

1. INTRODUCTION

For many listeners, preaching can be dull and lifeless (Baumann 1998:11). Sometimes listening to a sermon is an ordeal to be endured rather than life-giving bread from God to a hungry soul. At times in the praxis of preaching an encounter between the human and divine is absent, leaving hearers sterile in their worship and stagnant in their spiritual growth. Congregants are found to be regularly “clock watching” waiting for the moment of release and relief when the sermon is finally over. They are then free, in their thinking, to escape from the drudgery of church to really live and enjoy the rest of the day and week.

In some situations preaching has become nothing more than suggested prescriptions of how to do one thing or another in the course of living life with its many challenges. Preachers are often limiting their preaching to the listeners’ perceived needs like the offering of advice on solving emotional problems or developing a myriad different life skills.

In the light of the increased focus on the listeners’ needs determining the agenda for the preacher and seeking to understand the role of the pastor as preacher Jim Shaddix (2003:3) asks,

Did God really commission him to be the dispenser of the infinite number of how-tos necessary for navigating daily life effectively? Is it possible for any preacher to be that smart? Can he be the expert in that many fields, especially when you consider the plethora of life issues for which the people in the congregation are seeking help? Is it possible for any pastor to invest the kind of time necessary to research and organize such an expanse of information? There is no doubt in anyone’s mind that today we churchgoers are asking questions about daily living. But are pastors responsible for or even capable of answering all those questions?

It is also common place to find the church trying a variety of options to “succeed”.

Technique is being substituted for truth, marketing action for thought, the satisfaction of the individual for the health of the church, a therapeutic vision of the world for a doctrinal vision, the unmanageable by the manageable, organism by organization, those who can preach the word of God by those who can manage an organization, the spiritual by the material. At the center of these substitutions is an individualism fired by a shallow self-centered consumerism. And along with this, and because of it, has come a debilitating loss of truth – the very thing that brought mainline denominations low – and behind that there lies the loss of awareness of God as objective and transcendent. This too is an inescapable part of the move to the market, of adaptation to the ways of the world that modernization has brought about.

(Wells 1994:86)

And then there are some listeners who are exposed to nothing more than ‘sermonettes’ comprising of a few ‘blessed holy thoughts’ with the intention of lifting the hearers’ spirits for the week ahead. Sermons are often thought of and perceived as dreary, dead and meaningless.

While this may be the modus operandi and experience in many churches one would question whether this is what is intended or expected by those who take preaching seriously as described by Cooper and McClure (2003:2).

The sermon, in principle, is central to the life and thought of a worshipping community. It brings together the fundamental working powers and authorities of a living faith. In the context of a worship service, the sermon is the meeting place of God, Scripture and the present; it provides a home for faith, theology

and culture; it is where a biblical understanding of reality is confessed, interpreted, and related to our experience of reality; it is where we hear whispered to us an inner word of God addressing the particulars of our lives and times; and finally, it is where gospel and judgment encounter us.

More importantly; can this be what God's intended purpose for preaching is? There is surely something more majestic and glorious in the event of preaching that would inspire greater faith in God and worship of God.

1.1 The Problem Stated

The preacher in a local congregation has a significant role not only in communicating the Word of God in a sermon in a technically superior manner but his mandate from God is to lead the people to encounter the Glory of God. Paul urges Timothy to see the gravity of this task; "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his Kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction (2 Timothy 4:1-2)." William Hendriksen explains that this "heralding" or "preaching" is generally "the divinely authorized proclamation of the message of God to men" (1991:309). This must have serious implications for the preacher and the listener exposed to the recent popular homiletical practice which has turned in its emphasis and focus to the subjects. It has resulted in a strong emphasis on human experience,

human experience has become the focal point of the sermon. Meanwhile, subjective religion is in vogue and the personal search for meaning receives full attention. Since the human experience receives central attention, God is mostly mentioned indirectly. God-language is primarily language about our human awareness of God.

(Immink 2004:110)

And as Campbell (1997:142) observes, the preacher in many instances today primarily speaks about God “by speaking of how God is reflected in human existence and experience”.

The preacher’s accountability to God must also call into question preaching methodology practiced at the 2005 Baptist Youth of South Africa Summer camp where the keynote speaker unashamedly made use of unwholesome frivolous language (March 2006 Baptist Union of SA Executive minutes) in his sermon to more than a thousand teenagers.

This does lead to two further questions; was this the pattern and practice of the New Testament church and, is this what God intended for the task of preaching?

A completely different focus is conveyed by J. I. Packer, speaking of his impressions after hearing Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones saying that he had never heard such preaching. It came to him as a listener with the force and surprise of electric shock bringing him “more of a sense of God than any other man” (Catherwood 1985:170).

Piper (1990:22) asks the all important and relevant question: “Do people in the 21st century take from the worship service a sense of God, a note of sovereign grace, a theme of panoramic glory, the grand object of God’s infinite Being? Do they enter for one hour in the week into an atmosphere of the holiness of God which leaves its aroma upon their lives all week long?”

All action inevitably leads to consequences. The preacher may then with his focus and emphasis on human experience in the preaching event be an obstacle in mediating the word of God to the listener, whereas should his goal not be that of meaningfully facilitating the mediating of the word of God in to the life of the listener leaving a distinct impression of a sense of God? Should God-honouring preaching not make every effort to avoid obscuring God’s

revelation and glory but rather occupy itself in shining the light of God's word and glory into the heart and mind of the listener?

If this is true, then what we need most, in the words of Allen, is a "revitalized apprehension of the reality of God" (1995:30). John Piper (1990:9) goes a step further in describing the current dilemma in the preface of his book, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*,

People are starving for the greatness of God. But most of them would not give this diagnosis of their troubled lives. The Majesty of God is an unknown cure. There are far more popular prescriptions on the market, but the benefit of any other remedy is brief and shallow. Preaching that does not have the aroma of God's greatness may entertain for a season, but it will not touch the hidden cry of the soul: Show me thy glory!

1.2 Purpose

The intention of the research is to develop a homiletical approach that will better equip the preacher in proclaiming the Glory of God through the Word of God, thus inspiring the listeners to greater vitality of faith in God and into a deeper and richer encounter "with and of" God in worship.

1.3 Methodology

The research of this study will follow two methods.

1.3.1 A Literature Study

The first is making use of a literature study to describe a Biblical understanding of the Glory of God, seeking to understand how the preacher obscures or proclaims this vision of God in his preaching praxis. The literature study will seek to give an overview focusing on the more recent theological influences, features, emphases and trends in theories of preaching as well as

describing the more prominent preaching models been utilized in the Evangelical and Baptist contexts. Literature sources will be examined with an emphasis and particular interest in that which has been written by evangelicals who, like Baptists, have a high view of Scripture.

The literature study will include a review of some of the classics on preaching as well as more recent books and articles written relevant to this dissertation.

1.3.2 Practical-theological Method

Since practical theology deals with God's activity through the ministry of human beings (Heitink 1999:8), the accumulation and organizing of information must not be an end in and of itself. It is rather a means to an end. The desired end is that of being a useful channel in the hands of God thus facilitating a living faith and meaningful encounters with God.

It is for this reason that a second aspect to the methodology must be included. The literary study must be supplemented and supported by research methods that lead to changes in action.

According to Heitink (1999:6), practical theology as a theory of action is the empirically orientated theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society. It inevitably aims at change, through a process of management and steering.

In this methodology of practical theology one meets the concepts of understanding, explanation and change (Heitink 1999:163). These concepts are represented by hermeneutic, empirical and strategic perspectives respectively. Each perspective forms part of a triangular relationship that interconnects assisting the researcher in the task of arriving at meaningful conclusions.

The hermeneutic perspective (Heitink 1999:178) includes researching the theoretical ideas, present day features and challenges that the study of

homiletics is facing. The challenge in the context of this study being a concern for vibrancy of faith and worship in response to the proclamation of the Glory of God. It is here that the literature study will make a valuable contribution.

The empirical perspective (Heitink 1999:220) will focus on explanation. In this section, I will seek to illustrate the theoretical ideas by looking at specific preachers, the content of their sermons and the congregational response. This will include scrutinizing their particular preaching practice seeking to establish how it can either be a hindrance or a help to faith and worship prompted by the Glory of God.

The strategic perspective (Heitink 1999:201) will seek to facilitate change. Once a hermeneutical approach has been developed in the circular process of understanding and explanation, then a new theory of action will be formulated to develop the skills of the preacher.

The process can be illustrated by means of the diagram shown in Figure 1.

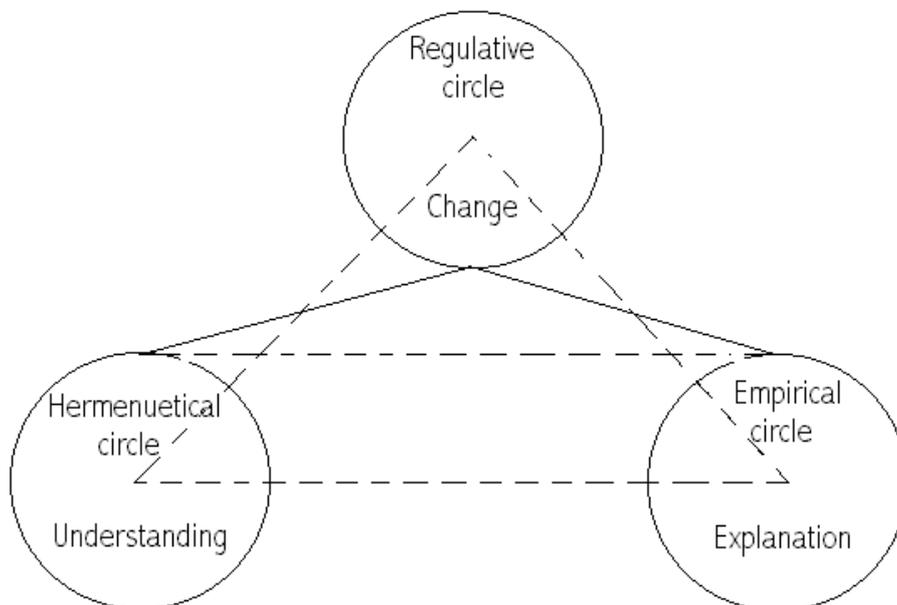


Figure 1

1.4 Development of Study

In developing this study, the authority, inerrancy and sufficiency of the Bible is assumed. What really matters is what God thinks (Guinness 1993:14). The research undertaken in this dissertation will seek to be in line with the high view Baptist's have held and continue to hold on Scripture.

The Baptist Union of Southern Africa confirmed their position on the authority of Scripture at a National Assembly in 1998 (*The South African Baptist Handbook*, 1998-1999:413). This step took the Baptist Union back to what Hudson-Reed had said years ago,

Differences of opinion strongly held and maintained among us have not been able to break the bond of loyalty to the Scriptures as the Word of God... We have always thought of ourselves as people of the Book. All Christians hold to the authority of the Bible, but Baptists have a peculiar view on the supremacy of that authority.

(1983:357)

The Bible therefore cannot be ignored or taken lightly by any preacher seeking to be relevant and effectively used in transforming the lives of his hearers. The usefulness of Scripture is described by the Apostle Paul writing to Timothy saying that "All Scripture is God breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16).

On the basis of the above assumption the research will be developed in the following areas:

1.4.1 Understanding the 21st Century Challenge

The intention of this chapter is to identify some of the challenging features on the preaching landscape of the 21st century. The research will be limited to

features on the preaching landscape of the 21st century that impact the vision of a Majestic and Glorious God. The focus of this study is limited to exploring effective preaching of the Glory of God evoking the response of worship and the vitality of faith in God.

1.4.2 A Biblical View of the Glory and Transcendence of God

The Biblical text will be surveyed with detailed focus on selected relevant passages to establish the meaning of the Glory of God in the belief system of those believing men and women. Further attention will be given to an understanding and emphasis of the immanence and transcendence of God from a Biblical point of view.

1.4.3 Theological Theories and Preaching Models

The research will then seek to identify and survey several past and current theological theories and preaching models. The theological theories and preaching models will be discussed and examined in the light of the biblical text and mandate.

1.4.4 Towards a Homiletical Approach

Murray A. Capill (2003:12) says that preaching: “Is intended to produce by the grace of God, a deep impression on the hearts and souls of the hearers. It is a divinely ordained means of drawing people to God and compelling them to respond to Him.”

In this chapter a summary of key theological convictions and practices gleaned from the literature research will be identified. These key theological convictions and practices will be deemed necessary for a preaching model that is best suited to proclaim the Glory of God bringing the listener into an encounter with the magnificence of God. As a result of this emphasis, leaving an impression of God on the hearers, and in this way inspiring them to greater

vitality of faith in God and into a deeper and richer encounter of God in worship.

1.4.5 The Effect on the Listener

Through the use of empirical research this study will seek to examine the effect on listeners exposed to three different preaching models, namely narrative, expository and topical. The purpose is to establish whether the different preaching models, including other aspects of those sermons, are proclaiming the Glory of God leading to vitality of faith and worship, or whether the sermons are in any way a hindrance to the listeners' faith and worship by obscuring the Glory of God. The design of the questionnaire used will include the key theological convictions and practices identified in the previous chapter.

In doing this it must however be stressed that in the process the listener will not be ignored. Vos promotes the importance of the listener (2005:317) stressing that the preacher diligently considers how the sermon benefits those listening to the sermon.

The preacher should always look for ways of involving his/her audience in the introduction, the arrangement of the sermon movements and the conclusion. The sermon should be created and delivered for the benefit of the congregation.

The literature study will seek to identify and therefore provide the specific helpful as well as distracting (or hindering) features in a sermon that lead to faith and worship of the listeners, providing a basis for detailed scrutiny of specific preachers and their sermons.

1.4.6 An Adjusted Theory of Praxis

The strategic perspective (Heitink 1999:201) will seek to facilitate change. Once the homiletical approach has been developed in the circular process of

understanding and explanation, then a new theory of action will be formulated to develop the skills of the preacher in communicating the Glory of God through the Word of God, thus inspiring the listeners to greater vitality of faith in God and into a deeper and richer encounter of God in worship.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGE

One cannot generalize making broad pronouncements on the state of preaching. There are some and perhaps many situations where preaching is powerful and effective. It cannot, however, be said that this is what is happening in every local church. Capill (2003:9) makes the following observation:

In many a church you can find preaching that is topical and contemporary, but light on biblical substance. You can easily find preaching that is personal, but in a largely subjective or emotional way. You may well find preaching that is solidly biblical, yet rather lifeless and dreary. But to find clear, powerful preaching of the Word that grips your heart and leaves you not so much feeling that you have been in the presence of a great communicator as in the presence of a great God, not so much entertained by a man as enthralled by the truth of God – that, it seems, is all too rare.

There is no doubt a multiplicity of reasons for this particular state of affairs in preaching.

2.1 The Role of Knowledge in the Christian Faith

Throughout its history the one true Church founded on the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself being the Cornerstone, has believed and confessed that the one true God has “revealed himself, not only in creation and providence, not only in Jesus Christ, but also verbally or informationally” (Reymond 2003:13). This foundational belief has been questioned and in many instances discarded, thus having an effect on the role of preaching.

Christian theology has over the past centuries been subject to the attack on the role of knowledge in the Christian faith. Many present-day theologians are

questioning God's ability to communicate truth to man and therefore undermine man's ability to attain knowledge about God (Nash 1982:11).

This agnostic attitude toward God can be seen in the writings of Gordon Kaufman (1972:95):

The real reference for "God" is never accessible to us or in any way open to our observation or experience. It must remain always an unknown X, a mere limiting idea with no content. It stands for the fact that God transcends our knowledge in modes and ways of which we can never be aware and of which we have no inkling ...God is ultimately profound Mystery and utterly escapes our every effort to grasp or comprehend him. Our concepts are at best metaphors and symbols of his being, not literally applicable.

This kind of scepticism is also apparent in the writings of philosopher W T Stace (1955:19) who maintained that "God is utterly and forever beyond the reach of logical intellect or of any intellectual comprehension, and that in consequence when we try to comprehend his nature intellectually, contradictions appear in our thinking."

These views have trivialized the traditional role that truth has played in Christian religion. Cognitive knowledge about God is simply declared impossible and replaced by personal encounter, religious feeling, trust or obedience (Nash 1982:12). In other words "God does not give us information by communication. He gives us Himself in communion. It is not information about God that is revealed but ...God Himself" (Baillie 1956:29).

William Temple (1934:316, 322) held that "there is no such thing as revealed truth ...What is offered to man's apprehension in any specific revelation is not truth concerning God but the living God Himself". This marked a dramatic break from traditional historic Christianity, a tradition that affirmed both an

intelligible revelation from God and the divinely given human ability to know the transcendent God through the medium of true propositions.

Nash (1982:13) says that the possibility of human knowledge about God has been denied on at least three grounds: (1) some have precluded knowledge about God on the basis of particular theories about the nature of human knowledge; (2) others have been led to antagonism because of their view of the nature of God. An example of this is that some have so exaggerated the divine transcendence that the Wholly Other God of whom they speak could not be an object of human knowledge; and (3) still others have affirmed the impossibility of knowledge about God because of theories about the nature of human language. They regard human language as incapable of serving as an adequate carrier of information about God.

He asks whether there is a relationship between the human mind and the divine mind that is sufficient to ground the communication of truth from God to humans. He further states that there was no doubt in Christian thought that such a relationship exists and that such knowledge is possible until alien theories of knowledge gained ascendancy in the decades after Hume and Kant (Nash 1982:14).

If there is no communication of truth possible from God to humans then this has serious implications for the preacher who intends to be instrumental in communicating the Glory of God through the Word of God, thus inspiring the listeners to greater vitality of faith in God and into a deeper and richer encounter of God in worship.

It is nevertheless important to understand the development of this kind of thinking coming to us today via a number of influential thinkers.

The writings of David Hume (1711 -1776) attacked the supremacy of human reason, which had been one of the cardinal tenets of the Enlightenment. He did this by seeking to show that human reason has definite limits (cf. Hume 1993:11-24). Anyone who extends reason beyond its limits becomes involved

in absurdities and contradictions and becomes prone to the disease of scepticism (Brown 1974:68, Young 1982:76). Hume believed that philosophers have been far too optimistic in assessing the claims of human reason. Most of the things we think we know are not known at all, that is, they have not been arrived at on the basis of reasoning and they are not supported by experience.

Hume held that pivotal beliefs rest on something other than reason and experience. The something other is that of instinct, habit and custom. Some non-rational force compels us to accept these pivotal beliefs. In his writings on ethics Hume argued that moral judgments do not rest on reason but on non-rational human nature. Hume (1993:16) asks, “Why torture your brain to justify the course of nature upon suppositions, which for aught you know, may be entirely imaginary, and of which there are to be found no traces in the course of nature?” In ethics, as in metaphysics and religion, human reason is and ought to be the slave of human passions, that is, our non-rational nature. This is tantamount to the claim that we cannot have knowledge about the transcendent. This axiom Nash (1982:20) identifies as the foundation of what he calls Hume’s Gap.

Hume did not doubt the existence of an external world. Nature, instinct and common sense all lead us to believe in an external world. According to Hume the arguments of the rationalists should be ignored and personal instincts should be trusted. He believed that investigation ought to be limited to areas, such as mathematics, where knowledge is possible. “Speculative knowledge claims about certain topics in metaphysics, theology, and ethics should be avoided; such matters should be accepted on the basis of faith, not knowledge” (Nash 1982:20, cf. Young 1982:77, Brown 1974:93). “All the philosophy, therefore, in the world, and all the religion, which is nothing but a species of philosophy, will never be able to carry us beyond the usual course of experience, or give us common measures of conduct and behaviour different from those which are furnished by reflections of human life (Hume 1993:22).

Hume's goal in his discussions on religion was the same as his objective in philosophy: he wished to show that reason is powerless to convert anyone to the claims of faith. Speaking of the nature of the divine Being; his attributes, his decrees, his plan of providence Hume (1993:30). comments, "Concerning these, human reason has not reached any certain determination: But these are topics are so interesting, that we cannot restrain our restless enquiry with regard to them; though nothing but doubt, uncertainty and contradiction, have, as yet been the result of our most accurate researches". He's personal preference seems to have been for a non-rational faith in a god unsupported by reason, revelation, miracles, or evidence of any kind (Horton 1995:167, Nash 1982:22, Brown 1974:73).

The nature of Hume's Gap can be identified as the rejection of the possibility of a rational knowledge of God and objective religious truth. He grounded man's belief in God in man's non-rational nature (Young 1982:62). Hume was the precursor of those philosophers and theologians who insist that religious faith must be divorced from knowledge and who believe that the impossibility of knowledge about God will in some way enhance faith. Hume was engaged in denying knowledge in order to make room for faith. For him knowledge and faith have nothing in common. The arrogance of rational religion must be destroyed so that faith (non-rational faith) can assume its proper place as the only legitimate ground of religion (Sproul 2000:114, Nash 1982:22).

Nash (1982:22) shows how Hume's Gap makes its appearance in the thought of many modern thinkers. "The contemporary eclipse of God can be seen in Sartre's 'silence of God,' in Heidegger's 'absence of God,' in Jasper's 'concealment of God,' in Bultmann's 'hiddenness of God,' in Tillich's 'non-being of God,' and in radical theology's assertion of 'the death of God'."

Paul's sermon to the philosophers on Mars Hill (Acts 17) concerning worship of the Unknown God seems quite relevant to this important issue. Non-evangelical theology since Hume is a chronicle of futile attempts to retain respectability of religious faith while denying religion any right to revealed truth.

While contemporary non-Evangelicals have virtually reduced faith to “courageous ignorance” (Henry 1970:13) evangelicals are failing in defending God’s objective communication of truth. Hume’s Gap has infected modern orthodoxy to the extent that many evangelicals are ignoring or de-emphasizing the cognitive dimension of divine revelation. This Christian anti-intellectualism may be manifested in a variety of ways (Nash 1982:23): in contempt for creeds, in a search for God through the emotions, in a dependence upon some kind of mystical experience

The most obvious consequence of Hume’s Gap is a minimal theism. Once Hume’s stance is adopted, New Testament Christianity, with its proclamation of a divine Christ whose death and resurrection secured redemption from sin and gave hope beyond the grave must be replaced with a religion that talks about how good it feels to have an experience with a god about whom nothing definite can be known. The threat to Christianity from the legacy of David Hume is not a full-fledged frontal assault upon Christian theism... Hume’s legacy is more insidious. It undermines the faith not by denying it but by directing our attention away from the importance of its knowledge-claims and its truth-content.

(Nash 1982:24)

A second thinker of the eighteenth century whose system of thought has encouraged scepticism (cf. Brown 1974:91) about the possibility of the knowledge of God is the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Any scepticism about the knowledge of God will adversely affect the role of preaching in its effort to lead worshippers to a greater vision of the Majesty of God and vibrant true worship.

David Wells, in his book *God in the Wasteland* (1994:104), is convinced that Kant influenced present day rules for “discussing how it is that someone knows the external world, and in so doing initiated the breakdown of the old

distinction between subject and object". He further states that when this breakdown crossed over into theology, it resulted in an "overemphasis on God's immanence and a diminished emphasis on his transcendence." The question must be asked and answered as to whether this influence paved the way for a change in emphasis away from the Glory of God in preaching.

Philosophers prior to Kant, says Wells (1994:104), had assumed that human knowledge is possible only as the mind is adapted to the world. "The reigning epistemological paradigm held that the mind was simply a mirror in which the external world was reflected, that an objective world imprinted its reality on minds that were passive, inert, and uninvolved in this transaction."

Kant (1965:introduction) rejected this model and reversed this order,

Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them a priori, by means of concepts, have on this assumption ended in failure. We must therefore make trial of whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge.

"Instead of beginning with the objective world, he began with the subjective conditions for knowledge, with the shape and functioning of the mind" (Wells 1994:104).

Kant believed that while sense experience is necessary for human knowledge in the sense that no one would have any knowledge without it, sense experience is not a sufficient condition for knowledge. Something else (a form or structure) must be added to the content supplied by the senses.

The undetermined object of an empirical intuition is called phenomenon. That which in the phenomenon corresponds to the sensation, I term it matter; but that which effects that the

content of the phenomenon can be arranged under certain relations, I call it form. But that in which our sensations are merely arranged, and by which they are susceptible of assuming a certain form, cannot be itself sensation. It is, then, the matter of all phenomena that is given to us a posteriori; the form must lie ready a priori for them in the mind, and consequently can be regarded separately from all sensation.

(Kant 1781:www.ilt.columbia.edu/academic)

Unless the content is given form or structure by the human mind, knowledge would be unattainable. Concepts (the form supplied by the human understanding) without percepts (the content supplied by the senses) are empty; percepts without concepts are blind. Human knowledge, then, has two necessary conditions: the form supplied by the mind and the content supplied by the senses. But neither condition is sufficient by itself to produce knowledge (Nash 1982:26).

Kant taught that the form or structure that the human understanding supplies to knowledge exists in the form of categories or innate aptitudes for knowing. “He argued that the mind sorts into categories the stream of information contributed by the five senses and then synthesizes the data in ways that do not necessarily correspond to what is externally existent” (Wells 1994:104). Since all human knowledge must be mediated by these categories, men cannot know anything that is not so mediated. The unfortunate consequence of this claim, however, was a radical disjunction between the world as it appears to us (the world modified by the categories of our understanding) and the world as it really is. According to Kant, human knowledge never brings us into contact with the real world, what he called the noumenal world. All we know is the phenomenal world, the world as it appears to us after it has been modified by our categories of our understanding. Since our knowledge is always perceptually modified by the a priori categories of the mind, the real world (noumena) is not only unknown but unknowable (Nash 1982:27, Horton 1995:126).

Wells (1994:104) goes on to draw an implication: “That once the mind was seen as itself a source of knowledge, knowledge that was then superimposed on the data from the outside world, and once this knowledge was cut loose from control in the knowledge of God, a juggernaut was launched.”

Hume had his Gap; Kant had his Wall. Kant’s system had the effect of erecting a wall between the world as it appears to us and the world as it really is. Human knowledge is restricted to the phenomenal world, the world of appearance, the world shaped by the structure of the knowing mind. Knowledge of any reality beyond the Wall, which includes the world of things in themselves, is forever unattainable. Human reason cannot penetrate the secrets of ultimate reality. Answers to the most basic questions of theology and metaphysics lie beyond the boundaries of human knowledge. Since God is not a subject of experience and since the human categories cannot be extended to transcendent reality, Kant’s God is both unknown and unknowable. Whenever human reason attempts to penetrate beyond Kant’s Wall, either in a search for knowledge about God or in a quest for answers to ultimate questions, it becomes involved in antimonies and contradictions (Nash 1982:27).

Kant believed that he had served the interests of the Christian religion by stating that he had found it necessary to deny knowledge (Brown 1974:104) in order to make room for faith (Nash 1982:28). Hume and Kant had arrived at nearly the same point as for both men faith and knowledge have nothing in common. Every time human reason attempts to leap across Hume’s Gap or tries to break through Kant’s Wall separating the phenomenal and noumenal worlds (as speculative metaphysics and theology seek to do), reason becomes bogged down in contradictions.

Human reason they believed could not penetrate the secrets of ultimate reality. The most basic questions of metaphysics and theology are questions to which human reason can find no answers, not even from God. Hume’s Gap and Kant’s Wall represent the limits beyond which human reason cannot go;

they simply state, among other things, that human knowledge about God is an unattainable goal.

(Nash 1982:28)

Kant does however see a role for God in spite of God being one of the unknowables. He proposed that it is only in moral experience that such knowledge can be grounded, for the knowledge we have of ourselves as moral beings is inexplicable if God does not exist (Wells 1994:107). If in his criticism of the limits of theoretical knowledge Kant gets rid of God out of the front door, he rushes to the back door to let God in. He does this in an effort to salvage morality. In his moral and practical philosophy he seeks a basis for ethics and argues for the presence of a categorical imperative, a universal sense of oughtness that is integral to human experience and provides a moral obligation to duty (Sproul 2000:130).

Kant argues therefore for the Christian God on the basis that He must exist for ethics to have any meaning and so even if we cannot know that God exists, for practical purposes we must live “as if” He exists for ethics and society to be possible. If there is no absolute ethical norm, morality is reduced to mere preference and the world is a jungle where might makes right (Sproul 2000:131).

2.2 An Emphasis on Human Feelings

Kant’s rejection of the possibility of cognitive knowledge of God was taken up by various thinkers including Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889), both of whom became major sources of Protestant liberalism. Schleiermacher’s first important book, *On Religion: Addresses in Response to its Cultured Critics*, appeared in 1799. He thought of his own work as a reaction against Kant’s reduction of religion to an ethical exercise of the will. But despite his protests against Kant, Schleiermacher’s position in the end became an extension of Kant’s theological agnosticism (Nash 1982:29).

Schleiermacher distinguished between the kernel and the husk of religion suggesting that many of the cultured despisers of religion in his day were in fact offended by the nonessential elements of Christianity. The dispensable husk of religion, in his view, included the metaphysical theories and theological doctrines so many unbelieving intellectuals found incredible. Schleiermacher (1969:55) wrote,

For what are these doctrinal structures, these systems of theology, these theories about the origin and the end of the world, these analyses concerning the nature of an incomprehensible being? Here everything elapses into callous argumentation. Here the sublimest subjects are made pawns of controversy between competing schools of thought. Now surely ...this is not the character of religion. If, therefore, you have paid attention only to these religious dogmas and opinions, you do not yet know religion in itself at all, and religion is not what you are objecting to. Why haven't you gone deeper to find the kernel lying inside these outer layers?

Schleiermacher went on to reject two approaches to religion. Firstly, he attacked those who thought of religion primarily as a way of thinking or knowing something. Secondly, he criticized those who, like Kant, viewed religion primarily as a way of living or doing, as a kind of conduct or character. For Schleiermacher, religion must not be confused either with knowing or with doing. He believed that true religion is found in feeling (Schleiermacher 1969:55-56).

Faith must be something quite different from a mishmash of opinions about God and the world (the theoretical approach) or a collocation of commands for one life or two (the practical way of Kant). Piety must be something more than the craving after this hodgepodge of metaphysical and moral crumbs, something more than a way of stirring them up.

(Schleiermacher 1969:73)

Schleiermacher went on to reinterpret Christian theology in terms of his emphasis on religious feeling. He did this in a two-volume work, *The Christian Faith* (published 1821-1822), where he expanded his conviction that the essence of religion is to be found in a human being's feeling of absolute dependence.

"The common element in all howsoever diverse expressions of piety... is this: the consciousness of being totally dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation to God" (Schleiermacher 1928:12). Later in the same book he wrote, "God-consciousness is always... the feeling of absolute dependence" (Schleiermacher 1928:260).

He maintained that knowledge of God was restricted to the self, where the immanence of God was registered in feeling – specifically, awe deriving from a radical dependence. "Thus God", says Wells (1994:108), "became a kind of psychological deposit, a 'something' deep in the self. Somewhere within, the divine signature could be read with enough clarity to secure some meaning in life." Nash (1982:30) agrees:

Schleiermacher's view reduces to the position that God is unknowable to the human intellect. Instead of looking for God in nature or in the Bible or in human reason, we should look within. God is to be found in a special kind of feeling, the feeling of absolute dependence.

He became to be regarded as the fountainhead of one dominant form of liberalism, namely, the view that it doesn't matter what a person believes, it is what he feels that is important. It is clear that he thought it wrong to regard revelation as any kind of human discovery. Revelation is not something "excogitated in thought by one man and so learned by others" (Schleiermacher 1928:50). As H D McDonald explains, revelation for Schleiermacher "is not an in-breaking of God, but an up-surgings of divine humanity" (1959:169).

Schleiermacher insisted that God can never be known as He is in Himself. He can only be known by men as God-in-relation-to-humans. Because of his exaggerated emphasis on divine immanence he concluded that God is too close to contemplate with any objectivity (Nash 1982:31). Schleiermacher wrote, “All attributes that we ascribe to God are to be taken as denoting not something special in God, but only something special in the manner in which the feeling of absolute dependence is to be related to Him” (Schleiermacher 1928:194). The divine attributes are for him, not objective characteristics of God, they are merely reflections of human feelings (Nash 1982:31).

Wells (1994:107) points out that Schleiermacher “repudiated objective knowledge of God and then, like the romantics, reached down into his own being to find the grounding for his knowledge of God”. Barth (1982:217) says that Schleiermacher “viewed God as the mirror image of the self”. If the result was, as Friedrich Schlegel charged, a God who was a “little skinny”, the reason, of course, was that God could be no larger than the self of which He was a reflection. And as Barth (1936-77:339) commented, “For all his brilliance, Schleiermacher ended up knowing only himself and not God.” Barth (1936-77:193) further commented that the reason so much attention to this aspect of Schleiermacher’s thought is that modern theology suffers from a bad conscience. “Theology suffers from a chronic lack of objectivity in our age: we do not know what we are talking about but we still want to talk about him, so theologians have repeatedly returned to Schleiermacher to see if perhaps he might show us how to do it.”

2.3 The Church in the Market Place

Is the chronic lack of objectivity at least in part responsible for the overt emphasis on human feelings? Gary E. Gilley (2002) raises the challenge of the church in the age of entertainment in his book *This Little Church went to Market*. He maintains that the new paradigm church in its efforts to enlarge the church numerically has given itself to marketing rather than following the biblical mandate as given in the New Testament.

In their [specific reference here is being made to the writings and practices of Rick Warren of Saddleback and his *The Purpose Driven Church*, George Barna and also Lee Strobel's *Inside the Mind of Unchurched Harry and Mary*] church growth methodologies more attention is paid to market strategy, business techniques and demographics than to New Testament instruction.

(Gilley 2002:20)

A secular magazine, *American Demographics* (April 1999), claims to have its finger on the pulse of American's wants and desires says that people today are,

Into spirituality, not religion... Behind this shift is the search for an experiential faith, a religion of the heart, not of the head. It's a religious expression that downplays doctrine and dogma, and revels in direct experience of the divine – whether it's called the "Holy Spirit" or "cosmic consciousness" or the "true self". It is practical and personal, more about stress reduction than salvation, more therapeutic than theological. It's about feeling good, not being good. It's as much about the body as the soul... Some marketing gurus have begun calling it "the experience industry.

(Cimino & Lattin 1999:62)

"Congregates," the authors believe, "care as much about a church's childcare services as its doctrinal purity, pay more attention to the style of music than the pastor's theological training" (Cimino & Lattin 1999:62). If the emphasis of placing the felt needs of the people, above that of what Scripture teaches as the real needs of people then there will inevitably be a paradigm shift in the way church is done and must lead to consequences in the area of preaching.

The movement in our day to the entertainment explosion being enjoyed by masses is described by Neal Gabler (1999:16) is "about gratification rather

than edification, indulgence rather than contemplation, escape from moral instruction rather than submission to it". It is in reality nothing more than senseless fun.

Donald G. Bloesch (2001:54) reported in a *Christianity Today* article the early signs of a backlash to the seeker-sensitive services so popular today:

Evangelical Protestantism is in trouble today as increasing numbers of business and professional people are searching for a new church. The complaint I hear most often is that people can no longer sense the sacred either in the preaching or the liturgy... Worship has become performance rather than praise. The praise choruses that have pre-empted the great hymns of the church do not hide the fact that our worship is essentially a spectacle that appeals to the senses rather than an act of obedience to the mighty God who is both holiness and love. Contemporary worship is far more ego-centric than theocentric. The aim is less to give glory to God than to satisfy the longings of the human heart. Even when we sing God's praises the focus is on fulfilling and satisfying the human desire for wholeness and serenity.

An over-emphasis and preoccupation with what people want and feel will no doubt affect the agenda of preachers and their preaching. If the market is the determining factor for preaching it is no wonder that pastors have abandoned the systematic, expository preaching of the Word (Gilley 2002:115). There are some preachers, says MacArthur (1995:253) resisting this trend,

If preaching is to play its God-designed role in the church, it must be built on the Word of God... Much preaching today emphasizes psychology, social commentary and political rhetoric. Bible exposition takes a back seat to a misguided craving for relevance... Lamentably, there is a discernable trend in contemporary evangelicalism away from biblical preaching and a drift toward an experience-centered pragmatic, topical approach in the pulpit.

Piper raises a number of penetrating questions in response to an article “Insider Movements” which appeared in the publication *Mission Frontiers* (September – October 2005). Referring to the “signs” in John’s Gospel and the reason John gives for including them in his gospel; these are written “so that you may believe”. He (Jesus) “manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in Him.” That is the way faith comes. Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes “He will glorify me!” (John 16:14). Therefore we declare the fullness of the glorious Person and Work of Christ in history. That is how the church is created and sustained.

It seems to me that a growing number of pastors and missionaries have lost confidence in this truth. They have concluded that the gap between the glory of Christ and the felt needs of their neighbours, or between the glory of Christ and the religion of the nationals, is simply too great for the Word to overcome. The upshot seems to be the minimization of the Word of God in its robust and glorious fullness.

Armed with a “big business” mentality, many in the seeker-sensitive movement have replaced Bible-based sermons with anecdote-filled talks. After all, that’s the stuff that sells. In light of this growing evangelical trend, MacArthur (2003) in an article “Fifteen evil consequences of Plexiglass preaching” (www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/plexiglas-sf1.htm) examines what happens when preachers put the seeker before the Saviour and abandon God’s Word for ear-tickling entertainment.

At least two of these consequences he mentions have a bearing on the subject of this thesis. They are:

It clouds the true depth and transcendence of our message and therefore cripples both corporate and personal worship. What passes for preaching in some churches today is

literally no more profound than what preachers in our fathers' generation were teaching in the five-minute children's sermon they gave before dismissing the kids. That's no exaggeration. It is *often* that simplistic, if not utterly inane. There is nothing deep about it. Such an approach makes it impossible for true worship to take place, because worship is a transcendent experience. Worship should take us above the mundane and simplistic. So the only way true worship can occur is if we first come to grips with the depth of spiritual truth. Our people can only rise high in worship in the same proportion to which we have taken them deep into the profound truths of the Word. There is no way they can have lofty thoughts of God unless we have plunged them into the depths of God's self-revelation. But preaching today is neither profound nor transcendent. It doesn't go down and it doesn't go up. It merely aims to entertain.

It breeds a congregation that is as weak and indifferent to the glory of God as their pastor is. "Seeker-sensitive" preaching fosters people who are consumed with their own well-being. When you tell people that the church's primary ministry is to fix for them whatever is wrong in this life—to meet their needs, to help them cope with their worldly disappointments, and so on—the message you are sending is that their mundane problems are more important than the glory of God and the majesty of Christ. Again, that sabotages true worship.

Gilley (2002:59) maintains that one of the strongest influences behind the change in the message and methodology of the new paradigm church is the invasion of psychology, and its focus on felt needs and the competition in the market place. He believes that the church has become a reflector of our times rather than a revealer.

Os Guinness (2000:43) warns, "The problem is not that Christians have disappeared, but that Christian faith has become deformed. Under the

influence of modernity, we Christians are literally capable of winning the world while losing our own souls.”

Responding to this deformity, Gilley (2002:62) believes that “the means for progressive sanctification and biblical living have been shifted from the scriptural to the therapeutic.” A large part of the reason for this lies in the almost wholesale embracing of psychology by the Christian community.

Huge differences in understanding and approach exist between a secular psychological approach and a biblical perspective. The biblical perspective maintains mans responsibility for his actions as opposed to a psychological approach where difficulties are all attributed to external influence (Gilley 2002:63). He goes on to elaborate on a number of fundamental differences between Psychology and Scripture (see Gilley 2002:64-66). The differences include:

- Difference in focus – Scripture is God-centred, psychology is man-centred.
- Difference in view of human nature – psychology teaches that human nature is basically good or at least neutral whereas Scripture teaches that people are sinners with a flawed and depraved nature.
- Differences in view of values – The Bible teaches absolutes where God defines truth whereas psychology promotes relativism.

Secular psychology has received a warm welcome in many evangelical circles. *Christianity Today* (1993:31) says, “Right now evangelicals are swimming in psychology like a bird dog in a lake; they hardly seem to realize how much has changed... They certainly do not feel in danger...” Gilley (2002:66) raises his concern by saying that “Christianity and psychology both deal with the issue of how to live, yet they come at it from opposing angles, draw different conclusions, and basically are not compatible.

2.4 The Emerging Church

“During the last dozen years ‘emerging’ and ‘emergent’ have become strongly associated with an important movement that is sweeping across America, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere (Carson 2005:12). This movement using the two words “emerging” and “emergent” as defining adjectives of their movement have also made their appearance in the South African Baptist context.

“At the heart of the movement or as some leaders prefer to call it, ‘the conversation’,” says Carson (2005:12),

lies the conviction that changes in culture signal that a new church is “emerging”. Christian leaders must therefore adapt to this emerging church. Those who fail to do so are blind to the cultural accretions that hide the gospel behind forms of thought and modes of expression that no longer communicate with the new generation.

Gerald K Webber (2005:www.baptistbulletin.org) gives some insight into understanding this emerging church.

On the crest of a postmodernism wave rides a new movement called the emerging (or emergent) church. It’s essentially a Generation-X happening, a reaction to the seeker-driven approach of the Baby Boomers and many who preceded them.

Calling this a “movement,” which *Merriam-Webster’s* dictionary defines as “a series of organized activities working toward an objective,” may be premature. Despite the volume of material in books and blogs, little about the emerging church is organized. Some adherents call it a conversation.

Still, this trend will not be ignored. Every week followers gather to drink coffee, listen to Christian music, and hear a story-sermon under church names like The Journey, Pierced Chapel, and Scum of the Earth Church. They have rejected the structure of the megachurch movement and have minimal concern for performance.

He offers the following six personal observations about the emerging church:

The emerging church defies definition. Even proponents of the emerging church have difficulty nailing down its definition. Leonard Sweet, author of *Post-Modern Pilgrims* and *Jesus Drives Me Crazy*, is quoted in www.theooze.com: “Our faith is ancient. Our faith is future. We’re old-fashioned. We’re new-fangled. We’re orthodox. We’re innovators. We’re postmodern Christians.” Sweet (2003:19) observes that Christian Spirituality is “anything but sane if sane means ‘logical, predictable, serious or safe. Christian spirituality is highly illogical, paradoxical, volatile, playful and dangerous. The world of faith is freakish unpredictable”.

The emerging church is driven by disappointment. At heart the emerging church is a protest movement, deeply disillusioned with the previous three or four generations. They have a great respect for ancient forms and traditions but feel that their “modern” forbears have failed them. Carson (2005:14) agrees describing the common thread of protest as “we were where you were once, but we emerged from it into something different.” Emergents are turned off by the traditional worship patterns of the Builder generation and by their absolutism. They reject what they describe as “rational” preaching, dogmatic teaching, and confrontational evangelism. They are even more appalled at the commercialism of Baby Boomers and are determined to replace “programs” with “relationships,” “excellence” with “realism.” They refer to this as the “rebooting of being church.”

The emerging church deprecates doctrine. The emerging church may well be the leading edge of an ecumenical updraft for the twenty-first century.

Reflecting a postmodern mind-set, adherents prefer an individualist whatever-works-for-you approach to theology. One website (www.emergingchurch.org) states, "The modern creedal orientation of 'we believe' has been subverted by the postmodern creedal orientation summed up by Sheryl Crow in her song which proclaims, 'if it makes you happy, it can't be half bad.' "

Steve Chalke & Alan Mann (2003:67), recognized leaders of the Emerging church have a problem with the doctrine of original sin,

While we have spent centuries arguing over the doctrine of original sin, pouring over the Bible and huge theological tomes to prove the inherent sinfulness of all humankind, we have missed a startling point: Jesus believed in original goodness! God declared that all his creation, including humankind, was very good. That is not to suggest that Jesus is denying that our relationship with God is in need of reconciliation, but that he is rejecting any idea that we are, somehow, beyond the pale.

McLaren (2004:60-61) shows little concern for accurate exegesis and good handling of the Scriptures. Instead he displays great sympathy for those who reject miracles. He writes, "I feel more sympathy with those who believe otherwise, and I applaud their desire to live out the meaning of the miracle stories even when they don't believe the stories happened as written". This inevitably leads to a diminishing view of Scripture, which in turn must affect the proclamation of the Glory of God.

Albert Mohler (2005) observes in a <http://www.crosswalk.com/> blog,

The Emergent movement represents a significant challenge to biblical Christianity. Unwilling to affirm that the Bible contains propositional truths that form the framework for Christian belief, this movement argues that we can have Christian symbolism and substance without those thorny questions of truthfulness that have so vexed the modern mind. The worldview of

postmodernism—complete with an epistemology that denies the possibility of or need for propositional truth—affords the movement an opportunity to hop, skip and jump throughout the Bible and the history of Christian thought in order to take whatever pieces they want from one theology and attach them, like doctrinal post-it notes, to whatever picture they would want to draw.

The emerging church is deficient in discernment. One cannot deny the intelligence of the emerging church's proponents. Some are obviously astute and articulate. Native intelligence and biblical discernment, however, are two different things.

Its most eloquent spokesman, Brian McLaren, is pastor of Cedar Ridge Community Church in Spencerville, Maryland. McLaren is a smart guy; he graduated summa cum laude from the University of Maryland and obtained his Master of Arts degree with a 4.0 grade point average. He left academia to found the church he pastors. The author of *A Generous Orthodoxy*, McLaren is an illustration of the distinction between intelligence and discernment. On Cedar Ridge's web site is the church's doctrinal statement. It includes a paragraph about Jesus Christ with no indication of His eternal deity, a reference to the Holy Spirit with no suggestion that He is God, and a declaration that "God speaks to us in the Bible" with not a word about its inspiration or inerrancy. Regarding "unity," the statement reads, "Cedar Ridge recognizes diversity among Christians in nonessential areas"; the paragraph gives no hint of what those nonessentials are. Such looseness may not be universal, but it is typical of the emerging church's lack of discernment.

The emerging church dotes on devotion. By minimizing "divisive" doctrine, by emphasizing the primacy of relationship over reasoned belief, by elevating God's (almost indiscriminate) love for mankind over His essential holiness and justice, by raising unity above truth, the emerging church creates an atmosphere where peace is the summum bonum (supreme good from which all others are derived).

The emerging church is destined for disuse. The emerging church will ultimately go the way of philosophies that are driven by culture. Os Guinness warned, in *Dining with the Devil* (1993), “He who marries the spirit of the age soon becomes a widower.”

The advent of this movement has bearing on this research in that many in the movement and those curiously interested are asking about the place and nature of preaching in this emerging church.

A pastor, identifying himself as Pastor Pete (2006: www.opensourcetheology.net/node/856) submitted his questions in regard to preaching in the emergent church on an internet blog:

In the Reformed tradition, thanks to Karl Barth, we are often referring to the three-fold witness of the Word. That is, 1) the Word that took flesh in Jesus Christ, 2) that is witnessed to in Scripture, and 3) that is proclaimed in Word and Deed by the church. I'm particularly interested in your thoughts on the third (if there is a similar thread, please let me know). Specifically, what form will preaching take in the emergent church? In our tradition, the sermon has always taken centre stage. As a pastor who preaches every Sunday I'm starting to become a little dissatisfied with the practice. I stress "a little." I look forward to doing it, but the results are anti-climactic. I'm wondering, with the emergent church's leaning toward experience and relationship, if a guided, communal conversation might replace a prepared, individual lecture?

The responses to his questions certainly indicate that new styles and structures in preaching are being tested. Graham Doel (2006: www.opensourcetheology.net/node/856) posted a response onto the blog saying that he has experimented with conversational dialogue, congregational dialogue, creative story telling and community topic selection.

Casey Tygrett's (2006) article entitled *Ugly Preaching* expresses frustration about current preaching (www.theooze.com/articles/article.cfm?id=1193),

I realize even to use this term I'm dragging up a dead set of presuppositions, but in thinking about preaching, teaching, talking or homiletizing, etc., there is for me a state of increasing frustration. Why don't people hear the truth in what I'm saying? Where is the response regarding their lives? We trust in the spirit of truth to really get to the heart of things, but in the end the frustration of someone who undertakes to teach people about the Gospel is often intense and mysterious. Each talk, each exposition, crafted with hope and care is received as if it were a commencement address: "Good sermon. Not too long." People see it as my job—I see it as a matter of disseminating life or death challenges. There is only so long one can dive into and out of this pool before a mental and spiritual funk begins to develop.

Dan Kimball (2003:175) offers visions of modern preaching and post modern preaching. In his view the modern preaching is inadequate and goes to the extent of suggesting that biblical terms like "gospel" and "Armageddon" need to be "deconstructed and redefined". In modern preaching the biblical text is communicated primarily with words whereas in post modern preaching "the scriptural message is communicated through a mix of words, visual arts, silence, testimony, and story, and the preacher is a motivator who encourages people to learn from the Scriptures throughout the week".

2.5 Is Something Missing?

Having listed three inadequate responses (see Capill 2003:9-11) to what is seen as a crisis in preaching, Capill (2003:12) maintains that the more fundamental crisis concerns "the lack of spiritual vigour in much preaching." Something is missing - in that contemporary preaching is powerless, failing to

convict sinners, convert the lost, sanctify the saints, produce deep and lasting change in people's lives, overwhelm people with sheer majesty, grandeur, excellency and beauty of God, and his only Son, Jesus Christ. "It is the crisis of preaching that, for all its relevance, innovation or soundness is devoid of the power of the Holy Spirit".

Lloyd Jones (1971:91) has the same sentiment when appealing for something more than an intellectual presentation of biblical truth. "You are not simply imparting information, you are dealing with souls, you are dealing with pilgrims on the way to eternity, you are dealing with matters not only of life and death in this world, but with eternal destiny." He goes on to say (1971:98) that the chief end of preaching is to give people a sense of the presence of God:

I can forgive a man for a bad sermon; I can forgive the preacher almost anything if he gives me a sense of God, if he gives me something for my soul... if he gives me some dim glimpse of the Glory of God, the love of Christ, my Saviour, and the magnificence of the gospel.

This problem is not confined to a particular era either. In his day, Jonathan Edwards (1974:391) addressed the same issue,

Was there ever an age, wherein strength and penetration of reason, extent of learning, exactness of distinction, correctness of style, and clearness of expression, did so abound? And yet, was there ever an age, wherein there has been so little sense of the evil of sin, so little love to God, heavenly-mindedness, and holiness of life, among the professors of the true religion? Our people do not so much need to have their heads stored, as to have their hearts touched; and they stand in the greatest need of that sort of preaching, which has the greatest tendency to do this.

Do the preacher and listener not need to have their minds and hearts gripped by the Glory of God? Will this not, at least in some way address the lifeless, boring and lacklustre orations offered as pitiful substitutes for the powerful preaching of the Word of God?

3. A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE GLORY AND TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

Protestant catechisms ask the question, “What is the chief end of man?” The answer given: “The chief end of man is to glorify God...” Most would agree with this response, but says W. Robert Cook (1984:291), “The thoughtful person will raise yet another question that is not addressed by the catechism. What is meant by ‘glorify God’? And even more basically, what is the glory of God?”

In this chapter the biblical text will be surveyed to establish the meaning of the Glory of God. Attention will also be given to an understanding and emphasis of the immanence and transcendence of God.

3.1 The Glory of God

3.1.1 Glory in the Old Testament

In the light of having its roots in the word “dokeo”, the classical usage of the word “doxa” took two primary directions: On the one hand it had the sense of expectation, referring to one’s own opinion, while on the other hand it meant reputation, referring to the opinion of others about oneself. Josephus uses the term in this way but adds the idea of honour or glory – this due to the influence of the Old Testament on his thinking (Cook 1984:291).

In the LXX “doxa” is the translation of “kabod” which refers to that which is weighty or impressive and may be used of man or God (Cook 1984:292). The most frequently used word in the Old Testament for glory is “kabod”. It means “difficult,” “weight,” “heaviness,” “worthiness,” “reputation,” or “honour” (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:246). It can be used of men to show that a person is a man of weight or substance (Gordon 1975:730), or impressive (Cook 1984:292). Since the word “kabod” comes from the word “kabad”, “to be heavy,” it gives the idea that the one possessing glory is laden with riches

(Genesis 31:1), power (Isaiah. 8:7) and position (Genesis 45:13) (Elwell 1987:443). Berlejung & Frevel (2006:246) add that the adjective “kabad” can convey this heaviness or oppression in a negative sense, whereas the noun “kabod” never has a negative connotation.

When used of God it refers to the impact made on man from God’s self-manifestation (Cook 1984:292). “Kabod” also described the manifestation of light by which God revealed Himself, whether in a lightning flash or in the blinding splendour which often accompanied theophanies. Similarly we see the disclosure of the divine presence in the cloud which led Israel through the wilderness and becoming localized in the tabernacle (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:246; Elwell 1987:443).

At times “kabod” had a deeper penetration, denoting the person or self. When Moses asked of God, "Show me your glory" (Exodus 33:18), he was not speaking of the light-cloud, which he had already seen, but he was seeking a special manifestation of God which would leave nothing to be desired (cf. John 14:8). Moses wanted to know God as He was in himself. In reply, God emphasized his goodness (Exodus 33:19). The word might be rendered in this instance "moral beauty." This incident involving Moses reveals the idea that God's glory is not confined to some outward sign which appeals to the senses, but is that which expresses his inherent majesty, which may or may not have some visible token (Elwell 1987:443). The glory belongs to God intrinsically. It is an essential quality in God’s character (Gordon 1975:731). “Whereas the glory of God is His essentially and inherently, the major emphasis”, says Gordon, (1975:732) “in Scripture is on the glory in its manifestation. It describes the self-revelation of God’s being and character.” This is shown in Isaiah 60:1 “Arise shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.” The display or radiance of God’s glory is a reflection of his character (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:247).

Isaiah's vision of God (6:1–8) (cf. Berges 1998:94-104; Motyer 1993: 75-78) included both the perception of sensible features and the nature of God, particularly his holiness (cf. John 12:41) (Elwell 1987:443, Gordon 1975:731).

Berges (1998:94) describes the vision as emphasizing the true kingship of God. The vision of God is such that it exceeds all conventional understanding of the man on the street. God is above all. His kingly majesty is above all else. God's glory is so majestic that to see his face is to die (Exodus 33:20) (Gordon 1975:731). Isaiah uses the impressive phrase, "the splendour (glory) of his majesty in 2:10, 19, and 21. He had in mind, suggests Gordon (1975:732), "a frightening revelation of God".

The intrinsic worth of God, his ineffable majesty, constitutes the basis of warnings not to glory in riches, wisdom, or might (Jeremiah. 9:23) but in the God who has given all these and is greater than his gifts (Elwell 1987:443). For the people of Israel the glory of God surpassed all other aspects of glory. "Although the word could refer to armies or wealth, Israel must trust in neither of these but in the Lord" (Isaiah 31:1, 3; cf. Psalm 20:7; 62:7) (Gordon 1975:731).

Calvin (1983:331) shows that in the Decalogue, God having demanded exclusive worship in the first commandment prohibits image worship in the second. The prohibition arises from an apprehension of God's glory – glory of such a nature that no earthly form can be given to it (Deuteronomy 4:15).

Calvin (1983:91) says, "As often as any form is assigned to God, his glory is corrupted by an impious lie". This is put very directly in Isaiah chapter 40, especially verse 18 "to whom will you compare God? What image will you compare him to?" it is then seen how foolish it is to represent such a glorious God by an idol (cf. Isaiah 41:7, 44:9ff, 46:5ff).

The prophets often use the word "glory" to set forth the excellence of the Messianic Kingdom in contrast to the limitations of the present order (Isaiah 60:1-3) (Elwell 1987:443).

It is interesting to note an alternate view on understanding the glory of God as presented by John T Strong (cf. 2000:69-89) where he argues that Ezekiel understood Yahweh's "kabod" as a hypostasis (2000:72), where hypostasis is

defined as “a quality, epithet, attribute, manifestation or the like of deity which through a process of personification and differentiation has become a distinct (if not fully independent) divine being in its own right” (McBride 1969:5). Strong (2000:73) does, however, acknowledge, that “scholarship as a whole has not followed this course.”

3.1.2 Glory in the New Testament

Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida (1989:66) analyse the Greek word “doxa” in their Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains and divide the meaning of this word into the following different ranges or categories: splendour, brightness, amazing might, praise, honour, greatness, glorious being, heaven, pride and sublime glory.

In view of the purpose of this research it is necessary to elaborate on each of these meanings. The specific indices are noted alongside of the equivalent English meaning.

- 79.18 The quality of splendid, remarkable appearance as seen in Matthew 6:29; even Solomon in all his splendour was not arrayed as one of these.
- 14.49 The state of brightness or shining – “brightness, shining, radiance” as seen in Acts 26:13; a light much brighter than the sun shone around me from the sky.
- 76.13 The manifestation of power characterized by glory as seen in Romans 6:4; just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father. This aspect of glorious may be expressed as ‘that which causes wonder’ or ‘that which causes people to marvel.’

- 33.357 To speak of something as being unusually fine and deserving of honour – to praise, to glorify as seen in Luke 17:18; why is this foreigner the only one who came back to praise God?
- 87.4 Honour as an element in the assignment of status to a person as seen in John 4:44; a prophet has no honour in his own country.
- 87.23 State of being great and wonderful as seen in Matthew 4:8; he showed him all the kingdoms of the earth and their greatness.
- 12.49 A benevolent supernatural power deserving respect and honour – glorious power, wonderful being as seen in 2 Peter 2:10; arrogant people showing no respect for the glorious powers above.
- 1.15 A place which is glorious and, as such, a reference to heaven as seen in 1 Timothy 3:16; he was taken up to heaven.
- 25.205 The reason or basis for legitimate pride as seen in 1 Thessalonians 2:20; for you are our pride and joy.
- 33.468 An idiom literally “to give glory to God,” a formula used in placing someone under oath to tell the truth as seen in John 9:24; promise before God to tell the truth.
- 12.6 A title for God, literally “majestic glory” as seen in 2 Peter 1:17; For he received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory...

An overview of God’s glory in the NT is described by Elwell (1987:443) where he says in general “doxa” is used of honour in the sense of recognition or acclaim (Luke 14:10), and of the vocalized reverence of the creature for the Creator and Judge (Revelation 14:7). With reference to God, it denotes his

majesty (Romans 1:23) and his perfection, especially in relation to righteousness (Romans 3:23). He is called the Father of glory (Ephesians 1:17). The manifestation of his presence in terms of light is an occasional phenomenon, as in the Old Testament (Luke 2:9), but in the main this feature is transferred to the Son. The transfiguration is the only instance during the earthly ministry, but later manifestations include the revelation to Saul at his conversion (Acts 9:3ff) and to John on the Isle of Patmos (Revelation 1:12ff). Paul speaks of God's glory in terms of riches (Ephesians 1:18; 3:16) and might (Colossians 1:11). The display of God's power in raising his Son from the dead is regarded as glory (Romans 6:4). The use of the word "glory" when connected to God in the New Testament conveys a clear sense in which God is lifted out above the ordinary (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:247).

Christ is the effulgence of the divine glory (Hebrews 1:3). It is through that the perfection of the nature of God is made known to men. When James speaks of Him as the Lord of glory (2:1), his thought moves in the direction of the revelation of God in the tabernacle. At the tabernacle the divine presence was a gracious condescension but also an ever-present reminder of God's readiness to mark the sins of his people and to visit them with judgment. So the readers of James's epistle are admonished to beware of partiality.

The glory of Christ as the image of God, the Son of the Father, was veiled or hidden from sinful eyes during the days of his flesh but was apparent to the men of faith who gathered around Him (John 1:14). Berlejung & Frevel (2006:247) state that the glory of Christ is often used in connection with honour, grace and truth. The word "doxa" connects these words with an understanding of God in the moments he reveals himself as the sovereign holy One.

Even as the pre-incarnate Son had dwelt with the Father in a state of glory (with no sin to mar the perfection of the divine mode of life and intercourse), according to his own consciousness (John 17:5), so his return to the Father can properly be called an entrance into glory (Luke 24:26). But more seems to be involved here than a sharing with the Father of what He had enjoyed in

ages past. God now gives Him glory (I Peter 1:21), in some sense as a reward for the faithful, full completion of the Father's will in relation to the work of salvation (Philippians. 2:9-11; Acts 3:13). So it is that both the taking up of Christ from the earth (I Timothy 3:16) and his return (Colossians 3:4; Titus 2:13). So it is the representations of his presence and activity as the future judge and king (Matthew 25:31) are also associated with a majesty and radiance which are largely absent in the portrayals of Jesus in the days of his humiliation (Elwell 1987:443).

While the contrast is valid, therefore, between the sufferings of Christ and the glory (literally, the glories) to follow (I Peter 1:11), John's Gospel reveals a further development, namely, that the sufferings themselves can be viewed as a glorification. Jesus was aware of this and expressed himself accordingly. "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified" (John 12:23). This word "hour" in the Fourth Gospel points regularly to the death of Christ. Jesus was not seeking to invest the cross with an aura of splendour which it did not have, in order to conjure up a psychological antidote to its pain and shame. Rather, glory properly belongs to the finishing of the work which the Father had given Him to do, since that work represented the perfect will of God (Paul calls his preaching "the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Christ is raised alongside of the Father into the place of glory, especially as the crucified One he participates in the glory of God (Hebrews 2:7, 9; 1 Peter 1:21) unknown to those who crucified him (1 Corinthians 2:8). Participation in the glory of God is the aim of sending Jesus (Luke 24:26; 1 Peter 1:11). For the Christian the participation in the glory of God comes to completion when ultimately glorified with Christ. This is the goal and perfection of their lives and faith (1 Thessalonians 2:12). The gift of salvation to the believer which has come after losing or falling short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) is the beginning again of participation in his glory in some measure in this life but finally fully in the presence of the God of glory. Paul announces the gospel of the glory of Christ. It is then through Jesus who is the image of God that the believer participates in the glory of their Lord. This vision of the Christ as the image of God has the power of new creation which brings transformation and

renewal into the image of God that they had before the fall (2 Corinthians 3:8) (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:246; Elwell 1987:443).

For John the word “doxa” includes the whole event of salvation through the lifting of Jesus on the cross. Jesus returns to the glory of the Father from where he came and so glory belongs to Christ as the pre-existent One (John 1:14). It can also be seen that the believer is in his earthly life already included in this glory to some extent, but will be perfected in the heavenly union with the Father and Son (John 17:24; Romans 8:18, 21) (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:248).

Of the sixty-one times “doxa” and “doxazo” occur in John’s writings, says Cook (1984:293) only five relate to a being other than God. In all but two of the remaining fifty-six instances the glory is directed to the Father or the Son. The two exceptions involve believers who may receive glory from God or Christ (John 5:44; 17:22).

The Father is seen bringing glory to himself (John 12:28; 17:5) or to the Son (John 8:54; 12:16; 13:32; 17:1, 5, 10, 22, 24). The Father glorifies himself through the life, death and exaltation of Jesus Christ, for it is in Jesus we have the most concentrated revelation of the moral perfections of God. John presents the Son glorifying the Father (John 7:18; 13:31; 14:13; 17:1, 4). Jesus does this as a pattern of life throughout his ministry. Jesus also says in John 16:14 that one of the significant ministries of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:248; Cook 1984:293).

Then it is noted by Elwell (1987:443) that the Father and Son are glorified by various created intelligences. Men in general, even the unbelieving, may bring glory to God (John 9:24; 13:31; Revelation 11:3).

Eschatological glory is the hope of the Christian (Romans 5:2). In this future state he will have a new body patterned after Christ's glorified body (Philippians 3:21), an instrument superior to that with which he is presently endowed (I Corinthians 15:43). Christ within the believer is the hope of glory

(Colossians 1:27). He is also the chief ornament of heaven (Revelation 21:23).

A somewhat specialized use of the word is that which can be seen in the doxologies, where they are ascriptions of praise to God for his worth and works (e.g., Romans 11:36)

“There is no question,” says Cook (1984:292), “that the NT usage of “doxa” keys in from the LXX rather than from secular Greek. The idea of opinion was dropped out of sight.” When it was used ethically to mean “reputation” it always has a positive note. When it is used in a visible sense it seems to mean “radiance” and is especially related to the light that radiates from God’s presence (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:247)..

Theologically it is the ethical usage that is significant. “The glory of God, conceived of as the revelation of his character, is the loftiest of truths” (Cook 1984:292). In a general sense the Glory of God may then be defined as “the exhibition of His Divine attributes and perfections (Psalm 19:1) or the radiance of His presence (Luke 2:9)” (Elwell 1987:443).

Bernard Ramm (1963:18) further develops this and succinctly points out clarifying that “the glory of God is not a particularized attribute like the wisdom of God but an attribute of the total nature of God, virtually an attribute of the attributes.”

3.1.2.1 The Glory of God as Understood by the Apostle Paul

An understanding of the word “glory” from the writings of Paul include various emphases (Lowery 1994:251). God's glory “*doxa*” is a characteristic associated with his presence and may be called a visible sign of his presence. Paul links God's presence and glory in his letter to the Thessalonians when he describes the fate of those who reject the gospel: "They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty (glory) of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:9). “This banishment

from loving fellowship with Christ implies expulsion from ‘the glory (radiant splendour) of his might’ as it is manifested in the salvation of the saints” (Hendriksen 1991:161).

A visual manifestation of God's glory is brightness or radiance (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:246; Lowery 1994:251). Paul compared the radiance reflected in the face of Moses after experiencing the presence of God on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:29-35) with the greater and abiding glory associated with the Spirit's ministry in the new covenant (2 Corinthians. 3:6-18). This comparison introduces a transition in the understanding of visible manifestation. Instead of a brightness or radiance indicating God's presence and reflecting His glory, Paul described the ministry of the new covenant as a character-changing experience in which believers "are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory" (v. 18) (cf. Hodge 1963:76-80). This display of God's character in Christian experience is the primary manifestation of His glory in the era of the new covenant.

This is understood clearly when Paul calls his preaching “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Christ is raised alongside of the Father into the place of glory, especially as the crucified One he participates in the glory of God (Hebrews 2:7, 9; 1 Peter 1:21) unknown to those who crucified him (1 Corinthians 2:8). Participation in the glory of God is the aim of sending Jesus (Luke 24:26; 1 Peter 1:11). For the Christian the participation in the glory of God comes to completion when ultimately glorified with Christ. This is the goal and perfection of their lives and faith (1 Thessalonians 2:12). The gift of salvation to the believer which has come after losing or falling short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) is the beginning again of participation in his glory in some measure in this life but finally fully in the presence of the God of glory. Paul announces the gospel of the glory of Christ. It is then through Jesus who is the image of God that the believer participates in the glory of their Lord. This vision of the Christ as the image of God has the power of new creation which brings transformation and renewal into the image of God that they had before the fall (2 Corinthians 3:8) (Berlejung & Frevel 2006:248).

The two manifestations, radiance and character, come together in the culmination of salvation (Lowery 1994:251). Then the process of character transformation will be completed and the presence of God for Christians will be immediate, as it is now for Christ, "the Lord of glory" as described in 1 Corinthians 2:8. Prior (1985:51) states that "If the rulers of this age had perceived the true identity of Jesus, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory". Satan has blinded them (Barnett 1988:82) and so they cannot see the Lord of glory who is "the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4). But Paul told the Romans, God's purpose for Christians is "to be conformed to the likeness of his Son" (Romans 8:29). Thus fulfilling the ultimate reason for this act of predestination which is the honour and glory of Jesus Christ (Sproul 1994:153). To experience the end result of that process is to be "glorified" (v. 30). Alternatively, when Paul referred to falling short of "the glory of God" (3:23) he described failure to gain access to this divine presence (cf. 5:2), in short, failure to obtain salvation (Sproul 1994:95). Because the Spirit is the empowering Agent of this character transformation in Christian experience, Paul occasionally used the term "glory" as a reference to the Spirit's work. Like when he wrote that "Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father" (Romans 6:4), the word "glory" is a shorthand description of the Spirit's work (Sproul 1994:113).

Another concept associated with glory is the idea of approval or praise (Lowery 1994:252). Paul reminded the Thessalonians that when he ministered among them he was not looking for "glory from men" (1 Thessalonians 2:6), that is, people's praise or approval (Hendriksen 1991:63). The only approval or praise important to Paul as indicated in 1 Corinthians 4:5 was from God (Prior 1985:64). On the other hand, giving glory to God distinguished people who had a relationship with Him from those who did not. When Paul described those who rejected the truth about God, he said, "They neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him" (Romans 1:21). In contrast to this was an individual of faith like Abraham, who "gave glory to God" (4:20). People thus give glory to God by what they say and do, that is, by expressing praise and thanks to Him and by representing Him in reflecting His character and doing His will (Lowery 1994:252).

3.1.3 God's Passion for His Own Glory

Reymond (2003:55) states that God loves himself with all of his heart, soul, mind and strength, that he himself is at the centre of his affections, that the impulse that drives him and the thing he pursues in everything he does is his own glory. This core belief of God pursuing his own glory will position the preacher with an emphasis that aligns with God and not man at the centre of his focus in preaching.

The instructed preacher will know that God created all things 'for his own glory' (Isaiah 43:7, 21), that he chose Israel 'for his renown and praise and honour' (Jeremiah 13:11), that it was 'for his name's sake and to make his mighty power known' that he delivered his ancient people again and again after they had rebelled against him (Psalm 106:7-8), and that it was 'for the sake of his name' that he did not reject them (1 Samuel 12:20-22), spared them again and again (Ezekiel 20:9, 14, 22, 44), and had mercy upon them and did not pursue them with destruction to the uttermost (Isaiah 48:8-11). He will have learned from the Scripture that it was 'for his own glory' that God did all these things (Ezekiel 36:16-21, 22-23, 24-32). He will know too that Jesus came the first time 'to glorify God' (John 17:4, 6), that every detail of the salvation which he enjoys God arranged in order to provoke in him 'the praise of his glorious grace' (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14), and that Jesus is coming again 'to be glorified' in his saints on that day, and 'to be marvelled at' among all who have believed (2 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

(Reymond 2003:56)

In spite of being raised in a Christian context where it was frequently taught and believed that "...whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31), Piper (2003:6) claims that no one had ever addressed the question of who the most God-centered Person in the

universe actually is. He had never been taught that God is the most God-centered person in the universe. He describes this as an explosive discovery affirming that “God loves His glory more than He loves us and that this is the foundation of His love for us” (Piper 2003:7).

“Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?” (Isaiah 2:22). “Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save” (Psalm 146:3). This is what the Lord says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength, and whose heart turns away from the LORD” (Jeremiah 17:5).

The Glory of God must be a supreme commitment among all Christians. The community of faith and its preachers must be consumed with this same commitment that God has to himself seeing that “God’s ultimate commitment is to Himself and not to us. And therein lies our security” (Piper 2003:7). Piper (2003:7-8) goes on to ask a number of questions with each answer referring back to God’s action on the basis of his love for his own glory, stating that this love for his glory is “no isolated note in the symphony of redemptive history. It is the ever recurring-motif of the all-sufficient Composer.” The questions asked include: Why did God predestine us in love to be his sons? That “the glory of his grace may be praised” (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14). Why did God create a people for himself? “I created them for my glory” (Isaiah 43:7). Why did God spare rebellious Israel in the wilderness and finally bring them to the Promised Land? “I acted for the sake of my name (Ezekiel 20:14). Why did the Father send the incarnate Son? “To confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy” (Romans 15:8-9). Why did the Son come to his final hour? “For this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name” (John 12:27-28).

3.1.4 God Created the Universe to Show his Glory

God’s love for his glory can also be seen in that He created his people for his own glory (Grudem 1994:272), for he speaks of his sons and daughters as those “whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made” (Isaiah. 43:7)

(cf. Van Huyssteen 2006:119-125) . But it is not only human beings that God created for this purpose. All of creation is intended to show God's glory (Gordon 1975:73). Even the inanimate creation, the stars and sun and moon and sky, testify to God's greatness, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge" (Psalm 19:1-2). The song of heavenly worship in Revelation 4 connects God's creation of all things with the fact that He is worthy to receive glory from them: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being" (Revelation 4:11).

Primarily the creation shows God's great power and wisdom, far above anything that could be imagined by any creature (Grudem 1994:272). "It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens" (Jeremiah 10:12). In contrast to ignorant men and the "worthless" idols they make, Jeremiah says, "Not like these is he who is the portion of Jacob, for he is the one who formed all things... the Lord of hosts is his name" (Jeremiah 10:16). One look at the sun or the stars convinces us of God's infinite power. And even a brief inspection of any leaf on a tree, or of the wonder of the human hand, or of any one living cell, convinces us of God's great wisdom. Who could make all of this? Who could make it out of nothing? Who could sustain it day after day for endless years? Such infinite power, such intricate skill, is completely beyond our comprehension. When we meditate on it, we give glory to God. When we affirm that God created the universe to show his glory, it is important that we realize that He did not need to create it. We should not think that God needed more glory than He had within the Trinity for all eternity, or that He was somehow incomplete without the glory that He would receive from the created universe. This would be to deny God's independence and imply that God needed the universe in order to be fully God. Rather, we must affirm that the creation of the universe was a totally free act of God. It was not a necessary act but something that God chose to do. "You created all things, and *by your will* they existed and were created" (Revelation 4:11). God desired to create

the universe to demonstrate his excellence. The creation shows his great wisdom and power, and ultimately it shows all of his other attributes as well. It seems that God created the universe, then, to take delight in his creation, for as creation shows forth various aspects of God's character, to that extent He takes delight in it (Grudem 1994:272).

3.2 The Transcendence and Immanence of God

3.2.1 Definitions

The terms “transcend” or “transcendence” is derived from the Latin verb “*transcendere*” which initially means simply a passing over, a going-beyond-something or an ascent to what is “more” and “over and above” (Wendel 2004:53). Carson (1996:223) says that “by transcendent, I mean that God exists apart from the creation that he made, and this above space and time. Thus he is not in any way dependent upon his creation; he is self existing – that is he draws his own existence only from himself”.

Grudem (1994:267) describes how Scripture teaches that the relationship between God and creation is unique among the religions of the world. It teaches that God is distinct from his creation. He is not part of it, for He has made it and rules over it. The term often used to say that God is much greater than creation is the word transcendent. This means that God is far “above” the creation in the sense that He is greater than the creation and He is independent of it. Sproul (1985:55) explains,

The word transcendence means literally “to climb across.” It is defined as “exceeding usual limits.” To transcend is to rise above something, to go above and beyond a certain limit. When we speak of the transcendence of God we are talking about that sense in which God is above and beyond us. It tries to get at His supreme and absolute greatness. The word is used to describe God’s relationship to the world. He has absolute power over the world. The world has no power over Him. Transcendence

describes God in His consuming majesty, His exalted loftiness. It points to infinite distance that separates Him from every creature. He is an infinite cut above everything else.

Wells (1994:116) agrees that Scripture indicates that God is transcendent because He is self-sufficient, owing nothing to the creation for his own life, and so powerful that He can always act within that creation. He is dependent on nothing outside of himself for the realization of his will but, because the creation is always and at every moment dependent upon Him, He is always over it. He however goes on to add that God is transcendent because his utter moral purity separates Him from all human life and defines Him in his essential character.

The Scriptures, however, also show that God is very much involved in creation, for it is continuously dependent on Him for its existence and its functioning. The technical term denoting God's involvement in creation is the word immanent, meaning "remaining in" creation. (Grudem 1994:267). The God of the Bible is not an abstract deity removed from, and uninterested in his creation. "God is not an impersonal force or power, but a being who interacts with other persons (whom he has made) as a person – with interchange, speech, 'personality'" (Carson 1996:223). The Bible is the unfolding story of God's involvement with his creation, and particularly the people in it. Job affirms that even the animals and plants depend on God: "In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind" (Job 12:10). In the New Testament, Paul affirms that God "gives to all men life and breath and everything" and that "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:25, 28). Indeed, in Christ "all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17), and He is continuously "upholding the universe by his word of power" (Hebrews 1:3). God's transcendence and immanence are both affirmed in a single verse when Paul speaks of "one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:6). The fact that creation is distinct from God yet always dependent on God, that God is far above creation yet always involved in it, means that God is both transcendent and immanent.

Having surveyed the development of the doctrine of God from more than two thousand year before Christ to nearly two thousand years after Christ Johnson and Webber (1989:101) confirm that they stand in the tradition of the church with their “feet firmly planted in the biblical and classical Christian teaching about God as a living, personal and triune God”.

It is within that commitment that Johnson and Webber (1989:101) argue that a balance be maintained between transcendence and immanence, therefore questioning,

the theologies of transcendence that make God remote and indifferent to creation and theologies of immanence that fail to maintain an adequate distinction between God and the creation... As a person who is at once” wholly other,” God is also the God whom we truly encounter in worship and in the everyday events of life. We believe God is best worshipped and served when seen simultaneously in the glory of transcendence and the personalness of immanence.

George J Zemek (1990:131) agrees, saying,

That “Presence theology” discussions and debates about whether or not in the OT the Lord is ever genuinely conceived of as dwelling on earth have generally been counter-productive in the edification of the church. Finite and fallible deliberations, energized by overly simplistic assumptions, have both impugned key texts and skewed their balanced theology. Conclusions that see contradiction rather than complementary truths have resulted, especially in reference to God’s transcendence and immanence.

3.2.2 Biblical Theology

A consideration of God who is outside can be seen by taking note of a large family of texts that Wells (1994:122) describes as speaking

...of the plenitude of God's being, his bright excess, his overwhelming largeness and the far reaches of his being that exceed all human understanding. These texts declare that God is exalted, that he is 'high', that he is 'above'...They celebrate that fact that God in his being, character, and will is not subject to the ebb and flow of life, to its limitations, to its distortions, that such is the power God has that even in a fallen world he is able to effect his will, exercise his sovereign control, and act in the fabric of its life. When he does so, however, his ways may sometimes seem dark and mysterious to finite sinners.

There is a group of texts that refer to the greatness of God's being and character, of His being elevated or 'above' this world. The Psalmist declares that God dwells "on high" (113:5; 99:2-3), that his "greatness is unsearchable" and he is "greatly to be praised" (145:3). Isaiah sees him in a vision sitting on a throne "high and lifted up" (6:1), he speaks of God who effortlessly exercises complete sovereignty over all creation (40:15-20) and in the lives of individual people (40:21-26). Similar references appear throughout the New Testament (Romans 1:10; Ephesians 1:4-5; Colossians 4:12). Stephen expressed his confidence in God's sovereignty when he gave his final sermon, calling him the "Most High" (Acts 7:48) (cf. Carson 1996:230-232).

It is this God, elevated over all of life, from whom Christ came. In John's Gospel, the contrast is drawn especially sharp in two forms. John distinguishes between two realms in life, sometimes contrasting "glory" with "flesh" and sometimes contrasting what is "above" with what is "below". It was from the realm of glory that Christ descended (3:13; 6:33, 38; 10:38) to take flesh (1:13-14). On forty-two occasions, John describes Christ as having been "sent" into this world, leaving God who is above and coming below (3:17;

9:39; 10:36; 12:46; 16:28; 18:37). Many have subsequently stumbled at this point, perplexed over the relation between the Father who was left and the Son who came. Did they share the same divine being? Could they be different grades of divinity? Did the separation require some kind of distinction between the divinity of the Father and the Son? The New Testament shows no such perplexity. Luke characterizes Christ as “the Son of the Most High” (1:32); Paul, citing Psalm 68:18, states that after completing his work on the cross, Christ “ascended on high” (Ephesians 4:8); and all the New Testament authors affirm both implicitly and explicitly that the goodness of the Son was not different from that of the Father and by the fourth century, in the Nicene Creed, the early church had finally secured this position against the heretical alternatives (Wells 1994:123-124). Jan G. van der Watt (cf. 2000:296-303) discusses how the sending by the Father of the Son places the mission within the family context thus emphasizing the relation between the mission and the family.

There are then texts that speak directly of the painful and sometimes terrifying reality of God’s utter moral purity. This too, is part of his elevation. This was part of what Isaiah saw in the temple when he cried out with the words, “Woe to me (6:5) (cf. Berges 1998:94-104; Motyer 1993: 74-78). He was struck by the dreadful danger that he and the rest of God’s people were placed in by this holy God, for this kind of holiness, of necessity, asserts itself against what is dark, wrong, perverse, and disobedient. And yet, a little later Isaiah says, “I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob. I will put my trust in him” (8:17). Later yet he says, “Truly you are God who hides himself...” (45:15). Why would a God whose holiness so awed Isaiah now seem to disappear? Sometimes the answer to this dilemma is that God’s absence, his “hiding”, his inaccessibility in the realm “above” is itself an expression of his judgment: He judges by withdrawing his presence. At other times, however, his judgment is more overt; the Old Testament gives a running commentary of those moments through the centuries when God’s holiness asserted itself against those who were arrogant, unbelieving or disobedient (Wells 1994:124).

Finally, there are texts acknowledging that God's ways often elude human understanding. Paul, for example, says that God's judgments are "unsearchable" and his ways "inscrutable" (Romans 11:33). God's apparent absence from our lives is not always a matter of judgment; sometimes, it is just a matter of the strange unfathomable out-workings of his providence. Sometimes sufferers facing circumstances that seem to herald the defeat or flight of God simply have to trust that He is indeed good, that He is indeed present. God's government of the world is often morally opaque from our perspective, and it will be so until the final day. "Why, O Lord, do you stand far off?" (10:1) asks the baffled Psalmist (Wells 1994:125). Job, in his long anguish and confusion, knows "the dread of a silent and absent God" (Terrien 1978:363).

In Deuteronomy 29:29 we learn that what is un-revealed will remain unknown: "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law."

The God of the Bible is the God who reveals himself – which is to say that revelation is not a matter of human discovery but of divine-disclosure. And the fact that God could have remained completely inaccessible to our understanding had He chosen to do so, that He could have concealed all that He is from us, and that He could have done this because He does not need us for his own completion. The fact that He did chose to reveal Himself to us is explicable only on the grounds of grace. (cf. Brunner 1934:548-560).

William C. Placher (1996:xi) raises an interesting point worth noting in the context of this dissertation. He says,

The problems of greatest concern to me are not the modern world's famous inability to believe in God – I'm willing, as a theologian to take my chances there – but the world's characteristically trivial images of God. When the culturally dominant pictures of God have come to be simplistic, it becomes

hard to arouse much excitement about the news of divine incarnation – or much sense of its meaning... (I am) worried – and continue to worry – that in the contemporary context God-talk too could seem a little too comfortable and domestic.

He is concerned about the appropriate language for God. In his book, *The Domestication of Transcendence* (1996), he proposes “a critical retrieval of some aspects of traditional Christian theology” (1996:xii). Before the seventeenth century Placher (1996:6) argue when speaking of transcendence,

Most Christian theologians were struck by the mystery, the wholly otherness of God, and the inadequacy of any human categories as applied to God... but in the seventeenth century philosophers and theologians increasingly thought they could talk clearly about God.

As a result there was a shift to a “contrastive” understanding of transcendence, where they were explaining God’s difference from created things by saying that God was *transcendent* (distant, unaffected) in contrast to *immanent* (close, engaged).

Rather than explaining how the categories break down when applied to God, they set the stage for the talking about transcendence as one of the definable properties God possesses – a quality we could understand and that many writers today could then come to find deeply unattractive. In that sense, transcendence got domesticated, and theology suffered as a result.

(Placher 1996:7)

Placher (1996:199), on this issue of transcendence, wants to recapture what the Bible makes clear about the transcendent mystery of God.

If Christians believe in God's transcendence, it follows that we remain cautious about all efforts to explain a process itself embedded in the work of God we recognize remains unknowable to us. We recognize the way in which the biblical narratives keep illuminating our understanding of our lives and shaping the worshipping communities in which we live those lives...(Y)et reflecting on our world in biblical terms keeps proving so enriching that we are willing to keep coming back to the Bible and leave many questions unanswered, many puzzles unresolved. This is what it is like to acknowledge the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit.

Should this element of mystery and majesty not also be present in preaching? Are we as preachers not in danger of reducing God to something less than He actually is? God is not and cannot be one of the things in the world, to be analysed and compared with categories appropriate to the other things of the world. Placher (1996:10), quoting John of Damascus, "God does not belong to the class of existing things, not that God has no existence but that God is above all existing things, no even above existence itself." As Paul Tillich (1951:235) elaborated the point,

The being of God cannot be understood as the existence of a being alongside others or above others. If God is a being, he is subject to the categories of finitude, especially to space and substance. Even if he is called "highest being" in the sense of the "most perfect" and the "most powerful" being this situation is not changed. When applied to God, superlatives become diminutives.

The valid point being that something we can understand and adequately account for in terms of our human categories is not God (Placher 1996:10). In commending learning about the unknowable mysteries of God from three classical theologians, namely Aquinas, Luther and Calvin, Placher (1996:60) argues,

Just as for Aquinas we speak with confidence a language about God we do not understand, just as Luther urged a turning aside from any effort to penetrate the mystery of the hidden God in favour of trust in God's promises, so for Calvin the words we speak of God can help us to a confident trust in God even as we recognize the inadequacies both of the words themselves and of our understanding of them.

As a theologian and philosopher Aquinas sought to develop proofs for the existence of God in his *Summa Theologica*. Aquinas believed that God could be known not only through the eyes of faith, but also by human reason. Luther's (1966:34) confidence in God can be seen in what he says in his *Bondage of the Will*,

If you doubt, or disdain to know that God foreknows and wills all things, not contingently, but necessarily and immutably, how can you believe confidently, trust to, and depend on his promises? For when he promises, it is necessary that you should be certain, that he knows, is able and willing to perform what he promises; otherwise, you will neither hold Him true and faithful; which is unbelief, the greatest of wickedness, and a denying of the Most High God!

Calvin (1983:174) also confirms his confidence in God by affirming that God's sovereignty focuses on God's omnipotent will.

He [God] is accounted omnipotent, not because he is able to act, yet sits down in idleness, or continues by a general instinct the order of nature originally appointed by him; but because he governs heaven and earth by his providence, and regulates all things in such a manner that nothing happens but according to his counsel.

The unknown truths about God does not have to erode confidence to speak about what is known even if there remains a measure of mystery. Does this not have an implication for the preacher who seeks to convey in his preaching a sense of the infinite supremacy and transcendence of God? I am convinced it does, in that the preacher does not always have to define God in such a way that exhausts any possibility of communicating his infinite transcendence without compromising his immanence. There is an element of mystery that must therefore remain.

Thomas G Long in his book *Beyond the Worship Wars*, argues for the inclusion of what he calls “The Presence of Mystery” (2001:15) during times of corporate worship in a Sunday service. He maintains that an important characteristic necessary for meaningful corporate worship is that “vital congregations make room somewhere in worship for the experience of mystery” (2001:20).

Barbara Brown Taylor reports that she periodically surveyed her congregations to inquire what sort of adult church-school classes they desired. They always asked for more courses on the Bible prompting her to involve professors from a local seminary to teach classes on the Bible. Yet the attendance was always poor. They always seemed to want more Bible study but few came to the classes. “Finally,” she notes, “I got the message. ‘Bible’ was a code word for ‘God’. People were not hungry for information about the Bible; they were hungry for an experience of God, which the Bible seemed to offer them” (Taylor 1993:47).

In like manner, people are not hungry for more worship services, for more hymns, sermons and anthems. They are hungry for experiences of God, which can come through worship; in the most primal sense, this hunger is what beckons people to worship. The anticipation of the holy is almost palpable, even in the tiniest church on the most routine of days. One can feel it as the people gather, in the spaces between the prayers and hymns, in the most electric silence before the homily.

(Long 2001:21)

Speaking of the preacher entering the pulpit, switching on the lectern light, and spreading out his sermon notes “like a poker hand” Frederick Buechner (1977:40) describes this sense of expectation, by saying:

All of this deepens the silence with which they sit there waiting for him to work a miracle, and the miracle they are waiting for is that he will not just say that God is present, because they have heard it said before...but that he will somehow make it real to them through the sacrament of words.

It is clear that an encounter with God is not something that human beings control or arrange,

No worship planning team could or should sit around a table brainstorming ways for holiness to erupt in an order of worship. However, while we certainly do not have the power to make God appear, a service of worship is a somewhat fragile medium, and we do have, it seems, the negative capacity to create static, to sabotage people’s perception of God’s presence. God is present in worship; our job is to clear the clutter and get out of the way of people’s sight lines.

(Long 2001: 21)

In as much as Long is specifically discussing the broader context of worship this same issue is applicable to preaching the sermon as part of that worship time. The preacher therefore needs to make every effort to ensure he does not create additional clutter in his message thus obscuring the listeners vision of the Glory of God.

Speaking of how many congregations have lost any sense of the transcendent in worship, Long (2001:24) quotes Lutheran theologian Joseph Sittler who maintained,

What is needed is a concentrated attack on the lost realms of wonder and terror and ambiguity, which lie so shallowly beneath the shallow chatty, bland life of our Sunday-morning parish situation – an attack equipped for its work by Biblical knowledge, theological acumen, and a shared awareness of the infinite equivocations in the lives of people who still come, ever expectantly to our churches.