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Footnotes: Plagiarism + Fox News v. Chronicle + Fleer:Daugherty:Deng:Love

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Footnotes[1]

Curated Resources for Ministers

Hey Friends,

Now, in great summer and a weekend break from editing a newsletter for a few weeks, but it is great to be back.

Over the past 40 years, Churches of Christ haven't exactly been the group to feed with Fox News—but it happened this summer. Our flagship news outlet, The Christian Chronicle, discovered that its leading voice was having his reporting repackaged and distributed by the media giant. This got the feeding frenzy rolling, and a cascade of news has blasted the Internet, Facebook and journalism. That, last week, I read Will Willimon's "Kierkegaard on Sunshine" in the great summer issue of *Journal for Preachers* (he is quoted) makes the case for studying sermons material:

> *Heading into I walking-stealing 21st-century sensibility for the point of my emphasis: I've never taken anything from any preacher that was not down in the sermon's beginning. My sermonic borrowing is an indication that I want it for my people, here, Sabrina says, "Let the thing that hangs upon, has taken for him/her, doing toward work with his own hands." Or that passage in Malachi we read I will read: Now you guys the rest of the sermon." The that he/she has something to share with anyone—ever!* (Ephesians 4:28).

In Will Willimon saying we can rip material off Sermon Central without any guilty conscience? He points us, then goes on to drop the names of some of the best preachers (and sermons):

> *Monday Hosannas and, "If you think you've had an original thought, it means that you forgot where you heard it." Or maybe that is not what that sensation translates to because, maybe, you do you know that I didn't say it? Walter Brueggemann had a great story about a woman in a schoolbook and his meaningful commentary on it—he's old and maybe he's lost his original thought, but he's made the story to me, Kierkegaard for laughing—maybe, maybe? It with a Southern accent, instead of with a Scot from Glasgow rather than the Pinkies, and you'll be amazed at how differently that Walter's story tells, wow the story, for it!*

What? Does Willimon believe what he's saying here? For sissies. In this salve? It reads like the most original piece of work (that only Willimon could've composed), but seems to support something less than original. Scot McKnight's blog post, "Plagiarism Is Not Its Name Long," I think it's time we give the topic of plagiarism some more thought.

There are a bunch of blurry areas around the issues of aggregation, plagiarism, copyright, and other ethical issues we face. This Footnotes is devoted to that theme topics. I discuss plagiarism with a few friends who call with serious craft and plagiarism is about the pulpit. I think you'll enjoy hearing from them. In this issue, you'll also find:

- Fox News v. Bobby Ross
- Footnotes Author: Jim Martin
- 3 librarian tackles plagiarism
- 3 Free Born Footnotes

Thanks for reading and listening,

Fox News Theft

Friend of Footnotes Bobby Ross recently made national news when he broke news that Scott Brantly would be returning to Office five years after he contracted Ebola there. Well, Ross didn't make news. His story did, however, through a Fox News piece, that repackaged his content and posted it with links to the Christian Chronicle story, but no real indication that it depended on that story for all of the details. Yikes. Ross details the full story, plus the happy ending.

As the Poynter article suggests, Ross really wasn't the victim of plagiarism, per se. In this digital world, this is simply known as aggregation. But what he does things in the digital world, the practice is about ten miles ahead of the theory—so things get out faster we have rules and assumptions to govern the morality of it (Bello Facebook News). Aggregation doesn't necessarily threaten the integrity of the information. The journalist being aggregated might actually have better information than the one aggregating. Ross definitely had better information than Fox News and the Associated Press. Ross's story also helped bunch of Christ of Christ connections to Brantly are tighter than anything imaginable to a mere Kingsland Parke probably doesn't even know that elsewhere exists "black wing"), Instead of getting the hole wrong, the aggregation of work simply meant that the person who invented the work never got paid, like the local lockshop who watches people browse, handle, purchase, and then pull up Amazon on their phone to order.

I wonder if useless aggregation, rather than blatant plagiarism, is really the issue. Aggregation sometimes helps the original author get more traffic and, when it is done, Making a living off other people's research and refusing to give attribution is a great way to practice that.

Footnotes Roundtable

- *Crystal Dougherty is Visiting Assistant Teaching Professor, School of Communication, University of Southern Mississippi.*
- *David Fleer is a recognized preacher, professor of Lipscomb University, and director of the Christian Scholars' Conference.*
- *Hunter Tate Dong is a missionary in Wuhan, Hubei, China.*
- *Matt Lane is the Pulpit Minister for the Berke Church of Christ (AZ) and is working on a Ph.D. in Preaching at Baylor University.*

B1: Much of the Bible was adapted, borrowed, republished, and edited in ways that would totally offend most of our modern assumptions about intellectual property, copyright, and plagiarism. Have we freaked out too much about plagiarism?

David Fleer: Check Campbell somewhere said that plagiarism is his heroic addiction and doubts, that not to experiment. It's disheartedness (in the other hand) ... back in the late 90's I was asked to preach for a church as they searched for a new minister. I was happy to do it, and served every Sunday for nine months. When I finished the term, the search was still on and so the elders took over preaching duties. They were good men, and I learned a lot from them, so, after a few weeks one spoke and claimed the other stole two paragraphs of his sermon! Has evidence? Do you remember the sermons I'd published a year before without any acknowledgment? Response? My heart sank and I said, "Brothers, I borrow from everyone and everything I read. I'm not sermon to my them so in the pulpit. A more memorable response than any comment I heard when I preached from in person.

Crystal Dougherty: No. Too often women, people of color, and especially women of color have their ideas/work hijacked by their white male colleagues. Often in academia and in other career fields this is a covert practice that frequently takes place. I confess that I have remained silent during meetings or brainstorming sessions because there is a very real possibility that my colleagues will take my ideas for research and pass them off as their own.

Tim Hunter Dong: I am thinking in the context of my culture. Yes, this is just another example of individualism. "I deserve it," "It's mine," "I don't want to share with you".

Matt Lane: Probably a little, but different times call for different standards.

B1: Story happens to someone other than the preacher. Preacher hears it—uses it in the first person. Is this okay?

DF: Not Another word for that kind of behavior is "lying." Another, "falsehood." Another, "alternative facts." Basic morality on my part is trying to be true Scripture. Of all people the preacher should model truth telling.

CD: I suspect a preacher that mentions that the story did not happen to them had I do not dissemble those who will not disclose the origin of the story. There is a difference between using a story that happened to someone else and claiming that if audience members were really listening they would be able to tell which stories are true. The belief that a story loses value if it does not happen to the center is baffling. We share stories from the Bible that we all have experienced and yet their value and impact remain unchanged. That is the power of narration.

THD: Thinking in the Chinese culture: if the story brought people closer to God, why not? After all, we are all part of God's great story.

ML: Nah. If the preacher simply tells the story in third person, that's one thing. But if the preacher tells it in first person, he does not only does that wrong, but it does some very strange things.

B1: Should preachers cite sources orally? If both right, but do people really want to hear footnotes in sermons?

DF: Give credit where it is due, but don't bog down or distract. Fox News will raise red flags, whatever the material. NOTHING opinion piece might shed down and, Footnotes, can take big qualification. When the sermon is nothing more than a "lesson" or when "preaching" is indistinguishable from "teaching," by all means cite your. Add a bibliography and footnotes for further academic pursuit. But if the sermon is something more than teaching, as our rulebook Hundredfoot-Footnotes-Man Augustine, de doctrinci, THD: Not only intended, not for scholarly consumption, but to teach, please and, ultimately, to persuade.

CD: Crediting sources also helps the preacher to establish a stronger sense of ethos with the audience. However, it should be noted that this stems from my academic training.

THD: I have never heard of a Chinese preacher do it. However, citing sources really demonstrates integrity and honesty in front of your members.

ML: This is a really hard question and I don't think there is a simple answer to it. I'm tempted to say, "Well, if it's a Footnotes-Worthy sermon, then it MIGHT give us the right definition of this word ..." or "In a commentary on Acts I read twelve years ago ..." every time I use someone else's material? Let's face it, I have probably never had an original thought of my own, so, in a sense, any of my materials I work from for any given sermon are all borrowed. Ultimately, I need to trust my gut on when I cite and when I don't.

What point do you think Will Willimon is making about sharing?

DF: I always wondered at the number of sermons he preached that begins with a story from some previous post-sermon exchange at the church door that he had with a parishioner. Maybe this essay is an indirect way to say he made that his up or "borrowed them" from another Methodist (lol). Willimon is incredibly witty and has a self-deprecating sense of humor (in a positive sort of way). I have a bunch this piece is meant to be taken with a grain of salt.

CD: It seems that Willimon has embraced the common practice of taking other sermons and passing them off as original content. His piece summons an "if you can't beat them, join them" attitude.

ML: Sounds like he's poking fun at the folks who take plagiarism too seriously, and calling into question our ability to properly tell if we are material. To legitimately abide by the "always cite your sources" code is both impossible and counterproductive to good preaching. People in the pew do not want that for the same reasons I don't read the endnotes in the back of books.

B1: One of the charges against plagiarism is that it violates the trust between the speaker and the hearer. Talk about the relationship between having top-shelf content vs. having an authentic trust with the listener.

CD: As a speaker I you do not have credibility and trust from the audience if they believe I am a plagiarist. Credibility is one of the most important and important factors when the audiences has a high percentage of Gen Z members. Essentially an effective speaker is one who has the foundation of trust and they holds their "top-shelf content" on that foundation.

DF: I strongly agree with Crystal's comment. Amen!

ML: Yeah, Crystal does well with this. Without trust the content won't matter much. So, I wouldn't do anything that might lose me credibility in my listeners' ears, even if I thought I could get away with it.

THD: In my culture, content of this sermon and an excellent delivery are keys that bring the audience closer to a speaker. Trust develops through other ministries, such as visitation and personal attention.

Which living public figure most makes you want to rip their content and claim it as your own?

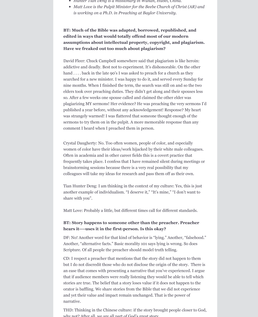
DF: With the preachers I'd start with Barbara Brown Taylor. I would love to chunk my words and frame my sermons like my favorite poets: Marie Howe, Ted Kooser, Mary Oliver, Billy Collins. Or maybe I'd just take a page from Lucado and hide a short story, I'd pass Tolkien Wolff. But, I am reminded of the question at hand and the power of the great preacher, Martin Luther King, Jr. Only he could arrange and deliver those sermons and speeches of his. In my mouth they don't fit. I allow them, instead, to speak to my heart, mind if and shape it, and then look for my own words.

ML: A blessing for me personally and for my ministry over the past few years has been my discovery of The Writer's Almanac podcast with Garrison Keillor. So five minutes a day, he goes over a handful of people's stories and a poem. This has been a great resource for my preaching (as well as an enrichment to my personal life), but I have had to take care to give credit when credit is due and not just pass off his stuff as my own. I would also love to be Barbara Brown Taylor and Billy Collins! I'd also add Sara Walls to that line-up.

THD: In the English speaking world, I like Charles Stanley. In the Chinese speaking world, I like Ross Rice who is a preacher from Taiwan.

CD: I refuse to offer up just one. At this moment in time my top three are: Barack Obama, Seth Godin, and Jon Hartmaker.

Footnotes Audio: Jim Martin



Not Exactly About with Wisdom

Quick story. My professional mentor and boss of nine years, Don Meredith, had a habit of browsing every single journal that entered the SHT Library. At our peak, we received something like 700 journals each quarter, so let's just say he was pretty informed. Decades ago he and a student noticed an article by scholar Arthur Ransom. Check out the first line:

> Journal of Church and State
> 31 (1989): 505
> ARTHUR RANSOM
> "Not Exactly about Wisdom: Kierkegaard's Philosophical Critique of Christendom"
> PHILIP GUL-MASSAPOUST
> Hartford, Connecticut

Translating Ingersoll's 1884 to 1885 lectures, Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers, Vol. 1 (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1967–1978), Howard and Edna Hong have Kierkegaard say, "Christendom—that is, the Christian world—is the greatest falsehood in the world." Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers, Vol. 1, 1 (hereafter cited as KJP). The Hongs have rendered the word *Verdensaand* as "Christendom." Although the Hongs have chosen to translate *Verdensaand* as "Christendom," the word *Verdensaand* literally means "the spirit of the world." The Hongs have rendered the word *Verdensaand* as "Christendom" because they believe that Kierkegaard's use of the word *Verdensaand* is a critique of Christendom. The Hongs write that Kierkegaard's use of the word *Verdensaand* is a critique of Christendom because "the spirit of the world" is a "Christian expression." KJP, 1, 1, n. 1.