What's Our Big Idea?: Analyzing the Academic Literary Corpus
of the Evangelical Homiletics Society

Nathan Wright, Ph.D. - nwright@gordonconwell.edu
and Alison Gerber, Ph.D. student - alison_gerber1@baylor.edu

ABSTRACT

Over its 25-year history, the scholars of the Evangelical Homiletics Society have presented

more than 250 papers at its annual conferences and published more than 200 academic

articles in its journal. As a whole, what has EHS been writing about, and what has it said? A

clear understanding of its past can enable any organization to move responsibly into its

future. Using Latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) from the field of data science, this paper

scrutinizes the entire EHS corpus, describes 17 distinct topics within that corpus, and offers

informed suggestions for our future.

INTRODUCTION

Who is EHS? What are we interested in? What have we achieved? These are the kinds of

questions we ask in this, the 25th year of the Evangelical Homiletical Society. This special

anniversary provides – as any special birthday does – an opportunity to look back and

reflect on what we have already accomplished, and to look forward to what we might

accomplish in the future.

This paper is such a reflection. It seeks to answer the question: what have we been

writing about all these years? Between the EHS annual conference and the Journal of the

Evangelical Homiletics Society (*JEHS*), the Evangelical Homiletics Society has created 462 academic papers to date. If only we could organize those papers and group them together by topic, we might be able to understand the key themes alive in our society and our academic studies. Thankfully, the last 25 years have seen the advent of topic modeling — a computer-based process for determining the key topics of very large bodies of text. Together, with the assistance of these digital tools, we have managed to determine both the number and the nature of those topics around which our society's academic work coalesces. We now know, in broad terms, what our society has been investigating these past 25 years, and we have a good idea about what binds us all together.

Method – Latent Dirichlet Allocation

We employed a particular process of *topic modeling* in order to determine, as accurately as possible, the topics present within the EHS corpus. Topic modeling is a computer-enhanced process whereby a researcher determines the topics within a collection of texts. The process achieves this by identifying common terms within those texts. For example, if a topic model was applied to a collection of digital magazines, it might identify "recipe," "cook" and "eat" together in some of the magazines, and "famous," "celebrity" and "scandal" together in others. From those lists of terms, a researcher could identify that the topic of the first group of magazines is "cooking", and the topic of the second group of magazines is "gossip". This is what we needed to achieve with respect to the EHS corpus: a

series of key topic term lists from which we could identify the topics of discussion within the society.

The topic model that we employed for this paper is called Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA).[1] The remainder of this section of our paper outlines our process of employing LDA; the following section presents our results.

First, it was necessary for us to construct a database of the materials we were seeking to evaluate. We constructed a large spreadsheet, into which we entered every paper presented at the EHS academic conferences from 2002 through 2021, and every academic article published in the Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society (*JEHS*), from September of 2001 through volume 1 of 2022.[2] For this study, the body text of each paper informed our analysis.

Next, our computer program "cleaned" these papers - removing anything other than alphabets a-z and A-Z and single spaces - so that what remained was a series of texts containing only individual words separated by a space. We also utilized the program *spaCy*[3] to remove *stop words* from these texts. Stop words are a predetermined set of commonly used words, such as "the," "an," "a," and "for."[4] These words are frequent in all English texts, but not correlated to any particular topics, which is why their removal is important to ensure the program's ability to identify meaningful topics.

After the data was cleaned, *spaCy* was also utilized to *lemmatize* the remaining words. Lemmatization is the process of taking words and, using the rules of language,

returning them to their root form. For example, every instance in the EHS corpus of "worshipped" became "worship", and every instance of "sinned", "sinning" and "sins" became "sin." Lemmatization is used in LDA because both worshipped and worship refer to the same topic key term of worship, and sinned, sinning and sins all point to the same key topic term: sin.

Following lemmatization via *spaCy*, we employed another program called *gensim*.[5] *Gensim* found *bigrams*, which are words that repeatedly appear side by side in the corpus of texts. When two words appeared more than 15 times together, we determined that these words formed a unique unit of meaning, and we fused those words together for the purpose of our study. Examples of bigrams that were fused together include "big idea", "new homiletic", and "sermon delivery".[6]

Gensim was then used to create a dictionary of all the terms in all of the texts. This helped us to identify how common terms were across the entire EHS corpus. At this point additional words were excluded from the texts in order to produce deeper clarity: words that appeared in less than 3 documents, as they would be too rare to indicate a topic in homiletics, and words that appeared in more than 65% of documents, as they would be too common to indicate a sub-topic of our field.

Now that the texts were cleaned, lemmatized, bigrams were found, and the most common and most rare words were removed, it was time to run the *gensim* LDA model. We instructed the program to read the entire corpus thousands of times.[7] As the program did

this, it learned, refining its understanding of what terms were statistically more likely to

appear together inside single papers, as well as between different papers within the corpus.

After the LDA model had run its course, *gensim* generated a list of groups of key

terms that it had determined to be identifying markers of individual topics: one group of

terms for each topic. For example:

> Topic 1 : "evangelical" + "woman" + "wesley" + "year" + "century"
> Topic 2 : "fear" + "theme" + "pandemic" + "control" + "picture"
> Topic 3 : "black" + "metaphor" + "social" + "theology" + "white" [8]
> (and so forth)

Gensim also produced a list of the most representative papers for each topic it had

identified.

Investigating these lists of terms and corresponding lists of papers one-by-one, we

worked together to name which topic within the whole field of homiletics the computer had

identified. While the program is able to provide both key terms and representative papers,

the topic names did not come from the LDA model – those were identified by us -- the

human operators. Although LDA is a computer-driven process, all stages of this analysis

require ongoing human input, particularly this last stage because *gensim*'s LDA model

requires its operator to identify the number of topics to search for *before* running its

processes. This necessitates repeatedly running the program with different topic numbers,

until a set of distinct, meaningful topics emerges.[9] We were aided in this stage by

pyLDAvis,[10] a program which maps visually the relative closeness of the topics produced by

gensim's LDA model. We witnessed distinct groupings emerge when 17 topics were requested of *gensim's* LDA model. The final visual representation of our topic model from *pyLDAvis* can be seen below.

THE 17 TOPICS

Here are the 17 major topic areas around which the first 25 years of EHS publications have converged. The titles are our own, and reflect our informed consideration based on the LDA-generated key words defining each topic. The numbering of these paragraphs corresponds to each topic's number on the Intertopic Distance Map, and represent no ordering or relationships of the topics beyond that.

The Intertopic Distance Map

     [see following page]

Intertopic Distance Map (via multidimensional scaling)
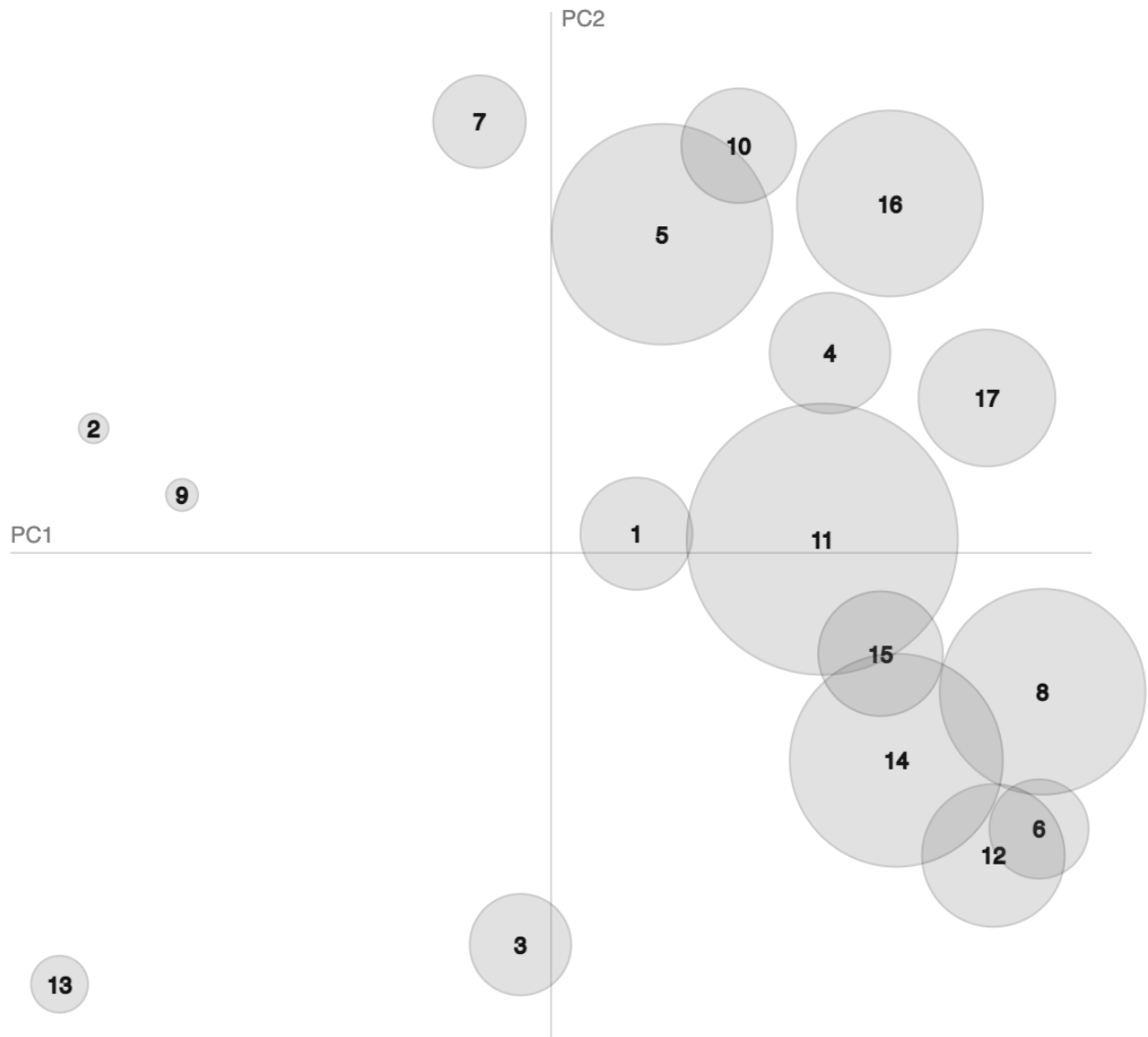
1.	Church History	9.	Illustration
2.	Fear	10.	Preaching the Psalms
3.	The Black Church	11.	Pastoral Ministry
4.	The Worship of the Triune God	12.	Pedagogy
5.	Psychology	13.	Minoritized Cultures
6.	Hermeneutics and Speech Act	14.	The Technological Age
7.	Preaching from the Old Testament	15.	Narrative
8.	From Text to Sermon	16.	Biblical Insights on Preaching
		17.	Methods for Biblical Preaching

What follows now is a guided tour of the 17 topics representing the roughly 2.7 million published words of the EHS corpus. We realize that not all individuals may be invigorated by reading through all 17 of these descriptions in sequence – but there is significant insight here for those who persevere. We welcome therefore any style and order of reading by which our readers will gain a better understanding of the entire EHS corpus, and particularly where their own interests and publications touch these topics.

1 – Church History[11]

Papers which typify this topic look back historically to reflect on preaching, taking a stance of retrieval towards persons and practices of earlier, usually Protestant, traditions. Many of these papers emphasize the biblical, evangelistic, and/or doctrinal nature of the preaching of the past,[12] some by highlighting a preacher whose ministry exhibited desirable qualities or effects.[13] The terminology used around this topic infers a discussion of Christian history, biography, revivalism, and societal impact. While a select few of these papers investigate minority voices -- women preachers,[14] Black preachers[15] and Korean preachers[16] -- the majority of these papers focus their attention on male, white, Western preachers. Almost all of the papers in this group focus their attention exclusively on preaching from the Victorian era to today.

2 - Fear[17]

This small but distinct topic consists of papers which explore the multifaceted relationship between preaching and fear: both godly fear, and the fear that originates from the

exigencies of life. Papers in this topic range from preaching and the COVID pandemic (ca. 2020-2022),[18] to how fear of the LORD inflects the task of preaching.[19]

3 – The Black Church[20]

Another distinct topic in the EHS corpus is this collection of papers that focuses on the practices and experiences of preachers and churches in the Black church. Papers around this topic consider preaching in relation to the pastor's role, the relationship between the term "evangelical" and the Black church, the work of specific preachers, and challenges faced by the Black community – particularly racism. The expectation that Christian preaching serves as a prophetic witness against injustice and is a key enactor of social change is a common theme. Interestingly, the concept of metaphor is more prominent in this group than in any other group of papers, which has caused, in our topic model, other papers that only address metaphor and not race to congregate also around this topic.

4 – Worship of the Triune God[21]

This topic of reflection focuses on describing preaching in light of the Christian God and the Church. Many papers in this group describe preaching in light of the Christian worship service, while others' descriptions tend to engage ideas from systematic or biblical theology. Papers which favor advanced Christian theological terminology tend to gravitate here. Though basic Christian theological terms are seen throughout the entire EHS corpus and all its topics, this topic more than others attracts papers which minimize the mixing of theological with non-theological terminologies.

5 – Psychology[22]

Accounts of preaching in this topic focus on psychological states and the desirability of particular sermonic forms to steward those states. Though individual papers in this group, per their titles, represent a wide variety of reflection, they all tend to favor psychological terms – pain, suffering, trauma, love, personality. They consider the psychological state or traits[23] of the preacher, or the psychological state[24] or development[25] of the preacher's listeners. Papers on trauma-sensitive preaching[26] tend to gravitate toward this topic.

6 – Hermeneutics and Speech Act[27]

Papers in this group of reflection describe the act of Christian preaching as a complex work of hermeneutics or pragmatics. As in papers throughout the EHS corpus, papers around this topic contain basic Christian theological terms, though many papers here use highly specialized terminologies, either imported from other disciplines or created, to bring the attributes of good Christian preaching into a higher definition of focus. One example of this phenomenon are papers informed by speech-act theory, which engage directly the works of John Searle and J.L. Austin and adopt their terminologies into the homiletical discussion.[28]

7 – Preaching from the Old Testament[29]

This group of reflection examines preaching from Old Testament books, specifically how to preach from individual Old Testament texts[30] and books[31] other than the Psalms (so much EHS reflection has focused on preaching the Psalms that it forms its own distinct Topic 10). Moreso than any other single topic, papers here tend to use terms directly related to the

exegesis of Scripture. Biblical books of special interest to these papers are Proverbs, 2 Samuel, Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes, which we hypothesize are objects of study in our society due to the unique challenges preachers face preaching these texts.

8 – From Text to Sermon[32]

This group of reflection scrutinizes the processes that make sermons, often examining one process according to a chosen set of philosophical or theological convictions. Topic key words "author" (authorial intent), "authoritative" (the authoritative role of Scripture) and "application" (how should a text be applied) regularly interpolate discussions here. It is around this topic, within its realm of concern for particular processes of constructing sermons from biblical texts, that EHS's discussions of the New Homiletic emerge. It is possible that this indicates that the text to sermon process is where major disagreements exist between the EHS corpus and the New Homiletic, though this hypothesis requires further investigation.

9 – Illustration[33]

This very small but distinct topic considers the nature and use of illustrative material for preaching. The terminological set here is a unique blend of pastoral, psychological, biblical, pedagogical, and narratival terms; this may indicate that a uniquely synthetic discussion has emerged here.

10 – Preaching the Psalms[34]

This topic focuses on rationales and methods for preaching the Psalms. The shared essence of these papers has to do with using the literary forms of this biblical book in the development and delivery of sermons. Papers here often note the applicability of the psalms' language to the emotional realities of the preacher and hearers, and particularly how the literary device of poetic imagery can evoke these. It is perhaps unsurprising the proximity of this topic to the topic "Preaching and Psychology" considering that both topics share an interest in lament, suffering, hope and song.

11 – Pastoral Ministry[35]

This topic describes preaching in relation to pastoral ministry. These papers are written with the preaching pastor in mind, and the terminology here reflects pastoral concerns, practicalities of ministry, and experiences of preachers in the pastorate. Though collaborative preaching and continuing pastoral education are somewhat common discussions within this topic, the relative ideological breadth and informality of many papers here make it difficult always to identify defined areas of advancing homiletical inquiry.[36] Said differently, many of these papers tend to focus more on pastors-who-preach than the preachers-who-pastor, and those papers' discussions of preaching are more attached to the variables of pastoral ministry than to the more defined and established discussions of preaching in other groups of the EHS corpus. There is opportunity here to develop more distinct academic foci around which profitable practical discussions can re-emerge.

12 – Pedagogy[37]

This topic concerns how best to teach preachers, usually at the graduate level. While the imagined reader of papers in other topics might be preachers or pastors, the imagined readers of the majority of these papers are teachers of preaching. A common interest of this topic area is ancient and modern rhetoric, and the use of rhetoric to persuade listeners.[38] John Broadus' work is often explored here.[39] Several surveys of preaching textbooks also appear under this topic.[40]

13 - Minoritized Cultures[41]

This topic of reflection describes the preaching of minoritized cultures other than the Black church, as well as how to preach responsibly about, and to, these minoritized cultures. The cultures represented by this topic include Mexican Americans, Korean American, and more generally, Asian North American. Reflection on preaching to multicultural groups gravitates toward here, as does preaching to second generation immigrants in the United States. Because of the heavy emphasis on culture here, papers that address more general concerns about culture are also drawn toward this topic group.

14 - The Technological Age[42]

This topic considers preaching's existence within a technological age. These papers wrestle with the usefulness and appropriateness of technology in preaching, and many tend toward an avoidant relationship given the oral and embodied nature of preaching. Papers concerned with communication and media tend to appear in this group. Engagement with

communication theory, Marshall McLuhan, and Neil Postman often proceeds here. Both "postmodern" and "technology" are terms unique to this group of papers, and oftentimes both of these contexts are cast as a potential threat to faithful preaching.

15 - Narrative[43]

Around this topic, "story" and "narrative" are by far the terms most likely to appear. There are three ways that the concept seems to be used. The first pertains to preaching narrative passages of Scripture: gospel narratives, Old Testament narratives, and parables. The second relates preaching to a culture that is integrated with, or values, story. The third is preaching in narrative forms. This group is terminologically distinct from Topic 8 likely because it enlists specific terms which already exist in a homiletical discussions of narrative preaching.[44] A curious feature of this topic is that investigation of the New Homiletic tends not to occur here, but in Topic 8, "*Text to Sermon.*"

16 – Biblical Insights on Preaching[45]

This topic is concerned with what Scripture says preaching is; papers here tend to compile discreet insights from all or part of Scripture in order to assemble a biblical definition of good preaching. Though these papers raise a variety of questions, they all tend to answer those questions using distinct terminology indicative of exegesis and biblical studies. While this topic as well as Topic 4 "Worship of the Triune God" both appear to circle around the question "what is Christian preaching?" the difference between the two lies here: *this* topic

approaches that question from an exegetical or biblical studies perspective, whereas topic 4

favors liturgical, systematic, or biblical theological perspectives.

17 – Methods for Biblical Preaching[46]

This topic is concerned with how to create sermons faithful to the teaching of Scripture.

The bigram "big idea" is almost exclusively found within this topic. Alongside discussions

of Robinson's method, this topic draws to itself papers concerned with Christ-centered

preaching, text-driven preaching, and preaching the Old Testament in the New -- although

rather than critically engaging with these methods, the majority of these papers are

concerned with teaching and applying these methods. Reflection on moralistic preaching

also tends to appear around this topic. It could be hypothesized that papers gathering

around this topic presuppose generally the insights of Topic 16, "Biblical Insights on

Preaching" and Topic 4, "Worship of the Triune God," and they advance those ideas into

methods and practices for good sermon development.

HIGHLIGHTS

As you can see, our analyses of the EHS corpus using LDA yielded 17 topics around which

that corpus terminologically relates. But what unifies all of EHS's work? Does EHS have a

big idea? If this big idea exists in a common terminology, perhaps a consideration of the

most common terms across *all* the papers may provide some clues that point to the society's

central idea to date.

The Big Idea of EHS

After we had removed the common inconsequential stop words ("the", "an", "a", "for") from our analysis, our repeated attempts to isolate and clarify topics within the corpus via *gensim* failed. Upon further observation, fifteen more common terms had to be filtered out of the entire corpus of EHS papers in order for the computer processes to make sense of distinct topics. Those terms are, starting with the most common: God, preach, preacher, sermon, preaching, text, word, church, people, biblical, Christ, life, way, Jesus, and Scripture.[47] From this word list a picture of our society's core concerns emerge: preaching, God, Jesus Christ, Scripture, and the Church.[48]

What might these common terms say about us? First, they imply a particular unity of faith. Though we pursue distinct, different topic areas within the larger field of homiletics, we are united around the central tenets of the historic Christian faith. Here, then, is our big idea! We are united in our faith in Jesus Christ as He is portrayed in Scripture, and in the prioritization of preaching according to Scripture for the benefit of the Church. Of course, we assent to the EHS statement of faith when we become members of the society, but to see such regular and broad verbal evidence of authors' faith throughout our academic corpus is notable.

Second, they speak to our faithfulness. To keep these concerns, of all possible others, at the heart of our society shows clearly our desire to be faithful Christians as we work as scholars. The words of our confession are found throughout our years, throughout our work.

Third, they speak of tremendous possibilities for our continued life and scholarship together. Though some may review this list of terms and denigrate our identity as an academic society, what is remarkable about our central concerns is the multiplicity of clearly academic lines of inquiry that have proceeded from them to date. To consider preaching, God, Jesus Christ, Scripture and the church evidently generates meaningful academic impetus for our discipline.

SUGGESTIONS FOR OUR FUTURE

Much more could be said in light of the amount of new data and analysis offered here – and we look forward to others engaging with and helping us interpret the data itself. From our limited vantage point, and mindful of our limited space, we will offer five suggestions here regarding how EHS might proceed into its future in light of what this new data shows.

Read what has been written.

As we analyzed the results of the LDA topic model, we noticed a clear lack of discussion between papers in the EHS corpus – even between papers that appear to address the same issue. Because this is the dominant pattern,[49] we propose that all EHS scholars invest more time reviewing papers from the EHS corpus, and interacting directly with papers of quality and influence from that corpus as they write. Citing one another's papers and critically engaging each other's ideas not only brings individuals' writing into clearer focus, it can serve to cohere and multiply the discussions of the entire society. In Christian perspective, reading one other's work is an act of honoring those with whom we share academic

fellowship; for many, it constitutes an act of honoring those who came before us. It also saves us, as individuals and as an academic society, from unnecessarily retreading overly-worn trails.

We are not calling here for more agreement across the society, but for more awareness of one's own position amidst other critically developed options within the current state of the discussion. We also, echoing the *JEHS* editors' recent pleas,[50] want to see more direct debate, more assertion of how one position is better than another, more "have at thee, sir", more noble repartees, rebuttals, and even retractions. Let the games begin – but remember to read the existing papers first.

Mind the gaps.

A significant area of potential in the EHS corpus is simply to develop untouched areas within existing topics. For example,

- The "Preaching from the Old Testament" topic appears to focus most of its attention on only four of the books of the Old Testament. We also have an entire topic dedicated to the genre-sensitive preaching of the psalter. Other books are options.

- Within the "Preaching and Minoritized Cultures" topic there are other preaching traditions, in other cultures, we are yet to hear from or hear about.

- Within the "Church History" topic a rich, expansive period of preaching history, between Old Testament preaching and Victorian era preaching, awaits scrutiny.

- Very little, if any, reflection within the "Technological Age" topic has grappled with the existence of artificial intelligence technology, and particularly its ability to generate unique, new sermons based on collected existing sermons.

There are many more possibilities.[51] If good academic writing begins with finding gaps in the existing scholarship, EHS is ripe with potential. No longer are we a motley band of scholars assembling a body of literature ad hoc, and it is time that we began choosing our topics accordingly. Mind the gaps, choose your aim, and fill the body with good insight.

Choose terms carefully.

Among our society's original stated goals, we find an intention "…to integrate the fields of communication, biblical studies, and theology, [and] to make scholarly contributions to the field of homiletics."[52] From EHS's inception, it has been an integrative academic enterprise, and today our LDA analysis confirms that EHS has indeed drawn insights from a variety of disciplines. Yet the highly specialized, technical terminologies which so often define certain topics in our corpus are not comprehendible to all of our members, let alone the students we teach. Until our own members can grasp the insights these specialized terminologies are getting at, one might wonder whether we have integrated those insights into the field of homiletics at all. There is room for growth here.

Further though, our reflection has opportunity to be more honest and critical when accepting specialized terms from scholars outside the Church – this befits us both as Christians and as academics. Agendas come along with these specialized terminologies,

and simply to adopt them without any acknowledgement of their histories or intentions bypasses the spirit and joy of academic inquiry. Terms have consequences, and the terms we choose to reflect on preaching are no different. I (Nathan here) am of the opinion that homiletics is important enough to have some of its own languages, its own priorities, its own specialties. Let us acknowledge and welcome expertise from all other disciplines - but let us conduct ourselves as if our terminologies and insights should be imported by them for their benefit; let us produce reflection of such quality and import that it cannot but be helpful to others. For God's mountain will be raised above all the others, and "all the nations will stream to it" (Isaiah 2:2-5). Let us show homiletics to be the rightful inheritor and chastener of all the expertise we can integrate into it. Let's begin by choosing carefully our terms.

Define terms clearly.

A related but distinct suggestion: we should favor terms that others can understand, and we must not shy away from defining our terms whenever necessary. Many papers in our corpus miss their potential because they fail either to use understandable terms or to define their terms. The pattern of defining key terms at the very beginning of an academic paper is commonplace among other academic societies – and we recommend that pattern for EHS. A good clear definition of what you mean when you use the term "theology" or "humanity" or "pain", for example, might swing another's understanding of your entire

paper in an entirely different direction. Moreover, in defining your terms specifically, you may realize more about your own argument than you otherwise would.

Remember our whole family.

The voices, persons, ideas and experiences of minoritized preaching traditions should be better integrated with the other academic work of our society. Presently, studies in Black preaching and other minoritized preaching stand as two distinct topics terminologically removed from the rest of the EHS corpus. These topics likely will always exhibit terminological distinctiveness – we want to acknowledge the uniqueness of other preaching cultures, and so the use of unique terms necessary to describe them must continue. But the lack of regular engagement with, or even mention of, these groups by the other topics in the EHS corpus is perhaps the most deafening silence within our corpus to date. Our reflection as a society will not represent preaching in all its fullness, nor even the understandings of preaching within our own academic society, until we take time to seek out resources from, listen to, learn from, and engage with minoritized voices. The shed blood of the Son makes us family – may we all remember and write as if this is so.

CONCLUSION

When we set out to investigate the core topics of the 462 papers presented and published by EHS, we had our predictions. We predicted there would be a topic only focused on the New Homiletic. We were wrong. We predicted a topic only focused on big idea preaching.

Wrong again. In fact, we predicted around seven topics of study would be contained within our corpus. We were wrong about that too. Instead, what we discovered is that the EHS corpus is multi-faceted, with papers that congregate around 17 different topics of study. In this paper it was our hope to share with you the delight that we experienced as we saw these topics emerge -- as we saw the Evangelical Homiletics Society emerge -- as we developed this data.

And what will be our future? Will we engage in critical debates with one another? Will we sharpen one another as scholars of homiletics? How many topics under the grand umbrella of homiletics will we have explored at our 50th anniversary? At our 500th? How deep will these topics have been mined, how wide? Nathan and I have spent these past few months living, breathing, organizing, collating and analyzing your (and our) old papers. Now, please, go write us all something new - for better preaching, and for the gospel of the Lord Jesus. Peace be with you all.[53]

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[1] David M. Blei, Andrew Y. Ng, and Michael I. Jordan, "Latent dirichlet allocation." *The Journal of Machine Learning Research*. Vol. 3 (3/1/2003), 993–1022.

[2] The desire to focus directly on the research topics chosen and published by members of our society informed the following decisions regarding what to include and exclude from the data set.
- In situations where a scholar presented a paper at the annual conference, a version of which was then published in a subsequent volume of *JEHS*, the conference paper was excluded from the data set in favor of the journal article.
- Some articles, though appearing in our academic journal, were not typical academic publications. Many of these were tribute articles regarding beloved members of our

society, and contained a variety of observations and anecdotes, personal and professional, about those members. These were excluded.
- Book reviews were not included in the analysis.
- Likewise, the transcribed sermons which our journal frequently publishes were excluded from the analysis.
- However, transcriptions of keynote addresses given by speakers at our annual conferences were included due to their intended role in probing and directing the research interests of our society's scholars.
- Lengthy appendixes to conference papers, particularly those resulting from the somewhat puerile decision to paste multiple pages of text from outside sources, were excluded from the analysis as well.

[3] Honnibal, M., & Montani, I. (2017). *spaCy 2: Natural language understanding with Bloom embeddings, convolutional neural networks and incremental parsing.*

[4] A complete list of *spaCy* stopwords can be found at
https://github.com/explosion/spaCy/blob/master/spacy/lang/en/stop_words.py

[5] Rehurek, R., & Sojka, P. (2011). "Gensim–python framework for vector space modelling." NLP Centre, Faculty of Informatics, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, 3(2).

[6] Examples of potential bigrams which we did not fuse together: "leave listener", "line [of] argument" and a personal favorite — "Gandalf laugh." Note that if the term "sermon" existed without "delivery", or vice versa, those terms remained independent for the purpose of our study.

[7] Specifically, the program was instructed to read 100 papers at a time, 100 times over, and then to move to the next 100 and repeat the process. This entire process was repeated 250 times.

[8] This is just a small sample of the groups of terms that *gensim* would print for our evaluation. The numbers in front of the terms indicate the probability of a particular term appearing in a paper of this topic. The terms are ordered from most likely to least likely to occur within a text of each topic.

[9] When the topic lists outputted from the model seemed to combine terms, or when representative papers that the model found for those topics clearly belonged to two topics, then we increased the number of topics. Alternatively, when topics appeared to split topic words and papers into two groups — when we understood that they should exist together — then we decreased the number of topics.

[10] Carson Sievert and Kenneth Shirley. 2014. LDAvis: A method for visualizing and interpreting topics. In *Proceedings of the Workshop on Interactive Language Learning, Visualization, and Interfaces*, pages 63–70, Baltimore, Maryland, USA. Association for Computational Linguistics.

[11] Topic key terms (these terms will always be given in descending order of their probability to appear in a paper of their assigned topic): 0.025*"evangelical" + 0.012*"woman" + 0.011*"wesley" + 0.010*"year" + 0.009*"century" + 0.009*"society" + 0.009*"doctrine" + 0.009*"whitefield" + 0.009*"early" + 0.008*"holy_spirit" + 0.008*"pentecostal" + 0.007*"movement" + 0.007*"charles" + 0.007*"influence" + 0.007*"history" + 0.006*"female" + 0.006*"theology" + 0.006*"ministry" + 0.006*"spirit" + 0.006*"revival" + 0.006*"minister" + 0.005*"service" + 0.005*"methodist" + 0.005*"england" + 0.005*"conversion"
Representative papers of this topic: Kwon, Ho, "George Whitefield's Advice for Creating Community;" Hall, Kenley D., "The Great Awakening—Calvinism, Arminianism and Revivalistic Preaching: Homiletical Lessons for Today;" Demme, Arica Heald, "Lament and Hope of a Female Evangelical Preacher."

[12] e.g. Hall, Kenley D. :- The Great Awakening—Calvinism, Arminianism and Revivalistic Preaching: Homiletical Lessons for Today; E.g. Ward, Tom:- Revolutionary Preaching from the Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin;

[13] e.g. Park, Joseph:- The Impact of John Wesley's Preaching on 18th Century Britain ; Kitterlin, Derek:- Going Back in Order to Go Forward: The Sermons of Charles Wesley; Kwon, Ho:- George Whitefield's Advice for Creating Community

[14] Demme, Arica Heald, "Lament and Hope of a Female Evangelical Preacher." The repeated use of the term "woman" in this paper is the reason for its high ranking among key terms in this topic group.

[15] Alcántara, Jared E., "Sundays in "East" New York: 1948-1960."

[16] Ryoo, David Eung-Yul, "Preaching and Worship in the Korean Church."

[17] Topic key terms: 0.169*"fear" + 0.115*"theme" + 0.070*"pandemic" + 0.040*"control" + 0.040*"picture" + 0.040*"reality" + 0.031*"section" + 0.026*"care" + 0.026*"covid" + 0.024*"perceive" + 0.023*"trust" + 0.023*"humanity" + 0.020*"response" + 0.017*"pressures" + 0.016*"occur" + 0.015*"pray" + 0.014*"face" + 0.012*"coronavirus" + 0.008*"exigency" + 0.008*"revelational."
Representative papers of this topic: Gibson, Scott M. and Daniel J. Gregory, "Patterns of Preaching During a Period of Lament: A Digital Assessment of Selected Sermons Preached from Around the World at the Beginning of the Worldwide COVID-19 Pandemic;" Hollifield, Gregory K., "Preaching to Fear: A Biblical and Practical Reconsideration of Fear, Fear of God, and the Rhetoric of Fear in Preaching."

[18] Kim, Matthew D., "Preaching in a Period of Pandemic and Prejudice."

[19] Scharf, Greg, "The Fear of the Lord: A Missing Antidote to Homiletical Idolatry?"

[20] Topic key terms: 0.043*"black" + 0.023*"metaphor" + 0.021*"social" + 0.020*"theology" + 0.018*"white" + 0.017*"taylor" + 0.013*"african_american" + 0.012*"racism" + 0.010*"ethnic" + 0.010*"justice" + 0.010*"society" + 0.009*"language" + 0.008*"racial" + 0.008*"tradition" + 0.008*"community" + 0.008*"color" + 0.007*"slave" + 0.007*"american" + 0.007*"nation" + 0.007*"political" + 0.007*"race" + 0.007*"history" + 0.006*"bushnell" + 0.006*"religious" + 0.006*"injustice."

Representative papers of this topic: Peeler, Joshua, "Color Blind Politics: How African-American Pastors Serve as Examples for Political Engagement From the Pulpit"; Zimmerman, Harry G., "Black Theological Preaching and How It Relates to the Church." Brown, Francis B. Jr. and Ernest L Mays, "The Intentionally Contextualized Rhetoric of Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Paragon for Relevance in Evangelical Preaching." Nelson, Jesse L., "No Longer Silent: A Practical Theology For Preaching On Racism." Price, Eric, "Situating Black Evangelical Preaching Within Scholarship on Black Homiletics: William E Pannell As a Case Study."

[21] Topic key terms: 0.044*"worship" + 0.023*"creation" + 0.021*"community" + 0.016*"mission" + 0.012*"spirit" + 0.011*"divine" + 0.010*"missional" + 0.010*"believer" + 0.009*"humanity" + 0.009*"relationship" + 0.007*"father" + 0.007*"love" + 0.006*"image" + 0.006*"speech" + 0.006*"holy_spirit" + 0.006*"trinity" + 0.006*"role" + 0.005*"doctrine" + 0.005*"identity" + 0.005*"spiritual" + 0.005*"theology" + 0.005*"jesus_christ" + 0.005*"redemption" + 0.005*"formation" + 0.005*"glory."

Representative papers of this topic: Quicke, Michael, "Exploring the Architecture of Community Formation"; Quicke, Michael, "The Neglected Trinity : a Challenge for Preachers"; Phillips, Benjamin B., "Fellowship of the Triune God: The Divine Context for a Theology of Preaching." Wright, Nathan:- The Eschatological Redemption of Human Speech: Towards a Biblical Theology of Christian Preaching

[22] Topic key terms: 0.010*"love" + 0.007*"hope" + 0.004*"suffer" + 0.004*"pain" + 0.004*"self" + 0.004*"right" + 0.004*"let" + 0.004*"sin" + 0.003*"character" + 0.003*"problem" + 0.003*"suffering" + 0.003*"matter" + 0.003*"leave" + 0.003*"stand" + 0.003*"story" + 0.003*"image" + 0.003*"face" + 0.003*"personal" + 0.003*"kind" + 0.003*"care" + 0.003*"death" + 0.003*"hand" + 0.003*"space" + 0.003*"talk" + 0.003*"crisis."

Representative papers of this topic: Lincoln, Kyle and David Cook, "The Call to Bless and not to Curse: Naming Mental Health Problems and Framing "Now" and "Not-Yet" Hope Horizons in Our Preaching"; Tucker, Austin B., "What Do You Mean "Truth Through Personality"? The Phillips Brooks Definition of Preaching in Historical Context"; Kim, Matthew D., "Preaching To People In Pain."

[23] Kato, Alex, "Reinstating Sincerity: From Calvin to Sartre to Hipsters to Paul."

[24] Kim, Matthew D., "Preaching To People In Pain

[25] Lincoln, Kyle and David Cook, "The Call to Bless and not to Curse: Naming Mental Health Problems and Framing "Now" and "Not-Yet" Hope Horizons in Our Preaching."

[26] Palmer, Rodney, "Trauma-Informed Preaching in an Age of Idols."

[27] Topic key terms: 0.018*"genre" + 0.017*"meaning" + 0.014*"language" + 0.014*"theory" + 0.013*"hearer" + 0.012*"content" + 0.011*"reader" + 0.010*"rhetorical" + 0.010*"effect" + 0.009*"speaker" + 0.009*"speech_act" + 0.009*"intention" + 0.009*"speech" + 0.009*"homiletical" + 0.009*"audience" + 0.009*"illocutionary_act" + 0.008*"literary" + 0.008*"sentence" + 0.008*"action" + 0.008*"proposition" + 0.008*"discourse" + 0.007*"express" + 0.007*"literary_form" + 0.007*"process" + 0.007*"feature."

Representative papers of this topic: Kim, Duck Hyun, "Reframing the Hermeneutical Question as Part of Its Homiletical Responsibility: Making Extensive Use of the Speech Act Theory"; Kim, Duck Hyun, "An Alternative Biblical Epistemology and Consequently Its Homiletical Praxis Using the Speech Act Theory (SAT) for a Homiletic Performance from Text to Sermon"; Gregory, Daniel, "The Pentathlon Preaching Principle: A Proposed Method for Bridging the Gap Between Text and Sermon."

[28] Kim, Duck Hyun. :- Reframing the Hermeneutical Question as Part of Its Homiletical Responsibility: Making Extensive Use of the Speech Act Theory

[29] Topic key terms: 0.031*"king" + 0.021*"david" + 0.014*"woman" + 0.012*"wisdom" + 0.012*"speech" + 0.011*"sin" + 0.011*"voice" + 0.010*"proverb" + 0.010*"fear_lord" + 0.009*"sexual" + 0.009*"samuel" + 0.008*"memory" + 0.007*"bathsheba" + 0.006*"wife" + 0.006*"sex" + 0.006*"sound" + 0.005*"send" + 0.005*"movement" + 0.005*"proverbs" + 0.005*"seminarian" + 0.005*"chapter" + 0.005*"solomon" + 0.004*"ecclesiastes" + 0.004*"speaker" + 0.004*"murder."

Representative papers of this topic: Bland, Dave, "A Hermeneutical Foundation for Preaching Proverbs"; Neely, Winfred Omar, "The Wife of Uriah the Hittite: Political Seductress, Willing Participant, Naïve Woman, or #BathshebaToo?: The Preacher as Sensitive Theologian."

[30] Shaw, Karen L.H., "Wisdom Incarnate: Preaching Proverbs 31."

[31] Bland, Dave, "A Hermeneutical Foundation for Preaching Proverbs."

[32] Topic key terms: 0.013*"theology" + 0.009*"authority" + 0.007*"application" + 0.007*"author" + 0.007*"meaning" + 0.006*"interpretation" + 0.005*"pericope" + 0.005*"passage" +

0.005*"homiletical" + 0.005*"homiletic" + 0.005*"understanding" + 0.004*"evangelical" + 0.004*"biblical_text" + 0.004*"hermeneutic" + 0.004*"historical" + 0.004*"interpret" + 0.004*"reader" + 0.004*"contemporary" + 0.004*"perspective" + 0.004*"history" + 0.004*"kuruvilla" + 0.004*"divine" + 0.004*"individual" + 0.004*"language" + 0.003*"emphasis."

Representative papers of this topic: Kuruvilla, Abraham, "Preaching as Translation via Theology"; Kuthe, Charles B., "The Prodigal Preacher: The Misuse of Typology with Regard to Authorial Intent"; Ralston, Timothy J., "Back to the Future: Classical Categories of Exegesis, Application and Authority for Preaching and Spiritual Formation."

[33] Topic key terms: 0.214*"illustration" + 0.039*"vulnerability" + 0.029*"story" + 0.022*"illustrate" + 0.021*"illustrative" + 0.018*"disjunction" + 0.016*"illustrations" + 0.016*"biblical_text" + 0.014*"material" + 0.011*"personal" + 0.009*"perspective" + 0.009*"randolph" + 0.008*"vulnerable" + 0.008*"haddon" + 0.008*"eyed" + 0.007*"confirmation" + 0.007*"transformational" + 0.006*"calvins" + 0.006*"gods" + 0.006*"tell_story."

Representative papers of this topic: Radford, Shawn D., "The Sermon as Illustration: Confirming Biblical Texts as Concrete Expressions"; Larson, Craig Brian, "Grafting in the Third Person Illustration"; Bumpers, H. Jared, "John Broadus, the New Homiletic, and Illustrations: Using Biblical Narratives as Illustrations to Promote Biblical Literacy."

[34] Topic key terms: 0.045*"psalm" + 0.015*"lament" + 0.014*"lord" + 0.012*"hope" + 0.011*"covenant" + 0.010*"psalms" + 0.009*"psalmist" + 0.008*"israel" + 0.007*"unction" + 0.007*"praise" + 0.007*"prophet" + 0.007*"anoint" + 0.007*"jeremiah" + 0.006*"judgment" + 0.006*"promise" + 0.006*"king" + 0.006*"psalter" + 0.006*"old" + 0.006*"prayer" + 0.006*"david" + 0.005*"spirit" + 0.005*"song" + 0.005*"poetry" + 0.005*"disaster" + 0.005*"faithfulness."

Representative papers of this topic: Tornfelt, John V., "Preaching the Psalms: Understanding Chiastic Structures for Greater Clarity"; Overstreet, Larry, "Emotional Subjectivity in Teaching/Preaching the Psalms"; Zimmerman, Heather Joy, "Location is (Almost) Everything! A Case for Preaching the Psalms in Light of Their Literary Contexts."

[35] Topic key terms: 0.009*"pastor" + 0.007*"ministry" + 0.005*"listen" + 0.004*"share" + 0.004*"year" + 0.004*"challenge" + 0.004*"topic" + 0.004*"member" + 0.004*"spiritual" + 0.003*"student" + 0.003*"leader" + 0.003*"group" + 0.003*"personal" + 0.003*"engage" + 0.003*"community" + 0.003*"teaching" + 0.003*"service" + 0.003*"pulpit" + 0.003*"model" + 0.003*"encourage" + 0.003*"opportunity" + 0.003*"individual" + 0.003*"prepare" + 0.003*"grow" + 0.003*"relate."

Representative papers of this topic: Walkemeyer, Kent, "Recognizing and Overcoming Obstacles to Collaborative Preaching"; Anderson, Kenton C., "Homiletical Insights Gleaned from the ACTS 'Preaching Pastor Survey'"; Swetland, Kenneth L., "The Intersection of Preaching and Pastoring," part of forum on "Preaching and Pastoral Ministry."

[36] Because also of their general nature, a number of the forum discussions published by *JEHS* also congregate around this topic.

[37] Topic key terms: 0.036*"student" + 0.013*"homiletic" + 0.012*"broadus" + 0.011*"rhetoric" + 0.008*"persuasion" + 0.008*"dissertation" + 0.008*"class" + 0.008*"survey" + 0.007*"rhetorical" + 0.007*"audience" + 0.006*"theory" + 0.006*"professor" + 0.006*"course" + 0.006*"style" + 0.006*"school" + 0.005*"homiletical" + 0.005*"classroom" + 0.005*"textbook" + 0.005*"learning" + 0.005*"lecture" + 0.005*"imitation" + 0.005*"effective" + 0.005*"teacher" + 0.005*"list" + 0.005*"seminary."

Representative papers of this topic: Pearson, Calvin, "Composition Pedagogy Increases Effectiveness in Homiletic Pedagogy"; Rappazini, Chris, "What Has Been Written: Quantitative Studies On Homiletical Textbooks Used In Seminary Classrooms."

[38] Pearson, Calvin, "The Forgotten Pedagogy of Imitation: How Imitation in Ancient Rhetorical Pedagogy Informs Modern Homiletics."

[39] Overstreet, Mark M., "John A. Broadus, the 'Lost' Yale Lectures, and his Enduring Legacy of Powerful Preaching."

[40] Rappazini, Chris, "What Has Been Written: Quantitative Studies On Homiletical Textbooks Used In Seminary Classrooms."

[41] Topic key terms: 0.130*"culture" + 0.094*"cultural" + 0.040*"generation" + 0.035*"korean" + 0.026*"group" + 0.024*"americans" + 0.022*"korean_american" + 0.022*"american" + 0.021*"identity" + 0.020*"asian" + 0.020*"ethnicity" + 0.019*"minority" + 0.018*"second_generation" + 0.016*"majority" + 0.011*"race_ethnicity" + 0.010*"christians" + 0.010*"member" + 0.010*"community" + 0.010*"non" + 0.009*"racial_ethnic" + 0.009*"ethnic_group" + 0.008*"difference" + 0.008*"society" + 0.008*"family" + 0.008*"english."

Representative papers of this topic: Kim, Matthew D., "A Bi-Cultural Homiletic: Korean American Preaching in Transition"; Kim, Matthew D., "A Blind Spot in Homiletics: Preaching that Exegetes Ethnicity." Izguirre, Jose G. III, "Preaching to a 'Culture Within a Culture': Shaping Rhetorical Strategies Targeting Generations of Mexican-Americans in the United States."

[42] Topic key terms: 0.011*"communication" + 0.009*"culture" + 0.009*"audience" + 0.007*"medium" + 0.005*"image" + 0.005*"oral" + 0.005*"language" + 0.004*"speaker" + 0.004*"information" + 0.004*"postmodern" + 0.004*"technology" + 0.004*"process" + 0.004*"knowledge" + 0.004*"value" + 0.004*"belief" + 0.004*"influence" + 0.004*"age" + 0.004*"reality" + 0.004*"self" + 0.003*"style" + 0.003*"model" + 0.003*"communicate" + 0.003*"engage" + 0.003*"worldview" + 0.003*"society."

Representative papers of this topic: Quicke, Michael, "Technologizing of the Word - Flight, Fight, or Befriend?"; Arthurs, Jeffery D. and Ben Jackson, "Preaching in the Electronic Age"; Curry, Andrew, "How the Image Changes the Message: Recalling Neil Postman's Critique of Televised Religion and Relating it to the Surge of On-Screen Preaching Driven by the Covid-19 Pandemic."

[43] Topic key terms: 0.055*"story" + 0.044*"narrative" + 0.015*"character" + 0.014*"imagination" + 0.014*"parable" + 0.011*"edwards" + 0.009*"structure" + 0.009*"disciple" + 0.007*"scene" + 0.006*"contemporary" + 0.005*"reality" + 0.005*"inductive" + 0.005*"plot" + 0.005*"deductive" + 0.005*"ricoeur" + 0.005*"dialogue" + 0.005*"narrator" + 0.005*"identity" + 0.005*"biblical_narrative" + 0.004*"adult" + 0.004*"film" + 0.004*"shape" + 0.004*"figure" + 0.004*"hearer" + 0.004*"event."

Representative papers of this topic: Watson, Glenn, "The Sermon in Three Acts: The Rhetoric of Cinema and the Art of Narrative Biblical Exposition"; Edwards, J. Kent, "Stories are for adults: Equipping preachers to communicate Biblical narratives"; Arthurs, Jeffrey D., "Genre Sensitive Preaching of Parables."

[44] Papers in this topic may represent, more than any other particular group of papers, the EHS corpus engaging and building upon homiletical reflection from scholars in the Academy of Homiletics.

[45] Topic key terms: 0.029*"paul" + 0.011*"spirit" + 0.008*"lord" + 0.007*"prophet" + 0.006*"luke" + 0.005*"proclaim" + 0.005*"holy_spirit" + 0.005*"sin" + 0.005*"john" + 0.005*"rebuke" + 0.005*"cor" + 0.005*"letter" + 0.005*"hearer" + 0.005*"ministry" + 0.005*"new_testament" + 0.005*"peter" + 0.004*"acts" + 0.004*"authority" + 0.004*"father" + 0.004*"jesus_christ" + 0.004*"spiritual" + 0.004*"apostle" + 0.004*"judgment" + 0.004*"believer" + 0.003*"kingdom"

Representative papers of this topic: "Overstreet, Larry:- A Pauline Theology of Preaching: Part 1"; Scharf, Greg, "Was Bullinger Right?"; Jeong, Shinchan, "Understanding the Letter to Philippians as a Secondary Form of Preaching."

[46] Topic key words: 0.027*"application" + 0.016*"passage" + 0.012*"old_testament" + 0.010*"big_idea" + 0.008*"law" + 0.008*"calvin" + 0.008*"audience" + 0.008*"explain" + 0.007*"exposition" + 0.007*"sin" + 0.007*"theme" + 0.007*"structure" + 0.007*"specific" + 0.007*"new_testament" + 0.006*"expository_preach" + 0.006*"method" + 0.006*"reference" + 0.006*"expository" + 0.006*"covenant" + 0.006*"outline" + 0.005*"obedience" + 0.005*"author" + 0.005*"verse" + 0.005*"imperative" + 0.005*"robinson."

Representative papers of this topic: Venter, C.J.H., "Hebrews As An Expository Sermon"; Price, Eric, "What is Moralistic Preaching? A Survey of Definitions and a Proposal for

Preaching the Imperatives of Scripture"; Jones, Brian, "Teaching Students the Applicational Power of the Big Idea."