

CHAPTER 2

A HOMILETIC THEORY FOR THE UPBUILDING OF THE CHURCH

A hypothesis of this study is that a homiletic theory has to do with a faithful and relevant ecclesiology for the upbuilding of the church. In other words, this study develops a homiletic theory which is connected with such an ecclesiology during a period of transition. This homiletic theory will be developed from the hermeneutic-communicative perspective of a homiletic theory for the formation and transformation of the identity of the church in the service of the Gospel in the congregation and in society (Pieterse 2001a:15). These processes of developing a homiletic theory consist of two steps. From a reformed theological perspective, firstly, a faithful and relevant ecclesiology in a period of transition will be identified. Secondly, a homiletic theory for the upbuilding of the church will be developed from the point of view of its identified ecclesiology.

2.1 THE CONTEXT OF THE CHURCH

In this section the context of the church will be understood hermeneutically. As we ponder the church's response to the context of the church, we have to try to discern how, as faith community, we have ourselves been shaped by modernity, how we have allowed our grasp of the gospel to be distorted (cf. Newbigin 1986; West 1999:65-71).

In identifying the characteristics of the context of the church and its influence on the church, it is first necessary to consider what term to use to describe the context of the church. With regard to this, Cas JA Vos (1996:vol.2:236) prefers the term "modernism" to describe the present phase of the church's existence to the term "postmodernism". Although the church is in a period of transition from modernity to postmodernity, however, there is very little clear division between modernism and postmodernism (Vos 1996:vol.2:234ff). Vos (1996:vol2:236) says that "We live in an age that cannot name

itself”. These different cultural changes cannot be so easily divided into time phases. They coexist in the situation of the church. However, these cultural frames are understood as the interpretation people give to the world, in words and artefacts.

The church is in the modernising process of society. According to Heitink (1999a:35), modernising is “a general term to describe the processes of change that have occurred in society in the last few centuries, with modernity as its end product.” Modernisation, as Cas JA Vos (1996:vol.1:234) mentions, is the objective reality that can be researched, understood, and explained by the way of human reason. What modernisation is and its influence on the church will be explained.

2.1.1 Modernisation

Modernisation is “the development in society that is characterised by the attempt to solve problems from the perspective of rationality” (Van der Ven 1996:5-6). Modernity is the name for the promise of rational, science-based progress as a human historical project linked to capitalist and socialist economic engines, with a claim on democracy as the polity of choice, with the nation-state as the primary form of political sovereignty, and with the bourgeoisie as modernity’s most prominent inventor as well as its vanguard and heart (Rasmussen 1993:26-27). Modernity has been characterised by such features as the dominance of rationality and reason, the development of the autonomous self, the distinction between public and private, fact and value, and the notion of the social contract as the basis for community (Newbiggin 1986; Bosch 1991:262-267; Guder et al 1998:18-36; Bellah 1991; Middleton & Walsh 1995:9-27).

The effects of modernity, according to Rasmussen (1993:26-29), are as follows: 1) The secularising of society and the empowering of humanity would leave us all as the unbounded rulers of ourselves and the earth. 2) Religion, the ancient integrator that underpinned a society’s morality, was no longer organisationally necessary for a human social order and could take its proper, more restricted place as voluntary personal choice and practice. 3) Capitalist economics would offer freedom from scarcity need. 4)

Democracy would release us from authoritarianism. 5) Science-based progress would save us from the terror of change and the paralysing fear of the unknown.

2.1.1.1 Rationalisation

Modernisation is accompanied by a rationalisation of society (Heitink 1999a:38). Rationalisation leads to a functional mode of thinking, which sees human beings first and foremost in the role they play and the position they occupy (Heitink 1999a:38).

By the end of the 14th century, a new movement, the Renaissance (c.1350-1600), was beginning to take shape in Italy. It was a rebirth of learning because it ignited a new interest in knowledge and particularly in the heritage of ancient Greek civilisation (Hunter 1992:26). The period, commonly known as the *Enlightenment* or the *Age of Reason*, covers the 17th and 18th centuries. It demarcates the modern age from the Middle Ages. Modernists sought to construct a society guided not by superstitious belief but by a universally valid rationality. With his famous “Cogito, ergo sum,” René Descartes (1955:106) argued that simply because our perceptions can – and often are – mistaken, certainty exists only in the mind. Descartes (1955:106) therefore placed his confidence in the rational consciousness of our own existence from which the indisputable “first truths” of philosophy might first be deduced through rigorous and logical introspection and then applied to make sense of our perceptions of the external world.

In contrast, the empiricism of John Locke (in Lose 2000:12) asserted that all of our rational ideas originally stem from our sensory experience. Therefore, only a method of empirical observation and verification could establish a reliable foundation for all knowledge. While apparently starting at opposite ends of the philosophical spectrum, however, both rationalists and empiricists held fast to the conviction that some indubitable “first truths” or “universal foundations” could be discovered upon which to ground all knowledge (Lose 2000:12).

The intellectual breach initiated by the Enlightenment was primarily a shift from understanding knowledge as logical and consistent belief to positing it as verifiable fact (Lose 2000:24). In both the rationality of Descartes and the empiricism of Locke, such a view of logical consistency is rejected in favour of the ideal of critical verifiability. Knowledge – to be accepted as knowledge – is not simply displayed, but proved. Hence, by submitting truth claims to either the rigorous doubt of rational introspection or the strict examination of empirical observation, one gains knowledge through a critical process of observation, experimentation and verification. The emphasis on coherence is not, of course, entirely neglected by the modernists, but it is not sufficient on its own. Knowledge is not only coherent belief, it is verifiable fact; it is no longer simply mediated by others, but is immediate to our rational and sensory perception; it is not so much an account of the past, as one of the present, and therefore is not the province of tradition, but instead that of expertise. Knowledge, in short, is that which can be proven here and now through the exercise of critical human reason (Lose 2000:25).

Another important aspect of rationalism is its search for absolute and objective truths. Descartes's *Cogito ergo sum* set a process in motion that created an "objective" world (Van Wyk 2000:86-87). Modernistic scientists saw themselves as researchers who produced exact and unambiguous knowledge, and established absolute truths. The absolute abstraction and reduction of human nature is an example of this kind of reasoning and an important characteristic of modernism.

Modernity would come to be animated by a resolute and optimistic desire to discover, study, describe, and ultimately harness the universal laws of the created order. Enlightenment thinkers, like their earlier Greek and Roman counterparts, believed that reality possessed a certain structure or order that was knowable by the human mind (Kuehn 1996:311). Thus, they endorsed the correspondence theory of knowledge (Brown 1990:173). The Enlightenment project upheld the certainty of knowledge. It regarded the world as an ordered realm with discernible natural laws to govern it. This belief galvanised the inquirers to search for means in order to demonstrate the truthfulness of their scientific, political, philosophical, and religious positions (Haykin 1996:52). The commitment to the certainty of knowledge inevitably led to the search for

a historical universality. This is truth which applies “to every people, everywhere, at every time, and in every culture” (Carson 1997:2).

Wedded to the idea of certainty was the belief in the objectivity of knowledge (Runia 1998:548). The assumption that knowledge was objective spawned the notion that the inquirer was a neutral observer (Carson 1997:2). The possibility of the subjectivity of the inquirer attracted scant interest. Consequently, science and the scientific methodology inevitably enjoyed an unassailable position as the final determiner of truth (Runia 1994:303).

The reassessment of knowledge – and therefore of truth – as that which can be verified through reason promotes a similar movement from the metaphysical and theological speculation that dominated the scholastic academy to an emphasis on mathematics and the emerging natural and (later) social sciences that would become the hallmark of the modern university. In his critique of modernity, Michel Foucault identifies three central assumptions about knowledge that characterised the period. While each contributed to the great technological strides of the era, each has also come under intense scrutiny during the postmodern period. These beliefs are that 1) an objective body of knowledge exists that can be discovered; 2) such knowledge is not only attainable but also value-free; and 3) the pursuit of knowledge benefits all people (Grenz 1996:131; Allen 1989:5).

With regard to theology, before the Enlightenment, men accepted divine revelation as the final arbiter of truth. While retaining the overarching belief in God that shaped the Christian world of medieval Europe, modernists nevertheless suspected that grounding one’s understanding of the workings of the creation on theological speculation about the nature of the Creator was entirely inadequate, and therefore they freely called into question the metaphysical convictions of the previous ages.

Vanhoozer (1998:6) argues that Descartes decentred God and divine revelation by making the knowing subject and reason out to be the source of truth. Now the role of reason was to understand that truth (cf Grenz 1997:17). Grenz (1997:150) asserts: “The

way Christians think about God, themselves and their world was permanently and irretrievably altered by an era in Western intellectual history commonly known as the Enlightenment.”

With Descartes’ unaided human reason, there was a seismic epistemological shift. Carson (1997:2) evaluates this as follows:

Now epistemology is not based on the assumption of a God who is omniscient such that our human knowledge is invariably some subset of His exhaustive knowledge. Rather, knowledge is being built on what is judged independent, self-evident truth, an independent axiom that does not need God.

The Enlightenment replaced God and revelation on the centre stage with human reason. Spykman (1992:26) fittingly describes the usurpation of human reason over revelation: “Question marks were placed on God’s side and exclamation marks on man’s side. Increasingly the centre of gravity...drifted from God to man.”

Rationalism, according to Van Wyk (2000:83), determined the nature of theology and its reductionistic approach to truth. The Enlightenment was built on the epistemological assumption that the modern mind can obtain certain and absolute knowledge. After Decartes’ knowledge was regarded as a separate and isolated notion, removed from the experiences and wisdom of life, truth became more and more defined with concepts, and revelation and faith were explained by the way of propositions (Van Wyk 2000:83). Whereas truth was at first separated from history, it later became, for the modern mind, that which “passed the test of scientific verification or was guaranteed by solid historical documentation.” In terms of the presuppositions of this approach, truth is found only by scientific and historical research, and it cannot be found by faith.

With regard to the practice of the church, for example, according to Gibbs and Coffey (2001:27), evangelicalism arose within that context, which meant that it had to confront the challenges of humanism and rationalism. In so doing it was itself influenced, more than it realised, by the modernism it combated. In response to the questionable assumptions and reductionist explanations of Darwinian evolutionists and Freudian psychologists, Christian apologists had to employ the tools of their opponents in order

to engage in meaningful debate. In so doing they became unwittingly subverted by the assumptions they made in debating with their opponents. Christian apologists argued for the reliability of biblical texts based on their consistency and accuracy defined in terms of modern “scientific” criteria.

In rationalism there was no place for revelation; such was the confidence in self-evident, universal truths available to all through unaided reason. There was little place for the “mystery” of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For it was beyond the powers of human reason to reconcile a holy God with sinful humankind.

2.1.1.2 Secularisation

Van der Ven (1996:153) refers to secularisation from the angle of the development that society as a whole is undergoing, namely, that of modernisation, not just from the viewpoint of the church. However this study limits secularisation with regard to theology and the church. Secularisation, according to Vos (1996:vol.1:239), is a changing relationship between religion and society. There is a breakdown in spirituality as well as a factor that imposes limitations on the impact of religion. In this society faith is diminishing and growing weaker.

Vos (1996:vol.1:239) sees secularisation adapting to religion, and as religion adapts to its social context, its worldview changes. The natural, societal, and personal reality is becoming increasingly demystified. To put it semiotically, it means less and less interpretation of the world in terms of religious signs. Theologically it means there are fewer and fewer traces of God. Natural reality appears to be under the ever-increasing control of the laws of nature in a natural-scientific sense. Societal reality is becoming increasingly subject to sociological patterns and regularities. Increasingly, personal reality is being described and predicted according to psychic factors and mechanisms. Natural, societal, and personal reality is being increasingly desubjectivised, objectivised, and de-deified. The total worldview is being more and more rationalised (Van der Ven 1996:154).

Through secularisation, society has become autonomous. One of the products of this is privatisation. Enlightenment has brought the church from public to private spheres. The religious issue is now the private matter. The separation of life into public and private spheres and its compartmentalisation into specialised areas resulted in the marginalisation of religious faith from society and its reduction to a privatised matter for like-minded individuals to pursue without imposing their views on the public sphere (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:27-28). Religious faith becomes relativised, helpful as a resource for coping with the crises of life, but having no legitimacy in claiming public truth. James Hunter describes the resulting crisis in the following terms: “What was ‘known’ with a taken-for-granted certitude becomes, at best, a ‘belief’. Further along in this process it becomes a ‘religious opinion’ or a ‘feeling’.... The emphasis shifts from a concern with the proclamation of an objective and universal truth to a concern with the subjective applicability of truth” (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:27-28).

As Witten (1993:19) points out, “privatization refers to the shrinking sphere of plausibility of religion in the modern world,” and to the corresponding limitations on religious language as a medium for public conversation about morality, law, economics, and other topics once discussed in religious terms (Witten 1993:19), “Religious topics of relevance are those that treat the inner workings of the self as the focus of in-depth analysis, frequently conducted through the secular language of psychology (Witten 1993:20).”

As religion is increasingly privatised, even faith communities have difficulty sustaining public conversation and corporate identity. Those who identify themselves with a particular religion may “decide not to accept the creeds or doctrines of their church as a ‘package deal.’ Instead, they may exercise their freedom to pick and choose among church teachings, professing and following some and denying the importance or the relevance of others” (Witten 1993:21).

Pieterse (2000:6) notes that “the process of modernity... in societies throughout the world causes a tendency in which the church begins to resemble the changed society”. The church is mostly rather a mirror of society than a window on another reality with

the values of the Gospel. Thus the church reflects the values, but does not inculcate the values and norms of society. Pieterse argues that when there is an interwovenness between church and society, they become “more alike and prophetic possibilities naturally dwindle”. The opportunities diminish as the world moves into modernity. The effect is that “modernisation automatically brings secularisation into the church.” Pieterse (2000) argues that the church lose its prophetic role in the society.

2.1.1.3 Pluralisation

According to Vos (1996:vol.2:236), owing to individualisation, people interpret themselves more as individuals than as members of a group, and this is more valid than it was in previous generations. This implies a greater independence from family, society and the societal roles of the individual. This change sees a rise of in pluralism, in the social, psychological and spiritual contexts. Diversity and variety is the order of the day in terms of cultural customs and viewpoints. There is therefore a greater fragmentation of personal values and identity. This is casual to relativism in all spheres of human activity and militates against any domination, also domination in the spiritual realm. Secularisation brings with it pluralisation and marginalisation (Van der Ven 1996:157).

Modern society is being characterised more and more by the independence of the economic, political, and cultural dimensions from each other. This also applies to the societal institutions within these dimensions, which become independent organisations that strive to achieve their own goals, work according to their own laws, mechanisms, and procedures, and aim at increasing their own effectiveness and efficiency. In short, society is branching off into more and more autonomous institutions (Van der Ven 1996:16).

This institutional differentiation is of great importance to the church. In the agrarian, preurban, premodern period, the church was the centre of society and carried it. In modern society this is no longer the case. The church can no longer maintain its position as an overall institution. The other institutions have become autonomous and have emancipated themselves from the church. It has become merely one institution among

many. The church has been marginalised in the course of the modernising society (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:216-217).

2.1.2 Conclusion

As some characteristics of the context of the church have been discussed, these thoughts have influenced the identity of the church.

When we consider the influences on the church, from traditional influences to those of the self-assured modern world, then those of the fragmented and fragile world of postmodernity, the church is merely one segment in that fragmented world, which is characterised by polarisation and conflict with each segment fighting for its right of self-determination.

During this period of social transition the church has been displaced from the prior social role it played in culture and society and has lost its once privileged and influential position (cf Brueggemann 1997:24-37). The church cannot assume a privileged position (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:216-217). It finds itself marginalised in a pluralistic world.

However, this situation is not only negative, but also positive for articulating a faithful and relevant identity and mission for the church. In the next section, in which an ecclesiology is outlined which reflects a faithful and relevant identity and mission for the church, a homiletic theory will be developed.

2.2 ARTICULATING A FAITHFUL AND RELEVANT ECCLESIOLOGY IN TRANSITION

2.2.1 Defining an ecclesiology from a missional perspective

In the previous section, the churches in transition were shown to have been dislodged from their prior social role of chaplain to society and to have lost their once-privileged

position of influence. At the same time, the churches have become so acclimatised to the dominant culture and way of life that they are now domesticated. These changes have brought about a crisis of identity for the church.

The church has lost its dominant position in culture and is now at the margins where it struggles with identity. In discussing engaging with culture, Roxburgh (1997:23) cites the model of “liminality” which was developed by an anthropologist, Victor Turner. The church in contemporary culture is at a point of liminality. According to Turner (cf Roxburgh 1997:23), “Liminality is a term that describes the transition process accompanying a change of state or social position.” Liminality is a condition of transition from one position or role in culture to another. In the model, Roxburgh explains the process of cultural and social marginalisation and re-entry. According to Roxburgh (1997:23-49), Turner describes three phases of transition in any rites of passage process: *separation*, the *liminal phase*, and *reaggregation*.

The three phases of separation, the *liminal* (marginal) phase, and reaggregation describe how a group is transformed in its outward relationships to other groups and institutions, and, equally important, in its own inner life (Roxburgh 1997:27). In the separation phase, the subjects going through the rite of passage are detached from their established, embedded roles. The initiates have had a socially determined and shaped role that has been essential to their sense of place and purpose (Roxburgh 1997:28). As this change occurs, the initiate moves into the second, *liminal*, phase. This is the place of marginalisation, or disestablishment. In the *liminal* stage, the group, or individual, is now outside the normative roles and relationships that characterised and gave meaning to their identity. The final phase in the rites of passage is reintegration into the social group as a new person with a fresh identity. This kind of reintegration is possible only after the *liminal* phase has been accepted as a marginal experience that leads to a new, transformative relationship with the social structures of the culture (Roxburgh 1997:27-29).

This study develops the identity of the church in transition and goes on to describe the mission of the church from the perspective of The Gospel and Our Culture Network

(GOCN). The Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) is a fast-growing and significant movement in North America, made up of theological educators, pastors, denominational administrators, and local congregational leaders from a variety of confessional traditions devoted to the task of fostering a missionary encounter with North American culture. The work of GOCN has been done in three areas. The first area is cultural analysis: What are the religious foundations and societal practices of North American culture (cf Hunsbarger & Van Gelder 1996)? The second is theological reflection: What is the Gospel to which the church is called to bear witness (cf Van Gelder 1999)? The third is ecclesiological discussion: What kind of church is needed to present a faithful and relevant witness of the Gospel to North American culture (cf Guder et al 1998)? The GOCN can be understood as a movement that is attempting to revision ecclesiology in the context of this new situation.

With regard to the third discussion, GOCN published a book entitled *Missional church* in 1998. The Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) understands that contemporary thinking about the church as well as its current structures have been shaped by Christendom or the *corpus Christianum* (Guder et al 1998). The church of Christendom was moulded by changes that took place in the fourth century, when Constantine became a Christian and legalised the Christian faith (Goheen 2002:482). In 392 Theodosius made Christianity the religion of the empire. The church, as a result, moved from a marginal position to a dominant institution in society; from being socially, politically, and intellectually inferior to being in a position of power and superiority; from being economically weak and poor to being in a position of immense wealth; from being an oppressed minority to being the oppressive majority; from being a *religio illicita* to becoming the only religion of the empire; from being resident aliens in a pagan environment to being an established church in a professedly Christian state (Shenk 1995).

This could not help but have a dramatic impact on the church's structures and self-understanding. Under the Christendom *symphonia* of church and state, the church lost its sense of being a distinct community embodying an alternative story. The prophetic-critical dimension of the church's relation to its culture diminished. The church became

part of the constellation of powers within the Christian state. It took place alongside the political, economic, military, social, and intellectual powers within the empire (Goheen 2002:482).

The authors of *Missional church* (within the North American scene) who discuss ecclesiology from a missional standpoint deem that the Christendom legacy continues to the present in the Western church (Hauerwas & Willimon 1989; Hall 1997; Shenk 1991; 1993; 1995; 1999:118-128; Hunsberger 1996). The Christendom that is present in North America is not “official” but “functional”:

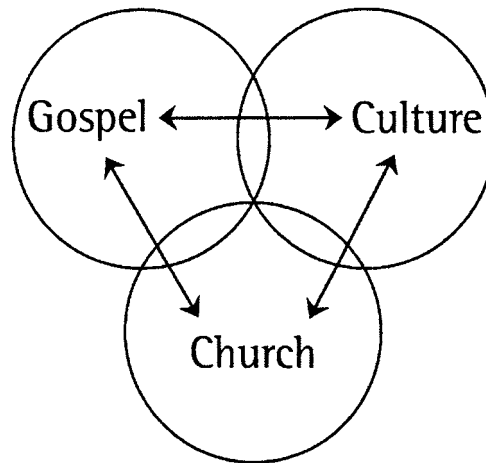
“Christendom” also describes the functional reality of what took place specifically in the North American setting. Various churches contributed to the formation of a dominant culture that bore the deep imprint of Christian values, language, and expectations regarding moral behaviours. Other terms like “Christian culture” or “churched culture” might be used to describe this Christian influence on the shape of the broader culture (Guder et al 1998:48).

According to the authors of *Missional church*, however, Christendom has crippled the church in two respects (Guder et al 1998). On the one hand, the churches of North America have been dislocated from their prior social role of chaplain to the culture and society and have lost their once privileged positions of influence. Religious life in general and the churches in particular have increasingly been relegated to the private sphere of life. Too readily, the churches have accepted this as their proper place (Newbigin 1986).

At the same time, the churches have become so acclimatised to the American way of life that they are now domesticated, and it is no longer obvious what justifies their existence as particular communities. The religious loyalties that churches seem to claim and the social functions that they actually perform are at odds with each other. Discipleship has been absorbed into citizenship (Hauerwas & Willimon 1989).

In this situation, forming the faithful and relevant ecclesiology of the church does not mean going back to Christendom. The church has to find a faithful and relevant identity for itself in a new situation. Therefore, in developing a relevant identity and mission for

the church in a transitional context, Lesslie Newbigin (1995:165-172; cf. Gibbs & Coffey 2001:214) argues that the church has to reflect the dynamic interplay of Gospel, church and culture, as illustrated in the following diagram.



The Missional Model (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:214)

During the hegemony of Christendom, as discussed previously, there was a church-based culture. There was little dissonance between the church and the culture. Wilbert Shenk (1995:34) argues that the established church “surrendered the vital critical relationship to its culture that is indispensable to a sense of mission.” However, in the post-Christendom period, this honeymoon is over. The church has been marginalised. The dominant “plausibility structure” between church and culture has collapsed. The gap between church and culture is widening. Now there are three poles: Gospel, Church and Culture (Wyatt 1999:157).

The identity and mission of the church in a period of transition, therefore, is to be articulated with reference to a “three-cornered pattern of relationships” between Gospel, church, and culture. The point to grasp is that the church does not simply range itself with the Gospel in its missionary approach to culture. Rather, such a Gospel-culture encounter always unfolds for the Christian community as a twofold dialogue: the dialogue the Gospel of God has with us within our culture, and the dialogue we then have representing the Gospel among the others who share our culture. In other words,

the Gospel incites conversation with both the culture and the church simultaneously. It confronts the culture about its godlessness, while it confronts the church about its worldliness (Wyatt 1999:159-160).

As preachers, we stand with the church, which means that the gospel's confrontation with the church's worldliness also implicates us. We relate to culture as former lovers, who having returned to our spouse, nevertheless carry inside us an intimate awareness of the hurts, hopes, lures, and lies of our former relationship with this culture. We know that we have not yet completely broken free of its hold on us. Our spouse's unfathomable love enables us to honestly face and explore these parts of ourselves. Out of the intense dialogue between culture and gospel within ourselves, there grows a compassion that animates the missionary conversation as a dialogue, not merely a monologue. This double conversation of the Gospel with both the culture and the church forms the heart of our being "in" but not "of" the world (John 15:19).

2.2.2 The identity of the church as a missional community

David Bosch (1991:368-389) has observed a shift in the perception of church and mission in recent years. The significant world missionary conferences of the twentieth century have influenced Protestants, both ecumenical and evangelical. The resulting shift in ecclesiology has encouraged the Western church to break out of its Christendom isolation, to recognise the missional reality in the local church as well as in the world, and to bring renewal to the body of Christ.

Several aspects highlight Bosch's development of church and mission. First is the emphasis on the missionary nature of the church. Mission no longer is a "fringe" activity of special groups and people in the church. Mission is defined as follows:

Mission is the creating, reconciling and transforming action of God, flowing from the community of love found in the Trinity, made known to all humanity in the person of Jesus, and entrusted to the faithful action and witness of the people of God who, in the power of the Spirit, are sign, foretaste and instrument of the reign of God. (Quoted in MISSIO 2000:21)

Mission is the very essence of what the church is about. The church is sent into the world by a missionary God. Moreover, the local church is “the primary agent of mission” both “in its own environment and further afield” (Bosch 1991:380-381).

A second emphasis, according to Bosch, is a new relationship between the church and the world. Rather than setting church and world in direct conflict, Bosch shows how many now see the two more in solidarity. Bosch suggests a coexistence that sees mission as “church-with-others.” Therefore, the church truly can be salt, light, and a servant to the world. “Just as one could not speak of the church without speaking of its mission, it was impossible to think of the church without thinking, in the same breath, of the world to which it is sent”(Bosch 1991:377).

Bosch submits, third, that in the new paradigm a tension exists between two views of the church. One view sees the church owning the exclusive realm of salvation. The other views the church as a sign of God’s interaction with the world. Bosch (1991:381-389) suggests that the two views need not mutually exclusive. Rather, he advances a perception of the church with a dual focus held in “creative tension.” The church’s gathering together in worship and prayer sustains its involvement in the world. According to Bosch (1991:377-378), the church is both separate from the world and sent into the world. Therefore, from this understanding of mission and the church, the faithful and relevant ecclesiology of the church will be developed.

1. The church is to be a missional community. A contemporary notion of the church has been understood in the terms dictated by a functional Christendom (Guder et al 1998:79). However, Guder et al (1998:79-80), following David Bosch’s mention given in the lecture at Western Theological Seminary in April of 1991, point out the following problem with this conception:

The churches shaped by the Reformation were left with a view of the church that was not directly intended by the Reformers, but nevertheless resulted from the way that they spoke about the church. Those churches came to conceive the church as “a place where certain things happen.” The Reformers emphasized as the “marks of the true church” that such *a church exists* [italics mine] wherever the gospel is rightly preached, the sacraments rightly administered, and (they sometimes added) church discipline exercised. In their time, these emphases may have been

profoundly missional since they asserted the authority of the Bible for the church's life and proclamation as well as the importance of making that proclamation accessible to all people. But over time, these "marks" narrowed the church's definition of itself toward a "place where" idea.

In the functional understanding of Christendom, the conception of the church as a "place" pays little attention to the church as a communal entity or presence, and even less does it emphasise the community's role as the bearer of missional responsibility throughout the world, both near and far away (Guder et al 1998:84). This understanding of the church as "a place where" brings with it the expectation that the church will be a vendor of religious services and goods.

David Bosch (1991:380-381) emphasises the missionary nature of the church. He defines the church from a missional perspective, as a "body of people" sent on a mission. The church is understood to play a central role in God's mission, that is, the *Missio Dei* framework (Bosch 1991:10). The church is sent into the world by a missionary God. Lesslie Newbigin (1953) also understands the nature of the church from a mission perspective in *The household of God*. Similarly Guder et al (1998:77) describe the church as the "people of God" who are called and sent to represent the reign of God. Unlike the "functional" notion of the church as an entity located in a facility or in an institutional organisation and its activities, the church is being reconceived as a community, a gathered people, brought together by a common calling and vocation to be a sent people (Bosch 1991:8-10; Guder et al 1998:81).

As David Bosch (1991) hinted after San Antonio, and affirmed in *Transforming Mission*, a recovery of the church as *community* is central to being a missional church in transitional situation, not just because a church which seeks to be truly communitarian will be able to bear a more authentic witness in modernisation, but also because a communitarian ecclesiology is closer to our origins in the Trinitarian community of our missionary God.

Therefore, as Bosch (1991:368) wrote, the church-with-others, the incarnational community of faith, is the starting point for mission in our time. As Bosch says later, "...it is the *community* that the primary bearer of mission" (:472). In common Christian

use the word “community” can range from the “two or three” gathered in Christ’s name to the whole *oikumene*, and even as a synonym for the solidarity of Christians with the poor and oppressed, people of other faiths, those in new religious movements, and so on (cf Bosch 1989:137). Christian understandings of “community” need to be rooted in the New Testament word *koinonia* and its cognates. For Paul, the main user of the word, *koinonia* “refers strictly to the relation of faith to Christ” (cf 1 Cor 1:9, 1 Cor 10:16, 2 Cor 13:13, Gal 2:9, Phil 1:5, Philem 6 (Schattenmann 1975:643). *Koinonia* (community) is the result of God’s saving, liberating mission in Christ, as humanity’s relationship with God is restored, making possible restored relationships with others and with the created order. “The New Testament concept of *koinonia* defines the Christian church as all those who have Jesus Christ and his mission in common” (Guder et al 1998:233). *Koinonia* is made real as the Spirit forms and transforms those who follow Christ in God’s mission. The theological foundation and framework of Christian community is Trinitarian. And that means that our sense of Christian community, and therefore our ecclesiology, has to be rooted in relational terms, rather than in the hierarchical or bureaucratic conceptions which have dominated Christian theology for two millennia (Gunton 1989:48-54).

With this understanding of the nature of the church, mission shifts from naming a function of the church to describing its essential nature (Guder et al 1998). This has direct implications for all aspects of the church’s ministry. It changes the conception of both missiology and ecclesiology. Behind the change of conception of the church from a place to a people, there is a shift in the understanding of the mission of the church from an *ecclesiocentric* (church-centred) view of mission to a *theocentric* (God-centred) one (Guder et al 1998:81).

In the church-centred paradigm, mission was considered to be activities initiated by the church with an aim of extending the church or planting it in new places. The church sent out missions and defined their character. The expansion of the church into new areas was thought to be its guiding goal (Guder et al 1998:81). However, in the theocentric paradigm, mission stressed the mission of God as the foundation for the mission of the church. The church was redefined as the community spawned by the mission of God

and gathered up into that mission. The church was beginning to understand that wherever it may find itself it is a community sent by God. The church's essence is missional, for its calling and sending by God shapes its identity.

This theocentric mission theology produced two theological interpretations of mission (Guder et al 1998:82). First, Newbigin (1964:77) argues that “missionary practice must be grounded in the person and work of Christ, seeded by “trust in the reality and power of the Holy Spirit” and rooted in a practical faith that discerns “God’s fatherly rule in the events of secular history,... in the revolutionary changes which are everywhere taking place in the life of the church.”

In this understanding of the church from a missional perspective, “mission” is not something the church does, a part of its total program, but the essence of the church, its identity (Bosch 1991: 373-374; Guder et al 1998:82). The church does not *do* mission, it *is* mission (Guder et al 1998:5). Michael McCoy (2001:4) mentions that “It reminds us that in all our talk about missional community, we must avoid the trap of thinking that the church *generates* mission: it is God’s mission which defines the church.” The *missio Dei* flows from one community – the Trinity – to another – the people of God. It is a mission which, originating in the relatedness of the Godhead, reaches out to create and restore relationships with and within all creation. By its very calling and nature, it exists as God’s “sent” people. Its worship, its proclamation, its life as a distinctive community, and its concrete demonstration of God’s love in acts of prophetic and sacrificial service are all witness to the good news whose sign and foretaste it is to be (Bosch 1991:373).

Second, the theocentric approach rediscovered the four characteristics of the church mentioned in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (AD381) (Guder et al 1998:83). This creed affirms belief in “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” The last-mentioned distinctive feature of the church, “apostolic,” asserts the church’s missional vocation. The church is apostolic not just because it represents the apostles’ teaching, but because it re-presents Christ (Scudieri 1995:28).

In relation to these four attributes of the church, Charles van Engen (1991:66ff) has suggested that the Nicene marks be read as “adverbs” rather than “adjectives” in order to capture the dynamic character of the identity of the church. Rather than static concepts defining the nature of the church, he proposes that the church’s ministry is “unifying”, “sanctifying”, “reconciling”, and “proclaiming”. This constructive suggestion provides a way of doing an ecclesiology because it focuses on the dynamic work of God’s Spirit in and through the church, rather than dwelling on abstract concepts defining the church (Guder et al 1998:255).

But Guder et al (1998:255) go one-step further. In order to capture the fundamental character of the church’s identity, the Nicene marks should be also read and understood in reverse order. “The church is called and sent to be apostolic, catholic, holy, and one – or, with van Engen, to be proclaiming, reconciling, sanctifying, and unifying (1998:255).”

The apostolicity of the church: the church as the proclaiming community

The concept “apostolicity” has been understood in terms of faithfulness to the apostolic tradition (Guder et al 1998:255). The church is apostolic in that it is based on the teaching and preaching of the apostles, and carries forward their legacy. Heyns (1980:114) describes apostolicity as follows:

Apostolicity is simply not on the same level as the Church’s unity, holiness, or catholicity, neither is it of the same nature. Those three attributes pertain so universally and permanently to saving history that they do more than characterize the Church as long as it exists; they are also of the essence of the Kingdom, and will remain so after the institutionalised Church has long since disappeared from the scene. Apostolicity is not an eschatological attribute in this sense, but rather the historical method by which the Church realizes those three attributes.

There is important truth in all of these emphases. CJ Wethmar (1999:79) says that “in the apostolicity implies that the one, holy and catholic church is based on the original witness to Jesus Christ”. What the apostles did, that is, their life and work as witnesses to God’s good news in Jesus Christ the Lord, defines and shapes the very nature of the

church. The apostolicity of the church is expressed by its witness to the Gospel, its obedience to the mandate to go out as Christ's ambassador (Guder et al 1998:255-256).

Faithfulness to the apostolic authority of the church is not, then, merely a matter of subscription to doctrinal tenets. It is a matter of commitment to and practice of the apostles' mission, which comprises both the apostolic message and the apostolic incarnation of the Gospel in community (Guder et al 1998:256). As the church continues to submit to the work of God's Spirit through the authoritative and normative biblical Word, it is empowered to continue the apostolic ministry.

In regard to the structure of the church, the fundamental criterion of apostolicity defines and shapes both the community of faith and the structures of connectedness (Guder et al 1998:256). The church is apostolic in that she continues the apostolic ministry. The church does so as an organic body, in complementary interdependence. The catholicity, holiness, and unity of the church are rooted in and formed by its apostolicity. These marks express the identity of the church; they describe what the community does and how it does it (Guder et al 1998:256).

The catholicity of the church: the church as the reconciling and reconciled community

The catholicity of the church is demonstrated in all the ways in which the church at every level witnesses to the one Gospel that draws all people unto Christ. "Catholicity" should be understood in its original Greek sense: *kata holon*, "according to the whole, or appropriate to the whole" (Küng 1968:296-297). The World Council's Fourth Assembly at Uppsala (1968) defined this catholicity as "the quality by which the church expresses the fullness, the integrity, and the totality of life in Christ" (Guder et al 1998:257).

The church is catholic when its way of serving Christ is appropriate to the Gospel while modestly recognising that this is not the only way to be a Christian community (Guder et al 1998:257). Its way of being Christian contributes to the reconciling of the entire church by focusing on the centre of the Gospel: the person and work of Christ, the hope

of the Gospel, the promised inbreaking of God's rule already begun in the apostolic ministry.

The structures of connectedness have a distinctive set of responsibilities with regard to catholicity. Even as they represent their traditions and constituencies in many forms of interaction with each other, they must demonstrate in the way that they cooperate, listen, decide, and even disagree that the one Gospel is authoritative over them all. They must keep their focus on the underlying apostolicity that shapes the authentic church everywhere. And they must find ways to relate to each other that are appropriate to the wholeness of the Gospel (Guder et al 1998:257; Wethmar 1999:78).

As regards an ecclesial homiletic hermeneutic, catholicity is important in discerning the message of the Bible beyond the reduction to individualism and socialism (Guder 2000; Eslinger 1996).

The holiness of the church: the church as the sanctifying community

The holiness of the church is expressed by the way a particular community understands itself and functions as a community set apart for God's mission (Guder et al 1998:258-259). Since that mission is apostolic and entails the demonstration of the inbreaking gracious rule of God, the impact of the community's witness is sanctifying (Guder et al 1998:259). That means that God's Spirit (the Sanctifier) works through the community's witness to heal the broken creation, to extend the salvation that Jesus accomplished on the cross. Thus the church carries out its mission by making holy through its witness. This holiness is demonstrated in the ways in which it practices forgiveness, fosters healing and reconciliation, makes peace, loves righteousness, and walks in Jesus' footsteps in all that it does with all who are "the least of these who are members of my family" (cf Matt 25:40). The community sanctifies, by God's empowering Spirit, when it serves God and God's children as the continuing incarnation of Christ's love and invites others to join in this calling. In particular, its holiness must be translated into concrete service to those who are poor, discriminated against, and subject to injustice. The sanctifying community's confident anticipation of the *eschaton*

turns its piety into a joyful foretaste and harbinger of the reign for whose coming it prays daily (Guder et al 1998:258-269).

In short, the holiness of the church happens in and through the ecclesial practices. The community makes holy as it lives out the Gospel in all its organisational processes, both internally and externally. With such an emphasis, the particular mission community is liberated to focus less on its holiness as a concern for its own inward spiritual state and more on its impact as a sanctifying presence where it is sent.

The same emphasis needs to characterise the structures of the church. At these levels, the holiness of the church should be demonstrated by the way those who uphold the church structures go about their business. Their decision-making processes, administrative policies, financial practices and personnel structures are all opportunities to incarnate the Gospel. What the world needs to experience is institutions whose decisions and actions are shaped by God's love revealed in Christ. For the sake of its mission, the church must risk being genuinely alternative in our culture. This alternativeness does not mean a withdrawal of the church from society, but rather an intentional demonstration in the actions of our connecting structures of this basic fact: Christ is our Lord, and we are his witnesses and the first fruits of his inbreaking rule.

Regarding a homiletic hermeneutic, the holiness is a guide to discerning the message of the text to form the identity of the church. The church is not of the world, but in the world. The church is an alternative community and also a parallel community.

The unity of the church: the church as the unifying community

The apostolicity of the church, expressed in its catholicity and holiness, must result in its unity. The emergence of the contemporary ecumenical movement out of the worldwide missionary expansion of the seventeenth to early twentieth centuries is an intriguing demonstration of that fact. Where the missional vocation of the church is taken seriously, where the Gospel mandate to be reconciled and reconciling, to be "holy even as I am holy" (Lev 19:2; 20:26; 1 Pet 1:16), shapes the church, then its visible and

tangible unity must follow. This unifying witness is to be understood in the light of the New Testament's radical message of God's healing work that overcomes all human boundaries of discrimination and injustice, especially with regard to the poor. Divisions may arise because Christians disagree among themselves, as they have done since the first century. They may arise because of the cultural setting in which the church is functioning. The tension between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the early church is a first example of this cause. However disunity comes about, the Gospel addresses it and the rule of Christ overcomes it (Guder et al 1998:260).

The catholicity and the unity of the church are two sides of the same apostolic truth, because Christ reconciles us and we therefore are made one in Christ. In the particular community, this truth will mean that we need openly to confront everything that divides us, finding the ways we are "conformed to this world" (Rom 12:2). The ministries of preaching and teaching are to equip the community to recognise and affirm as Christians those brothers and sisters with whom we disagree, because Christ has taken down the walls of division (Eph 2:11ff). The church has to practise unifying mission through seeking forgiveness for all the ways in which people discriminate within the community. An ecclesial life is unifying when the church follows Paul's detailed instructions in Romans 14 and people cease judging one another and causing each other to stumble, and instead seek to "please our neighbour for the good purpose of building up the neighbour" (Rom 15:2). Unifying practice confesses our racism, our sexism, our classism, and it experiences the healing work of the Lord who comes to those who know that they need a doctor. Unifying practice deals with our dissension by learning how to disagree in a Christian manner. This is an important part of the apostolic instruction preserved in the New Testament.

The connecting structures of the church, for their parts, should express and implement the mutual interdependence of all the parts of Christ's body. They should do this both in relation to the particular communities that make up their constituencies (e.g. the congregations of a denomination) and in relation to other structures. They should foster dialogue, enable contacts, provide resources to their communities, and encourage the public witness to the Lord who is the Prince of Peace and who breaks down the walls of

separation. This witness will move from the oneness of the community in Christ to the unifying power of the Gospel as God's claim on the world. The practice of unity and unifying ministry are ethical expressions of the radical newness of the life made possible by birth from above (John 3:3-8).

This functions in a concrete manner as communities practise accountability towards each other and submit to each other's guidance and admonition. Evangelical unity rejects the idea that any particular community is independent of all other communities. Dependence, connectedness, mutual love, shared responsibility as well as submission to one another are the marks of the structures of connectedness that practice unity as apostolic witness. The biblical purpose of visible unity is to manifest the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". This witness manifests to the world that there is "one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:4-6).

This call to unity must be effected in new and altered structures. The church's oneness must carry out and demonstrate its mission. Unity is witness. To seek unity for the sake of faithful witness will reveal more options for the structures of the church than the organisational approaches that currently dominate our ecumenical efforts.

2. The church is to be an alternative community. In this "three-polar" situation, the church has to move beyond accommodation and isolation. With regard to the faithful and relevant characteristic of community in transition, Douglas John Hall (1996:198-213) argues that the church must disengage from the culture in order to re-engage with a fresh voice. The developing process of a faithful and relevant ecclesiology of the church in a period of transition can be described as a disengagement-reengagement process. Walter Brueggemann (1997:80) explains that the disengagement is not an end in itself but a strategic matter for the sake of refocusing and redeciding about its identity and mission.

In the context of failed Christendom where the church has become excessively accommodationist, emphasis must be placed on disengagement. But such sequencing of “disengagement/reengagement” is somewhat programmatic and theoretical, for in the real church on the ground, these two strategies are worked at simultaneously. Through the process of liminality, the church needs to re-enter as a missionary presence with an apostolic stance, living adventurously as a subversive movement, realising afresh its total reliance on the Lord. The church is both separate from the world and sent into the world.

To understand this situation, it is important to reconsider the relationship between the church and culture. Traditionally the relation between the church and culture is understood according to a framework supplied by H Richard Niebuhr in *Christ and Culture* (1951). Niebuhr outlines five possible relationships between Christ and culture: “Christ against culture”, “the Christ of culture”, “Christ above culture”, “Christ and culture in paradox,” and, his favourite, “Christ the transformer of culture”.

However, Rodney Clapp (1996) and the authors of *Missional church* (Guder et al 1998:115-116) point out that Niebuhr’s analysis is inadequate for the church to find its way among the cultures surrounding it due to the following several reasons:

First, “Christ” and “culture” are not parallel concepts. “Christ” from Greek, or, “Messiah” from Hebrew, usually refers to the church’s title for the specific person Jesus of Nazareth and his continuing relationship with the church. By contrast, “culture” is a very general term. It involves an ongoing aspect of human society in every time and place. Moreover, the use of the singular term *culture* does not recognise the multiplicity and diversity of cultures that commonly exist in any one space and time.

Second, Niebuhr’s analysis has no real place for the church. His primary actor is the individual Christian, who must make choices concerning Christ and culture. By implication, the church is simply a collection of individual Christians. The church as a social reality, a community that affirms or dissents from culture based on its following Jesus Christ, is lost when the primary categories are “Christ” and “culture”. The “Christ

transforming culture” model, in particular, does allow for both affirmation and dissent. It assumes, however, that the real arena of God’s action is in the surrounding culture, not in and through the church. All but one of Niebuhr’s options take for granted a Christendom or Constantinian model of the church.... Not only the “Christ of culture” option but also most of the others assume that Christians have a common identity with the surrounding culture, so that church and culture mutually support each other; if there are problems in the culture, Christians are responsible for putting them right. Moreover, responsibility is always defined in terms of service to the culture, rather than in terms of Christians’ covenant responsibility to God in the context of the church.

Finally, Niebuhr claims that the only non-Christendom model, “Christ against culture,” is flawed because in it Christians are said to withdraw from the world, to reject any responsibility for it, and to be no longer “in the world” (Guder et al 1998:116). This model, however, is a straw figure set up to be knocked down easily. The possibility of living human beings not being “in the world” or withdrawing completely from “the culture” does not exist. Even those churches that have dissented from many aspects of the dominant culture still participate in it in many ways – through sharing its language, through involvement in its economic system, through social interaction of various kinds.

Niebuhr further criticises this model of Christian life by calling it inconsistent wherever it does participate in the dominant culture. Yet Niebuhr ignores the possibility that the most transforming activity of the church in relation to the culture might not be to try to wield power in the dominant culture, but instead to demonstrate by the church’s own life together the renewing and healing power of God’s new community (Guder et al 1998:116). Clapp (1996:59) argues that Niebuhr’s understanding failed to appreciate the fact that the church does not stand above culture. Niebuhr’s work was the creation of a time when few Christians could conceive of the church as itself being a culture (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:213).

In the movement of disengagement for reengagement, David Bosch (1993:98-95) proposes an anabaptist model in a contemporary situation. He (1993:89-95) distinguishes five traditions in the relationship of the church to civil authorities:

Constantinian, pietist, reformist, liberationist, and anabaptist. He dismisses the first two – Constantinian and pietist – as otherworldly. He sees the other three as “world-formative” and “much closer to each other than may appear at first glance” (Bosch 1993:94). The scope of these categories can be broadened to assess the relationship of the Gospel and church, not only to civil authorities, but to the culture as a whole.

In this scheme, it is the Anabaptist tradition – which Bosch calls elsewhere the alternative community and countercultural model (Bosch 1982) – that has been gaining ground and has begun to function as the dominant model in the contemporary context. According to Bosch, the Anabaptist model emphasises that “the primary task of the church is simply to *be* the church, the *true* community of committed believers which, by its very existence and example, becomes a challenge to society and the state” (Bosch 1993:92).

There, according to Goheen (2002:483), are two important features that characterise this model. First, it emphasises the *communal* dimensions of the missionary witness of the church. There is a reaction against reducing mission to the calling of individuals in culture, which is characteristic of the reformist model. It stands against a neglect of the church as a community that embodies the life of the kingdom together. Second, the *critical* side of the church’s relationship with its culture dominates: “The church is understood to be an implicit or latent *critical factor* in society.... The church is critical of the status quo, indeed *very* critical of it” (Bosch 1993:92). These two factors are combined in the designation “alternative community.” Bosch summarises:

The church simply exists in society in such way that people should become aware of the transitoriness, relativity, and fundamental inadequacy of all political programs and solutions. The believing community is a kind of antibody in society, in that it lives a life of radical discipleship as an “alternative community”(1993:92).

These two important features have been developed in critical reaction to the impact of Christendom on the shape of the church: under the Christendom *symphonia*, the church lost its sense of being a distinct community embodying an alternative story. Both the communal and critical dimensions of the church’s mission were eclipsed by its established position within culture.

The authors of *Missional Church* adopt the centring metaphor of an alternative or contrast community (Guder et al 1998:9-10). Goheen (2002:484) refers to it as follows: “The thrust of the gospel exposition in this book is to define a missionary people whose witness will prophetically challenge precisely those dominant [idolatrous] patterns [of culture] as the church accepts its vocation to be an alternative community.” With this fundamental ecclesial designation, the authors of *Missional Church* want to highlight the need for a church that embodies the communal and critical dimensions of the Christian mission, over against the individualism and accommodation of Christendom.

However, according to Michael W Goheen (2002:484-488), due to the emphasis on the communal dimension of the church’s mission, the calling of individual Christians in the world is neglected. On this point, a contrast between *Missional Church* and Lesslie Newbigin is instructive. On the one hand, Newbigin stresses the communal expression of the church’s mission: “The most important contribution which the Church can make to a new social order is to itself a new social order” (Newbigin 1991:81). On the other hand, the calling of individual believers in culture is equally emphasised: the church “must equip its members for active and informed participation in the public life of society in such a way that the Christian faith shapes that participation” (Newbigin 1991:85). In fact, for Newbigin the mission of individual believers in the world of culture is the primary place where the church’s missionary engagement takes place.

I do not believe that the role of the Church in a secular society is primarily exercised in the corporate action of the churches as organized bodies in the political or cultural fields.... On the contrary, I believe that it is [exercised] through the action of Christian lay people, playing their roles as citizens, workers, managers, legislators. (Newbigin 1977:127).

According to Herman Ridderbos (1975:328-330), the New Testament understanding of the church supports Newbigin’s emphasis. The word *ecclesia* is used in three different ways. The first refers to the new people of God in the totality of their lives as the reconstitution of humankind in Jesus Christ. As such, the “church” is expressed in the totality of the life of its members and not only as they gather for worship and fellowship. The second use of the word refers to local, identifiable congregations. These congregations are organised as communities and are recognisable as a human

community in a certain place. The third use of “church” points to a community gathered for certain “religious” activities – worship, prayer, sacraments, and so forth.

Therefore, there is a need for a continuous struggle with communal patterns of ecclesial life that will enable the church corporately to be a preview of the Kingdom. However, this should not be done at the expense of the mission of God’s people in their various and scattered callings.

2.2.3 The mission of the church as the representation of the reign of God

If we are to understand the church from the perspective of mission, this also means that the church and mission should be understood from the perspective of the reign of God (Bosch 1991:31-35; Küng 1968:41-104; Ridderbos 1962:334-396; Van Gelder 2000a:74-100). The missional identity is connected with God’s mission. God’s mission is described under the reign of God. Therefore the mission of the church also needs to be understood in terms of the mission of God and the reign of God. Van Gelder (2000a:74) argues that an understanding of the church must start with an understanding of the kingdom of God.

As the church is defined from a missional perspective, in order to identify some characteristic of mission of the church in a transitional situation, the church’s mission has to be understood from the perspective of the reign of God. In order to do so, firstly it is necessary to understand what the reign of God means, after which the mission of the church according to the understanding of the reign of God will become clear.

The meaning of the reign of God

Guder et al (1998:93) point out some problems of the understanding of the Kingdom of God as the image of “building” and “extending”. They explain that the images of “building” or “extending” arise from the combined effects of a Christendom heritage of

power and privilege, the Enlightenment's confidence in reason and social progress, and modern culture's dependence on managing life with pragmatic technique.

Firstly, the church's role as "building" the reign of God may also use words like "establish," "fashion," or "bring about." The reign of God in this view is perceived as a *social project*. The church is sent out by God to achieve that project, to create it. This view tends to place the reign out there somewhere, where we go to construct it as its architects, contractors, carpenters, or day labourers (Guder et al 1998:93).

Secondly, the church is sent to "extend" the reign of God – that is – "spread," "grow," or "expand" the reign of God. This treats the church's mission as a *sales project*. The church attempts to provide an expanded place where the reign of God may reside. Functionally, the church becomes the CEOs, promoters, or sales force for the reign of God (Guder et al 1998:93).

However, according to Guder et al (1998:93), the verbs *to build* and *to extend* are not found in the New Testament's grammar for the reign of God. The announcement of God's reign nowhere includes an invitation to go out and build it, nor to extend it. These are not New Testament ways of speaking about the reign of God.

Guder et al (1998:93-97) argue the reign of God from the words *receive* and *enter* in the New Testament (Guder et al 1998:94). At times they are intertwined in the text. "Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a child will never enter it" (Luke 18:17). In that same context Jesus notes how hard it is for those who have riches to *enter* the reign of God (vv. 24-25), and he assures the disciples that there is no-one who has left mother or father, houses or land, for the Gospel's sake, who will not *receive* one hundredfold (vv. 29-30). These two verbs represent dominant image clusters that are embedded throughout the New Testament in the discussion of the relationship between the people of God and the reign of God.

If we understand the reign of God in terms of the image *receive* and *enter*, these two images indicate the appropriate way for a community to live when it has been captured

by the presence of God's reign. For example, the reign of God is, first of all, a *gift* one receives (Guder et al 1998:95). The reign of God is something taken to oneself. It is a gift of God's making, freely given. It calls for the simple, trusting act of receiving. Second, according to Guder et al (1998:95), in addition to being a gift, the reign of God is equally a *realm* one enters. Here the imagery is quite different, for the reign of God is cast as a domain into which one moves. It meets everyone with God's welcome and Jesus' invitation. The reign of God is a realm – a space, an arena, a zone – that may be inhabited. Hence the biblical grammar for this reign uses the spatial preposition "in". In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declares that some "will be called least in the kingdom of heaven" and others "called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:19). Likewise, Colossians 1:13 tells us that Jesus "has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son."

If we take seriously these two images of the reign of God as *a gift* one receives and *a realm* one enters this curbs our cultural instinct to think of the reign of God as something we achieve or enlarge. The biblical images of gift and realm are not without their own dangers, certainly. The former can lead to the presumptuous claim of owning the reign of God, and the latter to the prideful assertion of knowing ourselves to be "in" it.

The reign of God as God's gift and realm are its most striking and critical features. Biblical language about the reign of God also embraces the eschatological tension of God's reign being a present fact and an anticipated future. It suggests the need as well for decisive action now. The call to receive warns against the consequence of rejecting the gift. The invitation to enter casts a shadow on hesitation at the door.

Inherent within the two biblical images of gift and realm are the further issues of repentance and faith. Receiving and entering are actions that mark a turning from other hopes and loyalties that we may accumulate to a singular hope in the one true God. They mark a turning in faith from sinful rejections of God's rule as well as carefree disdain for God's mercy and care. Receiving and entering the reign of God are the ways we "turn to God from idols" (1 Thess 1:9). This movement indicates that we are

involved in an ongoing dynamic relationship with the divine reign and that we must distinguish between the reign of God and its responsive community, between God's reign and the church.

It is in these findings that any biblically rooted and contextually relevant sense of the calling of the church in the contemporary context must begin. Here is a far more dynamic sense of the church's identity and its mission in the world. This sense stands in bold contrast to the merely functional or activist notions of building or extending that have so prepossessed the church. At this point of beginning one finds a more humble starting point for mission. It leads to the fresh insight that the first mission is always the internal mission: the church evangelised by the Holy Spirit again and again in the echoing word of Jesus inviting us to receive the reign of God and to enter it.

Lesslie Newbigin (1995) asserts that the mission of the church starts with the Bible story indwelling or inhabiting individual and gathered lives, to such an extent that the Gospel becomes plausible through others seeing how the church practises the truth. From that base, the church speaks of and persuades others about Jesus Christ. In sociological terms, Christians have to have a plausibility structure that is based on the Lordship of Christ from which to proselytise.

Here there is also a more dynamic image for every Christian's personal calling and discipleship. Daily life becomes a discipline of asking how one may move more squarely into the realm of God's reign and how one may welcome and receive it into the fabric of one's life this day more than ever before. Here as well one can find a more focused way of living together as the community of Christ. This point is especially crucial for churches that have suffered the loss of focus, the loss of a sense of what lies at the centre, the loss of their soul.

Here, moreover, is a far more welcoming framework for evangelism. Evangelism would move from an act of recruiting or co-opting those outside the church to an invitation of companionship. The church would witness that its members, like others, hunger for the hope that there is a God who reigns in love and intends the good of the whole earth. The

community of the church would testify that they have heard the announcement that such a reign is coming, and indeed is already breaking upon the world. They would confirm that they have heard the open welcome and received it daily, and they would invite others to join them as those to whom God's welcome has also been extended. To those invited, the church would offer itself to assist their entrance into the reign of God and to travel with them as co-pilgrims. Here lies a path for the renewal of the heart of the church and its evangelism.

The relationship between the church and the reign of God

In this section, what the mission of the church is will be discussed. In order to understand the mission of the church, it is necessary to consider the relationship between the church and the reign of God.

There are two kinds of the understanding of the relationship between the church and the reign of God (Guder et al 1998:98-100). Firstly, the church must not be equated with the reign of God (Bosch 1991:377). The church as a messianic community is both spawned by the reign of God and directed toward it. This is a different relationship from the one that at times has dominated the church's thinking. The church has often presumed that the reign of God is within the church. The two have been regarded as synonyms. In this view, the church totally encompasses the divine reign. Therefore church extension or church growth is the equivalent of kingdom extension or kingdom growth, and the reign of God is coterminous with the people who embrace it through faith and gather together as the church. This view leads easily to the affirmation that there is no salvation outside the church. The church then sees itself as the fortress and guardian of salvation, perhaps even its author and benefactor, rather than its grateful recipient and guest. The biblical portrait of the divine reign and church does not allow such conclusions. The church always stands in a position of dependence on and humble service to the divine reign (Ridderbos 1962:354)

Secondly, the reign of God must not be divorced from the church (Guder et al 1998:99). The church is constituted by those who are entering and receiving the reign of God. It is

where the children of the reign corporately manifest the presence and characteristic features of God's reign. The divine reign expresses itself in a unique, though not exhaustive or exclusive, fashion in the church.

However, sometimes these two have led to views that ultimately divorced them in some ecumenical circles during the 1950s and 1960s (Guder et al 1998:99). The vision of the church and its mission was most forcefully expressed by the report of a World Council of Churches' study program entitled "The Church for Other" (1967). Lesslie Newbigin has summarised the thrust of that document:

"Thinking about the Church should always begin by defining it as part of the world"(17). It is the world, not the Church, which "writes the agenda"(20-23), and the Church is not to be concerned about increasing its own membership (19). "Participation in God's mission is entering into partnership with God in history, because our knowledge of God in Christ compels us to affirm that God is working out his purpose in the midst of the world and its historical processes"(14). So "What else can the Churches do than recognize and proclaim what God is doing in the world" – in the emancipation of coloured races, the humanization of industrial relations, and so on?"

What is missing in this view is the church's reason for being a particular community, both distinct from the divine reign and yet spawned by it as its intended fruit and servant (Guder et al 1989:100).

Beyond these two perceptions, Newbigin (1980:19) has affirmed a perspective that seeks to maintain the distinction between God's reign and the church without breaking their connection:

The ... danger to be avoided is the separation of the Kingdom from the church. It is clear that they cannot and must not be confused, certainly not identified. But they must also not be separated. From the beginning the announcement of the Kingdom led to a summons to follow and so to the formation of a community. It is the community which has begun to taste (even only in foretaste) the reality of the Kingdom which can alone provide the hermeneutic of the message.

Therefore, to understand the relationship between the church and the reign of God, it is necessary to consider a way to capture the biblical sense of the church's calling and vocation: the church *represents* the reign of God (Guder et al 1998:100). This is another

way of rendering the fundamental New Testament notion of witness, but promises a fresh and holistic approach to viewing the whole life of the church in missional terms. The word *represent* can carry two different senses, a passive one and an active one. Passively, the meaning indicates that one thing stands for another. In contrast, the active meaning of *represent* indicates the way a person may be given authority to act on another's behalf or to care for another's interests. Both the passive and the active meanings of "represent" are intended when it is said of the church that it represents the reign of God, and each adds particular force to the missional calling of the church.

Guder et al (1998:100-102) explain the meaning of *represent* as follows: Firstly, the church represents the divine reign as its *sign and foretaste*. Themes woven into the fabric of the book of Ephesians illustrate this intended meaning. When the author speaks of the breaking down of the barriers between Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:11ff.) that has resulted from the expansion of the Gospel mission to the Gentile world, he states that this profound social change within the small community of Christians represents God's purpose for the world: "that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace" (Eph 2:15).

The emerging multicultural church here is a foretaste of God's redeeming purpose for the world, which is the mystery now revealed: "that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph 3:6). This point is even more explicit when the church is described as the sign of God's wisdom for the cosmos: "so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph 3:10). As a sign represents something else and as a foretaste represents something yet to come, the church points away from itself to what God is going to complete. In this sense, the divine reign's otherness is guarded. The church must affirm that it is not identical with God's reign.

Secondly, the church also represents the divine reign as its *agent and instrument*. Here it represents that reign in an active sense. The church bears the divine reign's authority (the authority of the "keys," Matt 16:19; and the authority of "forgiveness," as indicated

in John 20:19-23). It engages in the divine reign's action (living in terms of the lordship of Jesus over all creation). For this reason, Paul may address Christians as "co-workers for the kingdom of God" (Col 4:11) and consider them to be "suffering" for the reign of God (2 Thess 1:5). The church is representative in the sense of an embassy ("ambassadors for Christ," 2 Cor 5:20) of the divine reign. By its very existence, then, the church brings what is hidden into view as a sign and into experience as a foretaste. At the same time, it also represents to the world the divine reign's character, claims, demands, and gracious gifts as its agent and instrument.

Representing the reign of God as its community

The next point is to consider how the reign of God should be represented. How does a community of people represent the reign of God in the world? Guder et al (1998:102) point out that in Jesus' way of carrying out God's mission, "the church is to represent God's reign as its community, its servant, and its messenger." Guder (1985) talks about "being the witness, doing the witness, and saying the witness". This means the church's mission around the truth (message), the life (community), and the way (servant). The mission of the church is to represent the reign of God as its community, servant, and messenger.

In a free world where the focus is on the autonomous and decentred self, and with a gospel of reconciliation in Christ, the churches must revive their commitment to what it means to be communities of the reign of God. Churches are called to be bodies of people sent on a mission rather than a voluntary association of individuals in the contemporary culture. The church is to be a communal body of Christ's followers, mutually committed and responsible to one another and to the mission Jesus sent us upon at his resurrection.

It is necessary to consider the primary mission of the church to be a community. The church's mission has to repattern Jesus' mission. Jesus' mission was to embody the reign of God by living under its authority (Guder et al 1998:103). The church shares this calling with Jesus. In the church's case, though, its vocation is corporate, not individual.

Jesus, the one who represented Israel, is now represented by the new Israel, the church. Like Jesus, the church is to embody the reign of God by living under its authority. We live as the covenant community, a distinctive community created by God's reign to show forth its tangible character in human, social form.

Guder et al (1998:103-104) suggest two reasons why the church should be a missional community. Firstly, before the church is called to do or say anything, it is called and sent to be the unique community of those who live under the reign of God. The church displays the first fruits of the forgiven and forgiving people of God who are brought together across the rubble of dividing walls that have crumbled under the weight of the cross. It is the harbinger of the new humanity that lives in genuine community, a form of companionship and wholeness that humanity craves.

What the church identifies as true about itself because of Christ, it also knows to be far from true about itself in its present experience. Yet it is precisely this affirmation made by Christ concerning who the church is, that moves it to actualise in practice what it believes to be true (Küng 1968:59-65). Believing itself to be one in the "unity of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3), the church knows God has sent it into the pursuit of the "unity of the faith" (Eph 4:13).

Secondly, God delights in having a people who are one in love, and God's people enjoy the freedom of being that particular people. But there is another reason for this mission of being the community of the reign of God. "You are the light of the world," Jesus said (Matt. 5:14). We are a noticed and watched people. The genuineness of our identification as the disciples of Jesus is observed only in our love for each other (John 13:35). Jesus seeks our oneness with one another "so that the world may believe" that he indeed has been sent by his Father (John 17:21). The church's love and unity holds ultimate significance for the world as the visible basis of the Gospel's power and legitimacy. In fact, the church is itself the promise of the Gospel. The universal invitation to believe the Gospel includes the invitation to enter the reign-of-God-produced community of the new humanity. Just as Jesus exhibited his union with his Father in obedient submission to God's rule and could therefore say, "Whoever has seen

me has seen the Father” (John 14:9), so too God has designed it so that when people have seen God’s “peculiar” people, they have in a real sense caught a glimpse of God. “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (20:21).

Representing the reign of God as its servant

In a secular world of privatised religious faith and with a gospel of Christ’s reign over all things, the churches must discover what it means to faithfully represent the reign of God in their society (Guder et al 1998:104). Because we live in a plural world that no longer gives us a privileged place and automatic powers, we have the choice whether to confine our business to the private sphere and treat worship as a chosen means of spending our leisure or to find new patterns for demonstrating faith through public deeds. The calling to seek first the reign of God and God’s justice means orienting our public deeds away from imposing our moral will on the social fabric and towards providing tangible experience of the reign of God that intrudes as an alternative to the public principles and loyalties.

Jesus’ mission is to exhibit the signs of the presence of the reign of God by exercising its authority over broken lives, domination, oppression, and alienation (Guder et al 1998:104). Jesus demonstrated his authority over disease and nature, over people and their social structures, and over spirit forces that bind and distort. This authority was derived from being “under authority” (Guder et al 1998:104). His authority sprang from his own faithful trust and loyalty, his living under authority.

Jesus’ healing, exorcisms, calming of storms, feeding of the multitudes, and raising the dead to life were all signs. These signs revealed that in Jesus’ life under the authority of God the reign of God was at hand. The deeds themselves were simply doing what ought to be done under God’s reign. They also point to what God intends the world to be like when God’s reign comes. They represent what God fully intends to bring about at the world’s consummation, when all that creation was envisioned and imagined to be is finally made true. Jesus’ actions show forth the horizon of the coming world of shalom – peace, justice and joy in the Holy Spirit (Guder et al 1998:105).

Therefore, the church shares that horizon, and with it the impulse to respond to the whole range of need in humanity and in the creation. Thus the church represents the reign of God by its deeds as the servant to God's passion for the life of the world. Like Jesus, it exhibits by numerous signs the reign of God, thereby exercising its authority.

Representing the reign of God as its messenger

The church's being and doing are irretrievably tied to its proclaiming (cf Guder 1985; 2000). Proclamation is inevitable if our being and doing signify anything at all about the presence of God's reign. If in our being the church, the world sees God's reign, and by our doing justice, the world tastes its gracious effect, then the call to all on the earth to receive and acknowledge that reign must necessarily be expressed.

Guder et al (1998:106) propose that the mission of the church is to be a messenger of God can be expressed as follows: "in a plural world of relativised perspectives and loyalties, and with a gospel of the knowledge of God through the incarnate Christ, the churches must learn to speak, in post-Christendom accents, as confident yet humble messengers of the reign of God". A postmodern world is a wildly exciting arena for learning to speak boldly, often, and in fresh ways. The church speaks out boldly, but with the aim of recruiting members into an organisation through an individualised version of the Gospel, easily understood by an equally individualistic culture. It speaks boldly and in such a way that the signs of the reign of God in the Scriptures, in the world's history, and in the present may be clearly seen. It speaks so that the signposts to the reign of God evidenced in the church's own deeds will not be misunderstood.

In a fractured and disoriented society, to communicate the Gospel the church needs to be transformed by the message it seeks to communicate and needs to be built up as an authentic community of faith. Rodney Clapp (1996:188) says that "Christianity is not an ideology to be recovered or a philosophical system to be remembered. Christians are called to live the story, not restate it in the form of universalised propositions." Gibbs and Coffey (2001:189) suggest different communication strategies. They suggest the

church needs the strength of community to reinforce its message. The community of faith need to be “meaning-makers”.

Pieterse (2000:6) maintains that the church should be a window to another reality through the transformational power of the Gospel rather than simply be a mirror of society. The question is, how can the church speak prophetically to society, and achieve a sense of dignity and self-worth and stability? Pieterse (2001a:3) is of the opinion that in this world of suffering and poverty people can still achieve a “good life”, but then preaching must be “meaningful in their situation”, and help the poor to achieve a “vision, through their faith in God”, of a liberating way out of their wretched situation.

In order to accomplish the above, Pieterse (2001a:6) feels that preaching has to account for three things: firstly, to encourage people to decide for themselves, given that they are mature enough to do that; secondly, to account for the covenant relationship; and thirdly, to account for community with the values of “reconciliation, faith, love, justice, freedom, peace and hope”.

In sum: these three are distinguishable, yet inseparable. Synergy, not competition for primacy, should exist among these three facets of the mission of the church. To quote Newbigin (1997:229), if the local congregation is not perceived in its own neighbourhood as the place from which good news is transformed into good actions, the programs for social and political action launched by the national agencies are apt to lose their internal relation to the good news and come to be seen as part of a moral crusade rather than part of the Gospel. The local congregation is the place where the proper relation is most easily and naturally preserved.

2.2.4 Conclusion

In order to develop a faithful and relevant identity and mission for the church in transition, firstly I have suggested an interpretation of the context of the church. In this situation, the identity of the church has to be articulated from the relationship with the world. As Bosch’s work suggests, this is a reminder of a new relationship between the

church and the world that began to be understood in the twentieth century. Church and world are seen more in solidarity than in hostility. Bosch delineates six implications of this view: (1) The church is not the only goal of mission. (2) The church is a sign of the Kingdom, not the Kingdom itself. There is a convergence in evangelizing people and proclaiming God's reign. (4) The church is a "community of the Holy Spirit." (5) The church that is not involved in the world is heretical. (6) The church bears the good news as a privilege (Bosch 1991:377-378). Creatively, the church is both a theological and a sociological construct. It glorifies God and reaches out to people in "an inseparable union of the divine and the dusty" (1991:389). So we see that retreating into a Christian ghetto is not the answer. Embracing the society so tightly that no differentiation can be made between the reigning culture and Christianity is fruitless. The only adequate answer lies in being fully participate in the world, but resting firmly in the Christian tradition. It is so preposterously easy, and so maddeningly difficult, as being in the world but not of it (John 17:14, 16).

According to Bosch (1991:472), the church-with-others, the incarnational community of faith, is the starting point of mission in our time. It is the community that is the primary bearer of mission. The church's vocation to represent the reign of God as sign, foretaste and instrument. The church's calling is to live in the world as an apostle of God's reign, being an alternative community whose inner, communal life of the church matters for mission. This inner life is cultivated by ecclesial practices such as baptism, eucharist, reconciliation, discernment and hospitality, each of them expressing the reality of God's reign and shaping the character of the community's members. The church is a missional community. Its characteristics are identified as an alternative community, its missions being "community", "servant" and "messenger."

From this articulation of the ecclesiology, in the following sections, I discuss the formation of the identity of the church as a community of faith and the homiletic implications of this.

2.3 RICOEUR’S MODEL FOR THE FORMATION OF THE IDENTITY OF THE COMMUNITY

In this section, ideas on the formation of the community will be explored. Paul Ricoeur suggests a way in which the community could be formed – the characteristics of the identity of the individual and the community and the process of the community’s identity. Firstly, the characteristic of identity and the process of the formation of the identity, that is, a personal and community identity, will be explained through Ricoeur’s understanding of the identity. Secondly, Ricoeur’s three models will be discussed.

2.3.1 The characteristics of the identity of individual and community

Paul Ricoeur, in his book *Oneself as another* (1992), distinguishes the identity of the individual in terms of three aspects: I/me, ipse/idem and self/other. According to him, firstly the individual’s identity is based on a dialectical tension between what other people think of “me” and what I think of “myself” in the interior dialogue I conduct with myself. This is the “I/me” aspect.

Secondly, the individual identity includes a dialectic tension between *ipse* and *idem*. The Latin term *ipse* means *selfhood* (Ricoeur 1992:115-116). This means that the identity of the individual accommodates *change over time*. The other word *idem* means *sameness* or *permanence in time*. According to Van der Ven, Dreyer and Pieterse (2002:104), “I am determined by sameness, but at same time I overcome it in my selfhood. It is in this transcending that I actualize my *ipse*, which reveals itself in newness, originality, creativity.”

The third aspect is a dialectic tension between *self/other*. The individual’s identity depends on the extent to which the person is able, not to passively tolerate, but to actively recognise and accept the radical otherness of the other with whom he or she lives, cooperates and meets. In the recognition and acceptance of the other as other, individuals become aware of their own otherness: then they accept themselves as

another. In a sense the alterity of the other is mirrored in one's own alterity, which leads to the alterity of both alter egos.

The identity of the community can be applied and explained by this understanding of the three aspects of the individual's identity (Van der Ven et al 2002:105-106). From the *I/me* perspective, in the community, a *we/us* perspective, communities conduct an internal dialogue on whether the kind of community other communities say they are fits their own self-image, their own understanding of themselves. That is to say, the "we" in communities speak to the "us" (Van der Ven et al 2002:105).

Secondly, there is the *ipse/idem* perspective. In this perspective, communities are concerned with commemorating the core events in their past, from which they can then trace a communal line to the present so that they can believe they are still the same (Van der Ven 2002:105). But this sameness in itself cannot be the cornerstone of the community's future identity, because that would make it cling to the past, preventing further growth and development, which would lead to conservatism and possibly fundamentalism, even if the fundamentalism is of a narrative nature.

Thirdly, from the self/other-perspective communities are dynamic, vital and vibrant, when they are aware of their own identity and at the same time recognise the unique, inalienable, irreducible otherness of other communities, including their worth, value, richness and fecundity. "Only then the community's own otherness – its enigma or even mystery – comes to the fore: one's own community as just one *other* community. Or, to put it paradoxically, communal identity derives from communal alterity" (Van der Ven et al 2002:106).

A community's identity which is understood as a network of individuals and groups is a communicative identity. This is considered in the three directions: inward (*we/us*); outward (*self/other*); and in time (*ipse/idem*). In particular, the formation of the identity of the community can be described from the two perspectives of the identity: temporal and relational perspectives (Dreyer 2000:21-52). In the following section, I deal with

the way in which the identity of the community can be explained and formed in the dialectic tension between temporal and relational perspectives.

2.3.2 Two dimensions of the identity of the community

2.3.2.1 Temporal dimension of the identity of the community

The characteristics of individual and community identity have been explained. Now the two dimensions of the formation of the identity of the community are discussed. Ricoeur (1992:115-116) distinguishes the two dimensions of identity: *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity. *Idem*-identity (Latin *idem*) means *sameness* or some *permanence in time*. *Iipse*-identity (Latin *ipse*) as selfhood means “no assertion concerning some unchanging core of the personality”. In contrast to *idem*-identity, it accommodates *change over time*.

Dreyer (2000:27) remarks that “this tension between identity as sameness (*idem*-identity) and identity as selfhood (*ipse*-identity) plays a central role in Ricoeur’s thoughts on personhood and forms the background to his introduction of the term narrative identity.”

Ricoeur tries to bring the tension between these two models of identity together in a creative way through his typical dialectical style (Dreyer 2000:27). The confrontation between *idem*-identity (*character*) and *ipse*-identity (*keeping one’s word*), according to Ricoeur (1992), centres around the question of “permanence in time.”

From this temporal perspective of identity, according to Dreyer (2000:28), the distinction between *idem*-identity (with *character* as the paradigm) and *ipse*-identity (with *keeping of one’s word* or *promise* as the paradigm) reflects a basic tension between stability and change. In other words, personal identity, from a temporal perspective, always reflects this tension between self-sameness (*character*) and self-constancy (*promise*). Van den Hengel (1994:467) refers to this as Ricoeur’s theory of the internal dialectic of the human being. In the narrative there is an interaction of a self that, on the one hand, maintains an identity of constancy (a self that remains the same,

hence “sameness”), with a self that, on the other hand, projects itself into the future and commits itself to change and transformation (a self that is not yet but becomes in the “kept word”, which Ricoeur calls “ipseity”).

The dialectical relationship between *idem*- and *ipse*-identity, between *character* and *keeping one’s promises*, describes a fundamental tension or dialectic implied by the temporal dimension of narrative identity, in other words, the tension between *stability* and *change*, or, in the words of Ricoeur, between *sedimentation* and *innovation*.

Ricoeur (1992:118-119) solves this tension between stability and change, between identity as self-sameness and identity as self-constancy, by resorting to a narrative theory. Ricoeur explains that the notion of *mimesis* in narrative theory provides a way to mediate these tensions (Dreyer 2000:29). Ricoeur, drawing on Aristotle’s idea of a narrative as an imitation of action (*mimesis praxeos*), introduces a tripartite model of *mimesis* (cf Joy 1997:xxix). *Mimesis*₁ (narrative prefiguration) refers to human action in its unthematized or unreflective manner; *mimesis*₂ (narrative configuration) refers to the organisation of action in a meaningful form by means of a plot, and *mimesis*₃ (narrative refiguration) refers to the effects of reading or reception of a narrative by means of which the reader can change his or her ideas and actions. Ricoeur pays special attention to the mediating role of configuration (*mimesis*₂) (Dreyer 2000:29).

Narrative configuration (*mimesis*₂) refers to the dynamic of emplotment. *Emplotment of action* is important because it provides a synthesis of multiple events or incidents (Dreyer 2000:29). Furthermore, a plot provides a synthesis of the heterogeneous not only by combining multiple events but also by unifying widely divergent and even opposing events. The result is a single story that “turns the plot into a unity which one could call both concordant and discordant” (Dreyer 2000:29). This story is not just a collection of events, but a narrative which has a plot. It is this power of unification of a narrative that helps us to see how it is possible to integrate diversity, variability, discontinuity, and instability with sameness and stability (Ricoeur 1992:140). Ricoeur (1991:77) concludes: “It is primarily in the plot therefore that we must search for the mediation between permanence and change....”

In considering the relation between narrative and identity, with reference to Hannah Arendt, Ricoeur (1988:246) maintains that to state the identity of an individual is to answer the question: “Who did this?” and to answer the question “Who?” is to tell the story of a life. The unity of a life is the unity of a told story, says Ricoeur (in Reagan 1996:112). Stories give unity, “not unity of substance but narrative wholeness” (Ricoeur 1986:132).

This relation between narrative and identity also applies to communities. Ricoeur (1996:7) explicitly refers to this connection between narrative and collective identity when he writes that the “identity of a group, culture, people, or nation, is not that of an immutable substance, nor that of a fixed structure, but that rather, of a recounted story”. Narrative is the power of unification, the power to synthesise the heterogeneous, to turn multiple events into a “plot”, and to establish a concordance from a discordance. It provides the resources, the “privileged mediation” (cf Ricoeur 1991:188), to establish the coherence, the “identity” of a group.

The dialectical tension between permanence and change can be solved through the emplotment, because a plot integrates variability with sameness. According to Dreyer (2000:30), the identity of a congregation is not a given, but an achievement, a narrative accomplishment. In other words, it is in the telling of stories, and in the listening to the other’s stories, that a congregation’s “story,” its identity, is shaped.

Therefore, this narrative identity of a congregation or collectivity is never a finished product. The “story” of a congregation always has to be recounted. To recount is, however, not the same as to repeat or to reproduce. This brings a congregation back to the tension between stability and change, between sedimentation and innovation. This tension between the two poles of sedimentation (tradition) and innovation is of particular relevance when it comes to collective identities. Ricoeur (1996:8) says if the values, norms, heroes, etc, that is the acquired identifications of a collectivity, are not constantly renewed and reinterpreted, a tradition becomes rigid and dead. Innovation requires a rereading and reappraisal of the transmitted tradition, especially with a view to past promises which have not been kept (Ricoeur 1996:8).

This tension between stability and change, between tradition and innovation, which is inherent in the “story” that expresses a congregation’s identity, connects past and future through the present. The recounting of a congregation’s story always takes place in the present, but involves the past and the future. On the one hand the story relates to the past – to which Ricoeur (1992:161) refers, with reference to R Koselleck, as “the space of experiences” – through the collective memory of the congregation. Narratives are rooted in memory, says Ricoeur (1997:xli). It is therefore important to take the role of memory, and its counterpart forgetting, into account. One of the most important ways for a congregation to take the past into account is through commemoration. Commemoration is an expression of collective memory. But in the continuous struggle to derive a configuration from the heterogeneous elements of a congregation’s “story”, there is not only a movement from the present to the past through memory, but also from the present to the future through imagination. In a congregation’s story the members of the collective recognise the unfulfilled moments of the past and also anticipate what they will be in future. Narratives are not only rooted in memory, they are also rooted in imagination, writes Ricoeur (1997:xlii). Through imagination, narratives provide opportunities to articulate “imaginative variations”. In taking part in the composition of a congregation’s story, we conduct “a thought experiment by means of which we try to inhabit worlds foreign to us” (Ricoeur 1988:249). In the dialectic between memory and imagination “the space of experiences” and “horizon of expectation” are connected (Ricoeur 1992:161).

The temporal dimension of narrative identity stresses the importance of maintaining a healthy relationship between stability and change, between sedimentation and innovation. Ricoeur’s view on the social imagination, and more specifically the dialectic between ideology and Utopia, presents us with further insight into this dialectical tension. The main function of ideology is that of conservation. In the words of Ricoeur (1986:318), “...ideology has one fundamental function: to pattern, to consolidate, to provide order to the course of action”. This can, however, become pathological, and then ideology can distort matters (Ricoeur 1986:323). The main function of utopia, on the other hand, is that of critiquing established systems of power and of rethinking alternative ways of living. The pathology of utopia, however, is a flight from reality,

from the imperfections and challenges of praxis, that is, escapism. Ricoeur (1986:322) adds that the pathology of utopia conceals under this escapism and futurism “the nostalgia for some paradise lost”. The interplay of ideology and utopia is such that ideology needs the critical and subversive function of utopia in order to prevent it from developing its pathology of distortion, and utopia needs the integrative and conserving function of ideology to prevent it from developing its pathology of escapism. When this is applied to the narrative identity of a group, one can say that if a group’s dominant narrative lacks innovation, it becomes an ideology in the negative sense of the word, namely it distorts and subjects. On the other hand, if a group’s dominant narrative lacks stability as provided by the integrative power of ideology, the danger is that it will develop the pathology of utopia, namely an escape from the task at hand.

An important feature of the temporal dimension of collective narrative identity is the never-ending tension between stability and change, between the *idem*- and *ipse*-identity of the congregation, between sedimentation (tradition) and innovation. There is no final story, no master plot to express a congregation or collective’s identity.

The identity of a congregation is not something static, and has to be recounted continuously. The notion of discordant concordance helps the church to understand how diversity, variability, discontinuity and instability within a congregation can be integrated. It helps the church to understand how it is possible to make some kind of synthesis, to recover (rather than impose from without) a plot from the many stories in which congregations are entangled (cf Ricoeur 1986:130). This perspective provides insight into the struggle to compose a group’s “life story” from the diverse actions and events that characterise the congregation’s life, the outcome of which can at best be regarded as an unstable equilibrium.

2.3.2.2 Relational dimension of the identity of the community

The second aspect of the narrative identity, according to Ricoeur (1992:115-116), is its relational dimension. A narrative identity is not only a temporal, but also a relational identity. The relational dimension of the identity has another important dialectic,

namely that of the “self” and the “other-than-self”. It means that personal identity is always constituted in relation to others. Ricoeur (1992:116) also relates this tension to the distinction between *idem*- (with character as its paradigm) and *ipse*-identity (with keeping a promise as the paradigm). This is most apparent in terms of *ipse*-identity. The keeping of one’s word, of holding to your promise, always implies an “other” towards which the promise is made. Personhood in the sense of *ipse*-identity implies a responsibility towards others.

However, the tension between the “self” and the “other-than-self” is not restricted to the pole of *ipse*-identity. The “other” is also important in terms of *idem*-identity. On a biological level, the “other” is reflected in the genetic code of a person, and on a psychological level the “other” is always present in terms of our acquired habits, values, and identifications. In the words of Hughes (1999:56): “If we look again at the two models of personal identity, we see that selfhood involves a dialectic of self and other-than-self not only in the internalised values and acquired habits and identifications of one’s character, but also in the response to the other and responsibility for the other at the heart of promising.” Therefore the tension between the self and the other-than-self is thus implied by the two poles of identity as sameness and identity as selfhood.

Ricoeur (1992:146-148) again explains the mediation of this dialectic of self and the other-than-self by a narrative theory – the notion of *emplotment*. This time, however, it is not *the emplotment of action* as in the case of the temporal dimension, but *the emplotment of character*. Ricoeur refers here to the necessary correlation between plot and character. Telling a story is not only relating the actions, but also saying who did what and how. In a narrative people identify the different roles characters play. But more than this, people get to know the identity of the characters: “The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character” (Ricoeur 1992:147-148). In the story told people know the characters as heroes or as villains, as characters loved and respected or not, says Ricoeur. The different characters’ actions influence and shape each other, that is not only their habits and values, but also the promises made and kept or not kept.

What are the implications of this aspect of narrative theory for personal identity? The relational dimension is quite apparent in the construction of personal identity. The church not only constructs her stories from memory, but also from the stories she is being told. For example, this is most pronounced in the stories regarding our conception, birth and childhood which are not even part of our own memories – they belong to the stories of significant others who tell stories about us – and the stories regarding our deaths, which will belong to those who survive us (cf. Hughes 1999), but it is also true throughout life. The relational nature of narrative identity is also implied by the fact that our life stories are composed not only on the basis of our own stories, but also on the stories that others tell about us. The stories of our lives are never told in isolation. Personal identity always involves others. Like characters in a narrative we are “entangled in stories.”

Collective narrative identities do not escape this tension between self and other-than-self. Although there is no strict transference of the dialectic of sameness and selfhood (the *idem*- and *ipse*-identity of personal identity) to the collective level, one can also make use of the concepts character and keeping one’s word (self-constancy). Ricoeur (1992:121-124) argues that the identity of a community is made up of the acquired identifications with the values, norms, ideals, models and heroes in which the person or the community recognises itself. This pole of collective identity is also a reflection of the historical and geographical situatedness of a group. This aspect refers to the *idem*-identity, the character of a collective identity. As mentioned above, a group’s character is the result of the narrative interaction, the telling of stories, and in the listening to the others, stories within a collectivity in a specific context. It is, however, not restricted to this aspect. The story of a group is also shaped by the stories that other groups or collectivities tell about them. The relational dimension of collective narrative identity thus recognises that every group’s story is “entangled in stories” of other groups. Collective identities are not shaped in isolation.

This entanglement in stories of other groups is, however, more than influencing and being influenced by other groups in terms of the *idem*-identity (the “character”) of a group (Dreyer 2000:35-36). The relational dimension of collective narrative identity

highlights the importance of the other with regard to the *ipse*-identity (of keeping one's promises) of a collectivity. The collective identity of a collectivity or group also implies responsibility towards the others. A group's dominant story, its collective identity, is never ethically neutral. This is, for example, clearly visible regarding membership issues. The identity of a group always implies that some will belong and others not; some are embraced and others are excluded (cf Volf 1996). The relational dimension of narrative identity reminds us that a group's identity has ethical implications. In the words of Ricoeur, a group's identity implies certain promises towards others.

The challenge implied by the relational dimension of narrative identity is to mediate the tension between the self and the other-than-self in the continuous process of reconstructing a group's identity, and to recognise the inherent ethical nature of narrative identity.

2.3.3 Three models of the formation of the identity of community

In the previous sections, two dimensions of narrative identity were discussed. The formation and transformation of the identity should include attention to the dialectic between the temporal and the relational dimensions of narrative identity. Dreyer (2000:36) explains this, "A major stimulus in the direction of innovation and of changing the dominant "story" of a collectivity, which is a key issue in the temporal dimension, comes from the relational dimension of narrative identity." Ricoeur (1996:8) claims that innovation requires a recounting of the transmitted tradition creatively, with a view to past promises that have not been kept. The dialectic of stability and change of the temporal dimension is connected to the dialectics of the self and the other-than-self of the relational dimension (Dreyer 2000:36). Therefore a recounting of the narratives of a congregation must be done from the perspective of a dialectic tension between a temporal aspect and a relational one.

In regard to this dialectical relation between the temporal and the relational dimensions of the identity, Ricoeur (1996), in *Reflections on a new ethos for Europe*, provides three models of integration of identity and alterity in a contemporary pluralistic context.

2.3.3.1 The model of translation

The first model is called *the model of translation* (Ricoeur 1996:4-5). Ricoeur (1996:4) maintains that a plurality of languages calls for translation. Translation of meaning from one language to another is, however, only possible if we take the other language seriously. The possibility of translating is postulated more fundamentally as the *a priori* of communication. In the words of Ricoeur (1996:5), it “is really a matter of living with the other in order to take that other to one’s home as a guest.” This spirit of translation, this “translation ethos,” could be extended to the relationship between different collective identities. The first model thus stresses the importance of respect for the other and for differences (Dreyer 2000:37).

2.3.3.2 The model of exchange

The second model, which builds on the first one, is *the model of the exchange of memories* (Ricoeur 1996:5-9). Translation (Dreyer 2000:37) presupposes sensitivity for differences between one’s own and others and the ability to change perspectives. Ricoeur (1996:5) says the first difference which calls for transference and hospitality is a difference of memory. This difference of memory is an expression of the different customs, rules, norms, beliefs and convictions which constitute the collective identities of the different cultures. This model implies a willingness to go beyond an attitude of hospitality and to take responsibility “in imagination and in sympathy, for the story of the other, through the life narratives which concern that other” (Ricoeur 1996:6-7). It thus implies an ethical position, a new ethos.

The exchange of memories through narrative is no easy task – it requires genuine labour. Participants have to abandon their arrogant positions that their own culture or group is in some way superior to that of the other. They also require the openness and flexibility to let their identities be questioned, and the willingness to revise their own narratives. Ricoeur (1996:7) says this model implies an effort of *plural reading*, and even of *crossed reading* in a spirit of respect for the other. In this process of reappraisal of narratives and in listening to the narratives (memories) of the other, people realise the

entanglement of their stories. But more than this, they also become aware of past promises that have not been kept. The past thus forms a kind of debt, “a cemetery of promises which have not been kept” (Ricoeur 1996:8-9), which forms part of their collective memories. A major benefit of the exchange of memories is, according to Ricoeur (1996:8), the liberation of this debt, this unfulfilled future of the past.

2.3.3.3 The model of forgiveness

Finally, these two bring us to the third model, that is, *the model of forgiveness*, as the one on the highest level of “spiritual density” (Ricoeur 1996:9-12). According to Ricoeur (1996:9), forgiveness is a specific form of revision of the past and through it, of narrative identities. Moreover, it is a mutual revision of the past. The most precious result of forgiveness is that it liberates one of the debt due to past promises that have not been kept. Dreyer (2000:38) points out some differences from the previous one. Firstly, we do not only exchange memories, but we do it from a specific perspective, namely the perspective of suffering - our own suffering, but also the suffering inflicted on others. Secondly, we do not start from the perspective of our own suffering, but we “proceed from the suffering of others; imagining the suffering of others before re-examining one’s own” (Ricoeur 1996:9). Thirdly, this model goes further than the model of memory exchange in that it not only demands imagination and sympathy for the suffering of others, but the willingness to forgive and thus to “shatter the debt”.

Ricoeur (1996:11) warns, however, against two pitfalls regarding forgiveness. The first pitfall is that we confuse forgiveness and forgetting. Forgiveness requires the exchange of the painful memories of the past. In the words of Ricoeur (1996:11): “...the work of forgiveness must be grafted on to the work of memory in the language of narration.” The second pitfall to be avoided is to demand an immediate response to a request for forgiveness. Ricoeur reminds us that forgiveness requires enduring patience. Real forgiveness takes time and cannot be “forced” in any way.

2.3.4 Conclusion

The characteristics of the identity of individuals and community and the process of the formation of the identity have been discussed. Firstly, from a narrative perspective the temporal dimension of collective identity, with its ever-present tension between stability and change, between sedimentation and innovation, is intimately related to the relational dimension of this identity. Secondly, the relational dimension provides the major stimulus for the continuous process of revising our collective identities. The challenge is not only to recount, that is to allow for innovation and change of tradition, but also to recount differently through a process of memory exchanges in which allowance is made for crossed and plural readings in order to recognise the other as another in the story or stories that the congregation tell about themselves. Thirdly, the three models of the integration of identity and alterity provide us with ways to concretise this intimate relation between the temporal and the relational dimensions of collective narrative identity.

Ricoeur (1996) proposes three models for the integration of identity and alterity on a collective level. Firstly, the model of translation. This implies that congregations must show respect for the other, for the stories of other churches and congregations. Secondly, the model of the exchange of memories. Congregations face the challenge to exchange memories, to allow for crossed reading and for plural reading. Thirdly, the model of forgiveness. According to Ricoeur, forgiveness is a specific form of revision of the past of our narrative identities. This must be done from the perspective of the other, from the suffering of the other. In the next sections, this concept will be developed according to three models of Ricoeur.

2.4 HOMILETIC IMPLICATIONS OF RICOEUR'S MODEL FOR THE UPBUILDING OF THE CHURCH

In the previous section, I discussed Ricoeur's narrative theory for the formation of the identity of the community. Ricoeur (1996:3-13) suggests three models for forming the collective narrative identity. In this section, a homiletic theory will be developed by considering a faithful and relevant ecclesiology as discussed in section 2.2 and

Ricoeur's model for the formation of the collective identity in section 2.3 in order to build up the church.

2.4.1 Preaching as an act of translation

In a modernising society the church faces a complex diversity of views, life styles, idioms, values and norms among different generations – children, youth, adults, aged people. “Pluralism” refers to the aforementioned diversity of life styles, views, jargon, values and norms found in a differentiated community (Pieterse 1987:123). Naturally this pluralism is manifested in the church as well – in the same denomination and even within the same congregation. Furthermore, the church has been influenced by modernistic individualism.

In a pluralist society – and therefore in a pluralist congregation – the vision and the mode of belief of the preacher may not necessarily be the same as one's personal experiences (Dingemans 1996b:40). Diversity and variety is the order of the day in terms of cultural customs and viewpoints. There is a great fragmentation of personal values and identities (Vos 1996:vol2:236). In this context of the church the congregation is an aggregate of religious consumers, just another voluntaristic association (Van Seters 1991:269). A way of communication for communicating the identities of both individuals and communities in an individualised and pluralised congregation will be discussed.

From Ricoeur's proposal (1996:5), for the formation of the identity of the church as the community of faith, that is, for the formation of the church as the body of Christ, especially in pluralist and individualist context, firstly preaching should be an act of translation. “To translate,” as Ricoeur states, means to consider the possibility of the communication of identity for the formation of the community's identity in the transitional situation. In the words of Ricoeur (1996:5), it “is really a matter of living with other in order to take that other to one's home as a guest.” This spirit of translation, the “translation ethos,” or the “communicative ethos” must be a factor in any exchange of identities.

2.4.1.1 The characteristics of authoritarian communication

The traditional communication style in preaching is understood as a linear scheme in the relationship between preaching and listeners. According to Myron R Chartier (1981:24-25), this sender-receiver construct is characterised by one-way, or monological, or authoritative communication. According to Dingemans (1996b:41), in this model the relation between the Word of God and listeners is totally mediated by the preacher and his or her theological knowledge, personality, and faith. The preacher is the authoritative representative and interpreter of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The preacher preaches on behalf of God and the listener listens and has to obey the Word of God.

Craddock (1990:8) identifies the problem of the monological approach that treats listeners like vessels into which information is to be poured. He (Craddock 1990:8) explains that

[S]ermons which begin with conclusions and general truths arrived at by the minister in the privacy of a study tend to oppress and treat as less than fully faithful and capable a listening congregation. Today, this is often called the banking method of communicating; that is, the speaker simply makes deposits of information in the mind of the listener.

Pieterse (1995:62-64) describes some characteristics of this kind of communication as follows: “behaviour a product of factors playing on its organization” rather than “gives meaning to message and acts thereon”; “defending the other against humiliation and destruction” rather than “seeing the other as potential convert to own idea”; “receiver” rather than “active participant”; “not sharing the correct views” rather than “co-believer”.

Dingemans (1996b:40) also points out a problem of this communication style during a period of transition in the following statement: “In a pluralist society – and therefore in a pluralist congregation – the vision and the way of believing of the preacher is not necessarily the same as my personal experiences.” Jolyon P Mitchell (1999:32) describes the problems as follows: “For many listeners the single voice attempting to speak authoritatively from the pulpit has lost much of its power. The result is that in our

transformed preaching situation, the sermon delivered as a closed monologue will probably fail to connect with listeners.”

Therefore, an authoritative communication such as a monologue fails to allow space to translate or communicate the identities of individuals. Walter Brueggemann (1995:313) argues that “‘Ours is a changed preaching situation.’ where ‘the old modes of church absolutes are no longer trusted’”.

In preaching, “space” is needed for communication to form the collective identity or communal identity. With regard this, Pieterse (1995) outlines dialogue communication. Beverly Zink-Sawyer (1997:342) refers to the trends of the New Homiletic as a “move toward the listeners”. A major recent development in homiletics has been the realisation of the importance of good communication between congregation and preacher in preaching (Pieterse 2001a:85). The congregation are not just recipients but actual participants in the sermon. They may speak out before, during and after the service by asking questions and commenting on the sermon in an attempt to reach, along with the preacher, a better understanding of the message of the text for their specific situation. Recently in these trends, McClure suggests a “collaborative” style of preaching in *The roundtable pulpit: where leadership and preaching meet* (1996); Rose proposes “conversational” preaching in *Sharing the Word: preaching in the roundtable church* (1997). Pieterse (2001a:86) argues that “The key concept in this theory is dialogue between preacher and congregation, and between congregation and preacher.” Furthermore, there has to be room for exchanging individual’s identities in the congregation, not just a space between preacher and congregation.

2.4.1.2 The characteristics of dialogue communication

In a fragmented and individualised context and in a pluralist society and a pluralist congregation, to communicate the identities of individuals for the formation of the community’s identity, a dialogic approach to communication in preaching is needed.

Dialogue communication theory is rooted in philosophy. Ever since Socrates major thinkers such as St Augustine, Kierkegaard, Buber, Jasperse, Gadamer and Habermas have reflected on relations between people and their dealings with one another (Pieterse 1995:57). According to Pieterse (1995:57), the fundamental tenet in the thinking on dialogic association between people is that their communication is interpersonal; it occurs in freedom and on an equal footing; it gives rise to mutual understanding through the exchange, communication and interpretation of ideas and messages or the gospel; and it is existential communication. Existential communication implies that through interpretation and acceptance of the gospel we find salvation, meaning and our human destiny. It also implies that when we convey this to others, we offer our whole existence as a guarantee. Finally it implies that we live by this message – that we cannot and do not want to live otherwise.

Pieterse (1995:58-59) advances several reasons for the need for a dialogic approach in preaching. First, “Revelation occurred in a dialogic situation.” According to Pieterse, the acts and words in which God disclosed himself in the Old Testament always occurred in dialogue with people. God’s conduct in calling Moses may be seen as “a consistent characteristic of the self-disclosure of God: revelation is dialogical” (Swank 1981:28). God’s acts were never unilateral. He included human beings as his dialogue partners and allies in his movement in history. Jesus’ ministry in which he disclosed God’s will to us was pre-eminently dialogical. He used a dialogic style, welcoming questions and discussion. His dealings with people were inviting rather than coercive. His teaching and invitation could even be turned down (Mt 19:16-22). Hence our dealings with the Word should be a dialogue with the biblical texts.

According to Pieterse (1995:56), a dialogical communication is conceived of as dynamic interaction in which free, independent participants have both space and freedom to communicate on an equal footing. Dialogue is a spiral communication form, that is, a continuous and ever-evolving constitution and exchange of meaning between “participants” (Jansen & Steinberg 1991:13). Pieterse (1992:53) defines the term “dialogue” as the nature of communication, rather than in a narrow sense, namely as a simultaneous event for all participants, a process which assumes a spiral form.

Therefore it is a dialogical communication theory that stimulates interpersonal communication between people who desire to share their identities and form a community of faith (Pieterse 1995).

Second, “The congregation as a communication situation is a dialogic church.” Plurality in church and society is a crucial phenomenon confronting modern congregations. It leads to conflict and poses the very real problem of deciding which of the differing interpretations offered by a group is an accurate application of Scripture. The solution consistently presented by practical theology today is communication in the sense of dialogue (Van der Ven 1993). Dingemans (1996b:42) refers to a dialogue church in which various interpretations of the gospel are placed in direct communication in a concrete situation – hence a congregation in communicative coexistence. In our modern situation such dialogue is vitally important. Dingemans (1996b:42) explains dialogue in a congregation as follows:

All members in the congregation live in a circle of communication and have the vocation to assist and help their fellow members. Also the preacher, as one of the members of the congregation, is called to the special task of helping his or her fellow members to deepen their communication with God. The pastor in this scheme, therefore, is not put between God and congregation, but she or he is a member of the congregation and – at the same time – is called to stand next to the people as a helpful assistant. Since every member – not only the preacher – can become a representative of Christ for his or her fellow members, the preacher has the task to use his or her knowledge, ability, and tools to help the congregation in a particular way of pastoral communication to understand the gospel, to find their way in the Christian tradition, and to discover a personal and congregational style of life. The congregation as a whole and the individual members finally are characterised in this scheme as instruments or mediators between God and society.

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is the subject of communication on Scripture in the congregation, but in this communication the Spirit creates space for people to find clarity through dialogue and effort. The Spirit creates space for theonomic reciprocity (Bohren 1980:76). He introduces us to truth as corporate unity in Christ. In our dialogue, our groping for truth, he directs us on the right course until the light dawns. In salvific communication the Spirit creates a freedom in which he is the subject of the communication but also puts people to work. He makes us partners in his work, in

which we are given a say. In this Spirit-guided dialogic situation space for change is created.

Third, “Dialogue is the fundamental attitude of a Christian.” One of the most basic insights of theological anthropology is that people exist in relationships – with God, with one another and with nature (Berkhof 1979:476-484). Through the Spirit’s recreative work church members are new people in Christ. But this new humanity must always be viewed in their relationships in which they are moulded and shaped in the congregation. Consequently we should not regard members of a congregation merely as individuals in the religious community, but above all as humans in relationships.

In these relationships people are engaged in dialogue, in communication with God and one another. Thus dialogue is the fundamental attitude of Christians (Pieterse 1995:59). Nowhere is this more evident than in prayer. The basic of prayer is the relationship between God and human beings, mediated by the Spirit. The Spirit intercedes for us with the Father because of our inability to pray (Rm 8:26). The Spirit mediates between God and humans, creating the basis that makes prayer possible.

As Dingemans (in Pieterse 1995:59) puts it, prayer is at once hearing and responding: a dialogue between the strange, nearby God and human beings, breathed on by the Spirit. Dialogue is the fundamental attitude of Christians, for it is the essence of prayer. Bohren (1980:65) rightly avers that the Spirit alone can overcome our speechlessness. Through the Spirit’s work in our lives and through prayer we are trained in dialogue.

Pieterse (1995:60-70) explains the characteristics of dialogue communication, comparing it with the authoritarian communication style according to five subordinate dimension, namely (a) the conception of the other partner, (b) the communicated situation, (c) the goal of communication, (d) the form of communication, and (e) the contents of communication.

Dialogical	Authoritarian
a. Conception of the other/partner in communication	

Gives meaning to message and acts thereon	Behaviour a product of factors playing on its organization
Defending the other against humiliation and destruction	Seeing the other as potential convert to own idea
Active participant	Receiver
Co-believer	Not sharing the correct views
b. Communication situation	
Domination free	Dominant (Speaker)
Pastoral	Non-pastoral
Gospel-oriented communication	Manipulating communication
Involved in religious gathering	Outsider
c. Goal of communication	
Building relationship people/God	No relationship building
Allowing own convictions	Persuasion
Striving for mutual understanding	Communicate own understanding only
Liberation	Non-liberating
d. Form of communication	
Dialogical sermon	Monological sermon
Interchange of roles	Seeing only own position
Open-ended	Prescriptive
Preaching as a step in the process	Communication of Only Truth
e. Contents of communication	
Centrality of love/compassion	Judgemental to listeners
Good news from God	Moralism
Biblical message open to communal interpretation	Biblical message rigidly according to preacher's interpretation
Message of liberation from God	Putting new burdens on the listeners

Pieterse's table of dialogical and authoritarian styles

In the category of the conception of partners in communication, Pieterse (1995:62) adopts the anthropological approach in a dialogical theory of communication within a Christian-theological context.

Humankind was created by God. This biblically based religious statement indicates the basic human relatedness to God. Christians are seen as children of God, their Father, and as brothers and sisters to each other in the faith. A human being is created a unique person, an "I", with freedom and the ability to take decisions, thus determining his or her own destiny. Consequently each person is a fully responsible creature, accountable for her or his own choices. Human beings are created in the image of God and are therefore responsible for creation as God's representatives on earth; are oriented towards God and destined to fellowship with God and with one another. We are always involved in relationships – with God, with one another and with nature – and this gives meaning to our lives. In order to actualise themselves, people need relationships conducive to dialogue, mutual understanding and fellowship. Because the individual is involved in so many

complex relationships, we must adopt a total or holistic view of humankind. They are not just spiritual or just biological beings – we must see them holistically. Human life is fraught with pain, suffering, imperfection, conflict, oppression and violence. Nevertheless Christians live in hope, the most hopeful message being the gospel of liberation in Jesus Christ. Through faith in Christ both the individual and society can be mobilized to restore the human condition in harmony with the recreation in Christ. The recreated faithful person finds a new humanity, wrought in the image of Jesus Christ (Pieterse 1995:62).

With regard to “translation of identities,” from this anthropological understanding, the human being is understood as a being that “engages in social interaction with itself by making indications to itself and responding to such interactions (Pieterse 1995:62). The human being is seen as an organism that has to deal with what it notes. It makes an object of what it notes, gives it a meaning, and uses the meaning as the basis for directing its action” (Blumer 1969:14). Therefore it is open to dialogue and a process of understanding in order to come to an understanding with other people. According to Pieterse (1995:63), the individual has to make personal existential decisions and live authentically on her or his own responsibility. This is possible through communication with God and other people. In this communicator and recipient are on equal terms. The recipient is the turning point in becoming the communicator in the exchange of messages and ideas and vice versa, instead of being the receiver, the end destination of the communication. There is an interactive process going on in the mind of the individual and with others in a dialogical communication. Furthermore, in the dialogical approach, the communication partner is seen as “one of us,” as a brother or sister, even if he or she does not share the views of the preacher. In this sphere of freedom and openness communication is a dialogical process that moves in the direction of mutual understanding. Therefore, the other or partner needs to be understood from an anthropological perspective. There is a possibility of dialogue for translating identities.

In the second category, the “Communication situation,” Pieterse (1995:63) emphasises, on the basis of Habermas’ concept of the ideal speech situation, “free people communicating authentically without any domination whatsoever.” Although the ideal is never realised, we long to achieve it whenever we communicate, in this case in the mode of dialogical preaching. According to Pieterse (1995:64), the ideal speech situation is characterised formally by the symmetrical distribution of chances to assume

dialogue roles, that is to select and employ speech acts. Through dialogue on equal footing or interaction, mutual understanding can result in joint action. The action or praxis in itself constitutes a communicative event designed to bring the community closer to the ideal situation.

Practical theologians such as Rolf Zerfass and Helmut Peukert, according to Pieterse (1995:64), reinterpreted Habermas's concept of non-authoritarian communication in an ideal speech situation in terms of the theological concept of the kingdom of God or the reign of God (cf Pieterse 1990:238). This ideal functions within the Christian religious community, where people can communicate according to the criteria of the kingdom of God (*basileia*). In this way faith is communicated so that the kingdom may come in the lives of the congregation and in the community as a whole. Communication according to the criteria of the Kingdom – the ideal state of peace, love, justice, freedom and salvation – provides a framework for the theory of dialogical communication on which we can model the praxis of gospel-oriented communicative acts.

In regard to the third category – “the goal of communication,” Pieterse (1995:65-67) mentions the goal of dialogic communication. First, a dialogic is “to facilitate encounters between people and between people and God and to sustain these developing relationships by the ongoing dialogical and interpretative process that [takes place] in the community life of the community of faith” (Pieterse 1995:66). The second dimension is “allowing own convictions” with its contrast “persuasion” (Pieterse 1995:66). Communication along the lines of the criteria of the kingdom of God presupposes the unconditional freedom of the participants. In the realm of the gospel there can be no coercion. All people must be free to make their own decisions, for which they are responsible. This means that every person should recognise and respect another's freedom of standpoint and views – all communicating as free subjects in solidarity. The third dimension is “striving for mutual understanding” with its contrast “communicate own understanding only” (Pieterse 1995:66). When people are allowed to have their own convictions in a dialogue which is free and takes place on an equal footing one can strive to move by means of the process of interpretation to mutual understanding through dialogue. It is important to note that mutual understanding or

consensus in Habermas' book is achieved by means of dialogue – in the sense of real communication between subjects. The goal is mutual understanding, but it is reached as a product of the whole community of faith that is engaged in the process.

It is important to consider the relationship between the church and dialogue communication in preaching. According to Pieterse, communication refers to a close relationship with an ecclesiology, in the following terms: “In keeping with the concepts of interpersonal communication as a dynamic process and of the church (in which sermons are preached) as the body of Christ (where symmetrical communication should occur), I therefore opt for a dialogical theory of communication” (Pieterse 1992:52-53). A communicative style in preaching has to reflect on the character of the community. In other words, it has to be developed according to the structure and function of the community. Fred Craddock (1985:84-98) has drawn attention to the distinction between “speaking to an audience” and “preaching to a congregation”. The latter assumes and builds on an ecclesial relationship. It is necessary to reflect on the relationship between the communication style and the structure of the church.

Therefore, in addition to aggregating individuals to the identity of the community of faith, a dialogical style of communication in preaching creates a space in which to communicate the identities of individuals for the formation of the community of faith.

2.4.2 Preaching as an act of exchange

Ricoeur (1996:5-6) says that the identities of individuals need to be exchanged to allow the formation of a collective identity, because the identity of the individual cannot be identified without the alterity. This process is intended to form a communal identity through the exchange of individual identities in the church. Through these processes the church articulates a relevant and faithful community identity.

The exchange of memories is understood to mean the remembering and sharing of memories. In this section the process of forming an identity by remembering and sharing memories will be discussed. In order to exchange memories, firstly, the church

has to remember its identity, then this identity should be recounted in a fresh way. This process is a hermeneutic and communicative one.

2.4.2.1 Remembering memories of individuals and communities

Remembering identity from a temporal dimension

The act of remembering is an actualisation of memory (Stroup 1981). This process should be carried out in the two aspects of the identity – from a temporal and a relational perspective. The notion of a narrative identity implies a dialectic that is always present when identity is at stake, namely the dialectic between the temporal and the relational. Firstly, from a temporal dimension, the individual's identity and the congregational identity need to be discerned continually between memory and vision. Secondly, in the relational dimension, the individual's identity must be articulated in the community and a congregational identity must be discerned with the others – the marginal, the outsiders from their perspective.

The actualisation of memory from a temporal dimension

Congregational identity or the identity of the church is not a fixed substance (Dreyer 2000:40). From the temporal dimension, narrative identity embraces the tension between stability and change, or sedimentation and innovation. Therefore an individual's identity and a congregational identity have to be recounted continuously. This recounting takes place in the present, but always involves both past (the space of experience) and future (the horizon of expectation). According to BC Birch (1988:23), "a congregation is formed around the qualities of memory and vision."

Remembering is a hermeneutic act (Brueggemann 1988:135). Remembering in the biblical sense is neither simply a third-person repetition of the old story nor just a psychological or intellectual recall of the past historical event. Remembering brings the past into a new context removed in time and space from that which is remembered. Remembering the past in a new or contemporary context serves the continuity of the

history of a people, because it bridges the gap between differences of time and context. According to Allen Verhey (2002:13), an act of remembering is not an intellectual exercise but rather a participation in ecclesial practices – especially reading the Bible – that permit Christians to be reminded of Jesus so that they can act analogously.

Remembering is related not only to the continuation between the past and the present, but also to the creative vision of the future. Therefore remembering teaches the language of hope (Bohren 1980:163). Bruce C Birch argues that “memory” and “vision” provide a very significant clue in this matter (Birch 1988:20-42). In his understanding, memory and vision are related to the identity and mission of the congregation as a people of God.

Remembering is primarily oriented to the memory of “what God has done and how faithful response has been made to God’s action”. This remembering actualises reality in the present. At the same time it leads the present to the vision which “is oriented to the activities of anticipating what God is yet doing in the world” (Birch 1988:23). It is very important to understand that it is not a vague hope or vision, or merely an anticipation of what God will do some time in the future, but a hope with a challenge to a faithful response and mission in the present. Out of remembering comes the vision of what God’s people is called to be (Birch 1988:24). Vision is also oriented to the activities of aligning congregational life to serve the actions envisaged in God’s grace (Birch 1988:23).

Birch (1988:23) mentions that the community of faith stands with one foot rooted in a historical tradition from which it draws its identity as God’s covenant people. Its other foot is firmly planted in a future, God’s future, towards which it lives in anticipation of the fulfilment of God’s desire for love, justice, and wholeness (Birch 1988:23). As Birch (1988:25) rightly claims, memory of what God has done and vision, provided by the memory, of what God yet will do enables hope in the present.

To actualise the past is to bring its redemptive power and significance to bear on the present situation (Stroup 1981:167). A congregation has to draw on their memories of

the past, because narratives are rooted in memory. The activity of remembering our past as the church becomes a source of power for the present and for the future (Birch 1988:21). Brueggemann (1987) explores this point by examining the various cases throughout the Old Testament. According to him, at the core of the life of God's people is memory of what God has done. Memory enables the community of faith to hope regardless of their present situation. Thus he claims that hope belongs centrally and decisively to biblical faith. Through the remembering, the past story becomes the ground of hope of God's people for the future. The hope becomes the reason of the faithful response of God's people in the present. With this hope, God's people are released into the uncertain future firmly rooted in its identity" (Brueggemann 1987:50).

Recounting the narrative identity has to be done with an eye to the future. According to Dreyer (2000:40), in composing a congregational identity, there is not only a movement from the present to the past through memory, but also from the present to the future through imagination. The recounting of the story of a congregation has to create visions of what they hope to be in future. The recounting of a congregation's story has to provide opportunities to articulate "imaginative variations."

However, in recounting a congregational identity, a critical balance is needed between tradition and utopia. A critical attitude is needed towards the tradition and those who would like to control the collective memory (Dreyer 2000:41). Recounting does not take place in a vacuum, and always brings power issues to the fore. The main challenge in this regard is to mediate the tension between tradition and innovation. Otherwise, there is a danger of repeating the past (ideology). The other danger is a forgetting or ignoring the tradition, staying instead in utopia (Dreyer 2000:41).

In remembering the past or memory, it is also necessary to consider both the great tradition and the little tradition (Carroll et al 1986:26). Both of them form its present identity. The great tradition is a specific interpretation of the memory of Jesus Christ (Dreyer 2000:40). The little tradition is a re-interpretation of the grand tradition within a specific context. This includes the founding events of that particular congregation, the

memories of the different pastors and other leaders, its building projects, and its specific rituals, symbols, beliefs, practices, structures, etc (Carroll et al 1986:21-46).

This actualisation, in terms of Ricoeur, as it has been discussed, is a process of emplotment (Dreyer 2000:29). The dialectic tension between permanence and change can be resolved through this emplotment. The plot provides a synthesis of heterogeneous elements, not only by combining multiple events, but also by unifying widely divergent and even opposing events.

According to Stroup (1981:131), personal identity is the interpretation of personal history by means of the exercise of memory. Not only does the community provide an individual with a tradition and with symbols and categories for interpreting personal history, but the community also listens to how the individual uses the tradition to construct personal identity and it observes how the tradition is lived and enacted. The community with its collective memory serves as a check on every individual's interpretation and appropriation of the tradition and even though the community may not have immediate access to a person's past it can call into question how the tradition is used to interpret personal history and how it coheres with present projects, policies, and forms of behaviour. Remembering is a key activity of the people of God in keeping their identity as God's people.

Commemorating identity from a relational dimension

Personal identity is formed by the narrative interaction in a congregation. The congregational identity is also shaped by others, that is, by other groups, in a specific context.

The traditional homiletic approach to hermeneutic does not have a space for the sharing of the individual identities and communities. Walter Brueggemann (1990:239) has described it as a kind of “triangling” of text, pastor, and congregation in which the “standard practice is for the pastor to triangle with the text against the congregation, that is, to make an alliance so that the voice of the pastor and what is left of the voice of the

text gang up on the congregation and sound alike. In this model, it is difficult to have a space for reading the text together and sharing the individuals' identities in a congregation.

A community is a group of people who have come to share a common past, who understand particular events in the past to be of decisive importance for interpreting the present, who anticipate the future by means of a shared hope, and who express their identity by means of a common narrative (Stroup 1981:133). Therefore, to form a communal identity by exchanging the individual's identity, a commemoration or plural reading is required. McClure (1995) explains the need of plural reading of the Bible in a communal context. One of the Reformation's principles, according to McClure, is that all members of the community have an interpretative and proclamatory vocation (McClure 1995:22). In the community as the body of Christ, the relationship between the preacher and a congregation is not a hierarchical relationship but an equal, communal one because of the general priesthood of all believers. In this relationship, preaching is not only just the preacher's responsibility, but also a congregation's work (McClure 1995).

To McClure, a homiletic interpretation must be a collaborative act. McClure (1995:23) explains collaboration as follows:

Collaboration is not the same as consultation. It is not using the insights of others to shore up the preacher's homiletical messages. Collaboration means that others may, indeed, have something to teach the preacher, since there is no way that the preacher can sit where they sit. Another person's reading of the gospel may transform the preacher's interpretation entirely. When preachers have interacted with these interpretations, they may find themselves in the pulpit on Sunday morning proclaiming a very different Word than they otherwise could have expected.

The Word of God, therefore, is a communal Word when it is discerned, not from the centre of the community by professional preachers, but from the centre of the community by a collaboration of everyday preachers who are developing as maturing Christian disciples. The Word can then be proclaimed from the centre of the community by a preacher whose primary goal is to influence these everyday preachers towards

more and more interpretive and proclamatory faithfulness (McClure 1995:23). In communal reading, WD Jonker (1995:363) points out the role of the Holy Spirit. The church has always believed that the Holy Spirit alone can open our eyes and enable us to understand the Bible properly. The congregation is the community in which the Spirit works and lives. Therefore it is the proper locus for the interpretation of the Bible.

Calvin, according to Rossouw (1982:179-180), subscribed to the idea that the interpretation of the Bible as the Word of God can never be a private matter. Rather, the church, as the historical community of present and past believers, forms the hermeneutical continuum in which the interpretation of Scripture should be carried out. Fowler and Jones (1991) argue that people can only become “wise readers” of the Bible if they form part of a living community of disciples and have acquired the formation and transformation of character appropriate to disciples of Jesus. True understanding of the Scripture is part of the kind of life within the fellowship of believers. Stroup (1981:142) argues that the Bible is the church’s book and one might approach the text asking what it means to interpret the text in the context of the community that uses it to understand and interpret reality.

To be a true participant in a community, according to Stroup (1981:133), is to share in that community’s narratives, to recite the same stories as the other members of the community, and to allow one’s identity to be shared by them. The community’s common narrative is the glue that binds its members together. George W Stroup (1981:133-134) distinguishes between those persons who participate casually in a community’s life and those whose personal identities have been shaped by the community’s stories, symbols, and rituals. An individual is a member of a community only when he or she re-remembers with the other members, only when the community’s common narrative and the past it preserves are appropriated and extended into the future, both the future of the community and that of individual (Stroup 1981:133).

McClure (1995:21) argues that “all members of a community, from the centre to the margins, must be allowed to participate in the interpretation of the community’s mission and in decision-making. In order for this to occur, preachers must give the congregation

a role in the *discernment* of the Word to be preached.” If the church is to claim its own identity as a community of the Word, preachers must engage in the kind of actual, critical collaboration that brings the reality of the community’s life to bear in biblical interpretation (McClure 1995:23). Pieterse gives a concrete example of this round table conversation (cf Pieterse 2001a:86).

During the preparation of a sermon, preachers need to glean ideas and contributions about the meaning of the text from the members of the congregation. That is part of the first phase of the hermeneutic circle. They need to read a text from the Bible together. Pieterse (2001a:87) provides some suggestions for this ritual. Preachers ask the members the following questions: What feelings does it evoke for them? How have they experienced that text in the past? How was it explained to them? What comfort, hope, inspiration or negative feelings does it give them? This dialogue will give the preacher an idea of the effect that the text will have in the sermon and how to slant its message.

The identity and mission of the church cannot be separated from the lot of others outside the church. The preacher and congregation have to interpret the message of the text *from* and *for* the marginal, suffering outsiders, because the church does not exist for its own sake but for the sake of serving the world (Pieterse 2001a:22).

This formation of the identity of the church takes place in the interaction in and outside the church. In the church, individuals allow the exchange of their personal identities to be incorporated into the identity of the community. Also, the identity of the church needs to be formed according to the relation with the others. In order to do this, the others also need to be invited to the hermeneutic activity. This process, according to Ricoeur (1992:146-148), is the process of *emplotment*, that is, not only the *emplotment* of action, but also the *emplotment* of character. With regard this, the church needs to consider its existence and ministries for others. This brings ethical responsibility in its train.

2.4.2.2 An ecclesial homiletic hermeneutic

Walter Brueggemann (1988:135) describes a homiletic interpretation as a remembering act in the following words: “[I]nterpretation as the community’s act of recalling the old treasured memory in the context of the new situation”. As Thomas Long (1989a:84) argues that one of the aims of homiletic hermeneutic is to identify the identity of the church, this section will develop a homiletic hermeneutic for the identity of the church.

The definition of homiletic hermeneutics

From a homiletic perspective, hermeneutics as the process of understanding has to do with interpreting a text and then applying the interpretation of it in a way that is relevant to the congregation’s situation. To achieve this in the hermeneutic process, according to Pieterse (2001a:19), preachers should constantly transpose themselves from the world of the congregation to the world of the text, and then back to the present-day world of the congregation. In their hermeneutic capacity preachers are messengers who continually move between text and context, until the two worlds merge and the message of the text becomes apparent in the context of the congregation. Therefore, to draw the message from the text in homiletic hermeneutics means to exegete the two worlds – the world of the text and the world of the congregation.

Pieterse (2001a:72) defines a homiletic hermeneutic is “a matter of interpretation and translation”. A homiletic hermeneutic consists of two steps – that is, *interpret* the main content and message of the text and *translate* it into the real-life situation or context of the congregation for the purpose of the sermon (Pieterse 2001a:72). Pieterse (2001a:73) refers to translation as more than just an application; it is a “creative response” to understanding through interpretation. In theology hermeneutics indicates theoretical reflection on how to interpret the meaning of a text, a passage or the entire content of the Bible and, having interpreted it, to consider how to translate that message into the congregation’s context for the purpose of preaching (Pieterse 2001a:72). It is a process of reflection, or as BA Müller (2002:208) calls it, a “hermeneutic of prayer” in which the text is read with closed eyes (in prayer).

In a homiletic hermeneutic, understanding is a matter of exegesis, culminating in the design of the meaning of the text – which entails understanding the present situation. Translation goes further, implying the preacher's bold action in the context of the congregation as a creative response to the meaning of the text – hence an interpretive design that we call translation (Pieterse 2001a:91). In order to understand this process, it is necessary to explain the process of understanding, that is, hermeneutics.

In theology, a hermeneutic process is a process of understanding (Pieterse 2001a:17). Gadamer distinguishes hermeneutics as three processes of interpretation. These are *subtilitas intelligendi*, which means interpretation in the sense of understanding; *subtilitas explicandi*, which means exposition; and *subtilitas applicandi*, meaning application (Gadamer 1975:290-291). These three elements constitute the overall concept of understanding, which is what hermeneutics is about. Ricoeur also identifies three elements, which he calls *understanding*, *explanation* and *application* or *appropriation* (Ricoeur 1976:91-94; 1981a:182-197). Ricoeur calls the integrated process of the three elements *interpretation*, while Gadamer calls it *understanding*.

Gadamer (1975) points out that understanding or interpretation of an ancient text depends on the reader's context. This implies that meaning changes. The reader and the text together constitute the hermeneutic process which functions like a circle between historical contexts. Consequently meaning is never complete, for it is never a fixed object, but a process in which the historical context of every new reader is a factor. Every historical context constitutes its own horizon of understanding (Pieterse 2001a:75).

Meaning and the reader's understanding of the text link the text to readers with their own historical horizons of understanding, in such a way that the horizons start merging and understanding becomes possible. Therefore, the readers are part of the historical process of understanding (Pieterse 2001a:75). The next generation will establish their own historical horizon of understanding and, in their context, will interpret it somewhat differently. As a result, the contemporary readers are part of a tradition of interpretation of the biblical texts.

In Gadamer, any understanding or interpretation is in itself application (Pieterse 2001a:76). The search for the meaning of the text is geared to application (Gadamer 1975:311). Application must be directed to a specific context in the present. It must also move the reader to action. This application has an ethical dimension. To Gadamer, application is part of the process of understanding from the very outset. However, according to Pieterse (2001a:76-77), in Gadamer, application is part of the process of finding the meaning of the text rather than a fourth step towards translating the meaning of the text, as a creative response to that meaning, into a topical, contextual sermon. Translation, therefore, has to remain part of the hermeneutic process.

Ricoeur, according to Pieterse (2001a:77), took up where Gadamer left off, developing his ideas and producing fresh insights. Ricoeur's concern is for human freedom and human nature. To be a free, authentic human being in a world in which people are exposed to finitude and evil, people need to draw on the philosophical ideas derived from human experience. These ideas are to be found in symbols, myths, stories and metaphors relating to evil and the struggle against evil. Ricoeur tries to reconstruct the way the elementary ideas in these stories turned into texts. To determine this, his starting point was language and linguistic theory.

Ricoeur (1976:12-15) distinguishes between spoken and written language. Spoken language or speech acts occurs in the present. Speakers' linguistic communication refers the reality around them. That reality is made up of past experience, tradition, faith, culture, worldview, social, political and economic circumstances, and so on. Reality influences the content and type of the speech act, which also refers to extra-linguistic reality (Pieterse 2001a:77). When a speaker speaks, he or she is giving verbal expression to an intention. Writing is a fixation of a speech act. Hence language utterances are subject to change (Ricoeur 1976:12-15).

Therefore, according to Ricoeur, there is a transition from the speaker's original intention, which is expressed in spoken language in terms of that person's experience and the linguistic system. Via the linguistic system the content (locutionary act) is encoded in a modality (illocutionary act) and an effect (perlocutionary act). The speech

act is directed to somebody on the assumption that intersubjective communication (an interlocutionary act) is occurring between two people. The dialogue partner does not reconstruct the speaker's intention but simply decodes the verbal meaning, hence there is a difference between the speaker's intention and the meaning of the utterance (Ricoeur 1976:16-19). Mutual understanding is effected through syntax and the context or dialogue situation, which are accessible to both parties in the course of the speech act.

Recording spoken language entails a further change, hence a second phase in a language utterance (Ricoeur 1976:25-36). By recording spoken language in a text the speech act is divorced from its context. Only the content (locutionary act) of the speech act is preserved fairly well. Hence a gap is created between the speech act and the written record of it in a text. From this gap it is necessary for readers in a new context to attach meaning to the text. The text is divorced from the writer's intention and the context in which it originated.

Ricoeur analysed the transition or change from spoken language to written language and the further transition to the interpretation of the text (Ricoeur 1984:76-77). According to him, human reality has narrative features. It is a reality characterised by action, which presents narrative material and is recounted. Through these three stages related dialectically, the "world of the text" will be disclosed.

Every text is preceded by *prefiguration*. It is *understanding* phase. A story in a text derives from reality in which action occurs that provides narrative material. This reality has a narrative structure with symbolic value and it is this surrounding world that provides the material for the narrative. It constitutes the prefiguration of the narrative (Mimesis₁).

The second is *configuration*, that is the material provided by the world of action for the creation of a text. It is *explanation*. Hence a text is created through configuration, which is the work of an author. It is a story with a plot comprising successive events (Mimesis₂).

The third is *refiguration*, which occurs through the reading of the story. It is *appropriation*. People perform a reading act and shape their own story through the reading of the text. The story that derives from a world of action in the past returns to the world of action – the world of the reader. The reader may experience the story in the text as an appeal and create a new story from the original one (Mimesis₃).

Ricoeur (1981a:184-193) argues that reading is aimed at application or appropriation. Interpretation means that when readers read a text there is the possibility that they will apply it to their new situation. Appropriation of the text is in fact a condition for discovering its meaning. Unless it is applied to the reader's own situation, the text has no meaning for that particular person. According to Pieterse (2001a:79), "Applying a text to one's own circumstances does not mean 'adapting' it. On the contrary, application means letting go, as readers open themselves to the world presented by the text." When this happens, two worlds confront each other – the world of the text and that of the reader. Understanding happens when readers receive the other, foreign "self" of the text from its world which is presented to them. Application entails receiving and appropriating this new "self" or property of the text, which makes you perceive your situation afresh, moves you to action, or makes you construct a new story in your own context from the story presented in the context of the text.

The process of understanding has been discussed from the perspective of Gadamer's and Ricoeur's hermeneutics. Homiletically, in order to preach the biblical text for a congregation's specific context, it is necessary to follow the two steps – interpretation and application. Gadamer and Ricoeur argue, however, that in order to reach the culmination of the hermeneutic process (the sermon), that is, application, the biblical text must be interpreted existentially, so that the application will have a transforming effect on the congregation's lives. Therefore, the process of interpreting a biblical text begins with the existential situation of the preacher and the congregation (Pieterse 1988:79-82).

On the basis of this understanding of the meaning of the terms "understanding" and "translation", it can be said that because the purpose of a homiletic hermeneutic is to

find the identity of the church, a homiletic hermeneutic moves from the world of the congregation to the world of the text, and then back to the contemporary world of the congregation, until the two worlds merge and the text reveals a new world. In other words, the message of the text becomes apparent in the context of the congregation; or to express it differently, the message of the text becomes apparent when a congregation understands who they are and what they ought to be, in the context of the church (Pieterse 2001a:19).

Now in order to connect the world of the text and the world of the congregation it is necessary for preachers to understand two worlds – the world of the congregation and the world of the text. Some homileticians, according to Long (1989a:79), advise that “exegeting the text” should be followed by “exegeting the congregation.” But Long (1989a:79) argues that “[s]uch notions are ultimately misleading.” According to Long (1989a:79), the congregation has been present throughout the exegesis, and the preacher goes to the biblical text *from* the congregation and *with* the congregation. In the following parts, this study will discuss the interpretation of the world of a biblical text and the world of a congregation.

Exegeting the world of the congregation

Leonora Tubbs Tisdale (1997:56-90), writing on homiletics, suggests a way of exegeting the congregation in *Preaching as local theology and folk art*. In another contribution to the field of congregational study, Jackson Carroll et al, in *Handbook for congregational studies* (1986) provide the same framework for understanding the identity of the congregation. More recently, Nancy T Ammerman et al, in *Studying congregations: a new handbook* (1998), offer a further suggestion.

According to Tisdale (1997:56-90), to understand the world of the congregation, especially the identity of the congregation, the preacher needs to seek to interpret the deep symbols that reflect and shape the congregation’s cultural world. These symbols are often complex, and they can appear in multiple modes – verbal, nonverbal, spoken, written, audible, visual, tactile. The preacher should analyse how the congregation’s

cultural world is revealed through seven cultural materials: stories and interviews, archives, demographics, architecture and the visual arts, rituals, events and activities, people. From these identifying and appropriately symbolic “texts”, the preacher interprets the world view, values and ethos of the congregation. Especially the preacher understands the congregation’s views of God, humankind, nature (creation), the church, mission, and how these themes are interrelated.

Seven Symbols for congregational exegesis

First, Tisdale classifies seven categories of these symbols that reflect and shape the congregation’s cultural world.

Stories. The stories that the congregation tells about its own life reveal much about its identity (Hopewell 1987). The pastor hears these stories both in the course of everyday ministry as well as by deliberately striving to find them. A pastor can usually identify several persons within the congregation who can tell story after story. The pastor needs to listen to a variety of voices in order to discover the stories that most often find expression. The pastor also needs to pay attention to stories that appear to be significant but that are told only by one or two people. The following categories are among those that can help pastors catalogue the stories and develop a systematic picture of congregational life (Tisdale 1997:69-70).

- What are the important theological ideas in the stories? Why are these ideas important? How do they impact on congregational life?

- Which events seem to be turning points for the congregation? Why? How do these events affect the congregation?

- What values seem most motivating for the community?

- What behaviours are most respected, or are looked upon with suspicion?

- Who are the heroes, heroines, and villains of community life and what makes them so?

- What are the silences – the stories about which everyone knows but about which people say nothing? Why are they silent?
- Do some stories or images recur? What makes it important to retell them?
- What seem to be the dreams and hopes that are common to most of the congregation?

Using such data, the pastor can plot the story of the community like the plot of a novel.

Interviews. The preacher can also engage in structured interviews with individuals and groups – the board of directors, the choirs, support groups and small groups. In addition to questions such as ones used to analyse congregational stories above, the following are examples of questions that can help structure interview sessions.

- What is happening in the church today?
- What changes have you noticed in the congregation in the past?
- Which changes have pleased you? Which have displeased you?
- What holds this congregation together?
- What has the most potential to cause this congregation to fall apart?
- What makes your congregation different from other nearby congregations?
- What kinds of programs are empowering and frustrating in this congregation?
- What are the qualities of members that win the community's respect?
- What qualities embarrass the community?

The preacher listens to both the obvious and the latent dimensions of meaning in the responses. A pastor who is experienced in counselling listening especially to the stories of those who are marginalised in the congregation.

Archival materials. Archival materials include official church histories, minutes of official meetings, publications (eg, yearbooks, church directories, worship bulletins, the church newsletter, materials printed for stewardship campaigns), financial records, letters, pictures, audio and videocassette recordings. They are something of the memory of congregational life (Tisdale 1997:69). Some materials will be found in official files, while others are in the hands of individual members. The preacher can interpret such materials using categories like the ones listed for stories and interviews. These things can feed directly into a sermon when a preacher quotes from a source or describes a frayed picture from an earlier era. According to Tisdale (1997:70), these materials can give the pastor significant insight into the continuities and discontinuities in congregational identity as it has been formed and re-formed through the years.

Demographic composition. The study of a congregation's demographic composition tells the pastor who is present (and who is not) and ties the congregation's story into the stories of similar and dissimilar groups. With the help of survey forms distributed to the congregation, a membership directory, and in consultation with members who know about such things, the preacher can quickly determine the composition of the congregation according to age, race, ethnicity, gender, household composition, education, social class, economic situation, political philosophy, sexual orientation, roles in the larger community. These data often reveal, indirectly, the concerns of the community (Tisdale 1997:71-72).

Architecture and visual arts. Architecture and the visual arts can tell much about a congregation. The location and condition of the church building and grounds, the design of the building, and its décor often signal much about the character of a Christian community. What understandings of Christian faith, community, and mission are represented in the architecture of the building and the art pieces in it? A church building both reflects and creates congregational ethos. The preacher needs to ask to the question of the degree to which the building and its aesthetic environment coincide with congregational life (Tisdale 1997:71-72).

Rituals. “Ritual,” according to Carroll and Hopewell (Carroll et al 1986:37), “is repetitive action that has more than utilitarian significance. It is a form of nondiscursive, gestural language through which a group acts out meanings and relationships that are of enduring significance to its life.” Rituals then not only provide sources for discovering what congregational identity is; they also provide opportunities to probe and explore what it is becoming (Tisdale 1997:73). Some of congregation’s rituals take place in worship, but many occur in other settings. Stewart Guthrie (in Tisdale 1997:72-75) distinguishes between *calendrical rites* – rituals which have some regular performance schedule according to calendar, and *critical rites* – rituals which are only performed occasionally.

Events and Activities. Useful indices of a community’s values are often provided by the resources that a Christian community puts into events and activities. Here are some questions by which to reflect on what a preacher can learn from this aspect of the congregational world.

- What activities are most intensively supported and most neglected?
- In which events does the congregation take the most (and have the least) pride? Are some happenings controversial? If so, what are the dynamics of the controversy?
- Do recently added activities point to future directions in which the congregation is moving? Do events that are receiving less support or are being dropped indicate changes in the community’s climate?
- Can a preacher sense incongruity between what a community says is really important and the actual investment of its personnel and other resources?

The preacher must ask whether a church’s life is an adequate witness to the Gospel.

People. Finally, people themselves can be valuable culture texts, worthy of thick description. People are presumed in all lines of analysis. However, Tisdale suggests that the preacher pay particular attention to people whom the congregation regards as sages and those on the margins of the community. Sages are persons to whom the congregation listens because they represent the best of the community’s self-perception.

Discovering why the marginalised are on the edges of the community can often help a preacher discern the social boundary lines of the community. A community's boundaries for differentiating between "us" and "them" needs to be evaluated in the light of God's love and God's will for justice.

Components of congregational identity: Worldview, values, and ethos

Second, from "identifying and collecting appropriate symbolic texts of a congregation", the worldview, values, and ethos of congregation are identified.

Tisdale (1997:79-89) suggests components of cultural identity of the congregation according to categories such as "worldview," "values," and "ethos." *Worldview* refers to a people's picture of the way things in sheer actuality are – what they perceive to be "really real". *Values* reflect a people's interest and preferences within that world – that is, what they deem to be desirable and valuable. *Ethos* refers to "the tone, character and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood;...the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects"(Tisdale 1997:77).

Tisdale (1997:80-84) subdivides the worldview of the congregation as the view of God, the view of humanity, the view of nature, the view of time, the view of the church, the view of Christian mission, and interrelationships among the above concerns for interpreting congregational worldview and values.

1. View of God (Theology, Christology, Pneumatology)

- Is God perceived by this congregation to be primarily transcendent or primarily imminent? (What is the congregation's favourite hymn: "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise?" or "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"?)

- Is God most likely to be thought of: as judge and giver of law who exacts high standards for righteous behaviour and exhibits wrath toward those who fall short? as a merciful and forgiving parent who is quick to understand and forgive foolish ways? or as one in whom both justice and mercy co-exist?

- Is God perceived to regularly intervene directly into human affairs through the working of miracles? Or does God work primarily through natural processes? (How are prayers of intercession phrased in congregational life?)

- Is any one person of the Trinity valued more highly than another? Is any one person of the Trinity consistently devalued in congregational life?

- What metaphors for God (Holy One, Judge, Shepherd, Father, Rock, Mother Eagle), for Christ (Bread of Life, Light of the World, Son of God, Friend of the Poor, Saviour, Suffering Servant), and for the Holy Spirit (Wind, Fire, Healer, Empowerer, Gift-giver) are most prevalent in congregational life, and what do they indicate about the congregation's understanding of God?

2. View of Humanity (Theological Anthropology)

- What is the predominant view of human beings? (Are people primarily considered to be "sinners without hope save in God's sovereign redemption through Jesus Christ," to be "children of God, created in God's image, loved and recreated through Jesus Christ," or to be "fallible yet perfectible through the inner workings of the Holy Spirit?")

- How does this congregation see itself in relation to the rest of society? (Does it view itself as being primarily powerful or powerless? As being a potential change agent, or as being a victim of circumstances with little power to effect change?)

- What does this congregation value in human nature: being (where the worth of an individual is bound up with his/her existence as a child of God), doing (where the worth of an individual is closely tied to his/her achievements), or being-in-becoming (where primary value is placed upon the individual's personal and spiritual growth)?

3. View of Nature (Theology of Creation)

- What is the congregation's understanding of creation and the place of human beings within it? Is the congregation's basic stance toward nature one of:

a. Harmony with nature (as in many farming communities where people live close to the land and recognise their absolute dependence upon the cycles of seasons, rain, and sunshine for their daily sustenance);

b. Mastery over nature (as in many urban and suburban contexts in which a major concern is whether nature—that is, rain or sleet, heat or cold—is going to interfere with human plans and activities for the weekend); or

c. Subjugation to nature (as in areas regularly visited by life-destroying natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, or floods)?

- How would this congregation describe the manner in which human beings ought to live in relation to nature? (What interpretation of the meaning of human “dominion” in relation to creation is reflected in the signs and symbols of congregational life?)

4. View of Time (Eschatology)

- Is time primarily viewed as a qualitative commodity to be managed, used expediently and not wasted (so that worship or committee meetings must begin and end according to the clock, and proceed with as much efficiency as possible), as an obstacle to be endured or overcome on the path to a fuller existence (as in “doing time” in the prison), or as a relational entity (so that worship or a meeting begins when the whole community has gathered and proceeds until the community has a corporate sense that it is time to close)?

- Is the congregation primarily oriented to the past (reliving and longing for the “glory days” of long ago); the present (living in such a day-to-day survival mode that it gives little thought either to the past or the future), or the future (with plans and dreams and visions of what it would like to be and do)?

- What is the character of congregational “hope” and how is it related to biblical images of hope (such as “eternal life,” “parousia,” or “resurrection”)?

5. View of the church (Ecclesiology)

- What metaphors for the church predominate in congregational life? (Is the church primarily conceived as being an “institution of salvation,” “intimate community of the Spirit,” “sacrament of salvation,” “herald of good news,” or “servant of the servant Lord”?)

- Is the church understood by members of the congregation to be primarily a “hospital for sinners” (where people are welcomed, whatever their life situation, and few restrictions are placed on church membership) or a “holy community of saints” (in which certain ethical standards of lifestyle are required for faithful church membership)?

- How inclusive is the congregation—in its leadership, worship, and programming—of those who are frequently marginalised in the larger society (children, the elderly, women, persons with physical and mental disabilities, gay and lesbian persons, persons of diverse racial and ethnic identities)?

6. View of Christian Mission (Evangelism, Missiology, Social Ethics)

- If you were going to locate the congregation's own understanding of itself in relation to the larger culture, how would you characterise it? (Using H Richard Niebuhr's categories in *Christ and Culture*, would this church's stance toward culture be characterised as "against," "above," "of," "in paradox," or "transforming"?)

- Would the congregation's mission orientation best be characterised as:

a. activist (with strong emphasis on the congregation's own corporate address of social, political, and economic issues),

b. civic (encouraging church groups to study public issues and encouraging individuals to become involved, while avoiding corporate stands as a church body),

c. evangelistic (with primary emphasis upon the call of individuals to salvation and eternal life), or

d. sanctuary (providing a place in which its participants can withdraw from the trials of societal life and find a safe haven)?

- Would the congregation's own self-image for social ministry best be described as:

a. survivor church (reactive to the crises of an overwhelming world);

b. crusader church (proactive in seeking out issues and championing causes);

c. pillar church (anchored in its community and taking responsibility for the community's well-being);

d. pilgrim church (caring for immigrants with ethnic, national, or racial roots), or

e. servant church (caring for and supporting individuals in need)?

7. Interrelationships among the Above Concerns (Cosmology, Soteriology, Doctrine of Revelation)

- What overarching view does the congregation have of the cosmos, God's relationship to it, and their place within it?

Second, Tisdale also provides some categories for interpreting congregational ethos.

Crisis and integration: In a loss or dislocation, what is the characteristic response and reintegration that is sought?

Proficiency: What is the characteristic skill, the chosen manner of doing things, the reliable pattern of behaviour?

Mood: What is the characteristic temperament, the emotional atmosphere?

Hope: What end is characteristically expected and sought?

Therefore through the interpretation of the congregation's worldview, values and ethos, the preacher can understand the contemporary identity of the congregation.

Exegeting the world of the text

As Long (1989a:79) states, exegesis involves a conversation between the biblical text and the whole community of faith. Exegesis is a work of the church enacted through the preacher as its chosen representative.

A brief exegetical method for preaching

The following is an outline and discussion of a brief exegetical method of preaching that preachers should take note of (Long 1989a:61).

1. Getting the text in view

- A. Select the text
- B. Reconsider where the text begins and ends
- C. Establish a reliable translation of the text

2. Getting introduced to the text

D. Read the text for a basic understanding

E. Place the text in its larger context

3. Attending to the text

F. Listen attentively to the text

4. Testing what is heard in the text.

G. Explore the text historically

H. Explore the literary character of the text

I. Explore the text theologically

J. Check the text in the commentaries

5. Moving toward the sermon.

K. State the claim of the text upon the hearers (including the preacher).

A few comments on this method as a procedure for sermon preparation are necessary with regard to the identity of the church.

1. First, the exegete needs “to select the text.” Apart from the church’s year plan for preaching (the lectionary) which has the inherent limitation that many texts “and even entire books of the Bible are omitted” (Long 1989a:63), there are other methods. One is the personal choice of the preacher. Since the limitation here is that this method may become “hobby horse” preaching, however, the church lectionary is therefore recommended by Long as the more effective (Long 1989a:63-64). The selection of the text is very important in defining and developing the identity and mission of the church. the identity of the church is expressed in the four characteristics of the church – “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” The function of the church is reflected in *Kerugma* (*kerugma, marturia, didache*), *Leitourgia*, *Koinonia* (*koinonia, paraklesis*),

and *Diakonia* (Nel 2000:81). With regard this CW Burger (1999:138) argues that “these four ministries to be primary restorative or healing system of the congregation.”

2. Second, the exegete also needs “to get introduced to the text.” This is where Craddock (1985:123) asks the question “What is the text *doing*?” to determine the direction to take in preparation. This also means to put the text into its “larger context” (Long 1989a:65). This means using reliable Bible encyclopaedias and dictionaries to research the background to the text.

3. Third, another task for the exegete is “to attend closely to the text.” One needs to ask the “right questions” and give the “right responses” as preachers of the text. This, of course, means to “listen attentively to the text,” as Long has it (1989a:66). If the “text is narrative,” says Long (1989a:68), the preacher has to “stand in the shoes of each of the characters and experience the story from these varied perspectives.” In other words, the micro and macro structures (Pieterse 1987:115) are analysed. “The pericope is divided into smaller units by applying grammatical, stylistic and substantive criteria, and the interrelationship of these units is determined.”

4. Lastly the exegete needs “to test what is heard in the text.” Vos (1996:vol.2:4ff) describes the more technical analysis of methods to be discussed here, as we keep in mind the approach Long (1989a:60) is taking, in providing a “preacher’s exegesis” mentioned at the outset. However the text still needs to be interpreted by the exegete according to one or a combination of the following methods of interpretation.

Firstly, the historical-critical method. This method requires that the text be interpreted from the historical angle, as texts arose not in a timeless vacuum, but in time.

Secondly, the literary approach looks at the text as a literary phenomenon, as compared for example with the text-immanent exegesis that looks less at the history of the text than at the construction and connections within the text. Among the subdisciplines of these approaches is the canonical approach that looks at the text within its relation to the whole canon of scripture. Then there is discourse analysis, which looks more closely at

the textual structure that the text is based on syntactically. In this method meaning is in the text itself not in its history. Then there is the literary text analysis that again approaches the text in a narrative and textual analysis. The text is analysed as a narrative or story in itself. The key to this approach is the “implicit reader,” the universal and “ideal” reader, created by the narrator, and he participates in giving the text meaning.

Thirdly, sociological exegesis has to do with what Vos (1996:vol.2:14) calls the text of life, as in the question “Who am I?” This text of life is applied in religious, socio-cultural, political and economic contexts. Even answers from other disciplines are included, such as philosophy and psychology. This approach makes one aware that one is bound by time and space (Vos 1996: vol.2:21).

Meaning is conveyed by the text (Vos 1996:vol.2:14) therefore it is not only the text that needs exegesis, but also what Vos calls the context of understanding, and therefore also the role of the readers. There are at least two categories of readers, namely the real reader and the implied reader. This implies *inter alia* sociological exegesis.

Sociological exegesis in terms of meaning as discussed above has to take cognisance of the presuppositions (Vos 1966: vol.2:19) that Bible documents and traditions are both the channels and the products of social interaction and at the intersection of channel and product stands the exegete and his interpretation. Therefore sociological exegesis of a biblical text should attempt to describe and interpret the social relations referred to by the text, implicitly or explicitly. Since biblical texts are socially, historically and religiously established in an interchange with one another, the exegete needs to probe these connections in an attempt to discover and reveal the dialectical interaction and relationship between theory and practice in their theological and social experience. The exegete needs to keep in mind the fact that the social factors that determine a biblical text are often more implicit than explicit.

Therefore, social exegesis has to use analytical and comparative methods to come to conclusions. The sociological approach shows us we are time and space bound, thus our view of the world is through our own theological traditions, social reality and political

predilections and prejudices. This reality makes one sensitive to the social and religious factors that contributed to the biblical text. The exegete also submits to the process of exegesis. In the exegesis process, the text, the speaker and the audience interrelate and interact with one another as discussed above and with their own worldview and experience of reality. This brings into perspective the world of the exegete in terms of his convictions as well as the methods he or she chooses for the task.

Finally the preacher has to explore the text theologically. With regard to form the identity of the church, the text needs to be interpreted from the perspective of the church.

With regard to this, firstly, Charles Campbell (1997:250-254) suggests that a figural interpretation is a means of forming an alternative community in preaching.

Following Frei's argument in *The eclipse of biblical narrative*, Campbell (1997:250-251) refers to two functions of typological interpretation within the church. First, figural interpretation has served to unify the Scriptures by highlighting the patterns that connect the various events, people, and instructions into a single story. Typology is a way of interpreting Scripture as a unified narrative, rather than merely as a collection of discrete, isolated vignettes. Second, figural interpretation serves not only to unify the biblical narrative, but also to incorporate the contemporary world, particularly the contemporary people of God, into that story; it is not just a way of reading Scripture, but a way of reading life. Through typological interpretation, the world of the contemporary people of God is seen and described in terms of the patterns and connections discerned in the biblical narrative. Campbell (1997:252) cites the following example of the two functions of typological interpretation:

A good example is the Exodus event, which serves as a narrative pattern both for connecting various key events in the biblical story and for incorporating the people of God into that ongoing story. The Exodus provides the pattern for describing the Israelites' entry into the promised land and then their return from exile. The gospels then locate the coming of Jesus within this same story and interpret his death and resurrection as a continuation and fulfilment of this story, a pattern that continues in the liturgical actions of baptism and Eucharist. All of these typological

moves serve not only to unify Scripture, but also to incorporate the people of God (at many times and places) into God's ongoing story.

Justo and Catherine Gonzalez (1994:100ff) argue that typology is fundamentally a Christological and ecclesial form of interpretation. That is, the movement is from events in the story of Israel through Jesus as the centre and "archetype" of the story to the church as the ongoing bearer of the story.

Justo and Catherine Gonzalez (1994:113) provide another example in which an integral connection is made between preaching and baptism.

The fact that preaching is addressed to a baptized congregation should make a difference in the Biblical interpretation and the preaching. Scripture is a word already addressed to God's people – even the history of a dialogue between God and God's people. The congregation is not there to choose whether to be part of this people – they already are. Baptism is the sign of that inclusion. Therefore the word is for them. The preacher needs to make clear the connection of that ancient word to this present People of God. Typology assumes the continuity of the People of God, and therefore the word to that ancient people can readily be applied to the congregation now gathered.

Campbell (1997) and Gonzalez (1994) prove that preaching is appropriately linked with the typological incorporation of people through baptism into a distinctive community with a distinctive story. The function of typological preaching is not only primarily to connect individuals with the individual characters in different biblical stories, but also to move the story of Israel through Jesus Christ to the church.

Gonzalez (1994:103-104) argues that typology in its full form thrived while the church was a persecuted, or at best tolerated, minority, but faded away during the Constantinian era, when interpretation tended to accommodate the Bible to the dominant culture and empire. Typological interpretation was simply too particularistic, too radical for the Constantinian age; it functioned too much to "build up" a peculiar people, a "contrast-society," according to a different and distinctive story. Figural interpretation gives the church a distinctive story – a peculiar memory, identity, and hope – in the midst of the dominant, oppressive culture. As Brueggemann describes the situation of the church as

“exile,” to build up the church as an alternative community, typological interpretation is a means to do this.

Figural interpretation is not only a means of incorporating the church into the “storied world of the bible,” but a way in which the church can be “built up” to carry that story forward as a distinctive people. Figural interpretation is not a hermeneutical technique or method that can be taught in the abstract apart from the practices of the Christian community. Rather, figural interpretation is an act of the imagination, an act of seeing narrative patterns and connections between events, people, and institutions that are temporally separated.

Secondly, a faithful and relevant ecclesiology has to guide the process of interpretation as a hermeneutic key. The identified identity and mission in the previous section must be the purpose of the hermeneutic and the sermon. The attributes for identifying the true church of Christ should be endorsed in the church’s unity, sanctity, catholicity and Christianity (Pieterse 2001a:112). The identity and mission of the church are especially important in considering the function of the church – *leitourgia* (worship), *marturia* (mission), *kerugma* (preaching), *koinonia* (fellowship), pastoral care (*paraklesis*), and *diakonia* (service). According to Firet (1986:82ff), the functions of the church are interwoven. Although *kerugma* is the central mode of preaching, it does not follow that preaching contains no *diache* and *paraklesis* (Nel 2000:83). Gwak (2000:183) says that such identity formation is strengthened through a dynamic and balanced relationship between the functions of the church, such as *leitourgia*, *kerugma*, *koinonia*, and *diakonia*. This means that the identity of the church is closely connected with its mission. BA Müller (1992:9) refers these four characteristics will guide the church have creative tension between “to merge” and “to collide” with the world.

A guideline for finding the meaning of the text

Long (1989a:77) states, “Good exegesis” will point the way the text is leading us. But there is an added element, as critical as the others, and the preacher still has to decide what the text is saying to our congregation on this occasion. BA Müller (1991:132-136)

offers some guidelines for finding the meaning of the text for the church. With all these different exegetical tools and methods, according to Müller (1991:132), the exegetical task is to “find the inherent *theo-logical* movement” (that is, the logic of the God-on-the-move in the world of text) itself. According to Paul S Wilson (1999:40; cf. Campbell 1997:10-12), “one problem with biblical theology was that it considered the Bible as a theological interpretation of God’s action, not as a record of God’s actual acts themselves.” This *inherent* movement or plot is expressed in terms of structure (shape, genre) of a field of concern (focus), but also in terms of function (the theological intention) of the text. Preachers should therefore beware of merely probing the superficial level of the grammatical or historical meaning of the text. What is really required is what Achtemeier (1980) call the *creative* and *innovative* meaning, which will be revealed only when the depth perspective of the text is uncovered: the dynamic ongoing movement of the text which takes hold of the preacher himself. This is a dialogical process in which the textual meaning is re-played in confrontation with the present context. Only in this way can the new-ness (ie the “news”) of the text be brought to the fore.

The hermeneutical strategy becomes very important in this homiletic approach. The ongoing movement of the text must be sustained by a *hermeneutic sensitivity* to the contextual questions and the listener’s response. The problem with preaching is not that it is heretical (proclaiming false *truths*), but that it is so often boringly irrelevant, giving good answers to false questions, questions not being asked outside the preacher’s study. This hermeneutic sensitivity gives answers to questions on three different levels:

What must be discovered?

The openness to the text calls for an openness to God, an openness to what this God-on-the-move in the text is doing in this world; an openness to obedience to the call of this God to his pilgrim (often lagging behind!) people in the movement of his Spirit; an openness to the context: the causes *and* realities of fear, poverty, oppression, jealousy, self-centeredness; discerning the false “gods,” the prevailing myths and stories of the

congregation, of the church in general, the dominant culture, powers of good and evil, the questions people are asking, are afraid to ask (Müller 1991:133).

Who/What are the agents of transformation/confrontation in the context?

Are there any new perspectives, any alternative ways of looking at or uprooting the realities of the *status quo*? What are emerging images and dreams in which insurmountable walls can be “dreamt” down? What new values are required? The answers to these questions construct the homiletic point of view, the perspective that is of paramount importance in developing the plot (Müller 1991:133).

What is the new experience to be shared?

So what? Where does this all lead to? Is there “homework” to be done before the next sermon? Is there a new lifestyle that emerges out of the presentation? What can be shared as good news, as commitment, as vision in solidarity with others in their hopes and fears? What can be celebrated in a new way (Müller 1991:133)?

Finding the liturgical and homiletic plot

The final product to be “delivered” to the congregation must have a shape: a shape determined, as we pointed out by the theo-logic of movement: moving from the exegetical basis and hermeneutical focus to the homiletical function. The latter can be best expressed in terms of a vision, a story, a commitment and a task (Müller 1991:133).

Following Müller’s ecclesial hermeneutic (1992:8), the process of a homiletic hermeneutic may be summarised as follows:

First, to find, within the text, the movement of God, of the initiating praxis of God. It is a hermeneutical endeavour to trace the footsteps of God – footsteps towards a community of faith to follow in order to re-align the identity and the praxis of the church.

Second, to find expressions of the self-understanding of the church by the ecumenic confession of the Apostolicum in the text. Finding the expression of the text in terms of the four modes of identity expressed in the Apostolicum must allow this to merge or to collide with the challenges of this identity in the present social order.

Third, to guide and assist the congregation hermeneutically towards recognising, appropriating and actualising the biblical vision of God in the midst of His people (the *visio Dei, coram Deo*) and the commission (*missio Dei*) connected with their identity.

Fourth, to open the way towards a dynamic transformation and refiguration in which streams of new contextual understanding merge into the stream of the text as its source.

Conclusion: an ecclesial homiletic hermeneutic

Taking all the material discussed above into account, this study develops a hermeneutical circle in four steps for the formation of the identity of the church. Pieterse's hermeneutic circle (2001a:80) has been followed here.

The first step is to analyse the contemporary ecclesiology of the church in transition.

This can be done by using the methods of the social sciences. CD Gwak (2000) has researched this aspect of contemporary ecclesiology in Korea in his dissertation *Ecclesiology and membership trends in the South Korean Churches*. The description and interpretation of dominant contemporary ecclesiology in Korea, according to Gwak, are influenced by America's church marketing theory. This study covers this topic in chapter 3. This study also proposes the exegeting of the congregation.

The second step is to evaluate contemporary ecclesiology critically, with what is termed "ideological suspicion", on the basis of a faithful and relevant ecclesiology.

This includes the religious, ecclesiastical and theological aspects. It appears that prevailing ecclesiology is also dominated by the values of the secularised culture and

society. The preacher and church are usually accustomed to the contemporary dominant ecclesiology, so it is difficult to evaluate it as part of a faithful and relevant ecclesiology. Nonetheless, this is necessary if the church wants to interpret the biblical message from the perspective of a relevant ecclesiology.

The third step is to approach the biblical texts exegetically in terms of the dominant ecclesiological perspective (Gadamer's prejudices).

That means examining conventional exegesis with exegetical suspicion: the suspicion that the dominant interpretation of the Bible has excluded certain important insights into the biblical text which challenge the dominant ecclesiology.

The fourth step is to interpret the message anew in terms of an ecclesiology that is faithful and relevant to biblical interpretation (cf Pieterse 2001a:80).

This leads to the discovery of themes of an ecclesiology in the Bible which were overlooked in a dominant interpretation of the ecclesiology. The text, as Ricoeur states, descends on the congregation, opening up new worlds that influence and transform the congregation's thinking through the "self" of the text. This makes it possible to preach a faithful and relevant message which forms and transforms the identity of the church.

2.4.2.3 Sharing memories through narrative preaching

In order to form a community's identity, preaching has to be not only an act of remembering but also an act of sharing among the story-telling community. In the previous section, we said that in order to form the identity of community, there must be remembrance *by* a community and *for* a community. Also the remembering must be connected with the sharing of the identity – the identities of individuals and communities as well.

The identity of the community, according to Van der Ven et al (2002:108), is a communicative identity. The identity of the community is formed by sharing the

identities of the individuals that make up that community. At the same time the identity of the community also has to be shared with others. The identity of the church needs to be remembered and exchanged in the story-telling community and with others through the story-telling community. The sharing act also takes place in the communal reading, in the sermon delivery, and during the exchange of the experienced word in the lives of the members of the congregation.

Therefore, in order to share the identities of individuals and communities, before and after preaching, the sermonic text and the preached word need to be shared. In this act, preaching is not just the speech of the preacher in worship, but an act of the whole congregation. These processes shape a community's identity for recovering its credibility.

The form of the sermon for the formation of the identity of the church

Pieterse (1995:56) says that “preaching is essentially dialogue in character, even though its outward form may be a monologue.” Therefore by considering the sermon as a dialogue, the form and the language of the sermon for the formation of the identity of the church will be discussed.

The function and the structure of the sermon form

The form of the sermon follows a rhetorical strategy designed to encourage the congregation to *do* something (Long 1989a). In this section, the role of the narrative and narrative preaching in exchanging and forming the identity of the church will be discussed. As Long says, sermon form continually gives shape and energy to the sermon and eventually becomes itself a vital force in determining how a sermon constructs meaning. Long (1989a:93) maintains that “Instead of thinking of sermon form and content as separate realities, it is far more accurate to speak of the form *of* the content.” Form is an essential part of a sermon's content and can itself support or undermine the communication of the gospel (Long 1989a:93).

Cas JA Vos (1999:130) says that in dealing with a sermon form, the preacher should consider the “empirical element” and the “concretisation of theological pronouncements.” The sermon should have a concrete communicative form (Vos 1999:131). The preacher has also to consider the structure and the movement of the sermon form (Buttrick 1987b:147). According to Vos (1999:131), the introduction, the development and the conclusion have to be created by considering the movement and the communicative function (Buttrick 1987b:131). The sermonic function is to bring about an encounter between God and the people of God.

The “introduction” is an invitation to the listener to undertake a homiletic journey (Vos 1996:vol.2:256-260). To achieve this, the introductory passage to the sermon must attract and retain the listener’s attention. The “development” of the sermon, according to Vos (1999:131), must be a dynamic development rather than a static enumeration of points. David Buttrick (1987b:147; 1987a:23-69) explains his theory of sermon form by using the image of camera angle in the film. A static point sermon relies on fixed points. The camera is mounted at a fixed point. The actor or actress plays his or her part from this fixed perspective. On the contrary, the dynamically developing sermon is presented to the congregation from various angles and perspectives as a living event. Cameras are placed on static or mobile dollies or moving vehicles in order to record scenes from different and various angles and perspectives (Buttrick 1994b:88).

Buttrick (1987a:23-79) uses the concept “move” to explain the movement of the sermon, its variations in perspective and its development. Like film, the Bible story is not static, it moves in story form, episode for episode, or like the give and take of a live conversation, from one perspective to another (Buttrick 1994a:83; cf. Müller 1991:132-133). According to Vos (1999:131), these movements in the sermon are not random; it is by no means a disjointed form of words. Therefore the “series of moves” must be connected by a “logical movement” (Buttrick 1987a:24; 291-292). The “movement” cannot be produced by a succession of points. The design of a “move” depends on interaction between (1) theological insights, (2) an eye for contrast and amplifications, and (3) the actuality of lived experience (Buttrick 1987a:33).

In order to make these movements possible, according to Vos (1999:132), the structure of sermon must be given a “plot.” A plot is a homiletic and theological strategy which accompanies the listener on his/her journey (Vos 1999:132; Pieterse 2001:111). Although the preacher need not follow the sequence of the text *per se*, according to Buttrick, the movement in the sermon amounts to “replotting the plot” by considering the context of the congregation.

Finally, the function of the “conclusion” to the sermon is to draw the events of the sermon to a climax. It is a rounding off and completion. The conclusion to the sermon conveys to the congregation that a natural saturation point has been reached.

There are various forms that the message of a sermon can take. The form in which the sermon is couched is also important for the communication of the message (Pieterse 2001a:25). The achievement of this aim requires the preacher to be able to distinguish between the kinds of sermons and to apply this knowledge (Vos 1999:132).

Vos (1996:vol.2:171-212) distinguishes four kinds of sermons, namely the homily, the narrative, the text-thematic and the thematic sermon forms. First, the homily is a verse-by-verse exposition of a pericope in the Bible. The exposition is given and the application is left to the listeners. As a rule the exposition leads to a discussion of each verse, in the course of which listeners apply the meaning to their own situations (Pieterse 2001a:25). Second, the narrative sermons communicate very differently and assume many different forms (Pieterse 2001a:25). As a rule, listeners to a narrative sermon are drawn into the story and, through identification with the characters and the flow of the narrative, recognise themselves and reach a point where they have to make personal choices (Pieterse 2001a:25). Third, the text-thematic sermon communicates by way of argument and explanation (Pieterse 2001a:25). The message of the text is usually formulated in a sermon theme which is conveyed with an introduction, a body and a conclusion. The theme is explained and presented persuasively (with argumentation), with explanations and illustrations (exposition and application). However, according to Vos (1999:132), there is no such thing as a pure sermon form. Most sermons are mixtures of various forms. Nevertheless, the preacher must be able to

distinguish between the characteristics and functions of the sermon forms to use them effectively.

Narrative preaching for the formation of the identity of a faith community

Charles L. Campbell, in *Preaching Jesus: new directions for homiletics in Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology* (1997), evaluates contemporary narrative preaching from the perspective of its theological implications. Although this study does not agree with all of his arguments, his evaluation is valuable in using narrative preaching more carefully. One of the points Campbell (1997:144) makes is that “The problem is that up until now narrative homiletics has provided no resources for thinking carefully about the ways preaching contributes to the upbuilding of the church – the formation of the people of God – beyond the individual hearer.” In this section, a way of upbuilding the church through narrative preaching will be discussed by considering the characteristics of narrative preaching and Campbell’s evaluation.

1. One of characteristics of narrative preaching is the function of identification. Narrative preaching draws listeners into the story and through identification with the characters and the flow of the narrative, they recognise themselves and reach a point where they have to make a personal choice (Pieterse 1987:163-184; 2001a:25).

Thomas Long (1980:16) argues that a part of the preacher’s task is to shape the identities of believers. In fact, the function of preaching is this “identity-shaping function of biblical texts as presented in sermons”, so as to effect change in accordance with the appeal made by a biblical text. Narrative preaching achieves such identity-shaping through a process of identification. It is pre-eminently capable of conveying a truth, or of presenting the hearer with a choice of action, already portrayed in the story through the action of the characters (Pieterse 1987:169).

Stories “create a world” and invite the listeners to enter into that world and participate in it (Long 1989a:39). The story or narrative evokes experience, something happens. People in the text come alive to the listener with all their stresses, sorrows, joys and

wonderment. Even though the narrator makes no direct appeal, the listener of his own accord chooses to side with some character or characters, sharing their indignation, their viewpoints and solutions. Therefore, a good story or narrative is so designed that it invites the hearer to identify with one or more characters: “Biblical stories, narratives, communicate their truth to us in powerful ways because we see ourselves in the stories Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, etc., or because the hearer is led to identify himself with the wise or the foolish builder, with the wise or the foolish virgins” (Pieterse 1987:169). Identification with one or more characters shapes the identities of individuals and the identity of community (Pieterse 1987:169).

In order to bring about identification through narrative preaching, the preacher considers how to connect between two worlds – the world of the Bible and the world of the congregation (cf Pieterse 1987:166). One of criticisms of Campbell’s writings relates to its contemporary anthropological and individualistic trend in contemporary narrative preaching (Campbell 1997:122ff; cf Long 1989a:41). According to Campbell (1997:117ff), contemporary narrative preaching translates the world of the text into the world of human or cultural experience. Long (1998a:41) explains the dangers of this as follows:

The storytelling preacher, on the other hand, recounts both God’s story and our stories, seeking to weave our stories, the narratives of contemporary life, into the framework of God’s story. The result can be a powerful interplay between the Bible and life, but we must admit that it can also produce simply a confusion of stories. People have many ways of narrating the story of their lives. They can tell the “Christian story” of their lives, but they can also relate their family story, their national story, their vocational story, the story of their psychosocial growth, and so on. Ideally, the Christian story serves as the normative center of this narrative universe, critically informing all lesser stories. The danger, of course, is that this process gets reversed and the lesser story erodes or replaces the gospel story.

Therefore, the world absorbs the Bible, rather than Scripture absorbs the world (cf Campbell 1997). However narrative preaching has to describe an alternative world through the world of text. Thus the world of congregation has to be incorporated into the world of text (Brueggemann 1988; Müller 1992:9).

As an alternative to such an anthropologically-driven approach to preaching, Campbell (1997:193) proposes to reclaim Hans Frei's distinctive understanding of biblical narrative as follows: "narrative is important because it is the vehicle through which the Gospels render the identity of Jesus on Nazareth, who has been raised from the dead and seeks today to form a people to follow his way". This understanding guards against the devotion of the sermon into an anthropological flight from plight to solution, as "the story of Jesus, not the particulars of human experience, is the fundamental reality and starting point" (Campbell 1997:221-231).

Therefore, to avoid the collapse of the biblical narrative into contemporary personal experience, firstly, the link is to be between "the Story of God" and "the story of the congregation", rather than between "the Story of God" and "the story of the individual." The identity of the church is formed by the encounter between the story of God and the story of the church. In order to bring about an encounter between God and His people, the Story of God must be the main theme (or content) and movement (or plot) of the sermon.

With regard this, the preacher must understand the characteristic of the two stories – the Story of the Bible (or the Story of God) and the story of a congregation. On the one hand, the world of the text is to be understood as the Story of God.

In order to form the identity of the church, the movement of God is a key component of both the content of the sermon and the plot of the sermon. BA Müller (1991:132) refers to this as follows:

The exegetical task will still be to use the different exegetical tools and methods to find the inherent *theo-logical* movement (that is, the logic of the God-on-the-move in the "world" of the text) itself. This *inherent* movement or plot is expressed in terms of structure (shape, genre) of a field of concern (focus), but also in terms of function (the theological intention) of the text.

The biblical texts depict the world within which Christian identity is to be sought. The account of God's actions from creation through the election and history of Israel and culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ provides the essential

clues to the identity of the Christian community and of the God who brought it into being.

The church's identity is derived from Jesus' identity and is enacted publicly in the world as Jesus' was (Campbell 1997:226). Frei (1975:159-160), therefore, in *Identity of Jesus Christ: the hermeneutical bases of dogmatic theology*, advocates a movement from the narratively rendered identity of Jesus to the church, which is the embodiment of and witness to Jesus' indirect presence in and for the world. The church, as the embodiment of the indirect presence of Jesus Christ in and for the world, becomes a central character in the ongoing story of Jesus. Therefore, grammatically, God in Jesus Christ is not simply the predicate of individual human experience or needs, but is an active subject building up a people to embody and witness to Jesus' presence in and for the world (Campbell 1997:227).

On the other hand, plot should be reconsidered. Contemporary narrative preaching has emphasised the plot as the form of sermon (Campbell 1997:167ff). The proponents of this view are partially right. Plot is essential for contemporary preaching. Even more important than plot, however, sermons should be about character – the character and nature of God. As Charles L Campbell (1997:173) says, "It is the central character [of Jesus Christ] rendered by the gospel narratives, not narrative plot in general, that is at the heart of preaching shaped by the biblical story." Sermons can be an event or encounter with God, not just information or abstraction about God (Wilson 1999:41).

In narrative preaching, the plot of the listeners and of the congregation must be brought into contact with the plot of the cadre of the covenant (Carstens 1997:43). It is this plot that draws the listeners and the congregation into the Story of God. Ultimately the plot of the Biblical covenant must determine the plot of the listeners and the congregation. This becomes possible when the listeners and the congregation with her own plot are able to identify with the characters of the biblical story of the covenant and the character of the community of covenant (Carstens 1997:43).

This study, secondly, emphasises the “world of the congregation”, forging a link between “the world of the Bible” and “the world of the congregation.” If a preacher's concern is a link between “the world of the Bible” and “the world of individuals,” this result of this preaching, as criticised by Campbell (1997:117-145), will be an individual, experiential event. This kind of sermon forms “the aggregate of individuals” rather than “the body of Christ” (cf Van Seters 1991:269; Craddock 1985:84-98).

In order to form the community of faith through narrative preaching, the preacher has to connect “the world of the text” (or the Story of God) with “the world of the congregation” (or the story of the congregation) (cf. Pieterse 1987:166; Campbell 1997:147-165). The Story of God intersects the story of the congregation, and when that happens there is both a communication event and an existential happening in which the story of the living God illuminates the story of congregation, forming their communal identities (Campbell 1997:147-165).

A preacher also considers the relationship between the community and the individual. The individual needs to be understood in the community of faith. Campbell (1997:222) says that:

My account operates from a fundamentally different assumption: the community is logically prior to the individual, and the individual exists only within the context of relationships and roles played in a particular community. This understanding of preaching does not ignore the individual, but rather views the individual within the context of faithful disciples in a truthful community.

Therefore to form the identity of a community, narrative preaching has to be created by connecting the world of a text and the world of a congregation. The world of the congregation is to be understood as not the world of individuals but the world of the community. Stories may shape communal identity, but ultimately the cohesiveness of the community requires the interpretation of the communal story (Van Seters 1997:34). This brings the identification between “the people of God in the text” and “the present community of faith”.

In order to connect the world of text and the world of community, first of all, the world of individuals needs to be formed into the world of community. To do this, the Bible must be read in a communal setting. Ricoeur (1996:7) refers to this connection between narrative and community identity when he writes that the “identity of a group, culture, people, or nation, is not that of a fixed structure, but that, rather, of a recounted story.” “We live in a world of stories. Our lives are shaped by stories and moulded by stories” (Williams 1986:33). Within the story of a human being with its beginning, middle and end, movement now occurs. Influences exerted by other human beings, circumstances and various contingencies work together on the plot of his life-story. And it is this story that is read by others as the person’s story. Ricoeur explains that narrative configuration refers to the dynamic of emplotment (Dreyer 2000:29). Emplotment of action provides a synthesis of the multiple events or incidents. The plot has the power to make a single story out of the multiple incidents, or if you like, the power of transforming the manifold happenings into a story (Ricoeur 1986:122). Furthermore, a plot not only ties multiple events together, but unifies widely divergent and even opposing events. It provides a synthesis of the heterogeneous. This result is a single story that “turns the plot into a unity which one could call both concordant and discordant”(Ricoeur 1986:123). Therefore, for the formation of the identity of the community, narrative preaching should concern the link between the story of the Bible and the story of the community through the emplotment of events and accidents of individuals and communities.

2. Narrative preaching communicates its message indirectly, functioning in such a way that at a given point the listeners recognise themselves, although no direct appeal, exhortation or demand is made on them (Pieterse 1987:169).

The functioning of the story allows for both distance and involvement (Pieterse 1987:169). Pieterse (1987:69) gives the following example of this:

The distant churchgoer, a common in urban congregations today, is encountered as he is – at a distance. No demands are made on him, but the narrative intrigues and involves him in such a way that he is presented with a choice, and the tension is not defused until he has chosen. The story does not let go of the listener but continues to haunt him for a long time.

This is because the story permits the listener to make his own decisions, to determine his response to it in his own time and in his own way. In this sense the narrative is open-ended (Pieterse 1987:169).

Craddock suggests that inductive preaching allows the listeners to draw their own conclusions (Craddock 1979:67). Although stories form communal identity, the focus of inductive preaching has been on the experience of the individual (Campbell 1997:140). Such preaching treats the listeners as a “collection of individuals” who participate in the same events (Thompson 2001:14).

However, in the postmodern context, Campbell (1997:128) argues that “Craddock’s indirect method may not be at all what the church needs right now.” Thompson (2001:9) also states: “Inductive preaching functions best in a Christian culture in which listeners are well informed of the Christian heritage.” In the contemporary situation – in a non-Christian culture – a listener shaped only by open-ended narrative preaching will have no grasp of the reflective dimensions of faith (Thompson 2001:12). Because faith seeks understanding, the sermon has always been the occasion for deeper instruction in the faith. In order to achieve this, there is to be a space to share the experienced Word of God with each other. Stories have to do with human experience. The listener identifies, recognises himself/herself and has an existential encounter with the experience of another person which he shares (Pieterse 1987:170). This sharing accompanies the discipleship of community (1987:170).

Finally this act of sharing brings about the formation of communal identities. Therefore, BA Müller (2002:209) points out that, because the value of a narrative approach lies in stories of the identity of being believers, of being a church and stories as the implied, packaged, dynamic visions of faith, retelling the stories must, once more, become the core of our preaching praxis. In this regard Müller (2002:209-210) mentions that narrative preaching should be the retelling of alternative stories: loaded with alternative paradigms and alternative visions of alternative worlds. In this way, a new community of memories and expectations is established; dreams arise of God’s new world in which justice reigns – a new world that, upon the sermon’s invitation, allows the past and the

future to flourish in the present. Through the merging of these two worlds, the identity of the church is to be re-aligned, or rearticulated.

Several forms of narrative preaching

Up to now, I have discussed the function of form and several sermon forms. With regard to forming the identity of the church, contemporary narrative preaching has been evaluated from the point of view of Campbell's criticisms and those of others (cf. Campbell 1997; Thompson 2001; Lose 2000). By considering these evaluations, the preacher moves from text to sermon, using various narrative sermon forms in order to form the communal consciousness of the community of faith.

Narrative sermons communicate very differently and assume many different forms. John McClure (1991:24-28), in his article *Narrative and preaching: sorting It out*, lists four types of "narrative preaching".

1. The first type of narrative preaching occurs when the narrative aspects of the biblical text are related in some way to the sermon. In other words, narrative preaching includes sermons in which the form of the sermon is intentionally shaped by the form of a narrative text.

With regard this, several homileticians provide theories of narrative preaching: Thomas G Long (1989b:66-86; cf. 1994:1-22), in *Preaching and the literary forms of the Bible* (1989b), suggests ways in which the preacher could compose a sermon by considering the characteristics of the narratives in the Bible. Sidney Greidanus (1988:188-227), in *The modern preacher and the ancient text: interpreting and preaching biblical literature* (1989), also guides preachers in the direction of creating narrative sermons according to the biblical narrative.

According to Long, narratives offer the preacher raw material from which to craft a sermon: characters, conflict, and actions and words that can be interpreted. But to preach a narrative text faithfully, the specific literary characteristics of the narrative text

must be considered. To discern these characteristics, according Long (1989b:66-86), two questions are asked: 1) What is the rhetorical function of this narrative? 2) What literary devices does this genre employ to achieve its rhetorical effect?

First, *what is the rhetorical function of this narrative?* (Long 1989b:74) Long says that a story impacts on a listener in one of two ways. On the one hand, it encourages the listener to identify with one of the characters in the story (Long 1989b:74-75). Therefore, choosing which character to highlight is a first step in preaching a narrative text. On the other hand, a story impacts on the reader by making claims on how we live our lives (Long 1989b:76-77). Long (1989b:76) writes, “We each have stories by which we define our identity and shape our life. Each new story is placed alongside the old stories for comparison. Sometimes the new story confirms our worldview, but on other occasions it challenges that world – and we must choose in which world we will live.”

Second, *What literary devices does this genre employ to achieve its rhetorical effect?* (Long 1989b:77-82) According to Long, in any text that employs narrative, certain “dynamics” or “devices” must be considered. Long suggests these narrative characteristics. 1) *Narrative techniques*: notice who is telling the story. “In general,” writes Long (1989b:77-79), “biblical narrators are both in the background and omniscient... [Therefore] the question becomes, When is the reader informed”? 2) *Character development*: What changes do the characters experience? What roles do they play in the story? (1989b:79) 3) *Plot designs*: Each story usually has a plot comprised of a beginning, a middle, and an end. How do these three parts interact? What is emphasised and what is left out? (1989b:80) 4) *Word choice*: Are certain words unique or unusual? Do they carry particular meaning within the entire canon of scripture? (1989b:81) 5) *Location*: Where is the narrative taking place? Is this important to the story? (1989b:81) 6) *Parallel stories*: Long writes, “Biblical stories are sometimes designed to remind us of other narratives (1989b:81).” To what other narratives does this text point? 7) *Placement of the story*: What role does this specific passage play in relation to the narrative flow of the entire book? (1989b:82)

2. A second type, suggests McClure (1991:24-28), comes from sermons that follow the structure of a short story or movie. Edmund Steimle (1980:171) observes that, “Every sermon should have something of the dramatic form of a play or short story: tightly knit, one part leading into and dependent upon the next, with some possibility of suspense and surprise in the development.” Eugene Lowry (1980), in *The homiletical plot: the sermon as narrative art form* (Lowry 1980; 2001, Expanded ed.), has developed Steimle’s proposal into the “homiletic plot.”

Lowry’s model includes five steps:

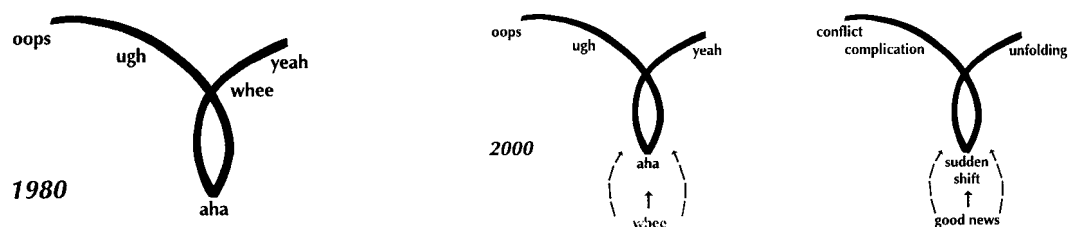
1) *Oops!: Upsetting the equilibrium*: The first task of a preacher is to present a problem, an idea, that raises questions or conflict (Lowry 1980: 28-35). Lowry (1980:29) calls this the “itch,” “the human predicament,” that seeks to hold a congregation’s attention. The problem is the focus of the sermon. It could be a question or difficulty that arises in connection with the Bible, or with some aspect of Christian practice, or as part of a situation where the congregation needs to feel the itch.

2) *Ugh!: Analysing the discrepancy or the plot thickens*: The preacher explores the complication. Lowry (1980:38) believes “the greatest weakness of the average sermon is the weakness of diagnosis”. This phase of the sermon needs to be analytical. The preacher helps the congregation think critically about the manifestations and causes of the situation that upsets the equilibrium of the congregation. What is wrong? Why is it wrong? The community goes “Ugh” as the reasons for the problem come into focus. This part of the sermon elaborates on the issues and tensions raised in the beginning of the sermon and the way they relate to our lives (Lowry 1980: 36-46).

3) *Aha!: Disclosing the clue to resolution*: At this point, the preacher offers a solution based on the gospel that ideally comes as a surprise or “reversal” (Lowry 1980:47-61). With regard to the identity, Lowry (:54-56) explains that the purpose of these developments in the plot of sermon is to aid the process of self-discovery or the discovery of self-identity.

4) *Whee!:* *Experiencing the gospel:* The preacher now expands on the clue to the resolution and applies it to the situation of the congregation (Lowry 1980: 62-66). At its best, this part of the sermon contains an imaginative experience of the resolution to the tension through the gospel. Lowry (1980:65) writes, “Seldom in preparing a sermon have I had difficulty in discerning what the gospel had to say about the issue at hand... the problem [was usually] that I had not probed deeply enough in my diagnosis.”

Recently, Lowry (2001), in *The homiletical plot, expanded edition: the sermon as narrative art form* (2001), changes his “homiletical plot” from five steps to four steps.



Lowry's homiletic plot

Lowry (2001:119) explains this as follows:

What is crucial to note here is that although it is generally the case that disclosing the clue to resolution (stage 3) happens immediately prior to experiencing the good news (stage 4), there are times when the good news prompts the reversal or is simultaneous with it. In a sermonic plot, both biblical text and/or the sermonic aim help determine the relation of stages 3 and 4.

5) *Yeah!:* *Anticipating the consequences:* This phase of the sermon is an unfolding (Lowry 1980: 67-73). The preacher anticipates how the discovery of the sermon will affect the future. Community, empowered by the gospel, asks, “Yeah, what next? The congregation wants to know how the resolution of the tension will affect the future of the congregational life and their life in the wider world. What can the church anticipate from God? What does the church need to do to live into the resolution? Each sermon, then, is an event that develops through time. Ronald Allen (1998:94) remarks that the

strength of Lowry' method is that it "encourages a church to name and analyse a disequilibrium that has taken place in the community".

Lowry, in *How to Preach a Parable*, moves from a theoretical to practical model of narrative preaching and offers four templates to place over a text. Lowry (1989:31) writes, "Choosing from the several options of sermonic design is not the first step in the formation of a narrative sermon – it is the central task." Lowry's four options include:

1) *Running the Story*: In this model both the text and the shape of the sermon are interwoven. "The preacher will highlight," writes Lowry (1989:38), "elaborate, amplify, and creatively en flesh certain portions while moving through the text."

2) *Delaying the story*: In certain sermons, a preacher might delay the story, in particular if it offers a resolution to issues or conflicts raised in the sermon. "Sometimes," writes Lowry (1989:38-39), "there are pastoral reasons to begin a sermon with a current congregational concern, then turn to the text for resolution."

3) *Suspending the story*: Sometimes a helpful approach is to begin with the text but then step out of the narrative flow to address a particular concern. Lowry (1989:39-40) explains that, "It may be that the preacher will move to a contemporary situation in order to 'find a way out' of issues the text raises. The preacher then returns to the text and concludes the sermon."

4) *Alternating the story*: The final approach divides the narrative portion of the text into "seductions, episodes, or vignettes, with other kinds of material filling in around the biblical story (Lowry 1989:39-40)."

The model we choose is determined by the focus of the text and whether this issue is best explored and resolved "in the text, or before it, or after it, or outside it (Lowry 1989:39-40)." "Once the sermonic intention is clear," writes Lowry, the hard work is done and "other kinds of preparation steps fall into place (Lowry :39-40)."

3. A third classification for narrative preaching, notes McClure (1991), is when “preachers are told to use their imagination and learn to think metaphorically in order to name grace in human experience.” In this model the sermon is shaped not only by the genre of story, but by the preacher’s imagination. Fred Craddock (1985:162) maintains that inductive preaching and the work of the imagination are more effective in communicating the gospel than a deductive model based on argument.

In 1971, Craddock proposed a new direction to preaching. At the time most preaching was “deductive,” focusing on a proposition later developed into three points. Craddock (1979:60) observed, however, that people don’t live deductively. He (1979:60) commented that “Everyone lives inductively.... No farmer deals with the problem of calfdom, only with the calf.” Craddock saw there might be room for a style of preaching that involved the listeners’ imagination. He called this style “inductive.” Simply stated, writes Craddock (1979:54), “deductive movement is from the general truth to the particular application or experience while inductive is the reverse.” In an inductive sermon, “thought moves from the participants of experience that have a familiar ring in the listener’s ear to general truth or conclusion (1979:54).” In other words, the congregation is invited to “retrace” the journey the pastor has taken in crafting the sermon with the intention to “see if [the congregation] comes to that same conclusion”(1979:54).

Craddock suggests the following method of inductive preaching: 1) Cultivate the ability to notice and re-create “concrete experiences.” 2) Structure the sermon like a “good story or a good joke” and build anticipation. Craddock (1979:63) remarks that, “The period between the father’s announcement of a family trip and the trip itself may be the children’s greatest happiness.” 3) Allow the listener to complete the sermon. The preacher does not “throw the ball and catch it himself.” As a model, Craddock points to Jesus and the fact that “Jesus’ preaching depended not simply on the revelatory power of his parables but also upon the perceptive power of those who attended to them” (1979:65).

4. McClure's final category stresses the potential for narrative to shape a church's theological worldview – in other words, sermons that refer to “faith-stories that are generated in a congregational context” (McClure 1991:24-28). Edmund Steimle (1980), in his book *Preaching the story*, writes of such a style where a sermon is defined by the intersection between the world of the preacher, the congregation, and the biblical text (Steimle 1980:41).

According to Steimle (1980), good preaching pays attention to the intersection of three stories: the stories of the text, the preacher, and the congregation. The preacher's challenge was to “interpret the biblical story so that light is shed on all three stories” (Steimle 1980:41). He offers five steps, in his essay, “The Fabric of the Sermon,” 1) Pay attention to and highlight the secular, “so that what is heard on Sunday morning will also make some sense on Sunday afternoon, to say nothing of Monday morning” (Steimle 1980:166-167). 2) Ask questions the congregation is already asking. 3) Craft a sermon that takes the form of a “story told, as a whole and in its parts” (:171). 4) Be inductive, Steimle agree with Craddock that a sermon should be “low-keyed, which leaves the issue in the air rather than pushing a person into a corner” (:173). 5) And be “lean and spare” with your language. “From the great stories of the Old Testament, Abraham, Jacob, Jonah, to the parables of Jesus...the fabric is that of stories told crisply, sometimes roughhewn, always quickly and surely to the point”(:173).

For Steimle, a narrative sermon is grounded in stories that shape a congregation: stories from the Bible, from church members, from the preacher. A preacher is above all a good conversation partner, listening for stories both fit and appropriate.

Although several narrative forms are described, as Vos (1999:132) mentions, there is no pure narrative form in the different forms described above. However, by understanding these different forms and functions of narrative preaching, the preacher can create sermons for forming and transforming the identity of the church.

Metaphor for the formation of the identity of the church

Cas JA Vos (2004:1) argues that “liturgical language functions as metaphorical language while contributing to spiritual formation and that this spiritual forming is reflected in the public domain”. Thus sermonic language as liturgical language is to be metaphorical for impacting the formation of the community of faith.

In order to transmit the message, according to Vos (1999:134), the sermon has to come up with metaphors that are alive in the minds of the listeners. Metaphor is figurative language that describes full reality and invites us into the described world and makes it our experience (Vos 1996:vol.1:37). Metaphor has two referential functions: the function of describing the world as it is portrayed within the text and the function of provoking the listeners to redescribe their own worlds from the standpoint of the description in the text. Ricoeur (1973:111) rightly claims that the most important quality of metaphor is that it can change our way of looking at our world.

Particular figures of speech such as metaphor, similes and representation permeate people’s everyday lives and are not confined to language, but are mechanisms which have their foundation in human thinking and structure, in both their physical and linguistic “actions” (Vos 1999:133; 2004:1-13). Because communication is based on the same conceptual system which we use when we think and act, language is an important source of evidence on how that system functions (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:3). Also, our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:3; Vos 2004:7). Therefore, Vos (1999:134) argues that the preacher should note that the various figures of speech function at both the linguistic and the cognitive levels.

The cognitive function of metaphor, according to Vos (1999:134), is emphasised within cognitive semantics. One of the effects of this cognitive function of metaphor is that new information is gleaned and interpreted from existing knowledge (Carstens 1993:92). This process has given rise to the insight that metaphor not only has a pragmatic-ontological origin but also assists people to order new experiences of reality and place them in perspective (Carstens 1993:91). This has resulted in the revelation

that metaphors are not confined to linguistic transactions but also create new possibilities and prospects on the level of thought and action.

According to Vos (2004:8), metaphor is considered as a network. When we refer to metaphorical language, we are referring not only to a function of words but also to the total context within words (phrases) are used. By “context” we understand not only the literary aspects (ie macro structure, discourse, narrative etc), but also other co-“texts” such as the nominated subject (ie the writer or reader/listener), including his or her sociohistorical background and literary competence. The preacher should never lose sight of the fact that numerous metaphors are not confined to a single closed context but may be spread over the whole text.

Robert Kysar, in his book *Stumbling in the light: New Testament images for a changing church* (1999), mentions the role of metaphor with regard to the identity of the congregation. He suggests how to conceive and articulate an understanding of corporate identity with metaphors, which he calls “the method of metaphor” (Kysar 1999:27).

In order to conceive and articulate its new identity, it is necessary, first of all, to describe the metaphor – what it is and how it works – in relations with self-understanding or identity. Then the role of metaphor in self-understanding for creating its relevant and faithful image will be discussed.

Firstly, the church expresses its self-understanding in a metaphorical language (Kysar 1999:28). Kysar (1999:28) calls it “metaphorical self-expression.” Generally the language conceives not only our thinking but also our lives. In describing identity, metaphorical language is a better than descriptive language. When we try, for example, to imagine who we are, we have no other recourse than to think of ourselves in relationship with other realities, often ones that are alien to ordinary descriptions of personhood. Self-understanding employs such a comparison in conception as well as in articulation. Our minds produce pictures of ourselves; that is the only way we have of imagining ourselves as entities. Furthermore, we are likely to conceive those mental

pictures with language. We think as well as speak in words. Our verbal expressions are then only the effort to share those imaginative pictures with others.

1. What is the metaphor?

I shall now discuss the definition and role of the metaphor, and then, the different kinds of metaphor.

A metaphor juxtaposes two things – most often attributing an unusual quality to some common quality (cf Vos 2004:6). Metaphor places some feature (the “vehicle”) in a relationship with another reality (the “tenor”) (Kysar 1999:29). For instance, someone says “Jonesville Church is a recycling centre”. The congregation know what a recycling centre is. But describing the congregation as a recycling centre may surprise them, since they do not usually think of the church as dealing with trash. Attributing the characteristics of a recycling centre to a congregation provokes them to think about how a church could have such characteristics. Usually the subject or tenor (Jonesville Church) is an ordinary one and the predicate or vehicle (a recycling centre) one that is not commonly used of the subject. Therefore a metaphor is defined as assigning an odd characteristic to something in a way that violates the ordinary language of a particular community.

Kysar (1999:30) states that metaphors have at least three different shapes. First, some metaphors are not true metaphors in the sense that they simply ask people to substitute ordinary language for the unusual words or phrases. Sometimes metaphorical comparison is easily translated back into ordinary language; that is, the congregation may substitute a proposition for the metaphorical language and thereby capture its meaning. Second, in another kind of metaphor one thing is compared with another by the inclusion of the words “like” or “as”. For example, Jesus is frequently reported as saying, “the kingdom of heaven is like...” (eg, Matt 13:44, 45, and 47). What follows the “like” is every bit as stimulating as it would be had Jesus not used the comparative word “like”, but Jesus tips off his listeners to be ready for the metaphor that follows. In doing so, he diminishes the surprise of associating something with God’s role. Third,

some metaphors are direct and immediate in their creation of an extraordinary relationship in words and phrases. Pure metaphor avails itself of the element of surprise, especially when it is found in a generally non-poetic kind of work, and surprise is one of the ways metaphor works (Kysar 1999:31).

On the one hand, a metaphor is a creative and momentary event – an expression that happens and has its effect immediately (Kysar 1999:31). On the other hand, true metaphors have richness in meaning that sustains them in the congregation's consciousness. They evoke a whole array of possible meanings and often stimulate a wider range of other metaphors. Because of this implicit power in some metaphors, many distinguish still another category of metaphors: root metaphors. Christian life and faith entails a number of such root metaphors, such as the expression "God's people." Using the metaphor of possession, it pictures a peculiar relationship of a certain human group with their Creator (eg, Ex 3:7 and 1 Pet 2:9-10). That metaphor spawned still others, most especially the expressions in which God is referred to as a parent and the community of faith as God's children (eg, 1 John 3:2).

2. How does metaphor work?

Next, how metaphor connects two realities will be discussed (Vos 2004:6). Metaphors create tension in order to allow us to appreciate the impact, newness and freshness of metaphors (Vos 2004:5). A metaphor helps us to begin to understand the unknown in terms of the known. Kysar (1999:31-33) refers to several ways in which metaphors do this. Firstly, a metaphor works by violating literal meaning (Kysar 1999:31). Secondly, metaphor functions through the friction or tension it creates by means of the relationship between (or among) the terms. The friction begins with the strain created by the literal and metaphorical meanings. For example, Trees clapping their hands: We imagine it literally and then metaphorically. The tension tightens as we consider the sense in which the relationship is true and false at the same time. Trees cannot clap; but maybe nature rejoices – this creates another metaphor to help us understand the first. As a result of this quality, metaphors tend to create a view of reality that is tensive, that is, that has a both/ and quality about it. Thirdly, through this tension, metaphors create new meaning.

Fourthly, a metaphor's meaning is found, therefore, in something more fundamental. The provocative relationship articulates some fundamental experience and thereby opens a worldview. The meaning of religious metaphor especially is found in the peculiar vision of reality it suggests. That vision is essentially a matter of how we understand ourselves, our experience, and the whole realm of reality in which we find ourselves. Finally, metaphor works with the plastic quality of language to fire imagination. Metaphors arise from and appeal to the human capacity to visualise new possibilities. Only if we can imagine the possibility of a new and different world can these strange metaphorical associations mean anything to us.

Metaphor are sparks ignited by imagination (Vos 2004:1). Imagination is something other than fantasy. Fantasy is an escape from reality, whereas imagination expands and enriches reality (Riebert 1990:58-59). According to Vos (2004:10), the liturgy leaves space for imagination. In this space our relationship with God, our neighbour and the world can be creatively explored and deepened. This imagination brings people into contact with the kingdom of God where we find not solely peace but also discord, conflict and pain. Imagination makes it possible for us to encounter and experience God in his different "guises" under different circumstances. A theology of imagination sees the Invisible, even if God's footprints cannot always be seen in the dusty paths of life (Vos 2004:10). Imagination also makes room for various images of other people. People appear in their vulnerability, fragility, their hunger for power and fame, their vindictiveness and vengefulness, their charity, gentleness, goodness, affection and courtesy. Imagination also feeds ethical actions (Vos 2004:11). It enables people to seek and discover new ways of making their interaction with other human beings meaningful and happy.

The imaginative impulses in the liturgy can grow into an imaginative life within the community. That means that the faith-community enters the public domain by concentrating on moral integrity and offering this as a contribution to public life (Vos 2004:11). But this contribution cannot take the form of demands. The faith-community must approach the world at large with openness and respect. Society must be convinced and persuaded that certain values make sense and give meaning to life. People must take

responsibility for a more moral society by giving more thorough and concrete consideration to the consequence of their actions (Vos 2004:11).

3. Metaphor and self-understanding

Root metaphors create relationships among other metaphors. Such metaphors give birth to new understandings of the world and the congregation's understanding of themselves. Root metaphors play a key role in shaping self-understanding. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980:5) discovered that certain metaphors function as sources for much ordinary speech. They explained that rich and encompassing metaphors provide the framework within which we conceive and interpret all our experience.

For example, when it is said, "We are children of God" this metaphor suggests a peculiar relationship between humans and the Ultimate Reality. In this way, metaphor can create and express human self-understanding. Self-identity is constructed out of attributing some quality to our person – a quality that may or may not be literally appropriate either to humans or to the whole of reality.

Lakoff and Johnson's conclusions about self-understanding are helpful:

Understanding of ourselves is not unlike other forms of understanding – it comes out of our constant interactions with our physical, cultural and interpersonal environment... Just as we seek out metaphors to highlight and make coherent what we have in common with someone else, so we seek out personal metaphors to highlight and make coherent our own past, our present activities, and our dreams, hopes, and goals as well. A large part of self-understanding is the search for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of our lives (1980:232-233).

Ricoeur (1995:151-152) also states that "a metaphor may be seen as a model for changing our way of looking at things, of perceiving the world". Like poetic language it reveals "the deep structures of realities to which we are related..." and creates "new possibilities of redescribing the world. Consequently, metaphor does not "prompt learning, it causes it." Therefore metaphors for self-identity allow people to see themselves in new ways – to grasp their own selves with clarity. Corporate self-

understanding, like personal identity, is no less metaphorical. A root metaphor arises in a community and by it the community comes to conceive itself and its function. The basic metaphor is intrinsic to Christian faith and the root metaphor of the church is part of that larger system of meaning of Christian faith (Kysar 1999:35).

Up to now with the relation to the self-understanding, the characteristic of metaphors and their roles has been discussed. It has been argued that metaphor – specially “root metaphor”, is a useful means to conceive and articulate the church’s self-understanding in a period of transition.

Church self-understanding and change

According to Dulles (1987:17-18), the church cannot be fully explained in propositional, deductive concepts. This leads to the metaphoric understanding of the church. Paul Minear (1960) classified more than ninety-six images of the church in *Images of the Church in the New Testament*. Dulles (1987:22) emphasises that “Images are immensely important for the life of the Church – for its preaching, its liturgy, and its general *esprit de corps*.”

In order to create some images of the church’s self-understanding in a period of transition by using metaphor, it is necessary to consider the relationship between image and metaphor. The word “image” means simply a mental picture evoked by language. Images are the imaginative visions excited by the encounter with language, through reading, hearing, or even seeing. In a sense images are abbreviations of metaphors (Kysar 1999:36). An image is the “emerging meaning” resulting from metaphor (Kysar 1999:36). Images of the church are those mental pictures that arise from and represent metaphorical language about the community of Christian faith.

Kysar (1999:36) scrutinises some popular images of the church’s self-understanding in the light of the reality of change. He argues that most of the current metaphors and their images of the church do not accommodate change either in the church itself or in its cultural setting. Kysar (1999:37) provides two kinds of metaphors. The first are clusters

of metaphors that in themselves clearly exclude and even oppose the reality of change (1999:37-38). The second category are some metaphors that might profitably account for change in culture and the church but which have been confined in their reference so as to exclude change (1999:38-40).

From these investigations, Kysar (1999:41) points out an important thing. Metaphors change as their cultural reference changes. Metaphorical language draws a characteristic from one realm of experience to set it in dialogue with another reality. When that characteristic undergoes change as part of culture, the metaphor too changes. When cultural changes influence metaphors, therefore, they need to be adapted according to the contemporary situation and understanding (Vos 1999).

To develop a new image with metaphor

Now how can the church develop a relevant and faithful image in a period of transition with the aid of metaphor? Kysar (1999:41) says that the problem does not lie in rehabilitating current images of the church or appropriating fresh ones. The situation of the church calls for new corporate self-understanding. Metaphor is the language with which we conceive and articulate corporate as well as personal self-understanding. Kysar (1999:41-42) suggests two steps in articulating a new self-understanding. One feature of metaphorical language is peculiarly important in this process: Metaphors are inherently filled with tension (Kysar 1999:41). The tension resides initially in the relationship created by juxtaposing two terms or phrases. The interpretation of metaphorical language also involves tension: first in the opposition of literal and metaphorical meanings and second in the ambiguity created by the exchange between the entities. The ambiguity leaves us searching for the meaning of a metaphorical relationship. In several ways the tension within metaphor and its interpretation parallels the tension inherent in change and the church.

Firstly, the church must live within a polarity between changing with culture and resisting change for the sake of its tradition (Kysar 1999:42). Tradition and cultural adaptation exert pressure in opposite directions. Metaphorical language gains its power

through the strain between the “is” and the “is not” of the juxtaposing of words and phrases. The images of the church’s identity therefore need to capitalise on both the “is” and the “is not” character of true metaphors. Metaphors of the church in change are capable of simultaneously emphasising both the transitional character of the community of faith and its continuity with its heritage (Kysar 1999:42).

Another benefit of metaphorical images for the church has to do with a similar tension within Christians themselves: the sense in which we are both in the world but not of the world (1 John 4:4-6) (Kysar 1999:42). The historical location of the church is in a specific cultural environment. However the ultimate origin and destination is from another realm, and the church seeks the influence of that transcendent realm on who the church is. Again the tension between the two might be captured in the tension between the two components of metaphor. Therefore the church has to construct metaphors that recognise the reality of life in a culture and at the same time claim roots that are beyond that culture (Kysar 1999:42).

Finally, most important of all, the tension inherent in metaphor creates a view of reality that is itself filled with tension (Kysar 1999:42). Metaphor sustains the tensive quality of existence we all know and experience. Just as there is an intrinsic “back pressure” in the metaphorical relationship, there is a similar pressure in reality itself. For example, the church declares that Christ was both truly human and at the same time truly divine (the Athanasian Creed). Metaphor is the linguistic equivalent of a paradoxical comprehension of reality and thus is the nature of the language of faith.

Translation of the biblical metaphor into a contemporary metaphor

In describing the identity of the church, the local church does not simply parrot biblical language. To do so denies its own cultural identity and isolates the local church from its culture as a sect (Kysar 1999:43). The metaphor of the Bible was created from the culture of that time. This metaphor has to be explained by using a contemporary metaphor in which the socio-cultural context of the present is expressed (Vos 1999:134).

If a preacher wants to use a contemporary metaphor to improve the way a metaphor from the primal text communicates, he/she has to establish the points of contact between the two metaphors (Vos 1999:135). The preacher, as Vos says, must ensure that the two metaphors do not clash and are not mutually exclusive (Vos 1999:135). In order to do this, the preacher must always be aware of the nature and function of metaphors at the linguistic and conceptual level (Vos 1999:135).

Translations of those pictures that the earliest groups of God's people fashioned for themselves remain the first and primary resource for images of our corporate identity. Those biblical images can be re-expressed in language that captures contemporary experience as well as elucidates churchly identity. Biblical language provokes contemporary images, in much the same way as poetic metaphor stimulates other metaphorical language. The richness of the biblical images of the church stirs new and contemporary images for our self-understanding (Kysar 1999:43).

Kysar (1999:43) proposes translations of three New Testament metaphors for the church's self-understanding: "on the way (Kysar 1999:45-66)," "home and homing (Kysar 1999:65-85)" and "stumbling in the light (Kysar 1999:87-112)." With these images, he constructs a single metaphorical sentence for who we are as a church: "The church is a community of faith on the way home, stumbling in the light." Therefore, both in its three component parts and as a whole, the impact of the biblical language points toward a new corporate self-identity that includes and takes change seriously. Furthermore, this self-identity employs the method of metaphor, has the tensional quality of such language, and at the same times is grounded in the biblical witness.

2.4.3 Preaching as an act of forgiveness

Preaching as an act of translation and preaching as an act of exchange of memories can culminate in an act of forgiveness. According to Dreyer (2000:38), forgiveness, realised through the integration of identity and alterity, is the one on the highest level of "spiritual density." Ricoeur (1996:9) refers to the model of forgiveness – resulting from the model of translation and exchange. From these two models, there is a double link to

the preceding discussion. On the one hand, the role of the story in the constitution of narrative identity has indicated the revision of the past, a revision which is effected by recounting the past in a different way. Forgiveness, Ricoeur (1996:9) argues, is a specific form of the revision of the past and, through it, of the specific narrative identities. On the other hand, the entanglement of life stories gives rise to a revision which is neither solitary nor introspective of its own past, but rather a mutual revision as the most valuable fruit of the exchange of memories. Therefore, forgiveness is a specific form of that mutual revision, the most precious result of which is liberation from promises of the past which have not been kept.

Bound up in the mutual revision, is an ethical issue. Dreyer (2000:38) explains it as follows:

Firstly, we do not only exchange memories, but we do it from a specific perspective, namely the perspective of suffering – our own suffering, but also the suffering inflicted on others. Secondly, we do not start from the perspective of our own suffering, but we “proceed from the suffering of others; imaging the suffering of others before re-examining ones’ own”.... Thirdly, this model goes further than the model of memory exchange in that it not only demands imagination and sympathy for the suffering of others, but the willingness to forgive and thus to “shatter the debt”.

Dreyer (2000:46) concludes that the individuals and the community of faith have to recount their stories in such a way that they start, not with their own suffering, but with the suffering of others.

This mutual revision can be considered in the two dimensions. In the community, the identity of individuals needs to be revised together with the identity of others to bring about a communal identity. As regards the world as well, forgiveness of other communities in the world can be brought about by revising the identity of the church and presenting the other community or the world with the faithful and relevant identity of the church.

Through this mutual revision of the individuals and the communities, the identity of the church will be formed and transformed. In this section, therefore, some characteristics

of preaching for bringing about the revision of identity and forgiveness will be considered. Especially, the church has primarily to be built up as the community of faith, to be servant and messenger, in order to restore its credibility.

2.4.3.1 Preaching as an act of being a Community

If preaching is to be an act of forgiveness, it has to be an act of upbuilding the church (Campbell 1997:222). The upbuilding of the church, according to Malan Nel (1990:1), is “the understanding of the nature, purpose and functioning of the local church.” Nel (2002a:1) defines the concept “building up the local church” as a ministry of reformation. Building up the local church is leading a congregation to understanding and finding its identity (Nel 2002a:6). The “building” metaphor in the Bible constantly recurs in the context of the covenant between God and his covenant people. It mostly describes how God is busy building and re-building his people (Campbell 1997).

If preaching is to be an act of being community through the forgiveness, some characteristic of preaching will be identified.

Firstly, the primary purpose of preaching is to be the formation of the community. Campbell (1997:222), with regard to the purpose of preaching, states that contemporary narrative preaching focuses on individual experiential events, in which the primary function is the eventful transformation of individuals, and still operates within a basically modern framework. However, in order for preaching to be an act of the formation of the community, it is important to consider that the community logically precedes the individual, and the individual exists only within the context of relationships and roles played in a particular community. This understanding of preaching does not ignore the individual, but rather views the individual within the context of a faithful community (Buttrick 1995:155). Therefore, the revision of the identities of individuals through preaching is possible in the communal context, and preaching can make possible the right relationship between individuals and the community for the formation of the communal identity.

Secondly, in order to build up the church, preaching should be understood from the perspective of covenant (Van Seters 1991:269; cf. Müller 1992, Vos 1996, Pieterse 2001a). Lucy Rose (1997), in *Sharing the Word: preaching in the roundtable church*, evaluates the purpose of preaching according to homiletic theories. According to Rose, traditional preaching focuses on instruction, as it defines preaching as persuasively presenting a truth so that the ideas in the preacher's mind are shaped in the minds of the congregation (Rose 1995:26; 1997). Kerygmatic preaching emphasises the individual's encounter with God, as it defines preaching as faithfully communicating the gospel so that God becomes the preacher and the sermon becomes a saving event. And transformational theory emphasises the individual's experience of transformation as it defines preaching as replicating a transforming experience of the text so that the congregation has the same experience of transformation. Finally Rose (1995:27) proposes a conversational preaching style, where the preacher and the congregation envisage themselves as exploring together the mystery of the Word for the lives of the worshippers, as well as the life of the congregation, the larger church, and the world. In her theory the purpose of preaching is to gather the community of faith around the Word where the central conversations of the church are refocused and fostered (Rose 1995:27). As Rose (1995:27) says that her proposal of conversational preaching is not an "instead of" but an "in addition to," the meaning of an "encounter" could be understood through the purpose of preaching in all these homiletic theories. The encounter between God and human beings is established through the covenantal relationship.

In the Reformed tradition, the purpose of preaching is to bring about an encounter between God and human beings (Pieterse 2001a:16; cf. Wilson 1995; Farris 1998). According to Pieterse (2001a), preaching as an encounter needs to be understood in the framework of a covenantal relationship. It is an event in which the congregation meets the living God (Wilson 1995:21).

Cas JA Vos (1996: vol.1:64-65) also takes the covenant as the theme for homiletic theory. According to Vos (1996:vol.1:117), the covenant provides a communicative framework for individual and social interaction within the congregation. Within this

framework God communicates with his people while both the individual and the Christian community can respond to God's Word. Because Christ is the head of the covenant and salvation and healing comes through Him alone, the Holy Spirit appeals to the people of the covenant to take up their position in Christ and to continue the struggle against sin. Rose (1995:27) says there are two communications: the divine-human conversation and the human-human conversation. On the one hand, there is the divine-human conversation between God and the community of faith. On the other hand, there is the human-human conversation. Through these communications, preaching is not only the transmission of truth, an encounter with God, or congregational transformation, but also "mutual edification" and mutual "orientation, clarification, encouragement, discrimination and direction-finding" through conversation around the Word in the community of faith (cf Rose 1997:98). However, in the covenantal understanding of preaching the purpose of preaching is not just conversation, but also an encounter through the conversation.

Through this encounter, the church articulates its identity. BA Müller (1992:7) states that "The identity of the Church to be proclaimed, and reclaimed theologically, is given as a *creatio verbi*, as *corpus Christi*, i.e. it is created by His covenanting action in history and is sustained by God's rule in Christ as the Head of Church and cosmos."

In the covenant perspective, the identity of the church is also connected with the relationship with the world. The church does not exist for herself, but for the world. How can the church as the body of Christ bear witness in the world? This core insight about the richness of a covenantal relation still leaves for the preacher and the congregation the demanding work of taking seriously the specific commands of this covenantal Other. Clearly the commands and guidance of the God of Israel and of the church are not vague and fuzzy, but quite concrete in the way they concern the specificities of life. Those bound to this God are summoned to act differently in every sphere of life. Indeed, obedience consists in bringing every zone of our existence under the will, purpose, and expectation of this covenantal partner (Brueggemann 1994:47-48).

Thirdly, preaching has to be understood as a *collaborative* act (McClure 1995; cf. Rose 1997). According to Long (1989a:47), preaching is “not merely a deed performed by an individual preacher but rather the faithful action of the whole church.” In order to form the communal identity, the individuals in a congregation have to participate the ministry of preaching actively.

Finally, in order to build up the church, preaching is to be understood as a *cooperative* ministry having a dynamic relationship with other ministries of the church. The church is built up through the functions of the church: *kerygma*, *leitourgia*, *koinonia* and *diakonia* (Vos 1996:vol.1:146-147). Ministries in a local church are a unity (Nel 2002a:9). Ministries are God coming to his church in a variety of ways (Nel 2000:77ff). In order to build up the local church as a community of faith, the ministries of the church have to be understood in conjunction with each other. Preaching needs pastoral care; pastoral care needs *koinonia* and *diache* and to be really effective and vice versa. It is like plaiting the ministries together into one whole and beautiful unity (Nel 2002a:12).

2.4.3.2 Preaching as an act of being a servant

In the previous section, I discussed the way the church can be built up as a community of faith through preaching as an act of forgiveness in the church. What is explored in this section is that, in order for the church as a community of faith to bring forgiveness into the world, preaching has to be an act of being a servant.

The model of forgiveness emphasises the importance of the ethical aspects of the church’s identity (Ricoeur 1996:9; Dreyer 2000:38). To bring about mutual forgiveness, with regard to the identity of the church, is to form the community of faith and restore the credibility of the church in the world. In the marginalised, secularised situation, specially the situation of the loss of credibility of the church, with regard to the relationship between the church and the world, if preaching is to an act of restoring the credibility of the church, preaching and the character of the church should be considered together (Pieterse 2001a:111).

Firstly, with regard to preaching as an act of being servant, this represents the church's most powerful witness as a community of faith in the world.

WD Jonker (1979:115) states that “the gospel comes to us through the normal process of communication. In this process the credibility of the communicator is of the utmost importance. In preaching the gospel we do not communicate objective truths in an abstract way, but testify to the saving power of the gospel in our own lives.” Jonker (1979:117) argues that “the credibility of the church is irrevocably linked with its faithfulness to its nature as the body of Christ and the herald of his Kingdom”. Word and deed should not be divorced but should be conveyed in an interrelated way by a community (Pieterse 2001a:112).

According to G Dekker (2002:181-182), the church in a modernising society needs to look at its organisation and its functioning in society. Max Webber (1976:268-275) distinguished two kinds of prophecy: ethical and exemplary prophecy. Ethical prophecy implies what the churches understand by prophecy: speak out prophetically, in other words critically, and tell the world what is good and just. Exemplary prophecy implies that the church does not focus on proclaiming its message to “outsiders” but – as an ecclesiastical community – actually lives life as it says life should be lived. It offers, or is, an example to the world (Dekker 2002:182). Dekker (2002:182) argues that the way of ethical prophecy is fraught with problems. In the situation of the contemporary church, exemplary prophecy is a better way to reach outsiders. Dekker (2002:182) maintains that “this is the best contribution the church can make to a more just society in our modern world”. The church could serve society best by recovering what it means to be a community of faith (Dawn 1995:133). According to Lohfink (1985), the most important and most irreplaceable service Christians can render society is quite simply that they truly be the church (Lischer 1993:115).

Secondly, if the church is a servant of the world and thereby restores its credibility, through this the world can be reconciled with God. For this to take place, preaching must be understood as an act of performance of the preached Word.

With regard to preaching, a hermeneutic activity of preaching is a “performance” act. Charles L Bartow (1997), in *God’s human speech: a practical theology of proclamation* (1997), understands preaching as an act of performance. Especially in postmodernism, with its permeating emphasis on relativity, Bartow draws on his extensive background in performance to interpret the Bible as God’s self-performance. Through the Bible, God defines Godself. Furthermore, God acts through the performance of Scripture in the Bible reading and preaching.

Nicholas Lash (1986) argues that the Christian interpretation of the Bible involves primarily the performance of scripture. If preaching is continually to form and transform the identity and mission of the church, a homiletic hermeneutic is an ongoing performance of this process of identity formation. Drawing on Lash’s work, Richard Lischer (1992:90-92; 1993:128-130) has recently argued that preachers need to take more seriously this performative character of interpretation. Like a Beethoven quartet or a Shakespearean play, scripture is a text for which the fundamental form of interpretation consists in its performance. The Christian community’s interpretation of scripture is similar to the interpretation of a play through the performance of a company of actors or the interpretation of a musical score through the performance of a group of musicians. As Lash (1986:42) writes,

The fundamental form of the *Christian* interpretation of scripture is the life, activity, and organization of the believing community. Secondly...Christian practice, as interpretive action, consists in the *performance* of texts which are construed as “rendering,” bearing witness to, one whose words and deeds, discourse and suffering, “rendered” the truth of God in human history. The performance of the New Testament enacts the conviction that these texts are most appropriately read as the story of Jesus, the story of everyone else, and the story of God.

According to Lash (1986:45), the primary poles in the interpretation of scripture are not finally written texts (for example, the biblical text at one pole and theological texts or sermonic texts at the other). Rather, the poles in biblical interpretation are fundamentally patterns of human action: on the one hand, “what was said and done and suffered, then, by Jesus and his disciples”, and on the other, “what is said and done and suffered, now, by those who seek to share his obedience and hope”. Within this framework, the most important interpretation of scripture takes place in the performance

of scripture by the Christian community. The interpretation of the scriptures is a full-time affair, involving their enactment as “the social existence of an entire human community” (Campbell 1994:18).

In the perspective of performance, the “hermeneutical gap” between then and now, as Lischer (1992) notes, is not a matter for reflection, but is daily overcome in the life of Christian communities. “Preaching is not... one person’s persuasive address. It is the ceaseless activity of the church....” (Lischer 1992:90).

Without the community’s performance of and participation in the Word, the chasm between the Book and the contemporary community is unbridgeable. The meaning of a text is disclosed in the community’s performance of the text in worship and in its witness in the world (Campbell 1994:19).

Such interpretation is not limited to the ways we seek to glean a message from the biblical text for the sermon. Rather, interpretation also includes the ways in which the church’s practice of preaching is itself an interpretative performance of scripture. Lash and Lischer take a broader view of the matter of biblical interpretation than preachers do. From this perspective the interpretive questions take a new form: How does the practice of preaching itself enact an interpretation of scripture? And what are the implications of this enactment for the way we preach?

The sermon, according to Bartow (1997:53ff), is a performance action that refigures the world of the preacher and that of the congregation. The performance emerges from the interaction of the preacher with the biblical text, the confessional tradition through which the preacher interprets the text, the congregation, and of course, the real presence of Christ. Bartow (:53ff) envisions the sermon as a dramatic narrative. The author does not mean that every sermon is a “story”, but that it has a beginning, middle, and end. It moves. It does something in the performative sense. By participating in the sermon, the congregation engages in an encounter that affects the community.

Rather than the futile attempt to correlate the biblical story with the dominant story which inevitably results in accommodating the Gospel to contemporary culture and experience, preaching, according to Campbell (1997:212), is a “performance of the

Scripture” that builds up the church to politically enact a “contrast society” in its life in and for the world. Preaching focuses not on narratives that correlate the Christian story with the human story, but on the unique identity of the character of Jesus of Nazareth. The repeated recital and reenactment of the story of Jesus in the church is not intended to address the experience and needs to individual hearers, not to form the communal consciousness of the community, but rather to form politically-enacted communities of “resident aliens” who “become characters in the ongoing story of Jesus” in a world that is fundamentally “disobedient to God” (Campbell 1997:231-232). Preaching for the world is to help the church as the body of Christ to be an example to the world. It is a performance, which implies living as an alternative community to show the love, justice, of God.

Charles L Campbell (1994:18ff) suggests that the proclamation of Jesus Christ is a concrete enactment of Jesus’ “third way,” which involves neither passivity nor violence, but is rather the way of active, non-violent engagement with the “powers” of the world. According him, Jesus, in his ministry, both witnesses to and embodies the reign of God in the world. The fulfilment of God’s coming reign is proclaimed and takes place in Jesus’ preaching, teaching, and mighty works. During the period of his ministry Jesus is an authoritative figure, actively challenging the powers with freedom and scope of movement. Moreover, during his ministry Jesus gathers together a community, a “contrast society”, whose life is shaped by the practice of non-violence. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus constitutes this people as a community of non-violent resistance to the powers.

However, in the course of his ministry Jesus’ preaching and deeds offend the powers of the world, which turn against him and seek to destroy him by violent means. The powers simply cannot sit by and allow such a challenge to their dominion to exist. Nevertheless, even as the religious and political authorities close in on him, Jesus explicitly refuses to respond to the powers in their own violent terms. Therefore Jesus is not affirming an unearthly, “spiritual” kingdom, but rather one that is “in the world, but not of it”.

Campbell (1994:20) concludes that as a form of discipleship empowered and shaped by this story of Jesus, faithful Christian preaching embodies a distinctive performance of the New Testament. The faithful proclamation of Jesus Christ is an enactment of Jesus' third way. As Jesus embodied the reign of God and challenged the powers of the world, but refused to resort to violence in that effort, so in proclaiming Jesus Christ the preacher is engaged in this same non-violent resistance to the powers. The preacher witnesses boldly; he or she challenges the powers of the world that oppose God's reign; she or he proclaims the reign of God in Jesus Christ and the freedom made possible by that reign. Christian preaching is not a form of passivity, but an active engagement with the powers.

In this kind of preaching the character of preaching and the church or the community of faith becomes important, for one cannot preach non-violently without developing the virtues, habits, and disciplines of non-violence in one's own life. No mere technique is adequate for such preaching. Rather, Jesus' third way invites preachers to discern the violence in their own lives and to participate in communities within which the skills of peaceableness are practised and learned (Campbell 1994:18-24).

Stanley Hauerwas (1983:150) states that some of the disciplines of peaceableness may be simple; they may seem almost trivial. Other disciplines may be more dramatic, including even the practices of those communities engaged in the tactics of non-violent political resistance.

As an enactment of Jesus' third way, preaching will also require certain virtues, particularly the virtue of patient hope. A people of hope can actively engage the powers of the world without losing patience when their efforts are not immediately effective. For our hope is born of the assurance that it is not simply our task to transform the world's violence into God's peace; that has already been done in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Hauerwas 1983:147). In that hope, those who proclaim Jesus Christ can follow his third way with patience and even with joy – the joy that comes with the assurance of God's redemption and the confidence that we are at least engaging in the right struggle.

Thirdly, preaching as the upbuilding of the church is to be understood as a *journey* (Nel 2002:12). If preaching is to be an act of upbuilding of the church, it is to be more than an event. Richard Lischer (1992:88) argues that the image of preaching as an *event* needs to turn into the image of a *journey*.

As attractive as the *event* is as a metaphor for God's action in the sermon, it does not deliver the moral and theological formation necessary for God's people in the world. The alternative image of *journey* or *pilgrimage* suggests that the sermon does not merely strike the conscience or create an existential experience, but that preaching, as opposed to individual sermons, forms a community of faith over time (Lischer 1992:88). This journey metaphor is linked with one of narrative. The journey is only possible for those whose existence is formed by the stories of Israel, Jesus and the Christian community (Greenwood 1996:37). To remember and be formed by both Israel's and Jesus' stories is to be nourished as a 'contrast model' of community, a servant community which takes time to care and nurture friendships, a faithful manifestation of the peaceable Kingdom in the world, a community of peace and truth in a world of mendacity and fear, a place of hospitality to the stranger, a place of unity in a divided world, a living alternative (Hauerwas 1981, 1988).

2.4.3.3 Preaching as an act of being a messenger

I have discussed the characteristic of preaching to facilitate the church's role as the community of faith and a servant. In this section I will consider the mode of communication by which the church as a messenger communicates the Gospel in the world. A mode of communication influences the formation of the identity of the church (Campbell 1997). The church speaks both for itself and to the relativistic and pluralist society in which it exists with its own distinctive language and convictions. Otherwise, the church is likely to fail to contribute significantly to public moral discourse and simultaneously become forgetful. Therefore this section will discuss how the church as an alternative community can communicate the Gospel in the world by considering the formation of the identity of the church.

The church in a period of transition, as was discussed in a previous section, is secularised and marginalised. In this situation, according to Douglas J Hall (1996:198), “the church needs to disengage from the dominant culture intentionally to reform its identity and to reengage with fresh voice”. However, as Hall (1996:198) mentioned, it is not as a once-for-all movement but as a continuous process. Therefore in this perspective, the way of communication is considered not only to form the identity of the church as an alternative community within the community, but also to communicate the Gospel in the world.

Testimony

In the relativistic and pluralistic culture, the proclamation of the Gospel is no longer a privileged claim (Brueggemann 1998b:22). With regard to the formation of the church’s identity, a mode of communication for the church in transition is through *testimony*. Walter Brueggemann (1998b:22-29), Ronald J Allen (2001:34-48) and Craig A Loscalzo (2000:11-28) suggest *testimony* as a mode of communication for the formation of the identity of the church in transition.

Thomas Long (1989a:42-43) articulates the meaning of the testimony as the image of the witness by following Paul Ricoeur: (1) the witness is not a volunteer, not just anyone who comes forward to give testimony, but only the one who is sent to testify. (2) The testimony of the witness is not about the global meaning of human experience but about God’s claim upon life. It is Yahweh who is witnessed to in the testimony. (3) The purpose of the testimony is proclamation to all peoples. It is on behalf of the people, for their belief and understanding, that the testimony is made. (4) The testimony is not merely one of words but rather demands a total engagement of speech and action. The whole life of the witness is bound up in the testimony.

Long (1989a:19-47) addresses the matter of homiletic purpose with various images of preacher – herald, pastor, storyteller, and witness. While Long finds each of these images helpful in some ways, he proposes another which he feels “is more suited than any of the others to disclose the true character of Christian preaching” (Long 1989a:41).

It is the image of the preacher as witness (:42). Appealing to passage such as Isaiah 43:8-13 and Acts 20:24, Long claims that the purpose of preaching is to bear witness to the saving grace of Jesus Christ and to the newness of life found in Christ (Long 1989a:42).

The witness image has several implications. First, it “emphasises the authority of the preacher in a new way” (Long 1989a:44). Rather than authority coming from experience or expertise, it comes out of “see and hearing.” The preacher and the congregation therefore must be a keen listener and discernor of God’s voice in the text. The second implication has to do with the way we understand the Scriptures. The image of witness understands the Scriptures to be records of the many encounters people of faith have had with a living God. It is on these encounters that the preacher focuses the sermon.

We go to scripture, then, not to glean a set of facts about God or the faith that can then be announced whenever and wherever, but to encounter a presence, to hear God’s voice speaking to us ever anew, calling us in the midst of the situations in which we find ourselves to be God’s faithful people (Long 1989a:45).

Long also believes that there is a communal nature to this understanding of scripture. The preacher approaches scripture not as an individual seeker but as one chosen by the community of believers to approach it with its many questions and needs. The third implication has to do with the style of preaching. Because witnessing, or testifying, necessarily involves telling what we have seen and heard, it will often take narrative form. It will not always be so, though, as the form of the message must be “governed by the truth to which they correspond. The shape of the witness’s sermon should fit the character of the testimony” (Long 1989a:46). The fourth implication acknowledges that “the witness is not a neutral observer” (Long 1989a:46). Each time we approach the scriptures for meaningful words for faithful living, we come back for another time. Rarely do we come to hear a message for the first time. Thus, our approach of the scripture is full of the baggage from previous trips, previous study, and the influence of other believers. We also come deeply enmeshed in our culture and worldview.

The location of the witness, in other words, is critical, and the preacher as witness is one who stands in and with a particular community of faith, deeply involved in the concrete struggles of that community to find meaning, to seek justice, and to be faithful to the gospel (Long 1989a:46).

The fifth implication of the image of the preacher as witness is that the setting of such preaching is the worship of the church (Long 1989a:46). Long points out that in our worship as we acknowledge the cosmic battle between the powers of the world and the redeeming power of God. The very act of worship itself is a bearing witness to God's power to save and to redeem, and it is a time when we recognise that "Christ is the one and true witness" (Long 1989a:46).

Testimony is a form of apology (Allen 2001:47). Brueggemann (1997:44; 1998b) explains that "*testimony*" is utterance by an alleged first-person witness who offers an account of experience that depends solely upon the trustworthiness of the witnesses, but that cannot appeal for verification either to agreed-upon metaphysics or to external historical data. According to Brueggemann (1998b:22), while the proclamation is an assumption of universal consensus, the testimony is a bid for assent. It refers to courtroom exercise in which the "truth of the matter" is deeply contested, and different witnesses are called upon to give accounts of "the truth of the matter" that turn out to be profoundly contradictory.

Firstly, testimony is a relevant communication style for forming the identity of the church. The notion of apologetics has often been employed in the church in the sense of justifying Christian faith to those who are outside the Christian community. For instance, early Christians justified their faith in the face of questions from other people in the Mediterranean world. Christians sometimes defended aspects of Christian faith against attacks posed by the scientific worldview spawned in the Enlightenment. Modern apologists seek to show that the Christian faith is harmonious with objective fact (Gibbs & Coffey 2001:27-28).

Apologetic motifs, however, often function as much to strengthen the faith of persons within a community as to defend the faith against outsiders (Allen 2001:47). Apologetics helps a community understand why it is possible to believe and act as it

does. Given the relativism and pluralism of the world of modernisation, why persons should remain or become Christian needs to be explained. According to Allen (2001:47), therefore, in the transitional context, testimony is one of the most effective forms of apology. Apologetic preaching helps strengthen Christian identity. The preacher as an apologist does not provide scientific proof of the truth of Christian claims. However, Charles L Blaisdell (in Allen 2001:46-47) notices that preachers can at least help congregations understand why it is not irrational to believe in God and to be a part of the Christian community. To say the same thing positively, a preacher can help a congregation understand why it makes sense to believe.

Secondly, in acts of testimony, the church invites other persons to consider their interpretations of the world. Rebecca Chopp (1997:197-198) speaks lyrically: “Testimony is not just confession of what something meant – that is, what it means to me – though it is that to a limited degree. In its fullest sense, the person who gives testimony articulates the truth of what she has heard, experienced, and endured.” Furthermore, “To bear witness, to testify, is to give an account through one’s life to that which both fills and moves beyond one’s life.”

Brueggemann (1998b:23) enlarges on this by saying that testimony is advocacy of a very odd truth, a truth that is off-centred and in deep tension with dominant, commonly accepted givens. It does not claim to be able to prove it. But this does not imply that the witness of the church is not true, rather it doesn’t need to prove its validity by some external means. With the loss of Christian consensus and theological hegemony, “the truth of the matter” is greatly contested, the truth about the reality and character of God and the consequent reality and character of the world.

Allen (2001:47) proposes the form of testimony as storytelling, especially as that story has interacted with others – others not only as human beings but also as biblical texts, Christian doctrines, or experiences in nature. Testimony can also take artistic forms of expression, such as music, painting, sculpture, dance, cinema, video, and various forms of writing (poems, short stories, novels, essays). Instead of delivering a monologue from the pulpit, a preacher might engage in a transgression in sermonic form by offering

testimony in a sermon through a series of slides projected in the sanctuary. Testimony can take other forms than words; it can be embodied in the full round of activities in “the everydayness of one’s life” (Chopp 1997:47).

Brueggemann (1998b:23) summarises the characteristics of testimony as follows: First, it is *fragile*, that is, it depends on the nerve of the preacher. Second, it is *local*, that is, it makes no sweeping, universal claim, but appeals to what is concretely known. Third, it is *persuasive*, that is, the rhetoric aims to win over the jury. Fourth, it is *contested*, that is, it dares to make utterances in the presence of other claims that may be more powerful and more credible. Fifth, it is *fragmented*, that is, it is only a piece of a narrative that brings with it a whole theory of reality that is implied but left unexpressed.

Overhearing

Walter Brueggemann (1997:79) suggests the mode of *overhearing* testimony. The church as an alternative community lives in the context of the surrounding culture, engaging with the culture, but not controlled by it. The faithful church examines those aspects of the culture that do not contradict the Gospel; it speaks the language of the surrounding cultures and of the gospel; it constantly tries to communicate the gospel in the surrounding cultures; and is cultivating and forming the culture of God’s new community, a culture not of the world (Guder et al 1998:114).

For this reason, the church is always bicultural, conversant with the language and customs of the surrounding culture and living toward the language and ethics of the Gospel (Guder et al 1998:114). One of the tasks of the church is to translate the gospel so that the surrounding culture can understand it, yet help those believers who have been in that culture move towards living according to the behaviours and communal identity of God’s missional people – in the language of the New Testament, God’s *ethnos* (cf. 1 Pet 2:9)(:114).

In order to achieve the objective described above, one mode of communication lies in *overhearing* with a view to the formation of the identity and mission of the church.

According to Brueggemann (1997:79), biblical preaching has proceeded on the assumption that the truth of biblical faith pertains to the “outsiders” even as much as the “insiders,” because the God who stands at the centre of the church’s narrative imagination is not primarily the lord of the church but the creator and governor of heaven and earth.

Therefore, Brueggemann (1997:79) argues an “*overhearing*,” that is, the theological claims made in the church by the church and for the church have to be overheard. It means that “the church itself is the primary addressee in this discourse, so that the canons of credibility operative in the church are the decisive ones”, that is, what is to be said must be tested first of all against the core memory of the church (1997:79). Brueggemann (1997:79) emphasises that such “overhearing” is not accidental. Rather, the church, at its most courageous and its most faithful, deliberately and intentionally makes its claims for the sake of the non-church public (1997:79). It is inconceivable that “church talk” should be casually overheard by the public at large, as though a casual “drive by” the church would make a difference. Rather, out of its own baptismal conversation, the churches of the Gospel celebrated in the baptismal community are echoed in the broader context in ways germane to public questions, public issues, and public possibilities (1997:80).

Walter Brueggemann (1991:41-45) cites a beautiful example of this kind of communication from the Bible – II Kings 18-19. In II Kings 18 and 19 we read the story of the time when Jerusalem, under the reign of Hezekiah, is surrounded by a huge host of Assyrian troops, sent there by King Sennacherib. The Assyrian forces have been plundering and sacking the cities of Judah. Jerusalem, the final prize, is now to be plucked. Hezekiah, 39 years old, and in the fourteenth year of his reign, is a pious and faithful king facing a terrible situation. He has already stripped the gold and silver off the altar and appointments of the temple and from the doors of the palace. His treasury is empty. There are no more material objects with which buy time against the Assyrians.

The Rabshakeh, Sennaacharib’s haughty ambassador, comes with his entourage to stand on the top of the wall that surrounds the beleaguered city. He is met by representatives

of Hezekiah, who ask him politely to converse with them in Aramaic, which is the language of international diplomacy. “Do not speak to us in Hebrew, within the hearing of those of our people who are on the wall.” The Rabshakeh responds with insult and threats: “Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the people sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and to drink their own urine?” Then, in a loud voice and in bad Hebrew, he shouts his demands, laced with seductive promises and dire threats: “Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: ‘Make your peace with me and come out to me; then every one of you will eat from you own vine and your own fig tree, and drink water from you own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive oil and honey, that you may live and not die’” (II Kings 18:26-27).

Hezekiah and his advisors gather in the palace. The king sends one of his officials to consult with the prophet Isaiah. Hezekiah, a man of prayer, recalls God's faithfulness in the past and places his desperate situation before the Lord. The message from Isaiah comes: He has heard a Word from the Lord. He tells Hezekiah to hold firm and to lay his case and the arrogant threats of Sennacherib before God. Hezekiah is given the assurance that a rumour will cause the Assyrian general to return to his own land, and that Sennacherib will die at the hand of one of his own sons. And as though miraculously, the Assyrian army is removed as a threat. The faith and righteousness of Hezekiah are vindicated.

Brueggemann (1991) has made this story the basis for offering a powerful set of observations about the kind of formation in faith that is required “behind the wall” for people of faith to offer their witness and to challenge the values and assumptions of secular societies “on the wall.”

To Brueggemann, if preaching is to help churches unmask the pretence of secular value structures and the seductive injustices of capitalist and market economies, communities of faith have to be grounded deeply in an alternate set of stories, and be equipped with an alternate set of virtues. Brueggemann (1991) says that if the churches are going to

offer their witness and guidance “beyond” the wall in credible and relevant ways, they must be capable of relating Christian normative judgments and visions in language that is intelligible and that has bite for those who have no Christian memory or commitments. Therefore, the church has to consider these two languages: the language “behind the wall” and the language for use “on the wall.”

Brueggemann (1991:43) argues that “people of faith in public life must be *bilingual*. They must have a more communal language for use behind the gate, in the community, and out of sight and range of the imperial negotiations.” Also they must have a public language for negotiation at the wall. He (1991:44) continually argues that “Christians should be nurtured to be bilingual, to know how to speak the language on the wall in the presence of the imperial negotiators, but also how to speak the language behind the wall in the community of faith, where a different set of assumptions, a different perception of the world, a different epistemology are at work”.

In regard this Lesslie Newbigin speaks of the need for Christian communities to be culturally bilingual (1989:55-65, cf Guder 2000:94). He refers here to the fundamental missionary task of Christian communities. As followers of Christ, they are being formed into distinctive communities speaking the language of faith rooted in and informed by Scripture. Therefore, they share with all Christian communities the cross-cultural commonality that is the presence and role of Jesus Christ. As they follow Christ, their language makes them, in many ways, distinctive within their communities. They are, as they learn Christ, more and more “strangers and aliens” (1 Peter), “resident aliens” and “colonies” (Hauerwas & Willimon 1992; 1994), and “contrast societies” (Lofink 1985).

Barrett (1998:120) explains this at greater length. The church as an alternative community has an alternative vocabulary. Christians share the languages of the cultures that surround them, and they speak with a distinctive vocabulary that expresses realities that they experience and are now able to identify through the agency of the Holy Spirit. This different vocabulary is not confined to technical theological terms employed by the church as a verbal shorthand for complex Christian experience. It also includes simple

words like sin, grace, and holiness, words reflecting equally complex realities but seldom used in everyday speech in the world.

However God's "sent people" certainly do not use this distinctive vocabulary in order to keep secrets from the world. This motive would be contrary to their mission in and to the reign of God. But distinctive words are needed to signal the new and different life Christians find themselves living in communion with God's holy nation and in allegiance to God's present and future reign. Such efforts try to express the Christian faith in the language of the surrounding society in order to communicate with those who do not believe. Yet such borrowed language is ultimately inadequate, first because the experience of the Spirit in the community of God's reign cannot be captured by any language; second, because the meanings behind the words that the church shares with its culture have forever been changed for those found, renewed, and now sent by the vision of the reign of God (Barrett 1998:120).

Therefore, as a means of forming the church as a community of faith in a secularised and marginalised world preaching is first of all *church talk* in order to help the church to remain separate from the world. Second, the church needs to re-engage in the world, because she is not of the world, but in the world. The church proclaims the lordship of God in the world, not just in private but also in public. To do this, *church talk* must be *public talk*, without ceasing to be *church talk* (Brueggemann 1997:80).

2.4.4 Conclusion

From an identified ecclesiology and Ricoeur's model, a homiletic theory has been developed for the upbuilding of the church in transition. First, in the secularised and pluralised context of the church, preaching is an act of translation with the object of forming the identity of the community. The translation is possible in a dialogic communication. This translation only can take place in a dialogic community. Second, in a dialogic community where memories are exchanged, preaching is an act of exchange of memories. The act of remembering is an ecclesial hermeneutic for the community and through the community. A relevant sermon form and language have

then been articulated. Finally, most importantly, preaching should be an act of forgiveness. Forgiveness is an appropriation of remembering. Through an act of forgiveness, the church is built up as the Community of faith, Servant, and Messenger.

2.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter is to develop a homiletic theory that stands in a dynamic relationship to an ecclesiology for forming and transforming the identity and mission of the church.

1. The hypothesis of this study is that preaching should maintain a dynamic relationship with ecclesiology for the upbuilding of the church. This relationship means that the preaching ministry needs to focus on the upbuilding of the church. At same time, the meaning of the upbuilding of the church should serve as a guide to the preaching ministry – regarding its goals, its homiletic hermeneutic, and its communication.

2. To prove this hypothesis, therefore, this study started to develop a faithful and relevant ecclesiology in a transition. In order to identify this ecclesiology, firstly the context of the church – that is, the characteristics of modernisation and their influence on the church – was described. The result of these influences has been that the church in transition has been secularised and marginalised.

Secondly, in such a transition, a faithful and relevant ecclesiology, the identity and mission of the church have been developed. What emerges from this discussion is that the church is to be a missionary community, which has missions: to be a community, to be a servant, to be a messenger.

3. In describing how the identity of the community could be formed, I have applied Ricoeur's narrative identity theory. According to Ricoeur, the identity has both a temporal and relational perspective. In order to articulate the identity of a community, these two perspectives should be considered together. Ricoeur provides three models for

forming the identity of a community – the model of translation, the model of the exchange of memories, and the model of forgiveness.

4. The identity and mission of the church that I have described could fruitfully serve as a guide to preaching for the upbuilding of the church in transition. The implication of a missional ecclesiology and Ricoeur's model of the identity of communication is that a homiletic theory would involve preaching as act of translation, preaching as act of exchange of memory, and preaching as an act of forgiveness.

4.1 Preaching as an act of translation means that in order to form the identity of the community of faith, the identities of individuals and communities need to be translated. For translation, the communication in preaching needs to be a dialogue. Through dialogue as the mode of communication the identities of individuals can be exchanged.

4.2. Preaching as an act of exchanging memories involves a process of remembering. Remembering is a hermeneutic act for the community and through the community.

4.3 Preaching as an act of forgiveness is a process of formation and transformation of the community of faith.

This study has developed a homiletic theory for the upbuilding of the church in transition. In the next chapter, this theory will be explained in the context of the church in Korea.