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THE REVIEW



Two Dangerous Trends in Modern Preaching

by Dr. Bob Payne, Moderator

One of the greatest and most sobering privileges in my life has been preaching the Word of God. Through the years I have done my best to bring *biblical* balance into my studies and my preaching. In the past few years, as I have talked to preachers and evangelists and have read various articles written by fundamentalists, I have become increasingly concerned that modern preaching (and sermon preparation) is becoming increasingly *imbalanced*. I see two unbiblical extremes in modern fundamentalism.

POOR PREPARATION, AND SHALLOW PREACHING

I have to admit that I don't "get out much." Most weeks I am in the pulpit of Berean Baptist Church. However, on occasion I have had the opportunity to hear another pastor preach when I have been on vacation. At times it is a delight, and at other times it is disturbing. During one of those "disturbing" messages, I clearly recall the preacher's completely taking a passage out of context and then using it as a springboard to communicate what he wanted to say. Clearly, this man spent very little time preparing before he entered the pulpit. Sadly, I am afraid this type of preaching goes on week after week in fundamental churches all across America.

The call to *preach* is also the call to *prepare* before a man preaches. Although each man has a different skill level when it comes to sermon preparation, *every preacher* has the responsibility to use the skills that he has to diligently prepare for messages. The man in the pulpit needs to take pains to study the passages that he will be preaching each week using sound hermeneutical principles in order to proclaim *God's* word, not man's. Poor preparation leads to shallow, inaccurate preaching, and a flock that has a tendency to be "carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14). There is no place for laziness in the ministry if the preacher is to show himself "approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

DILIGENT PREPARATION AND POOR HERMENEUTICS

There are other preachers whose problem is not laziness but hermeneutics. They *do* diligently prepare for messages. They are *never* accused of having shallow sermons. The problem with these men is not lack of study but faulty interpretation. These well-meaning men have fallen into at least four errors of Biblical interpretation:

1. The priority of grammar and exegesis over the total hermeneutical process. Although grammar and exegesis are vital to a proper interpretation of the Word of God, it must be remembered that they are only a *part* of the entire hermeneutical process. Doing a micro-analysis of a text without considering the context is folly. Jettisoning one's systematic theology (which is based upon the broad context of the Bible's teaching about a particular doctrine) is also equally foolish.

2. Human reasoning overrides biblical teaching. Some Bible expositors have developed a "cerebral" approach to the scriptures. Much less time is spent on the text, and much more time is spent on logical extrapolations from the text. In the end, the product is similar to those who do little to prepare for messages. "What *God* says" is replaced with "what *I* think." This approach to the Word of God exalts man and leads to arrogance.

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Practical Issues in Narrative Preaching

by Dr. Clay L. Nuttall

As in all controversial subjects, the extremes seem to get most of the attention. This article is about the practical aspects of preaching and teaching. With that in mind, we can focus on the use of a practical tool within the bounds of a theology that is biblical.

Horror stories abound about sermons that begin by the reading of a text followed with a long list of illustrations and stories. In many, if not most cases, the text is lost in a tsunami of personal experiences, opinion and self-aggrandizement. Most of the time these verbal excursions never return to the text nor are the texts explained.

The other side of this issue is a pulpit lecture that deals with the text as if it were being given in a seminary classroom. It could be exact and well ordered but dry as dust and as boring as a turtle race. The preacher and his proud family might be the only ones admiring the discourse, but the rest of the crowd is ordering dinner at the local restaurant.

A well-prepared message can respectfully represent a theology that is biblical, honoring the text but delivered in a way so as to whet the appetite of the listener. Bible passages that rise from historical narrative and parables have great value. They are so interesting that the speaker could easily invent meaning without the hearer's knowing it. Much preaching from the gospels falls into this category, because the participants fail to ask where the text is located and who it is written to.

Some professors would teach that the best stories and illustrations come from the Bible. That may be true; however, using these as background

for preaching through a text has the same danger. Such examples can be used in such a way that they violate the source or the central text. This is true of many other things where the teacher is not careful to ask "what does the text say"?

In the final analysis, it is a combination of things that create effective preaching, not just one. If we are true to the text, faithful to a theology that is biblical and use carefully those narrative helps, the message will be effective. This can be done without violating any of the primary considerations.

On the other hand, how do we know when the preacher has "rung the bell"? The entertainer can keep people's attention and manipulate them emotionally with his stories and not be true to the Bible. A lecture in the pulpit may have a truckload of information but be a flat tire when it comes to motivation.

What is the answer? It begins with thorough preparation so serious that the text is honored. There must be a confident understanding on the part of the preacher so that he is not tempted to wander. It must be presented in such a manner that commands the attention of the audience.

Preachers should be sentenced to listen to their own messages and watch them on video. That might cure a lot of our bad habits and distracting mannerisms. With this in mind, the preacher's goal should be to close the sermon abruptly with prayer while the faces are still lifted, Bibles still open and no one putting on a coat. Then, if something has really been taught that requires a response, nothing will distract from the Spirit's work in their hearts.



Dangerous Trends (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

3. An excessive dependence on historical theology and interpretation. The focus of Bible interpretation needs to be on the *text*. Although many things can be learned from a historical study of a text or of a theological point in the text, the rightness or wrongness of an interpretation is not ultimately determined by who taught it or how long ago they lived. It is *not* true that if a teaching is old enough and the theologian teaching it is respected enough, the interpretation must be correct. Historical theology and interpretation should only be a minor part of the process of accurate Bible interpretation.

4. A tendency to read back what is true in the present dispensation into previous dispensations.

Progressive revelation must always be considered as we study the Word of God. A failure to do so might easily lead to a misinterpretation and misapplication of the Word of God. What is normative in our dispensation of grace is not always something that was normative in former dispensations.

People today are thirsty for the unadulterated Word of God.

Modern preaching is in want of both diligent preparation and accurate interpretation. Those of us who preach and teach the Bible desperately need this biblical balance. By bringing this into our ministries, we will be a blessing to those under our preaching and will glorify the God whom we serve.

Real Hope & Change

Editorial

by Dr. Charles L. Dear

"You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of time, but you can not fool all of the people all of the time."
Abraham Lincoln 16th president of US (1809 - 1865)

Perhaps this editorial should begin with the fact that it is written before the presidential election and, therefore, without the benefit of knowing the outcome. Nevertheless, there are some serious lessons to be learned, even at this juncture, that none of us should miss.

For those who look forward to the Rapture of the Church of Jesus Christ before the great Tribulation, it is tempting to be almost smug about the conditions that will prevail during the Tribulation. In fact, it has seemed almost unbelievable that there could be any person or personality that could hold such charismatic sway over so many people that the mere specter of "change" is all that is necessary to swoon the masses into blindly supporting one whom they hardly know. Without a doubt, we know that we are not yet seeing the fulfillment of that which is prophetically described in the Scriptures, nor would we expect to see it fulfilled while we are still here. Even so, if any of us has held any doubts about the prospect of such a person's arising to sway the masses both here and abroad, those doubts have been vaporized through this year. When the Church departs and the restraint of the Holy Spirit is taken away, those who remain will be among all the people who are fooled all the time.

We are being confronted today by a preview, a broad rehearsal of things yet to come. Such "rehearsals" line the halls of Church Age history, from Nero and Caligula of the Roman Empire to 20th century despots and dictators, as well as Socialist leaning office holders in our present governments. It has always been the power progressively accrued to the State, while the people are reduced to a serfdom under a self-appointed aristocracy. It has been no less in our country over the last 100 years, and it has brought us to the present crossroads of American history.

The anti-American spirit is more understandable from those abroad, who have ulterior motives to undermine the leadership of

our nation for the cause of liberty around the world. They would rather have a United States that is less enviable to their people and a global sharing in the success that has been uniquely ours. The hope of our country, that drives people to take extraordinary risks to enter here illegally would be significantly diminished if we were reduced to second or third-world status, economically and socially. The wonder, however, is that we have some here, holding office, who propose legislation and judges pronouncing decisions that reinterpret our laws toward the same objectives. With Apostasy and Compromise, having been sown to the wind these many years in our country, we now reap the whirlwind of unknown change that will most certainly redefine the very character and spiritual nature of America.

For those of us in pastoral ministry and those whose focus of service is the local church, the whole spectrum of the presidential campaign has been a rude awakening to the actual spiritual state of many of our people. The ease with which so many professing Christians have been swayed by the sloganeering of Hope and Change, as well as vague promises of cradle-to-grave care, from any politician ought to shake any complacency about local church ministries. If we have been faithfully preaching the whole counsel of God's Word, if we have been eminently practical in the applications of spiritual truth, how can our people be moved so easily by such earthly appeals? Either the impact of our ministries has fallen short in comparison to the world's appeals or our message has been blunted by other voices our people hear that undermine the Gospel and the Authority of God's Word. Our hope is not in this world, its leaders nor even its economy. When a believer in Jesus Christ hears the word "hope," their immediate connection of the term should not be with government or political candidates but with their Savior. Just as any thoughts about "change" should first remind us of the old things passed away and all things become new for those who are "in Christ." The revelation that such mental links either do not exist, have been broken or are now mentally connected to the State, should sound an alarm wherever the Gospel is preached. It should also tell us that people are desperately seeking for help but in all the wrong places. (CONTINUE ON PAGE 4)

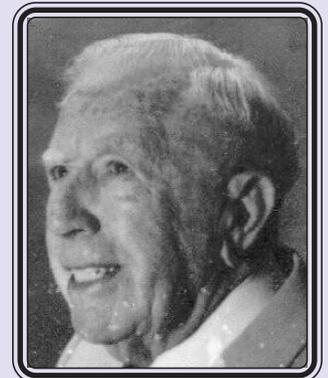
Some 40 years ago in the community around our church, there was a government unemployment office for those who had lost their job or others who were seeking employment in the area. Outside the building were some people handing literature to those going in and out of the office which caught my attention, thinking they were handing out Gospel tracts. In fact, they were from the American Communist Party, trying to recruit followers from among those who were bitter and angry with “the system” that let them down. I have no doubt that the recruiters sympathized with their plight and made all kinds of promises about how much better things would be under a Communist regime. It reminds us that the enemy never sleeps, never takes a vacation, as he probes for every point of weakness; and wherever he is able to gain a foothold, the cause of Christ suffers harm. People today are seeking, many desperately, for something that will lift them above the burdens of daily life; and there are others, like the American Communist Party, who will offer them a bag of promises that, in reality, is full of holes.

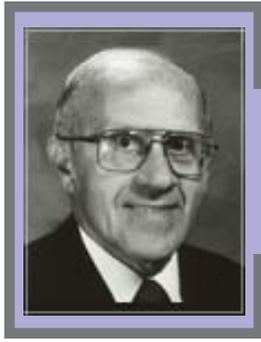
The question is whether or not we are answering the challenges against Biblical Christianity? Surely none of us should doubt that all these attacks upon our nation, as it was founded, are thinly veiled attacks upon our

foundation of Biblical Christianity. We are confronted on every side from our own government, from secular education, from the entertainment world, from non-Christian religions and from our culture; and too many of us have been made cowards, too fearful or too preoccupied to enter into the fray. Both the Cause and the Challenge are greater than any one of us and greater than any one ministry to engage with hope of success. Neither can the temptation to go into isolation be humored when the scriptures call us to be both the Salt and Light that this world needs and which can only come from God’s Word through believers. Our Fellowship should serve as a rallying body where many voices may speak as one voice for real Truth to power. Reflecting once again upon the immediate circumstances of a presidential election, perhaps the time has come again to reconsider the exercise of our rights as citizens of this nation to engage even the political arena we have abandoned for so long. If we have learned anything through this exceptionally long political campaign, it should be that our voices must be heard again in city hall, the state house and in Washington, as the voices of our spiritual forefathers were heard and made a profound impact upon the principles upon which our nation was founded, so many years ago.

In Memory of Rev. James Westcott

Rev. James E. (Jimmie) Westcott, 93, passed into the Lord’s presence on October 2, 2008, in Seminole, Florida. Jimmie and Marion, his beloved wife of 70 years, served the Lord faithfully in many capacities, initially pastoring in Richmond, VA; Seaford, DE; and in his home church in Atlantic City, NJ. Following his pastoral ministries, he owned and operated Camp Pamadeva, a Christian youth camp, in Hanover, PA for 23 years, which was blessed of God to send many into the harvest fields of the world for Christ. He also served as State Missionary for the Delmarva (Baptist) Fellowship for eight years. Jimmie, a great fundamentalist warrior, was involved in the formative years of the Regular Baptists for Revival and the Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America, speaking at national conferences for both groups. His indomitable spirit will be sorely missed by many. Revelation 14:13, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord... Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”





PERSPECTIVE

by Dr. Ralph Colas

Years ago Dr. Ernest Pickering, who awaits us in Heaven, would describe turmoil and strife in a church as “all of the peas and hominy disappeared”(It was a play on the words “peace and harmony”). Such discord now certainly marks the 150 million dollar Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, CA.

It is a family fight between Dr. Robert H. Schuller, founding pastor, and Dr. Robert A. Schuller, who succeeded his father as Senior Pastor and preacher on the long-running television show, *Hour of Power*. Now dad has removed his son from the program and seized it back for himself.

The schism arose over the son’s using more direct references to the Bible in contrast to dad’s psychology of positive thinking. The senior Schuller told the press he was called to start a mission, not a church. He explained, “There is a difference. You don’t try to preach what is sin and what isn’t sin. A mission is a place where you ask nonbelievers to come and find faith and hope and feel love. We are a mission first, a church second.”

With press credentials this writer covered the RETHINK Conference January 17-19, 2008, at the Crystal Cathedral and issued a report on that meeting. This report by the ACCC has been reprinted in a number of publications. The senior Dr. Schuller led this conference and included as the “Who’s Who” speakers both his son Dr. Robert A. Schuller and Donna Schuller, young Robert’s wife, identified as the “Guest Pastor” at the Crystal Cathedral.

Some of the radical statements at RETHINK by Donna Schuller were, “Reframe yourself—Reframe others—Reframe God because before you know God you must know yourself.” Her husband told everyone, “Don’t go to work and do a job—go to your destiny and fulfill your calling.”

It would now appear that the younger Schuller learned his destiny was NOT to continue as the speaker on *Hour of Power*. Dad “threw him under the bus” and will begin using different pastors, and even businessmen from the U.S.A. and Latin America. Dr. Robert H. Schuller told the press, “I love my son and am proud of my son but I cannot turn the Crystal Cathedral into a church rather than a mission.” However, it is evident he did not love him enough to keep him as the show’s only preacher three years after turning the program over to him.

The younger Schuller was convinced that he could carry the show alone but was overruled by his father and the church’s Board of Directors. Zenobia Coe of Lake Forest, CA, said she preferred the young Schuller’s Scripture-laden sermons. “But because God called me to the Crystal Cathedral, I intend to keep coming whatever the church decides.”

In March, 2004, Dr. Robert H. Schuller was given two standing ovations at the 61st Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). The applause came when Schuller walked up to speak and when he finished. He declared, “There are some things in the Bible I cannot swallow but you get saved not by the Book but the blood. Keep your message positive. Understand God is a God of grace and glory so forget the matter of justice.”

The heretical teaching continued, “Repentance is not a healthy response. Repentance is really defined when someone says, ‘I want to live the dream you have, Lord.’ Intelligent people do not understand the fear of God. Grace has been missed in Fundamentalism. Remember Jesus invested His stock in the Roman Catholic Church for at least 1,000 years prior to the Reformation. Now we need a new reformation with this message that God loves you and so do I.”

This is the same person who wrote in his book on self-esteem, “Jesus never called a person a sinner. Rather he reserved his righteous rebuke for those who used their authority to generate guilt and caused people to lose their ability to taste and enjoy their right to dignity.” He also wrote, “A person is in hell when he has lost his self-esteem. Pride is the great thing we all need to strive for.”

Reading all of this can cause one to wonder if the younger Schuller may lose some self-esteem by being jerked out of the *Hour of Power* by his dad, because he wanted to turn the Crystal Cathedral into a church rather than a mission. The issue seems to be **too much bible and not enough psychology!**

The ACCC does now have available a new DVD titled, *HERE I STAND*, which includes the interview with Dr. Robert H. Schuller at the NAE Convention. The Convention was held at Dr. Ted Haggard’s New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO (Since then, Dr. Haggard has been removed as pastor of the church and the President of the NAE). On the DVD Haggard defends bringing the apostate Schuller to the platform of the NAE.

So How Are We Preaching?

By Dr. Charles L. Dear



Our preaching is an important subject to follow with all of the changes in how church is conducted in recent years. One of the greatest concerns is how preaching has been affected or changed, not so much where new forms of worship are practiced, where we know preaching has been significantly undermined, but among our own brethren who stand together with us.

In the beginning of October, I conducted an impromptu survey among a random sample of our brethren, just to get a snapshot of our preaching. The survey was limited in numbers of responses and may not be the most scientific review of the subject. Nevertheless, it gives us a glimpse of how others are preaching and how it has changed, if at all.

Most of those who responded still do textual preaching, as opposed to topical preaching, by an almost three-to-one ratio. Of whole book studies, the New Testament prevails over the Old Testament by more than two to one. Of the choices in the realm of topical preaching, doctrinal studies are five times greater than other subjects, like current events. While some are adamant against topical preaching, I find it both necessary from time to time and a welcome change for the spiritual welfare of my people. I have also found that some of the nay-sayers about topical preaching avoid it because it requires more effort in preparation, dealing with multiple texts instead of one primary passage.

When asked about what things influence our preaching, outside reading and even current events scored rather low. What stood out as a major influence on preaching, however, was preaching in response to congregational problems. With an average of 51.8%, the range of responses was from 5% to 99%, with almost two-thirds of the responses showing more than 70% of preaching related to congregational problems. The survey did not pursue what kinds of problems were addressed through the preaching from the pulpit, but it would be good to see that preachers are aware of problems or deficiencies in the spiritual lives of their people and address those issues from the Word, as opposed to preaching to the “felt needs” of the people. Hopefully, it is not a “bully pulpit” abuse of the Word or the people. When asked about the change in the depth of preaching over recent years of ministry, the response was evenly divided between deeper preaching content and more basic preaching.

Some factors that may affect this are the range of spiritual ages in our congregations (from new believers to veterans of the faith for decades) and the length of ministry in one church. The range issue is challenging to preachers as we either try to find a happy medium of spiritual understanding, to which we direct the majority of our preaching, or we try to broadside our preaching across the whole spectrum of spiritual maturity, trying to provide something for everyone in every message. The latter can be a very daunting challenge. The length of ministry influence is more a reflection of our own spiritual growth in preaching over time and the need for our own hearts to be challenged by the Word before we preach it to our people. I would hope that we are never bored by what we preach to others. Quite the contrary, we should be so excited about what we have studied and prepared that we could sometimes wish we could just set aside the “preliminaries” and get down to the preaching right away.

The frequency of preaching and the length of sermons didn't significantly change for those surveyed, but some are experimenting with changes in preaching style and/or methods (28%), even though most continue preaching as they have been for some time (78%). There are arguments across the spectrum of time as to how long we should preach. Someone has well said that the brain can only absorb what the seat can endure. Even so, it seems difficult to set either minimum or maximum length of time as a rule, since the length of time to develop a subject or theme may well vary with the subject or the text. Likewise, it is difficult to engage the entire history, grammar and literal interpretation of a text in a brief period of time, let alone make a proper application of the passage. Serializing a study can break it down into smaller blocks of time, but begs the question whether the hearers can connect the parts from one message to the next.

So How Are We Preaching?

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

Reviewing the previous message before proceeding to the next can help connect the links in the minds of the hearers but missing a message altogether in a series can disrupt the bigger picture. Personally, I have preached many series of messages, both topical and as book studies, and find it more beneficial to the people as systematic Bible study, compared with individual messages that range all over the Scriptures with only the broadest of connections.

The last part of the survey asked about preaching in regard to the presidential election. For some that is a sensitive subject, especially in light of the threats advertised about the potential loss of tax-exempt status with the IRS. There seems to be some geographical differences, especially for those of us in big cities. I have personally received a half dozen invitations to political rallies for one presidential candidate that were hosted openly by clergy, in apparent defiance of any limitations placed upon churches or religious organizations because of their tax-exempt status. Understand that none of those churches or religious organizations has ever been challenged by the IRS over the last 50 years in Philadelphia. Furthermore, this year, Dr. James Dobson has challenged the threat to remove tax-exempt status from churches by selecting over 30 churches across the country that would preach, specifically, about the election from their pulpits on a specified Sunday this past September. He had lawyers prepared to go to court immediately to confront any threats against churches to take away their tax-exempt status for preaching about the election. To my knowledge, those churches and sermons were ignored by most media, and

no threat has arisen to be challenged in court. It would seem that the threatening forces decided it was better to pay no attention to them than to possibly lose the battle in a public courtroom. That should encourage the rest of us to engage the enemies of truth who wrap themselves in the guise of political office and not be so hesitant to apply scriptural principles to those who are under the judgement of God, like Herod in the days of John the Baptist.

One other word of advice; keep track of your preaching so that you don't fall into "hobby-horse" preaching and maintain a balance for the good of your people. Whether you keep a ledger of what you preach or file your sermons in some orderly way, keep a check on yourself so that your people know how profitable all Scripture really is. My own files consist of more than two feet of message cards, filed by primary text or by special occasions and holidays. For the last 20 or so years, they're also on computer files that more recently are duplicated on CD's both at home and in the office. I learned from a friend who had 20 years of ministry walk out the door of his church when someone stole his office computer. Blessed is he that maketh backups.

Lastly, I am thankful to see our brethren preaching the Word of God. Whether textual or topical, whether in the face of congregational problems or current events like an election, it is still the faithful reading, explaining and applying of His Word from our pulpits that will continue to set us apart from the herd of mediocrity, cowardice and confusion. May we not grow weary of the Spirit's leading as we open the Book unto our people and declare, "Thus saith the Lord."

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