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Southern Baptist Expository Preaching Homiletic Theory: Biblical Interpretation, Values, and Politics in Twentieth-Century America



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Abstract

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This study addressed the influence and role of the Southern Baptist (SB) expository preaching methodology by examining the role of expository preaching, its innate characteristics, and its espousal by SB pastors and theologians in the twentieth-century for influencing personal and social values and politics in the twenty-first century. My research begins with an investigation of the historicity that led to the development of the expository homiletic theory and delves into the historical concepts and intrinsic modes of thought and process foundational to expository preaching from the early first century of Christianity to the twentieth century. I demonstrate its advocacy by the SB theologians, pastors, and leaders in the formation of their biblical theology and social agenda. There are inherent characteristics in the expository method that underlie a proclivity toward or adherence to deeply embedded historical beliefs that were derived from the first century. This belief system pervades the preparatory and delivery aspects of the SB homiletic theory. The SB expositor has subscribed to a methodology that encompasses the consideration of a passage or text in a context which involves a study of the original biblical language, grammar, syntax, and cultural background of the text. The SB expositor attempts to didactically uncover the original meaning of the text based on its cultural context in order to communicate and disseminate divine truths that emanate from the text. The exposition typically involves an exegetical and hermeneutical method to uncover practical divine truths succinctly that will affect personal and societal change. My study includes an anthology of the sermonic material and homiletic practice of the foremost SB expositors, theorists, and homileticians. I explore the facets of their hermeneutical and homiletic processes to elucidate the basis of their adherence to their propositional and moralistic expository style which is shrouded in personal, political and social agendas. I delineate the basis for the perfunctory relationship between the translation methodology which SB theologians pursue and their acquiescence with the need for purity and literalness in understanding the original biblical texts written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. SBC theologians perpetuate a need for reading and preaching primarily based on the original text and replicating the exact words of God in the sermonic moment. SBC theologians desire to re-express the original tonal voice and images of the biblical text for twentieth and twenty-first century Bible readers. My analysis includes a demonstration of the influence of an exegetical, hermeneutic, and translation methodology that not only increases or builds the denomination but also affects social and political change. Works that have detailed the ideological and political conflicts between SB theologians, pastors, and leaders in an effort to show their approach and impact among the SB and their level of effectiveness in national and social arenas. I assert that the Southern Baptist support of expository preaching has emboldened and furnished both practitioners and congregants with a historical methodology in which they reproduce and propagate divine truths to bring about personal, social, and political change.

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The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is a Christian denomination based in the United States. It is the world's largest Baptist denomination, the largest Protestant and the second-largest Christian denomination in the United States, smaller only than the Roman Catholic Church according to self-reported membership statistics. The word Southern in Southern Baptist Convention stems from it having been organized in 1845 at Augusta, Georgia, by Baptists in the Southern United States who split with northern Expository preaching is a term and technique that refers to the proclamation the content of the Bible as it appears in the text, as opposed to an emphasis on application to the hearers. As a way of steering a middle course, one that sees pedagogical value in retaining the liturgical year and yet promotes a broader exposure to Scripture, is Timothy Slemmons' proposal, Year D: A Quadrennial Supplement (2012), which urges "greater attention to what we have heard" (Heb 2:1-3) by means of applying what he calls "the principle of canonical comprehensiveness." Biblical Preaching: the development and delivery of expository messages - Haddon Robinson. (ISBN 978-0-801-07700-5). Power in the Pulpit - Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix.