

Rhetoric and the Art of Preaching

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In 1857 Antony Trollope of the Barchester Towers quipped with an ironic semblance of both gravity and levity: “There is, perhaps, no greater hardship at present inflicted on mankind in civilized and free countries, than the necessity of listening to sermons.”¹ In a letter to his son J. R. R. Tolkien once exclaimed, “But as for sermons, they are bad, aren’t they!”² In *Preaching to Programmed People*, Timothy Turner asserts that the same people who channel surf all week, probably channel surf in their mind while the minister waxes prosaically on a subject that seems irrelevant based on a text that sounds convoluted.³ Although these sentiments may be somewhat hyperbolic, similar feelings are shared across denominational boundaries.

A great deal of preaching in the postmodern ecclesiastical landscape has become either amusing and trivial or dry and prosaic. It is either driven by a contemporary standard of entertainment rather than the Word of God or a parochial understanding of what it means to be a Reformed pastor rather than a Pauline desire to be all things to all people. Andre Resner, Jr., dialectically articulates the options facing

¹ In Henri Nouwen, *Creative Ministry* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 23.

² In Richard Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts: Encountering God through Music, Art and Rhetoric* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 176.

³ Timothy Turner, *Preaching to Programmed People* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Resources, 1995), 14.

the postmodern preacher: "Either we have a rhetorical homiletic which is theologically suspect or a theological homiletic which bypasses the otherwise necessary rhetorical scaffolding."⁴ The preacher who strives to be relevant with little concern for theological accuracy is in danger of having nothing substantial to say. Conversely, the preacher who is concerned with being theologically correct with little concern for cultural relevance is in danger of having no one to say it to. Christ's exemplary parabolic method of communication exhibits a concern for penetrating theological analysis and pertinent psycho-spiritual application. Jesus was relentlessly right and relevant.

In this article I will combine the rhetorical theory of Aristotle and Augustine with the aesthetics of Aquinas and Edwards, in order to demonstrate that an aesthetic foundation to biblical preaching is intrinsic to our understanding of homiletics ontologically and an expression of it practically. This foundation enables the modern minister to be relevant in the content and style of his preaching while maintaining theological integrity.

I. Principles of Rhetoric

In his seminal work on oratorical communication, Aristotle defines rhetoric as the "faculty of observing in any given case, the available means of persuasion." He then delineates three modes of persuasion which are furnished by the spoken word. "The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself."⁵ He uses the following categories in order to explain the three essential components of persuasive speech:

1. *Logos* refers to the persuasion caused by the speech itself when we have demonstrated a claim by means of convincing arguments suitable to the case in question.
2. *Pathos* refers to the passion and feeling that the speaker conveys and the listeners' experience as they hear the *logos*.⁶

⁴ Andre Resner, Jr., *Preacher and Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 70.

⁵ Aristotle, "Rhetoric", in *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Mortimer Adler, vol. 9, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1952), I.ii. 595.

⁶ In this article I will include communication styles as part of the pathos of the preacher which impacts the hearer due to the diversity of genre's used in the communication event.

3. *Ethos* refers to how persuasion is assisted by the speaker's personal character regarding both moral goodness and intellectual credibility.⁷

However, when considering the preaching of the Christian message of the gospel, we are compelled to ask whether or not it is appropriate to homologate the principles of extra-biblical sources into our theory of homiletics? Paul asserts that when he preached the gospel he did not preach "with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power."⁸ This caused Tertullian to pose an incisive question centuries ago: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord be there between the academy and the church? What between heretics and Christians?"⁹ In this article I will demonstrate that ignoring truth wherever it may be found is not only unnecessary, it is undesirable. While many of the early fathers such as Cyprian and Tertullian were critical of utilizing the rhetorical arts, they opposed the use of Aristotelian rhetoric in rhetorically impressive ways.¹⁰ Moreover, Tertullian's critique of the philosophy and poetry and the erudite insights of the Academy betrays a secret attraction for the refinements of rhetoric and philosophy.

The merit of Aristotle's theory of rhetoric is substantiated both by Paul's rhetorical skill and by principles of rhetoric which may be distilled from his writings.¹¹ Most obviously we find a close expression of Aristotle's rhetoric in 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6. "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake."

Rereading Paul with an awareness of Aristotelian rhetoric, we find these three principles restated: 1. "Our gospel did not come to you simply with words . . ." - the logos of gospel preaching. 2. ". . .but also with power and deep conviction . . ." - the pathos of gospel preaching. 2. "You know how we lived among you for your own sake . . ." - the ethos of the preacher of the gospel.

⁷ Aristotle, 595.

⁸ 1 Cor. 1:17.

⁹ Resner, Jr., 42.

¹⁰ Resner, Jr., 44.

¹¹ Charles Wanamaker, *The Epistle to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 49.

II. Beauty and the Art of Persuasion

The symmetry inherent in a homiletic that accounts for this threefold rhetoric assumes a creative God of whom we are speaking and from whom we derive our oratorical principles. As we explore the *logos* of rhetoric, we will see how the beauty of God informs and shapes both the form and the content of the sermon.

1. *The Logos of Preaching: The Beauty of Words*

The Church's first homiletic was Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*, where he borrowed Ciceronian rhetorical principles and fused them into a Christian homiletic.¹² He argued that the aim of preaching is to "teach, to delight and to move".¹³ Therefore, when we preach we do not merely provide hearers with information, rather we craft the sermon carefully and garnish it with beauty. Richard Viladesau, in his excellent exploration of theology and the arts, opines, "If Christian faith is to move people to action, it must be able to present a concrete and attractive vision of the good: it must move the heart and stir the imagination. In this sense, theology itself must become aesthetic."¹⁴ In order for theology to become aesthetic within the homiletic discipline, Christian communicators must understand the already present aesthetic dimension of the preaching craft.

Jonathan Edwards argues that the beauty of God consists in the unity and diversity within the Godhead and the harmony and proportion of his attributes.¹⁵ This unity in diversity and harmony and proportion, integral to our understanding of the character of God, is expressed in the creative act and reflected in creation. Therefore, our understanding of beauty and its human impact emerges from our understanding of the beauty of God.

Thomas Aquinas' aesthetic theology is effectively outlined in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, where the protagonist

¹² Resner, Jr., 45.

¹³ Augustine, "On Christian Doctrine", in *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Mortimer Adler, vol. 9, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1952), 686.

¹⁴ Richard Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts: Encountering God through Music, Art and Rhetoric* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 156.

¹⁵ Jonathan Edwards, "The Nature of True Virtue", in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 127-129. See also Jonathan Edwards, "An Essay on the Trinity," in *Treatise on Grace and Other Posthumously Published Writings*, ed. Paul Helm (Cambridge: James Clarke and Company, 1971), 102.

Stephen Dedalus explains the Thomistic theory of aesthetics to his friend Lynch. He argues that there are three essential elements to beauty: wholeness, harmony and radiance. First you see a piece of art in space or hear a piece of art in time, apprehending its self-contained wholeness. This is *integritas*. Having first felt it as a unified thing, you now apprehend its complexity, divisibility and the sum of its parts in harmony. This is *consonantia*. Lastly, radiance or *claritas* refers to the instant wherein that supreme quality of beauty is apprehended by the mind which has been arrested by its wholeness and captivated by its harmony.¹⁶

Similar to Aquinas' *claritas*, Jonathan Edwards' aesthetic theory further encompasses our experiential apprehension of beauty. He argues that that there is a twofold knowledge of goodness and beauty of which God has made the mind capable. The first is that which is merely notional and speculative and the second is the feeling of pleasure or sense of the heart at that which is perceived to be beautiful.¹⁷ Therefore, beauty that is creatively communicated through the evocation of ideas and feelings reaches beyond the merely conceptual level and touches the core of the person. Hence, the beauty of God corresponds to our deepest creaturely desires, necessitating the pursuit of beauty in all that we do. If this aesthetic theory has merit and beauty is the unifying factor which is essential to the very character of God, then it follows that the beauty of the message and of its media is not merely incidental to what is understood and communicated, rather "beauty is intrinsic to its meaning."¹⁸

This means that preachers of the gospel must be intentional craftsman with their words and artisans with the form and content of their sermons. The beauty of God compels us to preach in a manner that coheres with His beauty. Rhetorical principles, rooted in our understanding of the beauty of God, infer a sermon's unity, symmetry and proportion in its exegesis, exposition and illustration. Consequently, like the teacher in Ecclesiastes, we must "search to find just the right words"¹⁹ and preach with a perception of the beauty of God and an eloquent expression of that splendour in the form and content of the message. Therefore,

¹⁶ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 230-231.

¹⁷ Jonathan Edwards, "A Divine and Supernatural Light", in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol.2 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 14.

¹⁸ Viladesau, 146.

¹⁹ Ecclesiastes 12:10, NIV.

Although they do not talk of it at school -
... we must labour to be beautiful.²⁰

All of this, however, begs a further question: does eloquent language and persuasive speech mitigate the power of the gospel that we are preaching? If Paul did not preach "with eloquence or superior wisdom", should we seek to be craftsmen with our words?²¹ An awareness of the Corinthian context in which Paul spoke these words and the addressee to whom he spoke enables us to unpack his meaning. Paul was contrasting the wisdom of God with the wisdom of the Greeks, who believed in the seductive power of rhetoric. The Greek Sophists, in particular, were effective rhetors who saw truth as negotiable, contingent upon rhetorical skill and trickery. Words were merely tools used by rhetoricians to convince someone of an argument regardless of its veracity.²² Since the Corinthians were easily seduced by falsely ornamented rhetoric, Paul's intention was to dissuade them from trusting in eloquence, asserting that he did not rely on rhetorical trickery or oratorical cunning. What is annulled in Paul's thinking is not rhetoric *per se*, but rhetoric that is *kata sarka* (according to the flesh). Indeed, Paul shows an awareness of classical rhetoric in his letters as he employs rhetorical principles even as he sublimates it in his theological critique of it.²³ For example, it is not simply the content of 1 Corinthians 13 that compels young couples to have it read at their weddings, but the beauty and cadence of the poetry and the eloquence of the language. Although Paul did not entice his hearers, he did seek to persuade with carefully chosen words.²⁴ The fluent and articulate John Calvin contends that it is "quite unreasonable to suppose that Paul would utterly condemn those arts, which are excellent gifts of God, and which serve as instruments, to assist men in the accomplishments of important purposes."²⁵

²⁰ William Butler Yeats, "Adam's Curse", in Harold Bloom, *The Best Poems of the English Language* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004), 768. This is a broad application of Yeats' meaning. It nevertheless makes the point, that creativity is hard work.

²¹ 2 Cor. 2:1, NIV.

²² Resner, Jr., 10.

²³ Resner, Jr., 83.

²⁴ Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), 31.

²⁵ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Vol. XX* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 75.

A sermon must not only be rooted in a theological aesthetic, but it must also be garnished with illustrative beauty which corroborates biblical truth claims, thereby facilitating a connection between the preacher and the hearer. In a speech addressed to the English Parliament on June 14, 1643, the philosopher/poet John Milton addressed the question of censorship in publishing. Milton opposed a censorship which excluded everything but Christian material. He argued that Moses, Daniel and Paul were all familiar with the literature of their culture and were therefore able to communicate effectively within these cultures. Moses was familiar with Egyptian culture and learning. With his knowledge and understanding of all kinds of Chaldean literature, Daniel would have been immersed in the mythology of the Babylonian Empire.²⁶ Regarding Paul's awareness of literary art, Milton explains: "Paul . . . thought it no defilement to insert in Holy Scripture the sentences of three Greek poets, and one of them a tragedian . . .".²⁷ He is referring to the Areopagus in Acts 17 where Paul quotes Epimenides, a Cretan poet from 600 BC, and a Hellenistic Stoic named Aratus from the third century BC. Epimenides in the fourth line of a quatrain of his work *Cretica* says,

They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one –
The Cretans, always liars, evil bests, idle bellies!
But thou art not dead; thou livest and abidest for ever,
For in thee we live and move and have our being.²⁸

The words of Epimenides, referring to Zeus, the Greek god of the sky, are borrowed by Paul in order to relevantly illustrate the truth of how God is the foundation and sustenance of our lives. Paul then quotes Aratus from his poem *Phaenomena*:

Zeus begin with Zeus. Never, O men, let us have him
Unmentioned. All the ways are full of Zeus,
. . . the sea is full
Of him; so are the harbours, In every way we have all to do
with Zeus,
For we are truly his offspring.²⁹

²⁶ Dan. 1:17.

²⁷ John Milton, "Areopagitica", in *The Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 32 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1952), 388.

²⁸ Quoted in F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 339.

In both verses Zeus is presented as the supreme being of Greek mythology and Stoic philosophy.³⁰ Using the *Phaenomena* Paul declares that Yahweh has created mankind and we, therefore, must worship him. Like Paul, an effective use of the literary arts may garnish our sermons with illustrative beauty and provide an appealing association with the unbelieving world. For “[a]ll truth is from God; and consequently if wicked men have said anything that is true and just, we ought to not reject it; for it has come from God.”³¹ Therefore, to ignore the wisdom of the unbeliever is a rejection of the image in which she or he has been created. A worldview that recognizes the creating act of a Trinitarian God encompasses dissenting voices who may unwittingly speak God’s truth. For as Gene Veith reasons, “Standards of beauty, the psychology of literary form, and the requirements of language itself, will tend to draw authors even against their natural inclinations into literary expression that coheres with the logos of God in whose image we have been created.”³²

Moreover, engaging in literary art as an expression of the beauty of God in order to garnish a sermon provides insight into the human soul. John Killinger correctly maintains that “[w]hen the church fails to listen to contemporary art, it usually misses the temper and mood of humanity and loses its opportunity to deal with the needs of man at the point where it might most readily have entered into them.”³³ Moses, Daniel and Paul were effective in addressing their respective cultural contexts, in part because they were men who knew their culture’s literature.

However, I am not simply advocating the notion of plundering the Egyptians as if we were to go about pilfering ideas from the kingdom of darkness and smuggling them into the kingdom of light. Rather, recognizing literary beauty wherever it may be found, we employ it organically as God’s truth taken from one who has been created in God’s image.

²⁹ In Bruce, 339.

³⁰ Jerome Neyrey, “Acts 17, Epicureans and Theodicy: A Study in Stereotypes”, in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 122.

³¹ John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. XXII* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 300-301.

³² Gene E. Veith, *Reading Between the Lines* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 74.

³³ Killinger, 15.

2. *The Pathos of Preaching*

Having argued for the beauty of God as the foundation of both the form and content of the sermon, I will now discuss the need for the minister's *pathos* which includes the preacher's passion and style.

Preaching with Passion

Andre Resner suggests that “[p]reaching’s problem . . . is not a matter of what is said but how it is said.”³⁴ Augustine argued that in preaching there ought to be various speech styles. “You will be eloquent when you can say little things in a subdued manner, moderate things in a temperate style, and great things in a majestic style.”³⁵ Furthermore, if the aim of oratory is to teach, delight and move; then teaching depends upon what we say and delighting and moving the hearer in the way we say it.³⁶

In *The Religious Affections*, Jonathan Edwards correctly addresses the need for emotion to accompany theological understanding in the experience of one's faith: “He that has doctrinal knowledge and speculation only, without affection, never is engaged in the business of true religion.”³⁷ Therefore, in his study of revival he asserts that “[o]ur people do not so much need to have their heads stored, as to have their hearts touched, and they stand in greatest need of that sort of preaching, which has the greatest tendency to do this.”³⁸ Moreover, ministers, he avers, are not to be blamed for raising the affections of their hearers too high if that which they are affected with be worthy of affection.

However, one's passion should not diminish the authenticity of one's vocal expression. In J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, the main character, Holden Caulfield, is very cynical toward everything in life, particularly phonies. In one scene he ponders the preacher's ostentatious voice which is used for effect. “If you want to know the truth, I can’t . . . stand ministers. They all have these Holy Joe voices when they start giving their sermons. I hate that. I don’t see why the hell they can’t talk in their natural voice. They sound so phony when

³⁴ Resner, Jr., 76.

³⁵ Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Book IV, 686.

³⁶ Augustine, Book IV, 683.

³⁷ Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 30.

³⁸ Jonathan Edwards, *On Revival*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 391.

they talk.”³⁹ In preaching there will be inflection, crescendo, animation as well as conversational tones. However, *pathos* does not mean that we preach with a Holy Joe voice that sounds conjured and inauthentic.

Preaching with Style

Pathos does not simply refer to one’s enthusiasm and fervor, but the diversity of communication styles within any given preaching event. These styles are commensurate with the various genres of literature found in Scripture. God has creatively communicated through engaging narrative, poetry, parables, the metaphorical language of apocalyptic literature as well as propositional language. We, however, tend to ignore the imaginative nature of Biblical communication in favour of propositional language. Louis Markos suggests that this is because “we are heirs of the enlightenment with its emphasis of fact over fiction, logic over intuition, history over myth. We ascribe far more validity to scientific rational discourse than we do to the ambiguous, irony rich language of the arts.”⁴⁰

Within the Reformed tradition, a catechetical systematic approach to theology has weakened our ability to communicate artistically. In an attempt to avoid the increasingly common abuse of Scripture due to textual isolation, the Reformers rightly emphasized an exegetical reading of Scripture whereby one text is understood in light of another. From this emphasis there emerged a pedagogical method of instruction that focused on rote memorization. This catechetical approach inculcated truth through a systematic understanding of Scripture. While this method has great instructional value, it is important to recognize that the logical principles of hermeneutics, so integral to the Reformed tradition, had not been formulated when the gospels were written.⁴¹ Therefore, we must be careful when we hold Scripture to a system of taxonomical delineation and classification that did not exist when it was written.⁴² I maintain that if a systematic presentation of theology

³⁹ J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1991) 100.

⁴⁰ Louis Markos, *Lewis Agonistes* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2003), 120.

⁴¹ R.W.L. Moberly, “Proclaiming Christ Crucified: Some Reflections on the Use and Abuse of the Gospels”, *Anvil: An Evangelical Journal for Theology and Mission* 5 (1988): 101.

⁴² The Greek word *katechizo* simply means to teach by word of mouth. It is difficult to maintain that when the word was used Paul had some variant of the Socratic method in mind, when this method of instruction is almost entirely

was the most effective way to communicate truth, then that is how God would have presented it to us.

Moreover, a subscription to a catechetical method of pedagogy, which does not reflect Biblical style although it reflects Biblical truth, may create a prosaic theological milieu that has learned to read Scripture in order to extract doctrine, rather than reading Scripture with respect to the way Scripture was primarily written: as an expression of artistic styles to be holistically engaged for the purpose of transformation, rather than as catechetical instruction imbibed through rote memorization. Recent scholarship in narrative theology has helpfully shown us that in reading Scripture we are not simply concerned with what the Bible says but also how God says it. This does not necessarily mean that our preaching must be slick and urbane, but at the very least, it ought to reflect the styles of Scripture rather than become a mere propositional expression of truth.

How do we develop both style and substance, the pathos and logos of the sermon? One way is by being careful of what we read. The beauty of the logos will, to some degree, correspond to the literary beauty to which you subject yourself. Jonathan Edwards, of all theological writers, is one of the most stylistic and enjoyable to read. Yet he wishes that he would have studied the novels of the Victorian author Samuel Richardson in order to improve his own style of writing.⁴³ If your desk is piled high with dull leadership books full of statistical information and dry theology tomes replete with systematic reasoning, then not only will this shape what you say, but also how you are saying it. I am not suggesting that we put away our theology texts but that we learn to recognize literary beauty by subjecting ourselves to it. Read the classics, Dante, Shakespeare and Milton. Read Dafoe, Austin, Dickens, Dostoevsky, Steinbeck, Chekhov and Faulkner. Identify literary craftsmanship and subject yourself to it. This will assist you in your labour as a wordsmith and rhetorical artisan.

3. The Ethos of the Preacher

Lastly we will discuss the *ethos* of the minister of the gospel. John Wesley once said, “Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God . . . such alone will shake the gates

foreign to Scripture. Moreover, when it is used in Galatians 6:6, it refers to being catechized by the word of God.

⁴³ Killinger, 11.

of hell and set up the kingdom of God.”⁴⁴ These kinds of lofty sounding assertions are unhelpful to the development of the *ethos* of the minister and if taken literally, are ultimately discouraging. I look forward to that day when I will fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God. However, until then I am a minister of the gospel which saves from the sin I still succumb to. I make mistakes, repent and may prudently use my own shortcomings as examples of how my hearers may struggle with sin and learn to repent.

Nehemiah, the great leader who orchestrated the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, once prayed, “O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God . . . I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you.”⁴⁵ Nehemiah demonstrates the leader’s ethos when he uses the pronoun “we” and emphasizes his own sin when he adds, “including myself.” A minister of the gospel is not someone who simply exhorts his listeners to repentance; rather, he stands before you and shows you how through his own. The preacher’s ethos is observed in his authenticity, which inevitably means that he is not afraid to reveal weakness. There is something engaging about people who admit their weaknesses. They are unintimidating and welcoming. Weakness is relationally appealing.

However, we do not like to admit that we are weak and flawed. Fyodor Dostoevsky reveals why in his description of the incompetent father of the three brothers in *The Brothers Karamazov*. He describes the old buffoon with these words: “he is a man who knew his weaknesses and was afraid of them.”⁴⁶ Our fear of the exposure of weaknesses causes us to impound the truth about ourselves rather than live without pretense. We conceal our defects and deficiencies because we are afraid of them. Our strengths make us feel superior and our weakness frighten us because they make us feel inferior. Therefore, perhaps without even knowing why, people find us to be aloof and unapproachable. In Steinbeck’s *East of Eden*, the Irish matriarch, Liz, is described as a woman who “frightened her grandchildren because she had no weakness.”⁴⁷ If you are afraid of your own weaknesses, others will be afraid of you; for you would rather intimidate people than welcome them into the life of your flawed self. Most of us,

⁴⁴ In Adrian Burdon, *Authority and Order, John Wesley and His Preachers* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 25.

⁴⁵ Neh. 1:5-7.

⁴⁶ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 93.

⁴⁷ John Steinbeck, *East of Eden* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 12.

however, prefer the kind of company that allows us to be real for they do not think less of us when we disclose weaknesses.

The moments of the church's greatest influence have not been those when the church reached for worldly power or when it adapted to its culture, but when it sought to be authentic. "The church", David Wells asserts, "has been its most influential in those moments when its contrition reached down deeply into its soul . . . At such moments it has soared and out of its own weakness found extraordinary strength and power."⁴⁸ By embracing the cruciform paradigm, the weakness of the minister of the gospel becomes the locus of the power of God functioning through his preaching.

The prosaic promulgation of pure information, even God information, is dull, unappealing and uninspiring. Therefore, contemporary preaching must be concerned with the aesthetic categories of beauty in order to maintain theological integrity as well cultural significance. Using the Aristotelian categories of rhetoric, we have explored the notion of preaching as a creative expression, rooted inherently in the beauty of God as the foundation of both the form and content of the sermon. We have discussed the *pathos* of the sermon revealed in the variety of communication styles. Finally, the authentic *ethos* of the minister was discussed as that which grants credibility to the *logos* and *pathos* of the preached gospel.

⁴⁸ David Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 315-316.

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