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EDITOR: BRUCE J. NICHOLLS



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are in the business of expressing the unchanging gospel in ever-new language related to the changing needs of the world, but what is that ‘unchanging gospel’? Is it possible to put it into words? Or will it not be true that *every* set of words used to express it will be *less* than the truth it seeks to convey, and in fact chosen to express the truth for a particular time and culture?

This is an uncomfortable thought, but its truth is illustrated by the great attempts of the past to distill the essence of the gospel into succinct statements. They seem so dated now! and are so obviously in need of *expansion*, at least, to bring them into connection with the needs of our age.

Karl Barth, of course, applied this same thought to the Bible, also. It too, he maintained, is a culturally relative expression of God’s Word, a *witness to it* rather than an *expression of it*. Evangelical preachers will want to resist downgrading the status of the Scriptures in the church, but even so it is clear that God in his providence has given us words from himself deeply rooted in time and place. The preacher stands at the heart of the hermeneutical process, bridging the gap between then and now, and seeking the words which will re-express for people *now* the word that was so crucially spoken *then*.

This is challenging! And difficult. It is easy to fall back on accepted patterns, language tried and true, the clichés of Zion which reassure the faithful but puzzle outsiders. The challenge is to *understand so deeply* (point 1 above), and to *study so carefully* (point 2), and to *depend so humbly* (point 3), and to *reflect so widely* (point 4), and to *know so intimately* (this point), that new words will come freshly to express the grace and love of God with power for today.

‘Exposition’ is a great word. It speaks of *exposure* of the revelation of something that would otherwise be hidden. We preachers need to make sure that the *methods* we choose match the *goal* we seek—that of enabling the church and the world in our generation really to see the Christ who has gripped and won our hearts.

Thinking about hermeneutics has been a great help to me in my own preaching ministry, and it is my prayer that this essay will serve a similar purpose for brothers and sisters with the same great calling.

Dr. Steve Motyer teaches New Testament and Hermeneutics at the London Bible College, England. [p. 225](#)

Four Horizons in Preaching

Paul Windsor

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The author argues that relating the text to the people through the Preacher calls for the merging of four horizons, a task dependent on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He follows up this brief article with his own course outline for expository preaching which he uses in his classes.

Editor

It is not yet in our dictionaries, but one day it will be. *To re-invent*: ‘to return to the classical and redefine it in a way that demonstrates its usefulness in a contemporary context: to breathe life into a dying form ...’

Right back in the 1870s Phillips Brooks invented *the* classic definition of preaching: ‘the bringing of truth through a personality’. While today’s shaky convictions about preaching may suggest its imminent demise, it might be better for us to seek a re-invention—beginning with Brooks.

THE TRUTH

Brooks viewed the truth to be the fixed dimension in preaching. Whether it be in the form of the living word or as the written word, this truth imprisons us. The Christ-adoring explanation of biblical truth will never be eclipsed. ‘God still speaks through what he has spoken.’

For the preacher, the text is the ‘boss’. It sets the agenda as it did for Jesus on the road to Emmaus, for Ezra in the square before the Water Gate, and for Peter on the Day of Pentecost. It is the soil in which the digging is done and in which all thoughts are rooted. It is the file to open and then be ‘backed-up’ in the lives of all who process it.

The text is not so much the springboard from which we dive as the swimming pool into which we dive—and swim.

THE PERSONALITY

Brooks was right! There is more to preaching than explaining the truth. Such a one-dimensional vision must **P. 226** be buried. Preaching involves the preacher. With the media age spawning so many competitors for people’s senses, it is more critical than ever that a preacher’s explanation of the text transmit a personality that is compelling in its authenticity.

We need not be intimidated by this. It does not matter whether we live in 1870 or 1995, nothing will ever grab people’s ears more than someone who simply believes what they are saying and can communicate it with passion. The sterile reading of a manuscript with a monotonous voice is not good enough—not with people accustomed to the Peter Montgomerys of this world.

So as we preach, we must involve more of *ourselves* in our sermons. We need to dredge our life experience for stories of our encounters with God and with every human emotion and then in creative ways bring those into our preaching and thereby *bear witness* to the living God at work in the ragged edges of our lives.

THE LISTENER

The re-invention requires an expansion. Listeners are no longer the captive audience they were in 1870. In mind and in body, they are more prone to wander. How can they be engaged? In spirit and in emotion they are more inclined to self-absorption. How can they be lifted beyond themselves?

Audience-analysis becomes a key ingredient. We *will* need to work harder at introductions and conclusions as well as illustration and application. We *may* need to be briefer, less analytical, utilise fewer notes as well as the OHP, and include sermon ‘talkbacks’.

Truth no longer fascinates listeners. The biblical literacy index has never been lower, the theological instinct never more blunt. Never has systematic catechesis been needed more; and yet, sadly, never has it been wanted less by the people in our churches.

However, the more things change the more they remain the same. In every group of listeners in every era there will be the unconverted to be wakened, the self-satisfied to be humbled, the enquiring to be counselled, the convicted to be led to Christ, the young to be built up, the mature to be encouraged, and those in trouble to be directed.

Nothing accomplishes this diverse range of ministries better than faithful biblical preaching from a 'peopleperson' preacher. Whatever effort it takes to explain the text carefully, an equal amount will be required to earth it creatively in the lives of today's listeners.

THE WORLD

From the explicit to its implicit assumptions, the world is a different place from what it once was. The globe has shrunk. The fresh flush of the scientific revolution has paled. Information superhighways, satellite dishes (they are watching Oprah in village India even as you read), and ethnic mixing lubricates a pluralistic world in which tolerance replaces truth as the highest virtue.

Idolatry looks different now. Paganism is no longer tribal and [p. 227](#) syncretism no longer half-naked. A privileged position for Christianity in the market place of ideas has gone. Christendom is over. The preacher no longer features on the 'top twenty' list of most trusted professions, let alone heading it!

It has been said that when people stop believing in God it is not that they believe nothing, they believe *anything*. Ne'er a truer word! For the postmodern, individual conversions come easy and often—be it for toothpaste or for 'truth'.

Brooks knew none of this. Never has Bonhoeffer's call for 'worldly' preaching been more urgent, or Barth's 'Bible in one hand, newspaper in the other' maxim more in need of re-invention! But it begins not so much with what is in our hands as how it is with our eyes. Like Paul at Athens who saw the tragic amidst the tourist, like Jesus who saw the harassed amidst the crowds, we too must see and perceive. Today, preachers must be thinkers with good eyesight.

When confronted with crisis, the church too quickly looks to update its techniques rather than strengthen its trembling convictions. Such has been the case with preaching. Preaching is no longer a bringing of truth through a personality. It is the bringing of truth through a personality in a way that engages listeners living in our world.

Preaching is multi-dimensional. While exegesis begins with the text and is controlled by the text, it must extend to the preacher, the listener, and the world. All four must be exegeted. While God's story provides the main plot-line, there are three other stories to weave into the narrative.

Preaching's impact occurs as its four component horizons fuse together in the course of the sermon under the direction of the Spirit. After all, it is the Spirit who inspires the text, anoints the preacher, illuminates the listener and convicts the world.

An Apologetic for Expository Preaching

- I. Some definitions that explain exposition**
- II. A biblical basis that endorses exposition**
 - A. *a notion revived ... through exposition: [Nehemiah 8](#)*
 - B. *a duo restored ... through exposition: [Luke 24](#)*
 - C. *a church ignited ... through exposition: [Acts 2](#)*
- III. An historical record that illustrates exposition**
various case studies: Chrysostom, Puritans, Charles Simeon etc
- IV. The theological convictions that undergird exposition**
 - A. *a conviction about God*
 - B. *a conviction about Scripture*
 - C. *a conviction about the Church p. 228*
 - D. *a conviction about the Pastorate*
 - E. *a conviction about Preaching*
- V. The re-visioning that updates exposition**
 {NB This is the section in which I develop my Four Horizons material}
 - A. *the truth*
 - B. *the personality*
 - C. *the listener*
 - D. *the world*
- VI. The needs, in the church, that require exposition**
 - A. *where there is division, exposition will help build harmony*
 - B. *where there is superficiality, exposition will help build maturity*
 - C. *where things are stagnant, exposition will help initiate ministry*
 - D. *where things lack direction, exposition helps establish an authority*
- VII. The freedoms, in the pastor/teacher, that accompany exposition**
 - A. *The freedom of being restricted to biblical truth*
 - B. *The freedom to address sensitive pastoral issues*
 - C. *The freedom to cripple our hobbyhorses*
 - D. *The freedom from unnecessary counselling*
 - E. *The freedom to be personally restored*
 - F. *The freedom to be faithful, rather than successful*
 - G. *The freedom to see our congregation enthusiastic about the Word*
 - H. *The freedom to be prophetic*
- VIII. The pain, in our post-christian society, that aches for exposition**
- IX. The variety of biblical genre that diversifies exposition**
 - A. *Exposition which is deductive*
 - B. *Exposition which is inductive*
 - C. *Exposition which is story*
- X. The observations that reveal exposition**
 - A. *A Sight*
 - B. *A Sound*
 - C. *A Movement*
- XI. A bibliography that further enriches convictions about exposition**