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Imagination shaped: Old Testament preaching in the Anglican tradition

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passed over on the way to a Word that facilitates sacramental participation. For Schleiermacher, however, the Word is made flesh in Christ. Unlike Calvin's Christology, Schleiermacher's does not even depend on the historical event of Jesus' death on the cross. It is enough to know that the Word which became flesh in Christ continues to become Word for us in proclamation. The upshot of this distinction in DeVries' analysis is found in chapter 6, "The Living Word and the Work of Christ". In this final chapter she argues that Barth's assessment of Schleiermacher is fundamentally wrong. Indeed, to the contrary, DeVries views Schleiermacher as a legitimate heir to Calvin's own sacramental understanding of the Word. Contrary to Frei's assessment of Calvin and other reformers as "pre-critical" interpreters of narratives, DeVries sees both Calvin and Schleiermacher as devoted to understandings of preaching that make Christ present to hearers today beyond the purely historical issues of the narratives themselves. Indeed, for both thinkers the issue is not a history-like narrative whose truth can be gauged apart from referential concerns, but rather a re-presentation of Christ in the sermon. It's not the Christ from the past, but the Christ in the present.

Clearly DeVries deserves our thanks for putting the lie to Barth's breezy consignment of Schleiermacher to the ashheap of theological history. Indeed, DeVries' own analysis further reinforces the idea that Barth bears the mantle more of a Zwingli than a Calvin or Luther. Yet the fundamental claim that Calvin's theology of the Word is unambiguously sacramental could be nuanced a little further. Indeed, were Calvin's position as incarnational as DeVries claims, the division between him and Luther over sacramental theology should not have been so marked. Besides, one cannot get around the decidedly didactic bent to Calvin's "sacramental" Word. This alone should force one to view his accommodationist theory not solely in the sacramental terms of *Christus praesens*, but also in the theological and epistemological terms of the starting point of his great system, the problem of the proper knowledge of God. Nonetheless, DeVries rightly focuses on the importance of viewing Schleiermacher as a proper heir to Calvin. With both we are encouraged to preach more than a word "about" Christ, but the Word that *is* Christ, present to us and to the hearers of the Gospel.

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Imagination Shaped: Old Testament Preaching in the Anglican Tradition

Ellen F. Davis

Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1995
xiii + 289 pp. (including 19 pp. of endnotes)

This book, by an Old Testament scholar rather than a homiletician, presents selected sermons by five Anglican preachers, all of them English,

three from the 17th, two from the 19th century, as well as a brief Introduction and a concluding essay "Holy Preaching". The author claims that the selected preachers, Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1626), John Donne (1571/72–1631), Joseph Hall (1574–1656), Frederick W. Robertson (1816–1853), and Henry Parry Liddon (1829–1890), are "the most important biblical preachers within the Anglican tradition". This is a somewhat curious statement, equating Anglican preaching with English preaching, and even within English preaching ignoring such giants as John Jewel, the Wesleys, John Henry Newman (prior to his going to Rome), F. J. A. Hort, Charles Gore, and even Michael Ramsey, all of whom would be regarded as "biblical" preachers.

For each of the selected preachers, Davis devotes several pages to biographical material, and several more pages to analysis of their preaching. This is followed by fully reproduced sermons; two for all but Hall, who has five "Contemplations" reproduced. (It must be noted that Hall's material was originally written as short meditations, rather than being preached, while the sermons of the other four were actually preached to congregations.)

If one reads this book from front to back, as most would read any book, one's motivation for reading quickly fails. If one is interested in the lives of these five preachers, the material presented is much too short to be adequate, and each of these preachers has had autobiographies or biographies published which are much more complete. If one is interested in analysis of their preaching and writing, that too has been published more completely and thoroughly. And, if one wants to become acquainted with their preaching *opus*, each of these preachers has had very complete sermon collections published. The question, "Why this book?" arises very quickly.

The answer comes in the final essay, "Holy Preaching", which can stand on its own as a polemical argument for a particular form of preaching which Davis defines as "biblical" over against "thematic" preaching. One needs to read an endnote to discover that this essay is in fact a revision of an earlier essay published as part of a "post-liberal" response to the Baltimore Declaration, which was a somewhat fundamentalist "call to orthodoxy" by six priests of the Episcopal Church (the Anglican Church in the United States). It is this concluding essay that clarifies the questions "Why this book?" and "Why these preachers and these particular sermons?" They happen to re-enforce the author's position that the problem with today's preaching is "that there is little serious wrestling with the biblical message in mainline churches" (249), a position that is asserted without ever being demonstrated. Having set up this straw man, Davis then demolishes it with her selection of preachers and sermons: "[they] were chosen for their skill as exegetical preachers; all of them derive meaning from their text... Their style of preaching contrasts with thematic preaching... in which it is not so much the text that is explored but rather a doctrinal or moral principle abstracted from the text" (257). This position ignores several realities: thematic preaching (if well done) can be thoroughly biblical, biblical preaching (if badly done) can be thoroughly irrelevant (and boring); and

all of her selected preachers, who preached the "biblical" sermons Davis selected for this book, also preached sermons that would be called thematic. What made these preachers great was not an exclusive focus on one particular style of exegesis and/or hermeneutic, but thorough attention to the homiletical task and profound understanding of their intended audience. Loren Mead has suggested that before one can proclaim good news, one needs to know the bad news. These selected preachers were great preachers precisely because they knew what was bad news for their listeners, not because they approached Scripture in a particular way.

It is difficult to recommend this book, particularly to Lutheran readers. It is not a good introduction to Anglican preaching, nor to biblical or Old Testament preaching. On the one hand, given the present ever closer relationship between Anglicans and Lutherans, it might serve one useful purpose: because of its polemical nature, it gives a glimpse of the "family fight" happening within one branch of the Anglican family (the Episcopal Church) between "fundamentalist" and "post-liberal" factions on one side, and so-called "liberal Protestantism" on the other. It thus might give Lutherans a more intimate view of Anglicans than can be obtained through the more "official" conversation documents. On the other hand, it also has a quality of the airing of Anglican dirty laundry, and thus might be better avoided.

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Bringing The Word to Life

Michael R. Kent

Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-third Publications, 1995

143 pp, \$9.95 Softcover

This book consists of a series of brief meditations based upon Cycle A of the Lectionary. Each meditation is approximately one and a half pages in length, with an additional short paragraph which raises questions or discussion thoughts for that Sunday or festival.

While definitely Roman Catholic in its origin and approach, the book contains some thoughts for other preachers. Ideas brought forth for such festival or special days as Ash Wednesday, Transfiguration, Ascension, and Corpus Christi were particularly stimulating. For instance, on Ascension Day, reflecting upon the words of the angels (Acts 1), the author reminds the reader that Christianity is a religion of action, not a philosophical debating society.

There is an interesting index at the end of the book, listing topics and themes as they appear in the various meditations. Twenty deal with Spiritual Growth, eighteen with Responsibility, and fourteen with Optimism and another fourteen with Relationships.