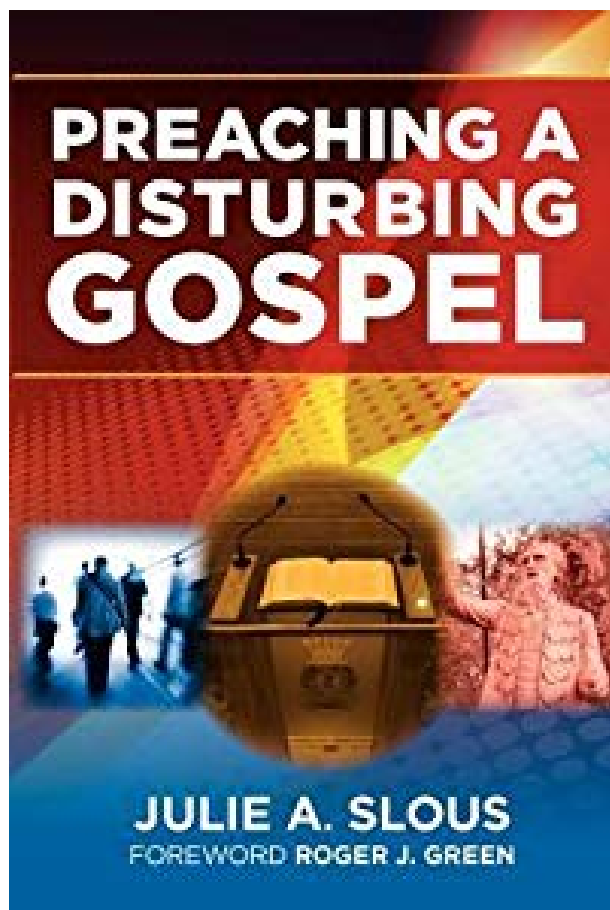


Preaching a Disturbing Gospel



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John Wesley was once asked why so many people came to hear him preach. His response was, "When you set yourself on fire, people love to come and see you burn . While the question pushed to understand why the masses were so intrigued with Wesley's pulpit, we might well ask today, what is really happening in our pulpits to capture the interest and the attention of today's listener? If we were to survey local congregations, perhaps we would be surprised to learn how many people would like to see a little more fire burning in the pulpit on a Sunday morning! It presses us to ask what preaching is accomplishing in today's contemporary world. Is preaching waking people up or is it painfully lulling them to sleep? Is preaching inspiring, motivating and reaching people where they are, or has the relevancy of this time-honored tradition within the Christian Church lost esteem and effectiveness? Using these initial questions as a launching pad, the pages that follow seek to put the reality of the contemporary pulpit in conversation with a place in history where homiletical fires burned with notable intensity. Drawing from the richness of The Salvation Army's story, we reach back into the Victorian and Edwardian eras (1819-1930) to encounter the aggressive proclamation of a disturbing gospel....Is there still a place for confrontational preaching in the contemporary pulpit? Does this approach to preaching help to address some of the very real challenges we are facing in engaging today's listener?