

**A STUDY OF TEXT-GUIDED PREACHING
IN THE KOREAN CHURCH CONTEXT**

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PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work presented here and submitted to the University of Pretoria for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy represents my own research and has not been submitted by me to any other university for degree purpose.

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ABSTRACT

A Study of Text-Guided Preaching in the Korean Church Context.

I have been for years now teaching homiletical theories and methods to students at World Mission University in Los Angeles, California. I have been aware of certain problems in the theory and practice of preaching prevailing in the Korean church. One of the most critical issues is that Korean preaching largely consists of the topical-deductive method. Another is that a hierarchical structure enforces the gap between the preacher and the congregation.

The study explores, within the framework of the theologian Johannes van der Ven's empirical-theological research program, text-guided preaching, based on the American homiletician Thomas G. Long's theory that the sermon should regenerate the impact of the biblical text, in the context of the Korean church and its tradition of preaching.

The study looks at the history and characteristics of Korean preaching (Chapter 2) and also at the emergence, characteristics, and styles of new American preaching (Chapter 3). The empirical component of the study deals with a case study involving a preaching workshop for theological students as an illustration of the reception by Korean preachers of the proposed theory for preaching (Chapter 5).

My proposal is that text-guided preaching (described in Chapter 4) will benefit those Korean preachers and students willing a homiletical exploration. The basic premise of this model of preaching is that a text seeks to impact its

reader; or, to use Paul Ricoeur's words, confronts its readers with a particular world of understanding; or, from the standpoint of speech-act theory, performs multiple illocutionary acts.

Text-guided preaching as it is presented in this study incorporates the notion of application, a notion introduced to hermeneutics by Hans-Georg Gadamer that says that understanding a text always aims at some practical application.

Homiletically refined by H. J. C. Pieterse and C. J. A. Vos, it means that the preacher's understanding of a biblical text is partly determined by the particular, historically contingent situation of the congregation.

This study adopts an empirical-theological approach to practical theology. As a part of the theological induction phase of the empirical-theological cycle, a preaching workshop was conducted with eight student-participants. The case study produced some significant results.

The clearest finding has to do with the task of interpreting the life situation of the congregation. It leads to the conclusion that theological education at World Mission University has to be modified to include trainings that would produce competent interpreters of the cultural context of Christian life.

KEY WORDS

Homiletical theory

Korean preaching

New theories of preaching

Interpretative process

Interpretation of congregation

Interpretation of text

Sermon form

Empirical-theological research

Speech-act theory

Theory of text-guided preaching

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A SUMMARY OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

A Study of Text-Guided Preaching in the Korean Church Context
By Sung Jin Lim

- Ch. 1 The thesis contends Korean preaching can be improved by incorporating text-guided preaching that asserts that sermons should regenerate the rhetorical impact of the biblical texts.
- Ch. 2 Chapter 2, which deals with the history and characteristics of Korean preaching, shows the predominance of the topical-deductive approach.
- Ch. 3 Chapter 3 deals with the development and characteristics of new models of preaching in American homiletics.
- Chapter 3 also discusses some features of philosophical hermeneutics pertinent to homiletics—most particularly, the role of application in the interpretative process—and H. J. C Pieterse’s homiletical appropriation.
- Ch. 4 Chapter 4, which describes text-guided preaching, emphasizes the importance of the performative dimension of the text—the idea that a text may perform multiple speech-acts.
- Chapter 4 describes Thomas Long’s theory that the preacher-interpreter must pay attention to the literary and rhetorical features of the biblical texts with the aim of regenerating the performative force of the texts in sermons.
- Chapter 4 considers text-guided preaching in connection with biblical poetry with the aid of C. J. A. Vos’ discussions of psalms.
- Ch. 5 Chapter 5 presents a case study developed from the perspective of empirical-theological research advanced by J. A. van der Ven.
- Chapter 5 describes the empirical findings, which support the position that text-guided preaching could contribute to the improvement of Korean preaching.
- Ch. 6 Chapter 6 concludes the study by providing a summary account of text-guided preaching as well as some general reflections on the key aspects of the study.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Goal of the Study

The goal of this study is to explore a new style of preaching that may contribute to a positive shift in the practice of preaching in the Korean church.

Traditionally, Korean preachers have favored a single style of preaching—namely, topical preaching—and a single form of sermon—namely, a deductive, three-point form. In the past decade, however, there have been discussions among some Korean homileticians on the necessity of transforming Korean preaching. The search for new directions in Korean preaching constitutes the context of this study.

The style of preaching that I wish to explore in this study is largely based on the homiletical theory developed by the American homiletician Thomas G. Long in his work *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible* (1989a). The main idea is that the literary-rhetorical dynamics of the text should shape the sermon. “The sermon’s task,” Long says, “is not to replicate the text but to regenerate the impact of some portion of that text” (1989, 33).

My exploration of the theory of preaching, which may be called “text-guided preaching,” seeks to be more than a theoretical discussion, as it includes an empirical research project. This project consists of a one-day preaching

workshop for graduate students at World Mission University. The purpose of the empirical component is to have some preliminary understanding of how Korean preachers will respond to text-guided preaching.

1.2 Theological-Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study of preaching uses a theoretical framework that is based on the practical theologian Johannes van der Ven's conception of practical theology as an empirical-theological research. Traditionally, the task of practical theology has been viewed as applying the results of historical and systematic theology. Being critical of this traditional position, J. A. van der Ven has developed an empirically oriented conception of practical theology.

To outline J. A. van der Ven's model of practical theology—it will be discussed in detail in chapter 5 of this study—the practical theologian carries out his or her task in five phases: formulation of the theological problem, theological induction, theological deduction, empirical-theological testing, and theological evaluation (1993, 119-156).

1. *Formulation of the theological problem.* The initial phase of the empirical research cycle involves identifying some theological problem relating to a traditional Christian practice. The theologian-researcher sets a goal, often in the form of a possible solution.

Our study is concerned with the practice of preaching in the Korean church. We identify the predominance of the static, three-point, deductive sermon as one of the major problems in the Korean church today. As a first step toward a new

direction in Korean preaching, Korean homileticians and preachers should explore new styles of preaching.

2. *Theological induction.* In the theological-inductive phase the theological problem is examined against available background information, which often includes some concrete observations, as well as some theoretical considerations based on recent theological literature. The examination leads to a research design that includes a specific empirical-theological question, method, unit, and other relevant features.

Our theological inductive investigation consists of a historical sketch of the Korean tradition of preaching and a discussion of major characteristics of Korean preaching (chapter 2). It also includes a study of new creative theories of preaching advanced by contemporary American homileticians (chapter 3)—most particularly, Long’s theory that the text should shape the sermon (chapter 4). Our research design draws on this inductive investigation (chapter 5).

3. *Theological deduction.* In the theological-deductive phase, the theologian-researcher, first, attempts to formulate some theories that express certain (causal) relationships between certain concepts and, then, develops hypotheses and questionnaires necessary for the validation of the theories. Theological deduction requires both testing and an evaluation of the results of the testing.

Rather than seeking some kind of validation for theoretically formulated causal relationships, our empirical research project focuses on seeking some general understanding of possible responses to a particular theory of preaching.

Instead of questionnaires, we rely upon a question-and-answer evaluation form for generating data. This study is going to make use of empirical research in order to try to **illustrate** the reception of a sample of people in practice of the theory for preaching which this study has set as its goal to try to develop for the specific Korean context.

4. *Empirical-theological testing.* In the testing phase, the researcher administers the questionnaire to a sample group, collects the data, presents the data with the help of statistical tools, and provides some causal explanations to account for the data. Because our research uses a question-and-answer format for generating data, it is expedient to use the same format for our presentation of the data.

This empirical research is therefore not explorative or descriptive, but it is an **illustration** of the **reception in practice** by a group of people, of the theory for preaching that the researcher is presenting for the practice of preaching in the Korean context, which I have in mind regarding the problem researched in this study.

5. *Theological evaluation.* The theological-evaluative phase completes the empirical research cycle by relating the causal explanations of the results back to theological induction and eventually to the theological problem posed at the very beginning of the cycle. Some general understanding of possible responses to a new theory and practice of preaching may be helpful in debating possible directions for Korean preaching.

1.3 The Theological Problem

The main problem with Korean preaching is that it is dominantly topical and deductive. Most Korean preachers carry out the task of sermon preparation in three steps. First, they choose a topic for the sermon. Second, they select a biblical text and search for a timeless truth or idea. Third, they explicate the biblical truth or idea in a deductive manner.

What is problematic with topical-deductive preaching is that in the hierarchical structures of Korean society, the preacher, as the sole interpreter-communicator of the timeless truth, can easily be elevated to a position of nearly absolute power. Moreover, one of the critical issues concerning the deductive approach is that such an atomistic, analytical reasoning cannot be applied to all sermons.

Korean preaching had been shaped by the nineteenth century American missionaries, who first brought the Protestant tradition to Korea. The central focus of the American missionaries was conversion of individual Koreans. One of their methods was topical preaching that expounded the basic biblical and theological themes of salvation. Since the beginning of the Korean Christian community in the 1880s, topical preaching has been the style of preaching favored by a vast majority of Korean preachers.

One of the characteristics of the early American missionaries was their “strict biblicism” (Hahn 2002, 47). Taking the Bible to be the main source of preaching, they approached the biblical text for a timeless truth or principle to preach on. Historically, Korean preaching has always taken such an approach

to the biblical text. Chang Bok Chung, one of the most influential Korean homileticians of our time, still defines preaching as the interpretation and proclamation of “biblical truth.” “Real preaching occurs,” Chung asserts, “only when the preacher becomes the contemporary instrument of biblical truth” (1999, 156).

The traditional practice of proclaiming the biblical truth through the sermon assumes certain roles for the preacher and the congregation. The preacher is perceived as the one who understands and delivers the biblical truth. The congregation is a group of receivers who depend on the preacher for the knowledge of the biblical truth.

In the context of Korean culture, which supports a patriarchal hierarchy, the preacher who knows the biblical truth assumes unlimited power over the congregation. This is one of the most serious challenges for Korean preachers. As the theologian Jung Young Lee says, Korean preachers “must be prepared to alter the patriarchal and hierarchical leadership style of today” (1977, 96).

For more than a century the Korean tradition of preaching has principally relied upon a single form of sermon. Sermons preached in most Korean churches today have a three-point, deductive shape. The early American missionary who had taught homiletics for many years at the first Korean theological seminary, Charles A. Clark, emphasized a deductive sermonic form. Chang Bok Chung’s major work on homiletics published in 1999 similarly emphasizes the importance of developing the central idea of a sermon into three or four closely related points (1999, 207-208).

Reliance upon a single form of sermon sets boundaries to what preaching as a hermeneutical-communicative practice can achieve. It is disadvantageous to insist on one communicative strategy, when there are other communicative strategies, such as narrative, inductive, and metaphorical. Deductive sermons rely upon an atomistic, analytical reasoning. To insist on deduction is to limit our imagination and experience. Moreover, if preachers insist on deduction in preaching, it would convey the idea that “the gospel is only a set of major concepts with rationally divisible parts” (Long 1989b, 96).

1.4 Theological-Inductive Investigation

In J. A. van der Ven’s empirical-theological cycle, theological induction connects the theological problem with a research design. The theological problem is closely examined and further clarified in light of some relevant information. The goal of theological induction is to reformulate the theological problem into a legitimate empirical-theological question. So the theological-inductive process calls for some theoretical considerations, which require a review of current theological literature.

The major problems of Korean preaching may be understood much more clearly if we engage in some historical survey of its development from the beginning of the Korean church. It is also necessary to examine Korean preaching in connection with the recent debates within the American homiletical tradition. The debates usually concern preaching’s purpose, content, and form and have resulted in a variety of creative homiletical ideas. The constructive

discussions taking place among American homileticians provide us, who are seeking a new direction for Korean preaching, with useful theoretical insights.

Chapter 2 of this study will deal with the historical and hermeneutical reflection of Korean preaching. Chapter 3 will deal with the new directions in the American tradition of preaching. Here we want to briefly touch upon some key ideas that are directly relevant to our study of Korean preaching.

One of the fundamental ideas of the new American homiletical movement is that there are many forms of reasoning and communication. Indeed, the movement has produced a variety of preaching styles: inductive, narrative, story, phenomenological, conversational, and others. It can be said that the contemporary American homiletical tradition is a movement from a single dominant style of preaching (that is, deductive preaching) to a variety of dynamic styles of preaching.

Another important feature of new theories is the redefinition of the roles of the preacher and the listeners. In the traditional situation of preaching, the preacher assumes an authoritarian stance while the congregation assumes the role of a passive learner. American homileticians are fully aware that there is a gap in the preacher-listener relationship and have proposed ways to encourage the value of collaboration.

A third general feature of new theories is the identification of the content of preaching with the dynamic meaning of particular biblical texts. In the traditional situation of preaching, the preacher delivers to the congregation some timeless biblical truth or principle extracted from the text. Many American homileticians

have challenged the hermeneutical practice of identifying the message of the Bible with some theological knowledge. They argue that biblical texts may express a diversity of meaning. Particular biblical texts may communicate some cognitive content, some experiential meaning, or some course of action.

We find Thomas Long's to be a well-balanced theory of preaching that incorporates and advances many of the creative and important insights of the new American homiletics. For this reason, it will serve in our study as a contact point between the new homiletics and Korean preaching. In chapter 4 we will present text-guided preaching, which is based on Long's idea of text shaping sermon.

Korean preaching needs a new direction. Korean homileticians have to engage in debates that would articulate both the limitations of the current practice and possible solutions. It is hoped that the empirical component of our study will contribute to such a discussion. The empirical-theological question we want to ask is "Can text-guided preaching persuade Korean preachers to be open to new possibilities in preaching?"

1.5 Empirical Research Design

The empirical research project included in the study (chapter 5) aims to explore whether or not text-guided preaching would enable Korean preachers to see the limitations of the traditional practice and motivate them to experiment with new homiletical strategies.

A one-day preaching workshop for a small group of theological students at World Mission University constitutes the core of the empirical project. It offers a setting for presenting text-guided preaching, interacting with the new theory and practice of preaching, and collecting feedback. This approach uses the case study method, which, according to Robert Yin, has a distinct advantage when the research is concerned with a “how” or “why” question or with an exploratory “what” question (2003, 9).

The agenda for the preaching workshop includes: presentation and application of text-guided preaching, practice of sermon preparation, and evaluation of the theory and practice. The evaluation form asks four formal questions. The first two questions, which ask to identify and describe the “most significant” and “most difficult” part of the theory of text-guided preaching, are intended to assess how participants would respond to the new style of preaching. It is assumed that their responses would also indicate where they are in terms of general attitudes toward preaching.

A third question, which asks to indicate the “most difficult” part in practicing text-guided sermon development, is intended to assess the participants’ ability to interact with the new style of preaching. The last question concerns perception of the present situations of Korean Christians. The reason for this question is to assess how well the participants in the case study understand everyday concerns of Korean believers. Interpreting and understanding the listeners is a crucial task of text-guided preaching.

CHAPTER 2

KOREAN PREACHING

2.1 Introduction

There is unquestionably a great need in the Korean church today to improve its traditional practice of preaching. Unyong Kim, one of the few Korean homileticians who have explored new theories of preaching in the Korean context, contends that Korean preachers have maintained “the single method—topical preaching style or three-point-making preaching style—for the last one hundred years, which they learned from the early missionaries” (1999, 64). The historical portion of this chapter will survey the uses of topical-deductive preaching in the Korean context.

In the hierarchical structure of Korean culture, the traditional style of preaching, which tends to elevate preachers above their congregations, creates a serious problem. Generally speaking, in the context of the Korean church the preacher could easily assume the role of the father, who in Korean culture and society exercises enormous power. “Thus, the preacher, symbolically the head of the religious community, has unlimited power,” the theologian Jung Young Lee writes (1997, 94). This and other problems will be discussed in the evaluative portion of this chapter.

2.2 A Historical Sketch of Korean Preaching

One style of preaching has served the Korean church through the various stages of its development and experience. The early American missionaries, who had played the greatest role in starting and nurturing the Korean Protestant community, preached topical, deductive sermons to convert the Korean people to become the people of God.

As the church grew, Korean church leaders have largely depended on the same hermeneutical-communicative strategy to address the diverse needs of the church and the people of Korea: conversion, evangelism, spiritual formation, Christian education, revivals, nationalism, prosperity, church growth, and many others.

2.2.1 The Early Missionaries and Preaching (1885-1910)

During the 1880s Korea was grappling with critical internal conflicts. The foreign influence of China and Japan had been increasing steadily, as they had been more than willing to assist the Korean government. As the rivalry for political influence intensified, it was inevitable for the Chinese and Japanese forces to clash. With Japan's surprising victory in the Sino-Japanese War, its sole dominance of Korea began.

The Korean government sought to counter the Japanese with the help of the Russians. But in 1904 the Russo-Japanese War broke out and once again Japan's victory ensured Japan's sole control of Korea. In August 1910, Korea was annexed to Japan, ceasing to exist as a separate nation.

Korea and its people were utterly destitute of protection and hope. Protestant missionaries from the United States and other countries began to penetrate the Korean population, especially the reform-minded groups. As Kyung Bae Min observes, many influential leaders, “who sought to replace the traditional elitist system with a western, egalitarian system, enthusiastically supported the Protestant missionaries, acknowledging the substantial contributions they made” (1974, 37).

Protestantism in Korea began in the 1880s when American missionaries began to arrive and made serious attempts to evangelize Koreans. The first two decades of Protestant missionary work saw a steady rise in membership. Then came a great revival in the first decade of the twentieth century. “It was a spiritual revival, explosive and spectacular, sweeping through the peninsula from 1903 to 1907, that touched off the massive ingathering of the church and permanently stamped its character with revivalistic fervor” (Moffett 1962, 52). During this short period alone the number of Protestant Christians in Korea increased fourfold from some fifty thousand to two hundred thousand (Moffett 1962, 50).

What is now widely known as the Great Revival took place in January 1907 in the city of Pyongyang. Korean preachers were conducting a regional Bible study conference at Chang Dae Hyun Church with about 1,500 men. At a service Sun Joo Kil preached on the way of salvation and the life in the Holy Spirit. As he spoke, many men—including some prominent leaders—were so overwhelmed by the power of the Holy Spirit that they began to confess their

sins in public. This empowered the whole congregation to seek God's forgiveness.

The presence of the Holy Spirit was unmistakable. Ik Noh Chung, an elder of the church, described his personal experience (Y. Kim 1981, 86):

I saw the presence of a power and a sense of holiness in the face of the Sun Joo Kil. It was just like the face of Jesus. He did not see me, but I could feel his eyes searching for me. Then the awareness of my sins frightened me. I saw some men walking out, and when they returned, they cried out to God for mercy. God spoke to us through the words of Sun Joo Kil, and we could not help but confess our spiritual complacency and immoral behaviors.

The extraordinary revival experience was followed by powerful evangelistic campaigns, as those who were touched by the power of the Holy Spirit felt the impulse of evangelism. Evangelism in Korea became an indigenous movement. The great revival spread to other cities and villages across the entire country, catapulting the Korean church as a whole to a higher spiritual level. Leadership passed from the missionaries to Korean leaders.

Since the Great Revival of 1907, revivalism became a central feature of Korean Protestantism (Hahn 2002, 69). In order to continue the revival movement, missionaries carried out a plan to reach "one million souls for Christ" through revival meetings. Revivals, accompanied by Bible classes, had been quite effective in shaping the moral life of the young Korean church. John Hahn writes that revivalism

had a remarkable impact on the whole Korean Church. It definitely led to a notable numerical increase in the Korean church membership, but more importantly, the revivals led to the emergence of new, pragmatic

Christian ethics and a high moralism among the believers. What had hitherto been considered as the norm in the traditional, Confucian culture now became branded as taboo in the Christian churches. (2002, 75)

Charles A. Clark, who had taught homiletics for many years at Pyung Yang Theological Seminary, the most influential theological school in the early period of Korean Protestantism, developed his theory of preaching with Korean preachers in mind. His preference for topical preaching, which tended to undermine the centrality of the Bible in preaching (H. Lee 2005, 216), reflected the young Korean church's urgent need for growth through evangelization.

Clark believed that the primary goal of preaching was evangelistic. He viewed preaching as religious discourse aimed at persuading people to turn away from a sinful life of evil thoughts and deeds and to accept Jesus Christ for salvation (H. Lee 2005, 220). He also was aware of the need of the Korean church to guide its members to moral and spiritual maturity.

Kerygmatic or evangelistic preaching—a proclamation of the life, death and resurrection of Christ that calls people to repent and receive him as Savior and Lord—was an essential component of the revival movements in Korea. The evangelistic message typically emphasized sin and its consequences and offered God's forgiving and saving grace. It also addressed the issue of spiritual complacency. Korean converts had to hear the gospel regularly so that they may continuously renew their commitment to Christ and their Christian way of life.

The early Korean churches were shaped by the nineteenth-century American evangelicalism. The early American missionaries introduced to

Korean Christians “strict biblicism” (Hahn 2002, 47). Many of them were trained in evangelical seminaries and Bible colleges in the United States and firmly accepted the Bible as the inspired Word of God and the only infallible rule of the Christian life.

One of the most remarkable achievements of the early American missionaries was Bible study programs (Hahn 2002, 54). All the new Korean converts were required to read the Bible diligently and to enroll in Bible classes. Bible classes were integral to revival meetings.

2.2.2 The Young Church and Preaching (1910-1960)

In 1910 Korea was formally annexed to Japan, which thoroughly suppressed Korean political participation. On March 1, 1919, a group of thirty-three Korean religious leaders met in Seoul and formally declared the independence of Korea. Peaceful demonstrations for independence swept across the entire land. The Japanese government suppressed the unarmed Koreans with a brutal force. After the Independence Movement, the Japanese government instituted policies to undermine the cultural foundations of national identity.

A large number of church leaders were thrown into jail for their participation in the movement. The oppression of the church in Korea by the Japanese government became widespread. Meanwhile, the missionaries insisted on a position of political neutrality. Korean church leaders, however, questioned the missionaries' attitude toward the Japanese rule. As a mistrust of the

missionaries became widespread, Korean Presbyterians and Methodists began to seek independence from foreign missionary organizations.

By 1930 all Koreans were required to bow before a Shinto shrine as a way of honoring the Emperor of Japan. But many Korean Christians rejected the ritual as idolatry and paid the consequences. Japanese church leaders tried to persuade Korean church leaders to accept the practice as a simple patriotic act. Instead of accepting the compromise, many Korean pastors chose to be tortured and imprisoned. Some paid the price of martyrdom.

The infant Korean church, nevertheless, had experienced periods of remarkable growth during the Japanese oppression (1910-1945) and during the years before and after the Korean War (1950-1953). The Korean Protestant population, which was numbered 200,000 in 1909, grew to 375,000 by 1935. By 1960, the number reached 1,300,000 (Moffett 1962, 50).

The Korean church had largely depended on revival meetings for evangelism and growth. The church's active involvement in the Independence Movement of 1919 attracted a significant number of Koreans to the Christian faith. In fact, the pulpit became a rallying point for the oppressed Korean people. Revivals emphasized the spiritual power to sustain the suffering masses, as well as resistance to the colonial policy of complete cultural assimilation.

A remarkable aspect of the new revival movement was that the revivalists were Korean. In other words, it was an indigenous movement. It was in fact an evangelistic and patriotic movement. Sun Joo Kil, Ik Doo Kim, and Yong Do Lee were among those who had profound impact on the church under oppression.

Kyung Bae Min describes Ik Doo Kim's national influence in these terms (1991, 280):

He was a national hero who resuscitated the people and the church of Korea from the disappointment and suffering which followed the failed independence movement of 1919. He was a prophetic pastor who gave voice to a new ideological search, new social expectations, and a renewed orthodox faith. He possessed an unusual ability to speak directly to the needs of the disinherited masses.

Preaching in the young Korean church reflected the orientation toward evangelism and revivalism that characterized the homiletical practice of the early American missionaries. What is significant for a study of Korean preaching is that the preaching of the native Korean preachers reflected the Korean people's struggle for independence from the Japanese occupation. The popular sermonic themes were the coming of the Kingdom of God and nationalism. As John Hahn states (2002, 90), premillennialism

appealed to the Korean believers, especially because of the chaotic and gloomy historical situation of the time. Resenting the present bondage under Japanese colonialism, they desperately yearned for the coming of the kingdom of God.... It was especially spurred by the revival rallies of Rev. IkDoo Kim and SunJoo Kil in the 1920s.

Sun Joo Kil was a popular revivalist who led numerous revival meetings and Bible conferences in the 1920s and 1930s. An analysis of his *Kangdae Bogam*, collection of his sermons, shows that Kil preferred topical preaching and the three-point sermonic form (U. Kim 1999, 27). Kil believed that preaching required not only the study of the Word of God but also of the life-situation of the audience (U. Kim 1999, 27). Many of his sermons dealt with eschatology,

emphasizing that Christians should “relinquish the hope for peace on this earth and to yearn instead for God’s supernatural deliverance through the return of Jesus Christ” (Hahn 2002, 91-92). John Hahn writes (2002, 93),

Although his revivalistic influence ceased with his sudden death in 1935, Kil’s premillennial messages, along with those of IkDoo Kim, played a pivotal role in popularizing premillennialism in the early Korean Church. Their amazing popularity coincided with the harsh reality of the Korean nation at that time. Their highly emotional message on the millennial kingdom neatly matched the frustration of the oppressed Korean church under Japanese colonialism.

In his analysis of a collection of sermons by prominent Presbyterian preachers between 1912 and 1958, Chang Bok Chung (1999, 48) finds that most of the sermons were topical and had either didactic or kerygmatic purpose. Kerygmatic preaching is chiefly evangelistic, aiming at conversion of unbelievers. Didactic preaching is essential in nurturing new converts, in helping them “to understand the meaning and basis of the new existence, to explicate the content of their faith, and to make their lives conform to faith” (C. Chung 1999, 189).

Chung’s analysis reveals that most sermons dealt with such topics as regeneration and repentance, discipleship and Christian life, parousia and eternal life (1999, 51). The overall message, Chung writes, “was fixed on the world-to-come. The present world was regarded as so utterly lost that it could not possibly be saved” (1999, 66). It appears, Chung continues, that many of the early Korean preachers understood their main task to be to “preach deliverance, that is, to exhort, witness, baptize, and gather out the selected for preparation to Christ’s second coming.”

In the early years of the Korean church, preachers favored allegorical interpretation (S. Chung 1986, 102-103), a method consisting of finding some timeless, spiritual message behind a biblical word or phrase. The tendency toward allegorizing was due to the fact that most of the early Korean preachers did not possess much biblical knowledge. Also, the Korean people under foreign rule readily accepted "real" or "spiritual" meanings of the biblical texts. Of the influential revivalists, Sun Joo Kil and Yong Do Lee relied upon the allegorical method extensively (Min 1979, 311).

Looking for the "spiritual" meaning of a text without regard for its historical or literary particularities could have been no more than a simple subjective undertaking. Also, the allegorical approach to the Bible, as practiced by Koreans, tended to render the message of the Bible irrelevant to everyday life. On the positive side, it gave to preachers some sort of spiritual authority and to listeners a sense of spirituality.

2.2.3 The Growing Church and Preaching (1960-Present)

In August 1945, Korea was liberated from the Japanese occupation. The Korean people were jubilant, but the celebrations were short-lived, as a communist regime was set up in the north. A democratic government was formed in the south, but in June 1950 the communist north invaded the democratic south. The devastating military conflict had dragged on for three years and at the end of the Korean War the country was divided into two independent and hostile nations.

From the misery of foreign occupation the Korean people transitioned into the shock and devastation of a civil war. Then the democratic South Korea embarked on the course of modernization in a breathtaking pace. The church in the south underwent a transformation that closely paralleled that of the larger community.

A great number of Christians fled North Korea in search of religious freedom, resulting in a rapid growth of local congregations in South Korea. In fact, the number of local churches in South Korea doubled after the war (Clark 1971, 251). During the years of recovery from the social and economic devastations, the Korean churches preached the message of hope and comfort.

During the 1970's South Korea began to experience a rapid economic growth and expansion, which was later termed as an "economic miracle." The new economic reality was accompanied by urbanization and social mobility. Responding to the enormous national transition, the Korean churches began to focus on national evangelization. So South Korea's economic miracle was accompanied by a "miracle of church growth."

The national evangelization movement, which had mobilized all the major denominations and thousands of local churches, significantly contributed to the remarkable growth the Korean church. Billy Graham's Korea Crusade in 1973, which mobilized over one million people, introduced a new, powerful method of evangelism to the Korean church. As a result of the Crusade, denominational leaders, local pastors, and lay leaders were united under the common purpose of evangelizing the nation.

Korean evangelists had conducted mass evangelistic crusades in major cities, as part of the national evangelization movement. Their ongoing cooperation promoted an extraordinary evangelistic ecumenism. The movement culminated in the World Evangelization Crusade in 1980. To support the Crusade, 411 executive committees were organized in cities and towns and 90 percent of the local churches were mobilized (J. Kim 1995, 59).

There is no question that mass crusade evangelism was a primary factor in the explosive growth of the Korean church in the 1970s. From 1974 to 1978 the number of Korean Christians increased from three million to seven million (J. Kim 1995, 58). The Korean Presbyterian Church (Hapdong) alone saw 1,200 new churches and 300,000 new members. In the 1980s the growth had been stabilized.

However, the Korean Protestant community as a whole has seen virtually no increase in membership since 1990. This trend is shocking to many church leaders. The rate of annual membership growth dropped from 4.4 percent in the 80s to less than 1 percent in the 90s (Oak 1998, 30). In the first half of the 90s, the three largest Protestant denominations—the Presbyterian Church (Hapdong), the Presbyterian Church (Tonghap), and the Methodist Church—all had grown by less than 0.1 percent annually.

It is true that many of the largest congregations in the world are in Korea. It can be said that the Korean church is witnessing an age of mega-churches. The number of churches with thousands of members has been increasing steadily. It seems, however, that growing Korean churches are largely a result of

membership transfer. They have been successful in attracting believers who have grown dissatisfied with their local churches.

The Korean church is undergoing a period of stagnation, because local congregations have turned inward on themselves and have been preoccupied with the issues of maintenance. Christians have lost desire to share their faith with those who do not know Jesus Christ. For many, regular Sunday attendance and fellowship with church members constitute their understanding of the Christian life.

Korean church leaders are aware that the church needs new understandings of Christian ministry. Traditionally, ministry has always been viewed as the sole responsibility of the local minister or pastor; and the people or congregation has always been viewed as the fortunate recipient of the professional ministry. As a result, the people have become dependent upon their pastor for all their spiritual needs and activities, while the pastor has become detached and isolated, usually suffering from exhaustion and stress.

To overcome the stagnation of the Korean church, pastors are seeking a paradigm shift in pastoral leadership. According to a new model, ministry is viewed as the responsibility of both the pastor and the congregation. They would maintain a relationship of mutuality and codependency. The pastor disciplines and equips the people, while the people actively participate in many areas of ministry.

One of the most significant changes in Korean preaching since the 1980s is the clear shift in its focus from personal salvation to church growth and

prosperity (U. Kim 1999, 35). As Korean economy grew stronger, Korean preachers catered their sermons to the aspirations of those Christians who were eager to improve their financial and social conditions. Preachers themselves aspired to build bigger congregations and larger church buildings and used the pulpit to promote their projects.

Certainly, sermons on how to receive the *bok*—that is, such “worldly blessings” as health, longevity, children, and prosperity—in the present life have been used effectively by Korean preachers to promote their church growth agenda. Jung Young Lee provides a personal account that underscores the connection between the message of prosperity and church growth in the Korean church context (1997, 80-81):

“You don’t preach on blessings,” my congregation often said to me. I thought I did. “Didn’t I preach on the blessings of joy, peace, goodness, and love?” I responded. They replied, “We mean the real blessings, the *bok*, you know.” They came to church to receive the *bok*, which meant wealth, success, health, longevity, and having many children at home. They want to have the *bok* now, but they also want to have it in its spiritual form in heaven. They told me that our church was not growing fast enough, because I did not preach on the *bok* or the material blessings of this world. Most growing Korean churches’ central message deals with the *bok*.

Unyong Kim (1999, 36) makes the observation that since the 1980s some Korean preachers began to explore new styles of preaching, most particularly, expository preaching. Such prominent preachers as Han Heum Ok, Jung Kil Hong, and Yong Jo Ha practice the expository style. According to Kim, the new trend has had a positive impact on Korean preaching. “The expository preaching style, as a substitute for traditional topical preaching, has provided a good

influence in the pulpit in the Korean church because it represents a rediscovery of the text-centered sermon” (1999, 36).

In the Korean church context expository preaching often involves uncritical interpretation of the text (J. Lee 1997, 67). Preachers tend to ignore the historical-cultural gap that exists between the ancient text and the contemporary audience. Jung Young Lee (1997, 69) offers personal observation.

An examination of the preaching in one of the fastest-growing Korean churches in my area illustrates how this uncritical exegesis functions in the Sunday morning service. The minister preaches like a Sunday school teacher. He goes through the text thoroughly from one verse to another.... The preacher is not interested in the historical and contextual importance of the passage, since the background of the passage he expounds is never explained. He is not interested in historical and biblical criticism at all. He attempts to prove the text through the use of other passages in the Bible. This, he is a typical Korean preacher who uses the so-called self-hermeneutic methodology, interpreting the Bible through the Bible.

Jong Seog Hwang’s recent study of the relationship between preaching and worship in the Korean church context has shown that Korean congregations consider the topical and textual sermons to be the most suitable forms of sermon for Sunday morning worship (2004, 80-82). 29.9 percent of those who participated in the research survey Hwang conducted for his study indicated that they wanted to hear topical sermons in Sunday morning worship. Another 27.6 percent of the participants preferred the textual sermonic form over other forms. The homily sermon was the choice of 11.9 percent of the respondents. The narrative sermon and the expository sermon were supported by 12.6 percent and 11.9 percent, respectively.

What the survey indicates is that Korean congregations prefer to hear need-oriented topical sermons that address their problems, as well as text-controlled sermons that move through the selected biblical passages verse by verse.

2.2.4 The Korean American Church

The number of Korean immigrants and their children in the United States was slightly over one million in 2000, according to the United States Census. Nearly all of the Korean immigrants came to the United States after the immigration law reform of 1965. Half of them were Christian at the time of immigration; moreover, a quarter of the immigrants would eventually become members of Korean churches (Kwon, Kim & Warner 2001, 15). It is widely accepted that there are currently over 3,500 Korean churches in the United States.

For the majority of the Korean immigrants in the United States membership in Korean ethnic churches is a way of life. Scholars explain that two major factors have contributed to the remarkably high rate of church involvement among Korean immigrants (Kim & Kim 2001, 72-74). The first factor is that nearly half of Korean immigrants had been practicing the Christian faith while they were living in Korea. The second factor is that church involvement helps Korean immigrants to satisfy their social needs.

One of the greatest challenges for the Korean ethnic church is to foster a sense of community among the congregation. A majority of Korean congregations has a membership of 100 or fewer (Kim & Kim 2001, 80). In its

annual report for 2005, the Korean American Presbyterian Church, presumably the largest Korean denomination in the United States, reported that over 90 percent of the denomination's 550 congregations had a membership of 100 or fewer.

Korean ethnic churches not only have small congregations but also struggle with "extreme fluidity of congregational membership" (Kim & Kim 2001, 80). It is widely accepted that Koreans tend to change congregations frequently. In fact, as Kwang Chung Kim and Shin Kim point out "almost half of the Koreans have been members of their congregation for six years or less, and close to one-third for less than three years" (2001, 80). It is not difficult to see that congregation hopping contributes to congregational instability.

Korean churches in the United States provide a home for Korean immigrants, meeting their spiritual, psychological, and social needs. They are, however, relatively small in size, and have to struggle to keep their members. In order to promote healthy church growth and congregational stability, Korean churches need to focus on building a strong community among their congregations. They also need to invest in the spiritual formation of their members, as church conflicts and spiritual needs that are not fulfilled contribute to congregation hopping among Koreans (Kim & Kim 2001, 80).

2.3 Homiletical Evaluation of Korean Preaching

In this section we want to attempt an homiletical evaluation of Korean preaching in terms of purpose, content, and form.

2.3.1 Purpose

It can be said that preaching's purpose in the Korean church has traditionally been persuasion. The Korean preacher's aim is to teach the Word of God. The preacher tries to teach the congregation to see and accept the truth contained in the text so that they may grow in their biblical and theological knowledge and be more faithful and fruitful in their Christian life.

The Korean church's traditional understanding of preaching's purpose is deeply rooted in the theory and practice of preaching taught by the early American missionaries to Korea. They understood preaching as a religious discourse by means of which they could persuade Koreans to turn away from their sinful life without God and to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior to receive God's blessings, including eternal life. Korean preachers preached God's Word to convert non-believers to Christian faith and to teach new Christians how to grow in Christian life.

The traditional homiletical practice of delivering a biblical message or truth through the sermon presupposes a gap between the preacher and the congregation. Lucy Rose gives a useful explanation of the gap (1997, 15):

This gap is fundamental to the roles assigned to the preacher and the congregation. The preacher is the sender, the communicator, the one with a message or truth to transmit by means of the sermon to the congregation. The congregation consists of recipients. Although they are often described as actively participating in the process, their chief task is to give assent to the sermon's message. Across the gap between the sender and the receivers goes the sermon.

In Korean preaching the gap is highly problematic because of the hierarchical structure of the Korean church. Korean society has been a patriarchal hierarchy and the Christian church in Korea is largely patterned after the Confucian social structure. Confucianism regards the family as the foundation of society, and filial piety—that is, absolute submission to the will of the father—as the foundation of the family. In the Korean church the preacher assumes the role of the father with respect to the congregation. Jung Young Lee explains (1997, 94):

The authority of a preacher comes from the very structure of Korean society. If the father is the most powerful person in the family, and the family is the foundation of society, to be a father figure in the Korea community means to be the most powerful person in that community. The Korean preacher is often regarded as the father figure.... The unconditional obedience to the head of the family is a typical attitude of Confucian mentality. Thus, the preacher, symbolically the head of the religious community, has unlimited power.

One of the most difficult challenges for the Korean preacher is to find ways to establish the ethos of a Christian leader in the pulpit. Perhaps the Korean preacher's greatest "challenge is how not to become authoritarian.... The preacher must be prepared to alter the patriarchal and hierarchical leadership style of today to the more egalitarian style of tomorrow" (J. Lee 1997, 95-96).

Unyong Kim, drawing upon new ideas advanced by contemporary American homileticians, advocates that Korean preachers need to change their views of preaching in order to be effective preachers of the Word of God in the contemporary context of Korean Christians (1999, 233 & 245). They need to view preaching no longer as a religious, persuasive discourse but as a more

democratic process, as a dialogue that takes listening by the hearer quite seriously.

The Korean church must foster a new understanding of the relationship between the preacher and the congregation. Korean preachers must learn to view their “listeners as *God’s people* taking a trip into the Word of God together with the preacher” (U. Kim 1999, 247). As they approach God’s Word, they must ask themselves such important questions as “Who will be listening to my sermon?” and “How would my audience hear it?”

2.3.2 Content

Korean preaching has always emphasized the centrality of the Word of God. Even today many Korean preachers maintain strict biblicism held by the early American missionaries to Korea. Accepting the Bible as the inerrant Word of God, many preachers reject critical approaches to biblical interpretation and pay little attention to the historical-social gap between the biblical texts and contemporary life situations.

In Korean preaching, the sermon is understood primarily as communication of the timeless truth or principle contained in the text of the Bible. It is the preacher’s task to explore a biblical passage for its central truth and to communicate and explain by means of the sermon the relevance of the biblical truth to the life situation of the congregation. Generally speaking, the content of preaching in Korean preaching is biblical truth—the unchanging truth revealed by God in his Word, the Bible.

It is, thus, not surprising to find Chang Bok Chung, an influential theoretician, defining preaching as “the proclamation, interpretation and application of biblical truth by one person to many” (1999, 156). Chung asserts that the preacher’s central task is to “speak the vital and lively message of the Bible,” that is, “the biblical truth [that] records what God has done for human beings rather than human speculation” about God (1999, 157, 158). “Real preaching occurs only when the preacher becomes the contemporary instrument of biblical truth” (1999, 163), and the task of conveying the biblical truth involves three practical steps (1999, 164-174).

First, the preacher carefully listens to what the selected passage is saying. Chung asserts that “the preacher may not properly preach on a biblical passage without having listened to God speak to him/her personally through that passage” (1999, 167). Second, the preacher must have a concrete interpretation of the central meaning, message, or idea the passage conveys. “Nearly every text contains several leads. One always has central significance. Preachers must focus their eyes on this central idea and ask, ‘What does God want to say through this matter of central significance?’ It is this message which must emerge in the sermon” (1999, 169).

Third, the preacher must find ways to relate his or her interpretation of the central meaning or idea to contemporary life situations. “Truth does not change, but application inevitably changes,” Chung asserts (1999, 171-172). Application is a creative process. Chung asserts that preachers “must see the Good News penetrating a contemporary situation in which the Word of God is spoken. Again

and again, preachers must make the eternal truth incarnate in the seething, surging life of the preacher's own day" (1999, 172).

Chung's understanding of preaching represents the predominant traditional homiletical tradition that has been challenged by new voices in American homiletics in recent decades. Many contemporary American theorists have challenged the assumption that the Bible's message can be formulated into timeless, universal truths. Advocating what Lucy Rose calls "transformational truth" rather than timeless, biblical truths, new understandings of preaching pursue "a shift from epistemology to hermeneutics" (1997, 65).

According to Rose, many scholars who embrace transformational preaching—a preaching that seeks to lead the worshipers to a transformational experience—as an alternative to traditional preaching

reflect a diminishing confidence in epistemological methods for discerning objective truth.... Instead, the focus shifts to the interpretation of texts or, more specifically, to the power that texts have for shaping meaning in the interpreter. (1997, 65)

This shift to hermeneutics—a theoretical reflection on the interpretative process of understanding the meaning of the text and the responsibility of the reader—reflects new understandings of how language functions. One of the distinctive convictions of the linguistic turn is that language—including biblical language—performs many functions (1997, 65). Language is used not only to state facts to convey truths but also to command actions and attitudes and to evoke feelings and experiences.

2.3.3 Form

The topical style of preaching still predominates Korean preaching today. Unyong Kim's important study of sermon forms Korean preachers use has shown that they largely "neglected to consider the variety of homiletical forms. Instead, they have primarily kept the single method—topical preaching style or three-point-making preaching style—for the last one hundred years, which they learned from the early missionaries" (1999, 64).

Korean preachers and revivalists prefer the topical sermon because it gives them greater freedom. Chang Bok Chung lists five advantages of the sermon form (1992, 131). First, it gives the preacher freedom in developing a sermon. Second, it helps the preacher develop analytical and creative capabilities. Third, its contemporary flavor helps the listener follow the message with ease. Fourth, transparency of its purpose and direction motivates the listener to be attentive. And fifth, it can effectively unify various points of the message.

The popularity of the topical sermon is largely due to its relative ease in preparation. It does not require a profound understanding of a text. Because of this, it may lend itself to unbiblical preaching. Another potential problem in this form of preaching is that the preacher may choose to preach on some favorite topics and ignore others. There are pastors who specialize in the theme of material success. In spite of the problems, topical sermons will remain popular with preachers because of its flexibility.

Korean preachers have traditionally understood a sermon as a presentation of the truth contained in a particular biblical text in terms of a clearly articulated,

general statement of the biblical truth and few specific supporting points. Many Korean preachers study particular biblical passages for important theological or practical truths and translate them into suitable sermon topics. The traditional sermon-making process involves formulating the biblical truth into a single proposition or sentence. This topic sentence is supposed to tell what the sermon is about.

Charles A. Clark, the American missionary who is widely recognized as the father of Korean preaching, taught that the topic of a sermon should be developed into a series of major sections (H. Lee 2005,212). For him a clear outline of the major parts of the message provides the message the clarity and coherence it needs.

Chang Bok Chung, an influential contemporary theorist, similarly stresses the importance of developing the “proposition” or “central idea” of a sermon into three or four major points that demonstrate the rhetorical qualities of clarity, coherence, and progression (1999, 207-208). Chung explains that the primary function of illustrations is to explain or to prove the central proposition and major points of the sermon (1999, 218-219). In Korean preaching narration and induction typically assumes subordinate roles.

One of the critical issues regarding the predominant homiletical theory that emphasizes sermon outlines has to do with the assumption that there is only one type of logical thinking. An outline divides the sermon into major divisions and then divides these divisions into subdivisions and sub-subdivisions. As Thomas Long points out, “an outline conveys the inner logic of a main proposition broken

down into its component parts” (1989b, 95). Such an atomistic or analytical thinking, however, cannot be applied to all sermons. The American theorist Long writes

If every sermon were presented this way, the underlying message, presented over time, would be that the gospel is only a set of major concepts with rationally divisible parts. To be sure, every sermon should be logical, but there are many different kinds of logical structure—narrative, inductive, and metaphorical, just to name a few. Outlines—at least in the way we have been trained to construct them—reduce our logical options to a single choice. (1989b, 96)

Another issue concerning the traditional Korean understanding of the sermonic form has to do with the functions of narrative and inductive elements. In Korean preaching, as in the traditional American preaching, such elements are assigned the subordinate roles of supporting major points of the sermon. “Induction,” Rose writes, “is a subcategory under argument. Narration is a subcategory chiefly under explanation, although it may also help a preacher apply or illustrate a truth or idea” (1997, 19).

Many contemporary American homileticians, however, have challenged the traditional understanding of the sermonic form and some, most notably Craddock and Lowry, have developed the inductive and narrative forms of the sermon. For Craddock the inductive method enables the congregation to retrace the steps the preacher had actually taken in his or her search for the text’s message. For Lowry the narrative method unfolds, in view of the audience and following the sequential elements of a plot, what the preacher had actually experienced as he or she struggled with the text.

Korean preachers need to seriously consider the legitimacy and effectiveness of the narrative and inductive structures in communicating the Bible's message. Many more creative styles of preaching have been proposed by American homileticians in recent years and Korean preaching can benefit enormously by study them. This is the goal of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

NEW HOMILETICAL THEORIES

3.1 Introduction

American homiletics in recent years has witnessed almost an explosion of homiletical theories. The dynamic, creative movement has been discussed in numerous works. One of the fundamental ideas of the new, contemporary movement is that there are a variety of methods of reasoning and communication.

Many contemporary American homileticians seek to replace or compliment the deductive form of thinking, which thus far has characterized American preaching, with inductive, narrative, and other forms of thinking. As Eugene Lowry puts it, the movement involves moves from “from theme to event, from description to image, from point to evocation, from authoritarian to democratic, from truth to meaning, from account to experience” (1993,96).

In this chapter we, first of all, briefly describe the traditional homiletical theory that considers preaching to be a means of interpreting and delivering the timeless biblical truth. Second, we trace the emergence of new theories in American homiletics with reference to new hermeneutical, theological, and developments. Third, we discuss main characteristics of new homiletical theories under the categories of the form, content, and purpose of preaching.

Fourth, we look at different styles of preaching: inductive, story, narrative, phenomenological, and conversational.

This chapter concludes with a section on the importance of theoretical hermeneutics on preaching. We will discuss some implications of Hans-Georg Gadamer's and Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics for homiletics as a hermeneutic communicative act. The important idea that the hermeneutical process of interpreting a biblical text for a sermon involves from the outset a practical aim, a particular application, draws on their theoretical accounts of interpretation.

3.2 Traditional Homiletical Theory

According to traditional homiletical theory the preacher's aim is to communicate the Word of God. The preacher tries to persuade the congregation to accept the truth contained in the biblical text. Traditional homiletical theory that focuses on delivering a biblical message or truth through the sermon presupposes a gap between the preacher and the congregation. The preacher is the sender of a message and the congregation consists of receivers. The gap is problematic because it embraces a hierarchical relationship.

One of the challenges for preachers is to find ways to establish the ethos or character of a Christian leader in the pulpit. They need to view preaching no longer as a religious, persuasive discourse but as a more democratic process, as a dialogue that takes listening by the hearer quite seriously. They must foster a new understanding of the relationship between the preacher and the congregation.

Accepting the Bible as the inerrant and infallible Word of God, many preachers have rejected critical approaches to biblical interpretation and consequently pay little attention to the historical-social gap between the biblical texts and contemporary life situations. The sermon is understood as communication of the truth contained in the text of the Bible. It is the preacher's task to explore a biblical passage for its central truth and to communicate and explain by means of the sermon the relevance of the biblical truth to the life situation of the congregation.

Generally speaking, the content of preaching is biblical truth—the unchanging truth revealed by God in his Word, the Bible. First, the preacher listens to what the selected passage is saying. Second, the preacher must have a concrete interpretation of the central meaning, message, or idea of the passage. Third, the preacher must find ways to relate his or her interpretation of the central meaning or idea to contemporary life situations. Truth is timeless but the situation of the hearer changes.

Traditional homiletical theory has been challenged by new voices in American homiletics. Many contemporary American theorists challenge the assumption that the Bible's message can be formulated into timeless truths. Advocating what Lucy Rose calls "transformational truth," instead of timeless, biblical truths, they pursue "a shift from epistemology to hermeneutics" (1997, 65). As Rose states, many scholars who embrace transformational preaching, a preaching that seeks to lead the worshipers to a transformational experience, "reflect a diminishing confidence in epistemological methods for discerning

objective truth.... Instead, the focus shifts to the interpretation of texts or, more specifically, to the power that texts have for shaping meaning in the interpreter” (1997, 65).

This shift to hermeneutics—to interpretations of particular biblical texts—reflects new understandings of how language functions. One of the distinctive convictions of the linguistic turn is that language—including biblical language—performs many functions (Rose 1997, 67-69). Language is used not only to state facts to convey truths but also to command actions and attitudes and to evoke feelings and experiences.

Preachers have traditionally understood a sermon as a presentation of the truth contained in a particular biblical text in terms of a clearly articulated, general statement of the biblical truth and few specific supporting points. Many preachers study particular biblical passages for important theological or practical truths and translate them into suitable sermon topics. The traditional sermon-making process involves formulating the biblical truth into a single proposition or sentence. This topic sentence is supposed to tell what the sermon is about. For many preachers, sermon development means turning the topic of a sermon into a series of major sections. They develop the “proposition” or “central idea” of a sermon into three or four major points that demonstrate the rhetorical qualities of clarity, coherence, and progression.

One of the critical issues regarding the predominant homiletical theory that emphasizes sermon outlines has to do with the widely held assumption that there is only one type of logical thinking. An outline divides the sermon into

major divisions and then divides these divisions into subdivisions and sub-subdivisions. As Thomas Long points out, “an outline conveys the inner logic of a main proposition broken down into its component parts” (1989b, 95). Such an atomistic or analytical thinking, however, cannot be applied to all sermons. Long writes

If every sermon were presented this way, the underlying message, presented over time, would be that the gospel is only a set of major concepts with rationally divisible parts. To be sure, every sermon should be logical, but there are many different kinds of logical structure—narrative, inductive, and metaphorical, just to name a few. Outlines—at least in the way we have been trained to construct them—reduce our logical options to a single choice. (1989b, 96)

In traditional homiletical theory and practice narration and induction typically have assumed subordinate roles. “Induction,” Rose writes, “is a subcategory under argument. Narration is a subcategory chiefly under explanation, although it may also help a preacher apply or illustrate a truth or idea” (1997, 19). Many contemporary American homileticians, however, have variously challenged the traditional understanding of the sermonic form and some, most notably Craddock and Lowry, have developed the inductive and narrative approaches to the form of sermon.

For Craddock the inductive method enables the congregation to retrace the steps the preacher had actually taken in his or her search for the text’s message. For Lowry the narrative method unfolds, in view of the audience and following the sequential elements of a plot, what the preacher had actually experienced as he or she struggled with the text.

3.3 The Emergence of New Homiletical Theories

The new movement in American homiletics has been influenced by many factors. To mention some of the important ones: new understandings of language and meaning, which have challenged the dominance of historical criticism in biblical interpretation; the rediscovery of the necessity and power of narrative in theology; and the emergence in our time of a pluralistic world. We will deal with each of these larger developments.

3.3.1 Hermeneutical Changes

New developments in biblical interpretation have significantly influenced the theory and practice of preaching. For many years historical-critical methods have dominated biblical scholarship. Historical criticism approaches the Bible as a human record and engages in “objective” and “critical” inquiry to determine whether biblical accounts are in fact “historically reliable.” Biblical texts are discussed and explained mainly for the purpose of determining historical facts. In our generation many biblical scholars have questioned the adequacy of the historical-critical method. They believe that meaning of a biblical text cannot be equated with or reduced to the historicity of the text.

New, diverse understandings of biblical interpretation have been advanced in recent decades. Literary criticism, which challenges biblical scholars to carefully attend not only to the various literary forms and structures of the biblical texts but also to the texts’ larger literary contexts, has had a significant impact on

homiletics. Literary criticism challenges preachers to pay attention to literary devices, such as plot, character, setting, and point of view, in studying biblical passages. It, moreover, encourages preachers to shape sermons in story or narrative form.

The new hermeneutic, which is most closely associated with Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling, has enabled homileticians to understand both text and sermon in a new way (1997, 68). One of the most fundamental ideas of the new hermeneutic is that event and word are so closely interwoven that we cannot speak of an event without words and, conversely, we cannot use words without conceiving of some event. Words represent a fundamental way of relating to events. The unity between linguistic and extra-linguistic realities, which is represented by the expression “word-event,” is central to the new hermeneutic.

As Lucy Rose points out, the notion of a word-event is of critical importance to new homiletical approaches. Biblical texts, consisting of words, are “word-events.” So the preacher’s first task is to encounter the particular word-event embodied in the text. The preacher’s next task is “to recreate in the sermon the word-event present in the text so that the sermon becomes a similar word-event for the congregation” (Rose 1997, 68).

3.3.2 Theological Changes

Appeals to narrative and story in contemporary theology also have influenced the development of the new American homiletics (Ellingsen 1990, 9). Discussions in contemporary theology and ethics concerning the significance of

narrative have been initiated in part by H. Richard Niebuhr. Since the Enlightenment liberal theologians have tried to explain the gospel in terms of common human experience. Niebuhr claims, however, that the Christian church embodies a particular history. “When we speak of revelation in the Christian church we refer to *our* history, to the history of selves or to history as it is lived and apprehended from within” (1989, 29-30).

Narrative theology has emphasized the “realistic narrative” form of the Gospels, arguing that the particularity of the Christian message can be grasped when we pay a close attention to their narrative structures. Stephen Crites, who accepts Niebuhr’s emphasis on “lived history,” argues that “the formal quality of experience through time is inherently narrative” (1989, 66).

Narrative approaches to theology and preaching presuppose the “idea that the Bible presents us with a ‘world’ of its own. Thus by implication the task of theology is to describe the character and identity of the world. And the task of preaching is to tell the Bible’s stories about that world” (Ellingsen 1990, 19).

3.3.3 Cultural Shifts

The new homiletics can be viewed as a response to a “cultural breakdown” in the United States. This dynamic shift is part of the cultural transition in Western societies. The Christian church has been significantly affected by it new cultural environment. As David Buttrick says, “what we have called the Protestant Era, a synthesis of faith and Enlightenment, is over” (1994, 72). As a result of the fragmentation of the Protestant synthesis, “we Protestants are

defensive; we are desperately trying to hold onto our social position. American churches are pathologically into self-preservation, even though such survival strategies will be ineffective.”

Buttrick believes that the task of homiletics in this new environment is to offer a critique of cultural assumptions that have shaped the church. Further, preachers must be involved in a “new evangelical enterprise,” a dialogue with countercultural movements and “countercultural peoples who will be the force of the future, the consensus of a new world age” (1994, 73).

To engage culture evangelically, it is necessary to present Christian faith in new ways and in new idioms. “People are thinking, understanding, and speaking in ways that belie the homiletic textbooks we have inherited from the past. So we need to think out the rhetorical ways and means appropriate to contemporary consciousness” (Buttrick 1994, 112).

3.4 Characteristics of New Homiletical Theories

Eugene Lowry credits the publication in 1971 of Fred Craddock’s *As One Without Authority* as initiating a revolution in American homiletics (1993, 93-112). Providing an overview of the new dramatic development, Lowry tries to capture its many diverse expressions as follows.

The result, as we peer back over twenty years, *appears* as a paradigmatic shift involving moves from deductive to inductive, from rhetoric to poetic, from space to time, from literality to orality, from prose to poetry, from hot to cool, from creed to hymn, from science to art, from left brain to right brain, from proposition to parable, from direct to indirect, from construction to development, from discursive to aesthetic, from theme to event, from description to image, from point to evocation,

from authoritarian to democratic, from truth to meaning, from account to experience. But note that I said *appears* “from ... to” The matter is not quite as simple as that. (1993, 95-96)

Lowry employs the term *appears* as a reminder that “more often than not the paradigm shift is more an alteration of emphasis, with one aspect becoming dominant in concern while another aspect becomes subordinate” (1993, 100). He explores the diverse moves in preaching theory and practice under the categories of the shape, content, and goal of preaching.

3.4.1 Form

One of the distinguishing features of the new homiletic is a movement away from the deductive to the inductive process in preaching (Lowry 1993, 101-102). The traditional sermon is typically deductive: it first unpacks a thesis or general principle and then tries to support it by means of explication and illustration. However, the inductive sermon reverses the movement: it moves from particular to general.

Another distinguishing feature of new preaching is that it is democratic rather than authoritarian (Lowry 1993, 102). Since the traditional sermon depends on detailed explanation, the preacher assumes an authoritarian stance with the congregation assuming the passive role of a receiver. The new homiletic, by maximizing the sense of shared exploration, encourages the preacher to stand with the congregation.

New preaching, on the one hand, uses the temporal imagery of movement in describing sermon preparation. That is, a sermon is developed as a sequence

of moves. Traditional preaching, on the other hand, uses the spatial imagery of construction. That is, sermon is constructed by putting together related ideas (Lowry 1993, 104-105).

3.4.2 Content

New preaching is reshaping not only the shape but also the content of the sermon. Whereas traditional preaching focuses on discursive knowing, new preaching places more emphasis on aesthetic knowing (Lowry 1993, 105-107). As Lowry stresses, to view aesthetic discourse in preaching as merely “ornamental” is to undermine its communicative value. It is as effective as discursive discourse in the proclamation of the gospel.

New preaching rejects the dichotomy between “story” and “argument,” recognizing that “sometimes a story is the more economical, precise, and powerful means *of* argument” (Lowry 1993, 106). New forms of preaching take the responsibility of communicating the gospel seriously while recognizing that the gospel does not easily fit into “the tight packaging of prepositional thought” (Lowry 1993, 108).

3.4.3 Purpose

The central issue in the New Homiletic movement is the goal of sermonic event. Traditional preaching invariably aims to get something said, but new understandings of preaching aim at “evocation of the experience of the Word” (Lowry 1993, 110). “Deductive preaching by its structure tends toward rational

conviction. Inductive preaching attempts evocation.” Lowry points out that deductive preaching can become mere reporting while inductive preaching can become mere event.

Lowry concludes his sketch of the new developments in homiletical theory and practice by saying that the transformation is “indeed a radical one, but not involving mutually exclusive entities or goals.” Rhetoric and poetics are not mutually exclusive. New preaching incorporates rhetorical devices, just as traditional preaching incorporates poetic elements. Lowry’s concluding words are instructive.

Suppose we imagine that *instead of the sermonic envelope being governed by rhetorical principles with poetics inside, that the reverse be true—a narratively shaped envelope with rhetorical ingredients inside.* Inside the narrative flow one may find reason at work, discursive rationality in all its strength, with the process *including* the use of metaphoric image, story, and so on. One should no more label a narrative sermon as *mere story* than one would name a traditional sermon *mere logic*. Both story and logic are proper. The question is: *What specifics are to be included inside which overall shape? Which are the eggs; which is the basket?* The changing answer to that question is the revolution of preaching in our time. (1993, 111-112)

3.5 Variety of Preaching Styles

The influential New Homiletic movement has produced such diverse ideas and strategies as: Fred Craddock’s inductive movement, Eugene Lowry’s homiletical plot, Charles Rice’s story, David Buttrick’s sermonic moves, and Lucy Rose’s conversation.

3.5.1 Inductive Preaching

It is generally recognized that Fred Craddock's work *As One Without Authority* opened a new era in American preaching. He introduced and articulated inductive methodology as a genuine alternative to the traditional deductive approach to preaching. The foundation of Craddock's inductive method is the presence and priority of the hearer and her experience in the entire process of preparing and preaching a sermon. The preacher should engage in an imaginative conversation with the congregation throughout the process of preparing and shaping the sermon.

Deductive movement has long been accepted as normative for sermon. Simply stated, it is a movement of reasoning and communication from a general truth to some particular application (2001, 54). Craddock asserts that deductive preaching is "a most unnatural mode of communication, unless, of course, one presupposes passive listeners who accept the right or authority of the speaker to state conclusions which he then applies to their faith and life" (2001, 54). Deductive preaching assumes, therefore, the authority of the preacher and the passivity of the congregation.

A major weakness of deductive preaching is that it fails to achieve unity and persuasion. Attempting to explain its main idea in terms of supporting points, a deductive sermon turns into a series of disconnected discourses. "There may have been some movement within each point," Craddock remarks, "and there may have been some general kinship among the points, but there was not one movement from beginning to end" (2001, 56).

Craddock understands the sermon basically as movement. The traditional *deductive* sermon invariably moves from the general truth to the particular application or experience. In the *inductive* sermon, however, the movement is reversed. It starts from the particular experiences of the hearers and arrives at the hearers' individual decisions or experiences. Inductive preaching relies upon a movement "from the present experience of the hearers to the point at which the sermon will leave [the congregation] to their own decisions and conclusions" (2001, 146).

The whole movement, meanwhile, is sustained by a sense of anticipation, which requires a thematic unity and rich imagination. The primary challenge to preacher is to evoke and sustain anticipation, since the whole point of the sermon is disclosed at the very end (2001, 151). In order for the listeners to grasp the central idea when the sermon comes to an end, the entire sermon should focus on delivering a single idea. Every material, including illustrations, must serve the governing theme.

Images are essential because they are simply the best means of relating to the hearers' concrete experiences and of effecting changes in their attitudes, values, and life directions (2001, 92). To be effective, images must be concrete, taken from real life. The language must be as concrete, precise and specific as possible to evoke immediate response. Effective sermonic portraits draw the hearers into the bonds of identification; and they are characterized by such qualities as genuine insight, particularity, naturalness, restraint and an economy of words.

For Fred Craddock there is no one universal form that fits all sermons. Generally preachers need to shape their sermons in terms of the performative functions or rhetorical purposes of the biblical texts. They need to understand what kinds of communicative acts—praise, exhortation, apology, explanation, narration—their selected passages are intended to perform. It is also appropriate to shape the forms of sermons in terms of the hearers' present life situations or circumstances.

3.5.2 Story Preaching

In his work *Thinking in Story* (1993) Richard A. Jensen proposes that preachers practice “thinking in story” alongside “thinking in ideas.” He argues that “thinking in story” is an effective frame of sermon design in our post-literate age (1993, 60-64). He explains that it is a valid way of communicating the Bible because most biblical texts contain stories.

Stories invite participation and allow the Christian tradition to take root in the imagination of those who hear. Moreover, “stories are in sync with the way the electronic media work” and “have a chance to break through the cultural filters that work in the heads of those who listen to preaching.”

Charles Rice states in *Interpretation and Imagination* that the primary task of the preacher is to bridge the “world of the Bible” and the world of contemporary human experience (1970, 16-17). The preacher must take the Bible and the Christian tradition seriously, seeking to shape our stories within the biblical narrative. In *Preaching the Story* Rice states, “Preaching is the event in which

our particular stories are caught up into The Story to be judged, redeemed, and enlarged in purpose” (Rice, Steimle & Niedenthal 1980, 35).

In addition, Rice holds that the preacher must try to communicate the particular Christian tradition in the idioms that are meaningful to contemporary hearers: “the preacher’s vocation is translation, the apt and artful presentation of the gospel in contemporary idiom” (1970, xi). Rice sees the narrative form as the crucial vehicle for translating the Christian story in contemporary idiom (1979, 6).

3.5.3 Narrative Preaching

No one has focused on the narrative method in preaching more explicitly and consistently than Eugene Lowry. He has advocated shifting the focus of preaching from dissecting a central theme into three points to guiding through a story. He is committed to the idea that a sermon is a plot, an event-in-time and to the centrality of the hearer’s experience in that event. Lowry has chosen narrative as the most suitable medium for preaching, because he believes that human experience, both personal and social, is best expressed through stories.

The power of story in communicating our experience stem from five ingredients: setting, character, action, tone, and narrative time (1985). The most important function of setting is to express the limitedness or boundedness of human experience by locating human situation in a specific time and a specific place (1985, 44). A vital function of character is to illuminate, through the

qualities of the character or characters, new images or new vision of human potential (1985, 48).

The narrative unfolds a series of events or actions involving the main character. The tone of a story discloses a particular point of view, which can be that of the character, the author, or audience. The factor of time provides the framework for the story. A story unfolds within and bounded by its temporal framework. A sermon as a narrative is a temporal ordering of some particular human experience (1985, 77). Narrative time is intertwined with a plot. So preaching must incorporate principles of plot.

Lowry, in fact, defines a sermon as a plot. Plot is the central characteristic of the sermon. The source of the plot is the point of interaction between need or problem and theme. The plot itself consists in a movement from a felt discrepancy to its resolution. What is central to the sermon is not the theological or ethical content, but the plot that moves or unfolds in a set time in the predetermined stages.

The most critical (and lengthy) stage in the sermon involves unfolding the fundamental or central discrepancy, because it basically determines how the gospel message is to be presented. The role of the gospel in the sermon is to resolve or address the central discrepancy or problem of the sermon. Since the gospel's role is therapeutic, it must perfectly match the central discrepancy to be effective.

In his *The Homiletical Plot* (2001) Lowry identifies and elaborates five essential stages of the sermon plot: (1) upsetting the equilibrium, (2) analyzing

the discrepancy, (3) disclosing the clue to resolution, (4) experiencing the gospel, and (5) anticipating the consequences. In his *The Sermon* (1997) Lowry modifies the plot into four stages: conflict, complication, sudden shift, and unfolding.

3.5.4 Phenomenological Preaching

David Buttrick sees the method of distillation, which encourages preachers to “distill” single topics from some selected biblical passages, as one of the dominant homiletic practices of modernity. He explains that it is a product of rationalism of the Enlightenment (1994, 80-81). Trapped in a rationalist ‘bind’ for three hundred years, preaching has been equated with “careful understanding, explication, and application” of the Bible (1981, 46).

The most serious flaw of the method is that it encourages preachers to see biblical passages as isolated “still-life pictures,” waiting to be looked at and talk about objectively (1994, 82). Buttrick believes that we have to explore the Bible in a new way and invites us to treat biblical passages as “motion-picture film clips,” moving like stories or conversations (1994, 83).

Further, Buttrick asserts that the language of the Bible is “language designed to function in consciousness” (1981, 54). In other words, almost all biblical language is trying to *do* something to the consciousness of the reader. Ancient writers “grasped language like a tool, choosing form and style and structure to shape purpose.” One important implication for preaching is that the intent of a biblical text must be reflected in the intent of a sermon based on the

text (1981, 58). Preachers must attend to how biblical texts function in the readers' consciousness as well as to what these texts say.

Such a view of the Bible and its language requires a new homiletic method. Buttrick believes that sermons should incorporate the idea of movement. Preachers should think not in terms of sermonic points but of sermonic scenarios or movements. "So how to design a sermon? The sermon will need an Introduction and a Conclusion and in between a series of moves" (1994, 95). The motion of a sermon is achieved through a series of episodes plotted according to some intention. According to Buttrick, sermon design "ought to travel through congregational consciousness as a series of immediate thoughts, sequentially designed and imaged with technical skill so as to assemble in form faith" (1981, 55-56).

Like a camera lens, the introduction aims to bring the selected subject into focus against a cultural-linguistic backdrop (1987, 85). The function of an introduction is to orient the listeners to a particular point of view with respect to the text. So the consciousness of the listeners becomes aware of one focus. The function of a sermon conclusion likewise involves a phenomenology of human consciousness. A conclusion must not aim to provide a sense of closure so that the mind can come to a rest. Rather, it must aim to evoke a strong sense of awareness so as to make the mind to be open and restless.

3.5.5 Conversational Preaching

In *Sharing the Word* (1997) Lucy Rose offers a “conversational” understanding of preaching. Conversational preaching is a way to refocus the local congregation’s conversations around the Word. In this form of preaching, “the preacher and the congregation are colleagues, exploring together the mystery of the Word for their own lives.” The preacher submits his interpretation of a biblical passage to the community of faith through the sermon for their “additions, corrections, or counterproposals” (1997, 5).

The preacher’s interpretation of a biblical text initiates conversations. The preacher’s interpretation funds multiple interpretations, “one proposed articulation of the gospel funds multiple articulations of the gospel, through the Spirit that prods and prompts the hearts and minds of the congregation” (Rose 1997, 6).

For Rose two sermonic forms can be used effectively in conversational preaching: story and an inductive-narrative form that expresses the preacher’s journey toward meaning (1997 113-117). These two forms of preaching develop a “community of interpreters who value their own experiences and faith commitments, wrestle with the Holy Spirit and texts, and make their own decisions” and at the same time “encourage the search for communal meanings” (1997, 117).

3.6 Hermeneutic Understanding of Preaching

One of the major issues with new understandings of preaching is that they do not sufficiently account for the hermeneutic nature of the practice of

preaching. Homiletical tasks, both the interpreting of the biblical texts and the shaping of sermons, are essentially a hermeneutic act. That is, they aim at making the ancient biblical texts meaningful to the present situations. What this means is that the present situation at least partly determines the meaning of the text.

Preaching as a hermeneutic or interpretative act has to recognize both the multiplicity of meanings and the presence of self-interests. Rose has articulated these two critical concerns of interpretation. She asserts that “every reading of every text and every voice interpreted as belonging to God or Scripture is colored and textured by the personality, conditioned by the socialization and vested with the interests of the interpreter” (1997, 80).

If every interpretation is at least partly determined by personal experiences, then every text engenders multiple interpretations. Rose is convinced that the aim of preaching is begetting multiple interpretations. “The preacher searches for meaning that makes life livable and, by the secret workings of the Spirit, grace-filled. This meaning is then submitted to the community of faith through the sermon for their answering meanings” (1997, 5).

The hermeneutic nature of preaching may be understood within the framework of philosophical or theoretical hermeneutics. H. J. C. Pieterse has discussed Gadamer’s and Ricoeur’s hermeneutics from a homiletic perspective (2001, chap 3). Pieterse is convinced that their notions of application are relevant to the homiletical-hermeneutic process, as they allow the process to start in the life situation of the preacher and the congregation (2001, 79).

3.6.1 Gadamer: Understanding as Application

Gadamer's masterpiece *Truth and Method* has made an outstanding contribution to philosophical discussion of hermeneutics. His account of hermeneutic understanding offers a new way of viewing application. In modern thought understanding always happens before application. In modern theology, for instance, practical theology is viewed as application of theological understanding to the concrete situations of life. "The theologian moves," Don Browning observes, "from revelation to the human, from theory to practice, and from revealed knowledge to application" (1996, 5).

According to Gadamer, however, understanding always involves application. That is to say, "application is part of the process of understanding from the very outset." Jean Grondin explains Gadamer's account of the relationship between understanding and application.

He follows Heidegger's intuition that understanding always includes self-understanding—indeed, self-encounter. Understanding, then, involves something like applying a meaning to our situation, to the questions we want answered. It is not the case that there is first a pure, objective understanding of meaning, to which special significance accrues when it is subsequently applied to our questions. We always take ourselves along whenever we understand, so much so that for Gadamer understanding and application are indivisibly fused. This can best be seen by means of a negative example, non-understanding. Whenever we cannot understand a text, the reason is that it says nothing to *us* or has nothing to say. (1994, 115)

Gadamer's view of hermeneutic understanding is reflected in Browning's view of theology. According to Browning, "theology should be seen as practical

through and through and at its very heart” (1996, 7). He believes that this is a result of taking seriously the claim made by Gadamer and others that “practical thinking is the center of human thinking” (1996, 8). Browning’s proposal is that our pursuit of theological understanding should begin with questions shaped by our communal practices.

When a religious community hits a crisis in its practices, it then begins reflecting (asking questions) about its meaningful or theory-laden practices. It may take time to describe these practices so it can better understand the questions precipitated by the crisis. Eventually, if it is serious, the community must reexamine the sacred texts and events that constitute the source of the norms and ideals that guide its practices. It brings its questions to these normative texts and has a conversation between its questions and these texts. This community of interpreters will see its inherited normative sources in light of the questions engendered by its crisis. As its practices change its questions change, and the community will invariably see different meanings in its normative texts as its situation and questions change. (1996, 6)

Gadamer’s ideas about understanding the meaning of a text have been translated homiletically by Pieterse. Within the practice of preaching, understanding or interpreting biblical texts always aims at their application to the present situations. “We interpret a biblical text,” Pieterse writes, “for the purpose of composing next Sunday’s sermon. Consequently application (or appropriation) enters it immediately” (2001, 76).

Pieterse emphasizes that “application must be directed to a specific context in the present.” If understanding involves a particular application, then understanding must occur differently from one interpreter to another. It is Gadamer’s major insight that meaning changes. “The altered context of every

new reader affects his or her interpretation of the text, and hence the meaning attached to it. In principle, therefore, a text has an infinite number of meanings” (Pieterse 2001, 74-75).

Homiletically speaking, we understand the same biblical text differently. Every reading of the same biblical text is motivated by a different situation or interest and consequently produces a different interpretation. On the basis of this, Rose proposes conversational preaching, in which a sermon is offered as a tentative interpretation that invites other interpretations. The preacher and his or her congregation have to learn to encourage different understandings and articulations of the gospel.

3.6.2 Ricoeur: Understanding and Objectivity

Ricoeur’s theory of interpretation both extends and amends Gadamer’s. Following Pieterse, we will mainly focus on Ricoeur’s notion of application or appropriation. Because of his emphasis on the involvement of the interpreter in the achievement of understanding, Gadamer’s hermeneutics is often viewed as a version of relativism. Ricoeur believes that the hermeneutic process requires critical procedures in order to validate interpretations and to achieve mature understanding. Hermeneutics must incorporate a critical element to avoid relativism or subjectivism.

Ricoeur agrees with Gadamer when he says in *Interpretation Theory* (1976) that the existential concept of appropriation or application “remains the ultimate aim of all hermeneutics.... This goal is achieved insofar as interpretation

actualizes the meaning of the text for the present reader” (91-92). Pieterse’s explanation of Ricoeur’s account of appropriation and understanding is quite helpful.

Appropriation of the text is in fact a condition for discovering its meaning. Unless it is applied to the reader’s own situation, the text has no meaning for that particular person. Applying a text to one’s own circumstances does not mean ‘adapting’ it. On the contrary, application means letting go, as readers open themselves to the world presented by the text Understanding happens when readers receive the other, foreign ‘self’ of the text from its world which is presented to them. Application entails receiving and appropriating this new ‘self’ or property of the text, which makes you perceive your situation afresh, moves you to action, or makes you construct a new story in your own context from the story presented in the context of the text. (2001, 79)

Ricoeur says that one of the misconceptions of the existential appropriation has to do with the suspicion of a total mastery of the text by the reader (1976, 94). Gadamer’s notion of application does in fact invite the objection that it places the meaning of the text under the power of the interpreter. Ricoeur tries to remove the suspicion by stressing “the disclosing power of the text.”

Far from saying that a subject already mastering his own way of being in the world projects the *a priori* of his self-understanding on the text and reads it into the text, I say that interpretation is the process by which disclosure of new modes of being—or if you prefer Wittgenstein to Heidegger, of new forms of life—gives to the subject a new capacity for knowing himself. If the reference of the text is the project of a world, then it is not the reader who primarily projects himself. The reader rather is enlarged in his capacity of self-projection by receiving a new mode of being from the text itself. (1976, 94)

According to Ricoeur, appropriation is linked to critical evaluation. The interpreter, who confronts the proposed world disclosed in front of the text, may

achieve mature understanding if he is prepared to give a critically explanatory account of himself. In other words, the subject, wanting to transform self-understanding by exposing his own self to the text, must engage in an “internal critique.” An objective critique of the self, or a “critique of the illusions of the subject,” or the “critique of ideology is the necessary detour that self-understanding must take if the latter is to be formed by the matter of the text and not by the prejudices of the reader” (1991, 88).

It can be said that the critical evaluation of the self is a necessary condition for attaining mature understanding. Another condition is validation of interpretations. Following Gadamer, Ricoeur contends that the hermeneutic process allows multiple interpretations. However, unlike Gadamer, Ricoeur stresses the need to critically evaluate competing interpretations. He sees the need for some critical, evaluative procedures in the hermeneutic process. Ricoeur wants to incorporate some manner of objectivity in hermeneutics.

Ricoeur maintains that a text may produce multiple interpretations. However, “it is not true that all interpretations are equal,” he contends. By incorporating the “logic of validation,” a theory of interpretation may “move between the two limits of dogmatism and skepticism” (1976, 79). Ricoeur underscores the possibility of a rational procedure.

It is always possible to argue for or against an interpretation, to confront interpretations, to arbitrate between them and to seek agreement, even if this agreement remains beyond our immediate reach. (1976, 79)

The kind of rationality required by the hermeneutic process in resolving the conflict between rival interpretations is different from scientific rationality. It consists in “subjective probability.” Ricoeur states:

An interpretation must not only be probable, but more probable than another interpretation. There are criteria of relative superiority for resolving this conflict, which can easily be derived from the logic of subjective probability. (1976, 79)

3.6.3 Homiletical Reflection

We turn now to Pieterse’s account of theological hermeneutics that draws on philosophical discussions of hermeneutics. Pieterse deals with hermeneutical themes from the perspective of preaching to the poor (2001, 81-92). His four major points, however, are pivotal in any context of preaching.

First, the preacher as interpreter confronts the Bible from a particular standpoint. In other words, interpretation is application. So those preachers who are preaching to poor congregations must adopt the perspective of the poor. As Pieterse states, preachers “go to the Bible with a particular prejudice or bias—the prejudice or bias arising from one’s own situation” and “will always approach the biblical text from the angle of their own situation” (2001, 81).

Pieterse shows that the poor can find a special, meaningful place in the text of the Bible (2001, 82-85). The whole text—from the divine deliverance of an enslaved people in Egypt to the prophetic tradition of proclaiming God’s judgment on the powerful who oppress the poor, a tradition that culminates in the mission of Jesus—reveals that “God champions and cares for the poor in a very

special way.” Hence it befits the followers of Jesus “to heed the clear message of God’s special concern for the poor in the biblical witness.”

Second, the preacher must inhabit the world of his or her congregation. To paraphrase Pieterse’s words, the preacher must experience the situation of his or her congregation existentially. As the preacher stands in front of a text and engages in a dialogue with it, he must voice the concerns and questions of his congregation. For when the preacher is interpreting a text for a sermon, he is doing it for the sake of his community and not for his own personal purposes.

Pieterse contends that “the listeners to the sermon, the congregation, have a say in how the biblical word is interpreted for their existential situation” (2001, 85). In order to achieve “a better understanding of their Lord’s message for their specific circumstances” the listeners need to find various ways to communicate their questions and concerns with the preacher. Preachers must encourage and practice “a dialogical approach, with all the participants in the local congregation and the participants in the sermon joining in on an equal footing. Each contributes equally; no-one dominates anybody” (2001, 86).

Third, as the preacher engages in interpretation he or she must seek what God is communicating to a particular situation by means of the text. Exegesis constitutes this stage of interpretation. Exegetical methods are pertinent in discovering the world of the Bible. Translation, the last stage in the interpretative process, is “a creative response to the meaning of the text that exegesis has produced” (2001, 90).

It is important to note that exegesis does not constitute a means of mastering the text. For the biblical texts are “pre-eminently open” and possess a “dynamic power which constantly seeks to speak a new, relevant and liberating word” (2001, 91). So the preacher must respect the dialectic of understanding (the meaning of a text) and scientific analysis (of the text).

Fourth, the preacher has to translate what God has said in the text in terms of the concrete situation of the congregation. Translation requires critical, creative thinking. The inscribed words of a biblical text must be reinterpreted imaginatively so that the text may “speak anew in a relevant, dynamic manner in the situation of the congregation” (2001, 89). Pieterse continues:

But this translating activity, when the message of the text is preached in a novel way in the present situation, should adhere faithfully to what the text is saying.... Imaginative, relevant translation of a text for a sermon means inquiring hermeneutically into the intention of the text and then allowing it to progress dynamically to a new, liberating message in the present-day context in order to open up new existential possibilities: the scripturally fixed words of the text become a Word event all over again, a speech act with new, relevant meaning for the congregation’s situation.

CHAPTER 4

TEXT-GUIDED PREACHING

4.1 Introduction

A theory of preaching has to integrate at least four basic elements: preacher, congregation, text, and sermon. Chapter 4 deals with a theory of preaching that insists that the relationship between text and sermon has to be controlled by what the text says and does. It insists, in other words, that the rhetorical function of a biblical text must be allowed to guide the function of a sermon on the text. We may call this type of preaching that takes the rhetorical claim of the text seriously text-guided preaching.

This type of preaching has been advocated by Thomas Long, who believes that readers' understanding of a text is controlled in some way by the literary and rhetorical dynamics of the text and that sermons can be guided by that control (1989a, 21). The movement from text to sermon is to be controlled and guided by the text itself. The pivotal homiletical question is "How may the sermon, in a new setting, say and do what the text says and does in its setting?" (1989a, 33).

For a long time academic disciplines, including biblical studies and homiletics, have embraced a representational view of language. Such a view holds that the primary function of language is to represent or depict facts or truths. Historical criticism of the Bible—which seeks to explore historical facts

behind the biblical texts—and traditional preaching—which seeks to explore the biblical texts for pure, timeless truths—resonate with the modern, representational view of language.

Text-guided preaching, however, assumes a view of language that recognizes the performative dimension of language. According to this view, people use language to perform a variety of acts, such as commanding, promising, praising, asking, as well as stating and describing. Developed in the middle of the twentieth century by philosophers Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) and J. L. Austin (1911-1960), the new understanding of language has been appropriated by biblical scholars and homileticians. This is the main concern of section 2 (“Language, Interpretation, and Preaching”) of the present chapter.

Preaching concerns not only the text-to-sermon movement but also the relationship between the preacher and the congregation. It is helpful to explain the relationship within the hermeneutical-communicative framework. We may see the preacher as interpreter and as communicator; we may see sermon development as consisting of a hermeneutical process and a homiletical or communicative process.

So the preacher as interpreter begins a hermeneutical process by interpreting first of all the practical situations of the congregation. So in interacting with a biblical text, the preacher carries it out for the congregation. The preacher as communicator seeks to regenerate by means of the sermon what he has learned and experienced from the text for the communal life of the congregation and for the individual members.

The hermeneutical and homiletical issues are discussed in the third and fourth sections of this chapter. Section 3 (“The Hermeneutical Process”) deals with the contextual and textual aspects of the hermeneutical process. The preacher as interpreter tries to understand both the contemporary context of the congregation and the rhetorical dynamics of the text. Preaching seeks to connect the experiential world of the congregation and the experience of the rhetorical impact of the text. This section considers hermeneutical issues specifically in connection with psalms, focusing on how psalms create experiential impact.

Section 4 (“The Homiletical Process”) deals with the movement from text to sermon. It presents four general text-to-sermon paths that preachers can follow: movement-to-movement, conflict-to-conflict, insight-to-insight, and mood-to-mood. The central idea is that a sermon’s communicative goal has to be informed by the text’s rhetorical intent.

4.2 Language, Interpretation, and Preaching

Until the middle of the twentieth century, a restricted understanding of language had dominated academic disciplines. It was thought that language mirrored or pictured reality. The traditional, representational understanding of language has been seriously challenged by new understandings that take into account the social dimension of language. The new, richer and wider views insist that language is interwoven with social practices and activities and that words are used to perform conventional, linguistic acts.

The performative understanding of language is quite suitable for the disciplines of biblical interpretation and preaching. Biblical texts and sermons can be seen as performing a diversity of communicative acts that intend to achieve some intentional effects. Biblical texts and sermons can evoke noncognitive experiences and issue commands or promises, as well impart insights and ideas.

4.2.1 Modern Developments

Throughout the history of the Christian church the Bible has been studied for God's message, for what God had said. The Bible has been used as the main source of God's truth. Traditionally, theologians have explored the Bible for timeless, revealed truths with the aim of developing the solid foundations for theological system. Likewise, preachers have expounded biblical texts for divine truths they can use to edify the community of faith.

This traditional practice of reading and preaching the Bible, however, was challenged by the introduction into biblical interpretation of the historical-critical methodology. Historical criticism approached the Bible as a human record, subjecting it to "objective, critical" enquiry to determine whether biblical accounts were in fact "historically reliable." Biblical accounts were discussed and explained mainly for the purpose of determining historical facts. In this respect historical criticism reflects a modern understanding of language.

A modern view of language generally assumes that language expresses thought and thought represents reality. Modern empiricism, on the one hand,

explains that ideas in the mind are impressions created by objects in the world. Ideas merely mirror objects. Rationalism, on the other hand, explains that ideas are formed by the mind by conceptualizing sense data deposited by objects in the world. It denies that ideas passively mirror objects. It asserts that ideas represent objects. Ideas are conceptual representations. So for modern thinkers, thought either mirrors or represents objects in the world.

With respect to language, modern thinkers assume that its primary function is to express thought and try to explain its meaning in terms of representation or reference. Words express ideas and have meaning by virtue of their referents, the objects they refer to or picture. Those scholars who emphasize the centrality of historically critical methods in biblical interpretation—and thus reduce what the Bible says to particular historical facts—in fact embrace the modernist agenda of equating meaning with reference.

While conservative Christian scholars and preachers have continued the traditional practice of explicating the Bible for God's truth, liberal Christian scholars and preachers have turned to the experiential significance of the Bible. For many contemporary liberals, to understand a biblical text is to grasp the meaning or the experiential significance of the text; and to communicate a biblical text is to enable the church to experience the meaning of the text. They tend to focus on the effects that a biblical text has on the reader. For them preaching is a reenactment of the experience of a text.

4.2.2 New Developments

For nearly four decades Anthony Thiselton has persistently advocated the need to attend to the performative dimension of biblical texts in biblical interpretation and theology (1999, 144). It is his fundamental conviction that biblical texts must be regarded as performing a variety of speech acts, such as declaring or proclaiming, praising, witnessing, pronouncing, trusting, and most especially promising (1999, 144-145).

He also emphasizes that a single passage can embody multiple speech acts. In other words, a single locutionary action may perform several illocutionary acts. Hebrews 1:1-4, for example, performs “several multilayered, multidirectional actions,” such as preaching, confessing, praising, arguing, celebrating (1999, 146).

In focusing on the performative aspects of the text, Thiselton is fully aware of the logical dependence of speech acts on what John Searle calls “institutional” and “brute” facts. So he writes that the relationship between linguistic action and extra-linguistic states of affairs “remains exceedingly subtle, complex, and diverse from case to case” (1999, 147).

Thiselton is wary of hermeneutical traditions that tend to restrict what language can do to a single function. He has endorsed the later Wittgenstein’s view that language is like “the tools in a tool-box” (Wittgenstein 1973, sec. 11) and is critical of those who insist, to use Wittgenstein’s words, “that language always functions in one way, always serve the same purpose” (1973, sec. 304). Thiselton agrees with Wittgenstein’s attempt to rescue language “from its burial beneath an abstract Cartesian tradition that tends to equate language with

argument or description alone. In Jesus Christ the Word was made *flesh*; Cartesian Protestantism threatens to turn flesh back into abstracted *word* again” (1999, 145).

Thiselton also sees the need to rescue biblical language from Rudolf Bultmann’s program of interpreting the entire language of New Testament strictly in existential or volitional terms. “Bultmann lapses into a generally noncognitive view of New Testament language” (1999, 148). Embracing the “Kantian fact-value duality” Bultmann dismisses the descriptive or referential dimension of biblical language, reducing biblical passages about states of affairs into assertions about “existential self-involvement and value.” Bultmann’s major fault is that he accepts a “crude distinction between descriptive, expressive, and volitional utterances, as if these were virtually three self-contained, self-sufficient modes of discourse” (1999, 149).

Hence for Thiselton it is fundamental for biblical interpretation to take into consideration the multi-dimensional character of biblical language. He has turned to Wittgenstein, Austin, and Searle to liberate biblical hermeneutics from its imprisonment to with simplistic and deterministic views of language and biblical interpretation. It is Thiselton’s fundamental conviction that understanding the biblical text is more than just recovering the intentions of the author; is more than just determining what it is referring to; is more than just discerning what would count as an appropriate response.

To understand the biblical text is to understand diverse things it is communicating, including revealing something about the author, pointing or

alluding to relevant states of affairs, and guiding the audience to transformative experience. In Thiselton's own words, important paradigmatic biblical illocutions "(1) *entail serious obligations on the part of the speaker*; (2) *presuppose serious institutional facts* (which in the sense identified by Searle ... rest on extralinguistic 'brute' facts); and (3) *achieve transformative effects not by causal perlocution but through institutional illocution*" (1999, 237).

4.2.3 Speech-Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation

In *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism* (1996) Nancey Murphy argues that the theories of language developed by Ludwig Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin can lead to a more adequate account of religious language (1996, chap. 5). These philosophers rejected the widely held idea of "language as a mirror or picture of reality," replacing it with a new image. "The new image is language as a tool or language as action. Both Austin and Wittgenstein emphasize the *use* of language to do things in the social world" (1996, 111).

In *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein tries to correct the distorted idea that our language is mainly about things in the world by devising a variety of language games, in which participants can be seen as trying to attain certain concrete objectives by using language as a tool. What is instructive about Wittgenstein's strategy is that we can dissect our everyday language as a myriad of language games. This strategy does help us see that language is not entirely about things in the world.

Thus it is pertinent to reject the conservatives' referentialism—the view that theological language is primarily about reality. Murphy also argues that we should as well reject the liberals' expressivism—the view that theological language is essentially about inner experiences—since language involves rules and rules cannot be privatized.

Wittgenstein's emphasis on the performative aspect of language is vitally important in approaching the biblical discourses. It encourages us to locate the meaning of the biblical discourse within the reality of the corporate Christian life. The task of the interpreter is to describe the forms of life and relevant communal practices that the biblical language embodies. Wittgenstein's remark "In the beginning was the deed" is true in the case of the biblical discourse.

Murphy's account of Austin's speech-act theory is more extensive than her account of Wittgenstein's idea of language. One of her objectives in expounding Austin's fundamental idea that "all language needed to be understood primarily in terms of what the speaker is *doing* in uttering it" (1996, 114) is to make the crucial point that reference and expression are determined by, and thus logically dependent upon, an understanding of what the speaker is doing with language (1996, 115).

Austin calls instances of language use "speech acts" and in *How To Do Things with Words* examines the conditions for "felicitous" or happy speech acts. To use one of Murphy's own examples, a speaker, presumably a teacher, who says to a student "Thank you for closing the door" is in effect performing a

speech act of thanking if “Thank you for x” is a conventional way of expressing gratitude (a primary condition).

Furthermore, the happiness of this speech act also requires among other things that the student actually closed a door (a representative condition) and the speaker is grateful for the student’s action (an affective condition). Although this speech act requires both reference and expression, neither is primary. Murphy explains:

So reference and expression are both essential to most speech acts, but the question of the nature of the speech act—the question of what one is attempting to do with the sentence—is prior, since this determines the sorts of inner attitudes that are appropriate and determines, as well, what sort of relation there needs to be between language and the world. From this perspective, any account of language that attempts to *begin* with representation or expression is doomed to inadequacy. (1996, 115)

Murphy attempts to show how a speech-act theory may shape the practice of biblical interpretation (1996, 122-126). The first step in speech-act analysis of biblical texts is to “take the texts to be analogous to speech acts... as opposed to either (mere) expressions of religious awareness or (mere) factual accounts” (1996, 122). Murphy distinguishes and explains—in terms of various types of biblical criticism and with some concrete examples—five types of conditions that need to be fulfilled for a biblical speech act to be considered happy. They are linguistic and social conventions, referential and expressivist or psychological conditions, and uptake.

Murphy cautions us though that speech-act analysis should not be taken as a complete theory of biblical interpretation but rather as a guideline that tells us

what kinds of factors are relevant to an adequate understanding of biblical texts (1996, 126).

Murphy addresses the debate in the discipline of biblical interpretation regarding the question of the location of meaning, the question whether meaning is in “front” or “behind” or “in” the text. She is convinced that in order to understand what a text is doing we have to consider all the relevant dimensions, authorial, textual, social, and reader-response (1996, 126).

She agrees with Friedrich Schleiermacher and those who locate meaning in the author’s intention. “One condition for a happy speech act is uptake, which involves understanding what the author intended to do by means of the passage in question” (1996, 124). This does not mean, however, that we need to reconstruct or recover what was in the mind of the author at the time of writing. As Murphy puts it, “the recognition of authorial intent does not require imagination or empathy so much as knowledge of the linguistic and social conventions of the author’s time” (1996, 124).

4.2.4 Speech-Act Theory and Homiletics

Lucy Rose points out that speech-act theory has partly influenced the development of the new, transformational understandings of preaching that have emerged in the past three decades. One of the basic convictions “about language that characterizes transformational views of preaching,” Rose writes, “is that words both say things and do things, that words are events. Two influences here are speech act theory and the new hermeneutic” (1997, 67).

She singles out Craddock's early, influential work *As One without Authority* as a primary channel through which J. L. Austin's speech-act account of language entered homiletical discussion.

Craddock sees Wittgenstein's account of language as an early attempt to overcome a restricted view of language that insists that "words serve only as signs pointing to the discovered or discoverable data" (2001, 28). Wittgenstein insisted that language should be studied when it is at work, that is, in its everyday use, "because speaking is part of an activity, a form of life, and is to be understood within that context."

Craddock sees Austin's account of language, which emphasizes that words have a rich and wide range of power, as a direct challenge to "the tyranny of the single perspective" (2001, 28). "Austin has reminded us," he states, "of the creative or 'performative' power of words. Words not only report something; they do something. Words are deeds" (2001, 29). Craddock is convinced that such a dynamic view of language offers "fresh possibilities for new power in the pulpit." (2001, 27).

Thomas Long's homiletical theory certainly echoes speech-act theory. Long insists that what constitutes an understanding of a biblical text is neither an abstract idea nor some noncognitive aesthetic experience but a claim it makes upon the reader (1989b, 84). Such approach to the text has a direct implication for preaching. "Biblical texts *say* things that *do* things, and the sermon is to say and do those things too." What are the kinds of actions that the biblical texts perform?

Some texts form Christian identity through the transmission of doctrine, others render biblical characters powerfully “present” through narration, some evoke wonder or provoke memory, and still others issue ethical demands. The list could go on, of course, since texts are multifaceted, and every text possesses its own unique and complex set of intentionalities. (1989b, 84)

What are the kinds of claims that the biblical texts may make upon contemporary readers? Long recognizes that a particular text may make different claims, depending on a congregation’s current situation. “Texts potentially make many claims, and a change in congregational situation would also alter the results of the exegesis and therefore the tasks of the sermon” (1989b, 87).

For instance, Romans 8:28-39, which affirms that nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord,” may engender an empowering sermon of reassurance and hope for a troubled and distressed congregation. But in the context of a congregation that holds a “sunshine and success” perspective of the gospel, the same text may engender an entirely different sermon.

To an openly troubled church, Romans 8:28-39 speaks a word of encouragement and cheer. In the context of this congregation, though, a group trying desperately to remain at ease by carefully stepping over the threatening places in life and hewing to the smoothly cheerful path, the very same text speaks another word, initially of confrontation but finally of liberation from superficial faith. (1989b, 88).

Cas Vos asserts that the language of preaching must clearly (1) communicate a particular content, (2) perform a particular linguistic act, and (3)

achieve the intended effect (2005, 328). Sermons have to incorporate invariably these three levels of language. The preacher must have clarity about what she wants to say. She also needs to know what she intends to do with her words.

Vos elaborates:

Every sermon should have one or more focal points. At the second level, the homiletician must know what he/she is trying to achieve with the sermon. He/she should have clarity about where he/she wants the listener to progress. Is this a sermon of comfort and hope, or is it a sermon intended to give the listener insight into a crisis or issue? At the third level, the force of the linguistic act is important. The question is, does the sermon come across so convincingly that those who hear it will believe what the preacher is saying? (2005, 329)

4.3 The Hermeneutical Process

Understanding the Bible requires a hermeneutical process. It requires steps to glean the message of the biblical text from the perspective of present life situation. At the same time biblical hermeneutics presupposes some particular understanding of the message of the Bible. For many readers it is about the relationship between God and people, about how God dealt with his people and how his people participated in his movement in history. The Bible reveals the relationship between God and his people, and the relationship it reveals is dialogical. As H. J. C. Pieterse puts it, God treated his people as “his dialogue partners and allies in his movement in history,” as Jesus’ ministry, which perfectly embodied God’s will, revealed (2001, 4).

This presupposition shapes our hermeneutical process. So to interpret the Bible is to interpret texts about how God interacted with his people from the standpoint of our present reality. To interpret the Bible is to extend the dialogical

interaction between God and his people beyond the text, to “view this relationship in our context, in terms of the mindset of people living in our own day and age” (Pieterse 2001, 4). The aim of biblical interpretation is to make the message of the Bible relevant to us. The message of the Bible “needs to be alive, relevant and directed at the circumstances of the listeners” (Pieterse 2001, 17).

4.3.1 Understanding Our Existential World

We agree with Pieterse who begins his homiletical theory with an account of the situation of the congregation. Preachers, as interpreters of the Bible, must be interpreters of their congregation also. They need to engage in various types of conversation with their congregation. They “should be thoroughly acquainted with their listeners, their circumstances, experiences, needs and problems” (Pieterse 2001, 4).

C. J. A. Vos also emphasizes the importance of understanding “the experiential world of the listener” (2005, 289). This is, he elaborates, “the world in which people think, experience and believe; the way they experience the world in relationships, in society and community, e.g. in church and within the sphere of their public responsibilities. Hence, the homiletician needs to be a child of his/her time.”

Referring to pain and longing as basic features of our experiential world, Vos says that preachers must address in their sermons the everyday, diverse manifestations of pain and suffering.

Pain and longing remain constant, but the experience of everyday life differs from person to person. It is important that a sermon takes this into account. Pain always contains elements of longing and hope, but a sermon should allow the listener to begin to feel that his/her personal darkness is not so impenetrable to light after all. A sermon serves as a source of hope at times of disappointment and disillusionment, because it relays the fact that God concerns himself with our everyday affairs. (2005, 292).

Vos holds that the preacher must foster an inclusive view of the listeners. The listeners “are not necessarily only those people whose beliefs are similar to those of the preacher, but also those who have strayed from the Church. The homiletician requires those who are near and far to the Church” (2005, 297).

For Vos, poetry, painting, music, stories and film all furnish windows into the complex experiential world (2005, 292). The arts are creative forms of expressing various levels of everyday experience. Poems, for example, express not only “the depths of human experience, but also the crest of its waves. We can be carried along by the currents, or almost drowned by the maelstroms.... In poetry, life is described on every level—its riches, its poverty, its joy and its pain” (2005, 292).

Even comic book films like *Spider-Man*, *Superman Returns*, *Daredevil*, and *Hulk* often offer social commentary as well as entertainment (2005, 295). For example, Hulk, one of the comic book superheroes, is driven by anger, a key motif that “makes the Hulk story relevant for a world in which anger is increasingly unleashed and expressed in numerous ways,” as Vos comments (2005, 296).

4.3.2 Understanding Textual Speech-Acts

So the preacher begins the hermeneutical task by entering into the everyday experiential world of the congregation. From this contextual sphere the preacher moves into the textual sphere. The preacher has to study a particular biblical text for a sermon. “In the hermeneutic process preachers should constantly transpose themselves from the world of the congregation to the world of the text, and then back to the present-day world of the congregation” (Pieterse 2001, 19). Continually moving between the text and the context, the preacher tries to narrow the historical and socio-cultural gap that exists between the two. As the preacher tries to “dialectically relate the world of the text, with its message, to the world of the congregation members with their needs” (Pieterse 2001, 19), the text “takes over,” performing certain communicative actions. Pieterse explains:

If preacher spend enough time hermeneutically digesting the text for Sunday’s sermon, the text starts addressing them. It takes over, illuminating their entire existence. Sometimes it comforts, sometimes it criticizes, sometimes it calls to repentance, sometimes it teaches or points the way. And so on. When the text thus addresses us and does something to us, we can go out to preach that text as witnesses to our own experience. (2001, 20)

The dialectical, hermeneutical process results in a clear sense of what the text is doing. And the particular speech-act embodied in the biblical text must determine the kind of speech-act the sermon will embody. If the particular text seeks to comfort, for instance, then the goal of the sermon should be to bring comfort to the congregation. Pieterse provides a helpful explanation.

Once we have a clear mental picture of the text, we need to determine its tenor or intention, also known as its *scopus*. What does the text want to say in the sermon? Does it seek to comfort, call for commitment, criticize, encourage, inspire, call to repentance, or what? Once we have written down the message of the text, its tenor and intention, in one clear sentence, we should write down the goal of the sermon—what we want to achieve with it on that particular occasion. (2001, 20)

Thomas Long also sees understanding what the text is *doing* as the heart of the textual interpretation. The central aim of the preacher's interpretative task, according to Long, is "neither the plucking of an abstract idea from the text nor some nonconceptual aesthetic experience but, rather, the event of the text's actively shaping Christian identity" (1989b, 84). A biblical text makes a claim upon its modern readers.

Biblical texts may perform such diverse communicative or speech acts as commanding, praying, narrating, explaining, and arguing. And the things that biblical texts perform function to inform and form Christian identity. Texts perform actions or "*do* things by *saying* things in certain ways." "Every aspect of a biblical text—its concepts, its language, its literary form, its social and historical placement—works in concert to exert a claim upon each new set of faithful readers" (1989b, 84).

Long maintains that the kind of action a text performs should shape the kind of action a sermon seeks to perform. "Biblical texts *say* things that *do* things, and the sermon is to say and do those things too" (1989b, 84). Traditional homileticians have taught that the sermon should say what the text says, that is, its main idea. But, according to Long, "they were only half right because they

overlooked the fact that texts say what they say in order to cause something to happen. Content and intention are bound together, and no expression of textual impact is complete without them both” (1989b, 85). New contemporary homiletical theories tend to emphasize experiences over ideas. But, according to Long, they are half right as well, because they downplay the content by which texts evoke experiences.

4.3.3 Literary-Rhetorical Interpretation and Psalms

At this point we want to consider Long’s position that “the literary form and dynamics of a biblical text can and should be important factors in the preacher’s navigation of the distance between text and sermon” (1989a, 11). Long’s basic idea is that preachers need to consider literary genres of biblical texts in developing sermons.

The literary genre and devices of the text do control how the preacher interprets the text and thus must also influence how the preacher develops the sermon. It is crucial for preachers to give attention to literary forms such as narrative, psalm, epistle and narrative “because these are precisely the aspects of biblical texts commonly washed out in the typical text-to-sermon process” (1989a, 12).

The preacher’s task also requires a serious consideration of the best way or ways of conveying what the text says and does. It requires extending “a portion of the text’s impact into a new communicational situation, that of contemporary hearers listening to the sermon” (1989a, 33). The homiletical practice is not to

explain or “replicate” what the text says and does but to “regenerate” for the contemporary hearer the impact of some *portion* or some *aspect* of the text.

There are many paths from text to sermon, many ways of allowing the literary-rhetorical dynamics of a biblical text to shape a sermonic form. To mention four text-to-sermon connections: the sermon may recreate the movement of the text; the sermon may regenerate the conflict in the text between opposing forces, lifestyles, or worldviews; the sermon may explore a central truth or idea embodied in the text; the sermon may recreate the emotional mood the text evokes (1989a, 128-134).

In interpreting a text, the preacher must carefully attend to its literary and rhetorical features. This is the approach Long takes in *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible*, in which he analyzes psalms, proverbs, narratives, parables, and epistles in terms of “the literary features *in* the texts and the rhetorical dynamics which are likely to take place *in front of* the texts, that is, *between* text and reader” (1989a, 24). It is important to distinguish between the literary features of a biblical text and the rhetorical impact the text is intended to produce. Long explains:

The literary features are those elements of language and sequence that make the text what it is. The rhetorical dynamics are the effects that the literary features are intended to produce in a reader. Literary features are in the text; rhetorical dynamics, though caused by the text, are in the reader. A punch line is a literary feature of a written joke; the laughter caused by the punch line is a rhetorical dynamic. (1989a, 26)

Different literary genres are intended to produce different types of effects in the readers. So it is vitally important for the preacher, as interpreter of the Bible,

to identify and carefully study the particular literary genre and devices of a given text in order to understand what the text is intended to do.

Although Long's analysis covers five genres, we will confine our discussion to his treatment of psalms. In our discussion of literary and rhetorical aspects of the biblical psalms, we will also refer to Vos's *Theopoetry of the Psalms*, which deal with important hermeneutical and homiletical issues in the study of the psalms.

In terms of genre psalms are classified as liturgical poems. As poems biblical psalms follow the literary conventions of Hebrew poetry. The biblical psalms, however, are more than poems for they have been incorporated into the common life of the community of faith. As Long puts it, "psalms are not only poems, to be read and interpreted as just poems. They are poems which came to have repeated liturgical usage" (1989a, 45).

What this means for preachers is that they must be aware of how particular psalms have been experienced by their congregation (Long 1989a, 11). When we study Psalm 23, for example, we immediately realize that it has been read and experienced many times before. Sermons based on the text have to acknowledge the fact that "we have been this way many times before," that "there is something old and familiar at work" (1989a, 46). Such acknowledgement is part of preaching.

Our familiarity with certain psalms changes their rhetorical dynamics. As liturgical poems, psalms do more than what poetic devices employed allow them to do. "This fact of the psalms' liturgical character modifies and sharpens what

we can say about their rhetorical impact beyond that discerned through the realization that the psalms are poetry” (Long 1989a, 11). So in understanding the rhetorical intent of a particular psalm—that is, what it tries to do or achieve—the preacher must also have an understanding of the kinds of rhetorical effects that particular psalm has had on his listeners.

Now, in studying the poetic dimension of particular psalms for sermons, the preacher has to ask two essential and closely related hermeneutical questions. What is the rhetorical function of this particular poem? And, what particular poetic devices does the poem use to achieve its rhetorical effect? These questions require some basic knowledge of poetry in general and Hebrew poetry in particular. Long states that “poetry works to disrupt the customary ways in which we use language,” so as to change our thought and experience (1989a, 45). He explains:

Poetry stretches the ordinary uses of words, and places them into unfamiliar relationships with each other, thereby cutting fresh paths across the well-worn grooves of everyday language. Poems change what we think and feel not by piling up facts we did not know or by persuading us through arguments, but by making finely tuned adjustments at deep and critical places in our imaginations. (1989a, 45)

The rhetorical function of poetry is to influence how we perceive and experience the world around us. It disrupts our ordinary ways or patterns of thinking and experiencing so as to challenge us to see and feel things quite differently. As Long states, psalms as poems work their way into the reader’s imagination to create “a shift in the basic moral perception of the reader. Psalms operate at the level of the imagination, often swiveling the universe on the hinges

of a single image” (1989a, 47). Preachers thus must be prepared for the ways in which psalms seek to interact with their imagination. Moreover, they themselves need to use their sermons to interact with their audience’s perception.

4.3.4 Style and Language of Poetry

The preacher-interpreter’s important task, in studying a psalm for a sermon, is to carefully observe how certain poetic devices achieve certain effects.

“Paying careful attention to these linguistic strategies can reveal to the exegete not only how the psalm is doing its work, but also much about what the psalm is seeking to say and to do” (Long 1989a, 47).

One of the chief conventional devices in Hebrew poetry is parallelism. Parallelism indicates that the content of the subsequent line is somehow closely related to the content of the preceding line. The nature of the connection between the preceding and subsequent lines can vary. There are various types of parallelism but we will mention examples of synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic parallelism (Vos 2005, 33-34).

In synonymous parallelism the second line is similar in content to the first line. Here is an example from Psalm 147:1.

How good it is to sing praises to our God,
how pleasant and fitting to praise him!

In antithetic parallelism the second line contrasts the thought expressed in the first line. Psalm 15:4a uses this type of parallelism.

who despises a vile man
but honors those who fear the Lord,

When synthetic or complementary parallelism is used, the second line completes the thought expressed in the first line. The following concluding line from Psalm 15:5b complements the content of the lines preceding it, including 15:4a above.

He who does these things
will never be shaken.

The preacher must pay special attention to parallel expressions because they transport central ideas and images into the imagination of the interpreter. “The effect of parallelism on the reader is that those ideas and images begin to take on life in her or his imagination” (Long 1989a, 49-50).

Metaphors pervade psalms. Vos draws our attention to the central role of metaphorical language in poetry. Basically, it contributes to the texture of a poem and shapes its meaning. “Language,” Vos articulates, “has at its disposal various stylistic elements to express ideas. The primal root of poetry is sound. The primal stem is the imagery. Metaphors could be seen as peepholes through which we glimpse the meaning of a poem” (Vos 2005, 30). Metaphor is a powerful stylistic device. “Metaphors are explosive, hurling people towards new insights and blasting open new worlds” (Long 1989a, 49).

Vos uses Psalms 84:10-11a to illustrate how metaphors work and what they say and do (Vos 2005, 31-32).

For a day in your courts is better
than a thousand elsewhere.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than live in the tents of wickedness.
For the LORD God is a sun and shield;

The terms “the courts” and “tents” have their ordinary meanings, namely, what they usually refer to. In Psalm 84 the term “the courts” also has a metaphorical meaning, namely, God’s presence and glory. Likewise, the term “tents” is used here metaphorically, expressing the idea of transience. The metaphors of sun and shield are used to express God’s character. The nature metaphor expresses the ideas of light and life, while the military metaphor expresses the idea of protection. Readers of the psalm know that God is not identical to the sun or a shield. Because we know that God is transcendent, the terms “sun” and “shield” take up a metaphorical sense and work their way into our imagination.

4.4 The Homiletical Process

After the hermeneutical task, the preacher must begin the task of shaping a sermon that communicates the rhetorical intent of the text. The preacher as communicator must ask this key question: What may the sermon intended for my congregation say and do what the text says and does? (Long 1989a, 33). The purpose of asking this homiletical question is to bridge the text and the sermon.

4.4.1 Regenerating Textual Impact

“The sermon’s task,” Long claims, “is to extend a portion of the text’s impact into a new communicational situation, that of contemporary hearers listening to the sermon” (1989a, 33). He does not hold that the sermon has to replicate the

literary form and devices of the text. A central homiletical task is “not to replicate the text but to regenerate the impact of some portion of that text.” It is impractical to say and do everything the text says and does. This should not be the preacher’s goal. “Rather the preacher should attempt to say and do what a *portion* of the text *now* says and does for a new and unique set of people” (1989a, 33).

Long considers Psalm 1 to show how we can find a connection between a psalm and a sermon (1989a, 50-52). An examination of the poetic language of the text of Psalm 1 shows that the contrasting images of a tree and chaff are central to its message. The tree is planted and secure, but chaff is blown away and restless. These contrasting images express certain aspects of the contrasting lifestyles of the righteous and the wicked. The rhetorical effect of the contrasting images, Long explains, is “to create two contrasting spheres of activity in the awareness of the reader or hearer. One sphere is filled with frenetic, desperate, directionless motion which quickly fizzles out. The other sphere of activity is still, steady, calm, rich with the quiet and strong action of the wise person reflecting upon Torah” (1989a, 51).

A sermon that effectively communicates the message of Psalm 1 may not only explain the stark contrast between the righteous and the wicked but also recreate its experiential impact in the hearers (Long 1989a, 51). This requires a search for contemporary examples of the two forms of life. An effective sermon on Psalm 1 may thus depict a person whose mission is “to grasp, to search, to change, to adjust to the shifting winds of the prevailing *zeitgeist* before it is too

late” (Long 1989a, 51-52). A sermon on a psalm does not necessarily have to have a poetic structure. But it has to have a poetic force. It must seek to recreate the visual and emotional impact of the psalm in the hearers’ consciousness.

4.4.2 Four Text-to-Sermon Patterns

There are many paths from text to sermon. There are many possibilities for conveying the performative or communicative force of a biblical text by means of a sermon. As Long puts it, “every sermon should be ‘custom-made’” (1989a, 128). The creation of a sermon involves a search for the best form and the best language to recreate the original rhetorical impact of a biblical text in a new situation. Long explores four possible paths from text to sermon (1989a, 128-134).

1. *The movement of the text may shape the movement of the sermon.* The movement-to-movement pattern may well fit narrative texts. A biblical narrative usually unfolds a plot in a series of episodes. So one way to preach on a narrative text is to create a sermon that mirrors the sequence of the plot.

Long demonstrates how this may be done, using the story of Elijah and Baal’s priests (1 Kings 18:17-40) (1989a, 129-131). The story moves from (1) the accusation that Elijah troubles Israel to (2) the contest between the prophet and Baal’s priests; and then to (3) the failure of the priests; and finally to (4) God’s manifestation.

A sermon patterned after the story may open with (1) a description of how in our day Christians trouble the larger society, and then move to (2) an elucidation of rival positions that Christian community and the larger society take with respect to certain critical public issues.

As a third movement, the sermon may offer (3) a critical analysis of the weaknesses of the rival, secular positions. The sermon may then conclude by giving (4) an account of “those places in our own experiences in which the presence of the true and saving God is manifest and which prompt our awe and worship.”

2. *The conflict in the text may shape the conflict in the sermon.* Some biblical texts contain a conflict between two “opposing forces, ways of living, or visions of the world” and the preacher may choose to reshape this conflict in a contemporary form (Long 1989a, 132). We have already seen how such movement can be done with respect to Psalm 1, which presents a stark contrast between the life of the righteous and the life of the wicked.

The conflict-to-conflict pattern may be suitable for such texts as Matthew 7:24-27 and Galatians 5:19-26. The former text concludes the Sermon on the Mount with a vivid portrait of two contrasting responses to the ethical teaching of Jesus: doing or not doing the words of Jesus. The point of this text is that the teaching of Jesus must be taken in all seriousness. This point can be embodied in a sermon that presents two detailed contrasting examples from contemporary situation.

Galatians 5:19-26 gives two catalogue lists of vices and virtues to highlight the antinomy of the life controlled by “the flesh” and the life led by “the Spirit.” Instead of explaining in detail the items on the catalogues of vices and virtues, a sermon on the text may contrast contemporary examples of the egocentricity that underlies “the works of the flesh” with those of the orientation of selfless concern for others that underlies “the fruit of the Spirit.”

3. *The central insight of the text may shape the central insight of the sermon.* Some biblical texts do allow readers to gain new insights; and preachers may choose to preach a teaching sermon to communicate their insights.

Long uses the story of Joseph and the birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:18-25) to illustrate how this insight-to-insight movement can be accomplished (1989a, 133). One of the insights we may gain from the story is that Joseph’s idea of doing justice is transformed by the message of his dream. When he was determined to do the right thing, namely, to divorce Mary quietly, the Lord instructed him “to take Mary your wife,” revealing to him that “that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.” Joseph’s story tells us that being just sometimes requires us to be open to a new movement of the Spirit. Long’s explanation is instructive.

This is not all that the text does, but it does teach this truth, and a sermon on this text may well be a teaching sermon aimed at communicating this insight. Such a sermon may explore contemporary situations in which the church and Christian people are called upon to perform the right and just action. How do we decide what that action should be? Do we appeal to precedent as though we already know what the good should be, or do we prayerfully explore the tradition and open ourselves to a fresh movement of the Spirit, seeking to discern the will of God for this day and this situation? (1989a, 33)

4. *The mood of the text may shape the mood of the sermon.* In the case of some biblical texts the emotional mood is integral to their rhetorical impact. We encounter a powerful emotional force when we read certain psalms, prayers, hymns, or thanksgivings. To regenerate the mood of a biblical text, the sermon itself has to be a work of art. The language of the sermon has to produce some music. Vos articulates:

There is sheer beauty in the bringing together of certain sounds. The mouth is like a spinning wheel, weaving words into colorful threads of meaning. The homiletician's choice of language is crucial, as the wrong choices could give away his/her hesitation, tie him/her into knots, or the speech could come across entirely characterless and disjointed. (2005, 318)

Every sermon must reflect a careful choice of language; however, for a sermon that seeks to be an embodiment of the emotional force of a text, its aesthetical quality has to be exceptional. The preacher as communicator has to know how language evokes feelings. Most particularly, metaphorical language is effective in helping people feel the emotional impact of the text (Vos 2005, 319).

4.4.3 From Text to Sermon: An Example

We can have a better understanding of how a sermon may regenerate the impact of a text by observing Vos' own sermon on pilgrimage psalms (2005, 365-367). In the sermon Vos briefly explains Psalm 120:5-6 ("Woe to me that I dwell in Meshech, that I live among the tents of Kedar! To long have I lived among those who hate peace.") by saying that it is "difficult to locate Meshech on a

map” and that “Meshech and Kedar have come to symbolize bleakness, intolerable conditions, exile and alienation.” The preacher then leads his audience to an experience of the distress of the psalmist, “a man of peace” living “among those who hate peace” (120:7).

We, as travelers, can identify with the psalmist who had to dwell in Meshech, the land of alienation, misery and loneliness. We have all experienced the harshness of life first-hand. We have all been mauled by life and we bear the scars. We have known anxiety, doubt, temptations, sorrow, conflict and death. We have tasted the sweetness of life, but are also familiar with the bitterness of Meshech.

These words have a rhythm, created partly by beginning each statement in a similar fashion (“We, as travelers, can identify.... We have all experienced.... We have all been mauled.... We have known.... We have tasted....”). The preacher uses words imaginatively (“mauled by life”) and to evoke feelings of distress and hurt (“we bear the scars”). The last statement captures, poetically, the totality or reality of human experience (“the sweetness of life” and “the bitterness of Meshech”).

Vos’ sermon moves on to a second station in the pilgrim’s journey, Psalm 121:1-2 (“I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.”). Briefly commenting that the hills were the habitat for the utterly impotent gods, the preacher identifies four contemporary gods with “feet of clay.”

The sex god cannot reach all the pleasure-seekers in time. The god of success has so many supporters that he cannot satisfy everyone. The god of health has his hands full with AIDS. The cyber god has a hard time keeping up with human technological expertise. The gods

are tired. They would like to die, but we never leave them in peace.
They cannot really help us.

These rhetorically rich and powerful words produce a rhythm, partly by beginning each of the first four statements with the title of a contemporary god. The threefold use of “cannot” also contributes to the rhythm, but more importantly it underscores the impotence of all those gods.

There are here hints of playfulness; irony and a sense of tragedy are certainly evident. But the dominant feelings the above statements evoke cannot be but feelings of sympathy (“The gods are tired.”) and of disappointment (“They cannot really help us.”). So the audience is ready to join the psalmist, who asks “Where does my help come from?” and then answers “My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

CHAPTER 5

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH: A CASE STUDY OF RECEPTION

5.1 Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to describe the empirical research project I carried out as a part of the present study. A preaching workshop was conducted with eight student-participants with the purpose of gaining some preliminary insight into how theological students would respond to text-guided preaching. The research question had to do with the relevance of text-guided preaching (discussed in Chapter 4) to the Korean tradition of preaching (discussed in Chapter 2).

The overall method of the empirical research project was a case study in a **qualitative** research project. In the last phase of the preaching workshop, each participant completed an evaluation form consisting of four formal questions. They were mainly related to identification of the most significant and most difficult elements of text-guided preaching. The answers that the participants provided constitute the results of the case study. The results are presented in this chapter using the question-and-answer format.

These results are the results of an **illustration in practice** of how the theory for preaching in the specific Korean context, where I discovered the problem being researched in this study, is being received in practice by a sample of

people. Because of practical reasons the researcher has chosen to use the specific group of people.

This chapter begins with Don Browning's and Johannes van der Ven's theories of practical theology. Both of the practical theologians are critical of the traditional view of practical theology as an extension of the enterprise of the historical-systematic theology. Browning asserts that the entire enterprise is in an essential way "practical." J. A. van der Ven conceives practical theology as an empirical-theological research.

The empirical research project presented in this chapter has to be taken as a step in the theological-inductive phase within J. A. van der Ven's empirical-theological cycle. It was hoped that the results of the case study conducted would somehow contribute to general, theological-inductive perceptions regarding the relevance to the Korean preaching context of the homiletical theory that the text should shape the sermon.

5.2 New Understandings of Practical Theology

Historically speaking, the study of theology has been divided into three disciplines: historical theology, systematic theology, and practical theology. Within this framework, the main task of practical theology is understood as applying the results of historical and systematic theology to everyday religious issues and situations. The task of preaching, for instance, is understood as explicating theological concepts with the aim of applying them to everyday concerns.

There are, however, certain major problems with this theory-to-practice, or applicational, model of practical theology. One problem has to do with the fact that it relies on the deductive form of reasoning. According to Johannes van der Ven, the traditional approach to practical theology “might be adequate in the case of homogeneous, precisely defined and relatively simple social, pastoral and church situations. In reality, though, the social, pastoral and church situations of today are heterogeneous, diverse, pluriform, perplexing and sometimes even chaotic” (1993, 91).

Another problem with the theory-to-practice approach is that it assumes a modernist understanding of theory and practice. In the modern period, theology has been viewed as a theoretical discipline. Theology becomes “practical” only when conceptual, theological knowledge is “applied” to concrete situations of life.

However, as Don Browning asserts, theology is practical fundamentally. “We come to the theological task with questions shaped by the secular and religious practices in which we are implicated—sometimes uncomfortably” (1996, 6). The clear distinction between theory and practice assumed by modern theologians does not exist in reality.

New directions in practical theology have been proposed since the 1980s. Practical theological discussions have raised foundational and methodological questions, and to some degree they have been influenced by the social sciences. Here we want to focus on Browning’s conception of practical-theological reasoning and J. A. van der Ven’s conception of empirical-theological research.

5.2.1 Practical-Theological Reasoning

According to Browning's proposal, the study of theology is fundamentally a practical discipline employing practical reasoning and dealing with social practices. In other words, theology is "practical through and through and at its very heart" (1996, 7). Theological reflection has to begin with the actual practices of a particular Christian community, because what lies at the center of the Christian life is praxis. For this reason, theological reflection takes the form of practical reasoning.

According to Browning, theology begins with genuine questions concerning those meaningful, social practices that are shared, practiced and maintained by a religious community. This first movement within practical theological reasoning is called "descriptive theology" (1996, 47). The descriptive task is spurred by an acute awareness that a particular practice is problematic. It is guided by fundamental questions such as: What are we actually doing? What is the significance of this practice? What should we really be doing?

The descriptive task leads to a second movement, "normative theology," which deals with the issue of normativity. Normative theology involves interpretation of the authoritative texts of the Christian tradition that inscribe normative Christian practices (Browning 1996, 49). This normative task asks such practical questions as: What are the normative practices that should guide us? What do the authoritative texts that shape our Christian identity really say about our practices? What are the normative practices embedded within the authoritative texts really about? What is the vision they embody?

The normative task points toward the final movement within practical theological reasoning, which Browning calls “strategic practical theology.” This is where a local community of believers in fact returns to their present situations (1996, 55-56). They engage in the strategic task of reforming or transforming their problematic practices. In doing so, they are driven by critical questions such as: What are the specific factors directly contributing to this particular situation? What course of action does this situation require?

The strategic task brings the fruits of the descriptive and normative efforts back into contact with the particular situation that first prompted the practical theological process. The practical theological process that began with a crisis in praxis is now completed with more critical praxis.

5.2.2 Empirical-Theological Research

For J. A. van der Ven, praxis is central to practical theology; and the study of praxis requires an empirical approach. Generally speaking, an empirical approach to praxis involves not only the task of describing and explaining praxis as it is, but also the task of investigating and changing praxis so as to expand its boundaries (J. A. van der Ven 1993, 77). J. A. van der Ven’s empirical approach to practical theology consists of five phases: the development of the theological problem and goal, theological induction, theological deduction, empirical-theological testing, and theological evaluation (1993, 119-156; 1999, 332-335).

1. Identifying a theological problem and determining a theological goal.

Empirical-theological investigation begins with debating some aspects of the

hermeneutic-communicative praxis of a Christian community. It aims at “improving hermeneutic-communicative praxis, or at freeing it from constraints and expanding its boundaries” (J. A. van der Ven 1993, 120). In initiating a research, the researcher first identifies some limitations or inconsistencies with regard to some traditional religious practice and then determines a theological goal.

Preaching, pastoral counseling, and other forms of pastoral ministry are integral to the hermeneutic-communicative praxis and can be objects of empirical-theological research. The goal of a research on pastoral ministry may be formulated in terms of improving communicative methods, or of “determining the conditions under which particular methods may be helpful in unblocking religious intrapsychic communication of an individual with himself and with God” (J. A. van der Ven 1993, 120).

2. Theological induction. Once some particular theological problem is identified it has to be examined in the light of some concrete observation and of recent theological literature. Theological induction involves, first of all, collecting some concrete information on the theological problem and, secondly, reviewing concrete observations within a theoretical framework, which the researcher develops on the basis of contemporary theological literature. Theological induction is an “interaction of perception and reflection,” that is, “a kind of dialectical interplay” between concrete, more or less general, perceptions and general theoretical formulations (J. A. van der Ven 1993, 123).

Theological induction involves, thirdly, turning the theological problem into a specific empirical-theological question that can be researched and, fourthly, developing a research design that can adequately accommodate the specific empirical-theological question. An empirical study is necessarily limited in what it can explore or explain. It is impractical to explore every aspect of a theological problem. The researcher has to delineate an empirically and practically relevant aspect and turn it into a real research question.

The researcher then uses the question to shape specific methods, units, and other features that make up the research design. Empirical-theological research commonly uses the survey method to achieve “a descriptive and explanatory inventory by systematically questioning people about one or more issues” (J. A. van der Ven 1993, 123). It also employs the quasi-experimental design “to describe and explain the effect of interventions in a given situation.”

3. *Theological deduction.* The deductive reasoning guides and encompasses the formation of theories, the development of hypotheses, and the composition of questionnaires. Empirical-theological research requires a theory that may be validated empirically. In general theories have to demonstrate that they are logically consistent, independent, sufficient, and necessary. In empirical-theological research, the criterion of empirical sufficiency is crucial. Theological theories must have concepts that specify the concrete conditions under which they may hold. As J. A. van der Ven asserts, “theories without sufficient contextual specifications are not theories but speculations” (1993, 130).

A theory must contain concepts and an expression of how they are related to each other. One concept functions as the independent variable, while another functions as the dependent variable. The causal relationship between concepts may be mediated by a third concept functioning as the intervening variable. There may be other concepts and variables depending on the complexity of the theory. Theories specify the research units such as individuals, groups, and institutions.

The researcher must derive from a theory hypotheses that can be tested. The intent of theory formation is “to test against reality causal relationships which are presumed to exist on the basis of the basis of theological theory” (J. A. van der Ven 1993, 134). The concepts or variables of a theory have to be translated into concrete terms that express observable and measurable reality. On the basis of the hypotheses the researcher develops a survey questionnaire that can be administered to a sample group.

4. *Empirical-theological testing.* In the testing phase, the researcher first identifies the specific population to study, determining a sample group that is representative of the population. Then the researcher administers the questionnaire to the sample group, collecting the data to be analyzed. The researcher has to determine how the data analysis is to be carried out. It is critical to choose appropriate statistical tools to determine the relationship between variables.

Statistical presentations themselves, however, do not explain the causal direction of the relationship between variables. The research must attempt to

give a causal explanation either to support or to undermine theological hypotheses. As J. A. van der Ven explains, the explanation of the dependent variables in terms of the independent variables must be “exploratory.” “The goal of this endeavor,” he states, “is to formulate some well founded theological hypotheses supported by exploratory-causal research” (1993, 151).

5. *Theological evaluation.* Empirical-theological research requires theological evaluation of the results of the testing. The causal explanation has to be interpreted, that is, be placed in the immediate context of the theological question and also in the overall context of the research, the theological problem. The researcher tries to determine whether the causal explanation based on the results of the testing really answers the empirical-theological question articulated in the inductive process.

Theological evaluation may be extended beyond the empirical-theological study itself. “The results of the empirical-theological study do not represent a definitive endpoint.” They must be incorporated into the ongoing hermeneutic-theological debate. Empirical-theological investigation protects theology from dogmatism and fundamentalism. Theological evaluation of empirical findings is needed to protect theology from empiricism. Theology is a dialectical process: that is, “the results of the empirical study influence the hermeneutic-theological reflection, without which one would be dealing with an empirical dictate. At the same time, however, further hermeneutic-theological reflection stimulates a renewed confrontation with the empirical reality” (J. A. van der Ven 1993, 153).

5.3 Research Question and Method

The empirical component of my study has to do with the relevance and practicality of text-guided preaching. Is this kind of preaching relevant to Korean preachers and Korean congregations? It is crucial to have some notion of how text-guided preaching would impact the practice of preaching in the Korean church. Is it practical? That is, can it be successfully taught and practiced? As one who studies and teaches preaching theory and practice, it is vitally important for me to have some understanding of the practical aspect of preaching theories.

To enable an understanding of the impact of text-guided preaching, it was decided to conduct a preaching workshop for a small group of seminary students. I personally chose eight students who completed at least two courses in homiletics and demonstrated some competence in preaching. The one-day workshop consisted of four parts. Firstly, text-guided preaching was presented. Secondly, a demonstration of how the theory could be applied to a biblical text was given. Thirdly, each of the participants worked on a sermon draft. Fourthly, each participant completed the evaluation form.

The goal of the research project was to analyze students' understanding of and response to text-guided preaching. The evaluation form developed for this research project consisted of the following four questions.

1. What was for you the *most significant insight* of the preaching theory presented?
2. What was for you the *most difficult part* of the preaching theory presented?

3. As you draft a sermon, guided by the theory, what was the *most difficult part*?
4. What do you think is the *most crucial concern* among Korean or Korean American Christians today?

The first and second questions deal with the perception of the preaching theory. My concern was how my students would perceive the theory, which would be new to them. Which part of the theory would strike them as the “most significant”? Which part would be perceived as the “most difficult” in terms of understanding? It was expected that the first two questions would identify strengths and weaknesses of text-guided preaching.

The third question was intended to evaluate the students’ ability to apply the theory. The expectation was that this question would identify the students’ own weaknesses or struggles in sermon preparation. The fourth and last question was included for two reasons. The first reason was to explore the students’ general perception of life situations of Korean Christians. The second reason was to see whether or to what extent the students would interact with concrete everyday situations in preparing draft sermons.

The overall method of this particular research project was the qualitative approach of a case study. As one of the common methods of empirical research, the case study investigates a complex social phenomenon within some real-life situation (Yin 2003, 1). As Robert K. Yin explains,

the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. In brief, the case study

method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events—such as individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, international relations, and the maturation of industries. (2003, 2)

Yin maintains that the decision to do a case study has to be based primarily on the form of research question (2003, 5-7). The case study method is preferred when the research focuses on a “how” or “why” question. Yin asserts that the case study has a distinct advantage when “a ‘how’ or ‘why’ question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control” (2003, 9). “What” questions that are exploratory may lead to the use of case studies.

The four questions that have been formulated specifically for the evaluative part of the preaching workshop may be seen as exploratory “what” questions. The first three have to do with identifying those parts of text-guided preaching that are “most significant” (question 1) and those parts that are “most difficult” (questions 2 and 3) from the standpoint of the student-participants. The fourth question has to do with identifying major concerns of Korean Christians. The overall question that guided the whole research project was a “how” question. How well would the participants understand and incorporate the new, creative form of preaching?

Within J. A. van der Ven’s empirical-theological cycle, a case study may be undertaken in the theological-inductive phase to explore a traditional practice in its real-life context. As we noted earlier, theological induction invariably begins with some general, experiential perception regarding a socially embodied

Christian practice. In the case of text-guided preaching, however, there exists currently no noteworthy perception regarding its theory or practice in the Korean church. Because of this, the exploratory case study method was chosen.

The case study project was intended to gain preliminary understanding into how text-guided preaching would impact Korean preachers and congregations. The relevance of this methodological approach was established on the basis of the fact that the relationship between the new kind of preaching and the Korean church was not yet clear. It was expected that the case study would generate significant insights that could be used to facilitate general theoretical discussions within the theological-inductive phase of theological-empirical research. Such discussions are essential for theory building regarding the relevance of the theory and practice of text-guided preaching in the Korean church context.

5.4 Procedure

The one-day preaching workshop was conducted on March 5, 2007 with eight participants, who were personally selected from among the students in the master's programs at World Mission University in Los Angeles, California. I conducted the workshop, which was organized into four sessions. The following agenda was developed for the preaching workshop.

- I. Session 1: Introduction and Presentation
 - A. Objectives of the preaching workshop
 - B. The preacher as interpreter-communicator
 - C. Interpreting the life-situations of a congregation

- D. Studying the literary-rhetorical features of the biblical text
- E. Determining the function and form of the sermon
- F. Developing a sermon
- II. Session 2: Application
 - A. Discussion of practical concerns of Korean Christians
 - B. Literary-rhetorical analysis of Psalm 1
 - C. Sermon form contrasting two different lifestyles
 - D. Movements from text to life situation (a sample sermon)
- III. Session 3: Sermon Preparation
- IV. Session 4: Evaluation

1. *Presentation of text-guided preaching.* In the first session, after an introduction, a presentation of text-guided preaching, based on chapter 4 of the present study, was given. To offer a brief summary, preaching is a hermeneutical-communicative practice. The preacher is, first of all, an interpreter of the Bible and of her congregation. Contemporary preaching theories stress the importance of interpreting the experiential world of the listener. The preacher moves from the contextual sphere into the textual sphere. In dealing with biblical texts, the preacher has to understand various rhetorical functions they are intended to perform and literary devices that contribute to those functions.

The preacher is also a communicator. She communicates the message of the Bible in the contemporary socio-cultural context. She communicates, through a sermon and in contemporary language, a particular claim a particular

biblical text makes on its readers. The preacher has to develop for the sermon a movement that adequately expresses the literary-rhetorical dynamics of the biblical text. The sermon development should also reflect an accurate account of practical congregational situations.

2. *Application of text-guided preaching.* In the second session of the workshop, the group began with a discussion of major current issues affecting Korean Christians. The purpose of the discussion was to exercise the hermeneutical practice of interpreting the contemporary context. Then the student-participants performed a literary-rhetorical analysis of Psalm 1. I chose the text for the group for reasons of familiarity and relative clarity. The students attempted as a group, first, interpretation of the metaphors of a tree and chaff and, then, description of possible contrasting lifestyles that would correspond to the reality that the metaphors were intended to project.

The group worked together on a possible sermon form that would adequately express the message of Psalm 1. The participants adopted the following outline, to be used in the third session as each would engage in the drafting of a sermon.

- I. Introduction
- II. "Chaff": Image of "Restlessness"
- III. A Contemporary Form of "Restless" Living
- IV. "A Tree": Image of "Security"
- V. A Contemporary Form of "Secure" Living
- VI. Conclusion

To help the participants understand transitions from text to context in sermon development, I examined with them Cas Vos' sermon on the pilgrimage psalms. A portion of the sermon is analyzed in chapter 4 of the present study. The student-participants found it helpful as it displays a series of movement between text and context.

3. *Practice of sermon preparation.* In the third session, each student who participated in the workshop was asked to draft a sermon on Psalm 1, using the outline developed earlier. The group had two hours for the task. I understood that it usually required much more time to prepare a draft, but a completed draft was not what I expected from the students. My expectation was certain evidence that they attempted to work with the particular sermon form they developed for Psalm 1. I also wanted to see how they would bridge the biblical text and today's situations. Particularly I was interested in seeing how well my students would relate the images of a tree and chaff to contemporary situation.

4. *Evaluation of theory and practice.* In the last session, each participant was asked to complete the evaluation form. They were asked to answer in some detail three questions relating to their assessment of the theory and practice of text-guided preaching, as well as a single question relating to their perceptions of the experiential world of Korean Christians.

5.5 Results

Yin states that the question-and-answer format suits either a single-case or a multiple-case report (2003, 147). Yin explains that "the composition for each

case follows a series of questions and answers, based on the questions and answers in the case study database” and further that “the content of the database is shortened and edited for readability with the final product still assuming the format, analogously, of a comprehensive examination.”

Yin asserts that in reporting multiple-case studies the question-and answer format has some practical advantages. “Because each reader may be interested in different questions, the entire format facilitates the development of a cross-case analysis tailored to the specific interests of its readers” (2003, 148).

In presenting the results of the case study I conducted, the question-and-answer format is favorable, because a substantial portion of the case study results is already in the form of answers to a set of formal questions. The narrative below is guided by these four questions based on the formal evaluation questions.

First, what is the most significant part of the theory of text-guided preaching?

Second, what is the most difficult part of the theory?

Third, what is the most difficult part in practicing text-guided preaching?

Fourth, what are the most crucial concerns of Korean congregations?

5.5.1 Most Significant Theoretical Element

1. Four participants identified the task of *interpreting the experiential world* of the listeners as the most significant insight of text-guided preaching.

Duck Ho Kim stated that the idea that preaching should begin with an understanding of listeners was most helpful. He commented: “sermons often fail to connect with listeners because they do not address their concerns. It is instructive for me that as a preacher that I have to undertake a systematic interpretative study of my listeners.”

Kwang Tak Oh commented that many preachers simply made general assumptions about their congregations and did not make efforts to interpret the diversity of their everyday experiences.

Ji Hee Lee wrote: “preachers have to develop meaningful relationships with church members in order to have a realistic view of their major concerns and struggles.” Lee commented: “Because preachers lack a realistic view of church members, their sermons tend to be too theological and too moralistic.”

Jin Soo Jeon thought that interpreting contemporary situations was one of the most important tasks of preaching. He wrote: “It is true that the power of the gospel is universal; but it is also true that the gospel can effect transformation when it is related to specific situations.”

2. Three participants identified the task of *regenerating the rhetorical impact* of the text as the most significant element.

For Ki Young Lee what was most helpful was the idea that a sermon must embody a clear rhetorical function. This is what he wrote: “I fully agree with the idea that the preacher must have a clear purpose in delivering a sermon, must have a clear understanding of what he wants to achieve by means of the sermon.”

Eun Seok Kwon commented: “It is often the case that preachers try to interpret the text in terms of what they want to say. In theory, the biblical text should shape the sermon. In practice, preachers tend to shape what the text says in terms of what they want to say.”

Jae Young Chang also recognized as central to preaching the need to be faithful to what the biblical text is saying and doing. He made this comment: “it is crucial to faithfully communicate what the text says and do so that the word of God can speak to us today. We want to hear what God wants to say to us through the Bible.”

3. One participant identified *literary-rhetorical interpretation* as the most significant element. In Kyu Ho Kim’s view, paying a close attention to the literary dimension of the biblical text is critical “because the meaning of the text depends on the linguistic, literary and rhetorical tools it uses. In order to understand the intention of the author we have to know how he uses the language.”

5.5.2 Most Difficult Theoretical Element

1. Three participants identified the task of *interpreting the congregation* as the most challenging part of the theory of text-guided preaching.

Jin Soo Jeon considered interpreting contemporary situations to be not only the most crucial and also the most difficult task in text-guided preaching. He made this comment: “Korean preachers believe that since the power of the gospel is universal, all they have to do is to preach the gospel as purely and sincerely as possible. They believe that they should preach the gospel without

compromising its message to suit different groups and different situations.” He then wrote: since Korean preaching’s main focus is to proclaim the biblical truth, it is a great challenge for him as well as for many others to develop sensitivity to the real-life situation of listeners.

Ki Young Lee stated that the greatest challenge for him was learning to understand people. He wrote: “it is not easy to approach people, to really get to know them to understand how they think and live.” According to Lee, preaching must make a difference in the lives of the listeners and “that is why every sermon should have a clear goal and that requires learning and practicing ways of understanding people and their everyday concerns and thoughts.”

Jae Young Chang recognized understanding the everyday context of his congregation as the greatest difficulty in preaching. He stated: “Because we live in an individualistic society, it is not easy to relate to church members. They do not open up easily, even after few visits.”

2. Three participants thought that allowing the biblical text to shape the *form of the sermon* was the most difficult part.

Kyu Ho Kim took the idea of literary-rhetorical analysis seriously, but also expressed a serious concern about possible difficulties in developing sermons that adequately express the rhetorical and literary effects of biblical texts.

Duck Ho Kim expected major difficulties in understanding and practicing a variety of sermon forms. He explained: “We are used to one or two types of sermon forms. But in order to communicate biblical texts adequately, we have to use a variety of sermon forms. The idea that the text must shape the form of a

sermon is important. However, this requires that we learn and practice new forms of sermon.”

Eun Seok Kwon recognized the importance for the preacher-communicator of having a clear purpose in preaching. He said that having a clear goal would bring about a clear outcome. To capture Kwon’s greatest concern, different sermon forms are required for different sermon goals and that would require tremendous efforts on the part of the preacher.

3. Two participants identified *literary-rhetorical interpretation* as the most difficult task for them.

Kwang Tak Oh expressed that it was difficult for him to deal with literary features of biblical texts because he lacked training in literature. He noted: “theological schools do not offer courses designed to develop practical skills in rhetorical and literary analysis. Biblical interpretation pay little attention to literary conventions.”

Ji Hee Lee also expressed that her greatest challenge was dealing with the diversity of biblical genres. She said: “I need to work on how to approach different texts, how to understand the meaning of a text against its literary background.”

5.5.3 Most Difficult Practical Element

As a part of the preaching workshop, each participant drafted a short sermon on Psalm 1. The sermon form was determined by the group. After

completing their assignment, which was designed to assess how well they would perform in practicing text-guided preaching, they gave the following responses.

1. Four expressed that explaining the dominant imagery of Psalm 1 in *concrete terms* was the most difficult part in practicing text-guided preaching.

Kyu Ho Kim stated that he found it difficult to relate the poetic text to real-life experience. Specifically, he had difficulty in thinking of modern, contrasting forms of life that would express the contrasting images of a tree and chaff.

Similarly, the greatest challenge for Ji Hee Lee was explaining the text in terms of modern examples. Lee understood the importance of the context listeners, but found it difficult to explain the poetry of Psalm 1 with examples from everyday experience.

Eun Seok Kwon wrote: “It was not easy for me to describe contrasting lifestyles that would represent the contrasting metaphors. It was really challenging for me to communicate the message of the poetic text using concrete everyday terms.”

Jae Young Chang also expressed his own limitations in handling biblical poetry and in relating biblical imagery to real-life experience.

2. Two participants identified their unfamiliarity with the *sermon form* as their main problem.

Ki Young Lee wrote: “I am used to logical thinking that moves from one idea to another, from one point to another. I am not yet oriented to a way of thinking that moves from one metaphor to its contemporary expression and repeats the

movement. I must say I am not familiar with this pattern of sermon development.”

Jin Soo Jeon thought it important to study new theories and new styles of preaching. He said the area of difficulty for him was following the given sermon form. He explained that it stemmed from his unfamiliarity with the particular form.

3. Two participants’ problem had to do with the *poetic language* of Psalm 1.

Duck Ho Kim remarked: “In general biblical poems are not easy to approach. In order to read them, we need some understanding of how Old Testament poetry works.” He then wrote: “The particular metaphors of Psalm 1, the contrasting images of a tree and chaff, were common metaphors for the original readers. But they are not part of our everyday language. In general the poetic language of the Psalms requires detailed background information.”

Kwang Tak Oh expressed a more or less similar view. He wrote: “It not easy for me to fully grasp how figurative language works. I lack the sensitivity and skills required to fully grasp and communicate the power of figurative language to elicit strong emotional responses.”

5.5.4 Most Crucial Congregational Concern

1. Three participants identified the *conflict between Christian and worldly values* as the greatest concern for Korean churches and believers.

Kyu Ho Kim remarked that many Korean churches and Christians seemed to simply go along with secular emphases. He wrote: “It is a crucial Christian value to follow the will of God. But it is often the case that believers pursue and

promote their own interests, extolling the value of individual choice. Instead of following the Bible, modern believers seem to follow the gospel of individualism and pluralism.”

Jae Young Chang expressed a similar view. He said: “It is a great challenge for us to maintain a Christian lifestyle in this secular culture. I work with college students and young adults and I observe that their thoughts and behaviors mirror the secular culture.”

Jin Soo Jeon remarked: “Many believers are confused about the essence of the gospel. I think it is because the Korean church has failed to distinguish between Christian and worldly values. Preachers have been preaching the value of individual happiness and the value of prosperity without questioning whether or not these and other values are compatible with the gospel of the church.”

2. Two participants thought that *family issues* were the main concern of Korean believers.

Ji Hee Lee underscored the reality of divorce within the Korean-American Christian community. She wrote: “Many Korean marriages end in separation and divorce. I think pastors have to deal with the effects of divorce and, more basically, with marriage issues. Breakdown of traditional family roles poses a great challenge to the Korean church.”

Duck Ho Kim talked about intergenerational issues in the Korean church. He stated: “In a typical Korean congregation we see three generations: grandparents, parents, and children. Although we are well aware of

intergenerational issues, the church seldom addresses them. Preaching should be used to facilitate affirmation and acceptance of individuals across the generations. Understanding and discovery of one another will strengthen family ties and the church community and promote spiritual continuity and maturity.”

3. Three participants mentioned specific *financial, emotional, and spiritual issues* of individual Christians.

Kwang Tak Oh pointed out the importance of work and money for many Christians. He elaborated: “Christians need to develop the right attitude toward money. Many believers have to deal with financial issues, and consequently financial security is an important issue for them. But sometimes they spend too much time working and making money so that wealth becomes the central focus of their lives. I think they need to learn to trust God for their financial concerns and to balance between spiritual growth and financial security.”

In Ki Young Lee’s view, emotional health of individual Korean Christians should be the number one priority of the church today. This is what Lee wrote: “Many Korean Christians suffer pain, depression and other emotional difficulties from time to time. They need pastoral support and help in these areas. I think Korean church leaders need to develop strategies for dealing with emotional issues of church members.”

Eun Seok Kwon saw active church involvement as the most critical issue. He stated that lay members should be encouraged and equipped to play active roles in church leadership and ministry. He wrote: “Christians have God-given

duty to commit to and build up the local church. But the reality is that only a minority is actively involved in church activities.”

5.6 Discussion

1. *Regenerating the impact of the text.* We begin our discussion of the results of the case study with the fact that the central idea that a sermon should regenerate a portion of the text’s impact appealed to some of the participants. At least three of the eight participants saw as pivotal the idea that the biblical text should shape the sermon. The significance of this finding may be discussed in the contexts of the Korean and American traditions of preaching.

The Korean tradition of preaching has been indifferent to the diversity of rhetorical functions of the biblical texts. As we saw earlier (Chapter 2), most Korean preachers approach the Bible with the intention of isolating a biblical truth or idea to be delivered to their congregation. They often lack time, and in some cases patience, to carefully study the text so as to experience what it says and does. So it is encouraging to find that some student-participants understood the centrality in preaching of experiencing and regenerating a portion of the multi-layered impact of the text.

The Korean tradition of preaching has to seek transformation by entering into the exciting debates about sermon’s purpose, content and form that have been carried on by contemporary American homileticians. Korean debates about the nature of biblical preaching may benefit from paying a close attention

to Thomas Long's idea that preachers should try to accomplish with their sermons what God want to accomplish through the biblical texts.

2. *Shaping the form of a sermon.* For three participants (Kyu Ho Kim, Duck Ho Kim, and Eun Seok Kwon), the most difficult element of the theory of text-guided preaching was the idea that the text should shape the form of a sermon. What is relevant here is the fact two other participants (Ki Young Lee and Jin Soo Jeon) expressed that their greatest struggle in actually drafting a sermon as part of the workshop had to do with the particular sermon form the group had developed and used.

To understand these participants' struggle with sermonic forms, we have to point out the fact that one sermonic form predominates the practice of preaching in the Korean church. Most Korean preachers favor topical preaching and the three-point deductive sermon. Korean preaching has to be improved by experimenting with different preaching styles and different sermonic forms.

It is hoped that the fact that altogether five participants in the case study found the form of a sermon the most challenging aspect of preaching may possibly lead to a general theological perception that could facilitate serious discussions among Korean homileticians about possible changes in the Korean practice of preaching, although I am convinced that more case studies are needed to generate meaningful theological perceptions.

3. *Interpreting the listeners.* Evidently, the clearest finding of my case study has to do with the fact that four (Duck Ho Kim, Kwang Tak Oh, Ji Hee Lee, and Jin Soo Jeon) of the eight participants have recognized the interpretation of

one's listeners as the most significant insight of text-guided preaching. Also, we want to note that three participants (Jin Soo Jeon, Ki Young Lee, and Jae Young Chang) have identified the task of interpreting the listeners as the most difficult theoretical element. Altogether seven out of eight participants found that particular interpretative task to be either the most significant or the most difficult element.

This observation is of great importance in the context of the Korean homiletical tradition. Also, it implies that the new developments in American homiletics are relevant to the development of Korean preaching.

Korean preaching is largely concerned with issues relating to textual interpretation and sermon composition. The task of sermon preparation moves from locating a biblical truth to articulating it with the help of few specific ideas or points. What is missing in the process is an intentional study of the listeners and their contexts.

That a majority of the participants in my case study recognized the importance of interpreting the listeners' concrete situations is quite encouraging, precisely because such recognition is necessary for transforming the traditional homiletical practice in the Korean church. As some Korean homileticians have voiced recently, Korean preaching needs major improvements, most particularly in the relationship between the preacher and the congregation. Having a clear understanding of one's congregation is as important as having a clear understanding of one's text.

The recognition of the importance of interpreting the listeners clearly indicates that contemporary American homiletical discussions are directly relevant to the transformation of Korean preaching. One of the contributions of the new American homiletical movement has to do with the presence of the listener. Many homileticians have followed Fred Craddock's lead in embracing a listener-oriented preaching. In this respect at least American homileticians can contribute to the improvement of Korean preaching.

5.7 Conclusion

We can find in the above discussion some clear implications for the practice of text-guided preaching in the Korean context. In this concluding section, we want to raise some fundamental questions, questions that have to do with theological training at World Mission University, as well as those directly related to text-guided preaching.

The most fundamental question is this: How can we change or improve our theological training at World Mission University, so as to orient our students to the hermeneutic importance of the context of Christian faith? This question is directly related to my assumption that perhaps most of the theological students at our school may be experiencing some real difficulties with the crucial task of interpreting the everyday situation, where socially embodied Christian practices take place.

Traditionally speaking, theological education consists of learning the biblical and theological content and developing the communicative skills needed in

applying the content to the everyday situation. What has been missing is a systematic, empirical study of the cultural context.

In order to help our students to become competent interpreters of the cultural forces that shape the larger community that surrounds and influences a particular congregation or a particular Christian community—for instance, the Korean immigrant church in the United States—we have to develop and require courses that closely examine the complexity of the cultural phenomena.

To be more specific, such courses would help students develop a sufficient knowledge of such important things as: central issues in critical hermeneutics; narratives and idioms that inform social practices and institutions; critical cultural issues and competing positions they engender; changes, trends, contingent events shaping the larger society; and social, political and cultural forces affecting people's lives.

Learning the cultural context of Christian life has to include abilities to raise critical questions about socially embodied practices, both secular and Christian. In other words, we have to help our theological students develop practical reasoning, so they would be able to deal with such fundamental questions as: Why are we doing this? Why is this practice important? Why is it problematic? What are we to do?

Another fundamental question we want to raise has to do with biblical studies. Traditionally speaking, biblical studies have concentrated on the content of the Bible. Conservative biblical scholars have emphasized the importance of the theological meaning or message of the text, while critical

biblical scholars have focused their investigations on the relationship between the text and the historical fact—for instance, the connection between the Gospels and the historical Jesus.

I am genuinely convinced that biblical studies at World Mission University have to be redirected to emphasize the performative dimension of the biblical text. So the pertinent question is: How can we reorganize the biblical studies component of our theological curriculum, so as to increase our students' competencies in employing literary and rhetorical methods?

What would be required is an extensive reevaluation and reformulation of the goals and objectives for the group of courses dealing with biblical books and biblical interpretation. Currently our main objectives for the courses focus on reading and interpreting the content of the biblical texts in the light of historical and literary information. So we have to discuss, first of all, why the current perspective is problematic.

It is practically impossible for one or two homiletics courses to deal with the task of interpreting and understanding the cultural context of preaching. So there must be separate courses designed specifically for the task. By the same token, the methods and procedures of interpreting the biblical texts in terms of their communicative functions have to be dealt with in courses in biblical studies.

Should biblical exegesis aim at preaching? In other words, should biblical exegesis take into account homiletical considerations? According to the dominant view, exegesis must operate independently of all practical considerations.

However, from the perspective of new theoretical hermeneutics, such as Gadamer's and Ricoeur's, biblical interpretation cannot operate independently. As Cas Vos' *Theopoetry of the Psalms* amply demonstrates, it is not only possible but also pertinent to read and interpret the biblical texts from a homiletical perspective.

We turn now to the questions directly related to the theory and practice of text-guided preaching. As we indicated in the discussion section above, Korean preaching's single-minded focus on isolating and delivering timeless, biblical truths and its dependence on a single style—namely, topical-deductive preaching—have to be challenged and reformed.

So the first question is: What can be done to redirect the focus from the truth to the impact or claim? What can be done to improve the theory of text-guided preaching, so that it could be more potent in persuading my students to redirect their homiletical interest from the timeless truth to the rhetorical impact of a biblical text?

What is needed is a shift from epistemology to hermeneutics. I will have to deal with crucial philosophical issues relating to interpretation and language in more practical terms. In particular, the idea of a text disclosing a world and the idea of a text performing multiple speech-acts have to be presented to my students in terms that are less technical and easier to understand. Furthermore, I will have to explain these and other notions in connection with biblical texts.

In teaching text-guided preaching, a presentation of practical exegetical procedures for preaching will be quite helpful. Thomas Long's *The Witness of*

Preaching offers a brief exegetical method for preaching, which, he explains, “is designed to be thorough enough to provide a solid engagement with the text but brief enough to become a regular part of a minister’s weekly schedule” (1989b 60-61). Long’s method could serve as a model.

Another question that has to be addressed has to do with the form of a sermon. What can be done to encourage my students and others who have depended on the deductive sermon to explore other, more creative, sermon forms? More precisely: What would be possible procedures that would be helpful in teaching the homiletical process of allowing the text to shape the form of a sermon?

There are many possibilities for the text-to-sermon movement. I need to develop a number of effective patterns of sermon form and incorporate them into text-guided preaching. What is also required is a set of homiletical procedures, which would methodically guide students and preachers from claims of texts to creative sermon forms.

In order to make text-guided preaching relevant to the Korean church, it is necessary to present or outline the theory with a view to a specific social context, such as the particular ethnic experience of the Korean immigrants in the United States. I find a model for such a project in H. J. C. Pieterse’s *Preaching in a Context of Poverty*, which demonstrates how preaching and church praxis can contribute to the liberation of the poor from poverty.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter highlights the central features of text-guided preaching. Additionally, I will attempt to offer some general reflections on the most important aspects of the study in respect of what has been done and what has to be done.

6.1 Text-Guided Preaching: A Summary

The central idea of text-guided preaching is that sermons must sufficiently reflect those literary and rhetorical features that are essential to biblical texts. In short, sermons must regenerate what texts are saying and doing. Major insights of this theory of preaching are drawn from the work of the American scholar Thomas Long, most particularly his *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible*.

6.1.1 Speech-Act Theory, Biblical Interpretation, and Homiletics

The claim that sermons must regenerate the performative force of biblical texts is grounded in a particular Anglo-American philosophy of language. The later Wittgenstein has drawn our attention to the performative dimension of

ordinary language. A central idea is that words function in many different ways and serve many different purposes.

J. L. Austin's important work *How to Do Things with Words* builds on Wittgenstein's idea of language and develops what is now known as speech-act theory. A speech act is what a speaker does when she utters a statement. In other words, a speech act refers to an illocutionary act that a speaker performs with a locution. Speech acts are meaningful acts because they are integral to our social practices and activities.

Speech-act theory has been appropriated by biblical and homiletical scholars. The theologian Anthony Thiselton has persistently advocated the importance of viewing biblical texts as performing a variety of speech acts. One of his key insights is that a single passage may embody multiple speech acts. According to Thiselton, a paradigmatic biblical speech act has at least three fundamental features: the intention of the author, relevant facts, and transformative effects.

The American philosopher Nancey Murphy cautions that speech-act theory should not be taken as a complete theory of biblical interpretation but rather as a guideline underlining all the relevant dimensions of understanding. She explains that to achieve a firm grasp of what a biblical text is doing we need to attend to relevant linguistic and social conventions, referential and psychological elements, and what the author intended to do by means of the text.

Fred Craddock, who is widely acknowledged as the pioneer of the new creative tradition in American preaching, articulates the importance of speech-

act theory for homiletics in his influential work *As One without Authority*. He is convinced that the recognition of the creative or performative power of language offers new, fresh possibilities for preaching. It is, however, Thomas Long who has developed a theory of preaching partly on the basis of speech-act theory. His main thesis is that what the biblical texts say and do should shape what sermons say and do.

Cas J. A. Vos also has used speech-act theory to explain the three fundamental levels of the language of preaching. A sermon as a communicative act not only communicates a particular content but also performs a particular speech act and aims to achieve some particular impact. Vos stresses that every preacher must recognize that the function of the sermon cannot be confined to communication of the content of the text. It is pivotal for preachers to recognize the transforming power of the sermon. By means of a sermon a preacher may effect significant change.

6.1.2 The Hermeneutical Process

Preaching involves a process of interpreting the text. This hermeneutical process begins with an understanding of the world of the preacher and the congregation. There is a gap between the world of the ancient texts and the world of the modern readers. It is inevitable that an understanding of an ancient text is partly determined by the life situation of its reader. The goal of the hermeneutical process is to glean what sort of claim the text makes on us in respect of our current situation.

H. J. C. Pieterse and Cas Vos have stressed the importance of beginning the hermeneutical-homiletical process with a firm grasp of our existential world. Pieterse draws on Hans-Georg Gadamer's and Paul Ricoeur's philosophical hermeneutics to emphasize the central importance of the contingent situation of the preacher and the congregation in the preaching process. Gadamer's main idea is that application constitutes the starting-point of understanding. Extending this idea, Ricoeur asserts that the interpreter's critical self-understanding allows the text to effect genuine transformation.

Pieterse makes four pivotal points. First, the preacher enters the world of the Bible from some particular contingent point. Second, the preacher interacts with the text, trying to locate answers to the questions the members of the congregation are asking. Third, the biblical texts are preeminently open and have the power to speak to different people in different situations. Fourth, preaching requires imaginative and faithful translation of what God says to the congregation by means of the text.

Vos draws our attention to the importance of the arts as windows into the complex experiential world of the congregation and the larger community. Such diverse forms of expression as poetry, painting, music, story, and film not only disclose various levels of experience but also evoke feelings and effect changes. Films, for instance, offer more than entertainment. In many cases they offer social commentary, showing how things and people may appear from particular standpoints.

The hermeneutical process begins with an understanding of the everyday world of the preacher and the congregation and then moves into the textual world. The preacher has to discern what the text is doing with the aim of communicating the text's illocutionary force by means of the sermon. Thomas Long regards understanding of what the text is saying and doing to be the heart of the textual interpretation. Understanding a text consists neither in grasping an idea nor in having some aesthetic experience.

Long insists that preachers have to carefully attend to the literary and rhetorical dynamics of biblical texts to fully grasp what the text is capable of doing. To fully interact with biblical texts preachers must understand how various literary forms and devices work to determine meaning. In dealing with psalms, for example, preachers must be familiar with how Hebrew poetry works. In addition, preachers must understand the rhetorical effectiveness of poetry in shaping how we perceive and experience the world around us. Psalms operate at the level of the imagination, often relying on some powerful metaphors.

6.1.3 The Homiletical Process

The hermeneutical process leads to the homiletical process of shaping a sermon that communicates what the text has to say to the modern congregation. The homiletical process is concerned with bridging the text and the sermon. The task of the sermon is to regenerate some impact or claim of the text in view of some particular communicational situation. A sermon does not communicate everything a text does but only a portion of what it does. A sermon

communicates the illocutionary force of some portion of a text for a particular congregation.

There can be a variety of ways of bridging the text and the sermon. Long explains four basic text-to-sermon patterns. First of all, the movement of the text may shape the movement of the sermon. Second, the conflict in the text may shape the conflict in the sermon. Third, the sermon may be developed around a central insight that resonates with the central insight of the text. And finally, the sermon may aim to express some particular mood that reflects the dominant mood of the text.

A sermon by Vos provides an excellent example of how the movement of the text may shape the movement of the sermon. In fact, this sermon closely follows the movement of a series of psalms known as pilgrimage psalms (Psalms 120-134). The sermon begins with Psalm 120, creatively regenerating the desire of a believer living in exile and alienation. Then the sermon moves on to Psalm 121, on the basis of which the preacher exposes the impotence of contemporary “gods.” Then the sermon moves on to Psalm 122 recreating the experience of the pilgrims who find God in the Jerusalem Temple. The second half of the sermon focuses on Psalm 134 to regenerate the extraordinary experience of the faithful preparing to return home after their pilgrimage.

6.2 General Reflections

1. This study takes an *empirical approach* to the practice of preaching. This study has used Johannes van der Ven’s empirical-theological research program

as its theological-theoretical framework, following the problem—induction—deduction—testing—evaluation cycle.

This reflects a growing trend among practical theologians to make the results of their studies less speculative and more practical. As we mentioned, Don Browning believes that theology in general is “practical through and through and at its very heart.” As van der Ven asserts, empirical-theological investigation protects theology from dogmatism. Practical theology must be intimately connected with socially embodied Christian practices, taking into account their social contexts.

A research in practical theology must begin with a traditional, communal practice that is important to some community of believers. It does not and cannot begin with a theological concept. Moreover, the Christian practice in question must be scrutinized firstly in its natural setting. Why is this practice problematic? What are its problems, inconsistencies, or limitations? How does the practice as it is practiced now affect our community, our identity, our core beliefs and practices?

Our study began with the traditional practice of preaching in the Korean church, which has favored a single type of preaching, the topical-deductive. The socio-cultural context of the Korean church is changing rapidly. The transformation of the larger Korean society is real and enormous. Korean preachers need to use a diversity of hermeneutical-communicative strategies to be heard.

Our study has, unfortunately, left out the task of examining Korean preaching in the context of the social transformation. Such task would be important to the first and second phases (formation of the problem and induction) of the empirical-theological cycle. Discussions on new directions for Korean preaching have to be based on some contextual analysis.

2. This study has explored in some detail one particular type of preaching, *text-guided preaching*. It is largely based on the American homiletician Thomas Long's important work that focuses on the idea that textual dynamics should be channeled through sermons.

Many traditional homiletics have emphasized the centrality of cognitive content in interpreting and communicating the message of the Bible. In reaction to this approach to preaching, new homiletics have emphasized the primacy of experiential event in the interpretative-communicative process. The trend in American homiletics is to shift focus from cognitive content to experiential event.

This mirrors the dichotomy in American Protestantism between conservatism and liberalism. The conservatives maintain that theology seeks knowledge and truth really matters. The liberals maintain that theology belongs to the domain of feeling and what really matters is meaning, or more precisely, existential or experiential meaning. Theology has accepted the philosophical, epistemological distinction between knowing and feeling.

From Long's standpoint, however, knowledge and experience are closely bound together. The meaning of a particular biblical text cannot and should not be confined to either the cognitive or the experiential aspect. For biblical texts

are capable of multiple communicative functions or speech-acts. They do many things. They may evoke emotions, inform facts, issue commands, invite praises, and so on.

Not only biblical texts but sermons also should be viewed as verbal performances. From this point of view, Long asserts that a sermon should aim to regenerate a portion of what the biblical says and does. In other words, there should be some degree of continuity between the performance of the text and the performance of the sermon.

This in fact addresses an important theological issue. Christians want to learn and obey the will of God. This is the primary reason for reading the Bible and listening to the preacher. Preaching is a crucial instrument of discovery, discovery of God's will. Usually by means of the sermon the congregation discovers what God said in the biblical text. So this theological point should encourage preachers to find creative ways to regenerate textual speech-acts.

Our study could have benefited significantly by a robust, extensive account of a diversity of possible text-to-sermon paths or movements. I believe that such a study should be undertaken shortly and be incorporated into my future homiletics courses at World Mission University, since it would be of tremendous help for our theological students who are being equipped for pastoral and other forms of ministry.

3. This study has taken quite seriously the relationship between the preacher and the congregation. One of the problems with traditional preaching is that it creates a gap between the preacher, who is viewed as the primary (if

not sole) interpreter and instructor of the biblical truth, and the listeners, who are viewed as passive recipients.

The gap between the preacher and the congregation is much more serious in the Korean church, which has largely accepted the highly hierarchical social structure of the larger society. The Korean preacher is elevated so far above his congregation that his interpretation and proclamation can hardly be challenged. His sermons are often either too theological or too moralistic.

Because the preacher is usually viewed as the interpreter-communicator of the timeless truth or universal spiritual principle, he or she has very limited interest or need for interpreting the everyday, real-life situations of his or her listeners. Because of this reality, sermons often fail to connect with the listeners, as some of the participants in the case study have observed.

One of the encouraging findings of the case study is that seven of the eight participants recognized the task of interpreting the experiential world of the listeners as either the most significant or the most difficult element of text-guided preaching.

What they need is ways of connecting with the listeners. It is crucial for homiletical theories to emphasize the importance of interpreting the listeners' context. It is also important to discuss how preachers may establish meaningful relationships with their congregations that enable real understanding possible.

4. Our discussion of the empirical findings indicates that the theory and practice of text-guided preaching require improvements. First of all, my presentation of text-guided preaching has to be less technical and more practical

in explaining key notions of philosophical hermeneutics and speech-act theory of language. Secondly, it can be improved by incorporating a brief, practical manual of exegetical procedures. A third area in need of improvement has to do with the text-to-sermon movement. There is a need to develop a manual that explains in detail a variety of creative text-to-sermon patterns.

5. The empirical findings lead us to ask some far-reaching questions. What could the theological faculty of World Mission University do to help the students to become competent interpreters of the cultural context of Christian life and preaching? There is a need for the faculty members to seriously debate the necessity of courses dealing with interpretation of the cultural context.

Another fundamental question concerns biblical studies at World Mission University. How can the faculty of biblical studies department reorient their focus from the theological content to the performance of the Bible? We have to look into possible ways of incorporating literary and rhetorical methods into biblical exegesis.

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