Schola Prophetarum: Prophetic Preaching Toward a Public, Prophetic Church

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Abstract

Prophetic preaching has for much of the last century been dominated by a classically liberal, Lone Ranger view of Hebrew Bible prophecy that is both a distortion of the past and increasingly problematic in the present. In this article, the author reconsiders the social shape of Hebrew Bible prophecy and joins to it the unusual contours of New Testament prophecy and its accompanying ecclesial practice of "discernment." These become resources for rethinking prophetic preaching theologically as an ecclesial task for a disestablished church desiring to move beyond post-liberal "resident alien" models and embracing prophetic preaching as a public form of shared ecclesial engagement for the sake of the world God so loves. In doing so, he seeks to connect with models of prophetic preaching as a shared, public task articulated most recently by scholars such as McClure, Andrews, Ottoni Wilhelm, and Ramsey.

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In a volume on prophetic preaching, ethicist James Childs makes the case that "the Spirit makes alliances."5 Perhaps the greatest possible shift in the mainline Church’s prophetic witness would be to recognize that the Spirit of God animates prophetic witness not just by the “no” in the face of human idolatry, but also by the “yes” in seeing God’s Spirit. already at work in the wider world beyond our ecclesial circled wagons, beyond the purity of self-enclosed identities. 3. For more details about the critique of this classic liberal view of prophetic preaching, see my article, “Schola Prophetarum: Prophetic Preaching Toward a Public, Prophetic Church,” Homiletic 34: 1 (Summer 2009), 12–21.