4. THEOLOGICAL THEORIES AND PREACHING MODELS

4.1   An Overview of Recent Developments in Homiletical Theory

Preaching has not remained static over the centuries. Preaching theory has continually developed with new insights and emphases being added by many contributors. This is also true of our own age where there is a wide spectrum of opinion. "Contemporary Homiletics shows a diversity of insights and operates from various presuppositions" (Immink 2004:89). Even within a particular and defined denomination, like the Baptist Union of Southern Africa, there is no consistent homiletical model. Preaching in its intention and methodology varies among these churches. There are those who champion expository preaching and others who prefer narrative and topical styles of preaching.

The last decades of the twentieth century, North American Homiletics was dominated by what is being called "New Homiletics" and during the first years of the new millennium, the emphasis has been moving further away from the modernist logos to postmodern poetics, a further turn to the listener (Immink 1994:89). Vos (2005:292) discussing "Art as a window on the experiential world" says that,

> The experiential world floats on the waters of poetry… We can be carried along by the currents, or almost drowned by its maelstroms. Sometimes we can scarcely keep our heads above the water and at other times we are splashing about happily in the streams of life's experiences… Poetry allows people to dream, no matter how dire their circumstances.

"Homiletics is exiting the houses of tradition, scripture, reason and experience" (McClure 2001). It is not that the fundamental constituents of preaching are no longer important, but, says Immink (2004:89),

> …their self evident meanings have evaporated. Positions are continuously under deconstruction, identities are fragmented and erased. Surely the basic questions remain. How should we read the Bible as a text? How does anamnesis work? How should we reason in the communication of faith? What is the role of human experience in religious discourse? These questions are handled from quite different perspectives, however. Homiletics is fragmented.

Even here it must be noted that the question regarding the Glory of God is conspicuous by its absence. Surely the question uppermost in any preaching event is that of: how and in what way is the Glory of God being communicated?

In the western European context, Homiletics took an empirical turn following a heyday of kerygmatic theology. Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann and C H Dodd had understood preaching primarily as an encounter with God's redemptive presence, albeit in different ways. The movement now is toward the process of understanding: how do the listeners engage in the process of understanding? The hearer of the sermon is seen as an active participant in the preaching process (Immink 2004:89).

There is no doubt that the preacher seeking to make a difference must take note of the present audience. "The person living in the 21st Century must be taken seriously for meaningful ministry to take place. The preacher must understand the congregation in its own context to avoid proclamation taking place in a vacuum" (Janse van Rensburg 2002:39).

Nell (Vos (ed.) 1994:28) agrees: "A sermon must be heard in order to have any effect… Preaching as a communication act is intended to act upon an audience, to modify an audience's convictions or dispositions… " The preacher in every context, including the postmodern context needs to know and understand his audience.

The inclusion of the listener or hearer alongside the biblical text is supported by Ernst Lange (1976:58). Gert Otto (1976) emphasizes the rhetorical dimension of preaching: preaching is an address, a speech. The Dutch homiletician, G D J Dingemans (1991), argues for a hermeneutical approach from the perspective of the hearer. Another recent tendency is linked with the late-modern interest in existentialism and subjectivism and moves in the direction of a more constructionist approach. Wilfried Engemann (1993) developed a "semiotic homiletic" in which he tries to do justice to the socio-cultural context of signification. There is also an interest in a more aesthetic approach. Martin Nicol has described how preaching can become a work of art (see 2000:19-24). Vos (2005:306) agrees, saying that the homiletician "is to craft a sermon with care and make it a work of art". Umberto Eco's idea of *offenes Kunstwerk* is introduced into homiletical theories in order to emphasize that texts can be understood in many different ways, that hearers provide their own interpretation, and that we definitively need imagination and metaphorical language in order to represent the divine mystery (Immink 2004:90).

4.1.1   Developments Around the Kerygmatic Theory

H. Grady Davis (1958:109) in his book, *Design for Preaching*, argues that preaching in the New Testament takes the characteristic form of "official announcement, proclamation of God's action and offer, by the mouth of a chosen messenger." Proclamation is presented as a promise. It consists of promises made by God, promises of forgiveness and help, of liberation and joy, of hope and of glory (Immink 2004:93). The word *euaggelizein* (Louw & Nida 1989:412) means "to communicate good news concerning something (in the New Testament a particular reference to the gospel message about Jesus". It expresses the good news of God's redemptive action in Jesus Christ. But Davis adds that the ministry of the word is not derived from this concept alone. In the New Testament, teaching and exhortation are the legitimate forms of speech. "Kerygma points to God's decisive acts in Christ and calls for faith and repentance. Teaching and exhortation focus on the

need in the community of faith to grow in knowledge, faith and obedience"
(Immink 2004:93).

The herald model is the preferred way of preaching by those who hold to a
word-theology. In his early days Barth held that the church had forgotten to
read the Word as God's Word. He was concerned that preaching had turned
into a kind of religious discourse, a reflection of human needs and religious
desires. This same concern underlies the motivation for this thesis. Barth
insisted beginning with his Romans placing strong emphasis on the otherness
of God. He saw that, "the Gospel proclaims a God utterly distinct from men.
Salvation comes to them from him [God], and because they are, as men,
incapable of knowing him, they have no right to claim anything from him"
(Barth 1968:28). Therefore, that in preaching we are confronted with a critical
and salvific word of God, a word that radically changes us (Immink 2004:93).
Eduard Thurneysen argued that preaching as a communicative act is never a
communication of experiences, be they pious or not. Instead preaching is
about God's salvific acts in history (Thurneysen 1971:105-118). The emphasis
is on God's saving activity in the world and not on human religious
experience. The herald model reinforces that personal experiences, personal
opinions, and colourful anecdotes are not truly important in the act of
preaching (Long 1989:27). Instead, the divine-human encounter in Jesus
Christ is to be re-presented. Preaching has to serve the word of God, i.e.
Jesus Christ as the act of God. For that reason, preaching is the exposition of
scripture. Consequently, says Immink (2004:93),

> Our subjective experience or subjective interpretation is de-
> emphasized in the act of preaching. Instead, preaching is
> sacramental. It is a human speech act through which God's
> salvific action is re-presented (Barth 1971:165-178), not in the
> sense that we can domesticate God, but rather that God can
> create the Christ event to be performed in our midst. Preaching
> is a kerygmatic event, not an expression of human
> consciousness.

Bloesch (2001:55) commenting in *Christianity Today* in an article advocating kerygmatic preaching entitled "Whatever happened to God" (www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/002/9.54.html) questions the sad state of the sermon,

> Equally deplorable is the state of the sermon, which in historic Protestantism was considered the primary means of grace. Our preaching may appeal to the Bible, but that appeal is often more cultural than biblical. We interpret the Bible through the lens of our own experience or our particular religious tradition. We do not allow for the fact that the Spirit speaking to us through the Bible may call our traditions and our theologies into question. The surest evidence that Protestantism has abandoned its glorious heritage—of being not only a reformed church but a constantly reforming church—is the demise of kerygmatic preaching, preaching that consists in retelling the story of God's gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. Ministers may preach from the Bible, but this does not guarantee that they are preaching the Word of God. Their sermons are didactic more than kerygmatic, more centred on moral concerns than on the gospel.

Lischer (1992:53) advocates the kerygmatic approach in a more moderate form, he says that "because it is God who speaks and the Holy Spirit who attends the Word, those who preach, teach and give testimony do so with the assurance that the Word's effective power is not diminished". Long defines preaching as "bearing witness" and Charles Bartow (1997:3) in his book *God's Human Speech*, emphasizes the performance dimension of the kerygmatic model.

> And if the divine self-disclosure in Jesus Christ is the primary locus of performative action for practical theology…, it is imperative that we attend to that self-disclosure with all the varied means appropriate to it… The Word of God is face to face, oral-aural situated, and suasory discourse. It is not a dead

> letter… It is an event of *action divina* (God's self-performance). It
> is in fact God's human speech.

The gospel here is primarily understood as an event of the divine self-performance. That self-performance is enacted again in preaching. In the *homo performans*, we meet the divine action (Bartow 1997:60). Preachers are not referring to the imaginations of their hearts, they testify to the divine self performance. Language therefore does not have an expressive function, but instead it is relational and depicts reality. What it evokes is not merely knowledge or emotion, but instead human action brought about by the enactment of God's self-disclosure in preaching (Immink 2004:94).

A specific form of narrative kerygmatic Homiletics has been developed in the tradition of the Yale school of theology. It aims at overcoming the old liberal experiential-expressive model of religious communication by presenting a cultural-linguistic alternative. The old subjective approach is rejected, mainly because it locates religion in the pre-reflective depth of the self. In the old model, faith is primarily a subjective experience and becomes discursive when it is expressed in thought and language. In a cultural-linguistic outlook, religion is viewed as a kind of cultural or linguistic framework that shapes the entirety of life and thought (Lindbeck 1984:33). Language and culture are a priori, and religion is a communal phenomenon that shapes the subjectivity rather than being a manifestation of subjectivity. The outer has priority over the inner and consequently religion is an external world that shapes the self and its world (Immink 2004:95).

Eugene Lowry introduced strategies for narrative sermons and holds the view that evoking an experience is the purpose of preaching. Yet there is an explicit kerygmatic moment in his theory of preaching. Lowry distinguishes between preaching as a task and preaching as a goal and introduces the term proclaiming to describe the goal,

> Preaching I can do. I choose it: I prepare for it. Prayerfully I
> engage it, and I perform it. I do it Sunday next. Proclaiming the

Word is what I hope will happen next Sunday. I will attempt my preparation strategy in such a way as to maximize the chance for it. But proclaiming the Word? Nobody has the grip of control for it. You cannot capture it; you cannot control the receipt of it; you cannot package it; you cannot deliver it, and you cannot control the receipt of it. Sorry. Preaching the sermon is a task; proclaiming the Word is a hoped for goal. It would be an achievement indeed.

(1997:37)

Lowry points out that the bridge between preaching and truly proclaiming is evocation, but understood as an encounter with God's salvific presence (Immink 2004:95).

Immink maintains that is important to see that kerygmatic preaching is not only stimulated by the Barthian tradition but also by Bultmann's theology. According to Bultmann preaching is personal address, summons, demand and promise. "The message of Jesus is an eschatological gospel – the proclamation that now the fulfilment of promise is at hand, that now the Kingdom of God begins" (Bultmann 1935:27). The summons and demand is evident at the last meal Jesus has with his disciples. Jesus' message is "based on certainty: the Kingdom of God is beginning, is beginning now! His own activity is for him and for his followers the sign that the Kingdom is imminent… In this last hour… decision is inevitable – for him or against him" (1935:30). Referring to the parable of the great banquet in Luke 24:16-24 Bultmann (1935:33) claims that "The call to the Kingdom of God is accordingly, as the parable shows, an invitation which is at the same time a demand. Where the Kerygma is proclaimed, there is the very revealing moment of grace (Immink 2004:95).

4.1.2 The Growing Importance of the Listener

One of the most fundamental characteristics of Homiletical discourse in the second half of the twentieth century is the attention to the hearer (Immink 2004:96).

It is necessary for the preacher to understand the world of the congregation (Pieterse in Vos 1994:6). This requires more than just the study of the Bible and commentaries but a penetration by the preacher into the world of the parishioners.

Long (1989:12) states that the preacher must approach the text as a representative of the congregation. He says, "we have been immersed in the lives of these people to whom we will speak, which is another way of saying that, symbolically at least we rise to the pulpit from the pew" .

What exactly does the listener hear, and what does he or she expect to happen in the church? This resulted in hearer-centred models in Homiletics. It was not that the kerygmatic theologians overlooked the listener but their concern was primarily theological and epistemological in nature.

One of the results of empirical research being used in Practical Theology during this period was that homeleticians began to see that preaching was not efficient (Immink 2004:97). New insights emerging from the social sciences led some theologians to admit that preaching does not function well in terms of communication. Karl-Wilhelm Dahm observed that preaching is too much a one-way activity of the preacher, which results in a consumer-attitude of the hearer. Although there is some positive result at the emotional level, they really do not change people's lives and have zero impact on a cognitive level. A few years later, Karl-Fritz Daiber completed large-scale empirical research in the churches of Hannover, and one of the results was that the hearers interpret sermons from their subjective mindset. Ever since then, apprehending the sermon has become a central theme in Homiletical studies.

In the South African context H.J.C. Pieterse (1991) has developed a dialogical communication model for Homiletics (Vos 1996:170). The communication model consists of conversation partners that strive to communicate in freedom and on equal footing (see Pieterse 1988:8-9).

Rudolf Bohren has been paying much attention to the active participation of the hearer, and has yet remained faithful to the kerygmatic model. He does so by using basic insights from reformed theology as developed by the Dutch theologian Arnold van Ruler. Central to van Ruler's work is the idea of the inhabitation of the Spirit. According to him, says Immink (2004:97),

> The gospel is not only proclaimed but also realized in the human world and history, albeit in an incomplete and fragmentary way. The sinner is not only justified, but also regenerated and renewed. Divine grace is not only bestowed upon us, but also accepted, internalized, and lived as a public affair. This is the specific and distinctive work of the divine Spirit. In line with the Calvinist tradition, van Ruler argues that faith cannot be understood solely in Christological terms. It also has a pneumatological structure. This implies reciprocity between the divine and the human: to be accurate, a theonome reciprocity. Bohren uses these insights in his homiletical theory. The work of the Spirit is a work in us and with us. Where the Spirit works, there human activities are included: methods are involved and techniques applied, art is practiced and science used. Moreover, the Spirit is not only involved in the preaching of the word but also in the reception of the word. Consequently, Bohren pays full attention to the hearer. The hearing of the word is both a work of God and an art and work of the human being.

In the secular European culture and mindset where all self evidence of Christianity is gone and questions as to the relevance of the gospel are being asked, Lange, turning to the needs and expectations of the hearer, argues that the sermon has to clarify the situation. He does not contend that the

situation of hearer reveals ultimate meaning or that the situation is simply illuminated from within, but rather clarified in the light of the gospel. In the light of the gospel, clarification implies real change (Lange 1976:58). In this model, the sermon is a conversation with the hearer about that person's life – a conversation, however, in the light of God's promises (Lange 1976:58).

Hans van de Geest's *Presence in the Pulpit*, presents a slightly different approach but keeps the focus on the reception of the sermon. From the perspective of dealing with the personality and character of the preacher he focuses on the importance of trust between the preacher and hearer. He believes that the sermon is not effective when our human resistance and our hidden unwillingness are neglected or overruled (Immink 2004:99). It is important to deal with what David Buttrick calls "congregational blocks".

The Dutch homiletician Dingemans developed a hermeneutical model from the perspective of the listener. Using the insights of modern hermeneutics, he argues that we can neither hold onto an objective truth nor depart from a subjective certainty. All knowledge is best understood as human interpretation. He sees the preacher primarily as a mediator who facilitates the dialogue between the hearer and the biblical text (Immink 2004:99).

4.1.3 The New Homiletic

In North America, the dominant paradigm in the last quarter of the twentieth century was the New Homiletic. This movement can be labelled in different ways: poetic, narrative, imaginative, creative or transformational. One of the leading principles in preaching is that preaching must be understood as an event-in-time. The purpose of this type of preaching is not to transmit cognitions but to facilitate an event to be experienced (Immink 2004:100). Good preaching does not seek to win consent to a truth claim, but evokes experience. An evaluation of the sermon is based on the question, what happened in this sermon.

Fred Craddock raises the practice of inductive preaching and he postulates three conditions (1981:62-64), which are necessary for inductive preaching,

> First, particular concrete experiences (of the listeners and the preacher) are ingredient to the sermon, not just in the introduction to solicit interest as some older theories held but throughout the sermon. On the basis of these concrete thoughts and events, by analogy and by the listener's identification with what he hears, conclusions are reached, new perspectives are gained, decisions made.

> The second matter thus far stressed as fundamental to induction in movement of material that respects the hearer not only capable of but deserving the right to participate in that movement and arrive at a conclusion that is his own, not just the speaker.

> This leads us to a third and final comment about the inductive method and the role of the listener: the listener completes the sermon… What is suggested… is that the participation of the hearer is essential, not just in the post-benediction implementation but in the completion of the thought, movement and decision making within the sermon itself. The process calls for an incompleteness, a lack of exhaustiveness in the sermon. It requires of the preacher that he resist the temptation to tyranny of ideas rather than democratic sharing. He restrains himself, refusing to do both the speaking and the listening. To give both stimulus and response, or in a more homely analogy, he does not throw the ball to catch it himself.

Induction begins with the particulars of life experience and points toward principles, concepts and conclusions (Lewis & Lewis 1983:32). In a later work they describe inductive preaching as "laying out the evidence, the examples, the illustrations and postpone the declarations and assertions until the

listeners have a chance to weigh the evidence, think through the implications and then come to the conclusion with the preacher at the end of the sermon" (1989:43). Inductive preaching works from the particulars to the whole, from the unknown to the known and employs four valuable elements.

Another aspect of the New Homiletic is the use of creativity and imagination. Imagination is understood as a rule-governed form of invention. It has to do with inspiration and creativity (Immink 2004:103). Vos (2005:291), discussing the need for the preacher to be part of the experiential world of the listener, says that the "homiletician needs to do more than try to understand the listener's experiential world; as far as possible, he/she should have an intuitive understanding of the listener's emotional state", thus illustrating the proposed use of imagination and creativity.

A good summary of more recent new directions in Homiletics is found in Rose's *Sharing the Word*. She favours a conversational model in which "the preacher and the congregation gather symbolically at a round table without head or foot, where the labels like clergy and laity disappear and where believing or wanting to believe is all that matters" (1997:4). All forms of hierarchy must be abandoned: the preacher is not an authority figure, there is no absolute or objective standard of word, and no propositional truth. All present have a contribution in a partnership between the preacher and the congregation (Immink 2004:104).

4.2   Contemporary Preaching Models

"The choice of the type of sermon has a communicative value and is a road along which the preacher and the congregation can travel" (Vos 2005:316). Important to this study is what happens down the road to the listener in terms of either being exposed or not being exposed to the Glory of God.

The preacher has a responsibility in bringing the listener to a particular destination. The destination must include inspiring the listeners to greater

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

This study will consider three different preaching models in line with what is preferred and used most often in the South African Baptist context.

4.2.1 Narrative Preaching

The narrative preaching model is not entirely new. In the Bible, there are what Walter Brueggermann (Long 1980:64-65) has called "primal narratives" such as Exodus and Passion stories. It was also prevalent in synagogue preaching, where preachers engaged in at least two distinct forms of proclamation: *halakah* ("the way") and *haggadah* ("story"). Halakah involves applying the legal provisions of the Torah to new circumstances, while Haggadic preaching weaves the hearers' circumstances in to the biblical narratives (Vos 1994:95).

Narrative preaching is being promoted as a primary sermon form in the 21st Century. It is argued by H. Grady Davis (1958:157) that if only one-tenth of the gospel is exposition and nine-tenths of it narrative then why do our "perceptual sermons roar on, entirely out of sync with the Bible's narrative model?"

4.2.1.1 Definition

In seeking to understand what narrative preaching is it needs to be distinguished from mere story telling. It cannot just be seen as story telling. Long (1989a:71) defines a story as a series of events that have a beginning, a middle and an end. These elements of time, says Pieterse (1987:166), are linked "by logical relationships, by a causal relationship" or, as suggested by Schlafer (1992:63; 68-70), "by the dynamics between narrative, images and arguments". However, as Buttrick (1987:10) points out, the report of chronological events cannot be considered a narrative.

"A narrative is the artistic arrangement and the telling of the events in such a way that the story has its ultimate effect in its sermonic context" (Janse van Rensburg 2003:56). Stories will not automatically produce a good sermon (Schlafer 1992:82). It is the plot of the story that adds that special charm and seductive power to entice the listener to become involved (Janse van Rensburg 2003:56).

Stories may give identity or even prove a point or share ideas (Robinson 1990:34) whereas preaching in narrative form transforms identity, because it places the story within the bigger context of God's story. Although we cannot predict the effects of a sermon, the power of narrative is that it invites people to identify with a character in the narrative. Schlafer (1992:79) explains:

> If a point of identification can be established with characters who are engaged in realistic interaction, there is the possibility that such an identification can have the effect of reshaping the life stories of those who hear the story in the sermon.

Well-told narratives draw the listener to the place where the listener identifies with the people in the story. Some characters are preferred above others but as the listener identifies with the trials and tribulations, the joys and loves of the characters, the listener experiences a solidarity with them that enables him/her to say: "I like that" or "I wish I could be like that" or "I do not wish to be like that" (Long 1989:75), or as Miller (1992:110) says, "What must I do?"

Although the story captures the attention of the listener instantaneous change cannot be guaranteed. Pieterse argues that the "single life-changing factor in Christian narratives is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ" therefore claiming that all preaching should be Christ-centred (1987:11-17).

"The literature in narrative preaching shows that the concept of narrative is not universal in its semantic interpretation" (Janse van Rensburg 2003:57). Some see a narrative sermon to be the re-telling of a biblical story, others understand narrative preaching to include a story about life that explains

biblical truths. Illustrations, often used to confirm an expository sermon, as well as poetic language, the life story of the individual, authentic experiences are also considered by some to be narrative.

Lowry (1993:25-27) defines narrative preaching in such broad terms that he regards each sermon "that moves from opening disequilibrium through escalation of conflict to surprising reversal to closing denouement" as a narrative sermon whether it contains a story or not. Vos (1996:181-186) argues that any approach that causes the sermon to be more pleasing could be called narrative, whereas some writers even include the traditional style of preaching in the definition of narrative (Hamilton 1992:104).

Janse van Rensburg (2003:57) maintains that this all-inclusive understanding of the term "narrative" is unfortunate, as it does not help us to understand the narrative art form better. On the contrary, it confuses more than it enlightens.

The narrative sermon according to Calvin Miller (1992:103) is not a simple matter of using stories and illustrations to make the sermon interesting, instructive, or challenging.

> The narrative sermon, rather than containing stories, is a story which, from the outset to conclusion, binds the entire sermon to a single plot as theme. Here and there sub-plots, separate illustrations or precepts may punctuate or ornament the narrative, but the theme narrative stays in force all the way through – from the sermon's "once-upon-a-time" until its "happy ever after."

4.2.1.2 Developing the Narrative Sermon

There are various approaches in developing a narrative sermon, including Lowry, with an emphasis on the plot, Buttrick with his emphasis on moves (1987:23-79), and Craddock with his emphasis on the inductive approach. Janse van Rensburg (2003:59) suggests that Miller's approach (1992:112-

115) is the most workable, because of its simplicity and ability to accommodate the main elements of the other approaches.

The preparation and delivery of narrative sermons as in the case of any sermon can be considered under the following four categories: the approach, the writing, the delivery and the calling of the sermon (Miller 1992:112).

Approaching the narrative sermon deals with the early work of needing to arrive at a subject, text and form for the sermon.

The writing begins as soon as it is determined this is the best form to use. The contriving of the narrative sermon will have a plot for its primary ingredient. The plot is the unresolved tension that must remain unresolved until the final moments of the sermon. In other words, it can be said that the audience must be kept waiting in suspense for the resolution.

The delivery should be gilded with the best, well rehearsed techniques of oral delivery and dramatic enhancement.

The calling should be obvious by the time the narrative is resolved. What is the text demanding of them? What does God require? Is the issue clear? How can they meet the issue? Why was the sermon preached in the first place?

As seen above, Miller uses the plot (like Lowry) as the point of departure where the plot entails four moves as explained by Janse van Rensburg (2003:59-63):

An introduction – this is where the characters of the story are introduced. At this stage the narrator will have to consider all the facts as well as the arrangement of those facts in such a manner as to create expectation and meaningful anticipation. It is also here that motives and emotions are important if characters are to be presented as people like us.

Events – these are the events that are complicated by developments (other wise known as "itch" (Lowry 1997:81).

Resolution – while narrating the events, "the information triggers the listeners to get involved in their own story, interpreting what they hear and seeking answers and solutions" (Hughs 1990:58). The resolution brings about a sense of satisfaction.

A conclusion – the events, as in a movie, come to a quick conclusion for dramatic effect. Lowry (1997:86) states that this is a "crucial time for powerful economy of words".

4.2.1.3 Advantages of Narrative Preaching

Miller (1992:104-106) sets out the following advantages of the narrative model:

- The narrative form forces our dull minds to pay attention to far more than the three point sermon form. Vos (2005:317) maintains "the main advantage of the story as a sermon is that it can be interesting, that it carries the listeners along with it." There is, however, the danger that the story could become the sermon text removing the text in to the background.

- It manoeuvres a story to suit the whole congregation's privatized needs. Each member of the congregation applies the story to his/her situation to arrive at the best individual application.

- It has to do with the flow and fix of the sermon.

- It may propel the preacher in the direction of sermonic artistry.

4.2.2 Expository Preaching

No treatment of the nature of expository preaching would be complete without referring to the dramatic scene recorded in Nehemiah 8. A scene described by Larson & Dahlen (2005:216) which was "not a spontaneous gathering but well planned and strategically arranged".

> All the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel. 2 So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. 3 He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. 4 Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam. 5 Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. 6 Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. 7 The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah—instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. 8 They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.
>
> (Nehemiah 8:1-8)

Raymond Brown (1998:127) commenting on this passage in Nehemiah 8 says, "The distinctive characteristics of this meeting for biblical exposition are strikingly relevant…   Western materialistic culture has become increasingly indifferent to the Bible". Brueggemann (2003:367) commenting on Nehemiah suggests that "particular attention be paid to the remarkable cluster of materials in chapter 8-10… The text narrates a determinative act… that marks the community of Judaism as the people of the book-cum-interpretation".

Expository preaching therefore seeks to follow the pattern of preaching as established by Ezra and his associates. Those godly men read God's book and explained it, and they did so in such a way that the people understood the implications (Begg 1999:27, Hughes 2001:19). Expository preaching is "Bible-centred preaching". That is, it is handling the text "in such a way that its real and essential meaning as it existed in the mind of the particular Bible writer as it exists in the light of the over-all context of Scripture is made plain and applied to the present-day needs of the hearers" (Unger 1955:33). The text of Scripture must be explained in such a way that people understand what God is saying to them (Hughes 2001:69).

True expository preaching creates an expectation amongst hearers to hear what it is that God is saying. Calvin expresses this in his commentary on Ephesians:

> It is certain that if we come to church we shall not hear only a mortal man speaking but we shall feel (even by his secret power) that God is speaking to our souls, that he is the teacher. He so touches us that the human voice enters into us and so profits us that we are refreshed and nourished by it. God calls us to him as if he had his mouth open and we saw him there in person.
>
> (1973:42)

4.2.2.1 Four key principles of expository preaching:

- Expository preaching always begins with the text.

That does not mean that every sermon will begin with the phrase, "Please turn in your Bible to …" But it does mean that even when we begin by referring to some current event or the lyric of a contemporary song, it is the text of Scripture that establishes the agenda for the sermon. The expositor does not start with some private idea, instead he begins with the Scripture itself and allows the verses under consideration to establish and frame the content of the sermon" (Begg 1999:28; Robinson 1980:23). The congregation should be able to see that it is from the text of Scripture where the preacher derived truths put forth in the sermon (Hughes 2001:18).

This is a basic principle put succinctly in *The Directory for the Public Worship of God*, written in 1645. "It is presupposed, (according to the rules for ordination,) that the minister of Christ is in some good measure gifted for so weighty a service, by his skill in the original languages, and in such arts and sciences as are handmaids unto divinity; by his knowledge in the whole body of theology, but most of all in the holy scriptures" (www.epcew.org.uk/dpw/DPW.html#preachingoftheword). When raising an issue from a text, preachers, according to *The Confession of Faith* are to ensure that "it be a truth contained in or grounded on that text" and "that the hearers may discern how God teacheth it from thence" (1970:379). Those who preach must ensure that their efforts lead to the listeners understanding their bibles. This conviction led those involved in the English Reformation to include in their first book on homiletics the clear instruction, "The Word of God alone is to be preached, in its perfection and inner consistency. Scripture is the exclusive subject of preaching, the only field in which the preacher is to labour" (Perkins 1996:9). That is why John Stott says, "It is our conviction that all true Christian preaching is expository preaching" (1982:125).

It is wrong therefore to think of expository preaching merely as a style chosen from a list (topical, devotional, evangelistic, textual, apologetic, prophetic or

expository). Roy Clements confirms this, "Expository preaching is not a matter of style at all. In fact, the determinative step which decides whether a sermon is going to be expository or not takes place, in my view, before a single word has been actually written or spoken. First and foremost, the adjective 'expository' describes the method by which the preacher decides what to say, not how to say it" (Clements 1998).

The task of the expositor goes beyond a running commentary on a passage or even a succession of word studies loosely held together by a few illustrations. It goes beyond the discovery and declaration of the central doctrine found in the passage.

In preaching the aim must be to let the text speak. As von Rad instructed young preachers: "every text wants to speak for itself" (1977:18). We should not only try to find out what the text means; we should also ask: "What is the passage trying to do?" (Buttrick 1985:91). In the words of Gerhard Ebeling: "The sermon is the execution of the text … it is the proclamation of what the text has proclaimed" (1966:109). The text provides both information and proclamation (Logan1986:137) and as the Bible is read and preached, God speaks to us today.

- In expository preaching the preacher stands between two worlds.

Expository preaching seeks to fuse the two horizons of the biblical text and the contemporary world. Stott in his book '*Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century'* (1982b) argues that it is possible to preach exegetically and yet fail to answer the 'so what?' in the listener's mind. Ezra's hearers would not have begun construction on the booths if he had failed to establish the link between the text and the times. True exposition must have some prophetic dimension that leaves the listener in no doubt that what he has heard is a living word from God and creates in him at least the sneaking suspicion that the Author knows him. The preacher's task is to declare what God has said, explain the meaning and establish the implications so that no one will mistake its relevance.

> Biblical and Theological studies do not by themselves make for good preaching. They are indispensable. But unless they are supplemented by contemporary studies, they can keep us disastrously isolated on one side of the cultural chasm.
>
> (Stott 1982:190)

David Read commends the need for study but goes on to say,

> …that theologically-cushioned, isolated study is a lethal chamber, and it is a dead word that is carried out along the corridor …not the living Word spoken as it must be, from the heart and from life to life.
>
> (1952:62)

It is necessary for the preacher to understand the world of the congregation (Pieterse in Vos 1994:6). This requires more than just the study of the Bible and commentaries but a penetration by the preacher into the world of the parishioners.

Long states that the preacher must approach the text as a representative of the congregation. He says, "we have been immersed in the lives of these people to whom we will speak, which is another way of saying that, symbolically at least, we rise to the pulpit from the pew (1989:12)."

- In expository preaching show relevance

Expository preaching encourages the listener to understand why a first-century letter to the church in Corinth is relevant to a twenty-first century congregation living in Pretoria.

The horizons of the biblical text and the contemporary world should fuse in such a way that the listeners are learning by example how to integrate the Bible with their own experience. Listeners face the twin dangers of assuming

either that what they have just heard is totally unrelated to where they are living or that it is immediately applicable, that it is "just for them" (cf. Begg 1999:30).

> The preacher has to place himself in the text's situation (horizon), whilst being true to one's own situation (horizon). In the hermeneutical interaction that follows (putting one's prejudices as questions and listening to the text's answers to these questions) the preacher's horizon is broadened
>
> (Vos 1994:7)

Vos concludes, "Speaking and listening happens in dialogues. A dialogue with the biblical text can occur where there is critical exegetical analysis and attentive listening on the part of the preacher" (1994:7).

- In expository preaching depend on the work of the Holy Spirit

Azurdia III claims that,

> The greatest impediment to the advancement of the gospel is the attempt of the church of Jesus Christ to do the work of God apart from the truth and power of the Spirit of God. Like the disciples, preachers are powerless, in and of themselves, to accomplish the 'greater works'. The declaration of Jesus in John 15:5 remains true to this day: 'Apart from me you can do nothing'.
>
> (2003:29)

Pieterse confirms this by saying that we can only hear the living Word in preaching through the work of the Holy Spirit (1987:15).

Hughes correctly argues that our belief in the power and our dependence on the Holy Spirit of God must never 'give us licence to be mediocre

communicators' (Hughes 2001:85). The same warning is given by Spurgeon (1970:127) to preachers who fail to employ effective homiletical techniques, saying:

> There are some preachers who care very little whether they are attended to or not; so long as they can hold on through the allotted time it is of very small importance to them whether their people hear from eternity, or hear in vain: the sooner such ministers sleep in the churchyard and preach by the verse on their gravestones the better.

It is true the Holy Spirit can do anything he wants, but "he has called us to preach the word and to preach it clearly, to preach it accurately and to preach to communicate the content of the gospel" (Hughes 2001:85).

4.2.2.2 The advantages of expository preaching

Liefeld (1984:10-13) lists the following advantages from a preacher's point of view:

- The preacher can be more confident of preaching God's will when preaching the Word of God. True exposition increases that confidence and the sense of authority that grows out of it.

- In expository preaching the preacher can confine himself to biblical truth and minimize subjectivism.

- By using this model the preacher in preaching through the Bible is more likely to proclaim the "whole council of God" rather than using favourite parts of Scripture. Begg (1999:35) agrees, "expository preaching prevents the preacher from avoiding difficult passages or from dwelling on favourite texts".

- The context of the passage usually includes its own application. The preacher therefore gets directions as to how the passage should be applied in the present day.

- Scripture often provides a pattern that reveals the inner thoughts and feelings of the author. This can provide excellent suggestions for providing outlining for the sermon.

Further advantages of the expository sermon are:

- Blackwood (1995:78-81) says that "it deals with the book as the larger unit and the paragraph as the smaller one."

- It sets limits, as explained by John Stott (1982:126-133), "it restricts us to the scriptural text," and does not allow us to invent our own message.

  One of the main advantages of expository preaching is that, if done without bias, the entire Bible will eventually be covered. In addition, the preacher will never be lost for a subject for his or her sermon, since few preachers have ever preached through the entire Bible in their lifetimes or with one congregation. Should they be so fortunate to finish the entire Bible with the same congregation, many years will have passed with (hopefully) lots of new faces in the congregation, so they can start over (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expository_preaching).

- Through expository preaching the preacher walks in the path of the original writer and there is less of a tendency for the preacher to preach his own opinion or the philosophy of the age (Chapell 2001:6).

Begg (1999:33-39) adds some important advantages of expository preaching,

- Expository preaching gives glory to God, which ought to be the ultimate end of all we do.

   Since expository preaching begins with the text of Scripture, it starts with God and is in itself an act of worship, for it is a declaration of the mighty acts of God. It establishes the focus of the people upon God and His glory before any consideration of man and his need. In beginning here we affirm the place of preaching not the grounds of personal interest but because it please God. A congregation that has accepted this and is beginning to learn the implications of it will be markedly different from the one in which sermons constantly find their origin in the felt needs of the people.

- It makes the preacher study God's Word

   The preacher who commits himself to the expository approach to preaching must himself become a student of the Scriptures. The first heart God's Word needs to reach is that of the preacher. John Owen (1968:76) spoke of this necessity for the preacher to experience the power of truth in his own soul,

   A man only preaches a sermon well to others if he has first preached it to himself. If he does not thrive on the "food" he prepares, he will not be skilled at making it appetizing for others. If the Word does not dwell with power in us, it will not pass on power from us.

- It helps the congregation

Expository preaching helps the congregation to learn the Bible in the most obvious and natural way.

- It provides a balanced diet

The rich diversity of the entire Bible can then be taught to the congregation. The listeners are not limited to the interests of the preacher or the latest book he may have read. The Word of God sets the agenda.

4.2.3 Topical Preaching

In a general and broad sense topical preaching takes place when the preacher

> is free to choose a text from the Bible rather than preach on a pericope assigned by the lectionary; when the preacher has an idea and then searches for a biblical text (or texts) treating that idea; even when the preacher writes on an assigned text but feels free to develop the sermon without rigid adherence to the structure of the text and without the compulsion to deal fully with every verse, phrase, or word in that text.

> (Rossow 1992:85)

There are others who define topical preaching more specifically; Caemmerer (1959:133, 139) defines the topical sermon in terms of approach, He sees the topical sermon beginning with a theme and goal in the mind of the preacher. It is the preaching on a subject which the preacher has begun to develop before he turns to a text to define it. Or it can be said that it is "need orientated rather than tradition orientated" (Duduit 1992:86).

Allen (1992:3-4) says that he is committed to the "expository sermon being the life blood of the church" but argues for the use and value of the topical sermon on topics where the Bible is not explicitly clear. He defines the topical

sermon as interpreting a topic "in the light of the gospel but without originating or centering in the exposition of a biblical text or them". He goes on to define a topic as "a need, an issue, or a situation which is important to the congregation, which calls for interpretation from the perspective of the gospel itself than from the standpoint of the exposition of a particular passage from the bible".

Another writer (Broadus 1979:55) defines the topical sermon mainly in terms of the development of the sermon's structure. "Topical sermons are those in which the divisions are derived from the subject. The topic may be derived from the text, but the divisions come from the subject." The starting point here is the text and not the preacher's idea. The text may even suggest the topic but what makes the sermon topical is that the sermon outline is developed in terms of headings natural to the topic rather than those indicated by the text (Rossow 1992:85).

There are at lease three elements that Rossow (1992:85) identifies as essential for topical preaching. First, the selected topic must be a biblical topic, or, if not that, at least a topic treated – and resolved – from a biblical perspective. He rightly insists that the sermon topic must "ultimately have a 'Thus says the Lord' quality to it;" the authority of the Scriptures must be clear.

Second, in spite of the preacher developing his theme in his own individual way and may not deal with all the aspects of the text, "there must be considerable congruence between the content of the sermon and the content of the text. When a preacher embarks on the task of topical preaching he must not distort or disregard the meaning of the biblical text.

Third, the topical sermon must communicate the gospel, "the good news of God's saving and sanctifying help through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The gospel must be seen as paramount, the principal ingredient, as the major reason why the sermon was preached at all.

4.2.3.1 Advantages of Topical Preaching

Various advantages of Topical preaching have been identified:

- It is more focused on the needs of the hearer and can be more rewarding. The preacher's mind is therefore trained in logical analysis (Broadus 1979:55-56).

- The preacher may consult individuals or groups in the congregation for their input as to the choice of sermon topics and sermon texts, thereby increasing the likelihood of subsequent sermons being relevant to individual and congregational needs (Rossow 1992:88).

- The topical sermon encourages the preacher and the congregation to have concern and to be able to describe contemporary issues and situations.

4.2.4   Summary of Preaching Models

Narrative preaching must be distinguished from mere story telling. It does however include story (Long 1989a:71) containing a series of events that have a beginning, a middle and an end. These elements of time, says Pieterse (1987:166), are linked "by logical relationships, by a causal relationship" artistically arranged in such a way that the story has ultimate effect in its sermonic context, adding that special charm and seductive power to entice the listener to become involved (Janse van Rensburg 2003:56).

Expository preaching is "Bible-centred preaching". That is, it is handling the text "in such a way that its real and essential meaning as it existed in the mind of the particular Bible writer as it exists in the light of the over-all context of Scripture is made plain and applied to the present-day needs of the hearers" (Unger 1955:33). The text of Scripture must be explained in such a way that people understand what God is saying to them (Hughes 2001:69). It is the text

of Scripture that establishes the agenda for the sermon and not some private idea. The preacher "begins with the Scripture itself and allows the verses under consideration to establish and frame the content of the sermon" (Begg 1999:28, Robinson 1980:23).

Topical preaching deals with a specific subject which the preacher has begun to develop before he turns to a text to define it. Or it can be said that it is "need orientated rather than tradition orientated" (Duduit 1992:86). This kind of preaching is when the preacher has an idea and then searches for a biblical text (or texts) treating that idea (Rossow 1992:85).

5. TOWARD A NEW HOMILETICAL APPROACH

In this chapter an attempt will be made to gather together the key theological convictions and practices identified in the literature study necessary for an approach to preaching that best brings the listener into an encounter with the Glory of God, in this way inspiring the listeners to greater vitality of faith in God and into a deeper and richer encounter of God in worship. In certain instances additional material will be added.

Preaching, according to Murray A. Capill (2003:12) "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." Those involved in preaching therefore need to be clear on particular theological convictions and practices that facilitate this intention of producing a deep impression of God on the hearts and souls of the hearers.

Theological convictions and practices that have a direct bearing on proclaiming the Glory of God in a faith-inspiring way have been discussed in the preceding chapters and are summarized below in an effort to facilitate the interaction between the literature study and the empirical research that will be carried out as recorded in the next chapter.

5.1   Speaking God's Words

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).

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 (Nash 1982:23). Preachers armed with this conviction will be willing to affirm that the

Bible contains propositional truths that form a framework for Christian belief (Wells 1994:86).

In a previous chapter it was shown that there are a variety of theories and models concerning the praxis of preaching, with the more recent emphasis being on the listener. This dissertation certainly does not propose ignoring the listener, but rather keeping the listener and the preacher in the right perspective under God. Having considered the nature of the Glory of God and the resulting weight that preachers and listeners should be giving to the supremacy of God then it can be seen that "if our pursuit in coming to a sermon is primarily to see perceived needs met, to see all questions that are on the table answered, or even give and receive practical help for daily living, then our journey will lead to someone or something other than God getting the glory" (Shaddix 2003:4).

The important and ultimate question then must be, how do we preach (and listen to preaching – a subject for further research not addressed by this dissertation) in such a way as to bring glory to God?

Shaddix (2003:4) answers this question by saying that the mandate for the pastor's primary weekly preaching ministry is "to rightly expose the mind of the Holy Spirit in every given text of Scripture. Exposure to the truth of God's word rightly unfolded is the only way that those of us who listen to sermons will ever be recreated into the image of Christ. And recreated people are one of the primary ways God is his glorified in his church".

If preaching for the Glory of God is clearly an act of worship then what could bring more honour to God than for his people to hear and revere his voice? It is the preacher then that is the primary worship leader in the congregation and the sermon is a significant sacrifice of praise offered by both the pastor in the pulpit and the people in the pew (Shaddix 2003:125).

The preacher holding to the conviction that, in the words of Peter Adam, in his book *Speaking God's Words* (1997:15-55), "God has spoken", "It is written"

and "Preach the Word". These are then the biblical foundational pillars for preaching.

The preacher armed with this foundational conviction will consequently need to make every effort to avoid the following practices which may hinder the proclamation of the Glory of God:

- The minimal use of Scripture with sermons; being light on Biblical substance (Capill 2003:9). The prophet Amos warned of a famine that would cover the land, a dearth of hearing the Word of the Lord (Amos 8:11). Theologian Walter Kaiser is among those who declare the famine is now here saying, "The famine of the Word continues in massive proportions in most places in North America (Kaiser 1999:166).

- Not allowing God's word to set the agenda for the content of a sermon and thus abandoning expository preaching in favour of giving people what they want (Gilley 2002:115). A half a century ago Merrill Unger (1954:231) saw the dangerous departure from biblical preaching already present and threatening the vitality of the church. Sounding a warning he wrote, "To an alarming extent the glory is departing from the pulpit of the twentieth century. The basic reason for this gloomy condition is obvious. That which imparts the glory has been taken away from the centre of so much of our modern preaching and placed on the periphery. The Word God has been denied the throne and given a subordinate place".

- Believing that the preacher or communicator has to be "great" for any kind of effectiveness. The emphasis on the communicator confusing the listeners as to being enthralled by man rather than by God (Capill 2003:13).

- Minimize the importance of doctrine. Thus shifting the emphasis away from doctrinal purity in favour of addressing felt needs (Cimino and Lattin 1999:62).

- Have an emphasis in ministry that promotes experiencing God through emotions and mystical experience (Nash 1982:23) at the expense of Biblical content.

- Imparting or downloading information. Thus not seeing that the role of the preacher with the use of God's word is not just about imparting information but giving people a sense of God (Lloyd Jones 1971:91).

5.2   The Pre-eminence of God

Theological convictions on the Glory of God as discussed in a previous chapter must of necessity lead both preachers and listeners to the place that they will at all times need to be ensured, like Paul and Abraham, that in all of their life and practice they seek approval from God and not man. Their supreme desire must be to give Glory to God.

The preacher cannot ignore that glorifying God covers all areas of life, for Christians are to receive each other "for the glory of God" (Romans 15:7). The speaking and ministry of the Christian are to be "in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1Peter 4:11). All of life must be for his glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). Our bodies must be kept pure for his glory (1 Corinthians 6:20). The duty in man is fulfilled in the believer who is being changed from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18) (Gordon 1975:733).

Every preacher will have either a God-centred or a man-centred theology. Logically it then follows that when preachers clearly hold the conviction that God is pre-eminent and supreme then they will have a God-centred theology, whereas if preachers elevate man as supreme their theology will be man-centred.

A God-centred theology rooted in the biblical revelation can only lead the preacher to the place where he sees that the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever (Reymond 2003:55). Thomas Watson (1978:6) elaborating on the question of the chief end of man says that "The Glory we give God is nothing else but our lifting up his name in the world, and magnifying him in the eyes of others." Practically, Glorifying God consists of four things: appreciation, adoration, affection and subjection (cf. Watson 1978:7). Watson (1978:9) adds five reasons why we are to glorify God: God gives us our being, God has made all things for his own glory, God has intrinsic value and excellence, creatures below humans bring God glory following with the question, "do we think to sit rent free?" and we are to bring glory to God because all our hopes hang upon him.

If all these reasons are true and valid for all mankind then it must be of uppermost interest to the preacher. The preacher must be concerned and passionate for the Glory of God. Shaddix (2003:3) agrees that preaching "cannot be driven by a preference, a program, or even a purpose, especially that of asking all the questions people ask. Instead, preaching should be driven by a passion for the Glory of God, a passion jointly possessed by both pastor and people".

The concern for the Glory of God in the praxis of preaching is something that flows from a biblical perspective of God. This should govern what we intend to accomplish in preaching. Piper (1990:19) maintains that if God aims to exalt Himself then the supremacy of God must be evident in preaching. He elaborates the theme in his book, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching,* by intentionally using a Trinitarian outline:

The Goal of Preaching: the Glory of God.
The Ground of Preaching: the Cross of Christ.
The Gift of Preaching: the Power of the Holy Spirit.

James Stewart (1972:73) said the aims of all genuine preaching are "to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth

of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God." Thus it can be seen that God is the goal of preaching.

Piper (1990:20) pleads for the supremacy of God in preaching:

> That the dominant note of preaching be the freedom of God's grace, the unifying theme be the zeal that God has for his own glory, the grand object of preaching be the infinite and inexhaustible being of God and the pervasive atmosphere of preaching be the holiness of God. Then when preaching takes up the ordinary things of life – family, job, leisure, friendships; or the crises of our day – AIDS, divorce, addictions, depression, abuses, poverty, hunger, and worst of all, unreached peoples of the world, these matters are not only taken up, they are taken all the way up to God.

Speaking of great preachers of the nineteenth century as Robert Dale, John Newman and Charles Spurgeon; John Henry Jowett (1912:96, 98) comments,

> They were always willing to stop at the village window, but they always linked the streets with the heights, and sent your souls a-roaming over the eternal hills of God…It is this note of vastitude, this ever-present sense and suggestion of the Infinite, which I think we need to recover in preaching.

This is not a proposal for preachers to get involved in "a kind of artsy elitist preoccupation with philosophical or intellectual imponderables" (Piper 1990:20-21). Spurgeon was not like this in his preaching at all – he was a preacher with popular appeal, His messages, however, "were full of God and the atmosphere was charged with the presence of awesome realities". Spurgeon said, "We shall never have great preachers till we have great divines" (1972:26).

Piper (1997) expresses a similar passion, "my desire is as strong as ever that God might inflame in you a passion for his centrality and supremacy in your ministry" (www.desiringod.org). Wells (1993:300) expresses his concern saying, "It is this God, majestic and holy in His being… who has disappeared from the modern evangelical world". Tim Stafford (1996:29) quotes Leslie Newbigen saying something similar,

> I suddenly saw that someone could use all the language of evangelical Christianity, and yet the center was fundamentally the self, my need of salvation. And God is auxiliary to that… I also saw that quite a lot of evangelical Christianity can slip, can become centered in me and my need of salvation, and not in the glory of God.

John Calvin saw the same thing in his day. This can be seen in his response to Cardinal Sadolet who had written to the leaders of Geneva trying to win them back to the Catholic Church after they had turned to the Reformed teachings. The issue in Calvin's response to Sadolet is, says Piper (www.desriringgod.org) quoting John Dillenberger (1975:89),

> Not first justification or priestly abuses or transubstantiation or prayers to the saints or papal authority. All those will come in for discussion. But beneath all of them, the fundamental issue for John Calvin, from the beginning to the end of his life, was the issue of the centrality and supremacy and majesty of the Glory of God. Here is what he said to the Cardinal, "[Your] zeal for heavenly life is a zeal which keeps a man entirely devoted to himself, and does not, even by one expression, arouse him to sanctify the name of God". In other words even precious truth about eternal life can be so skewed as to displace God as the center and the goal. He goes on and says to Sadolet that is what he should do – and what Calvin aims to do with all of his life – is "set before [man], as the prime motive of his existence, zeal to illustrate the Glory of God".

Benjamin Warfield (1971:24) said of Calvin, "No man ever had a profounder sense of God than he".

Geerhardus Vos (1980:241-242) asked the question in 1891, What is it about Reformed theology that enables the tradition to grasp the fullness of Scripture unlike any other branch of Christendom? He answers, "Because Reformed theology took hold the Scriptures in their deepest root idea… This root idea which served as the key to unlock the rich treasuries of the Scriptures was the pre-eminence of God's glory in the consideration of all He had created".

Cotton Mather said, "The great design and intention of the office of Christian preacher is to restore the throne and dominion of God in the souls of men" (1726: v). He based this conclusion on an understanding of Romans 10:14-15 where the good news of the preacher, the peace and salvation he announces boils down to the fact that God reigns supreme.

Piper (1990:23) adds the challenging implication that:

> The Lord sends preachers into the world to cry out that God reigns, that he will not suffer his glory to be scorned indefinitely, that he will vindicate his name in great and terrible wrath. But they are also sent to cry that for now a full and free amnesty is offered to all the rebel subjects who will turn from their rebellion, call on him for mercy, bow before his throne, and swear allegiance and fealty to him forever. The amnesty is signed in the blood of his Son.

If it is a significant part of the preacher's role to restore the throne and dominion of God in the souls of men with the equipped with the message of the offer of the mercy of amnesty, then it is important to consider what it is it that compels the heart of God to demand that people submit to his authority (Piper 1990:24). Isaiah 48:9-11 points to the answer when speaking of God's mercy to Israel, God says,

> 9 For my own name's sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my
> praise I hold it back from you, so as not to cut you off. 10 See, I
> have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the
> furnace of affliction. 11 For my own sake, for my own sake, I do
> this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to
> another.

This text points to something beyond the sovereign exercises of God's mercy as king. It is that of God's unwavering passion for the honor of his name and the display of his glory.

It can then be said that behind God's commitment to reign as King is the deeper fundamental commitment that his glory will one day fill the earth (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14; Psalm 57:5; Psalm 72:19). This discovery, says Piper (1990:24), has a tremendous implication for preaching.

> …for God's deepest purpose for the world is to fill it with
> reverberations of his glory in the lives of a new humanity,
> ransomed from every people, tribe, tongue and nation
> (Revelation 5:9). The glory of God does not reflect brightly in
> the hearts of men and women when they cower unwillingly in
> submission to his authority or when they obey in servile fear or
> when there is no gladness in response to the glory of their King.
> The implication for preaching is plain: When God sends his
> emissaries to declare, "Your God reigns!" his aim is not to
> constrain man's submission by an act of raw authority; his aim is
> to ravish our affections with irresistible displays of glory. The
> only submission that fully reflects the worth and glory of the King
> is glad submission.

This is very much in line with the teaching of Jesus: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and

then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field" (Matthew 13:44).

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:5, "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." In verse 6 he elaborates on the essence of his preaching: "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. The only submission to the lordship of Christ that fully magnifies his worth and reflects his beauty is the humble gladness of the human soul in the glory of God in the face of his Son.

The preacher armed with this conviction will make every effort to avoid the following practices which may hinder the proclamation of the Glory of God:

- Seeing success from a human and worldly perspective elevating the human above the divine, promoting the experience of people above God as the focal point in ministry (Wells 1994:86).

- Having an emphasis on human feelings where it is believed that God is found in a special kind of feeling (Nash 1982:30).

- Promoting self gratification rather than edification where there is an escape from instruction and submission to that instruction preferring selfless fun (Gabler 1999:16).

- Promoting worship styles that are ego-centric rather than Theo-centric where the human heart is targeted at the expense of giving glory to God (Bloesch 2001:54) and there is no sense of the sacred.

The significant theological conviction that lies at the source of this move away from humans being at the focus of all things to God being the focus and centre of all things is that of God's passion of His own glory. This conviction is

of such importance in the age we live that it is raised and highlighted as a separate theological conviction in the next point.

5.3   God is the Most Self-Centred Person in the Universe

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).

It is precisely this conviction that God created all things for His own Glory that gives us as sinful people confidence in God's faithfulness toward us in providing redemption through the work of His Son, Jesus Christ.

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's questions (2003:7-8) regarding 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).

The preacher armed with this conviction will make every effort to avoid the following practices which may hinder the proclamation of the Glory of God:

- Having a focus in ministry that has human experience as the focal point (Immink 2004:110).

- Believing that God is primarily concerned about people and consequently developing a mindset that sees God as existing for the benefit of humanity.

5.4   The Transcendence of God

It is helpful to repeat Placher (1996:199) who says that

> 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.

The preacher who holds to the theological conviction of the transcendence of God will convey in his sermons something of the mystery and majesty of God thus avoiding the pitfall of always having answers and comprehensive definitions on everything in the world and heaven above.

The preacher armed with this conviction will make every effort to avoid the following practices which may hinder the proclamation of the Glory of God:

- Eliminating all sense of mystery out of the praxis of preaching and worship.

- Having views of God and practices in ministry that do not convey the weight of his Glory.

5.5   The Light of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ

John Piper (2006) speaking at the *Together for the Gospel* conference on the topic *Preaching as Expository Exultation for the Glory of God* (www.desiringgod.org/library/sermons/06/042706.html), asks the question: "How are people wakened to the Glory of God and are Changed by it?" The answer to the question contains another of the essential convictions required to proclaim the Glory of God,

> One essential part of the answer is given by Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:18-4:6. He says, And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit'. To be changed in the way that glorifies God, we fix our gaze on the Glory of the Lord.

Taking the argument a step further he enquires as to how this happens. He again quotes Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 explaining how we behold the Glory of the Lord. "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

> We behold the Glory of the Lord most clearly and most crucially
> in the gospel. So much so that Paul calls it "the gospel of the
> glory of Christ". This has implications for preaching, as it means,
> when we cannot see the Glory of the Lord directly as we will
> when he returns in the clouds, we see it most clearly by means
> of his word.

Shaddix (2003:12) uses the word "reporting" as that which describes the task of the preacher. "Reporting about the work of God in Christ is found on a number of significant pages of the New Testament". Sometimes this reporting is about Jesus' incredible activity (Matthew 9:26; Matthew 14:1; Luke 4:37; Luke 5:15). There are other times where that reporting has direct relationship to the preaching event. Paul speaking in the context of the role of preaching in the propagation of the gospel in Romans 10:14-21 says, "but they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord who has believed our report?'" These words from the context of Isaiah in chapter 53:5 speaking of the suffering, dying work of the Saviour. Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. "The report", says Shaddix (2003:13) "of which Isaiah and Paul spoke is the good news of the crucified Christ, the glad tidings of His substitutionary death that we might live. That is what preachers are to report".

Throughout church history, preachers who have left a lasting impact on the church have known in the words of Michael Horton (2000:10), "the regular proclamation of Christ through the close exposition of Scripture is more relevant in creating a worshipping and serving community than political causes, moral crusades and entertaining services". "In a strange twist", says Lawson (2003:26) "the preaching of the Cross is now foolishness, not only to the world, but also the contemporary church."