

Homiletics: A Bibliographic Essay

by *Richard C. Stern*

INTRODUCTION

Homiletics is an inherently diverse and yet highly synthetic discipline. This is a poorly veiled way of saying that homiletics borrows from and benefits from a great many disciplines, theological and otherwise, in addition to having its own particular history, as well as dedicated theoretical and theological bases. This is the challenge – both curse and blessing – for preachers, teachers, and librarians. In thinking about writing this essay, I looked through numerous publishers’ catalogs to see what might be of potential interest to preachers and/or teachers of preachers. Nearly every book I saw in these catalogs could be of real and practical benefit to that collection of people. Without straining too much, areas directly related to preaching come to mind: the scriptures, gender-related issues, rhetoric (both classical and modern), church history, patristic theology, systematic theology, theologies of preaching, humor, use of literature in preaching, preaching the different literary forms of the Bible, postmodernism, post-liberalism, preaching at rites and other “special occasions” (funerals, weddings, baptism, and other rites, feast days, etc.), preaching for money (a.k.a. stewardship), ethics, storytelling, homiletic methods and structures, liturgics, contemporary culture, multicultural preaching (preaching with assemblies consisting of people from multiple cultures), cross-cultural preaching (preaching with cultures other than one’s own), sermon collections, influence and use of media and technology, and world religions. Then there are the many separate disciplines whose paths run in similar or parallel trajectories: literary theories, communication theories, culture studies, etc. All of this is further textured by the theological framework or jurisdiction within which one operates, that is, the ideological and ecclesiological lenses that are in play. Finally, books cluster around various topics: some old, some new, some ongoing. Topics often emerge then disappear only to reemerge a generation or a century later. As one example, there is the perpetually recurring question of whether preaching can properly be described as persuasion or only as proclamation. This debate has been ongoing since the time of Augustine. It heats up and then cools off for a time only to heat up yet one more time.

My responsibilities as a preacher and as a teacher of preachers circumscribe to a certain degree the sorts of materials I hope a library would acquire. Further, my particular interest lies with preaching as a form of communication. This includes rhetorical principles, methods of homiletic structure, and impact of media on culture. Other homiletics professors have come to the field via scripture, systematic theology, and liturgics. This will obviously influence the sorts of suggestions an individual homiletics professor might make regarding acquisitions. Yet, while having specialties, homiletics professors, because of the very rich nature of the discipline, are required to be generalists as well.

HOMILETICS AND RHETORIC

Homiletics is often perceived as an integrating discipline, a place where theology, scripture, history, liturgy, communication skills, and more all come to play. Of particular but sometimes overlooked importance is the field of rhetoric. Again, this is true at least from the time of Augustine, acclaimed author of the first homiletics textbook,

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Book IV of *On Christian Doctrine*.¹ Augustine, of course, was a rhetorician prior to his conversion to Christianity and certainly employed the rhetorical skills he learned in his new role as preacher, apologist, and bishop. Indeed, homiletic theory and practice have relied heavily on classical rhetoric for millennia. John Broadus' book, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, is an example of a rhetoric-based homiletics text that has endured in numerous printings and editions since 1870.²

The study of rhetoric has a longstanding place in the history of homiletics. Several works on homiletic history stand out for the preacher and teacher of preachers. First, although not of recent vintage, is Yngve Brilioth's *A Brief History of Preaching*, which is exactly what it advertises – a brief but solid history.³ A more recent and far more extensive examination is O.C. Edwards' *A History of Preaching*, which comes with an accompanying collection of sermons and source material on CD.⁴ It is also necessary to mention the seven-volume series by Hughes Oliphant Old, *Reading and Preaching the Scripture in the Worship of the Christian Church*.⁵ The series ranges from the biblical period to “our own time.” Yet another suggested volume is entitled *Folly of God: the Rise of Christian Preaching* by Ronald E. Osborn.⁶ What Osborn intended as a three-volume history unfortunately has been limited to the publication of just the one volume because of the author's untimely death. Osborn begins by examining the influence of classical rhetoric on early Christian preaching, moves to Jesus as a preacher, and then moves into the third century. Less ambitious histories include Paul Scott Wilson's *A Concise History of Preaching*, which looks at key personages in the history of preaching.⁷ David Dunn-Wilson's *A Mirror for the Church: Preaching in the First Five Centuries* divides the history into various themes or topics, rather than a simple chronology.⁸

In addition to these broader histories, however, there are a few specialty books that belong in a library, particularly for their relevance to rhetorical studies. Two books by George Kennedy remain classics: *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* and *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*.⁹ But the study of rhetoric is not just a matter of studying classical or ancient rhetoric, as useful as that can be. The influence of rhetorician Kenneth Burke has also been felt in homiletics. Several of his enduring works include *A Grammar of Motives*, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, and *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology*.¹⁰ More

¹ Saint Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* is translated as both *On Christian Doctrine* and *On Christian Teaching*. It is available in multiple contemporary editions.

² John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 4th ed., revised by Vernon L. Stanfield (New York: Harper & Row, 1870, 1979).

³ Yngve Brilioth, *A Brief History of Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965).

⁴ O.C. Edwards, *A History of Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004).

⁵ Hughes Oliphant Old, *Reading and Preaching the Scripture in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vols. 1-7 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998 – 2010).

⁶ Ronald E. Osborn, *Folly of God: the Rise of Christian Preaching* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999).

⁷ Paul Scott Wilson, *A Concise History of Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992).

⁸ David Dunn-Wilson, *A Mirror for the Church: Preaching in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2005).

⁹ George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), and *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

¹⁰ Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1945), *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950), and *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961, 1970).

recent homiletic authors who deploy principles of rhetoric include Lucy Lind Hogan, Robert Reid, and Craig Loscalzo.¹¹

NEW HOMILETIC

The 1970s marked a new direction for much of the preaching establishment. This development was labeled the “new homiletic.” The emphasis was away from the classical roots of rhetoric, which had dominated homiletic practice. It looked away from rhetoric and more towards the poetic, with little acknowledgement, it seems, to Aristotle’s treatment of that topic.¹² This reliance on classical rhetoric was overwhelmingly the case until some fifty years ago with H. Grady Davis’ book, *Design for Preaching*.¹³ Fred B. Craddock is also given credit for the break from classical rhetoric and “deductive” preaching. Craddock observed that we no longer, for the most part, think in the deductive modes outlined and categorized in earlier preaching or sacred rhetoric texts. We think inductively, Craddock claimed, although he has backed away from that term as applied to preaching. While the sermonic form he suggests is inductive (moving *toward* meaning or conclusion, rather than *from* meaning or conclusion), the process leading up to the sermon is still dependent on traditional modes of historical-critical exegesis. Although the process is not totally inductive, it cedes significant power to the hearers to come to their own conclusions about that endpoint. Forensic preaching might be a more descriptive concept since the preacher is assembling pieces of evidence to lead the jury, that is, the hearer, to a pre-determined conclusion.¹⁴ If he is right about our move toward inductive thinking, then preaching probably ought to follow along with that re-direction. And indeed, it has. It is surely more complex than what might be inferred, but the point is merely to suggest (1) the longstanding and important role of classical rhetoric in the history and practice of preaching and (2) the relatively recent move in “new” directions, as well as countervailing moves back toward the deductive or even catechetical modes of preaching. Expository preaching, or verse-by-verse exposition of the scripture, retains prominence in more conservative preaching traditions. Bryan Chapell is a name associated with this last expository, propositional approach to preaching.¹⁵

BEYOND THE NEW HOMILETICS

The New Homiletic is not quite so new anymore and is, for some, looking a little frayed around the edges. Although it is still prevalent, the originating personalities have largely retired: Fred Craddock, Eugene Lowry, David Buttrick, Henry Mitchell, Charles Rice, and others. The movement has become frayed enough that O. Wesley Allen spearheaded a project to gather some of those new homileticians to reflect on how the New Homiletic had changed or evolved. His book is cleverly titled *The Renewed Homiletic*.¹⁶ While the key figures in the New Homiletic have mostly retired, they are still producing valuable writings.

¹¹ Lucy Lind Hogan and Robert Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation: Rhetoric and the Art of Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999); O. Wesley Allen, *Determining the Form* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008); Craig A. Loscalzo, *Preaching Sermons that Connect: Effective Communication through Identification* (Downers Grove, IL, Intervarsity Press, 1992).

¹² Aristotle, *The Rhetoric and The Poetics of Aristotle*, ed. Friedrich Solmsen, *The Poetics* trans. Ingram Bywater (New York: The Modern Library, 1954).

¹³ Henry Grady Davis, *Design for Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958).

¹⁴ Fred B. Craddock, *As One without Authority*, revised edition (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001). The original edition came out in 1971. *Overbearing the Gospel* (Nashville, TN: Parthenon Press, 1978).

¹⁵ Bryan Chapell, *Christ Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).

¹⁶ O. Wesley Allen, Jr., *The Renewed Homiletic* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

There are a variety of “schools of thought” which are felt in the homiletics world. Feminism is an important one. Another homiletic trend of recent vintage is related to the area of post-liberal theology. This seems to be an extension to the nearly endless works addressing the post-modern milieu. Here I rely on figures mentioned in Wilson’s *Preaching and Homiletical Theory*.¹⁷ I bring to the librarian’s attention the fourth chapter, “Theology of Preaching,” in which Wilson details various figures who have impacted homiletic theology over the last 100 years or so.

Of increasing interest in homiletics is the matter of culture. Culture studies can be divided into two categories: ancient culture and contemporary culture. The word cannot be fully understood without reference to the culture from which the word emerged. Contemporary culture impacts the interpretation of the message. With regard to ancient cultural and sociological issues related to scriptural interpretation, two names stand out: John Pilch and Bruce Malina. Among Pilch’s works are series published by Liturgical Press oriented to the lectionary cycles. There is a series that provides cultural or sociological background material for each of the three major readings assigned for the day from the Old Testament (prophets), second reading (apostles), and the gospel readings. These are short volumes meant primarily for the preacher and not the scholar. Malina offers some more extensive explorations of biblical culture.¹⁸

Also of growing interest is the impact of contemporary culture on the preaching enterprise. This includes the worshipping assembly and its role in preaching, and their increasing diversity. It also includes the broader culture in which the preaching takes place. The impact of media is one area of research in this regard. Of increasing concern in the homiletics world is the matter of cross-cultural and multicultural preaching.¹⁹ Somewhat relatedly, African-American preaching is often held up as a paradigm of dialogical preaching. The point is not that it should be imitated but that it contains forms and strategies that could be employed in preaching in many contexts beyond that immediate community.²⁰ Another area of cultural diversity relates to preaching in Spanish. I have asked a number of people who preach in Spanish-speaking situations for references and have received little in the way of suggestions.²¹ Broad interest in the study of contemporary culture is represented in most publishers’ catalogs. Of particular interest are two series by Baker Academic: “Engaging Culture” and “Cultural Exegesis.” I find both series to be solid and not overly flavored with a particular or overwhelming ideological perspective. I

¹⁷ Paul Scott Wilson, *Preaching and Homiletical Theory* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004).

¹⁸ John J. Pilch, *The Cultural World of Jesus: Sunday by Sunday* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995); *The Cultural World of the Prophets: the First Reading and the Responsorial Psalm* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002-3); *The Cultural World of the Apostles: the Second Reading Sunday by Sunday* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001); and *Cultural Tools for Interpreting the Good News* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002). Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2006). Other volumes in the series cover synoptic gospels, Revelation, and John. See also Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

¹⁹ Joseph R. Jeters, Jr. and Ronald J. Allen, *One Gospel, Many Ears* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2002) and James R. Nieman and Thomas G. Rogers, *Preaching to Every Pew: Cross-Cultural Strategies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

²⁰ Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990) and *Celebration and Experience in Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990). See also Frank A. Thomas, *They Never Like to Quit Praising God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching* (Berea, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1997); and Cleophus LaRue, *I Believe That I’ll Testify: the Art of African American Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011).

²¹ Kenneth G. Davis and Jorge L. Presmanes, eds., *Preaching and Culture in Latino Congregations* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2000) and Justo L. González and Pablo A. Jiménez, eds., *Púlpito: An Introduction to Hispanic Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005) are two resources.

find books authored or coauthored by Robert K. Johnston to be especially reliable and provocative with regard to cinematic influences in contemporary culture.²² There are countless books that purport to help the preacher with postmoderns, millennials, multi-generational settings, etc.

GENERAL RESOURCES

The suggested resources here are mostly centrist in nature, avoiding overly narrow perspectives and also extremes on the theological spectrum. With that said, however, a good library should have a range of resources, providing patrons with the opportunity to engage with authors and ideas they might not explore with the limits of their personal library resources or predilections. This potential for a broadened exposure helps both to clarify one's perspective and hopefully to deepen and/or expand it. The library can help to facilitate this growth. While the library must serve the perspectives and needs of its users and institutional relationships, it should not do this narrowly but broadly.

A range of biblical commentary series is required. There are many worthy series. Some of the time-tested standbys are the Interpretation series (forty-three volumes covering Old and New Testaments) by Westminster John Knox and the Sacra Pagina New Testament series (eighteen volumes) by Michael Glazier.²³ Many use Abingdon's not-quite-so-new-anymore *The New Interpreter's Bible*.²⁴ The Anchor Yale Bible series, formerly the Anchor Bible series but now published by Yale University Press, has been around for many years, even decades.²⁵ With the hand-off to Yale, additional volumes have been published. The preceding series are aimed at the preacher. They are solid in terms of scholarly background and authorship but not overly technical. A far more extensive, technical, critical, and scholarly series is the Hermeneia series published by Fortress Press.²⁶ There are volumes covering both Old and New Testament books, including some works on the Apocrypha, although the entire Bible is not covered. There are also a great many one-off biblical commentaries that are not part of any series but are well done by respected authors. Library patrons have the opportunity to peruse library holdings that will hopefully stretch them in establishing wider or deeper perspectives. The library becomes a place for preachers to do research for preaching or adult or catechism classes, as well as an opportunity for growth in their theological acumen. I wonder if libraries could feature certain selections from time to time, such as several commentaries on Luke's gospel, noting their differences, or just leaving them out for patrons to examine. This could be done at the start of a liturgical year. Or invite authors to speak on their new works and how their work fits in the scheme of things. Perhaps this is already being done in many places.

Not every Christian worshipping community uses a lectionary, but more seem to. This opens up another category of commentary, one that focuses on the several biblical texts assigned for a given day or Sunday. Catholics use the *Lectionary for Mass*, based on a three-year liturgical cycle.²⁷ Year A focuses on Matthew, year B on Mark, and year

²² As two examples see *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006) and *Reframing Theology and Film: New Focus for an Emerging Discipline* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007).

²³ Michael Glazier is an imprint of Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN.

²⁴ *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003).

²⁵ New York: Doubleday originally and now New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

²⁶ Hermeneia series, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press).

²⁷ *Lectionary for Mass: For Use in the Diocese of the United States, Second Typical Edition*, Vol I: Sundays, Solemnities, Feasts of the Lord and Saints (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998).

C on Luke. John is distributed around the other three cycles at major feasts, such as Easter. Many non-Catholic Christian groups rely on *The Revised Common Lectionary* (RCL).²⁸ This also is a three-year lectionary that is clearly based on the Catholic lectionary first assembled in the late 1960s. Commentaries geared to the liturgical year cover the lectionary texts assigned for a given Sunday in the liturgical year or cycle. Westminster John Knox publishes the very thorough *Feasting on the Word*, a twelve-volume series, which covers the theological, pastoral, exegetical, and homiletical perspectives of each biblical text assigned for the given Sunday over the three cycles. This is becoming a family of resources with additional volumes and even Sunday school curricula published on an ongoing basis.²⁹ Because the Catholic lectionary and the RCL contain a significant overlap, commentaries based on the Catholic lectionary and on the RCL can be of help to most lectionary-based preachers. One can also look to Catholic author Dianne Bergant's three-volume *Preaching the New Lectionary*.³⁰ John Shea's series covers only the gospel passages but contains very pastoral although less scholarly insights.³¹ *Preaching from the Lectionary*, a one-volume work by Gerard Sloyan, accommodates both Roman Catholic and RCL lectionaries. It is necessarily brief but contains helpful insights and ideas for the preacher beyond textual criticism.³² It seems that the publishing house of each major denomination has a series in the form of lectionary-based commentaries completed, in the works, and/or available as ongoing subscriptions. The newest lectionary commentary series I am aware of is the *Abingdon Theological Companion to the Lectionary*, edited by Paul Scott Wilson.³³

Other general resources include the six-volume *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* and the five-volume *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*.³⁴ The *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching* is a handy volume as well, covering quite a range of topics in a single volume.³⁵ I also include the *New Interpreter's Handbook of Preaching* by Abingdon Press.³⁶ These last two resources are intended for the preacher/pastor who does not have time to do in-depth, extensive research on a given topic, but just needs a nudge in a helpful direction. In both volumes, the various entries are written by acknowledged experts in the field. The reader gets the advantage of solid scholarship but in a brief form.

A useful journal for keeping up with some of the new books coming out is the now free, online journal *Homiletic*, published by the Academy of Homiletics (AOH). The membership in AOH is limited to those teaching preaching or who are in graduate studies intending to teach preaching. It is not for those who are only preachers. The journal comes out twice a year. While there are some peer-reviewed articles, the book reviews are especially helpful. The website address is www.homiletics.org. I also refer the reader to Vanderbilt University's homiletic bibliography

²⁸ The Revised Common Lectionary (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992).

²⁹ David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, eds., *Feasting on the Word* commentary series (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008-).

³⁰ Dianne Bergant, *Preaching the New Lectionary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, Year A, 2001; Year B, 1999; and Year C, 2000).

³¹ There are four volumes in this "The Spiritual Wisdom of the Gospels for Christian Preachers and Teachers" series (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press), one for each liturgical cycle and one covering funerals, feasts, and weddings. The respective volumes are *On Earth as it is in Heaven*, Cycle A (2004), *Eating with the Bridegroom*, Cycle B (2005), *The Relentless Widow*, Cycle C (2006), and *Following Love into Mystery* (2010).

³² Gerard Sloyan, *Preaching from the Lectionary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

³³ Paul Scott Wilson, ed., *Abingdon Theological Companion to the Lectionary* (for year C) (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012).

³⁴ *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Doubleday, 1992) and *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009).

³⁵ William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer, eds., *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995).

³⁶ Paul Scott Wilson, ed., *New Interpreter's Handbook of Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008).

website.³⁷ It has not been updated since 2009, however. Librarians might also be interested in *Recent Homiletic Thought: A Bibliography, 1966-1979* and *Recent Homiletic Thought: An Annotated Bibliography, Volume 2*.³⁸

In addition to a diverse range of theologically oriented journals covering the several theological disciplines and perspectives, I suggest a theological library should also provide some access to materials not strictly theological. This would include newspapers and news magazines. I read *Business Week* every week. It gives me insights into the issues important to the culture at large. Perhaps *Scientific American* might be another choice. Their presence in a theological library conveys the belief that there is information of value beyond the strictly theological. Such periodicals are, of course, available at public libraries, but their presence in a theological library gives them a different aura and relevancy; context shapes the perception of the content we engage. These resources also have a far more current take on contemporary events than the typical theological journal or magazine. The study of theology is too easily isolated and insulated from the world in which the theology takes place and to which the theology is addressed.

Related to periodicals is the matter of online resources for preaching. I typed “preaching websites” into Bing and came up with 10,600,000 hits! They are endless and of varying value. No news there. While I have no experience in using them, I looked over some sites to make assessments on their value. In my opinion, to be avoided at all costs are websites that provide pre-cooked preaching, which ostensibly is intended to provide mere inspiration for preachers to use in fashioning their own sermons. I fear, however, that these sorts of sites mostly encourage bad habits and breaches of preaching ethics. There are, however, websites that can provide really helpful material for the preacher to use. I mention textweek.com and workingpreacher.org as two that seem to promote good preaching and not shortcuts. The latter is hosted by Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, but has a variety of denominations represented among its authors. They provide more than homily or sermon helps but are gateway sites for all sorts of content intended to help preachers do their work and not avoid their work. I am sure there are additional responsible sites. I discovered, however, that while even the excellent sites have lots of good information, they are more time consuming than using print resources.

Two lists of homileticians can help inform some bibliographic decisions. First is a list developed by Baylor University in 1996 of the twelve best preachers in the English speaking world.³⁹ The names listed are Walter Burghardt, Fred Craddock, James Forbes, Billy Graham, Thomas Long, Lloyd Ogilvie, Haddon Robinson, John Stott, Charles Swindoll, Barbara Brown Taylor, Gardner Taylor, and William Willimon. Most are American. Several are retired or deceased, but the majority are still writing and contributing to the field. For a library desiring to capture the best in contemporary homiletics, works by preachers on this list would be a good place to start. They cover a wide range of theologies and styles of preaching. The other list I consult is that of presenters at the annual Lyman Beecher Lectures held at Yale University since 1871.⁴⁰ This is a longstanding lecture series that features the most prominent

³⁷ See <http://divinity.library.vanderbilt.edu/bibliographies/homiletics.pdf>.

³⁸ William D. Thompson, A. Duane Litfin, and Haddon Robinson, eds., *Recent Homiletic Thought: A Bibliography, 1966-1979* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1967), and Duane Litfin and Haddon Robinson, eds., *Recent Homiletic Thought: An Annotated Bibliography, Volume 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983).

³⁹ See Baylor University Media Communications announcement of February 28, 1996 at baylor.edu/mediacommunications/news.php?action=story&story=1036.

⁴⁰ See <http://www.library.yale.edu/div/beecher.html>.

American preachers of the time. The lectures usually make their way into book form. The lecturers typically have other published works that have led up to their choice to present the Beecher lectures.

A trend that must surely impact theological libraries is that theological education is becoming less centralized. More courses are being offered online. More schools are offering degrees delivered largely online with periodic times of on-campus residency sprinkled throughout the program. How does the library serve these online constituencies? The Master of Divinity degree earned while attending a seminary or school of theology for three or more years is losing its status as the norm for ministry preparation. How do these trends impact notions of formation for ministry? Daniel Aleshire, in his *Earthen Vessels*, tries to make a case for the continuance of theological schools, which surely suggests that there is a case to be made, or at least a trend, that suggests the contrary.⁴¹ This varies with the denomination, of course. The Catholic Church still requires a seminary education for those seeking ordination as priests. Standards for such an education are specified by the Catholic Church. Barbara Wheeler of the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education reports on the problems that accompany the increasing use of lay pastors in the Presbyterian Church.⁴² Robert Elliott writes about alternative tracks for Lutherans seeking ordination, known as Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM).⁴³ TEEM provides education for those who are unable to engage the usual M.Div. program. They are deputed to minister in specific settings. Candidates in TEEM are older, have or have had secular jobs, and will be directly involved in their ministry setting while their formation is taking place. This, of course, means that they are not on campus in the way the traditional format would allow. They are on campus for three separate intensive weeks throughout a year. The program takes three years.

This trend has influenced the sorts of reading that these participants are looking for and the sorts of research they can be expected to conduct. This impacts publishers, which in turn affects libraries. On the basis of a recent panel of publishers at an Academy of Homiletics convention, the books that sell tend to be very “practical” in their orientation, that is to say, longer on the “how to” but shorter on the “why” of in-depth analysis, critical analysis, theoretical reasoning, etc.; in other words, some method but less theory behind the method. The orientation is toward “effective” preaching, however that might be defined. I observe that the theological nature of preaching becomes less and less important or evident in the publishing world. How do these online students access the library’s resources for their studies? Are e-books an answer? These ministers and ministry students seem less likely to have the time and energy to invest in the longer-term, deeper, more reflective and languid sorts of study that might once have been assumed with the Master of Divinity degree. A glance at a post-ordination pastor’s library these days is unlikely to find much in the way of updated critical scholarship. In homiletics, the impact seems to have been that there are fewer and fewer “grand theories” of homiletics coming out such as those theories/methods developed during the era of the New Homiletic including works by Craddock, Lowry, Buttrick, Wilson, Rice, and others. Books have taken a much smaller and narrower aim on particular homiletic problems. As in many other disciplines, one wonders if the formation of pastors and preachers suffers in the apparent and growing emphasis

⁴¹ Daniel O. Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels: Hopeful Reflections on the Work and Future of Theological Schools* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008).

⁴² Barbara G. Wheeler, “Is Seminary Education Necessary?” <http://www.auburnseminary.org/seminary-education-necessary>. Also Leslie Scanlon, “Commissioned Lay Pastors: “Second-Tier or Top-Rung Leaders?” <http://www.pres-outlook.com/news-and-analysis/1-news-a-analysis/9845-commissioned-lay-pastors-second-tier-or-top-rung-leaders.html>.

⁴³ Robert Elliott, “ELCA Seminaries Prepare for Demographic Change,” *The Lutheran*, 25, no. 11 (2012): 46-48.

on professionalization and on the acquisition of pastoral skills sets rather than those of resident theologian, or manager rather than scriptural exegete.

CONCLUSION

In this essay I have tried to identify some of the factors that I use in identifying or locating helpful resources that I would hope to find in my school's theological library. Histories help us to understand ancient cultures and currents that led us to where we are today. Commentaries help to understand ancient authors and adapt their words to modern hearers. Topical books address various interests and needs of preachers and teachers of preachers. I also encourage librarians to ask for suggestions from patrons. I realized in the process of writing this essay that I need to do a better job of being a library resource, that is, being of greater service to the library so that it can be of greater service to me.

