
Book Reviews

Expository Preaching

Haddon W Robinson
193pp £5.25 IVP

The author of this book makes a strong and convincing case for expository preaching. He gives a definition (page 20), without destroying what he is defining, 'Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers.' On the basis of this definition, Robinson develops his thesis that the concept must come from the text, which has to be chosen carefully. It should have an impact on the preacher himself, and one reviewer, at least, will welcome what is said on page 25, 'Distinctions made between "studying the Bible to get a sermon and studying the Bible to feed your own soul" are misleading and false'. The text speaks to the preacher and he becomes captive to the word of God. Ultimately his authority resides in the biblical text, not in himself (page 23). This is an important point, of course, but it should be related to what Motyer says in his helpful 'Forward', 'It is the subjective authority of the call of God exercised in the objective authority of the ministry of the Word'.

Robinson gives helps on how to choose and study a text (stages 1 and 2), how to discover the exegetical idea (stage 3), and how to analyse it (stage 4). The exegetical idea should be submitted to tests in form of questions,

'What does this mean?', 'Is it true?', and 'What difference does it make?' This process should enable the preacher to say briefly (in one sentence!), what the message should be, and enable him to develop the homiletical idea (stage 5). Consequently, it will be possible for a true herald of God to work out the sermon's purpose (stages 6 and 7), have an outline (stage 8), which can be filled in (stage 9). Lastly (stage 10), the author deals with the introduction of a sermon and its conclusion.

After dealing with the ten stages the author has two chapters, one on 'The Dress of Thoughts' and another on 'How To Preach So People Will Listen'. It could be suggested that the Holy Spirit, mentioned in the definition, does not have the prominence he deserves and demands in the last chapter.

Throughout the book there are exercises to work on, with answers at the end. Also included are appendices, selected bibliographies and indexes. It is a great help to have a summary of the development at the beginning of each chapter. It is true that the bibliography is selective, but even then one would expect to see works by such authors as Denis Lane, Jay Adams and Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Hundreds of books have been written on preaching, and it is quite a claim to say that this one is 'unique', but it is an excellent work, which can be warmly recommended to all ambassadors for Christ.

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Created in God's Image

Anthony A Hoekema

Paternoster/Eerdmans 1986

264pp £12.95

Hoekema is a skilled collator of the views of others who is well able to present, in a lucid fashion, a helpful, practical and reliable evaluation and stimulating syntheses of major dogmatic themes. His most recent work attempts not merely a discussion of the image of God but seeks to offer a comprehensive biblical anthropology. The latter part of the book deals with sin, its origin, spread, nature and restraint. This is helpfully written.

The section on Common Grace is particularly stimulating. Building upon Kuyper and, to some extent, Dooyeweerd, he sets forth a list of positive lessons to be drawn from the doctrine and emphasises that common grace helps account for 'the possibility of civilisation and culture on this earth despite man's fallen condition' (p.200). In a section on The Whole Person he forthrightly rejects trichotomy and dichotomy. Man is a psychosomatic unity. Two particularly useful discussions are those on Freedom and the Self-Image of Man. The latter essay is a powerful rejection of self-esteem and self-love which, nevertheless, emphasises that the Christian believer should have a primarily positive self-image since he is to see himself in the light of God's gracious work of forgiveness and renewal.

But, to the reviewer, the most valuable part of this excellent book is the initial discussion of the Image of God. Hoekema begins by emphasising the need for a Christian answer to perhaps the most urgent question of

the twentieth century, 'What is man?' A Christian anthropology must, he argues, begin with the recognition that man is a created person. As a creature, he is utterly dependent upon God. But there is another side to the paradox: as person he is independent. Thus he is able to make decisions, set goals etc. Man could fall into sin precisely because he was a person and since he is a creature can be saved only by grace. Again, as person, man must believe and has a responsibility in the sanctifying process.

Hoekema accepts the arguments of modern theologians that the image of God is seen in man's dominion and in his being created a social being: male and female. Moreover, he recognises that the unity of man requires us to predicate the image not of some distillation of man but of bodily man. The likeness is both structural and functional. The structural likeness remains after the fall but the functional image is lost and only recaptured in redeemed man both by redemption and as man labours to image Jesus. Indeed, the image is perfectly set forth in Jesus and will be the privilege of the perfected man on the renewed earth. The functions of the image of God in man are threefold: a human being is to be directed toward God, to his or her fellow man and is to be seen in rulership over nature.

Hoekema emphasises the dynamic character of image bearing in what is a most valuable contribution to the literature on the image of God. It is as satisfying an approach as the present reviewer has come across.

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