E. K. BAILEY'S HERMENEUTIC FOR PREACHING

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by

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For the glory of God

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PREFACE

The privilege of PhD studies at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary is contingent on the following supporters and without them I would not have been able to complete this program.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

According to homiletician Robert Smith, Jr., the African-American preacher E. K. Bailey (1945-2003) has become more popular in death than in life.[1] In 1975, Bailey planted the Concord Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, with a charter membership of two hundred thirty people. In his twenty-eight-year tenure at Concord, Bailey led the church to spiritual and numerical growth by emphasizing evangelism to unbelievers, outreach to the under-resourced, and discipleship to the baptized. Under Bailey's leadership, Concord established ministries such as the Institute of Church Growth, Center for Biblical Studies, Concord Senior Center, Substance Recovery Center, and Center for Women's Ministries. Bailey was also credited with pioneering a multiple staff ministry model among African-American churches as well as putting into place a plurality of eldership for church governance.[2] At Bailey's death, Concord had four thousand members. Under the leadership of Bailey's successor, Bryan Carter, Concord currently hosts nine thousand members with over five thousand five hundred attendees in weekly worship.[3]

Distinguished among Bailey's ministry was his commitment to biblical exposition. Known in the African-American Baptist church for years, Bailey's exposure increased through his preaching at Promise Keepers events and chapel services at Dallas Theological Seminary and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In 2010, *Preaching* magazine honored Bailey as one of the twenty-five most influential preachers of his day. Another homiletician, Wayne Croft, recognized Bailey as a pioneer in Black exposition.

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[1] Robert Smith, Jr., telephone interview with the author, January 25, 2020.

[2] Concord Church, "Our History," https://www.concorddallas.org/our-story, accessed April 12, 2021.

[3] Concord Church, "Our History."

Croft said that Bailey "launched a new birth of expository preaching in the African-American church and became the model for expository preaching in that tradition. . . . He juxtaposed expository preaching with the African-American preaching tradition."[4]

Bailey's legacy has endured with the annual E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference, conducted by the Concord Church. Started in 1996, this conference has equipped pastors in expository preaching with a book of the Bible serving as each year's conference theme. For example, the 2018 conference featured plenary sessions and workshops over 1 Corinthians, while the 2019 conference theme was Ephesians.[5] The conference has been a praxis of integrating Haddon Robinson's principles of biblical exposition with characteristics of African-American sacred rhetoric.[6] Bailey's ministry in life as well as his continuing legacy after death has proven him to be a significant, if not overlooked, voice in homiletics.

Thesis

The purpose of this dissertation is to research the hermeneutics behind Bailey's expository pulpit. What interpretive lenses best support Bailey's preaching of Scripture? That is, how did Bailey interpret the Bible for preaching in ministry? This dissertation contends that E. K. Bailey's pulpit ministry employed a twofold hermeneutic: (1) *Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship* and (2) *Bibliocentric Christoformity*. Bailey preached the Christian Scriptures (1) in connection with his ethnic and ecclesial community and (2) in submission to Scripture's authorial intent for communal formation in Christ. Bailey

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[4] Wayne Croft, Sr., "E. K. Bailey: Expositor of the Word," *Preaching* 25, no. 6 (May/June, 2010): 13.

[5] E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference, http://ekbpc.com/resources/. The 2020 conference was cancelled due to COVID-19.

[6] See Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980). Robinson defined the expository sermon as "the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and the experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers" (30). Bailey's own definition of expository preaching followed Robinson and will be discussed in chapter 3.

valued the pursuit of the biblical authors' meanings and their applications for the congregation he served.[7]

Significance

E. K. Bailey's Hermeneutic for Preaching is an important study for the following reasons. First, Bailey's megachurch-sized pulpit amplified and replicated the expository preaching method, adopted by other pastors.[8] His successful pastoral leadership of a congregation in the thousands offered a platform by which he could mentor the next generation of expository preachers, particularly though not exclusively, African-American preachers. As discussed in chapter 4, Bailey's homiletical mentor, A. Louis Patterson, Jr., influenced him more in the ways of expository preaching than any other preacher. With this impact, Bailey generously shared his homiletical inheritance with other pastors. His personal character, giftedness in preaching, and church leadership skills equipped him to reach a broad audience and bequeath a legacy which lasts to this day.

Second, the kind of pastoral leadership Bailey exhibited warrants an examination of his pulpit. Bailey offered a post-Martin Luther King, Jr., expression of the archetypical pastor of a primarily Afro-ethnic congregation. Bailey effectively planted and developed a community of believers in the name of Christ whose mission was to live out the Great Commission and Great Commandment. He often began his sermons by asking the congregation to recite the mission of the church: "to exalt the Savior, to edify

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[7] The idea of structuring and presenting Bailey's hermeneutic in a twofold manner is derived from Peter T. Sanlon's twofold hermeneutic of Augustine's preaching, "interiority" and "temporality." See Peter T. Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), xvii.

[8] The term "megachurch" describes a congregation whose average weekly worship attendance is over 2000. See Scott Thumma, Dave Travis, and Rick Warren, *Beyond Megachurch Myths: What We Can Learn from America's Largest Churches* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 8. Bailey reported that Concord Baptist Church's weekly worship attendance averaged "above 2000." See E. K. Bailey, "A Contextual Statement" (class paper, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, August 14, 1989), 11.

the saint, and to evangelize the sinners."[9] But Bailey produced more than inspirational Sunday preaching services. He presided over Concord Church's multiple ministries which drew believers and unbelievers together into African-American communal life. Under his pastoral influence, Concord's congregational culture echoed W. E. B. Du Bois's late nineteenth century observations of the Black Church:

> The Negro church is not simply an organism for the propagation of religion; it is the centre [sic] of the social, intellectual, and religious life of an organized group of individuals. It provides social intercourse, it provides amusement of various kinds, it serves as a newspaper and intelligence bureau, it supplants the theatre, it directs the picnic and excursion, it furnishes the music, it introduces the stranger to the community, it serves as a lyceum, library, and lecture bureau-it is, in fine, *the central organ of organized life of the American Negro*.[10]

Like Du Bois, Bailey saw the church community as a school to teach children their identity, a day care center for working parents, a grocery co-op to feed families, a credit union to finance business and mortgages, and a medical clinic for healthcare. He saw the church as a training center for virtues as piety, industry, and leadership mentoring.[11] Dubbed, "The Big Idea," Bailey envisioned a congregational facility (the "Concordplex") housing both "ministry and economic development."[12] To realize these plans, in 1996 Concord moved to a twenty-four acre parcel with a two thousand seat sanctuary.[13]

To this day, Bailey's echo of Du Bois's "centre of social, intellectual, and religious life" remains at Concord Church. For example, Bailey's successor, Bryan

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[9] Concord Church, "The Church Is the Community of All True Believers for All Time," historical mural located on the church premises, accessed July 6, 2021.

[10] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Problem of Amusement," 1897 essay in *Du Bois on Religion*, ed. Phil Zuckerman (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000), 21 (italics added). This dissertation acknowledges John D. Wilsey for his insight into this aspect.

[11] E. K. Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition" (DMin diss., United Theological Seminary, 1991), 71.

[12] E. K. Bailey, "A Contextual Statement" (seminar paper, United Theological Seminary, August 14, 1989), 46-51.

[13] Concord Church, "The Church Is the Community of All True Believers for All Time."

Carter, noted the following outcomes, some of which originated from Bailey's vision to serve "the wide breadths of the parts of life in our community"[14]: three hundred small groups for spiritual enrichment, numerous church plants, a dynamic student discipleship ministry, a "community development corporation" to serve the mental health needs of one hundred fifty clients, a food pantry that serves ten thousand under-resourced clients, a $3 million budget for housing assistance with plans to move ten thousand people out of poverty in the next decade, and an African American ownership group for economic development.[15] These outcomes, initiated by Bailey and expanded by Carter, comport with Du Bois's understanding of the Black church as the "central organ of organized life of the American Negro."[16] As examined in chapter 4, Bailey's grasp of the Black church's ecclesial "synergy" expanded from his mentoring by Henry H. Mitchell.

Furthermore, Bailey himself embodied Du Bois's persona of the Black pastor as the ecclesial community's "mayor," "chief magistrate," "spiritual guide," and a "leader of actual men."[17] For instance, Bailey once reflected on his own role as Concord's pastor, identifying himself as "chief of the tribe," "father of the community," "healer," and one to whom the congregation sought for problem-solving.[18] He observed, "I believe that we still have that approach, even with the size of our church. People share with me very minor, insignificant things as well as major things. That the pastor is the spiritual father and friend is still very much believed in our community."[19] Additionally, as considered in

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[14] Bryan Carter, telephone interview with the author, March 3, 2022.

[15] Carter, interview.

[16] Du Bois, "The Problem of Amusement," 21.

[17] Du Bois, "The Problem of Amusement," 21.

[18] E. K. Bailey and Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White: What We Can Learn From Each Other* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 41.

[19] Bailey and Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White*, 41.

chapter 5, Bailey mirrored Du Bois's view of the Black pastor as one who preached the "hard, honest truth to a people who needed a little more truth and a little less flattery."[20]

Third, Bailey's theological commitments complemented Daniel R. Bare's study of the theologically conservative, or fundamentalist African-American pastor during Jim Crow era.[21] Bare's fourfold understanding of fundamentalism asserted: (1) a supernatural, biblical worldview, (2) a theological adherence to the ninety essays of *The Fundamentals*, (3) a doctrinal critique of early twentieth century modernism, and (4) a utilization of fundamentalist vocabulary for self-identification.[22] Bare showed that though fundamentalist Black and White pastors had shared doctrines, their *applications* of these theological fundamentals differentiated due to their distinct racial locations. White pastors marshalled fundamentalism's theological points against Darwinian evolution, higher criticism, Henry Emerson Fosdick's modernist preaching, and "the social gospel."

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[20] Du Bois, "The Problem of Amusement," 21. For more historical context on the Black pastor, see Charles V. Hamilton, *The Black Preacher in America* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1972). While acknowledging no single mold, Hamilton surveys the various aspects that the Black preacher has embodied in the Black church and culture. Hamilton explores these roles: "pastor, pulpiteer, educator, leader, buffer, and bridge." He examines the preacher's relationship with the congregation. He considers the preacher during slavery. He gives metrics of Black preachers and the congregations they pastored. He writes about the different points of view concerning the preacher and politics. In latter chapters, Hamilton draws from interviews to discuss (1) congregational problems due to role misalignment, (2) educational experiences, and (3) various unique traits of Black ministers.

[21] Daniel R. Bare, *Black Fundamentalists: Conservative Christianity and Racial Identity in the Segregation Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2021). For a wider history of fundamentalism in the Black American experience, see Albert G. Miller, "The Construction of a Black Fundamentalist Worldview," in *African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Texts and Social Textures*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2000), 712-27. Miller traces early twentieth century Black fundamentalism in two cities, Dallas and Atlanta. He shows the development of fundamentalist doctrine arising from an "interconnecting network of black and white missionaries, congregations, camps, and Bible schools" (717-8). See also Albert G. Miller, "The Rise of African American Evangelicalism in American Culture" in *Perspectives on American Religion and Culture*, Peter W. Williams (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 259-69. Miller discusses the rise of the National Black Evangelical Association from 1963-2000. He distinguishes between Black fundamentalism and its propositional expressions in Black Brethren and Black Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) from Black, experiential Pentecostalism. This dissertation acknowledges John D. Wilsey for his insight into this connection.

[22] Bare, *Black Fundamentalists*, 18. Bare noted that the first three descriptors were theological and the fourth, sociological and thus more "subjective and elusive" (18). Edited chiefly by R. A. Torrey, *The Fundamentals* were a series of biblically conservative, theological essays written between 1910-1915 to rebut an anti-supernatural, liberal view of the Bible. This liberal view was also known as "modernist" as it aligned with its contemporary times, seeing the Bible through Darwinian evolutionary lenses. Theological modernism rejected assertions in the Bible such as Mosaic authorship, the Virgin birth, the bodily resurrection of Christ, the prophecies of Daniel, and the infallibility of Scripture. R. A. Torrey, and A C. Dixon, eds., *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* (1917; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

Black pastors drew from fundamentalism a charge to pursue racial equality and human rights for all.[23] Racial discrimination led White Protestant Fundamentalists to exclude their Black counterparts from the debate. Bare noted: "Their [White and Black Fundamentalists] commonality in one area did not necessarily dictate a congruence in the other."[24] Bailey's pulpit represented a late twentieth century iteration of Bare's work. While this dissertation found no evidence that Bailey subscribed to every detail of all ninety essays in *The Fundamentals*, he did align with its salient themes. In Bailey's own terms, he held to fundamental doctrines such as biblical inerrancy, the virgin birth of Christ, the bodily resurrection of Christ, the literal, Second Coming of Christ, the substitutionary atonement, and a supernatural worldview. On these grounds Bailey preached the Imago Dei for all ethnicities.[25] Bailey rigorously claimed a conservative, Reformed, orthodox view of Scripture. At the same time, he pastored in a predominately Black context due to segregation in America. He wrote, "The context of the African American Church is white racist America."[26]

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[23] For example, Bare noted the African Methodist Episcopal pastor, John Albert Johnson, who held that the "traditional, unchanging doctrines of the Christian faith not only undergirded the literal emancipation of African Americans from their long nightmare of enslavement, but also provided the cultural bedrock on which rested the future progress of the American people and the full realization of the American ideals of freedom and liberty on both national and personal levels." See Bare, *Black Fundamentalists*, 167.

[24] Bare, *Black Fundamentalists*, 17. Bare wrote: "I argue that the different social and cultural circumstances facing the black and white communities often led to substantially different social actions and applications, even among those who would commonly agree on the most important fundamentalist doctrines" (15).

[25] Bailey, "Statement of Theology for the Urban Church" (seminar paper, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, May 14, 1990), 2-10. See also E. K. Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching* (n.d.; repr., DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2013), 7.

[26] Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition," 20. See also Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson, "The Genius of the Negro Church," in *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, 2nd ed., ed. Milton C. Sernett (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 423-44. Sernett relates the history of the Black Church in the voices of documents organized historically. Seven major sections include: (1) "From Africa through Early America," (2) "Slave Religion In the Antebellum South," (3) "Black Churches North of Slavery and the Freedom Struggle," (4) Freedom's Time of Trial: 1865-World War 1," (5) "From the Great Migration to World War 2," (6) "Twentieth Century Religious Alternatives," and (7) "Civil Rights," "Black Theology," and "Beyond." In the section on the Great Migration and World War 2, Hays and Nicholson noted that the "status of the Negro Church is in part the failure of American Christianity in the realm of race relations" (423). The authors admire the Black church as first entity solely owned and operated by Black people. As discussed in chapter 4, Bailey will see the

Fourth, Bailey's pulpit served as a broad bridge between the local church and the academy. Bailey's Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary occurred in a cohort under Henry H. Mitchell. Bailey's coursework focused on selective applications of missiologist Donald R. McGavran's principles of church growth at Concord.[27] Bailey created a conference, "Institute on Church Growth," to serve mainly Black leadership in a local church context. The symposium would later evolve into the "International Conference on Expository Preaching," renamed the "E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference." Bailey's conferences were learning laboratories led by a faculty of seasoned, expository preachers and academicians. He created space for pastors of all contexts to study in community from skilled, expository practitioners and homileticians, such as Mitchell. Bailey's personal character and hospitable spirit permitted a magnanimous, gracious tent; the commonality of shared history as oppressed people. While leading and preaching from his own settled, conservative, theological convictions, Bailey interacted with a plurality of other voices and perspectives in ministry.[28] His "balance" exemplified Bare's observation about Black fundamentalism during segregation:

> A level of complexity and diversity within "the black church" . . . is apparent. That black fundamentalists sought to balance their recognition of the common oppression facing all black people in the Jim Crow world with their conviction about the spiritual centrality of the traditional "fundamental" doctrines of Christianity also

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church as a catalyst to business development and education, themes observed by Mays and Nicholson (430).

[27] Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition," 28.

[28] Lloyd C. Blue, video conference interview with the author, October 14, 2021. For corroboration, see Bailey and Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White*, 117. Bailey wrote, "I know a black pastor friend who is as different from myself as night is from day, but our churches function in similar ways. The church I serve has more of an African-American culture, and where he serves has more of the flavor of the Eurocentric culture, but our churches offer a very similar approach to ministry. Both are committed to preaching the word, but it's the 'flavor' of the worship services and the philosophy of how 'to do' church that makes us lean in two different cultural directions. People will make their decision based on what they're comfortable with" (117). See also Carter, interview.

> helps to illuminate how and why black fundamentalists tended to be less separatist than their white counterparts.[29]

Fifth, Bailey's hermeneutic has represented an under-reported perspective, demonstrating the non-monolithic nature of hermeneutics in Black preaching. For example, regarding interpretive scholarship in the last thirty years, Michael Joseph Brown noted a reader-centered shift in Black hermeneutics. He wrote:

> Subsequent phases of African American biblical interpretation would move away from corrective historiography toward other forms of interpretive engagement. *Most notably, biblical interpreters began to focus on the individual reading of the text as a constructor of meaning.* This is most evident in the work of scholars published in the last two decades of the 20th century, as well as the beginning of the twenty-first. . . . *A liberated and liberating hermeneutic rested more with the reader than with the contents of the Bible itself*.[30]

Also, Katie G. Cannon and Anthony B. Pinn compiled thirty-four essays claiming manifold perspectives in Black theology. The editors organized under the following categories: (1) "sources; (2) doctrines; (3) internal debates; (4) current challenges; and (5) future prospects."[31] They included contributors such as Allen Dwight Callahan, who reported reader-centered themes of slavery, oppression, resistance, and liberation in Black theology's use of the Bible.[32] Frederick L. Ware's chapter on methodology explored (1) a womanist hermeneutic, (2) a hermeneutic of God unlinked from orthodox Trinitarian theism, and (3) a "back to Africa homeland" hermeneutic.[33] R. Drew Smith's contribution included Thabiti Anyabwile's lament of the Black Church's theological drift from doctrinal conservatism, yet only as an intramural debate about the

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[29] Bare, *Black Fundamentalists*, 17.

[30] Michael Joseph Brown, "Black Theology and the Bible," in *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, ed. Dwight N. Hopkins and Edward P. Antonio (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 176 (italics added).

[31] Katie G. Cannon and Anthony B. Pinn, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology* (2014; repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), v-vii.

[32] Allen Dwight Callahan, "Reading and Using Scripture in the African American Tradition," in *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology*, ed. Katie G. Cannon and Anthony Pinn, 27-36.

[33] Frederick L. Ware, "Methodologies in African American Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology*, ed. Katie G. Cannon and Anthony Pinn, 124-35.

role of the church in adjudicating African American hermeneutics.[34] Overlooked in Cannon and Pinn was a chapter dedicated to critical consideration of conservative, grammatical-historical-cultural concerns as a part of the African American interpretive family. Bailey's hermeneutic would have been an appropriate case study for inclusion.

Moreover, in their majestic anthology of Black preaching, Martha Simmons and Frank A. Thomas wrote an introduction with an historical survey of the Black pulpit. They identified values of Black Sacred Rhetoric including: (1) "the centrality of the Bible," (2) "eyewitness style of picture painting and narration," (3) "close observation of life" or "existential exegesis," (4) "relevance," (5) "Holy Spirit," and (6) celebratory sermon conclusions.[35] They organized a collection of Black preachers and their sermons along six eras: "The Beginnings of African American Preaching (1750-1789)," "Social and Religious Emancipation (1790-1865)," "From Reconstruction to Deconstruction (1866-1917)," "World Wars, Freedom Struggles, and Renaissance (1918-1950)," "Civil Rights and Direct Action (1951-1968)," and "From Black to African American and Beyond (1969 to the Present)." They presented an historical overview before each era, followed by selected preachers and their sermons. Simmons and Thomas have bequeathed the academy a thorough overview of what African American preaching is and who they identify as its major players. Yet Bailey was omitted, save a bibliographic reference of his book, co-authored with Warren W. Wiersbe.

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[34] R. Drew Smith, "The Church in African American Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology*, ed. Katie G. Cannon and Anthony Pinn, 228-41. See Thabiti M. Anyabwile and Mark A. Noll, *The Decline of African American Theology: From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009). Anyabwile and Noll traced historical theology in the African American church, a study *inside* the African American community and *alongside* other ethnic communities. They argued that African Americans developed a theology without the tools of white theological institutions. Their thesis contended, "Disentangled from its evangelical and Reformed theological upbringing, the [Black] church became motivated by a quest for justice for justice's sake rather than by the call and mandate of God as expressed in more biblical understandings of Christianity" (16).

[35] Martha Simmons and Frank A. Thomas, eds., *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 7-8.

That said, Eric Redmond's collection of essays has shown appreciation for the symbiotic relationship between biblical exposition and the African American experience. Through examples of various scriptural genres, the book proposed pericopal, authorial intent within the "audience's contemporary social and ecclesial contexts."[36] Redmond's compendium highlighted theological themes of justice and hope as distinctively meaningful to the Black lived experience. He encouraged expository preaching through a book of the Bible, giving examples of effective application. Bailey was quoted once and his name appeared in the acknowledgments.[37]

Also, Esau McCaulley's "Black Ecclesial Reading," discussed in chapter 3, would represent a recent amplification of an expository hermeneutic which respects the Bible's "historical context, grammar, and structure."[38] McCaulley wrote to mitigate his unease with Anglo commentaries that "displayed little concern for how the text [spoke] to the experiences of Black believers" as well as Black works written from the "progressive strand of the Black Christian tradition."[39]

In summary, incorporation of Bailey's conservative, Reformed understanding of Scripture would better represent the non-monolithic nature of African American hermeneutics. He grew a substantial ministry to thousands of members. He was the pastoral mayor of Concord Church, an echo of Du Bois's perspective of the African American pastor. He was a late twentieth century complement to the theological commitments of Black fundamentalists in America's segregation era. He carefully, effectively implemented a succession plan for Concord's future and catalyzed author-

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[36] Eric C. Redmond, "Introduction: The Joining of the African American Tradition and Exposition," in *Say It! Celebrating Expository Preaching in the African American Tradition*, ed. Eric C. Redmond (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2020), 27.

[37] Winfred Omar Neely, "The African American Expositor," in ed. Eric C. Redmond, *Say It!*, 51.

[38] Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 21.

[39] McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 12-14.

centered hermeneutics for expository preaching in the Black Baptist pulpit. This dissertation attempts to illuminate a marginalized perspective of one who belonged to an historically marginalized people group.

Methodology

To achieve the stated thesis, this dissertation will employ the following essentials of the historical method: (1) collecting sources for the relevancy of the study, (2) sifting the authentic sources from the inauthentic sources, (3) extracting credible witness from the authentic sources, and (4) organizing for narrative exposition.[40]

Regarding collecting sources, the study will examine as primary sources Bailey's known published works. Additionally, Bailey's wife, Sheila Smith Bailey, has made available to the author six unpublished papers from his doctoral studies at United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio.[41] This dissertation has obtained one hundred sermons over Bailey's final ten years of preaching with particular attention to Bailey's expositions of Ephesians, the last major book series Bailey preached at Concord. Other sermons were selected across the decade to establish the consistency of his hermeneutic across the Bible.[42] The dissertation offers analysis of Bailey's preaching consisting of

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[40] Louis Reichenthal Gottschalk, *Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Method*, 2nd ed. (New York: Knopf, 1969), 28.

[41] E. K. Bailey, "A Contextual Statement" (seminar paper, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, August 14, 1989); E. K. Bailey, "A Statement of Focus" (seminar paper, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, January 22, 1990); E. K. Bailey, "Statement of Theology" (seminar paper, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, May 14, 1990); E. K. Bailey, "A Self-Description" (seminar paper, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, May 14, 1990); E. K. Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition" (DMin diss., United Theological Seminary, April 1991); E. K. Bailey, "Growing an Urban Church" (seminar paper, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, n.d.).

[42] Labelled "purposeful sampling," this method pursues "information-rich cases" for investigation. Such cases inform the researcher about content of key value to the study, such as Bailey's expository series on Ephesians. Michael Quinn Patton cites sixteen "strategies" of purposeful sampling. Regarding Bailey's sermons, this dissertation utilizes "typical case sampling," that is, "to describe and illustrate what is typical." Patton notes, "The sample is illustrative, not definitive." While purposeful sampling is vulnerable to the researcher's subjective bias, random sampling could overlook Bailey's maturity as an expository preacher by treating sermons preached early in his career the same as in his later years. See Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE, 1990), 169-186.

(1) appreciation of sermon setting, (2) description of sermon content, (3) organization of sermon structure and, (4) indication of Bailey's hermeneutic therein. Bailey's sermons will be examined with sensitivity to what he intended to communicate in the preaching moment and how his twofold hermeneutic substantiated his exposition.[43]

Additionally, live or video interviews occurred with the following family members and ministry colleagues to understand how Bailey's lived experience informed his faith, theology, and hermeneutical preunderstandings: Sheila Bailey (wife), Cokiesha Bailey Robinson (daughter), Shenikwa Bailey Cager (daughter), Leroy Armstrong, Lloyd Blue, Bryan Carter, Ross Cullins, Leonard Leach, Crawford Loritts, William J. Shaw, Robert Smith, Jr., Melvin Wade, and Ralph Douglas West (ministry colleagues). Archival footage of A. Louis Patterson's interview with H. B. Charles, Jr., has been accessed. Also utilized were video interviews of Sheila Bailey and Bryan Carter, each hosted by H. B. Charles, Jr.[44]

Regarding secondary resources, this dissertation has surveyed the historical heritage and hermeneutics of African-American Sacred Rhetoric.[45] Hermeneutical districts of Black preaching have been identified for comparison and contrast along a reader-centered/author-centered spectrum.[46] Bailey is located along this spectrum and

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[43] Bailey's sermons on audio were obtained on special order from Sheila B. Ministries, DeSoto, Texas, https://www.sheilab.org/online-store/e-k--bailey-products.html, accessed March 21, 2022.

[44] Again, "purposeful sampling" guides the selection of interviewees under the strategy of "snowball or chain sampling." Patton states, "This is an approach for locating information-rich key informants or critical cases. The process begins by asking well-situated people: "Who knows a lot about _____? Who should I talk to?' By asking a number of people who else to talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger as you accumulate new information rich cases." See Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 169-186.

[45] See Gottschalk, *Understanding History*, 53. Gottschalk differentiated between primary and secondary sources in this way: "A *primary source* is the testimony of an eyewitness, or of a witness by any other of the senses, or of a mechanical device like the Dictaphone; that is, of one who or that which was present at the events of which he or it tells (hereafter called simply *eyewitness*). A *secondary source* is the testimony of anyone who is not an eyewitness; that is, of one who was not present at the events at which he tells. A primary source must thus have been produced by a contemporary of the events it narrates" (53).

[46] Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 366.

among these districts, demonstrating how his theological, biblical assumptions led to his hermeneutical commitments.

In extracting and utilizing primary and secondary resources for credibility, this dissertation proposes Bailey's hermeneutic as the conflation of his two principal homiletical mentors: A. Louis Patterson and Henry H. Mitchell. Regarding Mitchell, it sees evidence that Bailey's educational experience at United Theological Seminary helped form the interpretive lens, *Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship*. Through this lens Bailey preached toward cultural relevance, familial affinity, and ecclesial community. Regarding Patterson, it proposes that his personal mentoring to Bailey assisted in developing the interpretive lens, *Bibliocentric Christoformity*. Through this lens, Bailey preached Word-centered, Christ-oriented, and Christ-shaped sermons within his theologically conservative, Reformed convictions.

Regarding organization for narrative exposition, this dissertation appreciates Zachary M. Schrag's definition of history as "the study of people and the choices they made."[47] Bailey's life consisted of his choices: to attend Bishop College, to marry Sheila Smith, to plant Concord Church, to meet A. Louis Patterson, to study under Henry H. Mitchell, to establish an expository preaching conference. From these choices, each made under Christianity's sovereign God, Bailey's "impact has far outlived his being physically present on the Earth."[48]

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[47] Zachary M. Schrag, *The Princeton Guide to Historical Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021), 9. See also Carl R. Trueman, *Histories and Fallacies: Problems Faced in the Writing of History* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010). Trueman echoed Schrag: "Ultimately, for me, all good historians, no matter what the period which they study, are engaged in asking variations on a basic question: *why is this person doing this thing in this way in this place at this particular point in time?* Once you realize that that is the kind of question you have been asking all along, you are free to answer it more effectively and to hone your methods to that question more accurately and precisely. The result is better historical consciousness, method, and, hopefully, writing" (24; italics added).

[48] Ross Cullins, video teleconference interview with the author, October 11, 2021.

Moreover, as a reflection of Bare's "historical-theological approach,"[49] examination of Bailey's hermeneutical, theological, and biblical commitments should be considered in and of themselves, not as a cover for attracting a megachurch sized congregation or constructing a personal brand or any other ulterior motive. Bailey's convictions about the Bible were deeply, personally held religious beliefs. For Bailey, what he believed, how he lived, and the way he preached were matters of eternal destiny. He asserted, "It is the life of Christ in you communicating the life of Christ to your congregation."[50] Bryan Carter noted that Bailey's pulpit life was the overflow of his spiritual life. Carter recalled words Bailey once spoke on the importance of being a spiritually authentic, biblically saturated pastor: "Where there is the absence of a devotional life lies the skeletal remains of an ineffective preacher."[51]

Historical Summary of Research

According to a ProQuest search conducted on March 20, 2022, three dissertations have been written on E. K. Bailey's leadership and preaching. First, Kenneth R. Lewis studied E. K. Bailey's pulpit through the critical lens of Haddon Robinson's homiletical method.[52] Lewis contextualized Bailey by interviewing his family members and ministry colleagues. He analyzed Bailey according to the canons of rhetoric. He considered Bailey's narrative preaching. He noted Bailey's attention to dialogical elements of African American Sacred Rhetoric. He demonstrated Bailey's commitment to

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[49] Bare, *Black Fundamentalists*, 14. Bare considers the theology of African American conservatives, as is. He accepts "theology qua theology to be a meaningful analytical category and understands the content of religious belief to be important in and of itself, rather than simply a reflection or manifestation of other underlying driving forces" (14). This point is where Bare departs from Mary Beth Swetnam Mathews, who argued that fundamentalist was a "racialized" term. See Mathews, *Doctrine and Race: African American Evangelicals and Fundamentalism Between the Wars* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2017), 5.

[50] Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, 15.

[51] Carter, interview.

[52] Kenneth R. Lewis, "An Examination of the Preaching of E. K. Bailey in Light of Expository Preaching Methodology" (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014).

expository preaching while respecting his context as an African American pastor shepherding in African American congregation. His excellent dissertation examined Bailey's expository methodology but not his hermeneutic behind the exposition.

Second, Brian Carmichael's dissertation surveyed several preachers who demonstrate effective imagination in sermons preached narratively or in first person monologue. Bailey, known for his first-person monologue sermons, is studied along with Bartholomew Orr, Calvin Miller, and Rick Blackwood.[53] Again, Carmichael's work celebrated Bailey's creativity but did not examine his interpretive lenses through which sermonic content flowed.

Third, Alvin Edwards studied pastoral leadership competencies among African American pastors.[54] The project, which required a pseudonym for its participants, studied the leadership traits of five African American pastors and how they defined "success" in ministry. Edwards's research contended that "community involvement, visionary ability, communication skills, and personal integrity" were paramount to ministry success. Bailey was one of the five pastors studied.[55] Edwards's contribution focused on Bailey's leadership over his homiletics.

This dissertation's unique contribution is its attention to *Bailey's interpretive keys which supported his expository preaching*. The research shows that the preacher's hermeneutical assumptions determine the quality of biblical exposition for homiletics. Bailey's two-fold hermeneutic reinforced an *author-centered* exposition as opposed to a *reader-centered* exposition. This aim does not ignore the context of readers or auditors. Bailey's pulpit proves that the expository preacher can be both (1) faithful to the biblical

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[53] Brian Melvis Carmichael, Sr., "An Investigation of the Development and Application of Creative Preaching" (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

[54] Alvin Edwards, "A Case Study of the Quality of Church Life: Examining the Leadership Style of an African American Pastor" (PhD diss., George Mason University, 2000).

[55] Alvin Edwards, telephone interview with the author, January 30, 2020.

author's intent and (2) cognizant of the preacher's and congregation's location of lived experience. Bailey's skill was his ability to situate his audience's environment in the light of Christianity's divinely revealed, inscripturated truth. Like Ezra and the Levites of Nehemiah 8:8, Bailey read from the Word of God and explained it paragraph by paragraph so that the congregation could understand the meaning. Bailey told Concord what God's Word said. He clarified what it meant. He applied it to their lives. Bailey incorporated biblical exegesis based on authorial intent without neglecting the unique, historical context of the African-American community he was called to pastor. Through the interpretive assumptions that grounded his preaching, Bailey trailblazed a path for a future generation of author-centered hermeneutics in Black Sacred Rhetoric.

Argument

The following chapters detail the dissertation's thesis argument. Chapter 2 considers Bailey's personal history. A brief overview of his life and call to ministry chronicles major milestones in his educational journey, his experiences in pastoral ministry, and the events leading up to the founding of Concord Church, Dallas, Texas. Bailey's own published witness as well as empirical evidence gathered via interviews inform his biographical history.

Chapter 3 reviews six prominent hermeneutical districts of African American Sacred Rhetoric. First, the *black liberation* district considers the interpretive lens of emancipation from oppression. Second, the *social justice* district sees Scripture in the sight line of the Old Testament Minor Prophets, who urged reformation of Israel's power structures unto equality before all under the law. Third, the *black exposition* district demonstrates a perspective which grounds the sermon in the grammatical, historical considerations of the Scripture without ignoring the readers' life situation. Fourth, the *communal hope* district offers a lens for preaching God's power to aid his suffering people, pouring hope over the hearts of hearers. Fifth, the *prosperity* district affirms Kate

Bowler's fourfold understanding of America's "prosperity gospel." And sixth, the *womanist* district summarizes the connection between Alice Walker's "womanism" and James H. Cone's Black theology. Through thematic analysis, this dissertation compares and contrasts these districts, identifying their overlap with attention to which districts are *reader-centered* (Gadamer)[56] versus *author-centered* (Hirsch). Bailey's pulpit will be situated among these districts with evidence that his scholarly concern for author-centeredness did not obstruct his pastoral concern for his congregants.

Chapter 4 presents Bailey's hermeneutical influencers, A. Louis Patterson and Henry H. Mitchell. Bailey's choices to associate with them proved to shape his pulpit for the rest of his life. In order to appreciate their effect on Bailey, their own homiletical perspectives must be examined. Collectively, though not equally, Bailey's hermeneutic was the merging of both. Patterson was peerless in his influence and contributed to the *Bibliocentric Christoformity* lens in Bailey's hermeneutic. Mitchell was notable in his influence and contributed to the *Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship* lens in Bailey's hermeneutic.

Chapter 5 explicates Bailey's twofold hermeneutic. First, *Afro-ethnic*, *Ecclesial Kinship* is defined as a hermeneutic of cultural relevance, familial affinity, and ecclesial community. Then, *Bibliocentric Christoformity* is understood as Word-centered, Christ-oriented, and Christ-shaped. Definitions for each component of these lenses are explored.

Chapter 6 probes Bailey's preaching from his final decade of ministry at Concord Church. By analyzing his sermons, published papers and coursework along with empirical interviews with family and colleagues, an argument emerges that Bailey

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[56] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (1960; repr., London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013). Gadamer called this approach a "fusion of horizons" in which the reader's horizon of understanding fuses with the text's horizon of understanding, out of which arises a "new understanding" of the text without the original author's will. "Understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves" (317).

consistently interpreted Scripture as: (1) a Christian sibling to Christian siblings, (2) an African American to African Americans acknowledging their unique heritage as an oppressed people, (3) a pastor to a congregation, (4) a scholar seeking authorial intent, (5) a kergymatic herald of Christ, and (6) one who preaches to imitate Christ, not just become acquainted with Christ. To demonstrate the consistency of Bailey's hermeneutic across several genres of Scripture, no less than twenty sermons from other portions of the Bible are considered from both Old and New Testaments. The sermons in this chapter represent Bailey's most experienced years of pulpit ministry (1993-2003) before his death in 2003. Bailey's pulpit exceled in biblical exposition because of attention to his twofold hermeneutic.[57]

Chapter 7 examines implications of Bailey's hermeneutic for pastors and homileticians. This section argues that what the preacher believes about the Bible will lead to how the preacher proclaims the Bible; theological convictions matter for preaching. It claims that effective teachers of preaching must pay attention to E. D. Hirsch's "meaning/significance" paradigm.[58] They must take note of a congregation's cultural considerations in interpreting the Bible for preaching. Bailey's example showed that effective homileticians should attend to the "interpretive location"[59] upon which the biblical author's original message lands as well as their own. Bailey's twofold hermeneutic occurred within the rhythm of daily life in Dallas, Texas, in a megachurch

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[57] Rhetorical analysis of recorded sermons is a tentative exercise. All of Bailey's sermons on Ephesians were extracted from digital recordings. Many of Bailey's other sermons were in written format. Few of his sermons were recorded on video. These mediums lose the dynamic, performative nature of African American Sacred Rhetoric. That is, Black preaching has historically been a live, audio-visual, in person, dialogical, and experiential event which recordings cannot completely reproduce. This study agrees with Trueman: "All histories are provisional in the sense that no one can offer an exhaustive account of any past action, given the limited state of the evidence and the historian's inevitably limited grasp of context as well as distance from the past. But provisional merely means limited and subject to refinement; it does not make all readings of the evidence equally valid, or equally unreliable." Trueman, *Histories and Fallacies*, 21.

[58] E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967).

[59] Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 2nd. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 59.

context. Staff meetings, spiritual counseling, weddings, funerals, hospital visitation, Wednesday prayer night, Deacons' meetings, follow up on newcomers, and conflict resolution-these activities constituted the flurry of an active congregation. These events, along with the front-page news of a major U. S. city, situated the hermeneutic of Bailey's pulpit in the *actual* as opposed to the *theoretical*.[60] Chapter 8 concludes this study with a chapter summary, further research opportunities for Bailey's pulpit, and the author's personal reflections on Bailey.

Thus, the logic of this work presents contextual issues in chapters 2 and 3, Bailey's biographical background and the interpretive landscape of African American Sacred Rhetoric. Then, Bailey's hermeneutical influencers are introduced in chapter 4 along with the proposed hermeneutic, explicated in chapter 5. In chapter 6, sermons from Bailey's mature pulpit test the proposed thesis; in chapter 7 lessons for today's preachers and homileticians are considered. Chapter 8 concludes the study with suggestions for further aspects of Bailey's pulpit.[61]

This dissertation intends to answer the research question, "How did E. K. Bailey interpret the Bible for preaching in ministry?" The proposed answer is offered in Bailey's twofold hermeneutic, validated by his preaching, his published works, unpublished papers, and empirical interviews conducted with his family and close colleagues in ministry. The conclusion of this dissertation urges field pastors and homileticians to adopt an author-centered, Hirschian, "meaning/significance" hermeneutic of the Bible as the ground for expository preaching. The importance of this dissertation is Bailey as a late twentieth century echo of Du Bois's Black ecclesial shepherd; a case study of Bare's theologically conservative Black pastor in America's

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[60] See Bailey and Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White*, 67. Bailey said, "When it comes to ministry, the preacher is part of the message, and sometimes he has to study the text in the furnace of affliction to find out what it means" (67).

[61] In acknowledgment to this dissertation's "logic of development," see Sanlon, *Augustine's Theology of Preaching*, xxii-xxiii.

segregation era; and a marginalized pastor within a marginalized people group. In a contemporary culture seeking to construct its own meaning, Bailey's pulpit contends for supernaturally revealed, inscripturated truth; the kind found in the Bible, not fashioned in the human mind. This dissertation is a reference for pastors and homileticians who desire the grammatical-historical-cultural hermeneutic actualized in a local church pastorate.

CHAPTER 2

E. K. BAILEY: HIS EARLY YEARS

Reflecting on his life, E. K. Bailey once said, "God used the spade of sorrow to dig the well of joy."[1] Bailey believed that his challenges as a child, an adolescent, and a young pastor forged his character into the likeness of Christ. Out of his difficult experiences came his nascent pre-commitments to understanding and interpreting the Bible. Robert Smith, Jr., observed that Bailey's "life and theology come together not in an abstract but a concrete way. Out of the merging of ink and blood emerged his theological and hermeneutical perspectives."[2]

This chapter will answer the question: "How did Bailey's personal and ministry history inform his hermeneutical assumptions for preaching?" By studying Bailey's extant family and ministry history, the following theme emerges: *Christoformity through hardship*. He testified:

> God in his infinite wisdom uses suffering to discipline our morality. You show me a person who has never gone through anything, and I'll show you a shallow person. If you've never been through anything, if you've never experienced any hard times, if you don't know anything about suffering, I want you to know God cannot use you very much. . . . Oswalt Chambers says to us, "You can't drink grapes, they must be crushed."[3]

Bailey held that the sufferings in his personal and ministry life served as a seedbed for his theological, hermeneutical assumptions about the Bible. Though Bailey did not leave a published autobiography, what is known about his life has come by way

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[1] E. K. Bailey, "Farther In and Deeper Down," sermon in *Let the Legends Preach: Sermons by Living Legends at the E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference*, ed. Jared E. Alcántara (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2021), 5.

[2] Robert Smith, Jr., telephone interview with the author, January 25, 2020.

[3] Bailey, "Farther In and Deeper Down," sermon in *Let the Legends Preach*, 5.

of interviews with family members and colleagues along with his sermons, ministry books, and unpublished class papers. After reviewing Bailey's family and ministry history, this chapter offers analysis which connects life experiences, worldview, and their subsequent hermeneutical assumptions.

Family History

Ervin Kinsley Bailey was born in Marshall, Texas, on December 19, 1945, the second son of Reverend Vivian Moses (V. M.) and Mrs. Victoria Bailey. V. M. was a well-known preacher in the Black Baptist Church, serving ministries in Texas and California. Bailey looked up to his father and the heritage of ministry to which he belonged. He admired his father's handsome stature and exceptional pulpit skills: "He was an outstanding orator, a prolific and powerful preacher. He was tall, well-groomed, and dedicated to preaching the truth of Christ. He was the rock of our family and I adored him."[4] In 1958, V. M. moved his family to Oakland, California, to pastor the 7th Avenue Missionary Baptist Church.[5]

Because his father was in ministry, Bailey was active in the life of local church community. He remembered being at the church whenever its doors opened. He appreciated his churched upbringing and the foundation of Christianity on which he stood. He acknowledged drawing spiritual strength from the "Scriptures that I had learned, prayers that I had prayed, and sermons I had heard over my lifetime."[6] While visiting relatives in Louisiana, six-year-old Bailey attended a church Vacation Bible School where he became a Christian.[7] Sadly, V. M. and Victoria divorced during this

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[4] E. K. Bailey, *Farther In and Deeper Down* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005), 19. See also Wayne Croft, Sr., "E. K. Bailey: Expositor of the Word," *Preaching* 25, no. 6 (May/June, 2010): 13.

[5] E. K. Bailey, introduction to *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, vol. 1, ed. H. B. Charles, Jr. (Jacksonville, FL: Shiloh Church, 2015).

[6] Bailey, *Farther In and Deeper Down*, 21.

[7] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 71, 108.

time and Bailey lived with his father, who remarried. Bailey later acknowledged a strained relationship with his stepmother: "His new wife had never taken to me but had tolerated me only as her husband's son."[8] Nonetheless, he lived his adolescent years in Oakland under his father's roof and often visited his mother, who had moved to Los Angeles.

As a seventeen-year-old student-athlete at Oakland High School, Bailey remembered an incident of racial discrimination while with friends. He had been invited to watch a "All American" high school football game in Los Angeles, where one of his peers played halfback. Bailey borrowed his father's car and four other friends accompanied him to the game. The friends coaxed Bailey into speeding, but he resisted. When they arrived in Los Angeles where his mother lived, Bailey wanted to see her before the game. He and his friends got lost and sought assistance from an Anglo police officer, who assumed horseplay. Bailey recounted the ensuing brutality:

> When I saw a police officer and tried to flag him down. He thought we were messing with him. He jumped out of the car, pulled us out of the car, primarily me because I was driving. . . . He hit me in the mouth and blood shot out, and I kept telling the man, "I don't want to fight." He took my license; it was paper at the time. He balled it up, threw it away, and just went from one thing to another. . . . What was I thinking about is: how am I going to explain this to my daddy? And when I looked over my left there was another fellow standing there, a police officer with a double barrel shotgun. Have you ever looked down the barrel of a double barrel shotgun?[9]

Bailey credited his father's influence as the reason why he responded peaceably as the victim of prejudice. He was more concerned about reacting in a way that would please his father: "It was because my daddy had established his authority in my life that I am still alive today."[10]

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[8] Bailey, *Farther In and Deeper Down*, 18-9.

[9] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 102. See also E. K. Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 5," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, June 21, 1998 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1998), MP3. In his sermon, Bailey calls his incident a "Rodney King whipping" in reference to the videotaped act of police brutality against King on March 3, 1991, Los Angeles, California.

[10] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 102.

Another episode served as a catalyst to Bailey's call to ministry. In high school he found it difficult to concentrate on his coursework. His grades began to suffer and his father was concerned that he was not taking his classes seriously. As graduation neared, Bailey's high school counselor reviewed his academic record and gave the following assessment: "Kinsley, I don't think you will amount to anything; you need to be a mechanic."[11] Bailey later reflected on this conversation:

> I have nothing against a mechanic's life, but when you have 10 thumbs, detest grease, and can barely recognize a spark plug, I'm led to believe that the counselor misread her information, or perhaps the American scheme of steering blacks away from the pursuit of higher education was somehow circumvented.[12]

Refusing this counsel, Bailey resolved to do whatever it would take to succeed in his academics. He determined to employ a work ethic that would overcome his coursework performance. Later Bailey discovered that his grades lagged due to undiagnosed attention deficit disorder. As an adult, Bailey recounted this event as a sermon illustration crediting God's faithfulness in his life:

> God called me to preach, although I had never read a solid book. God has been faithful. After becoming a man, I learned that my learning problems came from having ADD, a learning difference, but God had been faithful. I had trouble learning how to spell, I had to carry a dictionary in my back pocket everywhere I went, but God has been faithful.[13]

Ministry History

Bailey's call to ministry, his first pastorate, and later health struggles while pastoring Concord Church resonate with his life theme of finding Christ-saturated joy in life's most difficult sorrows.

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[11] Cokiesha Bailey-Robinson, "E. K. Bailey's Influence on Expository Preaching," lecture on CD-ROM presented at the How Shall They Hear? Conference (Morristown, NJ: Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, 2017). Bailey-Robinson quipped, "The counselor was right. Daddy was a mechanic of expository preaching!"

[12] Bailey, "A Self-Description," (seminar paper, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, May 14, 1990), 2.

[13] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 71.

Ministry Calling

Bailey's call to the Christian ministry came on the heels of a catastrophic event. On October 15, 1963, his father was tragically shot and on November 18, 1963, died.[14] V. M. Bailey's death pushed E. K. into a sinking spiral of lonely desperation. Bailey's strained relationship with his stepmother led to her evicting him from the house shortly after the funeral. Bailey was homeless and hopeless for eighteen months.[15] Reflecting on this dark season, he wrote, "For days I wandered the streets of Oakland with no money and no place to go. I felt abandoned and alone. My heart and my mind played tug-of-war. . . . I wanted to be depressed. 'It's not fair!' I shouted. I was guest of honor at my own pity party."[16] Recalling how he survived, Bailey said:

> I proceeded to live with friends, to sleep in parked cars, vacant houses, city parks, or wherever I could find a space. The years of this vagabond lifestyle, which was later imitated by the hippie movement, serve as the most critical years of my life. It was during those years that I strongly debated the issue of which was best-life or death. With the help of Jackie Skillan and others, I somehow made it through this morbid period of my life.[17]

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[14] Cokiesha Bailey-Robinson called this incident "intimate" to the family. See Cokiesha Bailey-Robinson, "Legacy of E. K. Bailey's Influence on Expository Preaching" (lecture at the How Shall They Hear? Conference, Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, Morristown, NJ, November 17, 2017). V. M. Bailey's death certificate indicated "pulmonary embolus due to gunshot wound of back. Homicide. Subject was shot with a .45 calibre gun by Leroy Jones." See State of California, Certification of Vital Record, Office of Clerk-Recorder, County of Alameda, Oakland, California, Certificate of Death, Vivian Moses Bailey, Local Registration District 6005, Certificate Number 885, Certified Copy 000322804, stamped "Informational," issued July 6, 2022. According to the *Oakland Tribune*, Jones called V. M. Bailey to Jones's residence, alleging V. M. of trying to break up Jones's family. A heated conversation ensued and as V. M. Bailey left, Jones shot him in the back. See "Pastor Shot, Deacon Arrested," *Oakland Tribune*, October 16, 1963, 48, https://www.newspapers.com/image/354493189, accessed July 15, 2022; "Charges Filed in Shooting of Minister," *Oakland Tribune*, October 17, 1963, 15, https://www.newspapers.com/image/354493730, accessed July 15, 2022; "Innocent Plea in Pastor Shooting," *Oakland Tribune*, October 18, 1963, 40, https://www.newspapers.com/image/354494395, accessed July 15, 2022; "Pastor Shot in Row Dies," *Oakland Tribune*, November 19, 1963, 27, https://www.newspapers.com/image/354479403, accessed July 15, 2022; "Churchman's Slayer Pleads Manslaughter," *Oakland Tribune*, February 5, 1964, 17, https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/354544408/, accessed July 15, 2022 and; "Minister's Slayer Sent to Prison," *Oakland Tribune*, March 4, 1964, 20, https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/354477924/, accessed July 15, 2022.

[15] E. K. Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 1," sermon preached at Concord Church, May 3, 1998, Dallas, Texas (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries), MP3.

[16] Bailey, *Farther In and Deeper Down*, 19.

[17] Bailey, "A Self-Description," 4.

Yet in Bailey's most intensive season of grief ("I was hanging on at the end of a rope"), he had a spiritual experience on a park bench in Oakland. He sensed God's assurance speaking to his spirit: "When I take, I never take all."[18] Bailey interpreted this "whisper" as God's promise to keep him during his difficult season. By recounting the blessings and benefits of his faith, Bailey sought the strength of his father's spiritual influence even apart from his father's physical presence. On that park bench in Oakland, Bailey experienced God's call to vocational ministry: "I had to press on because my father, the late Reverend V. M. Bailey, would have wanted it that way. Sitting on that park bench I decided that I would live as my father had, serving Jesus Christ. . . . I began to be filled with an overwhelming and unbelievable amount of joy."[19]

Three days later, Bailey unexpectedly received a letter from Bishop College, informing him of his acceptance to the upcoming fall term. He was to report to campus on September 9, 1964. With but two pairs of pants and two coats, he followed through on his promise to become a preacher if God would make a way for him to attend college. Later, Bailey learned how he was able to enroll: "Charles Goady, one of my father's personal friends, who had encouraged me to go to school in the first place, had talked to Dr. T. M. Chambers, Sr., a Bishop College Board member. He also bought my bus ticket, put $100 in my hand and told me, 'You can make it.'"[20]

Ministry Preparation at Bishop College

On September 15, 1965, Bailey met his future wife, Sheila Smith. Sheila had moved from Connecticut (and its predominately white schools) to Bishop College, an

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[18] Bailey, *Farther In and Deeper Down*, 20.

[19] Bailey, *Farther In and Deeper Down*, 20-1. In her lecture on Bailey's expository preaching legacy, Cokiesha Bailey-Robinson stated that her father kept a miniaturized park bench on his desk as a reminder of how God called him to ministry. She reflected: "God used the negativity of a counselor, the death of a father, and the park bench of a homeless man to launch him into destiny." See Bailey-Robinson, "E. K. Bailey's Influence on Expository Preaching."

[20] Bailey, "A Self-Description," 5.

historically black school.[21] She recalled being in the cafeteria eating with friends when a handsome, tall, young man entered. One of the female students yelled: "Bailey's back!" Sheila assumed that this young lady was in a courtship with him but as it turned out, the young lady was in a courtship with one of his peers. Later, while Sheila was visiting with friends in the dormitory, one of them informed her that Bailey had inquired about her! Their courtship began and they dated throughout their undergraduate years.[22]

Prior to his junior year, Bailey's academics improved considerably under the tutelage of a White church history professor named, Underwood. Bailey said, "He helped me to believe in myself and to develop the discipline of good study habits."[23] As a result, Bailey was elected president of the Ministers' Lyceum on campus after which his grades improved further. Also, during his junior year at Bishop, Bailey was mentored by Caesar Clark, pastor of the Good Street Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas. Clark frequently asked Bailey to preach at the church; he hired Bailey to serve as his pastoral assistant and driver. As a result of Clark's enthusiastic support, seven Dallas congregations with open pulpits sought Bailey.[24]

After their graduation in 1969, E. K. and Sheila married in a ceremony officiated by W. K. Jackson at St. John's Missionary Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.[25] Later that year, Bailey enrolled in Southwestern Baptist Theological

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[21] Bishop College was founded in 1881 by the American Baptist Home Mission Society. It was named after a white lawyer, Nathan Bishop, who sought to establish an institution of higher education for African Americans. Historian Amy Bertsch noted that Bishop was known for its "rigorous educational program that prepared black students to excel in the South despite the limitations of Jim Crow segregation." In 1961 the college relocated to Dallas, Texas, until 1988 when it closed for financial reasons. See Amy Bertsch, "Bishop College," East Texas History website, Sam Houston State University, https://easttexashistory.org/items/show/141, accessed July 23, 2021.

[22] Sheila Bailey, video teleconference interview with the author, February 5, 2021.

[23] Bailey, "A Self-Description," 3.

[24] Bailey, "A Self-Description," 7.

[25] W. K. Jackson was E. K. Bailey's godfather and V. M. Bailey's close friend. Bailey, interview.

Seminary and accepted the call as pastor of Mt. Carmel Missionary Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas.[26]

Ministry at Mt. Carmel Missionary Baptist Church

Under Bailey's preaching and pastoral leadership, Mt. Carmel experienced numerical and spiritual growth such that Bailey and the deacon board made plans for relocation. Bailey believed that the church would soon be landlocked and unable to provide more facility space to accommodate the growing attendance. While their deliberations occurred, a faction within the congregation expressed firm resistance, insisting that the church remain at the current location. Cokiesha Bailey-Robinson stated plainly:

> Concord was founded because Mt. Carmel was a church that put daddy through hell. I realize the world "hell" may make you uncomfortable, but the word "challenging" isn't strong enough! I remember stories about him being disrespected in business meetings, cursed at, and threatened. Then ultimately someone burned the church to the ground. I remember stories of deacons who wanted to be the pastor.[27]

The conflict ensued, escalating to the point where the faction sought to remove Bailey from the pulpit. Not knowing what to do next, he went to W. K. Jackson for counsel.[28] Jackson referred him to S. M. Wright, a pastor in Dallas, saying: "E. K., I've never been in this situation. But I think he [Wright] will be able to give wisdom to you." Sheila noted how her husband exemplified "the seeking and heeding of wise counsel."[29]

After Bailey's meeting with Wright, the congregation gathered at the chapel of Bishop College for services. With poise, Bailey preached each week before a faction determined to remove him from office. He recalled:

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[26] Bailey, interview.

[27] Bailey-Robinson, "E. K. Bailey's Influence on Expository Preaching."

[28] Bailey, interview.

[29] Bailey, interview.

> For the next eighteen months, the church would sit squarely on the stump of a power struggle, seeking both to slap the face and direction of its new minister. So the hammers of tough talk rang loudly, and the chisels of confusion did their divisive work until the blocks of ecclesiastical togetherness divided into two equal parts.[30]

The conflict came to head on a Sunday morning when the congregation held a retention vote. Just before services began, the opposing faction arrived in school buses full of non-active yet still enrolled church members, many of whom had been picked up at nursing homes. One of them walked up to Bailey, who was standing at the front door of the chapel and welcoming worshippers. The person asked, "Who's the man we're putting out today?" Bailey replied, "That would be me." Sheila said, "The opposing faction won the vote and my husband was fired from his job."[31]

In the summer of 1975, E. K. and Sheila sought more wisdom for the next chapter of their ministry. They interviewed at a church in Los Angeles, California, but after further counsel, believed it was the Lord's will for them to plant a new congregation in Dallas: Concord Missionary Baptist Church.[32] The church was named at the Lord's commission to Bailey: "I have called you to be a founder. I want you name it Concord because I want you to take people from hell to hope! Call it Concord because 'concord' means harmony."[33]

Ministry at Concord Missionary Baptist Church

On June 29, 1975, the church held its first services attended by 228 people and pastored by twenty-nine-year-old Bailey. Six months later the church purchased property with a down payment of $100,000. Nearly thirty people were joining the church each Sunday, making Concord one of the fastest growing churches in the United States. In the

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[30] Bailey, "A Self-Description," 8.

[31] Bailey, interview.

[32] Bailey, interview.

[33] Bailey-Robinson, "E. K. Bailey's Influence on Expository Preaching."

late 1970s through the early 1980s, Bailey's own development in expository preaching came through mentoring from A. Louis Patterson (1933-2014). Bailey had been educated in "thematic" preaching but through Patterson's influence became an "expository" preacher.[34]

In addition to Bailey's pulpit skills, his leadership abilities pioneered the practice of multiple church staffing in the Black Baptist Church.[35] The church grew rapidly for being grounded in biblical preaching and community outreach, ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of its neighbors. Bailey continued tooling his own skills and in 1991 earned the Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio.[36] Other churches took note of Concord's success, prompting Bailey to found the Institute of Church Growth and Development to assist them in furthering their ministries.[37]

As growth continued, Leonard Leach was hired as Bailey's assistant pastor; he served at Concord for nineteen years. The church started several core ministries in the areas of biblical studies, substance abuse recovery, women's ministries, and men's ministries. The most expansive core program was what Bailey called "The Big Idea," a multi-faceted facility for spiritual formation and economic development. Called the

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[34] Sheila Bailey and Shenikwa Bailey Cager, interview with the author, July 7, 2021. In the interview, "thematic" preaching was defined as the focus, explication, and application of a single verse's theme; one which may employ other passages as well. "Expository preaching" probes the biblical author's meaning of a pericopal passage's single unit of thought and its contemporary application.

[35] Ross Cullins, video teleconference interview with the author, October 11, 2021.

[36] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, inside front cover. Additionally, Criswell College and Dallas Baptist University have awarded Bailey honorary doctorates.

[37] "The Church is the Community of True Believers for All Time," a history of Concord Church from 1975-2015. See also "Our Story," https://www.concorddallas.org/our-story, accessed July 19, 2021.

"ConcordPlex," Bailey raised $3.4 million in a "Vision to Victory" generosity campaign for this initiative.[38]

Afterwards, Bailey established a "Council of Elders" for purposes of shared spiritual shepherding and congregational leadership. With growth in attendance and giving, Concord retired mortgages on three different parcels of land with plans for expansion. Because cross-cultural missionary outreach was central to Concord's strategy, the congregation partnered with Luc Deratus to plant three churches in Haiti. Additionally, Concord sponsored a ministry training center in Zimbabwe with Isaac Soda.

In 1996, Concord purchased a twenty-four-acre parcel with a facility that held a 2000 seat worship center. This space afforded the church the ability to add two more ministries in 1999: The Concord Missionary Baptist Church (CMBC) Learning Center and the Concord Senior Center. Bailey advanced a fresh mission and vision statement into the new millennium: "Exalt the Savior, Edify the Saints, and Evangelize the Sinners." To support this vision, Concord stressed annual themes. For instance, in 1999 the theme was "Saved to Serve." In 2000 the theme was evangelism: "Share the Joy." The church held gospel outreach events and presented the gospel to 10,000 people. From 2001-2003, the theme "Reclaiming the Village" was a call to build strong families. The church established a $100,000 scholarship fund for student education.[39]

In the fall of 1997, Bailey was diagnosed with kidney cancer and underwent corrective surgery. Two months later he preached at Concord's new facility.[40] He resumed his pastoral and pulpit responsibilities for four years when physicians discovered

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[38] "The Church is the Community of True Believers for All Time," a history of Concord Church from 1975-2015. See also "Our Story," https://www.concorddallas.org/our-story, accessed July 19, 2021.

[39] "Concord Church History," https://www.concorddallas.org/our-story/, accessed March 23, 2022.

[40] Bailey, *Farther In and Deeper Down*, 180.

more cancer in his nasal cavity: Nasopharyngeal carcinoma. On hearing this news he wrote, "Now I must preach with my life."[41] He received chemotherapy and radiation at M. D. Anderson hospital in Houston, Texas.[42] By the summer of 2002, though, a biopsy report brought more bad news. Bailey told his family: "The cancer has metastasized to my lungs. This type of cancer cannot be treated with chemo nor radiation nor an operation. And the doctor has given me six months to a year to live."[43] On October 22, 2003, Concord experienced its first pastoral transition: "After a valiant fight with cancer, Pastor Bailey was called home."[44]

Ministry of the E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference

In 1996 Bailey founded the International Conference on Expository Preaching to champion biblical exposition.[45] As mentioned in chapter 1, the conference is a week-long series of plenary sessions and preaching clinics for meaningful training to pastors in the field. For instance, the 2021 conference theme was "Preaching After the Pivot," addressing the tests of pastoral leadership and preaching in the wake of COVID-19, economic uncertainty, racial injustice, and political strife. Conference curricula aided local church pastors straining to keep up with the demands of serving the spiritual needs of their congregations. Main sessions and workshops presented biblical expositions of notable Old Testament figures who themselves were called to lead and speak God's

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[41] Bailey, *Farther In and Deeper Down,* 7.

[42] Bailey, *Farther In and Deeper Down*, 180.

[43] Bailey, *Farther In and Deeper Down*, 218.

[44] "The Church is the Community of True Believers for All Time," a history of Concord Church from 1975-2015. See also "Our Story," https://www.concorddallas.org/our-story, accessed March 23, 2022. For E. K. Bailey's obituary see https://obits.dallasnews.com/us/obituaries/dallasmorningnews/name/e-k-bailey-obituary?pid=1523744, accessed July 21, 2021.

[45] After 2008, the "International Conference on Expository Preaching" was renamed the "E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference"; Leroy Armstrong, video teleconference interview with the author, May 20, 2022.

Word in disruptive times.[46]

After twenty-five years, Joel Gregory marveled at the legacy of the E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference (EKBPC):

> There are several regional and national conferences, but the E. K. Bailey has endured for a quarter-century, withstood the lamented loss of its visionary founder, and now serves a new generation of young Black preachers. At the same time, it has steadily attracted an enlarging group of preachers other than African Americans.[47]

Gregory has noted a distinct feature of EKBPC sermons: the situating of biblical exposition within the "the native vitality, a wholly American artform, of African American preaching."[48] Sermons at the EKBPC are communal experiences of traditional traits in Black Sacred Rhetoric: narrative preaching, the turn of phrase, the call and response, the whoop, and the lyrical, rhetorical flourishes. According to Gregory, Bailey's goal was to "shine a bright light on the natural biblical content of Black preaching and polish to a gleaming reality what is already there."[49] In Gregory's view, Bailey's pulpit exemplified the centrality of the text whose telos is Christ.

Another distinction of the EKBPC has been the honoring of exemplary expository pulpiteers, dubbed "Living Legends." Each year a "Living Legend" is celebrated in a conference luncheon and asked to preach in a plenary session. A portrait is presented and exhibited in the conference's "hall of fame." The following names and their year conferred were recipients of the "Living Legend" award.[50]

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[46] In 2019, conference attendance was approximately 1000. See Joel C. Gregory, foreword to *Let the Legends Preach: Sermons by Living Legends at the E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference*, ed. Jared E. Alcántara (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2021), xi. The 2021 conference featured sermons over the lives of these Old Testament characters: Gideon, Nehemiah, Jeremiah, Amos, David, and Joshua. The 2022 conference was titled, "Preach Jesus! Biblical Preaching That Exalts Christ."

[47] Alcántara, *Let the Legends Preach*, xi.

[48] Alcántara, *Let the Legends Preach*, xi.

[49] Alcántara, *Let the Legends Preach*, xi.

[50] Alcántara, *Let the Legends Preach*, vii-x.

1. Caesar Arthur Walter (C. A. W.) Clark, Sr. (1996)
2. Manuel L. Scott, Sr. (1997)
3. Gardner C. Taylor (1998)
4. Henry H. Mitchell (1999)
5. Walter Kinsley (W. K.) Jackson (2000)
6. Stephen F. Olford (2001)
7. Edward Victor (E. V.) Hill, Sr. (2002)
8. E. K. Bailey (2003)[51]
9. A. Louis Patterson, Jr. (2004)
10. Clarence Booker Taliafferro (C. B. T.) Smith (2005)
11. William J. Shaw (2006)
12. James Earl Massey (2007)
13. Haddon W. Robinson (2008)
14. J. Alfred Smith, Sr. (2009)
15. Willie Richardson (2010)
16. H. Beecher Hicks, Jr. (2011)
17. Harry S. Wright, Sr. (2012)
18. Jasper W. Williams, Jr. (2013)
19. Melvin Von Wade, Sr. (2014)
20. Clay Evans (2015)
21. Lacy Kirk (L. K.) Curry (2016)
22. Robert Smith, Jr. (2017)

[51] Conferred on Bailey by the conference leadership committee; Armstrong, interview.

23. Joel C. Gregory (2018)

24. Lloyd C. Blue (2019)

25. Kenneth Ulmer (2021)

26. Tony Evans (2022)[52]

In his leadership of both Concord Church and the EKBPC, Bailey's successor, Bryan Carter, has stewarded Bailey's legacy as conference host.[53] Carter recalled the first time he was introduced to Bailey's ministry:

> I was twenty-three years old when I first heard the name, "Dr. E. K. Bailey." I came to the Expository Preaching Conference and it was there that my life began to change. I was introduced to the workshops and I heard him preach and I sat in some of his sessions. *I began to fall in love with the Scriptures because of the high way which he valued the Scriptures and the amazing way in which he preached. I watched how the preaching of the Word slowly began to transform my life*.[54]

In his opening remarks at the 2021 EKBPC, Carter explained Bailey's original vision for a convention of biblical exposition:

> We are thankful it was 25 years ago that our founder, Dr. E. K. Bailey, had a vision for this conference to be able to pour into the lives of preachers and proclaimers all across the country, to strengthen our preaching and strengthen the pulpits. Because so goes the preaching, so goes the church; and so goes to church, so goes the city and it starts in that pulpit; what God does in his proclaimed Word. *This conference has been built around making you stronger and more effective in your preaching*.[55]

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[52] There was no 2020 conference due to COVID-19.

[53] In the 2021 EKBPC Charlie Dates introduced Bryan Carter's sermon by stating that though he (Dates) never personally met Bailey, his legacy has reached him through Carter's humble leadership. Dates exclaimed, "Bryan, you have been generous with your inheritance."

[54] Bryan Carter in a video tribute to E. K. Bailey, presented at the 2021 EKBPC, Concord Church, Dallas, TX, July 6, 2021 (italics added).

[55] Bryan Carter, opening remarks in first plenary session, "Sermon from the life of Gideon" by Phillip L. Pointer, 2021 EKBPC, Concord Church, Dallas, TX, July 6, 2021 (italics added).

Ministry Legacy of E. K. Bailey

Four voices amplify Bailey's preaching impact via the Concord Church and his conference namesake. First, H. B. Charles, Jr., who spoke at the 2011 EKBPC, reflected on the first time he heard Bailey preach:

> From Joshua 8, the message was titled, "Reclaiming lost ground." I will never forget it. As a sinner, I was both challenged and comforted by the message. As a preacher, I was blown away! The message was homiletically enticing. Dr. Bailey had a presence about him. His voice was made for preaching. He commanded the room. *But what struck me the most was that he simply explained the text*. I left that service determined to do what I had just heard. By divine conspiracy, I was being turned toward expository preaching.[56]

Second, Cokiesha Bailey-Robinson stated that her father was a forerunner in expository preaching who influenced two hundred spiritual sons in ministry: "As one who reproduced himself in the lives of others, he left a church that would outlive him. He believed that a church should be built on expository preaching and not the pastor's personality."[57] More importantly, Bailey-Robinson appreciated how Bailey prioritized his vocation as father more than pastor. She said, "He had never made ministry more important than his family. *He believed that living a sermon was more important than preaching it*."[58] Bailey did not begrudge the church family for its demands on him yet did not abdicate his own family because of his love for them.

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[56] H. B. Charles, ed., foreword to *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 7. See also H. B. Charles, "Speaking at the E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference," H. B. Charles, Jr. web site, https://hbcharlesjr.com/resource-library/articles/speaking-the-e-k-bailey-expository-preaching-conference-2011/, accessed July 23, 2021. Charles wrote, "God used [Bailey's] ministry and this conference to introduce many to the principles, tools, and disciplines needed to preach what the text means by what it says. . . . In a real sense, there would be no H. B. Charles, Jr., if there were no E. K. Bailey" (italics added).

[57] Cokiesha Bailey-Robinson, "Interview with Rev. Cokiesha Bailey-Robinson, Kyle Lake Center for Effective Preaching, Truett Seminary, Baylor University, June 22, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ugLBKCCyzQ, accessed July 23, 2021. H. B. Charles, Jr., corroborated how Bailey exposed the Concord congregation and the EKBPC attendees to a roster of proficient biblical expositors: "I was impressed that the conference was not built around Dr. Bailey. He spoke several times and I heard many other respected preachers speak and lecture. Moreover, I was blessed by the multiracial line-up of speakers. I heard E. K. Bailey, Al Louis Patterson, Jasper Williams, and Myles Jones. But I also heard Warren Wiersbe and Stephen Olford. It was incredible" (H. B. Charles, ed., foreword to *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 7)!

[58] Bailey-Robinson, "E. K. Bailey's Influence on Expository Preaching" (italics added).

Bailey-Robinson recalled a time in high school when she was competing in the "Miss Carter High School" pageant. She wanted her father present for the award ceremony, but E. K. had scheduled a revival out of town. When she expressed her earnest wish for his presence, E. K. reminded her, "These revivals help pay for where you are!" On the night of the award, when Bailey-Robinson's name was called as pageant queen, out of the crowd and down the aisle of the auditorium ran a proud father shouting, "That's my girl! That's my girl!" E. K. had made it to the pageant.[59]

Third, Bryan Carter's voice speaks uniquely as both beneficiary of the EKBPC and pastoral successor to Bailey. Carter saw his relationship to Bailey in several dimensions: "father/son, teacher/apprentice, and teacher/student."[60] Beyond Bailey's pulpit and leadership skills, what impressed Carter most was how Bailey modelled Christ's attitude in suffering, particularly through cancer. Because of Bailey's example, Carter developed a biblically informed, Christo-form perspective on God's sovereignty over suffering. As an example, when he asked Bailey if people are responsible for their own suffering, Bailey answered with a metaphor of the "cross and the crop":

> Your crop is the suffering you experience through the seeds that you plant. The cross is the suffering that you receive when you go to the cross and stay there. . . . The cross is the willingness to go through suffering in a way that glorifies God. . . . Whomever God uses greatly has to be hurt significantly.[61]

A fourth voice is Bailey's research assistant, Lawrence Aker. Attesting to Bailey's tireless work ethic, Aker told of times when Bailey would keep working into the early hours of the day in sermon preparation ("And keeping you up with him"). Bailey believed that excellent preaching required hard work: "Lawrence, losers go to bed with

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[59] Bailey-Robinson, "E. K. Bailey's Influence on Expository Preaching."

[60] Bailey, *Farther In and Deeper Down*, 238.

[61] Bailey, *Farther In and Deeper Down*, 239.

their work undone on Saturday nights; but winners do whatever it takes."[62] Bailey refused to surrender to adverse situations and in reflecting about his legacy, Aker wrote:

> What lesson does E. K. Bailey teach the world? One word for me: *press*. That's what he would often tell me. Simply yet powerfully press your way through and continue to strive regardless of what you face, hear, see, feel, fear or dread. His unwavering dependence and trust in the Lord has been transferred to me.[63]

Bailey's life and ministry years acknowledge his trust in Christianity's God even in the face of incomprehensible struggles. Bailey concluded that even the most difficult seasons of his life were not outside the sovereignty of God. Bailey held that the God of the Bible existed and had a plan for his life. He believed that divine providence utilized suffering as an instrument (*"God took the spade of sorrow"*) toward the goal of resilient, Christian affection (*"to dig the well of joy"*).[64]

Analysis

Regarding the aforementioned question, "How did Bailey's personal and ministry history inform his hermeneutical assumptions for preaching?" Robert Smith, Jr., noted that out of the "merging of ink and blood emerge one's hermeneutical, theological commitments."[65] Bailey's life was the incubator out of which germinated his interpretive lenses, including his study of Scripture. In considering these selected, historical episodes of Bailey's life, three observations follow.

First, *out of Bailey's life experiences emerged his Trinitarian worldview*. In his sweeping study of *Weltanschauung*, David K. Naugle has defined "worldview" as a "systemic vision of reality," developed in historical, philosophical, and theological categories. He defined worldview as "a semiotic phenomenon, especially as a system of

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[62] Bailey, *Farther In and Deeper Down*, 242.

[63] Bailey, *Farther In and Deeper Down*, 242.

[64] Alcántara, *Let the Legends Preach*, 21.

[65] Robert Smith, Jr., phone interview with the author, January 25, 2020.

narrative signs that establishes a powerful framework within which people think (reason), interpret (hermeneutics), and know (epistemology)."[66] His underlying assumption contended that humans, created in the image of God, carry within their hearts a quest for meaning. To be human is to ask grand, visionary questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What am I made for? Why is this world the way it is? Naugle's assumption is that humans do not just thoughtlessly live. Humans are ceaseless interpreters, always seeking meaning. They live based on how they interpret life, or what James Orr named the "unconscious metaphysic."[67] This "metaphysic" is grounded in what matters most to human beings: "ancestry, language, history, values, customs, institutions, and especially religion."[68] Naugle and Orr have shown how these areas have shaped and continue to shape *Weltanschauung*.

Bailey's existential crisis at that park bench with his attendant divine assurance generated a perspective that led him to view life, *his life*, not as aimless chaos, but a divinely determined path revealed to him step-by-step. In Bailey's Trinitarian worldview, faithful divinity existed and could be trusted even if he could not comprehend every detail. Bailey's worldview enabled him to conclude: "Everything that happens to a believer is either God sent or God allowed."[69] While he did not fully understand: (1) why his parents divorced, (2) why he was the victim of racial prejudice, (3) why he had attention deficit disorder, (4) why his father was killed, (5) why he was fired from his first ministry, and (6) why he suffered from cancer, Bailey's worldview, synthesized by his experiences and refined by the Bible's revealed truth, led him to conclude God's good and faithful presence.

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[66] David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), xix.

[67] James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 370.

[68] Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, xvii.

[69] Bailey, *Baileyisms*, 31.

Second, *out of Bailey's Trinitarian worldview emerged his hermeneutical commitments for biblical exposition*. Thomas R. Schreiner contended that doing biblical exegesis serves the larger goal of determining a biblical worldview: "Biblical exegesis should be the foundation in the building of that worldview."[70] He lamented that some contemporary biblical academicians do not hold that a coherent and cohesive worldview can be derived from the Bible's revealed truth. He said that such a conclusion strips spiritual power from biblical exegesis and translates it into "specialized" academic knowledge, known only for the few.[71] He argued that the exegetical enterprise must strive for more than knowledge of authorial intent because intellectual curiosity alone is an insufficient motive for biblical exegesis. Rather, spiritual vitality in Christ must be the end. He wrote, "Exegesis will never be one's passion unless one's heart is gripped by biblical truth; only then will it lead to a deeper and rich joy in God" (John 15:11).[72]

Bailey's worldview was informed by his life experiences and re-informed by biblical truth. In his preaching Bailey believed that sermonic content must be under the authority of biblical content. He said, "You should use every ounce of your energy and influence to pull people into the book, because 'Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.' I should add that since you [the preacher] are not the truth, you should be calling and pointing people to the word of God."[73]

Bailey's view of the essentiality of Scripture came experientially on that park bench and cognitively from his reception of the Bible's own witness. He urged pastors: "Teach people that you, the pastor, believe in the Bible as the ultimate, infallible, and

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[70] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 5.

[71] Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 7.

[72] Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 6.

[73] E. K. Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching* (n.d. repr., DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2013), 7-8.

inerrant resource from God, and that the Bible is the only authority. . . . Teach people to love what is actually in the book. The more you preach the Bible, the more people will love the Bible."[74] Bailey exposited biblical truth not out of academic inquisitiveness but because he believed in the Bible's spiritual vitality. He understood that exposing biblical truth had affective outcomes. Referring to the Bible, he said, "People will cry because you open the book. People will be convicted because you opened the book. People will be changed because you open the book."[75]

Third, *Bailey's hermeneutical commitments for biblical exposition occurred in the context of a local church community.* On the wall at the Concord Church facility in Dallas, Texas, is a mural of history recounting the story of Concord, Bailey's leadership, and the life of the congregation through 2015. Bailey's lived space was a twenty-seven-year pastoral memoire with men, women, and children from all walks of life. He resided among the flock he pastored. His hermeneutic for preaching considered his spiritual kinship with the local church he led. As an African-American who grew up in a predominantly African American congregation and later pastored one, Bailey's biblical exposition occurred in a location considered by church members to be a "safe harbor" from the majority race culture. Bailey noted, "We don't feel safe the rest of the week, but we do feel safe at church."[76] In the safety of ecclesial kinship, Bailey's biblical exposition, supported by his hermeneutical commitments, occurred.

To summarize, Bailey's early life and later ministry years revealed his nascent theological and hermeneutical assumptions. The theme "Christoformity through hardship" has been argued from Bailey's own life recollections and the remembrances of his family members. Out of his trials emerged a worldview acknowledging the

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[74] Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, 8.

[75] Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, 5.

[76] E. K. Bailey and Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White: What We Can Learn from Each Other* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 12.

sovereignty and goodness of the biblical God, expressed fully in Christ. Out of Bailey's worldview surfaced an understanding of the Christian Scriptures which he believed to contain inerrant truth for joy in Christ. Furthermore, Bailey lived with this understanding in the context of congregational kinship among other Christians. Yet what was Bailey's hermeneutic? How did "Christoformity through hardship" become a core hermeneutical key? And where would his hermeneutic be situated in the landscape of the African-American pulpit? Subsequent chapters will consider these questions starting with a survey of six hermeneutical districts of Black Sacred Rhetoric.

CHAPTER 3

HERMENEUTICAL DISTRICTS OF BLACK SACRED RHETORIC

African American preaching is anything but monolithic. Listeners who sit under preachers such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Gardner C. Taylor, Otis Moss, Jr., E. K. Bailey, and Tony Evans, may assume homiletical uniformity due to their shared ethnicity or common history as an oppressed people. Listeners may even suppose homogenous, theological thought from similar rhetorical traits in Black preaching such as "call and response" or "whooping." This assumption would be premature. To be sure, there is a headspring to Black preaching. Cleophus J. LaRue contends that all Black preaching flows from two elemental questions: "(1) How do I demonstrate to God's people this day through the proclamation of the word the might and gracious acts of God on their behalf? And, (2) how best shall I join together Scripture and their life situations in order to address their plight in a meaningful and practical manner?"[1] LaRue believes that at the source of all Black preaching is the sovereign God who acts in a mighty, merciful, and meaningful way for his oppressed people.

While appreciating LaRue's overarching categories, a more detailed taxonomy can distinguish various ways in which Black preaching interprets and utilizes the Bible. A closer view can reveal diverse hermeneutical assumptions, *districts*, each grounded in a preunderstanding of the Bible. This chapter will summarize and assess six prominent hermeneutical districts in contemporary Black preaching, demonstrating its non-

[1] Cleophus J. LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 19.

monolithic nature.[2] These districts arise from distinct historical settings, each informing the content of the proclaimed word. The six hermeneutical districts are (1) Black Liberation, (2) Social Justice, (3) Black Exposition, (4) Communal Hope, (5) Prosperity, and (6) Womanist. After reviewing these districts, this chapter will offer analysis based on Grant Osborne's reader-centered/author-centered spectrum of meaning with the aim of locating E. K. Bailey's hermeneutic on this continuum.[3]

Black Liberation District

Based on James H. Cone's "Black Theology," the Black Liberation district views the gospel in the context of an historically oppressed people group. Appearing out of the American Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, Black Liberation teaches the oppressed to see the gospel as indivisible from their oppression and the only source of emancipatory power. Though not exclusively so, Black Liberation primarily situates itself in the American experience, setting itself against what it sees as an oppressive, white supremacist theology. As its primary interpretive lens, Black Liberation

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[2] Scholars of Black Sacred Rhetoric have preferences in expressing classifications for Black preaching. For instance, Frank A. Thomas speaks of "social activist," "Black identity," "cultural survival," "empowerment," "Afrocentric," "Word," "Prosperity," and "Womanist." See Martha Simmons and Frank A. Thomas, eds., *Preaching with Sacred Fire-An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 590-93. Cleophus J. LaRue prefers "domains of experience" comprised of "personal piety," "care of the soul," "social justice," "Black congregational life," and "Black corporate life." See Cleophus J. LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching*, 20-25. Furthermore, Eric C. Redmond observes "oppression," "hope," "Bible," "Congregation," and "Justice." See Eric C. Redmond, ed., *Say It! Celebrating Expository Preaching, in the African American Tradition* (Chicago: Moody, 2020), 27-54. Kenyatta R. Gilbert sees a "tri-vocal" category of prophet-priest-sage. See Kenyatta R. Gilbert, *The Journey and Promise of African American Preaching* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 11. Stephen Breck Reid cites three characteristics of the Black experience for African American biblical interpretation: "Unity Life," "Patriotism and Loyalty," "Critical Awareness and Race Pride" (17). See Stephen Breck Reid, *Experience and Tradition: A Primer in Black Biblical Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991). See Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church* (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 3. Warnock views the mission of the Black church and its preaching therein as "piety" or "protest." He wrote, "As an instrument of salvation through Jesus Christ, is the mission of the black church to save souls or to transform the social order? Or is it both? As it would seek to be faithful to the gospel message and mission of Jesus Christ, is it called to be an evangelical church or a liberationist church? Can it truly be an evangelical church without also being a liberationist church? Can it be a liberationist church without also being an evangelical church" (3)?

[3] Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1991), 366.

identifies with the enslavement of Israel in Egypt and Jesus Christ as the "Ultimate Oppressed One."[4]

This hermeneutical locality acknowledges God's activity not only to Israel's oppression but subsequently, the African American lived experience. God's deep involvement in liberation is such that he himself bears the descriptor, "black." Cone writes, "The God in black is the God of and for the oppressed, the God who comes into view in their liberation. *Any other approach is a denial of biblical revelation*."[5] In other words, Black Liberation perceives constructed whiteness as an idolatrous ideology obstructing orthodox Christianity. Cone contends, "The goal of black theology is the destruction of everything white so that blacks can be liberated from alien gods."[6] God, therefore, is "black," whose primary identity is deliverer. It also signals the district's self-understanding as genuinely orthodox. Black Liberation projects a "black" Trinity: God the Father delivers Israel from enslaved suffering; God the Son suffers in order to deliver human sufferers; and the Holy Spirit continues the work of deliverance in and through the church. "The Blackness of God" becomes a controlling metaphor for deliverance from historical white oppression in America.[7] Furthermore, Cone asserts that a correct reading of Christianity's gospel will lead to an understanding that oppressive political systems must be overthrown:

> Black Theology's answer to the question of hermeneutics can be stated briefly: The hermeneutical principle for an exegesis of the Scriptures is the revelation of God in Christ as the Liberator of the oppressed from social oppression and to political

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[4] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* 40th anniv. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2019), 64.

[5] Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 64 (italics added).

[6] Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 65. Note the implication that Christianity practiced by American whites suffers from heterodoxy (i.e., "alien").

[7] Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 67-68.

> struggle, wherein the poor recognize that their fight against poverty and injustice is not only consistent with the gospel but is the gospel of Jesus Christ.[8]

This understanding has implications for the relationship between black and white theological institutions. Simply, the deity of Black Liberation is to the white seminary as Yahweh is to Egypt's gods: irreconcilably distinct. They worship different gods.[9]

A more restrained explication of Black Liberation comes from Warren H. Stewart, Sr., who writes, "The oppressed black community found strength in knowing that God had been actively involved in the liberation of the Hebrew children."[10] In other words, oppressed African Americans see in God's care for enslaved Israel a concern for them, too. Preaching Black Liberation emphasizes God's attention to the under-resourced and marginalized. To sufferers of discrimination and racism, Black Liberation makes visible their invisibility. To victims burdened by ethnic domination, Black Liberation lifts them from their infliction. To doubters wondering if their faith is in the wrong God, Black Liberation assures them that their worship is true for their God is oppressed, too.

The preaching of Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., and Otis Moss III highlights these features of Black Liberation, tracking Cone over Stewart. For example, Wright's 2006 message at Howard University echoed themes of oppression by asserting, "Racism is how this country was founded and how this country was run. We believe in white

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[8] James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 74-5. In his critique about Cone's definition of the gospel, Esau McCaulley said: "It is the totalizing nature of this claim that gave me significant pause and seemed to separate Cone from a significant strand of the Black Christian tradition that combined the transformation of systems with the individual transformation of life. His [Cone's] definition of the gospel . . . appears to be at odds with the biblical narrative upon which such a claim resides." See Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 178.

[9] Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 10. "Because white theology has consistently preserved the integrity of the community of the oppressors, I conclude that it is not Christian at all" (10). Cone qualifies this remark in his notes by reiterating "white" and "black" as word pictures for "oppressor" and "oppressed."

[10] Warren H. Stewart, Sr., *Interpreting God's Word in Black Preaching* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1984), 18.

supremacy more than we believe in God."[11] Also, in his controversial "Confusing God and Government" sermon, Wright censured the United States government for its history of despotic treatment of non-whites:

> When it came to treating her citizens of African descent fairly, America failed. The government put them in chains. She put them on slave quarters, put them on auction blocks, put them in cotton fields, put them in inferior schools, put them in substandard housing, put them in scientific experiments, put them in the lowest paying jobs, put them outside the equal protection of the law, kept them out of the racist bastions of higher education, and locked them in positions of hopelessness and helplessness. The government gives them the drugs, builds bigger prisons, passes a three-strike law, and then wants us to sing God Bless America . . . no, no, no.
>
> Not God bless America, God damn America. That's in the Bible, for killing innocent people. God damn America for treating her citizens as less than human. God damn America for as long as she acts like she is God and she is supreme. The United States has failed the vast majority of citizens of African descent.[12]

Moss, though not as confrontive as Wright, strikes themes of Black Liberation in his 1 Kings 7 sermon, "When the Brook Dries Up."[13] Moss compares the administration of Ahab to American presidents George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush, claiming that Ahab took the policies to the "right" of his father. He relates the famine of Israel (prophesied by Elijah) to environmental catastrophes caused by policies of contemporary American political leadership. He employs the term "thug ravens" to describe how the Lord uses even the lowest of society to meet basic human needs like

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[11] Wade Goodwyn, "Minister Off Obama Team for Controversial Sermons," *NPR News*, March 15, 2008, accessed July 6, 2020, https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88293006.

[12] David L. Moody, *Political Melodies in the Pews? The Voice of the Black Christian Rapper in the Twenty-first-century Church* (Guilford, CT: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 94. See also Wright's sermon, "The Day of Jerusalem's Fall," on the Sunday after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Wright criticized Congress for quickly approving forty billion dollars to rebuild New York City while being slow to "declare war" on racism, health care, poverty, and education. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr., "The Day of Jerusalem's Fall," sermon in *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*, ed. Martha A. Simmons and Frank A. Thomas (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 855-63.

[13] Otis Moss III, "When the Brook Dries Up," sermon preached at Alfred Street Baptist Church March 12, 2013, accessed July 6, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTh89uTbGt4.

food. He links the drying up of Elijah's brook to dam building by the financial policies of the "one percent" in America. He refers to Ronald Reagan as "Pharaoh."[14]

In other words, Black Liberation hermeneutic controls preaching by associating the biblical text with the auditors' oppressed condition and the insistence on the enemy's destruction.[15] It sees liberation as a *sine qua non* of biblical revelation. Cone writes:

> According to black theology, revelation must mean more than just divine self-disclosure. Revelation is God's self-disclosure to humankind in the context of liberation. To know God is to know God's work of liberation on behalf of the oppressed. God's revelation means liberation, and emancipation from death-dealing political, economic, and social structures of society. This is the essence of biblical revelation.[16]

Cone's Black Liberation concludes that the essence of biblical faith is the *perception of God's emancipatory activity for the oppressed*. He says,

> Faith is the perspective which enables human beings to recognize God's actions in human history. . . . Faith is the existential recognition of a situation of oppression and a participation in God's liberation. Faith is the response of the community to God's act of liberation. . . . It means saying yes to God and no to oppressors. Faith is the existential element in revelation-that is, the community's perception of its being and the willingness to fight against nonbeing.[17]

In Black Liberation, the scene of the biblical text is under the reader's jurisdiction, not the author's jurisdiction.[18]

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[14] Moss III, "When the Brook Dries Up."

[15] Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation,* 50. "In this passage [Exod 15:1b-3] God's revelation means political emancipation, which involves destruction of an enemy" (50).

[16] Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 47-8.

[17] Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 50. This understanding is a departure from biblical definitions of faith such as John 11:25-26, Heb 11, Rom 3:21-25, and Eph 2:1-10.

[18] For a critique on Black Theology and Cone, see Anthony Tyrone Evans, "A Biblical Critique of Selected Issues in Black Theology" (ThD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1982). Evans was the first African American Th.D. graduate from Dallas Theological Seminary. He analyzes Cone's Black Theology through an expository preaching (Hirschian) hermeneutic. Evans's main concern is Black Theology's misunderstanding of "euangellion." He writes, "One must conclude then that the content of the Christian gospel is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on behalf of sinners. This automatically excludes liberation as part of the gospel's content especially since Paul says there's but one gospel (Gal. 1:8)" (232). Evans holds to an author-centered hermeneutic: "The literal, historical, grammatical approach to Scripture is the only valid approach for ascertaining the meaning of the text. Furthermore, experience,

Social Justice District

Less confrontive than Black Liberation, the Social Justice district interprets the Bible in view of civil rights. According to LaRue, this field encompasses (1) the equal access of citizens before the law, (2) the impartial treatment to citizens by the law and, (3) the provision for under-resourced citizens.[19] Frank A. Thomas agrees, seeing this school incorporate "poverty alleviation, racial and gender equality, and all peace, justice, and economic struggles."[20] While these themes affiliate with Black Liberation, the Social Justice district is distinct in that it does not strive to "overthrow the societal system . . . but reform it so that it conforms once again to the fundamental principles of fairness and equity."[21] Social Justice possesses four traits. First, it seeks reformation, not revolution. It approaches oppression nonviolently. It confronts oppressors for their inequities. It urges repentance and reliance on God's power for change. It envisions a society where "justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24).

Second, Social Justice recognizes the powerlessness of the oppressor for self-change. It sees oppressors held captive to a false mindset of pride, divine bias, unjust economies, and other expressions of Pauline "principalities and powers." Stewart writes, "God and his power are needed by the oppressors as well as the oppressed. The

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however real, must be judged in light of that hermeneutical approach. Thus, when quotes [in his dissertation] are made from white conservative theologians, it is intended to reflect the reference of one whose basic hermeneutic is the same as the author's. It is the contention of the author that apart from this hermeneutical approach all objectivity is lost" (4). See also Cecil Wayne Cone, "The Identity Crisis in Black Theology: An Investigation of the Tensions Created by Efforts to Provide a Theological Interpretation of Black Religion in the Works of Joseph Washington, James Cone and J. Deotis Roberts" (PhD diss., Emory University, 1974). Cecil Wayne Cone (brother of James Cone) critiques the "Black Power" concerns of Joseph Washington, James Cone, and J. Deotis Roberts. Contending that misunderstanding occurs when viewing Black theology as too heavenly minded or too earthly minded, the author studies Black religion from "sermons, prayers, and testimonies from slaves." From these sources can be derived a more accurate understanding of Black theology. He argues that "Black theology is the confessional story of Black people's relationship with the Almighty Sovereign God" (192).

[19] Cleophus J. LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 23.

[20] Simmons and Thomas, eds., *Preaching with Sacred Fire*, 10.

[21] LaRue, *Heart of Black Preaching*, 23.

oppressors need a God strong enough to liberate them from the burden caused by their own oppression of others."[22]

Third, Social Justice confronts the oppressed for mere lamentation instead of taking ownership for individual and communal action. It refuses to let a marginalized group to sit idly and wallow in their own condition. It repudiates the perpetual self-identification of victim. It urges them to "become involved in their own liberation."[23] It does not let the reader or auditor to yield to hopelessness. Instead, it firmly believes that God's power can reverse the devastation of injustice and effect individual and communal transformation. It projects an impartial God who though breaking the will of "Pharaoh" will not allow "Israel" to do as she pleases.

Fourth, Social Justice holds that the impartial, almighty God is nearby. Stewart asserts, "God is a living, loving, and involved Person who never ceases to express love and concern for all of God's children."[24] He is therefore, "warm," "intimate," and "self-giving" and these traits find their fullest expression in Jesus Christ.[25] Thus, Social Justice compels society to actualize its identity as image-bearers of the Bible's God; moreover, it urges believers to do so as the elect of God.

Evidence of Social Justice hermeneutic appears after the Reconstruction period in American history. Between 1916 and 1940, 1.5 million African-Americans migrated to northern U. S. states to escape racist laws in the South. Cities such as Cleveland, Ohio,

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[22] Stewart, *Interpreting God's Word*, 16-7. Assuming the inability of the oppressor for change, Black Liberation calls for revolution toward the irredeemable. Social Justice calls for reformation toward repentance.

[23] Stewart, *Interpreting God's Word*, 16-7.

[24] Stewart, *Interpreting God's Word*, 19.

[25] Stewart, *Interpreting God's Word in Black Preaching*, 21. Note how Stewart is far less abrasive than Cone: "It was Jesus Christ who really "pushed" the fatherhood of God more than any other human being. Black people as a whole sincerely believe that "all of God's children" includes *every* human being. It is not necessary for members of the black religious community to take an extensive course in exegesis in order to love, respect, forgive, and pray for their brothers and sisters of different colors and cultures, because they know that all of the "family of man" had but one origin, our Father-God" (21).

and Chicago, Illinois, became home to an "exodus" people. Black preaching transitioned from a pre-Civil War hermeneutic of hope to one of "pursued" social justice.

For instance, Kenyatta Gilbert highlights the pulpits of three northern "prophetic" Black preachers: Reverdy Cassius Ransom (1861-1959), Florence Spearing Randolph (1866-1951), and Adam Clayton Powell, Sr (1865-1953).[26] Gilbert recognizes their collective voices for challenging discriminatory practices in housing, alleviating poverty, and denouncing societal ills such as prostitution. These issues were brought on by the massive influx of African Americans who fled the southern United States due to systemic racism. Furthermore, Gilbert notes that the one of the biggest challenges in the northern Black church was indifference to the plight of "exodus" Blacks. This attitude baffled preachers like Powell: "I can understand how people, even ministers of the Gospel can differ on political, social, and moral questions, but I cannot for the life of me understand how anybody, especially the Shepherds of Christ can fight a man because he feeds them. Jesus never allowed anyone who followed him to go away hungry."[27] Powell urged the local church to oblige itself to meet these social needs in the name of the Christ by whom they assemble for worship.

By the time of his ministry, Martin Luther King, Jr., had benefited from a hermeneutical locality in existence over fifty years. From the Social Justice district King summons the American government to be true to the principles of its constitution. Though his "I have a Dream" speech is a notable example of Social Justice, King's sermons at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia, exemplify it as well. For instance, in his 1967 sermon, "No Room at the Inn," King tells the congregation why Jesus is refused:

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[26]Kenyatta R. Gilbert, *A Pursued Justice: Black Preaching from the Great Migration to Civil Rights* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016).

[27] Gilbert, *A Pursued Justice*, 33.

> If Christ enters our lives racial prejudice will leave. If Christ enters our lives, violent class systems will dissolve. If Christ enters our lives, war will end in the world, and men will "beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. And nations will not rise up against nations, neither will they study war anymore." But deep down within, we don't want Christ in our lives. We want to do things like we've been doing them![28]

In this message, King challenges both the oppressive systems of the state and a victim mentality of the oppressed: "When he enters our lives, he lets us know we must go the second mile. . . . We must do unto others as we would have others do unto ourselves."[29]

In another sermon, "The Prodigal Son," delivered in 1964 at the Ebenezer church, King addresses both oppressor and oppressed. Based on the parable of the lost son, King allegorizes the younger brother as "America." He challenges this lost son to come home. He says that while "America" was in the far country, over twenty million African-American brothers were being "humiliated, segregated, and dominated."[30] He states that whenever America is away from home, a famine occurs at home. He identifies riots as evidence of a cultural famine caused by America's flight to the far country: "Riots are socially destructive and self-defeating, and I will stand up and condemn them at every point; at the same time *I must condemn the conditions that make people feel so helpless* . . . that they engage in this kind of misguided action."[31]

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[28] Mervyn A. Warren, *King Came Preaching: The Pulpit Power of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 202.

[29] Warren, *King Came Preaching*, 202.

[30] Warren, *King Came Preaching*, 196.

[31] Warren, *King Came Preaching*, 196, (italics added).

As the message closes, King personalizes the point to his auditors, calling them to repentance: "I don't know your far country. It may be a bad temper. . . . It may be excessive drink. . . . It may be something deep down within you that causes you to be jealous of people and hate people and be envious of people. Come home! Come home! Ye who are weary come home!"[32] From the ground of Social Justice, he challenges the culture at large to a life in alignment with biblical justice. At the same time, he calls on the individual to take responsibility for personal righteousness.

As an interpretive model, Social Justice looks to the stories of Hebrew prophets such as Micah, Amos, and Isaiah, whose prophecies urged "constructive social change."[33] It appreciates the literary features of the Minor Prophets and may very well agree with their historicity, but the immediacy of the auditors' life situation dominates the hermeneut's concern. James Earl Massey notes, "In black preaching, and in the hermeneutic by which it happens, the focus is not on the concepts to be voiced and treated intellectually but upon an experience to be expected and enjoyed through an openness to the biblical witness."[34] That is, the message of Amos to the Black experience may take priority over the exegetical, author-centered considerations of scholars like Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. Thus, the preacher sees Scripture through the Social Justice district in order to create an aesthetically pleasing world which God intends in the New Heavens and New Earth. The preached word becomes a conduit for the congregation to enter the

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[32] Warren, *King Came Preaching*, 196-7.

[33] LaRue, *Heart of Black Preaching*, 23. "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic 6:8)? Also, "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). Moreover, "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow" (Isa 1:17).

[34] James Earl Massey, "An African American Model," in *Hermeneutics for Preaching*, ed. Raymond Bailey, (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 137.

domain of God, where peace, justice, and righteousness are the norm. The preacher fills the church with eschatological hope and pleads with them to actively pursue a life that brings the future into the present.

In summary, the Social Justice district has roots in the "Great Migration" of early twentieth century America. It prioritizes (1) political reformation over revolution, (2) God's view of justice with responsibilities to both oppressor and oppressed, (3) the preacher's identity as a Hebrew prophetic messenger, and (4) an aesthetic vision of the world as God intends. It strives to bring God's perfect will in heaven to earth.[35]

Black Exposition District

Understanding this district comes by exegeting the phrase, "Black Exposition." Regarding "exposition," this locality refers to *biblical* exposition. Regarding "Black," it refers to the Afro-ethnic location in America.

What *Exposition* Means

In biblical exposition, the sermon's aim is to communicate the biblical author's intended message to the intended audience in such a manner that the preacher applies the Scripture's meaning to the contemporary audience in the power of the Spirit. In biblical exposition the preacher observes the text and determines the passage for preaching by utilizing pericopal markers. The preacher pays attention to syntax, grammar, and flow before consulting commentaries. In biblical exposition, the preacher seeks the "plain sense" of the text. Ernest Gray notes four elements in effective expositional study: individual words, sentence structure, "bulky terms" for further study, and the relationship

[35] Gilbert, *A Pursued Justice*, 6.

to "co-texts."[36] Gray acknowledges three sections of biblical exposition: (1) observations, (2) explanation, and (3) relevance. He recognizes a Robinsonian homiletic involving "Title, Exegetical Idea, Homiletical Idea, Sermon Aim, Probing Question, Exposition, and Close."[37]

Robert Smith, Jr., concurs with Gray, describing biblical exposition with the metaphor "exegetical escort."[38] Smith says that the expositor's purpose is not merely to relay knowledge but to bring souls into God's presence for their transformation. He argues that to be exposed to God's Word is to be brought into the presence of the God who speaks His Word. Exposition then, carries theological, Christological, soteriological, spiritual, and ecclesial ramifications. It is theological in that the text is comprised of words originating from the Almighty Creator God, majestic and transcendent over all. It is Christological in that the text points to the fullest revelation of God, Jesus Christ. It is soteriological in that there is no other sacred text reliable by which fallen humans can receive salvation. It is spiritual in that it nourishes the human soul.[39] It is ecclesial in that the biblical exposition occurs in a communal not merely individual context. On this understanding Smith reasons that a text can only mean in the present what it meant when the biblical author originally wrote:

> A text can never mean today what it never meant when it was originally written and spoken. . . . Exegesis is the exact science of drawing out of the text the meaning that is in the text. The preacher must return to the original meaning of the text and make an application for today. As students of the Word, preachers search for what God's Word really says in its raw radiance without denominationalizing, ethnicizing, culturalizing, fossilizing, minimizing, maximizing, trivializing, or sanitizing the text. They take the original meaning of the text: the text as it is, even though it cuts,

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[36] Ernest Gray, "Contextual Considerations in a Tension Filled New Testament Text," in *Say It! Celebrating Expository Preaching in the African American Tradition*, ed. Eric C. Redmond (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2020), 79.

[37] Gray, "Contextual Considerations," 83.

[38] Robert Smith, Jr., *Doctrine that Dances: Bringing Doctrinal Preaching and Teaching to Life* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2008), 75.

[39] Smith, *Doctrine that Dances*, 76.

> confronts, and challenges both the preacher and the hearers to whom the Word is preached. . . . Preachers do not have the luxury of saying, "It goes without saying." When it relates to the Scripture, nothing "goes without saying."[40]

Winfred Omar Neely highlights assumptions about the Bible embedded in biblical exposition. Neely argues that biblical exposition values the Bible as the inspired, inerrant word of God in its original autographs.[41] Holding the sacred text with high reverence, biblical exposition recognizes its final authority in determining Christian belief and conduct. Neely states:

> As an expositor of the word of God, like any other preacher, committed to expository preaching, the African American Expositor has made the decision to bend his thought towards Scripture, instead of bending Scripture toward his thought. Thus, the African American Expositor reads and interprets Scripture in its plain, normal, and overt grammatical sense.[42]

For example, Neely exposits God's attention to enslaved Israel in Exodus 2:23-25. In his syntactical study, he discovers the God who "heard," "saw," "remembered," and "took notice" of Israel. This observation has particular meaning to African Americans, whose history parallels Israel's slavery and oppression. A people invisible to their culture turns out to be quite visible to the one divine person whose attention matters most. This hearing, seeing, and remembering God is at one and the same time the God who acts on their behalf.

Another assumption is that the text actually possesses meaning. That is, when the author of the text wrote the text, that author willed the text to mean something. Eric Redmond argues this very point, "The consensus about biblical, expository preaching is that the author's idea in the text is primary. Therefore, the ability to discern and

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[40] Smith, *Doctrine that Dances*, 76.

[41] Winfred Omar Neely, "The African American Expositor: Interpretive Location, the Plain Sense of Scripture, and Church Life," in *Say It! Celebrating Expository Preaching in the African American Tradition*, ed. Eric C. Redmond (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2020), 46.

[42] Neely, "The African American Expositor," 46.

communicate that meaning is important."[43] What Redmond gets at is the notion of intent: the biblical authors' willed meaning in the inscription of their thoughts. As voices of the divine, they designed words to produce a particular outcome, obedience to the Triune God in the likeness of God the Son. Consequently, in this district, exposition is the discipline of deciphering the biblical author's own meaning.

What *Black* Means

While "exposition" focuses on the text's meaning, "black" features the expositor's and auditors' "interpretive location."[44] Black Exposition acknowledges the preaching of the Bible's timeless truth *in a culturally specific context by a culturally specific preacher*. Eric C. Redmond's definition of biblical exposition recognizes the historical, cultural distinctives of people groups: "Expository preaching is an invitation for the preacher to explain the central idea of the text to an audience with a means that would be understood by the audience, while exhorting the audience to obey God's Word *within that audience's contemporary social and ecclesial contexts*."[45]

"Black" emphasizes a biographical point of place. It recognizes what David K. Naugle wrote, "There is, therefore, no view from nowhere. All things are known from somewhere. Where one stands will determine whether things are obscured or clarified."[46] "Black" negates the notion of sterile, impartial, hermeneutical objectivity when the interpreter is situated in places, cultures, ethnicities, and customs as diverse as Nepal, England, Uganda, Brazil, America, or the Dominican Republic. Neely concludes: "All of

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[43] Redmond, *Say It! Celebrating Expository Preaching*, 26.

[44] Neely, "The African American Expositor," 41. Neely cites "interpretive location" from Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 121-22.

[45] Redmond, *Say It! Celebrating Expository Preaching*, 27. In Redmond's view, *Black* and *Exposition* are "dance partners," not "battlefield enemies" (27).

[46] David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 325. Naugle's quote is contra Thomas Nagle's conclusions in *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford, 1986).

us bring all we are to the interpretive table of life and texts. In short, every one of us has an interpretive location. We are not neutral."[47] This does not nullify the need to pursue biblical, authorial intent. Rather, it is to encourage an attitude of humility in the interpretive endeavor, acknowledging the possibility of fresh application from one's location.

Specifically, "Black" refers to the social, cultural, and historical location of African Americans and how biblical exposition is significant in their context. For example, Esau McCaulley proposes "Black Ecclesial Interpretation" as canonical and theological, socially located in the black experience, responsive to black issues and concerns, patient with the text, and dialogical. He states, "Black Ecclesial Interpretation does the hard work of reading the text attentive to history, context, grammar, structure and attention to the black experience."[48] McCaulley's own African-American viewpoint situates him to see applications of the biblical text that might be overlooked in other contexts: "What makes Black interpretation Black, then are the collective experiences, customs and habits of Black people in this country [United States]."[49]

An example of McCaulley's Black Ecclesial Interpretation would be found in Bailey's sermon, "Seeing the World through God's Eyes" (Eph 4:17-24). Bailey detected a worldly mindset festering in Concord Church's predominantly African-American

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[47] Neely, "The African American Expositor," 40. For a complementary description of "interpretive location," see Gregg R. Allison's "particularity" in *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021), 59-72. Allison defines "particularity" as a gendered individual's "ethnicity/race, family/kinship, temporality, spatiality, context, and story" (61). See also Craig G. Bartholomew's *Where Mortals Dwell: A Christian View of Place for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011). Bartholomew writes, "As embodied creatures in the Imago Dei, humans are always dated and located, that is, placed. . . . Place is thus a dynamic concept evoking the creative engagement of humans with their contexts" (31). Various contexts result in various "significances" or applications of the biblical author's intended meaning.

[48] McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*, 21.

[49] McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 20. For example, McCaulley exposits Romans 13:1-7 as theological instruction how the state should conduct law enforcement under God's sovereign headship. McCaulley asks, "Does Paul have anything to say about how the state treats its citizens and our public response to that treatment that goes beyond submission?" McCaulley answers affirmatively and explicates his view in chapters 2 through 4 of his book.

congregation. The message contrasts the (1) Conformed Mind and the (2) Transformed Mind. Bailey's sermon resembled a running commentary as he taught verse by verse through the pericope. He warned the congregation against James H. Cone's rationalistic theology and urged the Scripture's revelational theology. Against the influence of Nation of Islam, Bailey pled with the Concord men toward *Christoform* discipleship. He said, "I can't side with every Black man in the world because not every Black man agrees with the Bible! I would rather be divided by truth than united by error!"[50] He critiqued Louis Farrakhan and the Million Man March, insisting that a "person without Christ could not think straight about spiritual and moral issues. One can be brilliant and blind."[51] Bailey related the account in Acts 19 about the riot in Ephesus over the goddess Artemis. By analogy, he stated that the church must work hard at holiness because the world is working hard at vileness. He challenged the men in the church: "You brothers who say Black men ought to get together, where are you and when do you want to meet? I will teach you what this Bible says about how to be a husband and father. Does Jesus have an equal? Then why are you mixing him with Farrakhan?" Bailey closed the message with a reference to Lazarus' resurrection in John 11:44, "Unbind him, and let him go." Bailey urged the church to take off the grave clothes and put on the wedding clothes. His closing line was: "That's it." Applause followed.

Bailey's sermon showcased Black Exposition's two core traits: (1) sensitivity to the concern of the biblical author and (2) discernment of the text's application to the contemporary hearer.

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[50] E. K. Bailey, "Seeing the World through God's Eyes" (sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, November 11, 1995). Bailey understood rationalism's source of truth as "anthropocentric while revelation's source of truth as bibliocentric; the mind of man as opposed to the mind of God."

[51] Bailey, "Seeing the World through God's Eyes."

Communal Hope District

The African American reality features a lengthy history of communal suffering and marginalization as a minority people. Slavery, Emancipation, Jim Crow laws, the Great Migration, the Civil Rights era, and racial unrest from publicized police brutality-these situations create a lens through which the Bible is interpreted for preaching and ecclesial life. Congregational community in the African American culture becomes a haven from the storms of discrimination and racial oppression. Rather than ornate physical structures of decorative glass and stone, the sermon itself becomes a "sanctuary" destination, a harbor of hope for a beleaguered and discriminated community.[52]

Preachers in the Black church, then, serve as mediatory dispensers of Communal Hope.[53] They are both bridges and fellow sufferers. Like the eye of a hurricane, they proclaim the promise of a better day in the day's tempestuous cultural storms. They preach to keep hope alive in a community of pain. E. K. Bailey alludes to this district when he speaks of his own involvement in interpreting biblical pericopes for preaching. He identifies his approach as coming from the text's "underside," as opposed to "Euro-Americans" approach from the "triumphal, topside." He appreciates his Euro-centric academic training but also values the historical struggles of African-Americans to which he is a part. He writes:

> I ask myself, "What does this text say to these people who are the children and grandchildren of slaves and who are still dealing with post-traumatic stress disorders, injustice, institutional racism, and racial problems on a daily basis? So, I've got to deal with people's spiritual, marital, social, economic, and psychological problems, as preachers do everywhere, but more so as the shepherd of people who

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[52] LaRue, *Heart of Black Preaching*, 10. LaRue writes: "Unlike many European and American denominations, where architecture and classical music inspire a sense of the holy, black preaching seeks to accomplish this act through the display of well-crafted rhetoric" (10).

[53] Wayne E. Croft, Sr., explores hope in Black Sacred Rhetoric in nineteen century American slavery and the years following the Civil War. Broadly defining hope as "the anticipation of something better than the here and now," Croft sees three subsets: (1) the "other-worldly" hope of the heavenly reward for the faithful and rescue from hell, (2) "this worldly" hope of justice and equity wrought by God on behalf of the oppressed and, (3) that God would one day ("the Day") bring an end to this wicked era and usher in the New Heavens and New Earth. Croft calls this "apocalyptic hope." Wayne E. Croft, Sr., *The Motif of Hope in African American Preaching During Slavery and the Post-Civil War Era: There's a Bright Side Somewhere* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), xii.

> are and have been disinherited and disenfranchised. . . . How can preaching help this person to confront and deal with structures, systems, and people who either intentionally or unintentionally participate in a system designed to keep him down and restrict him. *I must give a word of Christian hope to help him and his family deal with negative situations positively*."[54]

A sermonic example of Communal Hope is Charlie Dates's Pentecost Sunday sermon, "I Can't Breathe," following George Floyd's death on May 25, 2020. Using "we," "us," and "our" (the rhetoric of community), Dates employs Pentecost images of wind, breath and Spirit to depict men and women as holy image bearers of God suffocating beneath the evil of the fallen world. As a prophet-pastor, Dates comforts the congregation while delivering sharp rebukes to centuries of white supremacy. "I can't breathe" becomes "We can't breathe," the cry of an oppressed community. The message pivots to hope as Dates refers to "another kind of wind," the Holy Spirit.

> Pentecost gives us a second wind. Anybody struggling today saying, "I can't breathe?" God knows it. The systems of this world are too much. And so he sent his Spirit to breathe on us and to give us breath again. Pentecost keeps us from an old future. Can't you tell, can't you feel in the air that we in America are headed for an old future? We've seen this video before. We've heard these laments and these cries before. Except this time it's on a high definition iPhone.
>
> But here is what you need as you take to the streets, and as you tweet, and as you profile others on Instagram. You need the power of the Holy Ghost. Because when the power comes in Acts 2, it's a power to be an effective witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, it's a power to say that what human systems fail to do God in his infinite power and wisdom can do. It's a power that says Jesus put a Caesar to flight. He scared the Roman Empire, he shook the Jerusalem religious system, and they laid him down to death. But he rose early on the Sunday morning. It's a new power![55]

Here, Dates answers LaRue's aforementioned questions, "How does the text demonstrate God's power on his church's behalf?" and "How can the preacher

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[54] E. K. Bailey and Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White: What We Can Learn from Each Other* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 37 (italics added).

[55] Charlie Dates, "I Can't Breathe," sermon preached at Progressive Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois, May 31, 2020, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/word-of-the-week/i-cant-breathe-a-sermon-by-charlie-dates/, accessed August 1, 2021.

meaningfully join the text and the church's life situation?"[56] First, Dates demonstrates in Acts 2 how God acts for his people. Dates proclaims the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the activating life force in Christ's church. The Holy Spirit's indwelling causes ecclesial community. Second, Dates applies this meaning to the community's present circumstance. After reciting a roster of Spirit-breathed, resilient believers (Martin Luther King, Fred Shuttlesworth, Harriet Tubman, and Mary Bethune), Dates concludes with these words: "The only way we'll be able to breathe again is that we have got to have the Holy Spirit."[57]

Prosperity District

With historical roots in Phineas Parker Quimby's (1802-66) New Thought, E. W. Kenyon's (1867-1948) "dominating faith," and Kenneth Hagin's (1907-2003) Word of Faith movements, the Prosperity District has emerged in the Black pulpits of ministers such as Creflo Dollar, Fredrick Price, and Eddie Long. The Prosperity District is an individualistic, God-as-your-life-coach domain. Prosperity interprets the Bible with a posture to acquire personal success, money, status, and possessions.[58] Its key hermeneutic asserts that ideas can be materialized through their verbalization ("name it and claim it"). Prosperity holds that God wants people to experience physical health and financial success. It construes Proverbs 23:7 and Proverbs 18:21 as a warrant to speak thoughts into being.[59] It contends that faith is the necessary catalyst of thought materialization;

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[56] LaRue, *Heart of Black Preaching*, 19.

[57] Dates, "I Can't Breathe," sermon.

[58] Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (New York: Oxford Press, 2013), 7. Bowler cites four key themes of the prosperity gospel: "faith, wealth, health, and victory" (7).

[59] John L. Walton, "Prosperity Gospel in African American Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology*, ed. Katie G. Cannon and Anthony B. Pinn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 454. In the KJV, Prov 23:7 and Prov 18:21 read respectively, "As he thinketh in

specifically, faith expressed via financial giving to the prosperity preacher's ministry. Thus, Prosperity legalizes the biblical tithe into a contract between the giver and God in which God is bound to return tenfold. Sociologist Milmon F. Harrison writes, "[Tithing] is according to the biblical 'law,' based upon the way God created the natural world to operate, that one who 'sows' finances should expect to 'reap' a harvest of financial blessings in return."[60]

This *quid pro quo* aspect of the Prosperity District, though possessing historical roots in the United States, also manifests itself in non-Christian African religious thought. Elizabeth Mburu states, "Traditional African interactions with the Supreme Being are transactional as opposed to relational."[61] Worship in this context does not focus on the adoration of God's character, rather the expression of human wants. In Africa, Christianity's syncretization of transactionalism contributes to Prosperity District's success.

The Prosperity District does not ruminate on issues of the Social Justice or Black Liberation schools because it sees the problem of material acquisition primarily as an individual matter. Martha Simmons and Frank A. Thomas observe, "Prosperity preaching places its greatest emphasis on the achievement of financial wealth by individuals. While it may purport to have other concerns, they are all treated as secondary

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his heart, so is he" and "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Also, 3 John 2 is a prevalently quoted text in the Prosperity District, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (KJV).

[60] Milmon F. Harrison, *Righteous Riches: The Word of Faith Movement in Contemporary African American Religion* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2005), 96.

[61] Elizabeth Mburu, *African Hermeneutics* (Carlysle, UK: Langham Publishing, 2019), 28. Mburu further argues that a "transactional" approach distorts the meaning of passages such as Luke 6:38, "Give and it will be given to you." She writes, "The traditional transactional understanding of our relationship with the Supreme Being has led many to interpret this verse as meaning that when you give monetary gifts, particularly in the form of tithes, offerings, and gifts to the poor, God is obligated to bless you in return. We do not look for spiritual blessings, but for financial rewards. The link to the prosperity gospel is clear. What we may fail to note is that interpreting the text this way leads us to give the wrong motives-not because we love God and want to thank him for his faithfulness but because we want something back. Our giving becomes merely a transaction" (31).

or insignificant. The most important thing is that individuals prosper financially."[62] Congregational members in the Prosperity District are more likely to witness "how to" sermons addressing issues such as the favor of God and the quest for monetary success over sermons which critique prejudice and poverty.[63]

Sociologist Shayne Lee cites T. D. Jakes as a prominent preacher in the Prosperity District. He locates Jakes as a CEO style megachurch pastor in a "post-denominational" church. Jakes utilizes high-tech audio-visual and computer hardware, animated music, interactive corporate worship experiences, and a ministry style which blurs sacred-secular borders. In one sermon, Jakes boasts about his fleet of lavish automobiles, parading his material goods as proof of faith. Lee observes that Jakes' prosperity preaching has been re-branded to "personal empowerment" to avoid the negative critique of Prosperity's materialism.[64]

Simmons and Thomas observe that the rise of the Black middle class and the advent of the internet have brought the Prosperity District from the fringes of Black preaching into a (sadly?) more normalized interpretative lens. That said, John Walton's appraisal is empathetic: "To many Christians who have felt a decrease in real wages or lost unemployment, savings, and retirement plans with the economic downturn in the United States, this contractually bound God seems as good a bet as any."[65]

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[62] Simmons and Thomas, eds., *Preaching with Sacred Fire*, 11.

[63] Simmons and Thomas, eds., *Preaching with Sacred Fire*, 592.

[64] Shayne Lee, "Prosperity Theology: T. D. Jakes and the Gospel of the Almighty Dollar," *CrossCurrent*s, 57/2 (Summer 2007), 227-36.

[65] Walton, "Prosperity Gospel and African American Theology," 464.

Womanist District

In 1983 author Alice Walker created the term "womanist," an invention merging concepts of feminism with the African American life.[66] Walker's fourfold definition describes the womanist as (1) "womanish," that is, a bold, deliberate catalyst; (2) a universalist, that is, a gender fluid iteration of love to all people; (3) an afficionado for life in all its forms and efforts-food, song, dance, and nature; and (4) an Afrocentric version of feminism.[67] Walker's term provides a matrix for the praxis of Cone's Black Theology for black women. Delores S. Williams writes, "At last black female theologians found some of the 'material needed' to make a theology of women's experience that 'fitted' black women."[68] Williams explained that the key theological task for the Womanist District lies in the question, "How does this source portray blackness/darkness, women, and economic justice for nonruling-class people?"[69] Williams asserts that a negative answer to this question requires either the source's exclusion from use or its "radical reformation" by the black church.

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[66] Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* (New York: Harcourt, 1983).

[67] Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*, xi-xii.

[68] Delores S. Williams, "Black Theology and Womanist Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, ed. Dwight N. Hopkins and Edward P. Antonio (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 59. Williams cites five reasons the term "womanist" resonates more than merely "black feminist." First, "womanist" distinguishes the experiences of black women from white women. Second, it redefines patriarchy to include females as well as males who in privileged classes exploit black women in domestic services industry. Third, it amplifies their own ethnic voice and heritage as black female theologians. Fourth, it brings to the vernacular language previously dedicated to the academy. And fifth, it broadens the discussion to the African American family system (60-62). Also notable is womanist critique of Black Theology's appropriation of Exodus motifs to the exclusion of "non-Hebrews" such as Hagar. Williams asks, "Have they [black liberation theologians] identified so thoroughly with the theme of Israel's election that they have not seen the oppressed of the oppressed in the scriptures? Have they identified so completely with Israel's liberation that they have been blind to the awful reality of victims making victims in the Bible? Does this kind of blindness with regard to non-Hebrew victims in scripture also make it easy for black male theologians and biblical scholars to ignore the figures in the Bible whose experience is analogous to that of black women" (67)?

[69] Williams, "Black Theology and Womanist Theology," 64. By "source" Williams means the content by which the Womanist scholar does theology. She writes, "The Bible, a major source in black church liturgy, must also be subjected to the scrutiny of justice principles" (64). This view situates the reader of the biblical text over its author.

The Womanist District possesses an *ontology of marginality*. That is, its existence is derived from its outcast state. Katie G. Cannon, a leading voice in this district, has taken the core elements of Womanist theology and employed them in homiletics with the following expressions: (1) the elimination of sermonic content with disparaging female imagery and male-centeredness offensive to African American women; (2) the utilization of sermonic content to deconstruct patriarchy; (3) the eradication of sermon content in which the Bible is used to marginalize or demean women over men; (4) the application of empowerment rhetoric in sermons to and for women; (5) the deconstruction of complementarian notions of manhood and womanhood such that men are de-centered and women are de-marginalized; and (6) the implementation of Womanist resistance to the oppressor's status quo.[70] Cannon formulates these elements into hermeneutical inquiries for the Womanist preacher: How is meaning made? Who is best served in this sermon? What visionary world is being brought about by the preacher's rhetoric?[71] Other noted Womanist theologians include Prathia Hall, Jaquelyn Grant, Deloris Williams, Cheryl A. Kirk-Duncan, Renita Weems, and Emilie Townes.

Analysis: Osborne's Spectrum of Reader-Centeredness and Author-Centeredness

In considering these hermeneutical districts, Grant R. Osborne has provided a helpful model to deliberate the question: where is meaning centered? He argues a threefold "foci":

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[70] Katie Geneva Cannon, *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community* (London: Continuum International, 1998), 114-121. See also Donna E. Allen, "Womanists as Prophetic Preachers," *Review and Expositor*, 109 (Summer 2012): 387-396.

[71] Cannon, *Katie's Canon*, 121. For a primer on Womanist preaching and preachers, see L. Susan Bond, *Contemporary African American Preaching* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2003), 115-143.

AUTHOR → TEXT ← READER[72]

Osborne reasons that since the biblical author is not with the preacher in sermon preparation, how is the meaning of the text determined? Is the text severed from the author, freeing the preachers to adjudicate meaning themselves? Or should the preacher employ critical tools to ascertain as best as possible that which the author desired to communicate?

Preachers who determine that authorial intent is irretrievable locate their interpretive approach on the "reader" pole of Osborne's spectrum, following the epistemological claims of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002). Gadamer has proposed a "fusion of horizons" between the text's author and the text's reader. He has assumed the meaning of the text as independent from its author and that the interpreter/reader is the final arbiter of its sense. The "horizon of the author" is fused with the "horizon of the interpreter" unto the creation of new meaning, unique to that interpreter and his historical location. He held this "fusion" as fundamental to any interpretive act: "Our line of thought prevents us from dividing the hermeneutical problem in terms of the subjectivity of the interpreter and the objectivity of the meaning to be understood."[73] For Gadamer, discovery of meaning is the work of empathy as the reader/interpreter enters and queries the text and at the same time is queried and affected by the text. The outcome of such a "fusion" is new meaning. Osborne observes, "Gadamer's aesthetic hermeneutic moves from the author and the text to a union of text and reader, with roots in the present rather than in the past."[74] For Gadamer, no tri-focal spectrum of author-text-reader exists,

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[72] Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 366. Osborne wrote: "The 'author' produces a text while a reader 'studies' a text. Yet which of the three is the primary force in determining meaning" (366)?

[73] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (1960, rev. transl., Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, New York: Bloomsbury, 2004), 321.

[74] Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 371.

rather, just one "coming-to-understanding" confluence of the author's and reader's worlds.[75]

The principal strength of Gadamer's reader-centeredness is the quest for relevance. Using Gadamer, the preacher interacts with the biblical text and merges it with the preacher's world, out of which bursts new understanding for the congregation's present situation. With this sense in mind, Black Liberation, Womanist, and Prosperity districts locate themselves on or very near this pole. In fact, in the Womanist district the notion of "God's Word" does not limit itself to the sixty-six books of the Bible. A Womanist understanding of the Bible's nature includes a type of mystical, experiential presence of the "God-self" in the preaching moment. Bond observed, "The word becomes flesh and dwells among us as words from the Bible, as words from the preacher, as the presence of Jesus Christ's work, person, and ministry."[76]

That said, the principal vulnerability of reader-centeredness is "hermeneutical anarchy."[77] No supernatural metaphysic is required for a reader response lens; deity is not required, only a reader/interpreter. The critical question is: who is the reader and what is the reader's historic and social place? All assumptions about the nature of truth, Jesus, and the church are subordinate to the reader/interpreter. What the text means when the author wrote it becomes what the text means to the reader who interprets it. New meanings arise from each interpretive lens. Or, as Northrup Frye dryly stated: "It's a picnic in which the author brings the words and the reader the meaning."[78]

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[75] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 317. Gadamer states, "There is no more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. *Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves"* (317).

[76] Bond, *Contemporary African American Preaching*, 130.

[77] Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell, ed., *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2012), 57.

[78] E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale Press, 1967), 1.

On the other side of Osborne's model is the author's pole. This side assumes authorial intent rooted in E. D. Hirsch, Jr.'s "meaning/significance" design: "*Meaning* is that which is represented by the text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. *Significance*, on the other hand, names a relationship between a meaning and a person . . . or anything imaginable."[79] Osborne's author-centered pole shows the discovery, not manufacturing, of meaning. It asserts the author as the arbiter (*author*-ity) of a text's meaning. It assumes a "common sense approach to all communication."[80] It considers a last will and testament asking, "What are the testator's intentions, not what does the reader believe it means?"[81]

Kevin J. Vanhoozer has organized Hirsch's meaning/significance design in a threefold manner: (1) "the ground of interpretation," (2) "the goal of interpretation," and (3) "the guide of interpretation."[82] Regarding the ground of interpretation, Vanhoozer argues that texts themselves are not living entities, rather written expressions of the author's own mind. Strictly speaking, one does not ask, "What does the text say?" for texts do not have livelihoods. Rather, "What does the author say from the text in which he wrote?" Thus, to read what the text says is to read what the author is saying without a distinction between the two. Furthermore, by intention is meant what the author devises to do. Vanhoozer comments, "We speak of doing something intentionally as opposed to doing something accidentally. . . . Intentionality means that human consciousness is always *about*, or *directed at* something. An 'intention' is the act by which consciousness aims at something."[83]

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[79] Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 8.

[80] Robert H. Stein, "The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 44/3 (September 2001), 451-66.

[81] Stein, "Author-Oriented Approach," 451-66.

[82] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 74-77.

[83] Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text?,* 75-76.

Regarding the goal of interpretation, the outcome is quite literally a *common sense* between the reader and author. Vanhoozer states, "The aim of the reader is to 'think' the same 'object' as the author. . . . *An interpreter grasps the meaning of a text when he or she experiences sameness of content (or object) despite differentness of context*."[84] This outcome means that there is really no such notion as a privatized textual meaning. Often asked in church Bible studies is the question, "What does this Scripture text mean to me?" An author-driven understanding contends for an objective goal of meaning over a mystical or individualistic reading. Without a shared meaning between author and reader, Walter Kaiser has called into question the whole point of the hermeneutical enterprise:

> It would seem that these contemporary authors would like to borrow the single-meaning and the traditional linear-movement just long enough to establish their own theses. Then they would like to invalidate the further use of the single meaning procedure in interpreting other documents such as Scripture, for they regard application of the single-meaning procedure as a hopelessly antiquated approach to interpretation.[85]

Regarding the guide of interpretation, Hirsch's meaning/significance scheme differentiates between exegesis and eisegesis. In the former, the interpreter is lifting out of the text what the author put into the text. To exegete means "to guide out of" and to exposit means "to expose" what the authors put into the text when they wrote the text. Against this discipline is eisegesis, which is what interpreters do when they put into the text their own meaning. Eisegesis strips the text of the author's sovereignty over it and implants relativism in relation to it. That said, while Hirsch holds to the author's meaning within the text, he recognizes the text's significance to something different, namely the reader's situation. Vanhoozer observes, "On this view, the meaning of a text is

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[84] Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text?*, 76.

[85] Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 47. Kaiser continues along this line by arguing that the entirety of human communication is threatened by a reader-centered schema. He reasons that if humans are not sovereign over their words, then everyone is sending communication, but no one is receiving (47).

unchanging, but the significance is inexhaustible for the text, though fixed itself, can enter new situations."[86] In summary, the districts of Black hermeneutics can be sifted through one question: where does the district situate itself on an author/reader-centered spectrum?

Locating E. K. Bailey among These Districts

E. K. Bailey's definition of preaching abides in Black Exposition. He celebrated his God-given "particularity" as an African-American pastor to his mostly African American congregation.[87] He unapologetically identified with an historically oppressed people group. He held that being "pro-Black" did not mean that he was "anti-White."[88] He sought applications and practical lessons from the exposition meaningful to his ministry audience. He asserted, "An expository sermon is a message that focuses on a portion of Scripture so as to clearly establish the precise meaning of the text and to poignantly motivate the hearers to actions or attitudes dictated by that text in the power of the Holy Spirit."[89]

Bailey believed that proper biblical exposition required the preacher to "sit in the dark [the study] with what was yet to be revealed in the light [the pulpit]."[90] Before preachers can properly expose the text's meaning to the congregation, they must expose it to their own hearts. They must read and meditate on its content prior to consulting commentaries so that the sermon is *their* sermon. In biblical exposition, commentaries are meant to check or correct the preacher's conclusions. Bailey understood the phrase

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[86] Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text?*, 77.

[87] Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People*, 61.

[88] Ross Cullins, video teleconference interview with the author, October 11, 2021.

[89] E. K. Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, n.d., repr. (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2013), 2.

[90] Cokiesha Bailey-Robinson, "Expository Preaching Seminar" (lecture at the 2021 E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference, Concord Church, Dallas, Texas). In this lecture, Bailey-Robinson explicates E. K. Bailey's definition of expository preaching.

"portion of Scripture" in reference to a pericopal unit of thought, requiring biblical exposition to respect the context to which the text was written. In this way, Bailey argued, the preacher could teach the "precise meaning of the text."[91] His theological conviction about the nature of the Bible justified its careful exposition: "Teach people that you, the pastor believe in the Bible as the ultimate, infallible and inerrant resource from God, and the Bible is the only authority."[92]

Black Exposition by its definition roots itself firmly in Osborne's author-centered pole. Social Justice and Communal Hope can live near this pole as well, provided they maintain authorial "meaning" as they explore the "significances" of their unique concerns. Recall that these domains are labeled districts, not fortresses. Some overlap occurs. For instance, Bailey's sermon "Anatomy of a Dream," was a chapel message at Princeton Seminary for Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, based on Joshua 1:1-9.[93] Referring to Joshua's succession of Moses, Bailey asked, "How does one walk in the footsteps of a job well done?" Joshua had not the experiences of Moses, but God gave Joshua the dream of entering and conquering the land of promise. Bailey's major points are: (1) "the Providence of the Dream, (2) the Pursuit of the Dream, and (3) the Promise of the Dream."[94]

Bailey's sermon excelled in the intersection of biblical exposition and civil rights commemoration. He attended to the syntactical structure of the verses. He situated the preached text within the broader context of the Bible's redemptive history. He cycled back and forth between the "there and then" of Joshua and the "here and now" of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s leadership in civil rights. Bailey found meaning in the pericope's

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[91] Bailey-Robinson, "Expository Preaching Seminar."

[92] Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, 7.

[93] E. K. Bailey, "The Anatomy of a Dream," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 13, no. 3 (1992): 311-19.

[94] Bailey, "The Anatomy of a Dream," 311-19.

authorial intent before exploring its significance to the Black lived experience. For example, in one section of the sermon, Joshua is urged to summon within himself the courage to lead God's people before "giants" in his land. From this passage, Bailey candidly urges courage to his Afro-ethnic people group before the "giants" in their land:

> African Americans are facing some Giants. There is the giant of racial bigotry that's in our land. There is the giant of economic exclusivism in our land. There is the giant of educational repression in the land. There is a giant of political intransigence in our land. There is the giant of social oppression in our land. There is the giant of governmental insensitivity in our land: the kind of insensitivity representative of a particular, unnamed party that has a contract with America to alleviate all the progress that has been accomplished over the last four hundred years by eradicating affirmative action and by being indiscriminate in their elimination of people from welfare rolls, and taking lunch away from poor children. There are giants in our land. Somebody has to have the courage, the conviction and audacity to confront the giants in our land.[95]

In the message's conclusion, Bailey closed with hope in a stirring illustration, "The King has one more move."[96]

Bailey's sermon characterized his own definition of expository preaching, locating him firmly in the Black Exposition District. To Bailey, what gets exposited is the biblical text. To Bailey, the text exposited is a "portion" or, a natural unit of thought. To Bailey, the text has meaning in itself, which the biblical expositor is tasked to set forth to the church. To Bailey, the expositor must identify "attitudes" or "actions" which the text demands and persuade the hearers to employ them in everyday life. To Bailey, fulfilling these demands depends on the Holy Spirit's power for both the expositor in preaching and the congregation in hearing. What is of note to this dissertation regarding Black Sacred Rhetoric is that *Bailey's definition of expository preaching presupposes meaning in the text and specifically, the author's meaning*. To Bailey, there is no expository preaching apart from authorial intent.

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[95] Bailey, *The Dream Continues*, 10.

[96] Bailey, "The Anatomy of a Dream," 311-19.

Bailey's sermon, grounded in his own definition of what expository preaching is, demonstrates that the concerns of other districts such as Communal Hope and Social Justice can be addressed so long as the biblical author's will is prioritized. According to the definitions assigned by this chapter, Black Liberation, Prosperity, and Womanist districts would neither reside in Black Exposition nor in Bailey's pulpit because they are inherently reader-centered. E. K. Bailey's pulpit inhabited the author-centered district of Black Exposition.

Summary

In surveying Black hermeneutics for preaching, this chapter has demonstrated existing diversity within the African American pulpit. The six major districts discussed are Black Liberation, Social Justice, Black Exposition, Communal Hope, Prosperity, and Womanist. The sermon examples cited demonstrate that Black preaching is not derived out of a single interpretive zone. Sermons can be informed by various hermeneutical zones and their theological commitments. Some zones lean toward a reader-centered approach while others are author-centered with resultant homiletical outcomes. *Preaching, then, becomes a decision about which hermeneutical residence will be occupied by the preacher for sermon production.* Bailey's definition of preaching situated him firmly in Black Exposition. With this conclusion in mind, one wonders how Bailey arrived at this location. That is, who shaped him in his hermeneutical commitments for preaching? This question is the topic of chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

HERMENEUTICAL INFLUENCERS OF E. K. BAILEY

When E. K. Bailey began preaching at Concord Church, he was a "powerful, poignant, *topical* preacher."[1] His sermons centered on a particular theme, from which he supported with two or more biblical texts.[2] His proclamation of biblical truth was accurate. His rapport with the congregation was dynamic and dialogical. His energetic delivery attracted a growing flock. Within two years, the church swelled from its charter attendance of 228 to over 2000 attendees. Bailey recruited Lloyd Blue for help in maturing the believers at Concord Church. Blue worked with Bailey in strategic discipleship development, creating and implementing tactics to form Christ-like mindset and manners in the young church. Bailey himself deepened in his personal development of preaching during this season (1977-79). His preaching transitioned from thematic or topical in nature to expository.[3]

Inherent in Bailey's definition of expository preaching ("focuses on a portion of Scripture" and "the precise meaning of the text") is a way of viewing the Bible.[4] How Bailey preached the Bible rested on his interpretation of the Bible. But from where did Bailey derive his key hermeneutical assumptions? This chapter will discuss Bailey's two

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[1] Leonard Leach, video teleconference interview with the author, October 6, 2021.

[2] Sheila Bailey, video teleconference interview with the author, February 5, 2021.

[3] Leach, interview; Lloyd Blue, video teleconference interview with the author, October 14, 2021.

[4] E. K. Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching* (n.d., repr., DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2013), 2.

noteworthy hermeneutical influencers, A. Louis Patterson, Jr. and Henry H. Mitchell.[5] It will argue Mitchell's notable, academic-based influence and Patterson's unrivaled, field-based influence. In surveying Bailey's relationship with both mentors, this chapter will demonstrate how their impact on him conflated to shape his twofold hermeneutic: (1) *Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship* and (2) *Bibliocentric Christoformity*. Patterson's Scripture-saturated pulpit moved Bailey toward biblical, pericopal, Christ-shaped preaching. Mitchell's academic influence helped Bailey in proclaiming the gospel in the "idiom, imagery, style, and worldview of a particular people."[6]

A. Louis Patterson, Jr.: "Godfather of African American Expository Preaching"

A. Louis Patterson, Jr. (1933-2014), was born in Granger, Texas, with grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, and uncles within a few blocks from his home. His Judeo-Christian upbringing bequeathed him a consciousness of God's supernatural presence leading to his own conversion at the age of nine. Called to preach before he was a teenager, Patterson claimed that his first congregation was a field of corncobs behind his house. Like the Hebrew prophet Jonah, Patterson fled his calling but at the age of twenty-five yielded to the preaching ministry and was mentored by E. V. Hill in Los Angeles, California.[7]

Patterson recalled meeting with Hill at Mt. Zion Church. Hill asked Patterson how he was doing and Patterson responded by talking about his possessions. Hill

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[5] Cokiesha Bailey-Robinson, teleconference video interview with the author, November 11, 2021. Bailey-Robinson noted that these two mentors were neither equal nor alone in their impact on E. K. Bailey. Others who gave guidance included William J. Shaw, Melvin Wade, and W. K. Jackson. Bailey-Robinson also noted the influence of historically Black colleges and universities such as Bishop College in shaping Christian minds for ministry. That said, Mitchell and Patterson stand as conspicuous influencers with the latter being peerless.

[6] Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 11.

[7] H. B. Charles, Jr., "Conversations: Dr. A. Louis Patterson, Jr., YouTube interview, February 19, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAS08tI5-OY, accessed October 19, 2021.

interrupted, "No, I asked how you are doing, not what you have. We are not human havers or human doers but human beings."[8] Patterson remembered how empty, lonely, and heavy his spirit felt. He accepted Hill's invitation to join a cohort of thirty-four young preachers at Mt. Zion church. Every Tuesday for five years, they met for mentoring and training. Patterson remarked, "What a day of preaching that was like in Los Angeles! That era held a sense of the supernatural. The preaching was *Bible-centered* and *Christ-regulated*."[9]

Hill recommended Patterson as pastor of First Baptist Church in the North Fontana neighborhood of Fontana, California.[10] After five years there, in 1970 Hill commended Patterson to Mount Corinth Baptist Church, Houston, Texas. Patterson's ministry focused relentlessly on preaching and teaching. He preached three services, wrote the church's Sunday School class curriculum, and conducted training sessions. He said, "When I go to the dentist, I expect him to do dentistry. Likewise the passion of my priority is on preaching and teaching the Bible so that I might equip others in their calling."[11] To Patterson, preaching and teaching were complementary, the former being indicative and the latter being explication with application: "Preaching is in the indicative mood. It deals with proclamation. He came. He died. He is indwelling. . . . Teaching is about explanation and applying the knowledge that the Holy Spirit gives, who witnesses

[8] H. B. Charles, Jr., "Conversations: Dr. A. Louis Patterson, Jr."

[9] H. B. Charles, Jr., "Conversations: Dr. A. Louis Patterson, Jr."

[10] In 2009, First Baptist Church merged with another congregation to become Crosspointe Church. Brian Simms is currently the pastor. See Brian Simms's blog, *The Stray Shepherd*, "Ten Lessons from Ten Years at CrossPointe, #1," https://thestrayshepherd.com/2019/07/30/10-lessons-from-10-years-at-crosspointe-1/, accessed October 19, 2021.

[11] H. B. Charles, Jr., "Conversations: Dr. A. Louis Patterson, Jr."

the Word."[12] At his death, Patterson had pastored Mount Corinth over forty-four years.[13]

Patterson's assumptions about the Bible drove his preaching and teaching. His staunch conviction about the Bible's nature led him to profess it as "inspired, inerrant as the revelation, intelligence, order, and communication of God to man." He added, "I consider all other models, messages, and methods as dung."[14] When asked about his personal philosophy of preaching, Patterson quoted Nehemiah 8:8, "They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly [with interpretation, or paragraph by paragraph], and gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading." For Patterson, preaching was simple but not shallow: "Read the text. Give the meaning. Cause the people to understand."[15]

After arriving at Mount Corinth Church, Patterson's development in expository preaching accelerated at a Keswick Conference, hosted in Houston with Stephen Olford as keynote speaker.[16] Lloyd Blue, Patterson's friend and colleague who attended Keswick with Patterson, remembered how he and Patterson were riveted by the way Olford exposed the truth embedded in the text. After hearing Olford, Blue recalled Patterson saying, "If that is what expository preaching is, we've not been doing it right!"[17] They began a concerted effort to master the mechanics of biblical exposition. Patterson's previous training in newspaper journalism equipped him for thorough research. His

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[12] H. B. Charles, Jr., "Conversations: Dr. A. Louis Patterson, Jr."

[13] "Dr. A. Louis Patterson Obituary," *Houston Chronicle*, April 16, 2014, https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/houstonchronicle/name/a-patterson-obituary?id=9940987, accessed October 20, 2021.

[14] Bernard J. Snowden, Jr., "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Preaching Style of Albert Louis Patterson, Jr. with Application for Black Homiletics" (ThM thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2000), 24. Snowden asked Patterson respond to a questionnaire in his own words.

[15] Snowden, Jr., "Preaching Style of Albert Louis Patterson, Jr.," 24.

[16] Started in 1875 at St. John's Church, Keswick, Cumbria, U.K., Keswick is an interdenominational organization dedicated to "hearing God's Word, becoming like God's Son, and serving God's mission." See Keswick Ministries website, https://keswickministries.org/history/, accessed October 20, 2021. One of Keswick's programs is an intensive workshop on biblical exposition for preaching.

[17] Lloyd Blue, teleconference video interview with the author, October 14, 2021.

investigative, analytical mind caused him to focus on the details of the text. His writing skills in reporting enabled him to craft apt word choices. Because of Patterson's assumption of biblical inerrancy, the key question for the preacher (and one which he passed on to E. K. Bailey) was, "Have you considered what the Bible has to say about this particular issue? We live on biblical principles. Our decisions must be based on the Bible or there is no basis for it."[18]

Jeffrey A. Johnson, Sr., affirmed Patterson's hermeneutical pre-commitments in expository preaching. For Patterson, the pulpit expositor's task was to make visible or *expose* the biblical author's truth to the biblical author's original audience. Having done so, the expositor then sought to meaningfully apply the author's exposed truth to the congregation in the Holy Spirit's power. Thus, Patterson believed that expository preaching was the *only* genuine way to preach the Bible. In Johnson's view, Patterson could define expository preaching better by doing it rather than describing it.[19]

Analyzing Patterson's sermon on 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, "The Full Gospel," will exemplify Johnson's point. The setting of this sermon was the 2004 E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference where Patterson was awarded the "Living Legend" honor. After inviting the audience to locate the text in their Bibles, Patterson acknowledged Bailey and the conference's aim to elevate biblical exposition. He then proposed the text's main point: "Where you stand determines how you see. . . . Your standpoint determines your viewpoint." In a brisk message over 1 Corinthians 15, Patterson urged the audience to a proper direction based on an appropriate stance. His three majors were: (1) "I stand

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[18] Blue, interview.

[19] Frank A. Thomas, "A Conversation with Pastor Jeffrey A. Johnson, Sr., hosted by Dr. Frank A. Thomas," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSNS14kaR5I&t=1367s, January 28, 2018, accessed October 19, 2021. For other sermon examples see A. Louis Patterson, Jr., *Joy for the Journey: A Collection of Sermon from the Congress of the National Baptist Convention* (Lithonia, GA: Orman Press, 2002). Patterson's book presents fifteen sermons on the following topics: "Doctrine, Understanding, Personal Growth, Ministry, Church Workers, Personal Development, Commitment, Fellowship, Encouragement, Growth, Focus, Challenge, Hope, Reflection, and Service."

amazed at his choice; (2) I stand assured at his conquering; and (3) I stand in anticipation of his coming."[20]

Regarding his first major, after situating the text in the divisive issues afflicting the Corinthian church, Patterson asserted that what the church needed most was gospel truth. He said, "For all people, all places, for all problems, for all purposes, he would say, 'What you need is Jesus." He argued that the Corinthians' deepest problems rested in their sin for which Jesus is the only solution.[21] Patterson then applied this truth to the audience as he talked about being denied access to his home town public library because of his skin tone. While denouncing racism, Patterson told the audience that Christ's atoning death covered the sin of discrimination. Forgiveness occurred in Christ.

Regarding his second major, Patterson exhorted the crowd to preach the power of the cross because it assured God's people of his active, irresistible, and indestructible grace. Patterson focused on the phrase, "We are being saved," stating that God's grace is not only his "attitude toward us" but his "activity in us." Patterson artistically exclaimed: "You know what grace is? I'm glad you asked. Grace is unlimited. Grace is unknown. Grace is unimaginable. Grace is unexplained. Grace is unmerited. Grace is God's assigned gift to us, predetermined from his own sovereign will so that we could be gripped by grace even when we don't deserve it."[22]

Then, Patterson assured his listeners of the goal line of grace-the putting off of the mortal and the clothing of immortality. He explained justification as "I have been

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[20] A. Louis Patterson, Jr., "The Full Gospel," sermon in *Let the Legends Preach: Sermons by Living Legends at the E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference*, ed. Jared E. Alcántara (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021), 84-85.

[21] Patterson, "The Full Gospel," 86. Patterson stated, "The problem is in the text, that's sin, and the place of the problem is in the world. It's not necessarily socio-economic deprivation. It's not necessarily that the problem relates to a political participation in order to have a participatory democracy. . . . The major problem may not be cultural-ethnic deliverance. If the book is right, it's probably sin. I know something about sin and you do too. Sin is ugly. Sin is destructive. Sin is disruptive. Sin is disgusting. . . . He died for our sins (86)."

[22] Patterson, "The Full Gospel," 87.

saved," sanctification as "I am being saved," and glorification as "I will be saved."[23] To Patterson, a holistic understanding of grace constituted the rescuing endeavors of God.

In his third major, Patterson spoke of the believers' expectancy of the Second Coming. He rehearsed Peter's message in Acts 2 and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. He emphasized the Spirit's indwelling the church, which would mean God's centrifugal presence across the globe in his church. He said that at the king's *Parousia,* the king's global people would be transformed from every tongue, tribe, and nation.

> But, now, he indwells each of us on the wheat fields of Kansas, the swamplands of Louisiana, the Appalachian areas of Pennsylvania, the Golden Coast of California, the rugged plains of Texas. I ought to have somebody in the house! He's all over, and he's everywhere because he's indwelling. But, he's indwelling for a reason, and that is to strengthen us for the task. Do you know him? Have you tried him? I can never talk about it without remembering what he has done for me.[24]

Patterson closed the message with a call and response of alliterative activities identifying God as the "answer for my agony, balm for my bruises, cure for my calamities, deliverer for my distress, eraser of my error, fixer of my faults, and healer of my hurts."[25]

A careful reading of Patterson's sermon gives evidence of his respect for the text's author-centered concerns. For instance, he explained the original recipient's context to which the Apostle Paul wrote. Patterson noted the divisiveness in the Corinthian church as well as their immoral behavior. He mentioned Paul's embarrassment over the church's lawsuits, sexual promiscuity, and unchristian thinking. Then, Patterson told how Paul gave the Corinthians a declaration: "What you need is the gospel. What you need is Jesus Christ. It's not a debate. It's not a discussion. It's a declaration."[26]

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[23] Patterson, "The Full Gospel," 87.

[24] Patterson, "The Full Gospel," 91.

[25] Patterson, "The Full Gospel," 91.

[26] Patterson, "The Full Gospel," 91.

From there, Patterson pivoted to application for the listener. He asserted that the sickness of sin's manifestations could only be healed by gospel medicine. This point, Patterson asserted, was why Paul pressed matters of first importance in his declaration of Christ's bodily resurrection. Though this dissertation has found no evidence that Patterson ever interacted with Hirsch, the sermon demonstrated Hirsch's "meaning/significance" paradigm. Paul's original *meaning* to the Corinthian church found *significance* to Patterson's audience in their life situation as pastors to predominantly Afro-ethnic congregations. Patterson's message challenged conferees to embrace the cross's power to forgive America's sinful injustices. He said, "I am convinced that if any man bows at the cross and gets up with color on his mind, he ought to bow again. For Christ takes care of that. I'm trying to help somebody here tonight on the full gospel."[27]

Another example of Patterson's author-centeredness was the sermon's attention to specific words and their grammatical-historical understanding. Patterson defined gospel as the "good news of Jesus Christ dying on a hill called Calvary, buried and rose again."[28] Patterson described "grace" as God's unearned pleasurable aspiration for those whom he elected to save.[29] And, Patterson expressed "being saved" as past, present, and future deliverance in Christ.[30] The point of Patterson's word-attentiveness was his hermeneutical sensitivity to the Apostle Paul's intent. Because Patterson believed the Spirit-inspired nature of Paul's inscripturated words, he sought to convey Paul's primitive meaning accurately and conscientiously to the contemporary audience.

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[27] The brilliance of this statement is how it applies to both oppressed and oppressor. To the former, the significance is about forgiveness when sinned against. To the latter, the significance is a challenge to abandon pride-fueled prejudice. Christ takes care of both.

[28] Patterson, "The Full Gospel," 85.

[29] Patterson, "The Full Gospel," 88.

[30] Patterson, "The Full Gospel," 90.

In analyzing Patterson's pulpit, Cleophus J. Larue observed how Patterson delivered his expositions from the "domain of personal piety."[31] That is, Patterson urged listeners to demonstrate lives which conformed to the persons God declared them in Christ. One's identity in Christ must be exemplified by one's Christ-like formation, *Christoformity*; or as LaRue understood as "matters of the heart such as, prayer, moral discipline, and the maintenance of a person's right relationship with God."[32] Patterson's attention to biblical exposition for life-change was why he has been acknowledged as the "godfather of African American expository preaching."[33] Patterson was the single most influential mentor in E. K. Bailey's career as an expository preacher.[34]

Patterson's Influence on Bailey

In 1977, at a Fort Worth, Texas, meeting of the General Baptist Convention, Ross Cullins, associate pastor at Concord Church, heard Patterson preach. The next day, Cullins met with Bailey and said, "You need to hear Dr. Patterson." Bailey and Cullins went that night and Cullins recalled Patterson's message titled, "Follow Me and I Will Make You Fishers of Men!" Cullins recollected, "We sat high up in the auditorium and from that night forward, E. K. made the movement toward expository preaching."[35]

Bailey invited Patterson to Concord to preach for revival services and during

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[31] Cleophus J. LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 89.

[32] LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching*, 89. LaRue defined "the domain of personal piety" in a fourfold manner: (1) associating the Christian life personally with Christ, (2) emphasizing the new birth and its accompanying holy life, (3) experiencing God's power over sin versus an appeal to reason, and (4) collapsing the psychological wall between preacher and congregation by a shared emotional encounter. (21) Recall from the previous chapter how African American preaching is categorized, depending on who is doing the categorizing. For LaRue, the phrase "domains of experience" was one of five descriptive situations. A domain meant not just sermon content but sermon location and the life experiences of both preacher and congregation. See LaRue for explication of these situations (20-25).

[33] H. B. Charles, "Cutting It Straight with H. B. Charles, Jr.: Interview with Bryan Carter," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZFzSYUamag&t=2039s, December 2, 2013, accessed October 19, 2021.

[34] Leach, interview; Bailey-Robinson, interview.

[35] Ross Cullins, teleconference video interview with the author, October 11, 2021.

their Sunday lunch, Bailey said, "I have one invitation but two reasons for you being here. The first reason is at night I would like for you to preach to the church and then [the second reason is] during the day I would like for us to schedule time for you to teach me the principles of expository preaching."[36] Patterson poured into Bailey and these two men who loved the Lord sharpened one another. Patterson taught Bailey how to do words studies in the Bible's original languages. He stressed the will of the author in producing the text. He showed Bailey that to properly interpret the Bible, the preacher must be willing to be corrected by the Bible. This principle, Patterson held, was part of what preaching did; it changed perspectives, starting with the preacher![37] Bailey remarked that being dedicated to biblical exposition kept his own preaching tendencies in check with the text. For instance, Bailey inclined himself more toward "grace" while Cullins inclined himself more toward "law." But in biblical exposition, Bailey yielded to the tone and intent of the text, allowing it to have its say. Bailey found himself preaching the text's demands while Cullins found himself preaching the text's comfort. Bailey noted, "We preached a sense of balance."[38]

Bailey learned by one to one mentoring but also by observation. He noted how Patterson organized the biblical pericope. He saw how Patterson crafted words.[39] He paid attention to the ways which Patterson applied the biblical author's message to the contemporary audience's life situation. Cullins explained this as "digging into the text": inquiring its setting, authorship, recipients, word studies, and accurate translation. "E. K. called it, 'Doing your spade work,'" remembered Cullins. Patterson's fastidious attention

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[36] Bailey, interview.

[37] Leach, interview.

[38] E. K. Bailey, *Why Expository Preaching?*, CD-ROM (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1995).

[39] For Patterson's workshops on wordsmithery and biblical word studies, see A. Louis Patterson, Jr., *ABCs of English Grammar*, 3 cassette tapes (Dallas, TX: EKB Ministries, 1998); A. Louis Patterson, Jr., *Doing Word Studies*, cassette tape (Dallas, TX: EKB Ministries, 1997); and A. Louis Patterson, Jr., *Use of Grammar in Expository Preaching*, cassette tape (Dallas, TX: EKB Ministries, 1997).

to word choice persuaded Bailey to be particular in the way he crafted words for each message. This demanding level of excellence yielded a congregation excited about gathering in Sunday worship because they knew they were not going to get "popcorn." Instead, Bailey preached "meat and inspiration, every Sunday."[40]

After mentoring with Patterson, Bailey transitioned the congregation to biblical, pericopal exposition over 1978-79. He explained to Concord Church what he was doing as he began preaching paragraph by paragraph over books of the Bible. He took three years to preach through the book of Acts. Other books included the Gospel of Mark, Paul's Letter to the Romans, and Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. Bailey also preached creative sermons over biblical characters in a first person narrative. He embodied their character in performative preaching.[41] In all his preaching, Bailey stressed accurate exegesis grounded in a hermeneutical pre-commitment to biblical inerrancy and authorial intent.

For example, Bailey's sermon on Psalm 46, "Facing an Uncertain Future," situated the text in 2 Kings 18 with Israel's victory over the Assyrian army.[42] In Bailey's introduction, his storytelling transported listeners to the battlefield where the angel of the Lord vanquished the enemy. Bailey expressed, "As Judah rested from battle, God was already at war. By morning 185,000 Assyrians were dead. Buzzards flew over the enemy camp. Spies reported that the invaders were all dead. Delirious joy erupted. Hymns of praise broke out. Psalm 46 is one of the songs of praise the people of God sang to celebrate the miracle of divine intervention."[43]

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[40] Cullins, interview.

[41] See the following books formatted from Bailey's dramatic monologue preaching: E. K. Bailey, *The Preacher and the Prostitute* (Chicago: Moody, 2004); E. K. Bailey, *Confessions of an Ex-Crossmaker* (Chicago: Moody, 2004); and E. K. Bailey, *Testimony of a Tax Collector* (Chicago: Moody, 2004).

[42] E. K. Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, ed. H. B. Charles, Jr., (Jacksonville, FL: Shiloh Church, 2015), 57-64. Bailey preached this sermon on September 1, 2002.

[43] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 58.

Bailey's three major points walked the listener through the psalm: (1) "God is our refuge; (2) God is our resource; and (3) God is our relaxation."[44] In Bailey's first major point, "God is our refuge," he defined the Hebrew word for "trouble" in Psalm 46:1 as "tight place." He pivoted quickly to application by asking the congregation a series of questions: Have you ever been in a tight place? Have you ever been caught between a rock and a hard place? Have you ever found yourself between the devil and the deep blue sea? Are you there now?" From there Bailey showed how the word "though" (stated twice in Psalm 46:3) ensures the trustworthiness of God in the fact of trouble. Bailey told his listeners that their deepest decision is between "trust" or "trouble." He asked his listeners whether they would choose "faith or fear." He said, "Fear imprisons. Faith liberates. Fear paralyzes. Faith empowers. Fear disheartens. Faith encourages. Fear sickens. Faith heals. Fear renders useless. Faith renders serviceable. Fear puts trouble at the center of life. Faith puts God at the center of your life."[45]

Bailey's second major point, "God is our resource," asserted that the reason why the congregation can find their supply in God has to do with the "marvelous river" he provides and the "mysterious person" he is. Bailey understood the river to be God's refuge of assurance to his people, guaranteeing that he will keep them secure. He said, "If you have a been saved, You have a river that makes glad the city of God! You do not have to depend on yourself or any other person to deal with your uncertain future. Simply depend on the river that God has placed within you!"[46]

Bailey insisted the Lord himself was the "mysterious person" who would never abandon his people. After a flourish of scriptural references about the Lord's presence in the midst of his people (Luke 2:46; Matthew 18:20; Luke 24:36; Revelation 2:10), Bailey

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[44] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 59.

[45] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 60.

[46] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 62.

called out the response of the congregation, "The Lord will give you strength when you pray. The Lord will help your courage when you pray. The Lord will enable you to overcome your obstacles when you pray. The Lord will do for you what you cannot do when you pray. The Lord will give you courage to face an uncertain future when you pray."[47]

In Bailey's third major point, "God is our relaxation," the sermon displayed vulnerability Bailey told how Psalm 46 became personal with his own chemotherapy treatment from cancer. He said that Psalm 46 ended on a battlefield, then asked he congregation if they knew how that felt. The sermon upswelled with a series of "God is able" statements: "God is able to end the battle. God is able to silence the enemy. God is able to turn chariots over. God is able to break spears that would harm you. God is able to stop the weapons of the enemy. God is able to protect you from danger. God is able to give you the victory. God is able but you must trust him!"[48] The sermon closed with a call to trust God.

In assessing Bailey's message, the reader can hear multiple echoes of Patterson's bibliocentric influence. First, just as Patterson took pains to wordcraft, so did Bailey in expressing his major points: Refuge, Resource, Relaxation. Second, just as Patterson employed picturesque language in capturing the auditor's imagination, so Bailey introduced his message with the Lord's angel slaying the Assyrian army. Buzzards circled corpses. Exuberant joy broke out among Israel. Bailey transported the listener to "there and then" exposition in order to reinforce "here and now" application. Third, just as Patterson conducted grammatical analysis of the text, so Bailey explicated pericopal words such as "trouble" and "though." Fourth, just as Patterson ended his sermons in with exuberance, so Bailey concluded Psalm 46 with emotional fervor: "The Lord is with

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[47] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 62.

[48] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 63.

us!" Fifth, just as Patterson exposed the biblical author's original context in his preaching, so Bailey's placed Psalm 46 in the chronology of 2 Kings 18. Sixth, just as Patterson stressed author-centeredness for meaning, so Bailey conveyed the psalmist's original truth of God's benevolent intervention on behalf of his people.[49]

Analysis

Patterson's contribution to Bailey's pulpit was his ability to activate the principles of the Grammatical-Historical interpretation into the rhythm of Bailey's preparation for preaching. Grammatical-Historical interpretation studies for meaning a biblical passage in its original language and historical location. The interpreter assumes that authorial meaning resides in the text. Grammatical-Historical strives to discover, not manufacture, meaning. It assumes content already in the text over fashioning one's own meaning out of the text. From Hirsch's "meaning/significance structure" the reader deciphers the single meaning's significance for his own context.

Grammatical-Historical differentiates "lower criticism" from "higher criticism." The former examines various texts to determine as best as possible the original text; also known as "textual criticism." The latter considers the time gap between the original event and what was written about the original event. Grammatical-Historical assumes that a text was intended to convey meaning. It presumes textual truth independent of the reader. It concludes that the best content about Jesus of Nazareth resides in the Bible. It does not yield arbitration of the text's meaning to the church. While acknowledging the text's literary traits, Grammatical-Historical's plain sense appreciates what the biblical text communicates about the existence and nature of God. Its critical question is: *what did the historical author intend to communicate to the historical audience?* Its critical strength is its commitment to authorial intent. Its critical

[49] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 64.

vulnerability is the tendency of interpreters to forget their own cultural/historical biases in deciphering meaning.

This vulnerability is an important matter and should be explored with the question, "What is the relationship between an author-centered lens and one's social location?" William H. Myers believes that the critical-historical method of interpretation (in which he includes authorial intent) suffers from irrelevancy before an historically oppressed people group.[50] He asserts that an author-centered pursuit confines Scripture to the past while overlooking the afflictions of the present. He questions a methodology that assumes a Eurocentric worldview. He expresses frustration that an African-American student must acquire mastery over a Eurocentric method, employing "tools" with "metrics" in a "nonmetric" context. He sees adherence to a critical-historical approach as another expression of "enslavement."[51] Moreover, Myers sees a concern in the academy where African American professors enter predominately Eurocentric spaces only to experience hermeneutical "enslavement" on a professional level. He sees the difficulty of altering the "pedagogical structure" due to (1) the scarcity of alternative models, (2) the resistance to institutional change, (3) the challenge of detaching methodology from theology, and (4) the viewpoint diversity within African American scholarship itself; that is, some African American professors resonate with the notion of authorial intent.[52]

Myers offers eight concerns with Eurocentric, historical criticism: (1) its exclusivity, (2) its focus on single-meaning, (3) its concentration on history, (4) its over attention to how the text came into being, (5) its emphasis on proposition over narrative, (6) its dependency on historical method for meaning, (7) its confining the reader to

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[50] William H. Myers, "The Hermeneutical Dilemma of the African American Biblical Student," in *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Cane Hope Felder, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 40-56.

[51] Myers, "Hermeneutical Dilemma," 41-45.

[52] Myers, "Hermeneutical Dilemma," 43-44.

passivity rather than agency, and (8) its appeal to the scholarly over the populist class.[53] Of course, each of Myers's concerns can stretch into a fuller conversation that is beyond the scope of this dissertation; the point is that he sees the historical-critical method by itself as irrelevant to African-American faith formation. He concludes that "Eurocentric training in seminary does not aid [African American biblical students] in the articulation of an African American hermeneutic in their ministerial context or academic position."[54]

Admittedly, sermons that include protracted discussion of the Documentary Hypothesis are certain to convey little or no relevance before a people group suffering from racism. Sermon content belaboring the textual integrity of the adulterous woman pericope (John 7:53-8:11) or the closing of Mark's Gospel (Mark 16:9-20) will strain the patience of an unemployed husband or grieving widow. Still, Richard F. Burnett writes, "Historical criticism provides an invaluable service. It offers an initial preparation for understanding what stands in the text. It delivers a disciplined and deliberate rather than arbitrary process for determining what is there. Because what is there is often not only propositional statements or expressions of human piety *but also words that point to actual events*."[55] Myers appears to want pastor-scholars to present the significance of a passage without the foundational work of establishing veracity. As such, Myers turns biblical studies into an individualized, "docetic" experience, void of space-time history.[56] Against this notion, the apostle Peter testifies as an eyewitness of Jesus' majesty (2 Pet 1:16). The apostle John attests to the Jesus he heard, saw, and touched (1 John 1:1). The apostle Paul claims that without the historical, bodily resurrection of Jesus, Christians are

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[53] Myers, "Hermeneutical Dilemma," 46-47.

[54] Myers, "Hermeneutical Dilemma," 56.

[55] Richard E. Burnett, "Historical Criticism," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 292, (italics added).

[56] Burnett, "Historical Criticism," 292. Burnett claims, "Unless one embraces a docetic understanding of the Bible, Christian interpreters can no more ignore the task of its critical historical investigation than they can ignore the humanity of Jesus" (292).

among the most pitiful creatures (1 Cor 15:19). As a tool of criticism, the historical-critical method explores these claims. In Craig L. Blomberg's view, this method examines the grammar of the text in its "original historical context," looking for the author's intended meaning to the original recipients.[57] While Blomberg appreciates other critical methodologies, he places the historical-critical method first because it probes the question, "Did this really happen?" He states, "I find [theological and literary analyses] crucial. However, they can be engaged in legitimately only when built on the *appropriate historical foundations*."[58] Ultimately, Myers's argument against historical criticism falls short. At the same time, he raises an important questions for the hermeneut: How can the outcomes of historical criticism be conveyed in a way that resonates with marginalized hearers in the preaching event? And, how can African American biblical scholars intermingle canonical readings of the Black church with critical-historical considerations of the text? It is this dissertation's contention that Bailey addressed these concerns with the help of the other significant influencer in his pulpit, Henry H. Mitchell, whose contribution toward Bailey's lens, *Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship*, will now be explored.

Henry H. Mitchell: "Dean of the Teachers of Black Preachers"

Henry H. Mitchell (1919-2022) has been called the "Dean of Teachers of Black Preachers"[59] and the "father of the study of black homiletics"[60] for his influence in the local church and academia. Faithful pastor, prolific author, and transformational homiletician, Mitchell has clarified what African American preaching is and how

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[57] Craig L. Blomberg, "The Historical-Critical/Grammatical View," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 27.

[58] Blomberg, "The Historical-Critical/Grammatical View," 28.

[59] Martha J. Simmons, ed., *Preaching on the Brink: The Future of Homiletics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 22.

[60] John L. Thomas, *Voices in the Wilderness: Why Black Preaching Still Matters* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 22.

important it remains to Christianity. According to L. Susan Bond, Mitchell was the first Black homiletician to compose an unambiguously "Afrocentric" interpretation of Black preaching.[61] Mitchell's scholarship includes *Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art*, *The Recovery of Preaching*, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*, and numerous essays and articles on the Black pulpit. Mitchell's ten years of pastoral ministry along with his extensive career in the academy (Colgate Rochester Divinity School, Union Theological Seminary, Interdenominational Theological Center, and United Theological Seminary) qualify his voice in Black homiletics. Mitchell earned the Doctor of Theology degree from Claremont School of Theology. Mitchell's academic influence on Bailey becomes clearer when Mitchell's "rhetorical situation"[62] regarding Black Sacred Rhetoric is reviewed.

Mitchell's "Blackamerican" Rhetorical Situation: "Before King"

Mervyn Warren held that the pulpit of Martin Luther King, Jr., was the historical dividing line between two periods of Black preaching, "Before King" and "After King."[63] Black preaching before King focused on a better life in the life to come. Sermons featured themes such as hope, endurance, and patience for those victimized by race-based slavery and marginalized by Jim Crow discrimination. Black preaching before King offered the "bread of eternal life in the hereafter."[64]

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[61] L. Susan Bond, *Contemporary African American Preaching: Diversity in Theory and Style* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2003), 98.

[62] The term "rhetorical situation" originated from Lloyd F. Blitzer: "The nature of those contexts in which speakers or writers create rhetorical discourse." See Lloyd F. Blitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, vol. 1 (1968): 1-14.

[63] Mervyn A. Warren, *King Came Preaching: The Pulpit Power of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2001), 52.

[64] Warren, *King Came Preaching*, 46. Warren asks, "What set of circumstances moved Black preachers beyond merely promising bread of eternal life in the hereafter to grasp the need of liberation from religious and civil injustices of the day" (46)?

Evidence of these themes comes from the initial days of the Black experience in America. In the early seventeen century, slave owners balked at the notion that Blacks possessed souls. Thinking otherwise would have obligated the owners to free Christian Blacks as the Apostle Paul implied in his letter to Philemon. Certain Anglican clerics such as Bishop Gibson of London, clarified the uneasy consciences of slave owners by assuring them that while the Black soul belonged to God, the Black body belonged to them.[65] Indentured servitude laws in 1619 were ended by 1640 for permanent race-based slavery.[66] On the surface, the rationale for such a change was explained as "evangelism." By permanent slavery, "heathen souls could be saved."[67] Worship services among slaves were regulated by White rule. In 1693 Cotton Mather authored "Rules for the Society of Negroes," stipulating conditions by which Blacks could worship.[68] In religious gatherings, slave preachers addressed the immediate condition of their bondage, urging hope in the life to come.

With no literary, archival systems in Black culture, oral memory was highly valued as stories were passed on from generation to generation.[69] The preacher was known as the sacred storyteller. He was considered the foremost cultural historian passing on to "Blackamericans"[70] the promise of future freedom in heaven from their

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[65] Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings: The Long Hidden Realities of the First Years* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 24.

[66] Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings*, 24.

[67] Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings*, 24.

[68] Cotton Mather, *Rules for the Society of Negroes* (Boston: n. p., 1714?), Early American Imprint Collection. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evansdemo/R08350.0001.001/1:1?rgn=div1;view=fulltext. Rules included the following: (1) prescribed liturgy for worship-beginning and ending prayer, psalm to be recited, a sermon to be preached, (2) evening meeting after the Sabbath between seven and nine o'clock, (3) mandatory attendance unless excused by the slave's master, and (4) upstanding behavior, no harboring runaway slaves, and six months suspension from worship for sexual immorality.

[69] Mitchell, *Black Preaching*, 32. "When a people is considered insignificant, the powers that be do not bother to chronicle their development" (32).

[70] Henry H. Mitchell, *The Recovery of Preaching* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977), 11. "Blackamerican" is Mitchell's own people-group description to name the distinct cultural, historical context of the African American experience.

present, grinding enslavement. In worship and preaching, "Blackamericans" celebrated God's nearness in Jesus, who had entered earth to suffer with them. They preached that God would one day establish justice over all oppressors. Mitchell wrote, "Blacks in America . . . saw so little visible justice in this life that they quite functionally appropriated the local ideas of hell as a place to put 'ol' Marse,' preserving justice. And they *celebrated* their new idea by singing that everybody talking about heaven wasn't going there."[71] Wayne E. Croft, Sr. observed that Black religious gatherings prior to the Civil War provided (1) freer expressions in worship, (2) purer preaching against the "corrupted gospel of 'slave, obey your master,'" and (3) deeper community from a shared identity and situation.[72] Black preaching was located within a community of subjugated people who collectively held eschatological hope. In Black preaching both the preacher and the congregation celebrated the God who would one day deliver his people.

Post-Civil War, the short-lived era of Reconstruction (1865-1877) left southern Blacks without political support. They faced disfranchisement in the south through "literacy tests, poll taxes, physical segregation, property requirements, and sheer intimidation."[73] According to W. E. B. Du Bois, "The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery. The whole weight of America was thrown to color caste."[74] Eric Foner noted that well into the twentieth century, the

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[71] Mitchell, *Recovery of Preaching*, 19. See also Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings: The Long Hidden Realities of the First Years* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 19-20.

[72] Wayne E. Croft, Sr., *The Motif of Hope in African American Preaching During Slavery and the Post-Civil War Era* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), 36. Croft recognized, "Worship could now be congruent with their culture and could be more supportive of cares, concerns, joys, and hopes of their existence." (36)

[73] Allen C. Guelzo, *Reconstruction: A Concise History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 117.

[74] W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880* (New York: The Free Press, 1935), 620.

South was a single party province dominated by a "reactionary ruling elite" whose policies and laws meant harm to African Americans.[75]

The "Great Migration" followed. From 1916-1940, an average of five hundred African Americans a day fled the oppression of southern discrimination for communities in the northern United States. Three aforementioned preachers in Cleveland and New York City (Powell, Ransom, and Randolph) challenged the cultural status quo and spoke against society's sleepy indifference to pervasive racial injustices.[76] Their mantle fell to Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968), who prophetically challenged civil rights inequities in American government and culture. Richard Lischer contended that King ignored Ciceronian rhetoric of instructing, delighting, and moving auditors. Rather, King "elevated" the injustices of Jim Crow laws, "identified" with the oppressed against their oppressors, and "confronted" the immorality of racism with the intent of eradicating it.[77]

King's pulpit was not so much an *innovation* as a *continuation* of the African American pulpit, echoing themes of the Old Testament Exodus. King's preaching called out an enslaved people from the domination of "Pharaoh's" discrimination. Gilbert observed four traits of pre-Civil rights preaching which were bequeathed to King: (1) revealing the wickedness of structural racism so that all could see it for what it was, (2) remaining full of hope that truth would soon overcome oppression, (3) orally calling out

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[75] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, upd. ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 2014), 604.

[76] Kenyatta R. Gilbert, *A Pursued Justice: Black Preaching from the Great Migration to Civil Rights* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 8. See also Curtis J. Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Evans probed the question, "Are blacks innately religious?" as he surveyed black religion from the 1830s to the 1940s. He explored assumptions of "innate religiosity," "intellectual inferiority," and the role of faith among African Americans. He traced these assumptions to "romantic racialists" of the early nineteenth century. Post-Civil War, he discussed "ambiguities" in the white mind on the effects of black religion. He considered how the historical treatment of blacks led to a presumption of their inferiority as humans. From the "great migration," he spoke of black "urbanization" and its subsequent jettison of black religious culture.

[77] Richard Lischer, *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Word that Moved America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 121.

the reality of the oppressed unto their empowerment, and (4) utilizing the beauty of language to quicken the human spirit.[78]

Mitchell's "Blackamerican" Rhetorical Situation: "After King"

The outcome of King's pulpit was the recognition of Black preaching as a tradition of the "Blackamerican" experience. While Black homiletical scholarship existed prior to King, afterwards it greatly expanded. King's sermons and letters became the subject of dissertation research and rhetorical analysis. Frank A. Thomas stated, "To put it simply, after listening to King and so many others, mainstream America paid much more attention to the African American preaching tradition, and scholarship such as in the fields of rhetoric and theology, followed as a part of this interest."[79] Though King was not the first Black prophetic preacher, his pulpit set the stage for future research in Black Sacred Rhetoric. *Thus,"After King" was the "rhetorical situation" to which Henry H. Mitchell arrived*.

Born in Columbus, Ohio, Mitchell attended Ohio State University and Lincoln University before preparing for ministry at United Theological Seminary. He studied the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich in addition to the homiletics of Fosdick and Buttrick. With appreciation for their scholarship, Mitchell noted their lack of attention to "Blackamerican" culture and experience.[80] As Mitchell transitioned from the local church to the academy, he began to wrestle with questions such as, "What distinguishes Black preaching?" That is, "What makes Black preaching Black?" His Master's thesis at Fresno State College explored the linguistic dynamics of Black

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[78] Gilbert, *Pursued Justice*, 68.

[79] Frank A. Thomas, *Introduction to the Practice of African American Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2016), 31.

[80] Bond, *Contemporary African American Preaching*, 97.

preaching and its similarities with Black spirituals.[81] His doctorate established him as a homiletician, particularly in Black churches. Mitchell's research led him to author the following definition of preaching:

> *To preach is so to be used by the Holy Spirit that the gospel is communicated to the end that hearers are saved and then helped to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord. It is the hope of every preacher that every sermon will be used by the Spirit to move Christians to grow from point A to point B, in the direction of the life modeled by Jesus Christ. And every sermon should focus on one such behavioral goal as stated or implied by the biblical text.*[82]

While this definition is broad enough for more than one ethnicity, Mitchell specifically applied it to the Black experience. According to Mitchell, the interpretive "key" to comprehending his definition of preaching is "culture." He wrote, "The key to understanding the different styles of preaching is in the word *culture*: Preaching is carried out in the idiom, imagery, style, and world view of a particular people."[83]

Mitchell's Ethno-Rhetorical Homiletic: Culture, Vernacular, "Transconsciousness," and Celebration

For Mitchell, culture, vernacular, "transconsciousness," and celebration comprise the pillars of his ethno-rhetorical homiletic.[84] These aspects will now be considered.

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[81] Henry H. Mitchell, "The Genius of Negro Preaching: A Linguistic and Stylistic Examination of the Homiletical Twin Brother to the American Negro Spiritual, with Some Possible Implications of the Result for American Protestant 'White' Churches," (MA thesis, Fresno State College, 1965).

[82] Henry H. Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching,* rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), 13. In his earlier writings such as *Black Preaching* (1970) and *The Recovery of Preaching* (1977), Mitchell does not define preaching so compactly and explicitly. In those works, the reader is left with elements of what preaching is without a tight definition. Furthermore, this definition in itself does not identify Mitchell's thinking about the *distinctiveness* of Black preaching. Therefore, the definition needs to be applied somewhere in order to be fully understood. For Mitchell, it is the Black culture.

[83] Mitchell, *Black Preaching*, 11.

[84] See Mitchell's *Black Preaching*, *The Recovery of Preaching*, and *Celebration and Experience in Preaching.*

Entering Culture

By culture, Mitchell meant the aggregate of every insight and approach that a particular people group employs for its own continuation. Mitchell described "culture" this way: "Each group has a menu of acceptable food, a collection of proper hairstyles and attire, a way to greet people, ways to sing music and tell stories, and ways to build homes and rear children."[85] Culture is "the way we do things round here."[86] Mitchell rejected the idea that Africans were dispossessed of their culture when enslaved from their ancestral homeland. He wrote, "If American Blacks sound remarkably like some traditional Africans in worship (African Traditional Religion), it is only natural. Slave bosses could change the length of hoes and the manner of cultivating crops, but they could not change how the slave believed."[87]

Mitchell did not advise doing battle against the culture; rather, the preacher must "affirm and work within the culture of the congregation."[88] In Black preaching, the sermon resonates emotionally in accordance with Black culture's "frame of reference."[89] That said, Mitchell did not concede the unchangeability of culture. The issue is not *if* but *how* the pulpit should address change in culture. Thus, Mitchell held to "acculturation rather than intellectual imperialism."[90] In the Lyman Beecher lectures, Mitchell wrote, "The militant and idiomatically fluent pastor of an adoring Black congregation is bound to suspect that his prophetic White counterpart gets cast out of his church because his flock are spiritually hungry, more than because they are unalterably opposed to a justice

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[85] Mitchell, *Black Preaching*, 12.

[86] Elizabeth Godfrey, "Defining Culture: The Way We Do Things Round Here" (paper presented for the proceedings of the American Society for Engineering Education Annual Conference and Exposition, Albuquerque, NM, June 24-27, 2001).

[87] Mitchell, *Black Preaching*, 13.

[88] Mitchell, *Black Preaching*, 14.

[89] Mitchell, *Black Preaching*, 15.

[90] Mitchell, *Black Preaching*, 15.

never presented in their language."[91] For Mitchell, if the preacher could not identify with the congregation's culture, how could he expect to influence them toward spiritual maturity in Christ?

Mitchell's introductory message for the Beecher lectures addressed acculturation with Ezekiel 3:15 as his text: "Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-Abib, that dwelt by the river Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days." Mitchell asked his hearers what they thought the most difficult job in God's Kingdom was. After a string of possible answers, Mitchell proposed five words from the text: "I sat where they sat." After recreating the situation of the exiles in the vivid language of witness, Mitchell made it clear that Ezekiel "joined them":

> I get a little tired of people talking about conquering for Christ. I dislike a lot of the implications there. We need to be more like Ezekiel who finally *joined* them. He wasn't ever sent to beat them, he wasn't sent to conquer them, he was sent to be one of them. In so doing he had to avoid contrast, and we must avoid contrast. . . . We must identify with the people we serve.[92]

In other words, to enter the auditors' culture requires the preacher to associate and sympathize with that culture. Another example included Mitchell's Mother's Day sermon on Jochebed, Moses's mother.[93] In a foreword to this message, Mitchell observed how culture today often requires households to possess dual incomes. Though two wage earners exist outside the home, many mothers are required to shoulder a greater burden within the home. To this inequity, Mitchell urged the preacher to sneak up on the male auditors through the retelling of Jochebed:

> Head-to-head confrontation against established culture is futile. Folk mores have lived too long and served too well to discard now. An indirect tactic at a much

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[91] Mitchell, *Recovery of Preaching*, 26.

[92] Mitchell, *Recovery of Preaching*, 5.

[93] The very inclusion of a Mother's Day sermon evidences "acculturation." No "Mother's Day" holiday exists in the Bible; it is an American celebration. Mitchell's perspective is, "Why fight it?"

> deeper level is preferable to a shallow challenge. . . . *The behavioral purpose of the sermon is to move male hearers to proud respect and awesome admiration for the others in their lives*. This is achieved by a new vision of wonderful woman overlooked: Jochebed, the magnificent mother of Moses.[94]

In the sermon, Mitchell reflected how Jochebed, a slave of Pharaoh, freely entrusted Moses to "my righteous and Provident Gawd all the way." Mitchell recounted the story of how his enslaved great grandmother escaped Virginia via the Underground Railroad, then gave birth to Mitchell's grandfather, who was born in freedom.[95] Mitchell's personal story showcased the faith of his matriarchal forebearer as a type of Jochebed. The broader homiletical lesson urged preachers to find ways of embedding themselves within the culture of their hearers.

Employing Vernacular

According to Mitchell, the principal portal through which the preacher identifies with culture is the listeners' *vernacular*. During thesis research, Mitchell recounted an "unconscious change in speech" after listening to audio tapes of Black sermons.[96] He wrote, "The standard media English which I had learned in my midwestern birthplace had subtly evolved toward the mother tongue of the Black ghetto, especially when I was preaching."[97] He then found himself affirmed by congregants, grateful that he was finally letting himself be used by God. In Mitchell's opinion, his sermon content remained unchanged but his linguistic mode of pulpit communication resonated with the church.

Mitchell explained that as an African American with lighter skin tone, some in the congregation had low expectations of him since they initially assumed him to be

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[94] Henry H. Mitchell, *A Word For All Seasons* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2012), 4 (italics added).

[95] Mitchell, *Word for All Seasons*, 8.

[96] Mitchell, *Recovery of Preaching*, 97. Mitchell listened to multiple tapes of Black preaching for his MA thesis, "The Genius of Negro Preaching."

[97] Mitchell, *Recovery of Preaching*, 97.

White. He commented, "I had always stood in new pulpits amidst low and self-fulfilling expectations, since everybody in the ghetto fancies that Whites can't preach 'worth a lick.' The resistance I had never understood began to change when my language changed."[98] Mitchell reasoned, "Ear image takes precedence over eye image."[99] One's vernacular and identity are indivisible.

Citing Paul's "all things to all men" passage in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, Mitchell contended that Black preaching should occur in "Black English." Mitchell observed four characteristics of "Black English": (1) A slower pace of delivery compared to "standard middle class communication," (2) "ungrammatical constructions" such as "you is," "he play the piano," and "Don't you be callin'", (3) certain tonal inflections difficult to describe in writing but easily recognized aurally, and (4) "lazily articulated vowels and consonants."[100] An example of these traits can be found in an iteration of Peter's vision (Acts 10:14-15). Mitchell wrote: "A Black preacher could render God's speech to Peter in the text against racism thus: 'Looka here Peter, don't you be callin' nothin' I made common or dirty!'"[101]

Rather than preachers attempting to elevate the congregation to themselves, Mitchell urged an incarnational homiletic of meeting them in their life situation as is. This incarnation could only occur as the preacher humbly condescended to communicate in a voice most familiar to the congregation. Mitchell wrote, "No Black person can truly

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[98] Mitchell, *Recovery of Preaching*, 98.

[99] Mitchell, *Recovery of Preaching*, 101.

[100] Mitchell, *Black Preaching*, 84-86. For an appreciation of Black ethno-rhetorical vernacular, see William H. Pipes, *Say Amen, Brother! Old-Time Negro Preaching: A Study in American Frustration*. (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1992). Pipes studies African American Sacred Rhetoric from its origins in American slavery. He uncovers extant expressions of the slave preacher, though in modified form. He discusses preparation, education, and unique features such as tone, sentence structure, and kinesiology. Echoing Du Bois, he offers perspective on the Black preacher's other leadership roles within the Black Church, his spiritual and political responsibilities.

[101] Mitchell, *Black Preaching*, 83.

identify with a God who speaks only the language of the white oppressor."[102] He argued that preaching in "Black English" was the equivalent of an artist painting a "Black Christ" or "black Madonna." He said, "God is divested of his 'proper,' white, socially distant role, a personification of deity completely outside Black culture and life."[103] Mitchell challenged Black preachers to be more concerned about pastoring churches where the people are than attempting to impress them with proper English. He cited anecdotal instances of Black social workers declining to place Black children in White households for fear of a diminished ability to speak "Black English" (and thus, Black culture). He all but guaranteed that a predominantly Black church would not call a Black pastor who did not speak "Black English."[104]

Mitchell's controversial perspectives on vernacular were tempered with his future hope that one day racial strife in America will have faded to the point that "one tongue" sufficiently communicates to all ethnicities. Until then, Mitchell urged Black preachers to strive toward bi-lingual fluency. In doing so, they demonstrated to their congregations their willingness to be "counted among them."[105]

Affecting "Transconsciousness"

For Mitchell, entering culture through the portal of vernacular would produce a "transconscious"[106] experience. By this experience, Mitchell meant a Spirit-enabled

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[102] Mitchell, *Black Preaching*, 83.

[103] Mitchell, *Black Preaching*, 83. No evidence exists that Bailey contrived his vocals to comport with Mitchell's "Black English." Bailey's vocalization was natural to himself. See Ralph Douglas West, video teleconference interview with the author, June 16, 2022. For a critique of Mitchell's "Univocal African American Preaching," see Jared E. Alcántara, "Crossover Preaching: The Homiletical Legacy of Gardner C. Taylor and Its Contemporary Significance to Homiletics in the United States" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2014), 173.

[104] Mitchell, *Black Preaching*, 84.

[105] Mitchell, *Black Preaching*, 87.

[106] Mitchell, *Recovery of Preaching*, 30. "Transconscious" is Mitchell's own invention. He found the term "unconscious" unsatisfying because it implied inaccessible unawareness. He assumed that human consciousness of every type is aware. He believed the West unnecessarily conflated awareness and reason.

sermon which effects in the listener an "experiential encounter" with God. Out of this experience, believers could make incremental advances in Christlikeness. Mitchell's "meaningful experiential encounter" drew from his view of human psychology; beyond the "rational" or "conscious" mind is "transconsciousness."[107] Michell explained "transconsciousness" as the deepest recesses of the human psyche, the psalmist's "deep calls to deep" (Ps 42:7). Here Mitchell is vague in providing a clearer definition yet justifiably so considering the mysterious nature of "transconsciousness." Perhaps the best visual would be that of an ice glacier, the vast majority of which is underwater.[108] Mitchell would find "transconsciousness" in the deepest parts of the human spirit, the totality of humanhood. Bond called Mitchell's "transconsciousness" a "mystical integrating religious center."[109] These mystical sectors of the human psyche are accessed through "sermonic emotion" by way of story, oral artistic imagery, and inductive "moves."[110] As "sermonic emotion" reaches "transconscious spaces," the auditors activate themselves behaviorally toward the desires of the preached text. Thus, Mitchell contended that the point of African American preaching (and by implication all other types) aims at generating strong, loving emotions that translate into strong, loving activities. Bond wrote: "[Mitchell's] homiletic strategy is to generate feeling so that folks will continue to act out of that experience of ecstatic celebration."[111]

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[107] Mitchell, *Recovery of Preaching*, 30.

[108] "How Much of an Iceberg is below the Water?" Navigation Center, United States Coast Guard, Department of Homeland Security. https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/?pageName=iipHowMuchOfAnIcebergIsBelowTheWater. "About 7/8ths of an iceberg is below the water line. This figure is approximate. Although icebergs are similar not all are the same."

[109] L. Susan Bond, *Contemporary African American Preaching-Diversity in Theory and Style* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003), 103.

[110] Bond, *Contemporary African American Preaching*, 103.

[111] Bond, *Contemporary African American Preaching*, 105.

Mitchell's sermon, "On Starting from the Bottom, or Bethlehem Revisited,"[112] demonstrates preaching to the listener's "transconscious" experience. Mitchell's text was Luke 2:7; he explained that no country hometown could possibly accommodate the mass return of those who left for urban life. He said the hotel clerk was simply doing his job in saying there was no vacancy. That said, there was no need to feel sorry for the holy family for God had *planned* his son be born at the "bottom of the totem pole."[113] Mitchell stated that mangers, diapers, and mother's milk were typical elements of all who began life at the bottom. He claimed:

> I believe that God *meant* for Jesus to start at the bottom of society. . . . God wanted to identify with the oppressed through a human son. Existential philosophers would easily explain this on the basis that people at the bottom always see society more accurately than others. They have no vested interests to maintain, and no positions of privilege to protect. Jesus' matchless clarity of insight about people and society was at least partially due to his being a "manger kid," accurately sizing his world up, as first seen from the very bottom.[114]

In the sermon's next move, Mitchell related the lowly status of Jesus' birth with that of American slavery. He noted diaries of escaped slaves testifying to the character disintegration of their oppressors. He said, "Ex-slaves such as Austin Steward analyzed how slaves made an owner's children lazy and self-indulgent; how it tempted husbands to debauchery, drinking, and gambling, while squandering great fortunes and bringing down families in disgrace."[115] Mitchell connected Jesus's "astounding wisdom" with his low socio-economic situation. Mitchell's point was that Jesus was accessible to all classes because no classes felt threatened by him. Mitchell spoke of Matthew's genealogy, noting Jesus's less than perfect lineage. With ancestors such as Rahab, Bathsheba, Ruth, and Tamar, Jesus identified with the broken and sinful. Mitchell

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[112] Henry H. Mitchell and Emil M. Thomas, *Preaching for Black Self-Esteem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 51-57.

[113] Mitchell and Thomas, *Black Self-Esteem*, 52.

[114] Mitchell and Thomas, *Black Self-Esteem*, 52.

[115] Mitchell and Thomas, *Black Self-Esteem*, 53.

proclaimed, "Never mind where you *started*; just try to figure out where God wants you to end up."[116] He told a story about Gardner C. Taylor, whose friend was born a "manger child" and who grew up to be chief of surgical staff at a renowned hospital. Mitchell assured, "Mangers and cotton patch cabins are no obstacle to God's amazing, gracious distribution of intellectual gifts."[117]

In the final move, Mitchell faced his auditors. He challenged them to consider the benefits of their low social position. Rather than allowing the bottom to claim a negative identity, he urged his listeners to celebrate their "Bethlehem" for its refining work in their lives. From there Mitchell moved to a Christo-centric celebratory conclusion. He quoted the Christ Hymn of Philippians 2:1-11, acclaiming Jesus whose descent into exaltation removed the embarrassment of Bethlehem's manger. Shouts of gratitude and praised concluded the message.[118]

Mitchell's sermon sought to seep into the auditor's "transconsciousness" through the imagery of a no vacant hotel, a baby with plain diapers and mother's milk, stories of former slaves, and the witness of present-day achievers. He wanted to reach more than the rational minds of listeners. He wanted to get to their "gut." Mitchell said, "The art of Black preaching is not less than logical; it is logical on *more levels* or wave lengths, addressing both the intellect and the feelings/emotions . . . called unconscious by some, but more accurately the intuitions and feelings and sensitivities."[119]

Bond observed a connection between Mitchell's "transconsciousness" and Jonathan Edwards's "religious affections." Edwards wrote that the "affections that are truly spiritual and gracious, do arise from those influences and operations on the heart,

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[116] Mitchell and Thomas, *Black Self-Esteem*, 54.

[117] Mitchell and Thomas, *Black Self-Esteem*, 54.

[118] Mitchell and Thomas, *Black Self-Esteem*, 56.

[119] Mitchell, *Recovery of Preaching*, 32.

which are spiritual, supernatural and divine."[120] In describing "affections," Edwards employed words such as "soul," "heart," "and "inclinations."[121] He admitted the inadequacy of human language in defining "religious affections." He spoke about the experience of affections with a grammar of spirituality. Mitchell, too, conceded to the mysterious and imperfectly named "transconscious" part of a person. Both Mitchell and Edwards understood that because auditors live out of their "affections" or "transconsciousness," behavior transformation in Christ required preaching that reached into those enigmatic places of the soul.[122]

Mitchell believed that a particular type of preaching which accessed "transconsciousness" is narrative. In his thinking, narrative held transformational power over the congregation because of how they would identify with key characters in the story. In his sermon over Luke's parable of the prodigal son, Mitchell saw possibilities for messages which highlighted either the younger brother's repentance or the loving father's forgiveness.[123] He urged preachers to consider eyewitness account, dramatic monologue, or a contemporary retelling of the parable to engage listeners.[124] Skilled storytelling reflected the folk preaching of early Black Christianity in America and preserved a key cultural marker from ancestral communities in West Africa. Skilled

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[120] Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections*. (1746; repr., Mineola, New York: Dover Press, n.d.), 133.

[121] Edwards, *The Religious Affections*, 12-13.

[122] Bond, *Contemporary African American Preaching*, 104. Nothing in Mitchell's writings refer to Edwards. Bond's point is locating Mitchell's meaning of "transconsciousness."

[123] It would be curious to know why Mitchell omitted a message detailing the elder brother's legalistic spirit. It seems that Luke's point in the three "lost" parables addressed the Pharisees who complained about Jesus's association with "sinners."

[124] Henry H. Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 46. Creative ideas included the father's monologue as he waited for his son, the son's personal testimony of his experience in the far country. In one version, Mitchell noted that the son went off to Wall Street. "He blew his bundle on public relations, after which his friends and potential mentors prompty abandoned him" (46). In another iteration, the son's poverty was described as possessing a bottle of water with a sleeve of soda crackers (46).

storytelling included the preacher's ability to role-play multiple parts throughout the message so that the audience participated "vicariously" in the preaching event.

In Mitchell's sermon on 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "In everything give thanks," he dialogued with Paul over the phrase "In everything." Mitchell reenacted a conversation about situations that seemed futile to give thanks. He asked, "Brother Paul, do you really mean to say *every*?" Paul answered, "Yes! *Every* thing!"[125] As the sermon advanced, Mitchell proposed various episodes in Paul's life to test his gratitude. "Do you mean before Agrippa?" What about in the Philippian jail? In everything?" Paul responded, "Yes! In everything!" The sermon transported listeners to the Christians in Rome, to whom Paul wrote Romans 8:28. Paul professed thanksgiving *in*, not *for*, everything because he believed God powerfully worked *for* the good *in* everything. God's power in the gospel reached Rome via the network of Roman highways: "The empire's military budget is God's missionary budget." Mitchell concluded with a personal story in which he celebrated God's provision, thankful to him in everything.[126]

Engaging Celebration

The climactic component of Mitchell's homiletic concerns the employment of celebration in the sermon. In celebration, the sermon crests to dialogic praise between the preacher and the congregation. The preacher slowly builds, then bursts into a conversation of explosive exultation before an abrupt conclusion. For example, in his sermon, "Am I Ugly? Am I Pretty?" Mitchell's text was Psalm 139:14, consisting of three moves: (1) David's sense of awe at God's detailed knowledge of his life; (2) God's detailed knowledge as a way of overcoming "self-rejection," and (3) celebration over

[125] Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience*, 55.

[126] Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience*, 55-60.

Christ's incarnation and identification in becoming like humanity.[127] Mitchell finished with an ecstatic celebration of gratitude:

> Thank you Lord, my bed was not my coolin' boa'd, and my civer was not my windin' sheet. Thank you Lord that you woke me up this morning, and I was clothed in my right mind. Thank you Lord; I have the use my limbs. . . . Praise the Lord! Yes, I will praise you, O God, for I am awesomely and wonderfully put together; the way you made us is just pain marvelous, and my soul knows that real well.[128]

Mitchell's sermons consistently employed celebration as the final move. For instance, on Labor Day, the message closes with a "celebration of the joy and satisfaction of manual labor, which is treated almost as a sacrament."[129] On a church anniversary, the message "celebrates the worldwide Christian Church; nothing has prevailed against her."[130] For a sermon on Matthew 5:13, "salt of the earth," Mitchell peaks in celebrating Jesus Christ who gave himself completely in his death, burial, and resurrection.[131]

For Mitchell, celebration is the *sine qua non* of Black preaching. Centuries as an oppressed, enslaved people group are eclipsed by enraptured joy in God. The preacher and congregation symbiotically, antiphonally shout back and forth to one another. For instance, the preacher calls out: "The Lord is my light and my salvation!" The congregation responds: "What can man do to me?" Mitchell insisted, "Preaching *without* celebration is a de facto denial of the good news, in *any* culture."[132]

Mitchell proposed five functions of celebration.[133] First, celebration fosters remembrance of scriptural instruction; "that which is joyfully celebrated is well nigh

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[127] Mitchell, *Word for All Seasons*, 32.

[128] Mitchell, *Word for All Seasons*, 40.

[129] Mitchell, *Word for All Seasons*, 119.

[130] Mitchell, *Word for All Seasons*, 22.

[131] Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*, 79.

[132] Mitchell, *Recovery of Preaching*, 54.

[133] Mitchell, *Recovery of Preaching*, 54-8.

unforgettable."[134] Second, celebration affirms the personhood and self-expression of individuals whom the prevailing culture would marginalize. In celebration, worshippers are encouraged: "You have a voice! You matter! No matter what the dominant culture says! We know what God says!" Third, celebration fosters solidarity within the community as well. Mitchell wrote, "It binds together the host of those who affirm the goodness of God, who are affirmed in his praise, and who joyously affirm others as recipients of that same goodness."[135] The result, Mitchell notes, is emotional warmth and communal belonging, even among participants from diverse economic and educational situations. Fourth, celebration creates a harbor of sanctuary from a sea of racial oppression. For Mitchell, the Black church is the one place that is Black owned and Black operated, free of White discrimination. The church is where struggling people can jointly celebrate even in their grinding existence. Fifth, celebration is the natural climax to hearing biblical exposition and interpretation. Thus, celebration must occur at the conclusion of the message. The mind has been informed, the heart has been touched, now the body must respond! Black preaching reaches out to the totality of human life-body, mind, soul, and spirit.

Mitchell admitted that celebration is intentionally *emotional*. Appealing to feelings is part of holistic preaching, provided responsible exposition has occurred. Because the gospel is "good news," celebration should be *emotionally positive*. The congregation should be admonished when necessary; but celebration is a time for corporate encouragement. That said, Mitchell rejected celebration as a tool of manipulative *emotionalism*. He called out the "sin of irreverent celebration"; that is, shoddy exegesis in the sermon body for the purpose of "saving the gravy" for

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[134] Mitchell, *Recovery of Preaching*, 55.

[135] Mitchell, *Recovery of Preaching*, 57.

celebration.[136] He wrote, "[Irreverent celebration] is the sin of pasting on the sermon a climax known to be moving, regardless of obvious disconnection with the text."[137] Mitchell believed that celebration's power stemmed from the text. Celebration made the meaning of the text unforgettable in life of the hearer. Then, having exhausted themselves at the height of celebration, the preacher sits. After the sermon's climax, all else is anti-climactic. The preacher is done; the congregation must depart. This dynamic of "timed ascent" necessitates only one celebratory episode per sermon; more than one would dilute the effect of corporate revel. Mitchell stated, "There should be only one peak experience, and it should be in the concluding celebration. More than one peak renders the second peak anticlimactic."[138] Mitchell believed that life-changing persuasion occurred at the conclusion of a message as both preacher and congregation *exult* over a text which has *informed* them.[139]

To summarize, Mitchell taught a fourfold homiletic of Black preaching. The preacher *enters the culture* of the hearer through the *engagement of its vernacular*. In

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[136] Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*, 36.

[137] Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*, 36.

[138] Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*, 37.

[139] Mitchell argues that no new information should be given in the concluding celebration. "Climax is the time to summarize, reinforce, and celebrate previous illumination." Mitchell, *Recovery of Preaching*, 64. As a complement to Mitchell, see Frank A. Thomas, *They Like to Never Quit Praisin' God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching*, rev. ed. (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2013). Thomas analyzes celebration in Black Sacred Rhetoric, discussing the historical Black sermon as a performative, oral event in kinship community. He describes celebration as "ecstatic reinforcement" of the text's truth. Note the architecture design of this concept on page 112. He concludes with five sample sermons.

For another perspective on celebratory conclusion, see Cleophus J. LaRue, *Rethinking Celebration: From Rhetoric to Praise in African American Preaching* (Louisville: Westminister John Knox Press, 2016). LaRue questions the frequent emphasis of the African American heritage of celebratory sermon endings. He holds that preachers ought to invest more time in developing content in sermon body than the predictable "call and response" and "whoop." He critiques Henry Mitchell and Frank Thomas who advocate spirited sermon conclusions. He offers alternative "expressions" and "forms" of praise: "Word-centered, sacramental, spontaneous, silent, and doxological." For Bailey, employing a traditional, celebratory conclusion (or not) depended on discerning the Holy Spirit in the preaching moment. At times, his conclusion was a celebratory whoop; at other times the sermon would end in silence. He wrote, "I watch my people and listen for the Spirit, even as I am speaking." See E. K. Bailey, "Smoothing Out the Landing: A Great Sermon Not Only Starts Well, It Ends Well," *Leadership* 18, no. 4 (1997): 39-40.

sharing a common language, the preacher employs narrative to *affect the listeners' transconsciousness*. The trajectory of the sermon rises to lofty heights in *ecstatic gospel celebration*. At the peak of pulpit joy, the preacher stops. The sermon concludes. Church is dismissed.

Mitchell's Influence on Bailey

Mitchell and Bailey first met during Bailey's freshman year at Bishop College, 1965. Both Mitchell and William J. Shaw were guest preachers at the college's spiritual emphasis week. Mitchell was the pastor of one of Bailey's classmates, David Hurst. Bailey recalled Hurst's enthusiasm over Mitchell's invitation to Bishop; Hurst asked Bailey to attend a dorm room gathering with others to meet Mitchell. Bailey wrote:

> From that meeting, developed a growing relationship, which has passed through several stages. The relationship began as an acquaintance between a pastor and a young fledgling theology student. It grew into a scholar-mentor relationship as I gained an appreciation for his contribution to the enterprise of preaching through his book, *Black Preaching*.[140]

A decade later, Mitchell's impact on Bailey took on the dynamics of "professor to pastor."[141] Bailey invited Mitchell to preach Concord's revival services during Black History Month (February) on the theme, "The Spiritual Significance of Black Self-Esteem."[142] Mitchell recollected an increasing feeling of the Holy Spirit's working among the congregation as a result of his revival ministry to them. He noted, "The testimonies that came afterward alerted them to just how relevant this ministry was. It

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[140] E. K. Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition: A Final Document Submitted to the Doctor of Ministry Program Committee of United Theological Seminary in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Ministry" (DMin diss., United Theological Seminary, 1991), 86.

[141] Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition," 86.

[142] Henry H. Mitchell and Emil Thomas, *Preaching for Black Self-Esteem* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 9. Mitchell attributes the book's genesis from preaching and lecturing at Concord in the late 1970s. See also Alcántara, *Let the Legends Preach*, 37.

was, in fact, long overdue."[143] Mitchell's ministry to Bailey's predominantly African-American congregation encouraged them to celebrate *both* their standing as image-bearers of God *and* their spiritual adoption in Christ. His lectures and sermons empowered them to view their *Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship* as a cause for joy by creation and redemption in Christ.[144] Mitchell's influence on Bailey led to the linkage of the "dream of academic excellence" and the "dream of ministry in the church."[145] Having entered Bailey's space, Mitchell connected congregational ministry with the academy.

In March 1989, Bailey enrolled at United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, for doctoral studies under Mitchell. Bailey's academics under Mitchell shaped his own understanding of church growth and church leadership in the African American context. Bailey had recognized the importance of overcoming "academic poverty" enacted on the African American people through their exclusion from the academy. He wrote, "It's necessary to do research and strive to be accurate in your interpretation of Scripture. We need access to the resources that are available so we can study the great pulpiteers of history."[146] His 1991 Doctor of Ministry dissertation studied pastoral leadership for church growth in the Black church. Bailey's project concerned selective application of Donald McGavaran's church growth principles in Bailey's own context. *Having first enrolled at United to further study Black preaching, Mitchell convinced Bailey to consider the pulpit as part of a broader feature of pastoral leadership*. Bailey wrote: "After writing the self-description, contextual statement, and theological

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[143] Mitchell and Thomas, *Preaching for Black Self-Esteem*, 9.

[144] This notion explains why celebration is dominant in Mitchell's hermeneutic. Mitchell and Thomas, *Preaching for Black Self-Esteem*, 27. Mitchell wrote, "Ethnic self-esteem is the enduring evaluation that one makes about the significance of one's race, culture, and history as attributes of oneself." His thesis argued for a positive self-esteem among African-Americans grounded in self-knowledge and God's gracious knowledge of them. He said, "This book is a ministry that will seek to 'unlearn' the racist messages that are communicated to Black people in this society, while enhancing the ethnic self-esteem of African-Americans, in the pursuit of a holy and holistic self-love" (29).

[145] Alcántara, *Let the Legends Preach*, 37.

[146] Bailey and Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White*, 55.

framework, I realized that effective preaching for me was part and parcel of a larger package, which was a comprehensive approach to church growth."[147] Through dialogue with Mitchell and other United faculty, Bailey came to realize that his view of church growth had been attached to Fuller Institute's iteration "which was designed theologically, anthropologically, sociologically, and scientifically for White middle class America."[148]

At that point, Bailey determined to (1) familiarize himself with Black church history in America, (2) research growth "principles and precepts" unique to the Black church in America, and (3) host a reproducible practicum for other predominantly Black congregations.[149] Bailey desired a learning space "designed to bring together a Biblical [sic] theocentricity, a Christocentricity, and an Afrocentric ecclesiology in a concentric cycle of concern."[150] His project comprised historical and theological foundations, then a write up of his conference, "Institute of Church Growth."

After a brisk, historical survey of the Black church in America, Bailey conducted a biblical-theological-cultural sifting of Donald McGavran's perspectives on church growth. Basically, Bailey appreciated McGavran's desire for dynamic, evangelistic congregations, yet perceived that the "Church Growth Movement" in America had overlooked the Black church. Bailey wrote to offer a corrective. He understood "church growth" as the process of disciple-making based on the Great Commission, facilitated by contemporary methodology of social and behavioral sciences. He noted "sociological homogeneity" as "appealing" but dangerous to the biblical

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[147] Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition," 87.

[148] Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition," 87.

[149] Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition," 87.

[150] Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition," 87.

expression of the church.[151] To Bailey, homogeneity in both the White and Black church was due to White racism: "Racism had long since undermined the notion that there could be a unified church made up of all races in America."[152] Citing the parable of the net in Matthew 13:47-50, Bailey cautioned:

> The inclusiveness of this text appears to stand in contradiction to the sociological approach to homogeneity, which usually characterizes the White Church. The homogeneous concept is an attempt to be Christian while catering to the natural proclivity of the flesh, which does not want to cross racial, linguistic, or class barriers.[153]

That said, Bailey conceded, "The only acceptable approach to sociological homogeneity is that it be designed to meet people where they are then move them to theological homogeneity."[154] Reading Bailey, one can sense his frustration with (1) White, sociological homogeneity (which constrains the multiethnic expression of Christ's church); (2) Black Liberation theology, which takes "blackness to an extreme (If Black is the sole criterion for right and wrong, that characteristic could be manipulated.)"[155]; and (3) rigid, ecclesiastical traditionalism among Black conservatives (his experience prior to founding Concord). Bailey's answer was to shepherd a congregation drawing from the thought leadership of W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. From Du Bois, Bailey envisioned a church as the hub of social, financial, mercantile, and medical activity serving the Black community. From Washington, Bailey imagined church-initiated learning institutions, schools, and colleges, all advancing education among African Americans. He hosted the conference as a means to realize and replicate his vision of ecclesial kinship within the African American context. He wrote:

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[151] Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition," 30.

[152] Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition," 19.

[153] Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition," 33.

[154] Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition," 30.

[155] Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition," 33.

> These institutions should be developed around the theology of freedom, including educational and economic freedom. The theology of freedom is more than just rhetoric, such as liberation theology. It is an analysis of the social conditions in which we find ourselves and a call to develop programs and organize people to affect radical change within the system. We must build our own schools; create our own co-op markets; establish our own credit unions, savings and loans, and banks; develop our own businesses and patronize them. By removing these barriers, we will be confronting things that prohibit our people from responding to God.[156]

Bailey passionately believed the ecclesial community to be the only means by which the problems of a marginalized people group could be solved. He wrote, "The only hope for these asphalt metropolises to experience stabilization is for the church to permeate society with 'new ethnocentric light from old Christoecclesiastical lamps.'"[157] Bailey concluded that effective church growth requires pastoral leadership doing more than communicating religious instruction on Sunday:

> Church growth at its best in the African American tradition will take place when there is an application of *Bibliocentric directives*, which are correlated with *Afrocentric sensitivity* and are *applied holistically* to a secularized society and a humanistic humanity. This is the only kind of ministry that will save a dechristianized world.[158]

The remainder of Bailey's project debriefed the conference and included summaries of four plenary sessions and twenty-seven workshops. Regarding the plenary sessions, Bailey presented lectures on leadership in a pastoral context. Regarding the workshops, Bailey's conference leadership team organized sessions based on current issues such as congregational assimilation of newcomers, pornography in the Black community, prison ministry, ministry to the AIDS community, employment training, and church engagement with social justice. These workshop topics emerged out of Bailey's understanding of the church's role in providing a "social environment wherein the members and other human beings will be able to realize the potential for which God

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[156] Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition," 34.

[157] Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition," 34-35.

[158] Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition," 35, (italics added).

intends for His children."[159] Bailey lamented the secular world's "social structures" which attempted to "dehumanize, degrade, and otherwise hamper the realization of the abundant life that Christ wants for people to experience."[160] Bailey charged the church to advocate for "social justice" and become an "instrument for change that will help redeem the structures of society and join Christ in ministry within the world."[161] His model, envisioned from his doctoral papers and implemented at Concord, reflected Du Bois's observation of the Black church as the "fullest, broadest expression of organized Negro life."[162]

Bailey's project, a captain's log of his church growth conference, was a precursor to the "International Conference on Expository Preaching," launched in 1996 and remains to this day named, "E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference." In both classroom and field work, Bailey acknowledged Mitchell's influence on his own ministry and academic journey: "Little did I know that cold night in 1965 that I was meeting the man that God would use to open the door and help to develop the future focus of my synergy."[163] Mitchell influenced Bailey by joining scholastic disciplines to congregational dynamics in ways that honored the religious heritage of African-Americans. He was formative in Bailey's understanding of preaching, church growth, and leadership in the ecclesial, Black context.

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[159] Bailey, "A Statement of Focus" (seminar paper at United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, January 22, 1990), 8.

[160] Bailey, "A Statement of Focus," 8.

[161] Bailey, "A Statement of Focus," 8.

[162] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Problem of Amusement," 1897 essay in *Du Bois on Religion*, ed. Phil Zuckerman (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000), 21.

[163] Bailey, "Church Growth in the African American Tradition," 86.

Summary

This chapter has outlined Bailey's two hermeneutical influencers, A. Louis Patterson and Henry H. Mitchell. Through Patterson's one-on-one mentoring, Bailey developed from an effective, thematic preacher into a skilled, biblical expositor. Patterson's *Bibliocentric Christoformity* anchored Bailey in a hermeneutic concerned with authorial intent. Mitchell emerged as a notable academic and ecclesial influence on Bailey's pulpit. Through Mitchell's scholarship on the Black Church, its history, heritage, and vernacular as an oppressed people group in America, Bailey attended to the distinct social location of Concord Church, his predominantly African American congregation. Together, Patterson and Mitchell shaped Bailey's twofold hermeneutic for preaching: (1) *Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship*, and (2) *Bibliocentric Christoformity*. A description of this hermeneutic is the subject of chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

E. K. BAILEY'S TWOFOLD HERMENEUTIC

After a season of mentoring in the expository method, A. Louis Patterson observed E. K. Bailey's progress and remarked, "Once E. K. Bailey learned expository preaching, he never turned back."[1] Bailey viewed biblical exposition as the discovery of a pericope's "precise meaning."[2] This conviction grounded proper, biblical exegesis on a grammatical-historical, author-centered hermeneutic. At the same time, Bailey was concerned that the Bible be communicated in a way that demonstrated applicability to his contemporary hearers. Bailey never saw expository preaching as didactically rendered events from ancient history. Bailey wrote:

> Dr. Henry Mitchell says that the preacher's task is to provide a total experience of the gospel. The experience-centered gospel stimulates the growth of gut-level trust in God by providing involvement and encounters where faith had and has been caught and taught. Black preachers want to get into the text and feel it, touch it, taste it, smell it, rub shoulders with it, and then allow the people to experience the truth of the text.[3]

From Mitchell's influence, Bailey appreciated the heritage and communal experiences in the Black Church. From Patterson's influence, Bailey valued the claims of an author-centered, grammatical-historical interpretation of the text. Together, they formed Bailey's twofold hermeneutic for preaching: *Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship* and *Bibliocentric Christoformity*. Bailey's hermeneutic gave attention to the text's precise,

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[1] Cokiesha Bailey-Robinson, "E. K. Bailey's Influence on Expository Preaching" (lecture on CD-ROM presented at the 2017 How Shall They Hear? Conference, Morristown, NJ: Mt. Calvary Baptist Church).

[2] E. K. Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, n.d. repr. (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2013), 2.

[3] E. K. Bailey and Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White: What We can Learn from Each Other* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 110.

contextual meaning before it was preached in a familial, ecclesial, and culturally relevant manner. It has answered Myers's concern about the relevancy of historical-criticism to the location of marginalized people. This chapter will specify each component of Bailey's twofold lens.

Bailey's Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship

Bailey preached as a member of an ethnic and spiritual community. He shared a common historical heritage and a mutual faith situation. He proclaimed the Word as an African American to a predominantly African American church and as a pastor affectionate for the congregation he planted. He appreciated the unique vernacular of Black culture along with the sermonic features of stylized Black Sacred Rhetoric. He perceived the congregation as a "surrogate kinship group" in Christ and beckoned a depth of relational commitment which Jesus demanded.[4] Through this lens he challenged the congregation toward ecclesial loyalty in Christ's family beyond their biological family. In Bailey's preaching, *Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship* manifested itself by way of *cultural relevance*, *familial affinity*, and *ecclesial community*.

Cultural Relevance

Alvin Edwards, a mentee, recalled Bailey's words: "You have to preach with a purpose. You have to have a hand on the pulse of the people. You have to know their needs. They need to hear and know that you have their interest. In the vernacular of the church, 'You feel me.' One way to know what the flock needs is by being amongst them

[4] Joseph H. Hellerman, *The Ancient Church as Family* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 4. Hellerman defined "surrogate kinship group" as "a social group whose members are related to one another neither by birth nor by marriage, but who nevertheless (a) employ kinship terminology to describe group relationships and (b) expected family like behavior to characterize interactions among the group" (4).

and talking to them."[5] In his interactions with the members at Concord Church, Bailey sympathized as he acknowledged and addressed their struggles.

For example, he recognized every day struggles of married life in his sermon "Diffusing Anger in Marriage."[6] Bailey preached from Proverbs 11:29, "The fool who provokes his family to anger and resentment will finally have nothing worthwhile left." He asserted that conflict in marriage is inevitable, causing either a "break down or break through" between husbands and wives.[7] His thesis statement was that anger in marriage is due to anger within oneself and the way through is by (1) "Recognition," (2) "Reaction," and (3) "Resolution."[8] Regarding recognition, Bailey urged hearers to evade the denial of anger and admit its presence. He stated that a "suppression of anger" would lead to an "explosion of anger."[9] Regarding reaction, Bailey challenged the church to patient self-reflection concerning anger's source. He rejected the notion that people were born with an angry temperament. He argued that anger is learned and left unattended could become an ulcer-producing grudge. Regarding resolution, Bailey offered six "C's" of conflict resolution: "Never compare your wife with her mother. Never condemn (that is, fault-finding). Never command (that is, husbands being authoritarian to their wives). Never challenge (that is, being physically abusive or withholding money or sex). Never contradict (that is, interrupting one's spouse). Never confuse (that is, changing the subject to avoid losing an argument)."[10]

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[5] Alvin Edwards, phone interview with author, January 30, 2020.

[6] E. K. Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, vol. 1, ed. H. B. Charles, Jr. (Jacksonville, FL: Shiloh Church, 2015), 46.

[7] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 46.

[8] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 46.

[9] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 46.

[10] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 54-55.

Bailey's message, proclaimed from the life of a pastor and brother in Christ, offered practical application to the congregation's real world experience and stemmed from a hermeneutic of cultural relevance. Bailey transparently shared his own family-of-origin struggles as well as his personal battles with anger in conflict. He gave straightforward counsel ("Do this, not that") as a spiritual shepherd to the flock about an issue meaningful to them. This aspect in no way moralized the gospel. Rather, it showed the congregation what the gospel looked like when practiced daily. Bailey contended, "Preaching divorced from experience is just academic jargon. It's abstract, cognitive idealism with no power."[11]

In another example, Bailey showed sensitivity to the concerns of church members who as executives in large, corporate businesses suffered from racism in professional spaces. Bailey learned that despite their academic and professional credentials, these equally qualified church members faced prejudice. Even those members who were not discriminated against had to contend with the isolation of being sole minorities in the C-Suite. The lack of comradeship at work caused them to hasten their way to the church for the "safe haven" of community.[12] While acknowledging their struggle, Bailey was nonetheless intentional about opening the church to more ethnicities beyond the African American people group. He urged a spirit of gracious hospitality in welcoming guests to the church from all ethnicities, even the historically oppressor ethnicity. His response to the culturally relevant issue of being discriminated against was proactive hospitality. He gently insisted "that we had to model what the Bible says the church should look like."[13] As a component of *Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship*, cultural relevance was an outcome of Bailey's effort to *apply* the Scripture to the church's

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[11] Bailey and Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White*, 67.

[12] Bailey and Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White*, 12.

[13] Bailey and Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White*, 12.

specific situation. Bailey wrote: “If you're not addressing things that have to do with where I live, where I sleep, what I eat, what I'm dressed up in, and how I can get a job, then it's an irrelevant sermon. This includes matters related to race and racism.”[14]

Familial Affinity

This component consisted of a *shared heritage* as an ethnic people group subject to a *shared spiritual identity* in the family of God. That is, Bailey related to the mostly African American congregation as an African American and he preached to promote the believers’ primary identity as sonship in Christ. Regarding shared heritage, Bailey affirmed his identity as an African American. He agreed with the dual nature of Black life in America. He cited W. E. B. Du Bois, who saw the African American as living in two worlds. Bailey said, “It’s important to me to understand how to live in two worlds simultaneously. I must live in the micro black world, and I also must live in the macro white world.”[15]

Bailey’s sermon, “The Seeds of a Mother’s Faith,” exemplified biblical exposition with shared affinity among his own ethnic people group. The sermon, taken from 2 Timothy 1:1-5, began with memories associated with the word “mother.” Bailey identified Lois and Eunice with the capability every mother has to produce a “forest of potential” sprouting from their “seeds of faith.”[16] Bailey explicated the pericope in five movements: (1) the seeds of a “tender heart,” (2) the seeds of a “genuine faith,” (3) the seeds of “self-confidence,” (4) the seeds of an “unselfish love,” and (5) the seeds of “self-

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[14] Bailey and Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White*, 39.

[15] Bailey and Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White*, 23. See W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co., 1903). Du Bois’s essays deliberated the relationship between African Americans within the broader, white American culture. Dubois observed the “two-ness” of the African American: “An American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (3). Du Bois depicted this struggle in history, in sociology, and in the Black struggle for education and personal leadership. He wrote to reveal and undo the psychological, emotional, and spiritual bondage from slavery and racism.

[16] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 99.

control."[17] Bailey cycled between the text and the listeners. He gave the meaning, then applied its signficance.

In three of the five moves, Bailey specifically related the meaning of the text to matters unique to the congregation as African-Americans. First, Bailey cited Martin Luther King, Jr., in urging the congregation toward counter-cultural, tender-hearted love. Bailey quoted King's book, *Strength to Love*, in encouraging Concord to "synthesize" tough-minded thinking with tender-hearted compassion.[18] Second, Bailey urged mothers directly (and fathers indirectly) to set the example for their children in displaying genuine faith. He offered personal illustrations of his own upbringing in the dominant white culture, stating that his parents' example preserved his own life. Third, Bailey connected the text's usage of the word "self-control" with the auditors' life situation, specificallly in response to the Los Angeles riots in response to the Rodney King verdict: "There is no question that we abhor the verdict of the jury in California, but we also ought to abhor the violence that would kill innocent people and destroy property and businesses that people have worked a lifetime to develop."[19] While Bailey acknowledged racism's devastation on African Americans, he implored the church against self-defeating, personal behavior:

> We cannot blame everything that's happening in our community on another race. Oh, yeah, they have their part and their responsibility, but not all of it. They're not responsible for the high statistic of pregnancy outside of marriage. Yes, they bring the drugs into the nation, but they don't make us shoot it in our arms. We've lost what our forefathers had, and that was the discipline to dream. We've stopped dreaming. We've looked at the circumstances and decided to give up. We've got to continue to dream and have a sense of self-control and discipline.[20]

Regarding shared identity, Bailey addressed the church as a family (note the first person plural "we") whose allegiance to one another in Christ supplanted allegiance

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[17] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 99-104.

[18] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 100.

[19] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 103.

[20] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 103.

to their ethnic group. Bailey wanted the congregation to imitate Christ. He appealed as an surrogate sibling in Christ, aware of the needs of his spiritual family. His conversational tone implied that while he was *among* the church family, he posssessed an authoritative message *for* the church family. Bailey's sermons were not lecture-hall presentations to an unknown audience. He did not strive to entertain or offer inspirational speeches to a crowd of self-help seekers. He understood their life stories and challenged them to kingdom allegiance.

In another example of familial affinity, Bailey addressed conflict within the congregation. In his sermon, "Bearing with One Another" (Eph 4:2), he acknowledged a paradox in the family of God. On the one hand, people come to church wanting to find community and connection. On the other hand, he said, "The closer a church family gets to one another, the harder it is for them to get along. The reason why is because the church family becomes more aware of one another's weaknesses."[21] He showed how immature it was to make community with others contingent on identical preferences and tastes. Bailey's two major points were: (1) Bear with one another by means of patience; and (2) Bear with one another by means of forgiveness.[22] Bailey interpreted the Bible as an adopted son communicating to other adopted siblings in the Father's kingdom family.

Ecclesial Community

Bailey interpreted the Bible as a member of a spiritual body attached to other diverse members of the same body. Together, they constituted the presence of Christ on earth. More sermons appear from Ephesians 4 than any other chapter of Bailey's series through Ephesians. This fact demonstrated how Bailey paid attention to Concord's corporate concerns. For example, in his sermon "Our Sevenfold Oneness" (Eph 4:4-6),

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[21] E. K. Bailey, "Bearing with One Another," (sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, TX, September 10, 1995), MP3.

[22] Bailey, "Bearing with One Another."

Bailey stressed the congregation as the sacred space where Christian love is given and received. Bailey says, "We are an organized *community* with constant activity, continued growth and development. We are a *company* of believers who have found the one way of life. We are *union* of those who love for the benefit of those who suffer. We are a *center* of social worship."[23] Bailey's understanding of the Bible for preaching was never divorced from the local church.

Additionally, Bailey stressed that spiritual strength came in the context of an assembly in which each person served according to their giftedness. Eschewing the professionalization of the pastorate, Bailey pleaded with the church to maturation through "diversity in the midst of unity."[24] Bailey said, "I do not have the gifts of omniscience and omnipresence. I can't do everything. I can't make every meeting. My job is to feed the flock, to teach the Word of God. And as I teach the Word of God, discipline will grow, knowledge will grow, and love will grow. I know I have a role. And you have a role."[25] Bailey interpreted Ephesians with a view to more than the individual believer; he saw the church as a spiritual village whose members demonstrated solidarity in Christ by the way they treated one another.

Particular stylistic aspects of Bailey's preaching elevated the ecclesial unity and eschatological hope of the gathered people of God in the heritage of Black Sacred Rhetoric. To illustrate, in reviewing a hundred of his sermons from 1993-2003, approximately half of Bailey's messages concluded with stylized features of Black Sacred Rhetoric, "call and response" and "whooping." These features signified cohesion, conversation, affirmation, and celebration. In "whooping," Bailey's sermons crested to

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[23] E. K. Bailey, "Our Sevenfold Oneness" (sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, TX, September 17, 1995), MP3, (italics added).

[24] E. K. Bailey, "The Marks of a Growing Church (sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, TX, October 8, 1995), MP3.

[25] Bailey, "The Marks of a Growing Church."

dialogic praise between himself and the congregation. They slowly built, then bursted into a conversation of explosive exultation before an abrupt conclusion. The profound unity in that experience was as two people in dialogue: the preacher and the church. The church talked back to the preacher as one person. Regarding this exchange, Bailey noted, "The conversation builds a camraderie that is just incredible between the pulpit and the pew."[26]

More than the emotional hype of an excited preacher, Bailey's *expository whooping* recited the pericopal text and reiterated the sermon's doctrinal sense in an experiential, festive move. In antiphonal and lyrical dialogue with the congregation, the preacher pulled the church's not yet reality with the risen Christ into their present. The unified and gathered church encountered in the now, the yet to come fulfillment of promised redemption. The future thrill of the redeemed from every tongue, tribe, and nation (Rev 7:9-10) met the gathered church on earth. Bailey's expository whoop bridged the two realms in the assembled church.

To summarize, *Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship* acknowledged the unique heritage of the Black experience in America along with relational dynamics of kinship loyalty set within the spiritual assembly of Christ. For Bailey, this element served as a lens through which he interpreted Scripture.

Bailey's Bibliocentric Christoformity

Turning to *Bibliocentric Christoformity*, Bailey interpreted Scripture with sensitivity to the biblical author's intended meaning. He showed how the text elevated the person of Christ with the outcome of spiritual maturity in Christ. *Bibliocentric Christoformity* appeared in Bailey's pulpit as *Word-centered*, *Christ-oriented*, and *Christ-shaped*.

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[26] Bailey and Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White*, 113.

Word-centered

Regarding *Word-centered*, Bailey consistently referred to the text with phrases such as: "What Paul is saying here is," "Paul gives us," and "Paul talks about."[27] Bailey's hermeneutic prioritized authorial intent. Though this dissertation found no evidence of direct interaction with E. D. Hirsch, Jr., Bailey's sermons tracked Hirsch's contention that "meaning is that which is represented by the text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence."[28] Against a "text as open reality" description of reader-orientation, Bailey interpreted Scripture as an actual document addressed to an actual people by an actual author. He adopted the grammatical-historical lens in assuming that the biblical author's transmission willed to convey truth or correct error.[29] He aligned with Haddon Robinson's definition of expository preaching as a "historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context."[30] Bailey did not see such a critical approach to Scripture as Eurocentric as discussed by Myers; rather, he saw it as a common sense preunderstanding necessary in all meaningful communication. This preunderstanding was why Bailey urged biblical study in its original language. He

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[27] E. K. Bailey, "The Believers' Guarantee" (sermon preached at Concord Church, April 2, 1995), MP3.

[28] E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 8. Hirsch argues: "Is it proper to make textual meaning dependent on the reader's own cultural givens? It may be granted that these givens change in the course of time, but does this imply that textual meaning itself changes? As soon as the reader's outlook is permitted to determine what a text means, we have not simply a changing meaning but quite possibly as many meanings as readers" (213).

[29] Robert H. Stein, "The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. 3 (September 2001): 451-66. Stein contends that the "common sense approach" of author determination is assumed in every form of communication: "Communication between two people can only take place if both parties seek to understand what the other person means by their words. . . . What would you think of an executor of a will who began by saying, 'I am not interested in what the deceased meant by the words of this will? Here is the meaning I choose to give to this will.' For an executor to do so would, at least at the present time, be a criminal act" (455).

[30] Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 21. Note Robinson's adherence to author-centeredness: "In his study the expositor searches for the objective meaning of a passage through his understanding of the language, backgrounds, and setting of the text. . . . We try to pull up our chairs to where the biblical authors sat. We attempt to work our way back into the world of the Scriptures to understand the original message. As much as possible, expositors seek a firsthand acquaintance with biblical writers and their ideas in context" (23-24). In his *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, Bailey included Robinson's definition of expository preaching.

believed that the effort would clarify authorial meaning and engender a congregation affectionate for biblical truth. He stated:

> The more you preach the Bible, the more people will love the Bible. They anticipate how I will approach the text in my introduction. They will ask me, "How is that handled in the original lanuage?" It is only when you take people's attention and put it on the word of God that it lessens their energy to fight with you or against you. They begin to grow spiritually and, ultimately, they become concerned and motivated about doing ministry.[31]

Another element of Bailey's Word-centeredness was his belief in the supernatural power of the Bible to address concerns in the congregation unknown to the preacher. He reflected on the many times church members would leave the services commenting to him how the message specifically spoke to them. Questions such as, "How did you know I was struggling with this issue?" Or, "Have you been hiding in the back of my car overhearing my conversations?" Bailey wrote: "I have often wondered why members would flock to me after church with tears in their eyes saying, 'Pastor, that sermon had my name on it or that word was just for me.' I have learned that God took the words I preached and divinely met the needs of the people."[32] In Bailey's view, faithful exposition of Spirit-inspired, author-centered meaning yielded a "specific word, a confirming word, a comforting word, and a challenging word" to people beyond his scope.[33]

Still another feature of Bailey's commitment to Word-centeredness was his practice of visibly holding up the Bible before the congregation when preaching and quoting Scripture. Though Bailey preached without notes and recited verses from memory, he presented the optics of holding the Bible before the congregation to convey his confidence in its truth. Bailey wrote, "Even when you are quoting Scripture from

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[31] E. K. Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching* (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2013), 8.

[32] Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, 13.

[33] Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, 13.

memory, you ought to lift your Bible up high so that your people can see it!"[34] He revered the Christian Scriptures as God's Word. He wanted the Concord congregation to visually see that their pastor was under the authority of the Bible.

Christ-oriented

Bailey interpreted Scripture with a view to celebrating Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. His sermons were immersed in a baptistry of Christologically oriented content and delivery. Bailey contended for the exclusivity of salvation in the atonement of Christ. He stated:

> We live in a pluralistic world but Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes ot the Father but by me!" And you may say, "Preacher, that's the most narrow thing you can say!" But I say, "Do you understand that all truth is narrow? Your doctor is narrow. A pilot is narrow. A banker is narrow. When there is a specific problem, there must be specificity in the prescription."[35]

Also, Bailey affirmed the deity of Christ, proclaiming the Son's coexistence with the Father from all eternity.[36] Bailey announced Christ's substitutionary atonement by his death on the cross, concluding one sermon with, "He put Gentiles in one hand and Jews in another. He put together what had been separated. Thank God for the cross! We're reconciled, restored, and reinstated because of the cross!"[37] Bailey argued for the ongoing presence and influence of Christ to be existentially experienced within the lives of believers: "That Christ may dwell in you by faith."[38] Bailey held that Jesus of Nazareth

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[34] E. K. Bailey, "Why Expository Preaching?" (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1995), CD-ROM.

[35] E. K. Bailey, "Introduction to Ephesians," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas Texas, March 5, 1995 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1995), MP3.

[36] E. K. Bailey, "What's So Good About the Good News?" sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, March 12, 1995 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1995), MP3.

[37] E. K. Bailey, "The Formulation of a New Race," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, May 7, 1995 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1995), MP3.

[38] E. K. Bailey, "Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, July 23, 1995 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1995), MP3. Bailey exegeted the word *dwell*: "It means to settle in permanently. Paul prays that Christ is permanently present in the lives of his children. And you can tell whether a person has Christ in them. They talk like Jesus. They walk like Jesus."

is the eternal Son who exists glorified in the heavenly realm, who rules all of creation, and who awaits the appointed time when he will remake into the New Heavens and the New Earth. In one conclusion, Bailey exhausted himself on this point: "Paul runs on to the end of time and describes the fulfillment of God's dream. God's purpose is to present a people unto him and God will complete his plan when the church of Christ comes to its full fruition."[39] Whooping finished the message as further evidence of Christ-orientation.

Christ-shaped

Bailey interpreted Scripture with an attitude of activating biblical knowledge toward the imitation of Christ: *Christoformity*. Bailey preached so that Concord Church would resemble Christ in word and deed. He understood that formation to the likeness of Christ was contingent on walking in the path of suffering as Christ did. Bailey said, "I think preaching is more powerful when the preacher has experienced what he is preaching about."[40] To Bailey, Christoformity was the outcome of cruciformity, which did not exist apart from suffering.

This understanding evidenced itself in Bailey's message, "Overcoming Our Impossibilities," from Romans 4:18-25. Bailey began the message with various impossible situations where people find themselves. He moved to the different ways people try to navigate themselves out of these impossibilities. He walked the listener through three major movements in the text: (1) "The Promise of God in My Impossible Situation, (2) The Power of God over my Impossible Situation, and (3) The Purpose of God for my Impossible Situation."[41]

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[39] E. K. Bailey, "Doxology of Praise," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, August 13, 1995 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1995), MP3.

[40] Bailey and Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White*, 66.

[41] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 115-21.

Bailey preached this sermon while personally struggling with cancer. He recounted his ride home from MD Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, Texas, where he received an unfavorable prognosis. He related the weakness of heart he felt and the tear that fell from his eye. He reported the way Scripture bolstered his spirit with Jesus' promise to be everpresent. Bailey then reasoned from Romans 4:22 that just as Abraham neither wavered nor weakened, he was called to do the same. Bailey said that as God put Abraham through test after test to shape his faith, so it is with his own struggle with cancer. He asked, "Why did [Abraham] grow? He grew because God kept sending things in his life to exercise his faith." Then, Bailey confessed that his own faith was shaped into the likeness of Christ by the tests which God sent-tests for which Bailey expressed gratitude. Just as Abraham magnified God's glory as he grew strong in his faith, so too, in Bailey's own life, he gave gratitude to God for allowing faith-increasing tests.[42]

In another example, Bailey's sermon in Ephesians 5:25-33 exemplified this component as he challenged husbands to Christ-shaped behavior in relationship to their wives. Bailey's major points were: (1) Christ loved the church with a sacrficial love; (2) Christ loved the church with a purifying love; (3) Christ loved the church with a caring love; and (4) Christ loved the church with an unbreakable love. Bailey said that husbands look most like Christ when they love their wives like Christ: "As Christ's love releases the enabling power of the church, the husband's love causes the wife to be the best she can be."[43] Then, Bailey painted a picturesque scene:

> When the sun goes down, the sunflower bows its head; but when the sun comes up, peaks its head above the horizon, and its blazing light hits the sunflower. . . . Listen, when a woman is not loved by her husband but then he gets in Christ and Christ shines through him and he starts loving her like Christ loves the church; you can look at a woman and tell when she knows her husband loves her. Women can't hide

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[42] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 121.

[43] E. K. Bailey, "Love . . . God's Super Glue," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, August 18, 1996 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1996), MP3.

> it. They can't hide it when they are not being loved and when they are being loved! HEY!
>
> When you see a woman whose body posture is shriveled like a prune, you know something's bad at home; but when there's a shine on her face and a smile and a pep in her step, there's a godly man somewhere that's doing right by God's standard! HEY![44]

Bailey's definition of expository preaching illuminated how Christoformity occured: "in the power of the Holy Spirit."[45] In reflecting on Bailey's pulpit, Robert Smith, Jr., emphasized the pneumatology that animated Bailey's application in preaching. He said:

> If you have a filling of the Spirit, then you have to have a feeling; and that feeling does not need to be one that is heard in terms of volume; it just has to be expressed. Sometimes it's a tear; sometimes it's a whisper. By screaming, it doesn't make God more sovereign. And by whispering, it doesn't make God less. He's sovereign!
>
> Bailey found a way to let the text escape its time so that it becomes relevant. His [God's] revelation is true in the first century; his relevance speaks to the twenty-first century. He took the Word that was in its time and let it be the Word that is in our time so that the text could speak to us and not just be something in the Bible's day.[46]

For Bailey, Christoformity was the outcome of "intra-Trinitarian presence" involving the Holy Spirit.[47] The Spirit, who baptized the elect into the body of Christ, conforms them into the image of the Son; the very ones whom the Father foreknew and predestined (Rom 8:29). The fruit of Christoformity comes by way of the Trinitarian interplay-the Father commissioned the Son; the Son sent the Spirit; the Spirit sustains the elect. On Bailey's view of Spirit-empowered application, Smith noted that if pneumatology is omitted, Christoformity is "impossible."[48]

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[44] Bailey, "Love . . . God's Super Glue."

[45] Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, 2.

[46] Robert Smith, Jr., video teleconference interview with the author, March 7, 2022.

[47] Smith, Jr., interview.

[48] Smith, Jr., interview.

On a corporate level, Bailey saw the "whoop" and "call/response" as expressions of Holy Spirit. Bailey followed Mitchell in viewing the sermon as an encounter between the church and the Holy Spirit. The "whoop" and "call/response" were pneumatological in that "preaching [brought] an experiential encounter with the Word."[49] Through Bailey's expository preaching, *ecclesial community* was animated by God the Spirit. Bailey did not separate the Spirit's animation from biblical exposition.[50]

On an individual level, Bailey taught Concord that the Spirit's empowering enabled a clarified outlook and motivated will to obey God's Word. He said:

> How do we worship God in Spirit? Now that's really important because there are a whole lot of people who believe that when you get the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will cause you to lose your faculties, you know, that's why some people are a little afraid of this whole spiritual realm, because they believe, because they've been told and they see on TV that people who get the Spirit lose their faculties and start acting a little strange or crazy. They believe that in order to get the Spirit, you've got to roll around on the floor and foam at the mouth and be slain in the Spirit. I want you to know that has nothing to do with being yielded to the Holy Spirit. Amen. The Holy Spirit, when he comes into your life, is interested in captivating, activating and motivating you to do the will of God. He wants to captivate your mind, motivate your will and activate your behavior to do the will of God. That's what the Holy Spirit is about, right? So you don't have to be afraid of the Holy Spirit.[51]

Bibliocentric Christoformity then, was that portion of Bailey's hermeneutic which shaped the congregation into mature imitators of Christ (Eph 5:1-2). Along with *Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship, Bibliocentric Christoformity* clarified Bailey's vision for

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[49] Henry H. Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008). 11. Bailey's phrase, "total experience of the gospel," was in reference to Mitchell's book in which the sermon was rendered and experience was quickened by the Holy Spirit. See Bailey and Wiersbe, *Black and White*, 109-110.

[50] E. K. Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 4," sermon on John 4:1-26 preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, June 14, 1998 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1998), MP3. In this sermon Bailey impresses Concord to trust what the Bible says is true about God. He says that the church has three choices: "You can refuse to believe what is true about God; you can choose to believe about what is not true about God; or you can choose to believe what God says is true about God!" Moreover, he exclaimed, "That is why you have to be in a Bible teaching church where you can learn something about the Word of God so you can live the Christian life and truth and not in error. You know what? Preaching is so important. *Expository preaching is so important because preaching does two things: it explains the truth and exposes error. That's what I'm doing right now, I'm exposing error while I'm explaining the truth*" (italics added).

[51] Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 4."

preaching. Bailey interpreted the Bible as: (1) a Christian sibling to Christian siblings, (2) an African-American to African-Americans, acknowledging their unique heritage as an oppressed people, (3) a pastor to a congregation, (4) a scholar seeking authorial intent, (5) a kerygmatic herald of Christ, and (6) one who preached to imitate Christ, not just be acquainted with Christ.

Summary

This chapter has defined Bailey's twofold hermeneutic as *Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship* and *Bibliocentric Christoformity*. By *Afro-ethnic Ecclesial Kinship*, Bailey preached as a member of both an ethnic and spiritual community. He shared with Concord an historical heritage and a mutual faith situation. He heralded the Bible as an African American to a predominantly African American church and as a pastor affectionate for the congregation he planted. He appreciated the unique vernacular of Black culture along with the sermonic features of stylized Black Sacred Rhetoric. He appealed to the congregation as "surrogate siblings" and urged kinship commitment in Christ.[52] Bailey interpreted the Christian Scriptures for preaching as he challenged the congregation toward ecclesial loyalty in Christ beyond their biological family.

By *Bibliocentric Christoformity*, Bailey preached with an open Bible (both visually holding it and methodologically teaching from it) so that Christ's character may take shape in the lives of the congregation. He trusted the Bible as "ultimate, infallible, and inerrant."[53] He wrote, "Expository preaching will show you all of your indiscretions. Expository preaching will convict you of your lifestyle. Expository preaching will transform your mind and attitude."[54] Bailey believed that spiritual life-change occurred

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[52] Hellerman, *Ancient Church as Family*, 92.

[53] Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, 7.

[54] Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, 15.

when biblical truth was accurately taught, passionately proclaimed in the Spirit's power, and consistently exemplified by the pastor.

Bailey's twofold hermeneutic has successfully addressed concerns about the relevancy of historical-criticism to the location of marginalized people. Bailey's attention to the text's precise, contextual meaning was communicated in a familial, culturally relevant manner. Bailey's interpretive viewpoint manifested itself in analyzing his sermons from Paul's letter to the Ephesians as well as other notable series from his most experienced years in pulpit ministry.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYZING E. K. BAILEY'S PREACHING THROUGH HIS TWOFOLD HERMENEUTIC

Having established E. K. Bailey's key hermeneutical influencers (A. Louis Patterson, Jr., and Henry H. Mitchell) and outlined his twofold hermeneutical lens, this chapter will offer abstracts of sermons Bailey preached between 1993-2003. During January through March 1993, Bailey preached a seven-part series called, "Faith." During May through July 1993, Bailey preached through Revelation 1-3 in a seven-part series titled, "Seven Churches." During March 1995 through August 1996, Bailey preached thirty sermons through Paul's Letter to the Ephesians in a series by that name. During May 1998 through June 1998, Bailey preached a six part series titled, "Experiencing the Presence of God." And, during January 2001 through April 2001, Bailey preached a fourteen part series titled, "Breaking the Cycles" (of which ten have been digitalized for research). Due to Bailey's travel schedule and health challenges from cancer, the sermons were not all preached on consecutive Sundays.

These sermons were drawn from both Old and New Testaments as well as from diverse genres of Scripture: epistolary, narrative, poetry, and prophetic. By producing select abstracts of these sermons, this chapter will show that Bailey's mature pulpit at Concord was the product of his twofold hermeneutic. It will argue that Bailey's twofold hermeneutical lens, *Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship and Bibliocentric Christoformity*, governed his expository preaching during 1993-2003. The sampling of sermons will demonstrate how Bailey utilized these two keys as hermeneutical commitments for preaching. Following the presentation of these abstracts, this chapter will offer six findings which affirm his twofold hermeneutic.

Abstracts of Selected Sermons from Bailey's Pulpit (1993-2003)

The following abstracts document selected sermons during Bailey's final decade of pulpit ministry with the Concord Church. Through content analysis of these sermons, it will be shown that Bailey's twofold hermeneutic resided in his overall preaching ministry.

Preaching "Faith" Series (1993)

As the first sermon series of the new year, Bailey preached on the topic of faith with each message grounded in a biblical pericope. He explained the rationale behind the series with an exhortation for the congregation to exercise bold faith beyond Sunday morning worship toward a persecuting world. He wanted Concord to live by biblical beliefs, not earthly demands: "If you don't have an inward brace to outward forces you'll be hit by external circumstances."[1] He preached a message titled, "A Faith that Pleases God," from Daniel 3, the persecution of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. His major points were: (1) "A Faith that Pleases God is an Uncompromising Faith; (2) A Faith that Pleases God is an Uncommon Faith; and (3) A Faith that Pleases God is an Unconquered Faith."[2]

Regarding his first point, Bailey explained the context of Nebuchadnezzar's "grotesque" human-centered idol, then turned to human secularism in Concord's situation. He gave examples of compromise and warned of its dangers: "Some believe we ought to confront sin until *their* children commit the sin. Some believe you ought to be honest and have integrity until a little dishonesty will make them some money. Some believe that everyone ought to have moral standards until they are enticed. Are you

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[1] E. K. Bailey, "A Faith that Pleases God," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, January 3, 1993 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1993), MP3.

[2] Bailey, "A Faith that Pleases God."

walking with me?"[3] Bailey said the reason people compromise was that they do not consider the end result of either faithfulness or the lack thereof. He cited Moses' refusal to enjoy the brief pleasures of sin (Heb 11:25) and urged the church to consider the people (Heb 11) who did not compromise faith.

Regarding the second point, Bailey recounted the narrative in which the three Hebrew young men stood alone in refusing to bow before the idol. When confronted, they plainly explained to Nebuchadnezzar God's ability to rescue them. But even if God did not, these young men still refused to commit idolatry. Bailey recited from memory other Scriptures supporting the uncommon faith of deeply committed believers, Habakkuk 3:17-19 and Job 13:15. He acknowledged the difficulty of exercising faith in God's silence and exhorted the church with the words, "But if not," and "Yet I will."

Regarding the third point, Bailey moved to a Christ-centered explanation of the fourth person in the furnace. He said, "When they threw them in the fire, Jesus began to walk down the celestial staircase and got in that furnace with them! He got in the fire with them. Has he been in the fire with you?"[4] Bailey explained how there was freedom in the fire; purifying power in the fire; and an inextinguishable witness from the fires of suffering. He stated that after the fire, Nebuchadnezzar promoted the three men. Bailey contended that persecution's fire was meant to temper the church's faith and promote them before the Lord. The sermon concluded with victorious whooping before an elated congregation: "You can't serve God until you've been through the fire and if you're faithful, he'll preserve you and promote you!"[5]

In "Faith Seeing in the Dark," Bailey introduced Hebrews 11:8-12 by exploring ways people find themselves in darkness: "You can be in the dark historically,

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[3] Bailey, "A Faith that Pleases God." Bailey stated, "You can't run with the hare and hunt with the hound!"

[4] Bailey, "A Faith that Pleases God."

[5] Bailey, "A Faith that Pleases God."

socially, morally, educationally, and politically; but perhaps the one that is most threatening and brings about the greatest amount of anxiety is to be in the dark spiritually."[6] Bailey explained spiritual darkness as that which left a person clueless as to what he or she is to do next. His sermon had three major sections: (1) "Faith Sees Even When It Does Not Know Where; (2) Faith Sees Even When It Does Not Know When; and (3) Faith Sees Even When It Does Not Know How."[7] Regarding the first section, Bailey taught the importance of acting on the small part that is known instead of expecting God to give the entirety of his will. Bailey said that Abraham left Ur with the limited information even when it meant not knowing his final destination. Bailey illustrated by using the headlights of a vehicle at night, which illuminated a limited range. He gave a personal story about the death of his father and his own homelessness before entering Bishop College. He talked about being dismissed from the church he pastored prior to starting Concord. He said, "You may not have the house, the stereo, the clothes, or the money; but if you walk by faith, you're walking where God is leading. If he calls you, he will provide. If he calls you, he will enable you! HEY!"[8]

Regarding the second section, Bailey rehearsed the history of Abraham and Sarah, whose bodies were beyond childbearing years. Bailey urged the congregation toward unflinching trust in the timing of the Lord. Bailey said that "due season" is whenever God is ready. Bailey pleaded for perseverance and gave examples of enduring believers-Noah and William Carey. Bailey engaged the congregation in expository whooping as he told the story of Sarah's impatience and Abraham's passivity leading to Hagar's pregnancy. Bailey sang the prophet Isaiah, "My ways are not your ways! My thoughts are not your thoughts!" Regarding the third section, Bailey concluded the

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[6] E. K. Bailey, "Faith Seeing in the Dark: Heb 11:8-12," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, January 31, 1993 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1993), MP3.

[7] Bailey, "Faith Seeing in the Dark: Heb 11:8-12."

[8] Bailey, "Faith Seeing in the Dark: Heb 11:8-12."

message with more whooping. He sang redemption through Christ's crucifixion and implored the congregation to trust the God who specializes in doing the impossible.

In "A Sure-footed Faith for Slippery Times," Bailey exposited Psalm 73. His introduction invited the congregation to consider the psalmist's own testimony of near disaster. Bailey named it the "razor's edge of catastrophe."[9] He asked the congregation how they would feel if a physical examination revealed a previously undetected disease requiring immediate surgery. He pondered the level of doubt, anxiety, and fear which the congregation may feel. The message gave three major truths: (1) "Doubts Originate from the Observation of Life, (2) Perplexity Opens the Door to Temptation, and (3) Faith Comes Through the Revelation of God."[10]

Regarding the first truth, Bailey connected the reader with the text by posing contemporary questions related to the psalmist's doubts: Why does God's justice seem to ignore the ungodly? Why do the wicked prosper in health, work, and home? He cited biblical figures such as Gideon, Elijah, and Jeremiah, who also pondered these enigmas. Leaving the riddle open-ended, Bailey assured Concord that they are not alone in their bewilderment of God's ways.

Regarding the second truth, Bailey warned against expecting God to meet one's own notion of justice. Following his father's death, Bailey related how his underdeveloped faith and theology left him with a bitter spirit. He cautioned, "What are you bitter about? What makes you mad? Nothing makes you mad! People do what they do and you choose to be mad! Be careful! The devil will open the door of temptation. He will show you the beauty of the rose but cover up the thorn. He will show you the sin but

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[9] E. K. Bailey, "A Sure-footed Faith for Slippery Times: Ps 73," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, February 14, 1993 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1993), MP3.

[10] Bailey, "A Sure-footed Faith for Slippery Times."

hide the consequence."[11] Bailey resolved both the riddle and the temptation in the final move.

Regarding the third truth, Bailey resolved the message by pointing the congregation Godward. The sanctuary of the Lord reoriented the church's perspective away from a human point of view. Bailey invited the congregation into the Lord's reality that they be strengthened as the psalmist was (Ps 73:26). Bailey concluded the message with the whoop as a way of bringing them into God's presence. Bailey whooped sections of Psalm 73, taking the congregation to the mystery of the Christ's passion and the power of Christ's resurrection. At the height of the congregation's exuberance, Bailey sat. The sermon concluded.

In "The Rescue of a Staggering Faith," Bailey's message surveyed Habakkuk. After the Scripture reading (Hab 2:1-4), Bailey opened with an illustration about eighteen month old Jessica McClure, who fell into an abandoned well in 1987 and was trapped for fifty-eight hours before her rescue. Bailey says that while Jessica experienced the salvation of her body, Habakkuk experienced the salvation of his faith.[12] Identifying Habakkuk with Thomas Didymus of the Gospels, Bailey acknowledged the skepticism of believers when destabilized by suffering. Habakkuk's cry, "How long, O Lord?" has been shared by many of God's people. Bailey referenced Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, whose George Harris explained the countless evils against African Americans in slavery: "God let's them do it!"[13] Bailey's sermon had three major points: (1) "The Source of a Staggering Faith, (2) The Strategies of a Stable Faith, and (3) The Strength of a Steadfast Faith."[14]

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[11] Bailey, "A Sure-footed Faith for Slippery Times."

[12] E. K. Bailey, "The Rescue of a Staggering Faith: Hab 1:1-4," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, March 28, 1993 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1993), MP3.

[13] Bailey, "The Rescue of a Staggering Faith."

[14] Bailey, "The Rescue of a Staggering Faith."

Regarding the first point, Bailey teased out Habakkuk's cry, "How long, O Lord?" in various life situations: racism, violence, an unsaved spouse, a disease, an unmarried person who wants to be married, a tragedy. Bailey probed theodicy's mystery and its intellectual challenge to the congregation: "Is God all good and not all powerful or all powerful and not all good?"[15] He empathized with the congregation over their frustration at God's silence.

Regarding the second point, Bailey moved to Habakkuk 2, the watchtower pericope. He taught the congregation to suspend their judgment and patiently wait on the Lord as Habakkuk was told. Bailey illustrated with stories from Joseph in Genesis, Job, and Joshua's circuit around Jericho. Bailey urged a "pro-spective" view: "Look down the road and understand that God is in charge! He is in the temple! God is present. God is up to something. If you think the curve is too steep, God is at the wheel!"[16] Bailey related his own homelessness following the death of his father and urged the church to trust: "God was getting my life ready. He is in charge. He is on his way. He is going carry you from the pit to the palace!"[17]

Regarding the third point, Bailey taught Habakkuk 3:3, urging the church toward worship and witness. He said that God's glory commanded penitent worship:

> Does our land need healing? You don't have to leave Dallas to know this; there are courtroom trials in Fort Worth and California. There are drugs killing our young black boys. We need healing. If that's true, why aren't you at prayer meeting? There is a place and time for corporate prayer. When the saints of God come together, when the nation needs healing, we cannot leave it all to the politicians. We need prayer. Until you come to him, the nation will never be healed![18]

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[15] Bailey, "The Rescue of a Staggering Faith."

[16] Bailey, "The Rescue of a Staggering Faith."

[17] Bailey, "The Rescue of a Staggering Faith."

[18] Bailey, "The Rescue of a Staggering Faith."

Bailey closed the message with an appeal to Habakkuk's final words (Hab 3:17-19). Bailey urged the church to testify gratitude to God for the "yet" in their lives. The message ascended to Habakkuk's "high places":

> People say that I'm climbing the rough side of the mountain. Have you ever seen anyone climb the smooth side the mountain? When it's rough, you have got hind's feet! Victory in Jesus! Victory in Jesus! I've got hind's feet! He bought me! He saved me! I've got victory![19]

The sermon concluded. Concord was dismissed.

Preaching "Seven Churches" Series (1993)

Bailey preached through Revelation 2-3 in order to instruct the church as to their identity as an ecclesial community in Christ. He stated that having been pastor of the church for nearly eighteen years, he had received numerous letters from the church family. He said that some of the letters were marked personal and confidential, while others were open and public. Some were signed and others unsigned. Bailey said that the seven letters to the churches in Revelation were open letters, signed by Jesus himself.

> The reason why the pastor would preach on these churches are that these seven churches are a composite of what the church should look like in the church age. The Church age started in Pentecost and will conclude at the rapture. Therefore, the seven churches of Asia Minor reflect on what the churches have and do; what they look like high, low, bad, and ugly.[20]

Bailey then pivoted to the congregation by asking: "What would Jesus say to us? All he would say to Concord, he'd say in one of these letters."[21]

In "Remember the First Love (Rev 2:1-7)," Bailey explored the context of first century Ephesus. He related the financial, commercial, political, and recreational aspects of the city. He recounted Paul's ministry there from the book of Acts. Bailey interpreted

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[19] Bailey, "The Rescue of a Staggering Faith."

[20] E. K. Bailey, "Remember the First Love: Rev 2:1-7," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, May 30, 1993 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1993), CD-ROM.

[21] Bailey, "Remember the First Love."

the meaning ("astro-realities") of the seven stars, seven lampstands, and seven angels. He explained the meaning of Jesus' holding the stars and walking among the lampstands. He emphasized the difference between the gloriously resurrected Jesus in Revelation and the crucified Jesus of John's gospel. Bailey taught the text in three movements: (1) "Commendation, (2) Condemnation, and (3) Command."[22] Bailey argued that though churches like Ephesus (and Concord) may excel in doctrinal and ethical purity, such orthodoxy could lead to a critical, loveless spirit. In the final move, Bailey urged the church to "remember, repent, and return." Bailey applied the passage by urging the church to remember how lost they were before Christ so that they will appreciate what Christ did to bring them into his kingdom. As the sermon's enthusiasm climaxed, Bailey turned from the first garden (Eden) to the last garden (Gethsemane) in proclaiming Christ's promise to let his faithful followers eat from the tree of life. Bailey and the church conversed antiphonally in redemptive-historical call and response with whooping.[23]

In "The Troubled, Triumphant Church (Rev 2:8-11)," Bailey offered introductory remarks about how his absence from Concord due to his travels made him long to return to the pulpit to preach: "When you or I are out, I miss Concord."[24] After other pastoral remarks, he read the text, then began with an historical overview of ancient Smyrna. He related the city's history with Jesus' remarks about in the text. Bailey told the church to stay awake while he related Smyrna's background: "Don't go to sleep, I'm going somewhere!"[25] He compared the phrase, "Caesar is Lord" and "Jesus is Lord," informing Concord that such a confession was life-threatening to the first century church

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[22] Bailey, "Remember the First Love."

[23] Bailey, "Remember the First Love."

[24] E. K. Bailey, "The Troubled, Triumphant Church: Rev 2:8-11," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, June 13, 1993 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1993), CD-ROM.

[25] Bailey, "The Troubled, Triumphant Church."

at Smyrna. Bailey outlined the text in three moves: (1) "I know your pressure, (2) I know your poverty, and (3) I know your persecution."[26] Regarding pressure, Bailey acknowledged the shared stress of an historically oppressed people group whose income was half that of Anglos in America. He recognized the presence of "racism, inequity, and bigotry" in the Afro-ethnic experience.[27] However, Bailey contended that even these pressures were no rationale for abandoning Jesus, who was so poor he had to borrow money from a fish and a tomb for his body![28] Bailey stated when a church suffers, God will often send more suffering because He knows that they can endure beyond what they think. He closed with an illustration about Polycarp's martyrdom, followed by festive whooping.

In "The Complacent Church (Rev 3:14-22)," Bailey's sermon on the church at Laodicea challenged the congregation to a fiery faith *for* Christ through a distinctive life *in* Christ. He urged the congregation toward a living faith instead of a "cosmetized corpse."

> The church at Laodicea had a full house but they were indifferent to the things that mattered. They were a cosmetized corpse. Their land was landscaped. They were dressed up and perfumed down but dead with indifference. Can I get a witness? Concord, I want to thank the Lord that there is a remnant. But it breaks my heart as your pastor that eighty to ninety percent of our church is lukewarm about the ministry. Some of you are part of that complacent crowd that just shows up, not to Christ, but to religion. The former president of Yale once said that while commitment without reflection is fanaticism in action; reflection without commitment is the paralysis of all action.[29]

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[26] Bailey, "The Troubled, Triumphant Church."

[27] Bailey, "The Troubled, Triumphant Church."

[28] Bailey, "The Troubled, Triumphant Church."

[29] E. K. Bailey, "The Complacent Church: Rev 3:14-22," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, July 25, 1993 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1993), CD-ROM.

Bailey pled with the congregation to live, speak, and relate with holy distinction: "Most cities can't find enough in Christians to be upset with them because we're too much like them. They can't find enough in us to hate!"[30]

Then, Bailey gave three application points for the church. First, because Concord had become lukewarm in evangelism, he promoted an upcoming sermon series on how to communicate the gospel to the unevangelized. Second, he insisted that the cure to lukewarm Bible study involved "investing" the learned Word in the life of another. "If you are not passing on what you've learned, it's not doing you much good."[31] And third, he held that a passionate relationship with Christ should produce financial generosity to God's work: "A right relationship with Jesus ought to at least baptize your pocketbook."[32] Referring to Revelation 3:21 ("I stand at the door and knock"), Bailey closed his sermon with whooping, call and response, and a final challenge for believers to respond to Christ with deeper devotion and for unbelievers to invite Christ into their lives.

> He's knocking when you hear the choir sing.
> He's knocking when you hear the preacher thunder.
> He's knocking when a baby is born. (Have I got a witness?)
> He's knocking when your children get married.
> He's knocking when your loved one dies.
> He's knowing when trouble gets on your trail.
> Open the door and say, "Father! I stretch my hand to thee!"[33]

Preaching "Ephesians" Series (1995-1996)

Bailey preached thirty expository sermons in the book of Ephesians at Concord Church. Like his other messages, each sermon was approximately one hour. Other

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[30] Bailey, "The Complacent Church."

[31] Bailey, "The Complacent Church."

[32] Bailey, "The Complacent Church."

[33] Bailey, "The Complacent Church."

speaking engagements prevented him from preaching every Sunday; but Bailey himself preached each sermon in the Ephesians series. During this time, he faced the challenges of the Oklahoma City terrorist bombing, a warning to the congregation about Louis Farrakhan's Black ideology, racial strife in Dallas, Texas, and his own diagnosis of cancer. Bailey's last sermon in the series was the first Sunday he returned from surgery. Nine representative messages follow with evidence of Bailey's dual hermeneutic.

In the sermon, "Introduction to Ephesians," Bailey's overview of the letter located the Apostle Paul in Rome. Paul's first imprisonment generated the corpus known as the Prison Epistles. Bailey cited reasons for Pauline authorship, including the date and occasion of composition. He described Paul's imprisonment as house arrest. He taught that Ephesians was a cyclical epistle. He reviewed key doctrines appearing in Ephesians: "Predestination, adoption, redemption, reconciliation, pneumatology, Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology; Paul crowds all this in one, beautiful book."[34] He applied the sermon with four observations: (1) Paul did not let his situation determine his attitude; (2) Paul did not rest his faith on feelings but on facts; (3) Paul sought to explain truth and expose error; and (4) Paul did not worry because he was in God's sovereign will.[35]

In "What's So Good About the Good News?" (Eph 1:3-11), Bailey reiterated biblical fact as the ground of faith while understanding feelings as that of "profound assurance." He stated, "The flag of joy runs up the pole of faith."[36] He explained Ephesians 1:3-14 as a lengthy, run-on sentence. He gave six reasons why the gospel is good news, addressing three reasons in the week's sermon: (1) The Good News of Election; (2) The Good News of Sanctification; and (3) The Good News of Redemption.

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[34] E. K. Bailey, "Introduction to Ephesians," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, March 5, 1995 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1995), MP3.

[35] Bailey, "Introduction to Ephesians."

[36] E. K. Bailey, "What's So Good About the Good News?" sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, March 12, 1995 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1995), MP3.

He applied each major to the congregation's life situation. Election motivates the church to sanctification; the church in Christ can now live who Christ says they are. Sanctification is the outcome of a community that knows its sovereign election. Redemption is the act of ownership transfer from a "poor man's family" (the flesh) to a "rich man's family" (the Spirit). Resultant joy from this biblical fact led Bailey to conclude in a celebratory whoop.

In "The Believers' Guarantee," Bailey explored the notion of assurance. Reasoning that a guarantee is no stronger than the one who makes it, he said, "God can back up his guarantees."[37] The message explained that God guarantees: (1) "A Prosperous Supply of Spiritual Wisdom, (2) A Personal Salvation of Unconditional Election, and (3) A Permanent Seal of the Spirit's Protection and Acceptance."[38] Bailey cited the "seal" as a word of commerce in which the package is marked by the owner's signet. By analogy Paul assured that Christ's Spirit provided the church with protection and reception until the day of redemption. The message concluded in redemptive-historical whooping: "No eye has seen! No hear has heard! What great things the Lord has in store!"[39]

In "Our Human Dilemma" (Eph 2:1-10), Bailey introduced the sermon by telling the church how he was in a hotel only five miles from the Oklahoma City terrorist bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. He segued to the text saying, "Paul begins this chapter by plummeting to the depths of humanity. Suddenly he soars to the heights of what God has done. The pessimism is caused by man; the optimism is what God has done. Ephesians 2:1-10 describe the best and worst of times; what man is by

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[37] E. K. Bailey, "The Believers' Guarantee" sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, April 2, 1995 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1995), MP3.

[38] Bailey, "The Believers' Guarantee."

[39] Bailey, "The Believers' Guarantee."

nature and what man can become by grace."[40] Bailey's three movements were: (1) "The Reality of Our Dilemma, (2) The Reason for Our Dilemma, and (3) The Reversal of Our Dilemma."[41] Bailey explained "dead in sin" as being insensitive and unmoved by the gospel. He insisted, "Physical death is a symptom of the greater death at the core of your being. People don't know they are dead until they are made alive."[42] Furthermore, Bailey clarified the meaning of "flesh" as "our self-centered rebellious human nature."[43] He taught Paul's understanding of hamartiology before transitioning with, "But God!" He read and explained the text in an antiphonal whoop as the sermon closed in victory.

In "The Formulation of a New Race" (Eph 2:11-22), Bailey discussed the "double alienation" humanity suffers (from God and from one another) before probing the "double reconciliation" in Christ.[44] His major points were: (1) "A Portrait of an Alienated Humanity; (2) A Portrait of a New Humanity; and (3) A Portrait of a Reconciled Humanity."[45] In the first move, Bailey explicated the meaning of alienation, pointing to Paul's five descriptors: without Christ, without citizenship, strangers to the covenant, no confidence or hope, and no fellowship with God. In the second move, Bailey emphasized Paul's "But now." He pleaded for the priority of one's identity in Christ as the basis for unity in Christ no matter one's ethnic, national, or social location. He said, "Your ethnicity is not the most important thing once you become a child of God. Your ethnicity becomes subordinate to your 'God-nicity.' I am not a Black Christian. I am a Christian who happens to be Black. And I know I am preaching uphill today

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[40] E. K. Bailey, "Our Human Dilemma," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, April 23, 1995 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1995), MP3.

[41] Bailey, "Our Human Dilemma."

[42] Bailey, "Our Human Dilemma."

[43] Bailey, "Our Human Dilemma."

[44] E. K. Bailey, "The Formulation of a New Race," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, May 7, 1995 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1995), MP3.

[45] Bailey, "The Formulation of a New Race."

because all of us have had negative experiences. But I want you to know that the Word of God must be paramount above your experience!"[46] The third move focused on Ephesians 2:15, "On the cross." Bailey concluded with a poem, a story of reconciliation, and a celebratory, call and response close, with no whoop.

In "The Unveiling of a Mystery" (Eph 3:1-13), Bailey explained Paul's parenthetical pericope and meaning of the word, *mystery*: "There has been something that was hidden in the imponderable mind of God; but what had been concealed has been revealed by the power of the Holy Spirit so that now Man can understand and participate in what was once a mystery. This is a favorite word of Paul; he used it twenty times in his writings."[47] Bailey's major points were: (1) "The Prisoner of the Mystery, (2) The Plan of the Mystery, (3) The Preaching of the Mystery, and (4) The Purpose of the Mystery."[48] In the first move, Bailey urged the congregation not to assume that circumstances limit what God can do. Bailey said that the lock on Paul's chains was held by the key of Christ's sovereignty. In the second move, Bailey reiterated God's plan for Christ's church as the location for unity between Jews and Gentiles, a "new race and a new society."[49] In the third move, Bailey called out error of the "faith" or "health and wealth" movement for its eisegetical tendencies. In the fourth move, the purpose of the mystery was the church's proclamation of God's "manifold wisdom" (Eph 3:10). Call and response, whooping, and a gospel invitation to receive Christ conclude the sermon.[50]

In "Walking Together in Unity" (Eph 4:1-3), Bailey highlighted Paul's "divisional shift" from chapters one through three ("creed") to chapters four through six

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[46] Bailey, "The Formulation of a New Race."

[47] E. K. Bailey, "The Unveiling of a Mystery," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, June 7, 1995 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1995), MP3.

[48] Bailey, "The Unveiling of a Mystery."

[49] Bailey, "The Unveiling of a Mystery."

[50] Bailey, "The Unveiling of a Mystery."

("conduct").[51] He restated the divisions using the following pairs: "doctrine/duty, indicative/imperative, principle/practice, riches in Christ/responsibilities to Christ."[52] His two majors were (1) Disciplined Attitudes (self-effacement and self-contentment) and (2) Dedicated Activities (forgiving, forbearing, and working at unity). He stated that while God created unity, the church must maintain it. He passionately concluded with an illustration about Alexander the Great, whose leaders were bickering among themselves before a battle. Alexander walked his leaders up a high hill. Without a word, he pointed in the direction of the enemy. Bailey applied the illustration: "In a land where people pray to cows, there is no room for Christians to be at odds." The sermon concluded with no whooping or call and response.[53]

In "How to be Filled with the Holy Spirit" (Eph 5:15-20), Bailey defined the fullness of the Spirit as being "dominated, controlled, and guided by the Holy Spirit."[54] He compared the dulling effects of alcohol with the quickening effects of the Spirit. He distinguished between the presence of the Spirit and the power of the Spirit. To Bailey, the question was not, "How much of the Holy Spirit do I have?" But, "How much does the Holy Spirit have of me? The fact that Paul says, 'Be filled,' implies that you have a responsibility."[55] Bailey's sermon was void of three alliterative major points; instead, he didactically explained the filling of the Holy Spirit. He closed with application: "No one filled with the Spirit is a benchwarmer. Fullness leads to service." He led the congregation in the hymn, "Just As I Am."

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[51] Bailey, "The Unveiling of a Mystery."

[52] Bailey, "The Unveiling of a Mystery."

[53] E. K. Bailey, "Walking Together in Unity," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, September 10, 1995, (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1995), MP3.

[54] E. K. Bailey, "How to be Filled with the Holy Spirit," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, April 28, 1996, (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1996), MP3.

[55] Bailey, "How to be Filled with the Holy Spirit."

In "Men of War" (Eph 6:10-20), Bailey preached eight weeks after surgery for kidney cancer. His voice was markedly weakened. His appreciation for the church's prayers was profound. The setting was a men's event at Concord. He exposited the spiritual warfare pericope with three major headings: (1) "Understanding the Adversary; (2) Understanding the Armor; and (3) Understanding the Agony."[56] After affirming belief in the existence of Satan and demons, Bailey exegeted the armor imagery. He told the congregation that the armor does not belong to the Christian; rather, the Christian uses what is God's to defeat evil. Bailey said, "It takes a lion to defeat a lion! The lion of Judah defeats the roaring lion! Satan is a roaring lion but Jesus is the greater lion!"[57] Bailey states that once believers wear the armor, they are ready to fight the agony:

> Prayer is the fight. You will never rise any higher than your prayer life. The greatest fight you will ever fight is on your knees. When you sing, you get what singing can do. When you preach, you get what preaching can do. When you give, you get what money can do. But when you pray, you get what God can do![58]

Preaching "Experiencing the Presence of God" Series (1998)

In this series on worship, Bailey informed the congregation about the content and schedule of the ensuing Sundays. His pre-introductory remarks reminded the listener that Bailey was a pastor communicating pertinent direction to the congregation. After announcing the series title, Bailey asked the church how they think about public worship. He explored various ideas such as worship as medicine or as an enhancement for one's reputation. He invited the congregation to step into the sermon's reality that "the building might disappear" in order to have an "uninterrupted experience of the glory of God. Are

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[56] E. K. Bailey, "Men of War," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, December 13, 1997 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1997), MP3.

[57] Bailey, "Men of War."

[58] Bailey, "Men of War."

you going to walk with me?"[59] Bailey preached through three major truths from Isaiah 6: (1) "The revelation of God's righteousness, (2) The realization of God's holiness, and (3) The recognition of human sinfulness."[60] Regarding the first truth, Bailey taught that there was no seeking God unless He revealed himself. Isaiah's grief over King Uzziah was not answered by comfort but revelation. God's transcendent righteousness overwhelmed any grief Isaiah felt. What Isaiah saw was the sovereign God over all. Then Bailey challenged the church about what they see in worship; do they see their worries or His sovereignty?

Regarding the second truth, Bailey said that when God's unvarnished holiness met human depravity, the outcome was extreme self-consciousness of one's own shortcomings: "The glory of God has a way of humbling your humanity!"[61] Bailey directed the congregation's eyes to the text: "Can I work on this here? Stay here now in verse two." Also, "Can you make your way into the text?"[62] By directing the church's attention to the text, he helped them grasp its meaning-human pride has no standing before the holiness of God. Bailey insisted that the point of worship is to encounter the holiness of God.

Regarding the third truth, Bailey contended that recognition of God's holiness led to acknowledgment of one's depravity. Isaiah's unclean lips, which Bailey applies as the tongue's common expression of depravity, could only be purified from the Lord's resource: "When you see God, the first thing you know is that you got a foul mouth. But the mouth is really not the problem. It's the heart."[63] Bailey closed the message by connecting the purification of Isaiah's mouth with the purification provided in Christ. He

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[59] E. K. Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 1," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, May 3, 1998 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1998) MP3.

[60] Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 1."

[61] Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 1."

[62] Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 1."

[63] Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 1."

explained the doctrine of atonement using the phrase "at-one-ment" to tell how Christ's substitutionary death took away God's wrath so that Christians could be at peace with God. Bailey offered an altar call to receive Christ. There was no whooping or call and response.

In "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 2," Bailey preached Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal from 1 Kings 18. Having been absent several Sundays, he expressed gratitude for the reading of the text, then made three introductory observations. First, the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal was solely about worship. Bailey prayed that the church would commit to the one true God and act on this decision. Second, Elijah's worship resulted in a response from God. Bailey queried the church, "Has God showed up because of your worship lately?"[64] Third, Bailey stated that people would respond when they witnessed the power of God. He outlined 1 Kings 18 with four major words, (1) "Relationship, (2) Repentance, (3) Rulership, and (4) Renewal."[65]

Regarding relationship, Bailey argued that as Elijah walked with God, so too, the congregation must walk in relationship with God in order to have effectual worship. Bailey reviewed Elijah's life with God then validated his point with other figures in the Bible (Moses and Joshua). Bailey urged the church to desire the company of the Lord with the passion of these prophets. The sermon generated a communal experience via call and response. After each sentence, the congregation cheered.

Regarding repentance, Bailey defined it as the turning of one's heart back to God. Bailey said the whole pericope was about correcting disordered priorities. He challenged the church to refrain from being "theoretical theists" yet "practical atheists."[66]

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[64] E. K. Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 2," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, May 23, 1998 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1998), MP3.

[65] Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 2."

[66] Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 2."

He contended that every church has three types of worshippers. There were the "chilled," whose spirits were frozen to the fire of God's Word. To the chilled, church has no purpose. Then there were the "thrilled," whose spirits were enthusiastic about the environment of worship (i.e., the building, the staff structure, and the musical style). Finally, there were the "filled," believers who were Spirit-led. These believers worshiped with cognition and emotion. At this point in the message, Bailey and the congregation conversed in continued call and response affirmation.

Regarding rulership, Bailey briefly taught on the willing submission of Elijah to the will of God. He argued the impossibility of a Spirit-filled believer being demon-possessed. One either served God or Baal. As Christ was totally submitted to the rule of the Father, Bailey implored the church to be formed in His likeness: "If Jesus dwells in you, the devil cannot control you. Two objects cannot occupy the same heart at the same time. God is there or Satan is there. And if God is there, Satan cannot make you do anything!"[67] Bailey urged the church to choose who will rule their hearts.

Regarding renewal, Bailey retold the story of Elijah taunting the prophets of Baal before calling on the Lord. Bailey's reference to renewal derived itself from Elijah's repair of the altar. He challenged the church to rebuild the altar of their lives by returning to the Lord. He closed the sermon saying, "You can spend all the time at the altar when you worship him at the throne. That's all the time I have today. Praise God."[68] Applause followed.

In "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 3," Bailey's text was John 4:1-26, Jesus and the Samaritan Woman. In pre-introductory remarks, Bailey acknowledged a spiritual son in ministry, a newly commissioned ROTC Second Lieutenant from Tuskegee University. Bailey asked "Mark" to stand and the congregation applauded.

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[67] Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 2."

[68] Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 2."

Bailey introduced the message with a story about a woman who was frying a tortilla and noticed that its burn marks resembled Jesus. She took it to her priest for a blessing, enshrined it, and received more than 8000 pilgrims. Bailey said that almost everyone agreed that it looked like Jesus except someone who thought it resembled former heavyweight champion Michael Spinks. The audience roared with laughter.[69]

Pivoting, Bailey said, "It's incredible what people will worship." He reiterated the text where Jesus asserted that God must be worshipped in spirit and truth. Bailey warned against both false worship and vain worship. False worship was venerating the wrong deity. Vain worship was venerating the right deity in the wrong way. He plunged into the narrative and dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan Woman. Bailey cycled in and out of the narrative and recounted the story while applying the text's truth: Jesus wanted his disciples to worship in spirit and in truth. Bailey asserted that worship is affective to the human spirit and factual to the human mind. He explicated both dimensions.

Regarding spirit, Bailey urged an impassioned response to the Holy Spirit's regenerating presence. Bailey illustrated with a story about boy whose kite flew so far out of sight that a man came by and asked where his kite went. The boy replied, "I don't know." The man said, "Well, then how do you know it's there?" And the boy said, "Every now and then, I can feel it pulling!" Bailey giggled, "I can't always see him, but every now and then I can feel him pulling! I know he's there!"[70]

Regarding truth, Bailey pressed the importance of daily time in the Bible. He urged the congregation to participate in Concord's Wednesday evening Bible study. He contended that time in the Scriptures individually were prerequisite to meaningful

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[69] E. K. Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 3," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, June 7, 1998 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1998), MP3.

[70] Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 3."

worship corporately. He insisted, "Participation is contingent on preparation. You've got to worship before you get here!"[71] That is, Bailey wanted the church be studying the Bible during the week as a precondition to congregational worship. He called exuberance in Sunday worship without weekday Scripture meditation, "empty praise-ology and rhetoric."[72] By way of application, he taught the congregation how to meditate on Scripture during the week. He urged them to start with the Scripture passages in the current series. He explained how to pray the Scriptures. He implored the church to avail themselves to praise and worship music. He urged the church to include confession in their worship. As he concluded with energetic call and response section, he cited Psalm 139 and 1 John 1:9. He lyrically delivered the doctrine of justification in Christ alone. The sermon closed with applause.

In "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 5," Bailey taught from John 12:1-26. He reviewed the previous content in the series. Having taught Concord the importance of worshiping in spirit and truth, this sermon explored what such worship looks like in their lives. His major sections were: (1) "Worship involves risk; (2) Worship involves relationship; and (3) Worship involves reconciliation."[73]

Regarding the first section, Bailey exposited Jesus' interaction with Mary, who anointed his feet with oil. Bailey gave the contextual background of Mary's oil to help the congregation grasp why it was so expensive. He said that true worship would cost them. He applied Mary's example in telling them that worship required the risks of "high visibility and vulnerability."[74] He taught on the first century scandal of an unmarried woman letting down her hair before a room of men. As Mary publicly venerated Christ

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[71] Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 3."

[72] Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 3."

[73] E. K. Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 5," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, June 14, 1998 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1998), MP3.

[74] Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 5."

and subjected herself to being misunderstood, so should believers. Bailey stated, "You got to be willing to take some risks and worship God. You got to risk being misunderstood. You got to risk your image. You got to risk losing control. You got to risk being extravagant and generous with your worship! HEY!"[75]

Regarding the second section, Bailey emphasized the participation of the crowds who praised Jesus at his triumphal entry. He stressed the words participative, demonstrative, and expressive. He told Concord that at Jesus' triumphal entry, the crowds did not merely observe the praise of others, they aired their own praise. He stated that to know the identity of Christ leads to undivided loyalty to Christ. Bailey stressed that worship may be "personal" but never "private."[76] He urged the church to public profession of Christianity in word and deed. As an example, he gave his personal testimony of conversion and his own witness of God's protection over Concord.

Regarding the third section, Bailey highlighted the Gentiles who wanted to see Jesus in John 12:20-26. Bailey said that true worship should consider God's plan for all nations to be reconciled in Christ. Bailey recounted personal stories of racial discrimination. He spoke of God's work in teaching him to forgive. Bailey said, "I've been black all my life, and I plan to be black the rest of my life. Praise God. But you can be *pro-who-you-are* without being *against-what-somebody-else* is. [Like the Gentiles], you've got to see Jesus!"[77] The sermon concluded with an illustration about the importance of risk-taking in worship and how God would bless his church when they do.

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[75] Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 5."

[76] Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 5."

[77] Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God: Part 5."

Preaching "Breaking the Cycles" Series (2001)

Bailey opened his message with pastoral encouragements to the congregation for being prompt when the worship services start. He situated the "Breaking the Cycles" series with a somber story of a certain "Robert" about whom Bailey said was "caught in the quagmire of a generational curse" and "born to die young."[78] Bailey explored Robert's family tree and explained how lawless relatives left him with a corrupting influence. Bailey then shared Robert's conversion to Christianity: "Robert embraced that power and . . . was able to cut himself off from his genetic past. And God in his wisdom, hooked him up with a spiritual background and gave him a new family tree."[79]

Bailey pivoted to 1 Chronicles 4:9-10 and the life of Jabez. He organized his message into three points: (1) "The Cause of Jabez's Pain, (2) The Content of Jabez's Prayer, and (3) The Cure for Jabez's Problem."[80] Regarding the first point, Bailey discussed Jabez's name, "pain." Appealing to his "sanctified imagination," Bailey suggested the reasons why Jabez was so named and said that the name was a curse following him wherever he went. Bailey expounded on a theology of sin via "generationalism" in which "everything produces according to its kind."[81] Such a condition was hopeless without rescue, which Bailey proclaimed was God's provision in Christ.

Regarding the second point, Bailey pleaded with the congregation to call out to God in their pain. Bailey was puzzled as to why the church would call out to other sources of comfort. He said:

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[78] E. K. Bailey, "Breaking the Cycle of Generational Curses: Part 1," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, January 7, 2001 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2010), CD-ROM.

[79] Bailey, "Breaking the Cycles: Part 1."

[80] Bailey, "Breaking the Cycles: Part 1."

[81] Bailey, "Breaking the Cycles: Part 1."

> The cursed one called out to the Curse Breaker! He didn't call on the soothsayers, the palm readers, the psychic line, Deon Warwick, or Oprah! He didn't call on sociologists or the government to bail him out with affirmative action. He didn't call on educators; he knew they didn't have the answers. When you're cursed, you need the Curse Breaker. [Jabez] called on the God of the Israel![82]

The sermon rehearsed the various names of God, identifying how God rescued his people throughout the Bible. From there Bailey transitioned to his third point regarding the cure for Jabez's problem. Bailey applauded Jabez's commitment to prayer and noted how God viewed him as more honorable. Bailey turned to the church in the book of Acts as he urged the congregation to seek God in prayer. The sermon concluded with celebratory whooping accompanied by call and response.

In "Breaking the Cycle of Unhealthy Fears," Bailey exposited 1 Samuel 17 in the narrative of David's victory over Goliath. He introduced the congregation to a variety of fears-job loss, darkness, spiders, nuclear war, loneliness, and being unloved. He contends that the "antidote to fear is faith."[83] He organized the sermon with three major divisions: (1) God helps us overcome our fear of relationships; (2) God helps us overcome our fear of risk; and (3) God helps us overcome our fear of righteousness. Regarding relationships, Bailey told how young David went to the front lines of Israel's battle with the Philistine army. David's brother, Eliab, ridiculed him for inquiring about Goliath. From this narrative, Bailey found significance in the way contemporary relationships revealed "virtues" and "vices," which together refined the believer like "sandpaper to a porcupine."[84]

Regarding the fear of risk, Bailey demonstrated how David's confidence in God overcame a spirit of timidity before his larger opponent, Goliath. Bailey appealed to

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[82] Bailey, "Breaking the Cycles: Part 1."

[83] E. K. Bailey, "Breaking the Cycle of Unhealthy Fears," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, January 28, 2001 (Desoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2010), CD-ROM.

[84] Bailey, "Breaking the Cycle of Unhealthy Fears."

Jesus as "the greatest risk taker of all time."[85] Bailey cited Jesus' own words that even though foxes and birds possessed a more secure shelter, such a reality did not make him risk averse. Bailey stated, "God never said you'd never have any Goliaths. He promised that he would never leave us or forsake us. When you run into a giant, I'll be there!"[86]

Regarding the fear of righteousness, Bailey implored the congregation to boldly exhibit the righteousness of Christ as adopted children of God in Christ. He claimed, "Many of us would rather be religious than righteous. Religious and religiosity is accepted in society. But truth and biblical righteousness will alienate you from the world." Bailey admonished the congregation to bold faith in God that stood against the evil one. He reminded the church that as heirs of Christ, they had his authority to withstand the assaults of Satan. The sermon rose with a reference to Psalm 27, then Bailey settled the congregation. He concluded the message with a question and answer session.

In "Breaking the Cycle of Inferiority," Bailey's sermon surveyed three major figures in the Old Testament: Moses, Jeremiah, and Amos. He presented them before the congregation as illustrations for overcoming feelings of inferiority. Regarding Moses, Bailey pointed out that when he murdered an Egyptian and fled, this failure produced guilt, which resulted in inferiority. Yet God met Moses in his situation forty years later and used him to emancipate Israel from Egypt. Bailey exhorted the congregation that they worship Christ who is Lord of the universe: "Jesus said that all power has been given unto me! I will put it behind my church! All power in heaven and earth is behind you to accomplish God's will in your life. So, you have no reason to feel inferior unless you decide to keep on looking at yourself."[87]

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[85] Bailey, "Breaking the Cycle of Unhealthy Fears."

[86] Bailey, "Breaking the Cycle of Unhealthy Fears."

[87] Bailey, "Breaking the Cycle of Inferiority Complex," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, March 4, 2001 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2010), MP3.

Regarding Jeremiah, Bailey stated the Jeremiah's youth made him feel inadequate to the prophetic ministry (Jer 1:6-8). From there, Bailey urged the congregation to ignore the need for an encyclopedic knowledge of theology for effective ministry. Instead, the church should preach the pure, primitive gospel of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Bailey insisted, "You stop comparing yourself to others. You don't have to know Emerson, Shaw, Tillich, Moltmann, Bultmann, and Fosdick. All you need to know is Jesus and him crucified! And that he died for our sins. God's Word is in your mouth. You need to know about Jesus."[88]

Regarding Amos, Bailey said the prophet should have felt inferior but he was not. He was a shepherd, not a scholar. He had no formal education and his raggedy attire was contrasted with the regally dressed Amaziah, priest of Bethel. Bailey lauded Amos' fierce faith in face of persecution because Amos knew his God. Bailey then told the church that because they knew God, they could know that God would keep them. Their salvation was secure. Bailey cited Paul in Philippians 1:8, "He who began a good work. He who starts. He who saved you. He started working on you and if you give him time, he will finish what he started. Nothing can keep God from accomplishing his purpose in your life. *We sometimes feel inferiority because we evaluate ourselves based on how we look while we are under construction*!"[89] Bailey concluded the message by urging the congregation to see themselves as God sees them in Christ. He closed with no whooping or call and response; only saying, "I'm through."[90]

In "Breaking the Cycle of Family Violence: Part 1," Bailey offered gratitude for the church's continuing prayers over his health. He started the message by citing

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[88] Bailey, "Breaking the Cycle of Inferiority."

[89] Bailey, "Breaking the Cycle of Inferiority" (italics added).

[90] Bailey, "Breaking the Cycle of Inferiority."

episodes in the Old Testament on domestic violence.[91] He surveyed the murder of Abel by Cain, the rape of Tamar by Amnon, and the enslavement Joseph by his brothers. He told the church that his sermon had three points and that each point was a stand-alone sermon. In the first point, Bailey defined family violence: physical abuse, verbal abuse, economic abuse, responsibility abuse, and spiritual abuse. With each term, Bailey offered a well-worded, picturesque definition. While preaching this message, a woman who was emotionally overcome by the sermon content interrupted Bailey from the pew, "Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!" Bailey calmly continued with an appeal to husbands to model Christ-like submission before their wives. He closed the sermon, saying: "It's 10am. And I'm not through but I'm going to quit for today. That's it."[92]

In "Breaking the Cycle of Family Violence: Part 2," Bailey gave an expositional-topical sermon by discussing the domestic abuser. The sermon opened with Amnon and Tamar pericope in 2 Samuel 13. He narrated the story in such a way that the listeners saw, heard, and experienced the drama of the text. Afterwards, Bailey shifted to teaching the (1) character traits of an abuser, (2) what causes an abuser to act out, and (3) the ways in which the culture contributes to the abuse. He concluded with an appeal to endure, stating that the next sermon would discuss specific ways to come under the Scripture's authority.[93]

In "Breaking the Cycle of Procrastination," Bailey expounded on Deuteronomy 1:6-8 and 2:2-3, where God told Israel to leave Sinai and enter the land of promise. Bailey read a devotional thought on procrastination by Charles Swindoll, then outlined the message in three major sections: (1) Intimidation, (2) Indecision, and (3)

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[91] Bailey, "Breaking the Cycle of Family Violence: Part 1," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, March 11, 2001 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2010), CD-ROM.

[92] Bailey, "Breaking the Cycle of Family Violence: Part 1," CD-ROM.

[93] E. K. Bailey, "Breaking the Cycle of Family Violence: Part 2," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, March 18, 2001 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2010), CD-ROM. Part 3 of Bailey's sermon on family violence has not been digitalized for research.

Indifference. Regarding intimidation, Bailey recounted the spies who entered the land of promise and returned with different perspectives. Caleb and Joshua alone urged Israel to enter the land. Bailey pivoted with this question: "Concord, what is your attitude about the future of this church?" He challenged the congregation to the limited window of time with which God has given them to exercise their gifts for ministry. Regarding indecision, Bailey reminded the church that lack of decisiveness comes from perennial fear. He cites Helen Keller, who when asked, "What is worse than being blind?" replied, "Having sight but no vision."[94] Bailey told another illustration about how Michelangelo's unfinished statues:

> Some only have an elbow, a head, a shoulder, or a kneecap. The rest is locked in the marble. A whole leg is locked it the marble! Israel was unfinished work because of indecision and they were locked in the marble. All the rest of us could be locked up in the marble. God wants us to finish the work. He's not through with us but he won't do it without us![95]

Bailey warned the church that their indecision could lead to indifference. He cited Numbers 14:4, Israel's rebellion in seeking to replace Moses. Bailey hastened to the application: "Let me give it succinctly. Reject vision and you'll vegetate. Reject conquest and you'll complain. Do not be committed to growing and you'll grumble."[96] Bailey gently closed the sermon with a one word challenge to overcoming procrastination: "Now!"[97]

Analysis

In reviewing Bailey's sermons, six findings affirm his twofold hermeneutic: (1) *Afro-ethnic Ecclesial Kinship* and (2) *Bibliocentric Christoformity*. First, *Bailey*

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[94] E. K. Bailey, "Breaking the Cycle of Procrastination," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, April 1, 2001 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2010), CD-ROM.

[95] Bailey, "Breaking the Cycle of Procrastination."

[96] Bailey, "Breaking the Cycle of Procrastination."

[97] Bailey, "Breaking the Cycle of Procrastination."

interpreted the Scriptures as a spiritual shepherd who lovingly served the ecclesial community in his care. Having planted Concord, Bailey taught the Bible with a view to bringing harmony between God and people, and subsequently, harmony among people. As their shepherd, he knew the lives of those in the congregation. The faces in the pews were no strangers to him, even when Concord grew into the thousands. To Bailey, Concord was family, not clientele. For instance, before the sermon's formal introduction, Bailey often gave (1) a word of encouragement to the congregation for being prompt at the service start time, (2) a word of affection for his absence the previous Sunday on a speaking engagement, or (3) a word of greeting to a newly commissioned military officer, visiting Concord for Sunday worship.

Bailey's pulpit demonstrated neither a performance of public speaking, nor a lecture of biblical history; rather, a pastor whose love for the congregation was manifest in word and deed. He was not aloof from the church nor did he consider himself as part of a distant, professional class. Bailey's pulpit as a part of his overall ministry exemplified attentive shepherding. His ministry mirrored the Apostle Paul's words to the Thessalonian church: "Therefore, longing to be with you, we gladly determined to share not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you had become beloved to us" (1 Thess 2:8).[98]

Bailey's sermons gave evidence of a pastor who deeply loved the congregation he served. He was *for* them. His preaching and pastoral leadership evoked love for the people of God. He wrote:

> Using the God-given gifts along with the functional maturity acquired from the years of experience, *the pastor must work for God and the people*. Accepting the people for what and where they are, coupled with a commitment to lead them to

[98] Author's translation.

> where God is calling them to be, the pastor seeks to motivate, inspire, equip, organize, and use all the gifts of the people.[99]

Bailey saw himself as Christ's under-shepherd, representing Christ, displaying the life of Christ, demonstrating Christ's love to the church, and exemplifying growth in Christ. Bailey's pulpit served as the shepherd's staff: guiding the flock, protecting the flock, even correcting the flock. For example, former associate, Leonard Leach, remarked that Bailey, as pastor, wisely insisted on being the only one qualified to issue a congregational correction via a "pastoral sermon." According to Leach, Bailey possessed a unique relationship with the congregation. Because he officiated many funerals in congregation, visited the members in the critical care unit, and was present in their most festive and serious times, Bailey had the pastoral credibility to issue an admonishment, when needed. Leach said: "It's like somebody saying, if my children need to be spanked, let me spank them!"[100]

Bailey's pulpit ministry reflected his view of the local church as a Spirit-indwelled gathering of the called ("ecclesial"). He held that the local church's assembly was the outcome of the Holy Spirit's supernatural power. He believed that the church existed only as a visible body. To Bailey, the notion of "invisible church" was a contradiction in terms, like an invisible embassy. The point of an embassy was visibility! In Bailey's ecclesiology, he insisted that the local church, including Concord Church, was the beloved bride of Christ, warranting respect and honor. He also considered the congregation as the "pillar and foundation of truth" (1 Ti 3:15) in a relativistic world. He understood Concord to be the very presence of Christ in Dallas, Texas. As such, his role as pastor was to build up the church and equip the believers to do the work of ministry

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[99] E. K. Bailey, "A Contextual Statement" (seminar paper at United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH, August 14, 1989), 44, (italics added).

[100] Leonard Leach, video teleconference interview with the author, October 6, 2021.

unto the church's unity in Christ. To this end, Bailey's pulpit reflected an ecclesial hermeneutic.[101]

Second, *Bailey interpreted the Scriptures as a Christian pastor sensitive to his African-American reality.* Frequently, Bailey addressed the predominantly African America congregation he served with illustrations, instructions, and corrections which demonstrated his awareness of the Black location in America. For example, in his aforementioned Mother's Day sermon, "The Seeds of a Mother's Faith," Bailey included three sections in which he contacted the Black experience: (1) a quote by Martin Luther King, Jr., on the necessity of forgiveness, (2) a parenting challenge to rear children toward education as a pathway of life improvement, and (3) a call to personal responsibility over blame-shifting.[102]

Bailey's sermon, "The Dream Continues," displayed his understanding for the Civil Rights struggles unique to African Americans, while honoring the biblical author's intent (Josh 1:1-9).[103] In the sermon, Bailey decried the racist oppression of Black lynchings and bombings. He told the church that he and they were beneficiaries and stewards of King's dream of the beloved community. Bailey said, "The dream does not belong to you; neither does it belong to me. The dream belongs to God. This dream is not a result of human imagination. This dream is the product of divine revelation."[104] Bailey explained that the essence of the dream is the realization that as image-bearers of the

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[101] E. K. Bailey, "Statement of Theology for the Urban Church" (seminar paper for Henry H. Mitchell and Edward Wheeler, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH, May 14, 1990), 8-9.

[102] Bailey, *E. K. Bailey Sermon Series*, 98-104.

[103] E. K. Bailey, "The Dream Continues," sermon preached at Concord Church (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, n.d.). This sermon was an iteration of Bailey's chapel message at Princeton Seminary on Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, 1992. See E. K. Bailey, "The Anatomy of a Dream," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 13, no. 3 (1992): 311-19.

[104] Bailey, "The Dream Continues," 8.

Almighty, humans of every ethnicity are "created equal and free to pursue life, liberty, and happiness."[105]

Later in the message, Bailey urged the church not only to lament White oppression, but recognize that the oppressed must go to God for healing. Without forgoing King's call for justice in the land, Bailey insisted, "We have to cultivate the barrenness of our people. When I say, 'our people,' I am talking about African Americans, the sons and daughters of color. I'm talking about those of us who are of ebony hue."[106] He listed four major contributors of human barrenness: the criminal justice system, illicit drug use, the breakdown of the family unit, and sexual immorality. He pled with the congregation: "We have to call Black men back to God. We have to call Black women back to God. We have to call Black families back to God. In some places, we even have to call the Black church back to God. It is because our people have left God that we are in our present condition."[107] Bailey's perspective in speaking specific, sermonic content was sympathetic. He *suffered with* as an African American pastor to a mostly, though not entirely, African American congregation.

More evidence of Bailey's sensitivity to his African American location appeared in his doctoral studies. While at United Theological Seminary, Bailey wrote papers that appreciated historical influences by Africans to the history of Christianity. He listed places such as North Africa, Egypt, and Ethiopia where Christianity flourished. He included early church fathers from North Africa such as Clement, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, and Cyril. He highlighted the lives of African American Christian

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[105] Bailey, "The Dream Continues," 8.

[106] Bailey, "The Dream Continues," 11.

[107] Bailey, "The Dream Continues," 11-12. Later in the message Bailey cried, "We are Americans but our roots are in Africa. We are African Americans, and we want you to know that all of the negative caricatures that you have slung at us for 400 years are being eradicated. We're getting rid of all that stuff. We're not from the jungles. We are from a great country and continent. We are descendants of kings and queens. Even in our cells, we are somebody. With my naturally curly hair, I am somebody. With our thick, broad lips, we are somebody. With the broadness of our nostrils, we are somebody. With the black pigmentation of our skin, God made us somebody because 'God does not make junk'" (13-14)!

leaders such as George Lisle, David George, Richard Allen, and John Jasper.[108] Bailey noted six assets which the Black church offered "the church growth movement": (1) its celebrative worship and preaching, (2) its exodus theology, (3) its view of the Bible from the oppressed "underside," (4) its relevance to life in America, (5) its emphasis on the experiential to augment the cerebral, and (6) its population base of twenty million African Americans in need of the gospel.[109] Both in the field of pastoral ministry and the classroom of academic studies, Bailey valued his God-given, Afro-ethnic identity. He encouraged Concord to do likewise.

Third, *Bailey interpreted the Scriptures as a spiritual sibling in Christ to a family of spiritual siblings in Christ*. Bailey prioritized his kinship identity in Christ over his other identities. In expressing this priority, Bailey did not deny certain God-granted identities such as ethnicity; rather, he subjected them all to his "God-nicity."[110] Bailey contended that in Christ, he was a justified, redeemed, and adopted heir of the kingdom. His identity in Christ was supreme over every other identity: vocationally, educationally, socio-economically, or racially. In his message on Ephesians 2:11-22, Bailey explained how Christ fashioned a new race which canceled the divisions of former times. He told how Christ's crucifixion broke down Jerusalem's temple wall, which demarcated Jews from Gentiles. Bailey stated that when Christ destroyed the dividing wall between the Jews and Gentiles, enemies became family. He then pressed Concord that despite their negative experiences with other ethnicities, "I want you to know that this Word of God must be paramount above your experience. You can't live as a child of God out of the context; you live according to the authority of the Word of God. God says that if he is in

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[108] Bailey, "Statement of Theology for the Urban Church," 23-24.

[109] Bailey, "Statement of Theology for the Urban Church," 26-27.

[110] Bailey, "The Formulation of a New Race."

Christ, he is your brother, she is your sister!"[111] In his Ephesians series, Bailey expressed "what is" as a foundation for "what should be." He taught the church that the "theology" of Ephesians 1-3 should result in the "practicality" in Ephesians 4-6.[112] Because Concord was one family in Christ, Bailey urged them to live according to that reality. In this way, Concord would embody its name: *harmony*.

As a sibling-pastor, Bailey fervently taught, but not as one who had arrived. Rather, he preached as one who was walking and encouraging his church family along the way. Bailey's sermons often began slowly and deliberately, typically with the phrase, "I want to talk today about," followed by the title of the message. He would then say, "Would you repeat that after me?" Then, he and the congregation would repeat the title.[113] This introductory ritual, spoken in a calm voice, was Bailey's way of gathering the church. It was as if he was inviting the church to lean closer so that none would miss the important homiletical conversation they were about to experience. This opening homiletical ceremony established a familial tone. Some homileticians would argue that what Bailey was doing conformed with classical moves of Black Sacred Rhetoric: "Start low, rise high, strike fire. Sit down in a storm."[114] This dissertation would add to that observation a hermeneutical function, an interpretive lens of preaching Scripture from *the location of sibling kinship in Christ*. Out of that spiritual place, Bailey saw himself, the Word of God, and the congregation, not as an audience of spectators or a plenary session of conferees, but as beloved family in the Lord. Bailey studied and preached the Bible from the viewpoint of a pastor-brother who wanted the people he worshipped with to

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[111] Bailey, "The Formulation of a New Race."

[112] Bailey, "Our Sevenfold Oneness."

[113] For some examples, see Bailey, "Love, God's Super Glue"; Bailey, "Walking Together in Unity"; and Bailey, "The Unveiling of a Mystery."

[114] Cleophus J. LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 11.

taste the goodness of God's Word. In explaining what the church was and was not Bailey said:

> The church is not an ark for the saving of a select few. It's not a ferry boat to take effortless passengers to the shores of heaven. It's not a life insurance company accepting the payment of a small annual premium. It's not social set, welcoming some and excluding others. Here's what the church is: *a family in which love and service are accepted from one to another*. It's an organized community with constant activities and continued growth and development. It's a company of believers who have found the one way of life. It's a union of those who love for the benefit of those who suffer. It's a center of social worship.[115]

Consequently, when Bailey studied the Scriptures for preaching, he saw himself as a brother in Christ and fellow kingdom beneficiary who preached to others in the family of God.

Fourth, *Bailey submitted himself to the very Scriptures he interpreted for preaching.* Bailey revered the Bible as God's inerrant truth. He disavowed "situational ethics" and held to the dictates of the biblical text. He believed that the preacher's authority came from standing beneath the text's authority. He wrote:

> The only way you have authority is that you are under authority because you represent the kingdom of God. "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us." (2 Cor 5:20) Preach the word with the authority of God behind you. Preach the incarnational truth. Let people see the word fleshed out in you. The listener must know that you believe in what you preach.[116]

Crawford Loritts, colleague and friend, confirmed how Bailey preached as a "servant to the text."[117] That is, in every sermon Bailey sought to subordinate himself to the Bible's promises, encouragements, warnings, and wisdom. His preaching and lifestyle exemplified to the congregation what a subordinated life to the text looked like. Loritts stated that Bailey's preaching and philosophy of ministry were intertwined. What the congregation heard from Bailey on Sunday was what they witnessed in Bailey's life

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[115] Bailey, "Our Sevenfold Oneness" (italics added).

[116] E. K. Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching* (n.d.; repr., DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2013), 17.

[117] Crawford Loritts, video teleconference interview with the author, December 6, 2021.

throughout the week. Loritts commented: "[Bailey's] preaching modelled spiritual multiplication because he was committed to spiritual multiplication in a very real sense. I guess you could say his preaching was autobiographical. It was who he was. By the way, *that's the best preaching in the world*."[118]

Loritts explained that for Bailey, the Bible was not merely a point of reference in which to do ministry; it was the entire context of life and ministry. Because Bailey believed that the Bible was the unerring Word of God, it was his life. Bailey knew no personal/professional dichotomy; rather, one all-encompassing authority for existence in Christ. Bailey preached, led Concord, multiplied disciples, and conducted his own life under the Scripture's authority. It was therefore it was easy for him to move between the domains of vocation and family because Bailey wanted the Bible to rule him in every place. Loritts said, "Preaching was not a gig, it was a celebration of what [Bailey] held dear; a celebration of the power of God's Word."[119] Bailey then, would disavow using the Bible as a backdrop for the preacher's own thoughts. Rather, Bailey took the "truth of the text and put the clothes of the audience on its truth without violating the text's content."[120]

Loritts noted that Bailey's posture beneath the Word of God presumed a large measure of courage on Bailey's part. To stand before the congregation with an open Bible meant that the church was about to hear directives, not suggestions, from the Lord. Bailey's charge required him to deliver the whole counsel of God. Bailey possessed the pastoral skill of prophetically challenging the church while simultaneously letting them know how much he loved them.[121] Bailey could winsomely exhort the congregation to

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[118] Loritts, interview (italics added).

[119] Loritts, interview.

[120] Loritts, interview.

[121] Loritts, interview.

the text's demands because he had first put himself under the text. In a related interview, Leonard Leach remarked that Bailey's commitment to expository preaching led him (Bailey) to rethink Scriptural pericopes in light of the grammatical-historical-literary method. Bailey believed that to subordinate oneself to the text was paramount for effective expository preaching.[122]

This belief explained why Bailey carefully taught the Scripture's context as well as detailing the pericope's grammar and sentence structure. His bibliocentric focus manifested itself by: (1) examining what the text actually said, (2) ascertaining its original meaning, and (3) deciphering application points for the contemporary listener. He studied features of the text: "terms in their context, grammatical structure, literary genre, and atmosphere."[123] He utilized six questions to examine the text: "*Who* said or did this? *What* was being stated or done? *Where* was this happening or going? *When*? *Why*? *How*?" He noted the text's sentence structure, locating main verbs and paying attention to prepositions. He scanned the text for whatever was emphasized, associated, reiterated, similar, dissimilar, and realistic. He identified the paragraph as a main unit of thought while recognizing transitional terms such as "likewise," "therefore," "and now," and "now concerning." *In dedicating himself to these disciplines of study, Bailey presumed meaning in the text which the historical author willed to convey to the historical audience.* He believed that the task of preaching was deciphering the message of the text as originally given, then delivering its truth to the congregation in worship. Moreover, he stressed that answering these probing questions required hours of labor, unseen by the congregation.[124] He held that a painstaking regiment of "observation, correlation,

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[122] Leach, interview.

[123] E. K. Bailey, "Basics of Expository Preaching," lecture at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, February 22, 1995 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries), MP3. By atmosphere, Bailey meant pondering questions like, "What did Noah smell on the ark?" Or "What was it like for Zacchaeus to sit in that tree?"

[124] Bailey, "Basics of Expository Preaching."

interpretation, and application" would correct both the preacher and the congregation in terms of what Scripture actually said.[125]

Fifth, *Bailey interpreted the Scriptures for preaching with a view to the exaltation of Christ*. Bailey did not preach moralistically, merely coaxing the church toward ethical decency. To be clear, he was concerned with a life that reflected Christ but first, he preached Christ. For example, in his introductory sermon on Ephesians, Bailey stressed exclusive salvation in Christ alone over the pluralism of the secular world. He contended for the narrowness of Christ's claim as "the way, the truth, and the life." He urged the church to see that truth by its very nature is narrow. He illustrated his point by referring to physicians who prescribe medicine, bankers who account for money, and aircraft carrier pilots who land their jets on "narrow runways." Bailey noted that Paul's apostolic claim meant that Paul had *seen* the resurrected Christ. This experience left Paul with the passion to proclaim the messianic reality of One who was still alive. Paul's preaching was not about spiritual curriculum; it was about the living Son of God. Bailey's preaching ushered the congregation through a scripturally-rich portal so that they would experience the presence of Christ. For Bailey, preaching was "escorting" the church into the experience of the living Christ.[126]

Where Bailey employed *expository whooping*, his lyrics would often meld the actual verses of the text with the salvific act of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Bailey would intonate the verses of the text, fusing them into kerygmatic proclamation. For example, in "What's So Good About the Good News?" Bailey closed with Ephesians 1:7, "In him we have redemption, through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses." While intoning this verse, Bailey reached back in salvation history to recount what the

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[125] Bailey, "Basics of Expository Preaching."

[126] Robert Smith, Jr., *Doctrine that Dances: Bringing Doctrinal Preaching and Teaching to Life* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), 25.

first Adam lost when he trespassed. Then Bailey proclaimed the purchase which Jesus, the second Adam, redeemed. Bailey taught "the purchase of the possession led to the possession of the purchase."[127] Stressing the eternal security of the saints, Bailey urged that the Lord would sustain his church until the end. Lyrically, textually, and antiphonally, Bailey guided the church into the presence of the Redeemer.[128]

In another sermon over the healing of the official's son (John 4:46-54), Bailey concluded with an expository whoop whereby he sang the verses of the text as he envisioned how the entire household came to believe Jesus. He recreated the scene where the man returned to his family and explained his encounter with Jesus. In a call and response exchange, Bailey's "sanctified imagination" saw the man entering the room of his healed son and telling him that the One who had healed him was now ready to save him. Then, the man turned to his wife, apologizing for being so concerned about the world: "I've been working to provide a living but I met a Man who gave me life." Bailey pivoted to the congregation and said: "Have I got a witness? As the head of the house are you ready to give your life to the Lord?" With no concluding whoop, Bailey gave an invitation to the congregation to accept Christ.[129] He challenged the husbands and fathers in the congregation to surrender their lives to Christ. He closed in prayer. Thus, Bailey preached with Christ-orientation; he believed that Jesus was the beginning, middle, and end of the Christian faith.

Sixth, *Bailey interpreted the Scriptures so that Concord would resemble Christ.* He asserted, "It's one thing to be in Christ; that's salvation. It's another thing for

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[127] Bailey, "What's So Good About the Good News?"

[128] Bailey, "What's So Good About the Good News?"

[129] E. K. Bailey, "A Growing Faith," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, February 21, 1993 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1993), MP3.

Christ to be in you; that's sanctification."[130] More than transmitting biblical information, Bailey's pulpit aimed at encouraging Christlike transformation. He stressed that doctrinal orthodoxy without Christ-shaped love left a critical and guarded spirit. He wanted the church to winsomely display biblical truth in their lives even more than their affinity to him as pastor. He contended, "It is only when your people are more connected to Christ than they are to you that you can say with confidence 'I've succeeded' and you have effectively communicated the Word of God and a passion to know him."[131]

To illustrate, in his sermon, "Imitators of God," Bailey exposited Ephesians 5:1-2.[132] He introduced the message by stating how little people think or do that is original. He stated that consciously or not, people imitate what they see and hear. He emphasized the benefits and liabilities of imitation, contingent on who is being imitated. He stressed how stunning Paul's words were, "Be imitators of God." In spite of sin's total depravity, believers are called to imitate the holiness of God. Then, Bailey did a theological survey of God's character traits to persuade the congregation that imitating God is the supreme form of emulation. His sermon had two major parts: (1) "Imitate the compassion of God and (2) Imitate the characteristics of God."[133] Regarding the first part, Bailey explicated God's compassion as individuals. He urged the men of the church to be as compassionate to family members as their work colleagues. He urged husbands to learn and avoid what it is that wounds the feelings of their wives: "How can you say you love me yet don't know what hurts me? Be tenderhearted. I'm not making this up! It's right there in your Bible!"[134]

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[130] E. K. Bailey, *Baileyisms: Inspirational Quips and Quotes for living the Christian Life*, compiled by Jeaninne Stokes (Arlington, TX: JStokes Publishing, 2015), 58.

[131] Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, 17.

[132] E. K. Bailey, "Imitators of God," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, December 3, 1995 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1995), MP3.

[133] Bailey, "Imitators of God."

[134] Bailey, "Imitators of God."

Regarding the second part, Bailey discussed the characteristics of love and sacrificial giving as a corporate body. He pleaded with the church to avoid a consumerist mindset. He implored the audience to stop asking what the church could do for them and instead ask what they could do to serve the church. He stated that ten percent of the congregation gave ninety percent of the offerings. He ensured Concord that all their bills were paid but that the full potential of the congregation had yet to be realized. He concluded the sermon saying that imitating God stems from a desire to please God: "You ought to want to imitate your Daddy because you know your Daddy loves you."[135] Just before his prayer, Bailey gave this illustration: "One father was lamenting about his prodigal son to another father. The second father said to the first: 'If that were my son, I'd kick him out of the house.' The other father said, 'If he were your son, I'd kick him out, too. But he happens to be my son and that makes all the difference.'"[136]

This finding highlights Bailey's hermeneutic of practical application. To him, Christoformity was nothing less than applying the truth toward an outcome of imitating Christ. Bailey did not assume that his audience would make the connection on their own based on the theological principles found in the text. He purposed Christoform thinking to become Christoform living. He expressed vivid, tactile illustrations to walk the listener from the text's truth to its application in life. He did not overlook an opportunity to pastor the church from the pulpit. He did not avoid the tensions of the text, choosing instead to tease the implications out in weekly living. He wanted to point Concord to hope as well as fill Concord with truth. He took the "there and then" of the text and applied it to the "here and now" of daily life. Accordingly, Bailey witnessed a congregation growing in

[135] Bailey, "Imitators of God."

[136] Bailey, "Imitators of God."

Christlike maturity and eager to meet needs with love. He preached so that they would "taste and see that the Lord is good!"[137]

Summary

A twofold hermeneutic for preaching, *Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship and Bibliocentric Christoformity*, has been proposed as interpretive lenses for E. K. Bailey's sermon preparation and delivery. This chapter has presented sermon abstracts from Bailey's preaching from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the Gospel of John, the Revelation of Jesus Christ, Isaiah, and the Psalms. Bailey consistently deployed his hermeneutic to both Old and New Testaments, and various genres of Scripture. This chapter noted six key findings which confirmed his dual lens for homiletical interpretation. These discoveries supported an author-centered hermeneutic of Scripture applied to the life situations of Bailey and his flock. His legacy has bequeathed homileticians and pastors key implications for the hermeneutical enterprise in preaching. These implications will be discussed in the next chapter.

[137] Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, 8.

CHAPTER 7

IMPLICATIONS OF E. K. BAILEY'S TWOFOLD HERMENEUTIC FOR EXPOSITORY PREACHING

E. K. Bailey's twofold hermeneutic should be a tutorial for homileticians and preachers about sound assumptions that support exegesis for effective expository preaching. In reviewing his final decade of preaching at Concord, this study saw how Bailey approached the pulpit with *awareness*. Bailey was biblically aware, self-aware, congregationally aware, culturally aware, and ethnically aware. He believed the essence of the Bible as divinely given. He embraced his call as a commissioned Christian pastor. He understood the identity of the church community as the body of Christ. He comprehended the texture of his culture in late twentieth century Dallas, Texas. And, he identified with the heritage of the African-American people. Bailey's sermons gave evidence of valuing the biblical authors' will while preaching to the present-day life situations of his listeners.

This chapter will argue three implications that logically flow from Bailey's twofold hermeneutic. That is, from his hermeneutic and resultant definition of expository preaching, Bailey bequeathed homileticians *three implicit significances*. First, interpreting for effective biblical exposition should arise from the preacher's theological convictions about the nature of Scripture. Second, interpreting for effective biblical exposition should rest on the preacher's respect for the biblical author's willed meaning. Third, interpreting for effective biblical exposition should stand on the preachers' sensitivity to their own as well as the congregation's "interpretive location."[1]

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[1] Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Ada, MI: Baker, 2007), 120-21.

On the Importance of Theological Convictions about the Bible

When the preacher has announced to the congregation, "Please open your Bibles and meet me in Nehemiah 1," what should that preacher believe about the text to warrant precious time studying it in the worship service? Should the preacher's intent be to create a moment of emotional euphoria? Should the preacher desire to generate a Garrison Keillor-esque, nostalgic experience via a well-told tale of life in "Lake Wobegon?" Should the preacher lecture an episode of ancient history from Israel? *What the preacher believes about what the Bible is should determine how the preacher proclaims what the Bible says*. Bailey gave no ambiguity about his own theological convictions of Scripture.

Conviction about the Bible's Supernatural Reality

Without qualification, Bailey held the Christian Scriptures as the inerrant Word of God. He believed the Bible originated from the mind of God. Bailey said, "There are still absolutes and irreducibles that come from God. . . . You must say what God says and say it with authority. That is the goal of expository preaching. It is 'his word in your mouth' according to Jeremiah 1:9."[2] Bailey's divine view of the Bible led him to preach so that the congregation would hear God's thoughts. Bailey had no interest in orating therapy from "Dr. Ruth" or "Dr. Spock;" instead, Bailey proclaimed divine theology from Christ.[3]

Bailey's twofold hermeneutic should press preachers with questions about their own understanding of the Bible: (1) Does the preacher believe that God exists? (2) Does the preacher believe that God has the capacity to speak and has spoken? (3) Does the

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[2] E. K. Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching* (n.d.; repr., DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2013), 17.

[3] Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, 16.

preacher believe that God breathed out spoken words, which have been inscripturated? (4) Does the preacher believe that God's inscripturated words as presented in the Holy Bible are sufficient for salvation, godliness, and every good deed in Christ? (5) Does the preacher believe that the Bible presents a view of reality revealed therein?[4] (6) Does the preacher depend on the Holy Spirit's power in the sermon's study and delivery? Bailey's hermeneutic affirmed the above questions.

To Bailey, the Bible was the supernaturally given portal to God's reality. Recall that in his first message of the series, "Experiencing the Presence of God," Bailey invited the congregation to gather closely and bring themselves within the sanctuary of Isaiah's vision of God.[5] He prayed that their imaginations would cause the walls of the church house to vanish. He wanted his sermon to transport Concord into the realm of God's glory. For Bailey, Isaiah 6 was no history lesson; it was the gateway or window to God's splendid world, which could not be experienced had Bailey not held to the supernatural origin of Scripture. The congregation could only enter the portal of Scripture to experience God's glory, because their preacher was already there.

Thus, when pastors approach the Bible for preaching, their hermeneutical understanding should go deeper than merely selecting the appropriate critical methods to draw out the gist of a text. The expository pulpit should emerge from a hermeneutical pre-commitment of what the Bible is. *Pastors should approach biblical exposition with a pre-understanding that the Scriptures offer a view of another realm.* John Piper echoed this notion when he wrote: "My view *of* the Bible was always a view *through* the Bible."[6]

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[4] John Piper, *Expository Exultation: Christian Preaching as Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 19. Piper wrote that the purpose of preaching is to enable the congregation to see "how the very words of the text reveal the point the preacher is making about reality." (19) Preaching then, is about *proclaiming reality*.

[5] E. K. Bailey, "Experiencing the Presence of God-Part 1," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, May 3, 1998 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1998), MP3.

[6] John Piper, *A Peculiar Glory: How the Christian Scriptures Reveal Their Complete Truthfulness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 26.

In other words, Piper likened the Bible to a clear, glass window through which to peer into a supernatural reality. Interpreting the Bible for expository preaching must be more than figuring out ways to admire a painting on a museum wall. Preachers must draw out the truth of the Scriptures in a way that will help them implore the congregation to experience cognitively and emotionally the divine existence within the text. Piper expressed this level of exegesis as that which "includes both *rigorous attention* to the very words of the biblical text and a *radical penetration* into the reality the text aims to communicate."[7] The prioritization of the text's reality would prevent the preacher and congregation from erring in manufacturing their own reality; a disastrous effect which would strip the text (and the pulpit) of its authority. Again, Piper exhorted, "Always keep before you the summons of *the reality factor*."[8]

Like the apostles Peter and John, preachers should possess the unction to say: "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). Like the apostle Paul, whose sermons possessed "the very words of God" (1 Thess 2:13), preachers should carefully present their messages with the same mindset. They should precede the congregation into a cognitive, affective experience of the text's reality. Having witnessed the text's reality in prayer and study, the preacher should return to the congregation to testify propositional truth.

Utilizing Robert Smith's metaphor, the preacher should serve as the "exegetical escort," winsomely guiding the congregation into Scriptures so that they might see and be changed by the reality of the glory of God.[9] This witness would not

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[7] John Piper, *Expository Exultation: Christian Preaching as Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 162.

[8] Piper, *Expository Exultation*, 162.

[9] Robert Smith, Jr., *Doctrine That Dances: Bringing Doctrinal Preaching and Teaching to Life* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 75. Smith's implication is that preachers know where to escort the church because they have already been there.

make the preacher immune from error in the hermeneutical enterprise; rather, it would assert that the preacher's primary text, the Bible and the reality it presents, is inerrant.

Bailey held that in biblical preaching, truth was taught and error was rebuked.[10] Bailey preached to help the congregation know, feel, and act in accordance with the reality of God's kingdom as exposited in God's Word. Apart from such a noble view of biblical authority, what would be the point of preaching? Given the Bible's supernatural character, the preacher's persona becomes evident; what the Bible is, dictates what the preacher should do.

Conviction about the Preacher's True Persona

Bailey's pulpit has shown that there can be no biblical preaching apart from the God who has spoken. God voluntarily waived his right to privacy in expressing his Word. Preaching then, has disclosed who God is based on what he has said. Having spoken, God ordained his word to be inscripturated for the sake of (1) clarity, (2) historical perpetuity, (3) the passing down from generation to generation, and (4) for life. Moses told Israel that God's inscripturated word was "no empty word for you, but your very life" (Deut 32:47).[11] That the source of preaching is God's own word should remind pastors that the word they preach is living, not dead; powerful, not weak; and hopeful, not hopeless.

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[10] E. K. Bailey and Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White: What We Can Learn From Each Other* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 77.

[11] Peter Adam, *Speaking God's Words: A Practical Theology of Expository Preaching* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996). Adam grounded his theology of preaching in three statements: "God has spoken," "It is written," and "Preach the Word." (37) Regarding "God has spoken," Adam held that Word ministry, specifically preaching, would not exist without God first speaking. He affirmed Christ's incarnation as God's ultimate speech act. He noted that God's transcendence does not prohibit humanity from receiving His Word but ensures its reception. God's transcendent power overcomes any barriers to self-revelation. Regarding "It is written," Adam discussed "scripturization" as the process of making a permanent record of God's communicated Word "for future generations." (29) Regarding "Preach the Word," Adam expounded on Moses, John the Baptist, Jesus, the Apostles, and local church elders as "human agents giving his revelation and preserving his words." (56) Adam posed a critical question for the preacher entering the pulpit: "What am I supposed to be doing?" (119) Answer: "I am supposed to be explaining and applying the Word of God." (119) While acknowledging sermon types ("textual, topical, expository, doctrinal, life situation, relational"), Adam insisted on only one: expositional. He wrote: "The only kind of preaching worthy of the name is that in which the truth of a Scripture text is explained and applied to the lives of the hearers" (119).

The Scripture's divine nature should energize pastors to embrace the persona of *Spirit-commissioned herald* and eschew the persona of *human-approved rhetor*.[12] That the pulpit is on stage under lights and before an audience could convey the optics of a performance, whose success or failure is judged by the crowd's approval. Preachers should refuse to self-identify as human-approved speechmakers who entertain and produce their own desired effects for the audience. Audience admiration for a speaker's abilities do not translate into effective expository preaching. The preacher's true persona should be anchored in the functional role as herald of Christ. The herald's assignment should communicate, not generate meaning. As agent of Christ, the herald should speak as the "mouthpiece" of Christ.[13] The preacher's allegiance should rest in Christ, not the crowd. Faithfulness in conveying the message of Christ should supersede adulation (or disapprobation) from those who hear it.

In addition, having announced the good news of the kingdom, the herald should expect a response. Jesus, the world's true Caesar, died, resurrected, ascended, and is sovereignly enthroned over all things seen and unseen. Paul announced that one day every knee in heaven, on earth, and under the earth will proclaim the supreme rule of the Son whom the Father has super-exalted above all (Phil 2:5-11). The herald's declaration should anticipate a reply of obedience from those privileged to hear this news. Gospel heralds should do more than update their audience; they summon them to allegiance

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[12] Here, persona is defined as "projecting a distinct role via speech or discourse." The apostle Paul assumed the functional role of herald in gospel proclamation yet his person was unchanged. See Robert Vogel, "Role Criticism," Canons of Criticism 86720 (class notes, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, October 1-5, 2018). For a survey of five key roles of preaching ("steward, herald, witness, father and servant") see John Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961). Stott rightly contended that the preacher's persona emerge from a Christlike person. That is, the preacher ought not be one person in the pulpit and another person out of the pulpit. Also, for an exegetical study of Paul's homiletical theology, see Duane Litfin, *Paul's Theology of Preaching: The Apostle's Challenge to the Art of Persuasion in Ancient Corinth*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015). Litfin wrote: "Unlike the orator, the herald's task was not to create a powerful message custom designed to generate belief (πίστις) or persuasion (πεισμονὴ) in the recipients. The herald's task was to convey as faithfully as possible the already-constituted message of another. He was simply an agent, a messenger" (185).

[13] Litfin, *Paul's Theology of Preaching*, 185.

before their holy emperor. To announce the gospel was the privilege of the herald and to receive the gospel was the privilege of the hearer. Therefore, the herald's task was to convey, not create news. The herald's burden was to relay the news exactly as it was given. Robert Mounce wrote, "As the mouthpiece of his master he dare not add his own interpretation."[14]

This conviction was why Crawford Loritts called expository preaching a courageous act. To herald God's Word could conceivably put the preacher in the path of congregational disapproval, for that preacher must take a stand to please God and not people. It would mean telling the truth to ears who may not want to hear.[15] At the same time, Bailey's pulpit valor was what made the Sunday worship experience so anticipatory at Concord Church. He had immersed himself in Scriptures throughout the week. He assumed the persona of Spirit-commissioned herald. He boldly preached the Bible as God's Word. When congregation arrived, they came with expectant spirits: what is the Lord going to say to us today?

Conviction about the Bible's Revealed Truth

To believe the Bible's origin is of God and to view the preacher's role as an agent of God's Word: these two convictions established a third theological conviction concerning the Scripture's truth. When the preacher steps into the pulpit, what should be proclaimed is not opinion or conjecture, but truth. In John 17:17, Jesus declared to God

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[14] Robert H. Mounce, *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1960), 13. While Stott surveyed five personas of New Testament preaching, including the role of the herald, Mounce focused solely on the herald. He discussed the herald's task in the ancient and biblical worlds. He described the primitive gospel message. He demonstrated how gospel heralds gave a tri-dimensional announcement-historical ("Jesus is risen!"), theological ("Jesus is king!") and ethical ("Repent and believe!"). He defined that preaching as "that timeless link between God's great redemptive Act and man's apprehension of it" (153).

[15] Crawford Loritts, video conference interview with the author, December 6, 2021. Recall Du Bois's comment on the Black pastor who preached a "little more truth and a little less flattery," 6n20.

the Father, "Your Word is truth." This statement of Scripture's truth ran deeper than merely acknowledging true statements. As John Piper has said:

> Is the Bible true? I am not asking if there is truth in it, say, the way there is truth in *Moby Dick*, or Plato's *Republic*, or *The Lord of the Rings*. Aspects of truth can be found virtually everywhere. What I am asking is this: Is the Bible completely true? All of it. Is it so trustworthy in all that it teaches that it can function as the test of all other claims to truth?[16]

Carried to its logical conclusion, Piper's quote asserted an understanding of truth akin to a plumb line, rule, or line gauge; that which serves to assess all others by its own standards. This understanding has been referred to as "the correspondence theory of truth." [17] According to John Feinberg, this theory has been understood as the most common understanding of truth. In this definition truth is a relationship between the way language describes how the world is. Feinberg stated, "In the correspondence theory, statements are true or false, and what makes them so is their congruity or incongruity with states of affairs. Truth is a relation between word and world."[18] This assertion is what the Bible has claimed about itself. That is, what the Bible claims is how the world is. Though a thorough listing of these claims is beyond the scope of this study, suffice it to consider the following Scriptures and their self-attestation about truth:

> "God is not man that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it?" (Num 23:19)
>
> "And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret." (1 Sam 15:29)
>
> "Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens." (Ps 119:89)

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[16] Piper, *A Peculiar Glory*, 12.

[17] John Feinberg, "Truth: Relationship of Theories of Truth to Hermeneutics," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible: Papers from ICBI Summit II*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 8. See also R. Albert Mohler, "What is Truth? Truth and Contemporary Culture," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 48, no. 1 (March 2005), 63-75. Mohler notes that culture by and large accepts the correspondence theory of truth in the everyday functions of life: "[People] still have confidence in the existence of absolute truth an objective reality, and their lives would be unworkable, practically impossible, without it" (72).

[18] Feinberg, "Truth," 8.

> "Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar." (Prov 30:5-6)
>
> "And the Scripture cannot be broken." (John 10:35)[19]

Additionally, the Scriptures teach that truth resides in more than propositional statements; it exists in the embodied Son of God: "Jesus said to [Thomas], 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6). The profoundness of Jesus's statement is that he himself claims to be the plumb line or rule by which all other truth statements are tested. Thus, every statement which the inscripturated word claims of itself has been plumbed to the Son of God. All the Scriptures are true because the Son of God is true.

Piper noted that truth, inscripturated in the Word and embodied by the Son, is *from* God and *for* people. The Bible's self-attestation about truth is not to vaunt its own claim to inerrancy; it is to ensure that God's people do not err. Piper wrote:

> In preserving the Bible from error, God is loving us. The Scriptures are meant to protect people. Truth leads to freedom (John 8:32), and error leads to bondage (2 Tim 2:25–26). Truth saves (2 Thess 2:10); error destroys (2 Thess 2:11). Truth enlightens (Ps 43:3; Eph 5:9); error deceives (Prov 12:17; 2 Cor 11:13). Truth gives life (1 John 5:20); error brings death (2 Sam 6:7). Therefore, God is concerned not only for his own glory in being a God of truth (Rom 3:7); he is concerned also for us when he guards his word from error.[20]

When preachers step into the pulpit, they do so as agents of the One who is Truth in the flesh. They proclaim a message about the reality of an unseen kingdom. This unseen kingdom was prophesied, then brought into sight by the visitation of the king. Where the king is, so is his kingdom. The king has commissioned his preachers to announce that "repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning in Jerusalem" (Luke 24:27). Jesus's words lead to a fourth theological conviction about the Bible.

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[19] For further discussion on the Bible's self-attestation, see Piper, *A Peculiar Glory*, 96-97.

[20] Piper, *A Peculiar Glory*, 104.

Conviction about the Bible's Christ-centeredness

When Bailey preached, he wanted the congregation to know Jesus Christ as the sole solution to the innermost questions that consume people's lives. Bailey's theological pre-commitments aligned with 2 Corinthians 1:20, "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him [Christ]." To Bailey, the Scriptures presented Jesus as the Savior from sin, the Deliverer from self-esteem struggles, the Healer from evil, and the Victor from death.[21] Bailey's interpretive lens led him to stress Christocentric contours in the text. Bailey did not preach moralistic sermons. Instead, he showed Christ out of all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27). His redemptive-historical whoop sounded Christ's victory over any congregational challenge. In his preaching over Ephesians, Bailey noted Paul's "indicative/imperative"[22] framework: God has acted decisively in Christ (Eph 1-3); therefore, we must respond obediently (Eph 4-6).

Bailey's Christ-centered convictions should inform preachers about their own exegesis through the lens of the person, word, and/or work of Jesus.[23] The expositor should integrate the meaning of the text with climax of God's revelation in Jesus. The Gospel must be the ground for every "Thou shalt." The Kerygma should interpret Genesis through Revelation. Rather than a dissection of the text into pericopal units as a string of moralizing pearls, Christ-centeredness should unveil the text with Christ as the final fulfillment. For Graeme Goldsworthy, the key interpretive question should probe how the text or its broader context reveals Christ's person, word, and/or work: "All the expectations of the Old Testament have come to fulfillment in HIM. And this has

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[21] Bailey and Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White*, 167.

[22] John Carrick, *The Imperative of Preaching: A Theology of Sacred Rhetoric*, repr. (Carlysle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2016), 5. This dissertation found no evidence that Bailey interacted with Carrick. That said, Bailey simply observed what many scholars have seen in Paul's writings regarding the indicative/imperative structure of his letters, particularly Romans, Ephesians, and Colossians.

[23] Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 10.

happened FOR US."[24] Christ-centeredness should first pursue a grammatical-historical study of the Bible; within it viewing Jesus as God's ultimate revelation. This hermeneutic should see meaning as existing in the text (against a reader-response perspective). This hermeneutic should respect authorial intent yet see the text in the scope of God's overall redemptive plan. This hermeneutic's critical strength can be seen in its synthesizing of all of Scripture in Jesus. Its critical vulnerability would be textual "stereotyping" or allegorizing of Christ.[25] Also, Jesus should not be reduced to a "moral example."[26]

Additionally, Christ-centeredness has informed the way in which the text showcases *the need for Christ*. Listeners should confront the desperateness of their situation before hearing of their rescue by God. They should be aware of how much they need to be rescued. That they made it to church may lull them into pseudo-righteousness. Church attendance should not translate into smug assurance. Gerhard Forde has tagged this condition, "the problem of decadent pietism," where congregants care more about "getting right with themselves than with God."[27] The preacher should gently but clearly show listeners *their own reality*. No one, including the preacher, has ever stood righteous before a holy God; all have fallen short of God's glory and stand condemned (Rom 3:10-20). Only sinners have arrived at church assembly. Before hearers at Pentecost (Acts 2) could believe and receive baptism, their hearts had to be cut by the Apostle Peter's sermon.

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[24] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1-2, 93.

[25] For example, Augustine saw Abel as a type of Christ with Cain representing the enemies of Christ: "He [Cain] also was a symbol of the Jews who slew Christ, shepherd of the flock of men, who was foreshadowed in Abel, shepherd of the flock of sheep." See Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God* 15.7, trans. Philip Levine, ed. Jeffery Henderson, in *Augustine: The City of God Against the Pagans*, Loeb Classical Library 414, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 446-47.

[26] Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), 15.

[27] Gerhard Forde, *The Preached God: Proclamation in Word and Sacrament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 34.

Thus, Christ-centeredness should be more than proclamation of the historical record concerning Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection. Christ-centered preaching should address the inaudible question embedded in the ears of church attendees: Why should anyone care about the sermon's text? Answer: Because the text has rendered the church passive in its exegesis of her, "discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12).[28] The text should deliver a remedial hurt as it strips listeners of their pretentiousness before God's holiness. Then, having exposed the congregation with the law of God, the preacher applies gospel balm by announcing Christ as Lord who loves the unlovely. In Forde's words, God not only loves the "underbelly of the world," he has made it anew in Christ.[29] Forde said, "God's gospel word puts a new heart within us, thus ending the old and creating us new. He does this without condition-since the cross and its judgment have already happened in history. *God made the unlovely to be lovely by sending a preacher. Imagine that!*"[30]

To summarize, Bailey's hermeneutic should prompt preachers to articulate specific, theological pre-commitments about the nature of Scripture. Bailey's hermeneutic should instruct preachers (1) to see the Bible as a portal to God's supernatural reality; (2) to view themselves as Spirit-appointed heralds of this reality; (3) to understand Scripture as absolute truth, and (4) to comprehend Scripture through the person of Jesus Christ.

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[28] Forde, *The Preached God*, 25. Forde, "Preachers need to read the pericopes so as to allow themselves to be exegeted by them and then preach in a fashion that allows the text to do its deed to the hearers" (21). And elsewhere, he asked, "Are we being exegeted by the Scriptures-do we allow them to scrutinize our lives and give us God's promise? The authority of Scripture lies in its power to find, expose, and establish the being of its hearer" (25).

[29] Forde, *The Preached God*, 9.

[30] Forde, *The Preached God*, 9.

On Hirsch's "Meaning/Significance" Paradigm

Bailey's definition of expository preaching assumed the author as the primary residence of meaning. The annual E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference, a homiletical *festschrift*, has continued Bailey's commitment to author-willed meaning. Bryan Carter, Concord's current pastor and conference host, highlighted the conference's aim of discovering the biblical text's proper meaning derived from the biblical author's willed intent.[31] Furthermore, Bailey's hermeneutic presupposed the ability to retrieve authorial sense from the text for its impact on the contemporary listener. Thus, preachers and teachers of preaching should follow Bailey's lead in (1) tracing the pericopal author's intentions as written and (2) communicating its significances for their listeners. Bailey's hermeneutic demonstrated E. D. Hirsch's meaning/significance paradigm as elemental to the essence of expository preaching. Bailey's hermeneutic has answered three vital questions to the meaning/significance model.

Why Should the Author's Meaning Matter?

Without a preunderstanding that the author's meaning both exists and can be retrieved, no communication could occur, let alone biblical exposition. Following David Berlo's communication model, three indispensable components of communication include an initiating source, a sent message, and receptive vessel. That is, the source encodes a message, which is decoded by the receiver. The names could vary (author/book/reader, writer/letter/recipient, encoder/code/decoder) but all three comprise an irreducible complexity for communication to occur. What the author intentionally willed in the text must be considered or else the readers are left with theirs or others'

[31] Bryan L. Carter, ed., *Preaching Romans: Lessons and Sermons from the E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference* (Washington, DC: Sims Publishing Group, 2018), 15.

willed intent.[32]

Applying Berlo to exposition, the biblical author would be the initiating source who constructed thoughts and encoded them in a text. This fact alone should lead a reasoning person to conclude that texts alone are incapable of encoding thoughts. Rather, as non-living articles, *texts archive the thoughts of the author*. Robert Stein has affirmed this very point:

> To ask, "What does a text mean?" is to ask of an inanimate object what it cannot do, that is, to construct a thought or an idea. Authors and readers can think but not paper and ink, stone and groves, papyrus and symbols. Thus, I find it impossible to conceive of a text "meaning" anything. Usually what people are saying when they speak of the meaning of a text is "the meaning of the author that the text conveys."[33]

Biblical exposition, then, should be understood as the study of a communication act which originated from biblical authors who encoded their thoughts in writing, received by their readers. To omit the author would be to omit the author's communication. Expositors would then be simply exposing their own or another's impressions of the text. Walter Kaiser identified this scenario as the critical hermeneutical decision for biblical exegesis. The preacher must decide between (1) meaning discovered via verbal, authorial intent or (2) meaning manufactured via reader impressions.[34] Kaiser rightly held that the preachers' task should not be a discussion of their own representations of the text; rather, they should locate and communicate the will of the author. He stressed, "The interpreter's job is to represent the text, not the prejudices, feelings, concerns, or judgments of the exegete."[35] Thus, impressionistic

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[32] David Berlo, *The Process of Communication* (New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1960), 29. Berlo acknowledged his model as an adapted version of Aristotelian communication: "the person who speaks, the speech he produces, and the person who listens"(29).

[33] Robert H. Stein, "The Benefits of an Author Centered Approach to Hermeneutics," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 44/3 (September 2001), 451-66.

[34] Walter Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 24.

[35] Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 45.

sermons would not reflect Bailey's definition of expository preaching.[36]

Hirsch issued five rebuttals to a reader-centered thought that displaces authorial intent.[37] First, he maintained that exiling a text's author would bring confusion to substantiating a text's meaning because it would render as many meanings as critics. He noted, "If the author has been banished, the critic still remained, and his new, original, urbane, ingenious, or relevant 'reading' carried its own interest."[38] With multiple critics, what principle would adjudicate a text's meaning and who would be credentialed to offer a judgement?

In pulpit ministry such a hermeneutical posture would inevitably lead to homiletical anarchy with as many textual meanings as preachers. Bailey emphasized the preacher's job to determine the "*precise* meaning of the text."[39] *Preachers should strive for this level of communication because the Bible itself presumes authorial intent*. For example, when the Apostle Paul told the Corinthian church not to associate with the sexually immoral, he clarified himself because the church did not grasp his meaning (1 Cor 5:9-11). Some assumed he meant every person, Christian or non-Christian, who is sexually immoral. Paul, then, explained what he originally meant: They were not to

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[36] Impressionist preaching would fail any careful definition of expository preaching. For instance, Al Mohler argued the expository sermon as explaining and applying the biblical text to the people of God. Its goal would establish the people of God as his elect, holding a biblical worldview. Mohler said that the expository sermon is empowered by the Holy Spirit and structured according to the outline of the text. Following the etymology of homiletics (to say the same thing), Mohler rightly said that the truth substance of the expository sermon should match the truth substance of the text. See R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2008), 65. Also, Donald R. Sunukjian denoted a sermon as expository so long as it (1) explained the exact meaning which the biblical author intended to give and (2) demonstrated the relevance of the exact meaning to the lives of the hearers. See Donald R. Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 9. Moreover, Hershael W. York taught biblical exposition as "engaging exposition." That is, the preacher should accurately explain meaning and winsomely apply the biblical author's intended truth in the power of the Holy Spirit. See Hershael York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2003), 33.

[37] E. D. Hirsch, Jr., "In Defense of the Author," in *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 1-23.

[38] Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 3.

[39] Bailey, *Ten Reasons For Expository Preaching*, 2.

associate with sexually immoral people who call themselves Christians. Paul wanted the church to understand his intent via verbal meaning.[40]

Second, Hirsch rejected the very idea that meaning in texts can change. He conceded that authors often change their minds about their writings. Authors periodically have reviewed their previous writings and in a new light revise their meaning. *But an author's revised meaning has only validated the existence of an author's earlier meaning*. Any change in the author's meaning would only be known if the author gave notice. Hirsch wrote:

> He [the author] could report a change in his understanding only if he were able to compare his earlier construction of his meeting with his later construction. That is the only way he could know that there is a difference: He holds both meanings before his mind and rejects the earlier one. But his earlier meeting is not there by chance in any way.[41]

Applied to the homiletical realm, for example, in Acts 10:28 Luke recorded the Apostle Peter's change of mind about God's acceptance of the Gentiles as full members in the church: "God has shown me that I should not call any person uncommon or unclean." That Peter revised his meaning indicated the existence of a previous meaning-that he had consigned certain persons as uncommon or unclean.

Third, Hirsch reproved "anti-intentionalists" for their failure to distinguish between *what* the author planned to communicate (intent) and *how well* the author actually communicated (style).[42] He agreed that authors may stumble in their attempts to communicate their message. He granted that an author's life situation may inform how the text is expressed. He noted that the purpose of critical review is assessment: how effectively did the author convey his thoughts? But the thoughts under review would

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[40] John Piper, *Reading the Bible Supernaturally: Seeing and Savoring the Glory of God in Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 304.

[41] Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 9.

[42] Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 12.

belong to the author, not the reader. Additionally, Hirsch conceded the theoretical possibility of authors communicating their intentions so well that the consensual *vox populi* renders the author's meaning irrelevant. But then he wondered whether such a consensus has ever been achieved.[43]

What drives anti-intentionalism is assumed, textual autonomy. W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley argued this premise:

> The poem is not the critic's own and not the author's (it is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it). The poem belongs to the public. It is embodied in language, the peculiar possession of the public, and is about the human being, an object of public knowledge.[44]

According to Wimsatt and Beardsley, textual autonomy would even designate the critic as a proxy for the author, a type of co-regent over the text. They reasoned that the text is neither the critic's nor the author's but the public's. But exactly who would constitute "the public?" They never specified. Would not both critic and author belong to the public; and if not, why not? Wimsatt and Beardsley have committed a fallacy of reasoning called "the law of noncontradiction."[45] They synthetically created a classification, "the voice of the public"; they arbitrarily segregated "author" and "critic" from it; then based their assertions on a synthetically created premise of textual independence.

Applied to homiletics, this notion would name the preacher's experience with the text (or the experience of the congregation to whom the preacher addresses) as authoritative as the biblical text's author. This notion should be rejected. In the Gospel of

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[43] Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 13. Hirsch quipped that if the myth of [*vox populi*] actually existed, "there would not be any problems in interpretation." He would be out of a job (13).

[44] W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., and M. C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 54., No. 3 (July-September 1946), 468-88.

[45] Richard A. Holland, Jr., and Benjamin K. Forrest, *Good Arguments: Making Your Case in Writing and Public Speaking* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 134. Holland and Forrest defined the law of noncontradiction as "an assertion that for any object *x* and any property F, *x* cannot be both F and not-F at the same time and in the same sense"(134).

Luke, Luke specified his intent to Theophilus: assurance of his faith (Luke 1:4). How silly it would have been had Theophilus thought, "I realize what Luke intended to convey; nevertheless, I will create my own meaning, making it equal or better that of Luke!"[46] Bailey's hermeneutic did not result in asserting his own experience of the text as the text's meaning; he preached the biblical author's meaning.

Fourth, Hirsch corrected any view concerning the inaccessibility of an author's intended meaning. Hirsch exposed and refuted the bifurcated view that while the text is a public artifact, the author's thinking is a private mystery. The text, having survived the author, now belongs in the custody of readers and critics alike. The author has died; time travel is impossible. Speaking as if he were anti-intentionalist, Hirsch said, "The goal of reproducing an inaccessible and private past is to be dismissed as a futile enterprise."[47] To anti-intentionialists, a scholar's time and energies would be better spent seeking the text's relevance for the current audience.

Against this view, Aristotelian purposes of communication (to persuade, to instruct, to delight) stated that meaning is inherent to any text. So Hirsch chided attempts to uncover meaning by exploring the author's private psychology. He maintained the author's text as the most reliable piece of evidence to ascertain the author's psychology.

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[46] Certain assumptions of "performance criticism" are derived from Wilmsatt and Beardsley. Performance criticism concerns the reciting (from memory) and reenactment of the biblical text. A biblical text is performed or embodied by the presenter. Peter S. Perry understood performance criticism as the preparation, internalization, and performance of Scripture. See Peter S. Perry, *Insights from Performance Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 21. Having once recited the Sermon on the Mount before this author's congregation, much appreciation can be seen in a live performance of biblical recitation. But the reader should pause at Perry's views on meaning: "Performance criticism also exposes the unreality of a search for an "original" version. Even if we assume that a manuscript has all the words and letters that an author penned, we can't reproduce the embodiment that the author envisioned. Even if the exact words are used in the same language, every performer of that text will say the words slightly differently based on their own preferences and interpretation. Every audience will hear it differently based on their preconceptions and the situation." Perry, *Insights from Performance Criticism*, 148. These comments seemed to echo Wilmsatt and Beardsley. Interestingly, Bailey was noted for his own "biblical performance" as a first person narrative preacher. See E. K. Bailey, *The Preacher and the Prostitute* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2004); also, E. K. Bailey, *Testimony of a Tax Collector* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2004). Contra Perry, Bailey's definition of biblical exposition conscientiously assumed authorial intent and employed the grammatical-historical method for intent retrieval. See Bailey and Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White* (157-67), for Bailey's own analysis of *Testimony of a Tax Collector*.

[47] Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 14.

Scholars who are interested in an author's psychology should consult the author's text. Elliot Johnson affirmed, "Intention is not understood as a separate event, there is no difference between action conceived and action achieved. Rather intention is expressed in the public activity of writing."[48] The only way to grasp what was in the Apostle Paul's mind when he authored Romans would be to read Romans! Moreover, Hirsch argued that to relegate the meaning of the text to the reader ("vox populi") would eventuate hermeneutical anarchy. Textual meaning determined by public consensus would be impossible because there would be no way to obtain genuine public consensus.

Fifth, Hirsch censured "authorial ignorance," that is, the scholar who purported to understand an author's textual meaning better than the author.[49] In literary criticism, a scholar could possibly observe a feature about a text which was unwitting to the author. But for the scholar to assume from this observation a notion of superior understanding would go too far. Hirsch stated, "How can an author mean something he did not mean? It is not possible to mean what one does not mean, though it is very possible to mean what one is not conscious of meaning. That is the entire issue in the argument based on authorial ignorance."[50] With appreciation to Hirsch, in biblical exposition the matter of "authorial ignorance" would be a relevant point of awareness, especially when considering messianic prophecies and the New Testament's use of the Old Testament texts.

Catholic theologian Raymond Brown addressed "authorial ignorance" via the concept of *sensus plenior*: "the deeper sense of the words of Scripture intended by God

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[48] Elliot Johnson, "Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, eds. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 414.

[49] Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 22.

[50] Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 22.

but not clearly intended by the human author."[51] The critical question of *sensus plenior* would be: What fuller meaning resided in the text which the biblical author was unable to grasp and convey? While *sensus plenior* recognized a more complete meaning to an Old Testament passage through the lens of Jesus of Nazareth, there is a critical vulnerability is: by whose authority would the "fuller meaning" be established? In Brown's view, "the church, the consent of the Evangelists and Fathers, and tradition" would arbitrate "fuller meaning."[52]

A preferred voice would be Walter Kaiser's "single meaning, unified referent" hermeneutic.[53] Kaiser noted, "The sole object of the expositor is to explain as clearly as possible what the writer meant when he wrote the text under examination."[54] He asserted that the Old Testament author had the same understanding in his text as the New Testament author did when the latter used his text in reference to Jesus. Kaiser has rejected *sensus plenior*, claiming the prophets of 1 Peter 1:10-12 did not write beyond their knowledge. Their limitation pertained to "temporal aspects of the subject." Their understanding was "adequate" though not "comprehensive." Kaiser's lens stressed the text's original intent as given in the canon. By original he means "original in etymology" and "original in context."[55]

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[51] R. E. Brown, "The Problems of the Sensus Plenior," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses*, 43, no 3 - 4 (November 1967): 460-69.

[52] R. E. Brown, "The History and Development of the Theory of a Sensus Plenior," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly 15* (1953): 141-62.

[53] Walter C. Kaiser, "Single Meaning, Unified Referents." In *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry, Kenneth Berding, and Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 41-89.

[54] Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 45.

[55] Kaiser, "Single Meaning, Unified Referents," 40. See also Walter C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock), 1985. Kaiser argues that the author-determined, single meaning hermeneutic applies to the Old Testament Scriptures which the New Testament writers used. He asks if the New Testament writers justly used the Old Testament texts according to the intentions of their Old Testament authors. He maintains "single-use" whether the New Testament authors utilized the Old Testament for "apologetical, prophetic, typological, theological, or practical considerations" (vii-viii). Kaiser's key claim is that God "imparted just as much revelation as the [Old Testament authors] needed to

Two other major voices should be noted, residing closer to Kaiser than Brown. First, Darrell L. Bock contended for a single meaning, multiple contexts/referents when considering the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament. His thesis claimed that "God works both in his words and in revelatory events that also help to elaborate his message."[56] While agreeing to their single meaning, Bock maintained that Old Testament texts assume new "dimensions of significance, referents, and conditions" as the plan of God unfolds throughout salvation history. Resultant readings in light of Christ should complement, rather than cancel out earlier readings.[57] Bock has expressed a dual "theological-canonical" and "historical-exegetical" appreciation of Scripture.[58]

Second, G. K. Beale valued the Apostles' unique perspective regarding the redemptive-historical plan of the Old Testament into their context. In Luke 24, Jesus taught the disciples on the Emmaus Road all that the Scriptures said concerning himself. Beale assumed the following: (1) "corporate solidarity," (2) Christ as the "true Israel" in both testaments, (3) a unified understanding of history, (4) the advent of"eschatological fulfillment," and (5) because of (3) and (4) "Christ as the center of history interprets the Old Testament."[59] Beale appreciated *sensus plenior* though cautioned against the label lest he be misunderstood as belonging to the Roman church. Canon should interpret canon with later pericopes explaining earlier ones. Present day expositors can replicate the method of New Testament writers but not the certainty of their conclusion.[60]

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make their message effective for that moment in history and for the future contributions to the whole process of revelation" (23).

[56] Darrell L. Bock, "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry, Kenneth Berding, and Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 107.

[57] Bock, "Single Meaning," 131.

[58] Bock, "Single Meaning, 116.

[59] G. K. Beale, *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 392.

[60] Beale, *Right Doctrine from the Wrong Text?,* 392.

To summarize, authorial intent should dominate the hermeneutical enterprise; otherwise, congregations in Sunday's sermon would be overhearing their preachers converse with themselves. Berlo's tri-partate model, adapted from Aristotle, has been shown to be irreducible for communication. Hirsch's five rebuttals countered reader-centeredness for its banishment of the author. Concern for "authorial ignorance" has been probed for relevancy regarding the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. The Bible should be approached as divine revelation, not Western "art." Sunukjian's words should be on the reader's lips: "Look at what God is saying to us!"[61] With these summations, thoughtful listeners would ask, "How, then, should authorial intent be acquired?" This question is a segue into meaning acquisition.

How Should the Author's Meaning Be Obtained?

Bailey taught the retrieval of authorial intention through analysis of verbal meaning. That is, he closely examined the grammatical structure of the text, the sense of the words in their original context, and the overall argument which the authors were making in the text. He stressed careful observation of the text itself. He reasoned that effective expository preaching rested on effective Bible study. He believed that authorial intent of the text could be acquired through conscientious attention to the text itself.[62]

Preachers who desire to successfully proclaim the biblical truth *in the text* should commit themselves to a methodology that will extract the biblical truth *from the text*. This methodologically should attend to (1) textual criticism: what the text actually is, (2) textual genre: what type of text it is, (3) contextual history: the context and culture of the text, (4) textual anatomy: its syntactical, grammatical features, (5) lexical

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[61] Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching*, 9.

[62] E. K. Bailey, "Basics of Expository Preaching," lecture at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, February 22, 1995 (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 1995), MP3.

considerations of words in their context, and (6) the theological significance of prominent words in the text.[63]

Regarding textual criticism, preachers should familiarize themselves with the decision-making principles in determining preferred textual readings.[64] Also, they should access textual commentaries which lay out scripture variants.[65] Regarding genre, preachers should train themselves to distinguish parable from epistle, history from poetry, lament from praise, and gospel biography from apocalyptic writings. To misread genre in a biblical text would cause the entire hermeneutical task to drift off course. Should a parable be read as a historical event or a proverb as an inviolable promise, the exegesis would go awry.[66] The preacher should explore how the style of the text communicated the reality which the author sought to convey within the text.

Regarding contextual history, the preacher should respect the rhetorical-cultural context without neglecting the author's verbal meaning. This skill has shown the

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[63] For a tutorial on exegesis, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 2d ed., (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011). Schreiner defined "exegesis" as the process of determining what an author meant when an author wrote. While Schreiner applied his exegetical tutorial to the Pauline corpus, his principles could be used throughout Scripture. He associated worldview with the hermeneutical, exegetical enterprise and stressed self-awareness of how "preunderstandings" affect the discipline of exegesis. He challenged readers to be open-minded enough to let the process of biblical exegesis modify their worldviews (9). He offers veteran wisdom toward a humble exegesis: "We are dealing with degrees of probability in dealing with an interpretation. . . . Absolute certainty is not possible" (10). He argued that "reason and logic" lead to that which is most probable (10). Also, the most likely interpretation is "coherent and comprehensive" (10).

[64] Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 40-41. For example, Schreiner listed principles both external and internal to the text for proper textual determination. Externally, consider (1) validation by the best manuscripts, (2) any textual lineage, (3) parallel texts, and (4) and any variants. Internally, a text would likely be original if it be (1) shorter in length, (2) harder to read, (3) contextually coherent, and (4) clearer than the other variants. Schreiner acknowledged the "art" versus "science" of these principles.

[65] For a tool in textual criticism, this dissertation would commend Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, rev. ed. (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005).

[66] See Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985); Leland Ryken, *Literary Introductions to the Books of the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015); and Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993).

hermeneutical exegetical task to be more art than science. On one hand, contextual knowledge of the first readers have proven beneficial to textual interpretation. Schreiner noted, "The more one knows about the culture, history, and literature of New Testament times, the greater will be the ability to put oneself in the shoes of the original readers, which is always helpful in interpretation."[67] On the other hand, the preacher should see the boundaries of socio-rhetorical criticism, its imprecise claims, and its connection to what the text itself says.

For instance, in 1 Corinthians, social-rhetorical skills would construct a picture of Roman Corinth which while helpful, may not be perfectly accurate. It could reconstruct a house plan to include a Triclinium and an Atrium, locations which could illuminate Paul's discussion concerning the Lord's Supper, yet not with flawless certainty. Textual criticism, though, would direct the preacher to what the text actually said. For example, in Paul's discussion over men and women in 1 Corinthians 14, his argument was anchored more in his own understanding of God's created order as prescribed in Genesis. His conclusions were independent of the Corinthian landscape. Thus, while a socio-rhetorical study of the "New Woman" might inform the preacher of first century Corinthian milieu, textual interpretation would go beyond a warning about false teaching or brash behavior in the house churches.[68] Paul would contend for husbands and wives to order their relationship according to creation in Genesis. This dissertation would hold that if competing interpretations arise from these two critical models, textual attention via grammatical-syntactical analysis should be prior. That said,

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[67] Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 52.

[68] For a socio-rhetorical consideration of Paul's texts on men and women, see Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). See also Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). Contra Winter and Witherington, see Terrance Tiessen, "Toward a Hermeneutic for Discerning Universal Moral Absolutes," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36, no. 2 (June 1993): 189-207.

grasping context should not be discounted and socio-rhetorical tools should be consulted for textual study.

Regarding textual anatomy, the preacher should seek mastery of authorial argument through sentence diagramming. By analyzing syntactical architecture such as nouns, verbs, indirect and direct objects, and their modifiers, the preacher would capture authorial flow of thought. For instance, in prefacing the Christ Hymn of Philippians 2:5-11, Paul urged believers to make his joy complete by being like-minded, humble, and other-centered. In other words, Paul stated: "I know your concern my welfare and joy while I am imprisoned. I am grateful for you regarding this concern. Do you want to know what would bring me the most joy while I am in prison? Your humble, Christoform deference to one another; this attitude would give me joy!" Sentence diagramming beyond versification would extract this level of meaning acquisition.[69] In another example, the preacher would note that in diagramming 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, Christ is the subject of every sentence: Christ died, Christ was buried, Christ was raised, and Christ appeared. Paul was doing syntactical Christology, advancing the supreme Son of God, even in the passive voice.[70] The effect of Paul's verbal architecture was to unify a deeply divided church community with orthodox teaching concerning the resurrection body. He wrote to activate immovable, steadfast unity as the church served the Lord. In this way, sentence diagramming would help the preacher apply the syntax of the text to the hearers.

Regarding the theological significance, the interpreter should probe for

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[69] Hershael W. York, Paul: Model and Source of Preaching 86870 (class notes, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, May 28-June 1, 2018).

[70] See Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013). Abraham Kuruvilla urged interpreters to consider what the author was *doing* with what the author was *saying*. For instance, when a minister has pronounced the bride and groom at their wedding, the minister was not only saying words, but using words to activate a situation. In American government, the president-elect who has spoken the oath of office on inauguration day becomes president. The oath not only vocalized words but actualized a new state of affairs. Kuruvilla wrote: "Authors do things with what they say, and therefore interpreters of texts are obliged to discern what was being done with what was being said, if they are to generate valid application" (51-52).

"antecedent" and "informing" words or phrases in the text.[71] Walter Kaiser noted that words such as "sabbath," "rest," "seed," and "servant" may appear in a text yet possess prior meanings in one era of salvation history that may develop in another era. He urged a biblical-theological review of key words, quotes, or seminal events in interpretation. He stressed the order of (1) determining the original meaning and function of a text's significant words or phrases in their own context, (2) surveying other usages in the biblical canon, and (3) examining usages by extrabiblical authors from the same era. To illustrate, Paul used "conscience" nineteen times in his corpus of letters. Seven of those occasions were in 1 Corinthians 8-10. A theological study would reveal his Christianizing of a centuries old secular term. Paul took a word familiar to Greek history and culture, redefining in view of the gospel.[72]

This sixfold methodology of meaning acquisition would require labored study by the conscientious preacher. Concerning the formidable effort of thorough exposition, Bailey once challenged fellow ministers, "Preaching takes work! What the congregation does not see on Sunday morning are the hours of preparation during the week. I require hours and hours of study before getting up at three o'clock Sunday morning in order to memorize the message for preaching!"[73] Bailey's pulpit, his legacy of preaching, and the privileged call of pulpit ministry would all testify to the worth of such effort.

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[71] Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 137.

[72] See author's unpublished paper, "Conscience and Christian Liberty in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10," for Hershael W. York, Paul: Model and Source of Preaching 86870 (class at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, May 28 – June 1, 2019). Helpful tools for theological review of key biblical terms, phrases, or events include: Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,* Frederick William Danker, ed., 3d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011); G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); and Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1977).

[73] Bailey, "Basics of Expository Preaching."

How Should the Author's Significance Be Applied?

Bailey respected the biblical author's willed meaning for exposition; he also cared about applying the text's meaning to the lives of the congregation. He taught application as the culmination of expository study. He believed that the effective expositor deciphered the text by "observation, correlation, interpretation, and application."[74] He understood application as "acts or actions dictated by the text."[75] Bailey's assumed that the biblical text made claims upon the hearers. The preacher's responsibility was to identify or *signify* the relationship between what the author said *in the text* and how the hearer should respond *to the text*.[76] Bailey believed that it was not the preacher's responsibility to make the Bible relevant because it already was. He insisted that the preacher's job was to signify its relevance by showing what the text looked like when actualized in the lives of the congregation. He reasoned: "I go to the text and move to the congregation because my understanding of the Bible is that [it] . . . will speak to any and every situation. . . . Whatever the difficulties and challenges, that Word will address the needs of the congregation."[77] Bailey exposed the Bible's truth, then applied it to the challenges, anxieties, and aspirations of the congregation.

How did Bailey signify the text's applications? When he trained conferees, he spoke of his viewpoint as a local church pastor who used his *awareness* of the church corporate (where they lived, where they worked, what they ate, what they wore, how they spent their leisure time, and the sum of their worries, hopes, and dreams) to exemplify

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[74] E. K. Bailey, "Basics of Expository Preaching," MP3.

[75] E. K. Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, n.d., repr. (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2013), 2.

[76] Hirsch, *Validity In Interpretation*, 8. In Hirsch's meaning/significance model, application is derived from the significance, which "names a relationship between the meaning and that person, or a conception, or a situation, or anything imaginable" (8).

[77] Bailey, "Basics of Expository Preaching."

what the text wanted them to be, know, feel, and/or do toward Christoformity.[78] His applications of the text were uniquely tailored to the congregation's state of being. By living among the congregation and observing their encouraging or challenging situations, Bailey could craft application points in a manner meaningful to the church. Because he knew their situation, he could speak to their situation. He was their teacher on Sunday and their student throughout the week. The latter persona empowered the former. He wrote, "My studies have to bleed over into their reality."[79]

Preachers today would benefit from Bailey's practice of exegeting the flock to ensure accurate application of the biblical text. Application skills develop through the repeated practice of asking questions: How was this text first applied to the original audience? What would this text look like in contemporary lives of the congregants? How would this text materialize in their work spaces, neighborhoods, and family settings? What emotion has the text demanded of the listener? What way of thinking is being required by the text? Is there a quality of speech that the text has compelled? How has the text revealed and deconstructed "idols of the heart?" (Ezek 14:3) What behaviors would comport with the world that is God "projecting" out this text?[80] Has a word, work, or character trait of Christ appeared in these verses?[81] If so, where? How would these

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[78] Bailey, "Basics of Expository Preaching." See also Bailey and Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White*, 39.

[79] Bailey and Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White*, 37.

[80] Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013), 41. Kuruvilla's work proposed that biblical authors are not merely *saying something but doing something with what they are saying.* With the goal of text-driven, audience application to God's glory, Kuruvilla (drawing from Paul Ricoeur) argued "Christiconic" preaching that considers *the world that the text "projects."* Kuruvilla wrote: "The burden of the entire operation of hermeneutics, for Ricoeur, is the discernment of this world; *the task of interpretation is the explication and subsequent application of that projected world"* (42). Kuruvilla stated that over time, week by week, *pericope by pericope*, the gathered people of God project God's holy will in imitation of Christ (42).

[81] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 122. Goldsworthy believed the basic hermeneutical question was: "How does this text testify to Christ" (122)?

verses, when applied, be *"bad news"* to the culture?[82] What would the benefits of obeying these verses be to the ecclesial community?[83] What is the "fallen condition focus" of these verses and how is God's grace the answer?[84] The preacher skilled in sermon application has first mastered the art of asking specific types of questions meaningful to the preacher's specific congregation.

Thus, application connects the preacher's knowledge of the congregation with the preacher's mastery of the reality which the text "projects."[85] The preacher stands in the pulpit as an intermediary between the temporal world of the flock and the eternal world of God. Application is not intended to merely flavor sermons with interesting illustrations. Application is meant to bring God's future world into the congregation's present experience.[86]

Moreover, Bailey spoke to the *tone* which the preacher should possess in application: "to poignantly motivate the hearers."[87] The expository preacher should lovingly feed, not angrily berate, the flock. Poignant motivation should stem from a pastor's heart to homiletically woo the congregation. It should convince them that it is in

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[82] William J. Larkin, *Culture and Biblical Hermeneutic: Interpreting and Applying the Authoritative Word in a Relativistic Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1988), 349. Larkin wrote: *"How does the interpreter correct those aspects of the culture's worldview, structures, and behavior patterns which Scriptures contradict and thereby judge to be false"* (349)?

[83] York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 111. York stated, "What's the benefit for them? What's in it for them, the audience? Too often we are focused on the benefits for us, and to be effective we have to reverse that. If my listeners don't see the benefits for them, they will be very unlikely to take my action step, and my purpose will not be met" (111).

[84] Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 3d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 30. Chapell defined the "Fallen Condition Focus" as the "mutual human condition that contemporary persons share with those to or about whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage for God's people to glorify and enjoy him" (30).

[85] Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!*, 41.

[86] James Earl Massey, "An African American Model," in *Hermeneutics for Preaching: Approaches to Contemporary Interpretations of Scripture*, ed. Raymond Bailey (Nashville,: Broadman Press, 1992), 137. Massey stated, "The Black preacher studies Scripture for preaching with a view to discern the experience toward which the text points, and to plan the best means by which a vision of that experience can be shared in the pulpit" (137). Though writing an African American viewpoint, Massey's words should apply to preachers of any ethnicity.

[87] Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, 2.

their best interest to seek and heed the wisdom of God. Sometimes the congregation needs admonishment by the aforementioned, "pastoral sermon."[88] Even then, the congregation must sense compassion emanating from correction.

Finally, no application can take effect without the power of the Holy Spirit. As discussed, Bailey applied "attitudes or actions dictated by that text *in the power of the Holy Spirit*."[89] Hershael W. York stressed that no preacher can fabricate the Holy Spirit's impact:

> We do not offer a recipe for spiritual power that comes when we follow steps A, B, and C. Spiritual power comes only when we saturate ourselves with the Word, surrender ourselves to God's will, and discipline ourselves in God's way. Even then, the power of God manifests itself in different ways. Sometimes the power of God falls like rain in a place, and we see obvious and tangible results as the lost are converted and the saved find conviction and comfort in the Word. At other times, though, the power of God is much more quiet, more subtle, but no less potent.[90]

When the Word of God has saturated the sermon and the Spirit of God has dominated the preacher's life, then the church gathers expectantly to hear and experience biblical unction through God's pulpit ambassador. The result is conformity to Christ.

On the Preacher's "Interpretive Location"

In 2003, Bailey co-authored a book with Warren W. Wiersbe whose title, *Preaching in Black and White: What We Can Learn from Each Other*, addressed the issue of "interpretive location."[91] This phrase describes the multidimensional traits which comprise the space in which interpreters inhabit while performing hermeneutics. Such traits include the interpreter's own theological, cultural, generational, socio-economic,

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[88] Leonard Leach, video teleconference interview with the author, October 6, 2021.

[89] Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching*, 2.

[90] York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 7.

[91] Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2021), 59.

and ethnic history.[92] Winfred Neely remarked that these traits are what make human beings "storied creatures."[93] Neely stated that within the human existence, both individually and collectively, are behavioral rhythms which carry various beliefs and responsibilities. A person is born into these rhythms and over time assesses them, questions them, amplifies them, or resists them. Neely wrote: "We learned, acquired, and internalized these patterns of behavior and scripts because we are members of a family, a culture, an ethnic group, or citizens of political entities such as the United States, France, Senegal, or Ghana."[94]

Bailey's and Wiersbe's book reads like an interview transcript with questions posed to both author along with their responses. Themes include their (1) respective ethnic backgrounds and histories, (2) distinct ecclesial dynamics, and (3) shared and separate sermon planning and presentation practices. Both authors preach the same sermon text, the Zacchaeus pericope from Luke 19:1-10, with debriefing comments on themselves and the other. Theologically and homiletically, Bailey and Wiersbe share a commitment to the expository pulpit.[95] Their book is a contemporary case study echoing Daniel R. Bare's argument of joint theological "meaning" with diverse "significances" due to distinctive locations. Bailey and Wiersbe acknowledge this dynamic:

> Wiersbe: Black and white preachers start with the same inspired Word of God, but we don't look at that Word through the same eyes. Why?
>
> Bailey: Because our historical and cultural experiences are so different.
>
> Wiersbe: How do we change that?

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[92] Brown, *Scripture as Communication*, 59.

[93] Winfred Omar Neely, "The African American Expositor: Interpretive Location, the Plain Sense of Scripture, and Church Life," in *Say It! Celebrating Expository Preaching in the African American Tradition*, ed. Eric C. Redmond (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2020), 39.

[94] Neely, "The African American Expositor," 40.

[95] Bailey and Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White*, 34.

> Bailey: We cannot change our historical experience; however, we can work to change our cultural experience by seeing the value of cross-pollinating.[96]

Bailey and Wiersbe argue for awareness: the preacher's own embodied experience and acknowledgement of the ways in which one's own vantage point can enable proper and improper interpretation. For example, the fact that the author of this dissertation is able to engage in higher education is due to a particular "location" in life based on what he believes is the grace and will of God. Such a "location" affords the tools of research: an on-line database of theological resources, a Bible software program, grammatical-syntactical tools for textual study, all paid for by a generous budget for books and continuing education. These tools, responsibly used, contribute to a more accurate understanding of the Scriptures for God's glory and the good of his church. This author was born in an Anglo-protestant family, educated in a private, Episcopal, college preparatory school, located in Southwestern United States.

Not all preachers occupy the author's "location." Even if they did, their training in higher education and possession of exegetical tools would not yield an inerrant hermeneutic. Neely rightly asserted: "Our interpretive faculty itself is fallen, and as a result, we come to texts with warped horizons with the propensity to twist reality into our own image. Therefore, a chastened hermeneutic of humility is always in order when we interpret life, culture, texts, and the Bible."[97]

Lest there be any misunderstanding, acknowledgement of one's "interpretive location" is not a claim to moral or theological relativism. A conscientious, biblically conservative, author-centered hermeneutic will contend for the Bible's absolute truth and

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[96] Bailey and Wiersbe *Preaching in Black and White*, 36. See also Daniel R. Bare, *Black Fundamentalists: Conservative Christianity and Racial Identity in the Segregation Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2021). Bare states: "I argue that different social and cultural circumstances facing black and white communities often led to substantially different social actions and applications, even among those who would commonly agree on the most important fundamentalist doctrines" (15).

[97] Neely, "The African American Expositor," 41.

absolute salvation in Christ alone. Scripture's veracity resides independently of the hearer, no matter the location. As Franklin Johnson wrote:

> Men are saved by grace since the death of Christ, and they have always been saved by grace when they have been saved at all. The entire argument of the Apostle Paul in his epistles to the Romans and the Galatians has for its purpose the defense of the proposition, that God has always justified men by grace through faith, and that there has never been any other way of salvation.[98]

Furthermore, acknowledgement of one's location and the fallibility of one's interpretation skills is no suggestion that biblical truth cannot be deciphered. The *preached* word of God implies the *comprehended* Word of God. Smith made this very point with his homiletical metaphor of the preacher as an "exegetical escort."[99] The preacher ushers the hearer into perspicuous truth from the all-powerful Christ for life-change. Smith wrote: "The preacher of Christian doctrine, through the power of the Spirit, explains the basic and fundamental truths of the Christian faith and shows how they apply to Christian life."[100]

The notion, "interpretive location,"[101] serves as a reminder of the potential advantages, disadvantages, possibilities, and limitations of relating the Bible's timelessness to the preacher's own space. It makes expositors modestly confident in their interpretive conclusions. When in conversation with a community of interpreters who share the Bible's inspired, inerrant essence, there can be meaningful dialogue over the diverse significances which a text's single meaning may convey. As modelled by Bailey and Wiersbe, the result is that various theological interpreters converse and contribute to a fuller depth of understanding concerning the text's significance.

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[98] Franklin Johnson, "The Atonement," in *The Fundamentals*, vol. 2, ed. R. A. Torrey (1917; rprt., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 76.

[99] Smith, *Doctrine that Dances*, 75-102.

[100] Smith, *Doctrine that Dances*, 25.

[101] Brown, *Scripture as Communication*, 120-21.

For example, Esau McCaulley contends for a theology of policing as a case study applying "Black Ecclesial Interpretation." He argues by analogy from Paul's epistle to the Romans 13:1-7 as well as Luke 3:14. In the former passage, McCaulley contends for a structural/corporate application demonstrating ways in which Roman militia acted as police. In the latter passage, he addresses law enforcement as individual actors. McCaulley discusses policing and power, the image of God, and money. He sees correspondence in contemporary police as agents of the state. He asserts that it is their job is to provide a peaceful environment where residents without fear of personal safety.[102] His own experience as an African American provides a relationship to the meaning of the cited texts. McCaulley's "interpretive location" provides a perspective which other locations may not afford, locations which may possess certain "blind spots." Neely affirmed the importance of a hermeneutical community to expose such "blind spots" toward a more comprehensive understanding of the text's meaning and significances: "Since all Christ followers have an interpretive location, and since all of us may have blind spots or experiences that may make us more sensitive to aspects of scriptural truth that others with different experiences may miss, we need one another as we grow in our knowledge of God based on his Word."[103]

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to make explicit three implications drawn from E. K. Bailey's hermeneutic. Studying Bailey, the homiletician or pastor-scholar

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[102] McCaulley, *Reading While Black*, 34-46. McCaulley wrote: "This has been the Black person's repeated lament. We should not live in fear. Good should be rewarded and evil punished. The United States, historically and in the present, has not done that. Instead, it has used the sword to instill fear that has been passed down from generation to generation in black homes and churches. But that fear has never had the final word" (45).

[103] This community may be a local church eldership, a seminary faculty, a theological guild, or a denominational presbytery. The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 is an example of how the first century church collaborated to understand the inclusion of the Gentiles into Christianity. The significance of Gentile conversions was seen in light of the prophetic meaning of Amos 9:10-11.

should extract at least three lessons for the sacred desk. The first lesson pertained to the preacher's convictions about the nature of Scripture. What makes the Bible worth interpreting is its supernatural orientation. To interpret God's Word for preaching is to enter the supernatural world of Christianity's Trinitarian God. *What the Bible is should decide how the Bible is preached.* The second lesson dealt with the necessity for the biblical expositor to distinguish between the author's willed meaning of a text and the various significances that the text might have in relationship to the congregation. Why authorial intent matters was discussed along with how authorial intent should be obtained. The chapter also reviewed the ways in which authorial significance can be applied to the contemporary listener, not neglecting the critical role of the Holy Spirit in illuminating and empowering the message. Finally, the chapter considered the lesson of acknowledging the preacher's "interpretive location," that is, one's own "script" or "place" in the process of interpreting Scripture. The preacher's lived coordinates have an effect on interpretation. One cannot escape their "interpretive location." An awareness of it, though, can lead the interpreter to a posture of modesty in the task of Scripture interpretation.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has sought to identify the interpretive lenses through which E. K. Bailey preached in ministry. This chapter will close our study by summarizing the arguments made in association with the dissertation's research question and thesis statement. After recapping of each chapter, future research opportunities on Bailey's pulpit will be offered, followed by closing reflections.

Chapter Review

In chapter 1, the dissertation introduced Bailey's life, significance, and the interpretive lenses which undergirded his expository pulpit. The research question's unique study asked, "How did E. K. Bailey interpret the Bible for preaching in ministry?" This dissertation claimed that Bailey employed a twofold hermeneutic: (1) *Afro-ethnic Ecclesial Kinship* and (2) *Bibliocentric Christoformity.* Bailey preached the Christian Scriptures in a mainly, though not solely, African American congregation. He viewed Concord Church as a spiritual community of brothers and sisters in Christ. He preached Spirit empowered, author-centered, expository sermons so that the congregation he served would resemble Christ he loved.

Regarding the significance of this study, Bailey's gifted pulpit and leadership skills shepherded a busy, thriving megachurch in south Dallas, Texas. He was involved with and gave oversight to all the responsibilities of vibrant, congregational life: pastoral counseling, discipleship, weddings, funerals, hospital visitation, staff oversight, Wednesday programing, community development, and of course, the pulpit. Bailey's

hermeneutic was located in the praxis of church life. He held theologically conservative convictions on biblical inerrancy, the supernatural origins of Scriptures, the Virgin Birth, the divinity and bodily resurrection of Christ. As such, Bailey was an (1) echo of W. E. B. Du Bois's "Negro Pastor," the hub of Black communal life in a context of oppressive segregation; and (2) a late twentieth century complement to Daniel R. Bare's theologically fundamentalist black pastor in America's "Jim Crow" era. While Bailey held to Baptist, biblical orthodoxy, his "interpretive location"[1] or "dated and located implacement"[2] yielded different implications than his theologically conservative, Anglo colleagues in ministry. Bailey's pulpit was a case study reflecting Bare's contention that "theological unity" between ethnicities in no way guaranteed "political or social uniformity."[3] Bailey's conference on expository preaching merged the homiletical, exegetical tools of the academy with the praxis of the local church.

In chapter 2, the dissertation examined Bailey's biography and confirmed that his theological, hermeneutical commitments occurred from "ink and blood."[4] His struggles included being a child of divorced parents, the untimely death of his father, a victim of racism, a homeless wanderer, and a displaced pastor. In this context Bailey's theological beliefs led him to perseverance and trust in Christianity's sovereign, triune God. His conservative, Reformed, theological convictions were genuine as attested by the family, colleagues, and congregation he served. As reflected in Bare's "historical-theological" method, Bailey's faith should be seen as is. Bailey's history gave testimony that Christianity's God as revealed in the Bible is trustworthy. Out of his Trinitarian

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[1] Jeanine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 120-1.

[2] Craig G. Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell: A Christian View of Place* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 25.

[3] Daniel R. Bare, *Black Fundamentalists: Conservative Christianity and Racial Identity in the Segregation Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2021), 188.

[4] Robert Smith, Jr., phone interview with the author, January 25, 2020.

worldview came his conviction that the Scriptures are divinely originated; and as such ought to be exposited from the biblical author's point of view.

In chapter 3, the dissertation considered six hermeneutical districts of Black Sacred Rhetoric. These zones were described and located along Grant R. Osborne's spectrum of reader centeredness and author centeredness. Through content analysis, Bailey's pulpit situated itself in the district named "Black Exposition," demonstrating exposition reflected in the biblical author's willed meaning. Bailey expository preaching's presupposed authorial intent.

In chapter 4, the dissertation studied Bailey's principal, homiletical influencers. A. Louis Patterson mentored Bailey in the mechanics of the grammatical-historical exposition. Via personal mentoring, Patterson equipped Bailey to become a powerful, expository preacher. Also, Henry H. Mitchell's influence at United Theological Seminary persuaded Bailey to utilize leadership gifts beyond the pulpit so that Concord Church might become a regional, ecclesial mentor to the community in Dallas, Texas, as well as a training center for pastors. Through Mitchell's influence, Bailey envisioned Concord Church as the "central organ of organized life of the American Negro."[5] Bailey's Doctor of Ministry dissertation gave evidence of Mitchell's effect.

In chapter 5, the dissertation defined Bailey's twofold hermeneutic. By *Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship*, Bailey preached and pastored his congregation with shared ethnicity and faith commitment to Christ. He brought the Bible's timeless truths to the congregation's contemporary situation. He believed the congregation's identity to be sibling kinship in Christ. He held the church to be "community," a "company," a "union," and a "center of social worship."[6] By *Bibliocentric Christoformity*, Bailey visually held

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[5] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Problem of Amusement," 1897 essay in *Du Bois on Religion*, ed. Phil Zuckerman (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000), 21.

[6] E. K. Bailey, "Our Sevenfold Oneness," sermon preached at Concord Church, Dallas, Texas, September 17, 1995 (DeSoto, TX, Sheila B. Ministries, 1995), MP3.

the Bible open when he preached, expositing the Christian Scriptures with attention to the biblical author's willed meaning. He drew out of the text the divine truth which the biblical author put into the text. More than transferring religious content, Bailey preached so that the congregation would conform to the likeness of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In chapter 6, the dissertation validated Bailey's twofold hermeneutic in sermons delimited to his last decade of pastoral ministry. Bailey's series on Paul's letter to the Ephesians alongside other purposively selected series showed that he consistently, effectively preached expository sermons through his appreciation for willed meaning and audience relevancy. From an overall perspective, Bailey's canon of sermons within the study's scope along with Bailey's papers and empirical interviews confirmed the dissertation's thesis.

In chapter 7, the dissertation explored three implications from Bailey's pulpit for the expository preacher. The chapter's intent was to answer the question, "What does E. K. Bailey teach today's pastor about interpreting the Bible for preaching?" First, preachers must possess sound, theological convictions about what the Bible is. The Bible's essence dictates the Bible's homiletics. Second, preachers must respect the biblical author's intended meaning as they reveal the reality which the text projects before the congregation. Third, preachers must pay attention to theirs and the congregation's "interpretive location."[7] The preacher's aim must be more than knowledge acquisition, it must be life-change in Christ. As discussed, the first life to change is the preacher's! Bailey wrote, "The demand of expository preaching keeps you in the book and before God, because character is developed as you spend more time with God. Being with God comes before doing for God. . . . People want to know that God is

[7] Brown, *Scripture as Communication*, 120-21.

using their pastor."[8] Reflecting on Bailey's life, Bryan Carter affirmed that Bailey's integrity embodied the very hermeneutic he employed. Carter said,

> What I discovered about him as a man was that his preaching was an overflow of his life. His preaching was an overflow of his relationship with God. . . . And it was there in those Saturday morning classes that he would begin to help me to understand the value of a devotional life, time with the Lord. It was there in that space, and he began to teach me about pastoring; how to pastor and how to lead a church and how to navigate through leadership. . . . He passed at 57. So, how do you create a conference, create a church and build a generational influence, right? And leave such a legacy in such a short period of time? I can't even imagine![9]

Future Research

Regarding future research opportunities on Bailey's pulpit, this chapter offers three possibilities. First, in the field of rhetoric, one could examine Bailey in view of Aristotle's "grand style."[10] That is, how did E. K. Bailey's pulpit reflect Aristotelian "grand style" in African American expository preaching? The research's significance would challenge preachers toward creativity, imagination and rhetoric in conveying biblical exposition. The study would include defining and exemplifying Aristotelian "plain style," "middle style" and "grand style" in contemporary preaching. Then, the study would analyze Bailey's preaching as a case study of the intersection between "grand style" and biblical exposition. The study could confirm Hershael York's thesis of "engaging exposition":

> What is the most important thing in communicating? Is it substance or style? Is it content or delivery? Simply put, it's both. You cannot effectively have one without the other. If you divorce them from each other you will fail to be the preacher and teacher God wants you to be.[11]

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[8] E. K. Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching* (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2013), 17.

[9] Bryan Carter, telephone interview with the author, March 3, 2022.

[10] Dante Wright, telephone interview with the author, February 10, 2021.

[11] Hershael W. York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2003), 195.

Second, further research could explore how Bailey's preaching led Concord toward a thriving ministry of mercy to the under-resourced. Bailey's Doctor of Ministry dissertation probed ways which the local church could meet a community's tangible, physical needs; what secularism might call "social justice." The research could make connections with Du Bois's iteration of the social dynamics of Black church life. The research could show how Bailey understood matters of social justice within biblical, expository preaching. The research question posed could be: "How did E. K. Bailey's expository preaching empower the local church to meet physical needs with love?" The significance of the research would portray Bailey as a case study of a pastoral preaching to urge the church to be "doers of the word, and and not only hearers" (James 1:22). Bailey believed in the sufficiency of Scripture to nourish the spiritual lives of the Concord church family; he also believed it was the responsibility of the church to serve the community by doing good works in the name of Christ. The study would highlight how Bailey's theologically conservative pulpit viewed social justice through the lens of Scripture's sufficiency.[12]

Third, further research on Bailey could explore the history of the E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference. Via the historical method, the project could examine the origins of the conference: its significance, development, and contribution to contemporary expository preaching. Utilizing Jared Alcántara's compilation of sermons preached by the "Living Legends," a study could examine how each "Living Legend" sermon reflected the aformentioned components of Bailey's twofold hermeneutic.[13] The research question

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[12] The author acknowledges Kenneth R. Lewis for this research possibility in a telephone interview, February 7, 2020. See also E. K. Bailey and Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching in Black and White* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 21. Reflecting on the "sociology and theology of black Americans," Bailey references Ralph E. Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White: American Racial Reform, 1885-1912* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

[13] See Jared Alcántara, ed., *Let the Legends Preach: Sermons by Living Legends at the E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021).

posed could be: "How has the E. K. Bailey Preaching Conference complemented Bailey's hermeneutic for preaching?"

Closing Reflections

Bailey's expository pulpit continues to influence preachers by challenging them toward study habits that determine the "precise meaning of the text."[14] The question is not, "What does this verse mean to me?" Rather, "What did Paul mean when he penned Philemon?" From Paul's intent, then, the preacher considers what timeless principles connect to the lives of the contemporary listener. Bailey once mused that preaching is not "alliterated information without application."[15] More than lecturing about an ancient people, expository preaching is about mining for meaning. Again, Bailey taught that biblical meaning is quarried, not contrived! For Bailey, preaching is an act of worship in discovering and applying God's truth *to his own life* so that God's people may learn about His Word applied *to their own lives*. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever! He is at work in my story, in *our* story. Iterating this point puts preaching (not the preacher!) high in corporate worship. Bailey's hermeneutic articulates his concern for audience relevancy (*Afro-ethnic, Ecclesial Kinship*) alongside his respect for the biblical author's meaning (*Bibliocentric Christoformity*). Bailey viewed preaching as God's divinely ordained instrument imploring the church to live on the basis of who they are in Christ.

Bailey's preaching asked, "How does the text in this sermon point to Christ?" Moreover, Bailey's pastorate and doctoral studies sought comprehensive questions such as, "How does one's *overall* ministry point to Christ? How does one's marriage and family life point to Christ? Is there Christoformity in these areas as well?" Pastors must

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[14] E. K. Bailey, *Ten Reasons for Expository Preaching* (DeSoto, TX: Sheila B. Ministries, 2013), 2.

[15] Leroy Armstrong, video interview with the author, May 25, 2022.

hone their skills in preaching the whole Bible with a view to Christ. Such skills must extend to hospital visitation, funerals, weddings, committee meetings, Bible studies, staff meetings, missions trips, and local outreach. In addition to preaching good news, the pastor must *be* good news and shepherd a church culture of good news. For the church to go "farther in and deeper down" in Christ, Bailey believed that the pastor's life must lead the way and exemplify the Christ so preached.[16] Bailey's hermeneutic for preaching emerges from the overflow of his life. He remains a contemporary, archetypical "Ezra" for pastors who seek to set their hearts on the Word, practice it, then preach it to the people of God in the power of the Spirit.

[16] E. K. Bailey, *Farther In and Deeper Down* (Chicago: Moody Publishers), 2005. The title of Bailey's book originates from a lecture so titled by Robert Smith, Jr.; video teleconference interview with the author, March 7, 2022.

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ABSTRACT

E. K. BAILEY'S HERMENEUTIC FOR PREACHING

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E. K. Bailey's (1945-2003) pulpit ministry at Concord Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas, demonstrated the non-monolithic nature of Black Sacred Rhetoric. Bailey's preaching employed an author-centered hermeneutic while attending to the life situation of the Concord congregation. This dissertation will argue that Bailey's expository preaching was supported by a twofold interpretive lens, *Afro-ethnic Ecclesial Kinship* and *Bibliocentric Christoformity*. Bailey preached the Christian Scriptures (1) in connection with his ethnic and ecclesial community and (2) in submission to Scripture's authorial intent for communal formation in Christ. Bailey valued the pursuit of the biblical authors' meanings and their applications for the congregation he served.

Chapter 1 introduces Bailey's significance and pulpit legacy as an expository preacher. Chapter 2 discusses his life, education, and ministry years at Concord Church. Chapter 3 situates Bailey's hermeneutic in the landscape of six major hermeneutical districts of Black Sacred Rhetoric and locates him in biblical exposition within his African-American ethnicity. Chapter 4 explains Bailey's two principal hermeneutical influencers: A. Louis Patterson, Jr., and Henry H. Mitchell. Chapters 5 and 6 explicate Bailey's twofold lens, which the reader will see in Bailey's homiletical expositions on Ephesians in addition to other sermons preached during Bailey's most experienced years at Concord. Chapter 7 discusses implications for expository preaching based on Bailey's life and ministry. Chapter 8 concludes with further research opportunities on Bailey.

The dissertation amplifies the overlooked and under published *author-centered hermeneutic* in Black Sacred Rhetoric. It presents Bailey as an echo of W. E. B. Du Bois's "Black Pastor" and a contemporary complement to Daniel R. Bare's "Black Fundamentalist" pastor during Segregation. It shows how Bailey was able to incorporate biblical exegesis grounded in authorial intent without neglecting the unique, historical context of the African-American community he was called to pastor. Through the interpretive assumptions that grounded his preaching, Bailey trailblazed a path for a future generation of author-centered hermeneutics in Black Sacred Rhetoric.

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