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Preaching in Canada: The Absence of Constitutive Narrative and the Problem of Identity

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The general theme “Preaching in Canada” presents certain challenges to the would-be essayist. It would in the first place be foolish to pretend that preaching in Canada is utterly unique and distinctive. The other homileticians who have contributed to this issue would doubtless join me in admitting or bearing witness to the fact that we have sometimes used the same sermon on either side of the Canada/US border with equally kind reception in both nations. (None of us would admit in print that our sermons are ever received unkindly.)

Moreover, it would clearly be impossible to describe adequately the state of preaching in Canada. The country is enormous, regionally divided and culturally diverse. Preaching in Canada is equally diverse. The homily that one would hear in a traditional Anglican church that follows the lectionary would differ from the sermon in a United Church congregation dedicated to social activism and still more from the equivalent to a sermon in an evangelical church which has adopted the seeker service model. Still different would be the preaching in the Roman Catholic Church, the largest identifiable Christian group in the country. And here we are speaking only of English language preaching. Who would dare speak authoritatively of preaching in both of our two linguistic solitudes. Only a sociologist of religion such as Reginald Bibby might attempt the task and Bibby, at least, does not seem particularly interested in preaching as such.¹

It would be tempting in an essay on preaching in Canada to celebrate great Canadian preachers and homileticians. There have been and are Canadians whose preaching is noted far beyond our borders. A country that boasts preachers such as Herbert O’Driscoll and John Gladstone need feel no homiletical shame.² Over the years, there have also been great Canadian teachers of preaching and writers

on matters homiletical. The earliest Canadian textbook on preaching, as far as I know, is the posthumous collection of essays and lectures by J. J. A. Proudfoot who taught preaching for 34 years in the late 19th century in Knox College, Toronto.³ Proudfoot sometimes offered advice that still seems timely: “Pulpit announcements ... should be made as brief as possible. Those generally made are too numerous and distracting; and the reveal an amount of machinery quite incompatible with the simplicity of the Apostolic Church.”⁴

Amen!

Some other observations seem almost quaint. Proudfoot is more impressed by the rhetorical skills of secular speakers than of preachers. Perhaps that is understandable in one who heard Sir John A. MacDonald and Wilfrid Laurier rather than our present day politicians.⁵ Sometimes his homiletical theory is very different from the homiletics of our day: “A text is not an essential part of a sermon. Good Gospel sermons can be preached without a text. *A rhetorical discourse must have a definite subject.* This is essential.”⁶ What must be preached is the “soul of the text”, that is, the subject contained in the text. The structure of the sermon must be determined not by the text itself but by the subject and the “end aimed at.” “Allowing a text to give form to a sermon has done much harm.”⁷ He maintains a strong preference for the abstract over the concrete.⁸ Nothing could be a more concise and clear statement of the preaching theory against which the “New Homiletics,” the dominant homiletical approach of the last generation, has reacted.⁹

The truth is, however, that though Proudfoot’s work is clear, compelling and certainly Canadian, it is not substantially different from the works of American teachers of preaching of the same period. Much the same could be said of his many notable successors. Paul Scott Wilson of Emmanuel College, Toronto, for example, is among the most prolific, profound and respected writers in the field, from any country.¹⁰ Other Canadians have also drawn a hearing south of the border and in the wider world.¹¹ These authors do often demonstrate their social and national location in their choice of illustrative material. Ed Riegert, formerly of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, extensively used Canadian First Nations tales in his work *Imaginative Shock*.¹² The Canadian homileticians may also show the influence of living in a multi-cultural society in which Christianity is rapidly becoming a minority religion and which tilts politically to the

progressive end of the spectrum. It is possible to imagine these homileticians moving to the United States to live and teach but it is not possible to imagine them voting Republican. One would be hard pressed, however, to detect anything else distinctively Canadian. The decisive evidence surely lies in the fact that most Canadian homileticians publish with American presses for whom the primary market is overwhelmingly American. If the Canadian homileticians were utterly foreign to Americans, these presses would not publish them! A more progressive American homiletician could very likely write in a vein very similar to his or her Canadian colleagues. Ironically, this paragraph's attempt to list "world class" Canadian preachers and scholars may be more characteristically Canadian than their (our) homiletical theory.

Although it may not be possible to identify clear, distinctive and consistent characteristics of preaching in Canada, it is possible, I believe, to identify a particular task of preaching in Canada. That task derives from the persistent problem of Canadian identity. More specifically the uniquely Canadian problem that preaching may rightly address comes from the strategies English Canadians have adopted to cope with the fact that we no longer possess a national constitutive narrative. Here I venture with some trepidation into the field of the sociologist and the political scientist. I do not pretend to be trained in these fields nor is this essay a survey of literature on Canadian identity. My observations are buttressed by certain key works that will be mentioned in the footnotes, but they remain just that, my observations. They spring from some years of preaching in many churches across Canada.¹³ That ministry followed a theological education in the US and Britain and some preaching experience, especially over the years in the former. It is over against these two nations that we Canadians have tended to define ourselves. These thoughts, it must be declared, come from my experiences as a preacher and as a citizen, not from any particular expertise in the social sciences.

We turn, then, to the matter of a constitutive narrative. The homiletical community in North America, at least as it is represented in the Academy of Homiletics, the society of teachers of preaching, has been preoccupied with the role of narrative for a generation. Among other functions, some stories can become constitutive narratives, that is, stories that define and create the identity of a

community. This is a familiar concept in many theological circles but is certainly not a term that is well known in the wider church. Perhaps the reader will forgive this teacher of preaching if I explain it in this journal the way I would from a pulpit. In a sermon I might ask the congregation to imagine the funeral of the matriarch of a family. She has been the glue of the extended family and with her death its identity and perhaps its very continuance as an identifiable group is threatened. The day of the funeral comes and the family gathers for the funeral service, arguably one of the less important events of the day. After the service the family return to someone's home. There they eat and drink together and *they tell stories*.

“Do you remember the time when her old cat got up the tree and she ...”

“Or what about the time she caught Dad smoking when he was ...”

“Then there was the time when the vacuum cleaner salesman stuck his foot in the door and wouldn't ...”

They rehearse the familiar stories that all the adults in the family have known for years and communicate them to the younger members of the family. (In my experience the young people genuinely listen when this is going on.) In the retelling of the stories the family is recreated. It will go on for a family is more than shared DNA; it is also shared story.

At this point I turn to the congregation and say, “It's not very different in the church. We eat and drink together and we tell the stories of the faith. Those stories are, of course, the stories of the Bible. If we forget those stories or if we fail to pass them on to the next generation we cease to be the church.” As far as I can tell, people seem to understand what I am talking about.

All this is not particularly Canadian, of course. This sermon or address works just as well south of the 49th parallel. But if I am speaking about this concept in a Canadian setting I often add a middle term to the progression. I tell the congregation that it is not only families that are defined by a shared story. Whole nations share stories also. Then I say something like this: “I sometimes worry because we Canadians don't really have a constitutive narrative. Americans do. They have the Mayflower and the Puritans at the first Thanksgiving, George Washington who could not tell a lie and Abraham Lincoln who freed the slaves. Whether their ancestors arrived on the Mayflower or they themselves came to this continent on a Boeing 747, that's their national story. But we Canadians don't

have one.” As far as I can tell, people seem to understand what I am talking about. They recognize that to be Canadian is to be a people without a functioning constitutive narrative.

To be more exact, to be English Canadian is to belong to a people which has no constitutive narrative. Quebecois, by contrast, may well have such a narrative.¹⁴ In some versions, of course, that narrative is the retelling of a series of humiliations at the hands of the English. It may be that this version of the Quebecois constitutive narrative is more of a threat to national unity than failed or inadequate constitutional arrangements. Constitutive narratives are immensely powerful. To be even more exact, to be English Canadian is to belong to a people that once possessed a constitutive narrative but consciously gave it away or even suppressed it as inadequate and dangerous. There now remain only unconnected fragments of a national constitutive narrative. This has happened in my own lifetime. The motto of the province of Ontario is “*Ut fidelis incipit, sic permanet.*” That may be loosely rendered as “It began faithful. Let it remain so.” What was it faithful to in the beginning? – the British Crown. The defining principle and, as we shall claim shortly the narrative connected to it, centers around a connection to Britain and to the monarchy. That connection is safely obscured by the Latin of the motto. One wonders if the motto would have been changed had it not been so. But there were celebrations of that defining connection that were more clear, were once more popular and have been abandoned. So, for example, under the leadership of Prime Minister Lester Pearson,¹⁵ the Red Ensign, with its prominent Union Jack in the corner, was abandoned in favour of the Maple Leaf flag. The depth of controversy that attended that change is almost unthinkable today. In my public school in a Toronto suburb, we sang “God Save the Queen” every morning and “O Canada” only occasionally. I do not believe my sons even know the words to “the Queen.” It was in this period of rapid change that George Grant penned his classic *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*.¹⁶ He mourned in that book the triumph in Canada of a continentalism unable in any meaningful way to distance itself from the interests of the US and the loss of a British connection that had helped former generations of Canadians to resist those tendencies. In an introductory essay to the 1970 reprint of the book he made clear, however, that what he mourned was not so much Britishness itself but

rather the passing of “the sense of the common good standing against capitalist individualism (which) depended on a tradition of British conservatism.”¹⁷

The fate of the most popular patriotic song of English Canada may be more instructive for our purposes than the flag controversy. That song was “The Maple Leaf Forever!” written by Alexander Muir, a good Presbyterian. I quote it from childhood memory.

In days of yore from Britain’s shore
 Wolfe, the dauntless hero came
 And planted firm Britannia’s flag
 On Canada’s fair domain.
 Long may it wave, our boast and pride
 And join in love together,
 The thistle, shamrock rose entwined,
 The Maple Leaf forever!

We may note that in the chorus, the national flowers of Scotland, Ireland and England entwine, but explicitly not the *fleur de lys*. More importantly for our purposes, the verse is a recounting of a story. It celebrates the victory on the Plains of Abraham, the tragic defeat of the Quebecois story. The song carries on the story in other verses, “At Queenston Heights and Lundy’s Lane our brave forefathers fought and died.” Whom did they fight? Answer: The Americans, in the War of 1812. The constitutive narrative of English Canada once told the story of a people who remained faithful to the British Crown when Americans rebelled, who settled the wilderness to create a society faithful to that connection and who fought the Americans to maintain a British North America. To that connection, the story ran for generations, we Canadians remain faithful. The song is gone, played only with skirl of the pipes of the 48th Highlanders but, of course, with no words, at the opening game of the Toronto Maple Leafs home season.¹⁸ The story is gone too.¹⁹

Aside from some minor nostalgia for the days of my youth, I do not regret these changes. The story, as I was told it in my youth, is not only unnecessarily wounding to French Canadians but also clearly inadequate and even harmful in a multi-racial, multicultural society. Its loss was painful to the generation that had fought alongside the British and for the Crown in the Second World War but in truth the story had to be replaced. The question remains for Canadians in general, of course, replaced by what and what are the consequences

of those choices. In this paper, the operative question is neither of those but rather: What are the consequences of those choices for the preaching of the Church in Canada?

Before we turn to that question, however, several observations may be made. It is not the case that Canadians are not interested in their own history. The long and profitable publishing career of the late Pierre Berton suggests otherwise. I am only suggesting that our knowledge of our past does not add up to nor function as a constitutive narrative. Fortunately, a constitutive narrative is not the only source of identity, either for a nation or for a church. Canada as a whole and English Canadians in particular do have a national identity, no matter how anguished the search for that identity may sometimes appear. In the first place, Canadians identify themselves quite simply as ... *not American*. (Once we had to define ourselves over against Britain but that distinction was achieved decades ago, perhaps at at Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele. The monument at Vimy Ridge may have served for Canadians the same function as National Battlefield Parks such as Gettysburg in the US.) However difficult, it may be to define ourselves positively, it is easy to define ourselves negatively. To be Canadian is not to be American. As a nation, we collectively go through life like young travellers in Europe, always bearing on our backpack a Maple Leaf flag to demonstrate that we are not American. This is certainly in continuity with the abandoned constitutive narrative of Loyalists, Queenston Heights and Lundy's Lane. The emphasis now, however, is not on having a history different from the Americans but rather on having values different from our southern neighbours. Even when we speak of history, it tends to be used to illustrate those values. One thinks here of the brief "Heritage Moments" historical vignettes carried on CBC Television. One of the most interesting of these vignettes depicts Sam Steele of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police (antecedent of the RCMP) facing down turbulent Yankee whiskey traders and establishing good order in the name of the Queen. Vignettes such as this are not, I would argue, part of a connected narrative but rather anecdotes illustrative of an identity shaped by factors other than a constitutive narrative.

We believe ourselves to be a more tolerant, more progressive, less violent, more orderly in short, a "kinder gentler"²⁰ people. We are different because we have different values. The difference with respect to values may be decreasing (so Simpson) or increasing

(Adams) but the distinction between Canadians and Americans can be found in our values. That view is expressed in the recently published work *Fire and Ice*.²¹ That view is also held by at least one American, Michael Moore, whose film, *Bowling for Columbine*, argued, wrongly in my judgement, that the lower murder rates in this country have come about not because of more restrictive gun laws but because Canadians lack the primal fear of the black man that, according to Moore, afflicts the American psyche.²² Whether or not it is accurate, this perception of a kinder gentler society constitutes our non-historical national myth.

The myth has been marvellously illustrated and simultaneously lampooned in the figure of Corporal Benton Fraser²³ of the TV series, *Due South*. Fraser is the archetypal Canadian figure, a Mountie. He is seconded, in one of the more unlikely plot twists of contemporary television, to work with the Chicago police department where he wears his dress scarlet uniform, lanyard and characteristic hat in the most unlikely situations. In other words, he is placed in a situation where the defining characteristic of the Canadian identity, not being American, will be at once problematic and obvious. He is accompanied by his pet wolf "Diefenbaker," a name surely chosen not only because it is funny in itself, but because Americans will not get why it is funny. Fraser is brave, gentle, caring, loyal to his American sidekick Ray, respectful to his superiors and unfailingly polite even to bad guys. He is absurdly careful to follow the rules except when the exigencies of the plot demand that he go on his own, a regular occurrence. Then, however, unlike the classic American cop, Dirty Harry, he exhibits pangs of conscience over his choice. (This may be the Canadian distinctive according to the myth: we break the rules too but we feel really bad about it.) Fraser hardly ever uses a gun but when he does so, he is a deadeye shot. Of course, as a Mountie, he always gets his man.

These values are enshrined, according to our national myth, in our social programs. How are we different from Americans? We have sensible gun laws and above all we have a health care system that provides, sometimes slowly to be sure, for everyone in our nation. It is very telling, I would suggest, that in the recent CBC series, "The Greatest Canadian" the million plus voters who participated selected Tommy Douglas. On the face of it this is an absurd choice. Douglas served as premier of Saskatchewan, one of our less populous

provinces and normally ignored by most of the rest of the country. In Federal politics he never even reached the level of Leader of the Opposition. His NDP party was consistently rejected by the vast majority of the Canadian electorate. He was, however, gentle, caring, progressive and, above all, his provincial government introduced universal health care. That system spread from Saskatchewan across the country and helped make us what we are. The importance of this system to our national psyche can be measured by the angst that is produced by media accounts of excessive waiting lists or of wealthy Canadians jumping the queue to buy immediate treatment in the US. It is not simply that such stories reflect problems in a system vital to our society; they diminish our confidence in our national identity. Similarly, when we read stories of gang shootouts in our major cities, it is not simply that these are horrible crimes. We also ask ourselves, "Are we becoming just like the Americans?" We fear that we may be, "unarmed Americans with health insurance,"²⁴ and if those programs are threatened, so is our identity. There is at least a moderately cheerful aspect to all this that must be noted, however. All this seems to spring from that "the sense of a common good" the apparent passing of which was lamented by George Grant in 1965.

The difference between the two countries with respect to values may not always be as extreme as we think. After the re-election of George W. Bush as President in 2004, there appeared on the Internet an American cartoon that noted the odd geographical and political fact that all the states on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and the states bordering Canada along the Great Lakes and in New England had voted Democratic. All the other Democratic states, with the exception of Hawaii, were contiguous to those states. In the cartoon, the Republican states of the south and the heartland were coloured red and labelled "Jesus-land." The Democratic states were coloured blue, as was Canada, and the whole blue land mass was labelled, "The United States of Canada."²⁵ In short, some Americans, at least, preferred to believe that their values as Kerry voters were actually more similar to Canada's than to their Republican, religiously conservative compatriots in the center of the United States. Similarly, right wing Canadians may more strongly identify with Republican America than with their home and native land. It is reasonably well known that George W. Bush's best known non-bungled phrase, "Axis of evil," was penned by, to some disputed degree, his then

speechwriter, David Frum, son of the quintessentially Canadian and much loved CBC broadcaster, Barbara Frum. All this is to say that the divide over values in North America, a divide that sometimes seems as wide as the Grand Canyon, does not run along the 49th parallel. It is a fissure that exists within both nations.

There may well be more overlap between the two nations than separation. In the field of religion, quite specifically, there is a flourishing North American Free Trade Area. Denominations have their opposite numbers in the “other” country. Speakers move back and forth across the border, especially northward. Students do the same, though here the flow is chiefly southward. Pastors visit American megachurches such as Willow Creek or Saddleback and take part in the Billy Graham School of Evangelism to see how it is done. Canadians read, depending on their theological leanings, Rick Warren, Tim LaHaye or John Shelby Spong. A few Americans even read Henri Nouwen or Jean Vanier. And certainly, American students of preaching read Paul Scott Wilson.

But it is also different in Canada. The proportions differ radically. In the first place, we are simply much less likely to go to church. Today 42 per cent of Americans claim weekly church attendance and according to an Ekos Poll only 22 per cent of Canadians make the same claim.²⁶ I suspect many in both nations stretch the truth considerably when asked. But the fact they feel the need to make such a claim is interesting and many more Americans find themselves in that position. Fundamentalism is much stronger and certainly more visible and politically influential in the US than in Canada.²⁷ Most American churches, like Canadian churches, are small but there are more megachurches in the US, whether independent or associated with a denomination. A pastor friend attended a workshop on church growth in the US. An American participant asked how large my friend’s church might be. He answered, “About 300 members.” That is a not unimpressive communicant roll for a Canadian Presbyterian congregation. But the American replied, “That’s just a little baby church!” Whatever may be the case in other realms, in religion we are different.²⁸

Geography has made us the one who lies alongside the elephant. That will not change: “The Americans are our best friends whether we like it or not.”²⁹ There are also certain enduring verities about Canadian attitudes to the US that will abide. Consider these words

penned by George Grant in 1970: “We have all the advantages of that empire ... Yet, because we have formal political independence, we can keep out of some of the dirty work necessary to that empire. We make money from Viet Nam but we do not need to send our sons there.... Like most human beings, Canadians want it both ways.”³⁰ Change “Viet Nam” to “Iraq” and those words would be just as true today. Moreover, we in Canada will very likely continue to be a nation which defines itself over against the US. The differences between ourselves and the US will continue for the foreseeable future to be described historically but with reference to values and to certain key social programs that enshrine those values. The question that faces us, then is: How does one preach in such a situation?

There are both advantages and disadvantages to preaching in such a situation. One clear disadvantage lies in the fact that Canadians are likely to perceive what Michael Adams persistently labels “religiosity” as an American phenomenon. More specifically, it appears to me from observing media reports and simply listening to the way people talk that when many secularized Canadians hear the word “Christian,” they think of Southern, right wing, evangelical or fundamentalist Christianity, the religion of “Jesus-land.” They think of Jerry Falwell as Christian but forget about their own, very different local churches. For a faith to be considered somehow American makes life more difficult in a country whose identity is preserved only in the constant act of distinguishing itself from the US. In *Restless Gods*, Reginald Bibby suggests that times may be more favourable for Christianity and indeed for mainline Christianity with its omnipresent “franchises” than he had formerly supposed. The time is ripe, it might appear, for respectful evangelism. But it is precisely evangelism that is seen as characteristically American, a reality noted by no less astute an observer than “Pinball” Clemons, coach of the Toronto Argonauts.³¹ To preach evangelistic sermons or to urge parishioners to witness to their neighbours, however respectfully, may be perceived as foreign and “just too American.” Churches in which evangelism has become foreign are probably in serious long-term trouble.

On the other hand, Canadians – lacking a cohesive and functioning national constitutive narrative – are not likely to confuse their story with God’s. Americans may do just that. I remember when I lived in Virginia seeing a special offer from Jerry Falwell of

Lynchburg Virginia, a white leather bound Bible which contained in addition to the Word of God, colour portraits of all American presidents. Both Word of God and the Presidents seemed to be equally objects of veneration. It is clear what this is and sensitive American Christians know it full well. This confusion of their national constitutive narrative with the work of and word of God is idolatry. Canadian Christians are spared this particular temptation though, to be sure, we face different and perhaps equally dangerous ones.

If a tendency to idolatry is the besetting sin of American Christianity a tendency to smugness and even hypocrisy may be the Canadian church. The “hypocrites” so denounced by Jesus in the Gospels were not simply people who pretended to be better than they were, the meaning of the word in common speech. They were those who judged others harshly for failing to live up to the values and standards that the hypocrites professed and often failed to honour in reality. We Canadians may find ourselves deserving a like condemnation. If one’s identity is bound up in values, one may be tempted to esteem inordinately those who hold those values and to scorn those who do not. Moreover that scorn may extend from that which is truly dangerous, a tendency to resort to violence, for example, to that which is merely a matter of manners or style, perhaps waving flags at every opportunity. One might call this contempt of the other “Pharisaism” if that word also were not itself the product of that group stereotyping which may be our greatest temptation as Canadians. The most popular TV ad in recent years was “The Rant.”³² The Rant ostensibly celebrates Canadian identity, “I am Canadian!” but virtually every line is actually an attack on America and Americans. One might say the same about the hilariously funny “Apology to Americans” by comedian Colin Mochrie.³³ To be sure, Americans will not be seriously harmed by mockery. In some respects it is healthy and, to be honest, the America of George W. Bush probably deserves at least some mockery. But there are overtones of contempt in the mockery and contempt is always spiritually dangerous to the one or to the nation who looks on another with contempt. A colleague who emigrated from the US to Canada once told me that in her experience Anti-Americanism is the one form of prejudice that is tolerated in polite Canadian society.³⁴ Much in American national life and certainly many of the actions of

their government may be profoundly dangerous to the common good of the world and thus sinful. But the God who justifies sinners loves Americans also. Let it be said clearly and said clearly from Canadian pulpits: contempt of the other, even if the other is American is sinful. There is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, *American nor Canadian*, but we are all one in Christ Jesus. Surely “Preaching in Canada” must say just that.

A more cheerful final word may be possible. There may indeed linger in Canada, despite George Grant’s lament, a remnant of a “sense of the common good.” This sense may not be very strong. It is, perhaps, nothing more than a shoot of life from a fallen stump, a mere remnant. But God is good with remnants. A “sense of the common good” is not the same thing as the Kingdom of God, but it is probably closer to it than capitalist individualism. A country which even inadequately attends to the common good is worthy of its citizens’ love and care, even if those citizens are preachers. Preachers can help nourish this growth with the confidence that in this case their Canadian-ness and their Christianity are not entirely at cross purposes.

Notes

- ¹ The word “preaching” does not appear in the index of Bibby’s most recent survey of the Canadian religious scene, Reginald Bibby *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart, 2002).
- ² Preaching is an oral art that is learned, at least in part, by hearing great preachers. I was greatly influenced in my own development as a preacher by the example of John Gladstone of Yorkminster Park Baptist Church in Toronto. I received word of his death, at a ripe age, the day I was typing these words.
- ³ J. J. A. Proudfoot, *Systematic Homiletics*, ed. J. A. Turnbull & A. J. MacGillivray (Toronto: Westminster, 1903). There also exists in the Knox College Library a much shorter unbound work by Proudfoot, bearing the same title, the date 1896 and the note, “Printed for the use of his classes but not published.”
- ⁴ J. J. A. Proudfoot, *Systematic Homiletics* (classroom version), p.104.
- ⁵ J. J. A. Proudfoot, *Systematic Homiletics*, p.26.
- ⁶ J. J. A. Proudfoot, *Systematic Homiletics*, p.28.

- 7 J. J. A. Proudfoot, *Systematic Homiletics*, p.28.
- 8 J. J. A. Proudfoot, *Systematic Homiletics* (classroom version), pp. 54-56.
- 9 The New Homiletic is a movement that is usually considered to have been initiated by the publication of Fred. B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971). A feature of this movement has been its insistence that the form of the Biblical text is of equal significance as its content. The form of the text should heavily influence the form of the sermon. On this latter point see Don Wardlaw, *Preaching Biblically* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983) and Thomas G. Long, *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989).
- 10 Paul Scott Wilson is certainly Canada's preeminent author in the field. His publications include: *Imagination of the Heart: New Understandings in Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), *A Concise History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), *The Practice of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), *The Four Pages of the Sermon: A Guide to Biblical Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), *God Sense: Reading the Bible for Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), *Preaching and Homiletical Theory: Preaching and its Partners* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2004), *Broken Words: Reflections on the Craft of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004). Wilson also edited with John Rottman, a former student at Toronto, now professor at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, *Seasons of Preaching: 160 Best Sermons from the Preaching Resource Word & Witness* (New Berlin WI: Liturgical Publications, 1996).
- 11 One thinks here first of Art Van Seters, the first Canadian to serve as President of the Academy of Homiletics. (Paul Scott Wilson was the second. I was honoured to be the third.) Van Seters edited an important collection of essays entitled *Preaching as a Social Act: Theology and Practice* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988) which drew the attention of the homiletical community to the ethical and social dimensions of the preaching event. That emphasis has been maintained in his recent book *Preaching and Ethics* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2004). Ed Riegert of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary published a fine book on the role of imagination, *Imaginative Shock: Preaching and Metaphor* (Burlington, ON: Trinity Press, 1990) Riegert has recently published a collection of narrative sermons by Canadian preachers entitled *Hear Then a Story* (Waterloo: Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, 2002). Riegert's work is not as well known as it ought to be, perhaps because, unlike the other homileticians listed here, he published with Canadian presses. Riegert's successor at Waterloo Lutheran is David Schnasa Jacobsen. Though

raised and educated in the United States, Jacobsen has made a notable contribution to the homiletical world from his base in Waterloo. His books are: *Preaching Luke-Acts*, co-authored with Dr. Günter Wasserberg, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), *Preaching in the New Creation: The Promise of New Testament Apocalyptic Texts* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), *As Seeing the Invisible: The Cosmic Scope of Apocalyptic Preaching* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1997). He has pioneered the use of the Internet as a tool for teaching and discussion in the Academy of Homiletics as founding Editor of *Homiletix e-Forum*, the electronic journal of the Academy of Homiletics. The border is, of course, crossed in both directions. One of the founders of the Academy of Homiletics and an elder of the tribe of homileticians is Canadian born Donald MacLeod, longtime professor at Princeton Theological Seminary. The Evangelical Theological Society was formed in 1998. Kent Anderson of ACTS seminary of Trinity Western University served as President in 2002. He has authored *Preaching with Conviction: Communicating with Postmodern Listeners* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001) and *Preaching with Integrity* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003). Anderson also maintains a website www.preaching.org. In the interest of completeness, I might mention two works of my own, *Preaching that Matters: The Bible and our Lives* (Louisville: WJKP, 1998) and *Grace: A Preaching Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003). One may reasonably expect that graduates of the doctoral program in homiletics of the Toronto School of Theology may influence the field in Canada, the USA and Korea.

- 12 Ed Riegert, *Imaginative Shock: Preaching and Metaphor*.
- 13 I have not preached in either Newfoundland or Saskatchewan. I can claim to have done so in the other eight provinces.
- 14 Such matters are well beyond my expertise. On this matter see Jocelyn Letourneau *A History for the Future: Memory and Identity in Quebec*, trans P. Aronoff and H. Scott (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004).
- 15 The mention of Lester Pearson raises an important point. This was not done to English Canadians but rather occurred at the instigation of their own leadership. In some ways, Lester Pearson, a Rhodes Scholar, almost embodied the British connection.
- 16 George Grant *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1970). The book was first published in 1965 but I will quote from the 1970 reprint for which Grant wrote an impassioned and prescient introductory essay.
- 17 George Grant *Lament for a Nation*, p. x.

- 18 I suspect but cannot prove that this song is why the Toronto hockey team is not the more grammatically correct “Maple Leaves.”
- 19 The present Canadian National Anthem, *O Canada*, also refers to a constitutive narrative in its French version. English Canadians forget that it was, in fact, written for the nationalist St. Jean Baptiste society! The French words even include our key word, story.
- O Canada, terre de nos aïeux / ton front est ceint des
fleurons glorieux. / car ton bras sait porter l'épée, / il sait
porter la croix, / ton **histoire** est une épopée / des plus
brillants exploits. / Et ta valeur, / deux fois trempée, /
protègera nos foyers et nos droits.*
- The story of carrying the cross, that is faithfulness to the Roman Catholic Church and participation in its mission, may have disappeared in secular Quebec. Surely the emphasis on protecting rights remains, however, even if those rights are now primarily in the constitutional arena rather than the religious or even educational.
- 20 This is a phrase used by Jeffrey Simpson in his study of Canadians who emigrate to the US, *Star-Spangled Canadians: Canadians Living the American Dream* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2000), p. 79.
- 21 Michael Adams, *Fire and Ice: The United States, Canada and the Myth of Converging Values* (Penguin, Canada: Toronto, 2003).
- 22 Moore is “dead wrong” about at least one of his factual assertions. Canadians are not more likely to own firearms than are Americans. According to a 1996 survey 49% of American households possess a gun. For Canada the figure in the same year was 22%. A 2001 survey found that the figure was actually 19%. Michael Adams, *Fire and Ice*, p. 119.
- 23 The name “Fraser” evokes buried memory of early explorers and Scots born Hudson’s Bay Company traders. Flashes in later episodes to Fraser’s dead father and to scenes of long distance dogsled chases reinforce the mythical content. Here the mythology is not of our actual history so much as of older TV series such as Sgt. Preston of the Yukon. Popular culture is now profoundly self-referential, a problem for preaching in which the primary reference is to a story outside of popular culture.
- 24 Michael Adams, *Fire and Ice*, p. xii.
- 25 I have not been able to recover the URL of this cartoon.
- 26 Michael Adams, *Fire and Ice*, p. 50.
- 27 “Christian fundamentalism has far deeper and more enduring roots in the United States, particularly in the Bible Belt, than here in Canada.”

Michael Adams, *Fire and Ice* p. 50. I doubt that Adams has the theological sophistication to distinguish between fundamentalism and evangelicalism. Still, there is no reason to doubt the general truth of his claim.

- 28 Jeffrey Simpson claimed, “Whatever Canadians may think of their American neighbours, they have never been more like them. And not because Americans have changed but the other way round.” But Simpson then notes, “an exception might be moral and religious issues.” Jeffrey Simpson, *Star-Spangled Canadians*, p. 343. It is precisely the notion that Canadians are more like Americans than ever before that Michael Adams disputes in *Fire and Ice*. One may note here that Simpson privileged the realm of political discourse, economic arrangements and political institutions over the realm of religion and moral issues. Adams, whose study questioned a much larger number of both Canadians and American over a number of years, paid far more attention to fundamental values. It should also be noted that Simpson wrote before George W. Bush entered the White House. One wonders if he would argue in the same vein today. Whichever view is generally accurate, however, it is clear that precisely in the realm that interests me, the differences between the two nations are uncontested.
- 29 Robert Thompson, former leader of the national Social Credit Party, quoted in Michael Adams, *Fire and Ice*, p. 1.
- 30 George Grant *Lament for a Nation*, p. ix.
- 31 Reginald Bibby, *Restless Gods*, p. 65.
- 32 “The Rant” may be viewed at:
<www.coolcanuckaward.ca/joe_canadian.htm>.
- 33 “An Apology to Americans” may be found at:
<<http://interactorg.com/Rick%20Mercer.htm>>.
- 34 I think it fair to say that a sense of Canadian superiority over the US thoroughly permeates the entire book *Fire and Ice*, despite its claim of academic objectivity.