JOHAN JANSE VAN RENSBURG

NARRATIVE PREACHING

THEORY AND PRAXIS OF A
NEW WAY OF PREACHING

Foreword

I read Prof. Johan Janse van Rensburg's manuscript with bated breath. The book read like an exciting story and held no disappointments.

A good story succeeds in arousing the reader's or listener's interest and making him or her part of the narrative events. One reason is that the reader or listener may be surprised or even distressed by the story. Another reason is that the story interprets a part of life for us. One of the salient characteristics of stories is that they invite the reader or listener to identify with a character or possibly with the train of events. Because of all these elements stories delight and entrance us.

A successful story does not necessarily guarantee a successful narrative sermon. Prof. Janse van Rensburg has ventured to undertake a thorough study of the narrative as a homiletic form, bringing his highly refined theological and literary perceptions to bear on the task. This study was not undertaken in a vacuum; it was a scientific investigation undertaken in a congregation. People were able to report on their experiences as listeners. A narrative has to do with listening. The writer therefore gave thorough consideration to the listeners and their context. The book includes a clear account of how people listen.

Prof. Janse van Rensburg accepted the challenge of expressing a fresh hermeneutic approach in homiletic terms. The writer succeeds admirably in throwing new light on the relationship between pastoral care and preaching. The narrative sermon form is an ideal way of providing homiletic care for the audience. The writer is aware that the narrative is not the only solution open to the preacher. It is only one of a few possibilities.

This book clearly reveals that the narrative, like a good story, is not as simple as it appears at first sight. There are numerous pitfalls, and a great deal of effort, sensitivity and skill is required to write and present a narrative sermon. The writer broadly outlines the narrative sermon form. He then proceeds to colour in the outlines, forming a fresh and exciting picture. The writer/homilete never lets the reader down: he writes exciting narrative sermons.

This is a book full of homiletic insights. These insights are conveyed in simple and moving language. The book reads like a story. May every reader spend enriching hours in the company of this outstanding book.

C.J.A. Vos
University of Pretoria

Narrative Preaching
Theory and praxis of a new way of preaching

Acta Theologica
Supplementum 4
2003

Contents

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the title is misleading. It may create the impression that narrative preaching is a never-before-discovered new method of communicating the gospel of salvation. Of course, stories have been used in sermons for a very long time. Narrative preaching as an art form is in itself a much-discussed and -published theme in the field of homiletics.

Yet, in many ways, it is new. Compared to other forms of preaching such as expository preaching, thematic preaching and the homily, the narrative sermon is less used. As such, it does represent a new way of preaching for many. Furthermore, it is also new because it is only now receiving the attention it deserves in the South African context, and particularly in the Dutch Reformed Church. While narrative preaching has been acknowledged in academic circles for some time, a handful of preachers have only recently become aware of the many possibilities of this form of preaching.

The author is one example. He has been a minister for over thirty years, and although he used stories as illustrations, he never once preached a narrative sermon (per definition). From an academic point of view, he had read about the narrative, but only when he was asked to give a seminar on narrative preaching did serious research follow.

This research had two important consequences. First, it led to the preparation of a scientific article, then it got "out of hand" and ended up as a book. Secondly, the research forced the author to prepare and deliver narrative sermons in order to test the basic theory in practice. This adventure brought new dimensions to the author's repertoire and method of preaching.

It is hoped that the reader will be inspired to become aware of the possibilities presented by narrative sermons, and that the book will also make the reader aware of the fact that narrative preaching is a difficult art form. Much dedication and practice will make narrative sermons strikingly effective. Last, but not least, it is hoped that the book will assist preachers in their discovery of how to preach narrative sermons.

May God bless your preaching ministry!

Johan Janse van Rensburg
Faculty of Theology
University of the Free State
Bloemfontein

CHAPTER ONE

THE RESEARCH CHALLENGE

ABSTRACT

There is great enthusiasm concerning narrative preaching in some circles. This, and the fact that there are many wrong perceptions regarding this way of communicating the gospel, are the main causes for many unsuccessful attempts. If we are to utilise this wonderful and relatively new way of preaching, we must be able to elucidate its nature and function. This book is an attempt to further the discussion and to enhance the responsible use of narratives.

Despite all that has been written about narrative preaching — and there seems to be an abundance of literature on the subject — all has not been said that needs to be said. This may sound presumptuous, for it may suggest that this research has all the answers, the final word as it were. Certainly, this is not the intention. However, there are many aspects of the discussion on narrative preaching that are unclear or unsatisfactory. This is an attempt to further the discussion on a very important and contextual issue.

What is it that we do not know about narrative preaching? For example, why is it that narrative preaching does not receive the attention it deserves on a much broader scale? Which aspects of this issue need clarification? How should we go about structuring a narrative sermon? What makes a narrative sermon striking? It is noteworthy that few preachers know how to preach a narrative sermon. Personally, I have as yet not heard one narrative sermon that was both strikingly effective and true to a description of the character of narrative preaching. I am not even convinced that my own efforts are always successful! It feels as though I am only now beginning to have some idea of the challenge of narrative preaching.

This does not mean that there has never been a good narrative sermon. Neither does it suggest that there are no good narrative preachers. However, the good narrative sermons and the capable preachers are at present few and far between, whereas the "not-so-good" narrative attempts are outstanding. In evaluating Ellingsen's example of a narrative sermon (1990: 97-101), one cannot help feeling disappointed. If this is an example of a "good" narrative sermon, then the standard and requirements are not very high. An analysis of this sermon would reveal the many faults, causing the effort not to "rise to the occasion". The problem is that a well-structured

expository sermon could probably be much more powerful than this example of a narrative. The same can be said of other examples by well-known homiletic specialists. The following examples are found in Eslinger (1987). Charles Rice's narrative sermon for Pentecost Day has in fact very little to do with the Biblical Hermeneutics of Pentecost. Eugene Lowry's rendition of Mark 14:1-10 is nothing special. Even the renowned Fred Craddock's sermon on the conversion of Paul is disappointing. It does not deal with the real issue of conversion, but rather dwells on the significance of special revelations. E.A. Steimle's sermon "The eye of the storm", mentioned by Pieterse (1987:171-173), illustrates how difficult the narration of the text can be. Reading these and other examples may be fine, for some even impressive, but to expect all preachers to be able to deliver narrative sermons with such complex structures and difficult byways, is optimistic, to say the least. This merely emphasises the fact that a narrative sermon is neither easy nor automatically better than an expository sermon.

What is the reason for this? Is there a more important link between "the story" and the storyteller? Does the know-how or the natural talent of and for storytelling influence the effectiveness of a narrative sermon, more than some seem to think?

1. HYPOTHESES

Upon examining the many unresolved issues of narrative preaching, the following hypotheses may guide this research:

- Narrative preaching affords a wonderful opportunity to communicate the gospel in exciting new and unexpected ways, enhancing the effectiveness of the communication to elevate. There are obvious advantages in using a narrative form of preaching (See Miller 1992:104-106). One of the most prolific advantages must surely be that people of all ages love stories. When a story is initiated, says Marquart (1985:137), "the ear perks and begins to listen". The listener spontaneously leans forward as he or she is drawn into the plot. Miller (1992:104) is of the opinion that television dramas, novels, movies and plays have played an important part in preparing congregations for narrative preaching. This stresses the need for inductive preaching, because it attempts to transform the congregation from observers into participants (Lewis & Lewis 1986: 80). According to Craddock (1981:60): "Everyone lives inductively; not deductively". The problem of inductive versus deductive approaches will be discussed in chapter 2.

The inductive approach represents a different process of constructing a sermon than Perry's deductive suggestions (Perry 1973:37-39).

- Narrative preaching is more difficult than is generally accepted. This issue will receive our attention in chapter 6. The intention of discussing the difficulty of narrative preaching is certainly not to discourage prospective preachers. It is, however, essential that preachers understand that narrative preaching demands much understanding and preparation. Without this approach, efforts of preachers will be a constant source of frustration and embarrassment for themselves and the congregation.

- Narrative preaching should be considered to be but one of the possible preaching genres. This issue is dealt with in chapter 5. Personally, I am concerned that once preachers have discovered narrative preaching they are so infatuated that every sermon is approached with a narrative intention. It will be argued that this one-sided practice could jeopardise the congregation's need for variation. Furthermore, this would inevitably lead to the absence of the much-needed teaching element in preaching.

- There is the rarely discussed possibility of the abuse of narrative in preaching. Chapter 5 discusses the possibility that it could be exegetically dangerous to force any passage of Scripture into a narrative sermon. Not all of Scripture would fit a narrative form.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research will be based mainly on an analysis of the literature on narrative preaching. The literature will be evaluated in terms of the problem statement and the research hypotheses. A qualitative sample of congregational responses to a narrative sermon is included. This was conducted on a small scale, and consisted of a few sermons by the researcher in the congregation where he is a part-time minister.

We are challenged by the new approaches and by the varied possibilities in preaching. It drives us out of the comfort zone of the way in which we used to preach. Yet it rewards us with the exciting journey of discovering new possibilities and receiving the spiritual reward.

CHAPTER TWO

THE POST-MODERN LISTENER

ABSTRACT

In many ways, the post-modern human being shows similarities with the listener of two or three decades ago. This is so simply because post-modernity has been with us for longer than most people can imagine. Furthermore, modernism remains a parallel movement within post-modernity and has characterised our world-view for a very long time. Yet post-modernism has introduced many new perceptions and ideas never before encountered. The narrative preacher has a great opportunity to address the many needs and problems of the post-modern listener. The narrative approach may open up lines of communication with the post-modern human being that would otherwise not be possible. But preaching in whatever medium becomes ridiculous if we do not consider the profile of the post-modern listener.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many students of homiletics (Long 1989:55-57; Lloyd-Jones 1976:121-142; Vos 1996:59 & 1999:122; Den Duik 1995:8;14) point out that the audience should be considered both when choosing the text for a sermon, and designing the sermon. If the congregation who is listening to the preaching of the Word is not understood and approached from its own context, preaching is ineffective. This can lead to misunderstanding, frustration and failed of communication.

Opinions should not differ when it comes to taking the human being of the 21st century seriously. But who is this human being? If one were to sketch this human being, describe his thoughts and needs, what profile would ultimately emerge?

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

We should probably mention that the contemporary human being is the post-modern human being. There are, however, various reasons why such a statement is a hopeless oversimplification. Numerous variables hamper any attempt to draw clear lines for post-modern anthropology.

- From the perspective of practical theology, Biblical anthropology must be taken into account. Louw (1997;1999) laid the foundations for a pastoral anthropology. To what extent do these anthropological perspectives still apply to the post-modern human being? Is there not the

danger that a one-sided emphasis on Biblical anthropology may lead to a picture of humankind divorced from reality? Yet, on the other hand, it is also probably true that a one-sided contextual anthropology cannot be the exclusive norm for and target of preaching.

- Is the contextual human being a modern human being or a post-modern human being? Du Toit (2001:49-50) regards modernism as an integral part of post-modernism to such an extent that he is not comfortable with the term "paradigm shift" (See also Korawski 1996:2). His approach bears evidence of a modernistic criticism to reach post-modernist conclusions! Henry (1995:46) typifies such a critical attitude as hyper-modernism, not post-modernism. Similarly, Loubser (1994:160) does not regard post-modernism as a new paradigm, but as a trend. In his opinion, a distinction must therefore be drawn between pure post-modernism and a less radical post-modernistic trend. Torfing (1999:60-61), however, indicates that post-modernism intentionally attempts to attenuate modernism and undermine it as a basic motive for society.

  The flirtation with modernism is a typical strategy used by numerous proponents of a post-modern approach, in particular Lyotard (1986:79). Ouweneel (1994) calls this anomaly the irony of ironies. Is the human being of the 21st century modernistic or post-modernistic? What we have here is dialectical anthropology. Humankind is post-modern in its criticism of the modernistic scientific ideal. Nevertheless, humankind is irrevocably bound to the knowledge of modern science. We cannot return to pre-modern times. Or can we? Argued consistently, this possibility cannot be excluded! The post-modern disposal of the historical criticism may clearly imply that we must return to a pre-modern understanding of the text, as nothing exists apart from the text. Loubser (1994: 169) refers to this as "the demise of the historical-critical paradigm".

  "The author is dead" is the slogan of post-modernism. Post-modern, yet modernistic, without totally renouncing the pre-modern! Confusing, yet typically post-modern, with a multitude of narratives and an inclusive approach. Not "either - or", rather "and - and".

- There is no doubt that post-modernism has influenced the context and direction of every human science (Seidman 1994). There is therefore a human-scientific perspective on humankind in the post-modern era. There is, however, also a "post-modern" human being who has not yet been influenced by the new perspectives. Within this context this pre-scientific anthropology exhibits no uniform reality with what is presented by the human sciences under the influence of post-modernism. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that subtle and subliminal condi-

tioning influences the human being who has to listen to the preaching. We shall return to this later. There are no uniform views as to what post-modernism is. In addition to the fact that numerous definitions exist and that some experts are of the opinion that it is not possible to define post-modernism (see my discussion in Janse van Rensburg 2000: 5-6), scientific literature reveals that many researchers have been confused by certain key phrases of post-modernism such as "the client is the expert", "the death of the subject", "not either – or", rather "and — and" (i.e. more inclusive thought), and "multiplicity of narratives". Henry's (1995:38-39) distinction between a destructive and a constructive post-modernism is a speaking example of this flirtation with positive post-modern ideas. Gergen (1992:25) compares this bedazzling effect of post-modernism with "sweet poison". If a person then continues to build on these sweet-sounding statements without taking the paradigmatic context of post-modernism into account, he/she probably does not intend to take up all the philosophical baggage of post-modernism. However, by positioning himself/herself as post-modern, the person is indeed accepting the paradigmatic presuppositions of post-modernism. However, what he/she writes time and again conflicts with the core principles of post-modernism. This is one of the major causes of confusion in the debate concerning the paradigm shift (cf. Chapter 3 of Janse van Rensburg 2000).

The confusion becomes even greater if researchers do not take the strategic and academic significance of paradigmatic and epistemological choices into account. In this case, the post-modern era is confused with the post-modern paradigm without more ado (see Janse van Rensburg 2000:35-36 for the distinction between post-modern era, post-modern paradigm, post-modern strategy and post-modern criticism). Some people are of the opinion that because we live in the post-modern era, we must necessarily be post-modern.

3. HYPOTHESES

The phenomenological observation of the thoughts and behaviour of human beings, as well as the interpretation of relevant literature leads to certain hypotheses underlying this research:

• No single profile of the post-modern human being exists. Bavinck (1967: 7) experienced a similar problem: he could not exactly profile the people of his time.

- The complexity of post-modernism and an incalculable number of variables render it highly undesirable to define the post-modern human being as an address for the preaching in a simplistic and uniform manner, and to allow the preaching to be determined by this single profile.

- It is as important to take into account both the meso- and microlevels of the congregational context within which the preaching takes place, as it is essential to consider the macrolevel and globalising effect of post-modernism (Burger 1999:94-97). The person who becomes immersed in the globalisation principle in his/her preaching to such an extent that he/she fails to take the microlevel of congregational needs in a small rural congregation into account is unavoidably headed for discommunication in his/her preaching.

- The difference between a post-modern era and a post-modern paradigm can help us to reconcile the address and modes of the preaching. Firet (1968:41-102) distinguishes between the pastoral modes of *kerygma*, *didaché* and *paraclesis* (see also Jonker 1976). The various modes should still apply to post-modern man who, while preaching from a post-modern point of departure, would not be willing to accommodate such a structural approach.

- This hypothesis indicates that we must distinguish between the human being in the post-modern era and the post-modern human being. The latter human being has accepted the post-modern ideas and the former human being is influenced by post-modern thought to a certain extent or rejects it completely. Thus, we have three images of humankind: the post-modern human being, the human being who is influenced by the post-modern ideas consciously or unconsciously, and the human being who rejects post-modernism. These three categories of human beings make up the audience listening to the preaching of the Word.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- The starting-point for the research is a practical theology approach. This presupposes that the research must consider the principles of a Bible-based anthropology as well as Scriptural references to preaching. A few scientific suppositions are required to describe the choice of a practical theology epistemology.

- The danger of a fundamentalist approach to Scriptures cannot be taken sufficiently seriously (Müller 1981:11-26; Janse van Rensburg 2000: 77). In seeking Biblical guidelines for anthropology and preaching, the context, purpose and scope of the Scriptural passages concerned must

be taken into account. It therefore concerns principles rather than text-book references from the Bible. This approach aims to move away from a modernistic way of dealing with Scripture as well as from a post-modern breach of fixed norms and principles of truth. In this regard, we may consider the post-modern starting-points of "death of the author", "the collapse of unity", as well as the breach of all forms of structuralism and one truth for all (logocentrism).

- The choice of a practical theology epistemology does not exclude the important input of the human sciences, as it has often been stated that the responsible integration of human scientific input in a balanced manner does not conflict with this epistemology (cf. Brillenburgh Wurth 1955; Heyns and Jonker 1977:300; De Klerk 1978; 1981; Janse van Rensburg 2000:77). Fourie's (2001:15) fear that practice will not figure sufficiently in a practical theology approach is therefore unfounded. It is thus unfortunate that some people still pretend that this method only works with the Bible (Pieterse 1993:103-104).

- As the human sciences are recognised (consider, in particular, the important input of communication science in respect of preaching; Kellerman 1978; Pieterse 1988; 2001:23-28; Malan Nel 2001; Vos 1998a), no objection can be raised against adding empirical research as a minor and supporting component to the basis-theoretical study (Louw 1997: 176). Louw's (1998:58-59) asymmetrical model, according to which the empirical component may not dominate the research and the theological character may not suffer, is adhered to in this regard. This research, however, focused mainly on a literature study aimed at determining which guidelines can be gleaned from Scripture, subject literature and meta-theoretical literature for the purpose of finding a solution to the stated research problem.

- As art and culture made a major contribution towards establishing post-modern ideas in the minds of "ordinary" (non-philosophical) people (Ulmer 1983:40; Morawski 1996; Taylor 1998:36-54), occasional reference is also made to various art forms in order to demonstrate how the post-modern human being thinks, feels and reacts. This corresponds with an inductive approach and the incorporation of a right-brain approach to solving the problem.

5. SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES

This section highlights a few Scriptural principles which, as a frame of reference, may be of significance to the research. It is, however, impossible to do so in detail. Information from Scripture is considered as sufficient if it suggests clear principles in a systematised and interpreted form.

5.1 Scripture and anthropology

- Human beings including the post-modern human being, must be regarded as sinners (cf. Trimp 1981; Capps 1993). A human being can only be saved from sin by Christ's death of atonement.

- A human being can only find life in the real sense of the word in a personal relationship with God through Christ and the Holy Spirit.

- A human being is a being of unity. Therefore, the post-modern human being must be addressed as a total person in respect of all his/her needs (Clinebell 1987:31-34; Louw 1997:195-203).

- A human being is also a moral being who must live responsibly before God and respect his/her fellow human beings. This presupposes that repentance is still a relevant theme in the post-modern era. In this regard Louw (1997:214) refers to the role of the Holy Spirit and quotes Galatians 5:25.

- A human being is a social being, created to live in relationships. Clinebell (1987:37) refers to the church as "a caring-liberating community". The covenant creates the environment of faith within which the faithful can live together in a fellowship with beneficial results (Janse van Rensburg 1996:156-157). Vos (1996/1:64-65) rightly chooses the covenant as basic motive for constructing a homiletic theory.

- As a citizen of the Kingdom, a human being is an alien in this world and must be constantly reminded thereof, and strengthened in his/her resolve not to conform to the schemes of thought and lifestyle of this world (Romans 12).

- The human being belonging to God in Christ must be motivated and guided to maturity in faith in Christ. Louw (1997:239-294) draws a clear distinction between maturity in faith and spiritual maturity. In this regard pneumatology plays a directive role.

5.2 Scripture and preaching

- Preaching is a divine commission (e.g. Mark 16:15; Pieterse 2001:18-19).

- Preaching is the proclamation of the Word of God (2 Tim. 4:2-5; Jonker 1976:30-37).

- Preaching has a multiple purpose: to comfort (*paraclesis*), to proclaim (*kerygma*), to teach (*didaché*), to raise and to strengthen in faith (*katartizein*), and to build in the most holy faith (*oikodomein*; see also Noyce 1988:64). It must call to repentance (*metanoia*), but it must also provide the salve that will heal the wounds.

- Preaching must address the human being in his/her context, that is in his/her immediate distress and needs. Vos (1999:122) underlines the necessity of taking the listener and his context seriously, a thought developed by Gadamer (1975:350; 1976:15; see also Pieterse 2001:19-23.) Preaching may never be divorced from reality, the preacher may never, in his quest for contextual preaching, exchange the character of the proclamation of the Word for chats on everyday events and social issues. The post-modern human being questions these issues and seeks guidance. Therefore, the post-modern listener to the proclamation of the Word may not be sent home with questions only (Janse van Rensburg 2001:59). The uncertainty within which the post-modern human being lives creates a need for answers and guidance. However, the preacher must always consider the fact that his/her knowledge and understanding of God and the Scriptures, as well as our ability to communicate clearly, are not infallible and unlimited (Browne 1984:58-71). This presupposes that the congregation (listener) must be invited by means of questions to participate with a view to further discover of the meaning of the text through contextualisation (Janse van Rensburg 2001b:346).

6. POST-MODERN INFLUENCE

In order to analyse certain characteristics of the post-modern human being, the following trends will be discussed briefly:

6.1 The post-modern human being is uncertain

The supposed and euphoric certainty which humankind found in modern science was destroyed by the First and Second World Wars (Middleton and Walsh 1995:23). Shocked, they realised that the expectations of an earthly utopia created by modernism would not be realised. This feeling of disillu-

sionment and uncertainty created fertile soil for the rebirth of the philosophical thoughts of Nietzsche and Heidegger. O'Neill (1995:114) points out that the death of God (Nietzsche) and the consequential death of humankind as fruit of the post-modern onslaught deprived society of values. The death of God and the supposition that the truth is not readily forthcoming, but lies behind observable reality (Heidegger), facilitated and strengthened the post-modern rejection of logocentrism.

The scientific ideal of *modernism* therefore collapsed, while it did not prove possible to find an absolute truth in the *post-modern* paradigm. West (1996: 146-157) describes this disintegrating impact of post-modernism on the Christian faith, and points out that faith, where it still existed on the periphery of society, was subjected to the variable influence of change.

The post-modernist is no longer so sure of himself. Middleton and Walsh (1995:51) describe the disintegration of the *Homo autonomous* as "a post-modern identity crisis of immense proportions". This post-modern human being has lost his grasp on himself and on life: "The post-modern self thus exists in a perpetual state of dialectical self-contradiction" (Middleton and Walsh 1995:110). Even faith (all kinds of faith) is terminal (Taylor 1998:36-53). The following description summarises the uncertainty and fear of the post-modern era:

> And as we look around us we see crowds of cowering people huddling in the corners, shivering in desperation, as a freezing wind chills their bones (Middleton and Walsh 1995:25).

The feeling of helplessness and loss of meaning in life created by post-modernism emphasises the futility of everything. Derrida (1974:5), for instance, even describes the future as a monstrosity. Baudrillard's work, in particular, gives new life to Nietzsche's nihilism. What is left in life if a human being, in spite of all his efforts to forget about death, is forced to reconcile himself/herself with the reality of death? Nothing in fact, as there is no God and no life after death.

Moreover, life no longer offers anything exciting. The bored human being discovers that he has done, seen and experienced everything in this life. The only thing that remains for the post-modern human being to do is to play with the fragmented pieces of the disintegrated reality. "Playing with the pieces — that is post-modern", Baudrillard declared (in a personal interview, quoted by Kellner 1989:116-117). It is, in fact, an inescapable immersion in total hopelessness. Middleton and Walsh state:

> The heir of modernity's *Homo autonomous* is post-modernity's soli-
> tary soul couched in front of the television set, seeking satisfaction
> for unspecified needs and ineffable desires.

This corresponds with Baudrillard's ideology of consumer power and manipulation. Compare in this regard Baudrillard (1983:99, 173).

Amid this uncertainty, there is nevertheless the irony that the human being in the post-modern era yearns for more happiness and certainty, not only in respect of faith, but also in respect of the future. The tragic irony of the uncertainty is created by post-modernism; yet Bauman (1998:67) describes the need for certainty:

> My poor response to human-made challenges is the fault of the hu-
> man — all-too-human — faculties of one human being: myself. The
> uncertainty I suffer from is the outcome of human potency, and it is
> human potency that I need to guide me on the road to certainty.

This fundamental need of the post-modern human being and the reali-sation of the confusing impact of the uncertainty on his/her life affords preaching an excellent opportunity to address humanity in its deepest need. The message of hope and meaning in life, which is such an integral part of the gospel (see for example Ephesians 1:15-23), can be a redeeming and li-berating message for the post-modern human being. Therefore preaching to the post-modern human being must be positive (Forsyth 1964). Long (1999:12-14) describes this positive message as an eschatological *promise* (not a prediction/prophecy), which presupposes a personal relationship be-tween God and the human being. In the midst of all that is happening, God is guiding the future efficiently towards the end (that is the new begin-ning). This restores the potential for hope.

6.2 The post-modern human being is vital

If there is no meaning to life, if there is no life after death, only one option remains: to embrace life with everything it offers. *La Bella Vita* — life is beautiful. The post-modern human being is *Homo vitalis*. Life must be lived. Baumann (1998:64) uses the term *momento vivere* to indicate that life must be enjoyed because it is so short. He continues with a quotation from Delu-meau:

> Since life is so short, let us hasten to enjoy it. Since the dead body
> will be so repulsive, let us hurry to gain all possible pleasure from
> it while it is still in good health.

A speaking example of this philosophy in life is Vodacom's advertisement currently shown on TV. Every human being has approximately 2,2 billion seconds to live. Therefore every second must count ("Make every second count", according to the advertisement.) What is the consequence? The new-born baby bungee jumps from the theatre table at the end of the umbilical cord. The little face is alight with *joie de vivre* (the joy of living)!

This obsession with life is accompanied by loud and pulsating music, the art is provocative and the play (sport) is excitingly dangerous. This vital disposition is carried over to the divine service and preaching. The divine service must be "experienced", the preaching must be lively and participation is a precondition. The divine service acquires an inherently narrative character, an event, a "happening" in which the churchgoer wishes to participate. According to Schrag (1992:92), the narrative is "the structure inherent in human experience and action". He continues: "There is 'something more' than mere texts and language; there is experience" (Schrag 1992:94). Against this background, stereotyped and uninspired preaching that does not lead to participation is experienced as extremely negative, unprofessional and boring.

6.3 The post-modern human being is critical

The above-mentioned disillusionment resulted in the development of *Homo scepticus*, who questions everything with scepticism. Holy and inviolable truths and traditions no longer have the authority to enforce uncritical acceptance. In addition, modernism also resulted in the demythologisation of the truths of faith such as the resurrection and divinity of Christ (Velema 1969:12). Because reality has been relativised and there is a multitude of perspectives on truth, preaching is easily taken with a pinch of salt. There is also a greater openness to the elements of truth in other faiths. Tracy (1994:18-19) regards the start of an open-hearted ecumenical discussion with other faiths, under the guidance of prominent theologians such as Hans Küng and John Cobb, as one of the positive results of a more inclusive approach. It has therefore become difficult to accept criticism against other denominations or faiths, and the conviction is growing that everybody has a right to his/her own opinion, that there are elements of truth in other faiths, and that we should not condemn other points of view or doctrines. The song by the pop group Boy Zone "No matter what…" is a very interesting wordplay aimed at popularising this post-modern trend (everybody has a right to his/her own convictions).

6.4 The post-modern human being is globalistic-holistic and nevertheless contextually individualistic

The effect of globalism is not only that cognisance is taken of global schools of thought, trends and ways of living. Globalisation also has an eroding and transforming influence. It breaks down the fixed and hierarchical structures of modernism and shifts the emphasis from the subject's interpretation of the world to the inter-subjective analysis of world events. Keith (1997:24-25) believes that this inter-subjective and constructivistic interpretation of reality is gaining ground.

Communication media (television, radio, the printed press, as well as computer technology and the internet, in particular) played an enormous role in establishing globalism. Poster (1990:115-121) discusses the globalising effect of the internet in detail.

According to Baudrillard (1983:2), it is especially the "larger than life" reality created by television that renders human beings consumption-driven. Smart (1992:126-136) provides an illuminating discussion of the role of communication media as well as Baudrillard's interpretation thereof. Poster (1990:43-68) interprets Baudrillard's point of view in the light of the effect of television advertisements.

These communication media expose the post-modern human being to how other people live, what they possess in terms of luxury articles, and what their life and worldview is. This results in the creation of ideals (that often grow to obsessions) to be "like them". Bauman (1998b:53) describes this process as follows:

> The many watch the few. The few who are watched are the celebrities. They may come from the world of politics, of sport, of science or show business; or just be celebrated information specialists. Wherever they come from, though, all displayed celebrities put on display the world of celebrities — a world whose distinctive feature is precisely the quality of being watched — by many, and in all corners of the globe: of being global in their capacity of being watched.

Film and television stars are imitated and the role models for children are mostly those who cannot be associated with a Biblical lifestyle in any respect.

This universal urge to become citizens of the world in the most comprehensive sense of the word, however, also has an antipole. The irony of the obsession to live "like them" is that its content assumes the "wish to be myself". The individual does not want to be inhibited from living the way he/she wants to by parental authority, church doctrines, cultural tradition or

civil demands. Thus, the opposition against a subjective worldview is neutralised dialectically by an individualistic world-directedness. Tracy (1994: 9) summarises the effect of communication and consumption on the lifeworld as follows:

> We have seen our lifeworlds, in all their rich differences, increasingly colonized by the forces of a techno-economic social system that does not hesitate to use its powers to level all memory, all resistance, all difference, and all hope. Religion becomes privatized. Art becomes marginalized. All the great classics of our and every culture become more consumer goods for a bored and anxious elite.

The preaching will have to take this bipolarity into account.

6.5 The post-modern human being is whole-brain-orientated

Mention has been made of the modernistic tendency of the post-modern argumentation. It presupposes that the demand for a scientific and systematic nature will be linked to the preaching in one way or another. There therefore still exists a left-brain-orientated expectation with regard to preaching. Post-modernism is, however, also characterised by the post-structural approach and a metaphoric-narrative tendency. This implies that the post-modern human being wants to be less bound to fixed form and structure. Spontaneity and freer presentation therefore threaten to supplant the formal design of the sermon (Clements 1999:175). The structure of scopus, partes and pivot points is more easily exchanged tendentiously for a narrative approach in which the preacher does not even wish to feel constrained by the requirements of narrative preaching. The preacher does not wish to be restricted in his/her creativity. The *status quo* is sacrificed in favour of the *fluxus quo*. Tracy (1994:16) continues:

> Otherness, difference, and excess become the alternatives to the deadening sameness, the totalizing system, the false security of the modern self-grounding subject.

The right-brain-orientated tendency of the post-modern human being has undoubtedly created a need for creativity in preaching. Nel (2001:92-93) linked *creativity* to *openness* and *discretion*. This threefold approach is then inextricably linked to human relationships. As such it represents an "active reciprocity".

The need for creativity obviously also represents a need for a visually spectacular presentation. The person and actions of the preacher, his verbal and non-verbal communication, rituals, metaphors and symbols, narratives and parables form part of this expectation regarding vividness.

16

Lastly, the right-brain approach presupposes a strong need for experience in the divine service. The preaching must facilitate this experience. In an informative article, Clements (1999:181) concludes that preaching (in particular, "expository preaching") will also have to address the will and emotions. He writes:

> Any Bible exposition will have failed if it locates the intellectual content of the text, but neglects to communicate the emotional texture in which the content is embedded.

So strong is the need for (obsession with?) experience that dogma is made subordinate to experience! Gibbs (1993:190) ascribes the fact that Christian and Biblical principles are being replaced by utility principles to secularisation. If a religion "works", that is all that counts. In this regard one could speak of the epistemological pragmatism of postmodernism (Henry 1995:42).

6.6 The post-modern human being is obsessed with demolishing all forms of power

According to Lyotard (1993), power is seated in universal truth and value systems ("grand narratives"). Society and political systems use (= abuse) power to maintain these structures. Because all universal truth systems are unacceptable (objectionable), the only accepted form of power is the power used to cause the disintegration of these structures. The obvious result is that status and power no longer exercise authority. Power belongs to no individual and is seated in no structure (Lyotard 1993:261).

Similar trends are noticeable within the context of the church. People no longer listen because the church, the synod or the minister says so. Preaching has also lost much of its authority, as the listener more easily rejects the preaching or takes it with a pinch of salt. The listener no longer agrees readily with what is preached in the sermon. Alternatively, the church member simply places the sermon in his/her own context and interprets it according to his/her own narrative (the principle of a "multiplicity of narratives"). This may be the reason why the authoritative preaching style of "thus says the Lord" in general is accepted with increasing difficulty.

The above also results in a greater need for informality. The sermon must not be "preached", but "conversed". Members of the congregation must structure their own sermon from the information derived from the preaching. The same sermon can therefore contain different messages for different people.

6.7 The post-modern human being is sexually unfettered

Seidman (1994:216-223; 234-254) links the sexual libertinism, the rise of feminism and the struggle for the rights of homosexual orientated people directly to post-modernism. An interesting discussion by Melissa Raphael (1999:69-79) reveals that even the theology of Judaism could not escape the attracting force of post-modernism. She writes:

> Where modernity has left many Jews unable to theologise wholly within the boundaries of the tradition, post-modernity has questioned whether the tradition — precisely by being a living and lived tradition — is bounded at all (Raphael 1999:75).

Judaist feminist theology labels the traditional view on God as a disregard for the identity and right of women and a worshipping of maleness that is placed even higher than God. Judaist feminist theology takes the Otherness of God as a starting-point to argue that there is also a femininity to God that supersedes and terminates the patriarchal way of thinking about God.

If traditional Judaism could not even escape the assault of feminist theology, one could therefore not expect that the sexually liberated post-modern human being would easily accept a kind of theology and preaching that presupposes male chauvinism or condemns premarital sex, concubinage and homosexuality. How must one then preach in the light of the sexual freedom of the post-modern human being? How should the patriarchal cultural context of the Bible (covenant in the Old Testament; family in the New Testament) be interpreted in a contemporary manner? Should the father metaphor, for example, be replaced by more acceptable metaphors? Is preaching not being inhibited by the feminist demand for the removal of any culture-bound (culture-based) discrimination against women?

There are indeed strong indications that we should guard against adhering so strictly to the Biblical cultural context in this day and age. The post-modern human being is not willing to accept this. On 11 December 2001 a radio news report stated that a flashboard in Cape Town had to be removed at the insistence of a women's rights movement. The Christmas message on the flashboard read: "Peace on earth and goodwill to all men."

Against the background of such radical events we shall therefore have to ask: Can a sermon still proclaim, on the basis of Ephesians 5, that the husband is head of the wife and that the wife should obey her husband? Do teenagers, who are clearly becoming sexually active at a younger age, still listen to sermons on marriage and sexuality? Or have we, in fact, out of respect for (or fear of?) the rights and freedoms of the individual, stopped

preaching on these matters? Does this indeed mean that we must stop preaching on these issues or does it concern a more nuanced and well-considered hermeneutic understanding of the text? Other probing questions can also be asked. Can the church afford to remain silent on or ignore the present insistence (especially in our country) on the rights of women? Are these matters addressed in the preaching? Tracy (1994:19) calls the mission of the church to insist on the rights of women one of the crucial aspects of the proclamation. This implies that preaching to the post-modern human being will have to be well-considered and responsible.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Preaching in a post-modern era is a difficult task filled with responsibility. It necessitates a thorough knowledge of the listener and a true understanding of the needs and struggles of post-modern man/woman. However, I believe that a strict adherence to the post-modern paradigm in preaching will destroy the basic Biblical principles for preaching. Narrative preaching by its very nature could easily fall into this trap. Therefore an approach based on the Bible is considered to be indispensable.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NEED FOR CHANGE

ABSTRACT

A critical review of literature on homiletics as well as the disappointed and frustrated response of many congregation members shows a noticeable lack of faith in preaching as a communicative act. The paradigm shift from modernism to postmodernism has challenged old ways of preaching and has opened up possibilities for a much-needed hermeneutic approach and an inductive style of preaching. This challenge must be welcomed, although there could be hidden dangers in an uncritical acceptance of post-modern influences.

The much-discussed paradigm shift dramatically changed views on theology in general and practical theology in particular. For an elaborate discussion of the paradigm shift, see my book *The Paradigm Shift* (Janse van Rensburg 2000). A few important questions arise from this new way of thinking. Is the character of preaching not threatened by the paradigm shift? Is there not an imminent danger of one-sidedness, thus over-emphasising certain elements and discarding others? Is there not a desperate need for a more balanced view, moving away from absolutes, on the one hand, or relative tendencies, on the other? Does a plea for greater sensitivity and awareness of possible dangers inherent in certain processes of renewal necessarily imply a resistance against renewal in preaching? These and other relevant questions will be the concern of this chapter.

1. HYPOTHESES

This chapter is directed by a few strategic assumptions that will need testing and evaluating. They are:

- The new face of preaching could be both exciting and disconcerting. I am excited about and convinced of the need for change and renewal. Yet I have identified tendencies in this renewal process that give rise to some serious concerns. Throughout this book I have tried to steer away from absolutes and one-sidedness. I believe that a well-balanced approach to the ministry in general and to preaching in particular is crucial. My research and my personal evaluation of the current preaching scenario have created the impression that we are at the moment tossed between different polarities. Some are against renewal whereas others

are such radical reformists of preaching that little remains of what has homiletically always been considered as true preaching.

- The open-ended approach of post-modernity could threaten the true character of preaching if it is applied in its radical consequences. Post-modern protagonists are given to understand that preaching should have the same open-endedness that is represented in the philosophy of language and Derrida's explanation of *la différance*. This means that preachers should refrain from applying the message to some practical issue in society or the particular context of the individual listener. The danger of this kind of renewal will be discussed.

- Greater clarity with regard to definitions could be helpful in the discourse. On reading literature on the theme of preaching renewal, one is struck by the variety of definitions of key terminology. Concepts such as inductive, deductive and narrative are broadly defined. It will be argued in this chapter as well as in chapter 7 that such discrepancies confuse the issues at hand.

2. A NEW HERMENEUTIC APPROACH

New developments seem to favour a focus on life's problems and people's ability to cope with life's challenges. This change introduces a shift away from a deductive approach to an inductive and hermeneutic one in preaching. One of the greatest influences of such a shift must surely be post-modernism. It represents a shift away from a modernist proclamation of eternal truths to a post-modern search for meaning within the complexity of the diverse contexts of each individual. The collapse of unity (one truth for all and for all times) had to give way to a multiplicity of narratives (Janse van Rensburg 2000:9).

This shift away from a deductive to an inductive approach in preaching was noticed in 1975 when Horne (1975:20-21) ascribed a rebellion against the authority in the pulpit to secular man's rejection of absolutes:

> What is true in one situation may not be true in another. Nothing anywhere in experience, space, time, or any mode of being is, in that sense, absolute; all is relative to all else and so essentially conditioned by its relevant environment.

This deliberate shift to a hermeneutic approach started before 1975. The names of Gadamer and Ricoeur are significant in this regard, although they are not the original architects of the shift. Gadamer himself finds a strong link with Heidegger and Nietzsche (1976:4-10; 105-240), whom I

have highlighted elsewhere as the "founders" of the principles of post-modernity (Janse Van Rensburg 2000:13-18). Heidegger's discovery of the ontological significance of understanding becomes Gadamer's point of departure as he attempts to define the implications of this ontological understanding. Ricoeur also drinks from the same philosophical stream (Thompson 1981:2-4).

Although Gadamer and Ricoeur do necessarily represent post-modernism in the truest sense of the word, their thoughts correspond with the post-modern challenge of one fixed truth in a particular text (the collapse of unity). Gadamer (1976:10), in particular, challenges the scientific ideal of objective truth (Modernism) (Linge 1976:xvii), whereas Ricoeur (1978:101) declares in true post-modern fashion: "The unity of human speech is the problem today." This corresponds with the attack on the so called logocentrism: one truth for all and for all times. In this sense Ricoeur is also a post-structuralist, often referring to Lévi-Strauss and Saussure (Ricoeur 1981: 154-155).

Gadamar made the context of the listener the point of departure. The interpreter of the text meets the text with his/her critical understanding of his/her own context. True understanding (interpreting) of the text could only take place within the dynamic encounter between the text and the interpreter's understanding of his/her context. Understanding is an event, linking and interpreting the past within the context of the present. The past shapes the interpreter's present horizon, while the whole human experience of the world is hermeneutical *per se* (Gadamer:1976:15). Thus, interpreting involves a fusion of horizons. The interpreter does not try to historically understand and reconstruct the context of the text. Rather, the listener constitutes, as it were, the meaning of the text and embarks on a road of self-discovery. As Gadamer (1975:350) explains: "This means that the interpreter's own thoughts have also gone into the re-awakening of the meaning of the text."

Supporting Gadamer's thoughts, Ricoeur elaborates on the distance between the author's intention and the context of the listener. This contextual difference liberates the interpretation from its written context and the intentions of the author (Ricoeur 1976). The configuration of the author's thoughts and the interpretation of events are refigured by the reader/listener, as new meanings and imaginative constructs redefine the text (Ricoeur 1981). This line of thought corresponds literally with the post-modern slogan of "the death of the author" (See Janse van Rensburg 2000:6-7), with one important difference. Interpreting the text does not imply the adaptation of the meaning of the text to your context. Rather, it suggests that we

should let the context of the text and the intentions of the author go, thereby enabling the listener to be open to a new understanding *within* his/her own context (Ricoeur 1981:191). According to Gadamer (1976:38), the hermeneutical reflection frees us from ourselves and enables us to decide what is justified or unjustified. This liberating process allows for a creative interpretation, also made possible by the rediscovery of the principle of subjectivity: my character, my unconscious, my life (1978:7), a discovery of the true self (1978:15-16).

In his theological evaluation of these prolific thoughts on the interpretation of the text, Pieterse (2001:86-89) reiterates that we understand the message of the text from the starting-point of our own context. This means that we have are somehow prejudiced when we approach the text. However, this is not the same as reading your own context into the text.

The conclusions of Kleynhans and Kellerman (2000:84-85) could be understood within this contextual approach of the paradigm shift. They argue that the sermon should not endeavour to send the congregation home with answers (a deductive approach), but should rather cause the hearer to go home with questions, seeking the answers to these questions in their daily lives (a true hermeneutic approach). The implications are clear: it is

> not about the principles developed in the sermon, but rather about the ability to take responsibility for his/her actions (Kleynhans & Kellerman 2000:85).

Vos also develops his homiletic ideas from Ricoeur's philosophy, in particular his application of metaphors and narratives in a hermeneutic process. Vos (1999:121) speaks of a *dynamic* development of the sermon. Instead of a static enumeration of points, so typical of a traditional sermon outline, the sermon is developed from the dynamic interaction between the preacher and the listener. In similar fashion, Long (1989:95-96) sides with Craddock, calling for a questioning of the traditional approach.

The basic assumption is that the meaning of the text is never completely clear and its possibilities never fully developed. An exegetical exercise will therefore have to be supplemented by an ongoing understanding of the text. The listeners are invited to take part in this renewed process of understanding (Vos 1996:59). The point of departure here is that the listener should be taken seriously (Vos 1999:122). Den Dulk (1995:8) credits this strategy as a major contribution to homiletic discourse, although he (1995:14) believes that Vos is not radical enough in his application of this strategy.

The similarities between Vos and Pieterse and between Gadamer and Ricoeur should be obvious. Ricoeur argues that the cultural difference be-

tween the context of the text and the context of the listener can be over-come by the dynamic interaction between the preacher, the listener and the text (Vos 1996:60). To facilitate this interaction, Ricoeur separates the text from its cultural context whereas understanding the text depends on the joint of interpretation both by preacher and listener (Vos 1996:63). Thus, the listener can come to self-understanding.

3. CRITICAL EVALUATION

The enthusiasm with which these thoughts are introduced in the field of preaching is both understandable and justified. Few would deny that it could make a considerable contribution to a more effective dialogue in preaching. However, it is a pity that literature on this issue seldom reflects a critical approach. After all, many dangers are hidden within the philo-sophical basic theory underlying the new hermeneutic accents for preaching. A few remarks should prove the point:

- Kleynhans and Kellerman (2000:85) argue that the questions, with which the listeners are confronted, should be based on their response to the sermon and not on the principles pronounced. This point of view has its problems. Is there no danger that this could exclude or underes-timate God's principles as basic answers to life's problems? Fischer (1979:76) stresses "the tension between the church and the world and between God's will and our own." Nel (2000:120) argues strongly for a type of preaching that will address the basic needs of people so to de-velop their potential for growth and to effect life-changing experiences. This occurs when the principles of God's Word and a hermeneutic un-derstanding of the people's context are combined and form part of the preaching and pastoral strategy.

- It should be obvious that both Gadamer and Ricoeur embark on a road that inevitably leads to relativism and individualism. If the origin and the author of the text are not known to the interpreter, he can make his own interpretation within his/her own context. Therefore, the basic truth of a sermon may be so loosely interpreted by the listener that the message may have little to do with the intentions of the particular pas-sage of Scripture and that of the Holy Spirit. This possibility should not be underestimated. The more regularly critical elements of the message are lost or misunderstood in the process of communication, the more is it possible that a contextual interpretation by the listener could run free like wild horses, thus creating an understanding of Scrip-ture never intended by the preacher or the Holy Spirit?

- This danger is not rectified by the argument that the exposition of the Biblical text would prevent such a deranged interpretation, merely because the philosophy of Gadamer and Ricoeur is apposed to a fixed interpretation of the text. The prejudice of the interpreter, causing the interpretation of the text to be biased, secures the freedom to make an exclusively individual interpretation. Gadamer (1976:13) states: "The real power of hermeneutic consciousness is our ability to see what is questionable." This prejudice, as Gadamer (1976:38) calls it, is clearly an individual matter, as beauty is in the eye of the beholder. It reminds one of Derrida's principle of *la différance* (Derrida 1981:26-29): the truth is never here or there, but always on the horizon, always changing from person to person and from context to context.

- The importance of the strategy to take the listeners seriously is beyond dispute. Whether this is so uniquely new is another matter. Long (1989:55-57), for example, painstakingly explains the need to be aware of the circumstances of the listeners. He argues that the preacher should self-consciously embody the needs of the listeners (see also Lloyd-Jones 1976:121-142).

- Den Dulk would like to go further than Vos in taking the listener seriously. The listener should become the preacher, as it were. But is there no danger that the difference and distinction between preacher and listener could in this way be eradicated, as Den Dulk (1995:14) states? We could agree that the preacher should sometimes be the listener, and that the listeners (congregation) should become preachers. But that is totally unlike Den Dulk's intention. A type of hermeneutic approach is now swiftly developing, whereby the listener becomes the deciding factor, as in a Constructivist approach to pastoral therapy, in which the client is considered to be "the expert" (Anderson and Goolishian 1992). The preacher (like the pastoral counsellor) refrains from giving answers and solutions whereas the listener, as the interpreter, becomes the "preacher" of the message.

Martin Lloyd-Jones (1976:100-107) expresses strong convictions regarding the vocation to the ministry of the Word, calling the perception that all Christians should be preachers "unBiblical". When the clear distinction between preacher and listener is eradicated, not much remains of the vocation to become a minister of the Word. The serious responsibility to preach God's Word could only be taken up in a responsible manner if the preacher received a thorough education in subjects such as homiletics, hermeneutics and the exposition of Scripture (Jonker 1976:32-37; Lloyd-Jones 1976:115-117).

These critical remarks should, however, not be understood as a rejection of positive elements in the paradigm shift. If applied in a responsible and critical manner, these new thoughts need not oppose conventional homiletic constructs for preaching. In fact, a symbiosis is possible as will be evident the next section.

4. DEDUCTIVE AND INDUCTIVE APPROACHES

The words *deductive* and *inductive* are often used in this chapter as well as in homiletic discussions. Understanding these concepts will obviously determine the way of thinking about them. Vos (1996a Part I:144-145) gives a clear explanation of these terms. A deductive approach within this explanation is a linear and dogmatic approach. It takes the Bible as *only factor* in the construction of a sermon. It produces a kind of authoritative preaching "from above". The inductive approach, on the other hand, is not dogmatic but pragmatic. It does not take the Bible and theological theory as its point of departure, but it uses real situations and practical experiences of people (*praxis*).

Best (1978:74) warns that expository preaching may present a danger in that much of the context of the listener's life may be untouched. Admittedly, this could be a real threat, but it need not necessarily be so. In the same year of Best's publication, Black (1978:3) found that there is "an almost unanimous preference for what we call expository preaching." And indeed, as Black indicates, there is no reason why a deductive approach should not be combined with an inductive approach. Neither should a deductive approach exclude a contextual interpretation of Scripture (see also Horne 1975:19; Stott 1982:319; Daane 1980:49-56). In fact, those who prefer an inductive approach end up combining the two. There are many examples of this.

Even though Vos seems to favour the inductive approach, he also chooses a circular communicative model which does not construct the sermon as a monologue from the text, but from the interaction between preacher, listener and text/theme (Vos 1996a Part I:144-145). This means that deductive insights are included in the process of sermon formation.

Taking Craddock's strong motivation for an inductive approach to preaching as point of departure, Long (1989:81-87) seems to favour this approach as well, describing it as "one size to fit all" (1989:97). On the other hand, Long stresses the point that the sermon should contain both what the text says (suggesting a deductive element) and what the text does (inductive) so that content and intention are combined (1989:85-88).

However, when an inductive approach is stretched beyond its limits, an imbalance occurs. In this respect Long (1989:83) refers to homiletitians who became tired of hearing loosely constructed, vague and non-prepositional sermons with no clear message or guiding thought. Instead they returned to the classic notion of shifting from text to sermon on the basis of a unifying thesis or proposition (deductive).

The need for a re-definition and re-evaluation of terminology should now be evident. Within this semantic shift, *deductive* need not exclude the influences of the praxis in the construction of the sermon whereas *inductive* need not be understood as an exclusion of influences from the Biblical text in the construction of the sermon. From this point of view it is obvious that the problem with Vos' definition (see also the definition given by Best below) is that it explains a deductive approach as *exclusively Biblical* (without considering other factors such as the context of the congregation). Few preachers (myself included) have chosen a deductive approach with the explicit purpose of excluding the contextual needs of the congregation.

When the preacher stands firmly within both worlds of heavenly truths and man's needs and struggles (Eggold 1980:53), the congregation is blessed by a dynamic dialogue in preaching. Truth and confrontation need not oppose a hermeneutic approach when the communication is spoken in love (Fischer 1979:155; Fitzgerald 1980:72). Lewis and Lewis (1983:112) rightly conclude:

> Effective preaching serves as a co-operative venture between God and man, one pillar grounded in eternal truth, the other rooted in human experience.

Such a sermon should, according to them, have *both* inductive and deductive supports. Although they argue for an inductive approach (1983: 48-49), they evidently do not intend to discard the deductive element. On the contrary, they clearly want to package deductive truths in the inductive wrappings of narratives, parables, analogies and common experiences (1983: 56-60). It is the *exclusive* deductive style of preaching that is a source of concern for them (Lewis & Lewis 1983:68). Bright (1967:166-177) previously presented a similar very same argument by adding a communicative aspect of Biblical preaching to the exegetical and theological aspects, thus delivering the message within the context and frame of reference of the people's current situation (1967:174).

The issue in discussion is effectively illustrated by Butrick's inductive approach. Butrick (1992:26) argues that we can only preach on the reality of the resurrection

> by being scandalously honest about the church… We must begin
> with an open-eyed acknowledgement of our corrupted Christian
> communities. Then, just maybe, we can be surprised by the life of
> Christ living in the midst of our common lives.

In this approach our narrative is the point of departure, altered via the sermon by God's story within our reality (Butrick 1987:11-12). Our reality assists our understanding of the Biblical text (inductive) and defines our context through the text, suggestive of a deductive shift from text to context. Without relating the text to our context, there is a real threat that the congregation's narrative may stagnate in contextual absolutes (1987:18-20). Butrick's understanding of an inductive approach does not exclude a deductive shift from text to context. He vividly illustrates this by indicating the danger of over-emphasising the context as point of departure, causing four different preachers to read four different hermeneutic understandings into the same text (Butrick 1987:271). Therefore, an inductive approach does not exclude the necessity to "relate contemporary interpretation to both original meaning and, somehow, original *intending*" (Butrick 1987:274).

We may, therefore, conclude that over-emphasising either a deductive or an inductive approach may ultimately jeopardise the very essence of Biblical preaching. It is therefore regrettable that Vos, in a joint effort with Heitink and Pieterse (Heitink *et al*. 2000:63) seems to choose an inductive approach *instead of* (not in conjunction with) a deductive approach. But is it perhaps not a question of priorities? Which comes first? Fuller (1981:38-39) argues that the question whether the approach to a sermon should be from above or from below could be "a matter of national and ecclesiastical temperament". Although this may be true, Horne's (1975:19) warning, namely that the church could reflect too much the spirit of the culture and too little the spirit of its Lord, should be taken seriously (see also Lloyd-Jones 1976:137).

5. APPLICATION

Pieterse (1988:78-79) argues that the preacher reads the Bible and selects passages from Scripture according to the context within which the sermon is to be delivered. The process is therefore from the context to the text and from the text to the context of the listener. Does this represent an inductive or a deductive approach? Pieterse may have intended an inductive approach. From a different understanding of the concepts *deductive* and *inductive*, one may, however, also argue that it represents both. In that case, the context with which the preacher starts his reading and selection of Scripture is the general context of the congregation listening to the sermon. The exploration

of the text and its implications for the listener is a second move (a deductive process) whereas the application of the principles of the sermon to the specific context of the individual listener is an inductive process. This final inductive exercise is mostly initiated by the preacher's suggestions and questions, applied and interpreted by the individual listener.

6. A CASE IN POINT

When Romans 12:2 mentions that we should allow God to change us by changing our way of thinking, then it should be clear that a wrong way of thinking hampers life-changing experiences. The *principles* preached should be:

- Your way of thinking should be changed.

- Allow God to change the way you think.

- Christ ("because of God's great mercy", v. 1) is your motivation

These principles could be part of a deductive proclamation (kerugmatic), whereas the inductive questions for the hearer could be as follows:

- How does your way of thinking threaten the quality of *your* life?

- In what respects could *your* life be changed by a change in your thinking?

- How could *you* allow God to bring about the changes needed?

The inductive questions follow from the deductive truth, yet the exposition of these truths is almost suggested by the inductive reality of man's problems. This example illustrates that a choice for one particular approach would be unwise and unnecessary as both complement each other. There is therefore no need and indeed no motive for Eslinger's (1987:96) condemning a deductive approach in the strongest terms, and identifying

> an inherent bias in the whole project of deductive preaching which assumes authoritarian address of God's Word and passive reception.

Neither should there be a dogmatic approach to the question as to whether the inductive or deductive approach comes first or should be preferred. It is recommended that the preacher alternates between an inductive sermon and a deductive sermon, thereby creating the much needed variation in preaching, so highly esteemed by Killinger (1985:164-177; see also Eggold 1980:33-34; Lenski 1968:26-27).

I have argued (1999:158-167) that a hermeneutic approach is not exclusive to a post-modern epistemology. In agreement with Cox (1985:107), we will have to state that all preaching should be pastoral, seeking to comfort,

encourage or inspire the people who listen: "Our sermons should cover a broad spectrum of human need".

7. CONCLUSION

The shift from modernism to post-modernism and from a deductive to a hermeneutic approach had a prolific effect on preaching. The inherent and obvious dangers in such a shift do not cancel out the potential for renewal and enrichment of preaching. In order to steer through the dangers of a one-sided approach, a balanced approach based on Scripture is recommended. Care should be taken to ensure that inductive and deductive approaches do not become adversaries. They should rather be seen as partners in the search for a more effective communication of the Word within a post-modern context. With this condition as point of departure, there is reason to be positive about prospects for a much-needed renewal.

We have reason to be both excited and optimistic about renewal in our preaching ministry, but let's not go overboard!

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PREACHER'S NARRATIVE

ABSTRACT

For more reasons than one, it seems natural to mention pastoral care and preaching in the same category as both are essential parts of a responsible ministry. The narrative of the preacher, both his personal and family narrative as well as his pastoral interaction with his congregation, should provide the indispensable frame of reference for narrative preaching. This chapter examines the corresponding qualities as well as the dynamic interaction between both issues.

1. INTRODUCTION

Pastoral care and preaching — one cannot imagine one without the other. In fact, there are more fundamental reasons why these two issues should be considered partners. As the theme of this chapter suggests, both have healing as ultimate goal. Both are communicative acts (Pieterse 1988:36-37; Kellerman 1978:55-60; Kleynhans & Kellerman 2000:79; Chartier 1981; Firet 1968:54-59) with the potential to be used by the Holy Spirit to bring about wholeness in all dimensions of life (Clinebell 1987:14).

The proclamation of the gospel introduces a new life dispensation (Firet 1968:60). The gospel of Christ has the power to transform, creating as it were a new creation (Louw 1997:191). In Jesus Christ, life in its fullness is possible. Pastoral care and preaching could be instrumental in facilitating this much-needed wholeness.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

It should be simple to determine and describe the relationship and interaction between pastoral care and preaching. Yet, the paradigm shift and the resulting new thought on the nature of both have made this a more complicated endeavour. Preaching is no longer considered to be the explication and application of a passage of Scripture, as explained by Jonker (1976:30-57). In 1967 Reu (1967:322) referred to "modern sermons" that do not endeavour to explain the meaning of the passage of Scripture.

This has become even more prolific since the effects and influence of the paradigm shift have become evident. Different opinions on the nature of preaching will therefore have to be discussed. Similarly, the philosophy of

language and post-modern epistemologies, such as Constructivism and Social Constructionism, have initiated new approaches in pastoral therapy. There are new and honest endeavours to apply these post-modern ideas to preaching. Research indicates that these new concepts of pastoral therapy tend to influence radical changes in the approach to preaching. Epistemological points of view on these changes have become inevitable.

3. HYPOTHESES

Several assumptions are stimulated when researching the relationship and interaction between pastoral care and preaching. These assumptions will serve as research hypotheses. They are:

- True preaching of the Word creates an environment of trust, which is conducive to the initiation and progression of a pastoral process.

- The pastoral needs of the listeners become the inductive frame of reference for narrative preaching. The pastoral activities of the preacher position him/her as facilitator of God's encounter with the congregation's narrative. Without this pastoral context, narrative preaching (in its essence an inductive approach) would be impossible.

- Integrity is an unconditional prerequisite in both preaching and pastoral care, as the potential for healing could be seriously jeopardised by a spirituality of mistrust.

- The kerugmatic moment of preaching could be indispensable in a *kairos* moment of pastoral care. This should (and indeed could), however, always be done so as not to jeopardise any of the principles for pastoral care, counselling and therapy. Narrative preaching, by its very nature, could facilitate such an empathetic approach.

- There is a real threat that a one-sided emphasis on the kerugmatic element in pastoral care could seriously threaten a hermeneutic approach, turning pastoral care into a one-way communication. Many understand Thurneysen's kerugmatic model to be an example of such a one-sided monologue. However, this was not Thurneysen's intention. In fact, Thurneysen (1968:12) regarded pastoral care as an extension of preaching whereas the kerugmatic element in pastoral care occurs by means of *discussion* (my emphasis). According to Thurneysen (1976:129), this element of discussion differentiates between pastoral care and preaching. He should therefore at least receive credit for his endeavour to point out the partnership between preaching and pastoral care. If used correctly, narrative preaching could combine the kerugmatic moment with the hermeneutic approach.

- If the one-sided emphasis on the *kerugma* could jeopardise the herme-neutic character of pastoral care, then, conversely, the true character of *preaching* could become a multi-narrative therapeutic process if a thera-peutic application of the narrative approach to preaching is over-emphasised. The healing and therapeutic powers of preaching and pas-toral care could be enhanced *without* such a one-sided approach. This chapter argues with Vos (1996 Part I:146-147) who chooses to use the concept *kerugma* (proclamation) as well as others such as *leitourgia*, *koinonia* and *diaconia*; these concepts require the congregation's response to the sermon (see also Firet 1968:60-109). The combination of these concepts saves the proclamation of the gospel from one-sidedness and an abuse of authority.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research aims to evaluate literature on pastoral care and preaching, written from various epistemological points of view. The researcher takes up the argument, explained in another work (Janse van Rensburg 2000:52-58), that opposing paradigms cannot be reconciled without causing confu-sion or without seriously jeopardising the true identity of either one or the other. An analysis of the literature will reveal that the true identity of preaching can be held intact and simultaneously enriched by new develop-ments in pastoral care and preaching, caused by the paradigm shift, pro-vided that a post-modern *epistemology* is not accepted. The research therefore endeavours to facilitate a more definite and clearer formulation of the inter-action between pastoral care and preaching.

5. THE DYNAMICS WITHIN PREACHING AND PASTORAL CARE

Similar to pastoral care and counselling, preaching takes place within the heart of the congregation. Horne (1975:101-102) refers to this as "corpo-rate man". It is within the context of the congregation that Christians dis-cover their true identity and move towards their destiny in Christ. This implies that the communicative acts of both preaching and pastoral care are influenced and determined by the promises of the Word of God, secured in the covenant.

Vos (1996 Part I:64-65) rightly chooses the covenant as theme for ho-miletic theory. Contrary to the argument that the choice of such a theme may force a text interpretation of the Biblical text, Vos insists that the co-venant is a central theme in both the Old and the New Testaments. He

argues that the covenant provides a communicative framework for individual and social interaction within the congregation. Within this framework God communicates with His people, affording both the individual and the Christian community the opportunity to react on receiving God's Word. Thus the covenant reveals perspectives to and of the Kingdom of God while the eschatology operates as an important link in God's communication.

Only within the covenant can the hope of eschatology be understood, the hope of new things to come in this life and the next be kept alive (Pieterse 1988:38-39; for the implications of the covenant for pastoral care, see Janse van Rensburg 1996). In fact, the eschatological character of preaching and pastoral care makes the message relevant and creates the power of healing; an anticipation and realisation of things to come (Fischer 1979:25-27; Louw 1997:85-98). Horne (1975:49) quotes Paul van Buren on this issue:

> God's Word is life itself. For a world that lies in death, the Word is the resurrection and the life... The Word of God is far more relevant than we could ever be, and if we will be obedient to the Bible, truly obedient, then we shall find ourselves far more deeply involved in the lives of our people and in situations than we ever were when we were anxious to be relevant.

From this starting-point we may identify several basic elements which form part of both preaching and pastoral care:

5.1 A pastoral spirituality in preaching

A contextual approach to preaching is cultivated by a true pastoral interest in the lives of the people to whom the message is preached (Black 1978:3-6). This includes a knowledge of the people, their working conditions and their homes, their struggles, pleasures and pastimes, something which, according to Black (1978:18) can only be acquired by visiting the people, listening to their narratives, and talking to them (see Jabush 1980:54).

This pastoral interest is not something obvious, something to be learnt. Rather, the interest flows naturally from a pastoral spirituality, which should be an integral part of the preacher's person. Lloyd-Jones (1976:109) describes this as "something exceptional" and "an unusual degree of spirituality." Not only does the pastoral spirituality define the nature and character of the sermon's content, but it should also shine through in the spiritual atmosphere of the sermon and the worship service.

Jabusch (1980:52-53) makes a valid point in explaining the effect of such a pastoral spirituality on the preacher. The more the preacher gets in

touch with the needs of his people, the more responsive the preacher becomes to the Word he/she is to preach. Thus the happiness and health of the people is inseparably linked to the caring spirituality of the preacher.

5.2 A move towards wholeness and healing

Horne (1975:106-108) pleads for a redemption of corporate man (by means of) and the individual (in pastoral counselling). Preaching and pastoral care within the context of the covenant clearly uphold a definite instruction to obey the demands of the covenant (Pieterse 1988:60-61). The purpose of God's communication via preaching is to bring people into the realm of the salvation which Christ gives freely, thus changing peoples' lives from unbelief to faith, from selfishness to service, from retribution to forgiveness, from hate to love, from war to peace (see Pieterse 1988:41), thereby establishing the kingdom of Christ in their daily lives.

Both partners support a gradual but definite move to a full life, made possible by Christ's first coming to this earth (John 10:10; Clinebell 1987: 28-29). Louw (1997:239-241) refers to this spiritual growth as maturity *in faith*. This implies a lifestyle, a spirituality of moral integrity not only in matters of personal ethics (Janse van Rensburg 1999: 161-166 & 2000:65-69), but also within the context of so many complex social issues (Fuller 1981:39; Horne 1975:107). Where the reconciliation through Christ, the coming of the Kingdom of God or the covenant are the basic motives (basic motivation) of preaching on moral issues and the demands of the covenant, there need not be any fear of moralising (Janse van Rensburg 1991:1-27). In fact, the covenant gives preaching the right to make a moral appeal to both individuals and the congregation (Vos 1996a Part I:97). Because Christ is the head of the covenant and salvation, and healing comes through Him alone, the Holy Spirit appeals to the people of the covenant to take up their position in Christ and to continue the struggle against sin (Vos 1996a Part I:117).

If the aim of pastoral care and preaching is to facilitate healing and growth to maturity, it follows that the two basic elements of teaching and conversion should complement each other. Black (1978:6-9) explains that conversion is often required before teaching and that teaching is often essential before conversion. To fulfil the goals of preaching (and pastoral care), the preacher is required to preach healthy fear as well as punishment and sin. "You will never save a man by making his sin a casual thing, something a little regrettable…", states Black. Fischer (1979:48-49) identifies another irreplaceable function of teaching, namely to empower people to discern the Word for themselves. This should also include the responsibility and em-

powerment of people through preaching to serve one another with their gifts. The covenant provides the framework and motivation for this service to God and His kingdom (Vos 1996a Part I:123).

5.3 The need for pastoral integrity

The aim of change and the need for moral integrity as explained above does, however, not imply perfectionism. Neither does it imply that the preacher must be perfect in all respects. On the contrary, the thought of a perfect and unblemished preacher may cause a rift between preacher and congregation, thus undermining the efficacy of the sermon (Jonker 1976:21).

Again, this does not make the need for integrity redundant. Vosloo (1985:98) argues that, although the prophets and apostles were not perfect people, they had to have spiritual power and an inner conviction, which could only be the result of a personal encounter with God. Calvin is a good example of the point under discussion. Although he had no striking presence, nor a rich and sonorous voice or a flowing eloquence, he commanded attention for his sermons by means of his sustained intensity of conviction (Dargan 1974 Vol. 1:449). Clearly, the integrity of the preacher is inseparably linked to his spirituality or spiritual maturity.

When Fuller (1981:9) talks of an intellectual integrity, he stresses the importance of an academic and responsible approach to the exposition and preaching of the Word. This implies that the preacher should be guided by the structure of the specific passage of Scripture in preparing a sermon. The preacher should therefore not allow practical considerations to force a fixed structure on each sermon (Fuller 1981:38). Neither should a preacher be sluggish in collecting the correct information for the message. Loyd-Jones (1976:115-116) warns that the preacher should never be caught giving the wrong information about the specific passage of Scripture or other relevant information. Stott (1982:128) refers to Calvin in this regard, who, saying goodbye to the pastors of Geneve a month before he died, exclaimed: "I have not corrupted one single passage of Scripture. Nor twisted it as far as I know…"

"We have to prove that Christianity can be lived, simply by living it", states Black (1978:11). Pastoral integrity within this context implies that the preacher should live and illustrate what he/she preaches. Taking lessons from the history of preaching, Dargan (1974:109) concludes that the faulty living of the preacher threatens the effectiveness of the preaching act, creating a disastrous effect beyond measure. Pearson (1959:70-83) argues along the same lines. Writing about the credentials of the preacher, Pearson con-

cludes that the preacher's personality (emotionally, mentally and spiritually) should be soundly consistent, while his lifestyle should be characterised by his Christian identity. According to Pearson, the listeners demand proof of the authenticity of the material preached. This "challenge of the pew", as he calls it, reflects the true need of people to receive the bread of life. Such authenticity is conducive to powerful preaching.

This includes an honesty to preach what is lived, argues Black (1978:23):

> If you only know about punishment, *preach punishment*. If you only know about sorrow and comfort, *preach sorrow and comfort*. If you only know about grace and forgiveness, *preach grace and forgiveness*. Only what is real to you can be real to anybody else.

One may question the wisdom of Black's application, but the principle remains true: only what is real to you could have integrity for the people. This approach calls for honesty and sincerity, both critical elements of integrity. In stressing the importance of sincerity and honesty, Nel (2000:119-121; 128-132) pleads for a pastoral openness of the preacher, a sincere self-disclosure that will highlight the humanness and intentions of the preacher (see also Janse van Rensburg 1991:264-270). The personality of the preacher definitely influences the character and quality of preaching (Nel 2001). Stott (1982:270-271) is convinced that sincerity attracts crowds to listen to a particular preacher. He concludes: "Thus, hypocrisy always repels, but integrity or authenticity always attracts."

The integrity dealt with thus far referred to preaching. It is obvious that trust and integrity are part of a counselling relationship and process. Clinebell (1987:132-133) explains that the pastoral counsellor must be able to develop on his or her own spiritual resources. "Therefore, our own spiritual growth is essential to our effectiveness as pastoral counselors." As in preaching, not perfectionism but definitely an openness to the presence of the Holy Spirit is implied in counselling. As Clinebell (1987:133) rephrases:

> The work of an effective pastoral counselor springs from, and is sustained by, a deep and continues interior transaction with God (see Louw 1997:208-214).

The interactive dynamics of preaching and pastoral care should be obvious from the above discussion. A preacher with integrity will encourage people to seek his or her help in pastoral matters, whereas a pastor with integrity will stimulate people to listen to his or her message.

5.4 Authority for the pulpit and the consulting room

Horne (1975:20) mentions a rebellion against authority in the pulpit, ascribing it to man's modern spirit of finding authority within himself/herself. Nel (2000:124-128) even refers to a resistance against authority by preachers. Only a pastoral spirituality, reflecting sensitivity, love and compassion in the preacher's manner of preaching, the choice of words, *et cetera* (the whole psychology of the audience) can counteract such rebellion against authority. Black (1978:7-8) adds that people's rejection of authority should not be suppressed but rather addressed by means of the authority of truth, the truth of God's Word. This includes the need for authority in preaching, as preaching with authority enhances witnesses and doers of the Word (Fischer 1979:41), thus creating an extension of preaching into the field of church life and pastoral care. A true pastoral spirituality prevents rebellion against authority. For it is the spirit of love, acceptance and understanding (Hiltner) that defines authority as an instrument of healing. We will have to conclude with Nel (2000:125) that there is an inescapable task for authority in the pulpit.

Authority in the pulpit, yes. But what about authority in the pastoral counselling process? Certainly, a domineering and insensitive authoritarian approach in counselling does not reflect the true spirituality of Christ, neither could it ever be effective in any counselling process. However, the pastoral counsellor has authority and should indeed carry out such authority. Pastoral authority is derived from the God-given calling to be a shepherd to His people (Ezechiel 33) and it is directed towards wholeness.

Authority is about healing, not power. It is the healing power of God's message that puts the pastor in a position of authority, representing Christ's love and concern for people in need. Without this authority the pastoral counsellor becomes a puppet in the counselling process, functioning merely as facilitator of the narrative process of the individual (as in Constructivism).

6. INTERACTION BETWEEN PASTORAL CARE AND PREACHING

An analysis of history reveals that the one-sided preaching on doctrinal matters and relevant controversies has always had an adverse effect on the quality and effect of preaching as well as on the pastoral character of the preacher as pastor. One of the prolific negative effects was that it resulted in a moralistic kind of preaching that was not conducive to a pastoral spirituality (Dargon 1974, part 2:399, 437).

This mistake, recurring from time to time in history, should not be repeated in the future. Unfortunately, if the findings of Burger (1994:88-92) are correct, the church has not yet succeeded in freeing itself from the grip of a kind of intellectual (dogmatic) and moralistic preaching. According to Burger, we will have to pay serious attention to a kind of preaching that will highlight the need and possibilities of God's alternatives for church and society, if our preaching is to be relevant and effective. Pieterse (1988:34), however, points out that sermons with a learning content are not restricted to preaching on doctrinal matters. In the broader sense of the word, sermons with a learning content empower the believer to make the Word relevant within the context of today's complexities. This is confirmed by Lammens (1959:121) who found that young people detest dogmatic sermons, yet crave sermons with a learning content. Even sermons on the Confessions of Faith, for example *The Heidelberg Catechism*, need not (and indeed should not) exclude the practical application of confessional truths for the believers' spirituality *coram Deo* (Guillaume 1944:175; note the date!).

New developments seem to favour a kind of preaching away from doctrinal matters, focusing on life's problems and people's ability to cope with life's challenges. This change represents a shift from a deductive approach to an inductive and pastoral approach in preaching.

For some it even represents a therapeutic element in preaching. Kleynhans and Kellerman (2000:74-81) argue that different strategies of the narrative approach to pastoral therapy could be used to pursue the issues developed in the sermon. Strategies such as externalisation, unique outcomes, the "not knowing" approach, and deconstruction cannot be used to change the character of the sermon, although the intention of the sermon should be to deconstruct the life of the hearer (Kleynhans and Kellerman 2000:83).

There is no doubt that much of what has been said regarding a shift to a pastoral preaching of the Word should be welcomed. However, serious problems in the academic motivation for this paradigm shift as well as some of the consequences of such a shift should be evaluated. This research argues that much of the true character of preaching *could* indeed be lost in the process of relentlessly pursuing a hermeneutic approach to preaching. The following important issues are mentioned briefly:

- Kleynhans and Kellerman do not intend changing the true character of preaching into a therapeutic session (see Kleynhans & Kellerman 2000: 81). However, the question is whether an uncritical acceptance of a postmodern epistemology does not threaten the true character of preaching. Is the character of preaching not sacrificed in the process when it is concluded that the hearer should be sent home with questions rather

than answers? Surely, the nature of preaching requires the preacher to give God's answers to life's questions. For Reu (1967:323) the exposition of Scripture is so inseparably linked to the true character of preaching that "a sermon that does not (give an exposition of Scripture) has no right to exist." In this regard Pieterse (1988:13) correctly concludes that the sermon communicates God's good news for today's problems. Only in Christ can people in dead-end situations and without knowing how to deal with their hate and fears find the courage to live anew with faith, love and hope.

The Bible and the sermon are not to be used as a handbook for life. Rather, the sermon can provide *principles* as guidelines that should be part of a Christian spirituality. But this is where the problem lies. According to Kleynhans and Kellerman (2000:85), it is *not* about principles, probably because principles suggest answers, but the sermon should rather pose questions. Clearly, this should be considered a forced effort to uphold the hermeneutic approach of Social Constructionism (Social Constructionism is an epistemology of Post-modernism) in preaching. It is a fundamental mistake to accept that the stimulation of questions *excludes* God's principles as basic answers to life's problems. Fischer (1979:76) links the everyday context of people's needs to what he calls "the tension between the church and the world and between God's will and our own." Nel (2000:120) argues strongly for a kind of preaching (which he calls "personal preaching") that will address the basic needs of people so that there is potential for growth resulting in life-changing experiences. This happens when principles of God's Word and a hermeneutic understanding of the people's context are combined and are made a part of preaching and the pastoral strategy.

I have argued (1999:158-167) that a hermeneutic approach is not exclusive to a post-modern epistemology. A hermeneutic approach in preaching and pastoral care need not oppose a true exposition of Scripture. In agreement with Cox (1985:107) we will have to mention that all preaching should be pastoral, seeking to comfort, encourage or inspire the people who listen. "Our sermons should cover a broad spectrum of human need", says Cox.

- The sermon should address both the cognitive and the emotive aspects of people's existence (Pieterse 1988:33). Best (1978:74) warns that expository preaching (a deductive and therefore a cognitive approach) may present a danger in that much of the context of the listener's life may be untouched. A deductive approach should, however, not exclude a contextual interpretation of Scripture, for without knowledge of the

immediate needs of the congregation and crucial issues of the listener's frame of reference (Horne 1975:19; Stott 1982:319; Daane 1980:49-56), narrative preaching becomes a farce.

Bright (1967:166-177) explains a similar argument by adding a communicative aspect of Biblical preaching to the exegetical and theological aspects. It is the communicative character of Biblical preaching that brings the deductive insight within the context and frame of reference of the people's present situation. Because the Bible is relevant,

> no thanks to us; it is not up to us to make it relevant. When we attempt to do that, we usually succeed in cheapening the Bible. On the other hand, we certainly do not wish to make the Bible irrelevant! (1967:174).

7. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this chapter was to highlight the interaction between preaching and pastoral care. In light of the above argumentation and points of view, we may draw the following conclusions:

- The interaction between pastoral care and preaching has been established.

- The pastoral spirituality determines the character of the content and style of preaching. Narrative preaching has a double function in this regard: it serves as an excellent vehicle for communicating a pastoral spirituality and it facilitates a fusion of the people's narrative with God's narrative in Jesus Christ.

- Pastoral interest makes a hermeneutic approach in preaching possible, workable and effective. Without it, narrative preaching could never be effective.

- Pastoral integrity is an indispensable characteristic for the preacher. Without integrity no sermon could be effective, neither could any counselling be successful.

- The pastoral nature of the congregational context enhances the link between expository elements in the sermon and the hermeneutic contextuality of the needs of today's people. Within the covenant the preacher is also the pastor, leading God's flock to green pastures and an abundant life.

- The paradigm shift highlighted several dangers in a one-sided exploration of the deductive approach to preaching. However, an over-enthusiastic application of the therapeutic strategies of Constructivism

and Social Constructionism or the philosophy of language to the communicative act of preaching may seriously jeopardise the true character of preaching.

The merging of the preacher's narrative and the congregation's narrative with God's narrative is essential to preach in a narrative style.

CHAPTER FIVE

ONE OF MANY POSSIBILITIES

ABSTRACT

There seems to be a tendency among younger ministers to use only one style of preaching. Narrative preaching is probably the most popular choice. Although enthusiasm for narrative preaching is to be welcomed, it is disconcerting that there is the danger of exchanging one stereotype (thematic or expository preaching) for another (narrative preaching). To maintain excitement in the preaching and listening process, variation is the key to a more involved deliverance and acceptance of the gospel. But if one particular style is more compatible with a particular preacher, it is advised to "stick with what you know best".

Enthusiasm for narrative preaching runs high. Lowry (1980:16) unconditionally champions for a support of expository preaching with the narrative approach. This implies that he would like all sermons to be narrative. It is, however, an important premise of this research that narrative preaching is but one of the homiletical genres that could be used in communicating the gospel.

Many obvious arguments are used to boost the use of narrative preaching: the power of storytelling, the natural inclination of people to get involved in a story, the inductive nature of narrative preaching, etc. Runia (1983:30) identifies the Biblical character of preaching as an event, that is not merely the communication of facts, but a cognitive communication of facts that makes an appeal to people to respond.

The cognitive aspects of preaching necessitate a life response. I believe that one of the strongest arguments in favour of narrative preaching is that traditional preaching methods tend to be almost entirely left-brain-structured, except for a few stories, illustrations or metaphors tossed in from the side, whereas many people are more right-brain-inclined or even predominantly right-brain-orientated. Narrative preaching offers the opportunity to communicate with members of the congregation who are not predominantly reason-inclined. Hamilton (1992:105-106) tends to disagree with this, calling it a separation between reason and faith. However, this is not the intention, neither could the reality of predominance of left-or right-brain orientation be denied or ignored (see, for example, Janse van Rensburg 1998:65-78).

There are many advantages of narrative preaching and the need for narrative preaching should be undisputed. Venter (2002:7-8) agrees that narrative preaching opens up wonderful and exciting new possibilities (see also Kellerman 1990:4) but stresses the point that this is one of many possible approaches which is not sufficiently considered. Venter warns that the neglect of this diversity or the over-emphasis of the narrative could lead to an undesirable under-exposure of the revelationary and kerugmatic character of preaching (i.e. all kinds of preaching!).

We will therefore have to conclude that preachers should refrain from preaching narrative sermons at every opportunity. The preacher should consider many variables when he has to decide what form of preaching to use. These are, to mention but a few,

- The nature of the text, determined by the literary genre, be it historical, poetic, apocalyptic or otherwise.

- The natural inclination of the preacher, be it left-brain dominant or right-brain dominant. A preacher who has the talent to deliver a good expository sermon may use a narrative approach for variation, but should not change his preaching style for a narrative approach if he is better at expository preaching. Black (1978:23) has some good advice: Stick to what you know best!

- The cultural context will play a decisive role in the choosing a narrative approach. In the African context stories of liberation, poverty, gender and race are as natural as rain (Healey & Sybertz 1996:21). Mitchell (1987:39-63) discusses the narrative form in the Afro-American tradition and illustrates how effectively this form of preaching suits the black tradition.

- The demographic composition of the congregation may be a deciding factor. A congregation with predominantly older people will perhaps not accommodate so easily to a style of preaching other than the one they have grown accustomed to, whereas a younger congregation consisting of students and adolescents would thrive on a narrative approach. Or is it a proven fact that all people respond positively to a narrative approach because of man's natural inclination to be caught up in a good story? Would it not depend on the effective manner of storytelling?

- What about individual preferences? I have been preaching expository sermons for as long as I have been preaching. Once my research on narrative preaching had developed considerably, I decided that it was time to preach a narrative sermon in the congregation I currently minister to. The response to my narrative sermon proved that people have mixed

feelings about it. Most felt "that it was just as satisfying" as the expository sermons. Some preferred the expository sermons, but none mentioned that the narrative approach was better or worse. When Vos (1996:181) concludes that narrative sermons can capture the attention of people more than structured sermons can, it must be noted that this is not always the case. We have to conclude with Eslinger (1987:29) "[T]hat story is not the only appropriate homiletical medium for Biblical preaching."

If narrative preaching is introduced because of the need for change and variation, then that need for variation should prevent us from abandoning expository preaching and the occasional thematic sermon.

CHAPTER SIX

NOT SO EASY DOES IT

ABSTRACT

Arguing from the point of view that good narrative sermons are few and far between, the first hypothesis of this chapter is that narrative preaching is more difficult than is generally accepted. One of the reasons for the absence of effective narrative sermons is that narrative means different things to different people (see chapter 7).

I suspect that narrative preaching is often unconditionally idealised as the one and only method of preaching. Ford (1994:9-15) develops his model for evangelisation on "the oldest, most natural way to reach people." The perception that narrative preaching is the most natural method of communication causes preachers to enthusiastically embark on narrative preaching without really understanding and mastering the true nature of this homiletic genre (see Lischer 1984:29).

One case in point is the otherwise handy book of Eugene Lowry (1980), who is an authority on narrative preaching (see his many books listed in the bibliography). He makes a few sweeping statements about narrative preaching that could make his readers believe that this genre of preaching is the easiest and most natural method of communicating the gospel (Lowry 1980:88). Lowry criticises the standard form of preaching as he supports narrative preaching as the only natural and true form of preaching (1980: 10-14).

The appraisal of the narrative sermon generally stems from a dissatisfaction with standard methods of constructing a sermon. It appears that people are not tired of preaching; rather, they are tired of the standard and stereotype preaching (Macleod 1987:11). Runia (1983:10-11) is of the opinion that criticism of preaching is not at all unfounded. He refers to studies indicating that very little of the sermon content is remembered.

Standard methods of constructing a sermon are often described as forced and unnatural (see Buttrick 1994:82; Eslinger 1987:17-19, 23). It appears that these is general dissatisfaction in America with topical preaching (Eslinger 1987:28). This is understandable, simply because topical preaching was the most popular form in the preaching history of America (Daane 1980:52-53). However, the general practice of a sermon structure consisting

of three points (Craddock 1981:56), typical of a deductive approach, is perceived to be ineffective and outdated. Craddock (1981:100) calls this practice "paralyzing" (see also Lowry 1990:68).

Ellingsen (1990:7-8) argues along the same lines. He explains that the dissatisfaction with standard forms of preaching (e.g. expository and didactic) have raised the interest in narrative preaching, whereas the American culture seems to suit this approach to preaching. McClure (1991:137) identifies numerous cultural codes of preaching, of which many could be described as narrative instruments: analogies, metaphors, proverbs, etc. There is a need for imaginative preaching as in the narrative approach, writes Ellingsen, and one should address the need rather than bypass it.

In true dialectical fashion Lowry works with the concept that narrative preaching "is much easier than you think", although he admits that non-narrative passages of Scripture must first be translated (reformed) into narrative form (1980:88). Lowry admits that it is not so easy to provide dramatic, jolting or funny reversals Sunday after Sunday. The suggestion that narrative preaching may be more difficult than it was perceived to be in the past, came less than a decade later for Lowry when, in the introduction to his practical guide to narrative preaching, he wrote:

> Perhaps it used to be easier to preach on the parables; at least the task was clear in my mind when I graduated from seminary thirty years ago (Lowry 1993:19; first print 1989).

In 1997 (*The sermon*) he even wrote about "the lazy preacher" who has "up-front needs", suggesting that the creative process of narrative preaching requires more effort than the lazy preacher would be willing to pursue.

Lowry (1980:9-16) also stresses the point that preaching (and narrative) is an art form and that preachers are artists. True! But any artist will tell you that "producing" an artwork is a laborious and difficult task, with many failures and few successes. This is sufficient proof that it simply is not that easy to prepare and preach a good narrative sermon! According to Lowry (1980:14), a narrative sermon is all about "the plot". Finding that plot in non-narrative passages of Scripture is the kind of challenge that makes narrative preaching more difficult than we think (Hamilton 1992:110). Besides, many a plot in a (secular) story falls flat on its face! There is no guarantee that this will not happen in a narrative sermon. Furthermore, the plot is imbedded in the movements and structures of the sermon (Butrick 1987). Venter (2002:9) rightly asks whether every sermon can indeed be analysed and explained in terms of movements and structures.

It is obvious that narrative preaching does not come naturally, at least for most of us. In this regard Lowry's understanding is different. He argues that, although many may have doubts about their narrative skills, they will be surprised at their narrative skills in non-preaching activities. This in fact proves that they have a natural and latent ability to *preach* in the narrative art form. It comes more naturally than preachers seem to think and it is in fact not such a rare ability, according to Lowry (1990:74-77).

However, Jones' (1966:114-115) warning that narrative preaching should be done by preachers who have considerable dramatic ability, imagination and skills in the technique of storytelling, if it is not to be insipid and trite, should not be ignored. This does not necessarily imply that the preacher should also be an actor, dramatising the narrative in such a way that the pulpit becomes a stage and the message is reduced to nothing but a play (see Daane 1980:75). However, the ability to tell a story and the skill to re-arrange the movements of the story in a narrative structure cannot be denied. If the storyteller does not narrate the events in a captivating manner, the new approach will inevitably be met with less enthusiasm.

Upon evaluating the various models for narrative preaching, it becomes abundantly clear that suggestions on form and movement are complex and numerous. Browsing through the informative writing of Vos (1996:180-203), one is struck by the enormous variety of possibilities and requirements that have to be considered in order to make our narrative sermon effective. This is especially true of Lowry's suggestions in his two books, in which various approaches are suggested (1980; 1993).

The challenge of narrative preaching is not only emphasised by the need for talent, ability or the willingness to attain such qualities by means of study and exercise, but also by the nature and structure of the narrative form itself. Even Lowry's various moves, complex in themselves, have small subdivisions that have to be dealt with. In order to include all these aspects, narrative preaching should, therefore, be approached with considerable preparation and tons of inspirational and creative ideas in order to make it an attractive and successful preaching experience. This challenges the general impression of narrative preaching as being easy "because you just have to tell a story". Preachers, who think that the effort of an exegetical process in expository preaching can be avoided by preaching a narrative sermon, are misinformed and in for a surprise.

The above clearly indicates that narrative preaching should be taken out of its idealised context. We must optimistically, yet realistically, investigate the opportunities and *challenges* of this genre of preaching if we are to develop it into an effective instrument for communicating the story of God's

involvement with the many stories of people's needs. Ellingsen (1990:94) justifiably warns:

> It takes practice. We must put aside our inhibitions, become actors
> in relating these accounts, learn how to weave a story.

Lowry mentions: "[T]he artistic skill required for choosing metaphors will certainly make new demands on the preacher" (Lowry 1993:63; see also Buttrick 1987:25). This statement is made by an author who describes narrative preaching as "natural" and "easier than you think"!

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Contrary to belief, narrative preaching is not easy. The warning is clear: don't think that you can escape the laborious preparations for an expository sermon by seeking refuge in the easy telling of a story. Narrative preaching will probably demand even more preparation, because it requires the skill to artistically arrange historical and exegetical information in such a way that the plot keeps the suspense alive, a skill (we might add) that few have mastered. But don't be put off by that. In the end, your preaching will be enriched and you will be well rewarded with satisfaction.

CHAPTER SEVEN

USED AND ABUSED

ABSTRACT

It has been suggested that there are inherent dangers in the new approach to preaching. Narrative preaching is unfortunately not protected against such abuses. Some of the dangers are critically discussed to make the preacher aware of the kind of mistakes that could give narrative preaching a bad name.

The many possibilities of abuse are inherent in all genres of preaching. In no way does this imply that the threat of abuse will make the various genres redundant. The Latin expression is applicable here: *abuses non tollit usum* (The abuse does not cancel out the use).

Narrative preaching is therefore not excluded in this discussion. Miller (1992:107-109) identifies some extremely important dangers and drawbacks inherent in narrative preaching, namely:

- There is no guarantee that the narrative will cause the correct identification with the characters and events of the story.

- Narrative preaching may eventually cause the loss of teaching (*didache*) in the church.

- Narrative preaching may amaze, fascinate and entertain more than it may effect change in people's lives.

- The effectiveness of narrative sermons is bound by the creative capabilities of the listeners. We may add: it is also limited by the creative capabilities of the preacher.

It is important to highlight and discuss some of the most common and dangerous abuses.

1. MORALISING

The above clearly implies that the need to make the narrative sermon more dramatic and effective may lead to all kinds of unwanted methods in order to achieve this goal. In this regard, Kellerman (1990:12) stresses the danger of moralising in narrative preaching. It is crucial to elaborate on this abuse of the narrative.

Moralism has dominated the preaching style for many centuries (see for example the elaborate discussion in Dargan 1974). The devastating effects of this abuse against the communication of the gospel should not be repeated. It will be argued that narrative preaching holds an inherent potential for moralising, and we should guard against sinning in this direction.

Although moralism in preaching is a much discussed topic, there is considerable misinformation regarding the subject. Some are of the opinion that the mere mention of a human responsibility or the command to particular moral conduct is moralising in itself. This is certainly not the case. If preaching an ethical imperative constitutes moralism, then much of the Bible would be purely moralistic. There are so many ethical imperatives in the decalogue, the prophets, the psalms, the teachings of Jesus Christ, the letters of the apostles and the book of Revelations, that it is impossible not to incorporate such ethical imperatives in our preaching.

However, it is particularly the manner in which the ethical imperative is presented in Scripture that prevents us from falling into the pit of moralising. The following indicators are a general guideline:

- In Scripture the ethical imperative is never presented as a means of salvation. It is moralism in the first degree when the sermon leaves the congregation with the impression that, unless they do certain things and abandon others, they are lost. When faith in Christ and the grace of God in the reconciliation by His Son are substituted by the moral responsibility of the people, the heart is ripped out of God's narrative with and for us. When the congregation is only confronted with the law and not with the Lawgiver, according to Heyns (1970:23), then the great danger of moralism becomes apparent.

- In Scripture there is always a theological context for the ethical imperative. There are strong ethical appeals in the Bible, but they always seem to function within the context of a basic Biblical motive such as the covenant, the Kingdom of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the second coming of Christ, etc.

- Where an ethical appeal is made from a passage of Scripture while the hermeneutic implication of that passage is about what God did, there may be a real danger of moralism. I believe that this kind of ethical appeal more often than not turns into moralism. This means that the appeal should be focused on Christ as the centre of our existence and not on an exemplary way of life as a means of salvation. When the application (appeal) is made in such a way that it creates the idea of self-righteousness and salvation by means of good deeds, it becomes mora-

lising. Lowry (1997:81) contradicts such moralising by the stating:

> Ours is not simply the bad news task of moral exhortation, of pushy
> nit-picking for people to do better because Jesus wants it so.

No, the Biblical claim is a claim based on the promise of the gospel. He continues: "There can be no imperative claim without the indicative based on the Good News of Christ." Some examples are discussed in the final chapter of this book. They will hopefully illustrate what I mean.

- When the emphasis is so overwhelmingly on what we must do or how great we have sinned, it becomes impossible to experience the joy that good news (gospel) is supposed to create. The preacher should therefore aim for a healthy balance between reprimand and encouragement, between warning against sin and reminding of God's grace in Jesus Christ. If a sense of fear, created by a moralistic style of communication, becomes so predominant (see Bowie 1954:152) that praise and worship for such a wonderful salvation (Baumgartner 1982:437) becomes impossible, such abuse will be counterproductive in the service of the Word.

- Moralism is often communicated by a hostile style of communication. The spirituality projected by the preacher is not one of pastoral unity with and love for God's covenant people, but rather a spirituality of judgement and condemnation. This emphasises the importance of the relationship between the preacher as pastor and the congregation (see chapter three). It is even possible, warns Pieterse (1985:36), that the content of the message may be love, but that the spirituality created by the preacher's tone of voice, body language and facial expressions may project the distance between preacher and congregation. Cradock (1979: 58) aptly describes this as follows:

> Exhausted by his own fruitless efforts, the preacher alternates between
> writing "Ichabod" over their heads and "Golgotha" over his own.

There is room for an ethical appeal in a narrative sermon. The emphasis of the narrative should, however, not in the first place be on the human imperative but rather on God's indicative. Always try to establish the hermeneutic context and the homiletic idea of the narrative. That should help to prevent moralising.

2. LITERARY FREEDOM

There is also a danger that the narrator/preacher will indulge in all kinds of literary freedom to make the story more striking. For Lowry (1980:41) this does not pose a problem. On the contrary, he considers it inevitable that the preacher should use artistic freedom when, for example, trying to find motives for people's actions in Biblical stories. He concludes:

> [T]he preacher who does not dirty his homiletical hands with the fact of the deeper and quite fluid complexity of the motive world will not be trusted in the sermon, in a counseling chamber, or in the church board meeting.

Long (1989:67) seems to support the concept of the artistic freedom of the narrator. He points out that aesthetic writing (and preaching) is not concerned with history or dogma, but only with the creative and artistically playful use of language (1989:68).

The exclusive use of the narrative approach may place extra demands on the artistic creativity of the narrator. This may cause non-narrative passages of Scripture to be forced into narrative form, thus creating the prolific danger of deformation of the Biblical facts in order to accommodate artistic creativeness. Phillips (1986:3) concludes that non-narrative passages of Scripture require one method of exposition whereas the narrative portions of Scripture require another. Eslinger (1987:29) warns:

> Not all Scripture is of a narrative literary form even though it may be possible to speak of the stories which constitute the Story.

Therefore, Eslinger (1987:87) is against the enforcement of a narrative approach on non-narrative material.

One case in point is the manner in which allegory is incorporated in a narrative approach by Ellingsen (1990:10-12). He makes some disturbingly positive remarks about allegory as an instrument of narrative preaching. He warns against the abuse of allegory by some preachers who use this form of Biblical explanation in order to avoid the toils of expository preaching, yet he pronounces positive uses for what he terms "this hermeneutical model".

Although he is aware of a theological backlash against allegory, he is convinced that this reaction is overridden by the need for a new preaching model. The "die-hard" theologians (those against allegory)

> fail to recognise both the declining impact of their theological orientation in their own churches or the problems otherwise sympathetic colleagues have identified with their orientation — there is no returning to the neo-orthodox model (Ellingsen 1990:12).

There are sufficient indications (Ellingsen 1990:41-42) that this approach argues along the same lines as that of language-philosophy, seeking hidden meanings and deeper interpretations of the text than those provided by exegetical and historical-critical analysis. Although Ellingsen (1990:70) states that narrative preaching does not preclude using historical-critical tools, he also explains in dialectical fashion that there are four historical-critical procedures that are *not relevant* in narrative preaching (Ellingsen 1990:62). They are:

- Determining the text's "situation-in-life"

- Using the genesis of the text or speculations concerning its author's intention as a foundation for exegesis. Ellingsen (1990:41) denies that taking the autonomy of the Biblical text as starting-point and bypassing the Biblical author's intentions is to divorce Scripture from historical reality. This approach clearly corresponds with the post-modern concepts of "the death of the author" and "there is nothing outside of the text" (see my explanation in Janse van Rensburg 2000:6).

- Projecting dogmatic, confessional, denominational or personal faith material on a Biblical text.

- Regarding the text in a historically referential manner, concerned only with the political, social, or economic factors of its day.

Ellingsen (1990:50-51) explains that factual questions are of secondary importance, not directly relevant to proclamation, and get us side-tracked. No wonder Loubser (1994:169) speaks of the demise of the historical-critical paradigm caused by post-modernity! Craddock (1981:98) describes the inherent danger of an inductive approach (such as narrative) as follows:

> The fact of the matter is that inductive preaching, because it has in it the possibility of easy detours and is so susceptible to prostitution, actually requires more discipline of thought and study.

When does literary freedom constitute prostitution (to use Craddock's metaphor)? As a general rule it may be stated that literary freedom should explain the true intention of the passage of Scripture and never contradict the historical, text-critical, theological context.

It would, for example, not be wrong to imagine that the prophet Nathan could not sleep the night before he had to reprimand King David. Neither would it threaten the Biblical facts of Noah's narrative if we imagine that he probably sometimes wondered if building the ark on dry land was such a good idea. And did he really hear God giving him the command to build the ark, or was it his imagination? Although the Bible does not supply such

information, these are examples of benign literary freedom because it does not jeopardise Biblical facts.

If, on the other hand, the narrator were to speculate on the possibility that Joseph was the biological father of Jesus or that Judas was chosen by God as part of his salvation plan, and that he should therefore receive our thanks for betraying the Lord and a place in heaven (contrary to Scriptural indications), this would be an example of a prostitution of the Biblical narrative. Imagining a scenario where Abraham slaughters his son Isaac would be the kind of literary freedom that could create dramatic effects on the theme of obedience and total commitment, yet it would defeat the purpose of the Biblical narrative.

The need to preach in a different and exciting way may be so great that preachers may fall into the seduction of literary freedom. There is an unavoidable element of limited literary freedom in narrative, without which storytelling would be impossible. However, the possibility of abuse with its devastating consequences lurks around every story-telling corner. Narrative preaching should be used but never abused.

CHAPTER EIGHT

NARRATIVE DEFINED

ABSTRACT

Reading through the literature, one is amazed at what is understood by and included in a definition of narrative preaching. Frankly, I was shocked and confused. Not only do these all-inclusive definitions cause confusion; it is also my experience that this complicates the processes of making a narrative sermon. But most importantly, such a broad understanding of narrative makes it impossible to draw a clear distinction between a narrative style of preaching and other styles. I am convinced that the preparation for a narrative, the process of artistically constructing a narrative, as well as the careful preparation and enthusiastic deliverance of the sermon is different in character, style and mood to any other genre of preaching.

From the outset it is important to comprehend the need for a clear distinction between story and narrative (Hamilton 1992:104). According to Long (1989:71), a story can be defined as a series of events that have a beginning, a middle and an end. These elements of time are linked by *logical* relationships, by a *causal* relationship (Pieterse 1987:166) or by the dynamics between narrative, images and *arguments* (Schlafer 1992:63; 68-70). However, Buttrick (1987:10) correctly points out that the report of chronological events cannot be considered a narrative.

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

Whereas stories *give* identity or prove a point or share ideas (Robinson 1990:34), preaching in narrative form *transforms* identity, because it places the story within the bigger context of God's story. Preaching tells a story with transcendent dimension, according to Buttrick. Although we cannot predict how people will react to and whether their lives will be changed by the sermon, the power of narrative is that it invites people to identify with the characters or a particular character in the narrative. Schlafer (1992:79) explains:

> If a point of identification can be established with characters who are engaged in realistic interaction, there is a possibility that such

> an identification can have the effect of reshaping the life-stories of those who hear the story in the sermon.

Thus an involvement with the eventual message of the narrative can be facilitated more easily. Well-told narratives cause the listener to identify with the people in the story. Some characters are loved and idealised whereas others are hated with a passion. In identifying with the trials and tribulations, the joy and love of the characters, the listener experiences a solidarity with them that enables him/her to say: "I'm like that" or "I wish I could be like that" or "I do not wish to be like that" (Long 1989:75) or "What must we do?" (Miller (1992:110). In this way the story captures the listener's full attention. But it may take time, for radical change in someone's life (conversion) seldom happens instantaneously. Spiritual growth never depends on the success of a single sermon, argues Schlafer (1992:88). Pieterse (1987:169) refers to this quality of the narrative as "open-ended", because it permits the listeners to make their own choices and decisions.

Preaching offers possibilities and alternatives that have the ability to transform and change identity. The single life-changing factor in Christian narratives is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, all preaching should be Christ-centred (Pieterse 1987:11-17).

The literature on narrative preaching reveals that the concept of narrative is not universal in its semantic interpretation. Some understand a narrative sermon to be the re-telling of a Biblical story (more often than not in the first person), others understand narrative preaching to include a story about life that explains Biblical truths. Illustrations, often used to confirm an expository sermon, as well as poetic language (such as metaphors and fantasy), the life-story of the individual, authentic experiences (Pieterse 1987:166) are also considered by some to be narrative. Lowry (1993:25-27) defines narrative preaching in such broad terms that he regards each sermon "that moves from opening disequilibrium through escalation of conflict to surprising reversal to closing denouement" as a narrative sermon, whether it contains a story or not. In fact, any approach that causes the sermon to be more pleasing could be called *narrative*, according to Vos (1996:181-186). Some writers even include the traditional style of preaching in a definition of narrative (Hamilton 1992:104).

This all-inclusive understanding of the term "narrative" is unfortunate, as it does not help us to understand the narrative art form better. On the contrary, it confuses more than it enlightens. Eslinger (1987:30) also complains about this lack of clarity in explaining what narrative preaching entails and what methodology must be used in the development of a narra-

tive. According to Ellingsen (1990:15), it is precisely the "confusion of this family of literary or story approaches" that motivated him to try to bring greater clarity to the debate. We must also ask: Could an expository sermon with an illustrative story be called a narrative sermon, or is it an expository sermon with a (narrative) story as illustration? Would it be a narrative sermon if a structured sermon were wrapped in poetic clothing? Is it a narrative sermon merely because the Biblical story is re-told in the first person? In all these cases the answer would be: No! We have to speak the same language in order to understand one another. If we are to take seriously what Lowry (1996) describes as the typical anatomy of a narrative sermon, we simply cannot accept the open-ended definition of a narrative. Or does Lowry merely represent one of many possible approaches, as Ellingsen (1990:70-96) represents one explanation of the various steps in a narrative approach? Indeed, Rice, Mitchell, Craddock and Buttrick all have different methodologies for developing a sermon (Eslinger 1987; see also Kellerman 1990:13-16).

Upon evaluating the various possibilities, it appears that there are many approaches to constructing a narrative sermon but only limited possibilities for defining of a narrative. We must conclude that a sermon can only be called a narrative if that sermon answers to certain basic requirements.

Narrative preaching demands artistic abilities and great communication skills. Without the artistic arrangement and skilful presentation of a story, it becomes an unattractive disarray of events that can no longer be called a narrative.

CHAPTER NINE

BASIC STRUCTURE

ABSTRACT

I have hinted that the preparation of a narrative sermon can be considerably complicated because of the various possibilities. This would, in turn, probably cause narrative preaching to be less successful. If the approach and process can be simplified, it can have a reverse effect. I have tried to combine the many aspects of a narrative into a basic structure. I can only hope that it will do for you what it did for me.

To follow up on the definition mentioned in the previous chapter, I find it necessary to determine basic requirements for a narrative sermon. The idea is not to rigorously postulate a structure to be respectfully followed by all and each time you preach a narrative sermon. It should rather be regarded as an effort to evaluate and combine different opinions on the character of a narrative sermon for greater uniformity in understanding.

1. DEVELOPING THE NARRATIVE SERMON

The literature provides many possibilities for developing a narrative sermon. Lowry, with his emphasis on the plot, Buttrick with his emphasis on moves (1987:23-79), and Craddock with his emphasis on the inductive approach (to name but three; see also Lowry 1997:15), reveal effective and striking possibilities. Personally, I find Miller's approach (1992:112-115) the most workable, merely because of its simplicity. Furthermore, this approach can in fact accommodate the main elements of other approaches, thereby enriching Miller's model. Miller uses the plot (like Lowry) as point of departure. The plot entails four moves. With this approach and other models in mind, I have tried to develop a strategy that would work for me.

- An *introduction*

The introduction introduces the characters of the story. At this crucial stage the narrator will have to consider all the facts as well as the arrangement of those facts in such a manner as to create expectation. The phrase "Once upon a time…" can only be the point of departure that will need sufficient information (not too much) to create anticipation.

What facts or information do we have about the character(s)? Circumstances and past events may be part of this information, although we may

also decide to make past events part of the second stage, starting with current circumstances and future events, then returning to past events and back to the present. What facts do we *not* have (if it is about a non-fictional Biblical character)? The artistic creativity discussed earlier would have to be applied in order to supply enough information to make the characters people of flesh and bone.

Motives and emotions will be important if the characters are to be presented as "people like us". Phillips (1986:17) concludes that emotions refer to all those feelings that change men in such a way as to affect their judgement. We want to see these emotions underlying people's actions. Language is used to describe people's emotions and actions in such a way that the people are "living and moving before us" (Phillips 1986:21).

Another kind of introduction could be used in which the narrator makes some personal comments about a subject and then introduces the story as a case in point. I used the following introduction for a narrative sermon on the dramatic events of Jacob's life:

> There are many stories in the Bible that could be described as "strange", for many reasons. Sometimes you don't know who the good people are and who could be considered to be the "bad guys". You may also find people doing bad things, yet they seem to be favoured by God anyway. The story of Jacob is a case in point.

- *Events*

Here we have in mind the events that are complicated by developments (otherwise known as the "itch", Lowry 1997:81).

At this stage events are discussed. Such events should, however, not merely be stated, for much of the basic facts of a Biblical narrative are known to the congregation. It is, however, the story behind the story, the psychological, sociological, cultural or theological factors implying a plot or indicating interpretation, thereby complicating the turn and outcome of events, that should be presented to the listeners. This is the stuff that dramas are made of. It should therefore be presented in such a manner that the congregation discovers possibilities never before realised and hidden agendas previously unknown to them. The tragic yet dramatic battle between Rachel and Leah through childbirth (see Genesis 29-30; 35:16-21) is a good example of what is meant by the complication of events. Once the congregation understands the heartbreaking struggle of Leah against her better-loved sister and the zealous struggle of the childless Rachel against her child-bearing sister, the naming of Ben-Oni (son of my sorrow) becomes the cry of a life of struggle against the fear of rejection and a desperate attempt to buy love

in child birth (see Overduin 1963:264-268). When Jacob changes the name to Ben-jamin (son of my joy, son of my right hand) the turn of events becomes significant and prolific.

The decoding of such intrigue is part of the exciting journey toward an interpretation and contextualisation of the story. It both challenges the narrator and provides the material required to artistically construct a plot that will keep the listeners on the edge of their seats. This is a challenge and an opportunity which the narrator should not miss.

Craddock (1981:57-58) makes a very interesting point when he explains that preachers, in preparing sermons, generally come to conclusions after spending time on the exposition of the specific passage from Scripture. When it is time to preach the sermon, they start by announcing their conclusion as the theme, thereby "letting the cat out of the bag" and cancelling any hope of a surprise element in the sermon. Craddock (1981:63) refers to this as "the preacher's crime against the normal currents of life". More attention should be paid to this unhealthy practice, not only when preparing for narrative sermons but also when expository preaching is on the agenda. Craddock suggests that the preacher could trace back the inductive journey he took in his preparation in order to lead the congregation to a conclusion (1981:125-126). The logic is clear:

> Involve the listeners in the discovery of a conclusion rather than announcing foregone conclusions, thereby ruling out any possibility of discovery or excitement in and through the narrative journey.

In preparing the sermon, the narrator will therefore have to seek ways to "upset the equilibrium" (Lowry 1980:28), he will have to rearrange the well-known information in such a way that it becomes less self-evident and more intriguing.

Buttrick (1987:289-290) suggests the possibility that the events could be told not in chronological order but with anyone of the moves as point of departure. Dingemans (1996:44) suggests some interesting examples of different and unexpected points of departure to surprise the hearer in the pew:

> If I read John 18:15-27 and 21:15-23 from the standpoint of Peter's denial of Jesus, another sermon comes out than if I approach these texts from the angle of Peter's rehabilitation and Jesus' reconciliating attitude in John 21.

Guided by different motives there are a variety of possibilities to arrange the events in such a way as to create an element of surprise. Lowry

(1997:59) describes this element of surprise as the disturbance of the equilibrium. This is

> an effort to delay, to withhold, to hide, to keep in abeyance, some basic crucial key, ingredient, striking image, piece of knowledge, or clue, without which nothing can be resolved.

When this element of the unknown is combined by a sudden turn of events (Lowry 1997:74-75), you will have a recipe for intrigue. In this way "the plot thickens", thereby creating tension and anticipation.

The above explanation illustrates the clear-cut difference between telling the story (giving the facts) and artistically arranging the facts and events in such a manner that the story has a fresh appeal and a new face. What you want to avoid most in a narrative is that the listeners will anticipate where the preacher is going (Schlafer 1992:86). The listener's usual feeling of "I know it all for I have heard it so many times" must be anticipated and substituted by an element of surprise. Lowry (1997:62) comments that the destination of the story may be known, but the route to that destiny should always be a surprise. The congregation should, as far as possible, never be allowed to be "in the driver's seat", so to speak. The element of surprise changes events into dramatic material. This is known as "the bind".

- A *resolution*

While narrating the events, the information triggers the listeners to get involved in his/her own story, interpreting what they hear and seeking answers and solutions (Hughs 1990:58). The resolution creates a feeling of satisfaction. There is a sigh of relief when all is resolved and the tension is relieved. Miller describes this as the stage where the audience can breathe more easily because the story is concluded.

- A *conclusion*

The conclusion should have similar characteristics as that of a movie or television drama. The events should come to a quick conclusion in order to cause dramatic effects. In such productions the sudden and unexpected turn of events, following one after the other, almost without a breath in-between, creates the sense of bewilderment. The feeling of "It happened so quickly" should be dominant. This implies that the conclusion should not be spoiled by too many words. Lowry (1997:86) states:

> This is a crucial time for powerful economy with words. As tension subsides, the listeners will not abide lots of new material. Rather, this is the time to name quickly and powerfully the consequences of our being claimed by the gospel's prophetic and poetic anticipation of "new possibility in the listening assembly".

The need for a constant, swift and dynamic move from the beginning of the sermon (Marquart 1985:157) should therefore be maintained to the end. Preachers should resist the temptation to go on endlessly while the congregation has come to a conclusion.

The inability of the preacher to say "amen" is perhaps one of the most serious sins of preaching.

It kills the purpose of the sermon and it tends to wipe out the spirituality created by the narrative. Instead of being filled with emotions of awe and wonder and joy and thankfulness, the congregation is forced to wrestle with feelings of frustration, irritation and boredom.

2. THE ART OF EXTENSION

We have stressed the importance of a dynamic and swift interaction between moves and sudden end to the narrative. A word should be said about the art of extension. There is after all the potential to rush in and through the narrative in such an over-enthusiastic or hasty manner that the story is told even before anticipation and tension is created or the plot is defined. Its effect is almost like blurting out the secret before it was intended to be revealed. I know, for I have fallen into this trap!

The art of extension is the ability to stretch the narrative just that little bit longer (yet, not too much) to strengthen the feeling of anticipation. It is an art (as the narrative is an art form), because you have to be extremely careful not to lengthen the narrative with too much detail, whereas on the other hand you could postpone the "scratch" (Lowry) by teasingly giving little pieces of seemingly insignificant information. Sometimes the seemingly insignificant information could become extremely important in the unravelling of the plot. It could create tension, profile the characters, highlight the historical background or explain motives or conduct. If you listen carefully to the style of good storytellers, you will without fail hear how they are able to perfect the art of extension. It will require good planning and it will take a lot of practice, but in the end it will be worth the effort. It will turn your telling the story into the art of narrative.

3. WHAT ABOUT AN APPLICATION?

Should the conclusion also have an application? This is a much-discussed issue in narrative preaching. An application is not desirable in the context of a post-modern understanding of the narrative. The congregation must be sent home with questions, not answers (Kleynhans & Kellerman 2000:81,

84-85). The interpretation of the narrative, if applied according to White and Epstein (1990:2), will be determined by the manner in which it fits in with known patterns of the existing life-story. Giving an application implies that there is one explanation of the story. However, the post-modern paradigm supports a multiplicity of narratives. Thus, each individual should make his/her own application of the story according to his/her individual needs and circumstances.

This "open-ended" approach is not necessarily wrong. There is an element of truth in the fact that each individual's context is different. Therefore, there must be an individual and exclusive element in the application. The narrator may stimulate ideas in this direction by asking the congregation questions such as: What have you learnt from this story? How does it relate to your marriage relationship? What advice can you take home from the way the story developed and ended? Questions raise the possibility to examine facts in a new way, "like wild flowers bursting on the hillside, providing wonder and mystery" (Lowry 1997:63).

It must however be stressed that the application should never be allowed to be unconditionally free. I have argued (Janse van Rensburg 2001:346-347) that there should be a particular exposition of Scripture by means of sound exegesis. This exposition will then supply the guidelines for a personal and contextual interpretation and application of the sermon. Philips (1986:2) justifiably warns that narrative sermons would inevitably fail if the relation between exposition and narrative were not respected.

More importantly, there are reasons why an application of the narrative is preferred to an open-ended approach. First, an individual may make an application contradicting the intention of the narrative, thereby defeating the purpose of the narrative. Secondly, not all people are equally creative in spontaneously understanding the application of the narrative. Jesus often used an open-ended approach, telling the story but not giving the application. But the disciples and others could not understand the application. They either spoke among themselves, too shy or afraid to acknowledge that they did not understand, or they asked Jesus directly: "What does it mean?" (Matthew 13:36) and "Why do you speak to us in riddles?" (Matthew 13:10-11). Jesus had to explain before they understood (Luke 8:9).

Bearing in mind the artistic creativity of the narrative sermon, the narrator could, in preparing the sermon, consider having a preliminary open-ended approach, not revealing the application immediately. The surprise element could be strengthened if the application is kept until the end. Until that moment the congregation is kept in suspense and anticipation by asking themselves: "What does it mean?"

Attention must be paid to one more issue in this regard. The preacher fears the danger of moralising when making an application to such an extent that he opts for an open-ended approach. I consider this to be a mistake. Yes, moralism is undesirable because it weakens and in fact changes the character and purpose of the sermon, as I have explained in a previous chapter. The fact is, however, that it is not moralising to give information that is supposed to change people's lives. Paul and Peter do that all the time.

It should be relatively easy to determine whether your narrative sermon will be effective. Without the basic elements it could never be a narrative. Neither could it succeed. So always check your sermon. Look for the artistic arrangement of facts, the creation of tension, the upsetting of the equilibrium, the unexpected turn of events, the swift closure and you should be close to an ideal narrative sermon.

CHAPTER TEN

THE PLOT

ABSTRACT

Perhaps this is the most important and definitely the most difficult part of narrative preaching. The plot is the golden thread woven through the story that keeps the suspense until the end. Without a successful plot the element of surprise is lost and the narrative is doomed to a "we have heard it all" -response.

The plot joins beginning, middle and end by means of a central theme. For example, at the beginning of the story a need is identified. In the middle of the story the need is accentuated. Anticipation for the fulfilment of that need is created. Only at the end is the need fulfilled (See Long 1989:80-86 for a useful model of theme development).

According to Lowry (1980:23-25), the main ingredient (*proprium*) of a narrative is the plot.

> The event of the story moves from a bind to a felt discrepancy, to
> an itch born of ambiguity and moves toward the solution, a release
> from the ambiguous mystery, the scratch that makes it right.

The scratch is the congregation's "not knowing" the *what* or *why* or *how* that is the heart of the plot.

But how do we attain this "not knowing" position, in particular when the Biblical facts seem to give all the information and clear-cut answers from the outset? Apparently the most common mistake of preachers is to follow the line of specific Scriptural passages, announcing the "good" and the "bad" ahead of the plot, thereby rendering the ambiguous element of the plot powerless. When Judas is portrayed from the very beginning as the "baddy", a plot is almost non-existent. The congregation knows from the start that he contemplates treason and eventually commits it. Here the "not knowing" is replaced by "we know it all and we have heard it all."

The challenge for the narrative preacher is therefore to create a plot by adding other factors that would cause the congregation to think twice. A human element could be introduced to achieve this goal. This does not mean that the Biblical black and white answers should be replaced by human doubt. The detour of the "not knowing", the ability to create some doubt about explanations, answers and outcome could be seen as an instrument to

make the plot work towards surprises, a new look at the facts, as it were. Lowry (1993:32-34) explains this as "looking for trouble" in the text, trying to identify some strange fact or unexplained motive or implication that could remove us from "the driver's seat" and cause us to seek important underlying facts and factors that will cause us to expect the unexpected. The plot can only be effective if there is this element of surprise. Not knowing how the plot will develop is one element that captures the attention and imagination of the listeners right to the end.

We realise that it is not so easy to design the plot. The requirements for a narrative re-plotting of a Biblical story would for obvious reasons differ from narrative illustrations for an expository sermon. Furthermore, where a narrative is told as an inductive approach to a Biblical passage of Scripture in order to explain the Biblical text within the present context, the requirements for that narrative would differ from the requirements for a narrative illustration. Lowry (1980:76-77) remarks that when he preaches a Biblical narrative, he finds that he is not using the five steps for narrative sermons he developed and explained in the book.

The artistic capabilities of the preacher will certainly determine the success of the plot. The plot can only serve the story and the sermon if it has that all-important element of the unexpected. To create such an element of surprise where the story is often known, that is the creative challenge.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

ABSTRACT

Once you have placed all the pieces of the puzzle on the table, they have to be put together in order to complete the picture and to create a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Different aspects of the storytelling-process make up the pieces of the puzzle. These pieces are joined together by the plot.

Many issues must be considered in order to tell a story. They are important pieces of the puzzle and each aspect will demand careful planning. Decisions made will certainly determine the success of the narrative.

1. MOVEMENT

Movement is an integral part of storytelling (see Eslinger's description of Buttrick's explanation of movements in Eslinger 1987:147-151).

2. CONTEXT

The successful use of exegesis in narrative preparation is not only to see and listen, but also to constantly move back and forth between the Biblical world and the contemporary world of the congregation (Eslinger 1987:22).

3. TENSE

The choice of present or past tense in the process of storytelling is crucial. The present tense is undoubtedly the most striking and most used by novelists. The sermon of Dennis M. Willis on Noah (mentioned in Lowry 1989:42-78) is a perfect example of how dramatic the present tense can be to make the story more effective. Personally, it seems more difficult to tell the story in the present tense. Therefore, the choice of present tense will demand extra preparation and meticulous thought on how the story is to be told. Once the choice has been made, the storyteller should stick to that tense, unless a past story is related within the narrative.

4. FIRST PERSON OR NOT?

Another important choice would be whether to tell the story in the first person or not. If the first person is chosen, the narrative inevitably ends up as an effort to present the preacher as the person whose story is told. Thus, the preacher tells the story of Noah as if he is Noah. For some reason, many understand narrative preaching to be the telling of the story in the first person. Of course, this is a possibility and if this kind of first-person narrative is used correctly, the effect could be dramatic. However, it is much more complicated to narrate in the first person. It forces the storyteller to invent a lot of information that is not always available from Scripture. This elicits many possibilities for storytelling but it also raises the possibility of giving information that cannot be substantiated.

We will have to agree to a point. Yet, we must be aware of the danger that the invention of facts and motives for the actions of the character may lead to fictional preaching. When preaching in the third person, one can *speculate* about motives more easily and safely. But, in the first person, you will have to decide on a motive and tell it as though it was the driving force of the person or people's actions; that is, taking fiction and telling it as though it was the truth.

Choosing the first person may also be stretched to the limits of absurdity. I once heard a sermon preached by a young man about Martha. The young man started the sermon by announcing: "My name is Martha." In the privacy of my mind I groaned: "Oh no!"

We must conclude in general terms that the choice of the first person does not necessarily make the sermon a successful narrative. If chosen, the first-person narrative should be thoroughly considered and well-prepared in order to avoid an embarrassment. Furthermore, choosing the third person could be just as effective and dramatic, as in the sermon on Noah by D. M. Willis (in Lowry 1993:42-48).

There is of course a third possibility. A third-person narrative could be alternated by a first-person narration. In this case the preacher acts as the narrator, telling the story in the third person, yet giving his/her comments, feelings, problems and possible solutions to unanswered questions in the first person. The narrator becomes the "I" in this version. An example may explain this. After telling the events leading up to the death of Judas in the second person, the narrator continues in the first person:

> This is indeed a shocking story. Each time I read about this, I get so angry! Don't you? But then I wonder: What went on in the mind of Judas? What kind of background did he have? Was he perhaps the product of his childhood? Was he not pre-destined to do what he

> did? I find myself wanting to have sympathy with this man, won-
> dering whether extenuating circumstances could not be found. But
> then I am reminded of the Bible's evaluation of what Judas did…
> (etc.)

The third-person narration may also be interrupted by allowing the
character(s) to speak in the first person. It could then end up as follows:

> The other disciples of Jesus had fled. The soldiers had taken Jesus
> into custody. Judas was suddenly alone. He should have a sense of
> accomplishment. "I did what I had to do," he says in a zealous tone
> of voice. But there is an emptiness inside that he cannot explain.
> "What went wrong? How did it all end like this? I was so excited
> about him. I was so sure that he would free our people. But he wasn't
> worthy of our support. In fact, he was such a disappointment.
> While we talked about the kingdom of Israel, he talked about
> another kingdom, not of this world. What a farce! He took us for
> a ride; he made fools of us all." Judas is surprised at the anger he
> feels. His voice sounds harsh against the stillness of the night. He
> feels better, expressing his frustration in words. Then he continues:
> "He didn't like me anyway. He picked on me. He humiliated me
> in front of the people when I scorned that stupid woman with her
> flask of precious oil." He again feels the humiliation, the accusing
> glances of the people after Jesus had rebuked him. "Leave her
> alone", Jesus said. "She has already anointed my body for burial."
> Judas stares into the darkness. The silence is too much to bear and
> he speaks again: "He didn't like me. Why did he have to identify
> me as the one who would betray him? I was considering it, yes. But
> he could at least try to convince me not to go ahead. Instead, he en-
> couraged me: 'Be quick about what you are doing,' he said. If he
> had only tried to stop me." Judas thinks about what he has just
> said. A new thought enters his bewildered mind, bringing relief to
> his troubled soul. "It's not my fault", he shouts into the night. "He
> made me do it! I probably did Israel a favour. I did what others
> were afraid to do. They should thank me! One day the people will
> understand what I did. Then I will be a hero." Suddenly Judas
> remembers the money. He made an agreement with the temple
> priests. They promised to pay him for his part in identifying Jesus.
> "It's not much for such dirty work. Thirty pieces of silver", he mur-
> murs. Then he strolls off into the night to collect his prize.

4.1. Discussion

The above illustration is but one example of how to combine the first and
third persons in a narrative. Some comments will highlight a few issues.

• Repetition of a sentence can strengthen opinions and create perceptions
   (see Lowry 1989:64-65). Therefore, three phrases are included in the
   above example of a narrative sermon on Judas: "I did what I had to do",

"He made me do it", and "It's not my fault." Are these not the kind of excuses we would associate with Judas? In fact, are these not the kind of excuses we often use?

- The effect of such a first-person narrative can be extremely dramatic. However, we must be aware of the danger that it could easily develop into an over-emphasis on dramatic effect. There is a very thin line between the above narration and a novel. Yet, there is a vast difference between the two. In a novel the focus is on the plot and the dramatic effect of the story. In narrative preaching the plot and the dramatic events should never be presented as the focus of attention. They serve a purpose and that purpose is to highlight the message of the story. Kellerman (1990:11) defines the purpose of the narrative as the goal to create participation in the events of the story, thus effecting spiritual growth in faith. Therefore, the narrative can never be purely an art form that exists in and for itself.

- From the above it follows that there is an obvious link between a narrative and a novel. Although this is not necessarily bad, we must remember that not all people can be novelists. Therefore, not all narrative preachers will be able to produce such a dramatic first-person effect without overstepping the line. More importantly, narrative preaching should never end up as the reading of self-written novel material. In the final analysis the narrative style of preaching could be merely preaching. It may be exciting to create dramatic effects by writing the narrative in the first person. However, we should always bear in mind that we must preach what we have written. It is a difficult task to communicate the message in narrative form. We should therefore be careful not to make it more difficult by using a novelist style.

- Earlier I have suggested that using the first person is more complicated than using the third person. Lowry (1989:73-74) explains that it is "dangerous territory" when we move from third person to first person. Why? Because you have to "play the part" when you use the first person, something not all of us can do effectively for an extensive period of time. Acting out the part can also distract the congregation's attention and cause them to focus on the ability of the preacher to sustain his efforts of acting out the part. Lowry's advice is that we should only briefly move from third person to first person, returning to the third person as soon as possible. This is good advice!

5. STYLE

At the beginning of the research I hinted that the style of storytelling is more important than some seem to think. Lowry (1980:15, 89) is of the opinion that the talent and capability of storytelling is not an influentially important issue. This point of view was reiterated in a later publication (Lowry 1989:13-14). Based on the principles for a homiletic basis theory, I must disagree with Lowry on this issue. Style does make a difference. I agree with Marquart's (1985:131) view that form and style need to be taken seriously if we are to avoid boredom. Is it not the unique style of Jesus' teaching that made it so catching and special (see Marquart 1985:133-136)? One can hardly disagree with Daane's (1980:57) view that sermonic style is so essential that the preacher should work on style throughout his preaching ministry.

On successive Sundays I had different experiences of success with the narrative. During the first occasion (Easter Sunday) I ended the sermon with a true story about a minister's experience of the resurrected Lord. This was told in an enthusiastic and dramatic fashion. One member of the congregation responded by saying that the whole sermon came alive with that story.

On the following Sunday, I ventured to preach a narrative sermon on the life of Jacob (sermon included in the last chapter). For some reason I found it more difficult to narrate in a lively and dramatic fashion the various events of Jacob wanting to buy the first-born rights from his brother, then deceiving his father to get the blessing of the first born, then having to flee for his life, and eventually having to come to terms with the fact that he will have to face his brother again. The sermon was well-structured and had a good application with the required suspense and element of surprise, yet the sermon was received with less enthusiasm.

I have no doubt that the success of the narrative was seriously jeopardised by a lack of storytelling skills. Leaving the pulpit that Sunday morning I knew that the telling of the story fell flat on its face. I felt disappointed that a good story with numerous possibilities for enthusiastic and dramatic narration was spoiled by a mediocre narration. In reflecting on the reason for my lack of skills, I concluded that I did not sufficiently familiarise myself with the plot and the finer details. I had to concentrate so much on getting the information right that in the end it was the communication of correct information. If I had spent more time thinking about how I was going to present the facts and where I could add a little drama, I would have raised the standard and effectiveness of the sermon considerably. It was a hard-learned lesson: knowing the basic facts of the story is not sufficient

preparation for the effective telling of the story. If we want to capture the imagination of the listeners and involve them emotionally in the story, we will have to spend just as much time on preparing of our style as we would spend on preparing the sermon. In storytelling the delivery of the message really counts, especially when the Biblical story is well-known. Style does make a difference! If preaching as a communicative act in public address is unnatural and if it must be learned (Buttrick 1987:25), how much more does that apply to the narration within the context of a sermon!

Style implies not only the narrating process (the style of "telling"), but also the choice of words and metaphors, the arranging of movements, and the choice of a point of departure. Hamilton (1992:110-112) considers this to be an important step in the preparation of the narrative sermon. He makes the valid point that one should choose one point of departure from the many movements in the story. This implies that one should not merely or necessarily tell the story from beginning to end. One might choose to use the end as the point of departure, working back to the starting events, highlighting certain facts that may be important when the time comes to make conclusions or applications to the listener's context.

A puzzle without the final piece to complete the picture will leave you frustrated and disappointed. Always try to put all the pieces of the puzzle together.

CHAPTER TWELVE

NARRATIVE SERMONS

ABSTRACT

A basic theory on narrative preaching without practical examples would not be as effective as practical illustrations of the principles. These examples are presented as honest efforts by the author to create an awareness of the character of a narrative sermon. The sermons are not perfect but they have been tested in a congregational context with mixed success. They serve as working documents. You may critically evaluate them, change them or use them as you please. They only serve as a point of departure for starting an adventure. And if your results are better than my efforts, I will be jealous, but I will also praise the Lord. For it is in His service that we preach the gospel the best we can.

1. METHODOLOGY

A selection of narrative sermons is included in this chapter. The choice of sermons was guided by the endeavour to include as many aspects as possible of the basic theory in these examples. They should illustrate the principles discussed in the previous chapters.

Each sermon structure will be preceded by a brief discussion on the four basic categories: exegetical, homiletic, theological and liturgical commentary. Thereafter, a structure for the sermon will be suggested. Of course, it goes without saying that each denomination and even each congregation would have their own hymns and spiritual songs they use in the worship service. The hymns I suggest are used in the congregation I currently minister to. They could serve as examples, setting the liturgical mood as it were, whereas the preacher could choose equivalent songs with the same message and spirituality if the ones I suggest are not used or not known.

1.1 Hermeneutic approach

It will be noted that, contrary to the post-modern concept of a multiplicity of narratives and open-ended hermeneutics, I choose to uphold the principle of a correct meaning of the text via exegesis and understanding (hermeneutics), as I have explained in the chapters on basic theory. Without this basic assumption the historical, exegetical, theological and liturgical comments would be worthless. The author is not dead, as post-modernism wants us to believe, simply because the primary subject of Scripture is the Holy Spirit!

I believe that it is extremely important to put the narrative to use in order to illustrate the Holy Spirit's intention with the events described in a specific passage of Scripture.

1.2 The relation between Old Testament and New Testament

There is a very strong conviction among Old Testament scholars that the Old Testament must be considered and treated on its own value and merit. It is not part of God's revelation but it is *completely* God's Word. The intention of this line of thought is that when we preach from the Old Testament it is not correct (some would say) to bring in a New Testament and Christologic perspective. Others would be more moderate in their judgement, arguing that the New Testament *could* be brought into an Old Testament sermon but it is in fact *not necessary*. The Old Testament could stand on its own feet, figuratively speaking. From this point of departure you can preach a sermon on the Old Testament as though the New Testament does not exist. No reference to New Testament perspectives is allowed or necessary.

I find it difficult to agree with this line of Old Testament thinking. There are many reasons for my point of view. They are, to mention but a few:

- The early church in the New Testament sets the example by quoting freely from the Old Testament in their sermons.

- The Old Testament precedes the New Testament in its promise of God's deliverance through a Messiah. The New Testament shows how perfect God's salvation in Jesus Christ really is.

- The relationship between Old and New Testaments is defined in the Latin expression: *Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet*; *Vetus in Novo patet*. This means: The New Testament is potentially present in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament.

- If it is possible to preach from the Old Testament without a New Testament perspective it simply means that such a sermon could be preached unchanged in a Jewish Synagogue.

- Finally, it must be stressed that the addition of New Testament perspectives does not intend to minimise Old Testament narratives into incomplete fragments of revelation. It is simply that we, as church of Jesus Christ, cannot listen to the Old Testament as though we do not know the content of the New Testament.

A more elaborate scientific discussion could follow. However, this would lead us beyond our goal for this chapter. Enough has been said to explain my position and the way I believe Old Testament narratives should be

dealt with. In this regard, I have found the book by Trimp (1988) to be extremely helpful. Trimp explains that each particular narrative described in the Old Testament represents a particular stage in God's move with his people towards the final fulfilment of his covenant promises in Jesus Christ. This implies that the covenant provides the perfect basic motive to bridge the gap between Old and New Testaments. The following examples will indicate how I propose to bring a New Testament perspective to Old Testament narratives. I believe this to be a legitimate and unforced methodology that saves narratives from a non-Christian perspective, reducing such sermons to stories about life with a moral lesson.

1.3 Set goals

Setting goals for this chapter is a serious and difficult commitment. However, if it succeeds, this methodology should assist the reader in sliding into a narrative way of thinking, preparing and delivering a sermon.

SERMON 1

Scripture reading: Joshua 2; Hebrews 11:31.

Exegetical commentary:

There are apparently several historical-critical problems underlying the story of Rahab and the spies sent by Joshua. Despite such unresolved issues, Hamlin (1983:16) argues that this story is among the oldest traditions and certainly not a figment of someone's imagination. The historical context of Rahab's person is probably confirmed by proof of the existence of a Rahab clan that lived close to the ruins of Jericho.

Old Testament scholars are intrigued by the discontinuity in chronological order and the apparent incoherence of various narratives. The explanation given by Hawk (1991) seems to address these issues in a satisfactory manner. Hawk (1991:16-17) points out that the narrative is inherent in the structure of the book of Joshua. This evident narrative style defines and explains the apparent discontinuity. The narrative style organises and provides the structure and coherence that is necessary to integrate ideology and experience.

Building on Ricoeur's description of the development of a plot, Hawk works with Ricoeur's threefold mimesis. First, there is the pre-understanding of the story. Then there is the process of configuration that links the events into a unified whole. Thus logic is established and once can follow the story line. All the artifices are used at this stage to transform the story into narrative. In the third stage, the reader actualises the paradigms and configurations presented by the narrative. "The reader responds to the clues provided by the text to fill in the gaps and construct hypotheses of understanding", explains Hawk (1991:27).

One interesting point in the exposition of this story is the various interpretations of the fact that the spies went to the house of a prostitute. Why? What drove them there and what were their motives? Schaeffer (1977:74-75) is of the opinion that they went there because it would enable them to stay there unnoticed while they were surveying the territory.

However, Hawk (1991:62-63) disagrees with this opinion. Based on the choice of words in the original text he is convinced that they visited the prostitute for sex. To Hawk, this act portrays the irony of Israel's unfaithfulness to the God of the covenant. The Israelites have just returned from the shame of their prostitution with foreign women (Numbers 25:1) and despite God's prohibition they are at it again, visiting a foreign prostitute at the first opportunity presented to them. Hawk (1991:61) explains:

> In a symbolic sense, Rahab is a synthesis of all that is most threat-
> ening to Israel, a point which the narrator underscores by the names
> given to her: woman, prostitute, Rahab.

In the final analysis the preacher will have to not only make a choice between the two possible interpretations but also ask whether it should function in the narrative and in what way. It will be noted that I choose the motive of trying to attract as little attention as possible. If sex is chosen as motive, it could be used as a strong indication of God's patience with his people, keeping his covenant promise of inheritance of the land despite the conduct of the spies. Such a God of grace not only provides for his people but also saves a prostitute and her family.

Theological commentary:

Reading the intriguing historical events described in Joshua 2, one would not really get the impression that there are theological motives behind the plot. Yet, both Hamlin (1983) and Schaeffer (1977) highlight the strong theological overtones in this story. On the surface it appears that it is a case of "*du ut des*" — I do to you if you do to me. Rahab says: "I will hide you and not betray you if you will see to it that my family and I will not perish when your army takes over the city". When we examine the events from the perspective of the chapter on faith (Hebrews 11), we are told that Rahab's act was an act of faith.

Schaeffer (1977:75) interprets Rahab's words in Joshua 2:9 and 11 as evidence of faith. While Rahab was a non-Jew, she became part of the history of Israel while other Jews, who did not take God's covenant seriously and who were not Jews in the spiritual sense of the word, did not belong to God's Kingdom (1977:75). In this sense the words of Jesus (Mathew 21:31) are true, namely that harlots will enter into the Kingdom of God before people who would expect to enter because of their Jewish origin. Hamlin (1983:18) provides a similar exposition and also refers to the words of Jesus. Rahab's faith is proven by her firm *knowledge* that the God of Israel will give his people the victory (Joshua 2:9). This concurs with Rahab's confession in verse 11. Hamlin is convinced that her covenant with the spies and her acceptance of the God of the Jews caused her not only to abandon her belief in many other gods, but also renounce a life of incest. If we take this line of thought, it was nothing less than a true conversion to the God of the covenant!

This theological perspective forms the basis of a workable plot. How was Rahab's act an act of faith? The congregation would probably treat such an assumption with great scepticism. Was it not her works of merit that saved her and her family? This scepticism provides us enough intrigue to

hold the element of surprise or amazement. The element of surprise is not found in the unexpected turn of events (the story will be well-known to most listeners), but rather in the *interpretation* and telling of events. Designing the plot in such a manner that the response could be: "Now I see!" or "Why didn't I think of that?" would be the surprise element and the challenge of this narrative sermon.

Homiletic commentary:

What is the big idea (see Robinson 1980:31-44) in this narrative? What would we like the congregation to know or to experience ultimately? Here we are thinking of that one important message we would want to convey to the congregation for them to think about, even after they have left the worship service. In this particular instance and in light of the theological commentary, I would like to suggest "Only faith can save you". Choosing this theme is especially important because the events of the narrative can easily create the impression to the inattentive listener that the narrative is about securing your own destiny. Of course, choosing the wrong interpretation of events and designing the wrong plot can also give the congregation the wrong idea. The blame for this unfortunate misunderstanding would then have to be put squarely on the shoulders of the preacher!

To assist the preacher in determining the homiletic idea, I strongly recommend the reading of the very captivating exposition of events by Hawk (1991). This in-depth discussion is presented as a narrative itself. Hawk succeeds in highlighting the various aspects of the narrative that create tension. For example, the narrator's swift move from one scene (verse 4) to the next (verse 6) and then back again (verse 7) creates suspense, argues Hawk. In this method of storytelling the images of suspicious police and anxious spies are juxtaposed to intensify the tension. Such narrative indications can be extremely helpful in designing a story line that would keep the listeners on the edge of their seats.

Two further homiletic considerations are important if the plot is to succeed. First, the preacher must consider the Scripture reading. If the turn of events are read from Joshua 2, it will be extremely difficult to uphold the element of suspense and surprise as the cat has been let out of the bag before the narrative starts. Narrating the story in an exciting manner immediately after the reading of the events in Scripture will be extremely difficult. The narration is then no longer fresh and new. If the narration were to end as a mere repetition of what has been read, it could also create a sense of boredom. The dilemma becomes more prolific if Hebrews 11:31 is read before the narrative is presented. It is therefore suggested that the Scripture should not be read at the beginning. Instead, the narrator can start by telling the

story, carefully laying down the principles that will eventually lead to the plot. I am well aware of the fact that within the reformed tradition the reading of the particular Scripture passage is considered to be as important as the sermon itself, if not more important. Some would therefore seriously question my suggestion that the reading of Scripture could be substituted by the narration and that the congregation could be encouraged to read the story at home. Unfortunately, here one would have to make choices and sacrifices.

The relevance of Hebrews 11:31 is, however, another matter. This important explanation of what really happened during the events described in Joshua 2 can be introduced at two different places. The first option is to introduce it after the narration of the story. The narrator could say:

> Rahab was wise, wasn't she? She saw an opportunity to save her and her family and she took it. She was saved by her acts, one could say. Yet, it is amazing that the author of the letter to the Hebrews refers to Rahab's deed as an act and an example of faith. That's strange? What has faith got to do with it? Lets look more carefully at the turn of events…

A second possibility would be to keep the conclusion until the end. The narrator could analyse the facts and events, seek hidden motives and assumptions. The interpretation of the events could then lead to the exclamation: "Aha!" In such a case the narrator could say:

> After reviewing and analysing the facts, we come to the amazing conclusion that Rahab must have believed that the God of Israel would give her land to the Israelites. She must have believed that her future lies with this God and His people. Now we understand why Hebrews 11:31 says that she was acting through faith and that she was saved by faith…

There is, however, also a second consideration if the suspense is to be kept and the plot is to succeed. It is suggested that the announcement of the theme (scope) of the sermon should be kept until the end. Announcing it at the beginning of the sermon would again let the cat out of the bag and spoil the element of surprise. Remember Craddock's warning in this regard, calling this "the preacher's crime against the normal currents of life" (Craddock 1981:63).

There is a very fine line between narrating the events and analysing the events (the interpretation). The preacher should take special care not to allow the sermon to develop into an expository sermon by dealing with the interpretation of the facts in an argumentative style. The overall impression should not be one of reasoning, but rather the discovery of the story behind

the story. The third stage of developing the plot, according to Hawk via Ricoeur, suits this purpose, as it enables us to use the clues given in the narrative to fill in the gaps and interpret the facts (see the commentary above). The congregation is lead to the discovery that in Rahab's case, just as in our own, we are saved by grace through faith and not by deeds of merit.

Liturgical commentary:

A liturgical atmosphere should therefore be created to facilitate a spirituality of joy and thanksgiving for God's method of salvation: faith and not work. Prayers and hymns can facilitate this spirituality, as well as the liturgical remarks of the preacher during the whole service.

1. STRUCTURE OF THE SERMON

1.1 Introduction

- When they knocked on her door, she had no idea that her life was about to be changed forever. Of course, she thought they were customers. She was a prostitute, you see.

- But the men were strangers, in a sense. They were not from the city, nor of her own people. She was about to find out that they were Israelites, spies who were sent to get information about her country and her people.

- What was she to do? Should she let the king know that they were there? That would be the patriotic thing to do. Her country was about to be invaded. But it would also be the safest thing to do. If she kept quiet about the strangers, she could be considered an accomplice, a traitor. And the penalty for that is death. Of course she was afraid. And yet, she could not betray the visitors. For she had heard about their people and their God. She, and everybody else, had heard that God, the true and living God, was on their side. She had heard of the powerful thing that their God had done to fight for them and to protect them. And she knew that they were doomed, that the success of their invasion was guaranteed.

- Was it fear that made her weigh the options? Perhaps, if they conquer her land, they would show mercy to her and spare her life. But was it fear?

1.2 Moves

- She had to believe what she had heard about these men and their God
- She had to believe what was to be…
- She wanted to be part of this history…
- Therefore she acted on her faith… (Hebrews 11:31)
- Thus God's covenant promise came true for her… (Mathew 1:5)

1.3 Discussion

The various moves suggested above should be narrated in such a manner that the listeners are involved in the plot, asking questions about Rahab's motives and the fear or uncertainty she may have felt. Are the men to be trusted? Is there not another way out? What if the king finds out that she is a traitor? Suspense could also be upheld by elaborating on Rahab's need to make quick decisions and the spy's fear that she would report their presence to the police. However, the plot should never be overridden by dramatic effect. Rather the suspense and drama should serve to profile the plot.

1.4 Scope

ONLY FAITH CAN SAVE YOU!

SERMON 2

Scripture reading: Judges 6.

Exegetical commentary:

From the beginning of the chapter it is clear that Israel is once again in a predicament. The oppression of the Midianites is described in seven verses. This is in strong contrast to the narratives of Ehud (3:12-14), Deborah (4:1-3), Jephta (11:5) and Samson (13:1), where the oppression is described only in one verse. Marais (1998:106-107) points out that this lengthy elaboration of the Midianite oppression stresses the immensity of the threat and the intensity of Israel's plight (see also Webb 1987:145).

Israel is in this predicament because of their sin (6:1), but when Gideon asks why God allows the oppression, the angel does not give the sin of the covenant people as reason. This is a strong indication of God's grace towards his people and the faithfulness with which He keeps his covenant promises despite the unfaithfulness of his people.

The fact that no one voluntarily came forward as deliverer of the people is in strong contrast to the stories of Ehud and Baruch. This lack of leadership is interpreted by Marais (1998:107) as a downward spiral. It is clearly a decline in the religious potential and moral fibre of the people. Marais writes:

> The whole nation is being represented as living in a reduced state, hiding like animals in holes and caves. They are represented as being broken in spirit.

Marais (1998:108) is of the opinion that Gideon was actually a coward and that the angel's greeting was in fact to sarcastically ridicule Gideon for his cowardice. However, I find it difficult to agree with this profile. There is no evidence to support such a strong demarcation of character and the reasons given by Marais to support his theory are far from convincing. Gideon's response could be interpreted as humility. Actions of heroism are seldom preceded by visions of grandeur and heroes are often surprised at their own heroic deeds. I believe this to be part of the intrigue making up the plot of this story that God saw enough potential in Gideon to choose him as the leader through whom God wished to deliver his people. This concurs with Bowman's exposition. Even though God is with Gideon, human intervention is part of God's plan (Bowman 1995:35-36). God is not going to deliver them without them. For this reason God does not respond to Gideon's objections but simply orders him to go and deliver his people.

Theological commentary:

As in the previous sermon, the theological emphasis is on the act of God and our response and not *vice versa*. In this case, the main theme (the big idea) of the sermon is the calling by God. The narrative should be structured in such a way that it emphasises the faithfulness of God in keeping his covenant promises. However, in acting out his promises He chooses people, particular people for a particular task. This theological point of departure has at least three implications:

- He chooses a particular person for a particular task in executing his plan. To take away that responsibility from that person would be sinful.

- He won't accept "No" for an answer. No matter what drawbacks or excuses there may be, the instruction remains: "It's your responsibility".

- He sustains those who are called and empowers them with whatever they may need for the task. In the final analysis it will become evident that it is not they who have to perform the impossible but God himself, as is illustrated in the events of this Scripture passage. All God is asking is that we will respond to his calling.

It is crucial to place the events in the context of the covenant. Without this theological basic motive and the New Testament perspectives on the covenant (see for example Hebrews 4) the religious and ethical appeal will end up as pure moralising (see again the chapter on the abuse of the narrative). Then we have to do things instead of making ourselves available as vessels and vehicles by means of which God wants to complete his work in and through Jesus Christ.

Of course, this does not mean that God cannot or will not use our own talents and abilities. On the contrary, God's angel greets Gideon with the amazing words: "The Lord is with you, brave and mighty man!" (Judges 6:12). Gideon had to be a man of faith and courage, even though it was never his battle but God's. Thus each of us has gifts that are acknowledged by God and used in his service. But our strength does not depend on these talents, but on the fact that God is with us!

Homiletic commentary:

How do we convey this "big idea" (Robinson)? Finding the plot will be the most difficult part of structuring the narrative. One possibility (there is always more than one possibility) is to show Gideon's wrong understanding of his calling as though the success of his mission will depend solely on him. This can be done by highlighting circumstantial events in the narrative. It is clear that Gideon could not believe that God would choose him

for the great task of liberating his people. First he argues the case against such a possibility, then no less than three times he asks for a sign. Mayes (1985:25) draws a comparison between Gideon's calling and that of Moses. Both object when they are called, both are sent despite their objections, and both ask for a sign. There is also a fourth opportunity for Gideon when God leads him to a specific tent in the camp of the enemy to listen to what the enemy is saying. He goes through this exhausting process while it was never intended for him to act out the role of the hero, accomplishing the impossible. The puzzle (the "itch", as Lowry calls it) could then be the intense struggle of Gideon to find out if he really was the right person for the task. In this case the narrator should narrate Gideon's doubt in such a way that the listeners get involved in his struggle. The immensity of the task to deliver Israel from such a terrible oppression can highlight the struggle and the eventual discovery that no predicament is too great in the face of God's presence and actions. This can be done as follows:

> I can understand that Gideon needed to make sure of the calling to such a great and seemingly impossible task. Wouldn't you and I feel the same? And does it not cause immeasurable unhappiness and tension when we don't immediately get straight answers from God? But I can also understand Gideon's doubt. After all, how can a human being know for sure when God is calling him or her to a specific task? How do you know that it is God's voice and not your imagination or your own subliminal will producing voices of commitment? And how do we know that we have got what it takes to do great things for God?

Highlighting this part of the narrative and getting the listeners involved by making them ask the same questions and wanting clear answers, can set the scene for the unexpected answers to these questions. The surprising and unexpected turn, creating the core of the plot, can then be that Gideon had to discover (as we do) that the calling from God will become evident not so much in the outer and remarkable things we may ask as signs (the dew miracles). Nor do we have to feel the heavy burden of having to act out the calling on the presumption that it all depends on us. We come to realise that we don't always get clear signs at the start. Rather the calling will become clear in the way in which God will take over and provide. We have to act in faith in order to discover what God had in mind for us from the very beginning. Only in retrospect can we see how God made the calling a wonderful and surprising reality. That's the unexpected element that can create a great plot for this amazing story of God's faithfulness and power. Acting in faith secures the calling. Even though Gideon goes secretly in the night

to destroy the Baal image (see Webb 1987:149), he nevertheless acts on the calling.

A wonderful opportunity not to be missed is to use an open-ended approach in the conclusion. In setting the plot, the listeners were involved in the process of asking: "How are we called by God? And how do we know that it is God's voice?" In the conclusion the narrator should pick up this theme, asking open-ended questions, which only the listeners individually and the congregation as body of Christ can answer. Sending them away with the need to answer for themselves and to the Holy Spirit what God is calling them to do could constitute a true religious experience.

Liturgical commentary:

The liturgical atmosphere should be loaded with a spirituality of commitment. If God wants to use us, each in our own unique way, we must make ourselves available. We need to trust the Lord and not look for excuses to avoid being used in his service. Prayers suggesting submission and commitment could be supplemented by so many wonderful hymns enhancing this spirituality. One that comes to mind is that wonderful and well-known song:

> Have thine own way Lord,
> Have thine own way.
> Though art the potter
> I am the clay.
> Mould me and make me
> After thy will,
> While I am waiting, yielded and still.

1. STRUCTURE OF THE SERMON

1.1 Introduction

"Who?, me?" Gideon is sure that there must be a misunderstanding. The angel just called him a brave and mighty man. "You want to use me as a leader to deliver our people?" Surprise! "Yes, you". The angel is adamant. Gideon is clearly troubled. He does not see himself as particularly brave or important. However, there are more important issues on his mind. He has been wrestling with so many questions about the struggle of his people. He often thought of the mighty deeds that God had performed in the past. He grew up knowing that God had sided with his people, often delivering them from their enemies. "Why was God so absent now? Why does He allow his people to be crushed, humiliated and kept in bondage for so long?"

So he asks. And the angel says: "Go with all your great strength and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I myself am sending you."

Gideon is stunned. The angel did not answer his question. At least, it does not seem so. He asked why God did not do anything and the angel's reply was: "You do it! It's your responsibility".

Gideon sighs with a sense of despair. "How can it be me? I am the least of our family and our clan is the weakest in the tribe of Menasse". "That doesn't matter", says the angel. "You can do it because God will help you. He will be with you".

Gideon found it hard to believe, even though it was God who spoke to him. Three times Gideon asks for a sign and three times God answers. The message is clear: "You have got to go! I am sending you."

1.2 Scope

IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!

1.3 Moves

- An impossible situation — Israel oppressed as never before
- Chosen and sent by God (v. 14) – that made him very special
- Strengthened (v. 16) and strong (v. 14) (Acts 1:8; 2 Tim. 1:7)
- Acting upon the calling (vv. 25-28) – before God gives his blessing
- Inspired by the Holy Spirit (v. 34) – an enthusiasm from above
- The victory is God's (Judges 7).

2. CONCLUSION

Just as He delivered Israel with 300 men so that they would not boast and say that it was their victory, so too is the salvation by grace. It is God's victory in and through Jesus Christ, not our good works, our diligence and commitment, not even our faith, for faith directed towards Christ is in itself a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8).

Gideon complained about the circumstances of his people (vv. 1-10, 13). God said: "It's your responsibility". The church needs members who will love the Lord and his kingdom so much that they will make themselves available for whatever task God chooses to place on their doorstep. "Who? Me?" "Yes, you!" What is it that the Lord wants you to do for Him? Is it to witness? Then it's your responsibility. Is it to comfort? Then it's your

responsibility. Is it to conquer sin? Then it's your responsibility. If you are wondering whether it is your calling, then God says through this wonderful history: "I am sending you". And if you think you can't, God says: "I will be with you. You can do it. Go!"

AMEN

SERMON 3

Scripture reading: Daniel 6.

Exegetical commentary:

Some historical-critical reflections on Daniel 6 seem to suggest that there is reason to doubt the authenticity and reliability of the events described. However, Leupold (1969:258) repudiates such criticism. It is interesting to read such assumptions that doubt the authenticity of Daniel 6. However, I do not consider it necessary to elaborate on these exegetical issues for the purpose of preparing the narrative.

Wood (1975:78-87) gives some interesting background information that could be used to stretch and dramatise the narrative. These facts are:

- The events described in Daniel 6 took place against the background of political change. The Medo-Persians were now in control and Darius appointed supervisors (120 princes and three presidents) to rule with him. Those supervisors and presidents must have been jealous of Daniel's high position and favour with King Darius. He was at least one of three presidents and some translations make him the first of three presidents. That would put him in order of importance and power next to the King.

- Daniel was approximately eighty-three years old when these events took place.

- The comments by Péter-Contesse (1993:163-164) could be added to this list. The upper chamber could be described as a "room on top of a room". The windows could be opened in the direction to Jerusalem. When Daniel prayed in a kneeling position, his act could be seen from the street and could not be mistaken for some other kind of action. Daniel was praying.

One of the most important exegetical issues must surely be Daniel's regular prayers. The question arises whether the events intend to highlight Daniel's faithfulness in prayer or whether there is something hidden behind his prayers. Leupold's exposition (1969:261-262) seems to focus on Daniel's "regular and fixed prayer habits". Leupold also seems to think that the grammar used to describe Daniel's act of kneeling and praying strongly suggests that the prayers concerned not only what Daniel prayed about *before* the immediate crises, but also included the needs of the immediate crises created by the decree.

Péter-Contesse (1993:163) refers to the *Revised Standard Version* that adds "and gave thanks before his God". One may ask: "What was there to thank God for in such terrible circumstances?" It should also be noted that the

praise and worship with supplications was part of Daniel's daily prayers. One can only imply from the facts that the praise had something to do with the fact that he was praying in the direction of Jerusalem.

Theological commentary:

Examples in chapter eleven of this book focus on God's acts and not on what we have to do. This is done not only to escape the danger of a moralistic preaching style, but to reflect what I believe to be the true intention of Old Testament narratives, namely that the God of the covenant acts and that our actions are a response to his actions. This is not to reduce our Christian responsibility but to place it in the correct theological context.

This point of departure is illustrated in the events of Daniel 6. One can focus and elaborate on Daniel's faith and faithfulness, and it is indeed inspiring to be confronted with such diligence and heroism in faith. Here is a man who serves God irrespective of the consequences. However, one has to ask the obvious question: "What caused Daniel to continue praying not only in the face of great adversity and danger, but especially in the circumstances of the Babylonian captivity while so many of his fellow captives had given up on God? Was it not because of the faithfulness of God and the trustworthiness of his promises that Daniel kept on praying?"

It would be tempting fate and even suicidal to continue praying openly under such circumstances if God were not worthy of such trust. God had proven Himself to be faithful and his covenant was eternal. Daniel knew that God would not and could not break his covenant with his people. He believed that, even though they were now captives, they would one day be free to return to Jerusalem. He trusted God for this deliverance and continued praying while others stopped believing.

Taking this as the main theme explains Daniel's persistence and places it in the context of faith actions. Lacocque (1979:118) explains the events in the context of "martyrdom for faith". However, we must remember, as Paul explains in Ephesians 2:8, that even the faith with which we believe, is a gift from God. Daniel's faith and obedience are indeed a great inspiration. Nevertheless, the main theme of this story is that he persisted in praying to God because he believed God to be trustworthy and faithful. Therefore, not only Daniel's faithfulness but also above all God's faithfulness should be praised.

Homiletic commentary:

The narrative of Daniel 6 is a dramatic one and well-suited for a narrative sermon. It has all the intrigue of a Hollywood movie or a play by Shakespeare. But what is the hermeneutic context and homiletic purpose of this

narrative? Is it that we should, like Daniel, refuse to worship other gods, no matter what? Or is it perhaps that we should pray faithfully as Daniel did? One could even imagine a sermon with the traditional three points: Daniel prayed regularly (three times a day); Daniel prayed despite adversity (he was a captive in Babylon), and Daniel prayed, no matter what (he would probably die).

It cannot be denied that these themes are dormant in the understanding of events. However, I believe that the historical context will help us to find the correct hermeneutic principle. The events of this narrative take place in the times of the Babylonian captivity. The people of Israel felt rejected by God and they experienced a sense of hopelessness. How could they sing a song of joy in a strange land (Psalm 137)? How could they have any hope of returning if the God of the covenant allowed the temple to be destroyed, Jerusalem left in ruins, and the covenant people taken into captivity? Among all this, Daniel continues on praying, facing in the direction of Jerusalem.

Why Jerusalem? Because Jerusalem was the city of God, the city where God's temple stood. That was his heart's desire (Wood 1975:83). Jerusalem was the representation and embodiment of God's covenant. If there were ever the hope of a return, that miracle would have to come from the God of the covenant. God could do the impossible: return His people to their land. Lacocque (1979:114) describes the strategic place of Jerusalem in the history of Israel:

> Jerusalem is always the goal to be attained. This is why, in the post-Exilic period, prayer was directed toward The City. Jerusalem is always present yet always still to come, always given yet always to be won, always calming yet always disquieting, always lived yet always hoped for. Daniel turns toward it to pray three times each day, on his knees. What the Babilonian wise men — representing the nations caught up in their static world view — hold against Daniel-Israel is his hope.

But would God allow them to return to Jerusalem? Were they now not the rejected and forgotten people? Daniel believed that the God of the covenant would never break His promises. Daniel was standing on the promises of God, as the words of that wonderful hymn proclaim. So what is the homiletic idea? That God is faithful and trustworthy, and that His covenant is forever and that we may rely on those promises. God may need to discipline us but He will not reject us. His discipline is proof of His love and of the promises of His covenant, which are fulfilled in His Son of love. For this reason prayer is not hopeless, even though the circumstances may seem hopeless.

Liturgical commentary:

If we treat this narrative in a moralistic way, we could send the congregation on a massive guilt trip because we don't pray like Daniel did. If we emphasise the need or the power of prayer as the main theme, we could really charge them into a frenzy of prayer-responsibility. In both cases the liturgical atmosphere would be different, focusing on what we have to do. In this case the congregation would leave the worship service with a different kind of emotion than if we were to choose God's faithfulness as the scope of the narrative. The faithfulness of God and the eternal character of his promises create a spirituality of joy, gratitude, peace and protection. Christians may rest in and stand on the promises of God. It is important that the liturgical commentary should stress this main theme of the faithfulness of God throughout the worship service, thus enhancing a spirituality of peace and joy. One of the many hymns that could be chosen to sing, would be William M Runyen's "Great is Thy Faithfulness:

> Great is Thy faithfulness, Oh God my Father,
> There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
> Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
> As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

1. STRUCTURE OF THE SERMON

The window of the upper room was open. From there Daniel could look out in the direction of his beloved city. Jerusalem! Ah, how many fond memories did he have of the city of God! All that he knew and loved was left behind when he was unwillingly taken by ungodly men to this strange land. Now he was a captive, unable to be where his heart's desire was.

Jerusalem! Once the temple stood there, that glorious place of worship, where the covenant God of Israel commanded his people to praise and worship him as their true and only God. But they had not listened, this stubborn people of Israel. The gods of foreigners and the rituals that accompanied those strange religions forever intrigued them. And so they were seduced to worship those gods. They did not intend to leave the God of Israel, neither did they want to trade him for the other gods, they thought nothing of it to add the other gods to their prayer list.

But they had ignored the command of the covenant God: "You will have no other God but me! Do not make for yourselves idols of wood or clay or gold or silver. Do not worship such gods". But they did not listen. They had forsaken their covenant promises. So God punished them. He allowed them to be taken captive to a strange land.

That really shook the foundations of their faith. God would never allow such a thing, they said. And when God did just that, their concept of God crumbled. Now they felt rejected by God. Everything they thought they knew about God was wiped out. "God did not care, after all", they said to one another. "God said that He would be faithful but look what he has done!"

Suddenly Daniel hears the lions roar. It has always been an awe-inspiring experience. You could feel the ground tremble as that mighty sound escaped the throat of those fearsome beasts. It was close to feeding time. And that did not necessarily mean that the lions would be fed animal meat. Sometimes people would be fed to the lions, people who came into disrepute with the king.

Daniel sighs as he looks in the direction of Jerusalem. Of course he was shocked, just like the rest. He too had to come to terms with the fact that God really did it. The city of God was in ruins, the temple was de-sacralised, and holy artifacts were taken and brought to the temple of the gods of Babylon. It is hard to imagine the original glory of the temple and bygone days when the people of God worshipped Him and sacrifices were brought before Him.

Tears prevent Daniel from looking in the direction of the City of God. Like so many times previously, he falls on his knees to pray. Daniel is not even aware of the fact that his enemies are watching him carefully. He knows that they have set a trap for him. They have enticed the king into making a decree stating that for 30 days no one was to pray to any other god but the king. People who disobey would be fed to the lions.

It is neither the ominous roar of the lions, nor the consequences of falling down on his knees to pray that is uppermost in Daniel's mind. He is thinking about Jerusalem. He is thinking about the temple. He is thinking about the God of the covenant. Then he prays, as he has done so many times previously, to the only true and living God who could hear his supplications, the only God who could see his tears and hear his cries, the only God who could change Israel's destiny, returning them to their land and their city.

"Oh God of my fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob", Daniel cries out. His voice trembles as the words escape from his mouth. "You, oh God, have given us a promise that you will be our God and that we are your people. You have made a covenant with us. You have said that it would be an eternal covenant. Yes, your hand has been heavily laid upon us in punishment and we thoroughly deserve such reprimand. But you have not forsaken us, Lord. You have not forgotten us. As the cries of your people enslaved in Egypt cried out to you, so the cries of your people are now reaching out to

touch your heart and to change our destiny. Your faithfulness is above all else and I know that one day you *will* hear our prayers. You *will* take us back to the land you have given to our fathers; you *will* restore your City and temple. You are our God and we are your people".

Before Daniel has finished his prayer, his enemies reached the palace and requested an audience with the king. There was not much the king could do to save Daniel, although he tried until sunset to find a way out. He *did* make the decree and the evidence against Daniel was overwhelming. Daniel was found guilty and the laws of the Medes and Persians, issued by the king, could not be broken or retrieved.

The enemies of Daniel jeered and laughed, overwhelmed by their joy when Daniel was let down into the pit of death. The King shouted: "May your God, whom you serve so loyally, rescue you."

What happened next was a miracle. As the stone was placed over the mouth of the pit, God's angels of protection placed chains over the jaws of the lions. They did not feast on the body of Daniel as was so obviously expected. When the king arrived early the next morning, he called out: "Daniel, servant of the living God! Was the God you serve so loyally able to save you from the lions?"

Yes, He was! The trust Daniel placed in God was not in vain. God proved to be faithful in protecting his servant and destroying his enemies. When the stone was taken away from the mouth of the pit, the chains which the angels put around the jaws of the lions were removed. And no sooner had the enemies of Daniel reached the bottom of the pit than those jaws opened wide and fierce to crush the bones of the men who challenged God's authority and majesty.

But there is a wonderful turn of events, more amazing than Daniel's deliverance by God. The king made a new decree, namely that everyone should fear and respect Daniel's God. "He is a living God, and he will rule for ever. His kingdom will never be destroyed, and his power will never come to an end…"

And so Daniel was saved. But what happened to his prayers about Jerusalem? His prayers were answered! God's people were allowed to return to their land. Jerusalem and the temple raised anew in all their glory! God did listen to his supplications because He is trustworthy and faithful. He had not forgotten His covenant and the promises He made. God said to Abraham: "I will bless you greatly and make your descendants like the stars in heaven. And in you all the nations of the world will be blessed."

How would that be? You see, my attentive listeners, God could not and indeed did not want to break his covenant because that covenant meant only the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The prayers for Jerusalem would be answered because a cross had to be planted on a hill outside that City of God. And the curtain of the temple, protecting the holiest place of God's presence, had to be torn so that God could forever be with his people. Emmanuel, God with us!

Now what about us? God has made promises to you and me. In these times of crime, violence and false teachings, do you still believe that what God said is true? Do you still believe that God's covenantal Son died on the cross of Calvary outside Jerusalem? Do you believe the promise of God that your sins are forgiven and that you are his child because of what happened outside Jerusalem two thousand years ago? Do you doubt the trustworthiness of God or his ability to save you? Are you wondering whether God really cares about your pain and suffering? Or are you standing on the promises of God, like Daniel? I do believe that the purpose of this story is to encourage us to stand on the promises of God.

1.1 Scope

STAND ON THE PROMISES OF GOD

1.2 Discussion

I started out by planning a simple structure for the sermon but in the process I got carried away with the narrative. It became an almost full-blown written out narrative sermon. A few interesting aspects are worthy of commentary.

You will remember how I emphasised the importance of choosing a specific grammatical tense and adhering to your choice. In this case, I had to correct myself all the time to ensure that I stayed true to this principle. However, I found that the narrative developed naturally into two tenses. The present tense helped me to set a dramatic atmosphere in the first part of the narrative. In the second part of the sermon I intuitively felt the need to let the story move faster in order to enhance the dramatic effect (see my previous remarks on this issue). The past tense suited this purpose better.

Furthermore, it will be noticed that I have made Jerusalem the centre of attraction in the narrative. It seemed to me that Daniel's prayers in the direction of Jerusalem were the key to unlock the true understanding of events described here. Jerusalem becomes the symbol of God's covenant and it represents all the promises of God. The fact that Daniel prayed so regu-

larly in this particular direction simply had to be significant! I also assumed that the content of Daniel's prayer could not just be that God would protect him against the onslaught of his enemies because he prayed in the direction of Jerusalem *before* the decree of the king. This suggested to me that matters concerning Jerusalem were predominant in his mind. Daniel's prayers were more than just an act of despair by a homesick person.

The question regarding the Scripture reading and the announcement of the scope is relevant. As previously, I propose that the story be told in narrative form, inserting passages of Scripture as part of the narrative. See how I have included the words by Darius from the *Good News Bible*. Reading the events before narrating them would simply mean a duplication that would kill the element of surprise and leave the congregation disinterested.

This theory was tested in the congregation where I preached the sermon. It surprised me that, although I had given the above explanation for not reading the chapter, some members of the congregation mentioned that they would have preferred the Scripture reading in any event. Perhaps I should revisit this idea of not reading the story before telling the narrative! What about reading the Scripture after preaching the narrative? In this case the information gathered by means of the narrative could entail an in-depth reading and hearing of Scripture.

But what about the scope of the narrative? Should it be announced at the beginning (would that not kill the element of surprise?) or should it be announced as a conclusion at the end? If the scope is announced in the beginning, it could indeed serve as a surprise. Those who know this history would not expect it to be about the faithfulness of God. They would rather expect a sermon about the faithfulness of Daniel or the need for prayer. Announcing the scope at the start could therefore intrigue the listeners, wondering how the preacher got to this conclusion. The narrator could say:

> Today I want to tell you a story about God's faithfulness. I feel the need to warn you in advance that you may perhaps think that this story is about the great faithfulness of a man in his service to God. But after you have heard the story and weighed the facts, I hope that at the end you will realise that it is about God's faithfulness and not man's faithfulness.

Alternatively, the scope at the end could serve as a conclusion for the story. The listeners are led to interpret the facts and come to the discovery themselves that it is about God's faithfulness. In this case the narrator could say:

> After hearing the facts, do you think that this story is about the
> faith of a man named Daniel? Certainly, the story is about Daniel's
> persistence in prayer. But is the intention of this passage of Scrip-
> ture to glorify Daniel's faith? I believe it is obvious that it is the
> God of the covenant and his faithfulness that is the true essence of
> this story. Therefore: Stand on the promises of God.

Planning the plot involves choosing a particular point of departure,
making one of the moves in the narrative the starting-point. I took the
upper room and Daniel's prayers as initiation to the plot. However, there
are (as always) many other possibilities. For example, it could be interest-
ing to start with Daniel moments after he is thrown into the pit. In such a
case the narrative may perhaps start as follows:

> Daniel, the prophet of God, is a little bewildered. He can't see very
> clearly in the semi-darkness of the lion's pit. But he can smell and
> hear them. A scent of rotten meat hangs in the air. Then he sees the
> silhouette of a large male lion. As his eyes get used to the darkness,
> he sees more lions. He was hurt when they let him down in the pit.
> His age of 83 years does not allow for the kind of mobility they
> subjected his body to when they let him down into the pit. His
> heart is pounding. Any moment now they will attack him, he sus-
> pects. But to his amazement they do not seem to take an interest in
> him. Suddenly, a female lion walks up to him to investigate. "This
> is it!" he thinks. But nothing happens. The female turns around
> and walks away. Then Daniel realises: "They are not going to tear
> me apart. God has closed their mouths! Praise the God of Israel!

The scene could then move back to the enemies and their plot to kill
Daniel, then to the prayers, *et cetera*. The possibilities and variations are
endless. It is important, however, that the moves be planned and that all
possibilities be thoroughly worked out before a final choice is made. In the
final analysis the moves should be structured in such a way as to serve the
main theme in the best possible way.

A last remark concludes the discussion on this narrative. It is possible
to use background information to stretch the story a little further. I have
tried to heed the warning by Lowry that words should be economical and
that a narrative should move to a conclusion swiftly. However, I have also
explained that the art of extension could be used to enhance tension, post-
poning the revelation of the plot. If the narrator chooses to try his/her skills
in the art of extension, something could be made of the jealousy of Daniel's
enemies (the political factors) or Daniel's perfect example and integrity that
made him so loved by the king, or even the fact that he was in his eighties,
still persisting in his faith and religious activities. However, a warning will
not be out of place. Dwelling on such background facts could easily lead the

attention away from God's faithfulness and cause the spotlight to focus on Daniel. In such a case Daniel becomes the example to follow while God's faithfulness may be underestimated.

SERMON 4

Scripture reading: 1 Samuel 3.

Exegetical commentary:

At the time of God's first revelation to Samuel, he was still a very young boy and a priest trainee. He had no experience of direct revelations from God, although his training must have introduced him to the importance of revelations. The theme of revelations could have been a much-discussed subject, as the first verse reveals that the revelations were rare in those days. This must have been particularly perturbing to Israel. It was also bad news, as the times when God did reveal himself to his people were noted by God's blessings (Baldwin 1988:63). As God's covenant people they had grown accustomed to God's guidance through revelations. The sentence structure suggests a break in communication between God and his people (Mauchline 1971:56).

The absence of revelations may be the reason why Eli needed to make sure whether Samuel had indeed heard the voice of God or whether it was just a dream. He instructs Samuel to go to sleep the first time. If it were a dream, it would be unlikely that it would be repeated. When it happened again, Eli was sure that it was the Lord speaking to Samuel (Mauchline 1971:57).

Theological commentary:

The hermeneutic implication of this passage is not that young people must be available to be used by God. Neither is it that God calls young people to be his witnesses, true as this may be. The scope of the message is not that we must be "tuned into" the whisper of the Holy Spirit, otherwise we would not recognise the voice of God when He speaks to us. The first verse of 1 Samuel 3 gives a hint of the theological context of this narrative. The Word of God was not heard often in those days. Revelations were few and far in between. What could be more terrible than that? God has ceased His communication with His people!

It must be particularly significant that God's anger and the reason for the broken-down communication was the conduct of Eli's sons. Their sins were so terrible that no sacrifice would be able to still God's anger (verse 14). What was their terrible sin? They disregarded the holiness of the sacrifices, stealing what belonged to God, thereby corrupting the sacrifices (1 Sam. 2:12-17). Because of this, "God had hidden his face" (Hertzberg 1976:41).

But now the silence is broken. God has not forgotten His people, despite all the terrible things that have happened in Israel. God has not abandoned His covenant. He has remained faithful and He is taking His people on a journey to the final and full revelation in His Son, Jesus Christ. From these facts we may conclude that the theological significance of these events seems to be centred on the sacrifices. Christ would be the perfect High Priest who would bring a perfect sacrifice that would take away all our sins!

Of course, neither the people of Israel, nor Samuel or Eli had this insight at that time. But we, as body of Christ, can see in retrospect how God's revelation to Samuel had a significant impact on the covenant and the fulfilment of the covenant in Jesus Christ. Hertzberg (1976:43) explains the calling and office of Samuel as the uniting of the three offices of king, priest and prophet. Gordon (1984:27) comments that such unification of three offices in one person would be impossible in the later history of Israel. Only in the Person of Jesus Christ would these offices once again be united. We can also see how privileged we are that we have the revelation in Jesus Christ and the Word of God, never to be taken away from God's universal church. Within this theological context the narrative is dominated by God's narrative and not in the first place by what we must do.

Homiletic commentary:

Finding the homiletic idea could be crucial in designing the plot for the narrative. If the plot is designed around Samuel's availability as young man to be God's instrument, the narrative would be structured completely different than if the plot were built around the need for God's communicative acts, without which we are lost.

Personally, I feel quite strongly about the sacrificial direction of the narrative, although it is not so strongly accentuated in commentaries. The challenge would be to bring this New Testament perspective into the narrative without unnatural or forced allegory. The narrative should therefore have a distinct Old Testament character, exposing the events in a particular time of covenant history. The narrator could end the narrative with some comments based on information from the New Testament. The narrator could say:

> The story we have told is both sad and inspirational. It is bad news and good news. It tells about the terrible consequences of sin and the interruption of God's communication with his people. But it also gives the good news that God is serious about his covenant. So serious in fact that He gave his only Son as complete sacrifice to take away our sins which would, like those of Eli's sons, never have been taken away by any other sacrifice. And because of this sacri-

fice, God will never again interrupt the communication with his covenant people. Jesus promised that He would be with us until the end of the days. He gave his Holy Spirit to live within us and to continue God's communication with us forever. And we have his precious Word, through which God guides and comforts us. That's the good news about which we may sing and praise the God of the covenant.

In choosing a particular style for the narrative, many possibilities arise. One of the ministers attending my seminar on narrative preaching took a first-person approach, telling the narrative from Samuel's perspective. It was done so dramatically and effectively that only after reading the sermon halfway did I realise that it was not his own personal life story. He told about his mother's prayers because she did not have a child and how she cried so intensely that the minister (he did not use the term "priest"; that was the "catch"!) thought that she was under the influence of alcohol. From here the scene was set for a dramatic plot. It would also be a workable concept to start off by telling how the news of the death of Eli's sons reached him and how he fell from his chair and died. From these dramatic events the scene could then be taken back to where it all started with God's revelation to Samuel. Another striking possibility could be to use the dramatic juxtaposition of the boy's sin (a gloomy event) with the bright and serene setting of the boy Samuel in the sanctuary. Hertzberg (1976:34-35; 37) comments that this contrast "is surely intentional". This contrast could be used to great effect to accentuate both the bad news and the good news of this story.

Liturgical commentary:

I have chosen God's communicative acts as the main theme of this narrative. A liturgical atmosphere should therefore be created to stress the need for God's revelation and the joy of an assurance that God will never more withholds his revelation from his Church. Praise for God's faithfulness, for the final revelation in his Word, his Son and Holy Spirit should enhance an atmosphere of joy. This could be supplemented by encouragement in prayer and song to be unreservedly open to God's communication in our daily lives.

SERMON ON 1 SAMUEL 3:1-18

1.1 Introduction

- Imagine a time and place where there is no Bible, no direct revelation or communication from God to man. Imagine that every one does as he/she believes and as it pleases them. How would it be never to hear anything from God? How would it feel not to have God talk to you?

- Of course, some would not miss it at all. But I know I will! If I have to live without God's Word, without knowing that God loves me and cares for me, it would drive me insane. Life would become meaningless. And that is exactly how Israel of old must have felt.

1.2 Scope

WITHOUT GOD'S REVELATION WE ARE LOST.

1.3 Moves

- God's people did not take note (2:27-29 against 2:12-17)?

- Therefore revelations and visions were rare (3:1)? Implications!

- God wants to restore communication (the history of Hannah; see Hertzberg 1976:34)

- Samuel knows and serves God from a very young age (1 Sam. 1 & 2)

- Yet he does not recognise God's voice (verses 4-5).

- A terrible message (verses 13-14) creates fear (verse 15)

- Why did God intend doing this terrible thing? (Sanctification of people; renewal of covenant; God was on the move toward his perfect and blameless High Priest, Jesus Christ)

- Revelations are here to stay (His Word at your disposal; His Spirit lives within you and His family shares with you).

- How important is God's communication for us?

2. CONCLUSION

How does it make you feel to know that God has truly revealed himself to us? We will never be without his communicative acts. (Gratitude, relief and praise!)

AMEN

SERMON 5

Scripture reading: 2 Samuel 6.

Exegetical commentary:

The decision to transport the ark was understandable, and it was a task that had been neglected for decades (Hertzberg 1976:278). Both Baldwin (1988:206) and Hertzberg (1976:278) refer to the overstatement of numbers in verse one. Even though it is unlikely that there were so many people accompanying David, the narrator overstates the numbers to emphasise the importance David attributes to the event. In any event it must have been a huge crowd, consisting of representatives from all the tribes, the orchestra and choirs.

Mauchline (1971:224) is of the opinion that Uzzah never intended to disregard the holiness of the ark. His act was born from an honest concern for the safety of the ark. He therefore concludes that "this story of Uzzah offends our moral sense".

Although we must agree that Uzzah acted in good faith and although the ark of God was carried upon a new cart, "no doubt with good intentions", Baldwin (1988:207) justifiably points out that the arrangements and actions described in this narrative represent a disregard both for the holiness of the ark and for God's clear prescriptions for transporting the ark (Ex. 25: 12-14). Because David gave orders to place the ark on a new cart, contrary to God's command, he was morally responsible for the tragedy that happened. Even though he blamed God for such a cruel punishment, he had in fact overstepped the line, assuming that his intimate relationship with God exempted him from God's prescriptions (Baldwin 1988:208). Furthermore, it must be noted that both Uzzah and Ahio could be considered to be the first protectors of the ark and that they would therefore have known about the prescriptions for transporting the ark (see Hertzberg 1976:278-279). Furthermore, they were in a family who for years were in charge of the ark (Baldwin 1988:208).

Theological commentary:

The events described are dominated by two emotions. On the one hand, there is shock and dismay in the realisation that God could do such a thing. On the other hand, there is the need to try to understand why God did it. Was it just an example of injustice and could God be unjust? If not, why did it happen? It is clear that the so-called theodicy (trying to understand and justify God's decisions and actions) of Systematic Theology could become predominant in the narrative. Although it is unavoidable to ask the "Why"

questions, the preacher should be careful not to allow the narrative to be dominated by speculation and explanation, trying to justify God's actions. The preacher should use the opportunity to try and find the meaning and message of these events. Is it about God's holiness? Is it about God being inexplicable? Or is it about the carelessness of people in their worship and religious actions? I believe that these events draw our attention to the fact that, even though God is "our" God, even though He is the God of the covenant, even though He is our Father and He loves us, He is still God. We may never forget the mystery of worship (Jones 1980:12-17). It is never just about us and always about the manner in which we are to approach God and be with God.

Homiletic commentary:

What is the homiletic idea behind these dramatic events? To me it is obvious that we need to be reminded that God is the Almighty God and that we could never cross the line, becoming familiar with Him. Coming into direct contact with God could be fateful. We are allowed to come close to Him only by means of a mediator. Jesus Christ made us God's children. When we approach God in the name of Jesus, we need not fear. We may touch Him, for He is Immanuel, God with us.

Liturgical commentary:

The minister should try to create two kinds of atmosphere. The worship service could start with prayers and songs to emphasise God's holiness and our unworthiness to be in His presence. As the worship service develops and the narrative is delivered, the mood should change to joy in the Lord, praise and thanksgiving that we may come close, that we may touch the pierced hands of our beloved Saviour!

1. STRUCTURE OF THE SERMON

1.1 Introduction

- I often wonder: "How well do we know the God we serve? How serious are we in finding the correct way of worshipping Him? Who is He and how could we describe His nature?".

- Just when we think we know and understand Him, just when we become comfortable and familiar with Him, we read or hear something that causes even more confusion.

- For example, the day God changed a celebration in honour of His Name into a Death March, the day when joy to the Lord was changed into

anger against the Lord; the events of that day bear a message and a warning about the way we are to respond to the God we serve.

1.2 Moves

1.2.1 Are good intentions not enough?

- David's joy for God
- The new cart
- Uzzah's concern for the Holy Box

1.2.2 Good intentions do not override commandments

- Specifications to move the Covenant Box (Ex. 37:1-9)
- Don't touch (Numbers 4:15)
- Responsibilities of the priestly family (Numbers 4:1-20)

1.2.3 There are reasons for those commandments

- The presence of Almighty God was manifested in the Covenant Box
- To ignore this, simply implied death
- 2 metaphors: forbidden fruit in Paradise; electricity warnings

1.2.4 Does this mean that we can never serve God with joy?

- David was angry and afraid of God — human but foolish responses
- On the contrary (God took David's side) = It was pleasing to God
- Provided we do it God's way! (2 Sam. 6:12-19; 1 Chronicles 15-16)

1.2.5 What is God's way for us?

- Emmanuel — God with us — the Word became flesh — Son of man to stand on our side; Son of God to stand between us and God
- Someone we may touch (John 20:27)
- Without Him we may fall into the same sin as Uzzah, losing sight of God's holiness, thinking we can do it; thinking God needs us!

1.3 Scope

DON'T TOUCH!

SERMON 6

Scripture reading: 2 Samuel 12:1-4; 5-12.

Exegetical commentary:

Nathan's task was a difficult one. The responsibility of the prophet was not only to guide and encourage the king, but also to rebuke when God wanted to discipline the king. And kings do not always respond positively, as Samuel found out when he had to reprimand Saul (see 1 Samuel 13:12; 15:13, 20). It is therefore legitimate to assume that Nathan did not look forward to his audience with the king. Baldwin (1988:235) argues that the response of the king would to a large extent be determined by the method the prophet would use in his rebuke. It would therefore also be reasonable to assume that Nathan took some time in considering a few options before deciding on a parable as strategy.

Nathan's parable is structured in such a way that it endeavours to emphasise the great injustice that was done, rather than making each part of the narrative correspond with the events leading up to the reprimand (Baldwin 1988:236; see also Hertzberg 1976:312). Extreme contrasts are used to create this emphasis. The parable has three main contrasts to create the desired effect. First, the poor man has one little ewe lamb he bought with the little money he had (Mauchline 1971:253). The rich man, who has an abundance of herds and flock, takes possession of the poor man's lamb and orders that it be prepared as the main course of the feast. That was the rich man's injustice. Secondly, the cruelty of it all is emphasised by the fact that the poor man raised the ewe lamb as a pet, treating it like a member of the family. Thus a bond of affection formed between the poor man and his ewe lamb. This bond is cruelly destroyed by the rich man's actions. Thirdly, David's ungratefulness is highlighted by the fact that, despite all that God allowed David to have, he was still not satisfied. He wanted more and he wanted more than what God allowed.

Was Nathan afraid to confront David directly, Mauchline (1971 254) asks. We do not know. However, there is little doubt that Nathan's choice of method was the most effective of all possibilities. Baldwin states:

> There could be no more effective example of the power of the parable as a tool in counselling. All David's defences have been flattened at a stroke, and he stands naked before his judge (Baldwin 1988:237).

Such a terrible injustice deserves a severe punishment. The damage should be reimbursed fourfold (or sevenfold, see Mauchline 1971:253-254),

implying the ultimate restitution to show the king's horror at such an injustice. However, for a rich man to pay that would be as good as nothing. Therefore, the death penalty must be added (Hertzberg 1976:313).

One of the important exegetical issues which the preacher has to deal with in this regard is the question whether David did indeed write Psalm 51. At the time Rogerson and McKay (1977:17) did not consider the possibility that David did not write the Psalm. They merely point to the fact that for obvious exegetical reasons some of the verses (verses 18f.) must have been added later, as they do not cohere with the rest of the Psalm. They also refer to scholars who point to similarities between this Psalm and 2 Samuel 11. David's authorship is, however, not disputed directly.

Kraus (1988:501) argues that it is recognised that Psalm 51 is unthinkable for the time of David. However, this does not mean that the reference in the introduction to 2 Samuel 12 is a later addition and that it should be removed, for it reflects the manner in which the author, whoever that may be, interpreted this Psalm or wanted it to be interpreted. Although Seybold (1996:211f) seems to support the idea that David did not write the Psalm, he does not elaborate on the issue or the debate.

Scholars of the Old Testament seem to hold different points of view regarding the authorship of the Psalms, in particular Psalm 51. Goulder (1990:18-20) describes an academic debate that is by no means cut and clear. He concludes that the Davidic tradition was abandoned, not so much because of sound and indisputable exegetical evidence, but because

> the tide of learned discussion had left the Davidic question marooned… Perhaps, then, the reasons for rejecting the David tradition have not been very overwhelming.

Goulder (1990:62-69) has a strong case for the acceptance of David's authorship, convincingly answering Gunkel's objections to such a conclusion. Goulder argues that the Davidic authorship was still accepted by more traditional leading critics at the end of the last century, including Delitzsch and Kirkpatrick. More recently it has been defended by Aubrey Johnson. Goulder (1990:65-66) finally concludes:

> In view of all this, it is hard not to conclude that the case for associating the psalm with David, Uriah and Nathan is strong, and that objections to it are weak.

From the above it should be quite clear that it is not exegetically indisputable that David was not the author of Psalm 51. One more exegetical issue, however, needs our attention. It is argued that, if David did write the

Psalm, he obviously made a mistake in pronouncing that he sinned against God alone. If it were David, he would have known that he also sinned against Uriah. But to use this as proof that David did not write this psalm, is to stretch the exposition beyond responsible limits. Rogerson and McKay (1977:18), however, comment that all sin is ultimately against God, thereby disturbing the relationship with God. This confession is therefore not an effort to deny or escape the guilt or responsibility against Uriah, but rather to underline the ultimate consequence of sin.

Theological commentary:

David unknowingly pronounces a heavy judgement on himself. God's judgement, even though its effect and consequences are serious, seems to include some mercy. David will not die. Nevertheless, there is a heavy judgement, consisting of three parts: the child will die, the violence of the sword in David's house will bring further suffering, and open shame is to befall David when his wives would be shamed in public, just as he had secretly shamed Bathseba (Mauchline 1971:254). This may appear to be a merciless condemnation but Hertzberg (1976:315) points out that David's act caused serious damage to God's kingdom. The enemies of God severely blasphemed against God because of what David, the anointed one, allowed himself to be guilty of in the sight of God. A heavy punishment was thus inevitable in order to restitute God's honour.

It is particularly significant that David did not respond in anger, like his predecessor did, when it was revealed that he was guilty of such injustice. David's response in one sentence is an understatement, perhaps to prevent further embarrassment for the king's reputation. However, one sentence says it all. Nothing further was to be said in public. No efforts are made to find excuses or extenuating circumstances. Guilty as charged!

Although nothing more is told about how David felt about his indignation, historical tradition must have told the story of David's remorse in his private conversations with God after his public confession. Thus, even though it may be that David did not write Psalm 51, as many commentaries indicate, the words of the Psalm give the true reflections of a man who loves God very dearly and who is torn apart by grief over sin. For the purpose of the narrative sermon it could therefore be taken as David's confession before God and his deep concern that the intimate relationship he had with God would not be ended. In my opinion, it is therefore not necessary to elaborate on the fact that some expositors are convinced that David probably did not write this psalm.

From the theological point of view the events accentuate the seduction and terrible consequences of sin, the importance of a true confession and honest remorse, to which God's response immediately is "You are forgiven". Baldwin (1988:239) stresses the point that it was David's immediate confession that showed him to be different from Saul. Because David submitted to the Lord's reprimand, he was immediately forgiven, whereas Saul never accepted his guilt and never found forgiveness. Baldwin also mentions the traditional perception that Psalm 32 reflects the happiness David experienced knowing that he has been forgiven by God. From the perspective of the New Testament this forgiveness of sin becomes even more prolific when the subsequent death of David's son is juxtaposed by the death of God's Son, Jesus Christ, to effect the complete forgiveness of sin.

Homiletic commentary:

It is suggested that Psalm 51 be read at a strategic point in the narrative after Nathan confronts David and reveals him as the guilty party. 2 Samuel 12 only states that David admitted his sin, but Psalm 51 reveals in a dramatic fashion David's remorse over the shame of his transgressions.

It must obvious that a narrative sermon should and indeed could not carry this debate about authorship. There is no need to confuse the congregation with doubts if all arguments are not weighed. However, it would be more like an exegetical class rather than a narrative sermon. The preacher should therefore, without feeling guilty, present Psalm 51 as a psalm of David and the words as the utterances of a grief-stricken king who loves the Lord and who feels as though his bones are crushed by guilt, shame and repentance. After all, it was argued above that it has not been established beyond scientific repute that David was not the author.

Structured in this way, the narrative could stand on two pillars: the events leading up to Nathan's confrontation of David, and David's response presented in Psalm 51. In the first part of the narrative the events leading up to Psalm 51 could be dramatically described. In a second move the emotions of David, the underlying theological assumptions, and the consequences could be highlighted. Care should, however, be taken that the second part of the narrative does not develop into an expository approach. David's emotions should be narrated as part of the story. Instead of giving an exposition of what the expression in Psalm 51: 8 means ("How does a child of God feel when he is overwhelmed by grief and guilt?), the narrator could say:

> David is devastated, not so much regarding the shame and embarrassment before his people, but because he has disappointed the God he loves so much. In his mind he tries to soften the impact of his guilt, but the harder he tries, the more intense he feels remorse

and guilt. He feels dirty. He feels the intense need to wash himself, to be clean again. But he knows that water cannot cleanse him. He also knows that the cleansing must come from God. The intense spiritual agony, prolonged by the fear that God will reject and leave him, has such an impact on his mind and body, that it feels as though the bones in his body are crushed, as though his strength has left him. "Wash me, oh God", he cries. "Do not take your Spirit from me", he pleads. He has repeated the words so many times, but it feels as though he cannot say it enough…

Liturgical commentary:

A liturgical atmosphere could be created that is both sombre and jubilant. The terrible consequences of sin and the fact that God confronts and judges the sinner should become evident. However, the congregation must not be allowed to leave the church with a sense of doom and gloom. The warning about the consequences of sin should be overridden by the message of God's grace. David is not destroyed, for the line of his descendants has not been completed. Solomon was to be born, and after him eventually the Messiah would come. Again, it has become clear that God is adamant in keeping his covenant promises. And it is because of these promises that perfect forgiveness of sin in the sanctifying power of Jesus' blood is guaranteed. And because of this perfect reconciliation, God's Holy Spirit would never leave us, even though we may sin heavily. There is reason to rejoice in such amazing grace. Juxtaposing God's judgement over sin with God's forgiveness ("Your sins are forgiven") could create the desired dramatic effect and tension so necessary for the plot. Comments to this effect should be substantiated by the choice of psalmody, hymns and gospels that emphasise these sentiments.

1. FIRST GROUP OF MOVES

- Nathan did not sleep well. He had received a divine instruction to bring a dreadful message to the king. He is to confront the king and bring a message of God's judgement over David, because of the terrible sins he had committed. How would he do it? What will he say? Obviously he could not soften the message. But was there a way whereby he could try not to offend the king or precipitate too much anger? Eventually, Nathan decides to use a story to bring the message across. The king is a poet. He will love a story.

- Imagine, if you can, king David's palace. The king is sitting on his throne, He is in a good mood. He smiles and he sings. His generosity surprises the members of his court. What is the matter with King David? He is in love! It was love at first sight. When he saw Bathsehba, he

knew that he wanted her. And because he is the king, he had her.

- A messenger comes forward, bowing in respect and fear before the king. He begs the king's pardon and announces that someone insists on an audience with the king. He says he is a prophet. His name is Nathan.

- David is not unwilling to give audience to God's prophet. He loves God and he respects God's prophet. And besides, he is in such a good mood. A sense of well-being spreads all around the king's court and there is a relaxed atmosphere among his subjects.

- The prophet is lead into the throne room. There is something strange about him. He is in a serious mood, but when he speaks, his voice is calm. He asks the king's permission to tell a story. The king immediately agrees. It should bring some entertainment. Nathan takes a deep breath and starts the story: (Read 2 Samuel 12:1-4; 5-12).

- The mood in the king's court has changed. The relaxed atmosphere has vanished as the story and Nathan's explanation unfold. David's subjects hold their breath. What would the king's reaction be? Kings don't take lightly to such a reprimand. But he does not defend himself. He admits his guilt. The king reacts, not with anger, but with obvious remorse. His people did not expect such a response. They are embarrassed by the king's emotional outburst. They don't know where to look, nor what to say. Suddenly the king gets up and leaves. He has an overwhelming need to be alone. As soon as he reaches his private chamber, he bursts into tears. His thoughts flow into words and his words become a prayer. (Read Psalm 5.1).

2. SECOND GROUP OF MOVES

It is emphasised again that these moves should not be presented as in an expository sermon. They should become part of the story, as per example above (see homiletic commentary).

- THE PSALM SHOWS HOW DAVID PERCEIVES HIMSELF
    - Sinful (3)
    - Sinned against God (4)
    - Evil from birth
- THE PSALM SHOWS THE EFFECT OF HIS BROKENNESS
    - Feels stupid (6b)
    - Feels dirty (2, 7 = wash)

- Feels sad (8, 12)
- Feels forsaken (11)
- Feels death (14)
- THE PSALM SHOWS HOW HE PERCEIVES GOD
  - God's constant love (1a)
  - God's great mercy (1b)
  - God's power to cleanse (2,7)
- THE PSALM SHOWS THE NEED FOR A PERFECT SACRIFICE
  - A humble spirit (16-17)
  - Only a complete sacrifice: Jesus' humility, brokenness, but without sin.

3. CONCLUSION

Now, my attentive listeners, you and I are not better than David, we have our own sins. We may not deem them to be serious, but in the sight of God they are nevertheless transgressions against God and punishable by eternal damnation. Imagine, if you will, that God's ultimate Prophet stands before you right here today. Imagine that He holds out a hand - not an accusing hand, but a hand pierced by a nail. Imagine that He says to you: "I have already made the complete sacrifice. I forgive you."

4. SCOPE

Even though sin is punished, God's grace is given in abundance.

5. CONCLUSION TO THIS CHAPTER

It is said that the preacher always has three sermons: the one he prepared; the one he delivered and the one he should have prepared and delivered. There is no pretence in the presentation of the sermons in this chapter. They could be approached and presented in many different ways and I have no doubt that your efforts will be more successful. Isn't that precisely the idea?

CONCLUSION

There is sufficient reason to be enthusiastic about the new possibilities of a narrative approach. However, we shall have to note the warnings given by many (Kellerman 1990:12; Venter 2002:6-9) that narrative preaching is not without its complications, drawbacks and dangers. The naïve and un-complicated approach of many preachers in their narrative efforts is indeed reason for great concern. It is not far-fetched to anticipate that irresponsible and unprepared renditions of narrative preaching could precipitate negative feelings and responses from members of the congregation — something that would kill the purpose of narrative preaching! Miller's warning (1992:111) says it all:

> Let us demand of every sermon that it be preached in such a way as to honor both the Bible as narrative and as prepositional truth. Generally practising only one form of any medium is in a sense extreme.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ANDERSON H & GOOLISHIAN H
1992. The client is the expert: a not knowing approach to therapy. In: S. McNamee & K. J. Gergen (eds.), *Therapy as social construction* (London: Sage), pp. 25-39.

BALDWIN J
1988. *1 and 2 Samuel*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.

BAUDRILLARD J
1983. *Simulations*. New York: Semiotext(e).

BAUMANN Z
1998a. Postmodern religion? In: P. Heelas, *Religion, modernity and postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell), pp. 55-75.
1998b. *Globalization. The human consequence*. New York: Columbia University Press.

BAUMGARTNER J
1982. Verkündigung im Rahmen der Liturgie. In: G. Schüepp (Hrsg.), *Handbuch zur Predigt* (Zürich: Benziger), pp. 433-458.

BAVINCK J H
1967. *De mens van nu*. Kampen: Kok.

BEST E
1978. *From text to sermon*. Atlanta: John Knox Press.

BLACK J
1978. *The mystery of preaching*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House.

BOWIE W R
1954. *Preaching*. New York: Abingdon Press.

BOWMAN R G
1995. Narrative criticism: human purpose in conflict with divine presence. In: G. A. Yee (ed.), *Judges & method. New approaches in Biblical studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), pp. 17-44.

BRIGHT J
1967. *The authority of the Old Testament*. London: S.C.M.

BRILLENBURG WURTH G
1955. *Christelijke zielszorg in het licht der moderne psychologie*. Kampen: J.H. Kok.

BROWNE R E C
1984. *The ministry of the Word*. London: S.C.M.

BURGER C W
1994. Die agogiese moment in die prediking in 'n situasie van verandering. *Practical Theology in South Africa* 9(1):83-92.

BUTTRICK D
1987. *Homiletic moves and structures*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
1992. *The mystery and the passion*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
1994. *A captive voice. The liberation of preaching*. Westminister: John Knox.

CAPPS D
1993. *The depleted self: sin in a narcissistic age*. Mineapolis: Fortress Press.

CHARTIER M R
1981. *Preaching as communication*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

CLEMENTS R
1999. Expository preaching in a postmodern world. *Evangelical Review of Theology* 23(2):174-182.

CLINEBELL H
1987. *Basic types of pastoral care and counseling*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

COX C W
1985. *Preaching*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

CRADDOCK F B
1981. *As one without authority*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

DAANE J
1980. *Preaching with confidence*. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans.

DARGAN E C
1974. *A history of preaching*. Vol. 1 & 2. Michigan: Baker Book House.

DE KLERK J J
1978. *Herderkunde*. Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel.
1981. Pastoraat en die ander "pastorale" wetenskappe. Professorale intreerede. Bloemfontein: Universiteit van die Oranje Vrystaat.

DEN DULK M
1995. De homiletiek van C. J. A. Vos. *Practical Theology in South Africa* 10(1):6-14.

DERRIDA J
1974. *Of grammatology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
1981. *Positions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

DINGEMANS G D J
1996. A hearer in the pew: homiletical reflections and suggestions. In: T. G. Long & E. Farley (eds.), *Preaching as a theological task* (Westminister: John Knox Press), pp. 38-49.

DOCKERY D S (red.)
   1995. *The challenge of postmodernism*. Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books.

DU TOIT B
   2001. *God? Geloof in 'n postmoderne tyd*. Bloemfontein: CLF-Uitgewers.

EGGOLD H J
   1980. *Preaching is dialogue*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.

ESLINGER R L
   1987. *A new hearing. Living options in homiletic method*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

ELLINGSEN M
   1990. *The integrity of Biblical narrative*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

FISCHER W E
   1979. *Who dares to preach?* Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House.

FIRET J
   1968. *Het agogische moment in het pastoraal optreden*. Kampen: J.H. Kok.

FITZGERALD G R
   1980. *A practical guide to preaching*. New York: Paulist Press.

FORD L
   1994. *The power of story*. Colorado Springs: NAV.

FORSYTH P T
   1964. *Positive preaching and the modern mind*. London: Independent Press Ltd.

FOURIE C J v d L
   2001. Die rol van metafore in spiritualiteitsvorming. Bloemfontein: Ongepubliseerde D. Th.-proefskrif. UV.

FULLER R H
   1981. *The use of the Bible in preaching*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

GADAMER H G
   1975. *Truth and method*. New York: The Seabury Press.
   1976. *Philosophical hermeneutics*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

GERGEN K J
   1992. Toward a postmodern psychology. In: S. Kvale (ed.), *Psychology and postmodernism* (London: Sage Publications Ltd), pp. 17-28.

GIBBS E
   1993. *Winning them back*. Turnbridge Wells: Monarch Publications.

GORDON R P
   1984. *1 & 2 Samuel. O.T. Guides*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.

GOULDER M
   1990. *The prayers of David. Studies in the Psalter II*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.

GUILLAUME F
1944. De catechismus in den dienst des woords. In: R. Chippers (red.), *Van den dienst des woords* (Goes: Van Oosterbaan & Le Cointre n.v.), pp. 169-177.

HAMILTON D L
1992. *Homiletical handbook*. Nashville: Broadman Press.

HAMLIN E J
1983. *Joshua. Inheriting the land*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

HAWK L D
1991. *Every promise fulfilled. Contesting plots in Joshua*. Louisville: Westminister John Knox Press.

HEALEY J & SYBERTZ D (eds.)
1996. *Towards an African narrative teology*. Maryknol, New York: Orbis Books.

HEITINK G, PIETERSE H J C & VOS C
2000. 'n Poging tot saamdink. *Practical Theology in South Africa* 15(2):53-72.

HENRY C F H
1995. Postmodernism: the new spectre? In: D. S. Dockery (ed.), *The challenge of postmodernism. An evangelical engagement* (Wheaton: Victor Books), pp. 34-52.

HERTZBERG H W
1976. *1 & 2 Samuel*. Old Testament Library. London: SCM.

HEYNS J A
1970. *Die nuwe mens onderweg*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg.

HEYNS J A & JONKER W D
1977. *Op weg met die teologie*. Goodwood: N.G. Kerkboekhandel.

HEELAS P
1998. *Religion, modernity and postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.

HORNE C F
1975. *Crisis in the pulpit*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.

HUGHS R G
1990. Narrative as plot. In: W. B. Robinson (ed.), *Journeys toward narrative preaching* (New York: Pilgrim Press), pp. 48-61.

JABUSCH W F
1980. *The person in the pulpit*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

JANSE VAN RENSBURG J
1991. 'n Kritiese ontleding van moralisme in die prediking. Bloemfontein: D. Th.-thesis.
1996. Verbond en pastoraat. *NGTT* 37(1):152-156.
1998. Regterbrein-strategieë vir pastorale terapie. *NGTT* 39(1&2):65-78.

1999. Etiek en pastoraat in hermeneutiese konteks. *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* 39(2):158-167.
2000. *The paradigm shift*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Uitgewers.
2001. The influence of post-modern epistemology on preaching. *NGTT* 42(3&4): 340-347.

JONES I T
1966. *Principles and practice of preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

JONES W & YARNOLD
1980. *The study of liturgy*. London: SPCK.

JONKER W D
1976. *Die Woord as opdrag*. Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel.

KEITH N W
1997. *Reframing international development*. London: SAGE Publications.

KELLERMAN J S
1978. Vormgewing van die prediking as kommunikasieprobleem. Stellenbosch: D.Th.-thesis.
1990. Narratiewe prediking: 'n Homiletiese ondersoek en beoordeling. Bloemfontein: UV.

KELLNER D
1989. *Jean Baudrillard. From Marxism to postmodernism and beyond*. Oxford: Polity Press.

KILLINGER J
1985. *Fundamentals of preaching*. London: SCM.

KLEYNHANS D J B & KELLERMAN J S
2000. Die sosialekonstruksie-model en die spanning tussen hoor en doen as reaksie op die prediking. *Acta Theologica* 20(1):73-89.

KRAUS H J
1988. *Psalms 1-59. A commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg.

LACOCQUE A
1979. *The Book of Daniel*. London: SPCK.

LAMMENS G N
1959. Preken in jeugland. In: A.G. Barkley Wolf (ed.) *Hoe vindt u dat er gepreekt moet worden?* (Zwolle: La Riviére & Voorhoeve), pp. 110-125.

LENSKI R C H
1968. *The sermon: its homiletical construction*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.

LEUPOLD H C
1969. *Exposition of Daniel*. Michigan: Baker Book House.

LEWIS R L & LEWIS G
    1983. *Inductive preaching. Helping people listen*. Westchester: Crossway Books.

LINGE D E
    1976. Editor's introduction to Gadamer. In: G. D. Gadamer, *Philosophical her-meneutics* (Los Angeles: University of California Press), pp. xi-lviii.

LISCHER R L
    1984. The limits of story. *Interpretation* 38 (1):26-38.

LLOYD-JONES M
    1976. *Preaching and preachers*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

LONG T G
    1989. *Preaching and the literary forms of the Bible*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
    1999. When half-spent was the night: preaching hope in the new millennium. *Journal for Preachers* (3):11-20.

LONG T G & FARLEY E (eds.)
    1996. *Preaching as a theological task*. Westminister: John Knox Press.

LOUBSER J A
    1994. Postmodernism, post-apartheid theology and New Testament studies. In: J. Mouton & B. Lategan (eds.), *The relevance of theology for the 1990s* (Pretoria: RGN), pp. 159-177.

LOUW D J
    1997. *Pastoraat as vertolking en ontmoeting*. Kaapstad: Lux Verbi.
    1998. Hoe teologies is die Praktiese Teologie en hoe prakties is die teologie? *Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika* 13(1):43-63.
    1999. *A mature faith*. Leuven: Peeters Press.

LOWRY E L
    1980. *The homiletical plot. The sermon as narrative art form*. Atlanta: John Knox Press.
    1990. The narrative quality of experience as a bridge to preaching. In: W. B. Robinson (ed.), *Journeys toward narrative preaching* (New York: Pilgrim Press), pp. 67-84.
    1993. *How to preach a parable*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
    1997. *The sermon. Dancing the edge of mystery*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

LYOTARD J F
    1986. *The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
    1993. *Libidinal economy* (translation by Ian Hamilton Grant). London: Athlone Press.

MACLEOD D
    1987. *The problem of preaching*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

MARAIS J
   1998. *Representation in Old Testament narrative texts*. Leiden: Brill.

MARKQUART E F
   1985. *Quest for better preaching*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Press.

MAUCHLINE J
   1971. *1 and 2 Samuel*. London: Buttler & Tanner Ltd.

MAYES A D H
   1985. *Judges*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.

McCLURE J S
   1991. *The four codes of preaching*. Augsburg: Fortress Press.

MIDDLETON J R & WALSH J
   1995. *Truth is stronger than it used to be. Biblical faith in a postmodern age*. Downers
   Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press.

MILLER C
   1992. Narrative preaching. In: M. Duduit (ed.), *Handbook of contemporary preach-
   ing* (Nashville: Broadman Press), pp. 103-116.

MITCHELL H
   1987. Narrative in the Black Tradition. In: R. L. Eslinger (ed.), *A new hearing*
   (Nashville: Abingdon Press), pp. 39-63.

MORAWSKI S
   1996. *The troubles with postmodernism*. London: Routledge.

MÜLLER B A
   1981. *Skrifgebruik in die pastoraat. Stellenbosch Teologiese Studies 8*. Kaapstad: N.G.
   Kerk-uitgewers.

NEL M
   2000. Persoonlike prediking. *Practical Theology in South Africa* 15(2):112-135.
   2001. *Ek is die verskil. Die invloed van persoonlikheid in die prediking*. Bloemfontein:
   CLF.

NOYCE G
   1988. *Pastoral ethics*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

O'NEILL J
   1995. *The poverty of postmodernism*. London: Routledge.

OUWENEEL W J
   1994. Paradigms in theology. *Acta Theologica* 14(2):1-24.

PEARSON G
   1959. *The ministry of preaching*. New York: Harper and Brothers.

PERRY L M
    1973. *Biblical preaching for today's world*. Chicago: Moody Press.

PÉTER-CONTESSE R
    1993. *A handbook on the Book of Daniel*. New York: United Bible Society.

PHILLIPS W S
    1986. *The Christian preacher as poet: a method for exposition of narrative portions of Scripture based on Aristotle's "Poetics"*. Michigan: University Microfilms International.

PIETERSE H J C
    1985. *Verwoording en prediking*. Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel.
    1987. *Communicative preaching*. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
    1988. *Die Woord in die werklikheid*. Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel.
    1993. *Praktiese teologie as kommunikatiewe handelingsteorie*. Pretoria: N.G.-Kerkboekhandel.
    2001. *Preaching in a context of poverty*. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

POSTER M
    1990. *The mode of information*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

RAPHAEL M
    1999. "I will be what I will be": the representation of God in postmodern Jewish feminist theology and contemporary religious education. *British Journal of Religious Education* 21(2):69-79.

REU M
    1967. *Homiletics*. Michigan: Baker Book House.

RICOEUR P
    1976. *Interpretation theory: discourse and the surplus of meaning*. Fort Worth, Texas: The Texas University Press.
    1978. *The rule of metaphor. Multi-disciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
    1981. *Hermeneutics and the human sciences*. Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press

ROBINSON H W
    1980. *Biblical preaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

ROBINSON W B (ED.)
    1990. *Journeys toward narrative preaching*. New York: Pilgrim Press.

ROGERSON J W & MCKAY J W
    1977. *The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible. Psalms 51-100*. London: Cambridge University Press.

RUNIA K
    1983. *The sermon under attack*. Exeter: Paternoster Press.

SCHAEFFER F A
    1977. *Joshua and the flow of Biblical history*. Illinois: Inter Varsity Press.

SCHLAFER D J
    1992. *Surviving the sermon*. Cambridge: Cowley Publications.

SCHRAG C O
    1992. *The resources of rationality*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

SEIDMAN S
    1994. *Contested knowledge. Social theory in the postmodern era*. Oxford: Blackwell.

SEYBOLD K
    1996. *Handbuch zum Alten Testament. Die Psalmen*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr.

SMART B
    1992. *Modern conditions, postmodern controversies*. London: Routledge.

STOTT J
    1982. *I believe in preaching*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

TAYLOR M C
    1998. Terminal faith. In: P. Heelas (ed.), *Religion, modernity and postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell), pp. 36-53.

TORFING J
    1999. *New theories of discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell.

TRACY J
    1994. *On naming the present*. New York: SCM.

THOMPSON J B
    1981. *Critical hermeneutics: a study in the thoughts of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas*. London: Cambridge University Press.

THURNEUSEN E
    1968. *Seelsorge im Vollzug*. Zürich: EVZ-verlag.
    1976. *Die Lehre von der Seelsorge*. Vierte Auflage. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag.

TRIMP C
    1981. *Media vita*. Groningen: De Vuurbraak.
    1988. *Heilsgeschiedenis en prediking*. Kampen: Van Den Bergh.

ULMER
    1883. On writing: Derrida's solicitation of theoria. In: M. Krupnick (ed.), *Displacement: Derrida and after* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), pp. 29-58.

VELEMAN W H
    1969. *Op weg naar een nieuwe vrijzinnigheid?* 's-Gravenhage: Willem de Zwijgerstichting.

VENTER C J H
    2002. Verklarende (expository) prediking — 'n herevaluering. Paper delivered at the workshop for Practical Theology, Bloemfontein, 14-16 January 2002. Paper to be published in Practical Theology in South Africa.

VOS C J A
    1996a. Homiletiese flitse in die hermeneutiese spieël van Paul Ricoeur (1) and (2). *Practical Theology in South Africa* 11(1):58-78.
    1996b. *Die volheid daarvan*. Deel I & II. Pretoria: RGN.
    1999. The composition of a sermon. *Practical Theology in South Africa* 14(2):120-128.

VOSLOO W
    1985. Faktore verantwoordelik vir die insinking en oplewing in die geestelike lewe van ou-Israel. *Skrif en Kerk* (6)1:90-99.

WEBB B G
    1987. *The Book of the Judges*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.

WEST G
    1996. The future of religion in the twenty-first century: a South African perspective. In: C.W. Du Toit (ed.), *New modes of thinking on the eve of a new century: South African perspectives* (Pretoria: University of South Africa), pp. 146-157.

WHITE M & EPSTONE D
    1990. *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*. New York: Norton.

WOOD L J
    1975. *Daniel. Bible Study Commentary*. Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House.

SUPPLEMENTA REEDS GEPUBLISEER
SUPPLEMENTA PUBLISHED

1. *Kaleidoskoop 2000, Artikels oor Teologie. Gedenkuitgawe Fakulteit Teologie, UOVS 1980-2000* - D.F. Tolmie (Red.) (2000) (Uit druk/ Out of print)

2. *Contemporary translation studies and Bible translation: a South African perspective* - J.A. Naudé & C.H.J. van der Merwe (Eds.) (2002)

3. *Essentialia et hodierna - Oblata P.C. Potgieter* - D.F. Tolmie (Ed.) (2002)

4. *Narrative Preaching: theory and praxis of a new way of preaching* - J. Janse van Rensburg (2003)