

Frederick Buechner and Homiletical Impressionism

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American Preaching and “Impressionism”

In 1874, Gaspard-Félix Tournachon had an idea, a seemingly modest proposal for an art show, but an idea that ultimately transformed the art world. Either a Renaissance man or a P.T. Barnum-style impresario—take your pick—Tournachon was an inventive 19th century Parisian photographer with a prominent studio at 35 Boulevard des Capucines. He was also a man of many parts. He had been in his day, among other things, a caricaturist, a novelist, a balloonist, a circus ringmaster, and, reportedly, a secret agent for the French government. Part artist, part showman, Tournachon was difficult to overlook. A big man with burning-bush red hair and an impressive russet mustache, Tournachon recognized early on that he was meant for the public eye. At the precocious age of nineteen, he decided, à la Prince and Madonna, to change his name to a single, memorable, manufactured, press-worthy moniker, “Nadar,” a label he splashed extravagantly, like Chanel or Dior, across the façade of his studio.

Nadar’s big idea was as simple as it was radical. He would lend his studio for an exhibition to some of his friends, young unconventional, outcast, mostly impoverished artists such as Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot, Camille Pissarro, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir. After all, they badly needed a place to exhibit, having been brusquely rejected by The Salon, the conservative gallery representing the Parisian art establishment. What better space than Studio Nadar? It was well-known, centrally located, and had already become a gathering spot for the intelligentsia of Paris, surely an ideal venue to give a group of avant-garde painters a prominent and favorable showing.

Not so. The exhibition was, at first blush anyway, a total disaster. It lost money, for one thing. Attendance was sparse, with most coming not to appreciate the new art but to scoff at it. Real art, after all, was consumed by the great, epic themes and was painted with clear, bold, technically crisp and competent representation. These new painters by contrast focused not on cherished mythological narratives or stories from the Bible but on everyday scenes—picnics on the Seine, girls in flower gardens, recently plowed fields. They used pastel colors, gauzily applied, so that the paintings looked, to the conventional eye, unfinished and amateurish. Guffaws could be heard in the studio as the attendees made their way from painting to painting.

What was particularly offensive about these painters was not simply unconventional technique but the way their subject matter subtly challenged the hypocrisy of conventional art. Accepted artists could paint a lovely rendition of, say, the Virgin Mary, but in a way that was pedantic, sentimental, and pious. These new artists found such works to be clichés, and they redirected attention away from the big narratives and accepted verities and toward the ambiguities of ordinary life. Moreover, the

seemingly unfinished quality of their paintings served to shift the responsibility for meaning to the viewer instead of upon the artist alone, perhaps the one quality of this new art movement that stimulated the greatest outrage.¹

Almost everyone who ventured to Nadar's studio to see this experimental art huffily rejected it, but the most scornful were the professional art critics. One described the exhibition as the works of "five or six lunatics, one of whom is a woman" (referring to Berthe Morisot).² Most enduring and ironic, though, was the acerbic review of art critic and journalist Louis Leroy. He was appalled by what he saw and was especially galled by Claude Monet's *Impression Sunrise*, a hazy, misty presentation of an early morning scene of boats, grey-blue water, and an orange rising sun over the port of Le Havre.³ Was this seriously a depiction of a sunrise in Le Havre, or was it a piece of graffiti by a child or an idiot? Many viewers at the exhibition had complained about this painting, grumbling that "they were absolutely unable to recognize what was shown at all."⁴ In his review, Leroy ridiculed the word *impression* in the painting's title. "Impression!" he sneered. "Wallpaper in its embryonic state is more finished!"⁵

It was a caustic review Leroy would come to regret. The artists knew a backhanded compliment when they saw one, and they soon adopted Leroy's jab as the name of their movement: "Impressionism." Within a year, the whole art world was celebrating this new and exciting venture in art.⁶

Impressionism did not, of course, spring from thin air. Fin de siècle Paris was a time of social, political, and religious upheaval. The making of crafts and the labor of individual artisans were being swept away by the rise of factories and mass production. Craftsmen had now become a social class: "laborers." The ideas of Marx and Engels, who had published *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848, gradually seeped into the restless political vocabulary of this new and self-conscious working class, who now spoke boldly of such concepts as the "bourgeoisie" and the "proletariat." Darwin's *Origin of the Species* appeared just fifteen years before the exhibition, and the church was now playing defense, trying to keep Christianity and the Bible from seeming discredited by modern science. Only four years earlier, the Second Empire in France had come to an inglorious end, with Napoleon III in exile in England and the establishment of the Third Republic. The new regime was long-standing, lasting until the arrival of the Nazis in 1940, but it was marked by constant political unrest caused by conflict between liberal reformers, heirs to the French Revolution, and conservatives in the Roman Catholic Church and rural farmers. Paris itself was in flux, being transformed into a city for the elite, its narrow streets being replaced by lovely tree-lined boulevards, fancy railway stations, and high-end apartments with exorbitant rents.⁷

Impressionism was both a child of and a critical response to this society of unrest, class struggle, and radically changing values. The paintings of the impressionists featured the everyday life of ordinary people in parks, cafes, and cabarets, but

they did not reflect a contented society. They revealed “the new sense of alienation experienced by the inhabitants of the first modern metropolis.”⁸

Impressionism changed art, and it later exerted a major force upon the “new arts” of photography and cinema. A century later, a similar impressionistic shift in rhetorical art emerged as a transformative influence in American preaching. The American pulpit in the 1940s and 1950s was, in some ways, like classical art before impressionism. At its best, it was full of grand rhetoric devoted to the majestic stories of the Bible and the great moral principles of Christianity. A good example of preachers of this era was Ralph Sockman, who for over four decades served as pastor of Christ Methodist Church in New York City. *Time* magazine described him as “the best Protestant preacher in the United States.”⁹ Sockman’s sermons were not preached at street level. Instead, he stood aloft in the ecclesial tower calling the polis to reclaim the eternal verities of the faith. In his 1942 Beecher Lectures at Yale, Sockman said, “We must turn from the ‘politics of time’ to the ‘politics of eternity.’”¹⁰ He described his disdain for sermons sullied by the gritty issues of the day:

My personal policy is to preach very few special sermons devoted solely to public issues such as peace, missions, literature, corrupt politics and the like. Rather it is my aim to take basic principles and try to swing their searchlights so that they fall upon the various phases of our social, economic, and political environment.”¹¹

But in the memorable words of Yeats, “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold,” and in the 1960s, things began to fall apart. American preaching of the sort that Sockman practiced fell apart as well. On the fiftieth anniversary of the biblical journal *Interpretation*, preaching professor Richard Lischer commented on the aptness of Yeats’s image of the center not holding by remembering what preaching was like in 1947 when *Interpretation* was founded:

Indeed, any talk of a center takes us back a generation or two. If you need convincing that we have a new situation in preaching, read some sermons from 1947.... I looked at a few dozen...., and I can testify that reading them was like finding a message in a bottle from another shore. All the familiar characters and themes are there, but the idiom has changed. The sermons breathe a sense of confidence in the clarity and rationality of the Christian faith. This is a message that makes sense, they seem to say, and it is going to get through. If you have listened to tapes from that period, you may have noticed that the preachers sound terribly sure of themselves—even pompous—perhaps because they are under no necessity to qualify their assertions. There is an ease of communication here that is disconcerting to our ears. The sermons of 1947 reflect a new world that has been restored by the forces of good. They rejoice in the unlimited capacity of humanity to master its future. But most of all, they assume a universe of shared values and a common language for expressing them.¹²

By the early 1970s, any sense of shared values and a common language had been shattered by Vietnam, the sexual revolution, the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Woodstock, Watergate, and other manifestations of social restlessness and confusion. The emptying of establishment churches, so painfully obvious today, had already begun, and it was no longer possible to deny that traditional faith was imperiled by a rising tide of secularity.

There were few thoughtful Christians left who could respond easily to the confident, we're-in-charge-of-culture proclamations of Sockman and the other pulpit princes of the 1940s and 1950s. Instead, a new development occurred in American preaching. Widely described as "the new homiletic," this movement symbolically, at least, stepped down from the pulpit to nave level and spoke to their congregations human being to human being. They abandoned the tight, logical, morally elevated sermons of the previous generation and embraced everyday storytelling as the method of choice. No longer could preachers swing unimpeachable moral searchlights, as Sockman had done. Instead, like the impressionist painters before them, they traded stained-glass for ordinary life. They would tell of conversations in Gibson's hardware store or exchanges overheard in ICU waiting rooms or at the local pizza joint. In other words, these chastened preachers of the 1970s became homiletical impressionists, turning from bold and confident dogmatic claims to a search for meaning in the everyday and ordinary. If the preachers before them had turned for authority to their own inner certainty and to the great traditions of the faith, these preachers now turned to the listeners. "In the end," wrote Lischer, "each listener makes his or her own connection to the gospel, and each gets to decide if it is true or not. The individual hearer—and not the church—'makes' the sermon."¹³ The "turn to the viewer" in the impressionist painters became a "turn to the listener" in American preaching.

Perhaps the greatest practitioner of this new, more impressionistic, kind of preaching was Fred Craddock. With his rural Tennessee, down home accent and his deceptively profound yarns of commonplace life, he tilted the axis of American preaching. He preached a gospel that was to be found at the dinner table, in a conversation with the air passenger in the next seat, in the embrace of a loving elementary school teacher, in the parking lot of the local grocery, that is, in the chambers of quotidian life. Thousands of preachers became admirers and imitators of his style, but not everyone. Like the impressionists, his new style challenged the establishment and generated sharp rebuke. Craddock's masterwork, *As One Without Authority*, received a rapid retort from the evangelical world. In an essay pointedly titled *As One With Authority*, Southern Baptist Albert Mohler chastised Craddock and all other impressionist preachers:

[Preachers in the past] ascended the pulpit to speak of the eternal certainties, truths etched forever in the granite of absolute reality, matters framed for proclamation, not for discussion. But where have all the absolutes gone? The old thunderbolts rust in the attic while the minister tries to lead his people through

the morass of relativities and proximate possibilities, and the difficulties involved in finding and articulating a faith are not the congregation's alone; they are the minister's as well. How can he preach with a changing mind? How can he, facing new situations by the hour, speak the approximate word?¹⁴

But Mohler missed the point. He may as well have sniffed, like the art critic Leroy in Paris, that these new preachers were but mere "impressionists." In the 1940s "the eternal certainties" rang true, but the times had changed. Preachers who preached in the 1970s as Mohler wished they did were trapped in a positivist, sometimes fundamentalist, echo chamber. Craddock, and those like him, were pointing the way forward for preachers in an alienated and uncertain time.

Frederick Buechner: A Reluctant Homiletician

If Craddock was the master craftsman of the "new homiletic," Frederick Buechner was its poet laureate. Strangely, for one who so deeply influenced the preaching of his time, Buechner was himself shy and never fully comfortable in a pulpit. And he must have been surprised when Yale invited him to deliver the prestigious Beecher Lectures, an honor generally reserved for preaching's recognized practitioners and professors. But Buechner was a writer, and, Lord, could he write. He was the Voltaire of the homiletical revolution, and he wrote exquisitely and in ways that, like Renoir and Pissarro, brought the stories of the Bible close to home, humanized the heroes of the faith, and reimagined elevated theological language in the discourse of daily life.

Buechner died at age ninety-six last summer. The contours of his life are well-known, in part due to the countless tributes that have poured forth in news accounts and magazines. A surprisingly successful novelist by the time he was in his twenties, Buechner nevertheless soon found himself in a personal crisis. "I was twenty-seven," he wrote later, "living alone in New York trying with no success to start a novel and in love with a girl who was not in love with me."¹⁵ Depressed, lovesick, and searching, Buechner wandered for whatever reason into Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, where he heard George Buttrick preaching, contrasting the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II with the coronation of Christ in the faith of believers. Elizabeth was crowned with pomp and circumstance, said Buttrick, but Jesus was crowned among "confession and tears and great laughter." It was hearing that last phrase, *great laughter*, that changed Buechner's life forever.

"At the phrase *great laughter*, for reasons that I have never satisfactorily understood, the great wall of China crumbled, and Atlantis rose up out of the sea, and on Madison Avenue, at 73rd Street, tears leapt from my eyes as though I had been struck across the face."¹⁶ This was for Buechner, in every sense of the word, a conversion experience, and from that moment on, he turned his enormous literary gifts to the task of writing explicitly out of his Christian faith.

Whatever instincts Buechner may already have had about the connections of faith to brokenness and struggles of daily life, his relationship with Buttrick reinforced them. Buttrick, like Sockman preaching only a few blocks away, was a cele-

brated pulpiteer, but his manner already anticipated the changes in preaching to come and subverted the image of a prince of the pulpit. Buechner said that Buttrick, with “the voice of an old nurse,” was the antithesis of a “spellbinder.” John Killinger, one of Buttrick’s former students, remembers that his instructor “defied all the rules of public speaking, habitually stuttering and wandering about the pulpit and hanging his head when he spoke.”¹⁷ Historian Edgar DeWitt Jones records that Buttrick was one who “forgets himself when he preaches. He twists his legs together, stands on one foot, and pours out his soul.”¹⁸

Buechner was also influenced, in addition to Buttrick, by his Old Testament professor at Union Seminary, James Muilenburg. Buechner wrote,

But for me, as for most of us studying there in those days, there was no one on the faculty who left so powerful and lasting an impression as James Muilenburg. He was an angular man with thinning white hair, staring eyes, and a nose and chin which at times seemed so close to touching that they gave him the face of a good witch. In his introductory Old Testament course, the largest lecture hall that Union had was always packed to hear him. Students brought friends. Friends brought friends. People stood in the back when the chairs ran out. Up and down the whole length of the aisle he would stride as he chanted the war songs, the taunt songs, the dirges of ancient Israel. With his body stiff, his knees bent, his arms scarecrowed far to either side, he never merely taught the Old Testament but was the Old Testament. He would be Adam, wide-eyed and halting as he named the beasts—“You are . . . an elephant . . . a butterfly . . . an ostrich!”—or Eve, trembling and afraid in the garden of her lost innocence, would be David sobbing his great lament at the death of Saul and Jonathan, would be Moses coming down from Sinai. His face upturned and his eyes aghast, he would be Yahweh himself, creating the heavens and the earth, and when he called out “Let there be light,” there is no way of putting it other than to say that there would be light, great floods of it reflected in the hundreds of faces watching him in that enormous room.¹⁹

Buechner learned how to make biblical characters come to life among us, and echoes of Muilenburg can be heard in Buechner’s description of Pontius Pilate as a three-pack-a-day smoker and bureaucrat who is standing in front of his desk with the picture of his wife “when she still had her looks” and who, when Jesus, with the split lip and swollen eye, says to him, “‘I’ve come to bear witness to the truth,’ takes such a deep drag on his filter tip that his head swims, and for a moment, he’s afraid he may faint.”²⁰ Or again, hear Buechner’s all-too-human portrayal of Abraham:

If a *schlemeil* is a person who goes through life spilling soup on people and a *schlemozzle* is the one it keeps getting spilled on, then Abraham was a *schlemozzle*. It all began when God told him to go to the land of Canaan, where he promised to make him the father of a great nation, and he went....

In spite of everything, however, he never stopped having faith that God was going to keep his promise about making him the father of a great nation. Night after night, it was the dream he rode to sleep on—the glittering cities, the up-to-date armies, the curly-bearded kings. There was a group photograph he had taken not long before he died. It was a bar mitzvah, and they were all there down to the last poor relation. They weren't a great nation yet by a long shot, but you'd never know it from the way Abraham sits enthroned there in his velvet yarmulke with several great-grandchildren on his lap and soup on his tie.

Shortly after I arrived in the mid-1970s as a new professor at Columbia Seminary in Georgia, I was placed on the committee that selects speakers for the seminary's annual ministers' week. Having encountered Buechner when I stumbled across his hilarious and profound novel *Lion Country*, I suggested his name. "Who?" the committee asked. I told what I knew of Buechner, and the committee, reluctant I suppose to discourage the rookie prof, voted to invite him. Columbia's president sent the invitation, and soon a letter came back in which Buechner accepted, but asked, "What would you like me to talk about?"

The president came to my office with the letter. "*You* suggested him," he said. "What do you think he should talk about?" I thought about that for a while and made three suggestions of topics, one of which was to tell the story of his life theologically. I had just read *The Alphabet of Grace* in which Buechner rehearsed the rhythms of an ordinary day through the lens of faith, so a theological autobiography seemed the next step. That was the idea that Buechner chose, and the resulting lectures became his powerful book *The Sacred Journey*.²¹

In the lectures, Buechner spoke honestly of moments of laughter and pain in his life, including the emotional story of the suicide of his father. The church where the lectures were held was silent and electrically attentive. After each lecture, people, moved by Buechner's testimony, rushed to phone people they loved and to say tender things that they had always wanted to say while there was still time. Like the impressionists before him, who could find truth and depth, however ambiguous, in picnics, piano lessons, and strolls along the Seine, Buechner found wonder and holiness in the unfolding of his days. "I sometimes think that all the major dramas of my life have taken place in kitchens," he wrote in one of his novels, "and maybe that's because in kitchens there's always something else to fall back on if the going gets tough, like cooking or eating or doing the dishes. And maybe that's the real drama after all—just keeping yourself alive day after day and cleaning up afterwards."²²

"What I propose to do now," he said in the lectures, "is to try listening to my life as a whole, or at least to certain key moments of the first half of my life thus far, for whatever of meaning, of holiness, of God, there may be in it to hear. My assumption is that the story of any one of us is in some measure the story of us all."²³

Buechner's ability to see hidden treasure in the everydayness of his own life was born out of a compassionate discernment he possessed not only toward his own experience but toward others as well. During those Columbia lectures, one evening I took Buechner to dinner at a local restaurant. At a table near us was a middle-aged couple. The wife, who wore the clothing of a person of modest means trying her best to dress up for a rare night out, was attempting to keep conversation going with her slightly bored husband. I noticed that she had gained Buechner's attention. Finally, he turned to me: "Sometimes I watch people, and if I watch long enough, they move me to tears."

That compassion for others led some critics of Buechner's writing to complain that he was never able to create a convincing villain. If so, we can see the reason for this in Buechner's description of Virgil Roebuck, an atheistic Princeton professor who appears in the novel *Lion Feast*. The novel concerns Leo Bebb, a seedy Florida evangelist who runs a disreputable diploma mill, but who is actually Buechner's embodiment of a despised "fool for Christ." Bebb is conducting a revival on the Princeton University campus, a series of what Bebb calls "love feasts." Roebuck confronts him as a charlatan and fear-monger, accusing him of all the hate and abuse ever committed in the name of religion. Bebb is on the verge of a rebuttal when he notices something:

I saw something I didn't notice up till then. It was one of those little signs they have on desks with your name on it. "Virgil M. Roebuck," it said. All I knew up to then was just Roebuck, and then seeing that sign, I thought to myself how this wasn't any old Roebuck. This was the Roebuck they'd settled on calling Virgil. This was the special Roebuck they'd pinned that special name Virgil onto and raised up to amount to something special....

And then, in words inspired by a similar scene in Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*, Buchner adds,

I busted in there as mad as a hornet, but you can't stay mad when you start thinking things like that. Once you commence noticing the lines a man's got round his eyes and mouth and think about the hopeful way his folks gave a special name to him when he was first born into this world, you might as well give up.

I said, "Virgil, the night is dark and we are far from home." How come it was the words of that old hymn popped into my mind to say? I don't know, but it did. I said, "The night is dark, Virgil Roebuck, and home's a long ways off for both of us."²⁴

Benediction

It is hard to believe that Buechner's singular voice, a cry in the wilderness for over half a century, is now stilled. It was an open secret that the last years of his life were marked by an enduring case of writer's block. At age eighty, Buechner wrote:

I can still write sentences and paragraphs, but for some five or six years now I haven't been able to write books. Maybe after more than thirty of them, the well has at last run dry. Maybe, age eighty, I no longer have the right kind of energy. Maybe the time has simply come to stop. Whatever the reason, at least for the moment, the sweet birds no longer sing.²⁵

Or perhaps the sweet birds were singing as beautifully as ever, but the times had changed so that their enchanting song could no longer be heard as clearly and forcefully. It is one thing to make the promises and stories of the Christian faith freshly accessible to the troubled faithful; it is quite another thing to speak to a secular age, to people who never heard those promises nor knew those stories in the first place. There are signs all around that preaching's Great Speckled Bird is about to leave her nest again and take flight once more. Perhaps what goes around comes around, and the time is ripe for preachers to climb back up into the high and lonely pulpit and to preach with an uncertain trumpet. In John Updike's *A Month of Sundays*, Rev. Tom Marshfield admits that he was pressed into following his pastor father into the ministry. His father had a fuzzy, impressionistic theology, and "I became a Barthian," says Marshfield, "in reaction to his liberalism." But there was more: "I did not become a Barthian in blank recoil, but in positive love of Barth's voice...wholly informed, wholly unfrightened prose.... In Barth, at the age of eighteen, I heard the voice my father should have had."²⁶ Is this the voice needed now? Only the Spirit knows.

In his old age, Buechner kept his daily routine as long as he could, making his way each morning to his backyard writing studio. In hopes of banishing the ghost of writer's block, he started the day by writing, in longhand on yellow legal pads as he always did, a brief essay about some memory from his own life. When he had finished, he would crumple the page and toss it into a corner. But Buechner being Buechner, these tossaway essays were brilliant and were ultimately published as *The Yellow Leaves*. But they never led to the flow of creativity he had known as a younger writer.

He needn't have worried. As long as there are anxious Christians, feeling alienated from the high doctrines of official Christianity and the sometimes distant claims of scripture, there will always be grateful preachers eagerly quoting Buechner and telling of an anxious chain-smoking Pontius Pilate and an Abraham, the tenacious Jew at the neighborhood shul with soup on his tie at the bar mitzvah.

Notes

1 I. L. Zupnic, "The Social Conflict of the Impressionists. Zola's Opinions versus Evidence in Portraits," *College Art Journal*, 19/2 (Winter, 1959-1960), 146.

2 "It is Time to Talk About Berthe Morisot, An Important Woman Impressionist," *Widewalls*, <https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/berthe-morisot-exhibition-barnes-foundation>.

3 "Impression Sunrise by Claude Monet," *Claude Monet: Paintings, Biography, and Quotes*, <https://www.claude-monet.com/impression-sunrise.jsp>.

4 *Ibid.*

5 "About Impressionism,"

<http://www.impressionism.org/teachimpress/browse/aboutimpress.htm>.

6 *Ibid.*

7 “Movements: Impressionism,” *The Art Story*, <https://theartstory.org/movement/impressionism/>.
<https://www.theartstory.org/movement/impressionism/>.

8 *Ibid.*

9 “Religion: Preacher on Park Avenue,” *Time*, (Oct. 6, 1961), <https://time.com/time/magazine/article/0%2C9171%2C827808%2C00.html>.

10 Ralph W. Sockman, *The Highway of God*, (New York: Macmillan, 1942), 59.

11 As quoted in John Bishop, “Ralph W. Sockman: 20th Century Circuit Rider,” *Preaching.Com*, <https://www.preaching.com/articles/past-masters/ralph-w-sockman-20th-century-circuit-rider/>.

12 Richard Lischer, “The Interrupted Sermon,” *Interpretation*, 50/2 (April, 1996), 170.

13 *Ibid.*, 173.

14 R. Albert Mohler, Jr., “As One With Authority,” <https://albertmohler.com/2008/12/12as-one-with-authority>. The original is in italics, which have been removed.

15 Frederick Buechner, *The Alphabet of Grace* (New York: Harper Collins, 1970), 43.

16 *Ibid.*, 44.

17 John Killinger, “George A. Buttrick: Discipline and Style,” *The Christian Century*, 107/5 (Feb. 7-14, 1990), 147.

18 Edgar DeWitt Jones, “George A. Buttrick,” *The American Preacher To-Day* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1933), 277.

19 Frederick Buechner, *Now and Then* (New York: Harper Collins, 1983), 15-16.

20 Frederick Buechner, *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Comedy, Tragedy, and Fairy Tale* (New York: Harper Collins, 1977), 13.

21 Frederick Buechner, *The Sacred Journey* (New York: Harper Collins, 1982).

22 Frederick Buechner, *The Book of Bebb* (New York, Harper Collins, 1979), 363.

23 Frederick Buechner, *The Sacred Journey*, 6.

24 Frederick Buechner, *The Book of Bebb*, 353.

25 Frederick Buechner, *The Yellow Leaves: A Miscellany* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), ix.

26 John Updike, *A Month of Sundays* (New York: Random House, 1975), 24-25.