Training for the Sound of the Sermon:

Orality and the use of an Oral Text in Oral Format

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How do your Sermons Sound?

Much good attention has been given of late to the sermon’s *content*, with the commitment to faithful exegesis of the text, to understanding the text in its Biblical context, and to thinking through the ramifications of the text for the preacher and the sermon’s audience. Much good attention has also been given to the *form* or shape of the sermon, with the recognition that different Biblical genres call for a variety of shapes, as do different audiences, places and purposes. In the Spirit’s power, preachers will also be gifted differently and will each bring a unique creativity to their sermons. The integration of insights from the study of narrative and narrative form has also complimented the classical commitment to propositional forms. However, not much attention has been given to the *sound* of the sermon. On reflection, this is strange, given that sermons are primarily an oral medium, for the ear. Moreover, despite the plethora of preaching texts, there are few resources to train students for this aspect of homiletical practice, which encompasses far more than “delivery” or “the use of the voice”.¹

Many preachers spend hours labouring at their content and its form. However, the value of this work is often lost because the sermon is so difficult to listen to. There may be projection, diction or other voice issues. The sermon may lack appropriate variety in its choice of words, or its conceptual or emotional pace. It may sound read. Greater variety of style may be required – most have heard sermons desperately needing an illustration or application to relieve their propositional load. The sermon may simply be unclear. It may not be logical. Key concepts may be lost in a forest of ideas. Conjunctions or negatives may not be stated plainly enough for the oral
Confusion may arise through inappropriate word juxtaposition, or through the use of homophones, whose variant meanings are obvious in a visual text. Lack of clarity may also come from inappropriate pausing or expression. Indeed, the hard work of listening and responding is made all the harder by the preacher’s insensitivity to the nature of listening. Distraction and frustration thus occurs. Listeners endure the sermon, rather than engage with it. Consequentially the sermon is quickly forgotten.

The problem of oral-aural clarity is exacerbated for the trainee preacher, who on entering theological education is required to learn a number of new “languages”. First, the student has to learn to write essays and exams. These need to conform to a sophisticated format. While this process is designed to train students in careful thinking, it can also have the serious side-effect of training students out of oral communication skills or, more commonly, causing them to mix essay with oral mode. In essay mode, for instance, students use different words from oral mode, and are specifically discouraged from using idiom and the full range of the vernacular. Similarly, different constructions in grammar and syntax are used in essay mode. Sentences can be longer and more complex. Principal clauses can more easily occur at the end of a sentence, as can its subject. Repetition and summative material is not required as often, as the eye can read at its own pace and return to previous points for clarification and reminder. Furthermore, in essay mode there are numerous visual clues to facilitate communication: the words themselves in clear standard form, punctuation, headings, spaces, varying fonts and font sizes, italics and underlining. With the vast bulk of learning and assessment instruments in essay mode, how can students maintain, let alone develop oral communication skills?
In addition to learning “essay” language, students also learn other languages. These include Biblical and related languages, a language required for theological study, or a language for future ministry. In order to prove one’s ability in translation, students learn to give precise, even wooden, translations. These may be far from idiomatic, even though they may demonstrate an exact understanding of case, tense or voice. This woodenness can easily transfer to the sermon, especially in the use of certain words and constructions, such as those beginning with “for”, “which” or “in order that”.

A related difficulty is the lack of understanding and appreciation of orality. The literate nature of much Western culture can mislead us into overlooking its many oral aspects. A highly literate society need not preclude an appreciation for oral messages and ability in their delivery. For instance, considerable care is often given in the Australian context to speeches delivered at Anzac or Remembrance Day services, graduations, weddings and funerals. Sports commentary has grown into an extremely sophisticated oral form, especially on the radio. Theatre and comedy flourish, and there is iconic enjoyment of the able story- or joke-teller. On the other hand, it is very easy for oral communication to cross a line and be considered inappropriately “high-brow”, probably reflecting our historical sensitivity to class issues. Training in oral communication in secondary schools is usually marginal and at tertiary level is only found in highly specialised courses. These mixed messages: a respect for certain forms of oral communication, yet a caution towards it and an ignorance regarding its delivery and appreciation can transfer to an uneasiness and diffidence in the homiletics student when considering the sound of the sermon.²
Related to the above is a lack of conviction about the oral medium *per se*. Commentators such as Postman have alerted us to the highly pervasive influence of television in transforming many aspects of society, including news, politics, teaching and religion into entertainment, with a strong emphasis on the visual.\(^3\) As a result, there is a loss of confidence in the power and effectiveness of the spoken word alone. This has led, for instance, to sermons necessarily accompanied by pew sheet outlines with a range of visuals. It has also led to complex arrangements of sermons with PowerPoint presentations including both text and non-text visuals.\(^4\)\(^5\)\(^6\)

There can be little doubt that Western culture has been influenced by the movement from text-based mass media such as newspapers and books to image-based mass media, such as television and film.\(^7\) However, when considering this movement it is easy to suggest “the death of the book” or the newspaper without recognising the rise of other text-based mass media, such as the internet, which in some contexts has made the written word more accessible. Furthermore, often lost in this debate is the ongoing influence of sound. Television and film remain highly reliant on words. The foretold death of radio remains a major unfulfilled prophecy and music has only grown in prevalence.\(^8\) Westerners may live in screen-filled visual cultures, but they also live in noisy ones. Webb argues that one of the main reasons for the continuing influence of sound is the pre-eminent intimacy of sound over the visual, since hearing, in contrast to sight, “establishes a more intimate relationship between source and perception”.\(^9\) Compare, for example, the difference between flashing lights and sirens; between a picture and a tune; between seeing someone and talking with them. The implications of this for Christian communication are highly significant.
Care needs to be taken to ensure we are not “captive to culture”. Jesus’ commission to his followers to be salt and light calls on us to critique culture, to often stand against it and to transform it. Our Biblical and theological heritage alerts us to the amazing power of God’s creative, sustaining and transformative word.\(^\text{10}\) This heritage should also make us cautious about the image, which has so often failed to communicate or, even worse, been misunderstood.\(^\text{11}\) Thus, while being alert and sensitive to the visual aspects of our culture, particularly in our evangelism and in our understanding of how worldviews and behaviours are formed, we need to bear in mind the enduring power and presence of the spoken and written word. In particular, we need to remind ourselves of the enduring power and presence of the spoken and written word of God, notably in the creation, sustaining and glorification of the world and the church. To believe this is an act of faith. It is counter-cultural. But “blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

If we are Christian, God’s word has been and is at work in us: recreating and transforming us. It may have come to us in its written inscripturated form or by some other means, such as through preaching, in conversation or in a dream.\(^\text{12}\) One reason for the lack of conviction about the oral medium \textit{per se} is that not all can identify transformation occasioned by the word of God through preaching. As teachers, facilitating opportunities for students to experience transformation through able preaching is part of our responsibility. Good preaching is infectious – those filled with the Spirit long to come under its sound again, and long for those whom they love to come under its sound. On hearing it, some of us dare to hope we might be used to preach effectively. But bad preaching leads to disillusionment, to a seeking of other ways, to sleeping in, and to a half-heartedness, a “prove-it” attitude towards the
preaching class. Unfortunately, too, not all students have had the experience of seeing congregations and communities transformed through preaching, or have the faith to believe this could happen, even though church and missions history is replete with such examples.

If God’s word is to be proclaimed in an engaging manner, then students need to be alerted to the different “languages” they are learning during theological study, and the particular purpose of each. They should be encouraged, in the great Reformed tradition, to speak in the vernacular to their audiences. The goal is for “natural, honest, enlivened speech”. An understanding and appreciation of orality will also be needed. Students will also need to think carefully about the place of the spoken and written word in relation to the visual image. To what extent are words pre-eminent and determinative? In particular, the Biblical claims about the creative, sustaining and transformative power of the spoken and written word of God need to be wrestled with. Is it pre-eminent and determinative? If so, how is that word of God to be communicated to His world? Through preachers, as Paul asserts in Romans 10:8-15? If the preacher is to have confidence in preaching per se, these Biblical truths need to be owned before the preacher can explore their own giftedness in preaching and come to a place of confidence in exercising this ministry. Finally, experience of Spirit-empowered preaching which is personally transformative and transformative of communities encourages this foundational ministry to be passed on to ensuing generations. Such sermons give attention to how they are heard. The preacher attends to the sermon’s sound, for the sake of the listener, for the sake of the church, and for God’s glory.
The Benefits and Importance of Attending to the Sound of the Sermon

Attention to the sound of the sermon will not necessarily guarantee a good sermon. Good sermons require good content, good form and good delivery, and it is the interactive sum of the sermon’s content, form and delivery that will determine the sermon’s ultimate sound. Given this, attention to the sound of the sermon will have implications for each of these three areas.

Interestingly, it will first assist the preacher in the preparation of content. In the oral context, speech units – the words between breaths – cannot be long. Ideas need to be expressed crisply, and the relationship between ideas needs to be crystal clear. Properly preparing for the oral context forces the preacher to be clear and logical. Are the sermon’s ideas in parallel, such as sometimes found in a psalm of praise or in a collection of commands; or are the ideas sequential, as in arguments and narratives? Are they a question, a statement, an exhortation or an imperative? Each will require a different sound.

Further, in the oral context, care needs to be paid to words. This is a different sort of care to that applied in the written context. Words in the oral context need to be varied and evocative, to maintain engagement. However, this variety must not lead to confusion or distraction. Sometimes precision is called for, requiring use of the same word, with unique meaning. Sometimes deliberate ambiguity is called for, especially when the Biblical text, or an illustration, is working at a number of levels. This occurs, for instance, with typology, and in the parables. When words that should be...
precise are ambiguous, confusion occurs. When words that are intended to operate at a number of levels are precise, the loss of the full range of Biblical meaning occurs.

Consideration also needs to be given to the sound of the original Biblical text and its varying translations, as these sounds will have implications for its exegesis and preaching. Since the Scriptures were written to be read aloud, oral rehearsal will be crucial to understanding their meaning. If preachers are to be faithful in communicating the full sense of God’s word, at least some oral congruence between the genre of the Biblical text and the sermon needs to be heard. This is particularly pertinent when preaching on poetic or prophetic texts, or songs of worship, such as in the Psalms, the birth narratives or the Revelation.

Attention to the sound of the sermon will therefore also have implications for determining form. By form I am referring here to the overall shape of the sermon. What shape will best be faithful to the text, achieve the sermon’s aim and maintain engagement? Tension and climax will be crucial considerations here, as will consideration of the sermon’s style. In Schlafer’s and Lowry’s terms, will it be in argument, story, image or mixed style? If the sermon is in argument style, will it be deductive or inductive? Different shapes will require different sounds. Propositional material sounds very different from illustrative or applicatory material. Indeed, most audiences can only sustain listening to propositional material for a limited time before illustrative or story material is required. This is because story gives the attentive ability required for propositional material an opportunity to “rest”. A sermon’s shape will therefore be made up of sections or episodes, each with their own distinctive sound. As the preacher comes to the end of each section, different sounds will signal
whether the material is climactic, summative or conclusive. Transitions between sections will also need to be considered, as will the transition’s sound. Is it expectant, reflective, contrastive, cumulative or conclusive? As the preacher wrestles with the sound of the sermon, different meanings and shapes will be considered, consciously and unconsciously, leading to greater clarity, engagement and effectiveness of communication.

Attention to the sound of the sermon encourages expression of God-given creativity in oral communication.\textsuperscript{17} Care needs to be taken lest the focus move unduly to the preacher or the medium, but an over-application of this fear has led to a lack of imagination and innovation. Preachers have also felt inhibited. This has been to the detriment of the preached word and its effectiveness, especially with audiences who are quickly bored with plain styles. It has also been to the detriment of our understanding of God and His personality and creativity.

Attending to the sound of the sermon finds its fulfilment in the sermon’s delivery. Delivery refers to the use of the body, particularly the voice, and other instruments to communicate the sermon. The voice has available to it a cornucopia of interesting and engaging sounds which can be expressed in a wonderful range of pitch, pace and volume. In their various arrangements, an astounding array of meanings is produced. Determining during preparation how content will be communicated orally is hard enough work for the preacher. Ensuring that in their delivery, the sounds produced are heard the way the preacher intended is also no mean feat! The same words can either be a delight to listen to, or a disaster. One speaking of them cannot but help draw in
the listener, whereas another speaking works as a turnoff. Preparing for delivery will be considered more fully in the next section.

On the other side of the pulpit, attention to the sound of the sermon helps listeners. Engagement will be maintained. Key ideas will be heard to be key through verbal highlighting and the use of pause, climax, headlining and endlining, repetition, and summative language. Supportive or illustrative material will be plainly secondary. The listeners’ energy can be devoted to understanding the content of the preacher’s message and its implications, rather than to discerning what the preacher is actually saying! Distraction and confusion will be minimised, and a sense of the text as originally given will be conveyed.

For both the preacher and the audience, attention to the sound of the sermon will aid memory. Crucial to this will be form and flow, and the choice of easily remembered headlines and endlines. One of the most powerful examples of this is the classic technique used in the African-American pulpit at the climax of the sermon, sometimes called whooping. Here the theme of the sermon is transposed into a song incorporated into ensuing worship and the community’s ongoing life. For these techniques to be effective, however, the preacher must have determined crisply the sermon’s “big idea” before embarking on the sermon’s text, so that what is to be remembered is clear and pertinent.

Training for the Sound of the Sermon
A critical tool to help preachers-in-training attend to the sound of the sermon is the *full oral text in oral format*. The *full oral text* refers to all the words and sounds that will be spoken in the preaching event by the preacher, including all associated introductory comments, Bible readings, prayers, or instructions to others. It is produced for the oral-aural context, for the preacher’s mouth, and for the listeners’ ears. It will necessarily be in the vernacular, and idiomatic. This is in contrast to an essay text, which is designed to be read privately and conforms to the conventions of print culture. An essay text is written for the eyes of others.

The benefits of a full oral text in oral format have been found to be highly significant, even for students who have been preaching regularly.\(^{21}\) The *full* text enables students and commentators to examine closely the complete preaching event. Obviously this should be done initially by the student. It can then be done with others, both before and/or after delivery.\(^ {22}\) The full text also enables detailed written feedback on the content, shape and sound of the sermon. On preparing a full oral text students are commonly surprised at how often they repeat the same language, when variety would assist communication and engagement. The process also helps with time-keeping, as most preachers speak about 100 words a minute.\(^ {23}\)

The requirement for a full *oral* text helps students develop their skills in distinguishing essay from oral text and encourages them to pay careful attention to language and delivery.\(^ {24}\) It asks the question, “How does the sermon sound?”, rather than, “How does the sermon read?” Those who take a manuscript into the pulpit in essay or mixed text often seek to translate into oral text “on the run”, creating unnecessary anxiety and complexity, and using energy better directed elsewhere.
Furthermore, a full oral text facilitates the process of contextualising language, and adapting to various styles of orality in the audience. Quicke calls this full oral text a “stereo draft” and notes that by being able to test a sermon aloud, “preachers become their own listeners and experience their sermon.” Thus the process of producing an oral text is a process of training preachers to be able to hear themselves, especially in the preparation phase.

The requirement for a full oral text is not designed to necessarily set a pattern for the student’s preaching career. Rather, it is intended to be a stage in a learning process where the most detailed attention can be given to each of the sermon’s components. It is certainly not designed to preclude extemporaneous changes to the sermon, often triggered by audience factors, or simply the reflective interlude between completion and delivery. Incidentally, often these changes make helpful teaching grist, given that sometimes they are highly appropriate, but that at other times they work against the integrity of the sermon. However, producing a full oral text facilitates a more intentional and thoughtful preparation process, and enables those students who rely strongly on their extemporary abilities to move beyond a particular plateau of competence. Having a full oral text in oral format, preachers can then move on to a variety of delivery modes, depending on the preacher’s gifting and style, and audience factors. Quicke considers six modes of delivery, including his preferred mode, after over thirty years of preaching, of “memorising the structure.” It is significant that this delivery mode comes after Quicke’s writing of a full “stereo-draft”.

Oral format refers to the arrangement of the oral text on the page. It is written for the preacher’s eye, to direct the oral production, and for the eyes of commentators. The
arrangement is thus designed to reflect how and when the words will be spoken. In particular, each time a breath is to be taken a new line is begun. A speech unit extending longer than a line alerts the preacher that this group of words is probably too long for a single breath. It may therefore need to be broken up or rearranged. Secondary and supportive material is indented, and this will be reflected in delivery. Pauses are indicated by space proportional to their length. The relationship between words is indicated. For example, words in parallel can be under each other, and contrasted words can be highlighted. Rubrics can be noted in the text or margin. For instance, maintaining or raising the pitch at the end of a line can be indicated by an arrow above the words; and movement towards a climax can be indicated by a south arrow in the margin. The shape of the words and rubrics on the page thus reflects how the sermon will sound. Apart from rubrics and page numbers, only those words that will be spoken appear on the page. A real trap for preachers is to include headings and numbers in their text that are not designed to be spoken. This leads to assumptions on the part of the preacher as to what has been communicated, and subsequent lack of clarity.

A short example of oral text in oral format from a sermon on Luke 17:7-10, *The Parable of the Servant and the Master*, appears below:

It’s not fair!
What about a bit of give and take here?
It all seems so pompous!:
Here’s the master, sitting up by himself at the table;
And here’s the servant:
hungry as a bull,
cooking and serving the food,
and hanging around until his master finishes,
before he can start on his own meal.

And after dinner? What happens?

Does the master thank the servant for his hard work?

*Of course not!*

The servant has simply obeyed orders and done his duty.

But you didn’t say “*Of course not!*” did you?

My bet is this master’s getting up your nose.

He could at least have said “Thank you.”!

Ever since you were a baby you’ve been taught to say “Thank you.”

And you’ve come to expect it!

And that’s our problem, isn’t it!

We want to be noticed.

We want to be appreciated.

We want to be congratulated.

And we are *worlds* away

from the world of this parable.

To produce oral format, the preacher first has to discern the length of appropriate speech units. Where will breaths be taken? The preacher then needs to think through the relationship between these speech units, and their consequent physical arrangement on the page. Ostensibly the preacher is working on the sound of the
sermon. However, because the preacher is working on an oral text in oral format, necessitating shorter and clearer speech units with clear and crisp conjunctions, the preacher is of necessity working on the clarity, logic and arrangement of the sermon’s ideas. This is further enhanced as punctuation is resolved and rubrics are added. Thus the process of producing oral text in oral format aids in the preparation of clear content in engaging form, and in the delivery of these ideas: the ultimate sound of the sermon.

Childers reminds us that while punctuation helps the reader make sense of essay formatted text, it “may or may not give him or her good advice about how to package the message for the ear.” This is because “punctuation directs the eye to meaning and phrasing directs the ear.” Thus, although essay format gives some indication of how a written piece should sound if read aloud, it does not give as many indicators to the speaker as oral format. Indeed, on occasion it unhelpfully gives indicators that do not apply in the oral context, such as some commas and question marks. Orally formatted text therefore should only include punctuation pertinent to the oral context. Preachers must not let the punctuation of an essay formatted text, such as the Bible, or a quote from a book, determine their “phrasing decisions,” or, to put it another way, the length, place and expression of speech units in the oral format.

Another limitation of essay format is that repetition in essay format is clumsy and confusing to the eye. Essay format also requires the eye to move across the whole page, and to find a different location along both the vertical and horizontal axes on the page each time the eye is lifted. In an orally formatted text, the eye can simply move down the vertical axis on the left hand side of the page to be reminded of the next
speech unit. This enables maximum eye contact with the audience and generally dispels much, if not all of the sense of the manuscript being read.

Naturally the oral text in oral format needs to be practised, aloud. This aids the preacher’s memory, especially “muscle memory”. The preacher will also be alerted to words or phrases that do not “sound right”. The juxtaposition of words may jar, or unintentional meanings may be communicated. During practice, the preacher can grasp the overall feel of the sermon’s engagement, and may be alerted to a need for style changes. As the preacher practises the text aloud new ways of speaking the material in an aurally engaging manner will often emerge, and the text can be so edited. Appropriate gestures, or physical illustrations, can also be experimented with, practised and marked in the text. As with learning any new language, learning to use oral texts in oral format may at first be a little self-conscious, but with time will become “second nature”. Those used to a prayer book tradition, where prayers and responses have some sense of orality, both in text and in format, will already have gained an intuitive ability. Of course, it is not simply enough to orate the text well. The text needs to be internalised and self-applied. Prayer, and a decision to love and give of oneself, are also required.

Salter has made a call for today’s preacher to “rediscover the revolutionary precision of speech exemplified by Abraham Lincoln.”32 Indeed, Salter argues that “imprecision through lack of spiritual preparation, careless thought, or the inability to seize the significance of the moment, is a sin.”33 These are strong words, but Salter recognizes that we will serve our hearers, and thus our Lord, by working hard on the sound of our
sermons. May the Lord delight in giving to His people not just sound sermons, but sound sermons sensitive to their sound.

For instance, my own experience with Robert G. Jacks, *Getting the Word Across: Speech Communication for Pastors and Lay Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995a), and Robert G. Jacks, *Just Say the Word: Writing for the Ear* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995b) is that they are too bulky and clumsy in their application. Literature associated with the fields of communication and performance studies can sometimes be adapted for homiletical use. However, wisdom is needed to differentiate between the skills required for acting and preaching. In the theatre, the audience expects the performer to act, and not preach! On the other hand, the audience is deeply suspicious at any sign of acting on the preacher’s part. Integrity and congruence between the preacher’s words, style and person are absolutely necessary in our contemporary world for any preaching which calls itself Biblical. Jana Childers examines the relationship between preaching and theatre in her stimulating and insightful book, *Performing the Word: Preaching as Theatre* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), but theologically conservative students may be distracted by her theological position and not attend to her helpful practical applications. Richard Ward, in *Speaking of the Holy: The Art of Communication in Preaching* (St Louis: Chalice, 2001), draws helpfully on insights from oral performance studies. He focusses on the public reading of Scripture, but is thin on adapting this oral work to a whole sermon, especially a sermon with a manuscript. Stephen H. Webb, in *The Divine Voice: Christian Proclamation and the Theology of Sound* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004), seeks to provide a comprehensive theology of sound and oral proclamation, with a substantial historical survey. Similarly, Charles Bartow also seeks to provide “a practical theology of proclamation” (Bartow, 3) in *God’s Human Speech: A Practical Theology*
of Proclamation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997). However, both Bartow and Webb
do not provide the tools for the practical application of their work.

For a discussion of some theological and personality-based objections to considering
the sound of the sermon, see Adrian Lane, “‘Please! No more boring sermons!’ An
Introduction to the Application of Narrative to Homiletics” in x (Melbourne: Acorn,
forthcoming).

See Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of
is not that religion has become the content of television shows but that television
shows may become the content of religion” (Postman, 116), has unfortunately been
realised in both meanings of the clause.

Some commentators have argued that including and adapting to the use of
PowerPoint has added at least an extra half-day to the preparation of sermons. Apart
from the implications of the significant shift away from the oral, including the
simplification of content, and the time and sophisticated presentation skills required
for PowerPoint presentation, the question must be asked if this half-day would be
better spent in another aspect of the sermon’s preparation. This is not to suggest that
sermons cannot be creatively combined with PowerPoint. Indeed, PowerPoint will
often be ideal for certain didactic material. However, it is a call for carefully
considered use. For a short treatment of the use of PowerPoint, videos and other
visual media in sermons, see Kenton Anderson, “In the Eye of the Hearer,” in Haddon
W. Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Eds), The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching:
A Comprehensive Resource for Today’s Communicators (Grand Rapids: Zondervan,
2005), 607-609.
At the congregation I attend in Melbourne, Australia, even liturgical responses and the words of songs on the screen are considered necessitative of an accompanying visual. This is often distracting and, necessarily, at best reductionistic. Similarly, compare the difference between a book and its movie.

This trend has also been encouraged by many Christian Educators, without due consideration of the most appropriate way to exercise the various ministries of the word, such as prophesy, command, rebuke, teaching, encouragement and evangelism.

An example of this is the movement in content and form of newspapers away from text oriented formats to magazine formats, with a significantly higher proportion of illustrations, photographs and graphics. Another example is television’s reluctance to cover any news without visuals, thus defining “news” as only that for which film is available. With the increase occasioned by technology in the variety of forms of mass media it will be interesting to see how the balance between text, aural and image based media changes in ensuing years. This balance will no doubt change in terms of frequency of use, impact and effect on content and form.

For a stimulating and comprehensive discussion of the relationship between radio and preaching, see Jolyon P. Mitchell, *Visually Speaking: Radio and the Renaissance of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999). In particular, Mitchell argues that “preachers need to move on from simply speaking visually to speaking experientially.” (Mitchell, 195)

Webb, 47.

See, for example, Gen 1:3; Deut 8:3; Heb 1:1-3; 1 Thess 2:13; Jas 1:18, 21; Eph 1:13; Col 1:5-6, 23; 2 Thess 2:8.
For a fuller discussion of the relationship between word and image, see Peter Adam, *Hearing God’s Words: Exploring Biblical Spirituality* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), Chapter 5, especially 139-162.

For a fuller discussion of the various means by which God speaks, see Peter Adam, *Speaking God’s Words: A Practical Theology of Expository Preaching* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), especially 22-23. Adam also provides a helpful exploration of the various ministries of the word, with particular reference to Calvin, Baxter and the ministry of the word in the New Testament (59-84). This approach affirms the foundational nature of the ministry of the word, as taught in Ephesians 4:11, but also recognizes that this ministry will be accomplished in a range of contexts and styles, affirming different giftedness, purposes, audiences and styles of learning. Paul evidences this in Acts 20:20. For an overview of Barth’s position, see Webb, 167-181.

Childers, 84.

Childers argues that “there are aspects – important aspects – of the meaning and liveliness of the text that can only be known through speaking the words of the text aloud.” (Childers, 50)

For a fuller discussion on engagement and form, see Adrian Lane, “Please! No more boring sermons!”


For a fuller discussion of the relationship between preaching and creativity, see Childers, 22-24 and 101-103. In particular, Childers reminds us of the theological
truth that “the human capacity for creativity is God-given and reflects God’s imprint on our natures.” (Childers, 101)

18 For a fuller discussion of the use of the voice, see Childers, 80-91.


21 This material is based on my more extensive discussion of evaluative methods in the Homiletics class. See Adrian Lane, “Some Principles and Methods of Sermon Evaluation used in the Introduction to Homiletics class,” 2002. Manuscript available in the Leon Morris Library, Ridley College, 160 The Avenue, Parkville, Vic 3052, Australia.


23 Michael J. Quicke, 360-Degree Preaching: Hearing, Speaking, and Living the Word (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 182.


25 For examples of wrestling with the implications of preaching to primarily oral cultures, see Tex Sample, Ministry in an Oral Culture: Living with Will Rogers, Uncle Remus, and Minnie Pearl (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 13-28 and 73-84; Grant Lovejoy, “‘But I Did Such Good Exposition’: Literate Preachers Confront

26 Quicke, 180.

27 Quicke’s six delivery modes are: Reading a manuscript; Using notes from a full manuscript; Reciting a manuscript; Memorising the structure; Interactive preaching and Impromptu preaching (Quicke, 185-186). Unfortunately Quicke does not clarify whether his comments regarding “Reading a Manuscript” apply to a manuscript in essay or oral text, in essay or oral format. My sense is that they presume a manuscript in essay format, and his comments on this delivery mode need to be considered with this in mind.


29 Childers, 82.

30 Childers, 82.

31 Childers, 82.


33 Salter, 23.