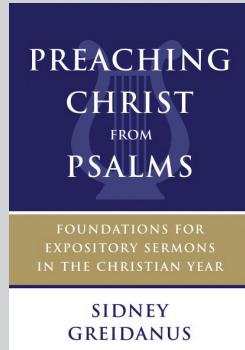


# Expository preaching from the Psalms



**Book Title:**  
Preaching Christ from the Psalms: Foundations for expository sermons in the Christian year

**Book Cover:**



**Author:**  
Sidney Greidanus

**ISBN:**  
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**Publisher:**  
Grand Rapids MI, 2016,  
R514.64\*  
\*Book price at time of review

**Review Title:**  
Expository preaching from the Psalms

**Reviewer:**  
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This is (probably) the last volume by Sidney Greidanus, emeritus professor in preaching at the Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, in a series on preaching Christ from the Old Testament. The previous volumes dealt with preaching Christ from the Old Testament in general with the focus on Genesis, Ecclesiastes and Daniel. This volume deals with the Psalms from the perspective of the Christian year selected for Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, the Baptism of Jesus, Transfiguration Sunday, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday and Christ the King. The Psalms were taken from *The revised common lectionary*. The Psalms were not meant as preaching texts, but present a good variety of the different kinds of Psalms.

In the first chapter of the book, Greidanus discusses the Psalms in general as well as the issues related to preaching from it. He follows the method outlined in the first book in the series including ten steps from text to sermon. The following chapters deal with one Psalm at a time and conclude with a 'sermon exposition'. In preaching Christ from the Psalms, he emphasises the important point that one should not read Christ back into the Psalms from the perspective of the New Testament. One should rather move from the message of a Psalm to Jesus in the New Testament.

In his approach to the Psalms Greidanus states that proper interpretation should take four dimensions into account: literary, historical, theocentric and Christocentric. He discusses the different types of Psalms, poetic devices, rhetorical structures and the literary context thereof. This section of the book, as well as the one on historical interpretation of the Psalms, offer valuable insights into the interpretation of the Psalms and would be of great value to any preacher. The theocentric and Christocentric interpretation of the Psalms is also of great value. In these sections Greidanus demonstrates that he is up to date with recent research on the Psalms. It also presents a good introduction into the Psalms and can be used by any minister wanting to preach from it.

As far as preaching from the Psalms is concerned, Greidanus regards the poetry, with their appeal to the emotions, as valuable. With regard to a preaching text, he prefers taking a whole Psalm as preaching text and proposes that one should follow the movement of each Psalm.

In the book more than 20 Psalms are discussed according to this model with an indication of how a sermon on a specific Psalm could be structured. Psalm 122 could serve as an example of this approach. The theme of Psalm 122 is 'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem' and it is the first Psalm that can be chosen for Advent. It is one of the songs of ascents. It follows on Psalm 120 and 121 with danger and violence as theme. Psalm 122 contrasts the security of Jerusalem against these dangers. In his literary interpretation, Greidanus discusses the parallelisms in this Psalm, its imagery, the repetition of keywords and its structure. In the theocentric interpretation he emphasises the function of Jerusalem as the city of the Lord. The people went to Jerusalem to praise the Lord. The Psalm is a prayer for the peace of Jerusalem. He wants to preach Christ from this Psalm by way of redemptive-historical progression supported by New Testament references. Typology could also be used with the temple as a type of Christ entering the world and being Immanuel. He prefers the idea of redemptive-historical progression. Jesus went to the temple and predicted its destruction. After Pentecost, the temple was replaced by God's people – the church. The aim of a sermon on this Psalm would be to encourage God's people to go to the house of the Lord and to pray for peace for the church and the New Jerusalem. The structure of the Psalm is used for structuring the sermon with three sections following the three parts that can be distinguished in the Psalm (vs. 1-2 – going to Jerusalem; vs. 3-5 – Jerusalem itself; vs. 6-9 – praying for the peace of Jerusalem) and a fourth section with a New Testament perspective on the church and the New Jerusalem.

The approach of this book corresponds with traditional reformed hermeneutics, accepting the authority of the Old Testament Psalms for the New Testament church. It will be of great value to seminary students and pastors and can be recommended without any reservation.

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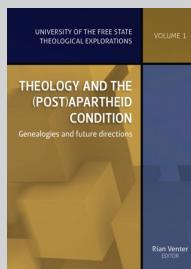
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# Theology and the (post)Apartheid condition: A response



**Book Title:**  
Theology and the (post) apartheid condition:  
Genealogies and future directions

**Book Cover:**



**Author:**  
Rian Venter (ed.)

**ISBN:**  
978-1-920382-90-2

**Publisher:**  
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(SUN PRESS), 2017, R275.00\*  
\*Book price at time of review

**Review Title:**  
Theology and the (post)  
Apartheid condition:  
A response

**Reviewer:**  
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**How to cite this book review:**  
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In this edited volume, contributors from the disciplines of Old Testament, New Testament, Systematic Theology, Practical Theology and Missiology engage in developing a wide-ranging response to the challenges faced in post-Apartheid South Africa. The critical question posed in this publication is: Seeing that theology is largely framed from a contextual base, where has the theological discourse moved to in this post-Apartheid era of South African history?

The question posed is indeed of merit, as many South African theological research outputs seem to have got caught up in the sticky place of simply reflecting backwards on the legacy of Apartheid, without moving the conversation significantly forward. So, what does a contemporary post-Apartheid South African theology look like? Of course this book cannot give an all-encompassing response to this question, but dares to make the first small steps in the conversation.

Written mainly for an academic theological audience, Rian Venter introduces the conversation by mapping the post-Apartheid condition. He describes the current South African theological discourse in the context of theological education; how various theological disciplines have engaged society on the meaning of the post-Apartheid South African context; and how these disciplines have sought to be instrumental in social transformation. This is a helpful introduction, as it provides a solid foundation from where the other contributors could make their case. In the introductory section of this book, the contribution by Resane is of particular value, as he plots the shifting theological horizons during the past two decades.

From the perspective of Old Testament studies, Schmidt and Snyman ask questions about *wisdom* and the meaning of prophetic voices, particularly as understood by (mainly reformed) theologians during the South African transition years. The New Testament section offers only one voice, but nonetheless a valuable one, namely of Tolmie who asks whether anything has changed in the last 50 years in South African Pauline studies. He concludes that some significant changes can be noted, sparked by socio-political and historical transitions.

Urbaniak and Venter contribute from the discipline of Systematic Theology. Urbaniak compares the prophetic voices of Koopman and Maluleke, while Venter engages the reader on the changing understanding of the doctrine of God in the post-South African context. Laubscher and Wessels, Pali, and Schoeman and Van den Berg then contribute three chapters from the discipline of Practical Theology, weighing in on how we witness the changing understanding of Christianity's prophetic witness, leadership and interdisciplinary practices. Van der Watt concludes the conversation from Missiology, asking what mission looks like in post-Apartheid South Africa.

If the reader is interested in a holistic approach to the theological discourse and practice in the South African context, then this book would be a good starting point.

For practical reasons one can understand that this book focuses mainly on the question of contextual theology from the reformed perspective, as contributors or contributions are placed in this theological tradition. Even a Catholic theologian like Urbaniak investigates reformed theologians. This should be counted as a point in favour of this book for two reasons. Firstly, it creates the scope to investigate the research question from Christian traditions outside the reformed tradition. This can be an ongoing work and facilitate conversations across the boundaries of ecclesiastical confessions. Secondly, it creates for the critic of the reformed tradition, a response which says that although Apartheid is an act of generalisation, seen as historically associated with Apartheid, the reformed tradition is (and has been) actively engaging with its own identity in post-Apartheid South Africa.

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In this publication, space is offered for different cultural voices and generations, but not – and this is my main critique – clearly for the voice of women. It would have been of great value to hear women's voices in this regard; how have women experienced the changes in theological discourse in the last 20-odd years? Or has there been no change for women?

Overall, I enjoyed reading this book. It has put into words what we have been quietly witnessing in

theological discourse in our beautiful country. Venter and the contributors need to be thanked for taking a deliberate step in outlining the spaces and perspectives occupied by the different theological disciplines in the reformed tradition. I look forward to seeing how this work is expanded, so as to become a bridge-building conversation between Christian traditions in South Africa.

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# Is the good creation only provisional?



**Book Title:**  
Over de voorlopigheid van de goede schepping

**Book Cover:**



**Author:**  
A. van der Dussen

**ISBN:**  
978-90-75847-45-1

**Publisher:**  
Theologische Universiteit Apeldoorn, 2017, R144.51\*  
\*Book price at time of review

**Review Title:**  
Is the good creation only provisional?

**Reviewer:**  
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**How to cite this book review:**  
Nel, M., 2017, 'Is the good creation only provisional?', *In die Skriflig* 51(1), a2283.  
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The book represents a paper read at the opening of the academic year of the *Theologische Universiteit Apeldoorn* on 5 September 2016. The issue under discussion is whether life after death will be better, richer and more glorious than life on earth that has in many instances been characterised as a vale of tears, or whether creation is now beautiful and already complete. Should Christians affirm creation, or denigrate it in gnostic fashion? This is in imitation of the counsel in 1 Corinthians 7:29–31 that states that the time is short; those who use the things in the world should use it as though they were not dependent on them as the world in its present form is passing away.

In reaction to Feuerbach's and Nietzsche's criticism of Christians' alienage in the present world, German liberal theologians like Albrecht Ritschl one-sidedly emphasised the *diesseitige Weltstellung des Menschen*, avoiding any reference to eternal salvation. Later Dietrich Bonhoeffer also emphasises that the kingdom of God on earth should form the centre of Christians' interest, without denying that their fatherland is elsewhere. He does not deny the provisionality of God's good creation but he does not accentuate it. This also happened when reformed theology with a one-sided longing for heaven was corrected in neocalvinism with its interest in culture. Herman Bavinck celebrates Ritschl's aversion to abstract supranaturalism that limits salvation exclusively to the transcendent and adds that Christians should not flee the world but fulfil the will of the Father by faithfully living out their calling in the world. He criticises hostility towards the world as a result of a dualism between the supernatural and the natural, and *recreatio* versus *nova creatio*. Kuyper also warns against what he typifies as the anabaptist flight from the world, and adds that there is no inch width in the entirety of human life over which Christ as the Sovereign does not call: Mine! The sovereignty of Christ is also realised in increasing human scientific and technological control of nature, leading to Kuyper's appreciation of life on earth. At the same time, he does not deny the importance of hope for a future age but he interprets the Christian life as a pilgrimage where believers live more and more into the heavenly.

This is not the case with A.A. van Ruler who radically denies the provisionality of the good creation. He asserts that in his *recreatio*, God will work with the raw materials of this world. He suggests that the centre of gravity of the loci of dogmatics should be revisited, so that *recreatio* stands in service of creation, as the New Testament is to be understood in terms of the Old, the Messiah in terms of the kingdom of God, and the Christian gospel in terms of humanity. In his eschatology, this world is the actual and only world.

However, biblical proclamation relativises earthly reality with hope for the second coming of Christ resting on a *new* heaven and a *new* earth (2 Pt 3:13; Rv 21:1). While Van Ruler defines the 'new' in terms of restoration and renovation of the original, good creation, K. Schilder states that God has not created the world ready and done, but as a growth process with creation evolving in history. Paradise was the beginning of a world in hope that will find its completion in the new Jerusalem. Human beings are called to collaborate with God in the unfolding of creation; they should take out of the world all it contains. Even if the first human beings did not sin, he argues, the world would still have had a history that unfolds on its way to its realisation. The new world will be renewed in terms of its being saved from evil, and purified to completion. In the mean time, *recreatio* is already part of our world through the *praesentia salutis* of the incarnate Word that lived amongst human beings, and the Spirit that renews human beings through rebirth. Van Ruler has been criticised that his view of history is too optimistic because he takes sin too little into account.

Van der Dussen therefore looks to others to formulate a reformed vision on the good creation. Berkhof's starting point is Philippians 3:20–21 that states that believers' citizenship is in heaven from where they eagerly wait for their Saviour who will change their unassuming bodies and make them like his glorious body (cf. Jn 17:22; Rm 8:17–21; 2 Cor 3:18; 1 Jn 3:22). Christ is not so much to be confessed as Saviour of fallen humanity as the One who introduces a higher form of being human than was found in Adam before the fall (1 Pt 1:4). Creation is therefore a provisional form of realisation of being human. That will only be realised in its higher and definitive form

when human beings and God are unified even more intimately than in the first creation of humanity. Berkouwer reacts to the idea that the incarnation is not only to be considered in terms of sin but that it will eventually contribute to human elevation or deification. He rejects the motive of elevation and rather speaks of *restoratio* of created beings. Bavinck agrees that the Word became flesh exclusively with the purpose that Christ died to reconcile human beings with God, but adds that his death brings about human beings' stable and intimate fellowship with God.

The diversity of reformed opinions shows that ongoing reflection is necessary although they agree that the provisionality of creation should be discounted in all theological endeavours in one form or another. On the one hand it is important to remember that the world experiences continuous cultural and technical developments and that its definitive character has not realised as yet; on the other hand the expectation should be kept alive that an unparalleled glory awaits God's children in the new dispensation. The world will not only be saved from its infertility caused by human sin, but will also be transformed by and into God's glory. Eschatologically speaking, the perspective of the renewal and full deployment of life on earth is balanced with the longing of fellowship with God and his glory that will

only fully realise with the homecoming in the new world. This double perspective stamps the current creation as provisional. Because earthly life will be crowned with unprecedented glory it is therefore necessary that humans live with full intensity in spite of its provisionality.

This short thesis may be valuable as an introduction to the theme of provisionality of creation. Due to its length (38 pp.) it, however, cannot further develop the different parts of the argument as fully as necessary to do justice to it. The result is that the eschatological viewpoint is narrowed down and the conclusion at the end of the book is not satisfactorily argued. More space is needed to present the full arguments of the different interlocutors of the author and it would have been preferable to use other viewpoints to contrast the issues under discussion.

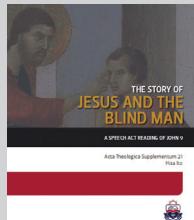
For graduate theological students and believers who are interested in theology the book may serve as a first step to think about an element of eschatology that still has relevance for the church. These readers may hopefully be stimulated to consult the authors that are cited in order to broaden their knowledge of the complexity of different viewpoints found not only amongst theologians but also in the New Testament itself.

# Speech act theory as an approach to interpret Gospel narratives



**Book Title:**  
The story of Jesus and the blind man: A speech act reading of John 9. *Acta Theologica Supplementum 21*

**Book Cover:**



**Author:**  
Hisayasu Ito

**ISBN:**  
1015-8758

**Publisher:**  
Bloemfontein: UFS, 2015,  
R120.00\*  
\*Book price at time of review

**Review Title:**  
Speech act theory as an approach to interpret Gospel narratives

**Reviewer:**  
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The author, Professor Hisa Ito from the Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto City in Japan, studied a Master of Divinity in the United States of America before completing his doctoral thesis at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa in 2000. Within the broader discourse regarding the complementary relationship between literary criticism and historical criticism, Ito endeavoured to show that an integrated approach of the two perspectives is possible and advantageous. He did so through utilising the findings of historical criticism in literary criticism, finding a scholarly environment receptive to new methodologies in South Africa.

This publication represents a reworking of Ito's thesis 15 years after the submission of the latter, although the main thrust remains the same. Chapter 1 presents introductory material on previous studies on John 9, providing the basis for the need for a detailed analysis of John 9 from a pragmatic perspective with special emphasis on irony (p. 6). The purpose of the study is formulated as follows:

... to analyse, in detail, the text of John 9 from a speech act perspective, with the emphasis on how language functions in order to determine whether or not such an analysis leads to acceptable and valid results as an interpretation of the text (p. 8).

The author's expectation of the study was that it [...] could possibly yield a new understanding of the way in which gospel narratives such as John 9 are carefully constructed by the implied author for the implied reader' (p. 8). This expectation was based on [...] a new understanding of how communication takes place in the text from a linguistic perspective', and the successful application of speech act theory to texts in literature.

In chapter 2 the author describes in detail the methodology that he applied in the study. This methodology focuses on speech act theory, but also incorporates related approaches to the extent that they augment speech act theory (p. 35). The researcher also provides insight into the advantages and disadvantages of the methodology he employed in the study. Chapter 3 contains a contextual survey of John 9 based on appropriateness conditions required for successful conversation. His aim with this approach is to find the most plausible contexts for John 9 as an example of an attempt to combine historical and literary approaches (p. 60).

Chapter 4 is the heart of the research presented in the publication, comprising 72% of its length in pages (excluding the bibliography). Ito presents his analysis of John 9 with great and admirable rigour. The analysis combines speech act theory with other approaches and his general point of departure, namely making use of historical and literary approaches to supplement his understanding of the text, radiates clearly from his analysis. The detailed nature of the analysis does not make for easing reading, but the scholar interested in the Gospel of John and the application of alternative approaches to its interpretation, will certainly appreciate the author's effort. Chapter 5 contains a summary of the analysis and the author's conclusions based on the same, dealing with aspects such as the use of interpersonal and textual rhetorics, symbolism, irony, and suffering in John 9. These will interest specialist scholars. Ito also evaluates the method he used in this study (p. 473 ff.), commenting positively on speech act analysis as a useful exegetical approach, especially when dealing with narrative texts and used in tandem with other approaches. He also identifies certain shortcomings in the method, especially the improvements to the taxonomy for the classification of speech acts (p. 475).

The question remains whether the author achieved his goal with this publication as quoted above. That he succeeded in producing a detailed analysis of John 9, is beyond question. As to whether the expectation of the author was met, I do have some doubts. His analysis certainly clarified and elucidated certain aspects of previous investigations of John 9, but a clear description of the value

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added to interpretation of John 9 by way of this approach is lacking (with the exception of the findings on *irony*). A more focused delineation of future research flowing from the study, would also be helpful, especially to young scholars

interested in the Johannine corpus or the approach designed and applied by Ito. These points of criticism, however, are minor, and I would certainly recommend this publication to scholars in the field.

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