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Ambrose of Milan'S Method of Mystagogical Preaching

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The intended audience appears to be those involved in church and missions ministry, but Longenecker's assumptions about his audience's prior knowledge are not always consistent. In the New Testament section, he is sometimes careful to give background to scholastic issues, but other times he assumes too much regarding knowledge of Greek syntax and a fairly sophisticated awareness of New Testament scholarship.

On the other hand, in Part 3, Longenecker offers an accessible, informative summary of various philosophical approaches to modern evangelism, including the "synergistic-developmental model." He highlights this model as a dynamic process that uses creativity and analogy to combine the core Christian gospel (expressed in the New Testament confessions) with the cultural norms of people who chose to follow Christ. In this model, worship, preaching, theological understanding and ethics are all based on the core gospel, but also subject to change and development depending on cultural and temporal context. Perhaps, if Part 3 had preceded Part 2, a clearer sense of direction and focus in the New Testament analysis would have emerged.

Though the content is not always engaging, Longenecker's approach does provide stimulus for considering the interaction between Christianity and culture in the complex, multicultural world in which we currently live.

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Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching

Craig A. Satterlee

Collegetown, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002

365 pages, \$38.95 Softcover

Satterlee has allowed readers of his dissertation from Notre Dame to catch a glimpse of one of the company of heaven – St. Ambrose of Milan. Satterlee's desire in studying Ambrose is twofold: 1) to understand what it meant for Ambrose to preach mystagogically and 2) to ascertain a method of mystagogical preaching for our own era. Before beginning this task, Satterlee lays the groundwork for a proper understanding of mystagogy defined as, ". . . sustained reflection on the Church's rites of initiation, preaching on the 'mysteries' of the Christian faith," and

which has as its goal, “the formation *of* Christians rather than providing religious information *to* Christians” (xxiii). The foundation of Satterlee’s book is that preaching mystagogically does not merely mean giving an explanation of what happened in baptism, but rather, allowing the baptized to re-experience their union with Christ in a much fuller dimension.

The book is distributed over nine chapters. Chapter one establishes the need for mystagogy not just for Ambrose, but for the modern church. Satterlee calls for preachers of the mysteries to acquire techniques that are oral in character, rather than written, and mystagogical in approach, rather than cognitive. The second chapter offers a peak into the historical background of Ambrose’s life: his birth, rise to governorship, election as Bishop, and the specific challenges he faced serving a church in this fallen world. Chapters three through eight are a series of six historical studies on Ambrose and his church that correspond to his homiletic method. Satterlee argues within these chapters that a sermon connected with the mysteries must take into account the rhetorical interactions of preacher, listener, message and setting (classical rhetoric’s subdivisions of *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*). Chapter nine concludes the book with Satterlee’s call for a need to re-discover mystagogy in preaching. A mystagogical method of preaching emphasizes participation with the rites and with the Word rather than a mere explanation of them. The chapter ends with a mystagogical sermon that Satterlee preached in his own congregation at the Easter vigil.

Satterlee’s work is excellent for any pastor or lay theologian and very timely as far as homiletics is concerned. The discipline of preaching is growing extremely tired of both higher critical principles of interpretation and the lingering odor of intellectualism. Preachers from all denominations are beginning to view sermons as events of meeting the incarnate Christ rather than as opportunities to make an intellectual argument. Ambrose knew how to speak the Word to people, to create a realm in which preacher and congregant interacted together around the living, incarnate Christ; something from which the church in any age could benefit.

Mystagogical preaching is preaching Christ; it is a step into another world, into another life – the life of the crucified and risen Christ.

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