

Workshop 7

Impact: Reformation Theology and Preaching

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Introduction

Proposition: Preaching for reform inevitably brought reform to preaching.

I. Theology that reformed preaching

Reformers realized that changes in their theology carried numerous implications for preaching and preachers. For example, consider the impact of the well-known five *solae*.

- A. *Sola scriptura* re-established the priority of preaching.
- B. *Sola gratia, sola fide, and solus Christus* reclaimed the content of preaching.
- C. *Soli Deo Gloria* redefined the role of the preacher.

II. Practices that emerged to support preaching reforms

- A. Preaching practices of the Continental Reformers
 - 1. Context: They reshaped the liturgy of the church.
 - 2. Qualifications: They valued substantial training for the preacher.
 - 3. Interpretation: They sought the plain sense of Scripture through exegesis.
 - 4. Method: They followed a preaching method called *lectio continua*.
- B. Preaching practices of the Puritans
 - 1. Structure: They organized their sermons according to “doctrine and use.”
 - 2. Communication: They practiced word-craft aimed at producing sermons of “plain speech.”
 - 3. Goal: They zealously sought the conversion and spiritual growth of their congregations.
- C. Preaching practices that converged in the Westminster Assembly

Questions 159 of the Westminster Larger Catechism (WLC) asks, “*How is the Word of God to be preached by those that are called thereunto?*”

Answer: They that are called to labour in the ministry of the Word, are to preach sound doctrine, diligently, in season, and out of season; plainly, not in the enticing words of mans wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and power; faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God; wisely, applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers; zealously, with fervent love to God, and the souls of his people; sincerely, aiming at his glory, and their conversion, edification, and salvation.

III. Abiding lessons for today’s preachers and the people they serve

A. Lessons for preachers

The lessons crafted for yesterday’s preachers provide a solid foundation for today’s preachers. Looking at WLC, Question 159 through fresh eyes, we can say that today’s preacher must:

1. Invest his energy in the ministry of the Word of God . . .
 - Taking care never to misrepresent God,
 - Working hard in the Word without regard for the latest ministry fad.
2. Speak the truth with unembellished simplicity . . .
 - Resisting the seductive power of pragmatic opinions,
 - Relying on the Spirit to accomplish what only He can do.
3. Faithfully proclaim a full, robust theology.
4. Reject professionalism in favor of real ministry to real people.
5. Feed his own soul for spiritual passion that fuels his work . . .
 - Motivated by a love for God that singularly seeks His glory,
 - Driven by a love for God’s people that relentlessly works for their spiritual good.

B. Lessons for the people they serve

WLC, Question 160 offers plain guidance: Q. What is required of those that hear the word preached? The answer is:

It is required of those that hear the word preached, that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer; examine what they hear by the Scriptures; receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind, as the Word of God; meditate, and confer of it; hide it in their hearts, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.