David Van Brugge

That Which They Can't See

A Retrieval of Jonathan Edwards' Homiletical Use of Imagination

V&R



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Figure 1. Rembrandt, *Mennonite Minister Anslo with His Wife* (1641)

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Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, or children,
Or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows;
But the enjoyment of God is the substance.
These are but scattered beams; but God is the sun.
These are but streams; but God is the fountain.
These are but drops; but God is the ocean.

Jonathan Edwards, "The True Christians Life," *WJE*, 17:437–438

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Dedication

With appreciation for my parents,
whose bookshelves included Jonathan Edwards;
And with thankfulness for my wife,
whose love allows this wanderer to chase ideas while listening to hours of Bach;
And with commitment to my King who called me to ministry,
whose servant I remain.

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Abbreviations

In citing works in the footnotes, works frequently cited have been identified by the following abbreviations. Full citation information can be found in the bibliography.

CWTM	Thomas Manton. *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton.* 22 vols. First published James Nisbet, 1870. Reprinted Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2020.
JEE	Harry Stout, ed. *The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017.
OHB	John D. Lyons, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of the Baroque.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
OHJE	Douglas A. Sweeney and Jan Stievermann, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Jonathan Edwards*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
RHPI	Amy Kind, ed. *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Imagination*. New York: Routledge, 2017.
WJE	*The Works of Jonathan Edwards.* Vols. 1–26. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955–2006.
WJEO	*The Works of Jonathan Edwards Online.* Vols. 27–73. Jonathan Edwards Center.
WJF	John Flavel. *The Works of John Flavel.* 6 vols. First published W. Baynes and Son, 1820. Reprinted London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1968.

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1. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Mennonite Minister Cornelis Claesz. Anslo in Conversation with His Wife, Altje* (1641). Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.
2. Achieving Exposition and Imagination.
3. Dome of St. Stephen Walbrook, London, UK (1671–1687). Photo 134538492 © Andrew Howson | Dreamstime.com. Used with permission.
4. Francisco de Zurbarán, *Agnus Dei* (1640). Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.
5. Detail of Frontispiece for the New Testament, *Authorized Version* (1611). Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.
6. Henry Augustus Loop, after Joseph Badger, *Jonathan Edwards, President* (1758). Image courtesy of Princeton University, Public Domian, via Wikimedia Commons. Elias Gottlob Haussmann, *Johann Sebastian Bach* (1746). Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

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Introduction

In *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival*, Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) painted a vibrant picture of the delights of spiritual sight:

> The soul … has been as it were perfectly overwhelmed, and swallowed up with light and love and a sweet solace, rest and joy of soul, that was altogether unspeakable; and more than once continuing … in that clear and lively view or sense of the infinite beauty and amiableness of Christ's person, and the heavenly sweetness of his excellent and transcendent love; so that [the soul] … did as it were swim in the rays of Christ's love, like a little mote swimming in the beams of the sun, or streams of his light that come in at a window; and the heart was swallowed up in a kind of glow of Christ's love, coming down from Christ's heart in heaven.[1]

Through such pictures, Edwards defended the revivals and provided an apologetic for authentic spirituality against those who condemned the revivals as mere emotionalism. However, this was not abstract, it was personal: this was the portrait of a saint he knew well, his wife Sarah Pierpont (1710–1758). Therefore this eloquent description of spiritual sight was not just a defensive and subjective apologetic. It reflected Edwards' pastoral and personal appeal that people reading that treatise and hearing his sermons would value and desire such an affective faith.[2]

Similar delights are portrayed in Rembrandt Harmenszoon Van Rijn's (1606–1669) depiction of the Mennonite minister Anslo and his wife (see Figure 1). While the husband Anslo is teaching, and looking on admirably, it is his saintly wife who is full of light. Anslo reflects some of the light, but he is not the source of the light. Indeed, he is in the shadows. The source of the light is external, even as it shines on the Bible. While Rembrandt's portrait is symbolic within the Baroque style, as it relates to the preacher it has deeper religious meaning. As the poet Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679) wrote of Rembrandt's portrait, *Wie Anslo zien wil, moet hem horen* (Who wants to see Anslo, must hear him).[3] Though primarily visual, the message is also an invitation to the verbal and the affective.

---

1 Jonathan Edwards, "Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival," *WJE*, 4:332–340.

2 Ted A. Campbell, *The Religion of the Heart: A Study of European Religious Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 2–3 suggests that affective faith was indicative of "religion of the heart," where the natural separation from God "is overcome in affective ('heartfelt') experience."

3 The Dutch quoted in Simon Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 477. The English translation in Schama avoids the reference to sight.

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Whether portrayed in ink or oil, Edwards' writing and Rembrandt's painting both reflect an imagination that promotes the concept of spiritual light and seeks affective acknowledgment.[4]

The recognition of an imagination that promotes spiritual light and affective response is not universal. Edwards himself wrestled with this, suggesting that unbelief and a rejection of the invisible rose, in part, from an over-dependence on the senses. He was concerned that people live "wholly about sensitive things, till what is sensible seems to be all to them. And that which is not the object of sense seems to be nothing; that which they can't see or feel don't seem real to them."[5] Today, preachers, like Edwards, are called to preach truths which may not seem real to others. Therefore, in practical theology, the question arises: how can one intelligently and authentically communicate the vibrant reality of invisible things? Since the priority of practical theology is to communicate the gospel as properly as possible,[6] what homiletical methods are appropriate?

Such questions are important because the discipline of homiletics must not be denigrated to technique or method: the priority remains theological.[7] Even then, the priority of communicating the gospel clearly is not just a scholarly theological study; it is also a spiritual and personal practice.[8] As F. Gerrit Immink suggests, both theology and practice dictate that gospel proclamation and human discourse are intertwined.[9] How then can homiletic choices promote that which is true and lovely? How have others been creative, wise, and faithful ambassadors? The answer

4 Thijs Weststeijn, "The Sublime and the 'Beholder's Share': Junius, Rubens, Rembrandt," *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 9–11.

5 Jonathan Edwards, "Practical Atheism: A sermon on Psalm 14:1," *WJE*, 17:52. This quote provides the title of this dissertation.

6 Christian Grethlein, *An Introduction to Practical Theology: History, Theory, and the Communication of the Gospel in the Present*, translated by Uwe Rasch (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 59; William Greenough Thayer Shedd, *Homiletics and Pastoral Theology* (Birmingham, AB: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2013), 280.

7 David Schnasa Jacobsen, "Introduction," in *Homiletical Theology: Preaching as Doing Theology*, ed. David Schnasa Jacobsen, Vol. 1 of The Promise of Homiletical Theology (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 7–9. Jacobsen notes five intersections between homiletics and theology: the gospel as content and lens of preaching; the act of preaching; the means of grace in worship; theological content in sermons; and practical concerns of preaching as an extension of theology. This study would fall within the fifth area since it wrestles with how practices of imagination would form the preacher's work. See also Garrett Green, *Imagining God: Theology and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 149; David Schnasa Jacobsen, "The Unfinished Task of Homiletical Theology," in *Homiletical Theology*, 48.

8 William Greenough Thayer Shedd, "The Characteristics and Importance of a Natural Rhetoric," in *Literary Essays* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2000), 123–147.

9 F. Gerrit Immink, "Homiletics: The Current Debate," in *International Journal of Practical Theology* 8, no. 1 (2004): 91.

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suggested in this dissertation is based on the supposition that imagination may be a significant part of the answer. That premise can be supported by the suggestion that imagination is suited to understand and share God's written revelation, as it can explain the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar, and use the language of this world to speak of an other-world, opening empirical observations to interpretations, all within the realm of faith that involves affection and volition.[10]

Some have considered the intersection of practical theology and imagination as an aesthetic practical theology. Aesthetic practical theology displays a merger of theology and theories of aesthetics in aesthetic methods and modes.[11] However, the aim of this project is not to adopt aesthetic methods in practical theology so much as to recover the "recognition and inclusion [of imagination] in the work and pedagogy" of homiletics.[12] The aim is to recover a clear view of the possible intersection of homiletics and imagination for the benefit of best practices in expository preaching today.

This pursuit of a homiletical understanding of the imagination will be focused with this research question: "In what ways can a homiletical use of imagination be strengthened by a retrieval of Jonathan Edwards' understanding of imagination as evidenced in the Puritan baroque characteristics of the Stockbridge Indian sermons (1751–1758)?" To develop an answer, the following sub-questions will be asked and answered. The opening question will be, What is the imagination and how does it relate to practical theology? That will lead to the next question, What is the current homiletical use of imagination and how might it benefit from retrieval? Those two questions set the stage for retrieving Edwards. And yet, since there is no simple summary document in which Edwards describes his understanding of imagination, the next question becomes, What was Jonathan Edwards' understanding of imagination, and what formed it? This leads to, How can Edwards' homiletical use of imagination be understood? What influences does it reflect? Is it helpful to see in Edwards coherence with a Puritan baroque mindset? Is there evidence of such a Puritan baroque concept in the Stockbridge Indian sermons? This will culminate in the question of, What benefits can be drawn from a retrieval of Jonathan Edwards' homiletical use of imagination? How might this help a contemporary pursuit of spiritual light and affective response? This introduction will further describe the problem, the method, the rationale, and the goal of such a study.

---

10 John McIntyre, *Faith, Theology, and Imagination* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1987), 148–157.

11 Richard Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty, and Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 19; and Richard Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts: Encountering God through Music, Art and Rhetoric* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 168–216 which suggests a way of preaching aesthetically through appealing to the hearer's experiences.

12 Jonathan King, *The Beauty of the Lord: Theology as Aesthetics*, Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 1.

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I.1 The Problem

The problem lurking behind this study concerns the necessity of a homiletical use of imagination within *dispositio*.[13] To be clear, the problem to be addressed in this study is not imaginative content of expository sermons.[14] This study assumes that the Scriptures are divine revelation and that the content of a sermon is biblical exposition. But within *dispositio* of expository sermons, how can the homiletical use of imagination be strengthened?

There are challenges to answering that question. The primary challenge is that the intersection of imagination and homiletics for expository preachers in the twenty-first century remains under-recognized. Past methods of homiletics have often been built around the modernist quest for order, stability, unity, and certainty through propositions highlighting reason, intellect, and the certainty of knowledge.[15] More recent methods see any expositional preaching as mere theological maintenance which generally results in safe, boring, and uninteresting preaching.[16] Those traditional methods are challenged by the plethora of possible information sources, the power and influence of the media, a cultural aversion to truth, and a lack of respect for the role of preaching.[17] These challenges are compounded by contemporary audiences who appreciate increased patterns of sensory, imaginative information and less rationalistic information.[18] Many have grown up in cultures that promote pluralism, pragmatism, pessimism, subjectivity of knowledge, moral vacuums, and

13 This study is focused on *dispositio* – the process of artfully arranging what one has to say.

14 The understanding of what an expository sermon is, is itself wide-ranging and confusing. Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, 7 vol. series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 1:8–16 observes that the New Testament distinguishes between expository, evangelistic, catechetical, festal, and prophetic preaching, defining expository preaching as regular exposition of Scripture. In this dissertation, an expository or expositional sermon is understood as described by Joel Beeke, *Reformed Preaching: Proclaiming God's Word from the Heart of the Preacher to the Heart of His People* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 344 where it is stated that an expository sermon will "derive its message and main points from a passage of the Bible."

15 Paul Scott Wilson, "Postmodernity and Preaching," *Touchstone* 32, no. 1 (February 2014): 12.

16 Craig A. Loscalzo, *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Postmodern World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 24.

17 J. Kent Edwards, *Deep Preaching: Creating Sermons that Go Beyond the Superficial* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2009), 3–10; David Lose, *Preaching at the Crossroads: How the World – and our Preaching – Is Changing* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 32.

18 See David G. Buttrick, "Speaking between Times: Homiletics in a Postmodern World," in *Theology and the Interhuman: Essays in Honor of Edward Farley*, ed. Edward Farley and Robert R. Williams (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995): 156; Alister McGrath, *Mere Apologetics: How to Help Seekers and Skeptics Find Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012): 27–40, 90–93; Holly Ordway, *Apologetics and the Christian Imagination: an Integrated Approach to Defending the Faith* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road, 2017): 1–20.

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religious inclusivism.[19] The simple meanings of tradition, scripture, reason, and experience have disappeared from academic, and often religious, discourse.[20]

Within this context, the challenge facing expository homiletics is how to maintain identity as "of the Bible."[21] Radical orthodoxy has responded to the postmodern context by retrieving the value of theology and rhetoric,[22] and yet hesitates about maintaining an identity as "of the Bible." Nonetheless, within Reformed practical theology, it may be understood that the truth of the Word of God, historic Reformed theology, the need of communities, and the experiences of people can and do overlap. But does imagination have any role in this?

Other avenues by which to approach the intersection of imagination and homiletics have been suggested. Barnabas Kim addresses imagination in both expository hermeneutics and homiletics, looking to biblical authors for insight in how to improve a homiletical use of imagination.[23] Similarly, Jeremy Painter applies the homiletical use of imagination from Scripture.[24] Kathrine Bruce's work is less concerned with expository preaching, and explores the connections between imagination, preaching, and personality.[25] Peter Henry's dissertation theorizes a role for imagination in preaching based on non-theological disciplines, seeing a relationship with experience and epistemology.[26]

There remains therefore a lack of scholarly observation on the helpful role of imagination within practical theology and expositional homiletics. That is not to say there is no other literature. Dermot A. Lane has contributed a helpful contextual article regarding general theology, showing that any rehabilitation of imagination

19 This list is summarized from R. Larry Overstreet, *Persuasive Preaching: A Biblical and Practical Guide to the Effective Use of Persuasion* (Wooster, OH: Weaver Book Company, 2014), 17–19.

20 Immink, "Homiletics," 89–90. See also John S. McClure, *Other-wise Preaching: A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001).

21 H. David Schuringa, "The Vitality of Reformed Preaching," *Calvin Theological Journal* 30, no. 1 (Apr. 1995): 191; Paul Scott Wilson, *Preaching as Poetry: Beauty, Goodness, and Truth in Every Sermon*, The Artistry of Preaching Series (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014), 16.

22 John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, second edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 437. See also Andrew R. Van't Land, "The Rhetorical Roots of Radical Orthodoxy: Augustinian Oratory and Ontology in Milbank's Theopo(e/li)tics," MA thesis, Institute for Christian Studies (2013): 69–74.

23 Barnabas Youn Soo Kim, "The Use of Imagination for Expository Hermeneutics and Homiletics," PhD dissertation (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 14.

24 Jeremy Painter, "Made for Other Worlds: The Preacher and the Imagination," DMin dissertation (Regent University, 2020).

25 Kathrine Sarah Bruce, "The Vital Importance of the Imagination in the Contemporary Preaching Event," PhD dissertation (Durham University, 2013).

26 Peter J. M. Henry, "Shared Imaginings: The Understanding and Role of Imagination in Contemporary Homiletics," PhD dissertation (Princeton Theological Seminary, 2009).

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will require the co-existence of reason and imagination.[27] While Lane acknowledges challenges and concerns, he suggests imagination's importance for contemporary theology since it "transforms the detached reason of Enlightenment into an engaged and participatory reason which has been one of the hallmarks of religions down through the centuries."[28] J. Robert Barth addresses the imagination as the key to analogical knowledge and religious experience, but bases his observation on Ignatius Loyola (1556–1609) and applies imagination to personal reflection and Jesuit art rather than expository homiletic endeavor.[29]

Though surrounded by a culture where "the image reigns supreme,"[30] expository homileticians rarely recognize how they might use the "sacred gift of seeing, the ability to peer beyond the veil and gaze with astonished wonder upon the beauties and mysteries of things holy and eternal."[31] In part because of the command to "Hear, O Israel!" (Deut. 6:1), the prophetic call to "behold" (e. g., Isa. 7:14, 40:9; Jer. 18:3) is minimized. The implications of the Greek word for "I know" being related to "I have seen" (*eidon*) are forgotten.[32] Even when the lack of scholarly attention has been pointed out, the imagination, "though it has always been understood by those skilled in the practice of the Christian cure of souls, has never been given proper place in Christian theology, which has been too much ruled by intellectualist preconceptions."[33]

The lack of scholarly attention in expositional homiletics regarding imagination seems to stem from a perception that historically the imagination was thought of negatively. John McIntyre perceives a progression from the early Reformers' condemnation of iconolatry to a broader iconoclasm, to hundreds of years of Protestant iconophobia, which has resulted in "imageless thought" that sterilizes religion and theology of images.[34] This perception has only been aggravated in contexts where rationalism – which generally has looked at imagination as suspicious – is highly

27 Dermot A. Lane, "Imagination and Theology: The *Status Quaestionis*," *Louvain Studies*, 34 (2009–2010): 119.

28 Lane, "Imagination and Theology," 133.

29 J. Robert Barth, "Mortal Beauty: Ignatius Loyola, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and the Role of Imagination in Religious Experience," *Christianity and Literature* 50, no. 1 (Autumn 2000): 69–78.

30 Richard Kearney, *The Wake of the Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 3.

31 Aiden Wilson Tozer, "The Value of a Sanctified Imagination," in *Developing a Christian Imagination: An Interpretive Anthology*, ed. Warren W. Wiersbe (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1995), 214.

32 Eva T. H. Brann, *The World of the Imagination: Sum and Substance*, 25th Anniversary Edition (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 15.

33 John Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 77.

34 McIntyre, *Faith, Theology, and Imagination*, 6–8. That this is not only unfortunate, but may also be historically inaccurate, see David J. Davis, *Seeing Faith, Printing Pictures: Religious Identity during the English Reformation*, Library of the Written Word (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

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regarded as the handmaid of theology.[35] David Allen's article on homiletics and authority traces this from the old path of revelation to a fork in the road he titled "autonomy of reason," which leads to the path of narrative and imagination.[36]

The lack of attention regarding homiletical use of imagination has not escaped professional challenges. At least one author has noted that sermon structures are standardized, generally predictable, and repetitive.[37] Sermon relevance is perceived as insincere and forced. Sermons often neglect biblical truths that are applied urgently, orderly, and directly.[38] Finally, alternative sermons that are supposedly imaginative are merely shallow and trivial. What remains absent are sermons that are biblical, interesting, filled with insight, yet clearly reflective of the text, with an affective objective.[39] There has been no scholarly embrace of imagination within the Reformed, expository tradition, resulting in little being written on imagination from within that tradition.[40]

That failure and the resulting myopia need to be the concern of practical theologians everywhere.[41] Since practical theology remains the theory of the communication of the gospel regardless of time and challenges, how the gospel can best be communicated to audiences today necessitates consideration. People need to see, and preachers need to know how to communicate sight as best as they can, while remaining dependent on the Holy Spirit.[42] The gospel needs to be communicated

35 McIntyre, *Faith, Theology, and Imagination*, 89.

36 David L. Allen, "A Tale of Two Roads: Homiletics and Biblical Authority," *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 43, no. 3 (Sept. 2000): 496–515.

37 Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching and Teaching with Imagination: The Quest for Biblical Ministry* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1994), 289–300.

38 See Albert N. Martin, *What's Wrong with Preaching Today?* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), 26; John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 262–337.

39 See Edwards, *Deep Preaching*, 163–170. And yet Jeffrey Arthurs, "How to Include Imagination in Sermon Prep," *Preaching: The Professional Journal for Ministry Leaders* 37, no. 3 (Spring 2022): 12–15 leaves imagination in the hermeneutical side of preparation.

40 For examples of homiletical literature within the expository tradition that do not mention or highlight imagination see Beeke, *Reformed Preaching*; John Carrick, *The Imperative of Preaching: a Theology of Sacred Rhetoric* (London: Banner of Truth, 2002); Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, second edition (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005); Herman Hoeksema, *Homiletics* (Grandville, MI: Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 1993).

41 Kevin Vanhoozer, "In Bright Shadow: C.S. Lewis on the Imagination for Theology and Discipleship," in *The Romantic Rationalist: God, Life, and Imagination in the Work of C.S. Lewis*, ed. John Piper and David Mathis (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 82–83.

42 Green, *Imagining God*, 150. See also J. Stephen Yuille, "'A Simple Method': William Perkins and the Shaping of the Protestant Pulpit," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 9, no. 1 (2017): 215–230.

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to a contemporary audience that often rejects imagination for the imaginary.[43] That communication needs to enchant and reason, and imagination encourages both simultaneously.[44]

Practical theology needs to retrieve clear teaching on imagination within expositional sermons. It has been done in the past. In a sermon on Hosea 2:10, "I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes," Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892) encouraged his hearers to see that "when Christ was on earth he preached in parables, and, though he is in heaven now, he is preaching in parables today … . The things which we see about us are God's thoughts and God's words to us; and if we were but wise there is not a step that we take, which we should not find to be full of mighty instruction."[45] More recently, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981) and Timothy Keller (1950–2023), as expository preachers, have both encouraged the use of imagination within homiletics.[46] And yet beyond the suggestion itself, these authors have left little instruction on how that might be accomplished. It is true that imagination is not just another important tool to nervously remember to use while preparing a sermon; it is to become part of who preachers are, buoyed by the grace of God.[47]

Appealing to the imagination is not mere reaction to postmodernism, it is following the example of God. If God appeals to imaginations through similitudes and images, certainly preachers can appeal to imaginations. As revealed in Scripture, the preacher should not just define the love of God, but "comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge" (Eph. 3:18–19).[48] The need for such appeals is only exacerbated in a postmodern context, which rejects focusing on rationality,

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43 That the postmodern context has rejected true imagination for the imaginary see Brann, *World of the Imagination*, 10.

44 See Paul Avis, "Apologetics and the Rebirth of the Imagination," *Ecclesiology, 9* (2013): 307; *Imaginative Apologetics: Theology, Philosophy, and the Catholic Tradition*, ed. Andrew Davison (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), xiii–xxv; Tim Keller, "Preaching to the Secular Mind," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 14, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 61–62.

45 Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "Everybody's Sermon," *New Park Street Pulpit* (London: Alabaster and Passmore, 1859), 4:330–331. See John 16:25 for Christ's own acknowledgement of using figurative language.

46 See David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1971), 235–237; Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015): 169–175, 287.

47 Craig Dykstra, "A Way of Seeing: Imagination and the Pastoral life," *Christian Century* 125, no. 7 (April 8, 2008): 26–31; Edwards, *Deep Preaching*, 43–56; Clyde S. Kilby, "Evangelicals and the Call of the Imagination," in *Arts and the Christian Imagination: Essays on Art, Literature, and Aesthetics*, ed. William Dyrness and Keith Call (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2016), 245.

48 Andrew Davison, "Christian Reason and Christian Community," in *Imaginative Apologetics*, ed. Andrew Davison (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 28.

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progress, and objective truth.[49] Therefore, in service to the broad church, a project about a homiletical use of imagination in expository preaching addresses a current need in the communication of the gospel.

I.2 The Method

There have been other studies tying together imagination and preaching, though often they focus on content and techniques.[50] These often stem from systematic or historical concerns. However, the challenge of this study is not to just describe a theological issue, or study a historical situation, but to examine the topic for practical theological norms today. This will be done by understanding practical theology methodology, particularly as it can be used in a retrieval situation. The method for studies in practical theology has been described by Richard Osmer and Gerben Heitink, as beginning with descriptive and interpretative elements and working towards normative and pragmatic elements for practical theology.[51]

The method will also rely on retrieval. Retrieval studies are a method of inquiry – a style of theological discernment – that seeks to recover the richness of the past.[52] Retrieval studies recover richness through dialogue with historical documents and ideas. They do not merely take past ideas, but use and *think with* the historical data.[53] In that way, this is not a plea to return to the past, but to use the past to speak into the present.[54]

Retrieval studies do have a place in practical theology. David Randolph realizes the possibility of retrieval for homiletics through repeating, replacing, or renewing the current practice of preaching, while suggesting that renewal through novel

49 Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 12–14; Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm, eds., *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1995), 22.

50 See Painter, "The Preacher and the Imagination."

51 Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: an Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 4, 240; Osmer concludes with a pragmatic element. Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology: History, Theory, Action Domains: Manual for Practical Theology*, trans. Reinder Bruinsma (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 228 concludes with an action element.

52 W. David Buschart and Kent D. Eilers, *Theology as Retrieval: Receiving the Past, Renewing the Church* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 12.

53 Darren Sarisky, "Tradition II: Thinking with Historical Texts – Reflections on Theologies of Retrieval," in *Theologies of Retrieval: An Exploration and Appraisal*, ed. Darren Sarisky (New York: T & T Clark, 2017), 195–201.

54 Sarisky, "Thinking with Historical Texts," 205.

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