you are not going to fulfill the task of Christian witness... When a movement loses its evangelical zeal, that movement is dead. When a church loses its passion for evangelism, its evangelical outreach,... that church is dead.”²²

Evans proposed a plan for having an effective witness: First, “restore the power of prayer to our lives... Talk to God like we expected Him to do something when we talk to Him.” Second, do house-to-house evangelism. He suggested conducting religious surveys to get people to do Bible studies. Third, always be ready to talk to others about Christ in conversation. Finally, become friends with a non-Christian American and with an international student with the goal of converting them to Christ.²³

This vision began to spread in the preaching of the 1960s. Jim Bevis, at the Broadway Church of Christ in Lubbock, used Evans’ ideas and those of Bill Bright to launch the Campus Evangelism (CE) movement of the 1960s. One of the most ambitious projects of the 1960s, CE was modeled after Bright’s Campus Crusade and sponsored

by the Broadway Church in Lubbock. Evangelism and an emphasis on the Holy Spirit were prominent. College students during the rebellious '60s flocked to CE meetings, but for them it was a spiritual rebellion, not a political one. Evans, John Allen Chalk, Prentice Meador, Tony Ash, Wesley Reagan, and others introduced grace- and evangelism-oriented preaching to the college students in the Churches of Christ. In this way, CE became another key vehicle in introducing evangelical ideas into the church.²⁴

Evans and West Islip began to have an impact across the whole church. He recalled that many individuals came to Long Island to see what they were doing. The Faith Corps attracted those interested in missions and evangelism (the Christian colleges had not yet developed extensive mission training programs). Many were interested in spirituality and the seemingly new ideas about the Holy Spirit. Others were interested in the successes of the whole exodus movement.²⁵ According to Don Haymes, "In promoting this venture [Evans] gained a great deal of national exposure; in the first flush of success his experiment was widely copied." Evans then "found himself in demand for meetings, lectures, and conferences across the nation." He was speaking at lectureships all over the country and "quickly emerged as a leader of poise and influence" during the 1960s.²⁶

Many preachers, especially some of the younger preachers who were interested in the spiritual renewal of the Churches of Christ, became interested in Evans and what he was doing. One of those preachers was John Allen Chalk. Born in 1937 in Lexington, Tennessee, Chalk attended Freed-Hardeman College and earned his B.A. and M.A. degrees from Tennessee Tech. After preaching in Tennessee, he became nationally known in the church

through his radio sermons on the *Herald of Truth*, the radio program sponsored by the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas. After preaching for the *Herald of Truth* from 1966 through 1969, he became the pulpit minister for the Highland church.²⁷

Chalk was grounded in the rational tradition as a child: "The Bible in those days was a battleground site, a textbook, an anthology of prooftexts, understood correctly by a few, misunderstood by most (especially outsiders). The Bible in those days could be contained in a syllogism or a series of syllogisms by which all arguments could be won and all disputes settled quickly and cleanly."²⁸

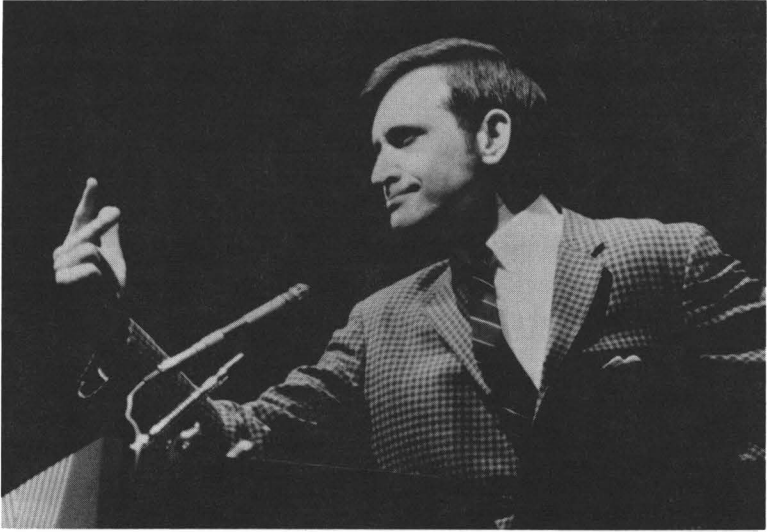
The issue of the Holy Spirit and Chalk's discussions and friendship with Dwain Evans turned Chalk from the rational and debate traditions. Chalk remembered:

For me it was a personal struggle in my own spiritual struggle. My path was crossing with people like Dwain Evans and Walter Burch, especially Dwain Evans. During those years when I was a young preacher in my early twenties, I was just having a tremendous spiritual struggle. There was just nothing that appeared to me to be real about my Christian life. I went through a two-year period in which I tried to answer the question: Is there a power beyond myself available to me in my Christian life? And when I finally discovered it was the Holy Spirit, which I did through reading over two hundred books of the standard evangelical literature (I read everything I could get my hands on about the Holy Spirit, and I kept a bibliography) and studying every passage in the Old and New Testament that mentioned the Spirit, taking copious notes, and working with that stuff—stuff that I could not share with anybody—I came to the conclusion that, yes, the Holy Spirit is alive and is a personal living force in the Christian's life. Then I had to ask myself, "Why is that living force not evident in

my life?" And that's when I came to the conclusion I had not made a lordship decision... No transaction had occurred between me and Jesus. I made a lordship decision after I had been preaching for probably eight years. And in fact I expressed that decision in a private second baptism that even my wife did not know about for months. While I wrestled with what I had understood about the Holy Spirit, the power of the Holy Spirit began to become evident in my life... All that happened in '65 and '66, and about that time CE was cranking up.²⁹

These evangelical perspectives on the Holy Spirit impacted Chalk's preaching. He, Evans, and others began efforts to speak out about spiritual renewal in the church. Several forums were available or created in the 1960s, including the CE national and regional meetings, where Chalk often spoke. He recalled:

As far as my agenda was concerned, it was to emphasize biblical truth, New Testament truth especially, that had been ignored by the Church: a dynamic view of conversion. And by that time I had crystallized my view, which was lordship/faith as opposed to just the physical act of baptism and then the role of the Holy Spirit. At that time we were still fighting over the personal indwelling of the Spirit. We had the opportunity in Campus Evangelism to teach a more biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The Lordship/faith decision really gave us a common point with anybody with whom [one might] talk on campus instead of having to prove a set of rational propositions about a right religion. . . The big thing for me was the fact that trying to preach... a correct institution to the whole student rebellion of the sixties was just absolutely not going to happen. And so to me it was not so much an agenda as it was a genuine desire to try to speak a meaningful word to students in rebellion.³⁰



John Allen Chalk at a Campus Evangelism Seminar in Dallas, Texas, 1966. —*Courtesy of John Allen Chalk*

A speech by Chalk at the 1966 Dallas National CE Seminar, “So Send I You,” was a theology for the new evangelism. While Chalk started with the mission of the Church, not the individual Christian, the speech still had an evangelical focus: “Our mission is Christ’s mission” and “Jesus came to seek and save the lost.” The Church, Chalk argued, “has taken Christ’s place on the earth.” Then he shifted to the individual’s responsibility:

For the Christian, the reality [is that] there isn’t any exit for the Christian; no exit from the world. That’s our objective; revealing God to lost men as he is unfolded in Christ. . . . And so we do not intend to abandon. We do not seek to escape. We know there is no exit. We go into the world with God’s message, his full revelation in Christ. That’s our objective.³¹

Chalk’s evangelical theology was not a sectarian retreat from the problems of the world, but neither did he develop here the social dimension of the gospel. He saved

that for his controversial *Herald of Truth* sermons preached in the summer of 1968, "Three American Revolutions."

Chalk's radio preaching broke with the previous *Herald of Truth* sermons. He was not preoccupied with other-worldly concerns and was not afraid to press into some of the social issues of the 1960s: race, crime, and sex.³² Wayne Dockery noted, "John Allen Chalk's series made firm contact with the marketplace, the neighborhood, the household, and all the economies of daily living. It was clear in Chalk's theology [that] God cared about the effects of crime, racial hatred, and sexual confusion upon people and life here and now."³³ While James Willeford had twice condemned racial prejudice on *Herald of Truth*, he had also condemned any social action to ameliorate the problem.³⁴ Chalk, arguing that Peter and Paul had attempted to destroy racism, exhorted, "Racism's future depends upon my attitude and yours. Will you oppose racism in a loving, courageous manner?"³⁵ Chalk also had a good understanding of "current trends" in "psychology, sociology, and philosophy." The social sciences provided a means for Chalk to analyze crime, race, and sex. He was able to trace "the historical origins of various philosophical viewpoints in order to provide a sharper critique." He even drew from the "fields of theology and biblical studies." Dockery accurately concludes: "Proof-texting was gone, and in its place was a more sophisticated treatment of biblical literature and of religious ideas."³⁶

Chalk's overall approach clearly came from an evangelical perspective. He shifted from "law and fear as the basis and motivation for ethics to 'the ethical motivation of love.'" He challenged the old conceptions in one sermon:

First, there is a very common attitude in many hearts today that God is so holy and righteous that he is unapproachable by man. Second, God is also viewed by

someone who is too far removed from my situation to hear my cry and to heed my call. Third, many people knew only and taught others only of God as an angry tyrant, an arbitrary dictator ... The Loving and merciful, concerned God, the heavenly Father of Jesus Christ is rarely seen and even more rarely accepted. This is one basic reason for crime in America.³⁷

Chalk and others moved away from the fear-and-guilt appeals Evans had used at the beginning of the '60s. They matured in their views and preaching and began to weave social concerns into their evangelical approaches. However, they did not completely transform their sermons into some of the current forms of preaching. John Barton, in his study of Chalk, noted that, while he was more catholic and contemporary than previous *Herald of Truth* speakers, his effectiveness "was frequently diminished by deficiencies of sermonic structure, word choice and his refusal to use narration, description, and contrast extensively." He "preferred to analyze ideas and fell into the habit of developing lengthy verbose lists of expository notions."³⁸

Chalk and Evans were transitional figures in the preaching of the Churches of Christ. Chalk commented about his own preaching toward the end of his tenure on the *Herald of Truth* radio program:

I am sure that I have been able to do some things,... but I have seen some things that I needed to do in the sense of penetrating the superficial mask that too many people wear in our day. I've seen myself failing to convict men of their false gods, to bring them into new insights about the way to live their lives most meaningfully, in a new relationship to Christ—what the implications of the Christian faith are—for [the] everyday, busy, hurried, frantic 20th century lives we are living. In the area of preparation, tools, clarity, I think one of my greatest regrets is, I've preached a lot of rationally, logically well-

constructed radio lessons that never got to the pavement where people are living.³⁹

Chalk and Evans both realized that their own preaching did not attain the goals of helping people experience Christianity. Both men stressed spiritual experience, changed lives, and evangelism during the upheavals of the '60s. They used sophisticated promotional and technological means to preach their messages of renewal. Their own speaking was still very modern, yet they moved toward the postmodern, narrative style of preaching. The media that Chalk used, radio and TV, are a key in the postmodern shift of culture. We now turn to the impact of media and the rise of narrative in preaching.

Notes

1. Martin Marty, "The Revival of Evangelicalism and Southern Religion," in *Varieties of Southern Evangelicalism*, David Edwin Harrell Jr., ed. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1981), 9-10.

2. Dwain Evans, "Advancing a Bold Idea in Evangelism," *Abilene Christian College Lectures*, 1963 (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian College Students Exchange, 1963), 234.

3. Evans, telephone interview by author, 14 July 1994, tape-recording. The narrative about Evans is based on this interview unless otherwise noted.

4. Ketcherside had been an ultraconservative "Sommerite," a part of the Churches of Christ that had opposed Christian colleges and "located" preachers. But in the early '50s Ketcherside had moved away from his narrow views and had begun to champion unity among the various divisions in the Churches of Christ. Most wrote him off as a "liberal" extremist.

5. Evans, interview. On Ketcherside see Stanley McDaniel, "Renewal through Recovery of Apostolic Proclamation, Purpose, and Power: The Invention of W. Carl Ketcherside" (Ph.D. diss., University of Indiana, 1979).

6. Evans, "Advancing," 231-32.

7. "The Campbellites Are Coming," *Time* (15 February 1963): 97.
8. For an example of one of these posters, see Walter Burch, "Exodus Bay Shore," *Gospel Advocate* (September 1962): 563.
9. Evans, "Advancing," 232.
10. Evans, "Advancing," 233.
11. *Ibid.*, 234.
12. *Ibid.*, 234-35.
13. *Ibid.*, 238.
14. Dwain Evans, "Nothing Can Compare . . .," *Twentieth Century Christian* (February 1966): 33.
15. Dan and Juanita Davis, in Evans, "Nothing," 34.
16. Evans, interview.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. Dwain Evans, "Witnessing," Texas Tech Bible Chair Retreat, 10 September 1965. Tape-recorded speech in possession of the author.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. Michael Casey, "Solution . . . Revolution: Campus Evangelism and the Rise of Evangelicalism in the Churches of Christ," paper presented at the Churches of Christ and Postmodernism Seminar, Nashville, Tennessee, 17 July 1991.
25. Evans, interview.
26. Don Haymes, "Church of Christism," *Mission* 5 (April 1972): 303.
27. John Barton, "The Preaching on *Herald of Truth* Radio, 1952-1969" (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1975), 29-30.
28. John Allen Chalk, "My Life with the Bible (A Meditation on Hermeneutics)," *Wineskins* 2(6)[1994]: 20.
29. John Allen Chalk, telephone interview by author, 22 May 1991, tape recording.

30. Ibid.

31. John Allen Chalk, "So Send I You," audiotape recording of sermon, 1966 Campus Evangelism Seminar, in possession of the author.

32. Wayne Dockery, "Three American Revolutions: A Study of Social Change in the Churches of Christ As Evidenced in the *Herald of Truth* Radio Series," paper presented at the Conference on Religious Communication in the American Restoration Tradition, Abilene Christian University, 15 July 1985. Also see Dockery, "Three American Revolutions: A Study of Social Change in the Churches of Christ" (M.A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 1974); and Barton, "Preaching." Most of what follows is dependent on Dockery's analysis.

33. Dockery, "*Herald of Truth*," 6.

34. Ibid., 5-6.

35. Ibid., 7.

36. Ibid., 11.

37. Ibid., 11-12.

38. Barton, "Preaching," 228.

39. Ibid., 228.

Got a Story? The Electronic Gospel

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We all sat mesmerized, my father, mother, my two brothers, and I. We were watching history in the making. The image was not the clearest, but we, along with most everyone else in the entire country, had our eyes glued to the same thing—the television set—watching one of the most historic occasions in all of human history: the first human to walk on the moon. A communication revolution has occurred since the days of Stone and Campbell, and the ways in which we communicate over radio and television were unimaginable to the early restoration fathers. Most of us tend to view the media as merely neutral forms that can communicate any message. But most communication scholars are breaking significant new ground that suggests such views are naive.

While rhetorical training has been important in the shifting preaching style, the means of communicating the message also has had a profound impact on preaching in the Churches of Christ. Communication has shifted from

being print-based to electronically-based during the lifetime of the Restoration Movement. We have grown up in a vastly different world from our great-grandfathers. My grandmother would never have understood MTV, while I doubt my son will spend hours doing fill-in-the-blank Bible study sheets. I, in my short lifetime, have experienced both. The impact of the media on the church is vast and deserving of a book itself. For this reason, I will present only a few observations here.

The early Restoration fathers lived in an age in which print dominated. Books and periodicals were the chief means of communication. Even oral debates were frequently published. Paul Prill, a speech professor at David Lipscomb, has noted that Alexander Campbell was usually “more concerned with the (future) reading audience” than the immediate audience listening to the debates, because he knew that the published debate would reach a wider audience than the oral debate and was aware of the power of the print media.¹

Communication scholar Walter Ong has provided a plausible explanation of the profound impact of the print medium on the nature of communication. In the old, oral culture, speech literally could not save itself. Once words were uttered, they were lost; they went out of existence. Words could exist only as sounds that were fleeting, and they existed only in specific contexts in which the speaker and audience were both present. However, when words were printed, they could exist as symbols fixed on paper and removed from the context of a living speaker and audience. Printing suggests that words are not fleeting, but “fixed and neatly segmental too.” Words are removed from time and in fact become “locked” in time; they are permanently “frozen.” In a print culture, the focus is on the literal meanings of words. Since the words appear in a linear style,

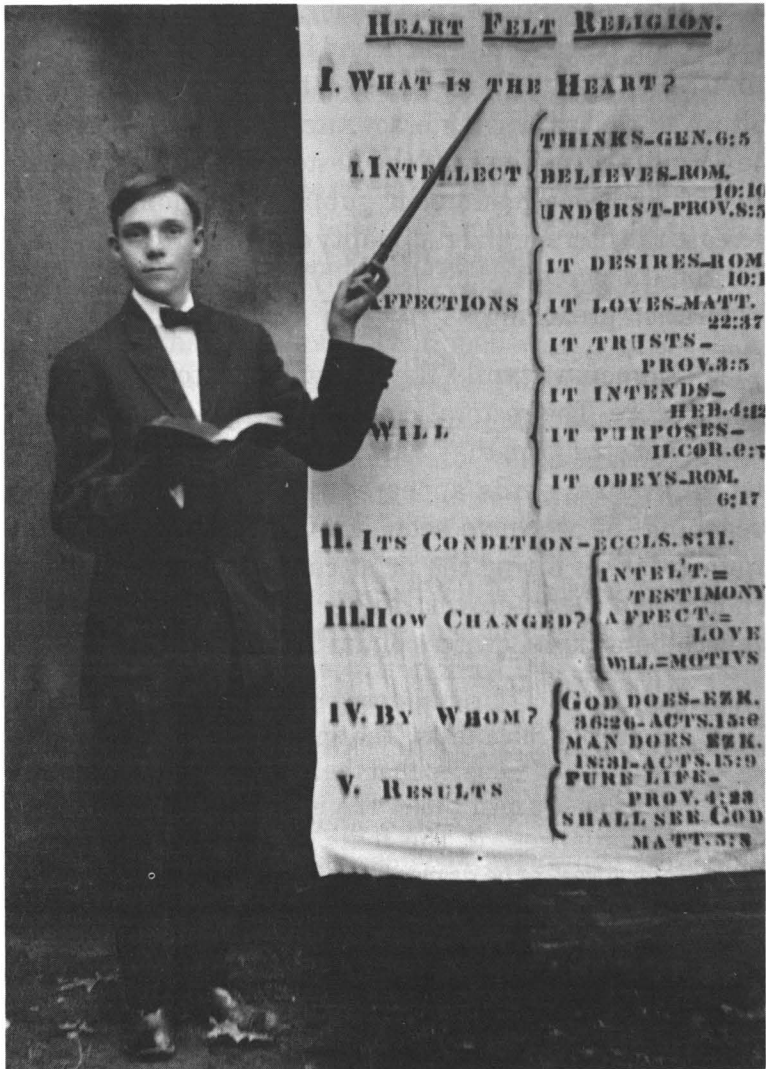
one pays more attention to the details, style, and arguments of writers. Therefore, a person who reviews and rereads a written document, as opposed to one who listens to a speech, more easily notices the omissions and inconsistencies of an author.²

The early Restoration leaders discovered the power of print. Periodicals multiplied, and books and debates were published. America in the nineteenth century had a print culture, as well as a high literacy rate. Emphasizing *reading* the Scripture to understand the Restoration plea, Campbell and others were leaders in public education, helping increase the literacy and rationality of all Americans. Those who could not read could not fully understand or accept Restoration preaching.

More importantly, the concept of Restorationism fit print culture. The restoration of the church was seen as a permanent structure that was “frozen” or “locked” in time, just as printed words appeared to be. The movement’s preaching, as we have seen, was linear, rational, and argumentative, fitting the print culture. Communication scholar and Georgetown University professor Lamar Reinsch perceptively writes of the 1950s:

[A] Church of Christ sermon or lesson always included a number of Bible texts. The speaker was careful to cite “chapter and verse” so that the listener could follow along in his or her own Bible. The intricate analysis, both of the “silences” of the texts and of the “necessary inferences” to be drawn from them, frequently required visual aids in the form of elaborate charts or graphs. Sometimes the speaker used a chalkboard to diagram a sentence taken from the Bible. Very often the Bible was treated as a set of word equations to be analyzed with theological algebra. Each significant word was assumed to have a single, simple, literal meaning which was either immediately apparent or could be discovered by

manipulating the equations. Always the listener was assumed to be interested in a detailed grammatical analysis of what isolated passages of scripture did or did not say.³



Charles Taylor at a tent meeting in the 1910s. —*Courtesy of the Broadway Church of Christ, Paducah, Kentucky.*

Sermons also might explore the intricate meanings and nuances of various Greek words found in New Testament passages or present the “plan of salvation” or the right “acts of worship” or various linear constructions from Scripture of the “patterns” that needed to be restored. Evangelistic sermons or studies emphasized intricate logical structures of knowledge which potential converts usually had to master before they could be immersed. Sunday school lessons consisted of fill-in-the-blank reviews of appropriate blocks of Scripture. Occasionally the audience filled out sermon outlines while listening to the sermons to help them master the knowledge being presented. Preachers even printed their own sermon books which contained sermons identical or nearly identical to sermons in other sermon books. These books served as resumés to show elders and churches that the preacher was “sound” and that he had mastered the necessary biblical knowledge.⁴ People needed permanent, immutable knowledge, and print culture provided the means to do it.

However, the context for preaching today has changed. The invention of the radio signaled the shift away from print culture, and the coming of television intensified that change. Churches of Christ, following the pattern of most conservative religious groups, quickly began utilizing broadcast technology.⁵

Within fourteen months of the first religious broadcast over KDKA in Pittsburgh in January 1921, Fred Little (who preached in Montgomery, Alabama) announced in March 1922 that he had “experienced the novelty of preaching by wireless last night.” Little hoped that radio could reach “derelict members.”⁶ However, the earliest radio sermons soon began to try to reach the unevangelized. Radio preaching so mushroomed in popularity that by 1953 one scholar counted 1,821 radio programs produced by the

Churches of Christ since 1922.⁷ Radio preaching probably reached its height among the Churches of Christ in 1954, when the American Broadcasting Company carried *Herald of Truth*.⁸ In Nashville, A. M. Burton's Life and Casualty Insurance Company owned WLAC. Burton, a member of the Central Church of Christ in Nashville, programmed so many radio sermons "that many people began referring to the call letters as We Love All Campbellites."⁹



James Willeford speaking on *Herald of Truth* radio on ABC network. —*Courtesy of Gospel Advocate.*

According to Dr. B. E. Davis of Abilene Christian University, radio preaching went through three stages: first, entire worship services were broadcast; second, just sermons; and finally, brief, attention-getting messages. As the novelty of radio wore off and radio audiences changed, the nature of the medium altered the content of the message. Radio audiences began to prefer shorter messages broken up into small blocks of time.¹⁰ As a result, many noticed that the traditional sermon was not effective over radio.

The typical sermon, rational and argumentative, fit a print culture, but not the new medium. In 1957 Maurice McKenzie studied the potential of radio for outreach by the Churches of Christ. He concluded that "radio should not be used to attempt to accomplish the teaching objective of the Churches of Christ except when supplemented by face-to-face contact."¹¹

We have seen that quite a number of things must be comprehended by a prospective convert before he has been taught enough to fit the needs of evangelism. It will almost certainly take a large number of radio programs to present all of those things fully and a given listener would have to hear every one of them before the teaching objectives were fulfilled... To attempt to do a complete teaching job by radio would, therefore, seem unprofitable. Also the chances of being able to present such a large number of things without being misunderstood or leaving unanswered questions in the listener's mind are practically nil.¹²

Those who responded to radio messages often remembered the stories or illustrations used by the preachers, indicating that the medium itself had an effect on the message. Also, the radio gave the impression that the preacher was talking directly to them, showing that the medium also created in the listeners a sense of intimacy that really does not exist

between the speaker and listeners as it does in face-to-face interaction.¹³

Television has accelerated the changes in messages and has had its own influence on message content in its emphasis on the nonverbal and visual aspects of messages. In the culture created by television and radio, words are “released” from the frozen print and become “oral” again. The focus is on the immediate reality. Recapturing the words exactly as they are uttered becomes difficult, though not impossible (one can replay an audio- or videotape several times to get the exact words). Rational or argumentative discourse is dull and unexciting on television. Rarely, if at all, does one find linear, sequential discourse (common in print) on television. Drama, emotion and narrative play well; and anything on TV must be exciting or the audience will move on to something new.

The visual, in contrast to the conceptual, dominates. As Neil Postman points out, the 300-pound William McKinley could not be elected President today because of his appearance. Political candidates are elected because of their “image.” In this new medium, most listeners are also very passive and will not put forth the effort to follow rational, argumentative discourse. The television medium is very effective in giving exposure to people and ideas, but it is very ineffective in changing attitudes or presenting sustained rational argument.¹⁴

Many in the church are beginning to adapt to the new media of radio and television. *Heartbeat*, a radio ministry, has a contemporary format. A brief message, lasting only a few seconds, attempts to reach the unchurched and people who are seeking answers to dilemmas in life. The message often focuses on human relationships and problems from a new perspective. To present the gospel to people who are seekers, Landon

Saunders, the creator of *Heartbeat*, usually focuses on the stories of the gospels and the struggles of human existence. *The Heart of the Fighter*, an outgrowth of *Heartbeat*, is a series of films that utilizes a focus on human relationships, narrative, and analogies to present the gospel. Others have developed formats and programs that fit the new electronic media. One television program uses a “contemporary format and takes an innovative approach” for Churches of Christ. The show describes people who “find answers in a relationship with Jesus Christ.” Follow-up literature deals “softly with their needs.”¹⁵ According to Lamar Reinsch, “It is apparent that the program in question does not bristle with citations of scripture. Nor does it stress intricate doctrinal issues.”¹⁶

One leading preacher known for his use of storytelling and narratives is Lynn Anderson,¹⁷ minister for many years at the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas. Anderson was born 22 September 1936, in Saskatchewan, Canada. After graduating from Western Christian College, a high school in Weyburn, Saskatchewan, he studied at Freed Hardeman College at the same time as John Allen Chalk and Landon Saunders. Anderson earned a B.A. from Harding College in 1959, an M.A. from Harding Graduate School of Religion, and a D.Min. from Abilene Christian University. Jim Martin, in his study of Anderson’s preaching, noted that illustrations or stories have “been very important” to Anderson’s style and content.

Anderson has noticed that the Bible does not simply contain stories; it is a story. He also notes that the Gospel is narrative and that, in telling Jesus’ stories, the story of Jesus is told.¹⁸ Writing about his own philosophy of preaching, he says:

Since story form colors my hermeneutic, I tend toward narrative styles aimed at altering attitudes and

experiences rather than at merely transmitting information. I want my listeners to develop the habit of sensing the "biblical story line." Love of story also lures me into generous use of anecdotes, not always as illustrations, but as vehicles through which to convey propositional or abstract content.¹⁹

Anderson has realized that a cultural shift has taken place and that most people do not follow linear, sequential ideas in speaking. People can follow stories more easily. Stories allow people to rest between abstract concepts in a sermon, and stories can hold their attention.²⁰

Anderson is an excellent storyteller in his preaching. Martin found that Anderson used active words, detail, color, and vividness when telling a story. His stories had high emotional intensity and often clarified and simplified the concepts he was discussing. Sometimes more than half of a sermon was illustrations. Anderson believes that it is wrong to bore people with the Gospel.²¹ Despite the novelty of what Anderson does, he does stand with preachers from other traditions in developing narrative in sermons. J. C. Bailey, a leading Canadian preacher, introduced Anderson to the use of stories when he gave Anderson T. B. Larimore's sermons to read as an example of a good use of stories in preaching.²²

Tension is an almost inevitable result of the use of such new approaches and the development of new preaching traditions. In 1991 a new congregation was created in Nashville, Tennessee, because many were "impatient with 'traditional' approaches to Christianity" in the Churches of Christ. The minister of the new church said that congregations "should consider, for example, the use of audiovisual presentations of the Gospel message in worship because baby boomers were reared on a 'visual' culture and do not respond as well to traditional sermons."²³

The shift from a print culture to an electro-media culture has had and is having profound influences on preaching. The old, rational style, regardless of its various forms, will have difficulty sustaining itself. Kathleen Jamieson, a communication professor at the University of Pennsylvania, has shown the impact of television on political speaking. Because of television's emphasis on the visual and dramatic, the "sound bite" has evolved as a major facet in political discourse. Ronald Reagan became the best exemplar of the new style of political speaking, with his ability to tell stories. Rather than argue when he was confronted with questions, Reagan would narrate a story and deflect criticism. For Reagan, stories were the basic rhetorical staple, while for his predecessors they were an "exotic dish."²⁴

Jamieson correctly notes that a story does not justify a generalization. However, "the dramatic tale has more power to involve and propel" a generalization "than do statistics that would better warrant the claim." The same holds true in a sermon. Stories will have more rhetorical effect than a flood of Scripture quotations or exegetical studies of the biblical text. "Reagan," Jamieson says, "is able, through simple, direct, dramatic word pictures, to evoke in the audience what he himself seems to be feeling."²⁵ The same is happening all over the land in our pulpits.

Notes

1. Paul Prill, "The Drama of Debate: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Debate between Alexander Campbell and Nathan L. Rice" (M.A. thesis, Western Illinois State, 1975).

2. Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (New York: Methuen, 1982).

3. Lamar Reinsch, Jr., "How Churches Are Challenged by the New Technologies," paper presented at the Conference on Religious

Communication in the Restoration Tradition," Abilene Christian University, July 1985. Also see Reinsch, "The Impact of Technology: How It Shapes Our Message," *Ministry: A Focus on Ministry, Missions and the Word* (Winter 1986): 1, 3.

4. Mark Love (Gresham, Oregon) brought to my attention this function of sermon outlines.

5. Quentin J. Schultze, "Evangelical Radio and the Rise of the Electronic Church, 1921-1948," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 32 (Summer 1988): 289-306.

6. Lowell Perry, "History of Broadcasting in Churches of Christ from 1922 1953," *Restoration Quarterly* 18 (1975): 34.

7. *Ibid.*, 40.

8. Robert Hooper, *A Distinct People: A History of the Churches of Christ in the Twentieth Century* (West Monroe: Howard Publishing Co., 1993), 188.

9. *Ibid.*, 136.

10. Joy McMillon and R. Scott Lamascus, "Are You Listening . . . ? Radio Evangelism among Churches of Christ," *Christian Chronicle* (October 1986): 10.

11. Maurice Wilford McKenzie, "A Study of the Advisability of the Use of Radio to Accomplish the Objectives of the Churches of Christ" (M.A. thesis, University of Denver, 1957), 68.

12. *Ibid.*, 65-66.

13. Lowell Perry, "The Description and Analysis of a Process of Religious Persuasion" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1956), 111, 113.

14. Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in an Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin, 1985) and Walter Ong, *Orality*.

15. Joy McMillon, "Special Receives High TV Ratings," *Christian Chronicle* (April 1985): 9.

16. Reinsch, "How Churches," 15.

17. Jim Martin, "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Illustrative Technique of Clovis Chappell, Batsell Barrett Baxter and Lynn Anderson" (D.Min. thesis, Harding Graduate School of Religion, 1987), 105.

18. Lynn Anderson, Interview by Jim Martin, 22 July 1985. Also see Martin, "Rhetorical," 105.
19. Lynn Anderson, *Freshness for the Far Journey: Reflections on Preaching As We Step toward the Twenty-First Century* (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 1992), 91.
20. Anderson, interview, and Martin, "Rhetorical," 106-8.
21. Martin, "Rhetorical," 113, 116, 119, 126, 128, and Anderson interview.
22. Martin, "Rhetorical," 136-37.
23. Ray Waddle, "New Church Plots Course," *Nashville Tennessean* (22 August 1991): B1.
24. Kathleen Jamieson, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age: The Transformation of Political Speechmaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 139.
25. *Ibid.*, 152.

What's Next? Into the Next Millennium

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The world will continue to change; and our forms and traditions of preaching will, as in the past, continue to change in response to social, cultural, and intellectual trends. Insisting upon one method or tradition of preaching will not be helpful as the church continues to face new challenges. At present, narrative preaching may meet the challenges, but it needs to be more than just the telling of interesting stories. This chapter will look at the impact of illustrations on preaching, the current cultural climate, the positive possibilities of narrative preaching, and the need for creativity in homiletics.

Princeton homiletician Tom Long has analyzed the development of the illustration as a homiletical tool during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The word “illustration” means “to bring light,” and according to Long, homiletics, under the influence of the Enlightenment, began to move from the idea of the preacher as persuader to the preacher as explainer. The task was to make the truth of

the Gospel “lucid and understandable.” Homiletics began to view the illustration as the key tool or aid to the task of making Scripture clear.¹

As Long notes, sermons develop a thesis, and illustrations help “illuminate and clarify that thesis.” Illustrations are therefore “windows on the word.” In sermons, preachers develop ideas, but when an idea becomes “too obscure or conceptually difficult” for the audience, the preacher “opens a window by supplying an illustration, thereby throwing some light on an otherwise shadowy topic.”²

However, preachers within our own rational tradition, also influenced by the Enlightenment, initially believed that the Scripture itself, especially the plain text or verses, could stand on its own. However, as we have seen over time, in one way or another, most of the preaching gradually adopted some form of illustration or narrative to modify the rational approach. Most preachers began to realize that the plain text would not stand on its own. Long’s explanation of the impact of illustrations is a useful way to understand what happened in Restoration preaching.

Long argues that when preachers began to use various illustrations, “they quickly encountered a troubling side effect: the illustrations often overpowered the rest of the sermon.” People became “more engaged by the illustrative material than they were by the main thread of the sermon.” Many listeners would remember the “windows” and forget whatever point was being made. Homileticians then began to issue warnings about the dangers of the “overuse” of illustrations. “Trivial” anecdotes were to be avoided. Solid illustrations were to be used “sparingly” and with “caution.”³

Long is correct about why audiences were “overcome” by the illustrations; “there is more

communicative power and energy in stories, images and examples than the terms 'illustration' or 'windows on the word' would allow."⁴ According to Fred Craddock, "stories or anecdotes" used in sermons "do not illustrate the point; rather they *are* the point."⁵

The parallels in our own history are striking. Alexander Campbell disdained the use of illustrations in preaching, believing such techniques simply encouraged the empty, emotional, revivalist preaching of the times. Larimore, Hardeman, the African-American preachers and others rejected this idea and began to use narratives in their preaching, for the rational form alone could not sustain itself with audiences. Later, as biblical scholars began teaching exegetical methods, they attempted a return to a rational approach to preaching.

I can vividly remember a class at Abilene Christian University where we were called upon to construct sermons based on the text we had exegeted for the whole semester. The instructor made it clear that the exegetical methods we were learning were to help us preach. The ones who dared to use "illustrations" in their sermons received lower grades. According to some biblical scholars, no preacher has the time to cover the exegetical ground and also try to use illustrations. In reality, many of the scholars probably intuitively knew the power of illustrations over audiences and tried to hold back the tide. Doubtless, those who took that exegetical class have never preached those illustrationless sermons, for we knew that the "dry bones" of exegesis would not work without something else.⁶

Exegesis in the pulpit takes an audience halfway across a bridge that goes from the ancient text to what that word should mean for us today. Preachers who primarily exegete a passage in a sermon focus on what the text meant and give good solid information about the historical context

and meaning of the original languages, but leave it to the audience to cross the rest of the bridge by figuring out for themselves any meaning or relevance the text has for the audience today. As we saw in chapter nine, even Frank Pack, in his description of the preaching process, said the preacher must make the sermon relevant to the audience. Unfortunately, he never said how this was done.

Homiletician David Buttrick explains the problem well. Pack's work, *Preaching to Modern Man*, fits a genre of books written on biblical preaching which take preachers step by step from a Scripture passage to the sermon. Buttrick explains that in all these books there "seems to be a gap" or something missing:

The crucial moment between exegesis and homiletic vision is not described. The shift between the study of a text and the conception of a sermon—perhaps it occurs in a flash of imagination—is never discussed. So alert readers are left with the odd impression that we move from the Bible to contemporary sermon by some inexplicable magic!⁷

In reality, for many exegetically based sermons, no magic is present; also absent is anything contemporary audiences can easily understand.

This exegetical approach also impacts how we view the Bible itself, since scriptural passages, Buttrick says, are considered "still-life pictures." The preacher can pull out the picture, observe it, and "comment on the details within the picture." This method is supported by "erudite historical-critical commentaries. They too isolated a passage and then, verse by verse, explained each detail philologically or historically." Ideas for sermons are distilled from "chunks of Scripture" with a devastating effect on the passage being preached. In narrative passages, Buttrick aptly says, "we lost the whole story. We discarded the narrative structure

and, in non-narrative passages, the rhetoric of a structural movement.”⁸ To attempt to keep people from abandoning the sermon as they sit in the pews, the preacher will reach for an “‘all-the-stops-pulled-out’ emotional illustration that may help to pass the time.”⁹ Such a step, as we have seen, can overpower the rest of the sermon.

In some of our colleges, the Bible scholars took over the preaching classes and banished the neo-Aristotelian trained speech scholars (discussed in chapter 8) in a vain attempt to keep alive the exegetical style of preaching. The Bible scholars appeared to be uncomfortable that students were learning the potent power that rhetoric and narrative represented. Some even disdained attempts to be relevant and to connect with the larger social world. The attitude can be summed up by Karl Barth in his book on homiletics:

We do not always have to bring in the latest and most sensational events. For instance, if a fire broke out in the community last week, and church members are still suffering under its awful impact, we should be on guard against even hinting at this theme in the sermon.¹⁰

Despite the efforts of biblical scholars and persons from the other rational traditions of our movement, illustrations in sermons are taking over most preaching. Admittedly, much of that preaching is very shallow. Coming out of the troubled 1960s, some sermons focused excessively on felt needs. Helping ministries began to grow by leaps and bounds, and an era of narcissism arose in the 1970s. Christians were urged to help themselves. Positive thinking took over, and “sin was seen as psychological dysfunction and salvation as inward good feeling.”¹¹ When I visited one of our Christian college bookstores a few years ago, a flashy display of Zig Ziglar’s books had replaced the display of C. R. Nichol’s *Sound Doctrine*.

In the 1970s, even some of the grace-oriented churches were losing focus. Preachers sometimes said that being filled with the Holy Spirit was the same as having enthusiasm. One preacher recalled the Pentecost story and pointed out that the disciples were filled with the Spirit and “were fired up with excitement.” He believed that enthusiasm could be reproduced in congregational singing. If the song leader had a “sourpuss” attitude, members would “sink down in their pews.” However, if the songleader was lively, “with a smile and a lilt in his song, and some enthusiasm about his melody,” then “the congregation could not be contained.”¹² While rejecting the rational approaches, preachers in the grace-oriented churches manipulated and misused the spiritual.

Often these preachers were simply telling illustrations for their own sakes or to gloss over a perceived need of the audience. Some of these preachers completely rejected the rational and exegetical traditions and cut themselves off from the biblical text. They assumed that a person did not have to cross the first half of the bridge between the ancient text and the present-day meaning. Their illustrations actually originated from the present-day moral world of the preacher; therefore, under the guise of presenting the Gospel, the sermon presented cultural values foreign to the Gospel. Lynn Anderson, a key user of narrative in preaching, realized that a danger of sentimental stories in sermons is that a story can potentially get in the way of the meaning of the biblical text. Even before Long and Buttrick made their observations about illustrations, Anderson knew that many people would remember the story rather than the text for the sermon and that some would simply be entertained by the story.¹³

The rational approach and more recent need-focused preaching both reflect the idea of the autonomous individual

who pursues his or her own agenda, independent of any tradition or authority. Especially since World War II, most church members have pursued the materialistic “good life,” and the “self-made man” myth has run rampant in society and in our churches.¹⁴

Modern society has divided the world into two compartments: the public realm—business—and the private realm—family life. Society has produced two critical archetypes to manage people in those two realms: the bureaucratic manager and the therapist. The manager has to rally the troops and keep individuals working efficiently in order to keep the organization running smoothly in the competitive marketplace.

His role is to persuade, inspire, manipulate, cajole, and intimidate those he manages so that his organization measures up to society’s criteria of effectiveness, shaped ultimately by the market.¹⁵

For the private sector, the key regulator is the therapist. Increasingly in modern society there is a lack of fit between the individual’s idea of self “and the available organization of work, intimacy and meaning.” The therapist is to supply the cure by “enhancing and empowering the self to be able to relate successfully to others in society, achieving a kind of satisfaction without being overwhelmed by their demands.” In other words, the therapist helps the autonomous individual choose his or her own roles according to each person’s own independent criteria.¹⁶

We may assume that if we can feel good about ourselves or use therapy to keep our problems at bay, then everything will be okay. The role of the preacher and preaching in our churches in the 1970s and 1980s often bought into this secular, therapeutic view of the individual and society. The preacher became an “enabler.” According

to Buttrick:

An enabler can be a person who removes inhibitions, blocks, hang-ups so that people may be free for self-fulfillment; thus [the term] can have a therapeutic meaning. Or, in our world today an enabler can be an executive who manages a corporate body so that people can be fully productive; thus an enabler can have a managerial meaning.¹⁷

We have allowed the roles and stories of society to run church life. The preacher runs the church as a manager, seeing the church as another bureaucratic business. He keeps the paid staff and, more importantly, the volunteer workers of the various church programs, productive so he can give good reports to his board of directors (the elders). Then he preaches on Sundays and counsels during the week to help the members of the congregation feel good about themselves and cope with the problems of modernity. But instead of solving the problems created by modernity, such a model exacerbates them.

More and more people are turning away from the modern ideas of progress and the segmented world of the private and public realms. Many are beginning to seek alternatives to the idea of the autonomous individual. One such group is the generation behind the baby boomers, called the baby busters or "Generation X." The baby busters are a pessimistic generation, increasingly rejecting the myths of modern society. They are not sure that science will make things better or that they can improve their own lives. Their music is filled with despair, and many are pessimistic about the opportunities to pursue rewarding careers. Some are rejecting a career-first lifestyle; the bureaucratic and therapeutic models of preaching will not attract them. Neither will the various rational forms of preaching have any appeal because the busters are a

generation raised on *Sesame Street* and MTV—the first television generation. The modern world is slowly passing away and with it the effectiveness of preaching rooted in its worldview. Milton Jones has aptly noted that “we will have to move into the twenty-first century and not be afraid of the revolutionary advancements in today’s communication capabilities.”¹⁸

The modern worldview is passing away for Generation X and others in our society. Right now we cannot know what will happen in the next century and the upcoming third millennium. We are entering into a new, postmodern world.¹⁹ At the moment, we are “between the times” and in the midst of the homiletical confusion I described in the introduction to the book.²⁰

What needs to happen (and is occurring in some of our colleges) is a reconnection of the academic discipline of rhetoric with homiletics. Buttrick correctly states that in “biblical preaching” or the scholarly tradition in general (outside of the Churches of Christ) “rhetoric has been regarded with suspicion as a form of alien human wisdom.” However, preaching forms evolve to match the shifting patterns of human society and culture. New rhetoric develops as cultural changes emerge. “People hear and understand in very different ways”; therefore, Buttrick says, “useful rhetoric tries to match speaking and hearing. We can learn to shape the language of speaking so that people will more readily grasp meaning and believe.”²¹ Rhetoric will be critical to help the pulpit connect with audiences, and it will help preachers comprehend the new postmodern audience and the forms the gospel presentation will take in the future.

As in the past, I believe that new forms of preaching will emerge and are emerging which will aid effective proclamation of the gospel. In times of upheaval, great

opportunities arise for the gospel to be heard. Increasingly, preaching is in a narrative form. Now more than ever, people respond to stories. As we have seen, stories are not mere embellishments or addenda to make the message clear; they communicate powerful messages in and of themselves. As people turn away from the rational, modern, bureaucratic society, they are searching for stories to live by and for texts that project a habitable, desirable world. They want stories that create a sense of community, that reject the rampant, bankrupt individualism of modernity. Texts or stories that can meet such needs must be applicable "as a guide to thought and action" as people "encounter changing circumstances. [They] must supply followable directions for coherent patterns of life in new situations."²²

The Bible had such a function in the first century. It had "extraordinarily wide applicability in varying circumstances." The Bible also "had directive force and community-building power far superior to the philosophical systems which were its only real rivals." In the first century and afterward, the Bible "was a preeminently habitable text in a world needing habitations, and the nations flocked into it."²³ As we enter the postmodern world, hungry for a sense of community, that opportunity presents itself again.

The Bible is itself overwhelmingly narrative in form. As Charles Woods puts it:

When one regards the biblical canon as a whole, the centrality to it of a narrative element is difficult to overlook: not only the chronological sweep of the whole, from creation to new creation,... but also the way the large narrative portions interweave and provide a context for the remaining materials so that they, too, have a place in the ongoing story, while these other materials—parables, hymns, prayers, summaries, theological expositions—serve in different ways to enable readers to get hold of the story and to live their way into it.²⁴

The theology of the Bible is narrated and cannot be separated by any rational grid into discrete, independent propositions. People will still hear its stories and especially the story of Christ: a story that can form a community of character.

As mentioned at the end of the last chapter, The use of narrative in preaching is spreading rapidly. An encouraging sign is that preaching *the* story is more and more common. A tradition of narrative preaching is showing signs of flowering in our churches. This tradition of narrative has two great strengths. First, narrative preaching unites the concerns of the traditions that are message-centered with those that focus on the needs of the audience. When the focus is *the* story, then the preaching will be based in the Bible. At the same time, people love stories and find meaning in them. They are eager for a story that will meet their needs; what story could possibly be more relevant to their needs than *the* story? Second, when the story of the Bible is preached, narrative preaching will be biblical in nature.

Creativity in this tradition will increase. New preachers will emerge and have a chance to be heard in the lectureship programs of Pepperdine University, the Jubilee meeting in Nashville, and in countless smaller gatherings. As they mature and become known, they will preach at the older lectureships at Abilene Christian and the other Christian colleges. As in the past, others will copy them by creatively adapting this narrative style. Eventually, new forms of preaching will develop in response to new situations and needs.

Still, we should not underestimate the challenges of the emergent postmodern views. We will always need creativity in teaching homiletics and training preachers. We need new instructors who share the breadth of view of

a LeMoine Lewis. We must encourage synthesis among the different preaching traditions, taking the strengths of each to form a new, better whole. Several of our colleges need to let the rhetoricians back into homiletics to join with the biblical scholars. Many from the first generation of neo-Aristotelian speech teachers have retired, and new persons trained in modern rhetoric are now in state universities and Christian colleges. In some Christian colleges, the neo-Aristotelian teachers of preaching need to become more aware of new rhetorical theory and collaborate more with biblical scholars in preaching courses. Buttrick argues for the central role of new rhetoric in the future of homiletics:

Our preaching may well become much more oral and immediate. But if we are wise, it will not become less rhetorical. Rhetoric is a speaker's wisdom that is based on how language works and, more urgently, how human beings understand. For the future, the field of homiletics will have to return and be renewed by conversations with contemporary rhetoricians. People are thinking, understanding, and speaking in ways that belie homiletic textbooks we have inherited from the past. So we need to think out the rhetorical ways and the means appropriate to contemporary consciousness.²⁵

The new rhetoricians can work collaboratively with textual scholars to develop the possibilities of narrative to bridge the concerns of the message-centered and audience-centered traditions of preaching. Ideally, teachers of homiletics will have training in both rhetoric and textual studies. Fortunately, in some of the Christian colleges this has begun to occur.

Throughout this book we have never advocated using only one style or form. Some traditions have died out, and others have evolved. Our preaching will continue to adapt and change to enrich the church. In such a small

fellowship as ours, preachers in the different preaching traditions ought to learn from each other. The possibilities for educating each other are numerous. Many of these avenues will play significant roles in the future changes of our preaching. The proliferation of audiotape, videotape, and especially the newly emergent electronic mail and computer networking technologies will allow preachers and teachers of preaching to learn from a wide array of local sermon practices and the various preaching traditions which these practices draw from. There is a wealth of diversity in the ways that we have preached, are preaching, and will preach the gospel. Our heritage is rich, the potential is vast, and the promise is exciting.

Notes

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1. Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 158.
 2. *Ibid.*, 159.
 3. *Ibid.*, 160.
 4. *Ibid.*
 5. Fred Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 204.
 6. Abraham Malherbe calls the synthesis of the research of an exegesis "dry bones." According to Malherbe, "Blowing life into these dry bones" is accomplished by a paraphrase. See his influential article, "An Introduction: The Task and Method of Exegesis," *Restoration Quarterly* 5 (1961): 169-78.
 7. David Buttrick, *A Captive Voice: The Liberation of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 89.
 8. *Ibid.*, 82.
 9. *Ibid.*, 84.
 10. Barth, *Homiletics*, 118; quoted in Buttrick, 8. Barth also said that preaching should be conducted with the newspaper in one hand and the Bible in the other. Buttrick, however, is right in noting that American teachers of homiletics in the biblical theology movement

have not followed this advice.

11. Buttrick, 13.
12. From an actual published sermon during the 1970s.
13. Lynn Anderson, Interview by Jim Martin, 22 July 1985. Anderson's preaching does not reflect the weaknesses of using stories that I am describing.
14. Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 44-45.
15. Ibid., 45.
16. Ibid., 47.
17. Buttrick, 47.
18. Milton Jones, "Bringing the Cross to Generation X," *Image* (July/August 1994): 23-26.
19. "Postmodern" simply means that many of the modern ideals of inevitable progress, the solution of problems through reason and science, secularism (the exclusion of any idea of God), and the inherently good nature of knowledge are questioned and will no longer be believed. See Diogenes Allen, *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World: The Full Wealth of Conviction* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 1-19.
20. For "between the times" see Buttrick, 71, 79.
21. Ibid., 67.
22. George Lindbeck, "Scripture, Consensus, and Community," in *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 97.
23. Ibid.
24. Charles M. Wood, *The Formation of Christian Understanding: An Essay in Theological Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 100.
25. Buttrick, 112. For a very perceptive article detailing the new trend in homiletics generally, see Robert Reid, David Fleer, and Jeffrey Bullock, "Preaching as the Creation of an Experience: The Not-So-Rational Revolution of the New Homiletic," *The Journal of Communication and Religion* 18 (March 1995): 1-9.

List of Preachers

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth-Death</u>	<u>Main Place of Ministry</u>
Walter Adams	1903-	Texas
Lynn Anderson	1936-	British Columbia, Texas
Jimmy Allen	1930-	Arkansas
George Bailey	1922-	Texas
J. D. Bales	1915-1995	Arkansas
Bill Banowsky	1936-	Texas
Batsell Barrett Baxter	1916-1982	Tennessee
Fred Barton	1911-	Texas
George Benson	1898-1991	Arkansas
Ron Bever	1933-	Oklahoma
Price Billingsley	1877-1959	Texas, Tennessee
G. P. Bowser	1874-1950	Texas, Arkansas
G. C. Brewer	1884-1956	Tennessee, Texas
L. L. Brigance	1879-1950	Tennessee
Hall Calhoun	1863-1935	Tennessee
Alexander Campbell	1788-1866	Virginia
John Allen Chalk	1937-	Tennessee, Texas
F. L. Colley	1899-1964	Texas
Willard Collins	1915-	Tennessee
George DeHoff	1913-1993	Tennessee
Stephen Eckstein	1893-1975	Texas
Carroll Ellis	1919-	Tennessee
Ed Enzor	1935-	Texas
Dwain Evans	1933-	Texas, New York
Tolbert Fanning	1810-1874	Tennessee
Joseph Gaston	1801-1834	Ohio
B. C. Goodpasture	1895-1977	Tennessee

Fred D. Gray	1930-	Alabama
David Haggard	1760(?)–1820(?)	Virginia, Kentucky
Rice Haggard	1769–1819	Virginia, Kentucky
N. B. Hardeman	1874–1965	Tennessee
R. N. Hogan	1902-	California
Tom Holland	1931-	Tennessee
Warren Jones	1921-	California
Marshall Keeble	1878–1968	Tennessee
Carl Ketcherside	1908–1989	Missouri
William Kinkade	1783–1832	Ohio
M. C. Kurfees	1856–1931	Kentucky
James Lamar	1829–1908	Georgia
Moses Lard	1818–1880	Kentucky
T. B. Larimore	1843–1929	Alabama, California
Steven Lemley	1945-	Texas, California
John T. Lewis	1876–1967	Alabama
LeMoine Lewis	1916–1987	Texas
A. B. Lipscomb	1876–1940	Georgia
Fred Little	1881–1942	Alabama, Tennessee
E. C. Love	1877–1951(?)	Tennessee California
B. F. Manire	1828–1911	Mississippi
J. M. McCaleb	1861–1953	Tennessee, Japan
Hugo McCord	1911-	Oklahoma
J. W. McGarvey	1829–1911	Kentucky
Prentice Meador	1938-	Missouri, Texas
Luke Miller	1904–1962	Tennessee
Nathan Mitchell	1808–1886	Ohio, Penn.
K. C. Moser	1893–1976	Texas
C. R. Nichol	1876–1961	Texas
Ira North	1922–1984	Tennessee
Stafford North	1930-	Oklahoma
James O'Kelly	1735(?)–1826	North Carolina, Virginia
Thomas Olbricht	1929-	Texas, California
Frank Pack	1916-	Tennessee, Texas, California
J. Wayne Poucher	1922-	Tennessee, Virginia

Ira Rice Jr.	1917-	Tennessee, California
Robert Richardson	1806-1876	Virginia
J. W. Roberts	1918-1973	Texas
Samuel Rogers	1789-1877	Ohio
John Rogers	1800-1867	Kentucky
Fred Rowe	1886-1947	Ohio
John F. Rowe	1827-1897	Ohio
J. P. Sanders	1906-	Tennessee, California
Landon Saunders	1937-	Texas, New Hampshire
Walter Scott	1796-1861	Ohio, Kentucky
John Secrest	1800(?)-(?)	Ohio
Charles Siburt	1946-	Texas
Elias Smith	1769-1846	New Hampshire, Mass.
F. W. Smith	1858-1930	Tennessee
F. D. Srygley	1856-1900	Tennessee, Alabama
Barton Stone	1772-1844	Kentucky
C. M. Stubblefield	1878-1950	Kentucky, Texas
J. D. Tant	1861-1941	Texas
Yater Tant	1908-	Alabama
J. D. Thomas	1910-	Texas
Evan Ulrey	1922-	Arkansas
Foy E. Wallace Jr.	1896-1979	Texas
Cled Wallace	1892-1962	Texas
Joe Warlick	1866-1941	Texas
W. B. West	1907-1994	California, Tennessee
L. S. White	1867-1949	Texas
Morris Womack	1927-	California, Michigan
Guy N. Woods	1908-1994	Tennessee

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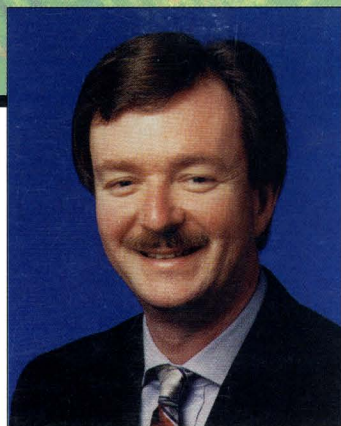
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"This book by Mike Casey is pioneering scholarship... Whether or not one always agrees with Mike, I predict that any future studies on preaching in our movement will, of necessity, commence with this book."

—Dr. Thomas H. Olbricht
Chair, Religion Division
Pepperdine University



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PRESS**

Abilene Christian University Press
ACU Station Box 8392
Abilene, TX 79699

ISBN 0-89112-017-3



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