

History of Preaching



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Bibliography

- **Dargan- *A History of Preaching* (1905,1912)- student of Broadus; professor at Southern; 2 vols., six periods listed below; includes much information about the historical context of the various preachers and their era which shed light on their style, approach, and content.**

- Turnbull- *A History of Preaching, vol.3* (1974)- Scottish Presbyterian who pastored in the US; attempt to complete Dargan's work; focuses on the preaching in America in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries and the first half of the 20th; discussion of the centuries are divided according to theological alignment; also addresses issues such as denominational preaching and the medium of radio; focuses on major preachers and mentions many others.

- Fant and Pinson- *A Treasury of Great Preaching* (previously *20 Centuries of Great Preaching*)(1971)- professors at Southwestern; 13 vols. (final vol is index); focuses on the individual preachers with each chapter including a brief chronology of his life, concise biography, an analysis of his preaching, sample sermons, and selected bibliography for further study on the preacher.

- Larsen- *The Company of the Preachers* (1998)- former pastor and Professor Emeritus of Preaching at Trinity; divides the history of preaching into 10 periods including OT prophets; includes a brief theology of preaching; describes the various preachers in their eras and provides personal info as well as preaching style and philosophy.

- Pattison- *The History of Christian Preaching* (1903)- professor at Rochester Theological Seminary; survey of preaching that corresponds to the history of the church; divided by centuries (1st four, 5-10, 11-14, reformation, 17, 18, 19); there are also some later classifications with the centuries based on country; includes brief preacher biographies, analysis of style, and impact on preaching.

- Edgar Dewitt Jones- *The Royalty of the Pulpit* (1951)- former pastor and president of Federal Council of Churches; collection and summary of Lyman Beecher lectures on preaching at Yale (annual series initiated by Henry Ward Beecher); summary of series from 1872-1949 and the lecturers classified in 10 categories based on their experience and emphasis (i.e.-Theologians, Educators, Shepherds, Churchmen, etc.); not in chronological order; describes social and theological context of the lecturers; notable appendix that includes the life, ministry, and theological training of each lecturer.

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- Dewitte Holland- *The Preaching Tradition* (1980)- Professor and head of communication department at Lamar Univ. in Beaumont, Tx; approaches subject from a rhetorical perspective; traces American preaching from its ancient heritage to its present condition; addresses early eras (Judaism, apostolic fathers, through dark ages and Reformation) but focuses on American preaching from its birth in 16th century to the 20th century; brief mention of significant preachers; concise synopsis.

- F.R Webber- *A History of Preaching in Britain and America, 3vols.* (1952)- vol 1 chronicles Celtic and English churches; vol 2 evaluates the Church in Scotland; vol 3 is devoted to American preaching; discusses preachers within their historical context and includes bio info, style, and theology.

- **Time Periods** – “In surveying the history of preaching as a whole we shall find that its course corresponds . . . in marked degree with that of both general and ecclesiastical history.” (Dargan, 26)

The Early Church (AD 30–100)

- Preaching was a rehearsal of redemptive history
(Peter in Acts 2)
- Preaching was an apologetic to the pagan culture
(Paul in Acts 17)
- Preaching was an exposition of key doctrines
(Paul in 1 Corinthians 15; *The Didache*)
- Preaching was the unfolding of further revelation
(John in Revelation)

Notable Preachers

- The Apostles
- The brothers of Christ (James, Jude)
- Stephen (Acts 7)
- Apollos (1 Corinthians 3)

Patristic Age

- **(70-430AD)** – from the time of the Apostolic fathers to the death of Chrysostom (407) and Augustine in 430; Dargan divides them into 3 categories- apostolic fathers (disciples of the apostles), apologists, theologians

Two Schools of Preaching

- The Alexandrian School
 - Centered in North Africa
 - Marked by an allegorical hermeneutic
- The Antiochene School
 - Centered in the Mediterranean
 - Marked by a more literal hermeneutic

Alexandrian Preaching Distinctives

- Preaching as an allegorical rehearsing of salvation history
- Preaching as catechesis of the faithful
- Preaching as an apologetic to the pagan culture
- Preaching as an exposition of key doctrines
- Preaching as a part of liturgical worship
- Would contribute to the Eastern Orthodox Church

Notable Alexandrian Preachers

- Clement – Philosophical apologist
- Origin – Allegorical apologist
- Cyril of Jerusalem – Catechetical expositor
- Cyril of Alexandria – Doctrinal pastor-theologian
- The Cappadocian Fathers – Doctrinal apologists

Antiochene Preaching Distinctives

- Preaching as a literal exposition of sacred texts
- Preaching as catechesis of the faithful
- Preaching as an apologetic to the pagan culture
- Preaching as an exposition of key doctrines
- Preaching as a part of liturgical worship
- Would contribute to the Eastern Orthodox Church

- Apostolic Fathers

- preaching of this time did not have the power of the Apostles, but it was successful
- faithful to the task and proclaimed the Gospel
- preaching had a regular place in worship; more like teaching
- preaching was simple homilies and telling the story of Christ

- Apologists
 - Defended the faith that Christianity is philosophically sound, historically true, and morally pure
- Theologians
 - Less dependent on philosophy and more devoted to Scripture

- **Climactic age of preaching 4th and 5th centuries (until 430)**

- *Favorable conditions that allowed preaching to prosper*

- In 313 Christianity became recognized religion of the empire under rule of Constantine
 - Church has a new social standing (it was fashionable to go attend)
 - Great love for oratory
 - In education rhetoric had the chief place
 - Canon of Scripture became settled
 - Doctrine became fixed through some early church councils

Key figures

- **Apostolic Fathers**
 - **Clement of Rome (30-100) – epistle to the Corinthians was a homily**
 - **Polycarp (69-155) – disciple of apostle John; warm earnestness in his preaching**

- Apologists and Theologians

- Justin Martyr (100-165) – philosophical apologist for the faith
- Irenaus (135-202) – not eloquent, but clear; fought Gnosticism
- Clement of Alexandria (160-220) – Greek philosopher that spoke with vigor (Origen was his pupil); opened school in Alexandria to instruct candidates for church membership in the principles of Christianity
- Tertullian (150-230) – lawyer converted @ 30. Rhetorician and theologian; gave name ‘sermon’ to Christian address
- Origen (185-254) – spoke of ‘explaining a text’; allegorical interpretation (universalist, extemporaneous style, wrote commentaries)

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- Athanasius (296-372) – argumentative skill, theologian, didactic style
- Capadocian fathers (Basil, Gregory, Gregory – 330~395) – gifted orators; addressed practical issues in life; defended orthodox theology
- Chrysostom (John of Antioch, ‘Golden Mouthed’)(347-407) – Trained in Rhetoric; homilies that included illustrations; energetic and eloquent; Emphasized historical, grammatical interpretation; preached many times weekly.
- Augustine (354-430) – won to Christ by Ambrose; rhetorician who persuaded audience; influential theologian of the reformation; some sermons are expository lectures; emphasized clarity; preacher should teach truth and reveal error; endorsed a variety of styles

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Dark Age or Early Medieval Age (430-1095)

- From death of Augustine to the preaching of the 1st crusade by Peter the Hermit and Pope Urban II; fall of Rome in 476 marked the end of classical civilization; political and social upheaval; sermons began to focus on churchly duties rather than kerygmatic preaching; sermon eventually preached in monastery chapels rather than churches; age of the monk

– **Conditions that led to the decline of preaching**

- Day of persecution had almost passed; less devotion to Christ
- The Roman empire was crumbling; life was corrupt and had an impact on preaching
- Political aspects- in the east rulers would not allow preachers to condemn sins of court life; in the west Roman Church was increasing in power; both turned to ceremony and ritual at the expense of preaching.
- The priest took the place of the preacher
- Personal religion was at a low
- Clergy was ignorant, immoral, and could not preach

Medieval Preaching Distinctives

- Preaching as apologetic against the growth of Islam
- Preaching as the result of ecstatic experiences
- Preaching as impartation of the mystical
- Preaching as a call to militant faith
- Preaching as a critique of the cultural status quo
- Preaching as mission to the unevangelized
- Preaching as an aspect of the lectionary
- Preaching as explanation of crucial doctrines
- Preaching as catechesis of the faithful

The Fourfold Interpretation

- The Literal Sense – what actually happened in the text
- The Allegorical Sense – the doctrinal significance for the contemporary church
- The Moral Sense – the ethical application for the contemporary church
- The Anagogical Sense – hidden allusions in the text that only the truly spiritual can understand

– Key Figures

- Basil (d.448) – handled text historically and made application
- Saint Patrick (372-465) – persuasive and determined preaching; biblical preaching emphasizing NT passages referring to OT
- Leo I (390-461) – diligent preacher; eloquent; focused on church duties but rarely dealt with doctrine or exposition
- Gregory the Great (540-604) – emphasized preaching in worship, centrality of Scripture, took step by step approach to the text
- Boniface (672-754) – used Scripture freely; allegorical; Church issues; Missionary preacher to Germany

- Charlemagne (742-814) – King of Franks, conquered German tribes and required them to accept Christianity seeking to establish a Holy Roman empire; he chose preaching as a primary tool for reform and for the restoration of society
- Peter the Hermit (1050-1115) – personal message from God; eloquent speaker; preacher against sin and for Christ; carried a crucifix that he often beat into his chest.
- Anselm (1033-1109) – better theologian than preacher; homily with allegorical interpretation

Scholastic Age (1095-1361)

- From beginning of crusades to the death of Tauler (1361) and the beginning of Wycliffe's ministry (ordained in 1361) (crusades, rise of intellectual thought, and reforms of Gregory VIII began a resurgence in preaching; allegory and symbolism prevailed)

– Characteristics of the Times

- “It is a mistake to assume that there were no great preachers from the death of Augustine to the Reformation. Preaching was neglected, but the Crusades, Scholasticism, and mysticism, gave rise to some outstanding preaching. Medieval preaching had a popular quality and dramatic element that often led to vulgarity and foolishness. The Scripture interpretation was mainly allegorical and symbolical and the sermons were filled with Scriptural allusions. Meditative piety brought forth some fruit. A few great preachers stood out and showed that the spirit of God had not ceased to work.” Stanfield, 27

– Key Figures

- Peter Abelard (1079-1142) – scholastic theologian with eloquence
- Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) – championed orthodoxy; mystical and simplistic style with divisions; preached often and extemporaneously; Pious Cistercian Monk. Mastered Techniques of sermon prep; Most effective preacher of his century; allegorical; preached without notes (preached 2nd crusade in 1144)
- Saint Francis of Assisi (1182-1126) – street preacher that spoke in common language of the people; simple and sincere; practical and persuasive (founder of the Fransiscan order of monks) founded order named “Brothers of the poor of Francis of Assisi.” Conversational preaching.
- Thomas Aquinas (1227-1274) – greatest theologian of the middle ages; Wrote *Summa Theologica*; strong character; preacher to the people; allegorical; argumentative method; extemporaneous
- John Tauler (1290-1361) – mystical and allegorical; attacked sin and called for repentance and faith; full of illustration

Reformation Age (1361-1572)

- From the death of Tauler and the rise of Wycliffe to the death of John Knox (the last of the great reformers); Reformation was birthed through the general revival in learning of the Renaissance and Revolution.

–Characteristics of the Times

- Catholic church was suffering decay; triviality in the pulpit
- Clergy was at a low moral state
- Lack of freshness
- At the same time, this gave rise to the reformation which was birthed under these conditions

- The great events and achievements of that mighty revolution were largely the work of preachers and preaching
- The events and principles of the movement powerfully reacted on preaching itself, giving it a new power, a new spirit, new forms
- The relation was one of mutual dependence, aid, and guidance (discoveries of science, inventions, etc. quickened the mental energies of man)

– Reformation preaching

- Intellectual vigor in preaching
- New and mighty emphasis on preaching (almost every day, etc.)
- Preaching was restored to the central place in worship
- Emphasis on better preparation (intellectual and spiritual)
- Preaching was polemical and doctrinal (refuted errors for reform)
- Bible recognized as supreme authority
- Better interpretation and preaching was primarily expository
- Homiletical method varied (mostly logical in order)

Reformation Preaching Distinctives

- Return to a literal hermeneutic
- Return to expository preaching
- Return of preaching to a place of prominence in worship
- Preaching as apologetic for Reformation principles
- Preaching as a critique of the cultural status quo
- Preaching as explanation of crucial doctrines
- Preaching as catechesis of the faithful

– Key Figures

- John Wycliffe (1320-1384) – emphasized preaching over the sacraments; simple and evangelistic sermons; critic of papal authority and clergy; accepted supreme authority of the Scripture; forerunner of the Reformation; Followers called Lollards from Dutch word meaning mumblor. Translated Bible into language of the people.
- John Huss (1369-1415) – attacked the papacy and corruptions of the church through sermons and writings; sincere and urgent style
- Savonarola (1452-1498) – emotional and somewhat expository preacher that used the Bible as sole source of authority; practical and natural delivery; attacked social sins and sins of the clergy; emphasized holy character; prophetic preaching

- Martin Luther (1483-1546) – held strongly to the authority of the Scriptures; emphasized justification by faith; posted 95 theses on door of church at Wittenberg 10/31/1517 and began the reformation; Expository sermons
- Luther's List of Qualifications for a Preacher
 - Should be able to teach plainly and in order
 - Have a good head
 - Good power of language
 - Good voice
 - Good memory
 - Know when to stop
 - Be sure of what he means to say
 - Stake body and soul, goods and reputation on the Word
 - Study Diligently
 - Suffer Himself to be vexed and Criticized by everyone.

- “The Reformation gave centrality to the sermon. The pulpit was higher than the altar, for Luther held that salvation is through the Word . . . but the Word is sterile unless it is spoken. All of this is not to say that the Reformation invented preaching, but the Reformation did exalt the sermon.” Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*

- Zwingli (1484-1531) – evangelical preacher; reformer of Switzerland
- Calvin (1509-1572) – regarded Bible as the Word of God; theologian; preached extemporaneously and expository messages through books fo the Bible; faithful exegesis of Scripture; avoided rhetorical elegance; *Institutes* are greatest theological work of the reformation.
- John Knox (1505-1572) – Scottish reformer; preaching demonstrated theological structure; confronted issues of life; theocentric nature

The Puritans

- Reformers of English Christianity
- Emphasized doctrine and piety
- Preaching as the central act of worship
- Preaching as a rehearsal of redemptive history
- Preaching as explanation of crucial doctrines
- Preaching as catechesis of the faithful

Dogmatic Age (1572-1738)

- After the times of the great Reformers to the beginning of the English revival under Whitfield and Wesley (1st Great Awakening in 1740); corresponds with the translation of the Bible; for the most part style dominated over substance (Larsen, 247); beginning of the Puritan movement and revival

- Richard Baxter (1615-1691) – elevated the Bible and emphasized changed lives; reasoned and logical sermons; read sermons from manuscript; best known of puritan preachers. *The Saints Everlasting Rest; The Reformed Pastor; Call to the Unconverted.*
- John Owen (1616-1683) – Puritan w/exalted character; strong influence; dedicated to practical application; rabbinical and classical scholar.
- Jacques Bossuet (1627-1704) – high view of Scripture; attacked Luther out of Roman loyalty; skilled orator with written preparation
- John Bunyan- influenced by Luther; fervent preaching that was opposed by Church of England; lengthy sermons; in Jail for 12 years – offered liberty if he stopped preaching – “If you let me out today I should preach tomorrow.” *Pilgrim’s Progress*
- Matthew Henry (1662-1714) – preached 7 times/week; very practical in application; preached from all parts of the Bible
- Cotton Mather (1663-1728) – Devout Calvinist but fervent evangelist; preaching was Christocentric; sensitive to social issues; extemporaneous style

Seven Characteristics of the Puritan Sermon

- Expository in Method
- Doctrinal in Content
- Orderly Arrangement
- Popular in Style
- Practical and Experimental in Interest
- Realistic in Application
- Powerful in Manner

Evangelical Age (1738-1900)

- known as golden age of preaching (19th century); from times of Whitfield and Wesley to the end of the 19th century (ends here b/c of convenience and lack of contemporaries to accurately assess the era); includes settlement of America, separation of church and state (John Locke); demise of the Church of England in America as a result of American Revolution;

- John Wesley (1703-1791) – ‘man of one Book’; great British evangelist; simple style; 5ft. Tall; Converted upon reading Luther’s preface to Romans; Rode Horseback all over England preaching more than any before him.
- George Whitfield (1714-1770) – emphasis on new birth; engaging orator; considered greatest of his age; Crossed Atlantic 13 times to preach in America; Powerful voice speaking to 30,000 in out door meetings.
- Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) – great expositor but lacked oratory skill
- Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) – ‘father of evangelical Protestantism in America; Puritan preaching style – stated the Scripture, explained the doctrine, concluded with application; chose texts to address topics; theological and philosophical thinker; “Sinner in the Hand of an Angry God.”

10 Characteristics of Edward's Preaching (John Piper)

- Aims to stir up Holy Affections
- Strives to enlighten the mind
- Saturated with Scripture
- Employs analogies and Illustrations
- Threat and Warnings of Hell
- Pleaded for a response (even though a Calvinist)
- Prods heart for hidden sin
- Utter dependence on the Holy Spirit
- Broken and Tender Spirit
- Intense and grasping to the preacher's soul.

- Timothy Dwight (1752-1817) – grandson of Edwards; addressed social concerns; eloquent speaker
- Schleiermacher (1768-1834) – Father of Modern Liberalism
- Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) – read manuscripts but preached with fire and fury; evangelistic
- Lyman Beecher (1775-1863) – trained young men; Yale lecture series named after him
- Charles Finney (1792-1875) – revival preacher known for boldness; anxious seat; pleaded for verdict; logical sermon w/ no manuscript; vivid imagination. Preached in New York.

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- John Jasper (1812-1901) – famous black preacher; ‘the sun do move’
- Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843) – preached Christ; concerned w/holiness; wrote sermons but preached w/out notes; devoted to exposition and application
- Alexander Maclaren (1826-1910) – preached extemporaneously; considered model of expository method
- John Broadus (1827-1895) – “On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermon”
- Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) – great preacher w/power, imagination, and humor; pastor’s heart and evangelistic. 38 vol. of his sermons are published
- Phillip Brooks (1835-1893) – preaching- ‘truth through personality’; powerful and doctrinal preacher; concerned w/ social issues
- D.L. Moody (1837-1899) – believed in inerrancy of Scripture; thematic preacher; persuasive and powerful evangelist; master illustrator

Modern Age (1900-present)

- preaching was particularly affected by social change; Holland notes changes that affected the pulpit including: foreign missions emphasis; social gospel; ecumenical movement; church in general

Modern Era Distinctives

- Multiplicity of preaching styles
- Influence of revivalism on preaching
- Influence of frontier expansion on preaching
- Influence of progressive theology on preaching
- Preaching as entertainment in a static culture

- F.B. Meyer (1847-1929) – expository preacher
- Billy Sunday (1862-1935) – Strong Christology and knowledge of the Scriptures; addressed moral issues and called for repentance
- A.T. Robertson (1863-1934) – combined scholarship and popular power; preached revivals; text-driven
- G. Cambell Morgan (1863-1945) – Committed to biblical revelation; preached great themes of the Bible; application is totally work of the Spirit; sermons were running expositions
- Henry Ironside (1876-1951) – ‘archbishop of fundamentalism’; converted at Moody meeting; book by book studies; preached the word; affiliation with Dallas Theological Seminary
- Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969) – liberal in theology and view of the Bible; counseled from the pulpit

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- Karl Barth (1886-1968) – theologian before preacher, but influenced many other preachers with his theology; Father of Neo-Orthodoxy; Scripture becomes the word of God
- R.G. Lee (1886-1978) – typically textual-topical; extemporaneous
- George Buttrick (1892-1979) – influenced by social gospel movement; believed sermon should derive from text; expository more than topical
- Norman Vincent Peale (1898-1993) – Father of Christian self-esteem
- D. Martin Lloyd Jones (1899-1981) – reformed and committed to Scripture; exegesis, meaning, and application; expounded small portions of Scripture; preached through books of the Bible
- Billy Graham (1918-) – evangelistic; orthodox theology; sincere preacher with simple outlines
- Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) – used Scripture to argue for civil rights; charismatic and simple style

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20th Century Distinctives

- Multiplicity of preaching styles
- The eclipse of the sermon in mainline churches
- The return of the sermon in evangelical churches
- Renewed emphasis on expository preaching in SBC
- Debate over the significance of a sermon in corporate worship