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Charles H. Cosgrove and W. Dow Edgerton. *In Other Words: Incarnational Translation for Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

*In Other Words: Incarnational Translation for Preaching* gets to the core of the task of preaching, and therefore deserves to be read and studied by everyone who preaches. For many of our churches, preaching is most fundamentally the act of bridging the gap between the ancient text of “long, long ago” and the lives of contemporary listeners “here and now.” Often in worship services a scripture passage is read, and then this reading is followed by a sermon that serves as a commentary to help listeners better understand what the passage meant in Bible times, what it means in our times, and how we might apply it in our lives.

I suppose it is trite to say that the times are changing, but the fact is that they are not only changing, they are changing rapidly. Thus the task of helping the scripture speak for our modern congregations is even more urgent. *In Other Words* engages the Biblical text that serves the task of preaching in beautiful and inspiring ways.

In case anyone thinks preaching has not changed, chapter one outlines some of the major changes in preaching over the last centuries and decades. This chapter serves to strengthen the writers’ case for what follows, but it also helps the reader see that preaching does change and that new thoughts about preaching are needed. Often we think of context as related to different places or people, but in this volume different times are added to the important context list.

Chapter two takes us to the book’s core teaching, helping us understand “incarnational translation” for preaching. Incarnational translation includes concerns of the original text and the contemporary context. What would the text sound like had it been written to our contexts? That is the incarnational translation Cosgrove and Edgerton want to help preachers be able to prepare as part of preparing to preach. Incarnational translation speaks to many of the changes mentioned in chapter one. Every preacher will be motivated to understand the need to find the rich fiber that is in the biblical text.

The center section of the book works with major genres of the scripture texts. Chapter three focuses on the Psalms, hymns, and oracles. With analysis and examples we are shown how incarnational translations

might be applied to such texts. Chapter four analyzes story and the role of story in scripture. The authors include examples of passages from both Testaments to inspire our own writing and sermon preparation.

Chapter five looks at law and wisdom with the same beauty and energy that we experience with the other genres. In each chapter there are enough examples to encourage readers to create their own translations. Chapter six concludes the book with a thorough and useful discussion of the hermeneutics involved in preaching. I use the word “discussion” because of the question and answer format employed in much of the chapter. Cosgrove and Edgerton ask the questions that need to be asked, even if we might not have thought to ask them.

Incarnational translation is first and foremost a hermeneutical process, one that every good preacher engages in every time he or she preaches. Granted, not everyone who reads this book will need a review in hermeneutics, but I welcomed it and felt a renewed energy to have a careful understanding of hermeneutics after the lively examples given in the earlier chapters. The authors include in the discussion circle hermeneutic theorists such as Paul Ricoeur and others. In this collaborative way I too felt included in the circle.

The incarnational translation to which this volume invites us is a genuinely creative process. We are invited to listen to the text and its meaning, whether in Hebrew or Greek or English or whatever, and then find a way to create a new translation in the language and images of our listeners’ time and place. It is helpful to contemplate how much we live in a time of translation. The preacher may know Hebrew and Greek, but most of our listeners do not, so it is all about translation. In incarnational translation we are urged to embrace the task – and to begin the walk of creative faithfulness to the meaning of the ancient text.

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