Lutheran homiletics in Francophone Africa:
How Lutheran orthodoxy informs African practice

By

Ryan Michael McDermott
Student No. 19388307

Supervisor: Johann-Albrecht Meylahn

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## ETHICS STATEMENT

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained the required research ethics approval/exemption for the research described in this work.

The author declares that they have observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University's Code of Ethics for scholarly activities.

## DECLARATION

"I declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Doctor of Philosophy — Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution."

## SYNOPSIS

Many factors come together to make Christian preaching effective and authentic. This thesis examines the current state of homiletical practice and formation in Francophone African Lutheran church bodies, with the goal of formulating a theoretical framework for practice that is both orthodox Lutheran and authentically African. The research problem is two-fold. Sermons preached in Francophone African Lutheran congregations are deemed to be inadequate. Why is this the case? What does Lutheran orthodoxy have to offer in the way of a remedy to this problem? The methodology used to examine these questions is Osmer's four questions regarding practical theology. Sermons and source materials from the current field as well as from historical sources are examined within. Consideration is given to questions of modernism and postmodernism, colonialism and decolonialism, and African identity. This thesis seeks to open conversation and hold space for these subject fields to intersect in the cross of Christ.

## KEY TERMS

African studies; decolonialism; homiletics; Lutheran; Francophone; Johann Gerhard; Martin Luther; C.F.W. Walther; postmodernism; African identity; practical theology; preaching

# Contents

## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

What is preaching? This question has interested people of a myriad of religious backgrounds and persuasions for centuries, if not for millennia. A Google search results in articles from numerous sources, some of which cite experts from various eras of Church history; other articles simply attempt to suggest a new definition of preaching (which, one may argue, is not so new or different from God's initial definition).

So why consider this question? To ponder the subject of the thesis herein, one must first understand the nature and definition of preaching. One cannot hope to understand what is happening, what ought to be happening, or how to move from Point A to Point B, if one does not understand this point. Therefore, this author begs the reader to allow a brief introduction herein of the concept of preaching – preaching specifically of the Word of the Lord.

"To preach is 'to bring what has already happened into history and to proclaim it before the whole world' until the 'deed' comes to be 'the use of the deed' (or the Word), until 'reconciliation' comes to be 'a message of reconciliation' (see II Cor. 5.19)" (Wingren, 2002:65). The above quotation is taken from Gustav Wingren, whose basic premise is that preaching calls forth words and events which came to pass in the past – whether that past is defined as historical or current – and makes use of these words and events in the given moment of the preaching event. In this way, through the preaching of the Word of the Lord, the preacher makes use of this same Word to "pierce to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart," (Heb 4:12)[1] to effect a meeting between the immortal, invisible, incorporeal God and His very much mortal, visible, and fleshly people here on earth.

In Romans 10, the Apostle Paul sheds some light on the subject when he says,

> How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without

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[1] All Bible quotations taken from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'(Rom 10:14-15)

For Paul, the task of the preacher is to stand firmly in the stead of the Lord who sends him and to speak the Word of the Lord, so that those who hear might believe, and thus call upon the name of the Lord, confessing with hearts and voices their faith in the saving work of Christ. The preacher is not simply a talking head, spouting nice words or spiritual platitudes; rather, the preacher is the mouthpiece of the Living God, preaching faith into the ears of the hearers.

Without preaching, no faith is created. Without the Word preached into the hearing of the assembly, the preacher is simply a voice crying into the wind. But what happens when other factors intervene to disrupt this flow of the Word of the Lord from God to the preacher to the hearer? What happens when the Word is preached, but the message is not received, or is somehow distorted in its reception?

The collection of the research herein and the goal of this thesis specifically have been motivated by the author's experiences as a missionary in Francophone West and Central Africa. During this time, the author served as a theological educator and participated in the process of pastoral formation for a working union of Lutheran church bodies stretching from Guinea to Burundi.

This author often sat through sermons preached in daily chapel services by seminary students in various stages of their pastoral development. This author listened as student after student attempted to expound a text of Scripture from the chapel pulpit. Sometimes the student rendered content what could be considered a success: not too long, not boring, focused on the text at hand, properly engaged with the context and the hearers, and whose doctrinal and exegetical assertions comported with what they were learning in their coursework. Other times, some students would speak prose that did a disservice to the Lord whose Word he was

commissioned to preach. In these instances, oftentimes there were too many words with no clear message, inadequate organization of the content, inappropriate exegesis of the text or the context (historical or present), or any number of other factors.

One trimester, the seminary students begged this author to teach an elective course on sermon structures. The rationale for this request was that the students only had learned a couple of basic sermon outlines, which then functioned as cookie cutters[2]. Almost every sermon followed one of two outlines (which will be examined in detail later in this thesis). A deeper problem became apparent during the trimester: the students had been taught a mechanical method as to how to formulate a sermon. Yet still something was lacking. They had not been taught how to integrate the various parts of their lives and their education into a well-formed understanding of the Bible. This integration was necessary to adequately interpret the core message of the Scriptures and to bring that message into conversation with the lives of the hearers. The problem was, to paraphrase the Apostle Paul, "How are they to preach unless they have been taught?"

Thus, one can certainly see a classic challenge of the practice of homiletics: crafting a sermon that is both God-centred and hearer-centred. How can the preacher take the texts written and proclaimed thousands of years ago, interpret them in a way so as to still say, "thus saith the Lord," and yet also preach these words into the hearts and lives of the hearers?

The problem field at the core of this thesis is thus two-fold: How does one bring contemporary and historical homiletical theories into conversation and synthesis with Lutheran orthodoxy? How does one then tie these theories into a relationship with contemporary Francophone African socio-cultural contexts?

As will be discussed in detail in coming chapters, many factors have contributed to the current situation of homiletical pedagogy and practice in Francophone African Lutheranism.

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[2] i.e., stencils or static forms into which raw material could be pressed to get the same result repeatedly.

Lacking is a knowledge of the greater tradition of Lutheran homiletical theory, resources for homiletical formation in French, an emphasis on Occidental patterns of logic and interpretation, and a minimization of the importance of cultural context to the preaching of the Gospel.

It is the argument of this thesis that much of the current field of homiletical theory is focused on Occidental ways of thinking. To that end, non-Western logic patterns and ways of communication are neglected or are considered un-orthodox. However, these non-Western thought patterns are the very thought patterns that influence the life and faith of Christians, and would-be Christians, throughout Africa.

On the other hand, one may find authors who posit theories of post-colonial African theology and homiletical practice. However, one may determine that these theories are often concerned with re-forming theology to fall in line with political thought, to the loss of the roots in historical orthodoxy. To return to Lutheran orthodoxy, in this author's estimation, would bring Francophone African Lutheran churches to a starting point whereupon a homiletical theory may be constructed. Such a theory would honour the social and cultural experiences and contexts of the African continent, while also honouring the contributions and insights of the Lutheran fathers.

The aim of this author's thesis is to examine these factors, as gleaned from some of the formational writers of this tradition. From this vantage point, the author wishes to propose a synthesis of orthodox Lutheran homiletical theory with authentic African cultural and contextual influences. The goal is to point the way toward finding an authentic voice for pastors of Francophone African Lutheran churches to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Much of the present thesis relies on the work of Johann Gerhard, one of the great figures of the so-called Lutheran "Age of Orthodoxy" of the Seventeenth Century.[3] In a close reading of Gerhard's *Theological Commonplaces,* the present author seeks to present a productive

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[3] Gerhard will be introduced in more depth in Chapters 6 and 11.

framework for interpreting biblical texts that will allow for the integration of the various components already mentioned in a way that allows pastors of Francophone African Lutheran churches to bring the Word of God to bear in the lives of their hearers.

To be succinct, the problem at hand is that future pastors in Francophone African Lutheran churches are not being equipped to read and understand effectively their African and post-colonial contexts. These future pastors also are not being equipped to read the Bible beyond and outside of a Western mindset. Therefore, the research question of this thesis is defined in two parts:

- How can Francophone African Lutheran pastors be taught the necessary hermeneutical skills to read both the Bible and their local contexts beyond the Western, colonialism-influenced mindset and lens?
- How can the heritage of the Lutheran church help these pastors gain these skills?

The thesis herein is presented in four main parts. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the methodology used in the field research, as well as the examinations of historical texts on the theory of homiletics.

Part One, Chapters 3 to 6, will attempt to answer, "What is going on?"; that is, what is the current state of homiletical practice in Francophone African Lutheran churches? Part Two, chapters 7 to 10, will discuss "Why is this happening?"; that is, what are the factors that have contributed to the situation described in Part One?

Part Three, Chapters 11 to 13, will address "What should be happening?"; in other words, after examining historical Lutheran homiletical theory and the insights gained from the research presented in the previous chapters, what should the outcome be? Part Four includes Chapters 14 and 15 and will attempt to answer, as a means of concluding the study, the question "How can this determination be put into practice?"

For this structure and style of inquiry, this author is much indebted to Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (2008).

## AFRICA AND LUTHERANISM

Throughout this thesis, a two-fold question is relevant: "What does Lutheranism have to offer to Africa?" and "What does Africa offer to Lutheranism?"

Lutheranism and its centuries of beliefs and practices has much to offer to Africa. This author believes that Lutheranism offers a space in which to hold faithfully to the eternal truth of the Word of God and at the same time to hold closely the time- and space-bound influences of one's culture and heritage.

The Lutheran Confessions insist on the Holy Scripture inspired by God as the sole rule and norm for faith and practice in the Church and in the lives of Christians, as the Formula of Concord says: "1. We believe, teach, and confess that the sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas together with [all] teachers should be estimated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament alone, as it is written Ps. 119:105: Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. And St. Paul: Though an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, let him be accursed, Gal. 1:8" (FC Ep Rule 1, *Triglot*). This gives roots to the Lutheran tradition, in a way that many other denominations and traditions lack.

However, at the same time, there is room for African Lutherans still to be African. Africans do not need to worship or preach in the same manner as Europeans or North Americans to be considered faithful and serious Christians. Africa has been the cradle of Christianity since before Christ Himself walked the earth.[4] Such a rich heritage must be taken seriously, and it must be given room to flourish.

For Lutherans, unity of doctrine has never required unanimity of ceremony. A freedom in the Gospel is celebrated, which allows for a congregation to embrace the elements of the culture and the heritage and culture of her members in a way that is both meaningful to God's

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[4] See, for example, the story of Joseph in Gen 37-50.

people and pleasing to God.  This freedom gives the African preacher the space to engage the hearers in a way that speaks to them where they are.

The Bible is not a primarily European book. None of its writers even knew that the Americas existed. One might argue, on the basis of antiquity of tradition, that Africans have more right and resources to read and interpret the Bible than Westerners, in a certain sense.

Klän writes:

If you look at the front page of the first part in the Book of Concord, you will find the rubric "*Tria Symbola catholica sive oecumenica*" (The Three Ecumenical Creeds). Lutherans indeed understand themselves as being at once evangelical, catholic, orthodox, and ecumenical in the best sense of the word and professing a church which shall last forever. "It is also taught that at all times there must be and remain one holy, Christian church."

Translation, however, is inevitable for any theological endeavour: Translation— linguistically, culturally, contextually, historically, ecumenically, not to mention our daily work as teachers and preachers—is our task. However, Christianity is and remains under an obligation to be critical of its own contemporaneity (Klän 2021:84).

Klän rightly points out the delicate balancing act that the Church must strike — a balance that continuously is being adjusted and adapted. The eternal, catholic nature of the Church must balance with the ever-moving, ever-changing nature of culture and history, so that the former does not become petrified nor lost, and neither does the latter become a feather adrift on the wind.

Conversely, the question is posed: "What does Africa offer to Lutheranism?" As was just mentioned, Africa has ancient roots, not only based in Christianity, but, more broadly, of human language and culture. The rich heritage of the people groups of Africa cannot refrain from serving the Body of Christ. More voices blending into the hymn of all creation serve to magnify the harmony of the unity of faith. The overarching goal of this thesis, therefore, is to open the discussion and hold space for these voices to be heard, for them to be integrated into the life and practice of the Church at large.

As shared, African cultures are deeply rooted in spirituality. The strong respect and honour for the spiritual is something of which Westerners could learn. How eye-opening it could be for Westerners to hear the voices of those who are not like them; to hear how the Scriptures speak to others, and mostly to experience faith in unity.

# CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

## WORLDVIEW DEFINED

Every academic work flows from a particular worldview. Merriam-Webster defines "worldview" as "a comprehensive conception or apprehension of the world especially from a specific standpoint" (*Merriam-Webster* 2024). It is important to realize this, and to identify the worldview from which one perceives existence.

This foundation of this thesis stems from a Christian premodern worldview. This worldview is best summarized as follows:

> 'Premodern' here refers to the period from the late Middle Ages through the Reformation to the dawn of the Enlightenment (c. AD 1200-1600). For most Europeans during that time an account of human knowing would go something like this: God exists and knows everything. We human beings, made in his image, know only an infinitesimal part of what God knows. In fact, if we are to know anything, then we must come to know some part of what God already perfectly knows-and so revelation is required. Revelation can come through Scripture or the church's teachings or by the Spirit's illumination or through experience or by means of what we today call 'science' (Gibson 2013).

Based on Gibson's commentary and the worldview of this author, the Triune God of the Holy Scriptures is the source and focus of the worldview that forms the content herein. This Eternal God does not and cannot change. He is a living God, who interacts with His creation in ongoing creative and life-giving ways. He is the beginning (Alpha) and the end (Omega). The truth of the knowledge of God (both subjective and objective genitive) is unchanging. However, this truth is also living because God, who is omniscient and omnipresent, also desires to speak to His children. God Himself is living and active. Moltmann writes:

> It is not the changes brought by time which in the first instance require faith constantly to ask new questions about Jesus and his meaning for the present day. Historical and social changes do in fact cause old world-views and religious conceptions to become outdated, and lead to the construction of new ones. But this is only one side of christological revisionism. It is he, the crucified Jesus himself, who is the driving force, the joy and the suffering of all theology which is Christian (Moltmann 2015:119).

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The cross, the primary representation of the crucified Christ Jesus, is the anchor of this author's worldview. Moltmann's "christological revisionism" is not a subjective, individualistic rewriting of history; rather, it is a continuous revision of worldview and perspective. These are based on a deeper understanding of the crucified God who forms the basis of Christianity. "The problem intrinsic to every Christology is not merely its reference to the person called by the name Jesus, but also the reference to his history, and within his history, to his death on the cross" (Moltmann 2015:118).

Thus, the worldview on which this thesis is based is by no means "modern" insofar as a modern worldview espouses empiricism and rejects the supernatural. Neither is this thesis focused on the "progress of humanity" as an ever-upward trajectory. Likewise, the worldview of this thesis is not postmodern nor late-modern (as postmodernism rejects the concept of metanarrative and unifying concepts throughout history).

The worldview the author has chosen to believe enables this thesis to address the research questions presented in Chapter 1. The author has endeavoured to provide space for context and culture to drive revision of tradition, while remaining anchored in the unchanging nature of the divine revelation of the Triune God.

## METHODOLOGY

This thesis is organized with two methodologies. The first is the overarching form of this work, which follows the outline of Osmer's *Practical Theology*. The second methodology is the specific analysis, which is employed with the field research data — the grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory methodology is used insofar as the researcher has attempted to let the data drive the analysis, rather than starting from a set of themes or presuppositions and then trying to prove them. Thus, this chapter outlines these methodologies as they apply to the studied research.

Osmer summarizes his four-fold methodology in the following manner:

What is going on?
Why is this going on?
What ought to be going on?
How might we respond? (Osmer 2008)

These four questions form the major divisions of the current thesis as introduced in the previous chapter. Osmer further explains these four questions:

Answering each of these questions is the focus of one of the four core tasks of practical theological interpretation:

*The descriptive-empirical task*. Gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts.

*The interpretive task*. Drawing on theories of the arts and sciences to better understand and explain why these patterns and dynamics are occurring.

*The normative task*. Using theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations, or contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide our responses, and learning from "good practice."

*The pragmatic task*. Determining strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation versation with the "talk back" emerging when they are enacted (Osmer 2008).

The first task, the descriptive-empirical, consists of the review of field research conducted and current training materials, and subsequently, examination of background matters relevant to the thesis of this work. Finally, historical Lutheran sermons will be examined according to the evaluative criteria to be applied to the sermon samples gathered in the field. In this way, the information will be gathered to discern the patterns that answer the "What?" question that Osmer lists first.

The second task, the interpretive, takes the form of deeper analysis of the data gathered. An attempt will be made to forge the links between what is happening and why it has come to pass in such a way. This section will attempt to follow the principles of grounded theory in discovering the themes presented in the research data. Section chapters also will attempt to relate the field data to historical themes and trends. This will demonstrate how past methods and cultural contexts and norms have affected the practice of homiletics in Francophone

African Lutheranism. Attention also will be given to ways in which Occidental influences have affected African preaching.

The normative, the third task, will consist of careful study of two conceptual frameworks espoused by historical figures in Lutheran theology, Johann Gerhard and C.F.W. Walther. The objective will be to demonstrate that while Walther's Law/Gospel framework has its purpose and uses, Gerhard's "Salutary Uses" of Scripture offers a superior framework for constructing a homiletical theory for contemporary African Lutheranism.

The final task is pragmatic. Its goal is to propose a theory, or perhaps more properly, a conceptual framework for Francophone African Lutheran homiletics. The objective is to present a framework that considers all the factors examined in the previous chapters, synthesizes them, and presents a cogent and usable conception that will (hopefully) enhance and advance the practice of Lutheran homiletics in Francophone Africa.

## UNDERLYING METHOD/PROCESS

As a basis for the four-step methodology previously explained, this researcher will attempt to use what Osmer calls "phenomenological research" to build a conceptual framework. Osmer summarizes phenomenological research in this passage:

> This strategy seeks to describe the essence of a particular type of event or activity for a group of people. For example, it might ask: Among hospital patients, what is the essence of their experience of a caring interaction with a nurse?" A guiding assumption of phenomenology is the "intentionality" of consciousness, that is, that consciousness is always directed toward an object. Researchers attempt to bracket out their own preconceptions and to allow individuals' lived experience (their consciousness) of events or activities to disclose themselves. After gathering many instances of lived experience, they then analyze them to identify their common structure or "essence" (Osmer 2008).

In the case of this research, the lived experience under consideration is the formation received and the daily or weekly practice of preaching as exercised by research participants. The objective will be to find the common essence of this lived experience among the participants to postulate a larger common structure that can interact with the theoretical

material and contextual factors. This material and these factors will be included in the discussion in later sections. This will be executed through surveys and the collection of sample sermons for analysis. The goal is to allow the experiences of the participants to disclose themselves, and then to provide themes for exploration in further research.

The present author wishes to acknowledge the tension presented by being a "partial insider" doing qualitative research (see Chavez 2008; Ross 2017). Chavez expresses the connection between the researcher and research subjects as "You are like me but with some differences" (Chavez 2008:478). The present author was like the subjects in being a male Lutheran theologian interested in the practice of preaching. This author was different than the subjects in being white, American, and holding a postgraduate degree. Ross writes:

> Insider status offers many advantages to qualitative research, and particularly research positioned within a participatory or emancipatory paradigm. These advantages include ease of access to the field or participants; expediency of building rapport; nuanced and responsible data collection, taking into consideration community norms and values; and richness in the interpretation of the data in light of deep knowledge of the social, political, and historical context (see Chavez, 2008). At the same time, insider status can also bring challenges. Presumptions, on the part of researcher or participant, that there are shared understandings of important concepts may curtail their explicit discussion, or the nature of preexisting relationships between researcher and participant may make discussion of key topics risky or uncomfortable (Chavez, 2008)[5] (Ross 2017:327).

The present author does not wish to pretend at completely objective "outsider" perspective. At the same time, this author does not wish to pretend at a completely "indigenous insider" perspective, either (Chavez 2008:475). Rather, the present author wishes to be considered as an interested member of the theological and spiritual community to which the research subjects also belong, in a wide sense.

Specific data-collection procedures are discussed in the relevant chapters included herein.

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[5] Citation in original text

Inherent to the structure and content of the present thesis is the tradition of Lutheran orthodoxy that will help to give form to the arguments presented herein. The question therefore arises: What does Lutheran orthodoxy have to offer 21st-century African pastors? This excursus will attempt to offer a brief argument about why the Lutheran tradition has something to offer. Specifically, the author wishes to highlight the themes of unanimity and *sola scriptura*, as they relate to the work being offered here.

The *Formula of Concord* states:

[11] For that we embodied the above-mentioned writing, namely, the Augsburg Confession, Apology, Smalcald Articles, Luther's Large and Small Catechisms, in the oft-mentioned Sum of our Christian doctrine, was done for the reason that these have always and everywhere been regarded as the common, unanimously accepted meaning of our churches, and, moreover, have been subscribed at that time by the chief and most enlightened theologians, and have held sway in all evangelical churches and schools. [12] So also, as before mentioned, they were all written and sent forth before the divisions among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession arose; therefore, since they are held to be impartial, and neither can nor should be rejected by either part of those who have entered into controversy, and no one who without guile is an adherent of the Augsburg Confession will complain of these writings, but will cheerfully accept and tolerate them as witnesses [of the truth], no one can think ill of [blame] us that we derive from them an explanation and decision of the articles in controversy, [13] and that, as we lay down God's Word, the eternal truth, as the foundation, so we introduce and quote also these writings as a witness of the truth and as the unanimously received correct understanding of our predecessors who have steadfastly held to the pure doctrine (FC SD Rule 11-13 *Triglot*).

Here, in the "Comprehensive Rule and Norm," the later Lutheran reformers wished to make their stance clear with respect to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran confessional writings. The Formula of Concord upholds that the Bible always has been clearly confessed as the inerrant, infallible Word of God, "the eternal truth, as the foundation." This is not expounded at length in the Lutheran Confessions because it is granted as an *a priori* assumption; the confession is made, and it needs no explanation for the 16th-century original audience of the Confessions.

However, what the Reformers are careful to note is that the Confessions are not equal to the Scriptures, but rather built upon the eternal foundation of the Scriptures, "as a witness of the truth and as the unanimously received correct understanding of our predecessors." The Lutheran Confessions do not define the Scriptures nor sacred doctrine; rather, they bear witness to the eternal truth of the Word of God. Furthermore, the Lutheran Confessions are held to be symbols of evangelical unity in faith and doctrine. One may note from the paragraph excerpted above the number of references to unity: "always and everywhere," "common, unanimously accepted," "in all," and "unanimously received." These confessions are not private opinions of a single person or of a select committee, but rather are believed, taught, and confessed as the common faith of the evangelical Lutheran Church.

The argument here to be made is that this sense of catholicity and tradition commends itself to African contexts because of that basic sense of tradition. As will be discussed in Chapter Five, tradition is particularly important in African cultures (as it is in most cultures around the world). The sense of un-rootedness that plagues many Africans and African churches may be combatted, in a real sense, by rooting the hearers in the traditions of their ancestors of the faith. The Lutheran Reformers were consistently careful to maintain their place in the stream of tradition, staking their claim to be Church on this unity with the Church in all times and places. As will be discussed in later chapters, consensus and unity are important aspects of African cultures. This emphasis on the consensus of the Church is a facet of Lutheran hermeneutics that has the power to appeal to such cultures. Thus, Lutheran orthodoxy rejects novelty for novelty's sake.

Secondly, the Reformation emphasis on *sola scriptura* would seem to have much to offer Francophone African Lutheran pastors in the Twenty-first Century, in terms of giving a solid ground upon which the Church may put down roots. So much of African Traditional Religion may seem to be open to interpretation, subject to the whims of the shaman, witch

doctor, marabou, or whomever claims to have the right to speak for the relevant spirits.[6] Against this background, the insistence on the priority of Scripture as the Word of God rings clearly. Christianity is based in unchanging and yet living truth, not the vagaries of the weather or the premonitions of a man.

The principles of interpretation which will be discussed in Chapters 10 and 13 compose an important contribution of Lutheran hermeneutics to the work of the Church in Africa. Amid a religious milieu that privileges and centres the spiritual professional, in terms of secret knowledge and access, the Reformation principle of "Scripture interprets Scripture" may be quite meaningful. The interpretation of a passage does not come from some arcane communion with a deity, but from the Word of God, God Himself, coming alive in the text. Against the backdrop of a culture that is always pressing for more offerings to the spirits, more rituals, more sacrifice to the ancestors, the insistence upon the sufficiency of Scripture for salvation may prove quite refreshing. For as the Word reveals, the Word of God is the power of God unto salvation, without human works (1 Cor 1:18; cf. Eph 2).

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[6] One must acknowledge that this charge could be levelled against Christian preachers as well. This, of course, is exactly what *sola scriptura* aims to combat.

# CHAPTER 3 – REVIEW OF FIELD MATERIALS

This chapter presents a survey of the field data collected in the course of the author's research. Research methodology is presented, with a summary of the data. This chapter falls under the heading of Osmer's "What?". A deeper analysis of the themes revealed is included in Chapter 7, where this author delves into Osmer's "Why?"

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The original vision for this thesis included a broad scope of field research, with the goal to gather data from Lutheran church bodies across the Francophone countries of Africa. The author's goal was to assemble a wide sampling of responses. However, the COVID-19 pandemic imposed many constraints. These included roadblocks regarding international travel, as well as the cost of such travel in general, which resulted in an impractical goal of obtaining wide-range research. Electronic dissemination of research instruments was attempted, with very little response, and the responses received contained mostly unusable data.

Therefore, this author decided to shift from a broad surface sampling across Africa to more of a case-study model. For the purposes of this thesis, the Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne au Congo (EELC) has provided the field data which will be presented and analysed. Special thanks are owed to the Rev. Albert Koutia, president of the EELC, and to other pastors of this church body for providing their responses and sermon samples. The EELC served as the basis for the field research because this church body was the most willing and accessible for the present author to perform the research. The task, then, is to argue that the data gathered will yield analyses that hold true for other Lutheran church bodies also, which shall be undertaken in the course of this thesis.

The field research conducted took the form of two stages: written surveys and sermon samples. Once informed participant consent was gained, participants were given a written survey to complete. The questions were designed to elicit free responses, rather than

quantitative responses such as a Likert scale survey. Participants completed the survey in the presence of the researcher, who was available to answer questions or clarify the survey questions as necessary.

Secondly, participants were requested to provide written copies of sermons for analysis. The samples collected were analysed to present the themes and features observed, and allowed comparison to historical samples and ideal principles, which are presented elsewhere in this thesis.

## SURVEYS

During a two-week research timeframe in September 2021 in Pointe Noire and Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, ten surveys were completed by research participants: seven by ordained pastors and three by students enrolled in a program for pastoral formation.

The average length of service in the Holy Ministry among the ordained pastors surveyed was eleven years. Three respondents received their pastoral formation at the Institut Luthérien de Théologie de Meiganga in Cameroon. The other four were formed for the Ministry at the Centre Luthérien d'Etudes Théologiques (CLET) in Dapaong, Togo. Two of the student respondents previously studied at CLET, and the last is currently a student at the Centre Luthérien d'Etudes Théologiques – Congo (CLET-Co) in Pointe Noire, Republic of Congo.

The pastors who responded to the survey indicated that they all preach at least twice per month at a parish or preaching station. All indicated that some portion of Bible contents exist in their choice of preaching language. (The Lingala Bible is published in its entirety; however, only the New Testament is available currently in Kituba.) Several pastors indicated verbally to this author, as an aside to the survey questions, that their practice is to read the assigned texts, study the content, and prepare their manuscripts or preaching notes in French. These pastors then interpret their notes or adapt them extemporaneously according to the linguistic makeup of the congregation present at any given occasion. All the pastors, as well as

the students, indicated their confidence that their hearers were generally capable of reading and understanding biblical text when presented with it.

When asked which books were most used by pastors of their church body, most respondents mentioned the works of Wilbert Kreiss. Some referred to Kreiss' Bible commentaries; others cited various handbooks written by Kreiss. However, the work of Kreiss seemed to be a dominant influence upon the thoughts of this selection of preachers. The homiletics course written by Dr. Kreiss is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

The ordained respondents offered no firm consensus regarding the key influences in their formation as preachers. Only one respondent mentioned the role of tradition in his formation. Two mentioned preachers they had heard on the radio or seen on television as key influences; however, no evaluative comments resulted as to whether these preachers were positive or negative influences. Three responses mentioned professors who had taught these respondents. Four of the seven ordained responders spoke in various terms not about outside influences, but regarding contextual features, such as the assembly that will receive the message, the text to be preached, and the life experiences of the preacher.

Nine of ten respondents stated that they considered their classroom formation in the domain of homiletics to be adequate for their roles as preachers. The one who responded negatively noted that he had received a good academic foundation, but felt he lacked the practical experience necessary to become a good preacher.

On the question of preference for one of the lectionary texts over another – Old Testament, the Epistle, or the Gospel – seven out of ten responded that they had no definite preference nor tendency. Two indicated that they often used the Old Testament as an entry point or illustration to lead to the Gospel, then show how the Gospel fulfilled the prophesy or foreshadowing of the Old Testament. The final respondent indicated that he preferred either the Old Testament or the Gospel text.

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A wide range of doctrines was given in response to the question of which doctrines most often figured in sermons. One would expect to find justification, redemption, and repentance among those, and these are present. However, notable is the prominent mention of sanctification; three respondents mentioned this doctrine. Law and Gospel was mentioned only once.

The following question was posed to the participants: In your mind, what would be the characteristics of a sermon authentically African that is at the same time faithfully Lutheran? The responses varied somewhat, but they are summed up well by the following response:

> I will say that the characteristics of a sermon authentically African are thus: a sermon animated by the adages and the examples based on African modes of living. A sermon that channels the values, African morals, the dress, the well-being, and certain teachings well spoken Africanly[7] (Survey CG-E-003).

Interestingly, one respondent seemed of a different opinion regarding this question:

> I do not believe that one must have an authentically African sermon. But a good study of the texts for a good African application (Survey CG-P-006).

On the question of sermon forms or structures, the respondents offered various ideas, but the common thread was that the structure one chooses for a sermon must be guided by the text and must be able to transform the minds of the hearers.

The responses given would seem to indicate that the participants did not understand the question regarding Law and Gospel as a homiletical system, or at least not in the sense intended by this researcher. All participants affirmed Law and Gospel as an effective system for forming a sermon. Their responses reflect the twentieth-century Lutheran understanding of Law and Gospel as the interpretive lens for reading the Holy Scriptures.[8]

All participants agreed that many elements of their traditional culture could be employed to enrich their preaching. Fables, myths, adages, and proverbs were all mentioned

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[7] Survey responses provided in French; translated by the researcher. Please see appendices for original responses.

[8] This matter will be dealt with more thoroughly in Chapter Eleven.

by several respondents. However, one may note that the respondents all seemed to indicate that these cultural items would make good points of introduction or illustration for a text within the sermon. No indication existed that one might form a sermon based on such a cultural item as an integral part of the sermon's content.

The final question posed on the survey asked for the respondent's advice for a future preacher. Many spoke of the need to remain faithful to the Scriptures, the Law, and the Gospel. Knowing one's cultural context was also advised. However, one response is quite notable:

> A preacher to come should be at the side of an older, experienced preacher so that he can be counseled on the manner of preaching. Because you can leave a school of theology, but from there arrive in a context, and you must adapt yourself to the context. Here now is an African proverb that says, "While you are among squatting toads, you don't ask for a chair," which is to say that one must adapt oneself to the context. (Survey CG-P-002).

## SERMONS

In the course of the research conducted in September 2021, five sample sermons were collected by this researcher. Admittedly, this is a small sample pool from which to draw conclusions. However, a strong effort will be undertaken to offer an analysis of the responses received. Included in Chapter Seven is a discussion of themes and features that were uncovered.

Four of the five sermons followed the structure of "What? Why? How?" that this researcher so often has observed in many church settings throughout Francophone African Lutheranism. The sermon manuscripts ranged in length from two half-sheets of handwritten text to four A4-size pages of two columns each, double-spaced and typed.

The fifth sermon collected is rather simple in structure, more so than the others. It follows a structure of "Problem, Solution." Both sections are short and fairly direct, addressing the hearer's desire to be satisfied, and then the heavenly food that the Lord bestows to satisfy man's desires. Given the brevity, one may wonder whether this was intended as a full manuscript, or rather as a memory aid for a more extemporaneous delivery.

Three of the samples begin with an extra-biblical illustration, by way of introduction. Each one, after recounting a story or cultural phenomenon, uses the phrase "it is not a matter of …" to pivot from the introduction to the theme, and thereafter into the body of the sermon. In each sermon, the theme is clearly enunciated, as well as the preacher's primary divisions of his outline.

Each sermon concludes by means of a brief exhortation, either to fulfil the injunction announced in the theme or to urge the hearer to believe the promise offered by the text.

## CONCLUSIONS

The surveys collected provide more information for analysis than the sermons. Admittedly, as was noted above, the sample size for determining themes or trends among the sermons is rather small; however, a few common features have been noted above. Chapter Seven examines the content of the sermons in more depth.

The surveys offered a window into the mindset and background of the preachers who responded. This researcher noticed that the participants did not always completely understand the gist of the questions. This may have contributed to some deviation in the responses given. However, as noted in this chapter, adequate data exists to be analysed. Chapter Seven includes an analysis of the themes that were revealed.

# CHAPTER 4: REVIEW OF CURRENT HOMILETICAL TRAINING MATERIALS

A primary motivation for undertaking the work that is the basis of this thesis is the dearth of materials available for a Francophone audience. These materials are scarce for teaching either the theory or the practice of homiletics from a Lutheran perspective.

A simple search on Amazon.com for the search terms "lutheran preaching" yields 118 results in English (not all being relevant).[9] However, if one searches for "predication lutherienne" on Amazon.fr, one receives just four results, none of which are relevant.[10]

The four primary books, currently used to teach homiletics in Francophone African Lutheran institutions, are *Préparation de sermon* (2008) by Glenn Fluegge, *Le oui de Dieu et le non de Dieu : la distinction correcte de la loi et de l'Evangile* (2015) by C.F.W. Walther, *Cours d'Homilétique* (1996) by Wilbert Kreiss, and *La predication : communiquer la foi à l'ère du scepticisme* (2017) by Timothy Keller.

The Keller volume is a translation of his original work in English, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (2015). While Keller's work contains useful information for the general study of homiletics and an approach to preaching, he is a Presbyterian by confession, and his work thus reflects a more general Protestant theological foundation. Therefore, although Keller's work may be useful, this thesis does not consider this volume in depth.

*Le oui de Dieu et le non de Dieu* is a French translation by Wilbert Kreiss of the book *God's No and God's Yes: The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel* (1973), a condensation prepared by Walter C. Pieper of the longer original work by C.F.W Walther,

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[9] Search on Amazon: "lutheran preaching". April 5, 2021
https://www.amazon.com/s?k=lutheran+preaching&ref=nb_sb_noss_2

[10] Search on Amazon.fr: "predication lutherienne". April 5, 2021
https://www.amazon.fr/s?k=predication+lutherienne&__mk_fr_FR=%C3%85M%C3%85%C5%BD%C3%95%C3%91&ref=nb_sb_noss

originally published in German as *Die Rechte Unterscheidung von Gesetz und Evangelium* (1884-5). This volume – *Law and Gospel*, as it is commonly referred to in English, is often considered one of the foundational texts of homiletical theory, at least in Lutheranism in the United States, as well as more generally a key manual to understanding and interpreting the Bible. In fact, the 2010 edition of this (the larger original) work is titled *Law and Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*. A thorough review of Walther's work is discussed in Chapter Eleven. Herein, however, is a brief summary.

The condensed version is useful for many students because it takes a 457-page volume and reduces it to 105 pages.[11] The text is significantly simplified, and most of the extra-biblical references have been eliminated or minimized. If one did not have the original work with which to compare it, one may believe that *Le oui de Dieu et le non de Dieu* was a quite satisfactory little handbook to use to form a framework for a homiletical theory.

However, in condensing Walther's work so significantly, Pieper eliminated much of the supporting explanations, examples, and illustrative materials that make Walther's original lectures so instructive. When one sees only the abridged version, one misses much of the underpinnings of the material. Therefore, a framework built on this foundation is likely to have holes and gaps. This volume is taught, because it is available, but Walther's full lectures would be a great aid to students preparing for the pastoral ministry in Francophone contexts.

In *Law and Gospel,* Walther presents twenty-five theses, under which headings he proposes a general framework for understanding the relationship between and the differences between the Law and the Gospel as found in the Holy Scriptures. His method and theory have been taught for more than one hundred years as the key to formulating a Lutheran sermon that

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[11] Comparing English versions. No French translation exists of the complete *Law and Gospel*.

correctly interprets the Scriptures so as to proclaim the message of salvation to the hearers of the sermon. This work is discussed in depth in Chapter Eleven.

The other work mentioned earlier, *Préparation de sermon* by Glenn Fluegge, is a translation and adaptation of an earlier work by David Londenberg, titled *Sermon Preparation*. This writer is in possession of Fluegge's work in French, but has not seen Londenberg's work, nor has this author observed contemporary use of this work in Lutheran contexts in Anglophone Africa.

## PREPARATION DE SERMON – METHOD

*Préparation de sermon* is less of a theoretical model than it is a practical workbook for the exercise of constructing a sermon. The use of the verb "constructing" is intentional in this context. Of two hundred-plus pages, just nineteen pages are devoted to a discussion of the theory of preaching. The remainder of the volume is filled with worksheets and outlines to be completed by the student. The general concept of this volume is that the student, or novice preacher, goes through the steps of completing the worksheets as he studies a biblical text. Assuming the worksheets are filled in adequately and correctly, the process, at its end, should generate a sermon. Working from an outline, the preacher is expected to be able to write a draft, edit it, and then produce a final product.

In this way, the method taught by Fluegge may seem relatively straightforward to the novice preacher. Simply fill in the forms in the specified order and method, and out pops a sermon as the result. The idea is to simplify the sermon-writing process so that the novice preacher can learn it, adopt the habits, and build his own practice. However, the downfall of this method is that it leads to what one may refer to as "cookie-cutter" sermons, or sermons that seem mechanically constructed. This researcher received numerous complaints from students who were being taught this method; these students were learning the process, yet they thought the sermons generated as a result were boring and repetitive.

To illustrate the method taught by Fluegge, let us consider the steps in his process. *Unit 2: A method for the preparation of the sermon* begins the practical instruction. His first two paragraphs introduce the process:

> You have arrived at the practical point of this course, that is, at the preparation itself of a sermon. This unit looks to direct you step by step in a method for the preparation of a sermon. There are many different methods for the preparation of sermons. Certain of these other methods are also good. Certain ones are not. Certain ones are faster. Certain ones are slower. Certain ones are more difficult and certain ones are easier.

> In any case, this method which is proposed to you in this book is a very good method. It is a synthesis of several other good methods. There are without a doubt other steps which one could have added. Nevertheless, if you master all the twenty steps of this method and if you follow them faithfully without skipping steps, you will be able to preach very good sermons. That is to say, your sermons will be more faithful to the biblical texts and more effective for changing your parishioners. On the contrary, it is also true that if you let slide certain steps, you will risk not preaching good sermons (Fluegge 2008:27).[12]

Notice how carefully Fluegge instructs the students to follow the method and not to skip steps. "If you let slide certain steps, you will risk not preaching good sermons" might well strike the student reading this text as a threat – "Follow this method, or else you won't be a good preacher!"

To be fair, Fluegge then acknowledges that once a preacher has gained some experience, he will not need to complete worksheets for every sermon. Fluegge assumes that the *habitus* of a preacher will become to do these things automatically, without the physical worksheet.

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[12] *Vous êtes arrivés à la mise en pratique de ce cour ; c'est-à-dire, à la préparation propre du sermon. Cette unité cherche à vous diriger étape par étape dans une méthode pour la préparation d'un sermon. Il y a beaucoup de méthodes différentes pour la préparation des sermons. Certaines de ces autres méthodes sont aussi bonnes. Certaines ne le sont pas. Certaines sont plus vites. Certaines sont plus difficiles et certaines sont plus faciles.*

*De tout façon, cette méthode qui vous est proposée dans ce livre est une très bonne méthode. C'est une synthèse de plusieurs d'autres bonnes méthodes. Il y a sans doute d'autres étapes qu'on y aurait pu ajouter. Cependant ; si vous maîtrisez toutes les vingt étapes de cette méthode et si vous les suivez fidèlement sans brûler des étapes, vous pourrez prêcher des très bons sermons. C'est-à-dire, vos sermons seront plus fidèles aux textes bibliques et plus efficaces pour changer vos paroissiens. Au contraire ; il est aussi vrai que si vous laissez tomber certaines étapes, vous risquerez de ne pas prêcher de bons sermons.* Quotations from Fluegge are translated by the current author.

One reads:

We also must make a remark for your future ministry. It is normal at first to complete this worksheet step by step. This is necessary and good. Please understand, however, that the ultimate goal is to develop in yourself a *habitus* of a preacher, that is, a certain disposition or habitude for seeing and studying the text and for conceiving the sermon. Once you have attained this level, it will no longer be necessary to fill in word by word this worksheet. You will do the steps automatically, having already developed the good habits of a preacher (2008:27).[13]

Fluegge (2008:27) divides the method into five parts:

Discover the sense of the text;
Study the context of your hearers;
Prepare yourself for preaching to persuade;
Organize the content of the sermon;
Write the sermon.[14]

Within those five parts, he elucidates twenty steps for the homiletical process, the result of which is a sermon that is "faithful to the biblical texts" and "effective for changing your parishioners."

The first part, "Discover the sense of the text," focuses on careful reading and exegesis of a chosen text. It begins with reading the text many times, in multiple translations or versions, and then selecting which version the preacher will choose to read in the congregation. Next, the preacher reads the text again, observing the literary genre, and then posing the "Who? What? Why?" questions. He also should include any pertinent or interesting observations from the text.

Next, steps three through five are a study of the context of the text: literary features, historical information, cultural significance, etc. Steps six and seven are a literary and

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13 *Nous devons aussi faire une remarque pour vos ministères futurs. Il est normal au début de remplir cette fiche étape par étape. Ceci est nécessaire et bon. Veuillez comprendre cependant que le but ultime est de développer en vous un « habitus » du prédicateur ; c'est-à-dire ; une certaine disposition ou habitude de voir et étudier le texte et de concevoir le sermon. Une fois que vous avez atteint ce niveau, il ne sera plus nécessaire de remplir mot par mot cette fiche. Vous ferez les étapes automatiquement ayant déjà développé les bonnes habitudes du prédicateur.*

14 *Découvrir le sens du texte / Etudier le contexte de vos auditeurs / Préparez-vous afin de prêcher pour persuader / Organiser le contenu du sermon / Ecrire le sermon*

comparative study: understanding the discourse of the text, the meaning of words, and then highlighting the key words, ideas, and doctrines. Steps eight and nine involve a study of the key words and doctrines in parallel Scripture passages, and then in other resources – particularly with respect to doctrinal themes. Step ten is to read and take notes regarding published commentaries of the text, as much as possible. Finally, step eleven is to formulate the central idea of the text as one short sentence (Fluegge 2008:28-47).

Part Two: "Study the context of your hearers," turns from the biblical text at hand to the parishioners who will hear the sermon under construction. This part of the process is remarkably brief. Step twelve considers the liturgical context of the sermon and considers the occasion and the other pericopes associated with the day. Step thirteen calls the preacher to analyse the situation of the hearers. In effect, this analysis is rather superficial, asking only that the preacher consider current events or situations in the community that may possibly affect his preaching.

It should be noted that missing here is the historical, geographical, political, or spiritual/religious context of the people to whom the sermon will be addressed. No attention is given to issues of cultural hermeneutics, nor to linguistic or educational barriers. The importance of these factors is the focus of Chapter Five.

Part Three, "Prepare yourself for preaching to persuade," has three steps. In step fourteen, the preacher will identify the goal or purpose of the sermon. Step fifteen directs the preacher to identify the problem or malady being presented in the text, and how that problem presents itself in the life of the parish or parishioners (symptoms of the malady). In a somewhat helpful note, Fluegge urges the preacher, while bearing in mind the grand problem of "without Christ we are dead in our sins"[15] (Fluegge 2008:52), to identify the unique way that is communicated in the specific text at hand, that is, with the use of metaphors. Step sixteen is to

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[15] *« sans Christ nous sommes morts dans nos péchés »*

identify the mode of preaching the Gospel that is to be employed in the sermon. The idea is to match the specific aspect of the Gospel with the specific problem of the Law as identified in the previous step.

Part Four carries the title "Organizing the content of the sermon." Step seventeen calls for the preacher to write down the text and theme, and then the major outline points, using full sentences. Step eighteen augments this by adding details to the major points from the previous step, and then writing a simple idea of the introduction and the conclusion for the sermon. In a commentary regarding step eighteen, Fluegge offers various counsels and suggestions for developing the content of each major point of the outline. He encourages the preacher to use such rhetorical tools as illustrations, applications, real-life examples, and personal anecdotes to captivate, persuade, and convince the hearers. He gives concrete advice on formulating the introduction and conclusion as well.

Finally, Part Five is "Writing the sermon." Step nineteen is the writing of a first draft. The preacher is encouraged to write out in full each of the parts of the outline, but to do so quickly and in one sitting. The point is to get it out on paper, and then it can be edited, which is step twenty. The preacher is counselled to use easy-to-understand words and short sentences. Step twenty, lastly, is the writing of the final draft. The corrections, redactions, re-orderings, and revisions should all occur between steps nineteen and twenty, so that step twenty produces the polished result, which then is ready to be preached to the congregation.

The observed result of this method is not a pastoral *habitus* which leads to high-quality sermons which proclaim the Bible faithfully to change lives. Rather, the result is sermons that are formulaic and repetitive. (This was demonstrated in Chapter Three.)

## EVALUATION

Following the method that was reviewed above, Fluegge gives two sets of criteria for the evaluation of the sermon produced by said method. Each evaluation takes the shape of a

form to be filled in and scored, one by the preacher, and the other by an observing professor or supervisor.

First, Fluegge gives a form titled "Evaluation of Four Aspects of the Sermon"[16] (Fluegge 2008:66). The preacher is instructed to complete this self-evaluation, ostensibly as a step in the final editing process. The four aspects are orientation toward the hearers, original language of the text, Gospel, and concrete expressions. In each of these four categories, the preacher is instructed to make a simple count of the noted items, and then total them at the bottom of the page. The instructions indicate that the goal is to score at least 260 out of 350 points on this form so that the sermon may then be considered a good sermon (Fluegge 2008:67).

The first aspect is "Orientation toward the hearers." Under this heading, the preacher is instructed to count the number of times personal or possessive pronouns are used in first or second person. According to the instructions, the idea is that the hearers should be implicated in the sermon, which may be measured by the use of personal pronouns in the text of the sermon.

Second, the use of "Original language of the text" is to be scored. The preacher is to note four key words from the text, and then count the times each word is used in the sermon. The idea is to cause the preacher to use the language of the text:

> While you study a given text, search out the unique Law and the unique Gospel in this text. Mark these unique words in the text. Then, proclaim your sermons to your hearers using these unique words. Doing this, you will attract their attention and launch to them the challenge to believe and to act in ways different and new (Fluegge 2008:67).[17]

The third aspect to be scored is titled simply "Gospel." This rubric has two lines, one for "Gospel" and one for "Explicit Gospel." From the instructions, one is to understand that

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[16] *« Evaluation des Quatre Aspects du Sermon »*
[17] *Pendant que vous étudiez un texte donné, cherchez la Loi unique et l'Evangile unique dans ce texte. Marquez ces mots uniques du texte. Puis, proclamez vos sermons à vos auditeurs en utilisant ces mots uniques. Ce faisant, vous attirerez leur attention et leur lancerez le défi de croire et d'agir de façons différentes et nouvelles.*

simple "Gospel" means that the Gospel message is spoken of, but not in a clear and explicit fashion. "Explicit Gospel" means that the Gospel is proclaimed explicitly. Fluegge instructs:

> We can say 'Gospel,' 'good news,' 'believe,' and 'Christ' and we can speak of such. But, in doing this, it could be that we have not well explained what the Gospel is or why this news is so good. The Gospel can be sometimes hidden and implicit.
>
> 'The explicit Gospel' is the Gospel well explained and plainly revealed. It is clear and no longer hidden (Fluegge 2008:68).[18]

The preacher is instructed to mark the manuscript with an E for *evangile* or an EE for *evangile explicite* by each paragraph where the Gospel is spoken. In the tallying, each E is worth five points, and each EE is worth ten points. (The first two rubrics are simply counted, but not weighted in value.)

The final aspect to be evaluated on this form is "Concrete expressions." Under this rubric, the preacher is to count the number of stories or illustrations (worth ten points each) and the number of other concrete expressions used (only worth one point each). The idea, according to the instructions, is to encourage the preacher to use language that will appeal to the hearers, provoke thought, and touch their senses.

> We have spoken of the necessity of using the language of the five senses (faculties): what we can touch, see, taste, smell, and hear. You must describe things in a resounding fashion as if our hearers were in the moment in the process of seeing, tasting, touching, smelling, or hearing them. In doing this, you will make your hearers experience your sermon. Your sermon will contain nothing but ideas, but it will contain concrete expressions (Fluegge 2008:69).[19]

While the aim of this self-evaluation is positive – to make the preacher consciously aware of the language he is using – the effect of such a form, and the way it is explained, leads

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[18] *Nous pouvons dire « Evangile », « bonne nouvelle », « croire » et « Christ » et nous pouvons en parler. Mais, ce faisant ; il se peut que nous n'ayons pas bien expliqué ce qu'est l'Evangile ou pourquoi cette nouvelle est si bonne. L'Evangile peut être parfois caché et implicite.*
*« L'Evangile Explicite » est l'Evangile bien expliqué et pleinement révélé. Il est clair et non plus caché.*

[19] *Nous avons parlé de la nécessité d'utiliser le langage des cinq sens (facultés) : ce que nous pouvons toucher, voir, goûter, sentir et entendre. Il faut décrire les choses de façon éclatante comme si nos auditeurs sont actuellement en train de les voir de les goûter, de les toucher, de les sentir ou de les entendre. Ce faisant, vous allez faire expérimenter votre sermon à vos auditeurs. Votre sermon ne contiendra pas que des idées, mais il contiendra des expressions concrètes.*

further toward the notion that what counts as a good sermon is one that checks all the right boxes, accrues the correct number of points, and meets the quantitative metrics set forth. One need not work too hard to imagine a sermon that would score well on this sheet, but nevertheless be a quantifiably terrible sermon in several other ways. This form has no purpose other than to count instances of gospel enunciation or key word usage. There is no measurement for misappropriation of the text, doctrinal errors, or logical inconsistency.

The second evaluation included in Fluegge's work is the "Form for Evaluation of Sermon" for the field-work program of the seminary. In this evaluation, the sermon is marked on the following five points: presence in the pulpit, plan and logic of the sermon, Christian doctrine, study/comprehension of the text, and application. The intent is that a professor completes this evaluation while a student is preaching. This form is scored out of a total of twenty points: presence is worth two, plan and doctrine are each worth five, and study and application are worth four points each.

For two points, the preacher's presence in the pulpit is examined and considered: dress, voice, organization of the service, and pastoral comportment.

Worth five points are the logic and outline of the sermon. The professor notes the primary points of the sermon, such as introduction, theme, basic structure, and conclusion. The student is instructed to submit a written detailed outline or full manuscript before preaching so that the evaluator can follow and make remarks.

The doctrinal content, also worth five points, is considered next. Questions posed are: "What doctrines are underscored in the text? Are there theological errors in the sermon? Which? Has one made a clear distinction between the Law and the Gospel, placing the accent on the Gospel?" (Fluegge 2008:71)[20]

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[20] Quelles doctrines sont soulevées dans le texte ? Où ? Y a-t-il des erreurs théologiques dans le sermon ? Lesquelles ? A-t-on fait une distinction claire de la Loi et de l'Evangile en mettant l'accent sur l'Evangile ?

Next, the preacher's study and comprehension of the text is scored, allowing for as many as four points. This rubric scores the presented understanding of the historical context, the deeper sense of the text, and the key words and subjects of the text.

Finally, for the last four points, the professor evaluates the application of the text. Has the preacher used illustrations, proverbs, current events, etc. to apply the text? Do explicit links exist to the liturgical year and circumstance? Do the parishioners feel touched by the sermon? Was the sermon properly preached, or simply read?

This evaluation is more thorough than the first, not least of which because it is intended to give an actual course grade of the sermon and the preaching experience. It deals mostly with the actual content as opposed to simply quantifying metrics as the first evaluation did. However, it again runs the risk of reducing the practice of sermon writing to a series of metrics, more or less representing boxes to check off. If one is confirmed to have hit the right notes, the sermon is judged therefore as good. There is some, but very little room for evaluation of the effectiveness of the sermon in this form. However, as has been noted by various Christian authors through the years, one can preach a well-formed and doctrinally correct sermon, and still have it fail because it does not touch the hearts of the hearers.

## COURS D'HOMILETIQUE

Wilbert Kreiss (1928-2011) was a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church – Synod of France and Belgium. Throughout his career, Dr. Kreiss wrote numerous volumes of theology texts, encompassing the four disciplines of theology: dogmatics, Bible commentaries, practical courses, and historical introductions. One of his works that is still used for required study is the *Cours d'Homilétique,* the *Course of Homiletics*, written in 1996. Kreiss is regarded by many as the father of Francophone Lutheranism in Africa. He is remembered for his lasting impact on the Francophone African Lutheran churches across the continent.

This author learned that the Kreiss text is used in the CLET institutes in Togo and Congo-Brazzaville. It has been used as the standard for many years in Togo; it was only taught for the first time in the 2021-2022 academic year in Congo-Brazzaville.

At first scan through the text, one may note that Kreiss organizes his work as a formal textbook rather than a series of short explanations interspersed with exercises and worksheets, such as the Fluegge text evaluated above. Kreiss explains his goal in the preface:

> The truth revealed in the Word of God saves, certainly, but often enough it is announced such a way that one does not have much envy to hear it! Teaching the truth is one thing. Teaching it in a fashion clear, timely, attractive, and brilliant is another thing. That has always been my personal preoccupation in teaching and in preaching; that is to say, what one could call the "science of preaching." The present work is a condensation of this teaching and would therefore be a reflection of this preoccupation. It has no other ambition than this: to pose certain landmarks and enunciate the rules without the application of which it is not a good proclamation of the best news whatsoever, that of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ (Kreiss 1996:3).[21]

Upon examination of the table of contents, one sees that Kreiss spills much more ink in discussing the theoretical underpinnings of the sermon and of the homiletical enterprise than Fluegge. This section does not attempt a line-by-line close reading of Kreiss, but rather endeavours to note the general contours of his work. These notations are for the purposes of analysis, paralleling what was offered regarding Fluegge above.

Kreiss states in his introduction, "After a first chapter brief enough about the content of the sermon, we will tarry at length on its formal aspect, in other words, the fashion of preparing a sermon and of pronouncing it" (Kreiss 1996:6).[22] This evaluation focuses more on the content

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[21] *La vérité révélée dans la Parole de Dieu sauve, certes, mais bien souvent elle est annoncée de telle sorte qu'on n'a pas beaucoup envie de l'entendre! Enseigner la vérité est une chose. L'enseigner de façon claire, actuelle, attrayante et rayonnante, en est une autre. Cela a toujours été ma préoccupation personnelle dans l'enseignement de l'homilétique, c'est-à-dire de ce qu'on peut appeler la "science de la prédication". Le présent ouvrage est un condensé de cet enseignement et veut donc être un reflet de cette préoccupation. Il n'a pas d'autre ambition que cela: poser quelques repères et énoncer les règles sans l'application desquelles il n'est pas de bonne proclamation de la meilleure nouvelle qui soit, celle du salut par la foi en Jésus-Christ.* Quotations from Kreiss texts are translated by the current writer.

[22] *Après un premier chapitre assez bref sur le contenu de la prédication, nous nous attarderons longuement sur son aspect formel, en d'autres termes sur la façon de préparer son sermon et de le prononcer.*

section of the work than the method section; the content section includes some themes that will be relevant to later chapters in this thesis. The first paragraph of the content section is as follows:

> The Christian sermon, and more specifically the Lutheran, is a proclamation of the Word of God in its double message, Law and Gospel. In the Law, it shows to man his natural situation, his sin which is his malady. In the Gospel, it proposes to him a remedy, the only true remedy, the pardon and salvation in Christ (Kreiss 1996:7).[23]

This passage is worth noting because it displays the lens through which Kreiss reads the Scriptures and through which he exhorts the student of homiletics to read and interpret, namely, the "double message, Law and Gospel." As discussed earlier, this understanding is writ large in the work of Walther,[24] but it will be the argument presented later in this thesis that the "five-fold use" of Scripture is a more helpful lens. However, at the moment, let it suffice to highlight this theme in Kreiss' writing.

Kreiss proceeds through a quick summary of Walther's theses and the framework they represent. However brief, this undergirds the whole of the course, as Kreiss refers to Law and Gospel regularly as the interpretive lenses for the homiletical task.

Kreiss then moves to a discussion of what he calls "goal, malady, remedy." This is an interpretive method or framework that is often phrased in English as "goal, malady, means." This framework has its origins (at least explicitly) in Richard Caemmerer's *Preaching for the Church.* This 1959 work proposes "goal, malady, means" as a homiletical under-theory – a method for searching out the theme of a text and formulating a unified idea for a sermon. However, "goal, malady, means" has come to be abused and distorted into a sermon outline proper.

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[23] *La prédication chrétienne, et plus spécialement luthérienne, est proclamation de la Parole de Dieu dans son double message, Loi et Evangile. Dans la Loi, elle montre à l'homme sa situation naturelle, son péché qui est sa maladie. Dans l'Evangile, elle lui propose un remède, le seul vrai remède, le pardon et le salut en Christ.*
[24] As will be shown in Chapter 11.

To do Kreiss justice, he does not advocate for "goal, malady, remedy" to be a sermon outline proper. He notes that this terminology is not meant to be preached but, rather, is a means to guide the sermon to make it well-ordered and meaningful. He writes:

> The preacher will not use constantly and of stereotypical fashion the vocabulary 'objective, malady, remedy.' This would be a fashion of proceeding primary and school-child-ish that would do nothing but weary the hearers. Without utilizing this terminology, he will nevertheless always keep present in spirit that the Christians to whom he speaks suffer from different maladies, or, if one prefers, manifest symptoms of one malady that one names sin, that one must show to them and offer to them the remedies that permit them to care for their pain (Kreiss 1996:12).[25]

Throughout the text, Kreiss is careful to point out ways in which the preacher may fall into the trap of becoming formulaic or stereotypical, to the point of becoming boring or ineffective as a preacher.

Kreiss then moves to a discussion of choice of text for the sermon. First, he argues that a sermon must have a text as a basis. Then he makes the case that the use of a system of pericopes, or a lectionary, is a good thing and a great advantage for both the preacher and the congregation. However, he notes that the preacher ought not feel absolutely tied to the pericopes if a pressing reason exists to address another text or a special need in the life of the parish.

Regarding the careful study of the text, Kreiss spends much time inculcating the need for study, prayer, and reflection for the preacher to understand properly and apply correctly the text chosen. He remarks, "There is no good sermon without a conscientious explication of the text. Neither is there a good sermon without its judicious application to the hearers" (Kreiss

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[25] *Le prédicateur n'utilisera pas constamment et de façon stéréotype le vocabulaire "objectif, maladie, remède". Ce serait une façon de procéder primaire et scolaire qui ne ferait que lasser son auditoire. Sans utiliser cette terminologie, il gardera cependant toujours présent à l'esprit que les chrétiens auxquels il s'adresse souffrent de différentes maladies ou, si on préfère, manifestent les différents symptômes d'une même maladie qui s'appelle le péché, qu'il faut les leur montrer et leur offrir les remèdes qui leur permettent de soigner leur mal.*

1996:23).[26] His methods for textual study are standard; the student of homiletics will recognize them from any introductory course.

Passing on to practical matters, Kreiss then gives a sample schedule of the week, suggesting how the preacher may organize his activities relative to sermon preparation, to give the preacher time to study, ruminate on the texts, write a good sermon, and be prepared to preach the sermon well.

Kreiss then addresses the matter of a plan for the sermon. He acknowledges that this is not unique to sermons, but that every public address needs a plan or some kind of order and coherence. He exclaims, "Pas de gélatine en chaire! [No gelatine in the pulpit!]" (Kreiss 1996:29). A sermon must have a plan, so that the preacher does not wander to and fro, and so that the hearers do not miss the point for want of logical progression.

Kreiss notes the importance of a well-formulated theme for the unity of a sermon:

The theme should, if possible, respond to the following three questions: 1) What will with the pastor talk about? 2) How will he speak about it? 3) What goal is he pursuing? For example, the theme 'Repentance is necessary' responds to these three questions. It announces that it will be a question of repentance, that the preacher will demonstrate its necessity, and that he has as a goal to incite the faithful to persevere in this repentance (Kreiss 1996: 32-33).[27]

Kreiss then discusses how to find the theme in a given text, how to fix the trajectory of a sermon departing from the theme, and how to combine the message of a text with the needs of the hearers.

Kreiss compares the structure of a sermon to that of the bones of a skeleton. The theme is the spinal column, and the major points are the bones connected to it. He writes:

Once the theme has been formulated and the orientation of the sermon has been defined, it is a matter of developing it with the aid of subdivisions. Certain preachers write their sermons without worrying themselves about the formulation of subdivisions. The gifted

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[26] *Il n'y a pas de bonne prédication sans une explication consciencieuse du texte. Il n'y a pas non plus de bonne prédication sans son application judicieuse à l'auditoire.*

[27] *Le thème devrait, si possible, répondre aux trois questions suivantes : 1) De quoi le pasteur parlera-t-il? 2) Comment en parlera-t-il? 3) Quel but poursuit-il? Par exemple, le thème "La repentance est nécessaire" répond à ces trois questions. Il annonce qu'il sera question de la repentance, que le prédicateur en montrera la nécessité et qu'il a pour but d'inciter les fidèles à persévérer dans cette repentance.*

spirits come in here, but the grand majority of pastors work more rapidly and in a more coherent manner if they dissect their theme and pull out the sub-titles of the different parts of their sermon (Kreiss 1996:35).[28]

Kreiss continues to speak of the theme and the subdivisions of the sermon, giving several examples of themes and sub-points that do not advance the theme, and then good examples that do advance the theme. Kreiss is careful to note that no set formula exists; in fact, he repeatedly eschews formulaic sermon structures as boring and likely to annoy or drive away the hearers. One may appreciate, in distinction to Fluegge, that Kreiss gives ample examples of both what to do and what not to do. This section concludes with several examples of a theme with subdivisions, grouped by type: logical, chronological, or geographic/spatial.

Next comes a brief note on style and vocabulary, where Kreiss cautions the preacher to be aware of using good words in good order. "Running back to alliteration and parallelism, to contrast, to paradox, and to word plays is not within the reach of everyone, but it is this that can make the difference between a sermon which one remembers and another that falls into oblivion" (Kreiss 1996:39).[29]

Then, Kreiss passes to the elaboration of the sermon on the basis of the plan. He gives a few examples of more fleshed-out outlines, and then a few sample sermons, to show how one may easily move from the basic theme-subdivision outline to the detailed plan, to the manuscript. He emphasizes that once the hard work of developing the first outline is done, each successive step generally occurs faster and more easily.

As a last note on the pragmatic portion of the work, Kreiss gives some advice regarding the sermon's introduction and conclusion. The introduction must introduce the theme and give

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[28] *Une fois que le thème a été formulé et que l' orientation du sermon a été définie, il s'agit de le développer à l'aide de subdivisions. Certains prédicateurs rédigent leurs sermons sans se soucier de la formulation des subdivisions. Des esprits surdoués y parviennent, mais la grande majorité des pasteurs travaillent plus rapidement et d'une façon plus cohérente, s'ils dissèquent leur thème et en dégagent les sous-titres des différentes parties de leur sermon.*

[29] *Recourir à l'allitération et au parallélisme, au contraste, au paradoxe et au jeu de mots n'est pas à la portée de tout le monde, mais c'est ce qui peut faire la différence entre un sermon dont on se souvient et un autre qui tombe dans les oubliettes.*

the listeners a reason to listen. Likewise, the conclusion must give the hearers a reason why that sermon was worth the time they spent listening to it.

The major section of the text is devoted to editing and refining. Kreiss passes without delay to the use of creativity in sermon writing. He remarks:

> The necessity of creativity imposes itself all the more since we live in what has sometimes been called 'the age of apathy.' Never before has a generation been characterized like ours by the passivity and the lack of interest. This is perhaps the reason why one has such a need in our days of stimuli such as the tendency toward unrestrained consumption, the bombardment of media (radio, television, discs, not forgetting the singer who crashes his decibels into the ears), alcohol and drugs, and sometimes violence. The task of the preacher is the more difficult because one expects of him the performances of the specialists in communication that are the television presenters and the advertising specialists (Kreiss 1996:50).[30]

Kreiss emphasizes the point that creativity is necessary to capture the attention of the hearers, but he is also careful to emphasize that creativity and rhetorical practices must advance the message. He also reminds the preacher that the point of a sermon is that the sermon be preached. Preaching is an oral art; the sermon is to be spoken, unlike a journal article or literary work. For this reason, the message must be quickly captured. "Different than a newspaper article, the sermon is made to be heard and not read. Each of its ideas must therefore be captured immediately, at the precise moment when it is enunciated. It is not a question for the hearers to reread the sermon to ward off a moment of inattention" (Kreiss 1996:51).[31] He then gives a lengthy discourse regarding various ways to write the sermon creatively to hold the attention of the hearers and to impress the message into the memory of the hearers.

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[30] *La nécessité de la créativité s'impose d'autant plus que nous vivons dans ce qu'on a appelé parfois "l'âge de l'apathie". Jamais génération n'a été autant que la nôtre caractérisée par la passivité et le manque d'intérêt. C'est peut-être la raison pour laquelle on a tant besoin de nos jours de stimuli tels que la tendance à une consommation effrénée, le bombardement des médias (radio, télévision, disques, sans oublier le baladeur qui crache ses décibels dans les oreilles), l'alcool et les drogues, et parfois la violence. La tâche du prédicateur est d'autant plus difficile qu'on attend de lui les performances des spécialistes de la communication que sont les présentateurs à la télé et les spécialistes de la publicité.*

[31] *A la différence d'un article de journal, le sermon est fait pour être entendu et non lu. Chacune de ses idées doit donc pouvoir être captée immédiatement, au moment précis où elle est énoncée. Il n'est pas question pour l'auditeur de relire le sermon pour parer à un moment d'inattention.*

Then comes a section on critique, both the preacher of himself, and others of the sermon. In grand distinction with Fluegge, Kreiss offers no worksheet evaluation rubric for the sermon. Rather, he poses several questions for the preacher to reflect upon, to evaluate his own work. The reason for self-critique is to improve. He notes:

> The good is always the enemy of the best. The fact that it happens to a pastor that one gives him compliments on his sermons does not authorize him to install himself in self-satisfaction. Likewise, there is no preacher so bad to the point that he cannot make progress, likewise no one is good enough to not need to become better yet. Just so, after having preached the best of his sermons, a pastor must ask God to give him grace, sinner that he is. And not only to give him grace, but also to aid him to always do better (Kreiss 1996:61).[32]

Following in the same vein, Kreiss gives counsel for the preacher who seeks the critique of his wife. He does note that many pastors' wives do not give criticism of their husbands' sermons, whether from genuine love and appreciation, from a sense of un-qualification or inadequacy to judge, or from a sense that it is not their place. However, other wives judge their husbands harshly, sometimes from a sense of familiarity. He notes that a wife's feedback is helpful but is never completely objective and is always only the perspective of one person. "In a word, not only can the critique of a pastor's wife not be objective, but she is never more than the critique of one sole person, of a parishioner who cannot pretend to speak for others. For this reason, her remarks have no more value than those of whatever other parishioner" (Kreiss 1996:63).[33]

After this discussion, Kreiss offers encouragement for the preacher to solicit the critique and input of the parish in general. He offers several suggestions as to how to elicit feedback in

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[32] *Le bien est toujours l'ennemi du meilleur. Le fait qu'il arrive à un pasteur qu'on lui fasse des compliments sur ses sermons ne l'autorise pas à s'installer dans l'autosatisfaction. De même qu'il n'y a pas de prédicateur mauvais au point qu'il ne puisse faire des progrès, de même personne n'est assez bon pour n'avoir pas à devenir meilleur encore. Même après avoir prêché le meilleur de ses sermons, un pasteur doit demander à Dieu de faire grâce au pécheur qu'il est. Et non seulement de lui faire grâce, mais aussi de l'aider à toujours faire mieux.*

[33] *En un mot, non seulement la critique d'une femme de pasteur peut ne pas être objective, mais elle n'est jamais que la critique d'une seule personne, d'une paroissienne qui ne peut pas prétendre parler au nom des autres. Pour cette raison, ses remarques n'ont pas plus de valeur que celles de n'importe quel autre paroissien.*

constructive ways, noting that the pastor must also be willing to receive it. He suggests a form of survey to be presented to the congregants, for them to evaluate the subjective qualities of his preaching, such as his empathy, authenticity, and respect (Kreiss 1996:66-68). These questions are formed according to a Likert scale, for the pastor to compile easily.

Kreiss notes the need for a pastor also to seek the advice and encouragement of other pastors. He writes:

> Too often the pastor is alone, terribly alone to labour over his sermons week after week, year after year, without having the possibility to benefit in his homiletical labour from the lights of another or the constructive critiques of advised and experienced colleagues. Very often also, he does not dispose himself of a sufficient number of commentaries nor of homiletical material that could be useful to him. Briefly, he is alone, sometimes terribly alone with himself. Also, all that could be put into service for combatting this solitude and to profit from counsel, critique, and encouragement of others deserves to be (Kreiss 1996:69).[34]

After the sermon has been prepared, edited, and critiqued, Kreiss then gives counsel on the practical matters regarding delivery. (One need not delve into too much detail in critiquing this section, since the delivery of the sermon is not the focus of this thesis.) The last section is a series of appendices containing exercises to aid the preacher in developing the skills taught in the body of the text.

## EVALUATION – KREISS

Kreiss' work has much to commend itself to the student of homiletics. As has been demonstrated, he is quite thorough in his treatment of the work of preaching, from the basic theory to the "nuts and bolts" of the process. No doubt, one could study through this text and become a good preacher.

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[34] *Trop souvent le pasteur est seul, terriblement seul à travailler sur ses sermons semaine après semaine, année après année, sans avoir la possibilité de bénéficier dans son travail homilétique des lumières d'un autre ou des critiques constructives de collègues avisés et expérimentés. Très souvent aussi, il ne dispose pas d'un nombre suffisant de commentaires ni d'un matériel homilétique qui pourrait lui être bien utile. Bref, il est seul, parfois terriblement seul avec lui-même. Aussi tout ce qui peut être mis en oeuvre pour combattre cette solitude et profiter des conseils, des critiques et des encouragements d'autrui mérite-t-il de l'être.*

However, Kreiss does display the Occidental tendency toward deductive logic in his sermon structures. It must be noted that Kreiss wrote his manual for a French institution in France; therefore, one must not expect it to reflect African culture clearly. As is discussed in Chapter Five, African cultures are not like European nor North American cultures. In addition, certain forms of logic may work differently or appeal to different sets of hearers. One can appreciate that Kreiss' process of sermon preparation is much less "cookie cutter" than that of Fluegge, but it still tends toward Occidentalism. The antidote to this is, of course, the objective of this thesis.

Moreover, one sees a decided leaning upon the formulas and distinctions of Law and Gospel not only as a hermeneutical lens but as a homiletical framework. One sees no discussion of the "five-fold use" of Scripture which this thesis will advance as more appropriate to African preaching (and perhaps Lutheran preaching more generally).

## CONCLUSION

As will be examined in further detail in Chapter Five, Fluegge's method reinforces the mechanical nature of sermon construction. The observation of this writer is that these steps and worksheets are conceived from an Occidental understanding of the preaching task, and from an Occidental foundation of logic and thought processes. Masenya (ngwana'a Mphahlele) and Ramantswana assert:

> As previously stated, one of the effects of colonialism on the African mind-set was that of an inferiority complex. The latter complex meant that African people despised their Africanness and basically upheld (Euro) Western paradigms as the norm and standard. Looking at the history of colonialism and *apartheid* with their repression and imperialism, we wonder whether the colonial subjects had the option to stick to their own ways. For example, if the traditional forms of education became forcefully replaced by the Western mould of education, with the latter being the one which was positively rewarded, which option did our foremothers and forefathers have but to run away from their own ways in pursuit of ways which concretely promised rewards? (Masenya and Ramantswana 2015:2).

As discussed in depth in Chapter Nine, colonialist forms of education and the persistence of a Western-oriented educational philosophy continue to disadvantage African

preachers by the insistence on Western forms and Western evaluation criteria. What is lacking is an understanding of African thought and African cultural understanding not only of the hearers but of the entire ecclesial context.

The advantage of Kreiss over Fluegge is that Kreiss spends more time discussing the theory and higher-level concepts of sermon writing and does not engage in the worksheet-based mechanistic sermon generation of Fluegge. Therefore, there is less to be mimicked indiscriminately. However, there is still more room to improve. Hence, the goal of this thesis.

Therefore, in summary, the currently available materials for homiletical instruction in Francophone African Lutheran programs of pastoral formation are inadequate. These materials do not teach hermeneutics sufficiently. Fluegge teaches a somewhat adequate practice of reading the text for understanding of its content and structure. His material does not teach cultural hermeneutics, however. He neglects matters of culture, traditional wisdom, and questions of the "forgotten middle," which are discussed in Chapter Five. Kreiss offers more conceptual framework for homiletical practice, and his method is more grounded in the doctrine and practice of the orthodox Lutheran tradition. However, once again, one may notice a lack of consideration for African identity, which, as indicated earlier, is because his manual was written in France for a French institution.

In addition to a neglect of cultural considerations, neither Fluegge nor Kreiss spend much time or effort to inculcate the value of the great treasure which is the Lutheran orthodox tradition. The richness of this tradition offers another layer of soil in which to plant the roots of the preacher – the preacher who wishes to be faithful to both the Scriptures as the Word of God and to the culture and tradition of his hearers.

# CHAPTER 5: EXAMINATION OF BACKGROUND MATTERS

In their experience with the bible, African Christians in the mainline churches today are asking about the meaning and significance of the Jesus of the gospels for them; they are asking how the gospel message might be made to come alive in their communities and personal lives, and be really good news to them in their concrete life situation. They are asking how the message of the bible might be unleashed and made to be experienced by them. But the general experience so far has been that at best old worn out answers are repeated for these new questions and therefore do not just fit, and at worst answers given are in response to questions that were thought asked but which in reality had not been asked (Tutu, 1978:336)[35] (Ukpong 1995:3).

Justin Ukpong raises a rather salient point in the above statement. Because many missions and missionaries have failed to consider the cultural and contextual issues that interedt with the Gospel in the lives of hearers, the Gospel often fails to be "really good news," but instead answers questions unasked.

For this reason, this chapter examines background matters of significant relevance to the study of Francophone African Lutheran homiletics. Specifically, this chapter will undertake a survey of African traditional religions (ATR), cultural contexts, and the movements and issues of post-colonialism. As the chapter progresses, the focus will turn toward the relevance of these issues for biblical interpretation and homiletical theory.

## AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

The question confronting us now is, how do we find out what these two religions – Christianity and African traditional religions, have in common?... When we find what is common or uncommon to both religions, then we can finally decide which way to go. We cannot continue to deny ourselves the opportunity to do a thorough research into African traditional religions and cultures, while simultaneously, insisting that their system of spirituality is nothing more than paganism. What the West must come to grips with is the fact that, without Africa, there cannot be anything like Christianity. That is why it is important for Christians to know that Africa must be a focal point in their faith journey because, it is from there that all that we believe in began (Mawusi 2015:123).

One might object that Mawusi overstates his case in alleging that there cannot be Christianity without Africa. However, the truth exists that the development of orthodox creedal

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[35] Tutu is cited here by Ukpong.

Christianity is historically tied to Africa.[36] It is also true that one must take seriously the history and power of African traditional religions and their influence on the faith and spirituality of African people.

Gehman summarizes ATR thus:

ATR is composed of three basic components: belief in the Supreme Being, the spirit world (spirits subordinate to the Supreme Being) and mystical powers. Throughout Africa different peoples emphasize one of those elements. Some, for instance the Murle of the Sudan, emphasize the Supreme Being. Others, like the Zande, focus on magic and mystical powers. Many Bantu, such as the Akamba, focus on ancestral spirits. Some like the Yoruba have a fixation on the divinities. Thus each of the African peoples has its own religious flavour, emphasizing one or the other of the three main components of ATR. But throughout Africa there is a widespread belief, to one degree or another, in the Supreme Being, the spirit world and mystical powers (Gehman 2012:ix).

Because Gehman and many others have done well in unpacking the theology of African religions in great detail, this chapter will not seek to re-cover the same ground. Let it suffice herein to summarize briefly each main point that Gehman identifies in the above quotation.

Orobator writes about the Supreme Being:

Characteristically, God in African religious expressions is a boundless Supreme Being who presides over the whole of the universe. This God is without boundaries. For Africans, God is everywhere. We encounter God everywhere. God is not indifferent to the affairs of the world. The proverbs and the theophoric names quoted above are very explicit about the various concrete roles that God assumes in our daily and ordinary experience and existence. God is neither indifferent to nor remote from the affairs of the world. God creates the universe and everything that exists, as the Nupe sing. There are gods, divinities, deities, and spirits who have some powers to act, but when it comes to creation, life is the gift of the Supreme Being who alone gives life (Orobator 2008:22).

As one surveys the literature regarding the subject of ATR, a common understanding begins to emerge. The Supreme Being, speaking generally, is the source of creation. Ultimate power rests with this being. Without this being, nothing exists. However, some range of diversity is evident in terms of the Supreme Being's level of connection or interaction with the

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[36] Alexandria and Carthage were major centers of early Christianity, Alexandria being considered the second-most seat of the Church after Rome. Africa produced some of the leading theologians of the early Church, such as Augustine, Athanasius, Cyprian, and Clement ("Africa" 1907).

mundane world. Some people groups would assert that this being is transcendent, distant from the world of humanity. What one may call God cannot and should not be worshipped, because God does not get involved in human interactions. However, other cultures believe that this God is in fact intimately connected with and involved with the mundane and earthly sphere.

Gehman notes eleven defining characteristics of the Supreme Being, which he argues are common across African traditional religions. According to Gehman, God is real, spirit, unique, transcendent, everlasting, personal, omniscient, omnipresent, almighty, kind, merciful, good, and holy. He notes:

> No African community lacks a name for the Supreme Being; in fact, throughout the continent God is known by thousands of names that describe the characteristics of God. This demonstrates, as Bolaji Idowu affirms, that God is more than an abstract idea. He is real. Topor states that "the existence of God is as real to [the African] as his very existence…" He further declares: "The notion of God forms part of our cultural heritage. Both mystically and philosophically we are constantly confronted with the reality of God" (Gehman 2012:292).

This author has heard it said that one does not need to convince an African that God exists; rather, one must convince the African which God is the true God.

One may let Gehman's treatment of the characteristics of the Supreme Being stand for itself. However, one other note from him may be considered relevant to the current discussion. He writes, regarding the personal nature of God:

> Without presuming to speak for all of Africa, we have concluded that God in Africa is understood primarily as a personal Being and not a mere impersonal 'It' or 'Power'. Albeit for many African communities, ambiguity prevails concerning the personality of God with a personal relationship with God unknown. Although in some places prayer may not be frequently directed to God, every African community calls upon Deity for help in times of crisis. In response, God answers, although some people assume that God will not answer. The dynamic prayers of recent African Christian converts from ATR would suggest that they have always understood that God is a Person to whom one may talk. He is an intelligent Being who is also kind and merciful (Gehman 2012:295).

Thus, one may understand that, as a general principle, God is understood as someone who is Supreme, yet also accessible in some manner; a Supreme Being who is willing to listen and respond to the petitions of the faithful.

The importance of this concept cannot be escaped when one wishes to bridge the gap between ATR and Christianity. Of course, both systems of belief hinge on a Supreme Being, but, as stated previously, the question is *which* Supreme Being?[37] As St. Paul preached to the Athenians regarding the "Unknown God" in Acts 17, so the task for the Church in Africa is to proclaim the one true God of the Scriptures, shedding light on the question of which God is the real one.

If God is understood as the Supreme Being, the next descending rank is divinities or spirits. About these Gehman writes:

> Associated with the Supreme Being are lesser spirit beings. These divinities are spoken of as 'gods' who function as ministers of the Supreme Being. "Some West African societies regard them as children or messengers of God, while others look upon them as His agents. The divinities may be male or female, good or evil, and are given places of abode or habitats in the environment, such as the hills, rivers, the seas, trees, rocks, and even certain animals" (Gehman 2012:172).

The divinities or spirits are the intermediaries between the Supreme and the human. Thus, many Africans can firmly avow a strict monotheism and yet also venerate a host of lesser divinities, oftentimes without seeing any contradiction. The divinities are not God in the sense that the Supreme Being is God, but are, as Gehman notes, God's agents in the corporeal world.

In some cases, the divinities are natural spirits or controllers of natural forces, such as rivers, weather, or seasons. In others, the divinities are understood to be the spirits of the ancestors, the living-dead who are still among the living. Gehman writes:

> Other divinities are 'glorified heroes' or 'deified ancestors' who lived and reigned among the peoples in generations past. Over time these human beings become elevated to the status of a god. The whole process begins in the home where a deceased father is

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[37] One could open an entirely new debate regarding the metaphysics of this assertion. The current author acknowledges that the question of the Supreme Being may not be relevant in every context, but it does seem to be a general unifying feature in various forms of ATR, as Gehman and others have documented.

regarded as an *orisha*, an object of veneration. It can be argued that since the children revere the father in the home as an *orisha*, the living-dead grow in prominence in the extended family, the clan and the whole ethnic community. "From his research N.A. Fadipe wrote: 'All the *orisha* of Yorubaland are generally acknowledged to be in every case traceable to a human being. The devotees of nearly every *orisha* can tell the investigator who the human original of the *orisha* was… As a result of the general affection, esteem and awe felt for him by the population, the local hero was elevated to the rank of a common ancestor of a whole people'" (Gehman 2012:172-73).

This elevation of the honoured living to the status of divinity among the revered living-dead is not unique to Africa, but it certainly plays a central role in the ATR encountered across the continent. The honour accorded to the living-dead is a reward to these for their virtuous and worthy lives. In essence, they become the emissaries and intermediaries for the living vis-à-vis the Supreme Being. Orobator explains it this way:

> The living community also recognizes an ancestor as a departed relative who resides in close proximity to the Supreme God. Transition to the world beyond allows an ancestor the privilege of dwelling in the presence of the Supreme God. The family or community has clear expectations of its ancestor's role. In the ordinary life of the community an ancestor plays the dual role of intercessor and protector. The former is possible because of the ancestor's proximity to the Supreme Being, while the latter is a function of the continuing ties that the ancestor enjoys with his or her surviving relatives… Finally and most important, an ancestor is someone whose presence we can still feel and with whom we can still communicate because of our love for that person (Orobator 2008:114).

Writing from an insider perspective, Orobator sheds light on the function of the living-dead ancestors to the living. Notice the dual role he highlights: intercessor and protector. The living-dead serve as intercessors from the living to God; they also serve as protectors of the living against malevolent forces or judgments.

The relevance of this concept to the task of preaching is not to make the same mistake as early missionaries, who disregarded and dishonoured the living-dead and thereby alienated the living, the very ones they were trying to reach. The vital and essential nature of one's relationship with the living-dead is key to one's understanding of the relationship between the material and spiritual realms. The African preacher would do well to pay attention to the dynamics of power between the living and the living-dead in his cultural milieu. As Article

XXI of the Augsburg Confession encourages, the saints are to be seen as examples of Christian faith and life, but not as active powers in the lives of the living. One reads:

> Of the Worship of Saints they teach that the memory of saints may be set before us, that we may follow their faith and good works, according to our calling, as the Emperor may follow the example of David in making war to drive away the Turk from his country. For both are kings. But the Scripture teaches not the invocation of saints or to ask help of saints, since it sets before us the one Christ as the Mediator, Propitiation, High Priest, and Intercessor. He is to be prayed to, and has promised that He will hear our prayer; and this worship He approves above all, to wit, that in all afflictions He be called upon, 1 John 2:1: If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, etc. (AC XXI:1-4 *Triglot*)

By keeping this distinction in mind, the African preacher may do well to honour the ancestors of his hearers, yet keep them in their proper place with respect to the work of salvation.

The third sphere of ATR that Gehman identifies is the mystical powers. This may be considered what is known in anthropological circles as *mana*, magic, witchcraft, or sorcery. He writes:

> If we are to gauge the importance of a religious concept or practice by its prominence in traditional culture, then surely the ATR belief in mystical powers is of paramount importance. From the sheer preoccupation that Africans have given to witchcraft, sorcery, and magic, we may affirm that belief in these mystical powers was a focal concern for ATR.

> Mystical powers, an impersonal power (*mana* or *uchawi*) which permeates the universe, can be used for good or ill. Within ATR there is a delicate balance maintained. Specialists with extra-ordinary powers, either inherited, endowed by the ancestral spirits or purchased from local medicine-men, are the mediums through whom the numinous powers may be tapped, either for good or ill. Access to these mystical powers by the ordinary African was through these specialists who served either the interests of the community or the malicious designs of individuals (Gehman 2012:98).

Gehman identifies six general types of traditional specialists in the mystical realm: medicine-men, diviners, rainmakers, prophets, priests, and herbalists. Each of these functions in a discrete way to tap into the mystical powers of the cosmos and make use of those powers

for a designated purpose. These categories may overlap in a single specialist, but these all seek to manipulate natural or supernatural forces for the benefit of an individual or a community.

Gehman writes regarding the impact the belief in mystical powers has on the daily lives of Africans, highlighting Paul Hiebert's work on the "flaw of the excluded middle" in Christian missiology. Hiebert (as cited by Gehman) found that Christian theology rooted in Enlightenment philosophy saw Christianity as dealing with higher-level spiritual and supernatural realities, but not touching what could be called everyday mundane concerns.

> The result was that missionaries taught the gospel as providing the answer to the ultimate questions of eternal life but failed to address the major concerns of the Africans related to mystical powers and spirits. The gospel dealt with sin and eternal judgment, the cross and salvation from sin, living a godly life in this world and preparing for eternity with God in heaven. This surely is the heart of the gospel; but the gospel was never applied to the pervasive problems of the invisible powers of witchcraft, sorcery and magic. This failure to apply the full gospel to Africa's existential concerns resulted in a split-level Christianity with people converting to Christ but continuing with traditional remedies for the mystical powers. At one level they practiced the Christian faith but at another level they continued with their ATR worldview (Gehman 2012:157-58).

It is not that missionaries of the Enlightenment and early post-Enlightenment taught falsely in emphasizing preparation for the hereafter in their work. Rather, they neglected to engage critically with the worldview of their mission targets (as the people of Africa were often regarded) and instead ignored the entire issue of the mystical realm.

One need not spend much time at all in Africa before encountering traces of this. In Lomé, Togo, for example, to get from the airport to the resort hotels on the beach, one must pass by one of the largest markets for magical/spiritual items in West Africa. Virtually every village market has a seller of such items. Sometimes items are prominently displayed; other times, they are more hidden in the shadows of the marketplace. Even devout Christians who do not make use of mystical powers know of these sellers and items and are aware of what to avoid.

Nevertheless, the matter of the "excluded middle" still exists. How does a Christian deal with the daily changes and chances of life? Gehman writes:

> The Creator God has graciously revealed himself through the written Word of God. A contextualized theology for the Church in Africa will find great help from a careful study of the Old Testament. The whole environment in the Old Testament was a folk religion with emphasis on mystical powers and lesser spirits. Therefore, the Old Testament is rich in its teaching on the sovereignty of God in rebuttal to the pagan beliefs and practices infiltrating Israel from their neighbours. It should be no surprise, therefore, that in the Old Testament God repeatedly revealed his sovereign rule over *everyone* and *every power*. Scriptural teaching is remarkable on the comprehensive rule of the sovereign God over *everything* in this world (Gehman 2012:160).

One must look to the biblical narrative and texts, and identify the parallels, which are not difficult for seekers to find. As Gehman notes, the Old Testament world was much like the world of modern-day Africa in terms of spiritual practices and beliefs. What the West has, in large part, set aside thanks to the Enlightenment is still alive in Africa. The Scriptures contain the answer to the questions being asked.

Gehman continues:

> Through teaching and preaching, through meditating on the Scriptures, the people of God need to place their confidence in the sovereignty of God who is in control. Whenever sickness, accident or death occurs, Christians should not be frightened because of their faith in the sovereign God who is in total control. "I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, *I will not be shaken*" (Ps 16:8). When we know and trust the sovereign Lord, we can be assured that nothing is able to touch us. We rest in his loving, sovereign will (Gehman 2012:161).

Thus, as Gehman says, the biblical answer to the question of the "excluded middle" is to meditate upon and teach diligently the sovereignty of God, over and against the indigence of human life and experience. Chapter Twelve will examine the thought of Cilliers regarding the topic of preaching for change, which is important to consider when thinking of the sovereignty of God as juxtaposed against the immense suffering and trauma that Africa has experienced.

## CULTURAL CONTEXTS

African Traditional Religion, as has just been examined, is a large and complicated factor that must be well understood before the African preacher can speak effectively to his hearers in their context. However, the wider cultural context must be considered as well. Religion never sits in isolation from the rest of culture. Therefore, this section attempts to highlight a few significant factors in culture that should be reckoned with. In recognizing the diversity of cultural contexts across the African continent, no attempt will be made to isolate specific local features. Much of the current author's teaching experience was located in northern Togo, where most of the population lives in poverty and in semi-rural settings. However, the field research conducted for this thesis took place in major cities in the Republic of the Congo. Rather than making sweeping generalities, this section endeavours to raise some overarching topics for consideration.

> Although we acknowledge the complexity of defining an African identity, what is pertinent to us is more the affirmation of our African identity than its definition. Africans are who we are. An affirmation of our identity as Africans is an appreciation of our African selves. In his famous 'I am an African' address, Thabo Mbeki did not offer a technical definition of an African identity. Rather, Mbeki affirmed and asserted his African identity by associating himself with the land, its landscape, the animal kingdom, the history of the land and its people, amongst others. The latter history is located within the context of colonialism and slavery, institutions through which some came to the land whilst others had their lands taken away from them. An affirmation of our identity as Africans is an appreciation of our African selves. It entails pride in the African self, irrespective of our ethnicity, gender, skin pigmentation, nationality, social class, sexual orientation, region or geography and religion, amongst others (Masenya and Ramantswana 2015:3).

In the above passage, Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) and Ramantswana posit that it is not necessary to define at a technical, dictionary level what an African identity is. Rather, what is necessary is to affirm and appreciate that one may identify as African, with all the history, anthropology, and environmental associations that come with that identity. To be African is to affirm a connection to Africa.

One may argue that this base understanding is relevant to the discussion of the impact that cultural context has on Christian preaching. Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) and Ramantswana state, "For Africans to contribute meaningfully in the global village, they are not required to abandon their African optic lenses. Rather, it is through such lenses that they are called upon to contribute to the global intercultural theological or biblical hermeneutics table as equal partners" (Masenya and Ramantswana 2015:3). That is, Africans practice biblical theology – including homiletics – not by setting aside their African-ness, but by recognizing what colours the lenses through which they see.

The practical impact of this is that African preachers must feel free to embrace their cultural heritage and use it to their advantage, and to the advantage of their hearers. African cultures have a rich heritage of stories, proverbs, and traditional wisdom that can form a bridge into the proclamation of the Gospel. Likewise, the forms of traditional wisdom can be pressed into service of the proclamation without sacrificing the *kerygma*¸ that which is to be proclaimed.

Moon has produced some noteworthy scholarship in this realm, regarding the use of proverbs in communicating the Gospel in African contexts. He writes:

> Our basic assumption is that for a deep engagement of the culture and Scripture to occur a closer look at cultural symbols is needed. Indigenous symbols can open windows that reveal aspects of the culture that are otherwise hidden. Local proverbs are an abundant and useful source of symbols that are often overlooked. Mbiti noted, "Proverbs are common ways of expressing religious ideas and feelings." Proverbs, then, may serve as open windows into the worldview of the culture, thereby providing a good place to start in understanding the deeper aspects of culture. As this understanding of the culture is engaged with the Scripture in a hermeneutical community, critical contextualization can occur. Proverbs may be one of the tools that God has placed in African cultures to facilitation contextualization – and they are right under our feet! (Moon 2009:2).

This is one area in which orthodox Lutheranism has a meaningful contribution to add to the discussion. The Formula of Concord discusses the matter of adiaphora, or so-called "indifferent" practices; that is, practices that are neither expressly commanded by Holy

Scripture nor explicitly forbidden. The underlying principle is that certain matters are a question of Christian freedom and of a reasonable mind. These matters must be grounded in a faithful understanding of Scripture and must be employed to determine what is most edifying for the Church. One reads:

> [9] Therefore we believe, teach, and confess that the congregation of God of every place and every time has, according to its circumstances, the good right, power, and authority [in matters truly adiaphora] to change, to diminish, and to increase them, without thoughtlessness and offense, in an orderly and becoming way, as at any time it may be regarded most profitable, most beneficial, and best for [preserving] good order, [maintaining] Christian discipline [and for eutaxia worthy of the profession of the Gospel], and the edification of the Church. Moreover, how we can yield and give way with a good conscience to the weak in faith in such external adiaphora, Paul teaches Rom. 14, and proves it by his example, Acts 16:3; 21:26; 1 Cor. 9:19 (FC SD X:9 *Triglot*).

The freedom granted by a right understanding of this article means that African congregations can meld their cultural context with faithfulness to the Word of God and to orthodox Lutheran identity. Rather than sacrificing either their African-ness or their Lutheran-ness, a path forward may be charted to honour both of these aspects. This freedom does not provide license to do whatever one wants; rather, the Formula is clear that adaptations are to be made "without thoughtlessness and offense, in an orderly and becoming way," as befits the proclamation of the Gospel. This is precisely the freedom that this thesis chooses to magnify, opening space for the Francophone African Lutheran preacher to be all three of those things simultaneously.

## COLONIALISM AND POST-COLONIALISM

One cannot deny that colonialism has had an irrevocable and almost unfathomably deep impact on African society, at every level and in every sphere. This is a topic which is too vast and deep for the current thesis to handle in its entirety. However, the task is to give some understanding of how colonialism has affected the work of the Church and the practice of homiletics in Francophone African Lutheran churches.

The author and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon wrote regarding the colonial world of Africa:

The colonial world is a Manichaean world. The colonist is not content with physically limiting the space of the colonized, i.e., with the help of his agents of law and order. As if to illustrate the totalitarian nature of colonial exploitation, the colonist turns the colonized into a kind of quintessence of evil. Colonized society is not merely portrayed as a society without values. The colonist is not content with stating that the colonized world has lost its values or worse never possessed any. The "native" is declared impervious to ethics, representing not only the absence of values but also the negation of values. He is, dare we say it, the enemy of values (Fanon 2004:6).

Fanon's basic thesis is that entrenched between the colonizing powers and the colonists on one side and the "natives" or the colonized on the other side is a gulf of values. The colonist sees the colonized as somehow subhuman and devoid of – if not averse to – "civilized values." Thus, the exploitation of the colonies and the colonized peoples occurs not only in the name of economics, but also in the name of "progress" and improvement. However, such improvement toward what end? Fanon continues:

The decline of yellow fever and the advances made by evangelizing form part of the same balance sheet. But triumphant reports by the mission in fact tell us how deep the seeds of alienation have been sown among the colonized. I am talking of Christianity and this should come as no surprise to anybody. The Church in the colonies is a white man's Church, a foreigner's Church. It does not call the colonized to the ways of God, but to the ways of the white man, to the ways of the master, the ways of the oppressor. And as we know, in this story many are called but few are chosen (Fanon 2004:7).

This is the part that comes to bear on the present work: the matter of the Church's mission. Is it to bring the radical, transformative, liberating, life-saving message of Jesus Christ the Savior of sinners? Or is it to bring the message of conformity, submission, and obedience to a foreign ideal of what the world should look like all around the globe?

Fanon's point must be acknowledged. It is undeniably true that the Church and the Gospel message have been used as façade and pretext to enforce a Western worldview upon African peoples for centuries. The African mind has been colonized perhaps even more so than the actual soil or persons of African nations. Colonization of the mind is much more difficult to overcome than colonization of the land.

Fanon continues regarding the process of recovery and decolonization. He writes:

Since perhaps in their unconscious the colonized intellectuals have been unable to come to loving terms with the present history of their oppressed people, since there is little to marvel at in its current state of barbarity, they have decided to go further, to delve deeper, and they must have been overjoyed to discover that the past was not branded with shame, but dignity, glory, and sobriety. Reclaiming the past does not only rehabilitate or justify the promise of a national culture. It triggers a change of fundamental importance in the colonized's psycho-affective equilibrium (Fanon 2004:148).

The point is that, as much as the colonists and the colonizing forces may have oppressed the culture, history, and intellect of the peoples they colonized, these cultures cannot simply be wiped off the slate of history. Fanon would advocate for this re-balancing of the psyche of the post-colonial. The change is not simply a rejection of the influences of the colonizers, but an integration of the past with the future. Mucherera writes:

Much change has taken place in the religiocultural and psychological worldview of neocolonial indigenous nations, and more specifically in Africa, since the advent of Christianity and colonialism. Three different layers of stories exist in the African context: the precolonial or traditional, the colonial, and the post- or neocolonial stories. All three levels are important in addressing situations of narrative pastoral crisis intervention or counseling. The stories of precolonial or traditional times still form some of the foundations and are highly influential for indigenous people around the world. As much as the histories of most indigenous people were passed down orally, one cannot ignore this part of their story and expect to fully understand them (Mucherera 2009:4).

Mucherera writes in the sphere of pastoral counselling, but the principle stands equally as well in the realm of homiletics. One cannot hope to preach effectively to African hearers without engaging, or at very minimum being sensitive to, the three levels of stories mentioned above. These levels are part of what it means to be African; they are part of the narrative that forms African identity. The traditional story level was addressed previously within the heading of cultural context. One may now turn attention to the colonial and post-colonial stories.

Colonialism devastated African traditional societies in many ways. This is not a historical treatise nor a sociological essay, so this thesis does not delve deeply into these

matters. However, one cannot hope to construct a cogent theory of homiletics for practice in Africa without at least touching on this topic. Mucherera writes:

> The impact of colonialism and Christianity cannot be ignored in how it still affects the African context today. The colonizers and some of the missionaries did not view the indigenous peoples as worthy human beings. Africans were uncultured, and more like the animals. In other words, they looked like humans, but they were more animal-like than they were human. Some of the colonists' goals were to kill everything African within the African person and create a new African being, modeled after the European (Mucherera 2009:7-8).

As much as orthodox Christianity is founded upon principles of love, mercy, and grace, the missionaries of years gone by often made the mistake of conflating Christianity with European identity. Therefore, to be Christian was to look, talk, and live as a European. This story was promoted widely across Africa but is not unique to Africa. One may find the same history in North America and Australia, for example.

Mucherera again writes:

> Some of the missionaries and the colonizers believed that the best way to "save the savages" was educating them by Western superior methods and introducing them to the new religion of Christianity. One of the mistakes these early missionaries made was their not realizing that the new religion they were imposing was not a "pure Christianity," but one that was interwoven with their European culture. In many cases, the indigenous peoples were taught the ways of the colonizers before the Bible was introduced to them (Mucherera 2009:9).

In like manner, Labuschagne writes:

> The Bible became a colonising document and Christianity became entangled in the colonial conquest. Missionaries were fully committed to the ideals of colonialism: extending civilisation, establishing Christianity and bringing progress (Maluleke 2007:521). As bearers of Good News (and civilisation), it was unthinkable for them that dialogue with Africans could lead to a positive outcome; the only option was to convert Africans from savagery to civilization (Labuschagne, in Knoetze and Brundson 2021:243).

Fanon, Mucherera, and Labuschagne write extensively regarding the matter of the psychological and mental subjugation of African colonized people. The key point is to recognize the effects of the colonial mindset upon the generations of Africans who lived

through that era, and on those who have lived after them. According to Mucherera, ". . . the impact of colonization and Christianity can be seen today in some of the pastors who give the harshest critiques of their own traditional spiritualities, religion, and way of life as being backward and heathen. Others favour the Western structures over traditional ones, since the traditional ways are perceived as backward." (Mucherera 2009:10). His point is well taken; sometimes even African pastors do not realize the amount of colonial influence that still inhabits their mental space.

It is in this vein of thinking that Meylahn presents his conception of non-colonialism, instead of decolonialism. He writes:

> Decolonial thought, understood as that which autodeconstructs, auto-disrupts and disturbs the various colonial narratives or the dominant narratives because of the insistence of the Call, the insistence of the Flesh, or Life, or the persistent insistence of the Victims of the various colonial discourses. Yet, I will rather refer to non-colonial thought and non-colonial worlds, as decolonial thought can too easily be understood as a stance that understands itself as speaking for or in the Name of the Call, or Name of the Flesh or Name of Life, or Name of the Victim, which is then not decolonial but colonial, as it identifies and determines the Flesh, the Life, the Victim or the Call (Meylahn 2018:237).

The argument Meylahn emphasizes throughout his work is that postcolonialism or decolonialism is still shaped by colonialism. Often, postcolonialism becomes a negative image of what colonialism was – the mirror or opposite. Rather, Meylahn asserts that the goal should be to find a new thing, a more authentic practice which is not colonized or neo-colonized, but which allows the story of Christ and the story of His people to speak for itself.

Meylahn calls this trans-fictional praxis, which he elucidates by saying, "Trans-fictional praxis as Christ-*poiēsis* is not a work of thinking, but a stance regarding thinking, and as stance a way of life. Not the truth that is thought, but the truth of thinking and therefore as Christ said about himself (John 14:6), I am the way the truth and the life. A Christ-*poiēsis* that seeks to imitate Christ is a way and a truth of thinking, without that truth determining anything, but a truth about thinking itself" (Meylahn 2018:240). Meylahn wishes to argue that

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determinative thinking, absolutism, and dogmatism are forms of colonization of the mind. Rather, one must imitate Christ by adopting a stance of thinking about thinking.

Meylahn continues:

Yet, likewise, the imitation of Christ is an *imitatio* Christi and not a determination of Christ. Therefore, Christ is not "used" as *the* hermeneutical key with which to unlock, interpret and determine any truth, but in imitating Him one stands in a stance of a praxis, which is a way and a truth and thus a life. It is a way that is the truth about life, which always appears as *Dasein*, as *Mitsein* (Meylahn 2018:240).

Much validity exists in the stance that does not seek merely to use Christ to unlock further, more esoteric truths. It is true that Christ is the sum and content of the Scriptures, as He says, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life." (John 5:39-40) To read the Scriptures without Christ is a fruitless exercise; they will remain a walled garden, locked to the outsider. However, it is also true that Christ is not merely a magical formula to mystically unlock greater levels of god-awareness or some such (as the Gnostics have believed).

It may be argued that colonialists viewed Christianity – and by extension, Christ – as a means to the end of "civilizing" the coarse savages they encountered. To be Christian was, to them, to be genteel and European. It may likewise be argued that for the postcolonialists that Christianity often has become a means to drive out the colonialist influences, through movements such as Liberation Theology. Christ is the God of the oppressed and the subjugated, and He provides the catalyst for revolution, in this mode of thought.

Here Meylahn argues that the point of non-colonial practice is not simply to offer another alternative to colonialism, to establish a new determination of truth. Rather, trans-fictional praxis is about thinking about thinking. He writes, "In a trans-fictional praxis (the approach developed in this book), it is not about offering one more answer or response to the

insistent [Call] of such a tradition, but it is about seeking to understand thinking (sense-making and meaning-creation) and how this happens in contexts (worlds)" (Meylahn 2018:255).

There is certainly something there, in seeking to understand sense-making and how that happens in context. One could argue that this is the role of the preacher: to make sense of the world – to interpret the world that surrounds his hearers according to their current context but also according to the Eternal Word of God. This interpretation will allow each of these voices "to speak" in its own dialect (so to speak), and will seek to weave the voices together. The result is one web of meaning that has the power to animate the souls and lives of the hearers. This theme is re-examined in chapter fourteen, where this thesis endeavours to present a working theory of homiletical practice.

## COLONIALISM AND EDUCATION

One of the greatest realms where the colonial powers exercised their dominion was education. Mucherera writes:

> It is true that in many of the indigenous settings, the native people were introduced to systems of reading and writing, which continue to work to their advantage to this day. They've seen some of the benefits brought about by the new educational system, of being able to read and write, and took advantage of them. One the other hand, the new system also created havoc mentally in the way it was introduced. The intent of the colonizers was to educate the indigenous people for the sake of easy communication and to train them to be servants of the colonizers (Mucherera 2009:11).

The education of Africans by colonizers was designed to facilitate their subjugation and domination. In many cases, this meant the forced education in a foreign language, such as English or French, with the goal of eradicating "tribal" differences between ethnic groups. In some cases, as noted before, socio-cultural "re-education" came before the actual evangelism that the missionaries were supposedly tasked with doing.

Labuschagne writes:

What is referred to as theological education in Africa, has for too long been nothing more than European theology in Africa. This is, therefore, an alienating curriculum, where the intellectual efforts do not correlate with the experience of most Africans

(Naidoo 2016a:2). These Eurocentric educational models not only prescribe the content but also the way in which knowledge is acquired and taught (Labuschagne, in Knoetze and Brundson 2021:244).

As was related to the current author, and personally observed by the author, the legacy of French education in Africa is a system of memorization and regurgitation of information. The professor lectures and the students frantically scribble notes for later memorization. Then, exams consist of parroting back to the professor the delivered maxims and dicta. Critical thinking is not encouraged; rather, it is actively discouraged. Questions are welcomed only in the manner of repetition of what was stated in the lectures. If the students challenge the authority or the words of the professor, these challenges are perceived as disrespectful and unwarranted. Gaga reports this also to be the case in Nigeria. He writes:

> The lecturing system now compels students to cram the lecturer's notes word for word for examination. Therefore, most seminary students no longer read for understanding but for getting good grades, even if after the 'good grade' the students do not remember anything or imbibe a transformed lifestyle that the subject intends (Gaga, in Knoetze and Brundson 2021:224).

The effect of the Western university model of education has led to an emphasis on the intellectualized practice of theology, rather than the lived experience and exercise of the Christian faith, Gaga argues. He continues, "Theological education in Africa did not spring from an African philosophical point of view. It was rather imported and was embraced hook, line and sinker without cultural and geographical substantiation to fit into our context" (Gaga, in Knoetze and Brundson 2021:224).

This author has observed that the result of such an educational system is that the students' minds become filled with the level of information necessary to function in a field, but they are not moulded into thinking inquirers or searchers. To describe it in Old Testament terms, these students have knowledge but do not possess wisdom. The practical implication of this, as this author witnessed, is that students become quite adept at passing exams based on

knowledge learned, but they are somewhat poor at putting the information memorized to good use outside the lecture hall.

In the practice of homiletics, this mindset is painfully evident in the students' efforts when they pontificate from the pulpit. This mindset, too, can oftentimes be seen in older or mature pastors in African churches. As noted in Chapter Four, the "cookie cutter" method, as exemplified by Fluegge's manual, is well suited to this sort of educational system. It directs the preacher to move through the steps in an almost scientific fashion, like feeding data into a machine (if you will). The goal is to receive a finished, complete product at the other end. As a result, critical thinking and serious reflection is not necessary to obtain a satisfactory result, and so it often does not happen. It is as Gaga wrote: "a considerable amount of time and resources is put into training leaders, but when they go to the field there is no reflection of what was learnt" (Gaga, in Knoetze and Brundson 2021:231).

Nieman writes about the necessary distinction between practice and technique, which is quite helpful in this discussion. He writes:

> Practices are 'focal' about meaning, drawing us through a practice into a closer engagement with what is signified. At their best, practices focus us in a way that is integrative and sustaining. Contrast this with how we are involved with techniques. Because they separate reality to means and ends or problems and solutions, techniques may help us briefly satisfy a particular challenge but fail to offer the broader patterns of significance that practices can convey. In their tendency to fragment and isolate, techniques are quite literally meaningless (Nieman, in Long and Tisdale 2008:25).

This is the argument advanced in Chapter Four regarding the work of Fluegge. His manual is a prime example of technique without underlying practice. It is mechanistic and reductionist, solving a problem by producing a product, but without inculcating a habit of engagement. Kreiss' work does much better at driving toward practice rather than technique, but still lacks the key component of engagement with the patterns of significance in the life and context of the African preacher.

Nieman continues:

This distinction is important because the meaning-laden quality of practices can become distorted in a problem-solving pedagogy as a set of techniques to be mastered. The result may be technical proficiency at a task robbed of its ability to convey wisdom or value. Effective teaching of practices is judged, by the way it retains a concern for focusing and this conveying significant meaning (Nieman, in Long and Tisdale 2008:25).

As a teacher in Togo, this author several times experienced students asking for help. They recognized that their homiletical theory and practice was inadequate and unsatisfactory, but they could not pinpoint what was "wrong," except that they recognized their sermons were boring, to put it plainly. The students realized that more options existed that just the mechanistic and repetitive process they had learned in class on one hand, or the seemingly scatterbrained diatribes that often passed for preaching on the radio or the television on the other hand. However, as Nieman indicates, their mastery of techniques had robbed them of the ability to convey wisdom – in this case, the ability to proclaim the Word of Life effectively.

Gaga argues that the answer to this problem is the practice of *paideia*, of personal formation. He writes:

Christians from the beginning have used *paideia* as a philosophy of learning because it fully embraces the approach of facilitation. According to Brock and Brock (1993:6), believers in Christ living within the Hellenistic culture already have conceptualised and accepted Christianity as a form of *paideia* because it is a kind of learning approach that results in the transformation of the person. Furthermore, they affirmed that as Christianity has taken the form of *paideia* from time immemorial, it is, therefore, the accurate theological education approach that provides a person the right understanding of who God is and results in a changed life (Brock & Brock 1993:9) (Gaga, in Knoetze and Brundson 2021:229).

While this is not a thesis regarding educational philosophy or curriculum design, one may consider Gaga's point regarding "the transformation of the person" as it applies to the practice of homiletics. Certainly, transformation of the hearer is the objective of the sermon – to proclaim the death of the sinner and the resurrection of the forgiven saint in Christ Jesus. However, personal transformation is also important for the formation of the preacher. He must be transformed into one who bears the message of Christ in such a way that it infuses his being

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and flows out in his proclamation (as one reads in Kreiss). When the preacher is transformed by the Gospel, he preaches as one transformed, and his message carries the transforming power of Christ.

## POSTCOLONIAL THEOLOGY

The Ghanaian author Emmanuel Lartey offers a summary of the term *postcolonial* as follows:

> In the religious milieu 'postcolonial studies' have largely been used to signify a 'style of inquiry, an insight or a perspective, a catalyst, a new way of life' or more poignantly as 'a collection of critical and conceptual attitudes'. It is as a form of criticism that postcolonialism seems to me to be most poignant (Lartey 2013:ix).

That is, Lartey views postcolonialism as a form of criticism that seeks to examine and work with the knowledge, insight, effects, and so forth that were abandoned at the end of the colonial era. In the introduction to his book, Lartey explains that the title *Postcolonializing God* is intentionally grammatically ambivalent. "As an adjective, 'postcolonializing' qualifies the divine, offering thoughts describing an aspect of the nature of God. In this sense, the study is of ways in which God may be seen to be present and active in the world" (Lartey 2013:xiii). God, therefore, is the actor in the process of postcolonizing His Church in Africa (and elsewhere). He does the work to strengthen, invigorate, and sustain the Church.

> Conversely,

> As a verb, 'postcolonizing' articulates the nature, acts and activities of communities, leaders or people who seek to establish communities of faith or else who produce or provide regularly or occasionally rituals or ceremonies that, reflecting the decolonizing nature of the divine, are plural in form, diverse in character and which subvert and overturn the hegemonic conditions established through colonialism creating forms of spiritual engagement that more truly reflect categories of thought and life that emanate from an African, rather than a European, way of being and thinking (Lartey 2013:xiii).

In other words, "postcolonizing" describes the actions and activities that religious communities and leaders undertake to make Christian theology an authentic part of African spiritual life. This means, for Lartey, overturning the European domination in theology and spirituality, and allowing Africans to think and live as Africans in the Kingdom of God.

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Lartey posits seven features of postcolonializing activities. These will be briefly examined, because they do form an important part of a framework for current theological praxis in Africa.

First, Lartey argues that "postcolonializing activities are *counter-hegemonic*, insurgent, even subversive in nature and character" (Lartey 2013:xvi). He means that where colonial patterns and establishments have been set to the detriment of the colonized people, postcolonializing activities must seek to overthrow and dismantle these patterns and structures.

"Second, postcolonializing activities are *strategic*. In other words, they bring into critical focus the dialogical nature of relations between theory and practice, and result in actions with transformative intent in the world" (Lartey 2013:xvi). These activities are intentional and focused, with a goal to achieve a "transformed existence for all" (Lartey 2013:xvii).

"Thirdly, postcolonializing activities are themselves *hybrid* and they promote multi-dimensional discourses and practices. They are deeply *variegated* and *plural. Diversity* is a hallmark and desired end of postcolonializng processes" (Lartey 2013:xvii). These activities promote synthesis and dialogue between sources and disciplines, without giving privilege to one domain over another in strict demarcation.

"Fourth, postcolonializing activities, in engagement with the previous features, are deeply *interactional* and *intersubjective*. They emphasize the social and global nature of phenomena and encourage approaches to subjects that engage interactively with all people's experience in the discourse on any subject" (Lartey 2013:xvii). The relational aspect of the process is emphasized here. The goal is to engage with the subjects of transformative practice, so that they are involved in the process of their own transformation.

"Fifth, postcolonializing activities are *dynamic* in nature. They recognize that issues are in a constant state of change and flux" (Lartey 2013:xvii). Change is something to be prepared

for, and is to be embraced as part of the process. Lartey takes this openness to change as a sign of maturity.

"Sixth, postcolonializing activities are *polyvocal*" (Lartey 2013:xviii). All voices are invited and encouraged to join the discussion. New perspectives are desired and sought, especially from those who have been traditionally underprivileged or marginalized. The uneducated, differently able, or simply different are intentionally included.

"Seventh and finally, postcolonializing activities are *creative*. They call for and produce new forms of being, institutions and practices" (Lartey 2013:xviii). He notes that creativity is not simply improvisation with colonial leftovers, but rather "generation and utilization of new practices, methods and material in the development and promotion of substantially different forms of activity that go beyond the status quo inherited or established as standard by colonizers" (Lartey 2013:xviii).

In these seven features of postcolonializing activity, one sees an ambitious program. However, as Lartey argues throughout his book, these are necessary facets of the work of postcolonializing African theology and church life.

It is the position of this thesis that these features also apply specifically to the homiletical task and the African preacher. The focus of this thesis is to offer an alternative to the established patterns handed down from previous generations, which did not and do not serve to engage with the lives and hearts of the African hearers of the Word.

Homiletical theory, which one hopes then translates into practice, is certainly intentional. The preacher must know what he will say and why before he mounts the pulpit to proclaim "Thus saith the Lord." Furthermore, the preacher must be intentional also toward the goal of speaking the Word of the Lord for the transformation of the hearts and lives of the hearers. The Word of God is a powerful transformative and postcolonializing force all on its

own – much more than simple information. The preacher wields a sharp two-edged sword (Heb 4:12), and he must handle it with care and intentionality to accomplish the goal he desires.

Hybridity is a topic that this thesis hopes also to encourage. The Word of God reigns supreme in forming the substance and content of Christian preaching. However, the preaching of that Word must also synthesize the elements of culture and society that play crucial roles in the lives of the community. Cross-pollination among domains of life is essential to forming a well-balanced homiletical theory and practice.

No one could argue against the need for homiletics to be interactional and relational. The preacher must know his hearers and understand their context and society. Not only must he be in dialogue with them to gain this insight, but he must be in contact with their cultures and societies. Knowing these facets of his hearers' lives, the preacher can bring cultural features into contact with the transforming power of the Gospel.

It is a goal of this thesis to provide a homiletical framework that allows space for dynamism and change. The Word of God does not change, but the world changes and we change with it. Therefore, any homiletical theory that wishes to remain of value must include space for change to occur as needed, without sacrificing fidelity to the message of the Gospel.

The voice that must sound most clearly and dominantly from the pulpit is the *viva vox evangelii,* – the living voice of the Gospel. However, the preaching of that Gospel is wrapped in human language and culture. Therefore, the voices of the communities in which it is to be preached must be heard. The preacher must be careful to attend to the marginalized voices in his context. The Gospel must speak with the power and wisdom of God, and in a voice that can be heard by all.

Finally, this thesis whole-heartedly affirms the need for creativity in the preaching task. The theoretical framework that is offered in upcoming chapters is designed to encourage

creativity, so that the voice of the Gospel never becomes dull nor irrelevant but falls like fresh morning dew upon the ears of the souls in need of "the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

Lartey offers remarks regarding postcolonializing pastoral care which are also relevant to the preaching task:

> Communities, and therefore individuals, are set within cultures. Whole cultures can promote and maintain healthy communities which in turn nurture individuals who are well. Cultures, in which the signs, symbols, tendencies, ideologies and covert assumptions are disrespectful of human persons and death-dealing, cannot produce healthy communities. Communities that result from the postcolonializing pastoral care activities and practices referred to do bear the hallmarks and characteristics of health, safety and human dignity, interpersonal, communal and inter-communal well-being (Lartey 2013:122-23).

One key task of the preacher is to proclaim the message in such a way that the power of the Gospel is brought to bear on the death-dealing and disrespectful aspects of a culture. The dismantling of colonialism is an important part of the African preacher's task; it is accomplished by establishing the reign of God in the midst of the particular milieu. The Gospel proclaims health, safety, dignity, and well-being to those who are lost, lonely, and suffering.

Heaney writes regarding the need for what he calls a "post-colonial imaginary;" that is, a way of thinking and imagining the world that expresses the realities and the visions of a post-colonial world. He argues that post-colonial theology fits into this program. He writes, departing from comments on post-colonial arts:

> Writing of the best of contemporary poems, Mary Oliver describes them as brimming from 'the particular, the regional, the personal.' This is the first attribute of a post-colonial theology. It is concerned with the particularity of place and people in relation to power, empire, and colony (Heaney 2019:163).

Further, he continues, "Likewise, a post-colonial theology gives voice or takes heed of the voices that have been suppressed by colonialism and coloniality" (Heaney 2019:164). One may be tempted to the extreme of rejecting the voices of the past if they do not fit with the decolonizing program, but the *via media* would be to allow the voices of one's culture and context to speak while also remaining rooted in the traditions and language of orthodox credal

Christianity. In this sense, post-colonial theology allows the synthesis of culture and theology to produce a Christianity which is authentic and still traditional in the best sense of each. "It is (contested) theological articulation emerging from the sociality of experience. It is speech together that gives life" (Heaney 2019:164). What better way to give theological articulation scope and space than from the pulpit? What better way to speak life than to proclaim the Lord of Life authentically and faithfully?

Moltmann poses the question: "Which God motivates Christian faith: the crucified God or the gods of religion, race, and class?" (Moltmann 2015:287). This is a question worth grappling with, for all Christians, but especially for the preacher. Is the God who is preached the crucified God – the Jesus who died on the cross for sins of the world – or is it the God of the colonialists, the anti-colonialists, or the post-colonialists? He is truly the God of the poor and marginalized.

# CHAPTER 6 – HISTORICAL LUTHERAN SERMONS

This chapter endeavours to examine a sample set of sermons from three historically significant Lutheran preachers. The goal of this examination is to attempt to gain an understanding of how these historical figures preached, as a general habit. The examination will then enable this researcher to posit certain criteria of what may be considered useful in terms of homiletical framework or theory, to best further the thesis of this thesis.

The sermons examined in this chapter are sampled from the works of Martin Luther, Johann Gerhard, and C.F.W. Walther. This author selected these sermons from works translated in English. To facilitate analysis and comparison among the three sets, this author chose to use sermons preached from each preacher on the same biblical text. Because much of Gerhard's work has not yet been translated into English, that corpus was the limiting factor and the influence regarding the choice of sample sermons. Therefore, from each preacher the following sermons that are considered include content from the following feast days: The Purification of Mary, The Visitation, and St. Michael and All Angels. The discussion of these sermons will follow this order (representing the order they fall in the Church year).

This author selected these three preachers to represent three key eras in the development of Lutheran homiletical practice. Martin Luther set the benchmark of what Lutheran preaching could be, as he sought to reform the practice of preaching in the face of the medieval Roman Catholic practice. Johann Gerhard represents the period of high orthodoxy in Lutheranism, often referred to as the "Golden Age." Moving from Luther to Gerhard reveals how Lutheran preaching matured and took shape in a differentiated manner as its distinct tradition. Finally, the author selected C.F.W. Walther because of the great influence his *Law and Gospel* has had on Lutheran doctrine and practice for the past nearly 150 years. Studying his sermons allows one to see how Walther himself put his principles into practice. In this way, taken together, the

estimation of the current author is that Luther, Gerhard, and Walther offer a set of criteria which may be used to judge Lutheran sermons, across eras and cultures.

The question raised is: how do these three long-dead German theologians represent something normative for contemporary, postcolonial Africa? Why are their sermons important enough and prototypical enough to be considered as standards for evaluation today?

The answer to that is twofold. First, one anchors one's homiletical practice in the greater stream of tradition that unifies the Church. This is an important aspect in developing a set of evaluative criteria or guiding principles for homiletical practice from the works of three preachers considered to be of historical significance, not only for a small sect but for Lutheranism around the globe. While Lutherans do not consider the consensus of the Church Fathers to be an authoritative source of doctrine, neither is this idea something to discard. This appeal to the wisdom of the fathers should appeal to the African sensibilities; this is also a key element of traditional education in many African cultures.

Second, the conclusion to this chapter will present, and then Chapter Eight will discuss in more detail, how Luther, Gerhard, and Walther used texts in ways that fit their circumstances and contexts. They each used the same Word of God and the same passage of Scripture, yet they used their individual freedom as preachers and pastors to develop sermons that spoke to their particular hearers in their contexts. In this sense, these three preachers represent a normative example for African preachers of how not to become slavishly attached to methods and models that can become rote, boring, and binding as shackles.

How can these three dead German men be an influence on contemporary African preaching? What about modern African voices? This is precisely the conversation that the present author hopes to open and to hold space for with this thesis.

The examination will consider the sermons of each preacher, first one by one and then as a set. After the three have been examined, the conclusion of this chapter will attempt to draw

some conclusions in general by comparing and contrasting the three sets. This will give some criteria or evaluative norms to facilitate the evaluation of field data, which is included in Chapter Eight.

Please refer to Chapter 6b for an excursus on the history of Lutheran hermeneutics.

## MARTIN LUTHER

The Luther sermons under consideration in this chapter are found in the *House Postils* (1996).

### Purification of Mary

The sermon for "The Day of Mary's Purification" from 1537 is based on Luke 2:22-32, and it follows this structure:

Introduction
First Division
Second Division
Conclusion

By means of introduction, Luther speaks about the history of Candlemas, and how it in some way relates to the ancient ritual of welcoming Proserpine back from the underworld. However, he does not develop that thought or dwell long upon it.

In the first major division, Luther identifies three elements of the account: purification, presentation, and offering. He poses the question: Why does Luke deal with these matters? His answer comes in two parts. First, Luke treats these events to indicate the burden of the Law. Luther then uses this as an occasion to condemn the abuse of freedom under the Gospel. Second, Luke uses these events to show that Christ subjected Himself to the Law for us. Luther unpacks this to show how Christ took upon Himself the judgment of the Law to redeem us when we could not do it ourselves.

The second major division reviews the text known as the *Nunc Dimittis* – the Song of Simeon. Luther in this section uses a step-parallel structure to show how Simeon experiences and proclaims the truth, but is rejected; likewise, Christians also have the truth but are rejected.

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First, Luther speaks of how Simeon sees with the eyes of a prophet. Christ is the Savior and the Light of the Nations, but not all people see or hear. Second, Luther points out that Simeon is made a heretic by those who reject the pure Light. Luther wastes no opportunity to condemn the Papacy for refusing and even shading the Light. He ends this section by emphasizing that one does not become a child of God by following the requirements of the Law.

Finally, the conclusion re-emphasizes that Christ is the Light and Savior of the world. Luther ends with the consolation that Simeon, after having seen Christ, is prepared to depart (i.e., to die) in peace.

### Visitation

The sermon for "The Day of Mary's Visitation" from 1532 is based on Luke 1:26-38, and it follows the same structure as the aforementioned sermon.

The introduction is brief. According to the sermon, in Luther's time the Visitation was an occasion to pray Mary's aid against the Turks. However, Luther asserts, it is properly a time to thank God for another revelation of Christ.

He enunciates the two major subjects of the sermon: The example of Mary with respect to outward works and morals, and the example of Mary with respect to praise and thanksgiving.

In the first major division, Luther speaks at length regarding outward works and morals. He extols Mary's virtue, noting that she is the Mother of God and yet still comports herself as a lowly maid. She is diligent in service to Elizabeth and John. In contrast, we are arrogant, becoming puffed up by any minor good fortune.

In the second major division, Luther treats the Magnificat, which, he says, shows us "how we should comport ourselves toward God." (Luther 1996 3:347). We should declare truthfully by humbly what God has done for us. To magnify the Lord is to humble oneself, says Luther. We are to praise God for His gifts, recognizing that they are His treasures, not ours.

The conclusion offers a recap of the subjects, reminding the hearers what was said regarding modesty and about thanksgiving.

### St. Michael and All Angels

The sermon for the "Day of St. Michael and All Angels" from 1532 is based on Matthew 18:1-10, also following the above-stated structure.

In the introduction, Luther speaks of how God could maintain creation on His own, without assistance. However, God has chosen to establish his creation to include creatures who serve each other.

In the first major division, Luther reminds the hearers that the devil's forces are constantly seeking to cause trouble. It is only the holy angels who restrain them. As Luther proclaims, when God wishes to punish or discipline humans, He withdraws the holy angels and allows the devil's forces to act. As a case study, Luther takes up the account of Job. He arrives at the point that it is only of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed by the devil's schemes.

In the second major division, Luther focuses on the special work of the angels in protecting children. He draws from this the conclusion that we must therefore honour the young and care for them properly, since God esteems them so highly. You offend God and His angels when you sin against a child.

Finally, the conclusion makes the clear point: if angels serve children willingly, so should we.

## JOHANN GERHARD

The Gerhard sermons under consideration in this section are found in the *Postille*, translated by Elmer Hohle (Lutheran Legacy 2012).

### Purification of Mary

As the Luther sermon for the same occasion, the text for this story is found in Luke 2:22-32.

Gerhard introduces the sermon by speaking of instances in the Old Testament when the glory of God entered the Temple. He asserts that these are symbolic, prefiguring the glory of

Christ entering the Temple. From there, he announces his intent to discuss both the presentation of Christ in the Temple and Simeon.

In the first major division, Gerhard states that the Old Testament Laws regarding purification are fulfilled in Mary's purification and Jesus' presentation. The need for and rites for purification confess that we are conceived and born in sin. This text presents the confession that we are sinful and in need of purification, but then it presents the consolation that Christ was offered and has purified the sinner.

From there, Gerhard asserts that Christ wanted to submit Himself to the Law for three reasons: 1) to show that He sanctifies us, 2) to show Himself the true firstborn from the dead among many brothers, and 3) to fulfil Old Testament prophesies.

In the second major division, Gerhard presents Simeon as an example of piety and faith, and an example of how to prepare for death. He lists six ways Simeon models these things: 1) heart lifted to God in prayer, 2) longing for death as a welcome guest, 3) awaiting death patiently at God's discretion, 4) at all times found in God's service, 5) peaceful heart, and 6) seeing Christ with the eyes of faith.

Gerhard does not have a clearly identified conclusion.

### Visitation

This sermon also is based on Luke 1:39-56.

Gerhard introduces the sermon by comparing the Song of Miriam in Exodus with the Magnificat.

He announces the three parts of the Gospel lesson as the three divisions of the sermon: 1) Mary's journey to Elizabeth, 2) her conversation with Elizabeth, and 3) her song of praise.

In the first major division, Gerhard notes that Mary took the journey to visit Elizabeth, motivated by the Holy Spirit. He uses this to remark that the Holy Spirit motivates good works from faith, namely devoutness of spirit, gracious kindness, inward spiritual joy, and readiness to serve. He highlights how Mary displays these characteristics as an example to the Christian.

In the second major division, Gerhard notes that Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, which is why the unborn John the Baptist jumped within her womb. Gerhard posits that this meeting was the first ecclesiastical synod of the Church, and those present passed a series of resolutions: 1) Christ is true Man. 2) Christ is true God. 3) The two natures are personally united in Christ; therefore, Mary is truly the Mother of God. 4) Not only is Christ the blessed fruit of the body, but through Him we become blessed. 5) The merits and blessings of the Messiah are imparted by faith. 6) True faith appropriates Christ's merits.

The third major division treats the glorious song of Mary, who sings full of the Holy Spirit. Gerhard presents five reasons for her praise: 1) God's favour to her in particular, and therefore an acknowledgement of her lowliness; 2) God's mercy; 3) God's majesty, and the special attributes of God; 4) God's might and strength; and 5) God's truthfulness.

Gerhard then concludes the sermon by matching lines from the Magnificat with Old Testament prophetic statements. His goal is to demonstrate the connection between the Prophets and Mary's song.

### St. Michael

This sermon also is based on Matt 18:1-11.

In the introduction, Gerhard uses the simile of an unborn child being carried in the mother's womb. If one wishes to harm the child, one must also harm the mother. Whoever would harm a Christian must likewise offend against God. God sends the holy angels to guard us against harm. Therefore, the sermon is to consider 1) how the angels manifest themselves toward God and toward humans; and 2) how we are to conduct ourselves concerning the benefits of the angels.

In the first major division, Gerhard first discusses how the holy angels behold the face of God. This means that they glorify God: they know His will; they are confirmed in blessedness; and they carry out His commands. Secondly, the holy angels serve us; that is, they protect us in body and soul, and they minister to us in times of need.

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On this basis, Gerhard mentions four reasons why the angels serve humans: 1) their obedience to God; 2) honour to Christ, including His humanity; 3) reflecting God's perfect love; and 4) we will one day join them in heaven.

In the second major division, Gerhard addresses the question: How should we conduct ourselves? He answers this in four points: 1) acknowledge the loving care of God; 2) pray that the angels continue to protect us; 3) do not give offense against those whom the angels protect; and 4) engage in true humility, following the pattern of the angels.

The conclusion is rather abrupt, ending the sermon with a rebuke to guard against sinful pride.

## C.F.W. WALTHER

The following sermons are found in *Gospel Sermons, v.2* (Concordia Publishing House 2014).

### Purification of Mary

This sermon is based on Luke 2:22-32.

In the introduction to this sermon, Walther states, "That God receives a person no matter when he repents… is a most precious, comforting truth." (Walther 2014:224). However, one should repent while one has the chance.

From Simeon, we learn the advantages which Christians enjoy in death: 1) that Christians are safe from the danger of a wretched death, 2) they have already conquered death, and 3) they go through death into inexpressible happiness. Walther prays that Christ would keep us faithful in repentance until we enter heaven.

In the first major division, Walther says it is true that God receives a sinner whenever he repents, but it is a foolish risk to delay. Repentance involves honesty with oneself and terrors of conscience, which are quieted by apprehending the promises of the Gospel. Therefore, one dies peacefully without fear who dies in repentant faith.

In the second major division, Walther asserts that those who served the Lord in life are prepared to die. The bitterness and sting of death is taken away. The death of Christ has stripped death of its power. Therefore, the servant of Christ is not sad nor frightful, yet hopeful, in the face of death.

In the third major division, Walther speaks of how death leads us into eternity. He asserts that there are degrees of bliss, just as there are degrees of damnation. The one who serves God all his life will have a better reward in heaven, says Walther.

In conclusion, one must not waste the grace and glory of God but repent while there is a chance to do so.

### Visitation

This sermon is based on Luke 1:39-56.

The sermon begins with a prayer that the Holy Spirit would visit the faithful.

In the introduction, Walther notes how the Old Testament is useful for teaching us how the Christian life is lived. He enunciates a theme of the social life of Christians, discussing 1) upon what their social life is founded. 2) what makes it so lovely, and 3) wherein its blessings consist.

In the first major division, Walther addresses the question of why Mary visited Elizabeth. It was a matter of shared faith, grace, and love. He asserts that all Christians – despite their differences – are alike in faith. Therefore, they are naturally spiritual brothers and sisters.

The second major division considers the question of what makes Christian fellowship so lovely. Walther argues that it begins with mutual joy over the Lord's blessings. In contrast, the children of this world have no joy, but spend their efforts in selfish endeavours. Christians, rather, trust one another, respect one another, and tell one another what the Lord has done for them.

In the third major division, Walther explains wherein the blessing of Christian fellowship consists. Mary and Elizabeth were furthered in their faith and piety by their

fellowship in the Spirit. On this basis, they freely and reverently praised the Lord. Even weak Christians are blessed by fellowship with other believers.

The conclusion to this is that, since we have this fellowship, let us use it. Satan wants to hinder Christian fellowship, but the Holy Spirit will keep us in fellowship with each other and with the Father until we enter heaven.

## St. Michael and All Angels

This sermon, as the previous for this occasion, is based on Matt 18:1-10.

The sermon begins with a prayer that the Lord would prepare our hearts to mingle with the angels.

The introduction discusses how the people of this world want to deny the spiritual world and the existence of angels. However, the theme of the sermon is the benefit of faith in the existence of angels. This faith 1) furthers knowledge of God, 2) strengthens trust in God's assistance, and 3) incites zeal in His children to serve God.

In the first major division, Walther discusses how God has revealed what is necessary for our salvation, but God has not revealed everything. However, from what He has revealed, we see what a great God He is, to create such wondrous creatures as angels.

In the second major division, Walther remarks that, as exalted as the angels are, God commands them to serve humans. With angels as our attendants, we must not be anxious regarding the dangers of the world. The angels protect us and our children, even in the hour of death.

The third major division announces that the angels' highest joy is in serving God; therefore, our greatest joy should be likewise. Therefore, one ought to repent and turn to Christ for forgiveness. Then one can serve Him gladly with the angels.

In conclusion, Walther says, someday you will stand with the angels in heaven, praising God.

## CONCLUSIONS

One commonality that is readily visible among the three sets of sermons studied is the structure. All of these sermons follow a deductive method of thesis and supporting points. They all have in common a clear objective and significant points to accomplish that objective. Gerhard's sermons are the most carefully structured, while Luther's sermons tend to be the most organically developed; yet, but they all begin from a theme and work through two or three main points to develop that theme.

What is also noteworthy is that although the three preachers tend to use the same sermon structure repeatedly, the main points within the structure are different and unique to each sermon. Unlike the sermons collected in the field research for this thesis, the sermons from Luther, Gerhard, and Walther do not confine themselves to a typical "cookie cutter" ready-made form. Rather, they are developed from the text or the theme at hand and they refer back to the text and occasion.

Another common point among the sermons is that these three preachers do not seem to concern themselves with the quantity or balance of Law and Gospel in their sermons. Rather, they speak from the text, generally, and let the intent of the text drive their proclamation. By modern standards, strictly applied, these sermons may even be rated as poor Lutheran sermons because they do not proclaim explicitly the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the justification of the sinner. However, there is no mistaking that these sermons are biblical and faithful to the text. It is the position of this thesis that these preachers were more interested – whether consciously or unconsciously – in applying the fivefold use of Scripture than in the narrower categories of Law and Gospel as a hermeneutical framework.

Luther does not seem interested in balancing his proclamation of Law and Gospel. Rather, he preaches the text according to the needs of the hearers, and he speaks according to his context. One finds that his sermons tend to be full of teaching and reproof. The Gospel comes in the form of consolation, usually with respect to God's mercy in not leaving things as

they were. Judging from the sermons sampled, Luther tends to be the most tied to the text in terms of his structure. It is explicit that his major divisions are arranged according to the flow of the text, even if he then uses the verse as a point of departure to go in his own direction. In this way, he is less thematic and more textual, to borrow twentieth-century categories.

Gerhard's sermons are demonstrably the most well-organized of the three sets, in terms of logic and internal coherence. He is a master at making points, sub-points, and sub-sub-points. The form of deductive logic is clear in his sermons, even to the point of the use of numbered lists.

Gerhard's sermons tend to be more didactic than those of Luther or Walther. However, he often connects the teaching with a point of rebuke or reproof. Then, he is rich in consolation when he delivers the Gospel message. Again, Gerhard does not seem to concern himself with balance of points but proclaims the message he sets out to preach. He uses the most quotations from Scripture, by far, weaving together passages from all over the Bible to support the point he is making at any given juncture.

Walther's sermons are also well-structured and clear. However, in comparison to Luther and Gerhard, Walther tends to favour the paideutic use of Scripture. His sermons seem to focus more on training the saints for the Christian life than those of the other two preachers. Walther also seems the most thematic in his preaching. He takes his theme and uses the text to support the theme, rather than Luther's method of drawing his points from the text. Even coming from the father of Law and Gospel in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and modern Lutheranism more broadly, he does not follow the strict categories and limitations of Law and Gospel, which are often placed upon twenty-first century preachers.

## POSITED NORMS

For the purposes of this thesis, this author wishes to posit some homiletical principles that can be gleaned from this examination of the work of these three historic Lutheran preachers. These principles can then serve as a form of criteria for evaluation of future sermons,

as well as part of a framework for developing a better homiletical practice for Francophone African Lutheran preachers.

The first principle to be emphasized is that the structure of a sermon should be tied to the text. Even if the most basic framework of the sermon is the same from week to week, the points that are built within that framework should be drawn from the text itself, rather than from some textbook formula. As one can see from examining three sermons regarding the same text, one may draw very different themes and points from the same text. Therefore, there is no need for mechanistic formulae to generate a sermon. However, it does admittedly take more effort from the preacher to develop a unique sermon outline for each sermon.

Secondly, Law and Gospel are certainly crucial components of every sermon, since they are "the doctrinal contents of all Holy Scripture, both of the Old and the New Testament" (Walther 2010:11). However, they are not to be a tight homiletical box from which there should be no departure. One is free to explore the text as it is presented, as long as one lets the text speak as Holy Scripture speaks.

Thirdly, to allow the Scriptures to speak in their own unique ways, one must understand the fivefold use of Scripture. One is not obliged to render all five uses of Scripture in one and the same sermon; rather, the preacher should be aware of which use he is employing in a given part of his sermon. The uses of Scripture should be employed in a balanced, coherent manner, to advance the sermon's objective as a whole.

Fourthly, one must notice that the illustrations and applications in each sermon are unique to its context. For a modern preacher to preach Luther's sermon would be foolish. Modern Lutheranism no longer struggles against the Papacy as its primary opponent, nor do we labour under the medieval German system of government and social structure. One can see the change even in the hundred years between Luther and Gerhard. The preacher must feel free

to use what cultural and contextual elements are at his disposal to make the points he is drawing from the Scriptures.

These four points are some general principles, which will be applied in the evaluation of the field-collected sermons in Chapter Eight of this thesis.

Why are these points of evaluation relevant to preaching in Francophone Africa? It is the position of this thesis that these points of evaluation are relevant to any preacher in a Lutheran parish, regardless of cultural context. They serve as unifying principles, points of contact between eras and locations, so that members of the Church may discuss what constitutes a good Lutheran sermon, be it in Sixteenth-Century Germany or Twenty-first-century Burundi. Part of the idea of presenting trans-cultural points of discussion is to free the preacher to consider his culture and context amid the serious study and exegesis of both text and people.

This chapter concludes the first section of this thesis. Chapter Seven will begin Part Two: "Why is it happening?"

# CHAPTER 6b - EXCURSUS – HISTORY OF HERMENEUTICS

This chapter includes an attempt to provide the reader a brief overview of the history of Lutheran hermeneutics, with an eye toward how that history has developed into Lutheran practice. Later, one may see how these ideas may come to shape the theory proposed in this thesis.

Luther came into the stream of hermeneutics that had been flowing in the Church for centuries. Kiecker notes that a great development in this area which had shaped the course of this discipline was John Cassian's elucidation of the fourfold method of interpretation. Kiecker writes:

> At the risk of oversimplifying the work of many centuries, the characteristic method of biblical interpretation throughout the Middle Ages is exemplified by John Cassian (360-435). Scripture was said to have four senses, the literal or historical, on the one hand, and the spiritual, figurative or mystical, on the other. This latter sense was composed of the allegorical, the tropological or moral, and the anagogical or eschatological sense. Cassian used an example that became a classic: Jerusalem, literally or historically, was a city of the Jews; allegorically it was the church; tropologically or morally it was the soul of man; and anagogically or eschatologically it was the heavenly city (Kiecker 1988:287).

Roughly contemporary with John Cassian was Augustine, who allowed some broadness in the literal sense, but also saw a spiritual sense in much of the biblical text: "Whatever appears in the divine Word that does not literally pertain to virtuous behavior or to the truth of faith you may take to be figurative" (Kiecker 1988:288).

Approximately eight hundred years later, Thomas Aquinas would attempt to tie together the literal and the spiritual senses, so that biblical interpretation was not simply flights of fancy. Aquinas wrote in his *Summa Theologiae*:

> That God is the author of holy Scripture should be acknowledged, and he has the power, not only of adapting words to convey meanings (which men also can do), but also of adapting things themselves. In every branch of knowledge words have meaning, but what is special here is that the things meant by the words also themselves mean something. That first meaning whereby the words signify things belongs to the sense first-mentioned, namely, the historical or literal. That meaning, however, whereby the things signified by the words in their turn also signify other things is called the spiritual sense; it is based on and presupposes the literal sense (Kiecker 1988:288).

Aquinas is using the philosophical categories of *signum* and *res* to explain the relationship between the literal and the spiritual senses. The *res* is the thing, that which is signified. In this line of thinking, ordinarily, a word is not a thing, not a *res* in itself. A word is a *signum*, a signifier of the *res*. That is, the word points to something beyond itself. However, Aquinas points out that in the Scriptures, the words themselves have meaning, because they are divine speech.

Kiecker summarizes the Thomistic view: "Whereas, for human authors, words signify things, for the divine author the things signified by the words may signify still other things. When words signify things, the literal sense is intended. When the things signified by words signify other things, the spiritual sense is intended. But this spiritual sense is based on the literal sense. Thus the literal and spiritual senses are tied together" (Kiecker 1988:288).

However, Surburg notes that, in contrast to Aquinas, Occam presented a view that was not so optimistic regarding human ability to understand the Scriptures through natural reason. Surburg writes, "According to Occam there was an unbridgeable gap between reason and faith. This was radically different from the view held by St. Thomas, who taught that one could reason his way through natural theology (philosophy) to revealed truth (faith)" (Surburg 1953:243). This unbridgeable gap, for Occam, meant that whatever is known about the Gospel is a result of divine revelation, not natural law or reason. "The Occamists, therefore, centered authority for theological dogmas in the Bible" (Surburg 1953:244).

Building on the work of Aquinas, Nicholas of Lyra argued for a literal interpretation, while not excluding a spiritual interpretation. Thus, Kiecker notes:

> Agreeing with Aquinas, Lyra says: 'All [interpretations] presuppose the literal sense as the foundation.' At the same time Lyra was not averse to spiritual interpretations per se, for later he adds: 'With the help of God I intend to adhere to the literal sense, and to include a very few, brief, mystical interpretations sometimes, though rarely.' (Kiecker 1988:288).

However, Lyra goes beyond Aquinas in developing what he calls a double-literal sense. Commenting on 1 Chronicles 17:13, Kiecker quotes Lyra's writing:

Sometimes the same word has a double-literal sense (*duplex sensus litteralis*)… . . . This [passage] is understood of Solomon literally, in so far as he was the son of God by adoption in his youth. Yet the [passage] is introduced by the apostle in Hebrews 1 [:5] as spoken about Christ literally. This is clear… because the Apostle introduces it to prove that Christ was greater than the angels. However, such proof cannot be made by the mystical sense, as Augustine says…The [passage] was fulfilled literally in Solomon, nevertheless less perfectly, because he was the son of God by grace alone… [It was fulfilled] more perfectly in Christ, who is the Son of God by nature (Kiecker 1988:289).

Kiecker notes that, in the thought of Lyra, there is no longer a literal and a spiritual sense, but the spiritual sense is subsumed into the literal, making this double-literal sense (Kiecker 1988:289).

Finally, however, the double-literal sense collapses into what Lyra would call the "true literal sense," that is, the sense the Holy Spirit actually intended. Kiecker quotes Lyra again:

Let us call that the literal sense which is in accord with the Spirit and is pointed out by the Spirit The literal sense and the spiritual sense coincide. This true sense is … the sense the Holy Spirit intends as He speaks through the prophet. It has been our total purpose to draw out of this sense all that the Holy Spirit has put into it (Kiecker 1988:290).

Notice that Lyra asserts that "the literal sense and the spiritual sense coincide." There is no separating the two, in his school of thought.

Over and against the school of John Cassian and Augustine, Surburg also notes the influence of Biblical Humanism upon Luther. He writes:

In 1509 the French Humanist Lefevre d'Etaples published his *Psalterium Quintuplex*, an edition that supplied the Biblical student with a textual basis for exegetical lectures and at the same time also furnished an up-to-date commentary on the Psalms. In it Lefevre censured those who trusted human merit and also weighed critically the sacramental system. This work with its emphasis on the grace of God gave a strong impetus to Bible reading, and Luther used it as a guide in his first Psalm lectures at Wittenberg, in 1512-1513 (Surburg 1953:244).

The "textual basis for exegetical lectures" was the big deal at the time Luther began his career as a lecturer at the University of Wittenberg. An even greater development came in 1519,

when Erasmus published his scholarly edition of the Greek New Testament (Surburg 1953:244). With the Greek text, one could go back to the original source material, rather than relying on the Church's "official" interpretation via the Vulgate. The importance of Erasmus' work was appraised thusly:

> There can be no doubt but that something great and new had happened, which declared war on Scholasticism and occasioned its fall; for Christianity was taken back more than a thousand years to the very time of the first expositors of the New Testament, yes, even to the building of the canon itself (Surburg 1953:244).

This, of course, became an unprecedented challenge to the Church's authority in the domain of biblical interpretation. With source material accessible, any scholar could read and understand.

Surburg traces the steps by which Luther moved from the traditional medieval, churchly interpretation, following the methods of Cassian, Augustine, Aquinas, etc., toward the historico-grammatical method. Between 1512 and 1517, Luther gradually shed the overly spiritualized and fanciful methods of interpretation. By the time he published his explanation of the Ten Commandments in 1517, he had rejected the fourfold spiritual sense outright (Surburg 1953:246).

After Luther, another step along the trajectory of Lutheran hermeneutics is Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520-1575), commonly referred to as Flacius. Flacius represents the second generation of Lutheran thinking. He was born in the early years of the reformation, and he contributed to the continuation of Lutheran thought and teaching. Although some of Flacius' ideas were eventually condemned (see FC I), his work, *Clavis Scripturae*, remains a key writing in the development of Lutheran hermeneutics. Moldenhauer summarizes the basic gist of Flacius' work thusly:

> Faith in Christ is the correct understanding of scripture. This is Christ's work in our heart, as Flacius writes: "It is the office of Christ both to open the Scripture to us and to enlighten our heart, so that it understands Scripture. (Luke 24) This happens when we

know and apprehend Him by faith." Two key ideas in the *Clavis* are brought together in this sentence. First, Christ is the scope and argument of all scripture. If we find him, the pearl of wisdom hidden in the field of scripture, Flacius writes, we have "done business" well enough (a reference to the business of the merchant in the parable) (Moldenhauer 2012:22).

Thus, for Flacius, faith in Christ becomes the analogy of faith, which will become an essential concept in the work of Johann Gerhard, as shown later in this thesis. Secondly, for Flacius, interpretation is practical. Moldenhauer continues:

> Second, for Flacius the study of theology leads to more than knowledge. It must lead to practice. Theology does not consist in theory alone but must lead into practice. Taking the argument a step farther, Flacius argues that one who gives way to sin destroys his knowledge of God. Where sin destroys faith and the life that flows from it, the true knowledge of God is lost. Without the Lord using scripture to teach, rebuke, correct, and train in righteousness, there is no true knowledge of God and no correct interpretation of scripture. Where the Lord does these things, we reach the true end of the study of Scripture: the knowledge of God, the justification of the sinner, and the worship of God (Moldenhauer 2012:22-23).

Theology must lead to practice. This proved to be somewhat of a game-changer for the practice of hermeneutics in the Reformation era. No longer could one sit idly and spill copious amounts of ink about minutiae. If theology were to lead to practice, then interpretation should preach. Which, Moldenhauer argues, is exactly what Flacius states:

> Flacius knows no divide between interpretation and application. He does not advise the exegete to determine the meaning of scripture and then apply that meaning to contemporary life. Instead, Flacius advises the reader to hear scripture as God's voice addressed directly to him. This leaves no room for a divide between interpretation and application. For Flacius, they are one and the same. Scripture is God's speech to the reader to make him wise for salvation (Moldenhauer 2012:24).

Much in this same vein comes Friedrich Balduin (1575-1627). Mayes writes, "Besides writing a significant Lutheran casuistry, Balduin's work centred on exegesis and dogmatics. His exegesis is typical of all the Lutheran Orthodox. In his exegesis, he analyses and explains sections of the biblical text with the goal of discovering the doctrines that they contain" (Mayes 2015:106-107). As Mayes details, the contribution of Balduin to Lutheran exegesis was to leave a model for doing theology from the Scriptures, rather than proof-texting: starting with a pre-conceived dogmatic statement or position, and then amassing biblical texts to support the

argument. Balduin argued for what Mayes calls dogmatic exegesis: gathering doctrines from the Scriptures. He writes:

> Now, the point of gathering doctrines from Scripture is to make 'use' of it. Balduin writes: 'The meaning of Scripture without use is empty knowledge. Paul writes that this 'puffs up' (1 Cor 8:1)." All that were written (*scripta*) were written for our teaching (*in nostram doctrinam*) (Rom 15:4). Scripture is "divinely inspired" (θεόπνευστος), and is useful for teaching (*ad docendum*), etc. (2 Tim 3:16). Therefore, after understanding Scripture, it is correct to deal with its *use,* which consists in its true application. Application deals with the doctrines that are to be drawn from the biblical text and then also with the people whom those doctrines serve (Mayes 2015:107-08).

One starts with the Scripture, and all doctrine must flow from and point back to the Scriptures. God designed and destined His Word to have purpose and effect. Thus, as one sees in both Flacius and Balduin, there can be no dry, academic parsing of text and dogma, divorced from the pulpit and from the lives of the hearers in the pews each week. As Mayes writes, application deals with people.

Roughly contemporary with Balduin was Johann Gerhard (1582-1537). Gerhard's hermeneutics will be discussed in detail in Chapters Ten and Thirteen of this thesis; thus, the entire topic does not need to be addressed here. For the moment, suffice it to say that two things characterize Gerhard's work: the analogy of faith and the fivefold use of Scripture. Although he is in the midst of the period of High Orthodoxy, Gerhard, as Balduin, insists that the Scriptures are useful; that is, to be used and applied.

Johann Jacob Rambach (1693-1735) lived a generation after Gerhard. Both a scholar and a Pietist, Rambach stands in the tradition of Lutheran hermeneutics as one who upheld the double sense – literal and mystical/spiritual – of Scripture. Mayes summarizes the position of Rambach thusly:

> According to Rambach, the sense of Scripture is 'that meaning which the Holy Spirit represented to the mind of the holy writers and which they, through pleasant words, have represented to the mind of the reader.' Rambach upholds the classic Reformation rule that the literal sense of the Scripture is one, but he also believes that 'under the literal sense there is a mystical sense hidden in many, but not in all, places of the Holy Scripture.' For example, in Numbers 21, the bronze serpent was lifted up on a pole so that whoever would look at the snake would be saved from death caused by snake bites.

Rambach insists that this literally took place (*sensus literalis*). Underneath this factual occurrence, however, something else is prophesied or indicated, namely, that the Son of Man would be lifted up on the cross, as Christ himself explains this passage in John 3:14. This is the *sensus mysticus* (Mayes 2008:46).

Rambach does not allow one to run rampant through the Scriptures, allegorizing and spiritualizing everything, in the manner of the medieval theologians. Rather, he maintains that the Scriptures contain analogies and types, such that things refer to other things (Mayes 2008:52). However, Mayes notes that Rambach is careful to maintain a distinction between the *sensus mysticus* and the "spiritual use" of a text, by which he means the proper application of a text to the hearers (Mayes 2008:52).

Lund asserts that the eighteenth century was a period of ascendancy for the Pietist movement, as well as the spread of Lutheranism as a global phenomenon, as opposed to simply a German thing (Lund 2020:37). Certainly, some Pietists were academic theologians – Rambach, for one – but many were opposed to the rigid dogmatism they perceived among the so-called orthodox theologians. Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705), credited as one of the founders of the Pietist movement, was very much concerned with practical theology, the interior Christian life. Lund writes, "[Spener] criticized the lack of true Christian living among those who professed allegiance to Lutheran doctrine and expressed dissatisfaction with theologians whose zeal for purity of doctrine, he claimed, had degenerated into a focus on subtle controversies remote from the essentials of practical Christian living" (Lund 202:37).

Because Pietism focused on the interior spiritual life of the individual Christian, biblical interpretation among Pietists came to be somewhat subjective. The emphasis was no longer on the propositional truths of the received text, but on the working of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Lund writes regarding the work of Löscher, that he opposed the Pietists in part because they stressed this inward experience over and above the external means of grace. Lund writes:

> Löscher stopped short of calling Pietism a heresy, and sometimes spoke of Spener as a gifted and honorable man. However, he felt that the divisions in the church caused by the Pietists created a *status confessionis* that compelled him to present a vigorous

refutation of their ideas. Although he theoretically distinguished between types of Pietism, his charges were based on incriminating citations from Pietists as varied as Francke, Lange, Arnold and Dippel. He saw 'indifferentism' manifested in both their dismissal of some doctrines as secondary teachings and in their mystical stress on Christ's indwelling more than external means of grace. They extolled conventicles to the neglect of regular communal worship and scorned the legitimacy of the clergy unless they are perfectly holy. In their emphasis on regeneration they mixed the righteousness of faith and works, making works necessary, in contradiction to the Formula of Concord (Lund 2020:40).

In reaction to some of the anti-academic tendencies of Pietism, a school of theologians came up that sought to bridge a gap between the extremes of both the Pietist position and the Rationalist position on the other side. Siegmund Jacob Baumgarten (1706–57) represents the beginning of this "Transitional Theology" movement (Lund 2020:41). While being sympathetic to the non-mystical vein of Pietism, he thought that as a theology, Pietism lacked academic rigor. "Baumgarten continued to teach that theology must be grounded in Scripture but also found fault with the subjective exegesis of some Pietists as well as Orthodox claims that the very words of the Bible were from God. He called for historical attention to the intentions of the human authors and was also one of the first scholars to suggest that the biblical writers accommodated their message to what their readers could understand." (Lund 2020:41). Note the balancing act between subjective exegesis and the beginnings of higher criticism.

An entire essay could be written on the influence of Immanuel Kant regarding Christianity; however, a brief summary will suffice for the current purpose. Kant rejected the notion of a vicarious atonement or miraculous, supernatural salvation by a Christ figure. However, he continued in the Pietist tradition of advocating a strongly moral life (Lund 2020:44). His critiques of reason searched for the limits of reason, in the pursuit of faith, with the goal of a right and moral life (Lund 2020:44).

While Kant's work had massive impact in the realm of theology and philosophy, it was not without critics. Kant's protégé Johann Georg Hamann, and in turn *his* student Johann

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Gottfried Herder, critiqued Kant for not considering the role of language in reason, as well as for divorcing thought from feeling. Lund writes:

> In this [Herder] argued that it is not possible to separate oneself from the particularity of received ideas in order to inspect the functioning of pure reason. Like Hamann, he noted how reason operates through language, which cannot be divorced from the experiences out of which words evolved. Herder was more interested in an empirically focused analysis of the development of humanity than in abstract reasoning or philosophical system building. In addition to their interests in language, Hamann and Herder also both appreciated individual subjectivity and objected to the bifurcating of thought and feeling (Lund 2020:45).

One can imagine how this interest in the connection between reason and language could lead to an appreciation for the individual experience and subjectivity in interpretation of texts.

A generation after this came C.F.W. Walther (1811-1887), the son of a German pastor in Saxony and the latest in a line of pastors. Walther was raised in a strongly Lutheran home, but even as a child he was exposed to the liberalism of the day. "Unfortunately, Rationalism and theological liberalism were broadly accepted in the German lands of that time, and even as a child, Ferdinand was instructed that the Bible could not be trusted and that Christianity was nothing but simple moralistic teachings" (Walther 2010:xix-xx).

Through the influence of his father, Walther went to the University of Leipzig to study theology, where he experienced some of his strongest formative influences upon his theology. One reads:

> Thus Ferdinand started at the University of Leipzig as a theology student, and he quickly joined a small group of students know as the "Holy Club," of which Otto [his brother] was already a member. While most of Leipzig's professors were thoroughgoing rationalists, the Holy Club was made up of students who were seeking something more certain, and they soon fell into a form of strict Pietism that believed one must go through great personal struggles in order to be saved. This threw Walther into great spiritual torments as he wondered if he truly was saved. This experience later contributed to Walther's keen insights on how Christians need to distinguish Law and Gospel (Walther 2010:xx).

Through a series of personal experiences and relationships, Walther grew out of Pietism and became firmly rooted in the "Old Lutheran" confessionalism that was rising in Germany as a reaction to both Rationalism and Pietism. This led, in turn, to Walther's participation in

the Saxon migration to the United States and the founding of what is now The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. As noted above, Walther's experiences in university contributed greatly to his insights in his work, *Law and Gospel*, which will be examined in depth in Chapter Eleven of this thesis.

Much more could be said regarding any of the figures mentioned in this chapter. However, hopefully, this will suffice as a brief overview of the history of Lutheran interpretation up to C.F.W. Walther. The thread will be picked up in later chapters of this thesis.

# CHAPTER 7 – ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH AND SERMON DATA: THEMES UNCOVERED

In Chapter Three, data was presented which was gathered from this researcher's work in the Republic of Congo in 2021. This data comprised both survey responses and sermon samples. Included in that chapter was a data collection summary. In this chapter, the author will analyse that compiled data. The goal is to highlight themes relevant to this thesis that were revealed in the analysis. In this way, the grounded-theory principle of data-driven inquiry is observed.

Furthermore, this chapter also undertakes to present some of the themes uncovered in the analysis of the historical sermons that was presented in the previous chapter. This section will strive to develop some concrete criteria by which the evaluation of the field-collected sermons can be undertaken in Chapter Eight.

## SURVEY DATA

Readily apparent in studying the data collected through the surveys is that the respondents had rather little interest or willingness to question or criticize the instruction and formation which they had received. When asked about the adequacy of their formation in homiletics, all respondents answered that they felt their formation had been sufficient, at least in terms of classroom theoretical instruction. One respondent noted that he had felt lacking in practical experience.

To this author, this seeming unwillingness to criticize the formation received would seem to fit in with the general African educational system. As was discussed in Chapter Five, much of African education is anchored in memorization and regurgitation of information. Coupled with the traditional understanding of the honour structures of one's social context, this makes for an environment where it is frowned upon to question the authority of those who teach. In the context of Lutheran pastoral formation, this phenomenon is nearly petrified when

one approaches the teaching of the late Dr. Wilbert Kreiss. One may see this in how Dr. Kreiss was eulogized by one former missionary who worked in his shadow:

> As I looked out at the pastors from all over Africa, I knew that all of them had been touched by Dr. Kreiss in some way. I introduced him as "Le Vieux" (the Old Man), a term of endearment and deep respect used by the younger ones to address their elder (it is forbidden among the Moba in northern Togo for 'children' to pronounce the name of their grandparents). He was and continues to be for us in Africa 'le Grandpére' (the Grandpa) with his gleaming white hair and beard — a sure sign of wisdom, for 'you can't buy white hair in the marketplace' (Fluegge 2011).

Without doubting or discounting the monumental impact that Wilbert Kreiss has had in the domain of Francophone Lutheranism around the world, the idea of a professor as being above questioning is not helpful in encouraging healthy academic discourse and promoting critical inquiry into the field of study. Information becomes internalized only through the use and manipulation that comes with questioning and synthesis.

One survey area that is rather revealing with respect to the subject of this thesis is the question regarding the characteristics of an authentically African sermon. The respondents seemed generally in consensus that an authentically African sermon must make use of elements of the cultural context such as adages, proverbs, and traditional wisdom. However, no respondent offered any sort of response regarding structure, thought process, or overall content. One may wonder what was in the mind of the respondent who dismissed the need for an "authentically African" sermon. This same respondent mentioned the need for a careful study of the texts for an "African application."

Careful exegesis is, of course, always urged for any preacher. What a careful exegesis in an African context looks like is the subject of Elizabeth Mburu's work, *African Hermeneutics* (2019). Mburu's work is considered in more depth in Chapter Thirteen, as an attempt is made to harmonize her approach with traditional Lutheran methods of interpretation.

One grand theme that seems to underlie the responses to the surveys, but which is lacking in explicit discussion, is the scope and depth of influence that Occidental logic and

philosophical understandings have had upon African preachers and their craft of preaching. This has been touched upon in Chapter Five and will be treated in some depth in Chapter Ten. This is seen in the survey data in the way that respondents seemed to hold cultural material as rather important for adorning a good African sermon, but they did not seem to carry their culture into the heart of the sermon. That is to say, proverbs, adages, linguistic influences, and others were to be pressed into service as bridges into the text, introductions, etc., but African modes of thinking did not seem to be viewed as legitimate ways to interpret the text at a ground level, to form a more African homiletical framework. Rather, it seems to this researcher as though the goal was more to decorate an Occidental practice with African dressing.

## SERMONS

The glaring, over-arching theme that surfaces in examining the sermons collected is the lack of critical engagement with the text for the formulation of the sermon. The sermons collected betray the "cookie-cutter" mindset discussed previously in this thesis. Therefore, each sermon lacks specificity. A lack of specificity is found in the outline, since the "Why? How?" outline can be applied to any text in the Bible. A lack of specificity exists in the exposition since the text is not handled on its own terms, but rather is forced through the "sermon machine" to generate the content designed.

A lack of specificity exists in the application to the hearers, because the mechanistic approach to sermon writing does not leave room either for creativity nor for the text itself to speak its own particular language and message. The sermons collected are well balanced in terms of their internal structure and their proportions of Law and Gospel (for what those metrics may be worth, as will be examined in the next chapter). However, the sermons do not proclaim the texts given, because the message of each passage of Scripture is swallowed up by the sermon generator machine and something easy but generic is given instead. As a former missionary once lamented, these sorts of sermons have no "teeth;" the Law does not bite, and the Gospel cannot truly comfort.

The sermons collected raised a secondary theme of which one may argue that these sermons are not African sermons; they do not reflect an authentic African life experience nor an African experience with the sermon's content. Aside from the introduction to one of the sermons, no engagement exists with any kind of African context. Furthermore, one sees no reflection of African context or cultural understanding either in the formulation or in the content of the sermons. It is the suspicion of this researcher that the hearers of these sermons would not resonate with the sermon content on any deep spiritual level, but rest at the level of information intake only. This, of course, is the problem to which the present thesis is endeavouring to provide a corrective.

## SUMMARY

From the field research data presented, as well as from the experience of the current author, it seems that a great lack is evident in the formation of students preparing to serve as pastors of Francophone African Lutheran churches. This is true primarily with respect to the students' familiarity and skill with handling the core of Lutheran orthodoxy. This also includes working with their own cultures and contexts in a way that allows the students to read the Scriptures and Lutheranism in a culturally sensitive and relevant way for the people under their spiritual care.

This thesis is an attempt to argue that Lutheran orthodoxy has a great deal to offer to the pastors of Francophone African Lutheran churches in terms of foundation and framework. Both are necessary to understand and interpret the Holy Scriptures. Chapters Ten and Eleven will present the work of Johann Gerhard and C.F.W. Walther, attempting to highlight the contributions of these two Lutheran fathers in this regard. Having been raised in the Lutheran tradition, the current author recognizes a certain vulnerability to a charge of bias; however, it is still the position of this thesis that Lutheran Orthodox tradition offers useful guidance and corrective to the concerns raised in this chapter.

Specifically, Lutheranism allows for one to read the Scriptures in their own light, interpreting the text with other texts of Scripture. The Lutheran tradition of hermeneutics has always recognized that one must read Scripture with one's own eyes; that is, the reader is not objective, but comes with experiences and context that colour one's reading. However, there are principles of biblical hermeneutics that stand the test of time while still allowing context to influence the result. One will see particularly in the work of Gerhard how the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* becomes an anchor for hermeneutics.

Secondly, this thesis makes the claim that students in institutions of pastoral formation in Francophone African Lutheran churches lack in formation for being able to read their own contexts and understand the cultural factors and forces at play in their interpretation of biblical texts. Without the ability to read their contexts, preachers risk preaching sermons that remain superficial and do not develop roots that grow deeply in the soil of African hearts and lives. On the other hand, an overreaction to this lack may cause some preachers to abandon the tradition of orthodoxy just mentioned to follow the winds of culture wherever they may blow.

# CHAPTER 8 - EVALUATION OF SERMONS ACCORDING TO LUTHERAN HOMILETICAL TRADITIONS

> Now the church's preacher has two duties: the interpretation of Scripture and applying it to salutary use. The interpretation of Scripture involves both finding the true and genuine meaning and a clear and simple explanation of the same. You see, it is not enough for the preacher to seek and search for the genuine meaning of Scripture, but he must also explain to the people in churchly homilies the true sense he has found (Gerhard 2017:201).

What makes a good sermon? What makes a good Lutheran sermon? What makes a good African sermon? How can a preacher merge these three questions, to craft a solid African Lutheran sermon? This, of course, is the subject of the present thesis.

This chapter endeavours to take some of the insights gleaned from the analysis previously presented of the historical sermons, drawing some basic rubrics for evaluation from those insights, and then applying these rubrics to the sample sermons collected in the field. The goal will be to see how the field samples compare to the historical examples, and what may be learned from this comparison to refine the argument of this thesis moving forward.

## RUBRICS

As presented in Chapter Six, one may draw four general rubrics from the example of the historical sermons of Luther, Gerhard, and Walther, which previously were analysed. Here, these rubrics will be refined from their general character, to make them usable criteria for evaluation.

The first rubric is that the sermon's structure must be tied directly to the text. As was noted, Luther, Gerhard, and Walther each had their individual tendencies with respect to the form of a sermon at the most basic level. However, the way that the points of any individual sermon were ordered, as well as the development of those points within overarching structure, was determined by the text. Thus, the first evaluative question should be: Does the structure of this sermon derive from the text directly and uniquely?

The second rubric is that the Law and the Gospel must be proclaimed rightly. However, this proper distinction is not to be seen as some sort of constraining homiletical box or mechanistic formula for structuring the sermon. Walther notes:

> Every Christian preacher should be able to say with the apostle Paul: God "has made us competent to be *ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit"* (2 Cor. 3:6). He should do *"the work of an evangelical preacher"* (2 Tim. 4:5) and therefore make it his main task *to bear witness to Christ*[38] (John 15:27) (Walther 2017:112).

Walther also notes that a preacher should not force any application upon the text, whether that be Law and Gospel or the fivefold use. He writes:

> The point here is not that every sermon or every main topic appearing in a sermon should be arranged according to this category of application and consistently used in this sequence but that every sermon should be based on these *five uses* of the Word of God, which are given by the Holy Spirit Himself (Walther 2017:99).

Therefore, the second evaluative question should be: Are Law and Gospel proclaimed rightly, in accordance with the particulars of the text itself?

The third rubric is that the preacher should be aware of the fivefold use of Scripture; thus, the sermon should apply the text in specific ways according to the fivefold use. Again, not that all five uses should be applied in every sermon with every text, but that there should be clear understanding of what the preacher is trying to accomplish in each section of his sermon. Furthermore, the application of the various uses should work together to advance the overall theme and objective of the sermon. Therefore, the evaluative question should be: What uses is the preacher applying in this sermon, and how do they serve the overall goal of the sermon?

The fourth rubric drawn from the previous analysis is that the illustrations and applications in a sermon must be contemporary. Walther makes this an explicit requirement of a proper sermon. He writes:

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[38] Emphases in original

The more a preacher from the past presented the Word of God in a manner contemporary to his time, the less contemporary his sermons can be now; for even though people today are still the same lost and condemned sinners that they were centuries ago and have always been, our era nevertheless suffers from certain unique spiritual diseases that require corresponding care (Walther 2017:125).

He then continues, using Luther as an example. Walther details how Luther took great care to preach about the pressing issues of his time. These issues were of grave importance to the congregation hearing Luther, but they did not press heavily upon the congregations in which Walther preached. Likewise, the issues that weigh upon the parishioners in a rural parish in the Midwestern United States are not the same issues that confront a parish in the heart of Brazzaville, for instance – even though both parishes consist of lost and condemned sinners redeemed by the one and the same Christ.

Therefore, the fourth evaluative question should be: Are the illustrations and applications in the sermon contemporary and appropriate to the context?

Equipped with these four evaluative questions, one may now proceed to the evaluation of the sermons collected. The original texts of the sermons are included in the appendices to this thesis.

## SERMON 1

Sermon 1 is based on Psalm 30, and the theme of the sermon is "Christians, Let Us Praise the LORD."[39] The structure of this sermon is as follows:

Christians, Let Us Praise the LORD.
    Why?
        In the text
        For us
    How?
        In the text
        For us

As has been discussed earlier in this thesis, the "Why? How?" outline is not unique to this sermon in the least. One could argue that it presents the text in a basic sense, but it does

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[39] Sermon CG-S-001. All sermon material is translated from the French originals by the researcher.

not give this text voice to speak in its own character. However, one can appreciate that the preacher took the time to divide the explication from the application neatly.

The Law and the Gospel are present in this sermon, but only in a very superficial manner. The preacher quotes the text in the explication section, then says, in effect, "God did this for you, too" in the application section. The Law is presented as a question: Did you do this as you were supposed to? Therefore, one must say that this sermon does not rightly distinguish Law and Gospel because they are not preached in their full weight and measure.

One may interpret the "Why?" section of this sermon as applying the text for consolation, since the preacher declares the protection and healing that come through Jesus Christ for the hearers. One might perhaps hear the "How?" section as training in righteousness. This is the preacher's goal, as he lists the ways in which the Christian could go about praising the Lord. However, he does not actually get to the point of truly training the people; he simply tells them what they should be doing.

This sermon contains no illustrations nor personal application of the text.

## SERMON 2

This sermon is based on John 6:35, with the theme, "I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to me will never hunger."[40] The structure of this sermon is as follows:

> "I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to me will never hunger." Jn 6:35
> Introduction – Life flows ever away
> Problem – We keep chasing after the goods of this world
> Answer – The only bread that satisfies is Christ
> Conclusion – What happiness for the children of God to know God's promises

The structure of the sermon does not at all derive from the text. It would seem that the preacher had an idea in mind of what he wished to preach and used this verse as a pretext to launch his discourse. The major divisions do not logically correspond to the theme, and the conclusion does not demonstrate the goal of the theme.

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[40] Sermon CG-S-002

Law and Gospel are not proclaimed rightly – neither in accordance with the particulars of the text nor otherwise. The Law is proclaimed in a very generic way, using language foreign to the text. Thereafter, the Gospel is proclaimed in a veiled way that corresponds to the problem posed, but not to the actual message of the text nor to the original problem posed in the introduction. One cannot say that the Gospel predominates the message because there is no mention of the death and resurrection of Christ, nor of the forgiveness of sins or salvation of the sinner.

The only noticeable use of Scripture in this sermon is the application of consolation in the third part. However, this consolation falls flat because the other uses have not been employed in any effective manner to demonstrate the need for consolation. There is no clearly articulated goal for this sermon, so it is difficult to judge whether the meagre employ of the fivefold use serves a purpose.

The introduction mentions the ancient Romans and their desire to avoid facing the reality of death. Then it cites a French poem, expressing a wish to drop anchor in the tides of time. However, there is no explanation of these illustrations, nor any connection later in the sermon between these and the theme. One would hazard a guess that these literary additions would not aid the hearers in understanding the theme of the sermon, because these additions are foreign culturally and are not explained and applied overtly.

## SERMON 3

This sermon is based on Jn 20:19, 26 and Jn 21:1. The stated theme is "The Lord gives us his meal."[41] The structure of this sermon is as follows:

    Introduction
            Theme
    What is this meal?
    Why does the Lord give us His meal?
    How does the Lord give us His meal?
    Conclusion

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[41] Sermon CG-S-003

This is another example of the "Why? How?" structure, which is not unique nor directly derived from the text. The stream of thought in each division seems to want to follow the general course of the Gospel narrative, but without clear links between the thoughts of the preacher.

Law and Gospel are proclaimed in a general sense using the imagery of hunger and a meal. There is talk of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. However, the Law is devoid of force. There is no accusation of the Law and no reason presented for the hunger. The talk of sin is without reason or origin. Therefore, the Gospel loses its impetus. It is nice talk, but not the saving power of the Good News.

In this sermon, the preacher seems to apply the Scriptures in a didactic fashion. At the end, he also makes use of consolation. However, the didactic use is found mostly in declaratory statements, turning the text to the hearer without actual direct application. The Gospel is couched in the form of consolatory statements to the effect that God loves us and takes care of us.

The illustration used in the introduction is that of a political candidate who gives a meal to garner votes. But then the preacher says that this behaviour is not what Jesus does. Thereafter, there is no return to the illustration, nor any application or explanation about what that illustration has to do with anything. This illustration may touch the surface of the hearers' life experiences, but without any kind of explanation, it has nothing with which to connect. Therefore, it misses the mark. It certainly serves little purpose to recite something, and then tell the hearers that the content has nothing to do with our text.

This sermon is based on John 20:19-31. The stated theme is "Jesus appears to his disciples."[42] The structure of this sermon is as follows:

Introduction
      Theme
Why?
How?
Conclusion

Once again, one finds the "Why? How?" outline in use. One might argue that this time it has a bit more of an organic connection to the sermon text. However, that does not negate the fact that the outline is mechanistic and artificial. The greatest problem is that the theme does not drive the sermon toward a proclamatory goal. Therefore, the structure does not accomplish a goal other than organization.

The Law and the Gospel are proclaimed clearly in this sermon. It may be granted that Law and Gospel are proclaimed in the terms of the text. The preacher has confined himself to speaking of the problem of doubt as presented in the case of Thomas, and then has applied that to the hearers. Thereupon, he has applied the Gospel in terms of Jesus banishing doubt. The Law has some force (although it could be even more refined and intentional), and so the Gospel has something real to say in response. Nevertheless, the Gospel is not proclaimed in this sermon in its full measure.

This preacher does a reasonable job of applying the Scripture in the form of rebuke against doubt. The "Why?" section serves as the vehicle for rebuking the doubt and unwillingness to believe without proof that exists in the hearers. However, one may argue that the preacher missed the opportunity to proclaim the full sweetness of Gospel consolation because he chose to exhort the hearers to deeper faithfulness without first pouring out the fullness of the Gospel message. The Gospel is there, but not in its full measure.

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[42] Sermon CG-S-004

In this sermon, the preacher uses the illustration of Martin Luther's wife walking about their house in funeral attire and with an attitude of mourning because Luther was acting as though Christ were not raised, so deep was his depression at a given time. The preacher uses this illustration at several points during the sermon to highlight the presence of doubt in even faithful hearts, and to show the difference between faith and sight. This researcher cannot say how the hearers would have received this illustration, but it seems at least well-conceived in the mind of the preacher.

## SERMON 5

This sermon is based on Eph 5:8-14, with a stated theme of "Christians, let us walk as children of the light."[43] The structure of this sermon is as follows:

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Introduction
        Theme
What is the light?
Why?
How?
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In this sermon, one may see a rare occasion when the "What? Why? How?" outline is used to a reasonable end. The key difference in this case is that the theme drives the sermon toward a persuasive goal, rather than simply an impartation of information. One may see in this sermon how this outline can be used, when used sparingly and with clear intention.

The proclamation of Law in this sermon comes close in some sections but misses the mark. In the "Why?" section, the preacher can rebuke idolatry persuasively, but he shies away from naming actual forms of idolatry that are present in the congregation, preferring rather to box the straw man of animism. However, in the "How?" section, where the preacher has a grand opportunity to proclaim the transformational effects of the light of Christ, he misses wildly. He takes pains to describe how Jesus is the light of the world, but then he reverts to the

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[43] Sermon CG-S-005

Law to chastise those who turn away from the light, instead of proclaiming how the light of Christ transforms the sinner and enables him to walk as a child of the light.

The preacher makes grand use of rebuke and attempts to use the text for training in righteousness. However, the rebuke falls short because of the reasons just noted. Furthermore, the training also lacks because the preacher fails to proclaim the transformative power of the Gospel, without which training in righteousness is impossible.

In the introduction, the preacher speaks of the reign of Louis XIV of France as the period of the brightest light in French history. He then refers to this idea several times in the course of the sermon. However, one wonders what the hearers would gain from this illustration, given that the preacher never connects it concretely to the message of the sermon. He rather says, "It is not a question of the light that shone during the time of Louis XIV, but of the divine light in which St. Paul invites us to walk" (CG-S-005:1).

It is the position of this thesis that negative illustrations only serve to advance the goal of the sermon if they are carefully explained and integrally connected with the theme. Furthermore, one doubts if the hearers of this sermon in twenty-first-century Congo would feel much connection with the citizens of Golden-Age France.

## CONCLUSIONS

One may see how these preachers did achieve some noteworthy marks according to the criteria set forth in this chapter. However, it should be clear from the evaluations presented here what the problems are in the Francophone African Lutheran (FAL) context.

It is the position of this thesis that most sermons preached from the pulpits of FAL churches are found lacking. In particular, they are lacking in hermeneutical depth. As one may see from the samples presented above, the preachers do not engage in a critical reading of text, tradition, nor context. As was shown in Chapter Five, it may be argued that preachers are not being trained in how to do this critical reading, this hermeneutical consideration. Without

proper training, how can the preachers be expected to do this? And without conversation between the text and the context, how can God speak to His people in a meaningful way?

Perhaps the greatest lesson to take from this evaluation is that work is sorely needed to assist FAL preachers to let the text speak for itself in their sermons, rather than forcing it through a mechanical process to fit it into a homiletical box. The Law must be proclaimed in its full sternness, and the Gospel in its full sweetness, for it to be a proper sermon. Each text has its unique language and style to accomplish such a proclamation. The following chapters attempt to design a theoretical framework which will allow that to happen, and in an African voice, to whit.

# CHAPTER 9 – OCCIDENTAL INFLUENCES ON AFRICAN PREACHING

It seems almost self-evident that Western forces have had an immense impact on preaching in Francophone African Lutheran (FAL) contexts. Some of these matters have already been examined in Chapter Five of this thesis; a repeat of the material is not necessary herein. However, this chapter endeavours to highlight some more specific areas in which Occidental influence has shaped the theory and practice of preaching in FAL contexts.

In particular, this chapter will focus on the history of education in Africa, the rise of postcolonialism and its reactionary tendencies, the importation of Lutheran clichés from the Western world that have been internalized in FAL circles, and the matter of cultural unrootedness. In the course of presenting these topics, this chapter will endeavour to discuss their impact specifically upon preaching.

## EDUCATION

Chapter Five raised the topic of education as an area of occidental influence in African society, which is reflected in the practice of preaching in FAL churches. The aim of this section is to dig deeper into this topic, with a focus on establishing the direct connection between educational philosophy and homiletics.

Sifuna and Otiende posit that Europeans brought their educational systems to Africa with the mindset that no education existed in Africa prior to colonization. "The view held by many Europeans who first came to Africa, however, was that the African was a savage, a pagan with no history and culture to perpetuate, that he was primitive, that he knew nothing and that Africans never taught their young" (Sifuna and Otiende 2006:149). According to Sifuna and Otiende, education was equated with books, facts and figures, and writing in the minds of the Western colonizers and missionaries. Because most African cultures did not have a written language or organized corpus of knowledge, no education could occur in any recognizable sense.

However, "To define education in terms of school or reading and writing is definitely fallacious. Schooling and education are not synonymous in any way at all" (Sifuna and Otiende 2006:149). Such a narrow, restrictive view of education excludes a great deal of the world's amassed knowledge that is not codified in textbooks. Sifuna and Otiende offer a more expansive definition: "Education is defined as the 'whole process by which one generation transmits its culture to the succeeding generation' or better still, as 'a process by which people are prepared

to live effectively and efficiently in their environment'" (2006:149). If one defines education as a process by which people are prepared for life, then one has no trouble understanding the traditional processes of inculcation and formation, perceived as education, which have taken place in the homes and villages scattered across Africa.

However, the goal of African traditional education (as much as it can be generalized across such a large and diverse continent) is more affective and integrative than that of European or American education.

> Indigenous [African] education was essentially an education for living; its main purpose was to train the youth for adulthood within society. Emphasis was placed on normative and expressive goals. Normative goals were concerned with instilling the accepted standards and beliefs governing correct behaviour and expressive goals with creating unity and consensus (Sifuna and Otiende 2006:150).

Rather than being about the uninterrupted transmission of discrete and abstract data points, traditional African education focused on forming the individual into a fully functional and integrated member of the family and of society.

Sifuna and Otiende note that the educators in the traditional settings across Africa were first and foremost the parents, but then in expanding circles the family – especially the elders – the clan, and the village. Education occurred as much by imitation and apprenticeship as by intentional and formal instruction. Children were expected to follow their same-gender parents and learn from them the skills and expectations of their place in the home and society.

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Learning took the form of play, service in the house, the recitation of oral literature (myths, legends, and folk tales), song and dance, proverbs, and the form of strict prohibitions and taboos strongly enforced.

It is worth pausing a moment to highlight the role of proverbs in traditional education, as the same proverbs carry over into everyday life for adults. "A judicious use of proverbs was usually regarded as a sign of wit. Proverbs were condensed wisdom of the great ancestors. In a given proverb, one or two moral ideas were contained in a single sentence" (Sifuna and Otiende 2006:153). These proverbs, in many cases, form the collective basis for the wisdom of the people group as a whole. As Sifuna and Otiende noted, proverbs are a condensed form of wisdom which is greatly valued not only in Africa, but across the global South.

According to Sifuna and Otiende, traditional African education was based upon five philosophical principles: communalism, preparationism, functionalism, perennialism, and holisticism (2006:155).

Communalism is the idea that the individual is sublimated and subjugated to the community. Each child is reared in society and is formed for service to the society. There is no such thing as an individual; "the individual was brought up to have love and sympathy for fellow human beings and such love was to be reflected in all forms of human relations and activities" (Sifuna and Otiende 2006:155).

Preparationism is the concept that education is to prepare a child to become a contributing member of society, whether as a woman running an efficient home or as a man supporting his family and contributing to the local economy.

Functionalism means that the education received is directly useful. "Education was strictly utilitarian, and was generally for an immediate induction into the society and a preparation for adulthood" (Sifuna and Otiende 2006:155). Children could see the usefulness and application of their learning, and therefore required less external motivation.

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Perennialism is the concept that underlying the education of young people was the motivation to ensure the unbroken transmission of cultural content. "Through education, members of the society made sure that behaviours necessary for the survival of the cultural heritage were learnt" (Sifuna and Otiende 2006:156).

Finally, holisticism is the idea that education encompasses the whole of life. Academic specialization is incompatible with the traditional way of life in an African home and village. "Farmers, for instance, were required to build their own houses and granaries. They could also be skilled craftsmen and hunters" (Sifuna and Otiende 2006:156).

Interesting to note is that while Western influence has radically altered the educational landscape in Africa, one must recognize that traditional education has not been driven out completely. "Even in the most Westernised communities, it is always possible to find some elements of traditional education, and very often, it continues to form the background of the educational contribution that the child receives from his family and environment" (Sifuna and Otiende 2006:156). As long as elders of the family and the community continue to pass down the traditional knowledge and values, the culture will continue to be carried into the future. One may argue that the Church is uniquely positioned in society to help ensure this transmission while infusing it with the Spirit of God.

It is the position of this thesis that Occidental influence may be perceived most clearly with respect to theology, and more specifically to homiletics, in two ways: first, the equating of education with the mastery of discrete data; and second, the seeming disdain for traditional wisdom and forms of knowledge transmission.

As Sifuna and Otiende have discussed, to equate schooling with education is fallacious, and one may argue that this fallacy harms African communities of faith because it denigrates the place of affective and integrative formation. The Christian faith and the practice thereof is both a matter of quantitative knowledge and of qualitative experience of the life-changing

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power of that knowledge. When the preacher becomes a purveyor of data points, then the sermon becomes a didactic lesson to be lectured at the people, rather than "the words of eternal life" to a world in desperate need. In terms of homiletics, this shapes the task of the preacher. A moral lecture or an exegetical presentation are enacted much differently than an authoritative proclamation of the Gospel with the *viva vox evangelii.*

Secondly, the privileging of Occidental forms of learning over African wisdom formation means that traditional wisdom becomes alien or even hostile to the Gospel. In many cases, traditional proverbs and stories could be used as bridges into the proclamation of the biblical kerygma, and an inductive sort of logic unfolded. But this method is deemed as backward and unscholarly, and so the wisdom of ages is despised even when it is perhaps most useful.

As discussed in Chapter Five, proverbs can provide rich ground in which the Gospel can be planted. In some cases, the Gospel actually may even be rejected without the proper and judicious use of traditional proverbs to introduce it to a people. But this is often overlooked by Westerners who operate from the antique mindset of Occidental deductive reasoning. Westerners tend to struggle with understanding proverbs, and often assume that all people must struggle likewise.

## CONTEXT AND CONTEXTUALIZATION

Context and contextualization have been addressed at some length in other sections of this thesis; no need exists to dwell again on these topics at great length. However, a few remarks are worthwhile at this juncture regarding context and influence.

Westhelle notes that there is always a question of whose context is being represented in an interpretation of the biblical text. Within a colonial or postcolonial setting, the question of context is connected to the question of hegemony. He writes:

> The difference between the two approaches on how to represent a context is the one that marks the dividing line between the hegemonic context and the subaltern one. The

former, the hegemonic context, enjoys the pretense of holding the accuracy of the representation, its 'scientific' status because it also controls the regime of truth and the canons to which it is accountable. The other is denigrated insofar as it does not operate within the environment of the hegemonic epistemology or the reigning regime of truth (Westhelle, in Mtata 2012:111-12).

The hegemonic context is that of the dominant force, of the academy – often, of the Western colonial power. The subaltern, as Westhelle terms it, context is that of the colonized, displaced, or subjugated person or people. As he notes, the subaltern is relegated to this status because the hegemonic power has declared it so. There is the pretence of truth and knowledge in this status – the colonizer has brought and bestowed this knowledge upon the colonized, and it must be so. The interpretation of the subaltern is deficient because he lacks the resources and wherewithal of the hegemon. This is true because the subaltern operates within a different sphere of epistemology.

Westhelle goes on to note that for the colonized to take up the task of asserting an interpretation proper to one's own context, certain imported methods and categories must be employed. He writes:

> The context that claims the right to represent itself does it in such a way as to intervene in the field controlled by the dominant context. For this it needs to use concepts and categories that are imported. This process in postcolonial theory is called hybridity. In postcolonial studies, hybridity is the ability to make incursions into other contextual and conceptual territories and employ, for its own purposes, notions familiar to the hegemonic context (Westhelle, in Mtata 2012:112).

Hybridity, therefore, is a crucial concept for accurate and faithful postcolonial biblical interpretation, and moreover for preaching. An African preacher must be able to make forays into the realms of the Scriptures themselves, as well as into the worlds of Occidental scholarship in areas such as history and linguistics. At the same time, the preacher must be able to bring back from these forays such things as are good and useful and able to be pressed into service in his own context for creating a cogent interpretation of the text that is also comprehensible to his own hearers and context.

Westhelle notes, "The postcolonial response is to represent the subaltern from inside out but always also making improper incursions into the hegemonic context. This is called resistance or counter-violence" (Westhelle, in Mtata 2012:112). This resistance is necessary to ground an African interpretation of Scripture in the African context of the African preacher and hearers. Westerners, therefore, ought not be allowed to dominate the conversation.

## CLICHES

It seems salient to note the influence of clichés in the practice of theology as an occidental influence. David Scaer summarizes the reason for considering this matter thusly: "students take over the language of their instructors without really knowing what it means" (Scaer 2014:131).

As Scaer notes, each group or guild has a set of jargon and terminology proper to the field and also to mark understanding and "insider" status. Use the right words in what seems like the right way, and one may be admitted to the privileged group. "Any group can be recognized by the words and phrases frequently used by its members. A common discourse makes a group cohesive and intentionally or unintentionally serves as a barrier to nonmembers. So congregations and synods are bound together by a common language or discourse that serves as their set of distinctives" (Scaer 2014:131). As human organizations, churches use human language in human ways; they use language in sociolinguistic fashion, not just purely linguistic exercises. Scaer writes further:

> Every group has its own linguistic shorthand. Newly enrolled seminary students are often at sea for the first two terms until they familiarize themselves with the community discourse. Single words and short phrases substitute for fully developed concepts. For example, the Latin *una sancta* grammatically might mean a holy woman, but in its everyday use in theology it is short-hand for the church (Scaer 2014:133).

Each group, no matter what the defining characteristic, has its own inside vocabulary. This is not necessarily bad. Technical vocabulary serves a purpose. Societal jargon serves a purpose. "Group talk" serves to identify one as a member of a group. If a congregation or a

pastor, therefore, uses the verbiage of his congregation to which he preaches, this reflects his desire for unity and identification with his hearers.

However, the concern, as Scaer expresses it, is when this sort of insider language, this theological shorthand, becomes cliché; that is, these phrases or expressions take on an assumed meaning that may or may not be accurate to the original usage. Clichés, Scaer asserts, "take on a sacred character with diplomatic immunity from analysis" (Scaer 2014:134). As an example of this, he cites the "priesthood of all believers," supposedly drawn from 1 Peter 2:9. This cliché takes a verse that speaks of the divine election of the Church and turns it into a model for congregational organization (Scaer 2014:134). Furthermore, Scaer asserts that the *sedes doctrinae* way of doing theology often becomes this sort of sloganeering. One selects a verse, slings it around as a proof-text for a particular doctrine, and it watches the verse take on the status of inviolability. Then, one is not forced to do the heavy lifting of study and reflection; just simply repeat the correct phrases and one's theology will be considered orthodox. "Holding that some passages of the Bible are clearer than others, the *sedes doctrinae* is cliché and stands at odds with Luther who held that all Scriptures were clear" (Scaer 2014:134).

The reason to focus on this subject is that clichés and theological slogans are terms and phrases that are used over and over, until they lose meaning, or even take on assumed meanings different than the original term carried. As mentioned, it becomes a sloppy way of doing theology. In sermons, repeating clichés may signal that one is part of an in-group, an initiate into the circle of those who speak in such a manner. However, the value of the phrases is often lost when repeated without careful consideration. Scaer catalogues several such clichés, such as "first-article Christianity," "foretaste of the feast to come," and "inerrancy" (Scaer 2014:135).

In particular, the danger in African contexts is that phrases which have become cliché in the West may be imported into Africa. These phrases are picked up and brought into the

discourse of African churches and pastors, but without the history and context that makes them relevant in the United States or Europe. When missionaries are not careful but use patterns of speech that are habitual in one's home church body, those patterns of speech are adopted by new pastors and disseminated. Coupled with the imbalance of status mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, these new and fun phrases easily become ingrained in a place where their meanings have been lost. Thus, Scaer writes:

> Through repetition, clichés take on a life of their own and, should they survive, become sacred. Like a geometric theorem, the truthfulness of a cliché rests in itself and is immune from analysis. In dogmatics this is called *autopistia*, a proposition or belief that needs no analysis because it is true in itself, at least until someone tells the emperor to look around for his clothes (Scaer 2014:136).

The truth of Scripture is self-evident, but it nevertheless bears – even requires – careful analysis and examination. To follow the dictum of St. Augustine, "I believe, that I might understand;" that is, one must study the Bible and work through the processes of theological study from the starting point of faith, but nevertheless actually do the work to understand, and not simply sling words around.

Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in the almost slavish devotion to "Law and Gospel" that may be found among some pastors. Scaer writes about how this becomes not just a hermeneutical lens, but also an outline for preaching, to which everything must conform. He writes:

> This was recently the case with four students in a preaching competition. Each was given a pericope from a different Gospel, but each sermon followed the outline of the law first, followed by the gospel. In hearing that the conclusion for the second sermon was identical to the first, the listener knew what to expect in the remaining two. In each case, the Lutheran distinctive of law and gospel took precedence over what each evangelist might have had in mind (Scaer 2014:137).

It can be quite tempting for a preacher to fall back upon the old familiar stencil of "Law first, Gospel second" for a sermon outline. However, as Scaer notes, the great Lutheran distinctive, which carries so much power as an interpretive principle, simply becomes a cliché. The preacher runs a great risk of becoming boring and repetitive, because each text no longer

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speaks for itself. It is much the same with seminarians and new pastors, who feel the need to drive in like a wedge all the "Lutheran things," such as Law and Gospel, the Sacraments, justification by faith, the *solas*, etc., into each sermon to prove themselves solid, orthodox, and properly educated.

In a more sober example, Scaer notes how even the doctrine of justification can be stripped of its value when it becomes a Lutheran cliché divorced from its necessary underpinnings. He writes of how most of the faculty at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (United States) in the 1970s could affirm the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith while at the same time doubting or even denying the historicity of the Scriptures or the historicity of Jesus Himself. Scaer writes:

> This raises the question whether the doctrine of justification should have precedence as the chief doctrine over the historical character of Jesus' incarnation, miracles, resurrection, or other events in his life. A church, even a Lutheran one, can survive as Christian with a false or inadequate definition of justification or no definition at all, but it cannot be the church if the historical character of Jesus and especially his resurrection are made optional. At least this is what Paul thought. Without the resurrection the Corinthians would still be in their sins (1 Cor 15:13–17). (Scaer 2014:138).

By clinging to the use of the Lutheran terminology of justification, many church bodies have continued to claim the name Lutheran while diverging widely from what the church of the Augsburg Confession has believed, taught, and confessed for the past five hundred years. As Scaer notes in the above quotation, the danger is that justification becomes a stop-point – a sign of one's commitment to Lutheranism, to shut down questioning – without the Christology or the historical content that must be believed to flesh out the doctrine of justification properly.[44] Scaer notes that doctrine goes afield when it is detached from historical fact. "If justification did not require belief in the resurrection of Jesus, then for some the gospel's freeing

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[44] This is why Scaer has spent much of his own career advocating the position that the chief doctrine of Lutheranism, the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*, is not justification, but rather Christology. One may consider the 2000 festschrift in his honor, *All Theology is Christology.*

from the law became an argument for the ordination of women (Gal 3:23–29)" (Scaer 2014:138).

Scaer acknowledges the temptation many pastors face with respect to cliché theology and preaching. He writes, "From my experience, Lutheran pastors find it hard to resist the temptation to superimpose Paul's doctrine of justification on the content and outline of the sermons based on the gospels" (Scaer 2014:139). Without going too far into the argument regarding the dating and chronology of the New Testament, it is worth noting that the Gospels do not reflect a carefully developed and articulated doctrine of justification in the way that Paul presents it in the epistles to the Romans and the Galatians. However, as Scaer notes, it is all too tempting for a preacher to import Paul's doctrinal formulations into a discussion of the Gospel texts. Formulations are, of course, easier to work with than messy narratives and parables. Scaer offers an example of an alternative reading:

> Offered as one example is the account of the tax collector who returns to his home justified (Luke 18:10–14). Rather than Jesus explaining how God justifies through faith, he directs the hearers to the self-degrading posture of the tax collector who, in asking God for mercy, shows he is justified. While the conclusion of the account, "for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted," shows how the law destroyed the tax collector's self-esteem and how he was accepted or justified by God, at a deeper level the words describe Christ's humiliation in being accused by the law and his being rescued by God through his resurrection from the dead. Law and gospel in the life of the Christian correspond to Christ's humiliation and exaltation (Scaer 2014:140).

Here is an example of reading a text while attending to the language and themes of the text itself, rather than seeking to conform the text to prior doctrinal suppositions. "Christology is the prior reality and justification is the subsequent one" (Scaer 2014:140).

Lest one come to sit in the proverbial ivory tower and deride "those others" who fall into the traps which clichés make so tempting, it is worth noting that not even Martin Luther himself was immune to this tendency. Scaer writes, "In judging James, Luther used Reformation principles, which are themselves clichés, and *sola fide* took precedence over *sola scriptura.* Justification had become not only a homiletical principle but a hermeneutical one in

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interpreting the Bible" (Scaer 2014:141). Justification is such a great and overriding principle that it can become cliché, in the sense that justification becomes the lens through which even Luther regards everything. Because James does not present the Gospel in a clear and forensic manner as Paul, Luther disdains his epistle.

Finally, Scaer points out, clichés are useful because they serve the author's self-interests. He writes, "Rather than coming to terms with a writer's intention, one chooses the cliché that best preserves one's self-interests, and so Luther was no different than the rest of us. But the whole procedure is hardly allowed since Jesus leaves no hint that we are to value any one word of his over another. In fact, he said the exact opposite (Matt 7:24–26; 28:20)" (Scaer 2014:141). In preaching the whole counsel of God, one may not simply regurgitate clichés and fill in the blanks with a few Bible verses. Jesus must speak with the voice that the Scriptures employ. The Scriptures are not proof-texts for the preacher's own interests, but rather are the *viva vox evangelii* that declares the wondrous works of God from one generation to the next.

Scaer notes once more that clichés are both popular and dangerous because they in and of themselves have very little meaning, and so can be used however one likes. He writes:

> Honor for being the master of clichés belongs to Schleiermacher, who reassembled discarded Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican distinctives into one unified theological program. Christian distinctives made his program look Christian, but it was not truly Christian. Such is the character of the cliché that it allows the hearer to supply his own meaning or no meaning at all (Scaer 2014:143).

As stated above, clichés are pervasive in all parts of life, including the Church. Theologians couch clichés as "distinctives," but when a distinctive is overused, it becomes devoid of its meaning, and thus cliché. The risk is high when one does theology by cliché that one's theology will become itself entirely cliché – devoid of meaning and detached from historical roots. However, the danger is multiplied when the clichés are imported from foreign contexts as clichés seldom translate well.

One may venture to say that roots are indispensable in connecting one to one's culture, history, and character as a member of society. Furthermore, these elements are necessary for a preacher to preach successfully in a manner that addresses the realities of his hearers and connects the world of the Biblical story with the world of those who desperately need the Gospel.

One great problem in many parts of Africa today is what may be called unrootedness. This sense of being disconnected – cut off – from the tradition and culture of one's people and homeland leads to a loss of identity, or a reinventing of oneself in a new and often strange fashion. Mayi-Matip writes thus about culture:

> In summary, we will say that the culture, which constitutes the proper ethos of a given human community and represents the totality of the experience accumulated by successive generations, desires itself to be, like the start of living water from the source, a creative liberty of yesterday, of today, and of tomorrow, at the same time faithful to itself and ready to open itself to exterior experiences and to new situations under pain of hardening (Mayi-Matip 1990:99). [45]

Mayi-Matip returns several times to this image of culture as flowing, living water. He also notes that culture is not static, despite the caricatures of African cultures and traditions.

Moreover, Mayi-Matip writes concerning development in African and how the West tends to define development differently from African traditional society, leading to unrootedness and alienation. He defines development thusly:

> In Africa, before Occidental penetration, life constituted the fundamental social value, and the human person all at once the privileged product of his natural environment, the agent of transformation thereof, and the beneficiary of this transformation. This supposes that the fulfilment of the man – member of the community in which each has

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[45] *En résumé, nous dirons que la culture, qui constitue le génie propre d'une communauté humaine donnée et représente la totalité de l'expérience accumulée par les générations successives, se veut, à l'instar de l'eau vivifiante de la source, une liberté créatrice d'hier, d'aujourd'hui et de demain, à la fois fidèle à elle-même et prête à s'ouvrir aux expériences extérieures et aux situations nouvelles sous peine de sclérose.* All quotations from Mayi-Matip are translated from French by the author of this thesis.

his place and a role to play – was, with material and social security, the objective of development (Mayi-Matip 1990:99).[46]

On the other hand, "For Westerners, development is instead assimilated into the massive production of societies of consumption" (Mayi-Matip 1990:99). The point he wishes to make is that, in his estimation, African traditional societies have been oriented around the growth of the community in terms of cultural and social security, and the individual finds his or her own personal development within the fold of the greater societal development. By contrast, he asserts, Western societies define development in terms of large-scale production and consumption – in economic terms, rather than cultural ones. He summarizes the impact of this shift upon African societies this way:

> I will summarize by saying that the accumulation of imported goods of consumption, as well as the consumption of exogenous cultural products notably does not carry necessarily toward development; that there does not exist a model universally acceptable and interchangeable; and that, in consequence, each society has the right to its own specific model of development, defined and determined as a function of its environment and its own culture, the application of imported models being the most frequent source of alienation (Mayi-Matip 1990:100).[47]

He points to rising levels of crime, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, and pollution as the consequences of what he calls alienation – what this thesis terms unrootedness. These, among other social ills, are the result of this unrootedness, a disconnection from and conflict between traditional goals and aspirations of African community life and the consumerist objectives of imported societal norms from the West.

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[46] *Afrique, avant la pénétration occidentale, la vie constituait la valeur sociale fondamentale, et la personne humaine tout à la fois le produit privilégié de son environnement naturel, l'agent de transformation de celui-ci et le bénéficiaire de cette transformation. Cela suppose que l'épanouissement de l'homme — member de la communauté dans laquelle chacun avait sa place et un rôle à jouer — était, avec la sécurité matérielle et sociale, l'objectif du développement.*

[47] *Je résumerai en disant que l'accumulation des biens de consommation importés, ainsi que la consommation des produits culturels exogènes notamment ne conduisent pas nécessairement au développement; qu'il n'existe pas de modèle universellement acceptable et interchangeable; et que, en conséquence, chaque société a droit à son modèle spécifique de développement, défini et arrêté en fonction de son environnement et de sa culture propres, l'application de modèles importés étant le plus souvent source d'aliénation.*

Development is not totally bad, in the opinion of Mayi-Matip, but it must be carried out in a way that is culturally authentic and relevant. He writes:

> Firstly, the link between culture and development is evident. The culture, in effect, by its creativity, is the source of development. More than that, it directs it entirely toward the people who do it. Such is 'endogenous and self-centred development.' For its turn, socioeconomic development accents and extends culture by permitting it to form more agents [of creation] and to create all sorts of media of which the culture has need (Mayi-Matip 1990:101).[48]

This "endogenous and self-centred development" is the proper goal of each society, according to Mayi-Matip. Development looks different in each context, and the values of each society must dictate the path, means, and objectives of development. Also, note that he emphasizes that the goal of economic development is to permit the growth of cultural development – the production not of economic consumption but of cultural creativity and expression.

To this end, Mayi-Matip urges the synthesis of traditional African knowledge and modern academic advances. He notes specifically the need to promote the use and diffusion of African languages as a mode of cultural transmission, the need to identify and make use of traditional knowledge-holders as sources of information valuable to the academic realm, and the need for planners of development to work in concert with the holders of ancestral knowledge. All of these must occur to make decisions and development agendas that respect the needs and desires of African societies (Mayi-Matip 1990:103). He warns of the consequences of ignoring these needs:

> To ignore the holders of traditional African expertise in the cultural domain is, it seems to me, to have a comportment somewhat similar to that of colonial power. African cultures have been first poorly known, then deformed by means of extremely powerful information and formation. The return to the sources will not function except with the

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[48] *En premier lieu, le lien entre culture et développement est évident. La culture, en effet, de par sa créativité, est source de développement. Mieux, elle le dirige entièrement vers le peuple qui le fait. Tel est le « développement endogène ou autocentré ». A son tour, le développement socioéconomique accentue et étend la culture en permettant de former plus d'agents et de créer toutes sortes de moyens dont la culture a besoin.*

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true and until now rare holders of traditional African expertise. "Where there is a head, one does not coiffe the knee," says a proverb (Mayi-Matip 1990:103-104).[49]

Indeed, as discussed elsewhere in this thesis, one classic aspect of colonialism is the devaluation and suppression of traditional knowledge and expertise. Africa in today's world cannot afford to continue suppressing her cultures and societies, and still continue to pine for the growth of authentically African culture.

The relevance of this to the homiletical task is that it must be noted how the consumerist mindset of the West has influenced African cultures, specifically in the denigration of traditional cultural values. The African preacher must follow Mayi-Matip's advice and seek the knowledge of those who hold their ancestral wisdom to remain rooted in one's own cultural identity. The goal of becoming an African Lutheran preacher is to hold both of these things together: Lutheranism and Africanism.

Mayi-Matip's essay is worth reading in one sense simply to see how he uses traditional proverbs to advance his arguments. He makes his point with cogent logic, but then also reinforces it for his listeners with traditional wisdom. The proverb is not explained, in most cases, but is left to the hearer to interpret. Of course, to use traditional wisdom this way also assumes a shared context between the speaker and the hearer.

The contribution this attention to rootedness makes to the overall objective of this thesis is this: to be authentically African, the African preacher must not be afraid to be African. He must know and value his culture, his language, and his heritage. He must know the goals and aspirations of his society, and know who holds the knowledge that will lead toward those goals. With both traditional and imported influences, he must learn to take what is good and leave what is not.

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[49] *Ignorer les détenteurs des connaissances traditionnelles africaines dans le domaine de la culture c'est, me semble-t-il, avoir un comportement quelque peu similaire à celui du pouvoir colonial. Les cultures africaines ont d'abord été méconnues, puis déformées par des moyens d'information et de formation extrêmement puissants. Le retour aux sources ne s'opérera qu'avec les vrais et jusqu'ici rares détenteurs des connaissances traditionnelles africaines. « Où il y a une tête, on ne coiffe pas le genou », dit un proverbe.*

# CHAPTER 11 – JOHANN GERHARD'S "FIVEFOLD USE" OF SCRIPTURE

In his *Method of Theological Study,* Johann Gerhard expounds on what he terms the "fivefold use" of Scripture. This forms the point of departure for the theoretical framework which will be proposed in the fourth part of this thesis.

The *Method of Theological Study* is a proposed program of study for a theology candidate who desires to be trained and formed for the Holy Ministry. Gerhard treats the subject of the fivefold use of Scripture in Section Four, Chapter Two: "On Training in Preaching" of his *Method.* Before that, he gives a helpful introductory discourse regarding the duties of a preacher and writes:

> Now the church's preacher has two duties: the interpretation of Scripture and applying it to salutary use. The interpretation of Scripture involves both finding the true and genuine meaning and a clear and simple explanation of the same. You see, it is not enough for the preacher to seek and search for the genuine meaning of Scripture, but he must also explain to the people in churchly homilies the true sense he has found. The former belongs to the preacher's private study; the latter, to his public office (Gerhard 2017:201).

One may say that Gerhard is referring to the twin studies of exegesis and application in this manner. The idea is to find the true meaning of the text, and then make application of that meaning to the hearts and lives of the hearers. On the matter and means of interpretation, Gerhard has an entire volume of his *Commonplaces* devoted to the subject, which are examined in detail in Chapter Thirteen.

Delving into the substance of Gerhard's discourse on preaching, one finds that he first engages in a discussion of the use and purpose of rhetoric. He briefly summarizes the classical principle of the five functions of a speech: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery (Gerhard 2017:201). These five functions are not so much concerned with the sermon as an end product in itself, but rather a way to analyse and explain a given biblical text. Gerhard speaks of the arrangement of argument, style of speech, use of words and language, etc. in this context. However, he does not wish to dwell on these technical matters, because he has covered

them in sufficient depth elsewhere (2017:204). He wishes it to suffice that the preacher give a simple and clear, but sufficiently well-reasoned explanation of the content of the text.

Thereupon, he moves to application. "It follows that we discuss the salutary application of the exposited and explained text for the benefit of the hearers" (2017:204). Gerhard argues that as the Church is diverse, so the manners of application must likewise be diverse. "But since in that case the whole gathering of the church consists of various, different people who need salutary teaching, the aim and mode of application cannot be uniform but manifold, various, and diverse" (2017:204). As a general principle, Gerhard has no problem acknowledging that the hearers of a sermon, both in the utmost as each individual and more generally in various groupings, are varied. Therefore, one must employ varied modes of application.

He continues:

Following in the footsteps of the apostle, we shall reduce this to the following five headings. Rom. 15:4: 'For as many things as were written for our instruction, so that through endurance and through the consolation of the Scriptures we might have hope.' Also 2 Tim. 3:16-17: 'All Scripture is divinely inspired and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be prepared, equipped for every good work.' From these statements of the apostle, one concludes that Scripture has five uses, for it works for instruction (διδασκαλία), reproof (ἔλεγχος), correction (ἐπανόρθωσις), training (παιδεία), and consolation (παράκλησις) (2017:204).

Here we read what is variously referred to in various places as the fivefold use, the five uses, or the salutary uses of Scripture. This chapter examines this method of interpretation and application of text, so as to posit a general framework for homiletical praxis. Therefore, Chapter Fourteen will propose a more particular theory anchored to Francophone African Lutheran context. Chapter Fifteen15 then will connect the analysis of the current chapter with the proposed theory included in Chapter Fourteen.

Let us then consider the five uses which Gerhard elucidates. As a point of departure, Gerhard first begins by laying a foundation on which he demonstrates why these five uses are

necessary and useful. He argues that humans are subject to what he terms "three injuries," and also that there are "three chief works" of Christians (2017:204-5).

Regarding the former, he writes: "But now, mankind has been subjected especially to three injuries through and because of original sin. We are blind and ignorant as to *the knowledge of the truth*, remiss and lazy as to *doing good*, weak and impatient as to suffering evil. Scripture treats the first injury through instruction, the second through training, and the last through consolation" (2017:204)[50]. That is to say, the Scriptures proclaim the will of God and the Law of God as the antidote to ignorance. The preacher's task, therefore, is to preach the Law clearly for the instruction and training of sinners, that they may lead godly lives. The preaching of the Law also functions as reproof, warning sinners to walk away from the path of destruction.

Then, regarding the latter – the "three chief works" – Gerhard writes thusly: "Contrariwise, there are three chief works of the true Christian: *to know, to do good, and to suffer evil*. Hence there are also three cardinal, chief virtues of the Christian: faith, love, and hope. Knowledge of the truth belongs to faith, doing good belongs to love, and suffering evil belongs to hope. However, knowledge of the truth cannot stand without removing falsehood, nor can doing good have a place unless one refrains from evil and sin" (2017:205). These are the reverse of the three injuries mentioned previously. As he points out, as the Law warns against and condemns the errors, it must also exhort and instruct in the right way.

Therefore, Gerhard summarizes this foundation this way, "Therefore the five parts as a whole are necessary to reach complete Christian piety (as far as happens in this life), instruction and rebuke belonging to knowledge of the truth, training and correction to doing good, and consolation to patient suffering of evil" (2017:205). Let us now consider each of the five uses individually, as Gerhard elucidates them.

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[50] Italics in original text; likewise in the following paragraph.

Regarding instruction, Gerhard's basic principle is that doctrine taught in the sermon must flow naturally from the text at hand, and the point should always be to "strengthen the hearers' minds in the truth" (2017:206). He gives a list of rules that urge the preacher to use the Law and the Gospel appropriately so as to cause the desired effect upon the hearers – repentance in the sinner, and comfort to the penitent. While allowing the use of simple rhetoric and logic, Gerhard urges that "In explaining the articles of the faith before the people, one should deal with the necessary and basic. Leave lofty and difficult questions for the schools" (2017:205). The idea is that the sermon should be broadly comprehensible, adequately treat the doctrine at hand, but not overwhelm nor surpass the hearers.

Thus, instruction is what one may characterize as doctrinal discourse. Drawing a particular doctrine or making a logical argument from the text is what is in view with this use of Scripture. The *Formula of Concord* speaks of the necessity of properly explaining and understanding the doctrines of the faith. While it speaks directly about the distinction of Law and Gospel, the principle may be extended to all Christian doctrine.

> As the distinction between the Law and the Gospel is a special brilliant light, which serves to the end that God's Word may be rightly divided, and the Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles may be properly explained and understood, we must guard it with especial care, in order that these two doctrines may not be mingled with one another, or a law be made out of the Gospel, whereby the merit of Christ is obscured and troubled consciences are robbed of their comfort, which they otherwise have in the holy Gospel when it is preached genuinely and in its purity, and by which they can support themselves in their most grievous trials against the terrors of the Law (*Triglot* FC SD V:1).

Taking this principle and extrapolating it to encompass all doctrine, the point and purpose is not simple to show the erudition and learning of the preacher, but to strengthen the hearers' minds and hearts against error and for godly living.

Reproof and correction are often confused, and sometimes conflated. However, for Gerhard's purposes, one may say that reproof has to do with false teaching, whereas correction has to do with moral faults. Thus, reproof is viewed as the reverse of instruction. Where

instruction sets forth orthodox Christian doctrine, reproof exposes the controversies and the false teachings that arise against that doctrine. One sees here Gerhard's concern that the Scriptures be applied both correctly and effectively to the hearers. He writes, "Especially should one explain [controversies] that are contemporary issues and that pose an immediate threat to the hearers. But one should remain cautiously silent about those that have been dormant for a long time or that seem to pose no threat, since no one has even heard of them" (2017:206). One may say, in modern parlance, "Don't go looking for trouble, but deal with what is right in front of you."

Regarding the manner of refuting errors, Gerhard writes, "Errors should be refuted by scriptural testimonies that are clear, fundamental, and directly and suitably pertinent to that issue. (5) Avoid unrestrained ire, insults, scoffing, and all obscenity. Do not use more harshness in your words than the matter requires" (2017:206). Throughout his discourse, Gerhard again and again returns to the perspicuity and sufficiency of Scripture for all applications. He does caution against letting this sort of negative rhetoric dominate: "Neither the whole sermon nor most of it should be spent rebuking errors, but one should immediately return to teachings, exhortations, and warnings, which are more needed for the mixed gathering of the church" (2017:206). To return to the previous application, positive instruction is to be favoured over negative rebuke.

Third, Gerhard writes about training, although in practice he uses the term exhortation. The focus of this genre of application is to exhort and urge Christians "toward the pursuit of piety and toward the duties of the Christian in this old world" (2017:206). Although this use of the Law has been hotly contested among various Lutheran schools of thought, Gerhard clearly intends that the Scripture should be applied in this way. He sees this as a way of equipping the Christian for a life of sanctification. He writes, "In exhortations everything should be directed not only to the external works but also to the inner man's progress, which consists of putting

the old Adam to death, contempt of the world, the denial of self, sincere humility of heart, etc."
(2017:206). The teachings of Scripture are given for Christians to imitate in faith.

Now Gerhard comes to correction. As mentioned before, in distinction to reproof,
correction is meant to address moral faults. He writes:

> Wherever the godly are praised for doing what is right and honored with rewards, the
> ungodly are conversely convicted of their sins and afflicted with punishments.
> Wherever God, through the prophets, laments the ungodliness, indifference, and
> impentence [sic] of His people, there is abundant material for correction. The deeds and
> rewards of the godly expose our negligence because we do not follow in their footsteps,
> because we are not as eager to pursue piety, because we value eternal goods so little,
> because we do not aspire to the promised rewards with the whole heart (2017:207).

In application via correction, the purpose is to bring the impenitent sinner to a
recognition of his or her sin, so that confession and forgiveness follow. The Scriptures are used
to show the right way to go, and then the preacher uses it to correct the moral failings in view
in the text. However, Gerhard is careful to note that this must be done with appropriate
gentleness. He writes: "Just as Nazianzen says of God's fatherly chastisements that 'He
tempers the sword of vengeance with the oil of kindness,' so also the preacher should work in
all ways to make the hearers understand that his censures proceed from a fatherly heart and a
desire for the hearers' salvation, lest 'the ministry of just correction turn into a weapon of anger'
(Gregory, *In evang.,* homil. 18)" (2017:207).

Finally, Gerhard addresses consolation. This is perhaps the shortest of the five uses, in
Gerhard's treatment of them, probably because consolation is so familiar that it needs no
lengthy elucidation. He writes:

> (1) God's promises supply the material for consolations; (2) likewise, the examples of
> the saints who were subjected to the same adversities but finally experienced God's
> rescuing; (3) also the statements about God's mercy, the benefits of Christ, the joy of
> eternal life, etc. Bernard says it beautifully (*De convers.*, ch. 30): "The sufferings of
> this age are not what we fully deserve for our past fault, which is forgiven; nor do they
> compare to the present gift of comfort, which is given; nor do they compare to the future
> glory, which is promised" (2017:207).

The Scriptures are to be used for consolation for those suffering under evil, and for those who feel the stings of conscience regarding their own sins. That is, once the Scriptures have been applied in the forms of reproof and/or correction, then the penitent heart is to be comforted with the balm of the Gospel and the reassurance of Christ's merit and grace for sinners.

## REFLECTIONS

Benjamin Mayes writes:

> To be sure, law and gospel are actually being proclaimed whenever Scripture's admonishing, warning, teaching, and comforting are being proclaimed, and the Lutheran dogmaticians continued to teach the distinction of law and gospel. But when reading and expositing Scripture, the Lutheran Orthodox seem to have thought in terms of multiple *uses* more than in terms of distinguishing law and gospel. These "uses" could be thought of as points of application through which the concrete, unchanging, historical reality of what Scripture discusses is applied in various ways to people now (Mayes 2019:111-12).

This cogent remark from Mayes is the point of departure for this present thesis. The present writer believes that by preserving the proper places for Law and Gospel and for the fivefold use of Scripture in an interpretive framework, the Lutheran preacher may arrive at a homiletical theory that has room for the orthodoxy of the Lutheran tradition (one may argue, room for the span of Christian tradition) while also granting space for a contemporary and contextual application of the "concrete, unchanging, historical reality" of the Gospel message.

Certainly, debates regarding Law and Gospel were being carried out well before Johann Gerhard arrived on the scene. These debates also continued well after him – as are discussed in the following chapter. However, as has been demonstrated in this chapter, Gerhard distilled the essence of the fivefold use of Scripture into a model for guiding the conversation between text and context.

Mayes demonstrates that Gerhard was not an innovator in this regard, but rather sought to preserve and build on a tradition that may have begun with the work of Andreas Hyperius in 1553 – one of the first Lutheran theologians to set forth a method for approaching the biblical

text for preaching. From Hyperius, the torch is passed to Matthias Flacius, as is seen in Flacius' *Clavis Scripturae Sacrae* (1567). However, between Hyperius and Flacius, asserts Mayes, the general Lutheran movement seems to have passed over this hermeneutical insight, more or less (Mayes 2019:113-14).

In the nineteenth century, Walther and Loehe expected that good Lutheran preachers would use the fivefold application, but then the subject seems to drop out of sight again in the twentieth century (Mayes 2019:114). The goal of this present work is to follow Mayes in bringing this framework of application back into the light in the twenty-first century.

Remarking on the practicality of the fivefold use, Mayes writes:

> Besides this, the various applications give direction and clarity to sermons and individual care of souls. Too often, pastors are not distinct and clear in their sermons, and usually this is because they are not clear in their own minds about what they are trying to do. Preaching requires intentionality. Are you teaching, admonishing, or consoling? Many pastors try to do all at once, and the result is that they are hard to follow and not edifying. If the uses are mixed, it's likely that people will just tune out (Mayes 2019:134-35).

Mayes is correct in his assessment of much of the preaching in this day and age. He believes preaching requires intentionality, something that is sadly lacking in many sermons. As is expounded in later chapters, the application of Scripture must be intentional. A good doctor is not haphazard in how he treats a patient's illness if his goal is to see the patient live and recover. Likewise, a pastor, a curate of souls, must be intentional about how he treats the spiritual malady which afflicts those he shepherds.

As is often raised in this thesis, the question is: Why should this be considered normative, or even relevant, for African preachers? The answer to that would come from the appraisal of the situation Mayes offered, just quoted above. No matter the culture or context, the preacher must be intentional and have a goal in his preaching. What does he hope to accomplish? What is the point of the sermon? These are relevant questions for any preacher, anywhere. The position of this thesis is that the fivefold use of Scripture provides a preacher a

helpful framework in which to answer these questions. When he can clarify for himself what he hopes to accomplish, he can craft a sermon that works toward that goal, rather than delivering a sermon that simply blows hot air at the congregation.

Chapter Twelve will discuss the elements of a practice in some depth, but one of these elements is strategy. The fivefold use belongs to the domain of strategy because it is not the goal in itself, but rather it is the *habitus* that guides the preacher in interpreting and applying Scripture. The fivefold use is a habit that can be implemented and practiced.

The fivefold use is not some new "wonder drug" to cure all the ills of Lutheran preaching, but rather an old treasure to be brought out of the storehouse of history and added to the framework of good homiletical theory. It will be argued in Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen that the fivefold use of Scripture gives the preacher a lens through which to focus the message of Scripture in and for a given culture and context.

# CHAPTER 11 – WALTHER'S "LAW AND GOSPEL"

While the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone may be the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* of Lutheranism, perhaps no doctrine is mentioned more often than Law and Gospel. The phrase "Law and Gospel" has become one of the Lutheran Church's clichés that Scaer speaks of in the essay treated in the previous chapter of this thesis. However, one cannot understand theology, and certainly one cannot be considered a Lutheran preacher, without understanding and holding firm to this doctrine of Scripture.

In 1884-85, Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther presented a series of lectures to the students at Concordia College (now Seminary) in St. Louis, Missouri. Walther intended these lectures to be a "course" in practical theology. He says in the first lecture:

> While in our dogmatics lectures my goal is to ground you in every doctrine and make you certain of them, I have designed these Friday evening lectures to make you truly practical theologians. I wish to talk the Christian doctrine into your very heart, enabling you to come forward as living witnesses with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power. I do not want you to be standing in your pulpits like lifeless statues, but to speak with confidence and cheerful courage, offering help where help is needed (Walther 2010:9).

For Walther, the proper distinction between Law and Gospel is not an academic exercise, to be relegated to the classroom or to the pastor's study. Rather, it is the challenging task of every preacher. While challenging, it is indispensable for the work of the Holy Ministry. He writes:

> Now, of all doctrines, the first and foremost is the doctrine of justification. However, immediately following upon it – and almost equally important – is the doctrine of **how to distinguish between Law and Gospel.**[51] Let us now focus on this distinction between Law and the Gospel – a task to which we want to apply ourselves diligently (Walther 2010:9).

Walther's chief objective in these lectures is to make the preacher competent to handle the Word of God in such a way that the Word rings forth in its truth and purity. Most of the lectures are devoted to refuting errors in distinguishing Law and Gospel. This appears to be for

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[51] Bold print present in published text, representing the German *Sperrdruck* typesetting style.

the sake of maintaining clear preaching to save and safeguard the souls of the hearers. Walther writes:

> It is not my intent to give a systematic treatment of the doctrine of Law and Gospel in these lectures. Rather, my aim is to show you how easily we can inflict great damage on our hearers when we mingle Law and Gospel – despite their fundamental differences – and thus defeat the purpose of both doctrines. But you cannot begin to appreciate this point until you grasp the differences between Law and Gospel (Walther 2010:11).

Thus, throughout the lectures, Walther speaks of the task of preaching the Scriptures in a manner consistent with this fundamental doctrine.

The objective of this chapter is to undertake a close reading of Walther's theses on the proper distinction of Law and Gospel, with a focus on discerning how these twin doctrines affect preaching, both in content and structure. After this close reading, some comments are included regarding the impact of Walther's work on modern Lutheran preaching, as perceived by the present author. The overarching goal, of course, is to reveal how the proper distinction of Law and Gospel fits into the overall framework to be proposed in this thesis.

Walther presented thirty-nine lectures in the course of fourteen months, from September 1884 to November 1885. In this series of lectures, he presented twenty-five theses regarding the proper distinction of Law and Gospel. The first four theses lay out the basic concepts regarding what the Law is and what the Gospel is, and why it is so important to distinguish between the two. Thereafter, the twenty-one theses that follow are refutations of errors that have or may creep into preaching and must be warned against and clearly avoided.

## THESIS I

Walther begins this series of lectures as a good theologian, defining his terms. Thesis I clarifies what is meant by Law and Gospel.

> The doctrinal contents of all Holy Scripture, both of the Old and the New Testament, consist of two doctrines that differ fundamentally from each other. These two doctrines are Law and Gospel (Walther 2010:11).

By way of introduction, Walther enumerates six erroneous teachings regarding the distinction between Law and Gospel. It is not that the Law is a human doctrine and the Gospel

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is a divine doctrine. It is not that only the Gospel is necessary. It is not "that the Law is the teaching of the Old Testament, while the Gospel is the teaching of the New Testament" (Walther 2010:11). It is not that the aim of the Law is condemnation, while the aim of the Gospel is salvation. It is not that the Law and the Gospel contradict each other. It is not that the Gospel is for Christians, and the Law is not (Walther 2010:11-12).

It is, however, as Walther asserts, that six true points of difference exist between the Law and the Gospel, namely that they differ as to mode of revelation, contents, promises, threats, function and effect, and target audience (Walther 2010: 12).

Regarding the importance of the Law and the Gospel for preaching, Walther writes:

But, my friends, do not hesitate to preach the Law! People may despise it, yet they do so only with their mouths, because the things you say when preaching the Law are the same things that their own conscience preaches to them every day. Nor could we convert anyone by preaching the Gospel to them, unless we preached the Law to them first. It would be impossible to convert anyone if the Law had not already been written in his heart (Walther 2010:13-14).

Walther speaks of the revelation of the Law and of the Gospel. The Law is given the humanity through natural revelation; that is, it is written into the fabric of creation and engraved on the hearts of all people. This is why, Walther notes, the outlines of the Law can be found in every religion on earth (Walther 2010:13). However, the Gospel only comes through the preaching of the Word of God, and specifically the preaching of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the salvation of sinners. Walther emphasizes repeatedly throughout the lectures that without the Law, the Gospel is unintelligible and worthless; conversely, without the Gospel, the Law is a cruelty and a death sentence.

It is worth noting this difference, because it speaks to the value – albeit within limits – of African traditional religion for paving the way for the preaching of the Christian *kerygma*. As has been noted in previous chapters, African traditional culture is very spiritual and very aware of the moral and ethical boundaries of life. In Christian terms, this is natural law working in the conscience. This spirituality can be honoured in the Church as preparation for the true

Word, rather than thrown out wholesale with the practices and superstitions of traditional religions. As St. Paul did in Athens, this innate understanding of the Law can be used as an inroad to fill in the content that is missing from general, natural revelation by the preaching of the Word of God. Walther remarks that conversion will necessarily bring with it an active interest in the things of God. He writes:

> To understand as clearly as possible everything that God has revealed – all of that is irrelevant for non-Christians. However, the moment someone becomes a Christian, there arises in him a keen desire for the doctrine of Christ. If they have not yet been converted, at the moment of their conversion even the most uncultured peasants are suddenly awakened and begin to reflect on God and heaven, salvation and damnation, etc. They start to wonder about the deepest problems of human life (Walther 2010:16).

In first-century Athens, this interest in spiritual things presented itself as an interest in philosophy and a desire (in some people) to hear about the unknown god of whose existence they had a vague sense. Among those who hear the Word of God and keep it, this desire leads to the sort of awakening of which Walther speaks: a desire to learn the things of God. For the preacher, this necessitates a *habitus* of learning and study, so that he may continue to bring out the treasures old and new from the storehouse of God (Matt 13:52). For the hearers, this drives them to seek out the teaching of the Christian doctrine and its application to their lives. Faithful hearers will press their pastor for good and consistent teaching, so that this desire for the things of God can be satisfied regularly and deeply. This is why Christian preaching must be filled not only with nice words but with solid content; meat, not just milk, as St. Paul warned. Thus Walther can exhort the preacher to sound doctrine:

> Thus you can gather how foolish it is – in fact, how terribly deceived so many people obviously are – when they ridicule pure doctrine and say to us, "Enough already with your 'Pure doctrine, pure doctrine'! That can only lead to dead orthodoxy. Focus on pure living instead. That way you will plant the seeds of righteous Christianity." That would be like saying to a farmer, 'Stop fretting about good seed! Be concerned with good fruit instead.'

> On the contrary, if you are concerned about good fruit, you will also be concerned about good seed. In the same way, if you are concerned about pure doctrine, you will at the same time also be concerned about genuine Christianity and a sincere Christian life (Walther 2010:25).

Unfortunately, this conflict arises in nearly every congregation in Christendom, as the slumber of sin dulls the senses and dampens the desire for the pure spiritual truth of the Scriptures. Many a pastor will be tempted to preach what he thinks the people want to hear, or what will cause more money and more prestige to come into the congregation (and to himself). But there is no true Christian life without Christian doctrine.

One may inculcate a semblance of morality and social niceness, but without roots in the Word, the change is superficial; it serves as just a veneer of Christianity over the pre-existing contents of the person's heart. This, of course, is the very nature of syncretism.

Also of interest for this thesis is Walther's discussion of the outline of the sermon. He writes:

> Of course, you cannot preach like Luther. Yet you still need to consider: 'How can I preach the Law to the secure and, at the same time, the Gospel to crushed sinners?' Every sermon must contain both doctrines. As soon as one of them is missing, the other is wrong. For any sermon is wrong that does not present all that is necessary for a person's salvation. Do not think that you have done rightly if you generically preach Law in one part of your sermon and Gospel in the other. No. A topical division of this kind is worthless. Both doctrines may even be contained in one sentence. But everyone in your audience must have the impression: 'He is preaching to me!' Even the most comforting and cheerful sermon must contain the Law as well (Walther 2010:29).

Generic preaching is the bane of the Church. One may hazard to say that any person who has visited Christian churches has heard at least one sermon which is so generic and shallow as to be worthless. If the Law is preached as a sort of general slap on the wrist or merely a lament over the sad state of affairs, then the Law has not really been preached. Likewise, if the Gospel has not been proclaimed in such a way that the hearer knows the specific comfort and grace that it gives for the specific ailment under consideration, the Gospel has not really been preached.

Walther is correct and very wise in noting that a mere topical division of "the Law portion" and "the Gospel portion" of the sermon is not properly dividing Law and Gospel. As he notes, every sentence may contain at once both Law and Gospel, just as a single statement

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may strike the heart of one person as conviction while it strikes the person sitting beside him as great comfort. Unfortunately, as has been shown in previous chapters, this mere logical, procedural division of Law and Gospel often appears to suffice in place of actual careful exposition and distinction of these two heavenly doctrines.

## THESIS II

In Thesis II, Walther states, "If you wish to be an orthodox teacher, you must present all the articles of faith in accordance with Scripture, yet [you] must also rightly **distinguish** Law and Gospel" (Walther 2010:35).

In this thesis, Walther argues that it is certainly necessary for the preacher to present all the articles of the faith to the hearers, and he must do so faithfully according to the Word of God. However, he cannot simply heap up doctrines, and then pretend that that his preaching has been faithful simply because he has not spoken anything false. He writes:

> That is the litmus test of a proper sermon. The value of a sermon depends not only on whether every statement in it is taken from the Word of God and on whether it is in agreement with the same but also on whether Law and Gospel have been rightly distinguished. If the same building materials are provided to two different architects, sometimes one will construct a magnificent building, while the other, using the same materials, will make a mess of it (Walther 2010:37).

To be sure, it is vitally important that the preacher present the Christian doctrine in all its truth and purity. However, it is not enough simply to give a doctrinal discourse and to avoid saying anything false. To build the house square and plumb, the architect must use the tools and materials correctly. Likewise, the preacher must rightly distinguish Law and Gospel to give the saving hope of the Gospel to those in dire need of it.

Walther urges the preacher always to preach the Gospel, even though the preacher may know that unrepentant sinners will hear it, for the sake of the elect. But the preacher also is to preach the Law, because without it, the Gospel is of no effect. He writes:

> If I know that a person is not in a condition to have the Gospel preached to him, I must not proclaim it to that person. However, when I speak in public, the situation is different. There I must take into consideration chiefly the elect children of God. Still, I

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must preach the Law even there. In fact, a sermon that does not contain any Law is worthless. In every gathering of people there are always some impenitent persons who must be shocked out of their sleep of sin. And if anyone, upon being warned, promptly responds: 'Nonsense! That does not concern me' – that demonstrates that his heart has not yet been crushed (Walther 2010:45).

This may lead one to a point well argued in Walther's other work, *The Church and the Office of the Ministry*. The Church on earth is always a mixed crowd: some regenerate, faithful saints and some unbelievers. Part of the art of preaching is always to proclaim the Law and the Gospel faithfully in such a way as to prick the conscience of the sinner and call him to repentance, while straightaway pouring on the rich healing balm of the Gospel for sinners in the terrors of conscience. Walther acknowledges the difficulty of this in the next thesis.

## THESIS III

Thesis III states: "To rightly distinguish Law and Gospel is the most difficult and highest Christian art – and for theologians in particular. It is taught only by the Holy Spirit in combination with experience." (Walther 2010:49).

Here, Walther is careful to distinguish between knowledge of doctrine and application thereof. He readily admits that to understand Law and Gospel is not difficult; "It is not solid food but milk. It is like your ABCs" (Walther 2010:49). However, the difficulty is in application. He admits that personal experience and the turnings of one's own heart compound this struggle. He writes:

> Like two hostile forces, Law and Gospel sometimes clash with each other in a person's conscience. The Gospel says to you, 'You have been received into God's grace,' while the Law says to you, 'Do not believe it. Just look at your past life. How many and how serious are your sins! Examine the lustful thoughts and desires that you have harbored in your mind.' On occasions such as this it is difficult to distinguish Law and Gospel. When this happens to you, you must say, 'Away with you, Law! All your demands have been fully met, and you have nothing to demand of me. There is One who has already paid my debt.' People dead in their trespasses and sins do not feel this tension. They are soon through with the Law. But the difficulty is quite real to people who have been converted. They may go to the opposite extreme and come close to despair (Walther 2010:53).

This is the constant tension under which every Christian lives, and especially every pastor and preacher of the Word. The Law will convict sinners, and the devil will try to use

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this to his advantage, accusing the conscience and attempting to blind the eyes of faith and deafen the ears to the message of the Gospel. But the preacher must learn by experience and with the instruction of the Holy Spirit how to first hear the Law and Gospel for himself, and then how to maintain that blessed distinction for his hearers. Walther urges the preacher thusly:

> Preach in such a way that people in the congregation would think: 'He means *me*. Sure enough, he has described me – a hypocrite – exactly as I am.' On the other hand, you, the preacher, would have to describe a person afflicted with temptation so plainly that this victim of tribulation would have to admit: 'That is my condition, without a doubt.' Conversely, when listening to the preacher, a penitent person would think: 'That comfort is meant for me; I need to embrace it.' At the same time, an alarmed soul must be led to think: 'Oh, what a joyous message. He means me!' Yes, the impenitent, too, must be made to acknowledge: 'That pastor has me down to a *T*' (Walther 2010:60).

This is the high art of preaching, and why good preaching is a craft developed and not an innate ability. The preacher must first be a pastor to his people, knowing their needs and struggles. Only then he can speak to their hearts in ways that bring the Word they need into their lives.

## THESIS IV

Thesis IV states: "Understanding how to distinguish Law and Gospel provides **wonderful insight** for understanding all of Holy Scripture correctly. In fact, without this knowledge Scripture is and remains a sealed book" (Walther 2010:69).

Here, one comes to the heart of the matter; namely, that one cannot hope to read the Scriptures properly, let alone preach them, without understanding how to distinguish Law and Gospel properly. Without this distinction, the Bible remains a book full of contradictions and obscurities. Walther begins the lectures on this thesis by citing a list of passages that seem to contradict each other regarding God's opinion of humanity and regarding the means by which one may be saved.

However, Walther writes:

> Do not think that the Old Testament reveals a wrathful and the New Testament a gracious God, or that the Old Testament teaches salvation by a person's own works and the New Testament salvation by faith. No. We find both teachings in the Old as well as in the New Testament. But the moment we understand how to distinguish between Law

and Gospel, it is as if the sun were rising upon the Scriptures, and we behold all the contents of the Scriptures in the most beautiful harmony. We see that the Law was not revealed to us to put a notion into our heads that we could become righteous by it, but to teach us that we are completely unable to fulfill the Law. Then we will know what a sweet message – what a glorious doctrine – the Gospel is and will receive it with exuberant joy (Walther 2010:70).

This distinction must be preserved so that the message of salvation may ring freely and clearly. Walther cites the example of St. Anthony and the desert fathers as proof of how things go awry when Law and Gospel are not rightly understood. St. Anthony took Jesus' words to the rich young man in Matthew 19 as instructions for salvation, rather than condemnation, and so the desert fathers sold all their possessions and moved to a monastery. "They brought the Law to the very same people to whom they should have brought the Gospel" (Walther 2010:71).

Walther stresses the vital importance of this distinction for a pastor; the pastor must be able and equipped to apply the Law at the right moment and, likewise, apply the Gospel at its right moment. He writes:

> The preacher will not rightly proclaim these facts [condemnation and salvation] unless the distinction between Law and Gospel is burned into his brain. Only then can the listener lie down and die in peace on his deathbed. Even if the devil whispers every kind of insinuation at him, he can say to Satan: 'So what if your charges against me are quite correct? I have another doctrine that tells me something altogether different. I am glad that the Law has put me in such a woeful situation, for now I can appreciate the Gospel all the more.' (Walther 2010:73).

This, of course, is the core of the matter. Law and Gospel must be rightly distinguished, and both must be preached in their proper moments so that the sinful soul might be roused to repentance by the Law and thereafter comforted with the life-giving message of the Gospel. This is the art of the preacher, which (as Walther said in the previous thesis) is only taught by the Holy Spirit in the school of experience.

Thus, one sees that for Walther, the key interpretive principle for reading and preaching the Scriptures is the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. This distinction allows him to understand the Bible and to apply it to the hearers in a cogent and salient fashion. However,

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one may notice that Walther nowhere says that Law and Gospel is to be *the* paradigm for preaching in that one must slavishly follow a "Law first, Gospel second" structure, to the detriment of the text itself. As was stated in a previous section, the proper distinction between Law and Gospel is not a matter of ordering or outlining in the sermon.

Now, Walther turns from positive theses presenting what the proper distinction between Law and Gospel is toward negative theses refuting errors in this teaching.

### THESIS V

Thesis V states:

The most common way people mingle Law and Gospel – and one that is also the easiest to detect because it is so crude – is prevalent among Papists, Socinians, and Rationalists. These people turn Christ into a kind of new Moses or Lawgiver. This transforms the Gospel into a doctrine of meritorious works. Furthermore, some people – like the Papists – condemn and anathematize those who teach that the Gospel is the message of the free grace of God in Christ (Walther 2010:79).

In other words, this thesis refutes those who teach that Christ has come to give more commands and to increase the burden of the Law; rather, Christ's role is to free humanity from its demands. Christ becomes a new Lawgiver rather than a Redeemer. According to this line of thinking, the primary purpose of His work is to inaugurate a new set of morals, not to open the door to freedom in the Gospel.

In this light, Walther launches a strong condemnation of the Papacy, based on the Canons of the Council of Trent. In these canons, Rome condemns anyone who teaches that salvation is by grace through faith alone, without works of the Law. Because of this false teaching, Walther joins the historical Reformation voice of those who decry the Papacy as the Antichrist for perverting and subverting the preaching of the true Gospel.

In the face of this grave error, Walther urges his students to steadfastness of resolve in the faith, especially in light of the temptations to compromise or to use the Law as a weapon for morality. He urges them to make up their minds and take their stand for Christ. He ends this section thus: "Now, then, what will your chief task be when you enter the sacred ministry?

You are to proclaim to a world of sinners both Law and Gospel. You are to do this clearly, perfectly, and with a passionate spirit" (Walther 2010:88).

In Thesis VI, Walther states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you do not preach the Law in its full sternness and the Gospel in its full sweetness. Similarly, do not mingle Gospel elements with the Law or Law elements with the Gospel" (Walther 2010:89).

This thesis is about half measures. Walther roundly condemns any attempt to soften the Law or to mingle the Law and the Gospel in preaching or teaching. The Law cannot make concessions, or the Gospel will not work its healing. He writes:

> Whenever you preach the Law, you must always bear in mind that it makes no concessions. That would be completely contrary to the character of the Law, because it makes only demands. The Law says, "You must do this. If you fail to do it, there will be no patience, loving-kindness, and long-suffering of God for you. You will have to go to hell." To make this point quite plain to us, the Lord says, "Whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven." That does not mean he will have assigned to him the lowest place in heaven, but that he will not go to the kingdom of heaven at all (Walther 2010:90).

Concessions are against the very nature of the Law. This is why Walther continues to exhort the preacher not to compromise, lest he should become a Pharisee. Walther goes to lengths to show how the Pharisees, and the Papists after them, compromise the Law by making it possible to keep by human effort. This is, of course, what the human ears and heart want to hear: that deep down the human is a "good person," maybe just possessing a "few flaws." However, Walther is quite clear in disabusing one of that notion, as he writes:

> The Law makes no one godly. Rather, when the Law begins to take effect, the person begins to fume and rage against God. He hates the preacher who has shouted the Law into his heart, feeling that he cannot slip off its coils. When this happens, you sometimes hear people say: 'I will never go to that church again. Why, that preacher strikes terror into my soul. I would prefer to attend the services of the Rev. So-and-so. He makes you feel good. When you listen to him, you realize what a good person you really are.' Alas! Down in hell these same people will want to take revenge on the preacher when they see how that false prophet got them thrown into the pit (Walther 2010:91-2).

It is indeed true that restless souls exist who wander from congregation to congregation, searching for a preacher who will soothe their itching ears, as St. Paul says. If the Law strikes them, they run from it. They seek out the saccharine sweetness of those preachers who will talk of comfortable topics that do not make these souls feel badly. These wanderers want a message of how to live a better life, how to be a nicer person, and how to help their neighbours, but without the need to apply any of the Law's demands – demands for a repentant heart, the renewal of the mind, or the transformation of one's life. Walther is quite clear as to where such preaching leads the preacher and his hearers: into the pit of hell.

However, the preacher who holds steadfastly to the proper distinction of Law and Gospel will terrify and possibly even break the hearts of the hearers. Of course, this is the point of the Gospel.

> The Law must precede the preaching of the Gospel. First you need Moses, then Christ. Or: first John the Baptist, then Christ. At first the people will exclaim, 'How terrible this all is!' But then the preacher – with a glow in his eyes – arrives at the Gospel. This cheers the hearts of the people. Now they understand why the pastor had preached the preceding remarks: he wanted to make them see how terribly contaminated with sin they are and how desperately they need the Gospel (Walther 2010:93).

Walther often makes use of the metaphor of medicine in these theses: the Law is a bitter medicine, but it must be swallowed and taken in its full dose. Thereafter, the Gospel can come in and do its work with full strength and sweetness. The healing is all the better after the illness. However, any commingling of the two results in the negation of both, just as adding sugar to the medicine neutralizes its healing effects. The preacher does well to bear in mind this simple concept.

## THESIS VII

Thesis VII states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you first preach the Gospel and then the Law; or first sanctification and then justification; or first faith and then repentance; or first good works and then grace" (Walther 2010:101).

In this thesis, thus, the chief concern is that the sequence of doctrine must be preserved, so that the message of salvation may ring forth in its truth and purity. Otherwise, the Law and Gospel are muddled and distorted. "This happens when they [preachers] do not present the various doctrines in their proper sequence: when something that should come last is placed first. This practice can inflict tremendous damage in the heart and the understanding of those listening to you. There are four different ways to get this sequence wrong" (Walther 2010:102).

The first error in sequence is to preach the Gospel prior to the Law, according to Walther (2010:102). He notes that this is the sort of tendency that afflicted the Antinomians in the days of Luther. The Antinomians preached the Gospel first because they actually did not want to preach the Law at all, believing that the Law has no place in the life of a Christian. He also points to the Moravians as another example of this error. While Walther does not elaborate on their particular error, one may surmise from Walther's comments that the Moravians generally practiced a superficial preaching of the Law, preferring rather to share the comfortable and kind message of the Gospel to the sternness and particularity of the Law.

The second "corruption of the correct sequence" is when one preaches sanctification before justification (Walther 2010:102). The forgiveness of sins must be preached before one can begin to speak about the sanctified life of a Christian. In other words, one must be made a Christian by confessing his sins and acknowledging he is a sinner and receiving grace through faith. Only then can one live as a Christian. Commenting on Psalm 119:34, Walther writes:

> What [the Psalmist] is saying is this: 'Because You, O God, receive me into Your grace, therefore – *because* of this gracious act of Yours – I start to love Your Commandments. As long as my sins are still unforgiven, I cannot love You and Your Commandments. No, I hate You. But as soon as I have been pardoned, I obtain a new heart and gladly quit the world, for I find with You something better than what the world can give me' (Walther 2010:103).

When one preaches sanctification before justification, one sets up an impossible sequence for his hearers. The hearers must understand that they cannot possibly live as

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Christians without first becoming Christians – lost sinners who have received the saving grace of the Savior.

The third error in sequence is when one preaches first faith and then repentance. Walther again points to the Antinomians and the Moravians/Herrnhuters as perpetrators of this error. In this error, faith is preached first, as though it were the motivator for repentance, when it should be the other way around. Walther cites Acts 2:37-38: "And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" Repentance leads to the remission of sins. This is, of course, the order preserved in the Augsburg Confession, Article XII.

The fourth error Walther mentions in this thesis occurs when one preaches good works and then grace (Walther 2010:104). Commenting on Eph 2:8-10, Walther writes:

> Note that the apostle does not say, 'We must do good works so that God will be gracious,' but rather the very opposite: '*By grace you have been saved, but by grace you are created for good works.*' First you have to receive grace, then God creates you anew. In this new state you *have* to do good work; you can no longer remain under the dominion of sin (Walther 2010:104).

God re-creates human beings to do good works, but the good works must follow the salvation that is quoted above. The old person cannot and does not possess the capacity to truly perform good works as described in Ephesians chapter 2. Furthermore, this new creation cannot occur unless and until the old Adam has been crushed by the Law and drowned in Baptism.

Thereafter, Walther proceeds to offer six example sermon outlines, which confuse this vital sequence of doctrine (Walther 2010:106):

- First: The way of salvation – 1) Faith and 2) Repentance
- Second: Good works – 1) What they consist of and 2) That they must be performed in faith
- Third: Prayer – 1) True prayer is based on certainty of being heard and 2) True prayer is based on faith.
- Fourth: Contents of the Word of God – 1) Prophesies and 2) Threats
- Fifth: True Christianity consists of 1) Christian living, 2) True faith, and 3) A blessed death
- Sixth: What must people do to become certain of salvation? 1) Amend their lives and become different, 2) Repent of their sin, and 3) reach out for Christ by faith

As Walther notes, these outlines are horrible because they rob the hearer of the blessed comfort of the Gospel by heaping upon its truth the need for works or chasing away the Gospel with condemnation. "When I hear these parts of a sermon, I say to myself: First the preacher is going to comfort me, they he will throw rocks at me, causing me to forget everything that he said at the start" (Walther 2010:106).

Some of these errors are not difficult to imagine. Walther himself admits that he puts them coarsely here, for the sake of instruction. Nevertheless, one may easily fall into any of these pitfalls if one is not careful to maintain the proper distinction and sequence of Law and Gospel in preaching and teaching. One may argue that in each example just given, the parts of the sermon outline are not false; they are simply in the wrong order. For instance, in the first one, simply reverse the parts; likewise, in the fifth, reverse parts one and two. This is why the preacher must remain ever attentive not only to the content of his preaching, but also to the order of the parts. Walther cites Luther:

> Now, a teacher and preacher must be trained in these two things. He must possess skill and experience in them. That is, he must both rebuke and crush the obstinate, and, again, he must be able to comfort those whom he has rebuked and crushed, lest they despair completely and are swallowed up by the Law[52] (Walther 2010:111).

Finally, with respect to the intent of this thesis, Walther drives home the point that sermons must be targeted and focused. Then, as now, a great problem existed with sermons being preached with no particular aim, aside from simply consoling the preacher that he had discharged his duty by saying something of the Word of God. Walther writes:

> The biggest problem with modern preaching, my dear friends, is this: these sermons lack point and purpose. And this fault is particularly noticeable in the sermons of our contemporary preachers who are believers. While unbelieving and fanatical preachers have a definite goal – too bad that it is not the right one! – believing preachers, as a rule, imagine that they have fully discharged their office as long as they have preached the Word of God…

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[52] W² 1:1429-30

Neither Christ nor the holy apostles preached in that fashion. When they had finished preaching, every hearer knew: he meant *me,* even though the sermon contained no personal hints or insinuations. For instance, when our Lord Christ delivered the powerful, awful parable of the murderous tenants in the vineyard, the high priests and scribes confessed to themselves: "He means us" (Walther 2010:111).

Walther wishes that preachers would concern themselves with having a definite purpose, rather than just mounting the pulpit and speaking hot air. He posits that unbelief grows in the Church because of preachers who do not share substance and truly do not preach what needs to be said. Walther ends his lectures on this thesis by saying, "However while it is important that sermons need a specific goal, it is equally important that your aim be the **right one**. If you do not aim properly, your preaching will be useless – regardless of whether you preach Law or Gospel" (Walther 2010:112).

## THESIS VIII

Thesis VIII represents a pivot from the earlier theses, which were presented as a series of lectures by themselves, to the latter theses IX-XII, which were added to form a second, more detailed series of lectures.

Thesis VIII reads: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you preach the Law to those who are already in terror on account of their sins or the Gospel to those who are living securely in their sins" (Walther 2010:113).

Walther argues that inverting the order of Law and Gospel, or preaching them to the wrong hearers, mingles the two doctrines and ruins the whole enterprise. As proof of the correct practice, he cites examples from Christ's preaching: the woman caught in adultery, Zacchaeus, the prodigal son, and the thief on the cross. Walther writes of these:

> These texts show us that, according to God's Word, we should not give a single drop of evangelical consolation to those who are still living securely in their sins. On the other hand, we should not address the slightest threat or rebuke to the brokenhearted – but only promises delivering consolation and grace, forgiveness of sin and righteousness, life and salvation (Walther 2010:115).

As a case study of this, Walther reads to his hearers a letter from Luther to George Spalatin, superintendent of the churches in Meissen. This is when Spalatin had made a serious

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error in pastoral judgment and thereafter fell into deep despair because of his sin. Luther's goal in the letter is to comfort Spalatin by assuring him that all is not lost. The situation can be made right, and Spalatin's own sins can be absolved. The current reader is encouraged to read Luther's letter, with Walther's insightful commentary. However, for the sake of brevity, allow one point to be taken from this section. Walther writes:

> When a preacher absolves a person who has confessed his sin to him, he takes that sin of the other person upon his own conscience. He can cheerfully do this, however, because the party who came to him to confess perhaps the most horrible sins came with a crushed heart. That preacher may cheerfully pronounce Absolution to such a person and say: "I will assume the responsibility for what I am doing, for I know that, on the great Day of Judgment, Christ will say to me: 'You did the right thing. For that person came to you with a broken conscience, and the only correct thing to do was to administer the Gospel to him'" (Walther 2010:121).

As the lectures continue, Walther moves on (in what is considered the second part of this thesis) to emphasize that the Gospel must not be preached to those who remain secure in their sins. In turning his attention in this direction, Walther comments regarding the heart of a preacher:

> For when your hearers feel that a preacher is deadly serious, they feel drawn by an irresistible force to pay the closest attention to what the preacher is teaching in his sermon. That is the reason sometimes many simple, less-gifted, and less-learned preachers accomplish more than the most highly gifted and deeply learned men.
>
> My dear friends, first and foremost, I would wish that you all were real Christians, filled with burning passion for the truth. That is the main tool you need, over time, to become powerful preachers – preachers whose spirit grabs hearers by an irresistible force, as the example of the apostles demonstrates. The people could not tell why, but the preaching of these simple men make a most powerful impression upon them (Walther 2010:126).

Again, as before, Walther wishes to impress upon his students that it is vitally important for a preacher to believe the things he says; furthermore, the preacher ought to have experience and intimate knowledge of the Law and Gospel in his own life.

> Regarding the preaching of the Gospel to secure sinners, Walther writes:
>
> The devil is capable of binding people not only with the ropes of filthy and course sins but also with the delicate threads of sins such as pride, envy, and lovelessness. A wicked person who wants to remain in his sins – whether they be those coarse or refined sins –

such a wicked person, Isaiah says, does 'not see the majesty of the LORD.' They do not discern what a great treasure is being offered them. They do not understand the doctrine of salvation by grace. Either they reject it, or they shamefully misapply it. They think: 'IF mere faith is all that I need for salvation, then my sins, too, are forgiven. I can remain as I am, and I will still go to heaven. I, too, believe in my Lord Jesus Christ.' Preachers who cause secure sinners to misapply the Gospel load upon themselves great guilt and responsibility before God (Walther 2010:128).

His point is that unforgiven sin condemns one to eternal hell and damnation. The soul who sins will die. The preacher who allows this to occur by preaching only comfort and consolation to a person bound in his sin – whether a coarse sin or a refined one – will in like manner be liable to judgment for not preaching the truth of the Word of God.

## THESIS IX

Thesis IX is arguably the most important thesis in *Law and Gospel*, in terms of the amount of time and attention Walther devoted to this matter. This thesis reads:

> You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you point sinners who have been struck down and terrified by the Law toward their own prayers and struggles with God and tell them that they have to work their way into a state of grace. That is, do not tell them to keep on praying and struggling until they would feel that God has received them into grace. Rather, point them toward the Word and the Sacraments (Walther 2010:143).

This thesis is primarily directed against the Reformed churches of Walther's day, and more specifically, against the Revivalists roaming across the United States at that time. "These people do not proclaim the pure Gospel doctrine of how poor, alarmed sinners can arrive at the assurance that God is gracious to them" (Walther 2010:143). Both the Revivalists and the Pietists directed people to their inner struggles and to their own prayers, in efforts to search their hearts and feelings for a sense of assurance that they had been received into grace.

Walther rehearses two stories from the book of Acts to show how the apostles dealt with sinners who had been stricken by the Law: the Day of Pentecost, and the conversion of the Philippian jailer and his household. In each case, he shows how the apostles did not drive the people to their own wrestling to find salvation, but rather to Baptism as an external proof

of God's love, grace, and good will toward them. Walther writes, regarding the Philippian jailer:

> What requirements do the apostles demand of him? They do nothing except proclaim the Gospel in a simple manner. Without any requirements they say, "Believe in the Lord Jesus." That makes the apostles' practice clear. Whenever their word produces faith, they immediately administer Baptism. They do not say, "We need to walk you through an extensive course of instruction and explain accurately and thoroughly all the articles of the Christian Creed. After that, we will have to put you on probation to see whether you can become an approved Christian." Nothing of the sort. The jailer asks to be baptized because he knows this is how he will be received into the kingdom of Christ, and the apostles immediately baptize him (Walther 2010:148).

When the Law has done its work, it is time for the Gospel to enter in and do its life-giving work. A sinner struck by terrors of the conscience does not need more Law, but the full-strength Gospel.

Walther notes that the preacher has not done his job properly in preaching the Law if he does not bring the hearer to the point of confessing himself to be a poor, miserable sinner who can do nothing in his own ability to reach God. However, the preacher also has not fulfilled his duty if he does not preach the Gospel to these terrified sinners. Walther writes:

> But the incorrect preaching of the Law is not even the worst feature of the sects. To make matters even worse, the sects do not preach the Gospel to people who are alarmed and in anguish. These pastors imagine they would commit the worst sin by immediately offering consolation to such poor souls. They give them a long list of works the have to do, so that they will be received into grace – if at all. They tell them how long they have to pray, how forcefully they have to struggle and wrestle and cry, until they supposedly feel the Holy Spirit and divine grace and can rise from their knees shouting, "Hallelujah!" (Walther 2010:151).

Walther continues to decry some of the antics and theatrics that were commonplace among the Revivalists of the day. These included consigning the seekers to the anxious bench or surrounding them with church members who knelt around the person needing conversion to pray and beg God to convert the poor, lost soul. This activity would continue until the person had drummed up in his heart the feeling that God had forgiven him and had received him into grace.

Walther posits three errors of the sects that destroy their preaching and teaching. Faulty doctrine produces faulty practice.

> In the first place, the sects neither believe nor teach real and complete reconciliation of man with God because they regard our heavenly Father as a God who is very hard to deal with, whose heart must first be softened by passionate cries and bitter tears. That amounts to a denial of Jesus Christ, who long ago turned the heart of God to men by reconciling the entire world with Him (Walther 2010:152).

Rather than God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, this sort of preaching would make it out that God is somehow softened up by Christ's sacrifice, but that the individual is still responsible for bringing himself to reconciliation with God by his efforts.

"Second," Walther states, "these sects teach false doctrine concerning the Gospel. They regard it as nothing but a set of instructions for man, teaching what man must do to secure the grace of God" (Walther 2010:153). They do not preach the Gospel as the means and message of reconciliation with God already accomplished in and by Jesus Christ.

"Third, the sects teach false doctrine concerning faith. They regard faith as a quality in people that "improves" them, that increases their sanctification. This is why they consider faith to be such an extraordinarily important and beneficial matter" (Walther 2010:153). That is, such sects do not consider faith to be a passive reception of the Lord's works and gifts, but rather an active striving, showing itself in love for God and neighbour.

Concerning these errors, Walther writes, "Unquestionably, this doctrine of doubt is the most horrible error into which a Christian can fall. For it puts Christ, His redemption, and the entire Gospel to shame. It is no laughing matter" (Walther 2010:156). And, to remove all doubt regarding this point, Walther recounts his own personal experience with these errors, having himself fallen into a Pietist sect during his university days.[53]

He recounts the story of Johann Philipp Fresenius, and how Walther himself encountered Fresenius' *Book on Confession and Communion*. Fresenius was, argues Walther,

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[53] The following is a summary of material presented in Walther, pp. 156-167.

a devout and pious man. However, he fell into grave error by mingling Law and Gospel, to the point where he very nearly obliterated the Gospel. Fresenius' error appealed to many in the Church in the late Eighteenth Century, because the Church had fallen into a sort of stupor of Rationalism, and the Pietism, which Fresenius championed, emphasized the inner life of faith and the lively strivings and wrestling that stirred up the fires of the heart which Rationalism sought to extinguish.

Walther grew up a believer, but he says he was not a fervent Christian. Therefore, when he encountered the admonitions of Fresenius and the influences of Pietism, he was a prime target for their message of reawakening. He fell in with a group of theology students at university, with whom he engaged in study and spiritual exercise according to the example and teaching of Fresenius and other Pietists. However, rather than deepening his spiritual life and strengthening his faith, Walther found that this approach to Christianity drove him into despair, because he could never be sure that he was secure in a state of grace. In fact, he turned away from the Gospel because he feared it was not for him. It was only by the grace of God that he encountered another young theologian who led him to see the truth of Scripture and the light of God's grace.

After recounting all that, and after presenting a summary examination of Fresenius' writing, Walther moves back to more general remarks about Thesis IX. He writes:

> The ninth thesis that we are studying is one of the most important. For when the Reformed mingle Law and Gospel – a common practice among the sects – this is what it boils down to: instead of pointing people to the Word and the Sacraments, the Reformed instruct alarmed sinners to struggle their way into a state of grace by prayer and inward wrestling until they *feel* grace living within themselves. This *looks* like a very godly and Christian procedure, and an inexperienced person can easily by deceived by it.
> But God be praised! We have God's Word, which does not deceive us, a Word upon which we can rely and by which we can remain in the present darkness, which it lights up for us (Walther 2010:169).

In this light, Walther goes on to present two lectures on Absolution, and the understanding of the power of the Word that underpins the doctrine and practice of Absolution,

as well as the other Sacraments. Walther presents Absolution as a particularly potent – and particularly Lutheran – answer to the errors and problems of Pietism. That is, Absolution is an external Word, spoken with the full power and authority of God Himself, which counteracts and supersedes any internal wrestling and striving.

THESIS X

Thesis X states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you preach that "dead" faith can justify and save in the sight of God – while that believer is still living in mortal sins. In the same way, do not preach that faith justifies and saves those unrepentant people because of the love and renewal it produces in them" (Walther 2010:229).

The primary goal of this thesis is that historical faith, or intellectual assent to the doctrine of the Church, is not enough to save a person from eternal separation from God. True faith necessarily is predicated upon repentance, and also produces a changed life. Walther writes:

> A person who claims to have a firm faith that he will never abandon – but who still has an impure heart – must be told that he is in great darkness. For, in reality, he has no faith at all. For instance, you may regard all the doctrines preached in the Lutheran Church as true, but if your heart is still in its old condition, filled with the love of sin – if you still act contrary to your conscience – then your whole faith is a mere sham. Then you do not have the faith of which the Holy Spirit speaks when He uses the word "faith" in the Scriptures. For *real* faith purifies the heart (Walther 2010:231).

In this thesis, Walther wishes to combat against the error of the Roman Catholic Church, which teaches that one can have true faith that can coexist in the heart with sin, and that a person can persist in unrepentance and yet be considered to have faith. He cites the Council of Trent as teaching, "We must claim that salvation can be lost by other means than simply by unbelief, through which faith itself is lost… Salvation can also be lost **by any other mortal sin, though faith itself is not lost by it**" (Walther 2010:233).

The Calvinists arrive at the same conclusions, albeit by a different approach. Walther cites the Decrees of the Synod of Dort: "So it is not by their own merit and strength, but through the gracious compassion of God, that they do **not entirely fall from faith and grace nor**

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**remain in their fall until the end and be lost**" (Walther 2010:235). That is to say, God preserves the elect from falling away, so that His eternal decree of predestination may remain inviolate. Walther sternly expresses his disagreement with this thinking, noting how it creates hardened sinners who believe they can live lives without repentance, since they cannot lose their faith no matter what. He cites the example of Oliver Cromwell as one who was comforted in this false assurance, despite his life of wicked deeds.

Against these false teachings, Walther quotes the Smalcald Articles: "The Holy Spirit does not permit sin to have dominion, to gain the upper hand so it can be carried out, but represses and restrains it from doing what it wants. **If sin does what it wants,** the Holy Spirit and faith are not present" (SA III III 44; cited in Walther 2010:236). Furthermore, he cites 1 John:

> St. John says in 1 John 3:9: "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning… and he cannot keep on sinning." This is also the truth that St. John speaks in 1 John 1:8: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (Walther 2010:237).

Walther is careful to elaborate that while any sin is a departure from the faith and causes separation from God, as soon as repentance is born in the heart, God forgives and restores the sinner to grace for the sake of Christ. As proof of this, he cites John 21, where Jesus restores Peter after the latter's denial of Him.

### THESIS XI

In Thesis XI, Walther states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you only want to comfort those with the Gospel who are contrite because they love God. You also need to comfort people with the Gospel who are only contrite because they fear His wrath and punishment" (Walther 2010:259).

Walther frames the false position thusly:

> If a Protestant is alarmed over his sins and is in a state of contrition and sorrow because of them, people ask him to state the source of his contrition. They ask: 'My dear fellow, why are you contrite? Are you contrite only because you realize you will be going to hell because of your sins? Or are you contrite because you realize you are condemned because you see God's wrath above you and the pit of hell below you?' The Papists and

even the fanatics say, 'No, real contrition must come from love for God. Only then is your contrition worth anything. Only then can I preach the Gospel to you' (Walther 2010:259).

The problem again is an inverting of the order of justification and sanctification.

Walther writes:

> A genuine preacher of the Gospel will ask: 'Do you know that you are lost and condemned sinners and that you cannot find the help you are seeking? Then come to Jesus with your evil hearts and your hatred of God and of God's Law, and Jesus will receive you just as you are. He is full of glory. Everybody knows that 'Jesus receives sinners!' There is no need for you to change your behavior, there is no need for you to cleanse yourself first, and there is no need for you to improve yourself **before** you come to Jesus. No, the only one who can improve *you* is Jesus! And He will, if only you would believe in Him" (Walther 2010:260).

The Law does not cause people to love God and to change their lives in any real spiritual

way. Rather, the Law drives people to despair. Only then can the Gospel have its full effect

and call the sinner to faith not in himself but in Christ.

> Further, Walther writes:

> When you preach, do not be stingy with the Gospel. Bring its consolations to all, even to the greatest sinners. But only when they are terrified by the wrath of God and hell are they fully prepared to receive the Gospel. True, this goes against our reason; we think it strange that such scoundrels should be comforted immediately. We would think that they should be forced to suffer much greater agony in their conscience. Fanatics adopt that method when they deal with alarmed sinners. But a genuine Bible theologian resolves to preach the Gospel and faith in Jesus Christ to a person whom God, by His Law, has prepared for such preaching (Walther 2010:263-4).

The Law must work first, but then the Gospel must be poured upon the sinner in

abundance. This truth is evident in John 3:17: "For God did not send His Son into the world to

condemn the world, but, that the world might be saved through Him."

In concluding his lectures regarding this thesis, Walther makes the following remarks

that reflect the vital work of a preacher:

> What is he supposed to bring about by his preaching? Remember that the preacher is supposed to shock secure souls who are asleep in sin. Next, his job is to lead those who have been shocked to faith. Next, he gives believers assurance of their state of grace and salvation. Next, he leads those who have become sure of their salvation to a life of sanctification. And last, he is to confirm those who are sanctified and keep them in their holy and blessed state until the end. What a task (Walther 2010:272)!

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## THESIS XII

Thesis XII states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you teach that the reason our sins are forgiven is because we both believe and are contrite" (Walther 2010:275).

The problem that Walther wants to highlight in this thesis is the idea that contrition is a good work in itself, and is cause for a person to receive forgiveness of sins. He is quick to affirm that contrition is necessary. One must be driven to despair over his sins, and the conscience must be quickened, so that the Gospel may be received by a willing heart. But one must not confuse the order of things. He writes:

> However, as you keep this in mind, do not think that contrition is the cause for sins being forgiven. Contrition is in no way the cause for a person to receive forgiveness of sins. Rather it is faith that grasps forgiveness of sins. Why do you think I have been stressing that people who claim *contrition* to be the cause of the forgiveness of sins are mingling Law and Gospel (Walther 2010:276)?

Walther notes that the pendulum can swing in two extreme directions. Either the preacher may apply the Gospel to partial contrition, thereby driving the person further into sin; or he may withhold the Gospel to drive a person to despair and internal turmoil. Walther notes that the Scriptures clearly prescribe contrition, but they nowhere describe a required degree of contrition that every sinner must reach before receiving the Gospel (Walther 2010:279).

## THESIS XIII

Thesis XIII states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you explain faith by demanding that people are able to make themselves believe or at least can collaborate toward that end. Rather, preach faith into people's hearts by laying the Gospel promises before them" (Walther 2010:287).

Walther writes:

> No, the error we are addressing is that man can produce faith in himself. Such a demand would be an order of the Law and would turn faith into a human work. Clearly, that would be mingling Law and Gospel. A preacher must be able to preach a sermon on faith without ever using the word *faith*. It is not important to use the literal word *faith*.

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Rather, the preacher needs to frame his address in a way that he would awaken in every poor sinner the desire to lay the burdens of his sins at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ and say to Him, "You are mine, and I am Yours" (Walther 2010:287-8).

In this thesis, Walther condemns the error that casts faith into doubt by making it a human work. He is clear to state that the Holy Spirit creates faith through the preaching of the Word. It is not a pre-existing condition in the heart of a person that would bring him or her to the Gospel. Luther complained in his day, and it still occurs today, that many preachers ramble on at great lengths about faith, but never actually give the faith to their hearers. This can only occur by proclaiming the saving Word that creates that faith (Walther 2010:288). They preach a great deal *about* faith, but the hearers are left wondering, "How do I get this faith? I must not be saved, because I don't have that of which the preacher speaks."

The controversy arises that some allege that God cannot demand something which man cannot fulfil. However, this is false logic. "There is an old trustworthy saying: 'Based on an obligation, one cannot be certain of its fulfillment'" (Walther 2010:289).

> God deals with people the same way [as a creditor]. By serving notice on me that I have to obey all His Commandments, God leads me to realize that I cannot meet my obligations – no matter how hard I try. Once He has humbled me, He approaches me with His Gospel. Modern preaching lacks the concept that the natural heart must be humbled. When a person says to a preacher, "I simply cannot believe," and the preacher tells him, "Oh yes, you can. All you need is the earnest desire to believe. You can get rid of your sins. All you have to do is to struggle against them," that is a horrible way to preach (Walther 2010:289).

God demands faith in His Gospel, but that does not necessitate that man is able to fulfil that obligation in and by his own strength.

### THESIS XIV

Thesis XIV is a companion to Thesis XII, both stemming from the Election Controversy that troubled The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod during Walther's career. This thesis states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you demand that faith is a condition for justification and salvation. It would be wrong to preach that people

are righteous in the sight of God and are saved not only *by* their faith, but also *on account of* their faith, *for the sake of* their faith, or *in view of* their faith (Walther 2010:297).

In this thesis, Walther first argues that to properly preach that a person is saved by faith, the preacher must be clear about his definition of *faith.* He notes that the Rationalists use *faith* to mean an assent to the historical facts of Christianity and an intellectual acceptance of moral teachings. The Roman Catholic Church uses *faith* to mean "faith formed by love," – *fides formata.* The Revivalists and modern evangelicals often use *faith* to indicate "what a person gives himself, what he himself achieves and produces. Their "faith" is a product of human energy and resolution" (Walther 2010:298).

Against this corruption, Walther states:

God's Word really means nothing else than this when it says that a person is justified and saved by faith alone: A person is **not saved by his own acts,** but **solely** by the doing and dying of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the whole world (Walther 2010:298).

Furthermore,

In short, the promises of grace demand nothing of humankind. When the Lord says, 'Believe,' He does not speak a demand. Rather, He extends an urgent invitation for people to apprehend and to appropriate what He is giving, without asking anything in return for it. This gift must, of course, be accepted. Needless to say, the person who does not accept it loses the gift, but not because there was a condition attached to it (Walther 2010:301).

Walther emphasizes that a person is saved by grace through faith, without regard for his faith as a separate entity, and certainly without considering what the human heart may churn up with respect to God.

## THESIS XV

Thesis XV states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you turn the Gospel into a preaching of repentance" (Walther 2010:309).

Walther begins this thesis by offering precision regarding the terms *repentance* and *Gospel.* He notes that each has both a wide sense and a narrow sense.

Repentance in the wide sense encompasses the entirety of conversion. Walther cites Acts 2:38 as an example of this usage: "Repent and be baptized every one of you." He argues that in this context, repentance includes confession of sins and faith in Christ. However, "the word *repentance* is used in a narrow sense to mean the knowledge of sin and heartfelt sorrow and contrition. In Mark 1:15 we read: 'Repent and believe in the Gospel.' In this statement, when John the Baptist uses *repentance,* he obviously does not mean *faith*, otherwise his statement would be unnecessary repetition" (Walther 2010:309).

Likewise, the term *Gospel* is used in both wide and narrow senses. The wide sense can either refer to all the preaching of Jesus, or yet more broadly, the entire message of Scripture, as Walther cites Romans 2:16 "On that day when, according to my **gospel**, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus." On the other hand, the term *Gospel* is used in the narrow sense to mean the message of salvation specifically. Walther writes, "The word *Gospel* is unquestionably used in the narrow sense in Romans 1:16: 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes'" (Walther 2010:310).

In light of this distinction in terminology, Walther cautions the preacher to be careful in his use of these terms. Precision is key in dividing orthodoxy from heresy. He writes:

> When a pastor in his sermons essentially regards the Gospel as a preaching of the Law – that is, as repentance in light of the wrath of God against sinners – this is extremely dangerous and actually harmful to people's souls. If that pastor is not cautious about the terms he uses, it is a great and serious error – even if the preacher's personal faith may be orthodox. Accordingly, the Lutheran Church has from its very beginning kept a close watch on men who are likely to say, 'The Gospel is a preaching of repentance.' What the Lutheran Church wants to see is whether he is speaking of the Gospel in the wide [sense] or in the narrow sense (Walther 2010:311-12).

Walther wishes the preacher to understand, and thereupon to preach accordingly, that the Law and the Gospel must be preached both in their correct and proper places. The hearers need to hear the Law to convict them of sin, but then they need to hear the Gospel in all its truth and purity to absolve them of sin – not to drive them to despair.

Thesis XVI states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you claim that people are truly converted when they get rid of certain vices and, instead, engage in certain works of piety and virtuous practices" (Walther 2010:333).

Walther introduces this thesis thus:

This is a very important thesis because it addresses the worst possible way of mingling Law and Gospel. Woe to the pastor who, in his preaching, leads his listeners to imagine that they are good Christians just because they might have stopped robbing and stealing, and that over time they will most likely eliminate any weaknesses still remaining in themselves. Such pastors twist the Gospel into Law because they claim conversion is a work of man. In reality, genuine conversion, which produces a living faith in a person, is brought about only by the Gospel (Walther 2010:333).

The point of this thesis is that mere amendment of life is not truly conversion. Repentance involves the recognition of and cessation of sinning, but that is not all. Walther writes:

That is the shameful teaching of moralists. The Christian religion gives us the correct teaching in one Greek word: *metanoeîte,* which means: "All of you, turn your minds around" or, as Luther translates correctly, "Repent" (Walther 2010:334).

Thus, the cessation of sin is only a sign of the interior conversion that has occurred in the heart as a result of faith in Christ. "With this word [*metanoeîte*] the Lord confronts the sinner, telling him, first, that a change of his innermost self must take place. What He requires is a new mind, a new heart, and a new spirit – not to quit one's vices and do good works" (Walther 2010:334).

Walther notes that pagans can cease from outward sinning. He points out the example of St. Paul before his conversion. He was blameless before the Law in outward appearances. However, he was brought to his knees and made to realize that his works counted for nothing without the love of Christ (Walther 2010:336).

Many preachers err in this manner, Walther notes, by using the Law as a blunt instrument to batter the congregation into submission on some point of doctrine or morals, or

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else by thinking that just because someone has shown some effort toward amendment of life, that person is truly saved. These two abuses of the Law lead to false belief. He writes:

> For this reason, we consider this to be the key part of the instruction that people need regarding how they must be born anew: One must first tell them that they are all spiritually dead and that whatever they may do in their lives – whether it be their monastic order, fasting, or anything else – will not help them to obtain forgiveness of sins until they are first born again and made into new people (Walther 2010:337).

> In an unconverted heart, good works are as good as poison, creating self-righteousness.

However, in the heart of one converted by the Gospel, good works can truly flourish and provide the proof that faith is living and active.

## THESIS XVII

Thesis XVII says: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you describe believers in a way that is not always realistic – both with regard to the strength of their faith and to the feeling and fruitfulness of their faith" (Walther 2010:343).

> Walther writes:

> Some preachers claim that Christians have nothing but pleasant feelings. I have frequently observed this claim in some of your sermons. You [seminarians] say things like: "To be sure, unbelievers are miserable beings. As long as they serve the world and sin, they will be chased by demons." That is simply not true. Many unbelievers live without any worries of conscience. "In contrast," some of you say, "how happy Christians are! They are free from all anxiety, free from doubt," etc. That is not true either. On the contrary, thousands upon thousands of Christians are filled with anguish and despair and are continually struggling and crying out: "Oh, what a wretched person I am!" (Walther 2010:347)

To put it plainly, Walther says, "Well, do not forget that **the blessedness of Christians is not based on pleasant feelings** but on the assurance that, despite the bitterest feelings imaginable, Christians are accepted by God" (Walther 2010:347).

According to this thesis, the preacher errs by describing the Christian inaccurately. He may describe, as the above quotation, unbelievers as miserable and Christians as blissful. Or he may describe Christians as infinitely patient, unafraid of death, enthusiastic in prayer, or any number of other wonderful-sounding conditions. However, the truth of the matter is that Christians are often no such thing. The problem with this error is that it creates either hypocrisy

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or despair. Either the hearer is driven to believe that he really is a good and strong Christian because he can and does fulfil these requirements, or he is driven to despair because he does not feel blissful and cheerful all the time and is not exuberant in prayer. Thus, he begins to question his faith when his emotions, rather than his will, permeate his faith life.

## THESIS XVIII

Thesis XVIII states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you describe the universal corruption of mankind so as to create the impression that even true believers are still under the spell of ruling sins and sin deliberately" (Walther 2010:355).

This thesis is the antithesis of the previous. In Thesis XVII, Walther condemns the preacher for painting an overly rosy picture of the human condition and minimizing sin. Here, the opposite is the problem: the preacher becomes overly enthusiastic in his portrayal of the depths of sin and pictures even pious Christians as being dominated by mortal sins.

Walther is careful to note that by nature, or prior to conversion, man is still dominated by sin. With such qualifiers, the preacher should not hesitate to proclaim the horrible condition of man. Yet, he must be careful when preaching, as Walther writes:

> However, when addressing a Christian congregation, you have to be very careful not to speak as if all Christians live in shame and vice. It was a harmful and dangerous attempt on the part of the Pietists to separate humanity into so many different classes that nobody was able to tell to which class he belonged. But this must not keep us from pointing out in our sermons the two groups into which humanity is truly separated, that is, believers and unbelievers, the godly and ungodly, the converted and unconverted, regenerate and unregenerate persons (Walther 2010:356).

It is necessary to preach the Law in its full sternness to lead people into proper repentance. However, once people have been brought to faith, the Gospel must enter in and declare them righteous and holy. Walther writes:

> When we speak of "horrible" sinners, we must not refer to Christians, in whom we find weaknesses, which are covered with the righteousness of Christ, yet also good deeds, which God does through them and which are pleasing to Him. All baptized Christians may apply to themselves the declaration of God: "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Walther 2010:357).

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Furthermore,

It is, therefore, one of the most important requirements of a true, Gospel-oriented pastor that he would know how to explain to his listeners the true nature of sin in terms that are as loud and clear as they are terrible, drastic, and relevant. For without a real knowledge of what an awful thing sin is, a person cannot understand and accept the Gospel. As long as he is not alarmed that sin is his greatest enemy and the most awful horror living in him, he will not come to Christ. Law and Gospel can be distinguished even less if a person has no true and adequate knowledge of sin. This point leads us to our next thesis (Walther 2010:362).

## THESIS XIX

Thesis XIX states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you preach about certain sins as if they were not damnable but only venial" (Walther 2010:363).

Here, Walther makes clear the distinction between so-called mortal and venial sins. He defines mortal sin thusly:

This distinction is necessary to prove that certain sins do, in fact, expel the Holy Spirit from the believer. Once the Holy Spirit has been driven out, faith, too, is ejected. For no one can come to faith or keep it without the Holy Spirit. Sins that expel the Holy Spirit and bring on spiritual death are called **mortal sins** (Walther 2010:363).

Whereas

**Venial sins**, on the other hand, are sins that Christians commit without losing the Holy Spirit. They are sins of weakness or rashness and are sometimes called the "daily sins" of Christians (Walther 2010:364).

Walther wishes to impress upon his students that there is no distinction between sins in terms of the nature of the sin itself. He writes, "Therefore, there is no such thing as a sin that is venial by its nature. Sins are venial only for Christ's sake" (Walther 2010:367). That is to say, the blood of Christ covers all sins. It is His saving work that renders sin forgiven, not the minor or banal nature of the sin itself. Walther cites many Scriptures that speak of the seriousness of sin, which he then summarizes:

All these texts prove that so-called "venial sins" are not venial in themselves according to their nature, but damnable, mortal sins. But Scripture speaks of believers only thusly: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." But a

believer is the very person who regards sin as **a very serious matter** (Walther 2010:368).

Sin must be judged severely, in order that the Gospel be proclaimed in full sweetness.

## THESIS XX

Thesis XX states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if a person's salvation is made to depend on his association with the visible orthodox Church and if you claim that salvation is denied to every person erring in any article of faith" (Walther 2010:375).

Walther affirms that it is necessary to believe in and be a member of the one, holy, Christian and apostolic Church. However, he must insist that this Church is invisible on earth. He writes:

> Although it is composed only of good sheep, only of reborn persons, the Church never appears in the form of a congregation that is made up of only true Christians. In its visible form the Church can never purge itself of the hypocrites and ungodly persons who worm their way into it. Not until life eternal will the Church appear triumphant, entirely purified, and without blemish, separated from those who are not honestly and sincerely joined to it but only drawn to their own secular interests in an outward union with the Church (Walther 2010:377).

Walter emphasizes, "The main thing, however, is undeniably this: when you make a person's salvation dependent on membership in the visible orthodox Church and communion with the visible orthodox Church, that means you are overthrowing the doctrine of justification by faith" (Walther 2010:378). Walther will affirm that the Lutheran Church is the Church *par excellence* on earth by reason of purity of doctrine. Nevertheless, he will also affirm that one may find true Christians in Methodist or Papist assemblies also. The true Church is the communion of saints, the people of God gathered around the gifts of God.

## THESIS XXI

Thesis XXI states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you teach that the Sacraments save *ex opere operato*, that is, merely by their outward performance" (Walther 2010:389).

This thesis specifically condemns the Roman Catholic teaching that the Holy Sacraments work to the benefit of those who receive them merely by the mechanical fact of them being administered. This action in itself is without respect to the faith of the one who receives them. Walther condemns this as another attempt at justification by works, making reception of the Sacrament a work. He writes:

> You receive the promise of grace only by faith. If you do not believe, having water poured on you is of no benefit to you. Nor do you benefit by receiving blessed bread and blessed wine – despite the fact that in Holy Communion you are truly receiving the body and blood of the Lord. There is no benefit in all of this. On the contrary, you are actually harming yourself by going to Communion without faith, because you become guilty of the body and blood of the Lord (Walther 2010:390-91).

> Simply put, "As the Word only benefits a person who believes it, in the same way the Sacraments help only those who embrace them by faith" (Walther 2010:392).

## THESIS XXII

Thesis XXII states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if a false distinction is made between a person's being awakened and being converted; moreover, when a person's *inability* to believe is mistaken for not being *permitted* to believe" (Walther 2010:409).

In this thesis, Walther combats the errors of the Pietists, who set up a false set of categories. He writes that "they declared that, as far as the way of obtaining salvation is concerned, all people should be distinguished into three groups: (1) Those who are still unconverted. (2) Those who are already awakened but not yet converted. (3) Those who are already converted" (Walther 2010:409).

The problem here is that, as Walther illustrates, the Scriptures do not speak in this manner. Rather, the Word of God only speaks of two groups of people: the unconverted and the converted. Walther addresses examples such as Herod Antipas, Agrippa, Felix, and Festus as those who heard the preaching of the Word, felt the pricks of the Law, and yet brushed these off and continued in unbelief. According to Pietist reckoning, these people would be considered

awakened, but not yet converted, because they had heard the Word and it began to have an effect on them, even though they had not yet fully come to the knowledge of the truth. However, according to Scripture, awakening is synonymous with conversion, because there is no awakening without faith. Walther cites, among other passages:

> Colossians 2:12: 'Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead.' 'Through faith!' The event described in this text took place 'through faith.' Accordingly, no one can be awakened unless they have faith. That means they must be Christians (Walther 2010:411).

> There is no gradient, no intermediate state here. Either one is dead in sins and trespasses, or one is alive in Christ. The Pietists, nevertheless, maintained a distinction which Walther declares as false. He writes:

> However, Pietists object that any person who has not experienced genuine, thorough contrition in their heart is not yet converted – but merely awakened. By **thorough contrition** they mean contrition like that of David, who spent night after night crying and weeping in his bed, walking almost bent over with grief for days. Anyone who has not passed through these experiences is only awakened and still unconverted (Walther 2010:411).

> Sadly, the Pietists have things backwards, because Christians cannot produce contrition and repentance through their own will without the Holy Spirit's leading. This is, in truth, a liberating declaration. Walther writes:

> We do not need to worry that we are unable to produce repentance in ourselves. All we need is to apply His forceful Word – and we have the first part of repentance. When the Gospel is presented to a person 'straight,' it will produce faith in him. All he has to do when he hears the Gospel is to accept it. **But here is where the struggle begins. The error of false teachers in this matter is that they claim this struggle takes place before conversion.** But there is no such thing as a spiritual struggle before conversion. The struggle takes place after conversion. And that is tough (Walther 2010:414).

> Furthermore, Walther is succinct: "Where there is even a spark longing for grace, there is faith. For faith is nothing else than longing for mercy" (Walther 2010:416). Faith is God's work; it is not of man.

> Walther also wishes to combat the error of those who confuse not being able to believe with not being permitted to believe. He affirms that people are unable to believe who continue

to cling to sin. As discussed previously, persistent sin of which one will not repent drives out the Holy Spirit and subsequent faith. This renders the person thereby incapable of receiving faith. However, that does not mean that such a person is not permitted to believe. Walther writes, "It is forever true that any person may believe at any time. Even when he has fallen into the most serious sin, he suddenly realizes that he has forsaken God. At that point, he can then get up with a crushed heart – and believe" (Walther 2010:420). Moreover,

> To tell a person that he **is not permitted to** believe is, in the first place, contrary to the perfect redemption of Christ from all sins, and [it is] contrary to the perfect reconciliation that [Christ] has accomplished. For in 1 John 2:1-2, John says, "If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." The entire world, then, has been reconciled. The wrath of God against the whole world has been removed. Through Jesus Christ, God has become every man's friend. That is the reason the holy angels sang even over His cradle: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, **and to mankind, goodwill**!" In Christ, God shows His goodwill toward all people (Walther 2010:420).

Walther continues, arguing that the most grievous fault of this type of error is that such preachers deny the power of the Absolution pronounced in the stead and by the command of the Lord Jesus Christ. The forgiveness of sins is a promise from God to those who believe, not a set of conditions that must be met to effect reconciliation with God. Walther writes:

> When they are being absolved, most people reason like this: "That is indeed very comforting, provided I know that I am in the proper condition to receive it." Well, that is not at all what God wants, because now that redemption has been acquired, He wants this communicated to all. The situation is exactly as if God were standing before us, pronouncing Absolution to us. What would we do if God were to reveal Himself to us, standing before us with life and death in His hands, calling us by name and saying, "Your sins are forgiven"? With what joy would we depart from His presence and shout: "No devil will shake my faith in my salvation!" (Walther 2010:425)

## THESIS XXIII

Thesis XXIII states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you use the demands, threats, or promises of the Law to try and force the unregenerate to put away their sins and engage in good works and thus become godly; and then, on the other hand, if you use the commands of the Law – rather than the admonitions of the Gospel – to urge the regenerate to do good" (Walther 2010:429).

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The simple truth of this thesis is that the Law cannot serve to motivate godliness in unregenerate sinners. The sinner has neither the desire nor the ability to change his life in such a way as to merit anything before God. Walther writes, regarding Jeremiah 31:31-34:

> We cannot fulfill the Law either. By nature we are carnal, and the Law cannot impose the Spirit on us. God says, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." That is why the Law is written on our heart. This means nothing other than this: What the Law was not able to bring about is what the Gospel accomplishes, but the message of the forgiveness of sins. All who were saved in the Old Testament were, of course, saved in this way only, as Peter clearly declares at the first apostolic council. Now, then, what are those doing who corrupt the Law in the time of the New Testament? They turn Christians into Jews, and not only that, but Jews of the worst kind who regard only the letter of the Law and not the promise of the Redeemer. Not only do they mingle the Law and Gospel, but they substitute the Law for the Gospel (Walther 2010:430-31).

Walther impresses upon his students that the Law cannot motivate true Christian living, nor should it be employed in this way. He writes, citing Luther:

> Now, remember this important passage for the rest of your lives: '**And whoever wants to achieve this result by forcing those who are unwilling is not a Christian preacher or ruler, but a worldly jailer.**'[54] An enforcer of the Law – just like a jailer – does not care about the condition of the heart of the person with whom he has to deal. He is only interested in enforcing that person's obedience. He stands in front of the person in his custody with a whip and tells him that he will feel the whip on his back if he does not obey. The jailer does not think: 'Oh, now you will become godly.' The criminals, on the other hand – clapped in irons and chains and forced to obey – are secretly planning how to avoid being caught during their next theft. That is what a preacher of the Law does to the members of a Christian congregation: he puts them in irons and chains (Walther 2010:437).

To preach the Gospel and to absolve someone is to give that person the freedom of the Gospel and the blessing of the remission of sins. There is no use for the Law in this instance.

## THESIS XXIV

Thesis XXIV states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you claim the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven because of its magnitude" (Walther 2010:443).

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[54] Luther, W² 12:318

Walther notes that the sin against the Holy Spirit is mentioned in parallel passages in the Synoptic Gospels, both in Hebrews and 1 John.

He notes that in Matthew 12:30-32, the sin of blasphemy deals with the office of the Holy Spirit; that is, the work the Spirit does. Walther writes, "Thus, whoever rejects the office of the Holy Spirit – that person's sin cannot be forgiven. The office of the Holy Spirit is to call people to Christ and to keep them with Him" (Walther 2010:444). If one rejects the gifts, the same gifts can have no effect on the person. However, Walther is careful to point out that this sin is a deliberate act of will and involves active confession of falsehood. Sinful and blasphemous thoughts that may arise in the heart, while still sin, are not the unpardonable offense, stubborn unbelief.

Referring to Mark 3:28-30, Walther notes that "to declare a **work** of the Holy Spirit to be a work of the devil even though you are convinced that it is a work of the Holy Spirit – *that* is blasphemy against the Spirit." (Walther 2010:445). He notes that every Christian has moments of resisting the sanctifying work of the Spirit. These are sins of which each person must repent. However, to speak falsely and declare the good works of the Spirit to be evil is blasphemy.

Likewise, in treating Luke 12:10, Walther notes, "Again, we see that the main point regarding the sin against the Holy Spirit is that the blasphemy is **spoken – knowingly and deliberately**" (Walther 2010:446). This is not something a person falls prey to by accident.

Walther then quotes Hebrews 6:4-8 to impress the severity and the lasting nature of the judgment against blasphemy. He writes:

> This is a very important passage! The sin against the Holy Spirit has the characteristic that **the person who has committed it cannot be restored to repentance.** It is simply impossible. He cannot repent. It is not our dear Lord who puts people into this condition, but the sinner who by his own effort produces this state of permanent impenitence. Once this condition has reached a certain degree, God stops operating on that person. The curse has settled on him, and there is no further possibility for that person to be saved. Why? Because he is no longer able to repent. The soil of this

person's heart has been finally cursed and is no longer enriched by the dew and rain of divine grace (Walther 2010:446).

The Holy Spirit does not stay where He is not welcome and He is driven out by wilful rejection. And where the Holy Spirit is driven out, there is no repentance.

Finally, regarding 1 John 5:16, Walther cautions that "before a person's death we can say of no one whether he has committed the sin against the Holy Spirit" (Walther 2010:447). The preacher must be careful not to condemn when he cannot see into the heart. However, regarding the words of St. John, Walther writes that one cannot properly ask God to pardon and spare one who, by his own words and deeds, does not wish to be saved.

In summary, Walther advises:

In general, when preaching on this topic, the pastor must aim to convince his listeners that they have not committed this sin, rather than warning them not to commit it. To a person who has really committed this sin, preaching is of no benefit. If they are sorry for their sins and crave forgiveness, tell them that they are dear children of God but that they are passing through a terrible tribulation (Walther 2010:447).

Forgiveness is much more fruitful than rebuke in this situation.

## THESIS XXV

Thesis XXV, the final thesis of the series, states: "You are not rightly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God if you do not allow the Gospel to predominate in your teaching" (Walther 2010:455).

This thesis serves as the capstone of the entire series. Walther uses this lecture to conclude and summarize the points he has made throughout the previous lectures and theses. He writes:

The most subversive way of mingling both occurs when the Gospel is preached **along with** the Law, but does not predominate in the sermon. That preacher may think that he has proclaimed the evangelical through quite often. His listeners, however, only remember that on some occasions he preached quite comfortingly and told them to believe in Jesus Christ. But how should they believe if the preacher does not tell them how to have faith? As soon as you do not let the Gospel predominate, many of your listeners will die of spiritual starvation. They will be spiritually half-starved because the bread of life is not the Law, but the Gospel (Walther 2010:459).

Walther admonishes his students, "When you become pastors, you become helpers of Christians' joy" (Walther 2010:459). That is, the pastor's job is to bring to his people the joy of the Gospel in all its truth, purity, and sweetness. The joy of a pastor, and thereby of his preaching, is the message of the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation in Christ Jesus. Walther's overriding concern is that the hearers of each sermon should find in it the gift of salvation offered to them. Thus, all mingling of the Law and Gospel is excluded because salvation is in view. He writes:

> When you examine your sermons to see how much you used the Law and how much you used the comfort of the Gospel, you may find: 'Oh, there is barely any room for the Gospel!' Now, [I say to] the preacher who steps out of his pulpit without having preached enough Gospel – so that some poor sinner who may have come to church for the first and the last time is not saved – woe to him! [That sinner's] blood will be required of [that preacher]! (Walther 2010:462)

Walther, following the example of Luther, wishes to be known as an evangelical preacher. He will gladly accept the charge of being too sweet of a preacher, if that means he has faithfully preached the Gospel and consoled fearful sinners with God's grace. Walther will not allow the terrified conscience to remain in anguish. He writes:

> **God grant that someday people may say about you that you are preaching well, but much too sweetly!** Do not spend too much time on the Law. Let the Gospel follow immediately. When the Law has made the iron red hot, immediately apply the Gospel and shape it into a proper form. Because once the iron has cooled, you can do nothing with it (Walther 2010:465).

The measure of success of a preacher's success is not earthly wealth, status, nor outward sanctification. Rather, it is whether the souls in his care are led to Christ. Walther concludes his lectures by saying:

> Now, whoever receives Him and believes in Him, that is, whoever takes comfort in the fact that, for the sake of His Son, God will be merciful to them, will forgive their sins, and grant them eternal salvation, etc. – **whoever is engaged in this preaching of the pure Gospel and thus directs people to Christ, the only mediator between God and people, he, as a preacher, is doing the will of God.** That is the genuine fruit by which no one is deceived or duped. For even if the devil himself were to preach this truth, this preaching would not be false or made up of lies – and a person believing it would have what it promises (Walther 2010:466).

One must notice that while Walther stresses the importance of the Gospel predominating in one's sermons, he nowhere gives any hint of a formula, ratio, or percentage. There is no magic number by which one may measure empirically whether the Gospel has predominated in a sermon. Rather, the Gospel predominating is a qualitative matter of the sermon's content. The Gospel predominates when the sermon gives the hearers the message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone.

It is a great error when a preacher believes that because he has a certain number of words or a certain measure of page space devoted to the Gospel, that this effort qualifies as having the Gospel predominate. One can easily spill a great deal of ink with "Gospel words" yet still trap people under the Law. Walther would not advocate this sort of mechanistic understanding of the proper distinction between Law and Gospel.

## CONCLUSION

C.F.W. Walther remains one of the most influential figures in the history of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS), and consequently of the myriad churches around the world that trace their heritage back to Missouri. His lectures examined herein are some of his greatest works; they continue to form the basis for introductory homiletics courses in many Lutheran seminaries around the world.

Certainly, one ought to affirm Walther's goal, as stated at the beginning of this chapter – that the preacher of the Gospel should know how to handle rightly the Word of God. The preacher should preach with the joy and fervour of the Holy Spirit, and not stand lifeless in a pulpit, droning on without giving the life of Christ to the people.

Walther's lectures are a brilliant work of pastoral theology. He inculcates not only a homiletical method but a pastoral spirit as he advises his students in what manner they are to preach. In this way, Walther continues to speak to the Church today as students of preaching continue to learn from his work.

However, one may argue that Walther's *Law and Gospel* has indeed become a Lutheran cliché, as Scaer spoke of them. Often, when one is in a group of pastors and the topic arises regarding the evaluation of sermons, the conversation turns to the measurement of how the Gospel was preached. This author has been involved in discussions regarding measurements, such as the number of times the name of Jesus was mentioned, the number of times "Gospel words" were quoted, or the space allotted to talking about the Cross. All of these seem to serve as acceptable measures of whether a sermon contains predominant Gospel content.

This thesis asserts that such quantitative measures are not what Walther had in mind when he said that the Gospel must predominate a preacher's sermon. Rather, he states that the preacher must clearly, energetically, and winsomely direct people to Christ for forgiveness, life, and salvation. The preacher must not deviate nor detour along the way. As quoted from Thesis XXV, the preacher must strike while the iron is hot.

Also important to this discussion is that Walther does not intend for his lectures regarding Law and Gospel to be a hermeneutics course. To be certain, one must interpret the Scriptures properly to distinguish rightly Law and Gospel in the Word of God. However, unlike Gerhard, for example, one may find here no rules laid out for the interpretation of Scripture. Walther gives no arguments regarding the inspiration of the Bible nor for the perspicuity of Scripture. These things are assumed as a foundation for this work. Clearly, as his frequent comments against the Rationalists demonstrate, Walther believes his students are prepared to be true evangelical students of the Bible, and, thusly, will preach as such. As he stated in the beginning, this is a course in practical theology. The issues of exegesis and dogmatics are assumed.

From that understanding of Walther's work, one may proceed to argue that an abuse seen in the time since Walther is that certain preachers and teachers would have *Law and Gospel* made into some type of systematics textbook regarding the doctrine of Law and Gospel

in Scripture. Moreover, while the importance of Law and Gospel is difficult to overstate, there are those who would exclude all discussions of other approaches to the Scripture for preaching and teaching.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to deal with the topic itself, but one may look to the controversy which arose in the Missouri Synod nearly twenty years ago, when some seminary professors raised the topic of the two types of righteousness as an alternate approach.

Oddly enough, despite the fact that Walther himself taught the fivefold use of Scripture as an approach to hermeneutics quite explicitly in his *Pastoral Theology*, that part seems to get overlooked in Missouri Synod homiletics. Therefore, LCMS missionaries and professors seem to carry that tendency into the congregations and seminaries of the partner churches of the LCMS. Koontz has done some enlightening work recently regarding Missouri Synod homiletics since the time of Walther, and he notes some of these changes.[55] Mayes also notes the evolution of Missouri Synod preaching in his work regarding Gerhard.[56] Mayes points out that the fivefold use of Scripture was for the most part neglected between Gerhard and Walther, and then once again was in disuse after Walther.

The question may be raised: Why should Law and Gospel be considered as the normative hermeneutical lens for preachers in postcolonial Francophone Africa? Certainly, other lenses could be considered through which to interpret the Scriptures. For example, it may be argued that the hermeneutical lens espoused by the *Westminster Confession of Faith* is the covenant relationship between God and humanity. It is the position of this thesis that Law and Gospel is the correct and appropriate hermeneutical lens, not only for North America or for

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[55] See Koontz, Adam C. "Speak as the Oracles of God: Reinhold Pieper's Classical Lutheran Homiletic." *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (January 2021): 23–36. Also, Koontz, Adam C. "From Reinhold Pieper to Caemmerer: How Our Preaching Changed." *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 85, no. 3-4 (October 2021): 193–213.

[56] See Mayes, Benjamin T.G. "The Useful Applications of Scripture in Lutheran Orthodoxy: An Aid to Contemporary Preaching and Exegesis." *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 83, no. 1 (April 2019): 111–35. This article is examined in depth in Chapter Ten of the current thesis.

Africa, but for all of Christendom. Law and Gospel is indeed the lens which the Scriptures themselves provide and promote. As Walther revealed in great detail, where one errs in distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God, one goes astray in other areas of doctrine and practice. Part of the theory to be advanced in Chapter Fourteen is how to integrate the proper distinction of Law and Gospel into a greater homiletical practice.

In summary, the position of this thesis is that C.F.W. Walther's monumental work regarding Law and Gospel is essential for a proper understanding of the Scriptures. His advice to preachers is invaluable in properly distinguishing these two twin doctrines of Scripture. However, *Law and Gospel* is not a systematic how-to textbook. One must be aware of the parameters of Walther's work, and one must use it as it was intended – to refine and enliven the preaching of the Gospel. Law and Gospel is part of the conceptual framework for homiletical practice that this thesis seeks to advance, to be sure; however, Law and Gospel is not the only element in that framework. It is the assertion of the current author that Walther never intended it to be so.

# CHAPTER 11b – LUTHER, GERHARD, AND WALTHER IN CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

One may raise the question: what do Martin Luther, Johann Gerhard, and C.F.W. Walther have to do with the Church today? What do theologians of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and nineteenth centuries have to say that is relevant to today's world? These are insightful questions which this excursus will endeavour to address.

## LUTHER

Moltmann writes, "Christian faith stands and falls with the knowledge of the crucified Christ, that is, with the knowledge of God in the crucified Christ, or, to use Luther's even bolder phrase, with the knowledge of the 'crucified God'" (Moltmann 2015:91).

It may be argued that Luther offers three contributions to the current discussion in today's context: a focus on the theology of the cross; a proper distinction between God and humanity; and a right understanding of the freedom of a Christian.

Luther's theology of the cross is a theology that takes seriously the sin and death of humanity, and at the same time the death and resurrection of Jesus for the salvation of humanity. In the Heidelberg Disputation, Thesis 20, Luther wrote, "He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross." ("Theology" 2023) Moltmann writes:

> The theology of the cross leads to criticism of the self-glorification of dehumanized man and to his liberation, and is directly associated with the human way of life and practice chosen by this congregation of weak, lowly and despised persons, a way of life which takes away the power of the social circumstances which bring about the aggression of dehumanized man, and endeavours to overcome it (Moltmann 2015:101).

This is where a theologian of the cross finds satisfaction: in the identification of a sinful human being in need of redemption with the sinless Christ who became sin for us, with the God who was crucified for His creatures. Moreover, this identification with Christ then leads to the identification of human beings with one another: a true form of compassion. Moltmann again:

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But the 'theologian of the cross' is led by the visible nature of God in the cross. He is freed to love that which is different and other. This has far-reaching consequences: religious desire for praise and might and self-affirmation are blind to suffering – their own and that of others – because they are in love with success. Their love is eros for the beautiful, which is to make the one who loves beautiful himself. But in the cross and passion of Christ faith experiences a quite different love of God, which loves what is quite different. It loves 'what is sinful, bad, foolish, weak and hateful, in order to make it beautiful and good and wise and righteous. For sinners are beautiful because they are loved; they are not loved because they are beautiful' (Moltmann 2015:309).

In societies that have been torn apart by tribalism, colonialism, economic exploitation, and countless other ravages, the love of the crucified God serves to unite one man with another in the unity of God. The theologian of the cross proclaims broken, ugly sinners to be beautiful by the Blood of Christ.

Secondly, Luther offers to the contemporary conversation the proper distinction between God and man. Jüngel argues that humans miss the true nature of God because they seek to make themselves into God. They want a God who looks like they look. He quotes Luther: "It [human reason] calls that God which is not God and fails to call Him God who really is God" (Jüngel 1988: 24). This hearkens back to Luther's description of a theologian of the cross, as previously mentioned. Jüngel posits that the main thing in theology is to describe God and man rightly. He writes, "The chief thing in Christian theology is that an end is put to this self-deception, and thus the proper distinction between God and humanity is reached. This is the fundamental distinction of Christian theology" (Jüngel 1988:24).

This fundamental distinction is positive. While Moltmann stresses the identification of the crucified God with humanity, Jüngel emphasizes the distinction – that man is not God. He writes:

God became man so that humans might be distinguished from God unconditionally. Within this distinction, human speaking about God would itself be unconditional. What I have seen in Luther's doctrine of God, in his Christology and his anthropology – if it is even proper to divide in such fashion – is always the same heartbeat, that is, that drawing of the proper distinction between God and humanity as a distinction for humanity's good (Jüngel 1988:25).

This distinction between God and humanity allows the Word of God and the actions of God to be an alien thing, *extra nos.* Part of the idolatry of natural human nature is to look inward, into oneself for truth and meaning. The externality of God means that He can act and speak in ways that no human can. Jüngel writes:

> But not that what is at issue is not the soul's word, but the *alien* Word of God. It is not a word which the soul speaks to itself, but a word which *addresses* it and – so we must conclude – *by this means* distinguishes inner from outer, the new from the old man. It is God's Word entering from without that first turns one inward and in so doing distinguishes that one as inner man from himself or herself as the outer man (Jüngel 1988:61).

Finally, Luther's distinction between God and humanity leads to the freedom of the Christian with regard to love. Faith sets the Christian free to love and serve the neighbour freely. Jüngel quotes Luther:

> A man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body to work for it alone, but he lives also for all men on earth; rather, he lives only for others and not for himself … This is a truly Christian life. Here faith is truly active through love, that is, it finds expression in works of the freest service, cheerfully and lovingly done, with which a man willingly serves another without hope of reward (Luther, in Jüngel 1988:82).

The Christian life is designed to be lived in community, not only with God but with fellow human beings. Again, in communities ravaged by all manner of divisions, this message of common love and fraternity would resound well from the pulpit.

## GERHARD

What does Johann Gerhard offer to the conversation regarding contemporary preaching in Africa? It has been posited, and will be further argued, that Gerhard's contribution is to allow space for the Scriptures to speak for themselves. He writes of the preacher's task, "Now the church's preacher has two duties: the interpretation of Scripture and applying it to salutary use. The interpretation of Scripture involves both finding the true and genuine meaning and a clear and simple explanation of the same" (Gerhard 2017:201).

By urging the use of the biblical categories of application, Gerhard encourages the preacher to allow the text to speak in its own voice. Whether the message of the text is teaching,

correcting, rebuking, training, or consolation – the text can indeed be powerful enough to sound forth. This avoids the tendency to over-spiritualize the interpretation of Scripture, as well as the temptation to shove Scripture into whatever interpretation the preacher fancies at the moment. As Mayes writes, "Preaching requires intentionality. Are you teaching, admonishing, or consoling? Many pastors try to do all at once, and the result is that they are hard to follow and not edifying. If the uses are mixed, it's likely that people will just tune out" (Mayes 2019:135).

The fivefold use of Scripture is a trans-cultural framework that can be used wherever the preacher finds himself, so that Scripture can speak into a context, whatever the particulars.

## WALTHER

Walther's significance for contemporary theology lies in his pastoral insistence on the Word of God, rightly divided, as a Means of Grace. The introduction to *Law and Gospel* (2010) summarizes Walther's work thusly:

> Walther's lectures on Law and Gospel keep Pietism, Rationalism, and revivalism in mind as they engage important aspects of our salvation. The content of these lectures touches directly on how God works to save us through Scripture as a Means of Grace. Walther knows that hope in the resurrection is a fact established by God. It is not our work of belief. God's unchanging truth remains central to all Christian hope in this world and to life with God in the next (Walther 2010:lxxii-lxxiii).

Walther's lectures form the basis of homiletical practice in The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and throughout the Lutheran Church globally. His concern for the message of justification by grace through faith in Christ alone continues to shape the conversation about Lutheran preaching, regardless of context. While the specific theological controversies of the nineteenth century may have passed away, the challenges of Pietism, Rationalism, and revivalism still loom large before the Church today. Walther gives expression to biblical faith in the face of these challenges. He also gives the twenty-first-century theologian language to speak to and about these challenges to the people of God.

# CHAPTER 12 – MODERN AND POST-MODERN HOMILETICAL THEORIES

Thus far, this thesis has considered in depth some of the classical principles of homiletics. Luther, Gerhard, and Walther have been given their voices in the ongoing discussion of homiletical theory and practice. The influences of Occidental forces in society and the academy also have been discussed. Now it is time to consider some of the movements in modern and post-modern homiletical theory.

This chapter is not intended to be an exhaustive treatment of all homiletical developments in the past two hundred years. Rather, it will endeavour to survey some of the literature and thinking that has occurred in this field in recent years (since the time of Walther) to examine these ideas. At the end, an attempt will be made to evaluate and synthesize some of these ideas, to see what is useful to carry forward into the concluding portion of this thesis.

## INTEGRATIVE ACTIVITY

In 1989, a book, *Learning Preaching: Understanding and Participating in the Process,* was published. This book was considered the gold standard of homiletical pedagogy at and represented much research and thought regarding the topic of homiletical pedagogy, and homiletics in general (cf. Long, in Long and Tisdale 2008:4). *Learning Preaching* opened with this claim: "Each of us has within us already the effective preacher God wants us to become" (Long, in Long and Tisdale 2008:4). The idea herein is that the innate gifts, talents, and abilities which constitute an effective preacher already exist within him. The task of the teacher of homiletics, therefore, is to draw out and develop those gifts in his students.

However, a shift has occurred in the field of homiletics. The favoured approach has moved from looking inward at innate gifts to looking forward to the greater world of the Church. Only here can the preacher stand and bring himself into that greater world. This incorporates the person into something bigger than himself, rather than preaching from an individualistic focus.

Long writes:

> Becoming a competent preacher is not simply a matter of drawing out and strengthening inner traits and gifts, important as that is, but it is instead a matter of critical learning about traditions and patterns of thinking and acting that have been honed over the centuries of Christian preaching. Our primary pedagogical emphasis now is not on what is allegedly 'in there' in each student, a 'little preacher' waiting to grow, but on what is 'out there,' namely the age-old practice of Christian preaching into which each student must be initiated (Long, in Long and Tisdale 2008:4-5).

This represents a deliberate reversal of perspective. The modernist idea of self-development and introspection has given way to a post-modern tendency toward the recovery of ancient traditions and connection with history. Long writes:

> Becoming a preacher demands costly personal involvement, and students need to be taught and cared for in attentive and personal ways. Nevertheless, becoming a preacher is more than self-development, more than having the internal seeds of homiletical gifts watered and cultivated. Rather, it is to be instructed in and equipped for a practice of the church that has its own canons and norms, that is older, larger, and more vital than the capacities of any one person (Long, in Long and Tisdale 2008:5).

One could argue that this reflects a greater cultural shift, in which the class of those who were thought of previously as "professionals" is no longer regarded as quite so exalted and innately special. Rather, such professionals – doctors, lawyers, and preachers, to name a few – are regarded as specialists not because they themselves are special, but because they carry the torch of their given fields, carrying on the history and tradition of their disciplines. This seems to mirror the cultural phenomenon of searching for meaning and rootedness in the ongoing stream of tradition in various cultural establishments.

Postmodernism brings a set of challenges to the Christian faith and Christian practices that must be addressed honestly and carefully. It is difficult to define postmodernism because by its nature; it is a phenomenon that defies definition. However, Ajibade notes several characteristic features:

> Some of its distinguishing features therefore include a reaction to modernity and all its tenets, rejection of objective truth, skepticism about and suspicion of authority. Postmodernists are in search of self and identity, they go for the expedient rather than the moral, they continue to search for the transcendent, and they live in a media world like no one else. They also engage in the pride of knowledge, they are on quest for

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community and they live in a very materialistic world. Albert Mohler added that postmodernists argue that the truth is socially constructed, it is plural and it is not accessible to universal reason (Ajibade 2015:13-14).

For the purposes of this thesis, the current author will focus specifically on the quest for community and identity which characterizes postmodernism. However, the other aspects of postmodernism are also relevant, as will be discussed.

A brief excursus may prove helpful at this juncture. Writing on the question of postmodernism in relation to church history, Denis gives a succinct statement of the impact of postmodernism:

> Late 20th century postmodern historians developed this argument into a full-fledged theory. History books, they claimed, should not pretend to tell 'the truth' about the past. All historical narratives are situated socially, culturally and in terms of gender. Truth is the outcome of a process of knowledge construction. Each author, each witness develops his or her own understanding of the historical truth. There is no such thing as a 'view from nowhere' (Kelly 2011:109)[57] (Denis 2019:3).

Strong within the postmodern mindset is the rejection of the modern, Enlightenment belief in "the capacity of reason and in the ineluctability of progress" (Denis 2019:3). According to the postmodern thinker, human reason is not the definitive factor of inquiry and truth, and progress is not the grinding march toward perfection that the Enlightenment made it out to be. Denis writes:

> Anticipated by Nietzsche who rejected the concept of autonomous reason governing the world (Habermas 1987:83–105), postmodernism is a philosophical and literary movement born after the Second World War which questions the Enlightenment's absolute faith in the power of reason and the myth of a never-ending progress driven by the West. As we have seen, postmodernism affects the manner of conceptualising history. It also impacts religious faith by promoting radical forms of pluralism and deconstructing the doctrinal discourse of instituted religion (Denis 2019:4).

The idea to which Denis refers is that the modern approach to history sees an arc of metanarrative, a great theme that unifies all of history and sets the benchmark for determining

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[57] Citation in original text

truth in an absolute way. This sense of metanarrative and absolutism is what postmodernism rejects in its conceptualization of history.

The fear among many theologians is that postmodernism leads to a sort of "free-for-all" relativism, which is antithetical to the Christian religion. Denis himself notes that Christianity is an historical religion. Without the claims of the historical events, the Christian message is nullified.

However, Denis notes, most postmodern philosophers will not deny the existence of truth. The question is how one can know it. He writes, "What postmodern authors – and among them historians – object to is an excessive confidence in the power of reason. Most of them are prepared to accept that a truth about human existence, history and the world exists. According to his friend and biographer Paul Veyne, Foucault himself was not a relativist. If he refused to refer to a total truth, he based his existence on temporary and provisional truths (Veyne 2010:86–87[58])" (Denis 2019:4).

Postmodernism is not inherently friendly toward Christianity, given the latter's dependence in large degree on metanarrative and historical truth. However, postmodernism is not necessarily antagonistic toward Christianity. Denis writes:

> But if we push the argument, we can say that postmodernism, or at least some elements of it, may create a space where Christian faith can develop. By stressing the intrinsic limitation of human reason and recognising the historian's radical situatedness, postmodern authors point at new ways of searching for the Unknown, the one whom the followers of Jesus call God (Denis 2019:5).

One may argue that this could be the intersection between postmodernism and Christianity: the acknowledgement of the limitations of human reason. Christians would refer to this limitation as original sin, which corrupts reason irreparably (on this side of the grave). Indeed, Denis' call for "radical situatedness" echoes Mburu's call, as detailed in Chapter

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[58] Citation in original text

Thirteen, for the theologian and preacher to recognize and own his cultural context and personal background.

Another topic which Denis raises that is relevant to this chapter is the question of insider versus outside perspective. He speaks of this perspective in terms of the discipline of church history, but one can extend the thinking, by analogy, to the discussion of preaching.

The insider perspective, generally across the humanities, is the understanding of the subject of phenomenon being described from the viewpoint of one inside the situation or culture under scrutiny. Denis writes, "The adherents of the insider point of view claim that the study of the Christian past is a branch of theology" (Denis 2019:5). Furthermore, historical inquiry must be subjected to the claims and requirements of religion, according to this view. He writes:

> Both [Barth and Jedin] subscribed to the paradigm of modern history. But they postulated, as an act of faith, that the results of the church historian's work would confirm, even paradoxically, the truth proclaimed by the church. In their perspective, no statement made by an historian is valid unless the religious believer could accept it as correct (McCutcheon 1999:18[59]) (Denis 2019:5).

In contrast, "The outsider approach consists in saying that the work of a historian of Christianity should be the same irrespective of whether he or she belongs to the church" (Denis 2019:5). According to this perspective, history – even church history – is an academic discipline, and as such is subject to the rigors and requirements for objectivity that constrain and guide any other field of scientific inquiry.

Denis notes, on balance:

> In the study of Christian history, insiders have an advantage because they understand the subject matter – faith, liturgy, church organisation – from within. However, outsiders also have something relevant to say on religion. They can see relations of power which believers find difficult to take into consideration. They pay attention to aspects of Christian rituals or practices which insiders would not notice (Denis 2019:6).

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[59] Citation in original text

Postmodern thinking would seem to reject the sharp-edged distinction between the emic and the etic methodologies and viewpoints.

Finally, Denis concludes:

> The reality is that we do not know (yet) the truth of history. Yet, imperfect as it is, history can help believers to grasp the breadth and width of the human journey towards God. We have everything to gain from a modest and self-critical approach to history and truth. Knowing little and searching for more is the call of the human condition (Denis 2019:6).

The point of this, with respect to the previous discussion regarding homiletical theory, is that "knowing a little and searching for more," as Denis put it, is indeed the call of the theologian – and every Christian. Therefore, in the postmodern mindset, one walks the line between the two ideas that Long presented. Preaching is a matter of cultivating an internal gift and skillset; it is also a matter of initiating the novice into the community of practice. In keeping both of these in friendly tension, one may advance the search for more which drives the human longing for God, and which, finally, the Gospel has the power to satisfy.

Long asserts that one must determine what the organizing principle of homiletics is to understand the preacher's task. Long briefly traces the history of modern homiletical theory from Brooks to Barth to the present. Brooks, in lectures given approximately 140 years ago, defined preaching thusly:

> What, then, is preaching, of which we are to speak? It is not hard to find a definition. Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men. It has in it two essential elements, truth and personality … Truth through personality is our description of real preaching (Long, in Long and Tisdale 2008:7).

Truth was considered a fixed point, and the preacher's personality was the variable. "Ideally, students came to the preaching class with the fixed truth already mastered, and the teacher of preaching could turn to the variables – the shaping of the preacher's personality, the molding of character, and development of the student's ethos" (Long, in Long and Tisdale 2008:8).

However, that definition came to be roundly rejected by Barth and those who followed in his train in the 1930s. For Barth, neither propositional truth nor the preacher's personality are fixed points. Rather, Barth defined preaching thusly:

> Preaching is the Word of God which he himself speaks, claiming for the purpose the exposition of a biblical text in free human words that are relevant to contemporaries by those who are called to do this in the church that is obedient to its commission (Long, in Long and Tisdale 2008:9).

God speaks, using human words. The encounter between the divine and the human is the key point of Barth's theory. He rejected the idea that the preacher had anything to offer the hearers; rather, the preacher is simply how God communicates His truths to His people with His words.

In the wake of Barth, Long notes that there was a dearth of work regarding sermon form or language in the homiletical process. Moving toward the 1970s, a realization arose that one cannot simply express the biblical message in ecstatic utterance; the matter of form and language must be attended to; hence, the rise of form and technique as the emphasis in the 1970s and 80s (Long, in Long and Tisdale 2008:9-10). Craddock helped to begin this shift with his emphasis regarding movement in the sermon. Long quotes Craddock's writing regarding the preacher's task:

> Anyone who would preach effectively will have as his primary methodological concern the matter of movement. Does the sermon move and in what direction? Movement is of fundamental importance not simply because the speaker wants to 'get somewhere' in his presentation but because the movement itself is to be an experience of community in sharing the Word (Long, in Long and Tisdale 2008:10).

In the thinking of both Brooks and Barth, one could argue, the *modus operandi* of the preacher is to expose certain truths – whether propositional (Brooks) or revelatory (Barth) – and let these truths work upon the hearers. However, Craddock introduces this notion of movement into the discussion. The concern again is not so much on the content, but now on the form. Long notes that this, coupled with the rising affinity for narrative theology, gave rise to what became known as "narrative preaching" (Long, in Long and Tisdale 2008:10).

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On the heels of thinkers such as Craddock, Rice, and Niedenthal, in 1980, is their definition of preaching:

> If we were pressed to say what Christian faith and life are, we could hardly do better than *hearing, telling, and living a story.* And if asked for a short definition of preaching could we do better than *shared story*? (Long, in Long and Tisdale 2008:10)

Ajibade notes that Craddock represents the nascence of the New Homiletic of the twentieth century. This New Homiletic follows from the New Hermeneutic, which shifts the focus away from objective truths, evidence-based inquiry, and history, toward the reader/hearer, community understanding, and narrative theology. Ajibade describes the approach of the New Hermeneutic: "It advocates an existential approach to hermeneutics and emphasizes the role of pre-understanding as essential to the task of interpretation" (Ajibade 2015:15). The interpreter starts from his or her own cultural and personal context, identifying and pre-understanding that, and only then dares to delve into the realm of the text.

Furthermore, "This is the same way the New Homiieticians [sic] hold that the truth of the gospel is dependent on community. It can only be known within a particular tradition, community or time. For them, reality and truth can only be socially constructed" (Abjiade 2015:15). Thus, narrative theology comes to hold sway over both hermeneutics and homiletics, because the narrative of a people or community comes to determine how the text is read and interpreted, and thus preached, in that community.

## POSTMODERNISM AND AFRICA

Ajibade notes that much exists within postmodern thought that should endear it to Africans, but not without caution. He writes:

> Postmodernism for example attempts to deconstruct modernism and some of its abuses like colonialism, rationalism, individualism, deism, naturalism, authoritarianism, the contractual mentality and a flawed approach to sovereignty. Post modernism radically deconstructs Judeo-Christian tradition and threatens to deconstruct western culture. It also uses those terms as consensus building, governance, diversity, sustainability, peer learning, gender equalities, win-win or solidarity. These are languages of reaction to western modernism and ordinarily it should be of interest to contemporary African aspiration. Where the confusion lies is that while postmodernism is deconstructing modernism, the non-western world wants growth, progress, social order and security

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which is believed to be a product of the establishment of modern democracy (Ajibade 2015:16-17).

The problem is that the deconstructionism of postmodernism does not give rise to reconstructionism. Ajibade argues that Africa does not need more tearing down but rather building up, which Western postmodernism is often unable to guide. He posits that Africa is uniquely gifted to offer a balance to these negative tendencies in postmodern thought. Africa can champion a return to five key areas of traditional value: anthropology; reality and common sense; the sacred and the sacredness of life; gratuitousness (charity); and brotherhood, fatherhood, and motherhood (Ajibade 2015:17-18). He argues that "These are things that postmodernism seek after but cannot obtain, or give an impression to offer but does not possess" (Ajibade 2015:18).

Ajibade firmly rejects the postmodern notion that expository, propositional preaching is to be disdained and discouraged. He writes:

> John Koessler was right when he asserted that expository preaching remains the most suitable means of communicating with a postmodern culture because culture is simply context. Jesus moved within several cultures and remains the same Word. In any culture, at any time and for whosoever will be opportune to hear, the duty of a preacher is to handle the text of God's Word 'in such a way that is real and the essential meaning as it existed in the mind of the particular biblical writer and as it exists in the light of the over-all context of Scripture is made plain and applied to the present-day need of the hearers'(Ajibade 2015:18-19).

This would seem to comport with the position Mburu espouses, as examined in Chapter Thirteen of this thesis. The Word is the Word. The preacher must be attuned to matters of culture and context, but God still speaks the same Word.

In the face of postmodern tendencies, Ajibade strongly upholds a more modern – though nuanced – approach to preaching, favouring an expository style that firmly entrenched postmodernists would likely reject. He writes:

> Expository preaching is that form of preaching that contemporises 'the central proposition of a biblical text, that is derived from proper methods of interpretation and declared through effective means of communication to inform minds, instruct heart and influence behaviour towards godliness.' Michael J. Easley stated that expository

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preaching draws a listener in to use his or her mind to grow, learn and mature in their walk with God. What is just required by the preacher is to make listening interesting and not boring by the use of illustrations which could include quotations, stories and use of visuals which would not overshadow the text. The preacher can also draw on variety of biblical genres and as a matter of principle keep re-examining his teaching methods (Ajibade 2015:20).

Using the mind to grow is a synthesis of modernism and postmodernism, which the preacher should consider. Ajibade further remarks, "The foregoing becomes important in the light of postmodernism's quest for orality and narrative. These are concepts that look African and if properly placed are best in reaching to the African audience" (Ajibade 2015:20). As discussed in previous chapters of this thesis, oral transmission and narrative instruction are longstanding cornerstones in African traditional education – cornerstones that must be rediscovered and put to their proper service.

## PREACHING AS PRACTICE

Long notes that the idea of preaching as storytelling was not without its critics, but that it did hold sway for many years. He notes that to craft and recount the stories and the Story of salvation, the preacher's own story and personality must also be accounted for. "In other words, the homiletical world had, in its own meandering way, come full circle to Philip Brooks's focus on the preacher's personality and character" (Long, in Long and Tisdale 2008:11).

However, Long notes that all such definitions of preaching are deficient in some way. Instead, Long et al. offer the definition of preaching as a practice. He cites Bass and Dykstra, who define Christian practices as "things Christian people do together over time to address fundamental human needs in response to and in light of God's active presence in the world" (Long, in Long and Tisdale 2008:12). Long writes:

> Under this definition, preaching certainly qualifies as a practice. Christians have been preaching sermons and listening to the since the very beginning, so preaching is '[done] together over time.' Theologically, preaching is not ornamental or mere oratorical entertainment. People need to hear the gospel, need to attend to the speech of the living and present God. Thus, preaching also addresses 'fundamental human needs in response to and in the light of God's active presence in the world' (Long, in Long and Tisdale 2008:12).

However, Long notes that this definition is too broad to serve as an organizing principle for the practice of preaching. Therefore, one may turn attention to Nieman's work on this subject to, as Long writes, "turn up the magnification" on this subject (Long, in Long and Tisdale 2008:12). Nieman writes:

> Surveying the range of contemporary approaches to practice, it appears that five basic features often appear. A practice can be recognized as including *common, meaningful, strategic, purposive actions.* Unpacked just a bit, this phrase conveys the 'who'(common), the 'why' (meaningful), the 'how' (strategic), the 'where' (purposive), and the 'what' (actions) of a practice (Nieman, in Long and Tisdale 2008:20).

Nieman notes that not all actions are practices. Rather, "[a] practice involves a group of component actions that have been shaped into a larger pattern. In a practice multiple actions are arranged into an overall structure, and thus not every random or haphazard action or set of actions counts as a legitimate practice" (Nieman, in Long and Tisdale 2008:21). Actions that form a practice are anchored within a domain. Nieman gives the examples of baseball and piano playing, which require practiced repetition for the practitioner to gain increasing proficiency.

Nieman writes that practices being common means they are social and are both historical and trans-historical. He writes:

> In particular, practices are common by existing in and across time. They have common origins and goals. Regarding their origins, they emerge from groups and their long-standing patterns and ways of being. Practices are always traditioned, standing within and in turn shaping the stream of how a group relates. Regarding their goals, practices exist for groups in relation to their larger purposes. Practices are not privately held, but serve collective outcomes, creating mutual goods that benefit more than just those who enact them (Nieman, in Long and Tisdale 2008:22).

Furthermore, Nieman emphasizes strongly that practices bring tradition into a current situation.

> "They must always be contextually responsive. Practices will therefore attend to and interact with the specific traditions out of which they operate, reinforcing these at some points while rupturing them at others. Such responsiveness is not an optional extra added to proficient performance, but is integral to it" (Nieman, in Long and Tisdale 2008:23).

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This would seem to be an important point to maintain in the contemporary milieu, and especially in African congregations, where tradition is clearly key to identity and social structure. However, the Church operates with her own traditions and structures. The preacher's job, as Nieman notes, is to reinforce some traditions while removing others from obscuring the Gospel.

In speaking of the meaningful aspect of a practice, Nieman notes that a practice is not merely the sum of a collection of actions. He writes:

> We therefore must inductively discern the meanings inherent in practices, reviewing a series of them for the significance they most centrally and consistently seek to convey. In this way, not only is a practice not reducible to its constituent actions, but in turn these actions are enhanced by contributing to a larger practice, receiving a greater horizon of meaning than they would ever have on their own (Nieman, in Long and Tisdale 2008:24).

He further notes that this greater horizon of meaning, which is given to the collective actions of a practice, is what separates practice from technique. Techniques are important because the practitioner must be proficient in the craft. However, "In their tendency to fragment and isolate, techniques are quite literally meaningless" (Nieman, in Long and Tisdale 2008:25), Moreover,

> This distinction is important because the meaning-laden quality of practices affects how they must be taught. Without this realization, practices can become distorted in a problem-solving pedagogy as a set of techniques to be mastered. The result may be technical proficiency at a task robbed of its ability to convey wisdom or value. Effective teaching of practices is judged, instead, by the way it retains a concern for focusing and thus conveying significant meaning (Nieman, in Long and Tisdale 2008:25).

It is not difficult to imagine or recall a preacher preaching a sermon that is technically proficient and correct, but yet which is fragmented and ineffective because it fails to convey significant meaning.

Nieman notes that practices are strategic because "[t]hey offer guidance and strategies toward attaining group aims and goods, suggestions for how to proceed, respond, and even rethink the practice in its continued use" (Nieman, in Long and Tisdale 2008:26). Strategies,

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says Nieman, are tightly abbreviated, such as culinary recipes or musical notation. Much more is implied by the strategy than simply the information denoted. He notes the place of *habitus* in this discussion, writing:

> This relationship between strategies and character, which I am suggesting applies to both teachers and learners, is what Bourdieu meant by *habitus*, a kind of "practical sense for what is to be done in a given situation – what is called in sport a 'feel' for the game, that is, the art of *anticipating* the future of the game, which is inscribed in the present state of play." Adept practitioners are so formed by a practice that they naturally have this feel for it, a repertoire of strategies that both guides their own actions and becomes a key component in teaching the practice to others (Nieman, in Long and Tisdale 2008:27).

Strategies, then, are the habits and actions by which a practice takes actions and moves them toward a goal. The meaning and actions may remain focused and consistent, but along the way the particulars are open to adjustment and adaptation (Nieman, in Long and Tisdale 2008:27).

Finally, a practice is purposive; that is, it is directed toward a greater purpose. Each iteration of the practice drives toward the grander goal and aims of the community. Nieman writes:

> The several actions at the heart of a practice have a forward energy to them, a teleological drive that is central to the existence of any practice in the first place. Therefore, aims can be seen as directing every other feature of a practice. Its common or social origins are extended into the future insofar as they continue to work toward these aims. Its implicit meanings operate as condensed expressions of the aims it seeks to attain. Its strategies have nowhere else to go unless these aims are already given, at least in some suggestive way. Beyond this, however, the aims of a practice establish its ethics, the ultimate values to which excellent performance will be held accountable. Once again, the intersection of practices and character is evident (Nieman, in Long and Tisdale 2008:28).

Nieman continues to note that this fivefold definition of practice can serve as a framework for "the distinctive practice of Christian preaching." (Nieman, in Long and Tisdale 2008:31). He notes that the *telos* of preaching – the proclamation of the Gospel – shapes preaching into a uniquely Christian endeavour. Preaching in and of itself is not uniquely

Christian; many other cultural groups have similar rhetorical traditions. However, it is that *telos*, that end goal, which sets Christian preaching apart from other types of preaching.

It is, of course, the goal of this thesis to construct a larger conceptual framework for Lutheran preaching in Francophone Africa. Within this larger goal, this discussion of preaching as a Christian practice is rather helpful, in the opinion of the current author. Nieman's definition gives the discussion shape and direction. The balance of practice and technique is crucial, and is something missing from the current materials and theories used in the field of study, as detailed in previous chapters herein. It may be argued that Kreiss approaches the subject in his homiletics text, but does not explicitly state the matter. However, Fluegge has no such discussion at all; his work is entirely focused on technique; the results are evident among the students of the institutions that rely on Fluegge's manual.

Without stating explicitly, Nieman gives an argument for residential seminary formation as essential for the work of the Ministry. He writes:

> The repeated tasks needed to appropriate the coordinated actions or multiple strategies of effective preaching require long-term effort that shapes how students perceive themselves, not just how others perceive them. Serious respect for the deep meanings within a faith community while learning to preach also forms preachers in those same values and communal roles. This is what is meant by the "habitus" of the practice, a feel for the game by which preachers realize their transformation from novices to adepts. The core issue is not about becoming more confident, but about growing in faithfulness in order to be open for others when preaching. This is why students who struggle with the practice of preaching often face deeper issues of faith formation and readiness for ministry (Nieman, in Long and Tisdale 2008:37).

A crucial part of becoming an adept preacher is first to hear good preaching from those who already walk the path of ministry. The seminary or Bible school thus becomes the seed-bed it is meant to be, where the students are nurtured in Christian practice not just by didactic inculcation, but also by practical formation through encounters with preaching. The rhythm and regularity of preaching in a residential seminary context offers the ground for this formation to happen. Faith comes by hearing, and we learn by observation.

Brooks defined preaching as communicating divine truth to the hearers. Barth defined preaching as God speaking to people for the purpose of expositing a text. One may argue that Brooks represents the modern school of homiletics, and that Barth represents a significant shift toward postmodernism, although he is not all the way there. The discussions in Long and Tisdale, it may be argued, represent a postmodern view of preaching, not in the sense that they depend on or encourage a sort of unrooted, truthless relativism in preaching, but rather in the chronological sense. Long, Tisdale *et al.* represent a stream of thought regarding homiletics that comes after the institutionality of modernism and the free-spirited relativism of postmodernism.

One may see this from the previous discussion of preaching as practice. It also may be seen in the definition of preaching that Lose offered. He advances a teleological view of preaching: it is defined by its end. He writes, "In brief, therefore, I describe the telos of preaching as *drawing people into an encounter with the crucified and risen Christ that they may come to new life and be caught up into the present and ongoing work and story of God*" (Lose, in Long and Tisdale 2008:53). Notice that Lose speaks of preaching in experiential terms: drawing, coming, being caught up. For Lose, preaching is not simply an exposition of propositions or of text, but a living activity. Furthermore, it is centred around story. It may be argued that this is a point of departure from the high postmodernism that rejects metanarratives and is a return to the ancient tradition of the Church. In this vein, it sees the entire arc of human history as caught up with God's plan of salvation.

Lose turns attention to the Gospel of John to emphasize his point. He cites John 20:30-31 as evidence of authorial intent and teleological orientation. He writes, "Strikingly, John admits that he self-consciously exercises authorial intention. That is, he includes some narratives while excluding others. Why? Because he has a rhetorical goal in mind: persuading listeners that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, so that they may believe in him" (Lose, in

Long and Tisdale 2008:53). Lose finds this (rightly) programmatic for John's gospel, as well as for Christian preaching in general. He writes:

> While John at no point speaks directly about preaching, this brief reading of the evangelical thrust of this Gospel invites our assertion that the goal or telos of all Christian witness and proclamation is to facilitate, even create, an encounter between the hearer and the risen Christ so that he or she may come to faith. Preaching, therefore, cannot afford to be simply talk 'about' what God has done in Jesus but rather must re-present the resurrected and living Christ as God's ongoing presence and work in the world, thereby inviting the hearer to participate in the new reality God has created and continues to sustain through our life in Christ (Lose, in Long and Tisdale 2008:54).

Furthermore, Lose states:

> Again, there is a clear conviction that Jesus continues to be available to those who believe in him through the proclamation of the gospel in the spoken and visible words of Christian worship. Preaching therefore cannot be mere instruction, exhortation, or even kerygmatic announcement, but must always seek to prompt an encounter with the living Christ (Lose, in Long and Tisdale 2008:54).

This may be seen in an evangelical trend toward an openness to the historical liturgy of the Church. While many evangelical Protestants still are sceptical or even opposed to formal liturgy, many seem to be drawn to the traditional practice of the Church as a way to ground and connect with something outside of themselves. A 2020 article from Wheaton College illustrates this point, speaking of students, faculty, and alumni of this evangelical institution who find comfort and deep meaning in rediscovering the liturgy and the greater story therein. The article states:

> Through the liturgy, human actions and words can combine with the power of the Spirit to create a true encounter with God that re-centers our lives around Christ. "It's really about union with Christ. That's the theological center of it," Dr. Scandrett says. "My life is not just my own solitary life, but it is a life that is now re-grounded, re-rooted in God through Jesus Christ" (Richardson 2020).

This language of encounter would seem to echo what Lose wrote. Preaching in particular, and liturgy in general, seeks to create that encounter between the transcendent, holy God and the finite, impure people of His kingdom. As Richardson writes, those who belong to what may be called the post-postmodern generation are looking for more than simply good advice or sanctified entertainment. She writes:

Believers are seeking a place where Jesus Christ is present alongside them, but still holy; where each stage of their lives is both significant and insignificant in his all-encompassing presence; a place for unity in the face of paradox. Whether or not the liturgical tradition serves that function for others or myself, we all need a constant re-centering on Christ. If our search in church practice is a search for Christ, renewal in worship will follow (Richardson 2020).

To make Christ present in, with, and under (to borrow a Lutheran cliché) the people in worship is a laudable telos of Christian preaching. It shall be argued that this teleological mindset proves much more fruitful than the propositional, expository focus of yesteryear that focuses more on setting forth truth – important as that is – than bringing people to the living Christ.

## TECHNOLOGY, DIGITIZATION, AND POSTHUMANISM

A new reality of the twentieth century is the ubiquity of the internet. This author has heard stories from missionaries in Africa of days gone by when there was one telephone in an entire district in northern Togo – the telephone was located at the post office. Now, smartphones are everywhere, perhaps even more so in Africa than in the United States, as this author has frequently observed Africans carrying more than one phone at a time. Even in isolated villages, one can often pick up at least some mobile data coverage.

This surge in digital connectivity has not left the Church untouched. As this thesis is being written, the world is approaching the third anniversary of the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This worldwide health crisis drove many activities of daily life to an online presence, into virtual spaces and formats, including the need for online worship. The effects of this on the Church are only just beginning to be known and explored in scholarly literature. However, even before COVID-19, a movement toward the virtual had begun, and some scholars have written regarding this topic and its potential impact on the Church.

This topic bears discussing at this point because it speaks to the necessity of the preacher knowing the people to whom he will be preaching in order to accomplish his task effectively. It is rather difficult for the preacher to know and understand the context of his

hearers when he is not exposed to it because he is not with his people. This section will examine some issues in this domain, in order to give space for these important factors to enter the discussion of homiletical practice.

In 2002, the Vatican issued a document titled *The Church and Internet*, that discusses the impact of social communication on the Church and on Christians. While the document emphasizes a fundamentally positive view of technology, it is not without its recommendations and cautions. One reads:

> The modern media of social communication are cultural factors that play a role in this story. As the Second Vatican Council remarks, 'although we must be careful to distinguish earthly progress clearly from the increase of the kingdom of Christ', nevertheless 'such progress is of vital concern to the kingdom of God, insofar as it can contribute to the better ordering of human society'. Considering the media of social communication in this light, we see that they 'contribute greatly to the enlargement and enrichment of men's minds and to the propagation and consolidation of the kingdom of God' (*The Church and Internet,* para. 2).

The positives that the Vatican extols are worth noting. This section will return to them later; namely, "enlargement and enrichment of men's minds" and "consolidation of the kingdom." These are carefully chosen objectives, and not without their presuppositions.

This Vatican document cites another Church proclamation, *Aetatis Novae,* quoting:

> Communication in and by the Church is essentially communication of the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is the proclamation of the Gospel as a prophetic, liberating word to the men and women of our times; it is testimony, in the face of radical secularization, to divine truth and to the transcendent destiny of the human person; it is witness given in solidarity with all believers against conflict and division, to justice and communion among peoples, nations, and cultures (*The Church and Internet,* para. 5).

This is a helpful characterization of what the Church is about. Communication by the Church is not simply a transmission of information. Rather, it is proclamation, testimony, and witness: terms that carry and convey juridical connotations. The speech that happens in and by the Church – and by implication, her ministers – actually does something, because it is the Word of God.

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The Vatican is prescient in its opinion. It notes that the two-way nature and capacity for isolation that are inherent to the internet are cause for concern and for intentionality of the Church:

> Similarly, as noted above, the virtual reality of cyberspace has some worrisome implications for religion as well as for other areas of life. Virtual reality is no substitute for the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the sacramental reality of the other sacraments, and shared worship in a flesh-and-blood human community. There are no sacraments on the Internet; and even the religious experiences possible there by the grace of God are insufficient apart from real-world interaction with other persons of faith. Here is another aspect of the Internet that calls for study and reflection. At the same time, pastoral planning should consider how to lead people from cyberspace to true community and how, through teaching and catechesis, the Internet might subsequently be used to sustain and enrich them in their Christian commitment (*The Church and Internet*, para. 9).

Note especially the strong statement: "There are no sacraments on the Internet" and that virtual religious experiences are "insufficient." These are words not to be taken lightly. It is important, in the opinion of the current author, to remember the essential flesh-and-blood nature of humanity and the human community.

However, the rapid evolution of technology means that not all share this incarnational view of the present and the future. "Christian ethicist, Brent Waters writes,[60] '[T]he future posthuman is an extension of the disembodied pattern of information that has come to define personhood in an uncompromisingly libertarian manner. *A person is simply a will that can be inserted within and asserted through a variety of media*'" (Myers 2016:33). Myers begins his essay regarding posthuman preaching this way to emphasize this radical shift in anthropology occurring in the world. His point is that the Church must consider the effects and ramifications of new and evolving technologies for the proclamation of the Gospel and for the mission of the Church. He writes:

> There is in the church a growing technological arms race in which the church with the latest technology gains a certain dominance over others. Yet, amidst this seemingly unquestioned approbation of new forms of media by its adopters, how might these

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[60] Brent Waters, *From Human to Posthuman: Christian Theology and Technology in a Postmodern World.* (Hampshire & Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 43. Cited in Myers (2016).

technological developments subvert the very foundations upon which these churches rest? In other words, how is the adoption of new media and technological strategies participating in the emerging, posthuman future (Myers 2016:34)?

Myers shows concern regarding the implications for the individual of the adoption of the posthuman anthropology. He also is greatly concerned for the future ministry of the Church in the midst of this development. He notes the trend among evangelical megachurches toward disembodied, multi-site worship, where worshippers can gather in a place convenient to them and be connected to the mother church via internet to receive the preaching of the head pastor virtually, even as they meet in person in their scattered locations. He writes, "But critics fear the multi-site and even out-of-state campuses turn churches into franchises like McDonald's or Starbucks. The topic for consideration in this *Christianity Today* article is less about what it means to be church than the capitalist assumption 'more is better'; the multi-site pastors interviewed talk about their 'brand name' as they move into 'emerging markets.' This trend raises questions about pastoral embodiment and contextualized preaching" (Myers 2016:37).

This dislocation of virtual reality, Myers argues, leads to a loss of the essential nature of the Church as a human community. "Hipps argues that 'the Internet is primarily experienced through cognitive interaction. Online evangelism reinforces that Christianity is information that you need, not a way that a community lives in the world. The capacity to hold someone's hand, feed the poor, and care for the sick requires a body.'" (Myers 2016:38). It is well worth noting this distinction of information versus way of life. One may argue that this is an extension of the modern versus postmodern debate previously considered in this chapter. The modernist view is returning in the sense that science and technology will unlock the totality of human potential, and progress is inevitable and always upward. The postmodern counterpoint, thus, would be the desire for community and integration into community, which this posthumanism diminishes.

Myers cites Hayles as the representative "cheerleader" for the posthumanist movement. "Hayles declares, 'When information loses its body, equating humans and computers is especially easy, for *the materiality in which the thinking mind is instantiated appears incidental to its essential nature*'" (Myers 2016:42). That is to say, what is essential to human nature is not incarnate; it is not physical. Therefore, that information pattern – not a soul – can be transferred from place to place and from data bank to data bank.

"The central issue occupying our treatment of holographic preaching is in the disembodiment of the preacher through technological substrates," writes Myers (2016:43). "In other words, how does the preaching environment change and adapt with the introduction of this new medium? More pointedly, how does holographic preaching affect the community gathered to hear a word from the Lord?" (Myers 2016:44) Myers will treat the phenomenon of holographic preaching specifically – the generation of an artificial image using light scanning and optical imaging technology – but his points are nevertheless salient for more accessible and less flashy forms of broadcast.

Whether through holography or forms of delivery such as live-streaming, the result is the same. "The preacher is thus rendered as an interference pattern, a digitized array of light emulsions synced with a digital voice. The preacher is not present as a body. He (or she) is present as information and as such is a telling display of posthumanity." (Myers 2016:44). Myers speaks about holographic technology being used in such a way that the receivers of such communication often have trouble discerning that the person on stage speaking is not a live body in the same room. One may argue that in the time since Myers wrote, even this requirement has diminished. The need to feel like the preacher is somehow present is not so pressing, as churches have adapted themselves to the concept that the preacher is not important, but rather the information that is being conveyed is important. In this sense, the posthuman

march has continued. The preacher, as a result, in essence, is a set of data to be downloaded to your viewing or listening device.

Myers posits that digital preaching harms the Church by rendering the pastor obsolete and all but eliminating the possibility of contextual preaching. It drives the individual away from the Church as community, not closer. He writes:

> When taken to an extreme, this medium may foster disconnected individualism, the proliferation of disembodied propositions devoid of context, character-driven, personality preachers, and possibly an enervated emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. For critics of evangelical Christianity, these features have already been noted as dominating the evangelical Church. Holographic preaching takes these critiques to a new level, however, because of the radical disembodiment of the preacher within the ecology of worship. Someone could literally die during a worship service and the holographic preacher would be none the wiser (Myers 2016:48).

These, of course, are features of preaching that have been highlighted elsewhere in this thesis as weighing negatively on the preacher's practice. Preaching is not intended to be merely a set of propositions. It is certainly not to be acontextual. It is most definitely not about the preacher's personality. One cannot even conceive of a merging of the pastoral and preaching offices in the way the Church has traditionally held them, since the pastor is not there to shepherd the flock of God, neither physically nor intentionally.

Chow and Kurlberg have undertaken a study of the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic by churches in Asia and northern Europe, specifically in terms of the churches' engagement and adoption of live-streaming and virtual service technologies. They remark:

> Thus, the theologically liberal but liturgically traditional Church of Sweden can be contrasted with the often conservative but utilitarian churches of Asia. As Simon Chan has remarked, Asian Christianity of all stripes tends to emphasise an 'essentially evangelical character'. This lends itself towards the propagation of an 'old' Christian message through new forms of media, from print media to radio/television broadcast and contemporary music… Indeed, it appears as though churches which are more evangelically-oriented - or, better, evangelistically-oriented - tend to be more keen to employ digital technologies in their engagement and mission with the broader society and world (Chow and Kurlberg 2020:303).

They note that Sweden and Singapore both rank near the top of global surveys regarding internet access. "According to IMD's World Digital Competitiveness Ranking 2019, Singapore

and Sweden were ranked second and third respectively" (Chow and Kurlberg 2020:303). Access to technology does not seem to be a deciding factor, as noted in the quotation above. Rather, motivation to innovate is the key.

Chow and Kurlberg note that liturgical orientation also tends to be a factor in the process and decisions regarding the embrace of virtual worship. The Church of Sweden seems to have been less whole-hearted in its adoption of virtual services. One reads:

> This liturgical instinct surfaces in an article by Karin Rubenson published in *Kyrkans Tidning*, a weekly newspaper associated with the Church of Sweden. She concedes that digital technology makes the situation of isolation bearable in these exceptional times, but without the physical gathering of believers in the sanctuary, the church is no longer as it should be. The assembly of physically-gathered bodies is so fundamentally instilled in the ecclesial reflexes of the Lutheran church, she contends, that 'our bodies cry out', longing to be present with one another again (Chow and Kurlberg 2020:305).

That is, virtual worship is a stop-gap, a temporary substitute for what should be: embodied, in-person worship – in the minds of many in the Church of Sweden.

Church leaders in the United Kingdom seem to have responded more favourably toward the adoption of technology. Roman Catholic Cardinal Vincent Nichols gave this ringing endorsement:

> There's a kind of burgeoning of spirituality a burgeoning of helping each other to pray and we're remarkably benefiting from these internet facilities. It's the house church of the early church combined with the technology of the twenty-first century. And for once the technology looks unambiguously positive in this period and I'm astonished by the creativity and the richness and the inventiveness of what's on offer to help us (Chow and Kurlberg 2020:306).

It is interesting to contrast that with the official position of the Vatican, as summarized in *The Church and Internet,* considered above. "Unambiguously positive" is not a common sentiment, one may argue.

Canon Pat Browne of the Church of the Holy Apostles in London is less joyful. "He fears that the convenience of following Mass from the comfort of one's home might result in some members of the congregation not returning to regular Sunday Mass once restrictions are

lifted. Live-streaming could thereby nurture an individualistic spirituality"[61] (Chow and Kurlberg 2020:307). Individualism is a hallmark of postmodernism, as the authority of institutions like the Church are to be questioned. However, it could be argued that the lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic have tested the practical rigors of that individualism, as people across the globe come to terms with what it means really to be alone with themselves.

Chow and Kurlberg attempt to summarize the responses of various church bodies to the question of virtual celebration of the Lord's Supper. Again, this tends to follow liturgical and historical orientations. They note, "Most Catholic dioceses and a number of churches in the Anglican communion have allowed clergy to broadcast the celebration of the Eucharist, on behalf of the laity who cannot themselves participate in person, as well as encouraging the practice of spiritual communion" (Chow and Kurlberg 2020:308). The Methodist Church in Great Britain concluded already in 2015 "that online communion 'compromise[s] the integrity of the sacrament'" (Chow and Kurlberg 2020:308). This position is shown in Singapore also. "Bishop Chong Chin Chung has instructed Singaporean Methodists to keep 'this rite sacred and not try to conduct Holy Communion on our own in our homes'" (Chow and Kurlberg 2020:308).

The Church of Sweden, of Lutheran heritage, issued a theological document rejecting the practice of virtual Communion. In the document, the Church states:

> It is in the speaking of the Eucharistic liturgy – reciting the words of Jesus during the Last Supper - over the elements that they are sacramentally transformed. Furthermore, as communion is an act that transpires in the local congregation, this gives additional rationale for this prohibition. As such, it is the physical distance between the Word and elements, and those assembled for celebration that is problematic with virtual communion' (Chow and Kurlberg 2020:309).

On the other hand, Chow and Kurlberg note that virtual worship and Communion have been whole-heartedly embraced by a specific set of churches. "Perhaps the most widespread

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[61] Pat Browne, video interview with Jonas Kurlberg, 1 May 2020. Cited in Chow and Kurlberg (2020).

acceptance of online communion can be found amongst churches which are known for their emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit: Pentecostal and charismatic churches. Many in the UK and Sweden have administered the sacrament online, recommending those participating to prepare a cup and some bread ahead of the live-streamed service." (Chow and Kurlberg 2020:310). One may see this as a reflection of their non-liturgical orientation, as well as their theological priorities. Chow and Kurlberg comment on this, writing, "Situated on the other end of the spectrum from Catholic Eucharistic theology, the communion theology of Pentecostals and charismatics underscores perhaps the greatest democratisation of Christian ministry, through the priesthood of all believers" (2020:311).

This disembodied and separated nature is the downfall of virtual worship and virtual Communion. The Body of Christ is not gathered, but rather scattered, which goes against the fundamental nature of the Church. Some churches have paused for theological reflection on the use of technology for worship and as forms of evangelism. In Sweden, it has been noted that the drive simply to make contact online with people, and thereupon draw more bodies into the pews, is not a proper focus of the Church's mission. One reads:

> In a pastoral letter to the parishes in the diocese of Fund, Bishop Johan Tyrberg, reflecting on being church during COVID-19, suggests that whilst it is desirable that more people encounter the divine, the purpose of the service is not to gather as many as possible but that the Word is preached and the Sacrament celebrated. Reflections on the evangelistic opportunities of digital technology are therefore largely absent. The mission of the church is not to reach the largest numbers of people but to continue to bear witness to Christ through its local presence (Chow and Kurlberg 2020:312).

Again, one hears the call to an incarnational presence of Christ in and with His body in the physical gathering of the Church.

As they conclude their study, Chow and Kurlberg observe that the philosophical and theological underpinnings of the discussion regarding virtual church seem to reflect a shift in the discussion of the Church more generally. They write:

> From our research, we were surprised that there was a noticeable absence of much explicit discussion of (dis)embodiment in the debates during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Perhaps part of the reason for this is that, in contrast with heads and theologians of global churches, such as the Catholic magisterium, most local and regional church leaders today are less steeped in philosophical notions of presence and embodiment framed in opposition to Platonic or Gnostic understandings of the world. Rather, those who disagree with certain aspects of online church practices tend to offer reasons to prioritise historical precedence over and against technological innovations, or centres of power within persons and places against the loss of control to the masses and the outer trenches (Chow and Kurlberg 2020:313-14).

The Church has long framed discourse regarding the body and the incarnation – of Christ Himself and of His people – in terms explicitly chosen to counter the Platonic or Gnostic doctrines, as mentioned. The idea that the soul could worship apart from the body, or the idea that the physical self is unimportant as long as the spirit is joined to the Communion of Saints – these such notions are evidence of a resurgence of some sort of neo-Gnostic sentiment. One can see the influence of Platonic duality in the previous discussion about posthumanism. In both Platonic and Gnostic thought, the physical corpus is something to be escaped, to be transcended. Thus, virtual church and disembodied preaching become not just good options, but the preferred option for many.

As has been mentioned both in the works of Myers and Chow and Kurlberg, two concerns loom large over the practice of virtual church (taken for the moment as a shorthand for various digital practices): the impossibility of contextualization, and the disconnect from the pastoral care relationship.

Context is of vital importance to good preaching in the Church, as has been argued elsewhere in this thesis. Preachers of various traditions, no doubt, would agree with this statement. However, it is simply impossible to preach contextually when the preacher is not located in the given context, nor does he even see the place and people where his preaching is heard. Yes, there are certain trans-cultural truths, as Mburu puts it. But these trans-cultural truths are nevertheless conveyed and inculcated in culturally relevant ways different from this place to that. A preacher cannot do this with any level of efficacy without being in the midst of

his people, knowing their culture and their lives, and exegeting the congregation, as Ajibade mentions. This leads to the second concern.

Virtual church involves an almost inherent disconnect from the pastoral care relationship. The Lutheran tradition has long maintained the concept of the pastor as *Seelsorger*, as a sort of physician of souls, whose responsibility it is to care intimately for the needs of the people placed under his pastoral care. Preaching is at the forefront of how this cure of souls is carried out on a regular basis. The best preaching is that where the pastor knows his people and is able to preach to them what they need to hear from the Word of God. This means knowing, understanding, and interacting with the culture of the hearers, and knowing and caring for their particular needs and life situations. This relationship is ruptured when the pastor and the people no longer meet and the pastor no longer knows those for whom he cares. Preaching must, of necessity, become generic without this relationship. The preacher cannot speak to real needs if he does not know what those needs are. He cannot respond with care and sensitivity to the hearers if he does not see and interact with them as he preaches.

One may argue that the pastor can come to know his people through digital means – for instance, in the metaverse. It would only take a search engine a few moments to return an entire list of sources[62] that speak to how social media  seems to cause negative effects on mental health and emotional well-being for many people, especially children and young adults. One specific phenomenon of concern for pastoral care is the tendency to skew what is portrayed online. Individuals tend to curate their online presence to show the image they wish to project.

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[62] A Google search for the string "problems with social media" returns articles from wide-ranging sources, such as MIT, Columbia University, the BBC, Mayo Clinic, and the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, just on the first page of results.
https://www.google.com/search?q=problems+with+social+media&sxsrf=ALiCzsaLmhowZmCQMF4wopFhL_gJO-3Wnw%3A1668426168022&ei=uClyY7F_quXQ8Q-yvLko&ved=0ahUKEwixu9Doy637AhWqMjQIHTJeDgUQ4dUDCBA&uact=5&oq=problems+with+social+media&gs_lcp=Cgxnd3Mtd2l6LXNlcnAQAzIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMgUIABCABDIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMgUIABCABDIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMgUIABCABDIFCAAQgAQ6BAgAEEc6BAgAEEM6BggAEBYQHkoECEEYAEoECEYYAFC3CVjcGWCrIGgAcAJ4AIABtQGIAcUMkgEEMC4xM5gBAKABAcgBCMABAQ&sclient=gws-wiz-serp (accessed 14 Nov 2022)

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It can be difficult for others to get an accurate picture of a person's mental and emotional state from his or her online postings. If a pastor cannot get an accurate sense of the spiritual condition of his people, how can he preach effectively to answer the true needs of those souls in his care?

## PREACHING FOR CHANGE

The notion of the preacher as an agent – or at least advocate – of social change is not a new one. It may be argued that this is the job of a preacher, going back to the prophets of the Old Testament. However, the means by which this advocacy takes place may change. The current section undertakes a brief consideration of Cilliers' writing on the foolishness of preaching as a pretence for its true power.

Cilliers writes in his introduction:

Foolishness. Complete and utter nonsense. *Holy* nonsense, for sure, but still nonsense—to many. That is preaching. And that is what Charles Campbell's homiletic vision is all about. Let us picture, with him, the following in our mind's eye: a man or woman stands before a group of people with different backgrounds, needs, personalities and expectations, and opens his/her mouth on the assumption, or at least the hope, that his/her words will, in some way, be transformed into words that are supposed to heal and comfort, and somehow spell out the most profound meaning of our existence (Cilliers 2008:11).

This hope of the preacher – that his words will do something meaningful – is foolishness in the eyes of a great many. One need only consider the backlash against "thoughts and prayers" offered for those who endure tragedies and suffering. For preaching, thoughts, or prayers to do anything, one must believe that there is a power behind these or within them that has the capacity to do something. The words must be perceived as powerful, containing a force that can effect change. Otherwise, preaching is just blowing hot air.

Cilliers continues, recounting a second vision that came to his mind:

A second picture popped up in my head as I reflected on Campbell's thoughts concerning the foolishness of preaching, a picture that might have been disturbing to some, but nonetheless was on the front page of newspapers during the recent spate of xenophobic attacks that swept across our country. It depicted the horror of a man engulfed in flames after being set alight by a mob on the rampage. The police are seen in the picture, desperately trying to extinguish the human inferno by throwing a blanket and some sand on him. He survives the ordeal, but is badly scarred, obviously for life (Cilliers 2008:12).

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What does this mean?

This and similar pictures graphically illustrated the fact that the powers about which Campbell is speaking are not illusions or harmless word-play, especially not in the South African context. They are frightfully real. The question that burned into my being was: how can preaching make a difference against powers and systems that result in unspeakable events like these? (Cilliers 2008:12)?

Cilliers writes, almost pleads, "*It is exactly at this junction in our history that we need to rediscover the power of foolish preaching,* in the sense that Campbell is proposing it." (Cilliers 2008:13, emphasis original). He cites Wink in crafting an explanation of what he means by foolish preaching, writing:

> He [Wink] spoke about Jesus' Third Way, a way between violence, on the one hand, and fatalistic submission to authorities and powers (erroneously called "pacifism"), on the other…
>
> This "third way" could be described in exactly the terms Campbell uses. The powers are to be resisted, but not violently. Rather ethically, aesthetically, comically. We should play the fool, and so frustrate the powers. We should juxtapose, and so jolt the systems. We should subvert, and so shatter the status quo. *The clown must take a stand before the powers* (Cilliers 2008:13, emphasis original).

The first step in taking a stand, according to Cilliers, is that the preacher must combat against what he calls the *syndrome of silence.* The preacher must resist the normalizing tendency that suppresses marginalized voices and seeks to smooth rough edges for the sake of niceness. "This language of denial or stabilization needs to be disrupted by the gospel's rhetoric of vulnerable madness, by stuttering the 'unspeakable meaning' of the vulnerable Word in the holy, nonsensical endeavour of preaching that is in search of meaning" (Cilliers 2008:14).

Next, Cilliers advocates that the preacher should become as a clown, or more properly a jester. He quotes Kolakowski:

> The philosophy of the jester is a philosophy which in every epoch denounces as doubtful what appears as unshakable; it points out the contradictions in what seems evident and incontestable; it ridicules common sense into the absurd—in other words, it undertakes the daily toil of the jester's profession along with the inevitable risk of appearing ludicrous (Cilliers 2008:15).

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Of course, one may easily appeal to St. Paul as an example of this, as he writes in 1 Corinthians 1:18: "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Paul was well aware that the message of the Gospel is nonsense to the unbelieving world. But it is arguably the task of the preacher to play the role of jester.

Cilliers argues that South Africa is well aware of the need to "grieve for change." He posits that South African theology understands lament. However, lament is not the only thing necessary.

> But we need also to embrace a theology of laughter. As a matter of fact, *what we need is not only grieving for change, but also clowning for change.* Grieving and clowning are closer to one another than one tends to think; they are two sides of the same coin. Like laughter and tears they complement one another. *Perhaps one could venture to say that meaning is found exactly in the interaction between grieving and clowning.* Death is swallowed up in the comical cry: "Where is your victory? Where is your sting?" (cf. 1 Cor. 15:55). Meaning (life triumphing over death) is born out of an empty tomb. It is a laughing matter. In Eugene O'Neill's play, *Lazarus Laughs,* Lazarus emerges from the tomb with a bellow of laughter. Meaninglessness is overcome by mirth (Cilliers 2008:15).

Another way to say this may be that preaching requires joy. Cilliers notes that "Apartheid suffered from a lack of humour. As a matter of fact, all oppressive systems and ideologies do, as they are characterized by pretentiousness, arrogance, fanaticism, intolerance and repression." (Cilliers 2008:15). In systems of repression, whatever their nature, darkness reigns. The preacher's task is to bring light into the midst of this darkness, to bring it about that "those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone" (Isaiah 9:2).

Cilliers next notes that preaching often can serve as counter-testimony against the narratives and themes of culture. The texts of Scripture present truths about God and about the human situation which are difficult, but which must be preached precisely because of the power in that tension. He writes:

> Campbell argues that "preaching represents an ethical decision to rely on the Word, rather than on the stone or the gun or the bomb." In relying on the Word, one somehow steps back, allowing the Word to create its own space, within which God "can make a

difference". In this powerlessness of the preacher lies the power of the Word of God, and the God of the Word. The strange, subversive text reshapes and reframes our God images (Cilliers 2008:16).

Again, one may appeal to St. Paul: the Word of God is the power of God for the salvation of humanity. It is not in human wisdom nor earthly might, but the creative, (re)generative power of the Word. Cilliers advocates that one let this almighty Word work His wonders.

Once more, Cilliers quotes Campbell regarding this notion of the clown Christ:

But why a clown Christ in a century of tension and terror? The clown represents different things to different people. For some he is the handy butt of our own fears and insecurities. We can jeer at his clumsy failures because they did not happen to us. For some he shows what an absurd clod man really is, and he allows us on occasion to admit it. For others he reveals to us our stubborn human unwillingness to be encaged forever within the boundaries of physical laws and social proprieties. The clown is constantly defeated, tricked, humiliated, and tromped upon. He is infinitely vulnerable, but never finally defeated (Cilliers 2008:16).

Cilliers finds this last phrase particularly insightful: "infinitely vulnerable, but never finally defeated." He writes:

In this last phrase lies a striking God image: infinitely vulnerable, but never finally defeated. If I had to opt for a God image that needs to be portrayed in South African preaching at this point in time in our history, it would be exactly this one. Campbell refers to the Word that is "vulnerable and fragile", that "relies on flawed speech", and is open to misuse "in violent ways to abuse and manipulate and exclude." Behind this vulnerable Word stands a vulnerable God. He does not side with the powerful and mighty, but rather is *"in a world full of injustice and enmity ... in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged"* (Belhar Confession, article 4) (Cilliers 2008:16).

A vulnerable God is not how most people would understand God. Gods are not vulnerable, by nature. However, this is precisely Cilliers' point. The God of Scripture makes Himself vulnerable so that He may identify with and suffer with (have compassion) His poor, miserable creatures. It is in this way that God overthrows the powers of this world.

Cilliers writes:

We need to understand anew in South Africa that God sides with the broken and downtrodden, the poor, the suffering, and those being displaced by xenophobia. *Preachers who take clowning for change seriously, who act as court jesters before the*

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*King (those in power), should not only subvert the King to become like the jester, but to become like the God lurking behind the jester, the God that is found in the vicinity of the marginalized. It is preaching that proclaims, and embodies, God's solidarity with broken humanity* (Cilliers 2008:17).

Preaching proclaims. That is to say, preaching is performative speech. Furthermore, preaching embodies the presence of God with His people – all of them. One may make a case that Cilliers presents an argument against the disembodied preaching discussed in the previous section of this chapter.

Cilliers summarizes his argument thusly:

To preach is to stand aside so that Christ can stretch out his hand. Sometimes we may even use words to try and express this mystery. We preachers, together with all of the church, have been entrusted with words that the world needs and, consciously or subconsciously, yearns for. Sometimes people may laugh at us, ridicule us, reject us, but we have received words that make all the difference in our search for meaning (Cilliers 2008:18).

The very point of Christian worship, and of preaching in particular, is that God be present in the flesh and blood realities of this world, among His people. His presence subverts and overthrows the rich, the mighty, and the proud. It is as the Blessed Virgin Mary sings in the Magnificat (Luke 1:51-53):

He has shown strength with his arm;
    he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
    and exalted those of humble estate;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
    and the rich he has sent away empty.

## TRANSFORMATIVE PREACHING

In somewhat the same vein as Cilliers' work, and as a sort of segue toward a conclusion for this chapter, brief consideration is now given to the work of O'Lynn regarding transformative preaching. He posits this definition of transformative preaching: "*Preaching is transformative when it is scripturally grounded, theologically informed, and culturally relevant*" (O'Lynn 2018:110).

For preaching to be scripturally grounded, O'Lynn means that the content of the preaching must be the Scriptures. He acknowledges that interpretation, exegesis, historical context, etc. are all important, but one must let the text speak. He writes, "When we speak for God, our words should be those of Scripture, not of our favorite authors" (O'Lynn 2018:110).

Second, transformative preaching must be theologically informed. For O'Lynn, this means that the preaching itself is more than just an imparting of knowledge. The preacher must dig deep into the text and bring forth the sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4) that gives and sustains life to the hearers. "Preaching must do more than offer a surface treatment of the text; it much reach deep inside the text and pull forth those teachings on faith, theology and spiritual growth that are contained within. Preaching must challenge those who give ear to reflect deeply and seriously about their faith" (O'Lynn 2018:110).

Third, transformative preaching must be culturally relevant. Preaching must connect the timeless message of Scripture with the timely and time-bound hearers who are to receive it. No human being exists in a vacuum, and no sermon is preached in a vacuum. "We must look to connect God's message with today's world, which can only be done by being a student of culture. It must be done creatively, just as Jesus was creative in his use of parables and Paul in his use of sermon forms. Only in this way can we effectively handle the Word of truth and proclaim that message fresh each week" (O'Lynn 2018:110-11).

What O'Lynn seeks is preaching that transforms hearts and lives. He views preaching as an event or an encounter with God that is designed to change the human situation. Therefore, preaching must be transformative, in the manner just described. In this sense, O'Lynn is in line with Cilliers in this desire for change through preaching. One may argue that this is the goal of all preachers – or at least ought to be. The Word of God is not preached for the sake of filling time. The Word of God is preached because it is the power of God unto salvation for those who hear it (Rom 1:16).

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to present a sampling of scholarship in the domain of homiletics from the past hundred years. Effort has been made to illustrate some of the thought trends regarding preaching. Obviously, this is not an exhaustive treatment. However, the goal is that some of these ideas may be gleaned and integrated into the conceptual framework that will be presented in the final part of this thesis.

As noted in the first section of this chapter, preaching is an integrative activity; the goal is to unite and integrate text, context, preacher, hearer, culture, narrative, and metanarrative all into one package. Sometimes this integration is neat and polished; sometimes it is messy and foolish-looking. But this is why preaching is an art form and not a science. Preaching is essential to the Church as the Church. The sheep cannot hear the Shepherd's voice if that voice does not sound forth in their midst. To gather around the promises of God is central to the mission of the Church, as confessed in the ecumenical Creeds. This is the task that every preacher must aspire to do well.

# CHAPTER 13 - A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF J. GERHARD AND E. MBURU

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to present a comparative study of Johann Gerhard and Elizabeth Mburu. The author has submitted this chapter for publication in *Concordia Journal*.[63]

Johann Gerhard stands as one of the central figures in the "Golden Age" of Lutheranism. His *Theological Commonplaces*, first published in 1610, are only just now being translated into English. These serve as a great treasure of the Church, with content rich in depth and breadth.

Elizabeth Mburu is a current-day theologian who represents the contemporary movement of postcolonial African theologians who are searching and striving for models of theology and biblical interpretation that honour both the treasures of the Faith once given to the saints and the rich cultures and heritage of Africa. Mburu's 2019 book, *African Hermeneutics*, sets forth her principles of interpretation, centred on the concept of a four-legged stool.

This chapter attempts to present Gerhard's basic principles of interpretation, mainly taken from his *Theological Commonplaces I-II*. The goal will be to discover the basic foundations of Gerhard's interpretive methods. Then, a similar effort will be made with respect to Mburu's work. Her theory of a four-legged stool will be examined to see the theory stands. Finally, an evaluation will be offered with an eye as to how and to what extent Lutherans may benefit from Mburu's work in bringing together orthodox biblical interpretation with contemporary culture.

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[63] submitted July 18, 2022

## GERHARD

Johann Gerhard aims in his *Theological Commonplace II* to refute mainly the errors of the Roman Catholic Church, which has maintained that the Scriptures cannot be interpreted apart from the magisterium of the Church, and more specifically, the papacy. From this background, Gerhard's aim is to show that the Scriptures are perfect and sufficient to interpret themselves.

St. Paul says, "The natural man does not perceive the things of the Spirit of God. They are folly to him, and he cannot understand" (1 Cor 2:14). "Accordingly, the illumination of divine light is required besides the natural capacities of our understanding and our 'original,' so to speak, 'abilities,' [*primaevas opes*]; otherwise the mysteries put forth in the Scriptures will be [for us] a closed and sealed book," writes Gerhard (2017:68). Moreover, Gerhard wants to be clear that while the natural, unregenerate man is able to grasp certain external matters, he cannot truly apprehend the fullness of Scripture.

> For though some things are so arranged in the Scriptures that they do not exceed the capacity of man's intellect – for example, the outer husk of the historical events – nevertheless the human mind cannot by the power of its inborn light rise to understand the mysteries of the faith fully and salutarily without the Holy Spirit's illumination. Some who are not yet illumined by the Holy Spirit can know about scriptural dogmas and grasp the history of the faith through the external ministry of the Word. They cannot, however, have πληροφορίαν ('certain, full, and saving knowledge') without the Holy Spirit internally enlightening their minds (Gerhard 2017:70).

Finally, however, the key for all interpretation of Scripture, according to Gerhard, is the rule or analogy of faith. He writes:

> From the clear passages of Scripture comes the *rule of faith*, which is a summary of heavenly doctrine gathered from the clearest passages of Scripture. It has two parts. The first part regards the faith, the chief teachings of which are laid out in the Apostles' Creed. The second part regards love, the sum of which is taught in the Decalogue. 2 Tim. 1:13: 'Hold to the pattern of sound words which you heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus' (Gerhard 2017:71).

Thus, according to Gerhard, the rule of faith is laid out in the Apostles' Creed and the Ten Commandments, together serving as the interpretive lens for all of Scripture. This rule of faith gives the "pattern of sound words" to which Paul exhorts Timothy to hold fast. "Therefore

one should be careful when interpreting the more obscure passages not to say anything that conflicts with the constant and eternal meaning that is contained in Scripture with clear words regarding each and every main point of heavenly doctrine" (Gerhard 2017:72).

Preus notes that the Post-Reformation Lutheran theologians considered the rule of faith to be a matter of the doctrinal content and unity of the Scriptures. He quotes Hollaz as writing, "Now if, therefore, the doctrine of faith is drawn and extracted from clear passages of Scripture, certainly every interpretation, consistent with the faith, ought to rest on the foundation of Sacred Scripture" (Preus 1990:13). This is consistent with Gerhard's view that the Apostles' Creed and the Ten Commandments offer the rule of faith in summary form. The Decalogue, because it is itself Scripture, and Scripture interprets Scripture, stands as a touchstone of interpretation. The Apostles' Creed, because it is universally affirmed in the Church as a correct exhibition of divine doctrine, serves as a companion to the Decalogue in establishing the rule of faith by which the Scriptures can be interpreted faithfully. "Hollaz concludes confidently, reverently, and almost doxologically, 'Therefore it can never happen that the true meaning of even one divine passage will not beautifully agree with the chief parts of the divinely revealed doctrine'" (Preus 1990:14).

Gerhard presents five principles for applying the rule of faith in the process of interpretation:

1) The interpretation of Scripture should be literal and proper.
2) Especially in articles of the faith, one should not depart from the letter, unless Scripture itself demonstrates and exhibits nonliteral speech.
3) There is no dogma of the faith that is not laid out somewhere in Scripture with proper and clear words.
4) The entirety of the rule of faith must be accepted, and its parts must not be set against one another.
5) If we are unable to arrive at the genuine meaning for the more obscure passages, we must not depart from the rule of faith (Gerhard 2017:92).

1) Gerhard is careful and clear to maintain that Scripture has a literal and proper sense. He writes, "Each passage has one proper and original sense that the Holy Spirit intended, and

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which can be obtained from the genuine signification of the words. It is from this literal sense alone that efficacious proofs come" (Gerhard 2017:94). That is to say, *unus sensus literalis est*. The literal sense of the words is the sense proper, or most natural, to the text.

However, Gerhard acknowledges that other interpretations may flow from the text, but without the literal sense disappearing. "*Allegories, tropologies, and anagogies are not diverse meanings* but various inferences from this one sense or various applications of this one sense and of the thing which the letter expresses" (Gerhard 2017:94). He argues that these nonliteral interpretations are not a different sense of the text than the literal, but rather applications of the text to various situations or contexts of the hearer. He also maintains that proofs of doctrine do not come from these inferred interpretations.

2) Writing regarding allegories, Gerhard draws a rather firm line as to how far one should go in seeking allegory. He gives eight principles to answer this question, but the third and seventh answer the purpose of this paper. His third principle says, "No allegories should be sought when it comes to the moral Commandments, promises, threats, and dogmatic discourses. Jerome (on Galatians 4): 'Allegory should not be sought in the Commandments that pertain to life or in those things which are perspicuous and evident'" (Gerhard 2017:96-97). That is, Gerhard is willing to grant the value of allegorizing the historical narratives of Scripture – more for homiletical application than for dogmatics – but he will not admit allegory into the reading of doctrinal discourse.

The seventh principle in this paragraph follows the third: "Allegories in dogmas do not make for strong proofs (excepting always those which Scripture itself puts forth). They merely adorn the faith" (Gerhard 2017:97). Allegories sound nice, and they preach well, but they are not strong logically, and therefore one ought not base doctrine upon allegorical interpretation.

3) This principle has to do with the connection between the Scriptures and the rule of faith.

This is confirmed from the perfection and perspicuity of Scripture. You see, if there were something among the articles of the faith that was nowhere in Scripture set forth in proper and clear words, then the perfection and perspicuity of Scripture would fail. Nonliteral speech [*improprie dicta*] can be explained in various ways; accordingly, only literal [*proprie*] and perspicuous sayings can offer a sure and immovable statement (Gerhard 2017:100).

Scripture is clear and it is perfect; therefore, one cannot make dogma rest on unclear statements without undermining the eternal clarity of Scripture.

4) The entirety of the rule of faith – the Apostles' Creed – must be accepted and kept whole in the practice of interpretation. Gerhard writes, "The reasoning of this inference is obvious, because all things that belong to the rule of faith are the utterances of the Holy Spirit and cannot and should not be set against one another. Therefore, wherever an article of faith is presented, one should keep to the literal sense. Neither should the article be placed in opposition to the other articles of the faith" (Gerhard 2017:100-101). He gives examples of how the Arians and the Tritheists both commit errors against this principle because they fail to hold to the entire rule of faith.

5) One may perhaps draw comfort from Gerhard's final principle in this section: sometimes we do not know what a particular passage is talking about. "To be sure, we must work tirelessly to arrive at the genuine meaning of every passage, but if ever we are unable fully to seek it out, we must be careful not to claim anything that would be contrary to the analogy of the faith (as we said above [§§ 71, 140])" (Gerhard 2017:101). The unity and perfection of Scripture is such that failure or inability to interpret one passage does not negate the veracity and value of the entirety of Scripture.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR FRUITFUL INTERPRETATION

It is worth noting that Gerhard considers Luther's advice regarding the fruitful reading of Scripture. Gerhard writes, "At this point we have spoken sufficiently on the means of interpretation, but for these to bear fruit, three things are required: *prayer, meditation,* and *testing.* The royal prophet deals with all these throughout Psalm 119" (Gerhard 2017:127).

Gerhard has already dealt with prayer earlier in this Commonplace, as has been discussed above. In summary, prayer is necessary for correct interpretation because the interpreter must invoke the Holy Spirit as the Author of Sacred Scripture to illuminate the heart and mind, which is necessary to reach a salutary interpretation.

"By *meditation* we mean undertaking frequent and arduous study of the Scriptures with ardent fervor in one's spirit. 'Blessed is he who meditates on the Law of the Lord day and night' (Ps. 1:2)'" (Gerhard 2017:127). Meditation involves drinking deeply from the wells of Scripture, studying the texts and their interpretation throughout the Church, and studying the writings of learned men who have gone before. Gerhard quotes St. Jerome, who wrote, "It is my intention to read the ancients, test everything, hold fast what is good, and not to depart from the faith of the church" (Gerhard 2017:128).

Testing, for Gerhard, is a twofold experience. He writes:

> For the sake of teaching, we define this testing, αἴσθησις, practice, or contemplation in two ways. The one consists in exercises of repentance, faith, prayer, and piety, that these be serious and proceed from the inner man. The other consists in the cross and calamities, but internal (which the apostle calls 'fears within,' 2 Cor. 7:5; they are commonly called 'spiritual afflictions [*tentationes spirituales*]') and external, or calamities. Without this twofold practice and inner tasting of the Scriptures, so to speak, one's treatment of them will be dry and unfruitful (Gerhard 2017:128-29).

The two parts of testing, as Gerhard defines it, encompass the internal and external life of a Christian, in such a way that one's experience deepens and enlivens one's interpretation of the Scriptures. Not that the meaning of Sacred Scripture is subjective and depends on the life experience of the interpreter, but rather the interpretation of the eternal Word is given new force in the life of the Christian when it is connected to and understood through the lens of one's particular experiences.

## SUMMATION

Johann Gerhard gives a well-argued series of principles regarding the interpretation of Holy Scripture. He is careful to hold steadfast to St. Paul's admonition regarding the rule of faith as the key for a correct Christian hermeneutic. Gerhard states that the rule of faith is to be

understood as the unity of the Christian faith, as encapsulated in the Apostles' Creed and the Ten Commandments.

However, what Gerhard does not give us is a series of detailed steps to follow to arrive at an interpretation of a text. Here and there he cites examples to highlight certain principles, as one can see in *TC II,* chapter X, where he uses the Words of the Holy Supper as a test case for illustrating his inferences from the rule of faith. Gerhard instructs the student of Scripture in the way to go, but then lets the student learn the path himself, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

## MBURU

Elizabeth Mburu holds a PhD from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (United States) and is an Associate Professor of New Testament and Greek at International Leadership University, Africa International University, and Pan-Africa Christian University in Nairobi, Kenya (Mburu 2019:back cover).

Mburu begins by naming the problem her book seeks to address. She writes:

African readers of the Bible face the additional challenge that most of the models and methods of Bible interpretation, or hermeneutics, are rooted in a Western context. This is not surprising given that Christianity came to Africa from the West, the churches and theological institutions that were founded were missionary led, and most of the theological resources are produced by Western writers. Millions of Africans therefore use 'foreign' approaches to the interpretation of the Bible (Mburu 2019:xiii).

One may argue the historicity of Mburu's claim that Christianity came to Africa from the West. Her point is nevertheless valid that most of the theological institutions which have shaped African Christianity in the modern era have Western roots and are based generally on Western principles and operate with Western resources.

Mburu writes, "This book is an attempt to address this problem by providing the reader with a contextualized, African intercultural approach to the study of the Bible" (Mburu 2019:xiii). She has identified a problem and proposes to answer the challenge with a contextualized response. Mburu's response to this challenge includes a summary exposition of

theological and philosophical aspects of an African worldview which influence the task of African biblical hermeneutics. The main goal of her work is to present her hermeneutical model: the four-legged stool.

In the introduction to *African Hermeneutics*, Mburu explains the reasoning behind her four-legged stool:

> It is an intercultural model that is based on the concept of moving from the known to the unknown. It therefore moves directly from theories, methods and categories that are familiar in our world into the more unfamiliar world of the Bible, without taking a detour through any foreign methods. It recognizes that parallels between biblical cultures and worldviews and African cultures and worldviews can be used as bridges to promote understanding, internalization and application of the biblical text (Mburu 2019:7).

The four-legged stool is intended to be a contextualized model to allow Africans to read the Bible like Africans. It is further worth noting that Mburu sets forth considerations to develop an African hermeneutic. She writes:

> In developing an African intercultural hermeneutic that embraces contextualization throughout the process, certain considerations must be kept in mind:
>
> - Africans tend to have an inherently religious or spiritual worldview that is not lost when they become Christians.
> - The philosophy and method used in an African hermeneutic must address issues that are relevant to African Christians.
> - An African hermeneutic must ground abstract thinking in concrete realities.
> - An African hermeneutic must be comprehensible to all Christians and not just a select group of intellectuals. The goal is for millions of believers who live in Africa to truly understand the biblical text and apply it in their lives.

> There is one other key factor that must serve as a foundation for the entire process: All conclusions regarding the text must be rooted in an understanding of the culture and worldview of the Bible (Mburu 2019:7-8).

One must immediately acknowledge obvious differences between the hermeneutical efforts of Gerhard and those of Mburu. Chief among these differences is the preponderance of consideration that Mburu gives to the context of the reader. Gerhard seems almost to ignore the reader's context. One would be hard-pressed to say that Gerhard would totally disregard the reader's context, but his main concern is to understand the text and the Biblical context.

One finds no discussion in the *Theological Commonplaces* regarding the reader's context as a hermeneutical principle.

The second striking difference is perhaps more important to note: for Gerhard, the starting point of any attempt at biblical interpretation is and must be the rule of faith, as discussed above. However, for Mburu the starting point is "an understanding of the culture and worldview of the Bible." Further, Mburu writes, "to understand the text, the reader must endeavour to step into the world of the biblical text and allow the text to speak for itself so that no faulty assumptions interfere with the interpretive process" (Mburu 2019:9). This paper evaluates this point in a later section.

## FOUR-LEGGED STOOL

Mburu uses a stool as the conceptual metaphor to construct her hermeneutical process. She explains her logic thusly:

> A stool is a familiar object in Africa both in the past and in the present. Just as a good stool is stable and supports our weight, so the hermeneutical stool will be one we can put our weight on, confident that it provides a stable or accurate interpretation of the biblical text. To do so, it requires four legs, which in this case are (a) parallels to the African context, (b) the theological context, (c) the literary context and (d) the historical context. These legs support the seat, which represents the final stage of interpretation – the application (Mburu 2019:65).

Mburu insists on beginning with the African context because, she argues, "that is what we know, and having that firmly in place will enable us to move from the known to the unknown" (Mburu 2019:66). She acknowledges that her method is somewhat similar to the hermeneutical spiral, because the reader continuously works through the stages of interpretation, coming closer and closer to the intended meaning of the text.

"The first leg of the stool, the place where we begin our search for understanding, involves identifying the theological and cultural contexts that are the primary contributors to our own worldview, as well as any relevant features of our social, political, and geographical contexts," writes Mburu (2019:67). She insists that one starts here because these are things that

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the reader possesses as *a priori* knowledge, which then colours the way one reads the text right from the start. Furthermore, she writes:

> Until quite recently, hermeneutics emphasized the historical context of the Bible and paid little attention to the context of the reader. It was wrongly assumed that the context of the reader did not contribute either positively or negatively to interpretation. However, scholars have increasingly come to recognize the two-sided nature of historical conditioning. What does this mean? It means that while the Bible stands in a historical context and tradition, so does the reader. The Bible's context and the reader's context are in constant engagement with one another, as we saw in the previous two chapters Mburu 2019:67-68).

The idea is that one first identify one's own assumptions and hermeneutical lenses, which are conditioned by one's culture and context. From that realization, one can seek bridges of understanding where the biblical context engages with the reader's context. Mburu notes, "It is important to point out that we may not always be in a position to fully analyze our context and worldview at this stage. What is important, however, is to acknowledge that they exist and to consider them as we read the biblical text so that it begins to feel more familiar" (Mburu 2019:69).

The second leg of the stool is the theological context. Mburu writes, "The second leg of the hermeneutical stool is to seek to understand the theological emphases of a text and how these are expressed in relation to the section and book in which it is found, and ultimately in relation to the whole Bible" (Mburu 2019:70). Her point is that one must first read the text with an eye toward the theological context, noting the passage's place within the larger discourse of its book and within the wider narrative of the faith. While Mburu does not articulate it in the same terms, one may argue that this is where she agrees with Gerhard regarding the unity of Scripture. Scripture interprets Scripture by showing the reader how to read and comprehend a given passage with its specific theological content and within its biblical context.

One thing against which Mburu contends is the tendency to conflate the context of the reader with that of the text. "When these contexts are fused, we assume that the meaning of the text to the original readers is identical to what it means to readers today" (Mburu 2019:70).

The problem, then, is that theological interpretation becomes subjective, subordinated to the reader's experience. "So, for example, rather than trying to understand what Paul was saying to his Ephesian readers, and African interpreter might say, 'What Paul is saying to me is…' This approach is harmful to interpretation because we are ignoring the context of the Bible and prioritizing our own context" (Mburu 2019:71).

Mburu gives a caution regarding a rigid theological reading of isolated passages:

It is important to be very careful when examining this second leg of the hermeneutical stool. We must not allow premature conclusions about the theological emphases of the text to dictate how we understand the other legs. In other words, while our interpretation must not contradict the theology expressed through the text, our assumptions about the theology of a specific text or of an entire book must not be allowed to dictate our interpretation without consideration of other contexts. A holistic approach is advisable (Mburu 2019:71).

Here, Mburu advocates for a reading of the text that carefully considers its theological context, as well as the overall theology of the book and the whole of Scripture. However, she would have the readers let each text proclaim its particular theological message, rather than the readers reading their own biases and ideas into the passage.

The third leg of the African hermeneutical stool is the literary context of the passage. Mburu writes, "Because the Bible is not only a spiritual document but also a work of literature, we need to establish the genre of the passage we are reading, what literary techniques are being used, details of the grammar and syntax of the language being used, and how this passage fits together with the surrounding text" (Mburu 2019:73).

Mburu discusses in this section the matters of literary genre, techniques, use of language, and literary flow. These matters are no doubt familiar to readers of the Bible who have any experience, but Mburu makes these matters explicit and connects them with African forms of literature and communication. For example, she writes regarding how both biblical narratives and African stories tend to be recounted in non-linear forms. She writes:

African stories are not purely linear, so that all we need to do is read the introduction and the conclusion. Rather, the whole story carries the message and every component

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has a role to play. This approach enables one to arrive at the meaning of the story from many different angles. Crucial interpretive keys are embedded in the very fabric of the story. Like precious gems, they must be mined and strung together to reveal the intent of the narrator as the story moves forward (Mburu 2019:77).

As an example to make this point, Mburu cites the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis. In chapter 37, Joseph's brothers mistreat him and sell him into slavery. But the reader must continue reading, and eventually connect all the dots to learn the lessons that God wishes to teach in this passage – lessons of redemption and forgiveness.

The final leg of the stool is the historical and cultural context of the passage. Mburu writes, "The fourth leg of the hermeneutical stool involves understanding how the text we are looking at was informed and shaped by the socio-cultural, political and economic circumstances in which it was written and the mindset of the author. This applies to all texts" (Mburu 2019:80).

Mburu returns to the idea presented with the first leg of the stool: that teller and hearer, or author and reader, have shared mutual interests. She posits that the biblical text contains myriad features of language, history, and culture, which would have been readily understandable with only a passing reference. Such references, however, have been obscured by time. Modern-day readers must work to discover these things. "If our aim in interpretation is to understand the message intended by the author, then this context must be uncovered and explained in terms that we understand" (Mburu 2019:81).

Mburu's point in this section is that the reading of the Bible must be rooted in the Bible's world. She writes:

> Since language is socially conditioned, studying the historical and cultural background is the main way of uncovering the mindset of the author. Once we understand what the writer was saying and what his message would have meant to the original hearers, we can more accurately interpret the message of the text of our times (Mburu 2019:84).

The four legs of the stool, therefore, have been erected and it is time to rest upon the seat, namely the application of the text.

Mburu is careful to spell out her position regarding authorial intent. She writes, "Note that one of our basic assumptions in this book is that a text can only have one intended meaning – namely the meaning that the author intended to communicate when he wrote to his original audience" (Mburu 2019:84-85). We might call this *unus sensus literalis est.*

However, she is quick to note the difference between meaning and application. She writes:

> But meaning is not the same as application. Application refers to the significance of the text for a modern audience. This means that while a text can have only one meaning, it can have multiple applications. Once we understand what the author intended to communicate to his original audience, we can legitimately apply this message to our multiple contexts (Mburu 2019:85).

Mburu writes about application in terms of contextualization. She states, "Contextualization recognizes that to bridge the gap between the biblical world and the modern world, the interpreter must have a grasp of both" Mburu 2019:85). That is to say, the interpreter must connect the biblical world with the world of the hearers in such a way as to make the Bible speak and affect the lives of hearers foreign to the biblical context.

Mburu defines two categories of distinction to which the interpreter must attend: culture-bound truths versus trans-contextual truths. Culture-bound truths are those things in Scripture which relate to and apply to the people of the Bible specifically. The major content in this category is the ceremonial and civil law in the Torah. In contrast, Mburu holds up the Ten Commandments as trans-contextual truths. However, it is important to note that trans-contextual truths are not without their context. Therefore, one must seek how to apply these truths wisely within a given contextual setting. She writes:

> Hence, it is important to understand that trans-contextual truths expressed in biblical cultural forms fit exactly into the biblical society but do not fit equally smoothly into African society. Therefore, these trans-contextual truths must be de-culturized or decontextualized from the biblical cultural forms and then re-culturized into specific African cultural forms in order to fit African society (Mburu 2019:87).

Mburu offers a method for developing an application:

i) Distinguish the trans-contextual content of Christianity and its attendant forms and expressions in African culture.
ii) Attempt to disengage the trans-contextual or non-cultural doctrines of Christianity from the biblical cultural forms.
iii) Reframe these trans-contextual truths in African cultural forms and expressions (Mburu 2019:87-88).

Her example for this process is the Fourth Commandment. The transcultural truth is the command to honour one's parents. This truth is present also in African traditional culture; however, its expression may be very different from culture to culture. In the second step, one attempts to disengage filial honour from the Jewish cultural aspects of Scripture. African cultures often have very different ideas of what honouring one's parents looks like. Thirdly, one attempts to express the trans-contextual truth in a contextually appropriate way. In this case, one might speak of honouring one's parents by abiding by their choice of a spouse. Jewish arranged marriages, for example, have many parallels in African cultures, but they are not identical.

In concluding this section, Mburu writes, "As we go about the task of application, we must be careful not to treat trans-contextual truths as relative or to make culture-bound truths applicable to all without regard for the fact that these truths applied to a particular situation in the lives of the original hearers" (Mburu 2019:88). In terms of the stool, the legs must all be solidly fashioned and equal, and the seat must fit solidly upon those legs.

Part II of *African Hermeneutics* is an attempt by Mburu to demonstrate how these principles and procedures work with some specific genres of the Bible. For the purposes of this paper, only highlights have been discussed. The reader may choose to read Mburu's entire work and consider these details in their totality.

## GERHARD AND MBURU TOGETHER

In her conclusion, Mburu writes:

Where did we go wrong? There is a Somali proverb that says, "Don't start out on a journey using someone else's donkey." Our problem can be understood in light of this proverb. In the early days of Christianity, Africans were among the leading Bible interpreters and teachers. However, we have now inherited from the missionaries a

Western approach to the biblical text that fails to consider our African culture and worldview. The dichotomy that we see today can partially be attributed to "foreign" ways of interpreting the biblical text. We, as Africans, have started off on our journey of Bible interpretation with our neighbour's donkey (Mburu 2019:211)!

As was alluded to earlier in this paper, one may detect a trace of anti-Occidental animus in Mburu's writing. However, it is wise to accept her point that foreign missionaries and teachers have imported foreign ways of reading the Bible into African Christianity.

It is a fair critique to note that Gerhard's work does not, in fact, address the context and culture of the reader. He does not deal much with the biblical context either. For Gerhard, the biblical context is relevant for illuminating obscurities in the Scriptures, but one does not find a detailed discussion of the role of context in biblical interpretation. The closest one comes is in the "Method of Theological Study," when Gerhard writes of the importance of studying the biblical languages.[64]

One must acknowledge that authorial intent matters not just in Scripture, but in all literature. Therefore, one must consider Gerhard's goals in writing his principles of interpretation. One may argue that he was not aiming to provide a step-by-step method of interpretation. Rather, his goal was to present general principles to guide the interpreter. Upon this foundation, the individual interpreter of Scripture may build his own methods to reach the end: the salutary application of Scripture to the hearer. It may also be argued that Gerhard sees the fivefold use of Scripture to be the primary method of interpretation; that is, all Scripture may be used for teaching, correction, rebuke, training in righteousness, and consolation.[65]

In contrast, Mburu's work assumes a fair amount of doctrinal content. As noted above, she affirms the *unus sensus literalis est*, which has been so well debated in Lutheran circles. She is certainly no postmodern relativist, as shown above also. Mburu does not deal with the academic debates regarding the authority or perfection of Scripture. She does not address

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[64] See *TC II,* "Method", Part II, Sec. 1
[65] See 2 Tim 3:16-17 and Rom 15:4

enemies of the Church who would negate her positions. Rather, her goal is to chart a positive path forward, not to engage in disputes with opponents.

Mburu's four-legged stool is well argued and clearly presented. Anyone who has spent any time in Africa knows the importance of a good stool, and the metaphor is well applied in her book. But the question posed in the introduction of this paper remains: does the proverbial four-legged stool stand? And can Lutherans "sit" upon it safely, trusting its ability to stand?

The four-legged stool, in the opinion of this writer, does indeed stand. The legs of African context, theological context, literary context, and historical-cultural context – if they are properly fashioned to stand equally – will support a seat upon which to rest a fruitful application of the text for the hearers in today's Church. However, this stool stands only when it rests upon a solid foundation.

This author would submit that Lutherans may find it useful to bring together both approaches discussed above to interpretation, to make a complete enterprise. Gerhard gives the theoretical and doctrinal underpinnings for biblical interpretation. One cannot ignore the necessity of the rule of faith as the chief cornerstone of hermeneutics. Nor may one depart from the literal sense of the text as its intended meaning. Mburu gives the student of biblical interpretation a cogent set of considerations for approaching a text with eyes open to both the text and the world around oneself. Her points regarding the biblical context and the reader's context are valid and should not be ignored. The meaning of Scripture is one, but the applications are myriad.

Gerhard's principles may be timeless in that they present the doctrine of Scripture in such a way as to form the foundation for biblical hermeneutics, regardless of the reader's culture. Mburu's principles are formulated to apply specifically to African contexts, but one would need only minor modifications to adapt the concept to other cultural milieux as well. Stools may look different, but everyone sits on a stool of some kind at some time or another.

Mburu's principles of distinguishing between culture-bound and trans-contextual truths are a great help in making this cultural portability possible.

## CONCLUSION

This author would argue that Gerhard gives us the solid flooring, and Mburu gives us the stool. Part Four of this thesis presents a framework for homiletical practice that considers both Gerhard's and Mburu's approaches to hermeneutics, in an attempt to offer a unified model applicable to the contemporary Francophone African Lutheran preacher.

# CHAPTER 14 - A THEORY OF HOMILETICAL PRACTICE

What is good preaching? How does one know good preaching when one hears it? To posit a theory of Francophone African Lutheran homiletical practice, one must first have an idea of the end goal.

Petersen writes of the preaching task:

The evidence suggests that imagination is more central to the task of preaching and hearing preaching than we may have realized. It may be that what separates good, orthodox, pure preaching from bland and cliché-ridden preaching is that good preaching is imaginative. In a good sermon, the preacher's imagination has been stirred and awakened in the text so that he has been in God's gracious presence. This occurs in the preacher's prayerful meditation on the Word. The fruit of that is then conveyed to the hearers in the sermon. Good preaching awakens their faithful imaginations, enabling them to meditate on God's Word and to also be brought by the Spirit into the gracious presence of God, who is real but unseen (Petersen, in Braaten *et al.* 2021:57).

The central argument of Petersen's work is that imagination, defined as "the act or power of forming a mental image of something not present to the senses or never before wholly perceived in reality," is required in both the proclamation and the hearing of preaching (Petersen, in Braaten *et al.* 2021:27).

Meylahn argues that the aim of preaching is incarnational; the task of the preacher is to sojourn with the hearers in a way that enters their stories and allows them to be heard and known. He writes:

The aim is a stance of *imitatio-Christi* where one stands with the individual, becomes flesh with the individual (incarnation) in their determined world, determined by the various determinations of the [Call]. To enter into the worlds of the individual kenotically, and therefore to view the various determinations that seek to determine the individual as a subject [object] of a particular world, by seeking to transform the individual into a docile determined body, an object of expert knowledge. Yet, this expert determination has cracks in it, as it can never fully capture the Life or the Flesh or the [Call] of the individual, family or community. Guided by the incarnation and the ministry of Christ the focus is on these cracks, on the unheard stories, on all that which escapes the dominant determination (Meylahn 2018:267-68).

In Meylahn's view, a certain amount of kenosis must exist – a humility that empties the preacher of himself, so that he can incarnate Christ for his hearers. As Meylahn states, cracks can occur in the expert knowledge of any preacher. The life of Christ (both in the objective and

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the subjective genitive) can never be fully captured by the intellect but requires faith in the work of the Holy Spirit. The unheard stories of the people who meet Jesus become heard because God is a God of the lost. Those who are unknown in society, by the "experts," are known by Him. This is Petersen's point regarding imagination: the preacher is to imagine for the hearers what their world consists of, will be, or could be with a God who knows them, gives His life for and to them, and loves them unconditionally. The *imitatio Christi* for which Meylahn strives will come with the experience of being fully known and truly loved by God.

In this chapter, an attempt is undertaken to posit a working definition of preaching. Thereafter, a theory of homiletical practice will be constructed which considers the faithfulness to the Holy Scriptures and to the Lutheran Confessions, as well as sensitivity to and engagement with Francophone African cultural contexts.

## A DEFINITION OF PREACHING

To figure out how to do something, one first must be clear about what one is doing. The job determines the tools necessary. This is true whether one plants flowers or prepares to preach a sermon. Thus, this chapter must start by defining what preaching is.

For the purposes of this thesis, the following definition of preaching is offered for consideration:

> *Preaching is a performative speech act in which God, through His Word, enters into the hearts, minds, and lives of the hearers and transforms them by His divine presence.*

The above definition is somewhat of a what complex sentence, which bears breaking down into phrases for careful consideration.

*Preaching is a performative speech act.* Preaching is performative. This does not mean that preaching is merely a performance art, such as acting or playing a musical instrument. Rather, preaching is performative because it does something in a real and active sense. In the act of preaching, something is happening. The words being spoken act upon the hearers to accomplish a purpose. Isaiah writes regarding this power of the Word, "so shall my word be

that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." (Isa 55:11)[66] In this sense, preaching is a speech act, because it is not a static recital of text but a dynamic re-presentation of the Word of God.

. . . *in which God* . . . Who is the God to which this definition refers? This in and of itself is a question that could fill an entire thesis. However, let this definition rest on that given in Article I of the *Augsburg Confession:*

> Our Churches, with common consent, do teach that the decree of the Council of Nicaea concerning the Unity of the Divine Essence and concerning the Three Persons, is true and to be believed without any doubting; that is to say, there is one Divine Essence which is called and which is God: eternal, without body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; and yet there are three Persons, of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And the term "person" they use as the Fathers have used it, to signify, not a part or quality in another, but that which subsists of itself (AC I 1-5, *Triglot*).

Various philosophers and theologians have attempted to describe God using phrases such as "first cause," "unmoved Mover," and others. While these phrases may be helpful to philosophical debates regarding the grand epistemological and ontological questions, the current author does not find them useful to the discussion at hand. Rather, it would be more productive to speak of God in terms of what He reveals about Himself, and more specifically, what He does in relation to His people.

The God of Christianity, and the God presumed in this thesis is the One named by Jesus in Matthew 28:19: "in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This is the name of the God whom Israel confessed in the *Shema:* "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one." (Deut 6:4) This Triune God reveals Himself to His creation in many and various ways, but He reveals Himself for the salvation of His people through His Son, Jesus Christ. St. John begins his gospel with these words:

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[66] All Scripture quotations from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:1-5).

The Word – the *Logos* – is the true and eternal Son of God. He is the creator of all things, and by Him life and salvation come to all humanity. It is through the Word of God – spoken, written, and incarnate – that the world, and each person in it, comes to know God. St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor 2:22-25). It is this power of God and wisdom of God that enters the hearers.

*God, through His Word, enters.* The most fundamental aspect of what preaching enacts is the entrance of God into the assembly and into each hearer. This is why many preachers of a more traditional liturgical persuasion begin each sermon with the invocation of the Divine Name. God's presence is effected, not by some sort of magical incantation nor by simply some pious thoughts that wish He were present, but by the proclamation of His Word. The proclaimed Word never returns void, according to the Scripture. In this sense, the preacher "imagines" God for his hearers, and the words of St. John are fulfilled in the midst of the assembly again: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Preaching is an incarnational event, as the eternal, immortal, and invisible God deigns to clothe Himself in human form to speak to His people.

St. Paul speaks of this to the Romans when he writes:

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!' But they have not all

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obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?' So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ (Rom 10:14-17).

Faith comes from hearing. This very ordinary, everyday human activity is accomplished passively, almost involuntarily, and brings about the salvation of the soul to the one who receives. Faith does not necessarily depend on a great "conversion experience" nor a paranormal encounter; rather, faith believes, accepts, and trusts the Word of God preached into the ears and hearts of human beings. This Word is the very essence of God Himself. It is life. It is life-giving. It is eternal. To hear the proclamation of Christ is to hear Christ Himself speaking. He is the living and active Word.

*God . . . enters into the hearts, minds, and lives of the hearers.* God enters the minds of the hearers through His Word when the content of Scripture is preached. The Christian faith is not merely a matter of spiritual possession or immediate investiture with this mystical thing called "faith." Rather, the Christian faith has substance and content. The presence of God is effected by invoking His Divine Name and by the proclamation of His Word. But this presence is not merely a spiritual abstraction. The presence of God is not simply an idea to contemplate nor a feeling of "with-ness" to warm the bosom and tickle the ears of the hearers. Rather, God is present in a very real sense; God enters the hearts, minds, and lives of the hearers. These terms were selected by way of synecdoche to represent the hearer's totality of the experience.

By the heart is meant both the faith and the affective portion of the human being. God enters the heart by means of His Word, and the Holy Spirit creates faith according to His good and gracious will (John 3:8). This faith is thereafter sustained by the preaching of that same Word because Jesus promises, "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63). The Word enters the heart of each hearer and works according to the will and purpose of God. As discussed with respect to Walther's *Law and Gospel,* the Word works differently in the heart of one person than that of another, as the sinner is stricken in conscience and driven

to repentance, while the heart which is already conscience-stricken and contrite is comforted with the message of salvation. For some, the Word enters their hearts and makes them hard in their obstinacy toward God and their desire to continue in their sins. This is all the work of God through the preaching of His Word.

God enters the minds of the hearers through His Word when the content of Scripture is preached. The Christian faith is not merely a matter of spiritual possession or immediate investiture with this mystical thing called "faith". Rather, the Christian faith has substance and content. The doctrine of Holy Scripture is conveyed through narrative, wisdom, discourse, and other rhetorical forms. All of these help convey this doctrine, and its eternal content, to the minds of the hearers. As St. Paul says, Scripture is useful for teaching and correction (2 Tim 3:16). The inclusion of the hearer into the narrative of salvation occurs both in the heart and in the mind. Theologians of the past have referred to this as the *fides quae creditur*, the faith which is believed.

Thirdly, God enters the lives of the hearers through His Word that is preached. This preaching occurs in both an individual and a communal sense. When the Word enters hearts and minds, it will necessarily also change the life of the hearers. This is true because the orientation of the heart drives the activity of one's life. God is present in the lives of His people, not far away somewhere, watching to see what they will do. The Gospel narratives are prime examples of how God is present with His people in their daily lives. As already quoted, God became flesh and dwelt among us. He enters into the life of the individual as the Word of God turns the heart and mind to the things of God. One's worldview of life then takes on a new shape – a shape now formed by this new revelation of God's Word hidden in the heart of man.

God also enters the lives of the hearers with His compassion. He "suffers with" His people, as the Scriptures both show and teach, for instance, in Hebrews 4:15: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every

respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." One of the enduring characteristics of Christianity as opposed to the other major religions of the world is compassion. God is not just near, but He is with His people.

Further, God enters the life of the congregation through His Word as the individual lives of the hearers are bound together into the Body of Christ. St. Paul calls this "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3). God binds His people together in the hearing of the Word, so that their common faith as a united congregation may grow and increase, and more people come to share in that life-giving faith.

*. . . and transforms them by His divine presence*. Merriam-Webster defines "transform" as "to change in character or condition."[67] This is certainly what God does when His Holy Spirit is welcomed into the life of a person. Walther discussed this in various ways in *Law and Gospel*. The summarized version is that when the Spirit of God enters a person, that person is first struck by the Law. The Law shatters the self-idolatry and brings the person to an awareness of his sin and, thus, repentance. Then, the Gospel acts accordingly, to give salvation and new life by faith in Jesus Christ. Resurrection from the dead to new life in Christ is the most radical form of "change in condition" one could possibly experience.

This transformation does not result from a person's own striving and wrestling, either with God or with one's own heart and mind. Neither does transformation occur because of a power or authority from the preacher himself, whose words and actions could never be enough to change the human condition. Rather, transformation occurs only with the presence of God. In a sense, this is the entire theme of the book of Leviticus where we read that God changes the character of His people by His presence in their midst so that an almighty and holy God could dwell in and with imperfect and unholy people with His blessings.[68] Even the impenitent are

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[67] *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. "transform," accessed November 21, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transform.
[68] See Kleinig, John W. *Leviticus*. Concordia Commentary. Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 2003.

changed in condition as they are warned and rebuked of their sins, and therefore their sins are bound to them in their unrepentance.

God transforms His people by His divine presence and by His Word, as Isaiah 55 declares. And this Word does not come to the hearers immediately but is mediated through the human speech of a man standing in the stead and by the command of the Lord whose Word he is to proclaim. The call of the prophet Jeremiah shows how the Lord commissions those whom He chooses to convey His message:

> Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me,
> "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.
> See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms,
> to pluck up and to break down,
> to destroy and to overthrow,
> to build and to plant" (Jer 1:9-10).

The words spoken by the minister of Christ with the authority of Christ are not merely empty babble; rather, they are the "words of eternal life" (John 6:68) that effect a transformation of the human heart. Cilliers (2004:40) argues that this is the primary point of Christian worship, as he writes:

> *That* is why we go to church, or should go. For *that* we yearn, consciously or unconsciously. All the elements of the liturgy, thus also preaching, deal with that, or should deal with that: i.e., to be led anew into the presence of God's mystery, to worship Him with awe … as God. Naturally, there are also other important core moments in the worship service, for example, that we practise community of faith, or that we celebrate our salvation, or become equipped for our task in the world, etc. But, if this does not emanate from *this moment of mystery, this wonder of an encounter*, then it is no worship service. In fact, what could be worse than this: that God withdraws from our worship services, that He tells us what he once told the Israelites (after the episode with the golden calf, Ex 32:1-6): "If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you" (Ex 33:5b).

These words, mystery, wonder, encounter, imagination, and more, describe the event that occurs in the Divine Service when God comes into His house and dwells with His people through His Word. This is the encounter which the speech act of preaching effects, as the *viva vox evangelii* rings out, piercing the very hearts and souls of God's children. The results of this glorious event are why preachers preach.

As Long and Nieman have argued, Christian preaching is a practice, not an accident. There is a form, a craft, and a strategy to this high and holy art. A practice must be defined, which is the purpose of this discussion. Now, let attention be turned toward crafting a working theory of Francophone African Lutheran homiletical practice.

## A THEORY OF HOMILETICAL PRACTICE

The stated goal of this thesis, as presented in the introduction, is: "to propose a synthesis of orthodox Lutheran homiletical theory with authentically African cultural and contextual influences, in order to point the way toward finding an authentic voice for pastors of Francophone African Lutheran churches to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

When one puts together a jigsaw puzzle, one begins with the edge pieces and assembles the frame. One then proceeds to locate and place the middle pieces, fitting them together with other pieces, until the picture in its entirety finally becomes visible. The "pieces of the puzzle" of preaching have been gathered in the previous chapters of this thesis. The edges have been carefully assembled to provide the frame for the pieces that now can begin to be fitted together.

Preaching as a speech act has been well considered elsewhere, so this thesis will not concern itself with the technical details of public speaking.[69] Suffice it to say, the preacher should be prepared to present himself before the people with the dignity and skill to stand in the stead of Christ and to proclaim the divine Word. He should know the cultural norms and customs which govern such a speech act in his milieu, so as to speak as one having authority, that the message may be heard and taken to heart.

Likewise, choice of appropriate text is paramount for all preachers. As a rule, it does not make good homiletical practice for a preacher to stand before the people of God and spout forth without first having prepared himself with study, meditation, and prayer. This is part of the "practice" of homiletical practice – the strategic and meaningful actions that contribute to

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[69] See, for instance, Kreiss (1996), pp. 69-91

the effective and efficacious proclamation of the Word of God. Whether the preacher follows a prescribed lectionary or whether he chooses to "free-text" to fit the occasion or needs of the parish, he should be well prepared to proclaim the text at hand.

One must not neglect a studious reading of the texts assigned or selected. Without the text, there is no preaching – the event simply becomes a discourse regarding the preacher's favoured topic of the day. One cannot proclaim "Thus saith the Lord" without a word from the Lord. Kreiss, Fluegge, and others have given ample advice and direction for how to study the text. Each preacher will, with time and experience, form his own habits of study and meditation, but whatever form these habits take, they will form his preaching of the Word of God. The preacher cannot give what he does not have. His sacred duty is to open the texts of Scripture so that the Word of God speaks to the people of God with the *viva vox evangelii.*

Meylahn argues that the work of a theologian is to reveal the world through Christ. He writes, "This thinking through Christ, Christ-*poiēsis*, imitates Christ by following Christ into the context: not as the determination, nor as a competing determination, but in the *kenosis*. This *poiēsis* does not create a world, but this imitation reveals the worlds as the work of *poiēsis*" (Meylahn 2018:265). This emphasis on following Christ into the context is significant. Great humility is required of the preacher to submit himself to Christ, to follow Christ where He leads, and to interact with his context in imitation of Christ. Much as Petersen wrote regarding imagination, Meylahn argues that this imitation is an act of revelation. The preacher's task is to reveal what Christ has done and is doing in the world. Christ creates reality. Christ does the work of entering into and transforming individuals, congregations, and cultures. The preacher's job is to reveal this transformation, making it known to the people. Moltmann writes:

> The cross signifies that in Jesus which makes him the object of preaching and every subsequent theological interpretation, an object which is in contrast to them, and with which hearer and interpreter are brought face to face. The crucified Christ therefore remains the inner criterion of all preaching which appeals to him. So far as it points to him, it is tested by him; so far as it reveals him, it is authorized by him (Moltmann 2015:109).

The crucified Christ must be the centre of all Christian preaching. In the death of our Savior on a cross, people of all backgrounds, cultures, and situations unite as they come to identify with the crucified God. The cross provides the space where African context, decolonialism, and Lutheranism can join together into harmony.

A few pieces of the puzzle fit together at the centre to give the picture its form. One of those in this puzzle is Law and Gospel. As discussed at length in Chapter Eleven, Law and Gospel serve as the fundamental principle of the Scriptures. Without this understanding, the preacher cannot hope to interpret the Scriptures properly. Walther lays describes in Thesis I the content of Scripture and how the Scriptures function for the hearers. The preacher must be prepared rightly to divide Law and Gospel so that each divine doctrine comes to bear on the hearers in its correct scope and sequence. The preacher has not done his job if the Law is not proclaimed such that the hearers are struck to the heart and brought to repentance for their sins. In the same way, the preacher has not done his job if the Gospel is not then proclaimed so that those terrors of conscience are wiped away by the grace and mercy of a loving and forgiving God. The third use of the Law is also a necessary part of Christian preaching; the people of God must be instructed in how to live a Christian life in their baptismal identity.

However, essential as it is for interpretation and application of the Scriptures to the hearers, "Law and Gospel" is not a sermon form, nor is it some sort of narrow dogmatic category. In keeping with the puzzle metaphor, it is one piece of the puzzle, but not *the* piece of the puzzle. Law and Gospel combined serve as an interpretive key, to be sure. This also serves as a sort of theological shorthand, sometimes even to the point of cliché. To prevent its becoming cliché, one may perhaps observe the movement within Scripture of these twin doctrines and be aware of how the sermon is structured to proclaim this divine activity. However, to talk overmuch about Law and Gospel is to, in some sense, negate their power. Law and Gospel are not data points to be discussed in a sermon; they are movements of the

Spirit of God within the heart of the hearers. They are indeed the essence of the Christian faith. Without both Law and Gospel there is no conviction of sin, repentance, and resurrection to new life in Christ.

The piece of the puzzle that locks in with Law and Gospel is the fivefold use of Scripture. Teaching, rebuke, reproof, training in righteousness, and consolation are not something other than Law and Gospel, but rather an interpretive lens by which Law and Gospel may be put to work in the hearts, minds, and lives of the hearers. When the preacher unpacks the Word of God in these ways, he is allowing the text to speak for itself – allowing God to speak how He has desired to speak to His people. God transforms hearts, minds, and lives through His Word, but not as some sort of amorphous, abstract cloud. That transformation has shape and substance, and the fivefold use of Scripture gives the preacher the tools to work with to bring about that transformation in the hearers, through the working of the Holy Spirit.

The fivefold use of Scripture opens possibilities for the preacher to use the text for its own purposes. A didactic text can teach. A reproving text can reprove. A consoling text can console and comfort. Rather than simply asking, "Where is the Law and where is the Gospel in this text?" the preacher can ask, "What does God want His people to hear in this text?" Of course, the cross must be the centre of all Christian preaching; the Gospel must predominate, à la Walther. However, the preacher finds a certain sense of freedom in letting the text speak for itself, rather than feeling as if he must force the text to say a certain amount of Law and a certain amount of Gospel. In Nieman's terms, the fivefold use is strategy, while Law and Gospel is purpose.

Obviously, the preacher cannot preach what he does not possess. This raises the question of access to the Word of God. How does the preacher get the message he is to proclaim? The Word of God comes from God Himself, as He speaks to His people. "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last

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days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (Heb 1:1-2). The Word of God is not hidden from the world; rather, He gives it freely, so that the world may come to know Him and to have salvation in Jesus Christ. The same Word that created the world is the Word that creates faith in the hearts of those who hear Him.

Moreover, this Word is not something devised by men. St. Peter writes:

> For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty…knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:16, 21-22).

Still today, the preachers of God's Word do not proclaim their own private opinions or "cleverly devised myths," but they proclaim "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" as they are given utterance by the Holy Spirit. Access to the Word of God is not bound by mystical rituals or levels of initiation, as in some religions. Nor does it depend on some immediate encounter with some sort of spiritual muse. Access to God comes through His Word, which creates faith.

Another set of pieces that fits into this puzzle is the set that gives context to the preaching event.

The preacher must first know himself. A sermon is not an exposition of the preacher's wit and acumen, nor his personal pathos and squishiness of heart. The key figure in the sermon should be Christ Jesus and Him crucified (1 Cor 2:2). However, the preacher's personality will inevitably show through in his abilities and character as a preacher. God used the personalities of the patriarchs and prophets, and He continues to use the personalities of His preachers today. As Mburu and others have said, the preacher must know himself and know how his own personality; thus, his experiences colour his reading and proclamation of the text. The preacher himself is a piece of the puzzle, not something to be hidden away.

Next, the immediate context of the preaching event must be part of the puzzle. Preaching never occurs without a setting and context. As discussed previously, technology has made it possible to un-root and disconnect a sermon from its original context, but that does not mean that it never had context. A sermon is always preached *to* someone. The preacher must bear in mind the people to whom he will preach. This begins with the setting. What is the parish like? Where is it geographically situated? What is the demographic make-up of the congregation? What is the socio-economic make-up of the congregation? What is the cultural context?

Moreover, the preacher must also consider the chronological and historical context. What is going on in the life of the parish at the moment? What is the liturgical season and occasion for this sermon? Are there particular concerns facing the parish at this moment that should be addressed in a certain way? Perhaps a particular issue has become a matter of public discourse, If so, should the preacher pronounce the Word of the Lord regarding the matter? Perhaps the congregation has fallen into un-Christian patterns of conduct, which a given text should address. In this scenario, the preacher has the duty to speak God's Truth regarding this conduct.

Broadening the scope a bit from there, the context of the sermon also includes the culture of the hearers. Whether or not the preacher shares the culture and life experiences of his hearers, his duty is to be sensitive and responsive to their cultural values and principles. As Mburu has argued, the preacher must recognize what are universal – or trans-contextual – truths, and what are culture-bound values. The preacher must engage with his hearers' culture, so that he is familiar with the things they hold dear; what they consider taboo; and what they find engaging, motivating, and necessary. This is both obligation and permission. The preacher must engage with his hearers in their world, but he is likewise at liberty to engage with them in this way.

The colonial ideas regarding the Word of God being antithetical to the "savage" African way of life are outdated and outmoded. The Word of God – the Christian faith – is trans-contextual, but it is also highly contextualized. Jesus explicitly told His disciples that He was not there to remove them from the world, but to be in the world with them (John 17:15). The Word of God speaks with the power and authority of God Himself, but He speaks with the mouth and voice of men. And the preacher of the Word of God preaches with context, history, and experience.

Who are the hearers? What is their view of the world, of themselves, or of God? What are the concerns of their daily lives? What are their dreams, fears, and hopes for the future? What are their spiritual gifts and strengths? What are the sins that beset the congregation most pressingly? These are all questions that the preacher must ask and must find answers to, so as to become a more effective preacher to the people who will hear him.

As Nieman describes, a practice is a teleological activity – a set of actions directed toward a specified end. The ends do not justify the means, but rather the means express within themselves the end goal (Nieman, in Long and Tisdale 2008:28). The goal must be clear, or the path to achieving it will not be clear, either. In terms of a sermon, the goal is the transformation of the hearers by the Word of God. The Gospel changes hearts, minds, and lives – but only by the power of God. The preacher must be clear about his goal, and about the parameters of his task. The centre of the puzzle – the key piece of the picture – is the Gospel, the message of forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in Jesus Christ alone. It is from this that all else flows in the practice of preaching.

What makes this a Francophone African Lutheran theory? As was done before, let this phrase be examined in its constituent parts, and then reassembled.

First of all, let it be acknowledged that the author of this thesis is neither a native Francophone nor a native African, however this author is a lifelong Lutheran. The current

author, however, has spent time in Francophone (and Anglophone) Lutheran churches in various parts of Africa, and has taught in centres of pastoral formation in various locations on the Continent. Therefore, this theory is offered humbly from an observer-participant perspective, in hopes of advancing the discussion and study in this domain.

The present author also hopes that this thesis will break ground for African voices, particularly from Francophone countries, to participate in the discussion. To have African Lutherans interact with the traditions of their forebears in the faith would enrich not only the Church in Africa, but worldwide.

What makes this a Francophone theory of homiletical practice? On its face, nothing. What has been posited in this chapter could be taken and applied to any congregation or preaching context anywhere in the world. The Gospel is the same, and the definition of preaching offered is the same, regardless of language or location. However, in this expansiveness is a sense of making space. The current author wishes to make space for the inclusion of Francophone preachers in the discussion of homiletical theory and practice. As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, a preponderance of the literature regarding preaching has been written in English, or perhaps German. The corpus of scholarly work in this field in French is rather slim. Likewise, the consideration of the particularities of the French language, in particular as they relate to the proclamation of the Gospel, should be considered as part of the puzzle. Of the fifty-four member states of the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie,* twenty-nine are in Africa (*Portail* 2022). Certainly, that fact alone renders "Francophone" a relevant locus of discussion for scholarly endeavour.

To move even beyond that, the modifier "Francophone" in the description of this theory refers more to the social and geographical scope of this work, rather than the linguistic scope. It must be acknowledged that for the overwhelming majority of Africans in Francophone countries, French is not their mother tongue, no more than English is for their brethren in

Anglophone countries. In Togo, for instance, among a nation of approximately 8.5 million people, 39 languages are spoken ("Togo" 2022). Of the 29 African nations that are members of *La Francophonie*, hundreds of languages are spoken, representing a kaleidoscope of peoples and cultures, each with a unique worldview and culture. It is dangerous to generalize about Africa, or even about Francophone Africa, but this thesis wishes to open the discussion for preachers and theologians in French-speaking Christian communities who may not have felt included because of the predominance of English in academic and theological domains.

What makes the theory being advanced here specifically "African"? The late Miriam Makeba once said, "Africa has her mysteries, and even a wise man cannot understand them. But a wise man respects them" (Ald This thesis does not claim to be the definitive answer to every homiletical woe that plagues Africa, nor does the author of this thesis claim to be the final word on this subject. However, this theory is advanced in the hope of paying respect to the mysteries and beauties of Africa and her many and varied cultures.

As discussed in Chapter Five, one of the great tragedies of colonialism was that colonizers devalued and disparaged traditional African culture and wisdom. Colonizers actively worked to suppress and to train the African out of those whose lands they occupied, frequently even in the name of religion. To this day, one may find a sense that traditional African wisdom and culture are good things, but that they belong to the grandparents and to the village. To be a member of the global society, one must leave behind these artifacts of the past and embrace modernity, also known as Occidentalism (or, increasingly, Orientalism). To speak in proverbs is to speak like your grandfather, and thus to think as he thought. To recite the ancient stories of your people is to be stuck in the past with the characters of those stories. In contrast, to adopt the dress, attitudes, and aspirations of Europeans or Americans is to show yourself a forward-thinking member of the global village. To be urban, sophisticated, and up

to date demonstrates that you are looking forward and not backward. Or so the attitude seems to manifest itself.

Let the reader understand: this is not the attitude advocated by the current thesis. Africa is certainly worthy of respect, and the peoples and cultures that populate Africa are worthy of respect and worthy of a place in scholarship and in the Church. As Gehman, Mburu, and others have discussed, there is much that the Church can learn from African culture. The richness of wisdom contained in the proverbs of even one African culture could provide fertile soil for a new and fruitful consideration of the Gospel as it could be communicated in a meaningful way to African hearers. The voices of Africa beg to speak the Gospel, just as the hearts of her people yearn to hear that same Gospel.

How does one access the Word of God within a specific context, so that the preacher has a word to speak, and so that the hearers can hear it well? First, the preacher must know the Word of God. There is no message to proclaim except that which has been given. Through careful study, prayer, and meditation, the preacher may enter into the world of the text, and of the biblical narrative. Then he will be prepared to situate his hearers in this narrative, as a participant-guide. This, of course, requires faith. The Scriptures remain entirely inaccessible in any meaningful way without faith. However, as Lange writes, faith makes things possible.

> First, because faith *hears* more than the obvious. Faith listens to the promise of God, which says that the world is a world in becoming. Second, faith *sees* more. It sees man and the world in the perspective of their good possibilities, in the perspective of their possibility to be improved — just as Jesus saw his surroundings. And third, faith *wills* more. It does not just look at things, but it goes about them in love and hope and helps to implant the future in them, which is to bring their good possibilities to light. A person of faith is one who perceives the world in the light of God's possibilities and therefore is not satisfied with the status quo (Simpfendörfer 1997:267).

Faith is what makes possible the imagination of which Petersen writes, which formed the introduction to this chapter.

Second, as discussed elsewhere, the preacher must know himself. He must take ownership of his identity as a person. He must embrace his culture and context and embrace

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the context of his hearers. By embracing his context, the preacher will be able to bring the Word of God into it, creating the occasion for God to enter into His people, as discussed earlier. This means that the preacher must use the language of his hearers – not just the same grammar and lexicon, but he must speak to them in a way they can understand. He must proclaim the Gospel so that the people hear God, "so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor 2:5).

An important point to remember is that God wants His Word to be known. Christianity is not a mystery religion. No one has a monopoly on the Word of God. The Word is not an obscure, opaque *corpus sapientiae* that requires a special character or special dispensation to access and interpret. Rather, in the words of St. John, "these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

What makes the theory propounded here particularly "Lutheran"? In one sense, nothing about this theory is particularly Lutheran. The Scriptures are not the unique domain of Lutherans. Lutheranism is certainly not the dominant church body on the African continent. A casual scan of the "Works Cited" of this thesis will reveal that most of the source material cited is not from Lutheran sources. It is the goal of all Christians to see the Gospel proclaimed and the mission of the Church advanced.

However, in another sense, this is a Lutheran theory of homiletics because it is rooted in the Lutheran theological tradition and in Lutheran practice. To again hearken to Nieman's terminology, Lutheranism provides the common elements to root the homiletical practice for which this thesis advocates. Johann Gerhard and C.F.W. Walther were unabashedly Lutheran in their doctrine and practice, and the current theory is based heavily upon their work. Indeed, the Lutheran understanding of Law and Gospel, and the proper distinction thereof, drives this theory, as it provides the purpose of preaching.

To put it simply, the Lutheran doctrine of Scripture is a necessary foundation for this theory. This theory, and the practice to be built upon it, requires the understanding that "the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12). The Word of God does something. It is not just a declarative statement. From the very beginning, when God spoke, things happened. "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light" (Gen 1:3). There is no Spirit-less Word; where the Word of God is preached, there He is, actively pursuing and creating His will. And the inverse is equally true: there is no Word-less Spirit. Just as the persons of the Holy Trinity cannot be separated but work together in the mystery of the divine economy, so also the Spirit does not work without the Word. Jesus declared to His disciples on the night in which He was betrayed, "He [the Holy Spirit] will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 14:14). This is not magic or fetishism; this is the Word of God doing what He says.

One of the stated goals of this thesis is to conserve the Lutheran distinctives without falling into the Lutheran clichés, to borrow Scaer's language. The current author wishes to give space for African preachers to make full and fruitful use of the treasures of Lutheran theology, in a place also inhabited by the culture and character of the people who will hear the preaching. In a way, this parallels Martin Luther's goals for the Reformation – keep what is good and remove what is not. *Ecclesia semper reformanda est.*

Cilliers writes:

> In concrete preaching, many aspects culminate: the preacher's dogmatics, ethics, scriptural view, historical awareness, pastoral and exegetical skills, hermeneutical capacity, psychological, emotional and spiritual maturity, and much more. Concrete sermons paint pictures of theological and church (therefore human!) activities – colourful and exciting, or drab and boring. They bear witness to either regeneration, or degeneration (Cilliers 2004:19).

In this way, the preaching task may be summarized, and the possibility is highlighted. Either regeneration or degeneration comes from preaching the Word of God. The Word always

works His will. The goal of this thesis is to open the space and discussion of how to practice preaching that leads to regeneration.

# CHAPTER 15 - APPLYING HOMILETICAL THEORY

In the first place, then, the proper distinction between Law and Gospel is a difficult and great skill for the pastor as a Christian individual. Indeed, the proper distinction between Law and Gospel is the greatest skill that *any* person can learn (Walther 2010:50).

In his lecture regarding Thesis III, C.F.W. Walther emphasized that the skill – the art – of properly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the Word of God is only learned from the Holy Spirit in the school of experience. One could argue that in like manner, the skill of preaching is only truly learned from the Holy Spirit in the school of experience. It is in this spirit that this chapter is offered. It seems fitting to conclude a thesis regarding homiletical practice with a practical example of the theory being argued.

Therefore, this chapter focuses on a sermon preached by the current author for the Feast of the Circumcision and Name of Jesus (1 January 2019) at the *Centre Luthérien d'Etudes Théologiques* in Dapaong, Togo. The sermon was originally preached in French and is presented here as the current author has translated. The sermon text is represented in indented paragraphs, and comments are interspersed in normal layout. The original French text may be found in Appendix 3. The basis for the sermon is Luke 2:21.

## "A New Day of Grand Pardon"

'Yom HaKippourim absolves sins toward God, but not sins toward one's neighbour if the pardon of the offended one is not obtained.' – *Mishna Yoma* 8:9

Here is the Jewish perspective regarding the pardon of sins on the day of expiation, otherwise called the Day of Grand Pardon.[70] This is a different conception than that which one finds in the Bible; but, one could say, this is not different than that of the world. Sins against God are considered to be lighter than sins against our neighbours. God covers everything by His mercy, or He will forget everything like a feeble grandfather; but men do not forget. The pardon coming from men is difficult to acquire. Thus thinks the world.

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[70] Originally taken from "Yom Kippour" https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom_Kippour

This sermon begins with a cultural item from outside the context of the hearers, but it provides a bridge from the Jewish world of the text to the non-Jewish world of the hearers. This connection will be clearly demonstrated in the coming paragraphs.

> The first day of a new year has become an occasion for launching requests for pardon. Already, I have received several messages on Facebook and WhatsApp requesting pardon if the person who sent me the message may have committed any sort of error against me. One sees often when the calendar turns, that people examine themselves and put themselves to trying to dissipate their errors and faults of the year that has just finished.

> So, what does this practice signify? One requests pardon for one's faults or sins, but, deep in the heart, what are you demanding? That sins be forgiven? That trivial mistakes be simply excused? Take a moment to think.

Here is the point of contact between the Jewish world and the world of the hearers: the demand for pardon. In Judaism, the day for doing this is Yom Kippur. In Gentile Africa, the day for this is New Year's Day which is actually almost the same thing, just different days on different calendars. The practice described gives the hearers a way to grasp what the Day of Grand Pardon means. The Law is then applied by pointing out the triviality of demanding pardon in a conditional manner. The key word in the messages mentioned is "If".

> Today we commemorate the Circumcision and the Name of Jesus. This is eight days after His birth in Bethlehem, that the Holy Family enters into the temple in Jerusalem in order to do for the newborn according to the Law of Moses; that is to say, that the baby should be circumcised and that he receive the name given by the angel: Jesus, which means 'He who saves.'

> Here is a didactic moment. It is necessary to teach people what this Feast Day is about because it is not an occasion that is generally widely recognized in most cultural milieux.

> It is strange, celebrating such a thing as a circumcision of someone, isn't it? There are many traditions regarding the rites and ceremonies for giving a name to an infant, and it is considered that the day one receives a name is an important occasion in the life of a person. But the day of circumcision is for a man a day important but for the most part hidden. Many African cultures have the tradition that the man must not discuss the rites and the ceremonies around non-initiated persons. It is not a thing to celebrate publicly.

Another point of contact is made, this time between the text and the hearers. The Temple in Jerusalem and the synagogue in Bethlehem are unfamiliar places, but rites of

circumcision are common across much of Africa. Because this sermon was preached to a congregation of believers representing eight different countries across Francophone Africa, and easily twice that many particular ethnic groups, more precise mention could not be made of the particularities of any tradition. However, the mention in a general fashion here was sufficient to make the connection for the hearers.

> It is permissible to approach an acquaintance and ask him, 'Where did your name come from? What is the history of your name? etc.' It is not acceptable to approach someone and ask him, 'Tell me the story of your circumcision. How did it happen?' Nevertheless, the Christian Church today celebrates publicly this very private event in the life of Jesus.

In this sense, the Feast of the Circumcision is a scandal for African hearers. One does not talk about such things publicly. This is another cultural matter to which the hearers related, drawing them through their own experiences closer to the text, and ultimately, closer to Christ.

> Consider this: We celebrate a good year because on this day our God and our Savior was circumcised.

Here is the theme of the sermon. Notice that it is not a "cookie-cutter" generic theme; rather, it is specific both to the day of the civil and the liturgical calendars. It is also specific to the text.

> We are in the middle of the season of Christmas; today is the eighth day of Christmas. And in the course of this season, we reflect on the reason why Jesus was born. Why was Jesus born of the Virgin Mary at Christmas? Jesus was born to accomplish the whole Law, circumcision included.

Again, teaching regarding the significance of the occasion is important to situate the sermon in its liturgical context.

> God has given His Law to mankind throughout the whole world. Since the creation of man, well before the fall into sin, the Law was there. God had commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, to subdue the earth and to care for all of the very good creation that God had created. He also forbade them from eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Before the fall, obeying the Law was not a heavy burden for Adam and Eve; on the contrary, it was a pleasure founded on the love between God and His creation.

Unfortunately, Adam and Eve fell into sin and they disobeyed God. In that moment, they fell and they caused the whole of humanity to become corrupt. Because of that, humans no longer have the capacity nor the will to obey the Law of God perfectly.

Preaching of the Law often involves a sort of general recounting of the sinful condition of humanity. The results of sin are evident not only in wilful acts of disobedience, but in the fact that human beings no longer have the capacity for righteousness. This is why the Law acts in its first use: the curb – to restrain gross and manifest sin.

> The Lord God of Hosts is a jealous God. He requires total and perfect obedience. The Bible tells us concisely: The soul that sins shall die. More, God says to us: 'I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me.' (Exod 20:5). From that, we confess: 'God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them.' (SC I Close).

This is the application of the Law as correction – addressing moral faults. A preacher has the duty to call sinners to repentance. The hearers must be informed and convicted of the fact that they are indeed sinners, and that the consequences for their sins are quite grave. One sees here also the use of the Small Catechism for instruction.

> What I have just been talking about illustrates the problem with respect to the Law. You fear and love men more than God. The Jews think that God pardons easily and rapidly the sins against Him, but men hold faults against one another. This is not a uniquely Jewish thought. The people of this world think that today, and the dawn of a new year, you must request pardon from other people so that you can commence a new year on good terms.

> Someone told me that there was a man who, on New Year's Eve, sent out an open invitation to those close to him, his friends, and his acquaintances, so that they could come to him to ask pardon for the sins that they may have committed against him. He said nothing about his own sins against others; but he wanted to show himself magnanimous and merciful by receiving requests for pardon from others.

Now the sword of the Law is sharpened. The mirror displays not just a general state of creation, but the specific condition of the hearer's heart. The correction is proclaimed, the Word is brought to bear directly.

However, the focus is then softened by a short anecdote about an unknown and nameless person. This fable is something to which the hearers of this sermon could easily relate.

It is a cultural item from their cultural experience. They had more than likely received such invitations themselves. The point is made boldly with the previous paragraph, but then the tension is eased with this. This movement of "tension and release" (even if only partial) is part of what creates movement in a sermon and what helps to keep the hearers interested. Too much tension, and they become fatigued or overly anxious. Too much release, and they become sated and complacent.

> Everyone wants to be seen as generous and magnanimous in this season. Everyone wants to start the new year with a counter at zero. But no one wants to humiliate himself to receive the true pardon. No one wants to confess his sins in thought, word, and deed, against God and against man. It is easy to say, 'If I have committed some fault, I ask pardon,' in a general fashion, before the whole world. What is difficult is to tell a person directly, 'I have sinned against you in this way, and I regret it; please forgive me.'

Now comes the explanation of the fable, the moral of the story. The preacher must know the hearts of his people, to know their desires and needs. This is where the message becomes personal. The conditional nature of human contrition is unacceptable; an apology that begins with "If" is not really an apology, because it does not take responsibility for the wrongs committed. This could be considered reproof – correcting the false doctrine of insincere repentance. It might also be considered training in righteousness – training the Christian how to offer a sincere apology to one's neighbour.

> The soul that sins shall die. The wages of sin is death. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.

> Among you, the Law is not accomplished. You have not done it. You have not feared nor loved God with your whole heart. You have not loved your neighbour as yourself. What you deserve is death and condemnation.

The sermon pulls no punches. The preacher must tell it like it is. The Scriptures declare the consequences of sin, and those consequences must be declared to the people. This is the application of the Word to the hearers.

> But, in the midst of the death and condemnation of humanity, God Himself comes. He was born of a virgin, according to the ancient prophesy. He was born to accomplish all righteousness. This little baby was born in human flesh, not according to the will or the blood of a man, but by the will of God. 'For in him all the fullness of God was pleased

to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross' (Col 1:19-20).

Jesus is come into the world to accomplish all righteousness. And the accomplishment of all righteousness requires that He should be circumcised, according to the Law of Moses. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. And the shedding of the blood of Jesus started with the smallest and most sensitive of his members. On this little member, Jesus was marked as a part of the covenant between God and the people of Israel.

Here comes one of a preacher's favourite words: "but." That "but" signifies a turning point in the sermon. "But" is a Gospel conjunction because it is a "but Jesus" moment. The preacher must be attentive to such linguistic signals in his language and how he uses them for proper effect to lead his hearers along the path of the sermon.

The Gospel is proclaimed in a general announcement of the death of Jesus. This is a necessary part of any Christian proclamation. However, the proclamation is then made specific by connecting it with the text and the occasion at hand. This way, the Gospel is shown to answer the specific problem raised by the Law in this sermon. By being specific and particular in this manner, the preacher makes each sermon unique and avoids boring his hearers by preaching the same message every time he mounts the pulpit.

There is also a subtle hint of teaching here, because this passage gives a small connection between the covenant of circumcision given to Abraham and the fulfilment in Jesus.

We celebrate the Feast of the Circumcision of Jesus because in this deed, He shows Himself faithful to His charge to accomplish all righteousness. And because Jesus has accomplished the Law entirely, we have the forgiveness of sins.

*Repetitio est mater studiorum.* Again, the reason for this feast day is repeated. Each time this declaration is repeated, a little bit is added which brings the hearers a little bit further along the path. This time, the circumcision of Jesus is explicitly connected with the fulfilment of the Law, which gives us forgiveness of sins.

Jesus did not come into the world to abolish the Law, but to accomplish it. He started His accomplishment with His incarnation, and He continued by shedding His blood by His circumcision. He did not have need of this, because He is not a sinner, but He submitted Himself to the Law to do everything for us and for our salvation.

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But Jesus did not stop there. He continued His obedience until death, even such a shameful death on the cross of Calvary. He shed a bit of blood in the temple at the moment of His circumcision, but He poured out His very life on the cross for us men and for our salvation.

Again one hears the Gospel "But." Here is instruction, showing how the circumcision of Jesus foreshadows His shedding of blood on the cross. There is also consolation in showing how Jesus' shedding of blood leads to the salvation of those who believe in Him.

The writer to the Hebrews says, 'Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins' (Heb 9:22). Today we celebrate that Jesus has not forgotten us, but that he has poured out His blood so that we could have the forgiveness of our sins.

Once again, the preacher gives a reinforcement of why the Church celebrates this occasion. Each time, a layer is added. More meaning is given, so that the hearers can enrich their understanding and appreciation for this seemingly obscure event in the life of Christ.

The circumcision of Jesus serves to show us that He is a man just like you and me. He is a member of the covenant of Abraham, Moses, and all the patriarchs of Israel. But, differing from us, He has not sinned. It is His blood that purifies all things: us, our people, our world, and all of creation. Because He has obeyed the Law and accomplished all righteousness, we have the pardon of sins, the true pardon that does not excuse faults but effaces them totally.

Because Jesus has accomplished the Law entirely, we have the pardon for sins. And therefore, because we have the pardon of all our sins, we will have a veritable good year.

Here is the actual theme and focus of the sermon. This connects the pieces that have been swirling around each other in a logical connection. The Gospel here answers the challenge that has been raised from the context of the hearers: what is true pardon for sins? Furthermore, the connection is made between the circumcision of Jesus and the celebration of a new year.

Notice also the logical progression. There is the "because . . . therefore" sequence that conveys clearly the actions and results. However, one may also take note of the process or linear movement happening. The interlocking "because . . . therefore" logical steps create

movement within the sermon and drive the hearers to connect the dots between points they may previously have failed to connect.

> A good year consists of what? Is it to have health, wealth, growth of the family? Is it to have lots of friends and acquaintances, or lots of contacts on social media? These things are not bad, but they do not last. Health is fragile, wealth is temporary, and social friends are inconstant.

> A true good year consists in having peace. The peace that comes from God surpasses everything that the world, the devil, or our sinful flesh could offer us. The peace that comes from God is not inconstant, but is durable, so long as the Holy Spirit is with us.

The sermon at this point becomes eminently practical for the hearers. This is the Word as consolation. The Gospel answers a deep-seated need for the people of God. This is a contextual concern, but also a trans-cultural truth that is being brought to bear on this congregation. Everyone wants to have a good year, and on New Year's Day, everyone is hoping for the best for the coming year. The Gospel tells us how to have that good year.

> If God is with us with His love and grace, who can threaten us? If God has taken away the guilt of our sins, who can accuse or frighten us? No one.

> St. Paul, in Romans chapter eight, reminds us: 'What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?' (Rom 8:31-32)

The consolation of the Gospel is poured on as the sermon moves toward conclusion. There is no argument that God dwells among the hearers. But the concern is whether God is here for their benefit. The resounding answer is "Yes!"

> God is for us. He handed over His Son for us, not in a general fashion, but according to every letter of the Law. He submitted Himself to the Law of Moses, with all its bloody demands. The circumcision of Jesus is His first blood spilt for us, but it is not the last.

> Therefore, we will have a good year, not by our own force, not by our justification of ourselves, but because we have the peace that the world can neither give nor take away.

Here is the Gospel, wrapped up into a compact package. The message is spelled out clearly, in language that connects with the text and the occasion. The language of circumcision

and of the shedding of blood also resonate in cultures where blood rites are still practiced and are still in the collective consciousness.

Again, the need of the people is met with the Gospel. The desire for a good year is sanctified by pointing the hearers toward the true source of a good year: the peace of God found in Christ alone.

> Yes, for sure, we can make today a Day of Grand Pardon. It is good to commence the new year with peace and reconciliation among men. The old year is past; we must let it close, with all its good things and all its ills. The new year is before us. We must traverse this unknown path not with fear but with the peace of God, because He is with us every step of the way.

The concluding paragraph of the sermon brings back the discussion of the Day of Grand Pardon from the introduction to solidify the connection between that and New Year's Day. The sermon ends on a note of consolation and of training in righteousness, as the people of God are fortified for the journey ahead through the new year.

> I build on this foundation,
>     That Jesus and His blood
> Alone are my salvation,
>     My true eternal good.
> Without Him all that pleases
>     Is valueless on earth;
> The gifts I have from Jesus
>     Alone have priceless worth.[71]

The sermon closes with a stanza from a hymn that was sung in the service, as a form of concluding prayer, as well as an effort to connect the liturgical celebration with the preaching. The people see that the parts of the service connect with one another, and that the lyrics of hymns can be used as prayers.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the previous chapter, it was argued that the definition of preaching is *a performative speech act in which God, through His Word, enters into the hearts, minds, and lives of the hearers to transform them by His divine presence.* As stated above, this chapter is an attempt

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[71] *Lutheran Service Book,* #724, st. 2. Originally quoted *Liturgies et Cantiques Luthériens*, #606, st. 2

to illustrate this with a real-life example. Let it be considered now how the sermon just presented fits this definition.

As a performative speech act, a sermon cannot be confined to a printed page. The argument sometimes circulates among preachers that one who writes out a sermon is not actually preaching, but merely reading. The current author would beg to differ with that conception, but the point remains that a static reading of a manuscript is not a performative act. Therefore, the reader of this thesis must accept that there was indeed such a speech act.

The basis of this act is the Word of God. The stated text that is the basis of this sermon is Luke 2:21, but the reader will notice multiple quotations from diverse biblical sources. The whole counsel of God is proclaimed, while yet keeping the focus on the chosen text and by focusing on the occasion at hand.

Through the speech act, the Word of God enters into the hearts, minds, and lives of the hearers. In this sermon, the heart is touched by the desire for peace and pardon at the beginning of a new year. The shedding of blood evokes images of sacrifice and suffering with which the hearers (at least the men) can identify. The affective movement of the sermon serves to further this objective, as rhetorical devices are employed to touch the hearts of the hearers. The mind is touched by the exegesis not just of the text – the text does not offer much for actual exegesis – but also of the context both biblical and immediate. The didactic elements in the sermon serve to teach the hearers why this occasion is being celebrated at all. The sermon also looks to help the hearers think through their actions and the cultural manipulation that goes on around them. Finally, the sermon touches the lives of the hearers insofar as they go forth and actually seek to give and receive genuine pardon and reconciliation with their neighbours, as opposed to the false repentance and shows of piety that flow from the Judaizing ideas of pardon.

God enters into the hearers through the proclamation to transform them by His divine presence. This cannot be quantified simply to put down on paper. The preacher often does not

see the transformation that takes place in the hearers. But Scripture cannot be broken; the Word of the Lord does His will. It is not the preacher, his rhetorical skill, nor his charisma that cause the transformation, except perhaps as an efficient cause, and even that occurs in a secondary sense. However, the sermon does effect this transformation because the Word of God is proclaimed. Transformation results because the hearer encounters the God who speaks with "the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

In this sermon, the reader may notice both the use of and the turn from strict Occidental logical forms. The "because . . . therefore" movement highlighted in the sermon is not a new invention of the current author. Whether this is an Occidental import could be argued elsewhere. The point here is that while this logical structure is present, what is absent is the heavy, almost slavish dependence on explicit deductive reasoning patterns. This sermon does not fall into a neat outline of major points and sub-points. It certainly is not "cookie cutter" because one could not substitute any other text or occasion and retain the integrity of the sermon.

This sermon represents an explicit attempt to bridge the gap between the context of the biblical narrative and the context of the twenty-first century hearers in Sahelian Africa. It makes use of two points of contact to build those bridges: circumcision and the day of pardon. The logic of extension is used to make a universal application from the particular and unique circumstances of Jesus' life, particularly with respect to His circumcision. The language of sacrifice is used to illustrate for the hearers the significance of the shedding of blood. The desire for pardon is the key point that ties together all these otherwise disparate strands of thought.

The preacher has endeavoured in this sermon to make space for African traditions to be seen and valued in appropriate context. No condemnation is given for the traditions of circumcision or those regarding the turning of a new year. Rather, the attempt is made to fill these cultural traditions with new and fresh significance in light of the Gospel message. There

is no compulsion one way or another, except that the seeking and giving of pardon be enacted

in a genuine spirit, from the heart, rather than in a hypocritical covering up of faults.

To borrow Mburu's metaphor, the stool has been built; now it is time to sit upon it.

## CHAPTER 16 – CONCLUSION

> I believe that preaching is still one of the most hopeful acts in which we can participate. In fact, to preach is to hope. *Preaching is a concentrated form of Christian hope.* It often takes place in spite of the fact that there are apparently no, or few, results, often against the odds of seemingly overwhelming powers and factors, often as the persistence of enduring hope (Cilliers 2004:19).

Preaching is foolish. What good does it do for some over-educated person in a funny dress to get up in a box or stand behind a lecture-stand or pace a stage and bloviate about religious-sounding stuff? What is the point of this exercise? And if there is a point, how does a person do it well?

These are some of the underlying questions that have flowed as the undercurrent of this thesis throughout the previous fifteen chapters. This project was born out of a desire to open the discussion about what a homiletical practice that is both orthodox Lutheran and authentically African would look like. The goal has been to create space for both of these realms to intersect and for the community of practice that inhabits that intersection to be able to grow and learn from the research and theory presented in this thesis.

Part One of this thesis has examined the question, "What is going on?" This author has attempted to present research data that shows the current state of homiletical practice and pedagogy in Francophone African Lutheran communities. This section includes some review of available literature and materials currently in use. Field data is also presented, gathered through surveys and interactions with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Congo [Brazzaville]. In this section, a survey was undertaken to highlight some factors that may be influencing homiletical practice in Francophone African Lutheran communities, such as colonialism, postcolonialism, and African traditional religion. Finally, a sample of sermons was examined in parallel from Martin Luther, Johann Gerhard, and C.F.W. Walther, to glean evaluative criteria upon which to judge the sermon samples gathered in the field research.

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Part Two addressed the question, "Why is this happening?" The literature reviewed and the field data presented in Part One were evaluated and analysed to highlight some themes and practices that seemed common and normative in the communities under consideration. Using the evaluative criteria gleaned from the historical sermons analysed in Part One, the contemporary samples were analysed, and some preliminary conclusions were reached.

In Part Three, source material from Johann Gerhard and C.F.W. Walther was examined, with a view toward highlighting the important parts of each author's work, to carry that forward into the conclusions of this thesis. As part of this section, a comparative study was presented of Gerhard's method of biblical interpretation with that of Mburu, toward the goal of possibly synthesizing the two. Finally, this section included a brief examination of some topics dealing with postmodern and contemporary issues in preaching and homiletical practice.

Finally, Part Four offered a working definition of preaching, which the current author has attempted to argue encompasses the "what" and the "why" of the preaching enterprise. Upon the basis of this definition, a theoretical framework has been offered that attempts to acknowledge the many and varied pieces that must fit together in this practice of preaching. During this, the author of this thesis has attempted to argue why the theory presented is particularly applicable to Francophone African Lutheran contexts, taking each of those adjectives into consideration.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As much as the goal of this thesis is to offer a theoretical framework, to open a conversation and to hold space for others to participate in the conversation, the present author would be remiss if a few concrete recommendations were not offered herein. These recommendations are in regard to how the formation of pastors in Francophone African Lutheran churches could be improved.

The present author is well aware of the limitations of resources available. What follows may be construed as a "wish list" of sorts: things this author would like to see included in pastoral formation in Francophone Africa (in no particular order of priority).

1. A full translation of Walther's *Law and Gospel* into French. The understanding of the proper distinction between Law and Gospel is a foundational concept for Lutheran homiletical practice, and Francophone students and pastors should have access to this work. Accordingly, Walther's material must be taught well and properly.

2. Teaching of the fivefold use of Scripture in basic homiletics courses. It is the opinion of the present author that this would help to shape the homiletical practice of Lutheran pastors to follow the text and to use the language of the Scriptures, rather than grasping at artificial categories to box in the Word of God. To this end, it would be immensely helpful to have Johann Gerhard's works accessible in French.

3. Teaching of cultural exegesis or interpretation as part of homiletical practice. Aspects of the culture of the preacher and the hearers must be brought to bear in service to the Gospel. Conversely, the Word of God must be set upon the hearers in a way that it deals with the questions, challenges, and blessings present in their own culture. Those who wish to be pastors in African congregations must be well-versed in their context, so that they can listen to the voices speaking around them and engage with the messages their people hear. The "excluded middle" must be excluded no longer.

4. Teaching and forming pastors in the traditional discipline of *oratio, meditatio, tentatio* as taught by Luther. This three-point cycle in the Christian life helps prepare the pastoral student to serve in ministry. It also will help the pastor conform himself to the Word of God while he also struggles with the issues of sin, death, suffering, and life in this world. Struggle is not just against sin, death, and the devil, but also against God Himself. The pastor must struggle in his own way, so that he can lead his hearers through their struggles while remaining faithful to God. He must wrestle with the texts and do the hard work to interpret and apply them faithfully.

5. Reading and engagement with postcolonial, decolonial, and non-colonial authors and scholars. Regardless of one's opinion of his or her individual political perspectives or theo-philosophical positions, it would be of great help (in this author's opinion) for students of theology in Africa to read scholarly writers such as Fanon, Mugambi, Cilliers, and Meylahn. One may note that these four also happen to be Africans.

As Cilliers said, "Preaching is a concentrated form of Christian hope." Preaching may be the most difficult thing a pastor has to do in his day-to-day ministry, and yet it is the most noticeable and arguably one of the most vital. When done well, preaching can move the hearers to depths of despair and on to heights of exultation. When done poorly, preaching can put people to sleep and cause children to suck fervently on their peppermints.[72] When the preacher

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[72] See the song "Pepermunt" by Stef Bos; quoted in translation in Cilliers (2004:16-17).

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fulfils his office, he leads the hearers to the still waters of salvation. When he does poorly, however, he can drive them from the Church and into the pits of hell.

For all this, a preacher must have hope. He must have hope in knowing that what he preaches brings life itself. It is not his own words that the preacher proclaims, but the Word of the Lord, the "words of eternal life." This hope must animate every sermon he preaches. It must lead people into the presence of God. Only in the presence of God can God touch the hearts, minds, and lives of the hearers.

Hope is born out of endurance and patience, as St. Paul says:

> Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom 5:3-5).

"Hope does not put us to shame." Here is great encouragement for the preacher of the Word of God. The preacher who puts his hope in God will not be put to shame. The Word of the Lord stands forever and will always accomplish His purposes.

The objective of this thesis has been to give space for discussion and to propose a theory for consideration so that the Word of God may be proclaimed in ways that are faithful, meaningful, hopeful, and encouraging. May this discussion inspire and equip more preachers to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and authentically.

# CORRECTIONS REPORT

Report 1
- Citations added/corrected as requested
- Methodology questions addressed in the relevant chapter
- Incomplete sentence fixed
- Quotations serve as introduction to the following arguments.
- "Dissertation" changed to "thesis" throughout
- Biblical citations moved to in-text parentheses
- Formatting fixed

Report 2
- Added reflection on the suggested material regarding positionality in Chapter Two
- The examiner's point regarding the dominance of "Western" thinking in the thesis is addressed in the introduction to Chapter Six.
- The examiner's point regarding bringing classic scholars and African voices into conversation is precisely the point of the entire thesis. This author does not wish to claim these voices as his own, but rather open space for them to be heard.

Report 3
- This researcher believes that the field surveys and sermons collected do serve to demonstrate the problem posed in Part One of the thesis.
- The point regarding not over-generalising is well taken.
- This researcher did not wish to make rigidly specific criteria for evaluation. Rather, more flexible rubrics were offered.
- Citations fixed
- Source without page number is from a Kindle book. Harvard style does not call for using location numbers.

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#1

ANDRE :

PREDICATION du 27/06/2021
PAROISSE DE WITTENBERG.

THÈME : CHRÉTIENS, LOUONS L'ÉTERNEL
Texte principal : PS 30.

C'est parmi les psaumes de remer-
ciément, mais la différence est que les
remerciéments souvent sortent d'un
événement précis où Dieu délivre David.
Nous allons répondre à 2 questions :
1- Pourquoi louer Dieu ?
Rép. Dans le Texte :
Parce que : Tu m'as relevé, Tu n'as
pas voulu que mes ennemis se réjouissent à
mon sujet, Tu m'as guéri, Tu as fait
remonter mon âme du séjour des morts
(V 1-3).
Rép. Pour nous :
Il nous a relevé dans le péché, il a
vaincu nos ennemis, il nous a guéri
à travers la souffrance, la mort et la
résurrection de Jésus-Christ dans cette
période de Pâques,

*Figure 1- CG-S-001, p.1*

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Une question : Est-ce que tu loues Dieu pour tout ce qu'il fait pour toi ?

2°- Comment Louer Dieu ?

Dans le texte :

En étant sous sa protection, par son assurance, par sa sécurité, par la prière.

Nous aussi :

Par la prière, par les louanges et adoration, par les offrandes, par sa parole, en participant aux sacrements, par les services.

Conclusion :

Chrétien, louons Dieu car c'est notre raison de vivre. Il y a de moment où ton corps veut t'empêcher de louer l'Eternel. Mais grâce au Saint-Esprit qui nous donne la force, nous pouvons soumettre nos corps à la louange.

Figure 2- CG-S-001, p.2

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#2

Andre

Prédication du 01/08/2021.
Paroisse de WITTENBERG.

THEME : "Je suis le Pain de vie. Celui
qui vient à moi n'aura jamais faim."
Jean 6 = 35
Sans ce "Pain", c'est la mort et la
perdition.
Les anciens romains avaient de la
nourriture pour satisfaire le corps et
les distractions pour surmonter l'ennui
et ne pas voir la vie s'écouler dans
l'océan de la vieillesse et de la mort.
Le célèbre poète qui avait composé "le lac"
(un poème) disait : "... Ne pourrons-nous
jamais sur l'océan des âges, jeter
l'ancre un seul jour ?"
Nous continuons de nous lancer à la
poursuite des biens de ce monde et du
plaisir mais en vain car notre soif
reste profondément inassouvie.
La parole de Dieu nous dit que "les
yeux de l'homme sont insatiables
(Prov. 27 = 30).

*Figure 3- CG-S-002, p.1*

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Et Sigmund Freud, Psychiatre autrichien
avait dit que " la fin vers laquelle
tend toute vie, c'est la mort". Une mort
à petit feu, lente mais certaine.
    Le seul pain qui peut rassasier
l'homme est le Christ lui-même, nourri-
ture céleste qui s'est offerte à l'humanité
et qui, encore aujourd'hui s'approche
de nos lèvres dans l'eucharistie.
Jésus promet que ceux qui viendront à
lui n'auront plus jamais faim.
    Quel bonheur pour les enfants de
Dieu d'avoir et de connaître les
promesses de vie pour le présent et
pour l'éternité grâce au Christ
ressuscité avec l'aide indéniable
du Saint-Esprit.

_Figure 4- CG-S-002, p.2_

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#3

Texte : Jean 20 : 19, 26 ; Jean 21 : 14
Thème : Le Seigneur nous donne son repas.

Introduction :

Pendant les élections législatives au sein de notre pays le Congo, chaque candidat qui venait dans notre village, après avoir battu campagne, il offrit un grand repas aux populations où les gens mangeaient et buvaient à leur faim.

Mais dans notre texte, il ne s'agit pas des candidats qui battent campagne pour offrir un repas aux populations, mais il s'agit du Seigneur Jésus-Christ qui donne le repas à ses disciples. D'où nous aurons pour thème :

Le Seigneur nous donne son repas.

* Pour la bonne compréhension de notre thème, nous allons répondre à trois questions suivants :

　1 - Quel est ce repas ?
　2 - Pourquoi le Seigneur nous donne-t-il son repas ?
　3 - Comment le Seigneur nous donne-t-il son repas ?

* Chers frères et sœurs en Christ, je vais rapidement répondre à notre première question qui est de savoir :
　* Quel est ce repas

Le verset 13 dit que c'était du pain et du poisson. Cet évènement se situe dans la période des 40 jours entre sa résurrection et son Ascension, peu de temps après sa deuxième apparition aux disciples réunis derrière les portes closes. Ils étaient retournés chez eux en Galilée dans l'attente de nouvelles instructions du Seigneur.
Ils avaient repris leur ancien métier de pécheurs. C'est ainsi que certains d'entre eux, ayant entrepris de pêcher, avaient travaillé toute la nuit sans rien

[...] or voici que Jésus se tient soudain sur le rivage sans que personne ne l'ait vu marcher ou s'approcher. Il se tient à l'endroit précis où il avait l'intention de leur apparaître. Pour nous aujourd'hui, il nous donne sa parole et la Sainte Cène qui est un vrai repas viatique.

De m. le Seigneur a nourri Israël avec la Manne. Il a aussi nourri 5000 hommes en multipliant 5 pains et 2 poissons. Jésus et lui-même descendu du ciel, il est le pain de vie descendu du ciel qui donne la vie au monde.

Chers frères et sœurs, nous passons à la 2e question qui est de savoir :

**✱ Pourquoi le Seigneur nous donne-t-il son repas ?**

✱ C'est pour ne pas avoir faim ni soif

Les versets 5ss montrent qu'ils étaient dans le besoin, c'est pour que le corps physique soit nourrit et maintenu en forme, c'est le même Jésus que celui qu'ils avaient connu avant sa mort. Il avait un amour particulier pour ses disciples. Partout où le nom de Jésus apparaît dans les Saintes écritures, il se réfère à sa nature humaine qui a souffert, qui est morte et qui a été ensevelie. Jésus se donne un repas Jean 6: 54-56

Mais à présent, il est le Seigneur ressuscité. Ce miracle était vraiment une mise en évidence de sa nature divine. Le Seigneur leur avait préparé un déjeuner auquel il les convia. Tous ces faits illustrent son pouvoir divin et sans limite et attestent qu'il n'est pas seulement vrai homme, mais aussi vrai Dieu. Dieu et l'homme sont unis en sa personne.

Voyons maintenant donc :

**Comment le Seigneur nous donne-t-il son repas ?**

V6. En leur donnant une recommandation. Jésus est le Dieu tout puissant et vainqueur, le Seigneur de son Église. C'est en tant que Fils de Dieu tout puissant qu'il gouverne et dirige les évènement sur terre pour le bien de son église pour nous, c'est par sa parole et la Sainte-Cène.

*Figure 6- CG-S-003, p.2*

Notre vie est marquée par l'attente de son retour. C'est une vie d'épreuves et de tribulations. Nous avons souvent l'impression d'être oubliés ou négligés.

Ns sommes tentés de vivre comme le monde. Nous avons besoin du rappel que le Seigneur est vivant. Qu'il se tient à nos côtés, qu'il connaît nos faiblesses et nos manquements. Il nous donne la force de porter la croix, de le servir et de mener une vie qui soit agréable. Il nous fortifie pour que nous puissions accomplir notre devoir et participer à l'édification de son royaume en proclamant son nom.

Il est notre ami le plus intime. Il nous a pardonné tous nos péchés et nos manquements. La croix que ns portons dans ce monde ne doit jamais être interprétée comme une punition du mal que nous avons fait. Toutes nos iniquités ont été pardonnées et oubliées (1 Jean 1:7-9) Hébreux 10:22. Puisque celui qui s'est substitué à nous sous le jugement divin est ressuscité ns sommes revêtus de sa justice (Galates 3:27) si nous péchons, Jésus est notre avocat et notre défenseur devant le père (1 J 2:1) il vit et intercède pour nous (Hébreux 7:25).

Il prend soin de nous (EPH 5:29 ; 1 P 5:7 ; Heb 13:5). Il veille à ce que ns ne manquions de rien. Il veut que nous lui présentions tous nos besoins et lui fassions confiance. Ns devons également implorer son aide pour nos besoins matériels. Cela concerne tout particulièrement ceux qui travaillent sur le champ missionnaire.

Ns attendons le second avènement du Seigneur. Ds l'intervalle, ns consacrons notre temps, nos moyens et notre énergie à construire son royaume et à répandre son Évangile.

# PREDICATION

Texte : Jean 20. 19-31

**Introduction**

Le réformateur allemand **Martin Luther**, le fondateur de l'église évangélique avait plus tard dans sa vie aussi des dépressions. Avant ces moments de dépression, il avait prit une craie et a écrit sur son bureau, sur les portes de sa maison: **Jésus est ressuscité. Il est vivant.** A la vue de cet écrit, sa famille et lui trouvaient du réconfort dans la résurrection de notre Seigneur et Sauveur Jésus Christ.

Mais une fois la résignation était si forte, qu'il ne pouvait plus regagner l'espoir de cette résurrection et il était resté très triste dans son salon. **Son épouse** ne savait plus que faire. Mais d'un moment à l'autre le Saint-Esprit lui a donné une idée. **Elle s'est habillé en tout noir ;** un signe de deuil chez eux tout comme chez nous aujourd'hui; et elle est apparue à son mari dans le salon, marchant lentement à travers la maison comme si elle voulait se rendre aux funérailles.

Soudain **Martin Luther** a remarqué son épouse tout en noir et lui avait demandé : **mais qui est mort ?** Elle a

répondu : **comme tu es si triste, si désespéré, je pensais que notre Seigneur et Sauveur Jésus est mort.**

Martin Luther a commencé à rire et il dit : **vraiment comment pouvons nous être si découragés si nous avons un Jésus vivant, qui nous aime et qui nous soutien.** Ainsi il a regagné le courage.

Dans notre texte, il ne s'agit pas de l'épouse du **Dr Martin Luther** qui apparait à son mari, mais de Jésus qui apparait à ses disciples après sa résurrection; d'où nous aurons pour thème : **Jésus apparait à ses disciples.**

Pour une bonne compréhension de notre texte, nous allons répondre à deux questions qui sont les suivantes :

- ➢ **Pourquoi Jésus apparait-il à ses disciples ?**
- ➢ **Comment Jésus apparait-il à ses disciples ?**

Sans plus tarder, répondons à notre première question qui est de savoir :

- • **Pourquoi Jésus apparait-il à ses disciples ?**

Jésus apparait à ses disciples parce qu'ils avaient de doute sur sa résurrection. Ils étaient incrédules. Dans notre texte, l'accent est mis particulièrement sur le doute de Thomas.

1

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Figure 8: CG-S-004, p.1

Dans notre introduction, l'épouse du Dr Martin Luther est apparue à son mari dans leur salon parce que ce dernier était tombé dans une dépression et qu'elle cherchait des voix et moyens pour relever son mari de cet état.

Pour nous aujourd'hui, Jésus nous apparaît parce que, tout comme les apôtres, nous tombons souvent aussi dans le doute et dans l'incrédulité au sujet de la résurrection de Jésus. Certains vont jusqu'à nier la divinité de Jésus.

En effet, l'Evangile de Jean donne lui-même les raisons de son écrit. Il soutient l'incrédulité des apôtres vis-à-vis de la résurrection de Christ. Il dit : **Jésus a fait encore, en présence de ses disciples, beaucoup d'autres miracles, qui ne sont pas écrits dans ce livre. Mais ces choses ont été écrites afin que vous croyiez que Jésus est le Christ, le Fils de Dieu, et qu'en croyant vous ayez la vie en son nom. V.30-31**

Jésus, après sa résurrection se présente à ses disciples sans doute pour leur confirmer l'accomplissement de sa parole concernant sa mort et sa résurrection. Pendant ce moment Thomas était absent.

Dès son retour, les disciples ont tenté de plusieurs manières de lui faire croire de l'apparition de Jésus en lui

parlant avec précision et certitude. Malheureusement, Thomas veut forcément voir avant de croire.

Ainsi, Jésus leur apparu en présence de Thomas et entre en conversation avec lui pour dénoncer son incrédulité.

**Un incrédule,** c'est quelqu'un qui est difficile à convaincre ou attitude d'une personne qui ne se laisse pas facilement convaincre. C'est l'absence de foi.

Si nous faisons une analyse claire des dires de Thomas, nous verrons que l'absence de Thomas a causé en lui beaucoup de difficultés. Thomas aurait profité de la même présence que ses frères. Son doute a certainement commencé par son absence lors de l'apparition de Jésus à ses disciples. Cette absence a crée en lui beaucoup d'incompréhension. Ceci nous met devant deux groupes de chrétiens : **1**. Ceux qui croient sans voir. **2**. Ceux qui croient parce qu'ils ont vu.

Thomas est de ceux qui veulent croire après avoir vu. Pour lui, son doute a fait que pendant que ses amis étaient dans la joie, lui il était en difficulté parce qu'il cherche des signes. Il sait que Jésus est mort mais il rejette sa résurrection. Nous sommes souvent à l'image de Thomas. Nous voulons voir avant de croire. Nous voulons un résultat avant de nous engager dans la foi.

*Figure 9- CG-S-004, p.2*

Nous voulons une preuve et alors nous limitons le pouvoir de Jésus.

Ainsi, quand le doute s'installe dans notre vie, nous devenons malheureux parce que la peur prend place.

Chers frères et sœurs en Christ, combien de fois nous sommes-nous incrédules à l'image de Thomas ? Seul notre Seigneur et Sauveur Jésus-Christ à la solution à notre incrédulité. Voilà pourquoi il était apparu à Thomas et les autres disciples. Aujourd'hui aussi, il nous apparait parce qu'il veut nous apporter la solution à notre incrédulité.

Connaissant pourquoi Jésus nous apparait, nous allons enfin répondre à notre deuxième question qui est de savoir :

- **Comment Jésus apparait-il à ses disciples ?**

Dans notre texte, Jésus apparait à ses disciples en se présentant à eux en personne. Au V.26, nous lisons : **Huit jours après, les disciples de Jésus étaient de nouveau dans la maison, et Thomas se trouvait avec eux. Jésus vint, les portes étant fermées, se présenta au milieu d'eux, et dit : La paix soit avec vous !**

3

Dans notre introduction, l'épouse du Dr Martin Luther est apparue à son Mari dans un état de deuil en s'habillant en tout noir.

Pour nous aujourd'hui, Jésus nous apparait dans sa parole et dans les sacrements qui sont le baptême et la sainte-cène.

En effet, pendant que les disciples étaient réunis, Jésus apparaissait, les bénit et s'adressait particulièrement à Thomas.

Il est venu particulièrement pour Thomas à cause de son doute. Il est aussi venu pour ceux qui veulent voir avant de croire. Il voulait aider Thomas. Il lui donne une grâce de toucher ses côtes afin de dissiper son doute. Mais après que Thomas a cru et a confessé Jésus comme son Seigneur et son Dieu, Jésus va ajouter une déclaration solennelle en disant : **heureux ceux qui croient sans voir.**

A la lumière de cette déclaration, nous voyons que : **l'heureux** est donc celui qui accepte l'invisible comme étant visible. Celui qui accepte les promesses de Dieu qui donnent la **paix**, la **joie** et le **bonheur**. Jésus a donné à Thomas une grâce particulière. Il s'est présenté à lui pour qu'il voie cette promesse.

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*Figure 10- CG-S-004, p.3*

Chers frères et sœurs en Christ,

Comme je le disais tantôt, nous aussi, nous avons quelques fois de doutes. Nous sommes comme les Chrétiens de Corinthe qui ont aussi douté de la résurrection de Jésus et qui ont nié même la résurrection des morts.

Jusqu'aujourd'hui, beaucoup ne croient pas à la résurrection de Jésus. Tel est le cas des Témoins de Jéhovah qui enseignent une résurrection spirituelle de Jésus niant ainsi sa résurrection corporelle.

Tout comme Thomas, Jésus nous donne aussi également une grâce particulière. Ce matin

Si nous croyons à la résurrection de Jésus, nous sommes aussi les plus heureux ~~ce matin~~. Nous devons être comme les disciples, raconter et expliquer cet évènement aux autres non seulement par la parole mais aussi par notre témoignage.

Si Christ est ressuscité, cela nous démontre la victoire de Jésus. Cette victoire doit donc influencer notre vie. Par notre manière de vivre, notre entourage doit reconnaître ce changement. Nous devons vivre une vie de victoire.

Chers frères et sœurs en Christ, Jésus ne va plus refaire cet acte qu'il a fait avec Thomas à cause de notre

doute ou à cause de nos péchés. Il ne va plus mourir et ressusciter particulièrement pour nous de nouveau.

C'est pourquoi, **en ce temps de Pâques** où notre Seigneur et Sauveur Jésus-Christ a triomphé de Satan et de la mort, je vous exhorte à bannir en vous l'incrédulité et le doute. Reconnaissez que Jésus est votre Seigneur et votre Dieu comme l'a déclaré Thomas enfin de compte. Et puisque de nous-mêmes, nous ne pouvons pas le faire, demandons au Saint-Esprit de Dieu de nous aider.

Jésus
En fin nous avons la vie éternelle. Nous qui avons reposé notre foi sur le témoignage d'autrui, nous avons une foi plus noble que celle de Thomas. C'est la clé qui a soutenu l'Eglise chrétienne jusqu'à nos jours.

Frères et sœurs en Christ, notre foi, la véritable doit être indépendante de la vue. Car c'est en espérant que nous sommes sauvés. **Or, l'espérance qu'on voit n'est plus espérance. Ce qu'on voit peut on l'espérer encore ?** Non ! Paul appelle : **Mais si nous espérons ce que nous ne voyons pas, nous l'attendons avec persévérance.** Romains 8.24-25.

Puisse le Tout-Puissant veuille nous aider par son Esprit-Saint et qu'il nous fortifie dans la marche chrétienne jusqu'à l'avènement de notre Seigneur et Sauveur, Jésus-Christ de Nazareth. **Amen !**

*Figure 11- CG-S-004, p.4*

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# PREDICATION

**Texte : Ephésiens 5 :8 -14**

*« Que la grâce et la paix vous soient données de la part de DIEU notre père et du Seigneur Jésus-Christ. » Amen.*

## INTRODUCTION

Parlant de la lumière, **Voltaire**, (un philosophe dans le monde de la littérature Française) écrit : **« Le siècle de Louis XIV** (roi de France) **est le plus éclairé qui fut jamais. »**.

Dans notre texte, il ne s'agit pas de la lumière qui a éclairé au temps de Louis XIV, mais de la Lumière Divine dans laquelle l'Apôtre Paul nous invite à y marcher, d'où nous aurons pour thème : **Chrétiens marchons comme des enfants de la lumière.**

Pour une bonne compréhension de notre texte, nous allons répondre à trois questions qui sont les suivantes :

- ❖ *Qu'est-ce que la lumière ?*
- ❖ *Pourquoi marcher comme des enfants de la lumière ?*
- ❖ *Comment marcher comme des enfants de la lumière ?*

Sans plus tarder, répondons à notre première question qui est de savoir :

## QU'EST-CE QUE LA LUMIERE ?

Littéralement, **la lumière** c'est un agent physique capable d'impressionner l'œil, de rendre les choses visibles. C'est ce par quoi les choses sont éclairées.

Théologiquement, **le thème de la lumière** traverse toute la révélation Biblique. La séparation de la lumière et des ténèbres fut le premier acte du Créateur. Au terme de l'histoire du salut, la nouvelle création aura Dieu lui-même pour lumière. De la lumière physique qui alterne ici-bas avec l'ombre de la nuit, on passera ainsi à la lumière sans déclin qui est Dieu même (1Jn1 :5). La lumière, comme tout le reste, n'existe que comme créature de Dieu.

En effet, comme les autres créatures, la lumière est un signe qui manifeste visiblement quelque chose de Dieu. Elle est comme le reflet de sa gloire. Malgré ce recours au symbolisme de la lumière, Dieu est Lumière. La lumière est aussi un don de Dieu et il nous fait la promesse de la Lumière. L'accomplissement de cette promesse s'est fait en Christ, Lumière du monde.

Aujourd'hui, tous ceux qui ont accepté Jésus-Christ comme leur Seigneur et Sauveur, sont les fils de la lumière. C'est dans ce sens que notre texte du jour nous invite à la vie comme des fils de la lumière.

1

Connaissant qu'est-ce que la lumière, nous allons maintenant répondre à notre deuxième question qui est de savoir :

## POURQUOI MARCHER COMME DES ENFANTS DE LA LUMIERE ?

Nous trouvons la réponse à cette question dans le v.8 qui dit ceci : « **Autrefois, en effet, vous étiez ténèbres, mais maintenant vous êtes lumière dans le Seigneur** ».

Nous marchons comme des enfants de la lumière parce qu'en Jésus-Christ nous sommes lumière ; c'est-à-dire nous sommes une nouvelle créature.

Dans notre introduction, le siècle de Louis XIV est le plus éclairé parce qu'il était un grand roi qui à mener beaucoup de réformes pour la France.

Dans notre texte, Jésus (Le Roi des rois) a fait pour nous aussi beaucoup de grandes choses, grâce à son sacrifice expiatoire ; c'est-à-dire qu'il a versé son sang pour le pardon de toute l'humanité.

L'Epître aux Ephésiens a un seul objectif : Enseigner et instruire. Paul veut donner un enseignement précis et approfondi ; et montrer les merveilleuses richesses

de l'Evangile. Partout où ce dernier est prêché, il suscite la contradiction et l'opposition.

L'Apôtre en fait l'amère expérience quand il était à Ephèse. Il faut donc préciser les choses et mettre l'Evangile à l'abri de toute déformation. Il faut aussi montrer aux Chrétiens combien ils sont bénis en Jésus-Christ. Et enfin exhorter à l'unité, sachant que les paroissiens de l'époque étaient composés des juifs et des païens convertis au Christ et que leur cohabitation pouvait à tout moment poser problème.

Paul sait très bien que Satan, l'ennemi acharné de Dieu et des croyants, fait tout pour détruire l'Eglise.

Voila pourquoi, pour la grâce particulière que nous avons en Jésus, l'Apôtre instruit ces contemporains et nous ce matin à marcher comme des enfants de la lumière.

Dans le souci de Paul, c'est de nous préserver contre les œuvres des ténèbres. Au v.12, il donne une description nette : « **En effet ce que ces gens font en secret, il est honteux même d'en parler** ».

Ephèse était un centre commercial, politique et religieux de l'Asie occidentale. A l'instar des autres cités de l'antiquité, Ephèse était une ville profondément

*Marche de la lumière signifie faire ce qui est agréable à Dieu.*

*Figure 13- CG-S-005, p.2*

religieuse. Cependant, en Apocalypse le Seigneur reproche à cette ville le manque de son premier amour. Pourquoi ? Matthieu 24 :12 répond que : « **En raison des progrès de l'iniquité, l'amour du plus grand nombre se refroidira** ». Ephèse adorait surtout Diane, la déesse de la fertilité en Asie. Alors l'idolâtrie a battu son plein.

Aujourd'hui, nous aussi nous sommes confrontés à ces mêmes fléaux. Nos pères ont hérité de nos ancêtres, l'idolâtrie. Et c'est dans ce péché qu'ils nous ont engendrés. **Le Révérend Souk** disait souvent qu'il n'y a pas de vrai Luthérien dans **notre génération et qu'on en aura que dans la génération future c'est-à-dire les enfants de nos enfants.**

Ceci est une vérité incontournable. Et cela prouve ce matin, combien de fois vous et moi, comment sommes-nous séparés de Dieu. Nous sommes des idolâtres.

Certains diront ce matin, qu'ils n'admettent pas ce genre de déclaration. Pour eux, ils ne se sont jamais fait tailler un bois, ni aller vers les montagnes et les eaux. Donc, comment croire qu'ils sont des idolâtres ? D'autres encore diront qu'ils sont nés Chrétiens.

Pourtant, nous sommes des idolâtres et c'est la Bible qui l'affirme. « **Tous sont égarés, tous sont pervertis, il n'y a pas un juste ; pas même un seul.** »

Mais la parole de Dieu nous invite ce matin : **Chrétiens, marchons comme des enfants de la lumière.**

Connaissant, pourquoi marcher comme des enfants de la lumière, nous allons enfin répondre à notre troisième question qui est de savoir :

**COMMENT MARCHER COMME DES ENFANTS DE LA LUMIÈRE ?**

Nous trouvons la réponse à cette question dans le v.9 qui dit ceci : « **Car le fruit de la lumière consiste en toute sorte de bonté, de justice et de vérité.** »

Dans notre introduction, c'est par des grandes reformes que Louis XIV a marqué son siècle par une grande lumière.

Jésus-Christ est la lumière du monde. Celui qui le suit marche dans la lumière. Mais de plus, si nous suivons Christ, sa lumière se reflétera dans notre vie et éclairera le sentier des autres. L'Apôtre déclare que nous sommes lumière dans le Seigneur. Nous sommes enfants de lumière.



Figure 14- CG-S-005, p.3

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V9 Comment

Dans Jean 8 :12, Jésus dit : « **Moi, je suis la lumière du monde** ». La lumière de Jésus est celle de Dieu. Dieu est lumière. La lumière symbolise la justice, la vérité et la connaissance. En Jésus était la vie, et la vie était la lumière des hommes. Jésus illumine toute la vie de l'homme. Il éclaire tout homme, comme le soleil éclaire tout homme. Certains sont aveugles et ne voient pas la lumière solaire. D'autres ferment les yeux pour ne pas la voir. Mais le soleil est là. Il brille, que les hommes le voient ou non.

Il en est de même de Christ. Tout homme reçoit une certaine lumière spirituelle de Dieu. S'il la rejette ou s'il en détourne, il retombera vite dans l'obscurité. La lumière lui sera ôtée. C'est pourquoi, l'homme doit marcher pendant qu'il a la lumière, conformément à la lumière reçue.

Les Juifs contemporains de Jésus avaient reçu une grande lumière. Christ lui-même. Mais ils l'ont rejetée et se sont à nouveau plongés dans les ténèbres. Ils ont égaré leur nation et perdu leurs âmes.

Chers frères en Christ, comme pouvait le dire notre Seigneur Jésus lui-même dans deux expressions synonymes : « **Marchez pendant que vous avez la**

lumière. », « **Pendant que vous avez la lumière, croyez en la lumière.** »(Jean12 :35,36), l'heure est pour de réfléchir. La lumière c'est Christ. Il ne suffit pas de voir la lumière, il faut encore croire en elle. Les mites, noms données à divers insectes, voient la lumière et se dirigent vers elle.

Quand nous apercevons la lumière, nous devons croire en elle. Autrement dit, quand nous voyons Jésus, nous devons croire en lui et le suivre.

Lorsque nous croyons en Christ, nous devenons des enfants de lumière. En d'autres mots, nous devenons des fils de Dieu.

Chers frères en Christ, en ce temps de Carême, je vous exhorte à la repentance. Quittons les ténèbres de l'idolâtrie et venons à Jésus, la véritable lumière. De nous même, nous ne pouvons pas le faire. C'est pourquoi, demandons au Saint-Esprit de Dieu de nous aider.

Que le Seigneur vous bénisse. Amen !

*Figure 15- CG-S-005, p.4*

_Introd_

* Les présidents des pays ont fourni de problème pour developper leur pays,

_ii_

* Expliquer Mardez de      = Ne poeles pas ce qui me u② veut pas
                            = Ce qui est agreable à me

_Introduction_

Le mon pays en Afrique, mes aïeux comme les Pdts (qui ont fait fait tou leur pays autoles que d'autre n'ont rien fait, Par ... un pays des fleuves à ... La Bon et des mauvais Pdts, Louis XIV est un bon Pdts qui a mené des gres formes tels que : Il protege l'agriculture, encourage le commerce, l'industrie, les travaux publics, la marine etc ... Ainsi ... tout de la lumière, Voltaire lui ... lan pd dans le monde de la littérature nanfoure) dit ceci « Le siècle de Louis XIV et le plus éclairé qui fut jamais »

Figure 16- CG-S-005, p.5

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# APPENDIX 2 – SURVEYS

#1

SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION – ETUDIANT

Pays d'origine : REPUBLIQUE DU CONGO

Institution ou vous recevez votre formation théologique/pastoral : CLETCO

Niveau / Promotion : IIème PASTORALE .

Y-a-t-il une bible complète publiée dans votre langue maternelle ? NOUVEAU TESTAMENT KITUBA.
( NGWISANI YA MALU – MALU ).

En général, les adeptes de votre milieu sont-ils capables à lire la bible et comprendre les textes ? OUI

Quels sont les livres de texte concernant l'homilétique les plus référés ou utilisés dans votre
formation sur l'homilétique ?
- L' Heure Luthérienne
- Le Commentaire biblique du Dr wr. Kreiss.
- La Bible Expliquée
- Le oui et le Non de Dieu.

Quels sont des influences les plus importants dans votre formation comme prédicateur ?
- LES PASTEURS LUTHERIENS (MAVOUNGOU, KOUTIA, OUAMKA, MBOUNGou etc
- Un Pasteur Baptiste ( CHARLES STANLEY).
- Myles Monroe.

Avez-vous le sens que votre formation dans la salle de classe suffira pour que vous seriez prêt à
prêcher chaque semaine dans la paroisse ? Si non, pourquoi pas ?
OUI : Parce que nous avons des prédications journalières toute
l'année qui nous servent de pratique.

Quelles lacunes constatez-vous dans votre formation à propos de la prédication ?
Pas de lacunes dans la prédication mais un grand
manquement des livres au niveau de la Bibliothèque
pour nos recherches (Ex : Dictionnaire Grec – Français ; Hébreu –
Français , . . . ).

*Figure 17- CG-E-001, p.1*

SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION

D'entre les trois péricopes pour un dimanche (Ancien Testament, Epitre ou Evangile), avez-vous
une tendance pour préférer l'un au-dessus des autres pour former la base d'une prédication ?
Lequel, et pourquoi ?

*Non, je n'ai pas de préférence. Parce que tous les textes de
chaque dimanche traitent du même problème.*

Quelles sont des doctrines qui animent des prédications que vous écoutez le plus souvent ?

*La Sanctification, la Rédemption, ...*

A votre avis, quel seraient des caractéristiques d'une prédication authentiquement africaine, qui
est en même temps fidèlement luthérienne ?

*– Problèmes qui minent l'Afrique (Famine, nudité, maladie,
pauvreté) qui doivent leurs réponses à : La Parole Seule,
la Foi Seule, la Grâce seule.*

Quelles sont des formes/structures des sermons qui vous mieux conviennent pour capter
l'attention ou bien toucher le cœur ? Pourquoi ?

*Tous les sermons touchant à la Foi, la grâce et la
Loi. Parce que ces sermons ravivent les cœurs brisés
et favorisent et maintiennent la vie en Christ.
L'Amour au sens large du terme.*

Est-ce que le système de Loi/Evangile vous ressemble efficace pour former des prédications ?
Pourquoi, ou pourquoi pas ?

*Oui. Parce que les deux sont indissociables et vont de
paire. Et puis, dans l'Assemblée, nous n'avons pas que
pénitents mais aussi des impénitents.*

*Figure 18- CG-E-001, p.2*

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Y-a-t-il des éléments de votre culture que vous pourriez mettre en service de votre prédication,
pour l'enrichir (Par exemple, les proverbes traditionnels) ?

Oui, nous avons des récits, des contes, des proverbes, des énigmes qui nous aident dans l'introduction ou l'illustration lors de nos prédications.

Si vous pouviez donner un avis aux prédicateurs à venir, que diriez-vous ?

De bien observer les manières de vivre de l'environnement, la coutume, les moeurs pour mieux adapter la Loi et l'Evangile, et mieux choisir les thèmes des sermons pour aider les participants.

*Figure 19- CG-E-001, p.3*

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SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION – ETUDIANT

Pays d'origine : CONGO – Brazzaville

Institution ou vous recevez votre formation théologique/pastoral : Clet – Dapaong

Niveau / Promotion : Vicaire

Y-a-t-il une bible complète publiée dans votre langue maternelle ? Oui

En général, les adeptes de votre milieu sont-ils capables à lire la bible et comprendre les textes ?
Oui, Ils lisent bien couramment.

Quels sont les livres de texte concernant l'homilétique les plus référés ou utilisés dans votre formation sur l'homilétique ? La préparation du sermon par le Rév. Flugge, Wilbert Kruss et aussi Alfred KUEN.

Quels sont des influences les plus importants dans votre formation comme prédicateur ?
Mon vécu quotidien; la réalité qui se vit dans la société et le souci des âmes.

Avez-vous le sens que votre formation dans la salle de classe suffira pour que vous seriez prêt à prêcher chaque semaine dans la paroisse ? Si non, pourquoi pas ? Oui! pendant ma formation j'ai été bien exercé pour cette tâche

Quelles lacunes constatez-vous dans votre formation à propos de la prédication ?
– Manquement des livres lutheriens et des commentaires pour cette tâche.

*Figure 20- CG-E-002, p.1*

SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION

D'entre les trois péricopes pour un dimanche (Ancien Testament, Epitre ou Evangile), avez-vous
une tendance pour préférer l'un au-dessus des autres pour former la base d'une prédication ?
Lequel, et pourquoi ? *Pour moi tous les textes marchent, il suffit peu*
*J'ai un message et une ligne de direction.*

Quelles sont des doctrines qui animent des prédications que vous écoutez le plus souvent ?
*La Repentance et la conversion, la Vie éternelle (Eschatologie)*
*La Sanctification et le Salut; le baptême et la Sainte Cène.*

A votre avis, quel seraient des caractéristiques d'une prédication authentiquement africaine, qui
est en même temps fidèlement luthérienne ? *Par des mimes, un ou deux chants*
*riment avec le thème; des questions rhétorique*

Quelles sont des formes/structures des sermons qui vous mieux conviennent pour capter
l'attention ou bien toucher le cœur ? Pourquoi ? *Une préparation thématique*
*Car nombreux des fidèles aiment voir un prédicateur développé*
*point par point d'un thème.*
*— Une prédication textuelle; connaître les vérités bibliques est*
*aussi un vouloir des fidèles*

Est-ce que le système de Loi/Evangile vous ressemble efficace pour former des prédications ?
Pourquoi, ou pourquoi pas ? *Oui, Car pour moi il est bien d'indentifier*
*Premièrement le péché que la loi condamne puis guérir avec*
*l'Evangile.*

*Figure 21- CG-E-002, p.2*

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Y-a-t-il des éléments de votre culture que vous pourriez mettre en service de votre prédication,
pour l'enrichir (Par exemple, les proverbes traditionnels) ?

Oui, les proverbes traditionnels, les anciennes histoires de nos clans
éthniques sont des éléments très enrichissants pour nos
prédication

Si vous pouviez donner un avis aux prédicateurs à venir, que diriez-vous ?

Je leur dirai d'être attentif en classe pendant les cours
d'homelitique, de suivre les prédications des autres pasteurs,
d'être de bon étudiants de la parole de Dieu, de méditer
souvent la parole de Dieu et de se donner à la prière afin
que le Saint-Esprit leur donne tout ce qui est nécessaire
pour la prédication.

*Figure 22- CG-E-002, p.3*

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SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION – ETUDIANT

Pays d'origine : *Le CONGO*

Institution ou vous recevez votre formation théologique/pastoral :

Niveau / Promotion : *Vicaire ; 10ème Promotion au CLET, Togo*

Y-a-t-il une bible complète publiée dans votre langue maternelle ?

*Oui*

En général, les adeptes de votre milieu sont-ils capables à lire la bible et comprendre les textes ?

*Absolument*

Quels sont les livres de texte concernant l'homilétique les plus référés ou utilisés dans votre formation sur l'homilétique ? *En fait, à cet effet ; je ne dirais pas que J'ai une totale et parfaite préference. Mais du moins, J'utilise les livres d'homilétique par exemple de : Wilbert Kress, de Alfred Kuen etc....*

Quels sont des influences les plus importants dans votre formation comme prédicateur ?
*Sans mentir, Ce qui est vrai est que : Ma formation Comme Prédicateur a marqué des influences plus importantes. Telles que : - Une bonne compréhension des texts ; la cohérence et la Logique dans les sermons Ce qui n'était pas du tout le cas avant. - L'attirance et la Captivation des auditeurs à mieux comprendre au mieux de leur salut.*

Avez-vous le sens que votre formation dans la salle de classe suffira pour que vous seriez prêt à prêcher chaque semaine dans la paroisse ? Si non, pourquoi pas ? *Non. Parce que L'école ne nous a donnée que L'intelligence et les moyens qu'il faut accademiquement parlent. Alors que il me manque l'expérience pastorale qui ne s'acquère qu'avec le temps ; d'où la Formation seule ne suffie pas.*

Quelles lacunes constatez-vous dans votre formation à propos de la prédication ?

*Figure 23- CG-E-003, p.1*

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SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION

D'entre les trois péricopes pour un dimanche (Ancien Testament, Epitre ou Evangile), avez-vous
une tendance pour préférer l'un au-dessus des autres pour former la base d'une prédication ?
Lequel, et pourquoi ? *En fait, Pour moi, je n'ai pas vraiment une
tendance particulière. Car chaque dimanche a un message clé
et chaque texte le fait sortir, tantôt d'une manière tantôt d'un
autre. C'est pourquoi après étude de texte, il m'arrive de
prêcher dans un texte donné ou encore Tous les textes.*

Quelles sont des doctrines qui animent des prédications que vous écoutez le plus souvent ?
*Mes prédications par exemple sont animées par les doctrines
Suivantes : La doctrine de la Repentance, de Reconciliation;
de L'amour et Grâce de Dieu; Des temps de la Fin et de
la personne et L'oeuvre du Christ.*

A votre avis, quel seraient des caractéristiques d'une prédication authentiquement africaine, qui
est en même temps fidèlement luthérienne ?
*Je dirai que les caractéristiques d'une prédication authen
tiquement africaine sont telque : - Une prédication animée
par les adages et des exemples basés sur les modes de vie
purement africain. Une prédication qui canalise les valeures
morales africaines, l'habillement, la bien séante et de certain
enseignements bon africainement parlant.*

Quelles sont des formes/structures des sermons qui vous mieux conviennent pour capter
l'attention ou bien toucher le cœur ? Pourquoi ?
*Les structures qui me conviennent sont : - Cause/Effet, Pourquoi
et Comment; Problème solution, Loi et Evangile; Paradoxe
Soutenu et aussi la structure des Points.
Parce que Ces structures, annoncent le message de façon
claire, captivante et efficace, non pas pour dire que les
autres structures ne le font pas. Mais parce qu'en utilisant
Ces structures énumérées les gens sont éveillés, attendent avec impa
ence ce qui va venir après et comprennent bien.*

Est-ce que le système de Loi/Evangile vous ressemble efficace pour former des prédications ?
Pourquoi, ou pourquoi pas ? *Oui,*
*Car avec ce Système, on n'est pas obligé de compliquer
la prédication ou le message. Mais on livre le message le tout
Simplement possible, tout en appliquant la Loi ou le
message Clé du texte, encourager L'auditoire à abandonner
les mauvaises habitudes et pratiquer la Parole.*

*Figure 24- CG-E-003, p.2*

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Y-a-t-il des éléments de votre culture que vous pourriez mettre en service de votre prédication, pour l'enrichir (Par exemple, les proverbes traditionnels) ?

Effectivement, Parce que parlant de l'homilitique dans le contexte africain, c'est de soutirer quelques bons proverbes, adages traditionnels qui peuvent être en décord avec le texte donné et applicable aux auditeurs. Et tel que je l'ai mentionné tout de suite, les exemples courants sur les valeurs morales liés à la sexualité, au mariage, à la bien séance, à l'habillement et au respect des autorités.

Si vous pouviez donner un avis aux prédicateurs à venir, que diriez-vous ?

Je leur conseillerai premièrement à demeurer Fidèle à la Saine Parole de notre Seigneur et sauveur Christ.
- Deuxièment à rester Fidèle à la pure doctrine tel que l'ont enseigné et exposé les Réformateurs
- Troisièment à ne pas mépriser toutes les cultures ou tous les élements dans leur culture, car certains peuvent être important pour la bonne éducation de leur auditeur
- Et enfin pour ne pas être bavard, continuer à apprendre, acquérir l'expérience et à utiliser les structures de sermons qui leurs donnent l'engouement de l'éveiller et de faire comprendre l'auditoire et ensuite continuer sur les doctrines animent leurs dites Prédications.

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SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION – *Pasteur*

Pays d'origine :

Institution ou vous avez reçu votre formation théologique/pastoral : *Institut Lutherien de Meigongpa CAMEROUN.*

Combien des ans dans le Saint Ministère : *22 ans*

A quelle fréquence (au moyen) prêchez-vous dans une paroisse ou point de prédication ? *3x.*

Y-a-t-il une bible complète publiée dans votre langue habituelle de prédication ? *Oui*

En général, vos auditeurs sont-ils capables à lire la bible et comprendre les textes ? *Oui*

Quels sont les livres de texte concernant l'homilétique les plus référés par des pasteurs de votre église ? *Ps 33 ; Commentaire. Emmaeus ; Luthérien Wilbert Kn*

Quels sont des influences les plus importants dans votre formation comme prédicateur ?
*les predications à la télé et a la radio des pentecôtistes.*

A la sortie de votre formation pastorale, aviez-vous vous senti bien préparé pour la tâche de prédication ? Si non, pourquoi pas ? *Oui bien préparé*

Quelles lacunes avez-vous constaté dans votre formation à propos de la prédication ?
*Au début je ne savais pas convenablement presenter christ à mes auditeurs, cela c'est amélioré apès ma formation de 5 ans.*

*Figure 26- CG-P-001, p.1*

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SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION

D'entre les trois péricopes pour un dimanche (Ancien Testament, Epitre ou Evangile), avez-vous une tendance pour préférer l'un au-dessus des autres pour former la base de votre prédication ? Lequel, et pourquoi ? *Les trois textes du jours sont important, pour la preparation d'un bon sermon.*

Quelles sont des doctrines qui animent votre prédication le plus souvent ?

*La doctrine du salut par grâce.*

A votre avis, quel seraient des caractéristiques d'une prédication authentiquement africaine, qui est en même temps fidèlement luthérienne ?

*en faisant une bonne contextualisation ou le proto-ancêtre qu'est le Christ.*

Quelles sont des formes/structures des sermons qui vous mieux conviennent ? Pourquoi ?

*Sermon à thème parce qu'il nous evite a dire beaucoup d'autre choses qui ne sont pas dans le thème choisi*

Est-ce que le système de Loi/Evangile vous ressemble efficace pour former vos prédications ? Pourquoi, ou pourquoi pas ? *Oui*

*La parole de Dieu nous dit ce que nous ne devions pas faire et ce que Dieu a fait pour nous en Jesus Christ.*

*Figure 27- CG-P-001, p.2*

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Y-a-t-il des éléments de votre culture que vous pourriez mettre en service de votre prédication,
pour l'enrichir (Par exemple, les proverbes traditionnels) ?

Oui. Sur la signification de l'appel avec le
tronc. d'abre que caractérise le clocher. au
début de chaque service et à la fin.
– la circoncision. par rapport au baptême.

Si vous pouviez donner un avis aux prédicateurs à venir, que diriez-vous ?

Il est important que chaque prédicateur annonce
ce que Dieu a fait pour nous en Jésus – christ qui
est le centre des écritures. Éviter le subjectivisme
mais avoir en tête que Dieu est l'objet. de notre
foi.

*Figure 28- CG-P-001, p.3*

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SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION – *Pasteur*

Pays d'origine : **CONGO** *Brazzaville*

Institution ou vous avez reçu votre formation théologique/pastoral : *CLET / Togo*

Combien des ans dans le Saint Ministère : *6 ans*

A quelle fréquence (au moyen) prêchez-vous dans une paroisse ou point de prédication ?
*BIBLE THOMPSON*

Y-a-t-il une bible complète publiée dans votre langue habituelle de prédication ? *NOUVEAU TESTAMENT / KITUBA : NGWISANI YA MALU MALU*

En général, vos auditeurs sont-ils capables à lire la bible et comprendre les textes ?
*OUI*

Quels sont les livres de texte concernant l'homilétique les plus référés par des pasteurs de votre église ?
*1 Préparation de sermon / Pour les cours : Homilétique I et II*
*2 Qu'est-ce que la prédication ? Paul C. Bruns*
*Traduit de l'Américain par Lyne Schmidt*
*3 Guide de prédication Simplié.*
*4 Quand Dieu Parle aux hommes. Wilbert Kreiss.*

Quels sont des influences les plus importants dans votre formation comme prédicateur ?
*Pour moi, Je crois que chaque fois que Je suis en présence d'un peuple, la prédication doit toucher le problème qui mine ce peuple. Et une fois que l'Evangile est annoncé, le témoignage est vivant lorsque les gens viennent à Christ. C'est ce qui a fait que la paroisse soit redynamisée.*

A la sortie de votre formation pastorale, aviez-vous vous senti bien préparé pour la tâche de prédication ? Si non, pourquoi pas ? *J'étais bien préparé pour la tâche de prédication, et c'est le métier que J'aime beaucoup. D'ailleurs si on parle des prédicateurs qui ont fait connaître le CLET, Je ferai partie, parce que J'ai laissé l'histoire au CLET. J'ai été bien enseigné.*

Quelles lacunes avez-vous constaté dans votre formation à propos de la prédication ?
*Au debut du cours, il y a eu quelques petites difficultés mais après avoir compris le cours, Je m'étais senti que J'étais proche du directeur Dongo Lusambu qui nous dispensait ce cours. Et finalement il m'appelait " petit Dongo ", c'est par rapport au travail*

*Figure 29- CG-P-002, p.1*

SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION

D'entre les trois péricopes pour un dimanche (Ancien Testament, Epitre ou Evangile), avez-vous une tendance pour préférer l'un au-dessus des autres pour former la base de votre prédication ? Lequel, et pourquoi ? *En tout cas je m'adapte facilement aux textes quelques soient les péricopes. Nous savons que tous les textes ont pour Centre "Jésus - Christ," Et donc je choisi le texte selon la réalité de notre paroisse et du milieu*

Quelles sont des doctrines qui animent votre prédication le plus souvent ? *Toutes les doctrines, mais la justification a toujours était été l'objet de ma prédication. C'est le Christ notre justice. Puisque toutes les doctrines sont bonnes pour notre salut en Jésus-Christ, nous avons intérêt à prêcher.*

A votre avis, quel seraient des caractéristiques d'une prédication authentiquement africaine, qui est en même temps fidèlement luthérienne ? *Les caractéristiques d'une prédication africaine, d'abord c'est dans notre contexte Culturel que nous prêchons la Parole de Dieu. Chaque milieu africain a un contexte Culturel. Telles que :*

Quelles sont des formes/structures des sermons qui vous mieux conviennent ? Pourquoi ? *J'aime la forme Textuelle dans mes sermons. C'est ce qui est conseillée, mais d'autres formes sont aussi bonnes pour moi, La forme thématique aussi j'aime*

Est-ce que le système de Loi/Evangile vous ressemble efficace pour former vos prédications ? Pourquoi, ou pourquoi pas ? *Nous Luthériens avons été d'ores et déjà enseignés sur la Loi et L'Evangile. Dans nos sermons, Il faut commencer par prêcher la Loi, puis L'Evangile qui nous donne accès au salut, en Jésus - Christ. Car la Loi ne sauve pas, c'est l'Evangile qui sauve*

*Figure 30- CG-P-002, p.2*

Y-a-t-il des éléments de votre culture que vous pourriez mettre en service de votre prédication, pour l'enrichir (Par exemple, les proverbes traditionnels) ?

Oui, mais ces éléments doivent subir un examen minitieu
Nous prenons le Texte d'Apoc 21:27.
L'Eglise doit examiner chaque prédication tout en tenant
Compte de notre contexte culturel. mais que rien d'impur
mi de souillé ne peut se entrer dans la Cité de Dieu.
selon L'Apocalypse. 21:27

Si vous pouviez donner un avis aux prédicateurs à venir, que diriez-vous ?

un prédicateur à venir doit être à côté d'un ancien
prédicateur experimenté, pour qu'il soit conseillé
à la manière de prêcher. Car Tu peux sortir d'une
école Théologique, mais dès lors que Tu arrive dans
un milieu, il faut s'adapter le milieu.
voici maintenant ce proverbe africain qui dit :
« Lorsque tu es au milieu des Crapauds accroupis
on ne demande pas la chaise ».
Ça voulait dire que on doit s'adapter le milieu.

*Figure 31- CG-P-002, p.3*

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SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION - *Pasteur*

Pays d'origine : **GONGO ( Brazzaville)**

Institution ou vous avez reçu votre formation théologique/pastoral : *Institut Luthérien de théologi de Meiganga.*

Combien des ans dans le Saint Ministère : *6 ans*

A quelle fréquence (au moyen) prêchez-vous dans une paroisse ou point de prédication ? *2 fois par mois*

Y-a-t-il une bible complète publiée dans votre langue habituelle de prédication ? **NON**

En général, vos auditeurs sont-ils capables à lire la bible et comprendre les textes ? **OUI**

Quels sont les livres de texte concernant l'homilétique les plus référés par des pasteurs de votre église ? *Kreiss, FLUGGE, Keuen, La foi des églises luthériennes*

Quels sont des influences les plus importants dans votre formation comme prédicateur ?

*Mes formateurs , certains pasteurs de l'Église _*

A la sortie de votre formation pastorale, aviez-vous vous senti bien préparé pour la tâche de prédication ? Si non, pourquoi pas ? *oui*

Quelles lacunes avez-vous constaté dans votre formation à propos de la prédication ?

*Ce cours n'a été étudié que pendant un semestre alors qu'il y avait encore beaucoup de choses à apprendre _*

*Figure 32- CG-P-003, p.1*

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SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION

D'entre les trois péricopes pour un dimanche (Ancien Testament, Epitre ou Evangile), avez-vous une tendance pour préférer l'un au-dessus des autres pour former la base de votre prédication ? Lequel, et pourquoi ? Je n'ai pas de préférence. Cela depend de l'ins-piration que j'ai. Il m'arrive de Commencer par l'A.T. pour finir par l'Evangile ou de l'Evangile à l'épître.

Quelles sont des doctrines qui animent votre prédication le plus souvent ? Anthropologie - Christologie - Sotériologie - Moyen de grâce Eschatologie -

A votre avis, quel seraient des caractéristiques d'une prédication authentiquement africaine, qui est en même temps fidèlement luthérienne ?
- Elle doit donner des réponses aux problèmes des chrétiens afr Cains
- Elle doit s'intégrer dans les réalités africaines exclusiveme
- Elle doit rester fidèles aux Confessions de foi luthérienne
- Elle doit être Christocentrique - Distinguer clairement la loi et

Quelles sont des formes/structures des sermons qui vous mieux conviennent ? Pourquoi ? l'évangile
① Contexte - Explication - Application
② Problème - Solution - ③ Loi - Evangile
④ Quoi - Pourquoi - Comment
Chaque structure est guidée par le texte.

Est-ce que le système de Loi/Evangile vous ressemble efficace pour former vos prédications ? Pourquoi, ou pourquoi pas ?
Oui. Parcequ'il suit le Schéma anthropologie - Christolog

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*Figure 33- CG-P-003, p.2*

Y-a-t-il des éléments de votre culture que vous pourriez mettre en service de votre prédication, pour l'enrichir (Par exemple, les proverbes traditionnels) ?

Oui. Comme, les Contes, les maximes, les éphémisme, les expres-sions idiomatiques (faire entrer dans la maison de feu = cireou cirg à titre d'exemple.)

Si vous pouviez donner un avis aux prédicateurs à venir, que diriez-vous ?

Le texte biblique ne change pas; mais les Contextes changent. Faire toujours le lien entre les deux; au cas Contraire, le texte reste un récit ancien qui ne Concerne pas l'homme dans son milieu. C'est le sens même de l'incarnation: La Parole s'est faite chair et a vécu au milieu du peuple juif.
Aujourd'hui encore Dieu vient à nous par Sa parole et s'in-Carne dans nos traditions afin de mieu nous atteindre.

*Figure 34- CG-P-003, p.3*

*#4

SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION – *Pasteur*

Pays d'origine : *Congo B2V*

Institution ou vous avez reçu votre formation théologique/pastoral : *CleT*

Combien des ans dans le Saint Ministère : *6 ans*

A quelle fréquence (au moyen) prêchez-vous dans une paroisse ou point de prédication ?

*3 fois par semaine.*

Y-a-t-il une bible complète publiée dans votre langue habituelle de prédication ? *Non !*

En général, vos auditeurs sont-ils capables à lire la bible et comprendre les textes ? *OUI*

Quels sont les livres de texte concernant l'homilétique les plus référés par des pasteurs de votre église ?

*La Bible Louis second, la Bible Thomson*
*Les petites brochures.*

Quels sont des influences les plus importants dans votre formation comme prédicateur ?

*Les influences les plus importants dans notre*
*formation comme prédicateur sont : à nos prédication*
*– Beaucoup de personnes s'interressent à nos prédication*
*– Nous prêchons véritablement la parole de dieu*
*tout en respectant la loi et l'Evangile.*

A la sortie de votre formation pastorale, aviez-yous vous senti bien préparé pour la tâche de prédication ? Si non, pourquoi pas ? *OUI*

Quelles lacunes avez-vous constaté dans votre formation à propos de la prédication ?

*La première année pastorale, j'avais des lacunes pour*
*prêcher parce que je ne m'étais pas encore habitué à*
*prêcher convenablement devant une grande foule.*
*A la deuxième année je me suis mis à bien prêcher*

*Figure 35- CG-P-004, p.1*

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SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION

D'entre les trois péricopes pour un dimanche (Ancien Testament, Epitre ou Evangile), avez-vous une tendance pour préférer l'un au-dessus des autres pour former la base de votre prédication ? Lequel, et pourquoi ?

*L'Evangile et l'Ancien testament sont la base de ma prédication*

Quelles sont des doctrines qui animent votre prédication le plus souvent ?

*L'homme vivra par la foi seule*

A votre avis, quel seraient des caractéristiques d'une prédication authentiquement africaine, qui est en même temps fidèlement luthérienne ?

*Les caracteristiques d'une prédication authentiquement africaines sont : La prédication commence par une introduction, un developpement et une conclusion.*

Quelles sont des formes/structures des sermons qui vous mieux conviennent ? Pourquoi ?

*Les formes/structures des sermons qui nous sommes mieux, c'est de démontrer la loi au paravant et l'Evangile au second plan.*

Est-ce que le système de Loi/Evangile vous ressemble efficace pour former vos prédications ? Pourquoi, ou pourquoi pas ?

*Le système de Loi/Evangile nous ressemble efficace pour former nos prédications parce que la loi nous montre nos pêchés, l'Evangile nous amène à la repentance*

*Figure 36- CG-P-004, p.2*

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Y-a-t-il des éléments de votre culture que vous pourriez mettre en service de votre prédication,
pour l'enrichir (Par exemple, les proverbes traditionnels) ?

Oui, les proverbes traditionnels nous aident aussi dans nos introductions pendant la prédication

Si vous pouviez donner un avis aux prédicateurs à venir, que diriez-vous ?

Voici quelques conseils que je peux donner aux prédicateurs.
La prédication n'est pas comme une lettre qu'on rédige à quelqu'un, mais il faut bien étudier le texte pour que la prédication soit bien assimilée. Il faut respecter la loi et l'Évangile tout en respectant la loi et l'Évangile.

*Figure 37- CG-P-004, p.3*

#5

SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION – *Pasteur*

Pays d'origine : *Congo Brazzaville*

Institution ou vous avez reçu votre formation théologique/pastoral : *Faculté de Théologie Lothérienne de Meigang Cameroun*

Combien des ans dans le Saint Ministère : *22 ans*

A quelle fréquence (au moyen) prêchez-vous dans une paroisse ou point de prédication ? *3 dimanches sur 4*

Y-a-t-il une bible complète publiée dans votre langue habituelle de prédication ? *Lingala oui. Français oui. Kituba le NTseul*

En général, vos auditeurs sont-ils capables à lire la bible et comprendre les textes ? *Plus ou moins les intellectuls le sont et le semi analphabetes Non!*

Quels les livres de texte concernant l'homilétique les plus référés par des pasteurs de votre église ? *Nous suivont le lectionnaire – le choix des textes c'est pour les Sermons Casuel ou les seminaires.*

Quels sont des influences les plus importants dans votre formation comme prédicateur ? *la tradition est Tres forte au Cameroun, elle aide à contextualiser l'Evangile. "An african tree of life" est un exemple. Au congo, dans les grandes ville la tradition n'a pas trop d'influence mais des Heresies de Nombreuses Eglises traditionnelles –*

A la sortie de votre formation pastorale, aviez-vous vous senti bien préparé pour la tâche de prédication ? Si non, pourquoi pas ? *Très bien*

Quelles lacunes avez-vous constaté dans votre formation à propos de la prédication ? *Aucune*

*Figure 38- CG-P-005, p.1*

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SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION

D'entre les trois péricopes pour un dimanche (Ancien Testament, Epitre ou Evangile), avez-vous
une tendance pour préférer l'un au-dessus des autres pour former la base de votre prédication ?
Lequel, et pourquoi ? J'aime bien l'AT et faire le lien avec l'Épitre
et l'Evangile pour proclamer la bonne
Nouvelle du Salut en Jésus.

Quelles sont des doctrines qui animent votre prédication le plus souvent ?

Loi et Evangile comme grandes doctrines

A votre avis, quel seraient des caractéristiques d'une prédication authentiquement africaine, qui
est en même temps fidèlement luthérienne ?
— Textuelle
— Presence de la loi et Evangile
— Christo centrique
— Un contexte africain (Conte, Adage, Proverbe, Autres
Figure de style.
— Catéchetique !

Quelles sont des formes/structures des sermons qui vous mieux conviennent ? Pourquoi ?
— Exegétique
— Thematique
— Historique
— Biographique

Est-ce que le système de Loi/Evangile vous ressemble efficace pour former vos prédications ?
Pourquoi, ou pourquoi pas ? Oue, C'est le contenu de la Predication lutherienne
• La loi montre le chemin (Guide), Miroir et Pedagoque nous
aide à reconnaitre le Péché et nous conduit vers la
repentance et tourne nos regards vers le CHrist.
• L'Evangile Console, Proclame la grace; le Pardon, le Salut
et la vie Eternelle en Jésus Christ. Crucifié.

*Figure 39- CG-P-005, p.2*

Y-a-t-il des éléments de votre culture que vous pourriez mettre en service de votre prédication, pour l'enrichir (Par exemple, les proverbes traditionnels) ?

Oui plusieurs Il y a des Fables, Histoires, des proverbes des allégories, les éléments de la Nature.

Si vous pouviez donner un avis aux prédicateurs à venir, que diriez-vous ?

- Il faut qu'ils connaissent le contexte, le milieu.
- l'influence de la langue
- bien Connaître l'auditoire
- le Contexte Historique, sociologique, Politique du milieu.
- Bien apprendre les méthodes de preparation d'un Sermon
- Bien étudier les Textes
- Ecrire un draft et le Reviser
- Etre bref et Claire
- Ne pas être lié au Texte.

#6

SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION – *Pasteur*

Pays d'origine : *Congo - Brazzaville*

Institution ou vous avez reçu votre formation théologique/pastoral : *CLET. Dapaong, Togo*

Combien des ans dans le Saint Ministère : *9 ans*

A quelle fréquence (au moyen) prêchez-vous dans une paroisse ou point de prédication ?

*Chaque semaine*

Y-a-t-il une bible complète publiée dans votre langue habituelle de prédication ?

*Oui*

En général, vos auditeurs sont-ils capables à lire la bible et comprendre les textes ?

*Je crois*

Quels sont les livres de texte concernant l'homilétique les plus référés par des pasteurs de votre église ?

*Nous suivons la pericopos.*

Quels sont des influences les plus importants dans votre formation comme prédicateur ?

*Les prédicateurs de la televition qui s'élevent et annoncent le plus souvent n'importe quoi font mal.*

A la sortie de votre formation pastorale, aviez-vous vous senti bien préparé pour la tâche de prédication ? Si non, pourquoi pas ?

*Oui !*

Quelles lacunes avez-vous constaté dans votre formation à propos de la prédication ?

*Il ferait mieux que L'autre personne me le dise. Parce, souvent si je ne me suis pas bien preparé, je rate la predication et les autres me font des observations.*

*Figure 41- CG-P-006, p.1*

SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION

D'entre les trois péricopes pour un dimanche (Ancien Testament, Epitre ou Evangile), avez-vous
une tendance pour préférer l'un au-dessus des autres pour former la base de votre prédication ?
Lequel, et pourquoi ?

*Oui ! L'Ancien testament pour mieux
expliqué L'accomplissement dans le
nouveau testament.*

Quelles sont des doctrines qui animent votre prédication le plus souvent ?

*Cela, selon les textes du péricopes.*

A votre avis, quel seraient des caractéristiques d'une prédication authentiquement africaine, qui
est en même temps fidèlement luthérienne ?

*Je ne crois pas qu'il faille avoir une
prédication authentiquement africaine.
Mais une bonne etude des textes pour
une bonne application à l'Africaine.*

Quelles sont des formes/structures des sermons qui vous mieux conviennent ? Pourquoi ?

*Selon les textes et les circonstances
je utilise toutes les formes.*

Est-ce que le système de Loi/Evangile vous ressemble efficace pour former vos prédications ?
Pourquoi, ou pourquoi pas ?

*Je crois que quelque foit la forme
du sermon, la loi et l'Evangile doit
appataître.*

*Figure 42- CG-P-006, p.2*

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Y-a-t-il des éléments de votre culture que vous pourriez mettre en service de votre prédication, pour l'enrichir (Par exemple, les proverbes traditionnels) ?

Oui ! Vous l'avez deviné.

Si vous pouviez donner un avis aux prédicateurs à venir, que diriez-vous ?

Il faut qu'ils soient bien formés. Cela leurs permettront à bien s'adapter aux circonstances.

*Figure 43- CG-P-006, p.3*

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SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION - *Pasteur*

Pays d'origine :

Institution ou vous avez reçu votre formation théologique/pastoral : *A Dapaong au Togo*

Combien des ans dans le Saint Ministère : *Six ans - ( 6 ans)*

A quelle fréquence (au moyen) prêchez-vous dans une paroisse ou point de prédication ? *Je prêche une fois dans la semaine et j'enseigne deux fois dans la semaine*

Y-a-t-il une bible complète publiée dans votre langue habituelle de prédication ? *Oui il y en a - en a*

En général, vos auditeurs sont-ils capables à lire la bible et comprendre les textes ? *Bien sûr*

Quels sont les livres de texte concernant l'homilétique les plus référés par des pasteurs de votre église ? *Fascicule " Préparation de Sermon pour les cours : Homilétique I et II du CLET et plus -*

Quels sont des influences les plus importants dans votre formation comme prédicateur ? *Je me suis plus inspiré du Rev. Wilbert Kreiss ; Rev Glenn Fluegy et du Dr Sonso Lussambu Ent*

A la sortie de votre formation pastorale, aviez-vous vous senti bien préparé pour la tâche de prédication ? Si non, pourquoi pas ? *En effet, oui parce que nous avons reçu un enseignement essentiel quoiqu l'étude du grec n'étant pas au poin*

Quelles lacunes avez-vous constaté dans votre formation à propos de la prédication ? *Des lacunes au départ dans mes sermons il y avait plus de la loi que l'Evangile, mais après avec le temps je me suis amélioré en équilibrant plus d'Evangile avec la loi dans sa rigueur*

*Figure 44- CG-P-007, p.1*

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SONDAGE SUR PREDICATION

D'entre les trois péricopes pour un dimanche (Ancien Testament, Epitre ou Evangile), avez-vous
une tendance pour préférer l'un au-dessus des autres pour former la base de votre prédication ?
Lequel, et pourquoi ?

*Ma préférence c'est de prêcher sur les textes
qui sont riche en Evangile peu importe l'ancien
ou le Nouveau Testament*

Quelles sont des doctrines qui animent votre prédication le plus souvent ?

*La doctrine de la justication
— la grâce. et la sanctification, la christologi
— les moyens de grâce -*

A votre avis, quel seraient des caractéristiques d'une prédication authentiquement africaine, qui
est en même temps fidèlement luthérienne ?

*Doit faire ressortir de façon f claire les moyens
de grâce, l'Evangile de façon claire., amener les
paroissiens à comprendre les tendances animistes*

Quelles sont des formes/structures des sermons qui vous mieux conviennent ? Pourquoi ?

*— Thème et sous - thème*

Est-ce que le système de Loi/Evangile vous ressemble efficace pour former vos prédications ?
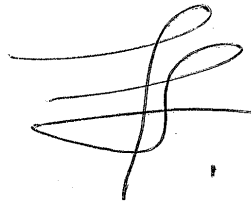Pourquoi, ou pourquoi pas ?

*Bien sûr*

*Figure 45- CG-P-007, p.2*

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Y-a-t-il des éléments de votre culture que vous pourriez mettre en service de votre prédication, pour l'enrichir (Par exemple, les proverbes traditionnels) ?

*Bien entendu -*

Si vous pouviez donner un avis aux prédicateurs à venir, que diriez-vous ?

*À mon avis que les futurs prédicateurs franco-africain fassent preuve de l'inculturation à la lumière du contexte de nos cultures, valeurs et traditi... qui riment avec l'Évangile de la grâce. — Ils doivent dénoncer les loi de façon rigoureuse - Mais aussi donner plus d'Évangile à la lumière de nos (cultures).*

*Figure 46- CG-P-007, p.3*

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## APPENDIX 3 – EXAMPLE SERMON

Rév. MCDERMOTT Ryan
CLET – Dapaong, TOGO
La Circoncision et le Nom de Jésus
1 janvier 2019

**Luc 2.21**

<div align="center">Un Nouveau Jour du Grand Pardon</div>

<div align="center">Au nom du Père et du Fils et du Saint-Esprit. Amen.</div>

*Reçois favorablement les paroles de ma bouche et les méditations de mon cœur, ô Seigneur mon rocher et mon rédempteur. Amen.*

« Yom HaKippourim absout des péchés envers Dieu, mais pas des péchés envers son prochain à moins que le pardon de l'offensé ne soit obtenu. » — Mishna Yoma 8:9

Voici le perspectif juif par rapport du pardon des péchés au jour de l'expiation, autrement nommé le Jour du Grand Pardon. C'est une conception différente que celle que l'on trouve dans la Bible, mais, on peut dire, ce n'est pas tellement différent que celle du monde. Les péchés contre Dieu sont considérés comme plus légers que les péchés contre nos prochains. Dieu couvre tout par sa miséricorde, ou il va tout oublier comme un faible grand-père ; mais les hommes n'oublient pas. Le pardon venant des hommes est difficile à acquérir. Voici comment pense le monde.

Le premier jour d'un nouvel an est devenu une occasion pour lancer les demandes de pardon. Déjà j'ai reçu quelques messages sur Facebook et WhatsApp, en demandant pardon si la personne qui m'a envoyé ce message a pu commettre n'importe quelle faute contre moi. On voit souvent quand le calendrier se tourne, les hommes s'examinent et se mettent à essayer faire dissiper leurs erreurs et leurs fautes de l'année qui vient de finir.

Alors, cette pratique signifie quoi ? On demande le pardon pour les fautes ou les péchés, mais, au fond du cœur, qu'est-ce que l'on demande ?     Que les péchés sont pardonnés ? Que les fautes légères sont simplement excusées ? Prenez un instant pour penser.

Aujourd'hui nous commémorons la circoncision et le nom de Jésus. C'est huit jours après sa naissance à Bethléem que la sainte famille est entrée dans le temple à Jérusalem afin de faire pour le nouveau-né selon la loi de Moïse, c'est-à-dire pour que le bébé soit circoncis et qu'il reçoive le nom donné par l'ange : Jésus, qui signifie « celui qui sauve ».

C'est étrange, fêter une telle chose comme la circoncision de quelqu'un, n'est-ce pas ? Il y a beaucoup des traditions concernant les rites et les cérémonies pour donner le nom d'un enfant, et on considère que le jour de la réception du nom fait une occasion importante dans la vie de quelqu'un. Mais le jour de circoncision est pour un homme un jour important mais en plupart caché. Plusieurs cultures africaines ont la tradition que l'homme ne doit pas discuter les rites et les cérémonies auprès des personnes non-initiées. Ce n'est pas un fait pour fêter publiquement.

Il est permis d'approcher une connaissance et lui demander « D'où vient ton nom ? Quelle est l'histoire de ton nom ? etc. » Il n'est pas acceptable d'approcher quelqu'un et lui demander « Dites-moi l'histoire de ta circoncision ? Comment ça s'est passé ? » Néanmoins, l'Eglise Chrétienne aujourd'hui fête publiquement cet évènement tellement privé dans la vie de Jésus.

Considérez ceci : Nous célébrons une bonne année parce qu'en ce jour notre Dieu et notre Seigneur a été circoncis.

Nous sommes au milieu de la saison de Noël ; aujourd'hui est le huitième jour de Noël. Et en cours de cette saison, nous réfléchissons sur la raison pourquoi Jésus est né. Pourquoi Jésus est-il né de la Vierge Marie à Noël ? Jésus est né pour accomplir toute la loi, la circoncision y comprise.

Dieu a donné sa loi à l'humanité dans le monde entier. Depuis la création de l'homme, bien avant la chute dans le péché, la loi a été là. Dieu a recommandé à Adam et Eve d'être féconds et multiplier, d'assujettir la terre et de gérer sur toute la création très bonne que Dieu

avait créée. Il les a aussi interdits de manger du fruit de l'arbre de la connaissance du bien et du mal. Avant la chute, obéir à la loi n'était pas un lourd fardeau pour Adam et Eve ; au contraire, c'était un plaisir fondé dans l'amour entre Dieu et sa création.

Malheureusement, Adam et Eve ont tombé dans le péché, et ils ont désobéis à Dieu. En ce moment-là, ils ont chuté et ils ont fait corrompu toute l'humanité. A cause de cela, les hommes n'ont plus la capacité ni la volonté pour obéir parfaitement à la loi de Dieu.

L'Eternel Dieu des Armées est un Dieu jaloux. Il exige l'obéissance totale et parfaite. La Bible nous dit tout bref : L'âme qui pèche, c'est celle qui mourra. De plus, Dieu nous dit : « Je suis l'Eternel, ton Dieu, le Dieu fort et jaloux, qui punis l'iniquité des pères sur les enfants jusqu'en la troisième et la quatrième génération de ceux qui me haïssent. » A partir de cela, nous confessons : « Dieu menace de ses châtiments tous ceux qui transgressent ces commandements ; c'est pourquoi nous devons craindre sa colère et ne point violer sa Loi. »

Ce dont j'ai parlé plus haut montre le problème vis-à-vis la Loi. Vous craignez et aimez les hommes plus que Dieu. Les juifs pensent que Dieu pardonne facilement et rapidement les péchés contre lui, mais les hommes retiennent les fautes l'un contre l'autre. Ceci n'est pas une pensée uniquement juive. Les gens de ce monde pensent qu'aujourd'hui, à l'aurore d'un an nouveau, on doit demander pardon des autres hommes pour qu'on puisse commencer l'année nouvelle en bons termes.

On m'a dit qu'il y avait un homme qui, à la veille de bonne année, a lancé une invitation ouverte à ses proches, ses amis et ses connaissances, afin qu'ils puissent venir chez lui pour demander pardon pour les péchés tels qu'ils ont pu commettre contre lui. Il n'a rien dit concernant ses propres péchés contre des autres ; mais il avait voulu se montrer magnanime et miséricordieux en recevant les demandes de pardon des autres.

Tout le monde veut être vu comme généreux et magnanime en cette saison. Tout le monde veut commencer l'an nouveau avec un compteur à zéro. Mais, personne ne veut

s'humilier pour recevoir le vrai pardon. Personne ne veut confesser ses péchés en pensée, en parole et en acte, contre Dieu et contre les hommes. C'est facile, dire « Si j'ai commis quelque faute, je demande pardon, » selon une façon générale, devant le monde entier. Ce qui est difficile, c'est dire à une personne directement « J'ai péché contre toi dans cette manière, et j'en ai un regrette ; s'il vous plaît, pardonne-moi. »

L'âme qui pèche, c'est celle qui mourra. La mort est le salaire du péché. Sans effusion de sang, il n'y a pas de pardon.

Chez vous, la Loi n'est pas accomplie. Tu ne l'as pas fait. Tu n'as pas craint ni aimé Dieu avec tout ton être. Tu n'as pas aimé ton prochain comme toi-même. Ce que tu mérites, c'est la mort et la condamnation.

Alors, au milieu de la mort et la condamnation de l'humanité, Dieu lui-même vient. Il est né d'une vierge, selon la prophétie ancienne. Il est né pour accomplir toute justice. Ce petit bébé est né dans la chair humaine, non pas de la volonté ni du sang d'un homme, mais de la volonté de Dieu. « Car il a plu à Dieu de faire habiter en lui toute plénitude et de tout réconcilier avec lui-même, aussi bien ce qui est sur la terre que ce qui est dans les cieux, en faisant la paix par lui, par le sang de sa croix » (Col. 1.19-20).

Jésus est venu dans le monde pour accomplir toute justice. Et l'accomplissement de toute justice exige qu'il devrait être circoncis, selon la loi de Moïse. Sans effusion de sang, il n'y a pas de pardon. Et l'effusion du sang de Jésus commence avec le plus petit et susceptible de ses membres. Sur ce petit membre, Jésus a été marqué comme partie à l'alliance entre Dieu et le peuple d'Israël.

Nous célébrons la fête de la circoncision de Jésus parce qu'en ce fait, il se montre fidèle à sa charge d'accomplir toute justice. Et parce que Jésus a accompli la loi entièrement, nous avons le pardon de péché.

Jésus n'est pas venu dans le monde pour abolir la loi, mais pour l'accomplir. Il a commencé son accomplissement avec son incarnation, et il a continué en effusant son sang par la circoncision. Il n'en avait pas besoin, parce qu'il n'est pas pécheur, mais il s'est soumis à la loi pour tout faire pour nous et pour notre salut.

Mais, Jésus ne s'est arrêté là. Il a continué son obéissance jusqu'à la mort, même la mort si honteuse sur la croix de Calvaire. Il a effusé un peu de sang dans le temple au moment de sa circoncision, mais il a répandu sa vie même sur la croix pour nous hommes et pour notre salut.

L'écrivain aux Hébreux dit : « Selon la loi, presque tout est purifié avec du sang ; et sans effusion de sang, il n'y a pas de pardon. » Aujourd'hui nous célébrons que Jésus ne nous a pas oublié, mais qu'il a répandu son sang pour que nous puissions avoir le pardon de nos péchés.

La circoncision de Jésus sert à nous montrer qu'il est un homme tout comme toi ou moi. Il est membre de l'alliance d'Abraham, de Moïse, de David et de tous les patriarches d'Israël. Mais nous différé, il n'a pas de péché. C'est son sang qui tout purifie : nous, notre peuple, notre monde, et toute la création. Parce qu'il a obéi à la loi et a accompli toute justice, nous avons le pardon du péché, le vrai pardon qui n'excuse pas les fautes, mais qui les efface totalement.

Parce que Jésus a accompli la Loi entièrement, nous avons le pardon du péché. Et, ensuite parce que nous avons le pardon de tous nos péchés, nous aurons une véritablement bonne année.

Une bonne année consiste en quoi ? C'est avoir la santé, la richesse, la croissance de ta famille ? C'est avoir beaucoup des amis et des connaissances, ou bien beaucoup des correspondants sur les réseaux sociaux ? Ces choses ne sont pas mauvaises, mais ils ne durent pas. La santé est fragile, la richesse est temporaire et les amis sociaux sont inconstants.

Une vraie bonne année consiste en ayant la paix. La paix qui vient de Dieu surpasse toute chose que le monde, le diable ou notre chair pécheresse pourraient nous offrir. La paix venant de Dieu n'est pas inconstante, mais c'est durable, tout au long que le Saint-Esprit est avec nous.

Si Dieu est avec nous dans son amour et sa grâce, qui peut nous menacer ? Si Dieu a ôté la culpabilité de nos péchés, qui peut nous accuser ou effrayer ? Personne.

St. Paul, dans Romains chapitre 8, nous rappelle : « Que dirons-nous donc à ce sujet ? Si Dieu est pour nous, qui sera contre nous ? Lui qui n'a pas épargné son propre Fils, mais qui l'a livré pour nous tous, comment ne nous donnera-t-il pas aussi tout avec lui, par grâce ? »

Dieu est pour nous. Il a livré son Fils pour nous, non pas dans une façon générale, mais selon chaque lettre de la Loi. Il s'est soumis à la Loi de Moïse, avec toutes ses demandes sanglantes. La circoncision de Jésus est son premier sang versé pour nous, mais ce n'est pas le dernier.

Donc, nous aurons une bonne année, non pas par notre propre force, non pas par notre justification de nous-mêmes, mais parce que nous avons la paix ce que le monde ne peut pas donner ni arracher.

Oui, bien sûr nous pouvons faire d'aujourd'hui un Jour de Grand Pardon. C'est bon, commencer l'année nouvelle avec la paix et la réconciliation parmi les hommes. L'année dernière est passée ; il faut que nous la laissions fermer, avec tous ses bonnes choses et tous ses maux. L'année nouvelle est devant nous. Il faut que nous traversions ce chemin inconnu non pas avec crainte, mais avec la paix de Dieu, parce qu'il est avec nous chaque pas de la route.

> Sur Jésus seul je fonde
> Mon bonheur et ma foi,
> Sur lui qui pour le monde
> A souffert sur la croix.
> Seul son sang est le gage
> De l'amour de mon Dieu ;

Il m'acquit l'héritage
      Promis dans le saint lieu. – LCL 606.2


Au nom de Jésus. Amen.