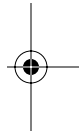




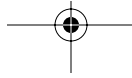
Exordium



Surely another book on preaching should not expect to stir up the band or cause flags to unfurl—unless of course it plays the right music or at least whispers a gentle breeze. If time means anything, this book has certainly had sufficient to simmer and season, for it really began back during the latter years of Martin Luther King Jr., with his personal permission and cooperation. My doctoral research at Michigan State University caught the attention of a professor there, Dr. Robert Green of the education department, who happened to have just marched earlier with Dr. King in Selma, Alabama. Dr. Green made an initial contact with Ms. Dora McDonald, personal secretary to King, eventually winning me a letter of approval and a green light for further extensive research, including interviews with Dr. King himself and a number of his mentors, professors and colleagues. Although King's requested copy of the completed dissertation was not delivered to him before his assassination, it was presented posthumously to his widow, Mrs. Coretta Scott King, during the 1988 King Week Celebration in Atlanta; this copy is housed in the special collection at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Social Change.



That was then, this is now. The dissertation was prepared for academicians while this present book is recast for “general consumption”—especially for persons interested in taking a look, whether for the first time or for a refreshing review, at some of the fundamentals of sermon preparation and delivery practiced





by one of the most effective and celebrated preachers in Western history.

This book attempts to avoid two extremes: a mere biographing of a preacher with only incidental references to his hands-on process of bringing a sermon to readiness and presentation, and a flooding of readers and practitioners with homiletical assumptions whose vagueness and impalpability would be mere shadows for chasing around discussion tables in ivory towers. Somewhere between these extremes lies a blend of relevant biography with practical, understandable, doable homiletical theory, offering clear and tried alternatives without claiming to exhaust the subject or parading as the last word. Experienced preachers as well as those just beginning their journey of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ should find this book helpful and rewarding. And there is much here also for those who find value in meaningful intellectualizing about sermons without sapping pulpit proclamation of its lifeblood.

How blessed and privileged you and I are to have lived in an age that produced an exemplary and effectual preaching model like Martin Luther King Jr.! If you love “good preaching” as a practitioner, learner or listener, if you appreciate clues that help bring it about and cues that might enhance your own proclamation, I believe you have come to the right pages. Enjoy the journey.

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