

Response to "Homiletic" by David Buttrick

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A. Something I profited from

I found the book very appealing. In contrast to Craddock it is well structured and indexed. This makes it easy to use his book in situations where some hints to a special difficulty in preaching are needed. This approach is also dictated by the very volume of his work (500 Pages!).

The structure Buttrick gives to sermons using "moves" is very appealing, simple and a good working tool. A summarization of the "moves" should give a good sermon outline to preach from. I was surprised how easily a sermon can be structured into these "moves". "Moves" are a way to form a coherent thought and focus in the hearers mind arising from the necessity of giving the audience time to comprehend.

Buttrick lists several laws to be followed composing "moves". Failure to follow these results in losing the focus of the hearers and thereby causing "wandering minds" among the audience.

His main accomplishment is in giving shape and defining parts which can be used to construct a sermon. This alone is very helpful.

His research on the methods to use these parts to keep the attention and bring the message across are also very helpful.

The strength of his approach is that it is totally rational and therefore in a sense "scientific". The material is therefore more accessible for the reader in our times.

This enables me - having a scientific education- to comprehend better what he is saying and is in touch with the contemporary way of seeing things.

One example of this is his research on different points-of-view. It is very helpful to see how the perspectives in each "Move" have to be so that they can be understood in the most convenient way by the hearers.

B. Something I disagree with

Buttrick's book is a purely technical book on preaching. He - except for his short appendix on the theology of preaching - omits the parts Craddock has tackling the issues of the character and person of the minister but instead focuses in on the technical aspects of bringing the message over to the hearers. I doubt that this can be separated like he does it. Again the role of the Holy Spirit is not dealt with. Buttrick's understanding is rather that the preacher communicates "symbols" to the audience. The preacher has no special authority from God but is just an interpreter of the biblical message.

It is also questionable if it is possible to put such a strict framework on all sermons. I would rather consider the structure he gives as a good working tool for the beginning preacher.

C. Estimate of the value of this Book for beginning Preacher.

This book is ideal for a beginning preacher. It demonstrates how to structure a sermon into the distinct parts composing it. One could think about training oneself in composing "moves" most effectively to learn to shape sermons. I really would like to do it like that.

Since I am just beginning to preach I felt overwhelmed by the material at hand. I was not able to figure out what was most important and around what element the rest of the material could be structured. Buttrick gives the basic structure in "Moves". I feel I have wasted a lot of time with other things in the class. Concentration on this would have given a focus and something to hold on to when constructing a sermon. Instead I had often the feeling of not really knowing how to approach preaching. I could imagine a class learning preaching from the start using Buttrick's techniques.