INTEGRATING DOCTRINE AND EXPOSITORY PREACHING:

A PROPOSAL AND AN ANALYSIS FOR

THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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Presented to

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Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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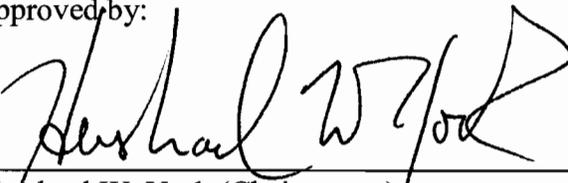
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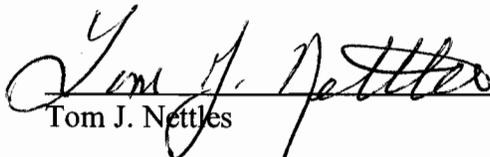
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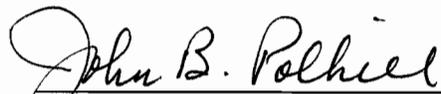
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John B. Polhill

Date _____11/13/03_____

To Annthea,

my wife and greatest supporter,

and to my parents,

Carl and Constance,

for their love and encouragement

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PREFACE

The reader may observe the somewhat frequent references to Internet sites and CD-ROMs. In nearly every case, I have verified the information by checking books and journal articles in the library. Because I did most of my research two hours from the main campus in Louisville, I simply left my footnote documentation "as is" to avoid making numerous changes. In a few cases, changes were in order, in which I cited the original work. Any other deviation from the original work is an oversight on my part.

This dissertation is by no means a solo effort. Many people aided me in this project with words of instruction, encouragement, and prayer. I would like to thank several of these people by name.

First, I am grateful for my supervisory committee—Drs. Hershael York, Tom Nettles, and John Polhill. Dr. York has provided invaluable guidance throughout my Ph.D. studies. I have often looked to him for wisdom, and his advice from years of experience in the pastorate and in preaching has been an asset in my own educational endeavors. Dr. Nettles always challenges me to think more analytically and write more clearly. Dr. Polhill exhibits a rare blend of a scholar's mind and a pastor's heart, and I am better for having sat under his instruction.

Having begun my doctoral studies while working in the HVAC department of Southern Seminary, I am thankful for my boss, Greg "Big Daddy" Edelson, as well as the entire crew. Even when we were backed up with work, Greg was always willing to let me adjust my schedule in order to put the finishing touches on seminar deadlines.

Moreover, I would like to thank the members of Bethel Baptist Church in Henderson, Kentucky. All of my three and one-half years of doctoral work were spent as a student pastor. The people at Bethel were kind and gracious in allowing me to balance several demands outside of the pastorate, and several lifted my spirits in prayer.

Furthermore, I have grown to appreciate my family and in-laws more and more as each year has passed. Surely, whatever may be commendable in me is a direct result of the discipleship from my parents, grandparents, and parents-in-law. My studies often cut our gatherings short and many times kept us from getting together at all. Yet through these years, I have received innumerable blessings from them—spiritually, financially, and emotionally, to name a few.

The family member I am most thankful for is my wife, Annthea. Every day of our married lives have been spent in Bible college or seminary. She pours her life into our kids—Hannah and John Mark—and I am convinced that they could have no finer teacher. With our training days behind us, we are now coming to a new chapter in our lives. I cannot wait to see what God will do through our years together.

Finally, words cannot express my love and gratitude for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Who would have imagined that God would be gracious enough to transform a prideful boy from the farmland of Indiana into a preacher of the gospel of God's grace in Christ? Though far from perfect, this work is an offering to Jesus Christ because of who He is and what He has done.

Joel Breidenbaugh

Louisville, Kentucky
December 2003

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The issue of blending doctrinal and expository preaching has received minimal

treatment in textbooks and articles on preaching. Since the appearance of Haddon

Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* in 1980,[1] homileticians have published a vast amount of

material about *expository* preaching—so much that it is proper to speak of a recovery of

expository preaching. Within the same timeframe, however, one has difficulty in

locating substantial writings which handle the subject of *doctrinal* preaching. R. Albert

Mohler, Jr. observes that this lack of emphasis on preaching doctrine has encouraged

many preachers to become slack in this area, resulting in doctrinal ignorance. This

theological ignorance from the pulpit has inevitably been passed on to the pews.[2]

Due to this void of doctrinal certainty, it is little wonder that the current trend

of preaching often minimizes any theological elements in favor of preaching to the

people's felt needs. Harry Emerson Fosdick's (1878-1969) impact on latter-twentieth

century preaching has led many preachers to define their roles primarily as counselors.

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[1]Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980).

[2]R. Albert Mohler, Jr. "The Primacy of Preaching," in *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching*, ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2002), 23. See also Tom Ascol, "Systematic Theology and Preaching," *The Founders Journal*, no. 4 (1991) [journal on-line]; accessed 20 December 2002; available from http:// www.founders.org/FJ04/editorial fr.html; Internet.

Even some theologically conservative preachers have accepted his criticism of expository preaching and his counter-proposal. Fosdick claims that many preachers

> indulge habitually in what they call expository sermons. They take a passage from Scripture and, proceeding on the assumption that the people attending church that morning are deeply concerned about what the passage means, they spend their half hour or more on historical exposition of the verse or chapter, ending with some appended practical application to the auditors. Could any procedure be more surely predestined to dullness and futility? Who seriously supposes that, as a matter of fact, one in a hundred of the congregation cares, to start with, what Moses, Isaiah, Paul or John meant in those special verses, or came to church deeply concerned about it? Nobody else who talks to the public so assumes that the vital interests of the people are located in the meaning of words spoken two thousand years ago. The advertisers of any goods, from a five-foot shelf of classic books to the latest life insurance policy, plunge as directly as possible after the contemporary wants, felt needs, actual interests and concerns.[3]

Fosdick clearly denounces *bad* expository preaching, for expository preaching by its own nature engages the audience with the biblical text.[4]

Against Fosdick's criticism, the recent rise of expository preaching rightly emphasizes preaching the Word of God as it is—doctrines and all—but the emphasis lies with the text's meaning and significance, or exposition and application. Furthermore, expository preaching textbooks rightly note the need to convey the central idea of the *Scripture* in such a way that the central idea of the *sermon* addresses the audience. Throughout this discussion on expository preaching, however, homileticians say little or nothing about preaching doctrinally within such an expository framework. Because the Bible, as the Word of God, is a theological book, it is possible and even necessary to

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[3]Harry Emerson Fosdick, "What Is the Matter with Preaching?" *Pulpit Digest* 63 (reprint, September-October 1983): 9.

[4]Hershael W. York and Bert Decker argue for "engaging exposition" in *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003). See also York, *2001 Power in the Pulpit Conference: Speaking with Bold Assurance* (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, cassette). See chapter 5 below on doctrinal exposition and the audience.

convey the central idea of a biblical passage from a *doctrinal* standpoint. Recent

publications show that theology and preaching in general are once again beginning to be

treated as overlapping disciplines.[5] Further, expository preaching that addresses the

contemporary world continues to be a growing interest. A need remains, nevertheless,

for implementing the two disciplines of *theology* and *exposition*. Even though some

expository preachers are heavy on doctrine and some doctrinal preachers deliver sermons

in an expository fashion, it is still necessary to integrate doctrinal and expository

preaching.

Thesis

This dissertation will propose and analyze the integration of expository

preaching and doctrinal preaching in addressing the twenty-first century. An assumption

of this work is that expository preaching best fits the biblical model.[6] Furthermore, both

biblical theology and systematic theology are faithful approaches to understanding

biblical doctrine.[7] How one is taught (expositional preaching) and what one is taught (the

Bible's theology) should be every preacher's concern for his church.[8] Thus, blending

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[5]See, for example, Millard J. Erickson and James L. Heflin, *Old Wine in New Wineskins: Doctrinal Preaching in a Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997); Robert G. Hughes and Robert Kysar, *Preaching Doctrine: For the Twenty-First Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997); Ronald J. Allen, *Preaching Is Believing: The Sermon as Theological Reflection* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

[6]I offer a definition of expository preaching in chapter 2 as a foundation to understanding doctrinal expository preaching.

[7]This is not to say that one necessarily concerns itself with the text of Scripture more than the other. Biblical theology focuses on a particular author's writings, seeking to understand what he means by certain words, phrases, concepts, etc. Systematic theology, on the other hand, is beneficial in seeing what the entire canon teaches about a particular doctrine, emphasizing the unity of the Scriptures. My contention, therefore, is that both biblical theology and systematic theology are faithful theologically and textually. For more on this notion, see Ascol, "Systematic Theology and Preaching," as well as chapter 4 below.

[8]Mark E. Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000), 45-46.

expository preaching and systematic-biblical theology provides what I label "doctrinal expository preaching." Additionally, since expository preaching necessarily includes application, it is imperative to convey how doctrinal exposition can, and should, address the contemporary world.

Hence, this proposal of doctrinal expository preaching for the twenty-first century will seek to show the need for emphasizing doctrinal truth within expository sermons. Because of the influence of postmodernism on today's church, preachers now more than ever need to declare the whole counsel of God. This kind of preaching demands both a doctrinal soundness and an expository style in setting forth the truth in its proper context. Although books and articles on expository preaching are abundant, doctrinal preaching receives little space in comparison. Furthermore, except for a chapter or section in a few isolated places, a tremendous void in doctrinal expository preaching remains. The lack of theological and biblical clarity and conviction in most of the modern pulpits—as well as the pews—makes this study both necessary and relevant.

Methodology

The goal of this work is to propose and analyze the incorporation of the all-too-often separated disciplines of doctrinal preaching and expository preaching with an eye on the contemporary world. This goal will demonstrate doctrinal expository preaching distinctively, biblically, systematically, and practically. First, this paper will establish the relevancy and necessity for this study. This section will include the rise of expository preaching and the decline of doctrinal preaching. Additionally, an analysis of the transformation of the audience over the last few decades with special concern for the roles of postmodernism and evangelicalism will help set the context for the rest of this

work. Second, in light of the voluminous amount of work on expository preaching, this study will look at significant components from some of the leading definitions. Moreover, a discussion of doctrinal preaching will help serve as a foundation for understanding doctrinal expository preaching. Third, an investigation of the Scriptures' terminology and preaching models should underscore the biblical basis for doctrinal expository preaching as a valid method. Fourth, a proposal on the roles of biblical and systematic theology in doctrinal exposition will aid the theological interpretive process. At the same time, hermeneutics has a voice in determining theological interpretation. The product of this theological exegesis will serve the process of forming the sermon. This section closes by offering two models as ways to implement doctrine and exposition. Finally, cultural concerns of truth, entertainment, language, image, and story highlight this study's relevancy and practicality. This work then concludes with several practical elements of doctrinal exposition.

Background

Three of the most influential preachers on my preaching ministry in recent years have been John Piper, Stephen Olford, and John MacArthur. Each of these three men has impacted me through both his sermons and his writings. Two characteristics they share stand out to me—they preach expository messages and these messages are rich in doctrine. It is accurate to say that expository preaching is the most biblical form of preaching, for its concern lies with the text's meaning within the immediate and larger contexts. At the same time, the best expository preaching I have *heard* is full of theology. It is with regret, however, that what I have *read* about expository preaching gives little attention to doctrine.

My initial interest with doctrinal expository preaching came at the task of producing a twenty week preaching calendar over a doctrinal-expository series in Hershael W. York's Doctrinal Preaching seminar. I was able to divide the Epistle to the Hebrews into twenty sermons and I put this model into practice in my own church. I gained additional interest in the topic after I wrote a paper on "Preaching Christology" for the same seminar. Furthermore, after reading the leading texts on expository preaching for comprehensive exams and after analyzing the books for the Doctrinal Preaching seminar, I realized the need to address this issue. To be fair to those who advocate expository preaching, they would probably want biblical doctrine to shine brightly in their messages. The reality is, nevertheless, that proponents of expository preaching have not explicitly argued for strong doctrinal content nor have they explained how preachers can incorporate theology and exposition.

Moreover, one of the contentions made in York's seminar was that doctrinal preaching's greatest downfall occurred during the 1970s and 1980s as Walter Kaiser, Jr. and others led preachers away from systematic theology toward biblical theology. While there may be some truth to this claim, I will argue that it is possible to recover strong doctrinal preaching through incorporating both biblical and systematic theologies.

A second reason for exploring this issue lies with the increasing downplay of doctrine among evangelicals today. Recent studies reveal that many evangelicals are biblically illiterate and theologically ignorant. It seems to me that the discipline of homiletics needs to re-address doctrinal preaching, especially within the framework of expository preaching.

Furthermore, having studied Baptist distinctiveness under Tom Nettles, the need for doctrinal conviction and clarity has been reinforced in my preaching ministry. A comparison of books recently published under the same title *Why I Am a Baptist*[9] supports the claim that as doctrinal clarity diminished among Southern Baptists—a leading evangelical denomination—during the twentieth century, denominational distinctiveness blurred. This doctrinal uncertainty has contributed to the numerous adherents to the Baptist faith who give little more than sociological, or cultural, reasons for being a Baptist. While this dissertation will not focus on Baptists per se, the late-twentieth century trend toward minimal distinctiveness among some Baptists has contributed to my interest in pursuing this study on preaching doctrine. Additionally, even though Baptist distinctiveness is not a main concern of this work, how one preaches faithfully within the evangelical orthodox framework is.

Therefore, with these interests and concerns, I have undertaken this task of proposing and analyzing a way in which preaching can integrate theology and exposition. The remainder of this chapter introduces the reader to a brief history of expository and doctrinal preaching. A look at the twenty-first century and the rise of postmodernism will underscore the challenges facing the preacher attempting to do doctrinal exposition.

The Recovery of Expository Preaching

Men of God have practiced expository preaching since the biblical era. Expositors of God's Word include Moses (Deut 1:5), Ezra (Neh 8:5-8), Jesus (Luke 24:27), and Paul (Acts 13:15ff). Although explanation was clearly at the heart of their

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[9]See, for example, the treatments in Cecil P. Staton, Jr., ed., *Why I Am a Baptist: Reflections on Being Baptist in the 21st Century* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1999) as contrasted with those in Tom J. Nettles and Russell D. Moore, eds., *Why I Am a Baptist* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001).

preaching, exhortation and application were also essential components, telling the audience what to do with the information.

Furthermore, the early church modeled this kind of preaching that explained the biblical text and applied it to the contemporary listeners. Men such as John Chrysostom (347-407) and Augustine of Hippo (354-430) stand out as noteworthy expositors. Known as the Golden Mouth, Chrysosom's preaching was tied closely to the Scriptures, so close that he delivered three homilies on the very first verse of John's Gospel![10] As far as Augustine goes, one usually remembers him as a theologian. His rich explanation of the Scriptures, however, impacted his generation and the Reformers of the sixteenth century. His clear explanation of the Bible's message placed him as the leading defender against the heresies of his day.[11]

During the Middle Ages, solid biblical preaching began fading from the scene as the sacraments began replacing the role of the Scriptures in worship. The Reformation not only returned the priority of the Word in worship, but it also recovered expository preaching. As to how the Reformation impacted preaching, Broadus cites four characteristics—the first two occur here, and the last two are below. Reformation preaching was, first of all, "a *revival of preaching*."[12] Such an outburst of faithful proclamation had not occurred since the biblical era. Second, "it was a revival of *Biblical*

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[10]Chrysostom *Homilies of St. John Chrysostom Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. John* 30-64, in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers First Series, vol. 14, ed. Philipp Schaff, in The Master Christian Library [CD-ROM] (Albany, OR: AGES Software, 1997). Significant writings exist from both Chrysostom and Augustine as are found in the first fourteen volumes of *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*.

[11]See John Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy: God's Triumphant Grace in the Lives of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000), 42.

[12]John A. Broadus, *Lectures on the History of Preaching* (New York: Sheldon & Co., 1876), 113.

preaching," the greater part of which "was *expository*."[13] The Reformers' exposition had

not had an equal since the days of Chrysostom, for in it is a return to the study of the

original languages in order to explain carefully to the people the Scriptures' teachings—

passage by passage and book by book. Careful and consistent exposition, sound

exegesis, and orderliness abound in Reformation preaching.[14] Broadus concludes this

point by saying that "in general, it may be said that the best specimens of expository

preaching are to be found in Chrysostom, in the Reformers, especially Luther and Calvin,

and in the Scottish pulpit of our own time."[15]

In the Face of Thematic Preaching

Although the Reformation recovered expository preaching, it did so only to a

degree. The Reformation's successors did not, for the most part, rival the steady verse-

by-verse, passage-by-passage, and book-by-book approach of Luther and Calvin. The

English Puritans latched on to the theological teaching of the Reformation, resulting in a

doctrinal-thematic style of preaching.[16] Thematic preaching, often understood as topical

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[13]Ibid., 114. Cf. John H. Leith, *The Reformed Imperative: What the Church Has to Say That No One Else Can* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988), 24-28.

[14]Broadus, *History of Preaching*, 114-16. That Broadus pushed for expository preaching in his own day is quite significant. Students of preaching should view his argument for exposition as foundational to Robinson's work in the same field (see also chapter 2 below).

[15]Ibid., 116. For Broadus' treatment of expositors in his own day, including Spurgeon, see Broadus, *History of Preaching*, 229-31.

[16]For a few writers who classify Puritan preaching as expository preaching, see John MacArthur, Jr. and the Master's Seminary Faculty, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching: Balancing the Science and Art of Biblical Exposition*, ed. Richard L. Mayhue (Dallas: Word, 1992), 51-60; John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 28-33; J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), 284. Although Puritan preaching has elements of expository preaching, I identify it, nevertheless, as doctrinal-thematic (for clarification sake, I provide a working definition of expository preaching in chapter 2). The Puritans did not normally practice the now-famous book-by-book approach to expository preaching. Since the Puritans were so well-versed in the Scriptures, many of their sermons include a barrage of biblical verses to support their doctrinal theses. For other homiletical models

preaching in the twentieth century, is preaching which "gives a systematic or integrated treatment of a theme considered worthy of discussion."[17] The kind of thematic preaching which had its roots in biblical truth would eventually give way to a type of thematic preaching which originated from the "hot" issues of contemporary culture.

The Puritan model of thematic preaching. Shortly after the Reformation, the Puritans entered the scene both in England and, later, in America. Doctrinal preaching may very well have reached its climax within this group of ministers. Puritan sermons, often one to two hours in length, were full of theological explanation and argumentation. In addition to Sunday sermons, special weekday or "occasional" sermons addressed the current circumstances. Puritan ministers were well-equipped to address both theology and culture.

A noteworthy feature of Puritan preaching is its "plain style." This style has at least three characteristics in regards to substance and structure. First, beginning with the biblical text, it provides a doctrinal thesis. Second, careful and comprehensive explanation of the theological statement takes place. Finally, the plain style consists of several observations as to the use or application of the doctrine to one's life.[18]

Although a full analysis of Puritan preaching is impossible at this juncture, the impact it made on future preaching is difficult to overstate. The need for sermons to revolve around a theme or idea has its origin in the Puritan model. Thus, it appears that the *structure* of Puritan preaching has had at least a small part in shaping the thematic

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which fall outside expository preaching, see Derek Thomas, "Expository Preaching," in *Feed My Sheep*, 74-80.

[17]James W. Cox, "Topical Preaching," in *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*, ed. William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 492.

[18]Harry S. Stout, "Puritan Preaching," in *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*, 394-97.

preaching so prominent throughout much of the twentieth century. Some preachers of the 1900s focused so much on relevancy that they had less and less to say about doctrine. Thus, the Puritans' doctrinal-thematic approach *grounded in the Scriptures* would eventually give way to something of a topical-thematic preaching *founded on the preacher's idea*. So, while a vast difference exists between the *substance* of Puritan preaching and much of contemporary preaching, there seems to be a connection with the *structure* between the two.

The modern method of thematic preaching. Puritan preaching helped preachers narrow their sermon's focus to a single theme. Although Puritans always began with the biblical text as the foundation for the sermon's doctrinal theme, preachers since at least the early-twentieth century have moved away from a semi-doctrinal exposition of Scripture to a thematic discussion of popular trends. The impact of Fosdick helps explain this shift in preaching.

Fosdick's roles as pastor of Riverside Church and as professor of Union Theological Seminary provided two influential platforms from which he could speak. On the one hand, as a professor, he was well-versed in the theological trends of his day. His writings on the Bible, preaching, and religion supplemented his discussions in the classroom. On the other hand, as a pastor, Fosdick used the Bible to offer words of advice and comfort. He viewed himself as something of a therapist. Many students and preachers valued his opinions as a theologian and trusted his advice as a pastor.

As noted above, Fosdick's distaste for some bad expository preaching led him to criticize the whole lot of expositional preaching. Furthermore, his modernist view of

the Scriptures directly influenced his preaching. Contemporary preaching still feels the rippling-effect of Fosdick's view of preaching.

Fosdick's "What Is the Matter with Preaching?" has become one of the most influential articles on preaching in the twentieth century. He argues against expository and topical preaching because they both start at the wrong end of preaching—the Bible and the preacher, respectively. As an alternative, Fosdick offers what he calls the project method, or problem-solving method. This type of preaching begins with the audience and results from cooperative thinking between the preacher and his congregation, using psychological practices.[19]

One of the biggest ironies about Fosdick's proposal is that many of his followers see him as "the progenitor of what might be called 'topical' preaching. Topical sermons often dealing with 'problem-solving' or 'life-situations' have dominated the pulpits of American churches"[20] since Fosdick's proposal. Even though Fosdick criticizes topical preaching, others observe that he has simply given it a different name.

This topical or thematic preaching continues to dominate mainline evangelicalism. A study of sermons by Fosdick and his followers shows that they offer little biblical explanation, often favoring narrative discourse.[21] What they do advance, however, are ideas of ways people can feel better about themselves or how they can be of

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[19]Fosdick, "What Is the Matter?" 9-12.

[20]Ronald E. Sleeth, "'What Is the Matter with Preaching?': A Fosdick Retrospective," *Pulpit Digest* 63 (September-October 1983): 17.

[21]See Harry Emerson Fosdick, *On Being Fit to Live With: Sermons on Post-War Christianity* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946); John R. Claypool and others, *Protestant Hour Classics: The 12 Most Requested Sermons, 1953-1988* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992); Barbara Lundblad and others, *The Past Speaks to the Future: 50 Years of the Protestant Hour* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995); Thomas G. Long and Cornelius Plantiga, Jr., eds., *A Chorus of Witnesses: Model Sermons for Today's Preacher* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994).

service to others. Although preaching themes could treat doctrines such as the Trinity, creation, grace, or sin, contemporary concerns for drug addiction, aging, depression, racism, and vocation have moved to the forefront in many of the mainstream evangelical pulpits of the twentieth century.[22]

Where thematic preaching has become skewed is in its place of authority. Although the Puritans' authority was the Bible, many preachers today see themselves as the authority. That is to say, the theme often originates in the preacher's mind before turning to find a supporting text.[23]

In explaining this move towards more of a subjective approach to preaching, especially preaching directed at people's needs, Robinson argues that the way preachers have viewed their roles reflect the shift of authority in the American culture. Prior to the 1950s, preachers saw themselves as evangelists. From 1950-1970, they viewed themselves as teacher. The 1980s and 1990s ushered in the preacher as therapist role. These role transformations caused changes in sermon content as well as in the authority in preaching.[24] The recovery of expository preaching in the face of these changes underscores the renewed emphasis upon biblical authority.

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[22]For ways these and similar subjects are supposed to help in addressing contemporary listeners, see James W. Cox, ed., *Handbook of Themes for Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991). One needs only to observe the number of Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Methodist contributors in order to realize the popularity of this book among mainstream denominations. Furthermore, having had Cox in the classroom, I know that he is quick to note the influence Fosdick has had on his own view of preaching.

[23]Francis C. Rossow, "Topical Preaching," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching: A Wealth of Counsel for Creative and Effective Proclamation*, ed. Michael Duduit (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 84-86.

[24]Haddon W. Robinson, "When Flint Strikes Steel," *Reformed Worship* 40 (June 1996): 15-16. David F. Wells makes a similar argument in his *No Place for Truth, or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 101.

In Efforts to Be Biblical

At the same time many preachers were viewing themselves as therapists, others were sensing the need to find their authority in the Scriptures. Thus, the primary reason for the recovery of expository preaching since 1980 is the need for preaching to be biblical once again. The route of thematic preaching was giving little more than lip service to Scripture. Of course, much of this direction resulted from a low view of Scripture. As more and more evangelicals asserted the inerrancy of Scripture, the natural way of preaching Scripture was in an expository fashion. After all, "biblical exposition comes only from those with a high inerrantist view of Scripture."[25] This relationship between Scripture and preaching is even clearer in the role doctrine has played in preaching.

The Neglect of Doctrinal Preaching

One finds different kinds of doctrinal preaching throughout church history— both strong and weak. Even in the doctrinally-weak sermons, the church has never completely lost doctrinal preaching. Nevertheless, periods of significant neglect of the sermon's theological content mark the history of the church. This section will highlight both the high and low points of the history of doctrinal preaching.

When Doctrinal Preaching Dominated

Doctrine will always remain an integral part of gospel preaching, for the gospel consists of such doctrines as the holiness and love of God, the sinfulness of man, the deity and sinlessness of Christ, the substitutionary atonement, Christ's resurrection from

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[25]R. Kent Hughes, "The Anatomy of Exposition: *Logos, Ethos, and Pathos,*" *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 2 (1999): 46.

the dead, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, and the necessity of repentance and faith for conversion. The truth of the gospel is at stake whenever people dismiss, or redefine in unbiblical terms, any of these key doctrines.

These key doctrines and their formations find their roots in the biblical era and the early church. It should serve as no surprise that today's homileticians remember the most noted expositors of Christian history as some of the best doctrinal preachers. Due to the absence of strong preaching during much of the medieval period, however, a need existed to recover the role of Scripture in worship. Thus, preaching and teaching the Word of God became of paramount importance during the Reformation Period. The Second Helvetic Confession of 1566 states, "The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God."[26] Because of this return to the Scriptures and its doctrines, many scholars agree that the Reformation Period and the next few centuries saw doctrinal preaching at its highest.

Broadus' comments about doctrinal preaching in his discussion of Reformation preaching are noteworthy. Within his treatment of the Reformers' biblical preaching, he states that "the preacher's one great task was to set forth the doctrinal and moral teachings of the Word of God."[27]

As stated above, Reformation preaching was not only "a *revival of preaching*," but it was also a revival of biblical or expository preaching.[28] Furthermore, it "involved a

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[26]John H. Leith, *Creeds of the Churches* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 131.

[27]Broadus, *History of Preaching*, 114. Charles J. Duey notes that in the Reformation "biblical preaching became the prime element in Protestant worship. And this preaching was theological preaching, not topical or life-situation preaching or any other form of public address than theological presentation of the Word of God" ("Let's Preach Theology," *The Covenant Quarterly* 21, no. 2 [1963]: 11).

[28]Broadus, *History of Preaching*, 113-14.

revival of *controversial* preaching"[29] when truth would not be allowed to stand beside error. Finally, Reformation preaching was "a revival of preaching upon the doctrines of grace. . . . freely proclaimed by *all* the Reformers."[30] Truth and doctrine are clearly at the core of these final two characteristics.

Combining both the point made above and this one, it is worth noting that Broadus emphasizes both *expository* preaching and *doctrinal* preaching within his discussion on biblical preaching, as if to say that true biblical preaching is both expository and theological in substance. The Reformation recovered the same practice of preaching that had occurred during the first few centuries of Christendom. Elsewhere, Ascol claims that in Calvin, Luther, and Zwingli, "theology resulted from and was given expression in expository preaching."[31] Although doctrinal preaching would continue for a few centuries following the Reformation, exposition took something of a backseat in most pulpits.

During the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries, doctrinal preaching abounded, thanks in large part to the influence of the Puritans. Their high view of the Scriptures provided the foundation for their high view of preaching. They insisted that one have a firm grasp of the theology of the entire Bible before seeking to explain a part of it. J. I. Packer writes,

> The Puritans received the Bible as a self-contained and self-interpreting revelation of God's mind. This revelation, the 'body of divinity' as they called it, is, they held,

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[29]Ibid., 116.

[30]Ibid., 117.

[31]Ascol, "Systematic Theology and Preaching." Elsewhere Ascol asserts that during the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries people assumed pastors were also theologians. "The Pastor as Theologian," *The Founders Journal*, no. 43 (2001) [journal on-line]; accessed 20 January 2003; available from http://www.founders.org/FJ43/editorial_fr.html; Internet.

a unity, to which every part of 'the best of books' makes its own distinct contribution. It follows that the meaning of single texts cannot be properly discerned till they are seen in relation to the rest of the 'body'; and, conversely, that the better one's grasp of the whole, the more significance one will see in each part. To be a good expositor, therefore, one must first be a good theologian. Theology—truth about God and man—is what God has put into the texts of Scripture, and theology is what preachers must draw out of them. To the question, 'Should one preach doctrine?', the Puritan answer would have been, 'Why, what else is there to preach?'[32]

It follows, then, that to a Puritan preaching is doctrinal by definition.

In further support of this claim, one of the most beneficial works on preaching came from the hand of a Puritan, William Perkins.[33] He believed that the preparation of a sermon must begin with doctrine: "First, fix clearly in your mind and memory the sum and substance of biblical doctrine, with its definitions, divisions and explanations."[34] The Scriptures' theological teaching, thus, shapes the rest of the preparation and proclamation process.

As for Puritan preaching, many Christians continue to benefit from the theologically-saturated sermons from the well-known preachers of that time frame, such as John Owen, Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles Spurgeon. Although an in-depth look at the preaching of these men falls outside the scope of this work, the main concern here is to see how and when the disciplines of theology and preaching became disconnected.

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[32]Packer, *Quest for Godliness*, 284-85. Timothy George asserts that the Puritans developed one of the most biblically-based, theologically-responsible patterns of preaching ("Doctrinal Preaching," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, 96).

[33]William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying; with the Calling of the Ministry* (Cambridge: J. Legatt, 1592; reprint, Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996).

[34]Ibid., 23.

When Doctrinal Preaching Diminished

It should be evident that preaching and theology have a direct relationship to the Scriptures. Apart from the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible one ends up with a dramatic shift in doctrine and preaching. Thus, it is not surprising that several writers trace the decline of doctrinal and/or expositional preaching to the decline of biblical authority.

Stated slightly differently, the movement away from doctrinally-substantive preaching finds its origin in the decline of biblical authority. As preachers lost confidence in the Scriptures' truthfulness, they made fewer appeals to its doctrines. The decline of biblical authority and the subsequent lack of doctrine in preaching find their roots in the rising liberalism of the late nineteenth century. Mohler writes,

> The intellectual roots of liberal trend within Protestantism are found in the enlightenment and the rise of modernist thought. By the late nineteenth century, liberal scholars in the academic world, especially in Germany and England, began to question some of the most basic teachings of the Bible. In particular, these skeptics began to deny the truthfulness of the Bible with regard to matters of history, creation, and the permanence of objective truth. . . . The Bible was no longer seen as a perfect treasure of divine truth, but was seen as the faulty testimony of ancient religious peoples.[35]

In order to observe this change in doctrinal preaching, several timeframes stand out.[36] Although these timeframes are not concrete-like parameters, they do help in tracing the decline in biblical authority and preaching. This section, therefore, outlines the roots and steady growth of doctrine-less preaching.

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[35]R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "A Conflict of Visions: The Theological Roots of the Southern Baptist Controversy," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7, no. 1 (2003): 5. For liberalism's impact on twentieth-century mainline Protestantism and the Southern Baptist Convention, see Mohler, "Conflict of Visions," 5-8.

[36]Mark Coppenger observes similar timeframes in tracing the human depravity in Southern Baptist preaching during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. "The Ascent of Lost Man in Southern Baptist Preaching," *The Founders Journal*, no. 25 (1996) [journal on-line]; accessed 2 April 2003; available from http://www.founders.org/FJ25/article 1_fr.html; Internet.

1870-1900—the root of decline in doctrinal preaching. The 1870s serve as a good indicator as to when this decline in biblical authority began within mainline Protestantism. Even though Schleiermacher's influence from the turn of that century was foundational to the rise of liberalism, its impact on American Protestantism would appear several decades later. Furthermore, the decade of the 1870s was a time when America began to identify itself anew in a post-Civil War era.

Several important figures began addressing the growing problem of liberalism during this decade. Princetonian scholars Charles Hodge (1797-1878) and, a few years later, B. B. Warfield (1851-1921) took a hard stand for biblical inspiration and inerrancy as they fought the criticism and Modernism creeping out of the European universities.[37] Hodge, for instance, opposed the promotion of Darwinian evolution because of its refusal to pay heed to biblical theology. The Bible is the supreme source of truth, and every theologian must subject himself, first of all, to the truths of Scripture. He wrote,

> It may be admitted that the truths which the theologian has to reduce to a science, or, to speak more humbly, which he has to arrange and harmonize, are revealed partly in the external works of God, partly in the constitution of our nature, and partly in the religious experience of believers; yet lest we should err in our inferences from the works of God, we have a clearer revelation of all that nature reveals, in his word; and lest we should misinterpret our own consciousness and the laws of our nature, everything that can be legitimately learned from that source will be will be found recognized and authenticated in the Scriptures.[38]

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[37]Carson is surely correct in his claim that "the Princetonians had more to say about Scripture than their forebears, precisely because that was one of the most common points of attack from the rising liberalism of the (especially European) university world" (D. A. Carson, "Domesticating the Gospel: A Review of Stanley J. Grenz's *Renewing the Center*," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 6, no. 4 [2002]: 90).

[38]Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1871; reprint, London: James Clarke & Co., 1960), 1:11. Hodge specifically attacks Darwinian evolution in *What Is Darwinism?: And Other Writings on Science and Religion*, ed. Mark A. Noll and David N. Livingstone (1874; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994). For more on the Princetonian doctrine of Scripture, see John Battle, "Charles Hodge: Inspiration, Textual Criticism, and the Princeton Doctrine of Scripture," *The*

Hodge also claimed that experience must be subject to the Scriptures' authority, for

> the Bible gives us not only the facts concerning God, and Christ, ourselves, and our relation to our Maker and Redeemer, but also records the legitimate effects of these truths on the minds of believers. So that we cannot appeal to our own feelings or inward experience, as a ground or guide, unless we can show that it agrees with the experience of holy men as recorded in the Scriptures.[39]

B. B. Warfield also defended biblical inspiration and doctrine in the face of growing liberalism. Concerning the latter, Warfield warned against creeping heresies:

> "Modern discovery" and "modern thought" are erected into the norm of truth, and we are told that the whole sphere of theological teaching must be conformed to it. This is the principle of that reconstruction of religious thinking which we are now constantly told is going on resistlessly about us, and which is to transform all theology. What is demanded of us is just to adjust our religious views to the latest pronouncements of philosophy or science or criticism. And this is demanded with entire unconsciousness of the fundamental fact of Christianity—that we have a firmer ground of confidence for our religious views than any science or philosophy or criticism can provide for any of their pronouncements. . . .
> . . . We are "orthodox" when we account God's declaration in his Word superior in point of authority to them, their interpreter, and their corrector. We are "heretical" when we make them superior in point of authority to God's Word, its interpreter, and its corrector. By this test we may each of us try our inmost thought and see where we stand—on God's side or on the world's.[40]

Moreover, Warfield addressed the significance of theology in preaching by stating

> if there be any validity at all in these remarks, the indispensableness of Systematic Theology to the preacher is obvious. For they make it clear not only that some knowledge of Christian truth is essential to him who essays to teach that truth, but that the type of life which is produced by his preaching, so far as his preaching is effective, will vary in direct relation to the apprehension he has of Christian truth and the type of proportion of truth he presents in his preaching.[41]

WRS Journal 4, no. 2 (1997) [journal on-line]; accessed 24 April 2003; available from http://www.wrs.edu/journals/897/text.html; Internet.

[39]Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:16.

[40]Benjamin B. Warfield, "Heresy and Concession" [on-line]; accessed 24 April 2003; available from http://www.bibleteacher.org/BBW5.htm; Internet.

[41]Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Indispensableness of Systematic Theology to the Preacher," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 7, no. 2 (1996): 245-46.

Not only did Princeton's scholars stake their claims on biblical authority, but Baptist leaders also contributed. In the middle of the 1870s, Broadus wrote, "It becomes every day more important to draw a firm line of demarkation between Physical Science and Theology, and to insist that each party shall work on its own side the line in peace."[42] Broadus believed that the Word of God is the highest authority, and even marginal departures from biblical teachings devastate a faithful biblical theology.[43] Allowing modern science and its quest for truth an equal plane alongside the Bible's teachings would eventually result in a denial of several key Christian doctrines.

Furthermore, James P. Boyce confronted liberalism in a personal way at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. In 1878 Boyce approached Old Testament Professor Crawford H. Toy because of the latter's recent acceptance and advancement of higher criticism in the classroom. As seminary President, Boyce could not, and would not, allow such destructive views to be taught to future ministers. Although Toy at first agreed to refrain from teaching his personal views, students asked too many questions about his opinions. Unable to remain quiet on his views, Toy eventually offered his resignation in 1879.[44] Even though Boyce was a personal friend of Toy, he stared liberalism in the face and fought against it.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Charles Haddon Spurgeon stood against higher criticism in what is known as the "Down Grade" Controversy among English

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[42]Broadus, *History of Preaching*, 231.

[43]For Broadus' views on the Bible, see L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 203-08.

[44]John A. Broadus, *A Memoir of James Petigru Boyce* (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1893), 264. Boyce began noticing the crisis in Baptist doctrine at least as early as 1856 in an address before the Furman University Board of Trustees. James Petigru Boyce, "A Crisis in Baptist Doctrine" *The Founders Journal*, no. 7 (1992) [journal on-line]; accessed 20 December 2002; available from http://www.founders.org/FJ07/article4.html; Internet.

Baptists. In setting the stage to this controversy, biographer Lewis Drummond writes

about nineteenth century European liberalism and how

> the continental philosophical atmosphere, aided by the theory of evolution, spawned
> pure rationalism, growing scientism, humanism and higher biblical criticism. And
> this atmosphere began to make strong footholds in the British scene, throwing the
> Church on the defensive.
> Spurgeon reacted strongly against this liberal trend. When he read a book he
> felt truly heretical, he would tear it into small pieces lest anyone read it and be led
> astray.[45]

Having been suspicious for some time about the Baptist Union and certain

Baptist preachers, Spurgeon finally gathered enough information to critique openly those

who had accepted unorthodox teaching. About their preaching Spurgeon wrote,

> The Atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Spirit is
> degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into a fiction, and the
> resurrection into a myth, and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them
> brethren and maintain a confederacy with them.[46]

Although Spurgeon ended up on the minority side of the controversy, evangelicals

around the world have benefited from his stance on biblical truth.

This growing liberalism would have an even greater impact on the next

century. It would continue to affect the role of the Scriptures. What started in the

classrooms of the world's leading universities would creep its way into the institutions of

school, state, and church in just a few short years.

1900-1940—Preaching the truth takes on new meaning. The birth of the

twentieth century brought with it the continual growth of liberalism in the university

world. As teachers advanced modern science and evolutionary principles in the

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[45]Lewis Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1992), 663. For a thorough treatment of the Down Grade Controversy, see Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 661-716.

[46]Charles H. Spurgeon, "Another Word Concerning the Down Grade," *The Sword and the Trowel* 23 (August 1887), 397; quoted in Drummond, *Spurgeon*, 820.

classroom, students became more and more susceptible to higher critical methods.[47]

Numerous Christian colleges, universities, seminaries, and divinity schools accepted the

claims of science, all-the-while rejecting little by little the authority of the Bible as

divinely revealed.

Somewhat of a climactic moment came by 1925, when the Church went head-

to-head with the State in the famous *State v. John Scopes* (a.k.a. the Scopes' Monkey

Trial) over the teaching of Darwinian evolution in the public school system. The roles of

Fundamentalist William Jennings Bryan and atheist Clarence Darrow brought most of

America up-to-speed on the larger scale of the controversy. While disagreements came

from both sides of the evolution issue—due to the larger war between supernaturalism

and naturalism—this controversy boiled down to a battle of science versus the Bible in

discovering the *truth*. Bryan's inability to match Darrow's wit, along with the media's

modernist tendencies, eventually led to a significant setback to the anti-evolutionary

forces.[48]

Within the church realm, Modernists represented the adherents of modern

science's claims. On the other side of the debate, the Fundamentalists characterized

many who continued to take their stand with the full authority of the Scriptures.

Although many personalities embodied both sides of the Modernist-Fundamentalist

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[47]Since the writing of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, the subject of evolution had become increasingly popular among Western thought. By the first two decades of the twentieth century, evolution had gained wide acceptance throughout America, impacting the institutions of church and school. Moreover, a study of the Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching reveals that sound doctrine had a strategic place in the pulpit during the latter half of the nineteenth century. A couple of decades into the next century, however, show a decline in doctrine (see Edgar DeWitt Jones, *The Royalty of the Pulpit* [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951], 385-94).

[48]For a helpful summary of this trial, see Doug Linder, "State v. John Scopes ('The Monkey Trial')" (2002); accessed 15 April 2003; available from http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/evolut.htm; Internet.

debate, two stood out as leading voices—Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969) and J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937).

Believing evolution to be factual and questioning much of the Bible's integrity, Fosdick preached with a strong emphasis on how one should live in the world. Among his sermons and numerous writings, one is hard-pressed to find solid biblical claims in support of the message he proclaimed.

Fosdick's message "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" in 1922 was aimed at stirring up like-minded Modernists.[49] This sermon has gone down in history as his most famous, however, because it sounded the alarm to many Fundamentalists. In this sermon, Fosdick dismissed four doctrines championed by Fundamentalists—specifically the doctrines of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, the virgin birth of Christ, His propitiatory sacrifice, and His literal return to earth.

As to these doctrines, Fosdick began by asserting that, although many gracious people hold to a literal virgin birth, there are a number of other evangelicals "who would say that the virgin birth is not to be accepted as an historic fact."[50] Also, Fosdick misrepresented the doctrine of plenary inspiration, describing it in terms of mechanical dictation. Finally, he discredited a literal, bodily return of Jesus Christ to the earth in favor of God's work of grace through human lives. He stated that there are evangelicals who claim,

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[49]It appears that the sermon was first published under Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The New Knowledge and the Christian Faith* (New York: n.p., 1922). The better-known title stuck shortly thereafter as is found in Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" *Christian Work* 102 (10 June 1922) [journal on-line]; accessed 15 April 2003; available from http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5070/; Internet.

[50]Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?"

'Christ is coming!' They say it with all their hearts; but they are not thinking of an external arrival on the clouds. They have assimilated as part of the divine revelation the exhilarating insight which these recent generations have given to us, that development is God's way of working out His will. . . .

And these Christians, when they say that Christ is coming, mean that, slowly it may be, but surely, His will and principles will be worked out by God's grace in human life and institutions.[51]

Fosdick rejected these core doctrines of Christianity because of his modernist view of the miraculous. He wrote that modern man "feels that miracles are a priori improbable. . . . [and] feels that stories of miracles are historically unreliable."[52] Miracle stories, Fosdick asserted, were added in later New Testament writings, those which were second-hand accounts. First-hand accounts, the most reliable, rarely record the miraculous—the epistles never record it and the "we" sections in Acts list very few miracles. Because of his naturalistic views, it is little wonder that Fosdick could preach that "Christians are unpayably indebted to science for the new note of straightforwardness and honesty in dealing with facts."[53]

Based on these assertions by Fosdick, it appears that he wanted to offer Jesus Christ and His teachings as the solution to the world's problems, all-the-while presenting a view of Christ which is radically different than the New Testament. Whenever the New Testament offers a doctrine which is puzzling to science, Fosdick either totally rejected it or redefined it. The authority, therefore, is not in the biblical text, but in the scientific assertions. This shift in authority impacted a number of scholars and preachers by the middle and late twentieth century.

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[51]Ibid.

[52]Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), 142-43. See also Fosdick, *Modern Use of the Bible*, 146-47.

[53]Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Religion's Indebtedness to Science* (New York: n.p., 1927), 16.

Countering the denial of Christian fundamentals, Machen wrote to fight off modern science in the realm of Christianity. His clear and careful argument that "Christian doctrine lies at the very roots of faith" makes his *Christianity & Liberalism* one of the strongest defenses ever for Christian orthodoxy.[54] Although Machen addressed key doctrines such as God, Christ, man, salvation, and the Bible, his claims on doctrine during this timeframe are of special interest.

Machen stated up front that naturalistic modernism/liberalism is not only a non-Christian religion, but it falls in a different classification of religions altogether.[55] Upholding Christianity as simply a way of life, modernism rejects the doctrinal framework of the Christian faith. In doing so, however, the modernist's claim against doctrine looks more like a mere objection "to one system of theology in the interests of another."[56]

Showing the validity of a clear doctrinal foundation in Christianity, Machen asserted that the entire Christian message stands on doctrine. The fundamental nature of the gospel means that certain historical events actually happened. From the time of the primitive Church,

> the meaning of the happening was set forth; and when the meaning of the happening was set forth then there was Christian doctrine. "Christ died"—that is history; "Christ died for our sins"—that is doctrine. Without these two elements, joined in an absolutely indissoluble union, there is no Christianity.[57]

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[54]J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity & Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1923; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 44.

[55]Ibid., 2, 7.

[56]Ibid., 19.

[57]Ibid., 27. See also the extended argument in Machen, *Christianity & Liberalism*, 28-29.

Although some critics of the 1920s were blaming the Reformation for the twentieth century emphasis upon key doctrines, Machen noted, "Ultimately the attack is not against the seventeenth century, but against the Bible and against Jesus Himself."[58] Therefore, Modernists fought against biblical authority and Jesus Christ's deity, and a Christianity grounded in ethical practices replaced the Christian faith consisting of doctrinal assertions.

While one could say more about these early decades of the twentieth century, the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy of the 1920s stresses the changing role of doctrine in the sermon. With the help of the leading universities and the media, modernism continued to gain ground.[59] Doctrinal conviction and clarity within the Church was beginning to fade.

1940-1980—The last hurrah for doctrinal preaching? The decades from 1940-1980 reveal a good deal about the role doctrine played in preaching. Books and journal articles on this subject appear to abound in comparison with both earlier and later decades.[60] As doctrinal preaching was making its last great run, one could sense the

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[58]Ibid., 46.

[59]E. Y. Mullins was a key figure in Southern Baptist life. Ernest Reisinger argues that Mullins was the re-founder of Southern Baptists, even the definer of their creedless faith of the latter twentieth century. Mullins replaced the theology of the founders of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary with his own theology, favoring a subjective view of freedom over biblical authority. "The Human Will and Doctrinal Decline," *The Founders Journal*, no. 26 (Fall 1996) [journal on-line]; accessed 2 April 2003; available from http://www.founders.org/FJ26/article 2_fr.html; Internet.

[60]Some of the books on doctrinal preaching and/or sermons during this timeframe include Merrill R. Abbey, *Living Doctrine in a Vital Pulpit* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1964); Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961); Douglas W. C. Ford, *A Theological Preacher's Notebook* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1962); Robert Mounce, *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960); James Stewart, *A Faith to Proclaim* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972); Theodore Wedel, *The Pulpit Rediscovers Theology* (Greenwich, CT: Seabury Press, 1956); Gerald Martin, ed., *Great*

troubled times ahead. Thus, one might say concerning the doctrinal preaching of this era,

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

In one sense, it was as if preaching had rediscovered theology anew. One

scholar observed,

> The statement that contemporary preaching has rediscovered theology needs a double qualification. On the one hand, theological preaching has never been altogether lost in the life of the church, though in various periods it has suffered neglect or abuse. On the other hand, the preaching in a multitude of churches today gives scant evidence of a theological concern or enlightenment. By "preaching's rediscovery of theology" is meant that in the life of the church as a whole, there is a new and deepening realization of the necessity of preaching which is theologically informed.[61]

At the same time doctrinal preaching was making its last great run during the

middle of the twentieth century, it was also facing a growing, ever-critical voice. Some

complained that theological preaching was boring and should not be practiced. James S.

Stewart answered such criticism,

> How foolish then, the clamour for non-doctrinal preaching! And how desperately you will impoverish your ministry if you yield to that demand! The underlying assumption is, of course, that doctrine is dull: a perfectly absurd misapprehension. . . . But to maintain that doctrine, as such, is necessarily a dull affair is simply a confession of ignorance or downright spiritual deficiency. Only a crass blindness could fail to see that such a truth as that presented in the sentence "The Word was made flesh" is overpoweringly dramatic in itself and utterly revolutionary in its consequences. "If this is dull," exclaims Dorothy Sayers, "then what, in Heaven's name, is worthy to be called exciting?"[62]

Stewart obviously considered doctrinal preaching as the only way to preach the full

gospel of Jesus Christ. One could not truly classify anything less as preaching.

Southern Baptist Doctrinal Preaching (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1969); Jerry Vines, *Fire in the Pulpit* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1977).

[61]Thomas E. McCollough, "Preaching's Rediscovery of Theology," *Review and Expositor* 56, no. 1 (1959): 43.

[62]James S. Stewart, *Heralds of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), 67-68.

In light of criticisms of doctrinal preaching as irrelevant, several evangelicals

began to note the need to refill the tank of doctrinal preaching. E. C. Rust, speaking to

both liberals and conservatives, wrote,

> Indeed, more than ever today there is a need for theological preaching. By this I
> mean preaching which relates the central doctrines of our faith to the challenging
> and portentous movements of our time and to the everyday life of our people. For
> too long our preaching, at all levels, has been remarkable for the absence of the
> doctrinal note.[63]

Furthermore, some preachers reaffirmed the necessity of theology in

preaching, especially a cross-centered theology. The person and work of Jesus Christ

remained at the heart of preaching. One could not explain such a subject without dealing

with doctrinal matters.[64]

Even though some great strides were made in theological preaching during this

era, the biblical theology movement was just beginning to take its toll on preaching

doctrine. More evangelicals were championing biblical theology as the foundation to

preaching.[65] Little did they suspect the dramatic decline in doctrinal preaching in the

coming years.

1980-Present—Is there any hope for doctrinal preaching? The last twenty-

five years reveal, now more than ever, the tremendous lack of doctrinal preaching. As

noted above, the 1970s helped pave new roads for biblical theology at the expense of

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[63]E. C. Rust, "Theology and Preaching," *Review & Expositor* 52, no. 2 (1955): 145. Rust's general assessment is correct, but what he offers by way of liberal and neo-orthodox theology as the answer lacks a solid, biblical foundation from which to build doctrinal preaching.

[64]Clarence S. Roddy, "On the Preaching of Theology," *Christianity Today* 3, no. 23 (1959): 5-7.

[65]See, for example, Rust, "Theology and Preaching," 145-65; D. A. Hagner, "Biblical Theology and Preaching," *The Expository Times* 96 (February 1985): 137-41.

systematic theology. This change in theology has cost many conservative evangelicals more than they bargained. Ascol rightly observes,

> The near extinction of doctrinal preaching today strictly correlates to the modern disenchantment with systematic theology—the discipline which seeks to arrange in an orderly and coherent (i.e. "systematic") fashion the revealed truth concerning God in His various relationships. Quite obviously such an attempt is valid only if there is an inherent unity in the Scriptures. If there is no overall unity in the Bible, no coherence in all its parts, then the systematic theologian is on a fool's errand.[66]

Without the Bible's unity, there is no foundation for systematic theology. Without systematic theology, preaching suffers from doctrinal malnourishment. Without solid doctrinal preaching, the Christian message is at stake.

Other than the rejection of biblical authority, another reason for the decline in doctrinal preaching concerns the cultural shift from modernism to postmodernism and the latter's influence on both the academic and ecclesiastical arenas.[67] Recent writers continue to lament the lack of doctrine in preaching: "How hard theology has fallen! Once considered the queen of sciences, today it is not even in the royal court."[68] Another says, "Contemporary homiletical methods have unintentionally moved preachers away from teaching doctrine in the sermon. . . . [and] have often been interpreted in ways that diminish the role of teaching in general and theological reflection in particular."[69]

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[66]Ascol, "Systematic Theology and Preaching."

[67]Robert G. Hughes and Robert Kysar accurately blame both the church and the culture for the current demise in theological understanding (*Preaching Doctrine*, 2-6).

[68]Matthew Ristuccia, "Bringing Theology to Life," *Leadership* 15, no. 1 (1994): 25. John H. Leith (*From Generation to Generation: The Renewal of the Church According to Its Own Theology and Practice* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990], 83) also observes the "great need for preaching with theological depth in our particular day."

[69]Robert Kysar, "New Doctrinal Preaching for a New Century," *Journal for Preachers* 20, no. 3 (1997): 17.

All hope is not lost, however, for preachers are at least noticing the need for theological preaching and many preachers have a desire to return to it. Timothy S. Warren writes, "In the last few years the study of preaching has taken an explicitly theological turn. Both the theological basis for preaching and the theological process in preaching are topics that have precipitated significant writings."[70]

It is with great hope, therefore, that homileticians recover sound doctrinal preaching afresh in this day. With the rise of expository preaching, along with a bit of an interest in theological sermons, there is a tremendous opportunity at (re-)implementing these two disciplines. The field of biblical preaching is ripe for harvest, if only the preachers themselves will get busy about the work.

The Audience of the Twenty-First Century

In addition to proposing a way of integrating doctrine and expository preaching, this work considers the contemporary audience. The twenty-first century has reaped the technological advances—radio, television, computers, and the Internet—of the twentieth century. The thirty minute sitcom has affected both the length of sermons and the way ministers preach. The ever-increasing visual technology enhanced by computers reminds preachers of the impact of visual, as well as vocal and verbal, communication.[71]

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[70]Timothy S. Warren, "The Theological Process in Sermon Preparation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156, no. 623 (1999): 336. Some of the more recent publications on doctrinal preaching include Jerry E. Oswalt, *Proclaiming the Whole Counsel of God: Suggestions for Planning and Preparing Doctrinal Sermons* (New York: University Press of America, 1993); Ronald J. Allen, *The Teaching Sermon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995); idem, *Preaching Is Believing*; Thomas G. Long and Edward Farley, eds., *Preaching as a Theological Task: World, Gospel, Scripture: In Honor of David Buttrick* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996); Hughes and Kysar, *Preaching Doctrine*; Erickson and Heflin, *Old Wine in New Wineskins*. Chapter 2 deals with some of these writers' contributions to doctrinal preaching.

[71]Bert Decker, *You've Got to Be Believed to Be Heard* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 81-85. While this book addresses communicators in the secular world, one that addresses Christian communication is Bert Decker and Hershael W. York, *Speaking with Bold Assurance* (Nashville:

Even though chapter 5 addresses preaching to a twenty-first century audience in greater detail, a few preliminary words are in order here. The rise of postmodernism has influenced preaching. Also, the ever-growing struggles within evangelicalism will help determine what, if any, doctrines preachers should declare in these uncertain days.

The Rise of the Postmodern Mindset

Perhaps David S. Dockery summarizes the current era best: "A new day has dawned. A new generation has come of age. The new generation is post-Christian, post-Enlightenment, and postmodern."[72] Many believe postmodernism, whatever it is, currently influences mostly the academy and intellectual world.[73] Postmodernism has, nevertheless, begun to impact preaching both in substance (what is preached) and style (how it is stated). The complexities of postmodernism demand attention, if preaching is to address people immersed in a postmodern culture.

It should be clear at the forefront that postmodernism is difficult to define with precision. By definition it refers to the age which follows modernism.[74] The current application of the term reveals it as "an umbrella concept covering styles, movements,

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Broadman & Holman, 2000). Neil Postman has also picked up on America's visual-orientation in what he calls the "Age of Show Business" in his *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985). This age has resulted in a "dumbing-down" of the average American mind.

[72]David S. Dockery, ed. *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 9.

[73]R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "The Integrity of the Evangelical Tradition and the Challenge of the Postmodern Paradigm," in *Challenge of Postmodernism*, 69-70.

[74]The dates for modernism vary. Thomas C. Oden ("The Death of Modernity and Postmodern Evangelical Spirituality," in *Challenge of Postmodernism*, 23-24) dates modernism from 1789-1989, or from the French Revolution until the crumbling of communism depicted by the tearing down of the Berlin wall. Stanley J. Grenz ("Star Trek and the Next Generation: Postmodernism and the Future of Evangelical Theology," in *Challenge of Postmodernism*, 76) sees modernism as far back as the decay of the Middle Ages and extending into the early and middle portions of the twentieth century. Suffice it to say that many writers on the subject of postmodernism find strong postmodern thought since the 1970s.

shifts, and approaches in the fields of art, history, architecture, literature, political science, economics, and philosophy—not to mention theology."[75] It seems safe to say that every area of life has been touched by postmodernism.[76]

Dockery views the heart of postmodernism's challenge as the rejection of truth, morality, and interpretive frameworks.[77] Postmodernism, therefore, dismisses the Christian worldview because of its stance on objective truth and morality. Thus, postmodernism and Christianity are in direct disagreement, and people today are questioning the theological underpinnings of preaching as never before.

Another difficulty in discussing postmodernism lies with its various strands. Critics of postmodernism have labeled its strands as hard and soft postmodernism,[78] destructive and constructive postmodernism,[79] and even deconstructive, liberationist, constructive, and conservative or restorationist postmodernism.[80] The harder views want to strip meaning from any and every text, including the Scriptures. The softer views, while not quite as dogmatic, are, nevertheless, still dangerous.

Postmodernism's own pluralistic worldview explains such diverse understandings within postmodernism (and, for this study, its theology). David Wells claims that "there is little agreement as to what it means to be a postmodern in theology,

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[75]Mohler, "Integrity of the Evangelical Tradition," 54.

[76]Postmodern thought, as complex as it is, seems to have a few basic tenets (see Millard J. Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998], 18-19).

[77]David S. Dockery, "The Challenge of Postmodernism," in *Challenge of Postmodernism*, 11.

[78]Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith*, 19.

[79]Carl F. H. Henry, "Postmodernism: The New Spectre?" in *Challenge of Postmodernism*, 38-40.

[80]Dockery, "The Challenge of Postmodernism," 14-16.

precisely because pluralism is at the center of it."[81] One may best characterize

postmodern theology as the following four strands: Karl Barth's confessional theology,

the existential-hermeneutical theology, theological deconstruction, and process

theology.[82] Several of the neo-orthodox theologians of the mid-twentieth century

represent the former two, and the latter two are gaining grounds, even among those who

claim to be evangelical.[83] Before discussing the relationship between postmodernism and

evangelicalism, it is beneficial to see how postmodern thought has affected preaching.

The Failure of the New Homiletic

Along with the rise of postmodernism in the 1970s came a new wave of

preaching in America. Starting with Fred Craddock's *As One without Authority* in 1971,

this movement has become known as the New Homiletic.[84] Offering to the contemporary

audience a new and "exciting" kind of preaching, New Homileticians dismiss

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[81]Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 66.

[82]Diogenes Allen, *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World: The Full Wealth of Conviction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989).

[83]Perhaps the most outspoken, and often quoted, evangelical open to postmodernism is Stanley J. Grenz. For understanding his approach, see his works: *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993); *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994); *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); "Star Trek and the Next Generation: Postmodernity and the Future of Evangelical Theology," in *Challenge of Postmodernism*, 75-89; *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000). For a summary and critique of Grenz's views, see Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith*, 83-102; Mohler, "Integrity of the Evangelical Tradition," 64-67; Carson, "Domesticating the Gospel," 82-97.

[84]Fred B. Craddock, *As One without Authority* (Enid, OK: Phillips University Press, 1971). Other important works in this movement include Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978); Richard Eslinger, *A New Hearing: Living Options in Homiletic Method* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987); Eugene L. Lowry, *The Sermon: Dancing the Edge of Mystery* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997); idem, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*, rev. ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Charles Rice, *Interpretation and Imagination: The Preacher and Contemporary Literature* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970); David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); Henry Mitchell, *The Recovery of Preaching* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977); Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

propositional claims—especially doctrinal ones—in favor of simply telling the story via narrative preaching. Both the characteristics and the shortcomings of this movement are of special importance here.

In step with postmodernism, the New Homiletic does not offer one unified approach to preaching but numerous avenues. While virtually each adherent of the New Homiletic has his/her own unique blend of what preaching should look like, Mark Howell summarizes the movement along a couple of shared characteristics. First, the New Homiletic rejects propositional preaching.[85] The reason for such a rejection appears to be two-fold. One reason is that there is "a conviction that the old rationalist paradigm for preaching is no longer effective; and second, a primary emphasis on the creation of an experience for the audience."[86]

Second, the New Homiletic focuses on the narrative quality of the Bible.[87] These adherents favor a storyline plot rather than any deductive argumentation a passage might present. Representative of postmodernism's community-based understanding the New Homiletic pushes for sermon structure to adhere to the biblical language that "is 'plotted' by the interaction between an intentional writer and the intersubjective

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[85]Mark A. Howell, "Preaching at the Dawn of the 21st Century: Is There New Hope for a New Homiletic?" (Ph.D. colloquium paper, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000), 11-16. For a complete analysis of this movement, see Howell, "Hermeneutical Bridges and Homiletical Methods: A Comparative Analysis of the New Homiletic and Expository Preaching Theory 1970-1995" (Ph.D. diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1999).

[86]Howell, "Preaching at the Dawn," 5.

[87]Ibid., 16-18.

consciousness of an intended audience."[88] Whether described in terms of movement, plot, or story, proponents of this movement stress preaching as narrative.

Thus, the use of story without any propositions is the highlighting feature of the New Homiletic. In summarizing his research on this movement, Howell states, "Authentic preaching, then, involves the meeting of two stories: The story of Scripture and the stories of life. If the preacher desires to bridge the distance between the biblical world and the contemporary world he must do so through the vehicle of story."[89]

In light of the New Homiletics' features, it is necessary to point out its weaknesses for preaching,[90] especially for doctrinal exposition (chapter 5 integrates some of its positive features). First, there is the big question of authority. The New Homiletic has followed in line with its postmodern underpinnings by shifting the authority away from the biblical text to the listener—going beyond the individual to the audience-community approach. This movement rejects biblical authority and theological substance in favor of accommodating to all the listeners. Not surprisingly, recent advances among the New Homiletic argue for preaching as a "roundtable,"[91] where there is *no authority* but a gathered community on *equal footing*. Without objective truth, anything and everything becomes fair game for understanding the Bible.

Second, the New Homiletic fails to declare the whole canon. Proponents prefer the narrative and parabolic sections of the Old Testament, Gospels, and Acts over

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[88]David Buttrick, "On Doing Homiletics Today," in *Post Critical Studies in Preaching*, ed. Richard L. Eslinger (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 95.

[89]Howell, "Preaching at the Dawn," 18.

[90]For an expansion of these weaknesses, see Howell, "Preaching at the Dawn," 21-26.

[91]See Rose, *Sharing the Word*.

the deductive sections of Scripture. Although these homileticians rightly remind preachers to avoid squeezing every biblical passage into a deductive outline, the New Homiletic becomes guilty of selecting from only a portion of the Scriptures. *Finding* the story to preach is more accurate of the New Homiletic than *telling* the story.[92]

Third, the issues of history, meaning, and truth are problematic for the New Homiletic. A growing number of preachers within this movement neglect the historical background of a text in favor of the text's form. Furthermore, any objective meaning tied to the text's historical surroundings is questionable because of the denial of authorial intent. Without authorial intent, no one can determine meaning absolutely, and if meaning is not absolute, then any notion of absolute truth must be impossible. No preacher can uphold the unchanging truth of Scripture, for it will entail determinant meaning. With regard to such truth, Eugene Lowry writes, "Propositional truth delivered through discursive language has a way of sounding more eternally true than it really is, even after we have researched the matter. Somehow, the mystery loses its awe."[93] What the New Homiletic (and postmodernism) really wants to claim is "We are absolutely sure that there is no such thing as absolute truth!"

In the end the New Homiletic walks in the footsteps of postmodernism and its rejection of normative truth in favor of individual, subjective, and even community-specific, intersubjective categories.[94] That is to say, postmodernism's remedy for modernism's individualism is communitarianism or socialism. Such a notion of

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[92]Eslinger, *A New Hearing*, 55.

[93]Lowry, *The Sermon*, 45.

[94]Dockery, "Challenge of Postmodernism," 13.

community or audience, however, is suspect. Mohler warns, "Communal meaning can quickly devolve into an oxymoron."[95]

Based on this assessment, the New Homiletic clearly fails to provide any certain hope for a not-so-certain culture. As a preaching method, its rejection of biblical authority and propositional preaching in favor of story telling leave the "new" sermon as little more than cotton candy—an interesting taste without any substance. Moreover, its denial and dismissal of history, meaning, and truth leave more questions about preaching than answers to preaching. Without unchanging meaning and absolute truth, there is absolutely no point in preaching at all, let alone doing theological exposition.

The Changing Face of Evangelicalism, or Neo-Evangelicalism?

The rise of postmodernism has not only affected preaching in particular but also evangelicalism in general. Indeed, "this postmodern world becomes the new challenge for the evangelical church."[96] Evangelicals have responded in a number of different ways to postmodernism—ignorance, indifference, dismissal, engagement, and acceptance.[97]

At the same time that evangelicals can respond to postmodernism, however, an identity crisis exists among evangelicalism because of the rising influence of postmodernism. The philosophical and theological strands of postmodernism have crept

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[95]Mohler, "Integrity of the Evangelical Tradition," 71.

[96]Dockery, "Challenge of Postmodernism," 12.

[97]For words of caution about ignoring postmodernism, see Thomas R. Schreiner, "The Perils of Ignoring Postmodernism," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2 (2001): 2-3. Mohler ("Integrity of the Evangelical Tradition," 70) writes, "In one respect, postmodernism may well represent a new evangelistic moment; an opportunity to transcend the corrosive elements of the older modern ideologies and to restate Christian truth in terms faithful to the biblical revelation and the Christian tradition, and yet addressed to a new consciousness."

into the evangelical camp. The changing face of evangelicalism makes it harder to define than ever before, so much that it may be appropriate to label certain strands as neo-evangelical.[98]

Iain Murray has traced the changes in American and English evangelicalism over the last fifty years.[99] He argues that from the nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth century to be evangelical meant to be united on certain doctrinal issues. The last few decades, however, have witnessed a doctrinal demise within evangelicalism. Murray traces the origin of this demise to Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and his *On Religion* (1799). Schleiermacher, often labeled the founding father of liberal Protestantism, was the first to argue "that religion is primarily not a matter of doctrine but rather of feeling, intuition and experience."[100]

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Schleiermacher gained a larger following. Still, during this same timeframe, evangelicalism had a strong sense of identity. Men such as Carl F. H. Henry and Harold J. Ockenga, along with an institution like Fuller Seminary, represented the "new evangelicals" of the mid-twentieth century. Some considered this "new evangelical" movement to be nothing more than

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[98]Elsewhere, some scholars define neo-evangelicalism as "the classification given particularly to a movement of North American Christians that arose initially in the 1940s. Neo-evangelicals were initially interested in proclaiming not only the personal but also the social dimensions of the gospel" (Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999], 48). The term did not really stick in the mid-twentieth century, with many opting the more common term "evangelical." I use the term "neo-evangelical" to refer to those who have gotten away from the theological nature of the term in favor of merely a sociological connection. While not denying a sociological factor, there must also be a theological factor in identifying evangelicals.

[99]Iain H. Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided: A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950 to 2000* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000).

[100]Ibid., 5.

fundamentalism at its best.[101] The best days of this movement, however, were short-

lived.

Since the 1970s, more and more liberal Protestants have joined themselves to

evangelicalism. Part of the reason for this marriage, Murray correctly asserts, has to do

with the acceptance of Billy Graham around the world. Graham realized that his mass

evangelistic crusades could draw greater numbers if the help of planning and preparation

were shared with the liberal denominations. William Martin, a Graham biographer,

observes that Graham

> doubtless intended to keep himself and his crusades free from Modernist
> contamination, but success weakened his resolve. . . . At first Graham was uneasy
> with non-Evangelical support but soon convinced himself that as long as no one
> tried to tell him what he could or could not preach, there could be no real harm in
> accepting the assistance and encouragement of people whose beliefs differed from
> his own at some points. After all, a key part of New Evangelical strategy was to
> gain a hearing for Evangelical doctrine in mainline denominations.[102]

Elsewhere, Murray employs a few of Martin's quotations in evaluating the role of the

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in weakening evangelicalism. He states,

> The reason why the BGEA decided to co-operate with liberals and other non-
> evangelicals was never set out in terms of principle. The fact is that the policy was
> seen as a necessary expedient designed sincerely for the best end, namely, to gain a
> wider hearing for the gospel. Crusades depended upon crowds and in the Graham
> story there is an almost ever-present concern for maintaining and increasing
> numbers. 'Keeping a customary eye for maximum public impact' and 'trying
> always for the largest possible crowds' was a settled part of the Billy Graham
> Association's strategy.[103]

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[101]Ibid., 31. See note 98 in this chapter as well as David F. Wells, "Introduction: The Word in the World," in *The Compromised Church: The Present Evangelical Crisis*, ed. John H. Armstrong (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998), 26.

[102]William Martin, *A Prophet with Honor: The Billy Graham Story* (New York: Quill William Morrow, 1991), 218.

[103]Murray, 58-59. The quotations are from Martin, *Prophet with Honor*, 251, 458. Richard V. Pierard also observes Graham's role in changing evangelicalism ("Evangelicalism," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984], 382).

Although Graham is not the only factor in the shift of American evangelicalism, his role

is significant and one must not overlook it.

By the latter half of the twentieth century, experiential unity became the

rallying cry of many associated with evangelicalism. This recently-formed "Experience

Party" holds debate with the traditional "Doctrine Party," those which see evangelicalism

based on certain doctrinal essentials.[104] Even though each group wants to claim historical

evangelicalism as its roots, history clearly stands on the side of the doctrinal group.

Perhaps no current historian has articulated the doctrinal decline within

evangelicalism more than David Wells. His trilogy of books and numerous chapter

contributions elsewhere have convincingly shown evangelicalism to be doctrinal

throughout all but the most recent years of its history.[105] Insisting that evangelicalism

includes orthodoxy, Wells writes,

> The stream of historic orthodoxy that once watered the evangelical soul is now
> damned by a worldliness that many fail to recognize as worldliness because of the
> cultural innocence with which it presents itself. To be sure, this orthodoxy never
> was infallible, nor was it without its blemishes and foibles, but I am far from
> persuaded that the emancipation from its theological core that much of
> evangelicalism is effecting has resulted in greater biblical fidelity. In fact, the result
> is just the opposite. We now have less biblical fidelity, less interest in truth, less
> seriousness, less depth, and less capacity to speak the Word of God to our own
> generation in a way that offers an alternative to what it already thinks. The older
> orthodoxy was driven by a passion for truth, and that was why it could express itself
> only in theological terms. The newer evangelicalism is not driven by the same
> passion for truth, and that is why it is often empty of theological interest. . . .
> . . . by substituting for its defining, confessional center a new set of principles
> (if they can appropriately be called that), evangelicals are moving ever closer to the

[104]Mohler, "'Evangelical': What's in a Name?" in *The Coming Evangelical Crisis: Current Challenges to the Authority of Scripture and the Gospel*, ed. John H. Armstrong (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 32.

[105]See Wells, *No Place for Truth*; idem, *God in the Wasteland* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); idem., *Losing Our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover Its Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

point at which they will no longer meaningfully be able to speak of themselves as historic Protestants.[106]

Certainly, the term "evangelical" carries the notion of concern for the evangel, or good news in Jesus Christ. Therefore, wherever Christianity is void of Christian orthodoxy and the unique Person and work of Christ, one cannot consider it to be evangelical by definition.[107] Simply put, evangelical preaching must necessarily be doctrinal preaching.

Doctrinal Expository Preaching
for the Twenty-First Century

God has always called Christian preachers, especially those who serve as pastors, to declare the whole counsel of God (cf. Acts 20:27-28). Preachers can best accomplish this extremely awesome and weighty task through doctrinal expository preaching, for expository preaching goes through the biblical text in an organized, systematized fashion and doctrinal preaching declares the larger framework of the text's nuts and bolts. Furthermore, doctrinal exposition is most valuable whenever preaching equally concerns itself with the Scriptures' message and the listeners' understanding of that message. Thus, the preacher's logos will be both biblically faithful and contextually applicable. This does not mean that preachers need to jettison the Bible's terminology, but they must work harder now more than ever to explain the Bible's message to an audience ignorant of the theology of the Scriptures. Preaching in the twenty-first century demands that preachers be both theologically attuned and culturally aware.

[106]Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 11-12, 101-02.

[107]For doctrinal parameters within evangelicalism, see Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and For His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1986), 20-24. See also chapter 5, which discusses valid doctrines within evangelical preaching.

Although preaching in the past has tended to favor either doctrine *or* exposition, most homileticians failed to stress the union between the two disciplines. This work will argue, therefore, that an integration of theology *and* biblical exposition is a possible, and even necessary, approach to preaching. In the face of a meltdown of truth and morality, anything less than a return to doctrinal preaching will cause Christianity and its gospel claims to limp along through the course of the twenty-first century. The recent interest in biblical theology (along with the value of systematic theology) coupled with the growth of expositional preaching greatly anticipates a theological-biblical kind of preaching which is both faithful to the text and fruitful in the lives of today's people. Such preaching can provide stability to shaky pulpits and unsettled pews. May ministers of God return to God's firm foundation of Christ and His Word!

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING DOCTRINAL
EXPOSITORY PREACHING

The definitional clarity of many commonly used terms is often blurred in the twenty-first century. Although the ordinary speech and slang of each new generation will give some words secondary meanings, it seems that the postmodern intersubjective-interpretive approach has impacted the current timeframe so much that some people make up the rules of grammar and language as they go. Sadly enough, preachers, with their heavy schedules of public speaking, have contributed to this demise, resulting in something of a different standard for grammar in preaching.[1] Thus, as chapter 1 argues, individuals who characterize themselves nowadays as evangelical without further defining what they mean bring confusion to evangelicalism. Similar uncertainty arises with the use of *expository* preaching. Nearly every proponent of preaching wants to claim expository preaching for his own view of preaching. Though not everyone agrees with him, Harold Bryson honestly claims, "No homiletical term has received as many definitions with an apparent authoritative definiteness as *expository preaching*. Each definition seems to be correct. Because of the variety of definitions, ambiguity abounds

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[1]Preachers often get away with split infinitives, ending sentences with prepositions, and similar grammatical mistakes. People graciously forgive such errors, but preachers should, nevertheless, strive for correctness in such areas.

about a clear, authoritative, workable definition of expository preaching."[2] Because of this definitional vagueness, this work will define and explain its use of expository preaching, which in turn, will help define doctrinal exposition. With this definition in hand, efforts at combining the disciplines of doctrine and expository preaching will highlight the ways others have viewed this matter. Finally, since Scripture is the basis for both preaching and doctrine, a discussion of the doctrinal prerequisites of an expositor, as they relate to Scripture, will conclude this chapter.

Defining Doctrinal Expository Preaching

One of the reasons this entire study is so crucial is due to the lack of information on doctrinal expository preaching and the need for a clear definition. This definition needs to include the basic tenets of both expository and doctrinal preaching. This section gives four of the leading and most precise definitions of exposition, followed by a working definition of doctrinal preaching. Integrating these definitions will result in doctrinal exposition.

The Use of Adjectives in Discussing Preaching

Many people, especially those in the pew, have nothing to do with adjectives when discussing preaching. To them, it matters little whether homileticians label preaching as topical, textual, expository, or any other type. They think that anything

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[2]Harold T. Bryson, *Expository Preaching: The Art of Preaching through a Book of the Bible* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 15. This is not to say that a workable definition is impossible, but, because of the differences among writers, a clear definition is necessary. Bryson categorizes the advocates of expository preaching into three groups: etymological, morphological, and substantive. Groups one and three are virtually the same, so Bryson's distinction between groups one and two is the most significant. The etymological definition focuses merely on the explanation of the text, while the morphological definition involves issues such as length of passage, treatment of passage, and a connected series of sermons (ibid., 15-25). The morphological distinction plays a part in my view of exposition (see below).

which declares Christ in some way falls under the large umbrella of preaching. Of course, adjectives, by definition, describe nouns, and students understand preaching better when adjectives are applied.

One needs only to turn to Broadus's seminal work to see the tremendous difficulty others have had in labeling different types of sermons. He writes,

> Various elaborate and unsuccessful attempts have been made to classify sermons. From the nature of the case no exact or scientific classification is possible; the various kinds will overlap and mingle in every conceivable way. . . . There are, however, two distinct principles or bases upon which these imperfect classifications may be made. One of these relates to the subject-matter of the sermon, including subjects, occasions, and materials. . . . The other basis of classification has regard to what may be called the *homiletical structure* of the sermon.[3]

Broadus's second group is of importance here. Even though common characteristics exist between different kinds of preaching, Broadus distinguishes three types based on the sermon structure. He calls these three "subject-sermons, text-sermons, and expository sermons."[4] A brief look at these is in order.

Evidently what Broadus calls "subject-sermons" is the same as today's topical sermons, for "subject-sermons are those in which the divisions are derived from the subject, independently of the text."[5] In this kind of preaching, preachers

> draw from the text a certain subject, usually stating it in the form of a proposition, and then the text, having furnished the thought, has no further part as a formative

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[3]John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, ed. Edwin Charles Dargan (Cambridge: University Press, 1898; reprint, New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1906), 306. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones argues for content *and* form in expository preaching in *Preaching & Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 58. See also his related discussion of the sermon's shape (ibid., 205-23).

[4]Broadus, *Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 307.

[5]Ibid.

force in the plan of treatment pursued in the sermon, but the subject is divided and treated according to its own nature, just as it would be if not derived from a text.[6]

A modern description of topical preaching could hardly be more fitting. Such topical preaching begins with an idea or theme in the preacher's mind. Moreover, each aspect of the sermon flows from the topic. Many professors of preachers label this kind of preaching as "an idea in search of a text."

Broadus describes text-sermons in much the same way as expository sermons. The divisions of the text-sermon, like expository preaching, come from the Scriptures. One way in which textual preaching and expository preaching differs, however, is in "the *proper handling of the details.* If we simply take the topic and the heads which the passage affords, and proceed to discuss them in our own way, that is not an expository sermon, but a text-sermon."[7] Thus, textual preaching, though it springs from a passage, does not directly connect with the passage as much as with the preacher.

Expository preaching, defined below, aims at properly handling the details of the Scriptural passage, i.e., it rightly divides the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15). Because so many writers differ in their understanding of expository preaching, this work details what is meant.

Is not all preaching expository? Some argue that expository preaching is preaching which *exposes* the text—whether it be a passage of Scripture, a sentence, a

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[6]Ibid., 308. Broadus cites popular preachers as Robert Hall, Richard Fuller, and Charles H. Spurgeon as those who, at times, preached topical or subject-sermons (ibid., 309-11).

[7]Ibid., 329.

phrase, or even a word.[8] Such a definition oversimplifies expository preaching and is far too broad, for nearly any kind of preaching exposes, or explains, something in the text, even if it may be a *poor* explanation.

Others argue that expository preaching is virtually synonymous with biblical preaching. Robert Smith, Jr. defines preaching in vein with John R. W. Stott's use of "expository preaching."[9] At the same time, however, Smith claims, "There is only one authentic type of preaching—biblical preaching. Biblical preaching must be defined by its substance and not by its shape—by its content and not by its contours—by its facts and not by its forms."[10] As stated before, this work presupposes exposition to be the most biblical kind of preaching. Expository preaching is distinctive from other forms such as topical, thematic, and narrative preaching.

On the other hand, certain extremists for expository preaching believe it to be the only kind of preaching. Anything that is not expository is not real preaching. One such proponent states,

> Exposition of Scripture, exposition worthy of its name, is of the very essence of preaching. It follows that it is a serious error to recommend expository preaching as one of several legitimate methods. Nor is it at all satisfactory, after the manner of

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[8]See, for example, Millard J. Erickson and James L. Heflin (*Old Wine in New Wineskins: Doctrinal Preaching in a Changing World* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997], 171), who claim that expository preaching "allows the preacher to take as a text (then explain and apply) any portion of Scripture, whether a word, phrase, verse, two verses, or extended portion exceeding two or three verses." How simply explaining a word or phrase accurately reflects the author's intention within a given context is difficult to see.

[9]Robert Smith, Jr., "Interview: Robert Smith, Jr.," *Vocatio* 10, no. 2 (1998): 8.

[10]Ibid., 10. See Charles Bugg, "Back to the Bible: Toward a New Description of Expository Preaching," *Review & Expositor* 90, no. 3 (1993): 414-15; Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 119-21. Donald L. Tucker ("Biblical Preaching: Theology, Relevance, Empowerment," *Paraclete* 25 [Summer 1991]: 23) sees a close connection between biblical preaching and the biblical text, defining it as "speaking in a religious context to listeners wanting to hear about the actions and purposes of the God of the Bible."

many conservatives, to extol the expository method as the best. All preaching must be expository. Only expository preaching can be Scriptural.[11]

Another agrees, claiming that "anything less than expository preaching is technically not really preaching at all."[12]

These statements are quite dogmatic, to say the least. These assertions are either based on broad definitions of expository preaching—including countless preachers throughout church history as expositors—or they reject such men as Spurgeon, Edwards, Whitefield, and Wesley as being something other than preachers.

Why focus on expository preaching? Although this work falls short of viewing expository preaching as an "inerrant" method, one of its presuppositions is that expository preaching is the most biblical method of preaching. While methods such as topical, thematic, or narrative preaching are not necessarily unbiblical, exposition rightly allows the Scriptures to have the full authority in structure and substance.[13]

A Working Definition of Expository Preaching

In order to understand doctrinal expository preaching, one needs to begin with a working definition of expository preaching. Such a definition, coupled with doctrinal

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[11]R. B. Kuiper, "Scriptural Preaching," in *The Infallible Word*, 3rd ed., ed. Paul Woolley (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967), 253.

[12]A. Duane Litfin, "Theological Presuppositions and Preaching: An Evangelical Perspective" (Ph.D. diss., Purdue University, 1973), 169-70.

[13]This does not mean that expository preaching has a particular style or format. Roy Clements argues, "Expository preaching is not a matter of style at all. In fact, the determinative step which decides whether a sermon is going to be expository or not takes place, in my view, before a single word has been actually written or spoken. First and foremost, the adjective 'expository' describes the method by which the preacher decides what to say, not how to say it" (*The Cambridge Papers*, 1998, quoted in Alistair Begg, *Preaching for God's Glory* [Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1999], 28). Additionally, York and Decker write, "Expository preaching is defined not by a style nor by a particular methodology, but by the end result of explaining and applying the meaning of the text" (*Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 33).

preaching, can clarify the meaning of doctrinal exposition. This view of doctrinal

expository preaching is unique to this work.

Perhaps the classic definition of expository preaching is Robinson's. He

writes,

> Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and
> transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its
> context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the
> preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers.[14]

Robinson's argument for expository preaching over the last twenty-five years

owes a great deal to Broadus. Most professors of preaching consider Broadus's *A*

Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons to be the classic text on homiletics.

Thus, one needs to consider what he had to say about this subject. He states,

> An expository discourse may be defined as one which is occupied mainly, or at
> any rate very largely, with the exposition of Scripture. It by no means excludes
> argument and exhortation as to the doctrines or lessons which this exposition
> develops. It may be devoted to a long passage, or to a very short one, even part of a
> sentence. It may be one of a series, or may stand by itself. We at once perceive that
> there is no broad line of distinction between expository preaching and common
> methods, but that one may pass almost insensible gradations from textual to
> expository sermons.[15]

Simply put, Broadus states that expository preaching has as its goal the explanation of a

portion of the Scriptures.

In addition to the explanation of the Scriptures, some scholars define

exposition morphologically in terms of the length of the biblical passage and/or the

sermon's structure and substance. Walter Kaiser, Jr. says,

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[14]Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 21. This definition is a slight revision from the first edition, mainly for clarity and gender inclusiveness.

[15]John A. Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (Philadelphia: Smith, English, 1870; reprint, New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1891), 303. As stated above, this work argues that expository preaching includes more than "part of a sentence."

Expository preaching is that method of proclaiming the Scriptures that takes as a minimum one paragraph of Biblical text (in prose narrative or its equivalent in other literary genre) and derives from that text both the shape (i.e., the main points and subpoints of the sermon) and the content (i.e., the substance, ideas, and principles) of the message itself.[16]

Mohler also argues along these same lines. He states, "As the Word of God, the text of Scripture has the right to establish both the substance and the structure of the sermon."[17] Wayne McDill concurs, "A biblical sermon is one in which the text shapes the sermon. The purpose, the theme, the structure, and the development of the sermon are to reflect the text."[18]

Furthermore, one scholar observes that

the great strength of expository preaching is that it reinforces the authority and centrality of scripture in the life of the church. It is a homiletical method that teaches scripture and enhances the knowledge and understanding of the Bible for both the preacher and congregation. More than any other genre of preaching, expository preaching honors the desire of the hearer to understand and claim the meaning of the scriptures for life in today's world.[19]

Expository preaching is, therefore, the only method of preaching which upholds the full authority of the Scriptures. As John MacArthur claims,

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[16]Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Crisis in Expository Preaching Today," *Preaching* 11, no. 2 (1995): 4. Others who argue for a similar minimal length of the biblical passage include W. A. Criswell, *Criswell's Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), 42; Faris D. Whitesell, *Power in Expository Preaching* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1967), vi-vii.

[17]R. Albert Mohler provided this definition in a D.Min. course on expository preaching as cited in Daniel L. Akin, "The Ministry of Proclamation: Book 1," section 4, "What Is Christian Preaching?" (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002), 13. Several writers within the New Homiletic movement argue that the Scriptures should provide the pattern for shaping the sermon; see Don M. Wardlaw, ed., *Preaching Biblically: Creating Sermons in the Shape of Scripture* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983). The main problem with these writers is that they deliberately avoid certain biblical genres, such as the Epistles, in favor of narrative passages from the Old Testament, Gospels, or Acts.

[18]Wayne McDill, *The 12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 14.

[19]John S. McClure, "Expository Preaching," in *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*, ed. William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 132.

The only logical response to inerrant Scripture, then, is to preach it *expositionally*. By expositionally, I mean preaching in such a way that the meaning of the Bible passage is presented *entirely* and *exactly* as it was intended by God. . . . inerrancy demands exposition as the only method that preserves the purity of Scripture and accomplishes the purpose for which God gave us His Word.[20]

This direct relationship between biblical authority and preaching emphasizes a point made in chapter 1—when biblical authority declines, preaching's decline must naturally follow. The only way for preaching to recover the necessary mixed ingredients of doctrine and exposition completely is to maintain the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Then, and only then, can doctrinal expository preaching have any lasting and significant value.

Returning to the substance of expository preaching, one finds Stephen and David Olford's definition to be a bit more comprehensive. They write,

Expository preaching is the Spirit-empowered explanation and proclamation of the text of God's Word with due regard to the historical, contextual, grammatical, and doctrinal significance of the given passage, with the specific object of invoking a Christ-transforming response.[21]

What these authors add to this discussion of expository preaching is the role of God in preaching, both as Anointer and Harvester. Moreover, the doctrinal significance of the text is of fundamental importance in preaching.

From these leading definitions of expository preaching, a synthetic definition follows. This definition will help establish the foundation for understanding doctrinal expository preaching. This work argues that *expository preaching is the Spirit-*

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[20]John MacArthur, Jr., "The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy: Expository Preaching," in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching: Balancing the Science and Art of Biblical Exposition*, ed. Richard L. Mayhue (Dallas: Word, 1992), 23-24. Alistair Begg argues that "the absence of expository preaching is directly related to an erosion of confidence in the authority and sufficiency of Scripture" (*Preaching for God's Glory*, 18).

[21]Stephen F. Olford and David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 69.

empowered communication of at least one paragraph (or its literary equivalent) of the

biblical text with special concern for interpreting the text in light of the historical,

contextual, grammatical, syntactical, and doctrinal significance of that text, deriving

from that text the shape and the substance of the message so that the message is

experienced by and applied to the preacher and then to the hearers.

Along with this definition comes an analysis. First, expository preaching should include a limitation on the text's length to a minimum of one paragraph of biblical text. Kaiser's point is to differentiate expository preaching from what others might label as topical, textual, or thematic. While these preaching styles can be biblical, the expository method which handles at least one paragraph of the biblical text allows Scripture and its divisions to shape the message, and thus, could very well be the most biblical form of preaching.

Second, both the main idea and the minor ideas (serving the main one) of the message, i.e., the substance, should come from the primary text. Although references to other Scripture may emerge (by using systematic and/or biblical theology), and may be necessary for explaining an idea via the analogy of Scripture, the leading thought(s) of the sermon flow(s) from the main text. This form of expository preaching preserves each biblical author's intent and method. Therefore, even the way in which the Scriptures were written contribute to biblical authority, which stands over a preacher's own craftiness in a sermon.

Third, application is both an important and a necessary aspect of expository preaching.[22] The Holy Spirit's ministry of illumination helps the preacher both to understand the biblical text and to apply the meaning of that text to his audience.[23] The basic role of application is connecting the message of the ancient Scriptures to the contemporary world.

Fourth, expository preaching focuses upon Scripture like no other form of preaching, for exposition takes into account the passage's historical, contextual, literary, grammatical, and *theological* situations. Put simply, no other kind of preaching hinges on the biblical text like expository preaching. Furthermore, it has as part of its foundation the doctrinal significance of the passage. Therefore, expository preaching *includes* doctrine. One may object, "Then what is the point of this work?" The answer lies in the many proponents of expository preaching who fail to address the doctrinal element.

An Understanding of Doctrinal Preaching

Doctrinal preaching, unlike expository preaching, offers few definitions. Many take for granted that preaching the Bible is doctrinal preaching. Unless one argues that weak doctrine and heretical doctrine falls under the category of doctrinal preaching, however, few examples of this type of preaching appear today.

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[22]Scott Blue argues convincingly for application's necessary inclusion in expository preaching in "Application in the Expository Sermon: A Case for Its Necessary Inclusion" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001). For ways in which applying doctrine can be made in a postmodern setting, see chapter 5 below.

[23]God's role in preaching should go without saying, but one must not forget that unless He governs the preacher's preparation and delivery, the preacher's message will have no lasting effect. For more on God's role in preaching, see John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1990), 17-46.

Most agree that preaching doctrine should be both biblical and applicable.[24] Moreover, an assumption of this work is that "the test of good theology is that it is preachable. . . . [And] the converse is also true. The test of good preaching is that it is theological, rooted in the Scriptures and the theology behind the Scriptures and the theology distilled from the Scriptures."[25] Thus, while some people may criticize doctrinal preaching as boring, the purest doctrinal preaching is biblically-saturated and interesting.

Perhaps the best working definition of doctrinal preaching is "Christian preaching grounded in the biblical witness to Jesus Christ; it starts with text, doctrine, or cultural question, but tends to focus on one or more Christian doctrines regardless of its starting point."[26] Theological preaching, in this light, shares several elements common to expository preaching. The biblical text, the doctrine of the text, and/or a cultural concern of a text can be met with sound doctrinal preaching.[27]

One will recognize, of course, the claim that doctrinal preaching is "grounded in the biblical witness to Jesus Christ." Although some scholars prefer to interpret the

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[24]Donald M. Ballie, "The Preaching of Christian Doctrine," in *The Theology of the Sacraments and Other Papers* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), 147-55.

[25]R. Alan Day, "Theology and Preaching," *The Theological Educator*, no. 57 (Spring 1998): 104. See also Heinrich Ott, *Theology and Preaching: A Programme of Work in Dogmatics, Arranged with Reference to Questions 1-11 of the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), 19-41. Ott views theology as a systematization of the whole picture while preaching focuses on a specific situation. Both of these disciplines "resemble each other and cohere with each other in the fact that they unfold and amplify one and the same truth" (Ott, *Theology and Preaching*, 55).

[26]William J. Carl III, *Preaching Christian Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 8-9. Carl claims that the teaching sermon and the doctrinal sermon are basically synonymous (ibid., 30, 60, 104). Others who follow this thinking include James Earl Massey, *Designing the Sermon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), 61-74; John W. Westerhoff, "The Pastor as Preacher-Teacher," *Homiletic* 18, no. 2 (1993): 3-4. Ronald J. Allen (*The Teaching Sermon* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995], 35-36) believes doctrinal sermons are merely a subcategory of teaching sermons.

[27]Carl believes all true Christian preaching is doctrinal and biblical (*Preaching Christian Doctrine*, 5-6).

Old Testament apart from Jesus Christ and the New Testament, Christian preaching by its

very nature must ground itself in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Graeme

Goldsworthy claims that the gospel as the Person and work of Jesus Christ is both the

hermeneutical key and the theological center of all the Scriptures.[28] Furthermore, "while

there is much in the Bible that is strictly speaking not the gospel, there is nothing in the

Bible that can be truly understood apart from the gospel."[29]

D. A. Carson agrees with such a definition, even applying it to expository

preaching. He writes that expository preaching "draws attention to inner-canonical

connections that inexorably move toward Jesus Christ and the gospel."[30]

This movement toward Christ rings loud in the following:

> If our doctrinal preaching does not induce, and indeed force, men to close with
> Christ, to learn to know him more and more, better and better, as the years slip by,
> as their Friend to whom they can go freely and with utter frankness, as their King
> whose word for them is law, as the Judge before whom, and by whom, the value of
> their lives will be assessed, as the Saviour in whom lies their only hope, our
> preaching, doctrinal or no, has missed its object, and not reached its end.[31]

Sinclair Ferguson argues for this same Christocentric view of preaching,

especially expository preaching. He claims that the cross of Christ must shape the

message and personalities of preachers. Preachers "are called to be cruciformed (shaped

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[28]Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 32-33, 84-86, 113. Few writers have argued so convincingly for this approach of redemptive preaching focused in Christ as Bryan Chappell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 73, 270-72.

[29]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 95.

[30]"The *SBJT* Forum: Profiles of Expository Preaching," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 2 (1999): 95. Similarly, Peter F. Jensen writes, "The goal of 'preaching the whole Bible' is attained when we so preach Christ that every part of the Bible contributes its unique riches to his gospel" ("Preaching the Whole Bible: Preaching and Biblical Theology," in *When God's Voice Is Heard: Essays on Preaching Presented to Dick Lucas*, ed. Christopher Green and David Jackman [Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995], 64).

[31]Arthur John Gossip, "The Whole Counsel of God: The Place of Biblical Doctrine in Preaching," *Interpretation* 1, no. 3 (1947): 334.

by the cross), Christophers (bearing the Christ of the cross), and Christplacarders (setting Christ and Him crucified on display, cf. Galatians 3:1) in [their] preaching as [they] 'try to persuade men' (2 Corinthians 5:11)."[32]

When the preacher follows this advice, he cannot preach any biblical passage without interpreting it sooner or later within the Christological framework. At this point preaching must identify itself with Jesus Christ in order to be distinctively *Christian* preaching.

Doctrinal Expository Preaching

Blending these definitions of expository and doctrinal preaching leads to doctrinal expository preaching, defined as *the Spirit-empowered communication of a biblical doctrine derived from at least a paragraph of Scripture (or its literary equivalent) with regard to the text's historical, grammatical, syntactical, and contextual significance interpreted through the larger Christological-redemptive theme of the Bible, first experienced by and applied to the preacher and, then, to his hearers with the goal of obedient behavior in light of the theological truth of the text.*

This work argues for this kind of understanding of doctrinal expository preaching. In incorporating doctrinal exposition, Jerry Oswalt states that a planned approach to preaching doctrine in an expositional fashion will allow the preacher to be both comprehensive and balanced on theological issues in the Scriptures. This type of systematic preaching best accomplishes the preacher's task of declaring "the whole

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[32]Sinclair B. Ferguson, "Preaching to the Heart," in *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching*, ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2002), 217. Elsewhere in this book, John Armstrong asserts that all "preaching must be theological preaching" ("Preaching to the Mind," 169).

counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).[33] Doctrinal exposition can bring clarity where confusion has stood. It must also be relevant to the times of the twenty-first century. Ultimately, this focus on theological exposition should help reinforce what biblical preaching really is.

Efforts at Combining Theology and Exposition in Preaching

In order to be fair, the reader should be aware that at least a *few* writers have made efforts at combining theology and expository preaching. The reader should view their offerings as the groundwork to implementing these disciplines. What follows is meant to "give credit where credit is due," while also highlighting the void that remains.

Millard Erickson and James Heflin devote a single chapter to "Expository Doctrinal Preaching" in *Old Wine in New Wineskins*.[34] This chapter, however, deals more with defining and understanding the different genres of expository preaching rather than explaining a how-to integration of doctrine and exposition. To the authors' credit, their main objective is to show the need for doctrinal preaching today. That they devote four chapters to ways doctrinal preaching can be done signifies the need for preaching doctrine (in some form). This section of the book leaves much to be desired, however, for even their treatment of expository doctrinal preaching focuses more on the different sub-categories of expository preaching rather than on how to preach doctrine expositionally.

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[33]Jerry E. Oswalt, *Proclaiming the Whole Counsel of God: Suggestions for Planning and Preparing Doctrinal Sermons* (New York: University Press of America, 1993), 1.

[34]Erickson and Heflin, *Old Wine in New Wineskins*, 167-82.

In addition to the chapter mentioned above, Erickson and Heflin discuss

doctrinal preaching forms as topical doctrinal, narrative doctrinal, and dramatic

doctrinal.[35] They obviously want to appeal to numerous preachers who favor various

forms of preaching styles. Homiletics does not need to compartmentalize each of these

preaching forms, however. In discussing the "how" of doctrinal exposition, this study

will explain how doctrinal expository preaching may borrow elements from the narrative

and dramatic forms.

Other than this treatment by Erickson and Heflin, some notable figures from

the past have touched on this subject of blending theology and exposition. More than a

century ago, John A. Broadus commented upon the inclusion of theological content with

preaching. He wrote,

> Doctrine, i.e., teaching, is the preacher's chief business. Truth is the lifeblood
> of piety, without which we cannot maintain its vitality or support its activity. And
> to teach men truth, or to quicken what they already know into freshness and power,
> is the preacher's great means of doing good. The facts and truths which belong to
> the Scripture account of Sin, Providence, and Redemption, form the staple of all
> Scriptural preaching. But these truths ought not simply to have place, after a
> desultory and miscellaneous fashion, in our preaching. The entire body of Scripture
> teaching upon any particular subject, when collected and systematically arranged,
> has come to be called the doctrine of Scripture on that subject, as the doctrine of
> Sin, of Atonement, of Regeneration, etc.; and in this sense we ought to preach much
> on the doctrines of the Bible.[36]

At the same time that Broadus urged preachers to teach doctrine, he also

lamented the decline of doctrinal preaching. He added,

> We all regard it as important that the preacher should himself have sound views of
> doctrine; is it not also important that he should lead his congregation to have just

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[35]Ibid., 183-239.

[36]Broadus, *Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 76-77. A few years before Broadus' work, Francis Wayland (*Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches* [New York: Sheldon, Blakeman & Co., 1856], 284-87, 293-94) observed the importance of expounding doctrine, but he differentiated between doctrinal preaching and expository preaching.

views? In our restless nation and agitated times, in these days of somewhat bustling religious activity, there has come to be too little of real doctrinal preaching.[37]

If the premier teacher of preachers decried doctrine-less exposition in his day, one may only surmise what his opinion would be of twenty-first century preaching.

Long before Broadus entered the scene, William Perkins proposed certain elements of expository preaching within a doctrinal-thematic approach. His work is most succinct in his own summary, where he stated,

Preaching involves:
1. Reading the text clearly from the canonical Scriptures.
2. Explaining the meaning of it, once it has been read, in the light of the Scriptures themselves.
3. Gathering a few profitable points of doctrine from the natural sense of the passage.
4. If the preacher is suitably gifted, applying the doctrines thus explained to the life and practice of the congregation in straightforward, plain speech.[38]

Clearly, both the explanation and application of a biblical text and its doctrine lies at the heart of Perkins's view of preaching.

Moreover, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, one of the great expositors of recent times, has submitted the necessary inclusion of theological substance within exposition. He believed that

to expound is not simply to give the correct grammatical sense of a verse or passage, it is rather to set out the principles or doctrines which the words are intended to convey. True expository preaching is, therefore, *doctrinal* preaching, it is preaching which addresses specific truths from God to man.[39]

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[37]Broadus, *Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 77.

[38]William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying; with The Calling of the Ministry* (Cambridge: J. Legatt, 1592; reprint, Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 79.

[39]Iain H. Murray, *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith 1939-1961* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990), 261. Idem, *Evangelical Divided: A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950-2000* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 81.

Elsewhere he wrote that preaching "is theology on fire."[40] Furthermore, "preaching must always be theological, always based on a theological foundation" and "a sermon should always be expository."[41] Thus, for Lloyd-Jones, theological preaching and expository preaching are, for the most part, overlapping disciplines.

Not only did Lloyd-Jones argue for theological, expositional preaching, he also warned against misusing Scripture in preaching doctrine. He wrote,

> It is wrong for a man to impose his system violently on any particular text; but at the same time it is vital that his interpretation of any particular text should be checked and controlled by this system, this body of doctrine and of truth which is found in the Bible. The tendency of some men who have a systematic theology, which they hold very rigidly, is to impose this wrongly upon particular texts and so to do violence to those texts. In other words they do not actually derive that particular doctrine from the text with which they are dealing at that point. The doctrine may be true but it does not arise from that particular text; and we must always be textual. That is what I mean by not 'imposing' your system upon a particular text or statement. The right use of systematic theology is, that when you discover a particular doctrine in your text you check it, and control it, by making sure that it fits into this whole body of biblical doctrine which is vital and essential.[42]

Heeding such a warning will keep preachers from preaching un-biblically.

A couple of today's noteworthy preachers touch on the need for expository preaching to be doctrinal. Alistair Begg laments the contemporary pulpit as one void of "the kind of expository preaching that is Bible-based, Christ-focused, and life-changing—the kind that is marked by doctrinal clarity, a sense of gravity, and convincing argument."[43] He also cites the *Westminster Directory for Public Worship* for three principles for biblical exposition:

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[40]Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, 97.

[41]Ibid., 64-65, 71. For his discussion on the roles of biblical and systematic theology in preaching, see Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, 64-80.

[42]Ibid., 66-67.

[43]Begg, *Preaching for God's Glory*, 11.

1. The matter we preach should be true; that is, in light of general doctrines of Scripture.
2. It should be truth contained in the text or passage we are expounding.
3. It should be truth preached under the control of the rest of Scripture.[44]

Thus, according to Begg, biblical doctrine and exposition go hand-in-hand.

John MacArthur also observes the theological content needed in preaching expositionally. He writes,

> *Preaching an expository sermon involves more than merely repeating the technical results of one's Bible study. True expository preaching involves transforming technical details into principles or doctrines so that the expositor preaches theologically with appropriate applications.*[45]

While defining expository preaching as including theological elements, MacArthur laments much of the doctrine-less preaching taking place today. He cries,

> One of the things that grieves my heart is we have had weak preaching and weak pulpits in America for a long time and we have people in Christian leadership who have almost non-existent theology. . . . They don't have any theological foundation on which to build their activities, as noble as their efforts and as true as their hearts might be to these things.[46]

Moreover, contemporary theologians have spoken on the overlapping disciplines of theology and biblical exposition. Walter Kaiser, Jr., a leading proponent for biblical theology, sees the need for careful theological analysis in the realm of sermon preparation. Articulating the preparation stages of expository preaching, Kaiser describes biblical exegesis as the foundation to biblical preaching. Such exegesis includes

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[44]Ibid., 31. The quotation is adapted from *A Directory for the Publique Worship of God throughout the Three Kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland: Together with an Ordinance of Parliament for the Taking Away of the Book of Common-Prayer and for Establishing and Observing of This Present Directory throughout the Kingdom of England and Dominion of Wales* (London: printed for Evan Taylor, Alexander Fifield, Ralph Smith, and John Field, 1644), 29-30.

[45]John MacArthur, Jr., "Moving from Exegesis to Exposition," in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 288.

[46]John MacArthur, Jr., *E. Y. Mullins Lectures on Preaching: Question and Answer Luncheon* (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002), videocassette.

contextual, syntactical, verbal, theological, and homiletical analyses. Thus, biblical theology necessarily falls within the preparation stage of expository preaching.[47]

Timothy George similarly writes, "Every doctrinal sermon must be contextually rooted in sound exegesis; and every expository or biblical sermon should place a given passage in the widest theological framework possible."[48] Such a statement forms the heart of this study, and chapter 4 will propose how the preacher can integrate biblical and systematic theology in expository preaching.

A few select places in books and journal articles also address theology and exposition. For example, one recent writer laments the all-too-common-divorce of doctrine and exposition by claiming that expository preaching often neglects doctrine, but systematic exposition needs to be theological, especially Christological.[49] This perception supports the need for a thorough wrestling with this issue.

Within a forum on expository preaching and related disciplines, Carl F. H. Henry speaks of the close connection between systematic theology and exposition: "If Christian preaching is indifferent to the legitimacy of and the need for systematic theology, it will inevitably be penalized by disorderly exposition. And if theology is not

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[47]Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981), 69-163, cf. especially 131-40.

[48]Timothy George, "Doctrinal Preaching," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, ed. Michael Duduit (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 96; cf. W. E. Sangster, *The Craft of Sermon Construction* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), 42-45. From a theologically moderate position, John S. McClure lists several subcategories of expository preaching, one of which is "exposition of scripture in relation to confessional statements or doctrines" ("Expository Preaching," 131).

[49]Ferguson, "Preaching to the Heart," 213.

preachable, one had better take a second look."[50] Henry, at the very least, advocates both

an explanatory form and an applicatory form of preaching doctrine.

The *Founders Journal*, edited by Tom Ascol, often includes articles pertaining

to doctrine and preaching. How one can blend doctrine and exposition, however, is never

handled in a holistic way. Writers of this journal uphold expository preaching as the

biblical model, often emphasizing its practice during the Reformation. Additionally, re-

enforcing doctrine and providing models of theological instruction are among the central

features of this quarterly journal. After reading through a number of issues, this writer is

under the impression that Ascol and the other contributors simply assume that

highlighting doctrine within preaching means practicing doctrinal *expository* preaching.[51]

Rather than remain an underlying assumption, however, someone needs to provide an

explicit and extensive discussion of the necessary union between theology and biblical

exposition.

Timothy Warren also sees the need for blending theology and exposition,

claiming "genuine expository preaching communicates theological meaning and

significance."[52] Moreover, he states that "although the study of theology comprises a

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[50]"The *SBJT* Forum," 91.

[51]All of the issues of this thirteen-year-old journal can be accessed at http://www.founders.org. Articles of special interest to this study include Tom Ascol, "Systematic Theology and Preaching," no. 4 (1991); "The Pastor as Theologian," no. 43 (2001); Tom J. Nettles, "The Transforming Power of Theological Preaching—Part 1," no. 21 (1995); idem, "The Transforming Power of Theological Preaching—Part 2," no. 22 (1995); Ernest Reisinger, "The Priority of Doctrinal Preaching," no. 23 (1996).

[52]Timothy S. Warren, "The Theological Process in Sermon Preparation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156, no. 623 (1999): 337.

substantial portion of most seminarians' curriculum, most, if not all, of that study has not

been specifically and practically related to the preaching task."[53]

As chapter 4 argues below, both systematic theology and biblical theology are

beneficial to this view of doctrinal expository preaching. Peter Adam pushes for the

incorporation of biblical theology in expository preaching, "for both imply commitment

to Scripture as a whole. Expository preaching implies commitment to the literary extent

of Scripture, and biblical theology to its theological depth. The preacher who is using

both will be a true preacher of Jesus Christ."[54]

Clarence Roddy assumes the inclusion of theology within exposition. He

claims that one may be certain that "it is impossible to expound the Word apart from the

preaching of doctrine."[55] Moreover, William Houser insists that every sermon be biblical

and "give a proper interpretation (exegesis) of the text which includes the teaching of

pure doctrine."[56]

From all of these treatments, one begins to see that homileticians have not

completely neglected the integration of doctrine and exposition. At the same time,

however, these discussions fall short of the definitional clarity and substantive depth

needed in incorporating these disciplines.

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[53]Ibid., 356.

[54]P. J. H. Adam, "Preaching and Biblical Theology," in *New Bible Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture,* ed. T. Desmond Alexander and others (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 108-09.

[55]Clarence S. Roddy, "On the Preaching of Theology," *Christianity Today* 3, no. 23 (1959): 7.

[56]William G. Houser, "Puritan Homiletics: A Caveat," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (1989): 266.

Contributions from the New Homiletic

Before concluding this section, a few words about the contribution of the New Homiletic in combining doctrine and preaching are in order. A growing number of preachers in this camp advocate a union between theology and preaching. For instance, David Buttrick calls for preaching to make "a turn to theology."[57] William D. Thompson, preferring the term *biblical* preaching to *expository* preaching, articulates the proper method of interpreting a text, noting particularly the significance of theological exegesis as a foundation for biblical preaching.[58] Gerhard O. Forde believes that even though systematic theology and preaching are different, "they are necessarily correlated: one is impossible without the other."[59]

Listening to this advice, Ronald Allen writes that "a conversational model of relating scripture, systematic theology, and preaching encourages conscientious, critical engagement."[60] Allen also writes that expository preaching can, and should, make adaptations to preaching systematic theology.[61] Moreover, he defines doctrinal preaching

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[57]David Buttrick, *A Captive Voice: The Liberation of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 110-12. See also Edward Farley, "Preaching the Bible and Preaching the Gospel," *Theology Today* 51 (April 1994): 90-103; idem, "Toward a New Paradigm for Preaching," in *Preaching as a Theological Task: World, Gospel, Scripture*, ed. Thomas G. Long and Edward Farley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 176-88.

[58]William D. Thompson, *Preaching Biblically: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), 23-26, 33-35.

[59]Gerhard O. Forde, *Theology Is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 3-4. While Forde argues that theology leads to proclamation, others in this camp claim that "*proclamation is for theology*" (Robert G. Hughes and Robert Kysar, *Preaching Doctrine: For the Twenty-First Century* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997], 20). Gerhard Ebeling probably states this inter-dependent relationship best: "Theology without proclamation is empty, proclamation without theology is blind" (*Theology and Proclamation* [London: Wm. Collins Son and Co., 1966], 20).

[60]Ronald J. Allen, *Preaching Is Believing: The Sermon as Theological Reflection* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 50. See also Ronald J. Allen, *The Teaching Sermon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995).

[61]Allen, *Preaching Is Believing*, 82.

as the "systematic theological exposition of Christian belief which takes account of Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason."[62]

Additionally, Robert Hughes and Robert Kysar write, "Sound biblical preaching is always theological, and sound theological preaching is always biblical."[63] Paul Scott Wilson poetically states, "Like strands of one rope, doctrine, preaching, and theology braid a lifeline through history."[64]

Such advice from these spokesmen looks good at the surface, but a serious flaw exists in the underlying foundation of these men—doubts exist in the truthfulness of Scripture. Continually rejecting the claims of Scripture, Allen presupposes various theologies at work in the Bible, often containing "contradictory elements."[65] Likewise, Hughes and Kysar want to call into question the soundness of a text's theology, even calling others to sometimes preach against the text![66]

Furthermore, Buttrick sneers, "For the better part of the twentieth century, preaching and the Bible have been wrapped up in a kind of incestuous relationship."[67] With such a low view of Scripture, one wonders how "a turn to theology" can ever be meaningful, if there is no confidence in the source of that theology. Surely the foundation and framework of the New Homiletic have serious defects that true biblical preaching must avoid.

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[62] Allen, *The Teaching Sermon*, 36.

[63] Hughes and Kysar, *Preaching Doctrine*, 36.

[64] Paul Scott Wilson, "Doctrine in Preaching: Has It a Future?" in *Preaching on the Brink: The Future of Homiletics*, ed. Martha J. Simmons (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 84.

[65] Allen, *Preaching Is Believing*, 44. See especially his comments throughout 37-62.

[66] Hughes and Kysar, *Preaching Doctrine*, 45-46.

[67] Buttrick, *A Captive Voice*, 171.

Even if one readily accepts the input of the New Homiletic, he is still left with little treatment of combining doctrine and exposition in books and articles. Moreover, only an occasional sermon or lecture hints at combining systematic and biblical theology with exposition.[68] Even in these addresses, ambiguity abounds, allowing confusion to rule the day. Blending the information together from each discipline, as done above, brings clarity where confusion has stood.

The Doctrinal Prerequisites of an Expositor

A related issue in doctrinal expository preaching is a preacher's theological prerequisites, or commitments. Since preaching explains and applies the Bible, a theological book, expositors will need to tackle certain doctrinal issues before actually being able to declare the whole counsel of God. Rust said it well: "The truth is that no man can be an effective preacher of the Gospel unless his preaching is undergirded by solid dogmatic affirmations and unless it is illuminated and made intelligible by some sound theological thinking."[69]

It should be clear that every preacher—even every Christian—is a theologian, albeit good or bad. In order to be a faithful expositor of God's Word, one must also be a serious theologian. This does not mean that theology is all that a preacher should read, but it does presume that theology will be a staple in the preacher's study. Throughout the

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[68]Two preachers who have at least minimally discussed theological exposition include Alistair Begg, *E. Y. Mullins Lectures on Preaching* (Louisville: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000), videocassette; and MacArthur, *E. Y. Mullins Lectures on Preaching*, videocassette.

[69]E. C. Rust, "Theology and Preaching," *Review and Expositor* 52, no. 2 (1955): 146. Preachers must be "knowledgeable in theology and in the Bible" (John H. Leith, *From Generation to Generation* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990], 89).

history of the church, people assumed that preachers should be sound in biblical truth.[70] Such an assumption is no longer true, for many contemporary preachers have little to do with theology and even think it unnecessary or an obstacle to effectiveness.

John MacArthur correctly claims that theology should drive preaching, even stating that "the heart of my preaching is my theology . . . I am driven by, I am shaped by, I am conformed to my understanding of divine truth. . . . [Moreover], the heart of all preaching is the love of the truth—the love of the truth at such a level that it yields the discipline of discerning that truth."[71] Furthermore, certain doctrines are necessary for a solid theological foundation for preaching. The most important of these is the doctrine of Scripture.[72] Several facets of this doctrine are significant.

The theological expositor must first come to grips with the doctrine of revelation. God has revealed Himself and His plan for His creation specifically through the Christian Scriptures. Beginning with Abraham and the Old Testament patriarchs through the prophets and the New Testament believers, God's plan of redemption has been revealed in a progressive fashion. There also exists an order to God's revelation, so that God's redemptive plan makes sense.[73]

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[70]Tom J. Nettles discusses this trait in early Southern Baptist life in "Basil Manly: Fire from Light: The Transforming Power of Theological Preaching, Part 1," *The Founders Journal*, no. 21 (1995) [journal on-line]; accessed 20 January 2003; available from http://www.founders.org/FJ21/article3.html; Internet.

[71]MacArthur, *E. Y. Mullins Lectures on Preaching*, videocassette.

[72]Ibid. MacArthur also includes the doctrines of election (divine sovereignty), identification (substitution of the believer being in Christ), and sanctification (purification). Though each of these is important in theology, their specific relationship to expository preaching is hard to see.

[73]Merrill F. Unger, *Principles of Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1955), 77-79.

Specific to this doctrine is a high view of Scripture as the perfect revelation of God. Every expositor—because he is textually driven by definition—will uphold the full authority of the Bible. Hershael York and Bert Decker define what this view looks like: "A high view of Scripture means that the Bible *is* what God says, and what God says is what we must say when we preach. . . . A high view of Scripture is the *sine qua non* of exposition."[74]

Related to the divine revelation of the Bible is the divine inspiration of the Bible. Belief in the divine revelation of the Scriptures is simply not enough. One must also trust that God has kept His Word free from error.[75] York and Decker describe this as "a commitment to the profitability of all Scripture," noting that "even though all Scripture is equally inspired, it is not all equally profitable."[76] Because all Scripture is profitable, it is necessary to preach all of it in declaring the whole counsel of God.

A third associated doctrine of Scripture concerns the divine illumination of the Bible. This speaks of the Holy Spirit's role in bringing understanding to the mind and heart of the expositor.[77] Although it is possible an unbeliever can dissect and diagram a biblical text as well as a committed expositor, the former can never truly comprehend the meaning of the biblical passage apart from the illuminating ministry of the Spirit (1 Cor 2:10-16).

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[74]York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 19. Closely related to Unger's prerequisites of an expositor, York and Decker list five commitments of an expositor (ibid., 18-31). They credit Duane Litfin in an endnote for his contributions to these commitments.

[75]Unger, *Principles of Expository Preaching*, 79-82.

[76]York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 19, 22.

[77]Unger, *Principles of Expository Preaching*, 82-83.

Furthermore, one needs to believe that he can attain the accurate interpretation of the Bible.[78] The notion of authorial intent comes into play here. While the task of getting into the mind of the author is impossible, it is possible through grammatical, syntactical, historical, and contextual study to determine what the biblical author meant in any given passage of Scripture. Without confidence in this possibility, there remains little, or no, reason for declaring the Scriptures.

A final related doctrine to this discussion is a belief that the expositor should also commit to a high view of preaching.[79] That is, since Scripture is the Word of God, declaring that Word is extremely important. Preaching involves the Spirit of God working through the preacher in communicating the Bible. In light of this entire discussion, one may summarize this commitment to revelation and Scripture as follows: God has spoken (revelation), and what He has spoken was written in Scripture (inspiration), therefore, a need remains to preach the Word (proclamation).[80]

These doctrinal prerequisites will enhance the expositor's preaching. In regards to the Bible, his confidence will be sure and steadfast. In relationship to preaching, the preacher will stand both humbly and authoritatively. Such commitments will give the preacher a solid foundation from which to preach.

This chapter has aimed at providing definitional clarity to doctrinal expository preaching. It has considered what others have done in this field and has offered

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[78]Ibid., 83-84. See also York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 28-31.

[79]See York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 22-23. These writers claim that an expositor must also be committed to thinking about the Scriptures, its application, and how people receive such preaching (ibid., 24-28). While in full agreement with their discussion, this area does not directly fall under my umbrella of doctrinal prerequisites.

[80]See Peter Adam, *Speaking God's Words* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 15-56. For a summary of this teaching, see Peter Adam, "Preaching and Biblical Theology," 104-05; cf. also R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "A Theology of Preaching," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, 13-20.

theological commitments important to doctrinal exposition. Now that this groundwork is in place, one is ready to observe its biblical basis.

CHAPTER 3

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DOCTRINAL
EXPOSITORY PREACHING

The integration of theology and expository preaching has a long history. Peter

Adam writes, "Preaching depends not only on having a God-given source, the Bible, but

also a God-given commission to preach, teach and explain it to people and to encourage

and urge them to respond."[1] This statement reflects the inherent relationship between

teaching and exposition in the act of preaching. Even though both doctrinal preaching

and expository preaching have not always occurred simultaneously, preachers from

different eras have implemented the two disciplines. The Scriptures are the focus of this

chapter—both its terms and its models. A study of the Scriptures should underscore the

biblical basis of doctrinal expository preaching.

The Semantic Domain for Doctrine and Preaching

The Bible is rich with descriptions of the proclamation of God's Word. The

terminology includes both preaching and teaching. A brief lexical study will help set up

a more detailed look at the preaching content and habits of the Bible's expositors.

When considering the meaning of biblical words, the concept of semantic

domains comes into play. Moisés Silva admits

> that the past two decades have seen considerable progress in the proper use of
> language for biblical interpretation, but [one] must not fall under any delusion that

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[1]Peter Adam, *Speaking God's Words: A Practical Theology of Expository Preaching* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 37.

linguistics and exegesis have been genuinely integrated in modern scholarship. And beyond that, modern linguistics—and semantics in particular—continues to develop at a very fast pace.[2]

More specifically, "modern linguistic theory teaches that the meaning of a given word is not located in the word per se but in the relationship a word has to other words in the context of a given occurrence and in contrast to other words which share its semantic domain."[3]

With respect to preaching, words which describe the preaching event are important in this study (see Tables 1 and 2). This kind of "word study" approach at biblical interpretation, however, has its fair share of critics. Silva observes,

> It has become customary in articles and books dealing with biblical topics to begin the discussion with an examination of "the terminology." Occasionally, the author may even think that a study of the relevant terms completes his research of the topic.
> Such an approach is inadequate. When a discussion depends primarily or solely on the vocabulary, one may conclude either that the writer is not familiar with the contents of Scripture or that Scripture itself says little or nothing on the subject.[4]

Of course, conservative evangelicals holding to propositional revelation rightly emphasize the meaning of words. Philip Hughes acknowledges the importance of words, but "only in combination. Words isolated from their context have lost their significance and are not sacrosanct. What is essential is the truth which the words unitedly reveal."[5]

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[2]Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics*, rev. and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 21-22.

[3]Karen H. Jobes, "Distinguishing the Meaning of Greek Verbs in the Semantic Domain for Worship," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 4, no. 8 (1991): 183-84. Louw and Nida place preaching, teaching, and similar words under the domain of communication. These writers contend, "The basis for the various semantic domains and subdomains consists of three major classes of semantic features: shared, distinctive, and supplementary" (Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), vi.

[4]Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning*, 22. Silva argues against the misuse of lexicography, for even his own book "is intended to encourage the study of words" (ibid., 28-29).

[5]Philip E. Hughes, "The Reformers' View of Inspiration," in *The Word of God and Fundamentalism* (London: Church Book Room, 1961), 99.

Table 1. Key Old Testament Terms for Preaching[6]

Term	Meaning	Reference
פָּרַשׁ	make distinct, declare	Neh 8:8
שָׂכַל	set forth (the) understanding (i.e., the meaning)	Neh 8:8
בִּין	give understanding, make understand, teach	Neh 8:7-8
נָבִיא	spokesman, speaker, prophet	Deut 13:1; 18:20; Jer 23:21; cf. Num 11:25-29
חֹזֶה	seer (i.e., a prophet)	Amos 7:12
רֹאֶה	seer (i.e., a prophet)	1 Chr 29:29; Isa 30:10
קֹהֶלֶת	collector (of sentences), or preacher	Ecc 1:1
קָרָא	call, proclaim, read	Isa 61:1
בָּשַׂר	herald as glad tidings; the salvation of God, preach	Isa 61:1; Ps 40:9
נָטַף	drop, drip, fig. (especially of prophet) discourse	Ezek 20:46; Amos 7:16; Mic 2:6, 11
לֶקַח	learning, teaching, instruction	Deut 32:2; Job 11:4; Prov 4:2; Isa 29:24
לִמַּד	teach (piel)	Deut 4:10, 12; Ezr 7:10; Ecc 12:9

In order to uphold propositional revelation, this chapter employs tables of key terms to underscore meaning in a general way. At the same time, however, a closer look at some of these words in different contexts helps avoid the criticism of "word studies."

Even though both the Old Testament and New Testament fall within this study, a few words are in order of the latter's multi-faceted view of preaching. Kittel's Dictionary claims, "The New Testament uses thirty-three verbs to express the activity of

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[6]Adapted from Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 89-90. All Hebrew definitions come from William Gesenius, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon: with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*, ed. and trans. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs [*BDBG*] (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979).

Table 2. Key New Testament Terms for Preaching[7]

Term	Meaning	Reference
κηρύσσω	announce, make known by a herald; proclaim aloud	Rom 10:14-15; 1 Cor 1:21-23; 2 Tim 4:2
εὐαγγελίζω	bring or announce good news; proclaim, preach	Matt 11:5; Luke 4:18; Acts 8:35; 2 Pet 2:5
διδάσκω	teach	Acts 5:42
διερμηνεύω	explain, interpret	Luke 24:47; Acts 18:6
διανοίγω	open (figuratively, the mind); explain, interpret	Luke 24:45; Acts 17:3
διαλέγομαι	discuss, conduct a discussion; speak, preach	Acts 17:2; 18:4
παρατίθημι	put before in teaching; demonstrate, point out	Matt 13:24, 31; Acts 17:3; 28:23
λόγος	speaking a word; statement	Matt 13:19-23
ῥῆμα	that which is said, word, saying, expression	Rom 10:17; 1 Pet 1:25
καταγγέλλω	proclaim	Acts 4:2; 13:5
παρρησιάζομαι	speak freely, openly, fearlessly, express oneself freely	Acts 9:27-28; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8
ἐλέγξω	bring to light, expose, set forth; reprove, correct	2 Tim 4:2; Tit 1:9; 2:15
παρακαλέω	appeal to, urge, exhort, encourage	2 Tim 4:2; cf. Acts 14:22
μαρτυρέω	bear witness, be a witness	Acts 20:21; 23:11; cf. 1 John 4:14
λαλέω	transitive speak and thereby assert, proclaim, say	Mark 2:2; Acts 17:19
συζητέω	dispute, debate, argue	Acts 9:29
ἀπολογία	defense	Acts 22:1; 1 Pet 3:15

preaching."[8] One way of classifying these words is as follows:

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[7]Adapted from Chapell, 90-91. All Greek definitions come from Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. and trans. William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). A number of generic words most certainly refer to preaching and teaching in the Scriptures. For example, phrases like "Jesus spoke to the crowd" or Paul "responded to them" surely mean that a certain element of preaching or teaching took place. For the sake of brevity, this study omits the vast majority of such generalizations.

Words of information: teach, instruct, point out, make known, remind.
Words of declaration: preach, proclaim, cry out, testify, bear witness, declare, write, read, pass on, set forth.
Words of exhortation: call, denounce, warn, rebuke, command, give judgment, encourage, appeal, urge, ask.
Words of persuasion: explain, make clear, prove, guard, debate, contend, refute, reason, persuade, convince, insist, defend, confirm, stress.
Words of conversation: say, speak, talk, answer, reply, give answer.[9]

The most common terms for preaching in the NT—κηρύσσω and

εὐαγγελίζω—are of special concern. The former occurs more than seventy times and

refers to proclaiming or heralding an announcement. The latter means to bear good news

and occurs over forty times. The two words are "essentially similar . . . for both

expressions may refer to the content of the gospel. This does not mean, however, that the

meaning of the two expressions is precisely identical."[10] One sees the close association

between these terms in Luke 8:1, where Jesus' ministry is described as "preaching

(κηρύσσων) and proclaiming the gospel (εὐαγγελιζόμενος) of the kingdom of God."

Kerygma and *Didache*

Before looking at this terminology in different contexts, it is necessary to

address the relationship between *kerygma* (preaching) and *didache* (teaching). Some

have argued for a clear distinction between the two while others see them as overlapping.

The mid-twentieth century produced writers on both sides of the debate. A brief look at

the main arguments from both sides follows.

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[8]Gerhard Friedrich, "κηρύσσω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [*TDNT*], vol. 3, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 703. See Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 76, for the multi-faceted descriptions of New Testament preaching.

[9]Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 76.

[10]Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s. v. "preach, proclaim."

C. H. Dodd, the pioneer of this discussion, argues for a clear-cut distinction

between *kerygma* and *didache,*

> The New Testament writers draw a clear distinction between preaching and teaching. The distinction is preserved alike in Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypse, and must be considered characteristic of early Christian usage in general. Teaching (*didaskein*) is in a large majority of cases ethical instruction. Occasionally it seems to include what we should call apologetic, that is, the reasoned commendation of Christianity to persons interested but not yet convinced. Sometimes, especially in the Johannine writings, it includes the exposition of theological doctrine. Preaching, on the other hand, is the public proclamation of Christianity to the non-Christian world. The verb *keryssein* properly means "to proclaim". . . . Much of our preaching in Church at the present day would not have been recognized by the early Christians as *kerygma*. It is teaching, or exhortation (*paraklesis*), or it is what they called *homilia*, that is, the more or less informal discussion of various aspects of Christian life and thought, addressed to a congregation already established in the faith.[11]

Though Dodd labels *didache* as "ethical instruction" here, he also defines it as

"a traditional body of ethical teaching given to converts from paganism to Christianity."[12]

As proof to this clear-cut distinction between *didache* and *kerygma*, Dodd goes to great

links to show that *kerygma* always relates to some element of the gospel.[13] He defines

the pre-Pauline, and hence, primitive, *kerygma* as "a proclamation of the death and

resurrection of Jesus Christ, in an eschatological setting from which those facts derive

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[11]C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments: Three Lectures with an Appendix on Eschatology and History* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936), 7-8.

[12]C. H. Dodd, *Gospel and Law: The Relation of Faith and Ethics in Early Christianity* (Cambridge: University Press, 1951), 15.

[13]Dodd summarizes the *kerygma* in six elements. First, it is the dawning of the age of fulfillment. Second, this age has come through Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection. Third, Jesus' exaltation at God' right hand makes Him the Messianic head of the new Israel. Fourth, the Holy Spirit is the sign of Christ's presence. Fifth, the Messianic age will soon consummate in Christ's return. Finally, the *kerygma* always ends with an appeal for repentance, which includes forgiveness of sins, the offer of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of salvation (*Apostolic Preaching*, 21-24). See also Dodd, *Apostolic Preaching*, 17.

their saving significance."[14] The writings of Paul and John, because of their later dates,

represent the most significant developments of the *kerygma* in the NT.[15]

Those who have followed Dodd on this distinction label contemporary

preaching under two categories. First, missionary preaching directed at unbelievers

focuses on the *kerygma*. Second, congregational preaching which addresses believers

handles *didache*.[16] Many in this camp argue that much of what people call preaching

today is nothing more than teaching, or instructing believers.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones appears to follow Dodd in this distinction. Lloyd-

Jones sees two main sections within the Bible's message. The first he calls

> the message of salvation, the *kerygma*, that is what determines evangelistic
> preaching. The second is the teaching aspect, the *didache*, that which builds up
> those who have already believed—the edification of the saints. Here is a major
> division which we must always draw . . .[17]

Because of Dodd's work, others have examined preaching and teaching more

closely from a biblical perspective. Robert Mounce and others disagree with Dodd's

conclusions, noting that they find some distinctions between *kerygma* and *didache*, but

also a great deal of overlap (see below). In agreement with Mounce, Klaas Runia writes,

> It is impossible to make a clear-cut distinction between the two terms. In the first
> place, the terms are often used together. Again and again we read of 'teaching and
> preaching' (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 11:1; Luke 20:1; Acts 4:1-2; 5:42; 15:35; 28:30-31).
> Apparently, the two activities are inseparable, and the various passages clearly show
> that teaching was not restricted to believers but was aimed at any one who listened
> in the various places where teaching took place. Even in describing the missionary

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[14]Ibid., 24.

[15]Ibid., 73.

[16]See Klaas Runia, "What Is Preaching according to the New Testament?" *Tyndale Bulletin*, no. 29 (1978): 13-16.

[17]D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 62.

activity of the disciples and apostles both words are used. They are apparently used interchangeably.[18]

Observing two verses from the list above, Donald Tucker comments,

Acts 4:2 links *didache* with *katangeleo*, to preach or to proclaim. Acts 15:35 links *didache* with *evangelize*. Both are addressed to either believers or unbelievers depending on who is present. Both appeal to Scripture for authority. Both present the message and work of Christ. Both call for repentance and conversion and faith in God. Both demand a decision.[19]

On a similar note, while admitting that "teaching is usually in the synagogue, whereas proclamation takes place anywhere in the open," Kittel's Dictionary observes that "the NT also speaks of a κηρύσσειν in the synagogue."[20] Likewise, although noting that *kerygma* and *didache* are not completely equal, Mounce asserts,

Kerygma is foundation and *didache* is superstructure; but no building is complete without both. It is only when they are ideally conceived that teaching and preaching can be taken as entirely distinct. In actual practice they overlap, and may be so intermingled that one can hardly ever say, "Now this is preaching," or, "This, on the other hand, is teaching." All *didache* is based on *kerygma*, and it may be seriously doubted whether any *kerygma* ever stands without some measure of explanatory *didache*.

Mounce argues that the *kerygma* has a significant amount of theological substance. Whether the focus is on the vicarious atonement of Christ (see 1 Cor 15:3) or the Lordship of Jesus the Messiah (see 2 Cor 4:5; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 2:6; Phil 2:6-11), the *kerygma* passed down to Paul was full of doctrinal substance.[21] E. C. Rust considers the theological nature of the gospel to be a given when he writes, "You cannot preach this

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[18]Runia, "What Is Preaching?" 14. For an excellent analysis and critique of Dodd's work, see Robert C. Worley, *Preaching and Teaching in the Earliest Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967).

[19]Donald L. Tucker, "Biblical Preaching: Theology, Relevance, Empowerment" *Paraclete* 25 (Summer 1991): 29.

[20]Friedrick, *TDNT*, s. v. "κηρύσσω."

[21]Robert H. Mounce, *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 103-08.

Gospel and not preach theology, and everytime you do preach it, as the early church preached it, you are making certain basic theological affirmations. That is why the New Testament is full of doctrine."[22]

James Cox agrees with this assessment,

> Preaching is teaching. What one declares calls for explanation, perhaps for argumentation. . . . In fact, teaching is necessary as preparation for the proper hearing of the good news, as part of the proclamation of the good news, and as follow-up of the good news. We can make no absolute distinction between gospel proclamation and Christian teaching.[23]

Ultimately, Mounce claims that people should not think of the *kerygma's* development in terms of lineal progression,

> but in terms of theological and ethical expansion. It is not that the *kerygma* undergoes any significant alteration, but that the unique event which by [sic] it is interpreted for missionary purposes, also carries vast implications for Christian living, and the drawing out of these implications constitutes the development which we find in the New Testament.[24]

These expansions can be seen as three concentric circles around Christ's death, resurrection, and exaltation (see Figure 1). The inner circle includes the *kerygma* and explains these events in order to bring people to saving faith. The middle circle provides theological explanation for believers to understand God's larger purposes. The outer circle consists of the ethical or practical element, addressing the Christian how to live daily in light of the inner truths.[25]

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[22]E. C. Rust, "Theology and Preaching," *Review and Expositor* 52, no. 2 (1955): 150.

[23]James W. Cox, *Preaching: A Comprehensive Approach to the Design and Delivery of Sermons* (Nashville: Seminary Extension, 1993), 8. Cox believes one "cannot draw a sharp line between *kerygma* and *didache*" (ibid., 12-13).

[24]Mounce, *Essential Nature of NT Preaching*, 133.

[25]Ibid.
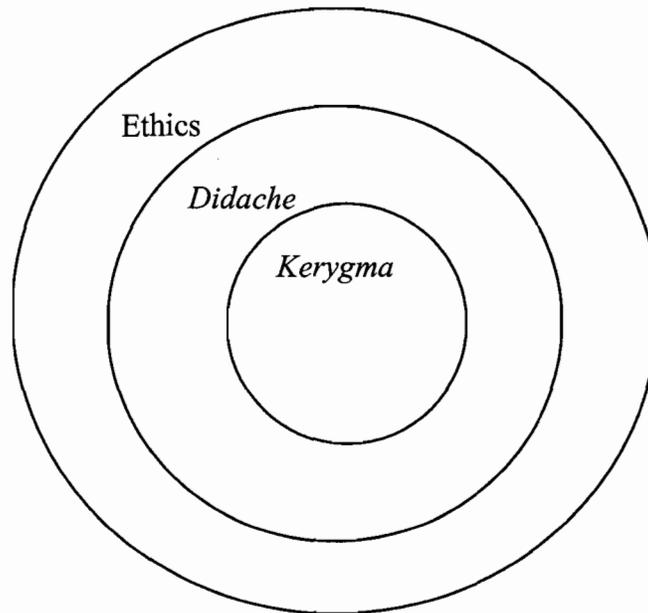
Figure 1. The Relationship between *Kerygma* and *Didache*

The conclusions one reaches in this study of *kerygma* and *didache* reveal a couple of truths. First, a difference does exist between the two, for the former often deals with the gospel to unbelievers while the latter unfolds the gospel's implications for believers. Second, even though a difference exists, it is not a *complete* distinction. The *kerygma* can include doctrinal elements and *didache* often restates the gospel in linking it to larger theological issues. Each biblical context is thus the determining factor as to how one should understand both preaching and teaching.

The Biblical Practitioners of Doctrinal Exposition

More important than merely seeing the Scriptures' word usage on preaching and teaching is discerning how the Bible employs these terms. Certain individuals stand out in both the Old and New Testaments as spokesmen for God. Although dozens of

preachers populate the pages of Scripture, those who integrated doctrine and exposition serve as the subjects of this study.

Old Testament Doctrinal Expositors

The Old Testament is not as well-known as the New for its strong preachers. Historically speaking, one could say that Enoch (Gen 5:18-19, 21-24) was the earliest preacher, for the New Testament describes him as one who "prophesied" (Jude 14). Furthermore, Scripture calls Noah "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet 2:5) and labels Abraham "a prophet" (Gen 20:7). Although no one knows the full extent of these men's preaching and teaching, these preachers preceded the greatest doctrinal expositor of OT history—Moses.

Moses. The great prophet and law-giver Moses is a portrait of all future preachers in Israelite history. He speaks for God, writes down the words of God, reads the words of God, and expounds the words of God. At least two different texts provide insight in understanding Moses' preaching.

First, Exodus 19-24 reveals several aspects of Moses as preacher. Once God addressed Moses about the covenant, Moses "set before [the people] all [the] words which the LORD had commanded him" (19:7). This statement, along with its preceding verses, appears to be a summary of chapters 19-24. A similar summary is found in 24:3-8. Some interpreters rightly label these summaries as sermons. Of course, the reader will notice that

> nothing is expressly said in Exodus 24:1-11 about preaching. It is the reading of the Law that figures in this story. We can perhaps draw from this that the reading of Scripture is primary in worship and that the place of the sermon is therefore to make that reading meaningful. The modern biblical scholar, however, will want to point out that the book of the covenant found in Exodus 21-23 is in fact an

interpretation of the Law, so that for those who read Exodus at that level the passage at least suggests both reading the Law and interpreting the Law. Indeed, even in these earliest records one finds that the reading of the Scriptures entails their preaching.[26]

Simply put, reading the Law led to an explanation of the Law.

In Exodus 19, Moses' sermon relays God's covenant with the people. The message begins with words of remembrance—Israel's holy history (v. 4). Moses then admonishes Israel to obey God and keep His covenant (v. 5). Moreover, Moses assures Israel of the promise of God's covenantal blessing (vv. 5-6). Hughes Oliphant Old is on target when he states, "Surely the sermon included an exposition of exactly what the stipulations of that covenant were."[27]

As to the doctrinal elements in this preaching, three stand out. First, the commandment to "remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (20:8) teaches both the doctrinal and practical aspects related to creation (v. 11). Israel was to remember that the God she served was the Creator of all and that a day of rest each week honored God's creative work. Second, the significance of the use of זָכַר ("to remember") in the commandment to "remember the Sabbath day" may very well imply the notion that God was Israel's Redeemer. This implication is drawn from 12:14, where the act of God redeeming Israel from Egypt becomes a memorial (זִכָּרוֹן). Furthermore, the explanation of this same commandment in Deuteronomy 5:15 grounds the Sabbath rest in God's

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[26]Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 1, *The Biblical Period* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 24. The expositional element may also be seen in the piel imperfect form of דָּבָר, meaning "speak, recount, even speak again and again" (John I. Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 3 [Waco: Word Books, 1987], 257).

[27]Old, *The Biblical Period*, 27. One sees the notion of exposition in the piel of סָפַר, "recount, rehearse, declare" (Gesenius, *BDBG*, s. v. "סָפַר"). On a related note, even if one does not argue for Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, it is clear that much of Exodus through Deuteronomy reveals God's instructions to and through Moses to Israel.

redemption of Israel. Third, the notion of covenant is an important theme in this message, for Moses declares Yahweh to be a God of grace (cf. 19:4) and then applies this covenant by means of sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice on the people (24:3-8).

In the end Exodus 19-24 portray Moses speaking God's words to the people, writing the words down, and applying the message through sprinkling the people with blood. Additionally, Moses' message includes doctrinal elements about the One True God. Thus, both explanation and doctrine appear to be present in Moses' preaching.

In addition to the text in Exodus, Deuteronomy contains at least three distinct sermons of Moses.[28] Although space does not permit a full treatment of each sermon here, the reader should see some shared features. First, the authority of Moses' spoken word as the revealed Word of God stands out. The use of דָּבָר shows this fact, for Moses spoke God's words to Israel so that they might heed them (1:1; 4:1-2, 12-13). These passages show that God's spoken דָּבָר became Moses' preached דָּבָר.

Exposition of God's Word is the second characteristic of Moses' preaching, for "Moses undertook to expound" God's law (1:5). The verb בֵּאֵר, meaning "explain, expound," emphasizes the careful instruction of Moses' preaching. Moreover, διασαφέω in the LXX, meaning "explain," or "tell plainly, in detail, report," highlights such a meaning.[29]

Closely related to exposition is the teaching element of Moses' sermons, the third noteworthy feature. Without a doubt Moses viewed his own expositional practice

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[28]Though somewhat debated, many accept the textual divisions of the sermons as 1:6-4:40; 5:1-28:68; and 29:1-30:20 (see Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary [Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996], xii).

[29]The idea of "distinct" or "plain" for בֵּאֵר appears also in Deut 27:8.

largely as teaching because he describes his own ministry of the Word as one of

"teaching" (לְמַד, 4:1, 14).[30] His doctrinal teaching included sin, sacrifice, atonement,

worship, God's judgment, His covenant of grace, the Law, and much more.

The fourth feature of Moses' preaching involves the application of the law to

the congregation of Israel (5:1) and the exhortation of the people to obey the law (4:1;

6:13; 8:1; 10:12-13; 27:1; 29:9; 30:15-20). Moses clearly believed God's Word could

only truly be heard if people practiced it. Moreover, the purpose of reading and

preaching God's Law is so that one may hear it, learn it, fear and obey God from it, and

have life (see 17:18-20). For life to come from the Word, one must first preach it and

apply it.

Summarizing Moses' ministry, Peter Adam writes that one sees "the main

ingredients of the ministry of the Word—the servant who hears God's words, the writing

down and reading out aloud of God's words, and the preaching of God's words by means

of exposition, application, and exhortation."[31] Moses' preaching is so significant that

Peter Adam names him "the paradigm prophet in the Bible" (Deut 18:15-19),[32] one who

is both a preacher and a teacher without any major distinction between the two.

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[30]The LXX's use of διδάσκω here would become even more prominent in the ministries of Jesus and the Apostles. Moses' constant reference to torah ("instruction, teaching") may also pinpoint his role as teacher (cf. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 5). Such teaching should also characterize each family, as parents instructed the children in the Torah (6:4-9).

[31]Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 40. Gerhard von Rad argues that the components of remembrance, interpretation with elaboration and application, and exhortation are central to the sermons in Deuteronomy (*Studies in Deuteronomy*, trans. David M. G. Stalker [Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953], 11-24).

[32]Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 40.

Furthermore, one should see the various ways in which prophets and priests in Jewish history carried out God's Word as springing from Moses' ministerial role.[33]

Ezra. As one of the most skilled scribes in Jewish history, Ezra both learned and taught God's Word (cf. Ezra 7:6, 11, 25). He even "set his heart to seek the law of the LORD and to practice *it*, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel" (7:10). Mervin Breneman sees here

> the secret of Ezra's impact. He loved God's Word and God's people. He had 'devoted himself' to the three things mentioned, but not as a hobby or pastime activity. He had devoted himself to the 'study' of God's law, to its 'observance,' and to 'teaching' it.[34]

Similarly, David Deuel claims that Ezra "had a deep desire to exposit God's Torah, 'i.e. to learn and interpret' Genesis through Deuteronomy, particularly the legal portions although not excluding the narratives."[35]

Several elements stand out in Ezra's ministry of the Word. First, it revealed an in-depth nature as seen in the use of דָרַשׁ, meaning "seek with application, study, follow, practise."[36] Careful exegesis was the groundwork of Ezra's preaching and teaching. Second, it focused on application—he wanted to carry out (literally, "observe") what was written. Third, the Bible labels his ministry of the Word as "teaching" (לְמַד). He desired

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[33]See Adam , *Speaking God's Words*, 40. He defines Moses' role as the origin for six groups of ministers: prophets, priests, wise men and women, writers of history, writers of songs, and leaders.

[34]Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, The New American Commentary, vol. 10 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 129. Ezra must have been an effective teacher, because certain people, having heard him, "trembled at the words of the God of Israel" (9:4). Moreover, a revival broke out as a result of his reading and exposition (Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Quest for Renewal: Personal Revival in the Old Testament* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1986], 135).

[35]David C. Deuel, "An Old Testament Pattern in Expository Preaching," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 2, no. 2 (1991): 131.

[36]Gesenius, *BDBG*, s. v. "דָרַשׁ."

to learn what God's Law said and to instruct God's people in it. With these commitments Ezra "must now present the fruit of his labor. In Augustine's terminology he must offer his 'sacrifice.' In the simplest terms, he must read and 'expose' the Word of God."[37]

Furthermore, one may describe Ezra's preaching as expository, for Ezra and other scribes "explained the law to the people . . . . They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading" (Neh 8:7-8). While some debate exists about the exact meaning of פֹרָשׁ, whether it has to do merely with translation or an element of interpretation, it seems that the context of these verses clearly show that careful explanation occurred.[38] Breneman comments,

> The leaders helped the people understand by "making it clear" (or translating) and by "giving the meaning." All translations, however, are to some degree "interpretation." But beyond that the exposition helps students of the Word understand the overall message and the implications of the text for doctrine and practice.[39]

Likewise, Deuel correctly observes,

> Few other passages in either the OT or the NT depict expositional preaching in such detail for what it truly is, i.e., 'exposing' the written Word of God to the community of faith so that the people hear with a view to learning, learn with a view to fearing, and fear with a view to practicing godliness, as Moses had instructed (Deut 31:12). In short, exposition assists the reading process whether the written Word is read individually or corporately, as was the case here. . . . [Ezra] expounded clearly only what he read in God's Word and based his exposition on what he had learned through careful study. . . .
> But this is not where the teaching/preaching stopped. Ezra also had a ministry of teaching among the heads of the households, the priests, and the Levites, i.e., the other teachers (Neh 8:13).[40]

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[37]Deuel, "Old Testament Pattern," 135.

[38]See Old, *The Biblical Period*, 98; Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, 226.

[39]Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, 226.

[40]Deuel, "Old Testament Pattern," 138-39.

Such preaching was obviously effective, for everyday for one week the people "gathered to Ezra the scribe that they might gain insight into the words of the law" (v. 13; cf. v. 18). Once they heard God's Word declared they sought to learn more about its teachings.

Deuel summarizes Ezra's contribution to preaching,

> While on the one hand Ezra's proclamation is not a Sunday sermon delivered to a local church, it does manifest a timeless and universal quality as regards the nature of exposition. Ezra models *an expositor's commitments—studying, practicing godliness, and teaching*—which leads him to perform *an expositor's task—reading distinctly* and *explaining* the Scriptures so that his congregation may hear with a view to learning, learn with a view to fearing, and fear with a view to practicing godliness.
> To the encouragement of expositors, God's people still repent and rejoice as they did in Ezra's day when a well-prepared teacher helps them understand Scripture.[41]

Thus, one can describe Ezra's ministry in terms of careful exegesis of God's Word, clear exposition of it, faithful doctrine out of it, and helpful application of it to the people.[42] His role was such that one could not distinguish between his preaching and teaching. His ministry of both exposition and doctrine were evident and effective.

The prophets. While the number of prophets who could receive ample treatment is beyond the scope of this paper, completely omitting them would fail to realize their contribution in this arena. Each of the prophets served as God's mouthpiece throughout Israel's history, for, to them, God revealed His secrets (Amos 3:7).

Some of the outstanding prophets in Jewish history include Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos, to name but a few. Not only did these men speak

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[41]Ibid., 140.

[42]Chapell describes Ezra's proclamation as the presentation, explanation, and exhortation of the Word. The New Testament preaching of Jesus and Paul also reflects this ministry (*Christ-Centered Preaching*, 80-82).

God's word, they also handled important theological themes.[43] Their preaching

incorporated the doctrines of God's holiness, majesty, faithfulness, and justice, as well as

doctrines such as God's redemption of Israel and the coming Messiah. Although it is

difficult to label each prophet as an expositor in a narrow sense of explaining a particular

section of Scripture, the fact that they spoke the words of God and explained His actions

certainly fits a broader view of exposition. Moreover, their explanations of Moses' Law

were often exhortations to get Israel to turn from idolatry to the one true God.

The Qoheleth on preaching. In addition to the Nehemiah 8 passage above,

Ecclesiastes 12:9-10 serves as a helpful and succinct model for Old Testament preaching.

Solomon, identified as the Preacher, or Qoheleth, "taught the people knowledge; and he

pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs. . . . [and] sought to find delightful

words and to write words of truth correctly."[44] A brief look at this passage should make

clear that Solomon mixed both theology and exposition in his message.

First, Solomon meticulously searched for the right wording in composing his

message as though he wanted to explain in especially clear language. His proverbs were

both "weighed" (אָזַן) and thoroughly examined (חָקַר). [45] Moreover, he selected

"delightful words" to communicate clearly with his audience. His preaching showed

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[43]For the prophets' preaching and some distinct messages within their writings, see Old, *The Biblical Period*, 41-84. Old claims that the OT priests also had both a teaching and preaching ministry. The argument comes largely from 2 Chr 15:3—"For many days Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law." Old writes, "The ministry of the Word is essential to true priesthood. It had been a cardinal function of the priesthood ever since Moses established the Levitical priesthood and entrusted to it the tablets of the Law" (ibid., 32).

[44]Although debate surrounds the authorship of Ecclesiastes, I, nevertheless, follow the traditional arguments in favor of Solomon (see Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, The New American Commentary, vol. 14 [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993], 257-66).

[45]Gesenius, *BDBG*, s. v. "אָזַן," and "חָקַר," respectively.

a deliberateness and care that merited his audience's most serious attention. There was a careful composing, investigating, and arranging of the proverbs and lessons he wrote. This was no haphazard spouting of negative thoughts in negative language. On the contrary, Solomon deliberately searched for 'pleasant words,' or 'words of grace' (12:10).[46]

Second, Solomon exhorted his audience to obey God's commandments (vv. 12-13) and he taught God's word as "words of truth" (v. 10). When connected with what is said above, it is clear that Solomon taught the truth of God in words the people could understand. Such a description of preaching should fit every gospel minister.

When looking at these doctrinal expositors from the Old Testament, several characteristics stand out in their preaching. Adam summarizes these common elements of the ministry of the Word: "These include the acceptance of the written or spoken Word as coming from God, the role of 'Scripture', the place of public reading and explanation, encouragement to the right response, and the effect of the ministry on the people."[47] To these one must add the doctrinal element, which, although not as full and descriptive as New Testament doctrine, is still quite prevalent. Hence, Old Testament preaching often consisted of theological exposition.

New Testament Doctrinal Expositors

One can easily find in the New Testament preachers of God's Word. Moreover, little difficulty exists in trying to find elements of exposition and doctrine intermixed in the declaration of the Word. Beginning with Jesus Christ and certain apostles, NT preaching is many-sided.

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[46]Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Ecclesiastes: Total Life* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), 123.

[47]Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 41.

Jesus Christ. The greatest preacher and teacher of all-time is, without question, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. As the God-Man, Jesus never uttered a single falsity. Furthermore, He had an advantage that no other preacher has ever had—He knew exactly what people were thinking and how they received His message. Although some preachers may have an idea of what their listeners are thinking, no one knows with precision except Jesus. For these reasons alone, today's preachers should not emulate certain aspects of Jesus' preaching, i.e., they should not speak in parables and leave people wondering.[48] At the same time, however, it is important to preach the gospel as Jesus did and to see the NT description of Jesus' preaching ministry.

As to Jesus' practice of preaching, the Gospels label Him both a Prophet (John 4:19, 44; 6:14; etc.) and a Teacher (11:28; 13:13-14; etc.),[49] emphasizing the ministries of preaching and teaching. Likewise, both preaching and teaching are evident in Jesus' first message. While Luke describes His ministry generally as teaching (διδάσκω, 4:15), Matthew shows Him to be both "teaching in [the] synagogues and proclaiming (κηρύσσω) the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt 4:23; cf. 9:35; 11:1).[50] Jesus says He specifically came to preach the gospel (εὐαγγελίζω) and "to proclaim (κηρύξαι) the favorable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). The text implies careful explanation and

[48]For more on avoiding some of Jesus' practices in preaching, see Hershael W. York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 15-17.

[49]For more on the doctrinal preaching of Jesus, see Ernest Reisinger, "The Human Will and Doctrinal Decline," *The Founders Journal*, no. 26 (1996) [journal on-line]; accessed 2 April 2003; available from http://www.founders.org/FJ26/article2_fr.html; Internet.

[50]The other Synoptic writers' summaries of Christ's Galilean ministry reveal that they understood, at least in part, teaching within preaching—Mark claims that Jesus went into the synagogues "preaching" (1:39) as does Luke (4:44). On another note, the Synoptic writers also summarize Jesus' ministry in terms of the numerous healings he performed, but such a focus is outside the scope of this work.

application because the people spoke well of Him and wondered at His "gracious words"

(v. 22). Old comments,

> As Luke presents the sermon, extensive use is made of the principle that Scripture is to be interpreted by Scripture. When Jesus preached in the synagogue on the Sabbath he was an expository preacher. His sermon was an interpretation of Scripture. . . .
> . . . The sermon is thoroughly expository and yet at the same time takes up into it the concerns, capacities, and interests of the congregation. It is an interpretation of Scripture and also an interpretation of the congregation.[51]

The fact that Jesus preached on Isaiah 61 emphasizes that the doctrinal content

was Christological. People were beginning to see the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy

about God's Anointed One. Additionally, the use of κηρύσσω in the Greek version of

Isaiah 61:1 provides

> the proper transition between the Old and New Testaments, for Jesus maintained that His ministry was the fulfillment of this prophetic portion (Luke 4:21). Sent by God and anointed by the Spirit, He was to 'proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind.' Herein lies a uniqueness that characterizes New Testament heralding: while it proclaims, it brings to pass its proclamation. The proclamation of liberty at the same time frees. The preaching of sight opens blind eyes.[52]

Not only do Matthew and Luke portray Jesus as both preaching and teaching,

but Mark does also, even employing the terms interchangeably. Old writes, "The words

'teach' and 'preach' seem to be synonymous in the Gospel of Mark. While we might

want to draw some clear distinctions between preaching and teaching elsewhere in the

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[51]Old, *The Biblical Period*, 132-33. Stein states that 4:21 "is best understood as a summary of Jesus' sermon" (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992], 157). Synagogue sermons at the beginning of the Christian era involved translating the Hebrew into Aramaic and preaching a sermon. The sermon included a learned interpretation of the Scripture passage and an application to the audience. The sermon aimed "to teach, admonish, inspire and comfort the congregation" (Old, *The Biblical Period*, 103).

[52]Mounce, *Essential Nature of NT Preaching*, 18.

New Testament, these distinctions are probably not applicable here."[53] Furthermore,

Mark's use of διδάσκω in 4:1-2 "seems to make it clear that the preaching ministry of

Jesus put an emphasis on teaching and had a strong teaching content."[54]

Many of the verses above from the Synoptics highlight the overlap between

didache (διδάσκω) and *kerygma* (κηρύσσω). Furthermore, since κηρύσσω and

εὐαγγελίζω are nearly synonymous (see Luke 9:2, 6), the fact that Jesus "was teaching

(διδάσκοντος) the people in the temple and preaching the gospel (εὐαγγελιζομένου)"

(Luke 20:1) shows His integration of doctrine and preaching on a regular basis.[55]

One of Jesus' greatest sermons was the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7).[56]

Whether this passage is one of Jesus' actual sermons or a compilation of various

sermons, these chapters are clearly sermonic material. The sermon is Matthew's way of

fleshing out Jesus' preaching and teaching (4:23, cf. v. 17), showing Him to be the

fulfillment of the prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15-18). Although Jesus gives much

ethical instruction, the doctrines of inerrancy and the full authority of the Scriptures also

stand out (5:17-19).

The elements of exposition and doctrine are also especially clear in Jesus'

preaching in the temple (Matt 21:23-23:39; Mark 11:27-12:44; Luke 20:1-47). Luke

introduces this sermon to the religious leaders and crowds as "one of the days while He

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[53]Old, *The Biblical Period*, 118. The fact that Mark uses κηρύσσω and διδάσκω
synonymously seems clear from Jesus' commission for them κηρύσσειν (3:14; cf. 6:12) and their later
report to Him of all which they ἐδίδαξαν (6:30).

[54]Ibid., 127.

[55]See also Luke 24:47-48 where proclamation (κηρύσσω) is equated with being a witness
(μάρτυς).

[56]For a thorough treatment of this sermon, see Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New
American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 93-135.

was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel" (20:1). In this sermon

Jesus uses texts like Psalm 118, Exodus 3, Deuteronomy 6, Leviticus 19, and Psalm 110,

explaining them in a number of question and answer sessions.[57] The doctrines of Christ

and the resurrection stand out in these teaching sessions. Furthermore, the way in which

Jesus often had to confront people's misunderstanding of Scripture highlights His focus

on doctrine. Peter Adam writes that Jesus

> frequently prefaced his explanation of their error with the question 'Have you not
> read?' On one level this was simply a way of reminding them of the *content* of
> Scripture, and of pointing out to them that the truth would be found in that
> Scripture. On another level the question 'Have you not read?' challenged them to
> question their understanding of the *meaning* of Scripture.[58]

The climax of Jesus' preaching takes place after His resurrection. Alongside

two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus clearly expounds (διερμηνεύω) every

Messianic text of the Old Testament (Luke 24:27; cf. v. 44). The roles of doctrine and

expository preaching blend here in Jesus' ministry like never before, because He declares

Christology in an expositional manner.

Not only can Jesus' practice of preaching be beneficial, but His precepts for

preaching are also insightful for this study. Reading through the Gospels, one sees Jesus

commanding His disciples to preach (κηρύσσω) (Mark 3:14; 6:12) and giving them

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[57]Commenting on the NT authors' quotation of Psalms, Henry M. Shires writes, "Often the use of the verse indicates that the Christian authors had in mind not simply the particular verses utilized but also their setting and even the entire psalm" (*Finding the Old Testament in the New* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974], 131).

[58]Peter J. H. Adam, "Preaching and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and others (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 106.

authority to do so (Matt 16:19; 28:18-20).[59] Specifically, they are to preach the kingdom of heaven/God (Matt 10:7; Luke 9:2), or the gospel (Luke 9:6).

Jesus' climactic charge to His followers occurs just before His ascension. In the Luke-Acts account, He charges His disciples to be "witnesses" (μάρτυρες) of Him (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8). Their witness is "to proclaim" (κηρυχθῆναι) the doctrine of Christ throughout the Scriptures as well as repentance for the forgiveness of sins (24:44-47). Ultimately, Christ wants His people to explain the Scriptures the way He did.

Similarly, Matthew shows Jesus commanding His followers to "make disciples of all the nations" (28:19). Jesus defines the imperative μαθητεύσατε in two ways. First, Christians are to make disciples by baptizing them in the name of the Triune God (v. 19). This element assumes conversion through the gospel message. Second, Christians must make disciples by teaching (διδάσκω) the new converts to keep all of Christ's commands (v. 20). That is, new believers need to have doctrine applied to their lives. Here, it is quite clear that both *kerygma* and *didache* are essential elements in the Christian message—whether it be by way of preaching or teaching. Old concludes,

> In the light of a text like this it is rather hard to drive a wedge between preaching the gospel of salvation and teaching the Christian way of life. Obviously according to this text Christian preaching is to do both. At times the Church has understood this passage as the charter of evangelistic preaching, and at other times as the charter of catechetical preaching. The least we can say is that in regard to the apostolic ministry it puts a high priority on preaching.[60]

Indeed, it puts a high priority on preaching doctrinally!

In summary of Jesus' ministry of the Word, Adam writes,

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[59]The authority handed down to the apostles is evident in Titus 1:5, 9; 1 Tim 3-4; and 2 Tim 4 (Samuel T. Logan, Jr., "The Phenomenology of Preaching," in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Samuel T. Logan, Jr. [Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1986], 151).

[60]Old, *The Biblical Period*, 152.

By his preaching and teaching he both announced and extended the kingdom, called people to faith, refuted error, rebuked those who taught error, encouraged the weak, trained his disciples, explained the Scripture, rebuked sinners and summoned all to faith and obedience.[61]

In the end one recognizes Jesus to be both the greatest preacher and the greatest theologian ever. Doctrine filled His preaching, and His teaching had its roots in the gospel message. Those who followed Him closest preached in like fashion.

The Apostle Paul. Although Jesus was the greatest preacher ever, the Apostle Paul's preaching clearly reached more people. Even though Jesus addressed thousands of Jews in Israel and only a handful of Gentiles, Paul's ministry encountered thousands of both Jews and Gentiles, even striving for "the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Paul's all-encompassing preaching integrated both doctrine and exposition.

Scholars often say that Paul's preaching focused on "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2; cf. 1:23). One must see this focus, however, as primary but not exclusive. That is, Paul preached both the cross of Jesus Christ and the doctrinal, as well as ethical, implications of the cross. In his letter to the Colossians, he described his own preaching, "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ" (1:28). Paul viewed his own proclamation (καταγγέλλω) as including admonition (νουθετέω) and teaching (διδάσκω). Such preaching is found in the message of Acts and Paul's own writings.[62]

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[61]Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 47.

[62]One should be careful with theological interpretation in Acts due to its literary genre of narrative history (see chapter 4 below for more on theological interpretation in various genres). Acts summarizes the actions of the apostolic church as do the Gospels with Jesus' life. At the same time, however, readers can learn much about Paul's ministry by studying Acts because its honest reporting accurately represents the actions of the early church (see Luke 1:1-4). For the elements of history and theology in Acts, see John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 50-55.

As one studies Acts, he finds Paul (earlier called Saul) both preaching and teaching the Scriptures. Just days after his conversion, Saul preached (κηρύσσω) Jesus as the Son of God, proving (συμβιβάζω) Him to be the Christ (9:20, 22).[63] Later, on his first mission, Paul announced (καταγγέλλω, 13:5, 38) the Word of God in the synagogues with words of exhortation (παράκλησις, v. 15), explanation (vv. 17-41), and proclamation (εὐαγγελίζω, v. 32). Paul's preaching was "a biblical-theological exposition,"[64] which covered "the whole history of salvation from Moses to Christ," explaining such messianic passages as Psalm 2, Isaiah 55, and Psalm 16.[65] Moreover, Paul's final stop in Antioch consisted of "teaching and preaching" (διδάσκοντες καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενοι) God's Word (15:35).

During the second mission, Paul traveled to Thessalonica and "reasoned to [the Jews] from the Scriptures" (διελέξατο αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν), proclaiming (καταγγέλλω) Jesus as the Christ through opening (διανοίγω) the Scriptures and laying them before (παρατίθημι) them (17:1-3). In Athens Paul used both theological and philosophical argumentation in "preaching Jesus and the resurrection" (vv. 18ff). Though straying from his normal practice of Old Testament exposition and then

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[63]Polhill observes that συμβιβάζω "means to *join* or *put together* and seems to picture [Paul's] assembling Old Testament texts to demonstrate how Christ fulfilled them" (ibid., 239).

[64]Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 58.

[65]Old, *The Biblical Period*, 175. In emphasizing the expository nature of Paul's message, Old adds that Paul's sermon may possibly have been "based on Deuteronomy 4:25-26 for the lesson from the Law and II Samuel 7:6-16 for the lesson from the prophets" (ibid.). See also Polhill, *Acts*, 298.

application, Paul's preaching in Athens began with Old Testament theology, moved to

the resurrection of Christ, and finally ended with application.[66]

Testifying (μαρτυρέω, 18:5) about Jesus as the Christ and "teaching the Word

of God" (διδάσκων τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, v. 11) characterized Paul's eighteen month

stay in Corinth. His follow-up letters to the Corinthian church may best convey his

practice of doctrinal exposition among those believers. Paul's voice is loud and clear on

a number of doctrines, including ecclesiology—the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17-34) and

worship (14:26-40), pneumatology—the Spirit's illumination (2:10-16) and spiritual gifts

(12:1-31; 14:1-25), and eschatology—the Lord's return and the resurrection of the dead

(15:1-58), as well as a theology of preaching (1:17-2:5) and ministry (2 Cor 2:14-6:10).

Paul's third mission began in Ephesus where his message consisted of

reasoning (διαλέγομαι) and persuading (πείθω) people about the kingdom of God

(19:8). This disciplined approach to teaching Scripture took place daily (vv. 9-10). His

departure from Ephesus most certainly reveals Paul's preaching habits (see below).

Paul's preaching in Acts also includes his speeches, or what is known as his

defense (ἀπολογία, 22:1; cf. 24:10; 26:1) of preaching the gospel of Christ (cf. 22:3-21;

24:10-21; 26:2-29). Though some may question viewing these speeches as sermons, it

seems clear "that the early Christian preachers were happy to present their message in

any situation or in any form which presented itself."[67] Although his audiences were

much smaller, Paul continued to witness about Jesus and do so from a clear argument.

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[66]Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 86.

[67]Old, *The Biblical Period*, 179.

The Book of Acts closes with Paul in Rome doing what he had always done—

preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. The elements of exposition

(ἐκτίθημι, 28:23), testimony (διαμαρτύρομαι, v. 23), and persuasion (πείθω, vv. 23-

24) were in full play. As a matter of fact, Luke can best summarize Paul's time in Rome

as "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ"

(κηρύσσων τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διδάσκων τὰ περὶ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ

Χριστοῦ) (28:31).

The clearest moment in Luke's account where Paul's preaching implemented

both doctrine and exposition comes in his departure from Ephesus. Speaking to the

elders of the church, Paul summarized his ministry among them. It contained elements of

declaration (ἀναγγέλω, 20:20, 27), doctrine (διδάσκω, v. 20), witness

(διαμαρτύρομαι, vv. 21, 24, 26), preaching (κηρύσσω, v. 25), and admonition

(νουθετέω, v. 31). Only such solid and multifaceted preaching as this could fulfill his

goal of declaring "the whole counsel of God" (20:27).

As to the message Paul preached, he labels it as the gospel, Christ, and even

the kingdom of God. The reader should understand these descriptions synonymously,

i.e., to preach the gospel is to preach Christ and to preach Christ is to preach the kingdom

(cf. 1 Cor 1:23; 15:12; 2 Cor 1:19; 4:5; Acts 28:31; Rom 1:16).[68] The fact that the gospel

of grace could both save the sinner and sanctify the saint makes it a message for

unbelievers and believers.

In the end, Paul's preaching handles primarily the doctrines of salvation and

Christ. The soteriological aspect of Paul's message discusses themes of redemption (Eph

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[68]For the replacement of the kingdom of God with the gospel of Christ, see Mounce, *Essential Nature of NT Preaching*, 52-53.

1:7), justification (Rom 3:21-4:25; Gal 2:14-4:11), and reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-21).[69]

The Christological element reveals Jesus to be the last Adam (1 Cor 15:45ff), the Son of

David (Rom 1:3), the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24, 30), the new Torah (Rom 10:6ff), and

the pre-existent Agent of creation (Col 1:15-20).[70] Even preaching has an important

place in God's plan of salvation, for after a thorough exposition of the doctrine of

justification by faith, Paul makes a direct connection between preaching the gospel and

expressing faith in Christ (see Rom 10:14-17). Paul's clear practice in his writings is

doctrinal exposition.[71]

Just as one can make a connection between Jesus' preaching practice and

precepts, so a similar relationship exists in Paul's preaching. His Pastoral Epistles

provide instructions about preaching and are tremendously significant in discussing the

integration of doctrine and exposition. Paul's precepts to Timothy and Titus, like his own

practice, emphasize that preaching needs to be both doctrinal and expositional.

Paul, who identifies himself as a preacher (κῆρυξ) and teacher (διδάσκαλος)

in faith and truth (2:7; 2 Tim 1:11), commands Timothy to "give attention to the *public

reading* of *Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching" (1 Tim 4:13).[72] The ἀνάγνωσις is

most surely the public reading of Scripture in a book-by-book approach. Παράκλησις

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[69]Although many would contend that we should not label the NT epistles as preaching, it seems clear that they were understood largely as sermonic material in the fact that they were often read out loud to the assembled church (Col 4:16; Rev 2-3; cf. 1:3). See also Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 313-14.

[70]Ibid., 137-42.

[71]Paul's style of explaining doctrine as the basis for duty is a common observation. That is to say, the doctrine of many letters (e.g. Rom 1-11; Eph 1-3; Gal 1-4; 2 Thess 1:5-2:12; Col 1-2) gives reason for the duty that follows (e.g. Rom 12-16; Eph 4-6; Gal 5-6; 2 Thess 2:13-3:15; Col 3-4).

[72]Of course, Paul's apostolic call is also important in his ministry (cf. 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11) but is not as significant for this study.

includes both exhortation and application of the Scriptures.[73] Additionally, διδασκαλία

focuses on the doctrinal substance needed in every expository sermon, for Kelly states,

"*teaching* signifies catechetical instruction in Christian doctrine."[74] For Paul, "the

ministry of the Word includes the proclaiming of the message of salvation and the

teaching of the Christian way of life."[75]

Timothy also receives instruction about elders who work hard at "preaching

and teaching" (λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ, 5:17). Furthermore, he must "teach and exhort"

(δίδασκε καὶ παρακάλει) others in the "sound words" of Jesus Christ and "the

doctrine (διδασκαλία) conforming to godliness" (6:2-3). Clearly, Paul expects

preachers to apply exposition and doctrine regularly in the preaching event.

Likewise, Paul's words to Titus include staying true to the "teaching"

(διδαχή), in order that he might be able "to exhort in sound doctrine" (παρακαλεῖν ἐν

τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῇ ὑγιαινούσῃ) (1:9). This teaching is a direct link to the "faithful

word" (πιστοῦ λόγου), which most certainly is the "proclamation" (κήρυγμα) of God's

Word to Paul (cf. 1:3). Moreover, one may be able to relate this sound, or pure, doctrine

(cf. 2:1, 7) to exposition because of the "faithful" word. Expositional teaching, like no

other form of teaching, strives for faithfulness to the Word.

Many rightly consider the apostle's second letter to Timothy as his swan song.

Here Paul lays out the challenge every preacher must face—"accurately handling the

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[73]George W. Knight III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 207-08.

[74]John N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 105. For a summary of these three aspects of ministry, see Old, *The Biblical Period*, 246-50. Paul's use of διδασκαλία throughout the Pastoral Epistles is nearly synonymous with διδαχή (see Old, *The Biblical Period*, 244).

[75]Old, *The Biblical Period*, 250.

word of truth" (2:15). This word of truth is clearly none other than the "sacred writings" (ἱερὰ γράμματα), also known as the God-breathed Scripture (γραφὴ θεόπνευστος) (3:15-16). This Scripture shaped the theological clarity needed for serving as an elder (cf. Tit 1:9). Furthermore, such Scripture is useful, first and foremost, for "doctrine" (διδασκαλία). Tom Ascol observes, "If the first profit of Scripture is doctrine, then doctrinal preaching is an essential ingredient for the growth and thorough equipping of Christian men and women."[76] Moreover, in light of the God-inspired Scriptures and the presence of God and Christ, preachers must "preach the Word" (κήρυξον τὸν λόγον)! Exhortation (παρακαλέω) and instruction (διδαχή) are always needed, especially when people shun sound doctrine (ὑγιαινούσης διδασκαλίαςς) (4:2-3). The repetition of ὑγιαίνω used to describe the teaching ministry underscores the importance Paul placed on doctrinal integrity (cf. 1 Tim 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Tit 1:9, 13; 2:1-2).

Paul undoubtedly provides a worthy model of implementing doctrine and expository preaching. His preaching has many flavors, including explanation, illustration, instruction, application, argumentation, and exhortation. Better yet, his ministry deals with preaching the gospel message of the cross of Christ, reminding believers of the gospel, explaining it theologically, and drawing implications from it. For Paul, then, exposition and doctrine are two sides of the same coin.

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[76]Tom Ascol, "Systematic Theology and Preaching," *The Founders Journal*, no. 4 (1991) [journal on-line]; accessed 20 January 2003; available from http://www.founders.org/FJ04/ editorial_fr.html; Internet.

The Apostle Peter. Simon Peter serves as another example of one who implemented both theology and exposition in his preaching ministry.[77] One can trace the origin of his ministry of the Word to Jesus' command for Peter to "feed [Christ's] lambs" (John 21:15). Beginning at Pentecost in Acts 2, Peter practiced doctrinal exposition. Here one finds Peter explaining Joel 2 using the analogy of faith, i.e., Scripture is explained by Scripture. Peter quoted Psalms 16 and 110 to explain the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, proving Him to be the Christ. Peter concluded by commanding the people to repent to have their sins forgiven. His preaching included both testimony (διαμαρτύρομαι) and exhortation (παρεκαλέω) (v. 40). As soon as people received the message and were baptized, Peter and the other apostles taught them doctrine (διδαχή) (v. 42).[78]

Later, Peter explained the gospel message from the Law and the Writings (3:22, 25; cf. 4:11) with exhortation to repentance (3:19) and argumentation of the exclusivity of Jesus Christ (4:12). The likelihood that Acts 3 refers to the prophecies of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 further highlight the expositional nature of Peter's message.[79] Peter, commanded not to teach (μηδὲ διδάσκειν) about Jesus (4:18), continued to instruct others about Him, nonetheless (5:28ff). Furthermore, Luke describes Peter and the

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[77]If Mark's Gospel is a compilation of Peter's preaching, then all that has been said above about Mark's use of the terms "preach" and "teach" has its origin in Peter's preaching. William Lane seriously considers this tradition from Papias in *The Gospel of Mark*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970), 8-12.

[78]The doctrine probably "included such subjects as [Christ's] resurrection, the Old Testament Scriptures, the Christian witness, and surely [the apostles'] own reminiscences of Jesus' earthly ministry and teachings" (Polhill, *Acts*, 119).

[79]For the possible allusions to Isaiah's Suffering Servant, see Polhill, *Acts*, 131-32; Old, *The Biblical Period*, 169-71.

apostles as "teaching and preaching" (διδάσκοντες καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενοι) Jesus Christ

(v. 42). Both gospel witness and doctrinal instruction are evident in this kind of ministry.

A person can make an argument that 1 Peter, although presented as a letter, is,

in fact, "an epitome of the apostle's preaching."[80] When viewed in this light, 1:1-2:10 is

actually theological exposition of the gospel. This gospel which Peter proclaimed is no

less than the enduring Word of the Lord (1:24-25). Furthermore, the message of 2 Peter

focuses on the doctrinal stability of the gospel (1:19-21), warning believers to hold fast to

God's Word, the way of truth (2:2, 21). While this is not all that one sees of Peter's

preaching (see Acts 10:34-43), the disciplines of exposition and theology were clearly

part of his regular practice.

Other notables in Scripture. In addition to Jesus, Paul, and Peter, a few other

doctrinal expositors may be found in the New Testament. The Apostle John was most

certainly a doctrinal expositor. Though it is difficult to determine the content of his

preaching from Acts, since he is usually portrayed alongside Peter (cf. 3:1ff; 4:19-20;

5:18ff; 8:14), 1 John appears to be a summary of John's message. Both "witness"

(μαρτυρέω, 1:2) and "proclamation" (ἀπαγγέλλω, 1:2-3, 5) about various truths

pertaining to the Trinity characterize his message. Even an admonition about false

worship concludes John's message (5:21).[81]

Furthermore, if a preaching element underlies the Gospels, then John's

prologue is an excellent example of doctrinal exposition. John shows Christ to be the

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[80]Old, *Reading and Preaching*, 237. For commonalities between 1 Peter and the primitive *kerygma*, see Mounce, *Essential Nature of NT Preaching*, 133-37.

[81]For more on John's teaching as an expansion of the apostolic church's *kerygma*, see Mounce, *Essential Nature of NT Preaching*, 145-50.

eternal Logos made flesh (1:1, 14). Moreover, the Logos "has explained" (ἐξηγήσατο) the unseen God (v. 18). The use of ἐξηγέομαι means that Jesus has literally "exegeted" the Father to believers.[82]

In addition to John, Apollos, who receives relatively little treatment in the Scriptures, showed elements of doctrinal exposition. He was an educated man who was "mighty in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24). He "taught" (διδάσκω) others about Jesus (v. 25), but after receiving full instruction about the way of God, Apollos clearly "demonstrated" (διακατελέγχομαι) Jesus to be the Messiah (v. 28). Such demonstration from the Scriptures must have included clear explanation and instruction. As F. F. Bruce comments, "Apollos's 'mastery of the scriptures' probably consisted both in his familiarity with the sacred text and in his skill in interpreting messianic prophecy in a Christian sense."[83]

Finally, the author of Hebrews provides one long sermon filled with doctrinal exposition. The author's closing words reveal the sermonic nature of the letter—"I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation" (13:22). By his use of παρακαλέω ("urge") and παράκλησις ("exhortation"), the writer viewed his letter as a sermon. On the use of these terms, David Peterson writes,

> *Paraklesis* . . . involved the proclamation of the mighty acts of God in Christ, often with some exposition of the O.T., and a drawing out of the practical implications for the audience in question—believers or unbelievers (*cf.* Acts 13:15-41). The terminology itself suggests that the activity had a summons to decision or an encouragement to persevere in the Christian way. Although systematic teaching

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[82]Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981), 44.

[83]F. F. Bruce, *Peter, Stephen, James, and John: Studies in Early Non-Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), 68.

was clearly involved, the address is not simply to the intellect but also to the affections and the will.[84]

The author explains in great detail some of the greatest theological truths about Christ. He continually uses Old Testament Scripture for both explanation and exhortation. The entire letter is doctrinal exposition at its best, for it continually explains, illustrates, and applies the OT with solid doctrinal teaching about the supremacy and sufficiency of the Person and work of Christ.[85] Moreover, the writer exhorts believers to pay attention to what they have heard (2:1), to hold fast to their confession of Christ (4:14), to encourage one another (10:24-25), and to cling to Christ and fix their eyes on Him (12:2).

All of these Old and New Testament examples help show the significance of doctrinal expository preaching. Both the semantic domain for preaching and preaching models in Scripture stress the *biblical* basis of doctrinal expository preaching. May preachers return to the Scriptures, and to its models, in declaring the whole counsel of God!

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[84]David Peterson, "The Ministry of Encouragement," in *God Who Is Rich in Mercy*, ed. P. T. O'Brien and D. G. Peterson (Homebush West, Australia: Lancer, 1986), 240; quoted in Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 78-79.

[85]For Hebrews' distinctive contributions in developing the *kerygma*, see Mounce, *Essential Nature of NT Preaching*, 142-45.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTING DOCTRINE AND
EXPOSITORY PREACHING

After providing a definition for doctrinal expository preaching and recognizing

its biblical basis, the next task calls for implementation. This chapter offers a proposal on

how the preacher can integrate both doctrine and exposition in an effective manner.

Since a wellspring of manuals exists on how to do expository preaching, this study

specifically focuses on theological exegesis and explanation within an expository

framework. By the end of this chapter, one should see theology as "a hermeneutical arch

that reaches from the text to the contemporary sermon."[1]

The Theological Framework for
Doctrinal Expository Preaching

The last chapter analyzed the biblical bases for doctrinal exposition—the

Scriptures show its practice and prescription. This chapter begins by looking at the

theological framework for doing doctrinal expository preaching. Timothy Warren states,

> Preaching that lacks solid theological footing also lacks authority. Students of
> preaching must become students of theology as well, developing skill in doing
> theology. Adopting a system of theology may provide an essential starting point,
> but preachers must also learn how to do theology, both biblical and systematic. To
> move from the contextualized exegetical meaning, dealing with a multitude of
> specifics, to the single universal statement of truth is a skill that is never learned or
> seldom demonstrated by many preachers. . . .
> The basic skills of studying theology—the theology of the book, the theology
> of the pericope within that book, and systematic theology—cannot be ignored. The

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[1]John Warwick Montgomery, "The Theologian's Craft," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 37, no. 2 (1966): 79.

risks of misrepresenting and misapplying the text are great for the preacher who ignores or misunderstands the theological message of the particular text.[2]

For the connection between theology and preaching, one needs to consider the distinct but related disciplines of biblical theology and systematic theology as twin pillars of implementing doctrinal exposition.

Biblical Theology

Biblical theology is quite possibly the most important realm of all the theological disciplines. It involves careful exegesis and hermeneutics, all-the-while incorporating the whole canon of Scripture.[3] In order to interpret biblical texts theologically, one needs to begin with biblical theology as a foundation to doctrinal exposition.

Some definitions of biblical theology. Biblical theology is the

theological interpretation of Scripture in and for the church. It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyse and synthesize the Bible's

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[2]Timothy S. Warren, "A Paradigm for Preaching," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 148, no. 592 (1991): 485. In light of this need to integrate theological study with preaching, Warren proposes a new preaching paradigm (ibid., 472-81). While a helpful paradigm, this paper focuses more on the theological and homiletical processes. See appendix 1 for the exegetical, theological, and homiletical processes in doctrinal expository preaching.

[3]Brian S. Rosner states, "Because biblical theology is the fruit of exegesis of the texts of the various biblical corpora it has a logical priority over systematics and the other specialized types of theologizing. However, the mutuality of the disciplines can be seen in our coming to the task of exegesis with certain dogmatic presuppositions about the nature and authority of the Bible" ("Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture* [*NDBT*], ed. T. Desmond Alexander and others [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000], 3). On a similar note, Tom Ascol argues for the necessity of both biblical and systematic theology; while the former deals with the diversity among various authors, the latter stresses the Scriptures' unity as a product of the divine hand ("Systematic Theology and Preaching," *The Founders Journal*, no. 4 (1991) [journal on-line]; accessed 20 January 2003; available from http://www.founders.org/FJ04/editorial_fr.html; Internet.

*teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining
sight of the Bible's overarching narrative and Christocentric focus.*[4]

Geerhardus Vos defines it as "that branch of exegetical theology which deals with the

process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible."[5] Comprehensively,

Goldsworthy asserts,

> Biblical theology is concerned with God's saving acts and his word as these occur
> within the history of the people of God. It follows the progress of revelation from
> the first word of God to man through to the unveiling of the full glory of Christ. It
> examines the several stages of biblical history and their relationship to one another.
> It thus provides the basis for understanding how texts in one part of the Bible relate
> to all other texts. A sound interpretation of the Bible is based upon the findings of
> biblical theology.[6]

Features of biblical theology. These definitions emphasize several features of

biblical theology. First, biblical theology allows "the Bible to speak as a whole: as the

one word of the one God about the one way of salvation."[7] Preachers should reject as

invalid any employment of biblical theology which does not accept the unity of

Scriptures. Edmund P. Clowney confesses, "Biblical theology is a contradiction in terms

unless the Bible presents a consistent message. Its essential presuppositions are the

principles of revelation and inspiration claimed and assumed in the Bible itself."[8]

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[4]Rosner, "Biblical Theology," 10. The expression "biblical theology" may refer, in some
places, to the movement of the 1940s-1960s. Brevard S. Childs documents this movement in *Biblical
Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970).

[5]Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,
1948), 13.

[6]Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible*
(Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 32.

[7]Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of
Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 7.

[8]Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans,
1961), 13. Similarly, Peter F. Jensen claims that an evangelical view of biblical theology entails the Bible's
unity in origin and content, the Bible as God's self-revelation, and the Bible as its own interpreter

Second, the goal of biblical theology is to understand the parts of Scripture in relation to the whole. Preachers attain such a goal when they "*so preach Christ that every part of the Bible contributes its unique riches to his gospel*."[9] D. A. Carson, borrowing from Hasel, says, "In this sense it is canonical biblical theology, 'whole-Bible' biblical theology; i.e. its content is a theology of the whole Bible, not a theology that merely has its roots in the Bible, or merely takes the Bible as the place to begin."[10]

Third, biblical theology helps define that "the center and reference point for the meaning of all Scripture is the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God."[11] Particularly speaking, even the Old Testament centralizes around Jesus Christ with numerous texts referring to Him.[12] John Bright declares, "Christ is indeed to us the crown of revelation through whom the true significance of the Old Testament becomes finally apparent."[13] Moreover, Clowney writes,

> Biblical theology serves to center preaching on its essential message: Jesus Christ. [And thus,] preaching must be theological. Salvation is of the Lord, and the

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("Preaching the Whole Bible: Preaching and Biblical Theology," in *When God's Voice Is Heard: Essays on Preaching Presented to Dick Lucas*, ed. David Jackman and Christopher Green [Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995], 68). The assertion on unity is why Childs' view of biblical theology falls short. Ultimately, he is unable to come to grips with biblical authority by failing to uphold the biblical text as a product of divine revelation. Therefore, as helpful as his claims are, his theological system has nothing on which to stand (see Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis*).

[9]Jensen, "Preaching the Whole Bible," 64.

[10]D. A. Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *NDBT*, 100. See Gerhard F. Hasel, "Proposals for a Canonical Biblical Theology," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 34, no. 1 (1996): 23-33.

[11]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 16.

[12]Kaiser notes that as many as 456 OT texts refer to Christ (Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003], 20). On a related note, Clowney believes the key for preaching the Old Testament "is the witness of the Scriptures to Christ" ("Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures," in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Samuel T. Logan, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986), 166.

[13]John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 112.

message of the gospel is the theocentric message of the unfolding of the plan of God for our salvation in Jesus Christ. He who would preach the Word must preach Christ.[14]

Likewise, Goldsworthy adamantly asserts,

Jesus Christ in his life, death and resurrection is the fixed point of reference for the understanding of the whole of reality. We must apply this fact to our doing of biblical theology. The gospel is the fixed point of reference for understanding the meaning of the whole range of biblical revelation.[15]

Evangelicals as a whole have even adopted this kind of hermeneutic. Article III of "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics" (1982) declares: "The person and work of Jesus Christ are the central focus of the entire Bible. We deny that any method of interpretation which rejects or obscures the Christ-centeredness of the Bible is correct."[16]

Fourth, biblical theology's Christocentric focus naturally leads one to find a main focal point for interpreting the Scriptures. Whether one can honestly argue for *the* central theme of the OT, NT, or even the Bible, it is still important to establish a focal point for organization and clarity. Paul House writes,

A focal point is valuable as long as it is true to Scripture and actually helps the theologian's analysis hold together. Attempting to argue a certain theme as the only major uniting idea can succeed only if all other motifs are proven secondary. . . . Surely such an argument would require an extended discussion before the theologian could begin.[17]

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[14]Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 74. Ultimately, there should be "no distinction between preaching doctrine and preaching Jesus" (Robert B. Selph, *Southern Baptists and the Doctrine of Election* [Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1996], 14).

[15]Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 60; ibid., 23, 72.

[16]"The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1984), 882.

[17]Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 56. See also Hasel, "Canonical Biblical Theology," 30-32. The role of biblical theology emphasizes certain themes to contribute to the understanding of the Bible's single, unified message (Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 77). For another argument for the Bible's unity and central themes, see Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*

Some of the central, unifying themes of the Bible are the kingdom of God, the covenants, creation—old and new, God's redemption plan for His people, and God's promise-line— the story of the Lord and His work. Underscoring the Bible's Christ-centered message strengthens any of these themes.

Finally, biblical theology is an engaging, theological interpretation of Scripture. Peter Stuhlmacher writes,

> A biblical theology . . . must attempt to interpret the Old and New Testament tradition as it wants to be interpreted. For this reason, it cannot read these texts only from a critical distance as historical sources but must, at the same time, take them seriously as testimonies of faith which belong to the Holy Scripture of early Christianity.[18]

These features describe biblical theology more fully, showing its concern for the Bible's message about God and Christ.

The value of biblical theology for doctrinal exposition. In order to carry out doctrinal exposition most effectively, the expositor will want to implement biblical theology and exposition regularly. This implementation will prove valuable in a number of ways.

First, it sets the individual text in its larger contexts. Adam explains,

> To place a text in context we must identify its literary context in the book, its theological context in the writings of the author, and the historical context of the book. Then to place a text in the context of the whole biblical revelation will involve understanding its context in OT or NT theology, its context in God's progressive revelation within each period of salvation-history, and its context in biblical theology. In sum, context must be theological as well as literary, and

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from the OT, 30-34. Much of NT theology concerns the more specific discipline of Pauline theology. It seems that those who view the major unifying themes of Christology and the gospel not only accurately depict Paul but the rest of the NT as well. See Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 22; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Paul and His Theology: A Brief Sketch* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), 37-38.

[18]Peter Stuhlmacher, *How to Do Biblical Theology* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1995), 1.

context must include the whole biblical revelation, as well as the book in which the text occurs.[19]

Similarly, Kaiser claims that good exegesis considers the whole context, whether the context is immediate, sectional, within in a book, or canonical (see figure 2).[20]

Canon

OT or NT

Same Author

Book

Section
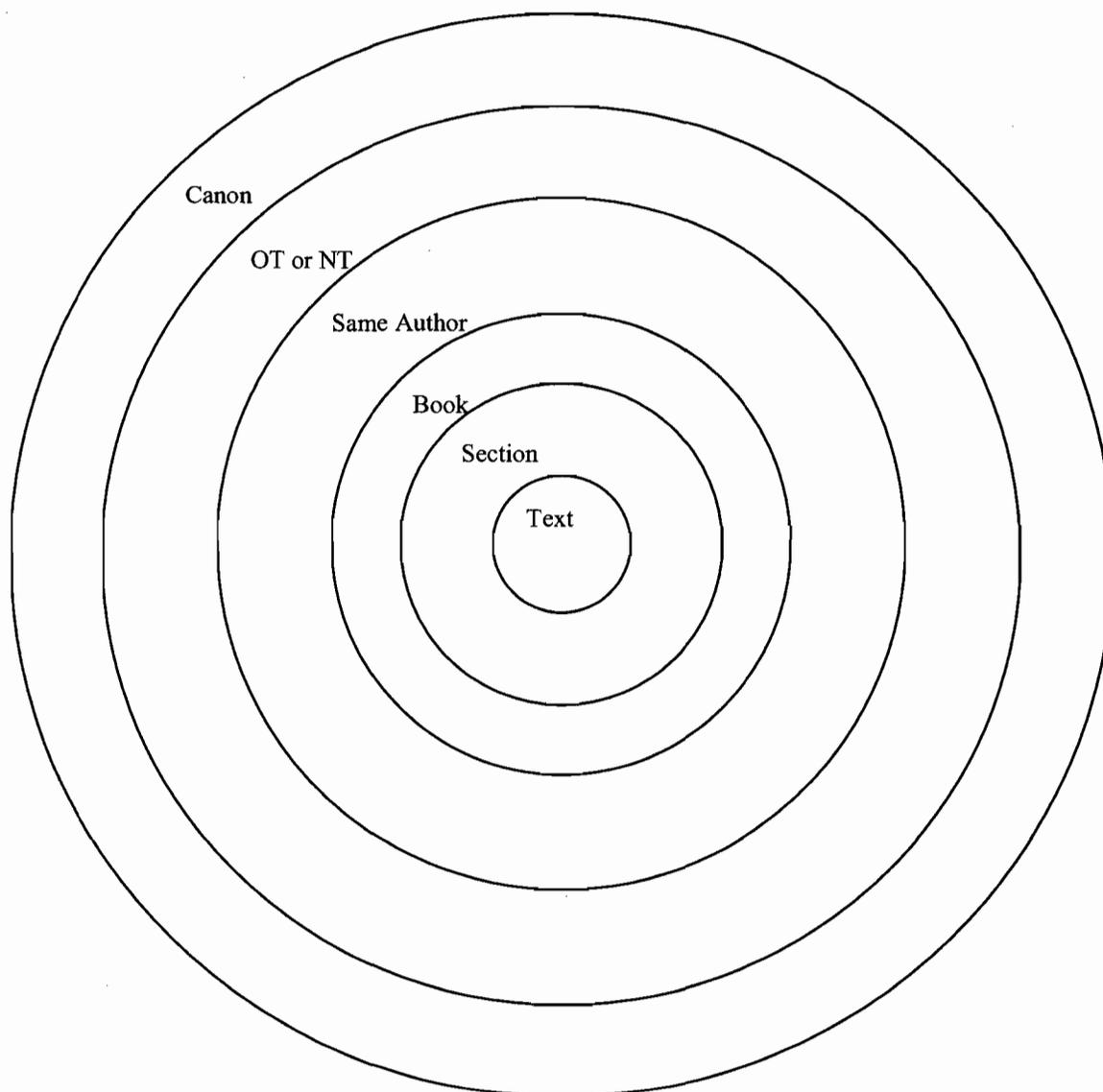
Text

Figure 2. The Interpretive Contexts of Biblical Theology

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[19]Adam, "Preaching and Biblical Theology," in *NDBT*, 107.

[20]Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981), 69-85.

Second, biblical theology for exposition is valuable because it helps readers "trace longitudinal themes from the Old Testament to the New."[21] Preachers will be able to interpret the OT in light of the NT message concerning Christ.

Biblical theology, then, is so significant that attempting expository preaching without it often leads to a lack of appreciation for the bigger story of the Scriptures and its relationship to Christian life.[22] At the same time, if one's view of biblical theology focuses solely on Scriptures' diversity without respect for its unity, then the preacher has to deal with the problem of discontinuity and even contemporary insignificance. Only a unified biblical theological approach can effectively relate the one (unity) to the many (diversity), bringing the role of systematic theology into play.[23]

Systematic Theology

Not only is biblical theology important for doctrinal exposition, but systematic theology is also. While not necessarily inferior to biblical theology, systematic theology reaps the fruit of biblical theology's task.

Some definitions of systematic theology. Systematic theology "is nothing other than the saving truth of God presented in systematic form."[24] More specifically, it

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[21]Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 267.

[22]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 59.

[23]Ibid., 63-68.

[24]B. B. Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings*, vol. 2, ed. John E. Meeter (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973), 180.

"is any study that answers the question, 'What does the whole Bible teach us today?'

about any given topic."[25]

The features of systematic theology. As to its features, systematic theology

is, first of all, biblically thematic. It draws on biblical themes and the work of biblical

theology. Second, systematic theology is comprehensive in that it looks to both the Bible

and historical theology in the development of doctrine. Third, this discipline is

normative, or prescriptive, of the Bible's teachings. Fourth, this theology is systematic; it

presents biblical doctrine in an orderly manner. Fifth, systematic theology is

contemporary, for it addresses current language and issues. While the truth does not

change, how the preacher should articulate the truth in the face of new issues does

change. Finally, systematic theology is practical, related to Christian living.[26] These

features help describe systematic theology while pointing to its value in doctrinal

exposition.

The value of systematic theology for doctrinal exposition. Just as biblical

theology is valuable for doctrinal expository preaching, systematic theology is also.

Lloyd-Jones speaks of the importance of systematic theology to preaching:

> To me there is nothing more important in a preacher than that he should have a
> systematic theology, that he should know it and be well grounded in it. This
> systematic theology, this body of truth which is derived from the Scripture, should
> always be present as a background and as a controlling influence in his preaching.

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[25]Wayne Grudem (*Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994], 21) borrows this definition from John Frame. Systematics is synonymous with dogmatic theology.

[26]Samuel T. Logan, Jr., "Preaching and Systematic Theology," in *The Preacher and Preaching*, 248; Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 23-24; David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth, or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 97-106.

Each message, which arises out of a particular text or statement of the Scripture, must always be a part or an aspect of this total body of truth. It is never something in isolation, never something separate or apart. The doctrine in a particular text, we must always remember, is a part of this greater whole—the Truth or the Faith. That is the meaning of the phrase 'comparing Scripture with Scripture'. We must not deal with any text in isolation; all our preparation of a sermon should be controlled by this background of systematic theology.[27]

Moreover, J. I. Packer writes,

Theology helps the preacher as the coach helps the tennis player, grooming and extending his performance by introducing him to the range of strokes that can be made and drilling him in the art of making them correctly. As the coach is the embodiment of decades of experience in playing tennis, so theology is the embodiment of centuries of study, debate, and interpretative interaction as the church has sought to understand the Scriptures. One can play tennis after a fashion without ever having been coached, and one can preach from the Bible after a fashion without ever having encountered serious theology in a serious way. But, just as one is likely to play better with coaching, so one is likely to preach better—more perceptively, more searchingly, more fruitfully—when helped by theology; and so the preacher who is theologically competent will, other things being equal, be more use to the church.[28]

Even Jesus' Great Commission stresses the value of systematic theology for preaching. Within the command to make disciples of all the nations comes the task of teaching all of Christ's commands (Matt 28:19-20). Surely Christ's teachings include all of Scripture. As Wayne Grudem observes,

The task of teaching all that Jesus commanded us is, in a broad sense, the task of teaching what the whole Bible says to us today. To effectively teach ourselves and to teach others what the whole Bible says, it is necessary to *collect* and *summarize* all the Scripture passages on a particular subject.[29]

Systematic theology is, therefore, valuable because it helps Christians carry out the Great Commission.

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[27]D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 66.

[28]J. I. Packer, "The Preacher as Theologian: Preaching and Systematic Theology," in *When God's Voice Is Heard*, 93.

[29]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 27.

**The Relationship between Biblical
Theology and Systematic Theology**

It should be clear that a close relationship exists between biblical and

systematic theology. One homiletician remarks on this connection:

> After the biblical theology has been discovered, but before the theological product is
> articulated, the preacher must run his biblical theological conclusions through the
> lens of systematic theology in order to account for the theological truth of the
> passage in light of the progress of revelation.[30]

Furthermore, Rosner adds that

> even if the Bible's storyline contains numerous subplots, its main story can be told,
> and often is with reference to major themes of *systematic theology* such as sin,
> salvation, and worship. Such topics act as centres around which the Bible's basic
> plot and message can be organized (emphasis mine).[31]

Simply put, biblical theology contributes to systematic theology and systematic theology

borrows from biblical theology.

Contrast and comparison also highlights the relationship between these two

disciplines. They differ in that systematic theology, unlike biblical theology, does not

encourage the full exploration of the Bible's plot-lines. That is, biblical theology is a

thematic approach to Scripture within biblical history and systematic theology is a topical

approach to Scripture.[32] Moreover, systematic theology seeks to answer what Christians

should believe *now* about some aspect of Christianity and results in Christian doctrine.

Biblical theology, on the other hand, attempts to answer the process in which God

revealed Himself and results in relating the whole Bible to the Christian life.[33] Further,

systematic theology engages the culture with the Scriptures while biblical theology deals

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[30]Warren, "Paradigm for Preaching," 477.

[31]Rosner, "Biblical Theology," 9.

[32]Jensen, "Preaching the Whole Bible," 69.

[33]Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 30-32.

solely with the Scriptures. Finally, systematic theology is a culminating discipline and biblical theology is a bridge discipline.[34]

Even though these contrasts exist, one should be careful not to dismiss one of these disciplines in favor of the other, for there is a close connection. About this close relationship, Clowney claims that no opposition exists

> between biblical theology and systematic or dogmatic theology, though the two are distinct. Systematic theology must draw from the results of biblical theology, and biblical theology must be aware of the broad perspectives of systematics. The two approaches differ in the development of material. The development of systematics is strictly thematic or topical. . . . The development of biblical theology is redemptive-historical.[35]

This leads to the comparison of these two disciplines. Several view biblical theology and systematic theology as complementary, for biblical theology aims at exegesis of individual texts in light of the whole canon's doctrinal picture and systematic theology, working from the premise that the Scriptures are coherent, focuses on the main doctrines of the canon.[36] Both biblical and systematic theology also share the same authority base—the sacred Scriptures.[37] Furthermore, systematic theology builds on the work of biblical theology and, at times, even employs a biblical-theological method in analyzing doctrine's historical development. Ultimately, systematic theology aims at

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[34]Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," 103.

[35]Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 16.

[36]"The reason why Grudem thinks it is possible to organize a systematic theology from almost any point is precisely because in his view the truth behind theology—which theology is meant to discover and expound—is so superbly coherent that the internal ties will eventually take you to the whole anyway" (D. A. Carson, "Domesticating the Gospel: A Review of Stanley J. Grenz's *Renewing the Center*," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 6, no. 4 [2002]: 96).

[37]Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," 102. For more on the contrasts between biblical and systematic theology, see Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 26. Allen's distinctions between systematic theology and doctrine appear to be between systematics and a mixture of biblical and historical theology (see Ronald J. Allen, *Preaching Is Believing: The Sermon as Theological Reflection* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002], 12-15).

collecting all of the biblical data on a given subject (similar to biblical theology) in order to summarize the Scriptures' teaching.[38]

Consequently, employing both biblical and systematic theology enhances doctrinal expository preaching. Indeed, without one or the other, doctrinal exposition suffers from malnourishment. With both forces, however, doctrinal exposition seeks to divide the biblical text accurately (2 Tim 2:15)—biblical theology—and to declare its teachings comprehensively (Acts 20:27)—systematic theology.

Deriving Doctrine from a Passage of Scripture

Equipped with the tools of biblical and systematic theology, the preacher is ready to do some theological digging. The theological exegesis of a biblical text may possibly be the most neglected phase in the sermon preparation process. Due to factors ranging from theological disinterest to a lack in theological training to theological illiteracy, many preachers simply do not take the extra time to mine the biblical text for all of its rich resources, especially the doctrinal substance. Once the preacher resolves to put in the extra time, he can, with disciplined effort, derive doctrine from any passage of Scripture.[39] Rosner rightly claims, "Not to attend to theological interpretation is to stop short of interpretation, to ignore the interests of the texts themselves."[40] Furthermore, such theological interpretation is necessary because many commentaries are void of

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[38]Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 23.

[39]Just as Merrill F. Unger argues that a preacher can expound any passage through proper exegesis (*Principles of Expository Preaching* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1955], 237-52), so an expositor can preach any passage doctrinally with theological exegesis.

[40]Rosner, "Biblical Theology," 4.

theological discussion, focusing instead on insignificant issues.[41] Both discipline and

effort are essential in faithfully deriving doctrine from Scripture.

**General Principles for
Theological Interpretation**

As to biblical interpretation, the different literary genres affect meaning. At

the same time, several *universal* principles stand out for interpreting any text

theologically, regardless of genre. Theological interpretation is clearly an aspect of

exegesis, as Stephen and David Olford contend: "Study or investigation should take into

account: (1) the historical and literary settings of the text; (2) the syntactical and verbal

specifics of the text; and (3) the *doctrinal and theological significance* of the text"

(emphasis mine).[42] Therefore, preachers would be wise to employ these principles early

in their exegetical work.[43]

Observing the redemptive-historical context. First, the theological

interpretation "must always begin by finding the immediate theological horizon and then

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[41]See Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis*, 142-46.

[42]Stephen F. Olford and David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 104.

[43]This theological process will yield a theological product, which serves as the basis for the homiletical process (see also appendix 1). For ways in which self-conscious attention to doctrine in sermon preparation contributes to preaching, see Mark Ellingsen, "Doctrine," in *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*, ed. William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 103-04. On a different note, an assumption of this section is that interpreters are already employing the basic rules of hermeneutics in light of the different genres. For basic guides to hermeneutics, see Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993); Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994). For a more technical, advanced approach, see Grant R. Osbourne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991).

relating that to the broader biblical-theological perspectives."[44] This step helps place the text within the larger framework of redemptive history. Greidanus comments,

> Redemptive history is the mighty river that runs from the old covenant to the new and holds the two together. It is true, of course, that there is progression in redemptive history, but it is one redemptive history. It is true that there is an old covenant and a new covenant, but it is one covenant of grace. It is true that the sacrifice of Christ brought an end to Old Testament worship with its blood sacrifices, but Christians are still required to bring sacrifices to the same God. Progression in redemptive history takes place within the continuity of a single redemptive history.[45]

Related to this redemptive-historical approach is the Person and work of Jesus Christ—the link between the two testaments. T. C. Vriezen claims that Christ "is the creator of the events of which the New Testament is full and thus the head of the new community of the Kingdom of God. In this way there is a fundamental connection between the two Testaments in the person of Jesus Christ."[46] The role of Jesus Christ, thus, becomes a major interpretive principle for theological exegesis.

A common objection to this interpretive principle is that while the New Testament clearly revolves around the Person of Christ, the Old Testament has its own hermeneutical issues apart from the New Testament.[47] While there is great profit in

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[44]Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 92. Ibid., 89. See also Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 69, 137. Allen offers similar criteria for theological interpretation, but his critical presuppositions leads him to dismiss any notion of absolute truth in the text (*Preaching Is Believing*, 51-58).

[45]Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the OT*, 48. The groundwork for Greidanus' more recent works on the redemptive-historical approach to interpretation is his *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Kampen, Netherlands: J. H. Kok, 1970).

[46]T. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, rev. ed., trans. S. Neuijen (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 123.

[47]Kaiser, at times, leans toward a non-Christological approach in his discussions on interpreting an OT passage in its original setting, focusing on authorial intent without proper concern for the bigger picture of Authorial intent (see Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 17-66). Elsewhere, however, Kaiser claims that the OT leads people to Jesus the Messiah (Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*,

understanding an OT text the way a Jew might have in the ancient era, it seems

contemporary *Christian* preaching must interpret the OT in light of Christ's completed

work in redemptive history, otherwise today's preaching of the OT may quickly become

Judaistic, legalistic, and futile.

This hermeneutical method of bringing out the Christ-centered message in the

Bible is none other than the redemptive-historical approach to biblical interpretation.

Perhaps no contemporary writer has articulated this position as well as Sidney Greidanus

in *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*. In describing his view of the "redemptive-

historical christocentric method," Greidanus says,

> The christocentric method complements the theocentric method of interpreting the
> Old Testament by seeking to do justice to the fact that God's story of bringing his
> kingdom on earth is centered in Christ: Christ the center of redemptive history,
> Christ the center of the Scriptures.[48]

Employing this method, Greidanus offers seven ways to interpret and to preach Christ

from the Old Testament. A summary of three of the most important of these methods

follows.[49]

First, and most important for this study, is the way of redemptive-historical

progression. This approach "sees every Old Testament text and its addressees in the

context of God's dynamic history, which progresses steadily and reaches its climax in the

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20-23). For a clear Christocentric approach to OT interpretation, see Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 49-51; idem, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 1-7, 115-27.

[48]Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the OT*, 227.

[49]For the complete treatment and examples from Scripture, see Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the OT*, 203-25, 234-77. Besides the three approaches above, Greidanus labels the other four as the ways of analogy, longitudinal themes, contrast, and New Testament reference. See also David L. Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching: Identifying the Issues in Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 166-67.

life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and ultimately in the new creation."[50] This

interpretive principle uses biblical theology well, for it "focuses on the core of

redemptive history in Christ."[51]

Second, and closely related, is the way of promise-fulfillment. This way "is

embedded in redemptive history, for God gives his promises at one stage of redemptive

history and brings them to fulfillment in subsequent stages."[52] Moreover, only when one

interprets the promise structure of the OT as fulfilled in Christ can his preaching of the

OT have theological depth.[53]

Third, the way of typology is a common interpretive method. Although some

preachers take typology to the extremes, most agree that the Bible contains a typology

structure which tracks God's work in history up through the work of Christ.[54] Expositors

will find these methods helpful in theological interpretation of the OT.

Asking theological questions. In addition to setting a text within redemptive

history, the preacher should also ask himself a number of questions of each passage,

beginning with "What does the passage teach about God?" Haddon Robinson claims that

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[50]Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the OT*, 237.

[51]Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 78.

[52]Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the OT*, 206. Kaiser prefers to call this interpretive method the promise-plan of God. He views 1 Peter 1:3-12 and the "so great a salvation" as the best substantial claim to this method. Moreover, the Scriptures everywhere attest to God carrying out His promises, much of which has roots in Genesis 12:3 (*Preaching and Teaching*, 31-33).

[53]Clowney, "Preaching Christ," 166-83.

[54]See Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the OT*, 212-13; Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 59.

"every passage has a vision of God, such as God as Creator or Sustainer."[55] Additionally,

the interpreter needs to ask, "What is the depravity factor? What in humanity rebels

against that vision of God?"[56] A more general question to ask is "what aspects of

Christian doctrine does this text prompt [me] to consider?"[57] These questions are crucial

in determining the theological meaning of a text.

Other related questions to theological interpretation are what does the text say?

What are the text's concerns? What do contemporary listeners have in common with the

original audience? According to Bryan Chapell, the answers to these questions help

determine the Fallen Condition Focus (FCF) of the passage, making sure the expositor

grounds the sermon in the intent of the divine Author.[58]

Furthermore, a preacher needs to ask certain key theological questions of the

text. Some of these questions include

> How does this text fit into the progressive revelation that God gives in the Bible? Is
> it related to any major biblical themes? Is its theme one in which there is significant
> development between the OT and NT? What relationship does it have to the
> gospel? How does the gospel form a context for it? How does it relate to the

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[55]Haddon W. Robinson, "The Heresy of Application," *Leadership* 18, no. 4 (1997): 24. See also Hershael W. York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 75.

[56]Robinson, "Heresy," 24. Answering these questions helps translate the exegetical idea into the homiletical idea via the theological idea (see Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002], 83-84).

[57]Allen, *Preaching Is Believing*, 105. Cf. William Muehl, *Why Preach? Why Listen?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 16. Similar advice comes from Robert G. Hughes and Robert Kysar, *Preaching Doctrine: For the Twenty-First Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 39-48. The main weakness in the approach by Hughes and Kysar is their failure to see the authority of the Bible, for they note that the Bible may present "faulty theology," when preachers are then "called to preach *against a text*" (ibid., 45-46). Obviously, one may want to preach against the theology of (say) the Sadducees, but Hughes's and Kysar's proposal clearly takes issue with biblical authority.

[58]Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 43. Chapell defines the FCF as "*the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or for whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage*" (ibid., 42). For a more complete treatment of discerning the FCF within redemptive exposition, see Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 263-312.

revelation of Jesus Christ, to the promise or the fulfillment? Is it used or interpreted elsewhere in the Bible? In which major theological category does it occur, *e.g.* promise, law, prophecy, wisdom, instruction, blessing, curse, people of God, gospel?[59]

Answering such questions helps keep the preacher focused on doctrinal content.

Observing the inter-canonical relationship. A third general principle for theological interpretation concerns the relationship between the OT and the NT. If beginning with a NT theme, the student will do well to consider its relationship to the central tenets of the gospel. At the same time, if beginning in the OT, checking for direct quotations and allusions in the NT should enable interpretation.[60] Such an approach employs the entire focus of biblical theology.

The analogy of faith. Finally, the analogy of faith aids in interpreting Scripture theologically. Although one particular text may touch on a doctrine, other passages of Scripture may help in understanding it more fully. The Westminster Confession states, "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly."[61]

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[59]Peter J. H. Adam, "Preaching and Biblical Theology," 108. With specific regard to Christ-centered interpretation, the preacher should ask himself about each text, "What does this passage mean in the light of Jesus Christ? And what does this passage reveal about Jesus Christ?" as well as specific questions concerning each of the seven ways of employing the Christocentric method (Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the OT*, 232-33). See also Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching & Teaching with Imagination: The Quest for Biblical Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 248.

[60]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 246. See also William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying; With the Calling of the Ministry* (Cambridge: J. Legatt, 1592; reprint, Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 26-29.

[61]"The Westminster Confession of Faith" 1.9, 57, in *Creeds of the Church,* in The Master Christian Library, version 5 [CD-ROM] (Albany, OR: AGES Software, 1997).

When employing the analogy of Scripture, Kaiser claims that it is most valid to compare Scripture only with *antecedent* Scripture—thus, keeping the interpreter focused on the antecedent theology of a text. Clues to determining this antecedent theology include terms which have taken on special meaning, a reference or allusion to a prior event in progressive revelation, and references to a covenant or promise.[62]

Cox wisely comments on the significance of the analogy of faith: "Many heresies or occasions for controversy through the ages could have been avoided if every interpretation of scripture had been subjected to the test of total scripture."[63] On this note, Stephen and David Olford caution against forcing one's theology onto the text:

> One's theology will impact what is viewed as essential, significant, purposeful, intentional, and meaningful within the text. We grant that. And yet, the careful exegetical-theological preacher will seek for *real indicators within the text* that express priority truths and emphases. These textual emphases need to be viewed in order to express the doctrine and theology of the text, rather than simply imposing a theological framework on the text. The goal is exposition of the truth(s) that is intrinsic to and intentionally expressed by the text.[64]

When comparing Scripture with Scripture, the interpreter would do well to practice the following guidelines (the first four are general and the last is specific):

1. An obscure passage gives way to a clear one.

2. The most secure doctrines are those which are treated often in and throughout various parts of Scripture.

3. Even though an apparent contradiction of two biblical doctrines exists, one should accept both.

4. Lengthy and systematic passages of a particular doctrine should clarify brief passages of the same doctrine, especially if it is an allusion.

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[62]Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 136-37, 161-62.

[63]James W. Cox, *Preaching: A Comprehensive Approach to the Design & Delivery of Sermons* (Nashville: Seminary Extension, 1993), 66.

[64]Olford and Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 127.

5.   The NT is the norm for interpreting the OT.[65]

In addition to these basic hermeneutical guidelines for theological exegesis, one needs to consider the form of the biblical text. Although the preacher can extract doctrine from any portion of Scripture, the literary genre of each passage will most certainly affect the means by which it is extracted. Therefore, principles for theological interpretation of the various biblical genres are in order.

Observing Specific Literary Genre

As argued in chapter 2, expository preaching allows the Bible to have both the first and final say in the message. For preaching to be as closely connected to the Bible as possible, the Scriptures must determine both the substance and the shape of the sermon. Don Wardlaw's *Preaching Biblically* in 1983 grabbed the attention of many homileticians to consider a sermon's shape.[66] Similarly, Fred Craddock argues for variety in sermon presentation,

> Why should the multitude of forms and moods within the Biblical literature and the multitudes of needs in the congregation be brought together in one unvarying [preaching] mold, and that copied from Greek rhetoricians of centuries ago? An unnecessary monotony results, but more profoundly, there is an inner conflict between the content of the sermon and its form.[67]

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[65]The origin of these guidelines came from a classroom lecture by Roy Zuck as noted in Daniel Akin, "The Ministry of Proclamation: Book 1" (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002), sec. 14, 19-21. See also Olford and Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 126-38.

[66]Don M. Wardlaw, ed., *Preaching Biblically: Creating Sermons in the Shape of Scripture* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983).

[67]Fred B. Craddock, *As One without Authority: Essays on Inductive Preaching* (Enid, OK: Phillips University Press, 1971), 25-26. Ibid., 45.

Likewise, well-known expositor Warren Wiersbe states that biblical preaching "means much more than to preach the truth of the Bible accurately. It also means *to present that truth the way the biblical writers and speakers presented it.*"[68]

Greidanus may argue this point most clearly:

> When the text is a narrative, we should seriously consider using a narrative form that follows the story line of the text rather than the standard didactic form which imposes its own structure on the text. Or when the text is a lament Psalm, we should consider following the form of the Psalm through its various moves from calling upon God, to description of distress, to complaint against God, to petitions to God for help, to professions of trust, to final praise. Or when the text aims to teach, we should consider following its major affirmations to its conclusion to convey its meaning. The point is, in expository preaching we should not only expose the meaning of the text but also the form and structure that convey this meaning.[69]

The Scriptures' shape varies among numerous literary genres. Since genre affects interpretation and interpretation affects preaching, the literary genres of the Bible demand a closer look. Not only is the Bible the result of God's revelation to some forty different human authors, but it also consists of several literary genres. Some of the most common genres are narrative, poetry, prophecy, wisdom, didactic, and apocalyptic. This section will observe the interpretative guidelines needed for deriving doctrine from a particular kind of biblical text.

Narrative. Without a doubt, the most common genre in the Bible is narrative. Kaiser writes, "According to one way of counting, narrative could make up half of the corpus of both testaments."[70] Other, more conservative, estimates attribute one-third of

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[68]Wiersbe, *Preaching and Teaching with Imagination*, 36.

[69]Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the OT*, 290. See also Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 141-56.

[70]Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 63.

the Scriptures to narrative.[71] Either way, the narrative sections of God's Word are so frequent that anyone trying to avoid preaching on them is like a driver attempting to dodge potholes on a country road in desperate need of re-pavement—sooner or later the two will meet!

In order to understand narrative for doctrinal exposition, preachers should follow a few guidelines in deriving doctrine from a narrative text.[72] First and foremost, the interpreter must seek to determine the narrative's teaching about God. Goldsworthy contends, "The story is never complete in itself and belongs as part of the one big story of salvation culminating in Jesus Christ."[73] This argument is important, because narrative genre can become anthropocentric rather than theocentric, if one is not careful. Fee and Stuart observe,

> Bible narratives tell us about things that happened—but not just any things. Their purpose is to show God at work in his creation and among his people. The narratives glorify him, help us to understand and appreciate him, and give us a picture of his providence and protection.[74]

This theocentric purpose of narratives runs throughout all the Old Testament as the following quotation supports:

> A striking feature of all the historical books proper is that they emphasize the activity of the Lord in bringing about His divine purpose: He punished those who disobey Him and blesses those who worship Him (Deut.), if people pray to Him and trust in Him their enemies are virtually impotent (Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah), what

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[71]David C. Deuel, "Suggestions for Expositional Preaching of Old Testament Narrative," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 2, no. 1 (1991): 47.

[72]For a more detailed approach to this task, see Millard J. Erickson and James L. Heflin, *Old Wine in New Wineskins: Doctrinal Preaching in a Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 124-31.

[73]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 150.

[74]Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible*, 79.

the prophets preach, happens (Kings) and what Yahweh promises (to the patriarchs or David) is fulfilled (Genesis-Joshua and Samuel).[75]

Second, readers will need to observe the author's purpose for the history. Certain details may be important here, such as Ruth's inclusion in the canon as a time of transition from the period of judges to the hopeful reign of David, or John's Gospel account as a selection of Jesus' signs in order to get people to believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that they might have life in Him. Such details can provide clues to theological interpretation.[76]

Third, one must identify each key character and determine whether he is a believer or unbeliever. This identification will help put the theological teaching in the proper perspective. Fourth, when dealing with God's action, one should ask what presupposes that action. God's wrath being poured out on people presupposes ongoing sin, and His redemption presumes His grace and election. Fifth, readers ought to see how the characters within the passage interpret the event. They may have special insight or they may be completely unaware of the bigger picture.

Sixth, the preacher can refer to the rest of Scripture to see if it provides an interpretation or analysis of the story elsewhere. A New Testament epistle may shed light on the doctrinal significance, such as Paul's explanation of Abraham's seed in Galatians 3-4. Seventh, discernment of divine approval or disapproval, if possible, may

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[75]I. H. Eybers, "Some Remarks Concerning the Composition of the Historical Books of the Old Testament," in *De Fructu Oris Sui: Essays in Honor of Adrianus Van Selms*, ed. I. H. Eybers and others (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1971), 45. For related purposes in preaching narrative, see Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 220.

[76]Eugene H. Merrill, "History," in *Cracking Old Testament Codes: Interpreting the Literary Genres of the Old Testament*, ed. D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 91, 104-06. Although much of the Bible's narrative history springs from the OT, the Book of Acts fits this category from the NT (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible*, 108-12).

underscore actions to emulate or avoid. Finally, the interpreter needs to make sure he distinguishes between timeless principles and culture-specific principles. The best way to determine the timeless principle is to consider the entire development of the story-line.[77]

Torah. Torah stands out in certain sections of the Pentateuch. Intermixed with historical narrative, Torah provides instructions for Israelite living. In certain cases, Torah remains a part of the Christian life.

To interpret Torah theologically, one should begin by relating the law to God's promise and personal faith. Since God's promises (see Gen 3:15; 9:27; 12:1-3) preceded the law, one should interpret any response to the law in the larger context of God's promise-plan. Furthermore, the Pentateuch's focus on individual faith and obedience may highlight the purpose of the law as instruction toward faith rather than a strict keeping of the law.[78]

Second, one needs to note the style of the law. Recognizing the features of apodictic and casuistic law aids the preaching of law. The former is unconditional, imperative, and general (such as the Ten Commandments). The latter is conditional, declarative, and specific (such as certain civil laws). Third, preachers should check to see if the New Testament repeats the law in a way that is binding on the Christian.[79] While ceremonial and civil laws do not necessarily carry over from the OT to the Christian, the moral law is certainly still in effect.[80]

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[77]Deuel, "Suggestions for Expositional Preaching," 53. See also note 83 in chapter 5 below.

[78]Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 140-44.

[79]Richard E. Averbeck, "Law," in *Cracking OT Codes*, 130-31.

[80]For a more complete treatment of the Law and the Christian, see Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 3a (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 65-77.

Poetry. Poetry often consists of either praise or lament, so the interpretation of poetry in general applies to each. Concerning praise one should distinguish between descriptive and declarative praise. The former praises God for who He is and the latter for what He does.[81] Furthermore, if possible, the reader should try to set the psalm in its historical setting, which may shed light on the reason the psalmist offered the praise. Psalm 51, for example, makes much more sense in light of David's sin with Bathsheba. Finally, identifying spiritual principles that apply to all times and settings will help the homiletical task.[82]

Interpreting the lament needs to consider the specific theological teaching of the lament, especially what it teaches about God or people's relationship to Him.[83] Moreover, the reason for the lament is usually found in the *ki*-clause, providing the focal point and main lesson of the lament.[84] The main lesson should clue the interpreter in on the doctrinal teaching.

Wisdom. Most interpreters divide this genre into two groups—Proverbs and non-proverbial wisdom. The reader must first distinguish between proverb and promise. Proverbs tend to be the general rule of thumb rather than ironclad promises. Second, preachers need to bear in mind the entire Old Testament context, especially the context of the wisdom literature. Creation, human experience, and immorality are common themes in the wisdom tradition, pointing readers to the theological meaning. Third, one should

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[81]Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 153.

[82]Kenneth L. Barker, "Praise," in *Cracking OT Codes*, 225-28.

[83]Tremper Longman III, "Lament," in *Cracking OT Codes*, 208-10.

[84]Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 138.

look for the particular truth of the proverb by looking for pairs or strings of proverbs. Although the arrangement of many proverbs is non-thematic, many concepts occur elsewhere in wisdom literature. Comparing proverbs on the same subject can shed light on the theological meaning.[85]

Prophecy. Two main subgenres of prophecy are oracles of salvation and announcements of judgment. For theological interpretation, the reader should, first of all, check to see if the prophetic words are unconditional or conditional.[86] This evaluation will prove valuable for the sermon. Second, noting any assurances of promise or blessing to God's earlier revelation will help determine the universal principle. Third, the preacher should evaluate the whole issue of prophecy and fulfillment. He will want to explain those prophecies which have been fulfilled in the falls of Israel and Judah, in the restoration to the land of promise, and, ultimately, in the Messiah within the larger frame of redemptive history.[87]

Fourth, preachers should interpret prophetic oracles from the transformation perspective, for God is at work in creating things "new"—a new people, a new Davidic King, a new earth. Finally, interpreters need to evaluate prophecies concerning Christ in light of His initial coming or His second coming. Such an evaluation points either to the completed work of Christ in the past or eschatological hope/warning for the future.[88]

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[85]See Ted A. Hildebrandt, "Proverb," and Andrew E. Hill, "Non-Proverbial Wisdom," in *Cracking OT Codes*, 248-49, and 273-76, respectively.

[86]Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 102, 111-12.

[87]See Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 256-58.

[88]See William A. VanGemeren, "Oracles of Salvation," and Trent C. Butler, "Announcements of Judgments," in *Cracking OT Codes*, 146-52, and 166-68, respectively. For general theological

Gospel. The Gospel genre consists of a collage of other literary features, including historical-narrative, law, wisdom, prophecy, and poetry. Thus, preachers must evaluate each context appropriately. When interpreting the Gospels, the reader must remember to keep Jesus Christ central. Even though the Gospel writers introduce a number of supporting cast members, the message is still the good news about God in Christ Jesus. Further, the entire canon serves as the broadest context for the Gospels and one must not miss Jesus' role in redemptive history.[89] Simply put, a person can only truly understand Jesus' life and ministry in light of the Old Testament.

Jesus' multi-faceted ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing serves to highlight certain Christological themes: Son of Man, Son of David, Son of God, great "I am," Son of Abraham, God incarnate, Suffering Servant, etc. Although the Gospel accounts also cover related issues of theology proper, pneumatology, and harmartiology, interpreters should give special attention to the Christological and soteriological themes.

A few instructions are necessary on the theological interpretation of parables.[90] Obviously, if Jesus provides an interpretation of the parable, the reader will want to focus on the main doctrinal issue, which has to do with some aspect of the kingdom of God. Additionally, the audience hearing the parable in its original context plays a *huge* role in determining theological meaning. The audience may be disciples, religious leaders, normal crowds, a mixture of different people, or anonymous (in which case, the reader will need to consider the context in the Gospel). Also, issues which receive the most

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implications from each of the Writing Prophets, see Gary V. Smith, *The Prophets as Preachers: An Introduction to the Hebrew Prophets* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994).

[89]Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 305-06.

[90]For basic guidelines for interpreting parables, see Stein, *Basic Guide to Interpreting*, 137-50; Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible*, 135-48. Parables also exist throughout the OT but I cover them here because of people's familiarity with Jesus' parables.

space in the parable and the ending of each parable emphasize the basic point of the parable, pointing the reader to its theological focus.

Epistle. The epistles serve as the bulk of theological discourse about the gospel message. Because of its didactic nature, deriving doctrine from this genre comes quite easily in comparison to other genres. The main principle of theological interpretation is for the preacher to concentrate more on the doctrinal argument rather than the peculiarities of each letter. With regards to Paul's writings, his concern tends to be God's grace in Christ, the cross of Christ, the resurrection, faith in Christ, obedience to Christ, and Jesus' second coming. Therefore, preachers should evaluate everything Paul says with respect to his Christocentric viewpoint.[91]

Apocalyptic. Apocalyptic literature, usually a subgenre of prophecy, is by far the most mysterious and the most difficult genre to interpret. Goldsworthy humorously speaks of this mysterious genre: "What is an apocalypse? It seems that an apocalypse is what scholars and other experts decide to refer to as an apocalypse!"[92] Found in both the Old and New Testaments, apocalyptic literature is extremely popular among some Christians (Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye, and many dispensationalists) and almost a foreign thought among others (many amillenialists). Even though apocalyptic literature is mysterious, a few observations stand out that will aid theological interpretation. First, these

> writings proclaim a message that rests solidly upon the central confessions of Yahwistic and, especially, prophetic faith. Accordingly, the God of Israel is portrayed as a just and compassionate God who will not forsake the faithful and

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[91]Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 332.

[92]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 218.

who will steadfastly guide history according to divine purpose. . . . Second, it is important to interpret the apocalyptic writings within the context of the Bible as a whole, so that the important lines of connection with other types of biblical literature become apparent and the specific contributions of each section of the Bible become clear.[93]

As with all the Scriptures, preachers must approach the apocalyptic writings with humility and awe before the majesty and glory of God. With this attitude toward Scripture, the reader should begin by setting the apocalyptic passages in their historical setting before placing them in the wider picture. Certain historical factors may clue the reader in on the prophet's intention.[94] Second, readers must avoid interpreting all of the metaphors in apocalyptic literature. Those who see great significance behind every figurative detail are in danger of missing the meaning. Third, interpreters are wise to keep several options open as to the fulfillment of prophecy within the apocalyptic genre. Date-setters and identifiers of the Antichrist often end up looking foolish while lacking integrity as *truth*-tellers. Preachers need to remember that confessing "I don't know" about the mysterious is both honest and valid.[95] Finally, readers need to clarify the main point of the apocalyptic text. Although all of the details must wait until Christ's return, faithful interpreters can glean and apply the main doctrinal message.[96] The ultimate goal in interpreting apocalyptic literature theologically is "to assure that these writings

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[93]Paul D. Hanson, *Old Testament Apocalyptic* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 42-43.

[94]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 214.

[95]Though uttered centuries ago, Irenaeus' advice on this issue remains sound. Commenting on the number of the mark of the beast, he states that it is "more certain, and less hazardous, to await the fulfillment of the prophecy, than to be making surmises, and casting about for any names that may present themselves, inasmuch as many names can be found possessing the number mentioned; and the same question will, after all, remain unsolved" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies,* in The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A. D. 325, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, in The Master's Christian Library [CD-ROM] [Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1997], 1121).

[96]See D. Brent Sandy and Martin G. Abegg, Jr., "Apocalyptic," in *Cracking OT Codes*, 188-90.

mediate God's Word and to awaken modern listeners to God's presence today as they did in biblical times."[97]

All of these general and specific observations aid the interpreter in his pursuit of theological meaning. This entire theological process results in a theological product, which is the doctrinal teaching of a particular text. This product is valuable in the homiletical process in communicating biblical doctrine via the sermon.

Homiletical Methodology for Doctrinal Exposition

Now that the preacher-interpreter has an approach to deriving doctrine from a passage of Scripture, he needs to transform the theological exegesis into homiletical form. This transition begins with some general principles for the sermon's focus and form. The transformation does not end there, however, for true exposition applies the genre to the sermon's shape. Further, the preacher must take the exegetical and theological idea and state it in terms of the sermon.

General Principles for Keeping the Homiletical Form Doctrinally Focused

Although discussions on sermon structure and outlines are found in many traditional textbooks on preaching,[98] a few general observations will help in doctrinal exposition. These principles will help guide the preacher in transforming the product from theological interpretation into the sermon. First, the preacher must set the biblical

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[97]Hanson, *OT Apocalyptic*, 61.

[98]See Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 127-59; Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 115-37; Olford and Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 139-55; Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 143-71; York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 103-46. For a number of possibilities in outlining, see Hugh Litchfield, "Outlining the Sermon," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching: A Wealth of Counsel for Creative and Effective Proclamation*, ed. Michael Duduit (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 162-74.

text and message in the larger context of the single message of the Bible. Though this point has been repeated throughout this chapter, the reader must not forget it. A word of caution is in order here: the doctrinal expositor must be patient in leading a congregation to understand the details of Scripture in relation to the whole message. Consistency and perseverance are absolutely necessary for a preacher to declare "the whole counsel of God."

Second, the most biblical way to expound exposition of the theological product is to preach with a Christocentric undergirding. Many times, this approach results in direct Christocentric preaching, where OT and NT alike proclaim and magnify Christ. In some cases, like preaching on the Song of Solomon, there needs to be a Christ-centered basis that teaches biblical sexuality as God-glorifying and Christ-honoring.[99] All of this is to say that, no matter what the passage is, the sermon's focus should reflect the Bible's focus and point people to understand the Bible's message about God's plan in Christ. Chapter 3 showed that NT preaching continually emphasizes the gospel of God in Christ. Regarding this feature, Greidanus writes,

> Christocentric preaching is the preaching of God's acts from the perspective of the New Testament. In other words, Christocentric preaching requires that a passage receive a theocentric interpretation not only in its own (Old Testament) horizon but also in the broader horizon of the whole canon. In this way one can do justice to two sets of biblical testimonies: on the one hand, Christ as the eternal Logos is

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[99]Preaching on love and sex from the Song of Solomon still needs to declare Christ as the foundation for a man and wife in a marriage covenant. The Triune God gave sex to husband and wife for both procreation and recreation (see Gen 1:28). Moreover, God fashioned a woman for man, ordaining marriage in the process. Paul relates marital love and sexual union from Gen 2:24 ("the two shall become one flesh") to the covenantal union between Christ and the church (Eph 5:31-32). Thus, a Christocentric undergirding to the Song of Solomon is quite valid. See also Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, The New American Commentary, vol. 14 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 380.

present and active in Old Testament times, and, on the other hand, Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament.[100]

Similarly, Larsen asserts,

The Christian proclaimer, whether preaching from the Old Testament or the New, must present Christ as the ultimate frame of reference. The Christian proclaimer can preach no text in the Old Testament as a rabbi would preach it because the fulfillment of the promise has come in Christ and we live under the new covenant. The Christian proclaimer has a lifelong love affair with the Old Testament, the Bible which Christ and the apostles cherished. But our preaching of any part of Scripture must stand within a clear sense of theological construct, and for the Christian proclaimer that construct is Christocentric.[101]

This Christ-centered focus helps remind the expositor that the sermon's structure should move toward the Person or work of Christ.

Third, the preacher should find both encouragement and caution in the creative use of structuring the sermon in light of doctrinal exposition. Summary statements of biblical teachings must flow from the text rather than be forced on the text. Jotting down related terms through some careful, yet creative thinking may not only benefit the process of theological investigation but may also help convey theological meaning of the text.[102]

Fourth, while relating the individual text to the whole of revelation, the expositor should consider its significance for contemporary hearers.[103] This principle largely deals with the application of doctrine. Warren mentions an important point here: "While both exegesis and theology remain stable (one meaning), homiletics varies

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[100]Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 119.

[101]Larsen, *Anatomy of Preaching*, 163-64. Of course, "to view a text christocentrically is not a license to preach the gospel by misinterpreting the text!" (Olford and Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 134).

[102]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 246. Goldsworthy strongly cautions against confusing any given word with a concept or theme (ibid., 247). For instance, just because the term "proclamation" occurs in Scripture does not necessarily mean it refers to preaching in the theological sense (cf. Jonah 3:7). For more on creativity in preaching, see chapter 5 below.

[103]Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology*, 98.

according to the differing audiences (many applications)."[104] Although a more thorough

treatment of applying doctrine comes in chapter 5 below, suffice it to say here that

doctrinal exposition deals with theological exegesis, explanation, and application.[105]

Finally, noting the particular genre of the passage contributes to the way the

preacher preaches the text. Because the Bible as God's Word has the right to provide

both substance and shape to the message, preaching on various genres of Scripture should

portray differences in presentation.[106] Commenting on biblical narratives, Deuel asks,

"Why change the format when preaching them? If the preacher's goal is to be

expositional, what is more expositional than preaching the text in its story-line form?"[107]

A few examples of this proposal follow.

Applying Genres in Doctrinal Exposition

Specifically, the various literary genres should impact the sermon's form. That

is, doctrinal exposition upholds the Word of God, allowing it to determine the sermon's

substance and shape. The following treatment includes the genres of narrative, Torah,

poetry, wisdom, Gospels, and epistles.

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[104]Warren, "A Paradigm for Preaching," 479.

[105]As to constructing doctrinal statements from exegetical and theological interpretation, Erickson and Heflin offer a four-step process. First, one must determine the original meaning and application of the message. Second, the interpreter needs to set the teaching of the text within the whole doctrine. Third, he should isolate the timeless principles of the text. Finally, the preacher constructs these principles in relation to the contemporary audience (Erickson and Heflin, *Old Wine in New Wineskins*, 102-03).

[106]Allen asserts, "There is no single form or structure for doctrinal or theological preaching" (*Preaching Is Believing*, 82). See also Thomas G. Long, "Form," in *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*, 144-51. Cf. Walter B. Russell III, "Literary Forms in the Hands of Preachers and Teachers," in *Cracking OT Codes*, 291-94. For various preaching forms, see Bryan Chapell, "Alternative Models," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, 117-31.

[107]Deuel, "Suggestions for Expositional Preaching," 48.

Narrative. The treatment of preaching narrative is often rough and rigid,

forcing the story into a propositional mold. The use of a well-planned approach,

however, can result in an engaging form of doctrinal exposition. First, when preaching

on narrative, it seems best to employ something of an inductive-deductive approach.[108]

While not fully advocating the narrative preaching of the New Homiletic and its

inductive method, this writer sees value in preaching narrative passages by retelling the

story with some application-principles sprinkled throughout the message. Steven

Mathewson describes this arrangement where "the first part of the sermon tells the story

inductively, while the second part spends time developing the idea."[109]

In answering how to preach narrative, Deuel observes, "Perhaps the easiest,

most effective way, the way truest to the biblical form, is just to retell the story, allowing

the story itself to heighten points of application."[110] The major elements of this narrative-

doctrinal exposition are conveying the text's theological meaning, showing the

movement of the text through developing the storyline, and engaging the audience

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[108]York and Decker acknowledge, "While our preaching might indeed have inductive *elements*, we really cannot shy away from the fact that the preaching of the prophets and apostles was almost exclusively deductive and directly applicational" (*Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 17), contra Robinson, who writes, "Narratives are most effective when the audience hears the story and arrives at the speaker's ideas without the idea being stated directly" (*Biblical Preaching*, 130). An inductive-deductive method begins with some principles, moves toward the theme (general truth), and ends with particular applications. For other ways of preaching doctrine in general, including using deductive, inductive, inductive-deductive, and narrative, see Jerry E. Oswalt, *Proclaiming the Whole Counsel of God: Suggestions for Planning and Preparing Doctrinal Sermons* (New York: University Press of America, 1993), 13-52.

[109]Mathewson, *Art of Preaching OT Narrative*, 118-19. The author labels other forms of narrative preaching as inductive, the flashback approach, the semi-inductive approach, and first-person narratives (ibid., 113-20). For the last approach, see Haddon W. Robinson and Torrey W. Robinson, *It's All in How You Tell It: Preaching First-Person Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003).

[110]Deuel, "Suggestions for Expositional Preaching," 61. Deuel goes on to say, "When a preacher states an abstraction, he usually follows it with an illustration to enhance comprehension of the abstraction. Narrative preached as narrative has already incorporated the illustration" (ibid.).

through relevant application.[111] Moreover, the preacher needs to focus the movement of the plot toward the theology of the text. Thus, preaching on narrative texts such as Jacob, Ruth, Jonah, and Esther will highlight the role of God and His sovereign plan.

In selecting a unit of thought in the biblical text, the expositor will usually deal with a larger chunk of narrative than he would were he preaching from the epistles. A unit of thought in a narrative text is "a whole story."[112] Preaching the storyline and hitting the high points theologically will help move the preacher through large sections of Scripture.

Torah. In reference to preaching Torah, the expositor needs to observe the three-fold use of the law: 1) it was given to restrain human wickedness, 2) it convicts of sin, and 3) it instructs God's people in righteousness.[113] This purpose can carry over to the doctrinal expository sermon by focusing on God's holiness and justice along with man's sinfulness. Furthermore, the preacher may find it necessary to structure the sermon conditionally when preaching on casuistic laws or imperatively with apodictic laws.

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[111]Modified from David L. Larsen, *Telling the Old, Old Story: The Art of Narrative Preaching* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1995), 66-69. For ways to preach narrative better, see Larsen, *Telling the Old, Old Story*, 56-69, 94-97. For particular nuances of preaching narrative, such as parables, miracle-stories, and biography, see Larsen, *Telling the Old, Old Story*, 143-237. Application, too, needs to let the genre have a voice (see Robinson, "Heresy," 26). See chapter 5 for application in doctrinal exposition.

[112]Mathewson, *Art of Preaching OT Narrative*, 32. He also suggests certain clues which mark changes in narrative (ibid., 32-33).

[113]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 166.

Poetry. When expounding a poetical text, the preacher would do well to convey the feeling of the text, whether praise with gladness or lament with sadness.[114] Similarly, preaching poetry may be the best place to employ such homiletical devices as alliteration, rhythm, parallelism, and repetition. Such devices in preaching do not disregard the doctrinal substance, rather they help the preacher reach the listeners' head by going through their heart.[115]

Concerning imprecatory psalms specifically, which are almost always found in laments, doctrinal exposition must treat them openly and honestly, for example, Psalm 137:8-9: "O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed, happy the one who repays you as you have served us! Happy the one who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock!" While the psalmist is not asking for bloodthirsty vengeance, he does express

> a desire for God's justice to be accomplished. He wishes for God's righteous judgment to fall upon the evil kingdom of Babylon. In his desire for divine justice he uses the imagery of his day to describe the overthrow of nations. It is interesting to note that in several ancient illustrations of a king's reign we find that the son of the king is sitting on his father's lap and the defeated and subject peoples are depicted beneath not the father's feet but the son's! Thus, the judgment of the king of Babylon must also involve the judgment of his sons. Only in this way will the evil dynasty be judged and destroyed.[116]

Such an understanding does not contradict a Christ-centered view of the Bible and Jesus' words about loving one's enemies (see Matt 5:44), for even the command to love others

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[114]William D. Thompson, *Preaching Biblically: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), 108.

[115]For the relationship between the emotional center and rational side of the human brain, see York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 207-13. They contend that if preachers really want to impact their listeners so that the Bible's message changes them, preaching must appeal to people's primitive, emotional side in order to reach the rational, intellectual, and decision-making part of humans.

[116]Stein, *Basic Guide to Interpreting*, 120. For similar ways of understanding imprecatory psalms, see Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible*, 202-04; Osbourne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 185.

is subservient to the greatest command to love, serve, and obey God.[117] Thus, seeking

God and His will takes priority in all things; this view, too, stresses the theocentric, and

even Christocentric, message of the Scriptures.

Wisdom. Expositional, doctrinal preaching of wisdom literature should be

done with care. Since universalizing proverbs is difficult and too simplistic, one should

avoid doing so in the sermon.[118] Furthermore, an expository sermon or series through

Proverbs probably falls outside the normal definition of expository preaching, for

preaching straight through the wise sayings of Proverbs seems *un*wise and would most

likely profit little. A topical-expositional approach to this book gathers several verses on

a particular subject in Proverbs, analyzing them separately and offering a synthesis of the

book's teaching. As to other non-proverbial wisdom literature such as Job and

Ecclesiastes, the preacher may want to preach systematically through the book, always

keeping the epilogue in view.[119] Moreover, the application of the message should

focalize on Christ.

Gospel. Preaching through the Gospels presents several options on the

sermon's form. Expositors may handle narratives and parables in an inductive-deductive

manner, emphasizing the doctrinal content.[120] Passages dealing with Jesus' teaching and

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[117]Much of Jesus' teaching draws from Deuteronomy. There one finds the extreme loyalty required by those in covenant commitment with Yahweh. Failure to obey God results in divine curses (see Deut 28:15-68).

[118]Kaiser, *Preaching and Teaching*, 86-87.

[119]See Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 194-95.

[120]For different options for preaching through Luke's Gospel, see Keith F. Nickle, *Preaching the Gospel of Luke: Proclaiming God's Royal Rule* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000). Greidanus observes, "The sermon form need not necessarily be the same as the form of the text but should

preaching should follow His own deductive approach, using propositional statements to

summarize major and minor truths. A series of sermons straight through one of the

Gospels should show the various Gospel genres of historical-narrative, wisdom, poetry,

prophecy, apocalyptic, parable, and didactic. Such an approach is quite possibly the most

expositional method. Further, it helps the audience see the bigger picture the Gospel

writer seeks to convey and helps them appreciate the literary features of God's Word.

Epistle. Forming a sermon from the epistles comes easier for most expositors

than preaching any other kind of genre. Many expository textbooks contain ways to

outline and preach sermons in a deductive fashion. Such deductive preaching best fits the

epistles, because of their own nature. Moreover, because much of the Western world

thinks deductively, it is convenient to shape sermons in like manner.

The didactic nature of the epistles makes it easier for theological content to

come out in preaching. Scott Hafemann reminds readers that "the goal of preaching in

the Epistles is the same as the goal of preaching in any other portion of Scripture, namely,

to affect the congregation with the theological truth of the text."[121] In addition to this

goal, the doctrinal substance should fall in line with the main points of the epistle.

Further, because of the epistles' common use of imperatives, the sermon's structure needs

to aim at exhorting listeners similarly.[122]

In the end, if one struggles over how to preach a particular literary genre, it

seems best to stick with a deductive approach. While this style does not fully honor the

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at least respect its characteristics" (Sidney Greidanus, "Preaching in the Gospels," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, 341).

[121]Scott Hafemann, "Preaching in the Epistles," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, 361.

[122]Ibid., 368-77.

way in which the Scriptures were written in certain cases, it still proves to be a good way of conveying the meaning of the text. Furthermore, it lets people know what they are to do with what they have heard.

Homiletical Principles of
The Theological Product

Just because the expositor completes the work of biblical and theological exegesis does not mean he is ready to step into the pulpit. Even figuring out the sermon form does not guarantee an exposition of a biblical text and its doctrine. The preacher must translate the theological product into an outline for doctrinal expository preaching. To do this, he should follow a few principles.

First, the preacher needs to state the theological product of the biblical text in such a way that it applies to the audience in both an interesting and relevant way. Second, preachers should employ contemporary language, striving especially for concreteness and specificity (see chapter 5 below for more on applying doctrine today). Third, this approach to preaching takes the timeless truth of Scripture and phrases it for the present audience. Fourth, the use of imperatives helps reinforce the necessity of application in doctrinal exposition, letting the audience know what they are expected to do in response to God's message. This issue is of particular importance in exposition, for such preaching aims to motivate the audience into action.[123] Finally, the whole sermon structure should build toward the climax (see Table 3).

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[123]For this approach to preaching in an applicational, imperatival way, see York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 139-47.

Table 3. Distinctions between the Exegetical, Theological, and Homiletical Processes[124]

Exegetical	Theological	Homilietical
Biblical language	Timeless language	Contemporary language
Time-bound to biblical author and audience	All time with no particular audience	Time-bound to contemporary preacher and audience
Technical	Non-technical	Applicational
Explication oriented	Deep structure	Motivation oriented
Provides analytical detail	Provides integrated truth	Provides interest and relevance
Textual order of the passage	Logical order of the argument	Communicational order of the homiletical proposition
Concrete and specific	Universal and general	Concrete and specific
Indicative/Declarative	Indicative/Declarative	Imperative

These principles will help the expositor make sure he is faithful to the biblical text and relevant to the contemporary audience. Of course, one can *discuss* how something should be done, but it is often better if he *shows* how it is done. Therefore, this work provides a few examples of exegetical, theological, and homiletical propositions in Table 4.[125]

Two Main Kinds of Doctrinal Expository Preaching

At this point in the work, one can assume that "the preacher's only real question should not be 'Shall I preach doctrine?' but 'How shall I preach doctrine?'"[126] In order to do this and declare the whole counsel of God, doctrinal exposition needs to be comprehensive. This approach suggests both broadness and balance in handling biblical

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[124]Warren, "Theological Process in Sermon Preparation," 354.

[125]For other examples of this kind, see Warren, "Theological Process in Sermon Preparation," 354-55.

[126]Thomas E. McCollough, "Preaching's Rediscovery of Theology," *Review and Expositor* 56, no. 1 (1959): 52. He answers this question by pointing readers to see how the theologians have done it (ibid., 53).

Table 4. Exegetical, Theological, and Homiletical Propositions

Text	Joshua 6-8
Exegetical	Because of the sin of Achan, God's anger burned against all Israel and victory did not come until the accursed were permanently removed through destruction.
Theological	Because of His own holiness, God judges sin and wants all of His people to live obedient, holy lives before Him, demanding that sin be removed.
Homiletical	Because God is holy, repent from your sin and live obediently to the Lord Jesus Christ.
Text	John 8:12-20
Exegetical	Jesus is the light of this dark world and a true witness to His message and mission from the Father.
Theological	Jesus Christ leads His people out of death's darkness and into life's light, fulfilling His mission to die for the lost.
Homiletical	Follow Jesus in order to live in His light and escape sin's judgment (or Believe Jesus' message and mission in saving sinners from death and giving them life).
Text	1 Corinthians 15:20-28
Exegetical	Christ has been raised from the dead and everyone in Him will be raised at His second coming, when God the Father places everything under Christ's feet.
Theological	The resurrection of Christ guarantees the future resurrection of every believer at His return to reign over all.
Homiletical	Prepare for Christ's reign as the Almighty Lord by trusting in the risen Lord.

doctrine. Its broadness will cover the larger subjects of the Trinity, sin, and atonement, as well as issues such as prayer, the sanctity of human life, and spiritual gifts. At the same time, a balanced approach will necessarily cover the larger and more important doctrines of the Bible without excluding the minor topics. In accomplishing this enormous task, doctrinal exposition takes two main forms—textual or consecutive.[127]

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[127]R. B. Kuiper ("Scriptural Preaching," in *The Infallible Word*, ed. N. B. Stonehouse and Paul Woolley [Philadelphia: The Presbyterian Guardian Publishing Company, 1946], 246-50) labels these as thematic (doctrinal-topical) and homily (running commentary). For broadness and balance in doctrinal preaching, see Oswalt, *Proclaiming the Whole Counsel of God*, 1.

**Textual Doctrinal Exposition—
Exposition of a Particular Doctrine**

Regardless of whether one practices expository preaching as textually or consecutively, the proper interpretation of a passage will bring a particular doctrine out, one which relates to the Bible's entire message.[128] Some preachers who are more doctrinally-wired may prefer to expound isolated texts on Christian doctrine. While this approach is not as favorable as consecutive exposition, it is certainly profitable and valid. In support of this view, Harold Bryson understands expository preaching as "the art of preaching a series of sermons, either consecutive or *selective*, from a Bible book" (emphasis mine).[129]

Similar to the great doctrinal preaching of the post-Reformation era, textual doctrinal preaching contains much theological substance. It begins with biblical doctrine and preaches it within a particular text. In line with the Puritans' doctrinal-thematic (or doctrinal-topical) preaching style, this view asserts the validity in preaching through doctrines systematically. On the other hand, this preaching differs from the all-too-common one or two verse text for preaching by insisting on a *passage* of Scripture. Carson observes,

> The advantage of an older style preaching in which the text served as a springboard for an entire systematic theology was that the big picture was constantly maintained—but the cost was distance from the text, and it was only rarely shown how this larger theological structure could be derived from Scripture itself.[130]

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[128]Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, 76.

[129]Harold T. Bryson, *Expository Preaching: The Art of Preaching through a Book of the Bible* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 39. As the title reveals, Bryson favors the consecutive method.

[130]D. A. Carson, "The *SBJT* Forum: Profiles of Expository Preaching," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 2 (1999): 95-96.

Furthermore, because of the close association with Scripture, the doctrinal elements will naturally flow from a text.[131]

The preacher will want to make sure that he sets the individual text and doctrine within the larger context of the Bible's message. This issue is where textual exposition becomes more difficult than consecutive exposition. In the latter, the preacher has the advantage of connecting the smaller themes of each passage with the main theme of the book week-in and week-out. Furthermore, the preacher can more easily interpret the smaller themes within the story of God's redemption plan. The textual approach, however, must constantly interpret each new text within its own context before tying it to the Scriptures' storyline.

As to sermon titles, one may prefer to label his messages as particular doctrines, such as Christ's atoning work, justification by faith alone, or the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit. While such titles may not be as catchy in this world of clichés, they will most certainly clue the audience in on the content of the message.[132] Also, a doctrinal series of expository messages on the deity of Christ, for example, might consider passages like John 1:1-18; Colossians 1:15-20; Philippians 2:5-11; and Hebrews 1:1-4.

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[131]When covering doctrinal issues, "it is not always necessary to go to the main passage on a doctrine (it may well have been covered in a recent sermon), but [one] should at least look for a passage that clearly teaches that doctrine rather than alluding to it obliquely" (Walter L. Liefeld, *New Testament Exposition: From Text to Sermon* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984], 102).

[132]See Clarence S. Roddy, "On the Preaching of Theology," *Christianity Today* 3, no. 23 (1959): 6.

Consecutive Doctrinal Exposition—
Pure Exposition with Doctrinal Substance

Preaching doctrine through an expositional series (i.e., consecutively) is quite arguably the best way to practice doctrinal exposition. Expository preaching in this fashion, writes Adam,

> is the obvious way to preach the Bible, as it reflects the way in which God caused Scripture to be written (in books, not isolated texts or paragraphs). It enables [preachers] to imitate God in respecting the humanity of the authors and their style and historical context. It also reflects the usual way of reading books, and models a good use of Scripture to the congregation.[133]

The arrangement of some Scripture, however, such as Psalms and Proverbs, may warrant the need to preach through sections of a book rather than simply straight through a book.

Preaching doctrine through a section of a biblical book. Rather than preach through an entire book at once (especially Isaiah or the Psalms!), the preacher may decide to preach consecutively on doctrine through sections of a book. Thus, he may deal with an expository series of messages on creation (Gen 1-2), election (Rom 9-11), the resurrection (1 Cor 15), worship (select Psalms), or true wisdom (select Proverbs in topical-exposition). With respect to the Psalms, a sermon series might also highlight different types of Psalms—didactic, royal Messianic, creation, lamentation, salvation history, or hymns of praise.[134] Preaching through sections of the Gospels could focus on Jesus' parables in teaching about the kingdom of God. Sermons on Jesus' miracles or His "I am" statements might stress a particular characteristic of Christ. In the end, this approach to preaching sections of Scripture, while still not as favorable as preaching

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[133]Adam, "Preaching and Biblical Theology," 108.

[134]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 203-11.

book-by-book, can give more possibilities for subject matter to the preacher in a given year while adding variety to sermon series.

Preaching doctrine through a biblical book. Perhaps the best expository preaching involves a book-by-book approach. One advocate for defining expository preaching along this line is F. B. Meyer, who defines one aspect of expository preaching as "*the consecutive treatment of some book or extended portion of Scripture.*"[135] Only those filling the same pulpit week in and week out, however, are able to accomplish the consecutive approach. That is, chapel speakers, pulpit supplies, and guest preachers are just a few of those who do not get this advantage.

When preaching through a Bible book, the preacher will want to divide the messages around the text's doctrinal themes. Thus, preaching through Hebrews will cover a number of Christological themes (including Christ's deity, absolute superiority, high priestly role, and atoning work), while also handling sanctification (living by faith, obedience, and perseverance) and God's holiness and judgment. These divisions will help set the sermon's parameters while establishing doctrinal unity and focus.

This chapter has provided a proposal on how the preacher can integrate both doctrine and exposition in an effective manner. Both theological exegesis and explanation within an expository framework have been treated. The roles of both biblical and systematic theology are extremely valuable for doctrinal expository preaching. Further, considerations for biblical genre affect both theological interpretation and preaching. These theological and homiletical issues contribute to the two main ways of

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[135]F. B. Meyer, *Expository Preaching Plans and Methods* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1912), 29. This definition covers both "sectional" exposition and pure exposition.

practicing doctrinal exposition—textually and consecutively. Hopefully, these matters will encourage preachers to integrate both doctrine and exposition in their normal approach to preaching.

CHAPTER 5

DOCTRINAL EXPOSITORY PREACHING
IN A POSTMODERN WORLD

Even if the reader agrees with the need for doctrinal exposition today, the

postmodern culture makes its implementation difficult, to say the least. With this

implementation in mind, this chapter's goal is to show how doctrinal expository

preaching can be done in a postmodern setting. Issues such as truth, entertainment,

language, imaging, and story are all significant for contemporary preaching. Further, the

practical value of doctrine comes through its actual application. Finally, this chapter

notes several individual doctrines for their valuable contributions to conservative

evangelicalism.

Truth in a Truth-less Society

American society currently consists of technological advancements like never

before—automobiles, household appliances, and the Internet, to name a few. These

advances and others like them allow people to accomplish more activities within a given

timeframe, providing the time to pursue matters of special interest—web browsing,

reading, or watching television.[1] In a previous era, it seems that people with so much

"free time" would pursue life's most ultimate questions, such as God, truth, and eternity.

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[1]David F. Wells claims that our comfortable lifestyle is unlike any previous generation with "more money, more goods, more comforts, more protections, and more freedoms" ("Introduction: The Word in the World," in *The Compromised Church: The Present Evangelical Crisis*, ed. John H. Armstrong [Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998], 21).

In this postmodern era, however, issues pertaining to truth are virtually moot, since many

consider it to be relative to each and every individual. Therefore, few define truth

objectively but, rather, subjectively. One even says that in postmodernism, "truth is up

for grabs."[2] Anyone in search of truth must look inward toward personal experience and

feeling. A recent study shows that fifty-four percent of Americans believe that "truth can

be discovered only through logic, human reasoning, and personal experience."[3] These

people resist those who are dogmatic about truth, and this resistance has had its effects on

the church. People "almost expect the minister, if he is to be politically correct, to say,

'Well maybe it is this and maybe it is that,' because [they] don't want the minister to

offend anybody by a proclamation that communicates too much certainty or authority."[4]

Taking a Stand on Truth

At the same time the postmodern climate bends truth to fit its fancy, today's

American culture is becoming ripe for truth and theological thinking. The events of 9-11

and the recent war in Iraq have resulted in an increase in sales among Islam literature as

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[2]Graham Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First Century Listeners* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 30. Postmodernism also defines truth by its own standards of pragmatism, inclusivism, and openness (ibid., 41, 95). Related to postmodernism's rejection of truth is its rejection of meta-narrative, "an expression of transcendent reality, objective and absolute truth. Postmodernists have rejected all such 'grand narratives' in favor of an antifoundationalism that abandons all 'large-scale theoretical interpretations purportedly of universal application'" (Timothy S. Warren, "The Theological Process in Sermon Preparation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156, no. 623 (1999): 339-40). Warren cites Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994), 48-49. For more on postmodernism's rejection of meta-narrative, see Gary Phillips, "Religious Pluralism in a Postmodern World," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, 2nd ed., ed. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 132; R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "The Integrity of the Evangelical Tradition and the Challenge of the Postmodern Paradigm," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism*, 71; Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World*, 32-33.

[3]"Doctrinal Confusion Abounds in the U. S.," *Church Planting & Evangelism Today* (Winter 2003): 11; *The Barna Update* (8 October 2002) cited in "Straying from the Truth of the Gospel," *On Mission* (Special Issue 2003): 9.

[4]R. C. Sproul, "The Teaching Preacher," in *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching*, ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2002), 138-39.

people, both Christian and non-Christian, are wondering what the Muslim world

believes.[5] Likewise, the postmodern culture consists of openness to spirituality, a

renewed interest in some matters of faith, and a certain admiration of Jesus.[6] Thus, now

that some people are once again asking life's most ultimate questions, Christians can and

must champion truth, and there are no better persons than solid expositors of God's Word

to accept this challenge.[7]

This stand on truth is where preaching, even doctrinal exposition, remains of

utmost importance. Living in a world that despises preaching and dogmatism, preachers

"must determine to let [their] convictions be shaped by the unchanging Word of God and

not by the shifting currents of modern culture."[8] Moreover, when people mock

expositors for their insistence on truth, preachers can take comfort in the preaching of

Jesus and the Apostle Paul. Commenting on the former, Samuel Logan, Jr. writes, "What

Jesus preached was anchored in the propositional bedrock of historical accuracy, and that

is why recognition and proclamation of the inerrancy of all biblical affirmations is so

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[5]Muslim-turned-Christian brothers, and now professors, Ergun and Emir Caner have received attention like never before about the faith they once held. Their writings on Islam include Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Fethi Caner, *Unveiling Islam: An Insider's Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002); idem, *More Than a Prophet: An Insider's Response to Muslim Beliefs about Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003); idem, *Out of the Crescent Shadows: Leading Muslim Women into the Light of Christ* (Birmingham: New Hope, 2003); Ergun Mehmet Caner, ed., *Voices Behind the Veil: Women on the Women of Islam* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003). With the growing threat of Communism during the mid-twentieth century, E. C. Rust observed the need to take a certain, authoritative stand on the truth while confronting an insecure culture ("Theology and Preaching," *Review and Expositor* 52, no. 2 [1955]: 146-48).

[6]Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World*, 17, 97, 120.

[7]Of course, conservative evangelicals, though a minority both in America and throughout the world, insist on absolute, objective truth. Such truth comes from God, the source of all truth. God's Word—both the written Word and the incarnate Word—clearly reveals this truth.

[8]Tom Ascol, "The Pastor's Chief Duty," *The Founders Journal*, no. 23 (1996): 2.

crucial in the church today."[9] Furthermore, Paul's "insistence that truth is given objectively in Christ, not subjectively through private intuition as the pagans thought, would make him sound strangely out of touch. . . . [and even though] his preaching would be judged hopelessly irrelevant because its theological focus would put it out of step with modern habits,"[10] he remained faithful to the truth (2 Tim 4:6-8).

Additionally, upholding objective truth is vital now more than ever, for without any solid, unchanging view of truth, meaning has no value. A reason the deconstructionist movement within postmodernism will never prevail is because its main contention is that there is no such thing as original meaning, leaving everything, including the purpose of life itself, in a state of meaninglessness. Johnston notes, however, that even among postmodernists, "deep down, people want life to make sense. Absurdity is all right in small doses, but nobody wants to live in it."[11] Doctrinal exposition's high regard for truth can help these people make sense of life.

In order for truth to confront this postmodern world, preachers, more than anyone, must have a *passion* for the truth. They must live it, love it, and preach it as though it really *matters*, because it most certainly *does*! John Armstrong offers several thoughts on preaching's emphasis of the truth, four of which follow: 1) both the manner and matter of preaching should show "that God is truth;" 2) the failure to love the truth leads to "spiritual destruction," for the only way to know God is to know Him "in truth;"

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[9]Samuel T. Logan, Jr., "The Phenomenology of Preaching," in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Samuel T. Logan, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1986), 143.

[10]David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth, or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 290-91.

[11]Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World*, 141. For an extremely thorough critique of the deconstructionist movement, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).

3) truth is absolutely necessary for salvation; and 4) Christian living must always rest on "obedience to the truth."[12] Clearly, one could claim, "Not only does truth *matter*, but it matters for all *eternity!*"

**Preaching Truth Is Not
As Easy As It Used to Be**

Of course, expounding truth in a truth-less society is a formidable task. With brevity and clarity, Kent Hughes describes the problem of preaching truth today:

> To be fair, preaching is far more difficult today than in past decades. There was a time across America when Sunday's sermon was the most stimulating event of the week. Then came the wireless and ABC and NBC in megadecibels. With this came the advent of the notorious "shortened attention span." Media-sotted people simply cannot listen as well or as long as their grandparents. And now we have a postliterate culture that does not read and has difficulty following reasoned discourse apart from visual simulation.
> Toss into this mix a loose set of attitudes known as postmodernity, which enthrones subjectivity and self-focus, and today becomes as challenging a time to preach the Word as has ever existed in Western culture. Nevertheless, God has chosen to speak through His written Word and its verbal proclamation.[13]

Erickson and Heflin, likewise, list twenty-seven possible factors which make preaching doctrine in today's world difficult. Such factors include naturalism, relativism, secularism, pluralism, ministerial pragmatism, anti-denominationalism, and anti-education-ism.[14] These factors, while challenging to doctrinal exposition, are not insurmountable to the one equipped with the Word of the omnipotent God.

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[12]John Armstrong, "Preaching to the Mind," in *Feed My Sheep*, 175-83.

[13]R. Kent Hughes, "Preaching: God's Word to the Church Today," in *The Coming Evangelical Crisis: Current Challenges to the Authority of Scripture and the Gospel*, ed. John H. Armstrong (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 92. Piper also observes, "Preaching great and glorious truth in an atmosphere that is not great and glorious is an immense difficulty" (John Piper, "Charles Spurgeon: Preaching through Adversity," *The Founders Journal*, no. 23 [1996]: 6).

[14]See Millard J. Erickson and James L. Heflin, *Old Wine in New Wineskins: Doctrinal Preaching in a Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 39-57.

God's Word is not the only tool the expositor needs to carry with him,

however, in this postmodern world. Understanding his hearers will aid the preacher in

knowing how to handle God's Word more effectively. Carson sees the need for

preachers to think like missionaries by studying their culture. He writes,

> The better seminaries have long included courses in the missions curriculum to help prospective missionaries "read" the culture they are about to enter. . . .
> But such courses are rarely required of students in the pastoral track. The assumption is that these students are returning to their *own* culture, so they do not need such assistance. But the rising empirical pluralism and the pressures from globalization ensure that the assumption is usually misplaced. Apart from isolated pockets, Western culture is changing so quickly that the church now struggles to understand what is going on. Indeed, it is less and less easy to speak of "Western culture" in such a monolithic fashion: there is a plethora of competing cultures in most Western nations, and many pastors will minister to several of them during their ministry. Indeed, in many metropolitan areas, pastors may find themselves ministering to several of them at once.[15]

Ultimately, doctrinal exposition faces the ever-changing world with the never-

changing truth of God. Preachers need a sure certainty in God's Word, a solid dedication

to learning this culture, and a strong resolve to engage the culture with the Word. With

such commitments God can use expositors to liberate those enslaved in sin with the truth

of Christ.

An Entertainment-Driven Culture

Another factor in the postmodern climate is the television and entertainment

industry. Few would disagree that today's American culture is largely entertainment-

driven. People have a mentality that they need to feel good and enjoy whatever they do.

Even some Christians are guilty of "hopping" churches in search of one which entertains

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[15]Donald A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 549-50.

them, meets their needs, and gives them a better worship experience. It seems as though

the television industry has contributed much to this entertainment frenzy, for

> the visual imagery of television has aided and abetted the rise of postmodern culture, at least at the popular level of experience. While many argue over television content, the television experience is by far the most defining influence with regard to the development of popular postmodern thinking.[16]

This craving for entertainment is nothing new to the church. Sproul observes

that Martin Luther had to fight this problem, for Luther believed

> that the people in the parishes came to be entertained. Even in the 16th century, the pastors, during the middle of the Reformation, were struggling with the demands of their congregations that they entertain them with their preaching. Luther claimed that it is not the task of the pastor to entertain, but to nurture, to feed, and to be faithful to the Word of God.[17]

Perhaps no one from a Christian worldview has addressed the advancement of

the entertainment industry and its effects on the spoken word as much as Neil Postman in

his work, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. Postman describes the history of public discourse

in America, labeling 1600-1900 as the "Age of Exposition" and the twentieth century as

the "Age of Show Business." These two ages represent two different cultures: a word-

centered culture, where reading is for comprehension, and an image-centered culture,

where reading is for leisure.[18] Postman points to several factors which have led to the

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[16]William E. Brown, "Theology in a Postmodern Culture: Implications of a Video-Dependent Society," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism*, 159. Brown also states, "No feature of modern culture so dominates life and thought as does television" (ibid., 162). Veith concurs, "A major force in the shaping of the postmodern mind has been the impact of contemporary technology. The product of rationalism, the electronic media may well make rationalism impossible" (Veith, *Postmodern Times*, 121).

[17]Sproul, "The Teaching Preacher," 143-44. A reason that some ministers give in to the entertainment crave by conjuring "up new and interesting viewpoints is because there is a lack of confidence among preachers in the effectiveness of preaching the whole counsel of God" (ibid., 157).

[18]Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 63.

current state.[19] First, Samuel Morse's invention of the telegraph transformed the way

people obtained information—by the ear rather than the eye. Second, around the 1830s,

newspapers began printing irrelevant information, subjecting their readers to junk. Third,

the development of photography placed information in isolation from language, no longer

requiring a context for interpretation and understanding. Finally, the progress of

television has moved discourse toward entertainment. Postman observes, "The problem

is not that television presents us with entertaining subject matter but that all subject

matter is presented as entertaining."[20]

Leith summarizes Postman's position, claiming that the entertainment industry

has two consequences. (1) It induces people to find the meaning of life in being
entertained. Entertainment (soap operas, athletic events, even anchor news which
turns great events into spectacles) relieves us of uniquely human responsibilities to
think for ourselves, to set goals and to accomplish them. (2) Entertainment distracts
our attention from the critical issues of life, and finally our heroes become not
persons of substance and achievement so much as celebrities who attract our
attention. Form takes priority over substance. In sum, entertainment whether it is
soap operas or political spectacles or athletic events, is not simply entertainment but
also an escape from the hard realities of life and from the questions for which
Christian faith is the answer.[21]

Therefore, "in a practical sense, the thinking involved in watching television is

radically different from that which is necessary in verbal communication (reading,

speaking, listening)."[22] Children and adults who spend hour after hour in front of the

television end up being deficient "in the ability to read intelligently, communicate clearly,

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[19]See Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, 64-80.

[20]Ibid., 87. Postman calls television "the command center," because "through it we learn what telephone system to use, what movies to see, what books, records and magazines to buy, what radio programs to listen to. Television arranges our communications environment for us in ways that no other medium has the power to do" (ibid., 78).

[21]John H. Leith, *From Generation to Generation: The Renewal of the Church according to Its Own Theology and Practice* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 94.

[22]Brown, "Theology in a Postmodern Culture," 162.

and reason morally."[23] The impact of television and the entertainment industry has led to a "dumb-ing down" effect on each new generation—kids do not really need to learn how to do basic arithmetic or spell when calculators and spell-check programs will do it for them. Moreover, these types of training models rarely force kids to think critically about important issues, allowing television programs, music lyrics, and the like to help form their views.

All of this does not mean that preaching cannot learn something from the entertainment business. As discussed below, preachers must continually assess the factor of visual communication in their sermons. In this postmodern world, a solution exists for people "accustomed to television, movies, and entertainers. . . . The solution is not, as some have suggested, to turn worship services into entertainment—or even infotainment; the answer lies in passionate preaching of *propositional truth*."[24]

The Roles of Language, Image, and
Story in Doctrinal Exposition

A recent trend among preachers of the New Homiletic and some church growth specialists is explaining and applying doctrine vis-à-vis re-language and re-image.[25] The core of the biblical message, they contend, should be told in new ways. Thus, the trend in contemporary preaching employs story in preaching so that preaching becomes less-propositional and more narrative-oriented. Language, image, and story

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[23]Ibid., 162.

[24]Hershael W. York and Bert Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance: A Solid and Enduring Approach to Engaging Exposition* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 5.

[25]For the foundational work to the audience-response New Homiletic, see Fred Craddock, *As One without Authority: Essays on Inductive Preaching* (Enid, OK: Phillips University, 1971).

most certainly are significant for preaching today, but preachers should carefully evaluate each.

The Need for New Language?

Obviously, language is a necessary element in any type of communication, especially oral communication. In preaching language must provide a link between the ancient Scriptures' theological message and contemporary anthropological reception. Tucker writes, "The task of theology is to determine what God has said through the Word. The task of the messenger is to proclaim this discovery in *language* that today's hearer can understand. The key to this task is the congregation of believers" (emphasis mine).[26]

Problem. In a recent book on how to preach doctrine, Robert Hughes and Robert Kysar argue that theological preaching should reformulate experience and abstraction through language, even to the point of translating tradition via re-language and re-image.[27] They go so far as to say that today's preaching on the atonement might want to underscore the correcting of "injustice through self-sacrificial love."[28] This focus, however, does not do justice to the biblical teaching of the atonement, even though their view is much more politically correct today. If only Paul had stressed this teaching in the atonement, then maybe he could have avoided some of the problems he faced.

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[26]Donald L. Tucker, "Biblical Preaching: Theology, Relevance, Empowerment," *Paraclete* 25 (Summer 1991): 26-27.

[27]Robert G. Hughes and Robert Kysar, *Preaching Doctrine: For the Twenty-First Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 27-29. Others follow the trend of Hughes and Kysar on language, image, and story, but Hughes and Kysar are more unique in that they distinctly address doctrinal preaching in the twenty-first century.

[28]Ibid., 30.

At the same time, readers should use caution toward certain church growth advocates, even those who label themselves as evangelical. On the one hand, Peter Wagner gives little more than lip service to the value of solid preaching, saying that "if you can serve a diet of positive sermons focused on the real, felt needs of the people you will be preaching for growth."[29] Elsewhere, discussing whether the gift of prophecy and good preaching are synonymous, Wagner claims, "I have not yet found a correlation between one or the other and church growth."[30] While not fully denying the value of solid preaching, Wagner never explains the substance of "good preaching." With these assertions in view, doctrinal exposition, no matter how extensive, matters little in reaching people for Christ in American culture.

On the other hand, George Barna rightly recommends the contextualization principle in communicating to different audiences.[31] In the end, nevertheless, his largely secular approach to "marketing" the church offers little biblical content while, at the same time, provides a felt-needs message aimed at "satisfying the needs of the consumer" and preaching on locally "hot" issues.[32] Elsewhere, Barna asserts, "Language which is theological, judgmental, or incessantly paternalistic creates problems for many younger

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[29]C. Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984), 218. Only the last three pages addresses preaching within church growth, and the subject matter has little to do with biblical content (ibid., 215-18). Also, ibid., 170-71.

[30]C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1979), 229.

[31]George Barna, *Marketing the Church: What They Never Taught You about Church Growth* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988), 51.

[32]Ibid., 76.

listeners."[33] One wonders if preaching a *gospel* about *Christ*, His *sacrifice* for *sins*, and God's *holiness* is too theological and overly expectant of such listeners.

Proposal. The more faithful approach to Scripture is to explain clearly the nature of the biblical terminology. Armstrong vehemently argues for definitional clarity in preaching. Against Barna's approach at re-language, Armstrong states,

> When the preacher must change his language or excise it of theological and biblical content, he finds himself positioned to be more of an inspirational speaker and motivator than a preacher of God's truth. . . . Barna indeed shows us the problem. But his solution is to avoid the absolutes, to go light on Scripture, not to explain the doctrines of the Word, but rather to be 'practical.'[34]

When being practical supersedes and replaces faithful explanation, then application has stepped out of place in expository preaching. The preacher must explain the content of the biblical text in order for there to be substantial application, i.e., effective and solid application always rests upon clear doctrinal exposition.[35]

John Leith says that sound

> preaching requires the acquisition of a language that is precise and clear, that has the quality of reality, and that is appropriate to communicate the Christian gospel. As long as English is spoken, this must build upon the remarkable literary and theological achievement of the Puritans. Language appropriate to the faith cannot be finally learned in academic communities but only as those learned in the tradition engage a broad range of people, learned and unlearned, in theological conversation. The scientific, technological, secular character of our culture makes the problem of

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[33]George Barna, "The Pulpit-meister: Preaching to the New Majority," *Preaching* 12, no. 4 (1997): 11-12. Shortly after this article was written, Barna Research Group came out with a study as to why people choose a particular church: 58 percent (the number one reason) said that theological belief and doctrine were extremely important and 52 percent (the number three reason) listed sermon quality as extremely important ("Church Attendance," Barna Research Online; accessed 22 August 2003; available from http://www.barna.org/cgi-bin/PageCategory.asp; Internet). It seems that theology and substantial preaching still have merit after all.

[34]John Armstrong, "Preaching to the Mind," in *Feed My Sheep*, 184-85.

[35]Conversely, doctrine should be experimental, practical, and applicable for the contemporary audience (Ernest Reisinger, "The Priority of Doctrinal Preaching," *The Founders Journal*, no. 23 [1996]: 22).

language all the more important. As Calvin put the traditional theology of the church in the language of ordinary discourse, so that is our task today.[36]

Thus, preaching must retain its theological roots to be effective, and the language in preaching, while not technical, will need to be faithful to the Bible. It seems that "today the fear of 'turning people off' with having to 'think' through doctrinal truths has led the pulpits overall to a shallowness that has dulled the cutting edge of soul-saving truth."[37]

Kaiser clearly argues for maintaining theological-biblical teaching in the sermon. Surely the issue of language plays an important role in his analysis:

> It is no secret that Christ's Church is not at all in good health in many places of the world. She has been languishing because she has been fed, as the current line has it, "junk food"; all kinds of artificial preservatives and all sorts of unnatural substitutes have been served up to her. As a result, theological and Biblical malnutrition has afflicted the very generation that has taken such giant steps to make sure its physical health is not damaged by using foods or products that are carcinogenic or otherwise harmful to their physical bodies. Simultaneously a worldwide spiritual famine resulting from the absence of any genuine publication of the Word of God (Amos 8:11) continues to run wild and almost unabated in most quarters of the Church.[38]

In order to speak with theological depth without going over people's heads, the preacher "must build upon values *already held* by the intended audience."[39] Without trying to belittle people's intelligence, a preacher usually

> needs to define even basic theological terms, and always in an engaging way. . . .
> . . . With respect to theological terms, a minister can take nothing for granted.
> The sermon should define even basic terms (such as Holy Spirit, sin, faith,

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[36]Leith, *From Generation to Generation*, 114.

[37]Robert B. Selph, *Southern Baptists and the Doctrine of Election* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1996), 14.

[38]Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching & Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981), 7-8.

[39]Philip J. Wogaman, "Preaching the Truth in Love," *Journal of Theology* 102 (Summer 1998): 46.

righteousness) so that preacher and congregation communicate on the same channel.[40]

Christians will always have a need for theology preached in their own language.[41]

At the same time, however, preachers must guard against going *too* deep in the sermon, as if they were lecturing students on theology. Employing technical language most certainly deadens interest.[42] The average church-goer does not need to hear such theological phrases as "hypostatic union," "supralapsarianism," or the "teleological argument for God's existence." Moreover, although the preacher in his study should investigate Hebrew and Greek terms, his sermon should leave them out.[43]

Finally, with regard to language, expositors need not worry so much about sermon length and boredom with doctrinal issues. Allen writes, "Theology is boring only if the preacher presents it in a boring way."[44] Moreover, studies show

> that congregations have a remarkable capacity to follow long and complex sermons when the content makes a vital connection with the experience of the congregation, when the language of the sermon is vivid, when the message moves so that the

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[40]Ronald J. Allen, *Preaching Is Believing: The Sermon as Theological Reflection* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 85-86. Joseph Faulkener adds, "It is clearly dangerous to assume much doctrinal sophistication or even biblical literacy on the part of a congregation" (Joseph E. Faulkener, "What Are They Saying? A Content Analysis of 206 Sermons Preached in the Christian Church [Disciples of Christ] during 1988," in *A Case Study of Mainstream Protestantism: The Disciples' Relation to American Culture, 1880-1989*, ed. D. Newell Williams [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991], 438).

[41]Bernard Reymond, "Homiletics and Theology: Re-evaluating Their Relationship," *The Modern Churchman* 34, no. 5 (1993): 37.

[42]Henry Sloane Coffin, *What to Preach* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926), 55.

[43]Some words from theology or the biblical languages may, in rare cases, help explain or illustrate a point (such as Paul's use of γυμνασία for "exercising" is the basis for the English term "gymnasium"). Ultimately, the principle for preachers to follow on this practice is "when in doubt, leave it out."

[44]Allen, *Preaching Is Believing*, 61.

congregation can easily follow it, and when the preacher embodies the sermon in an engaging way.[45]

Of course, anyone reading through the Bible catches a glimpse of its own vivid language with its use of poetry, metaphor, stories, and such.

The Need for Imagery

When speaking of preaching in a postmodern world, many agree that "one of the ripest fields is in the postmodern appetite for image."[46] Roof adds, "Perhaps the most important impact of television was that it replaced the *word* with the *image*."[47] How a preacher should use images, however, is a matter of disagreement.

Problem. Advocates of the New Homiletic not only argue for a new language in preaching, but they are also leading the way in promoting the roles of imagery and story in doctrinal preaching. Hughes and Kysar contend that more needs to be made of images and stories in preaching. One value of these models is that they "gain their power through ambiguity. When the image is ambiguous . . . or the story ends without a clear resolution, each takes on a new dimension. The story or image has many possible and different meanings."[48] Although these writers have something to bring to the table in their discussion of using the imagination in conveying doctrine (discussed below), they

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[45]Lyle Schaller, "How Long Is the Sermon?" *The Baptist Herald* 72, no. 5 (1994): 20. Similarly, John R. W. Stott observes, "Basically, it is not the length of a sermon which makes a congregation impatient for it to stop, but the tedium of a sermon in which even the preacher himself appears to be taking very little interest" (*Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982], 292).

[46]Michael J. Glodo, "The Bible in Stereo: New Opportunities for Biblical Interpretation in an A-Rational Age," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism*, 110.

[47]Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 54.

[48]Hughes and Kysar, *Preaching Doctrine*, 57.

ultimately leave the authority of textual meaning in the hands of the listeners, resulting in

numerous possible meanings rather than the author's intended meaning. This leads,

therefore, to more language *confusion* rather than *clarity* in understanding and applying

biblical doctrine.

Additionally, any kind of enduring theological reflection in twenty-first

century preaching will most certainly "take the form of imaginative discourse," contend

Hughes and Kysar.[49] Further, these writers speak of "doctrinal framing" which helps

hold the listeners' lives together,

> but such framing requires imagination. Humans are able to conceive their lives
> holistically only by imagining a holistic perspective. This means that imaginative
> preaching will be required, for the preacher must image anew how God language
> can unify the listener's experience. But, further, such preaching will invite the
> listeners themselves to imagine their lives within a theological image.[50]

That which Hughes and Kysar offer ends up being utterly senseless. Of

course, anyone conceiving life holistically needs a holistic perspective, but how imagery

and re-language seriously aids such a quest remains to be seen. It seems that they want to

communicate theological language through the filter of imagination so that all that is left

is little more than word-pictures which may or may not adequately convey the theological

message.

Proposal. Today's expositors might as well concede that much of their

expository preaching could use more imagination and creativity. Conceding such a point,

however, does not mean that imagination drives the sermon or that theological

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[49]Ibid., 13. By imagery, they "mean the mental and imaginary pictures evoked in the listener by language" (ibid., 55).

[50]Ibid., 11.

communication cannot occur without it. Rather, doctrinal exposition can, and should, benefit from the use of imagery in several ways.

First, in light of the contemporary culture's proneness to learn better from visual effects, doctrinal expositors would do well to become masters of visual communication.[51] One approach to this could be through multimedia presentations in preaching. Whether the presentation reveals sermon outlines and key definitions, relevant maps, or even short video clips showing events such as Jesus' crucifixion or ascension, doctrinal exposition can benefit from modern technology's use of visual images. On the other hand, if the preacher cannot use multimedia presentations, because of location or inadequate facilities, preachers can still employ body movement and gestures for visual effectiveness.[52]

Expecting criticism to this kind of approach, Johnston hears others ask, "Must the church become pictorial in order to live?" He answers,

> I can appreciate, and even hear, the resistance some might have to such a question: "Well, the church has survived for centuries without all this nonsense— art, drama, mime, role plays, documentaries, dance, and a vast number of other types of audiovisual presentation."
> True, the early church flourished in the absence of many things that are now used regularly: electricity, facilities, Sunday schools, biblical commentaries, seminaries, even Willow Creek formats. The use of audio-visuals is, without question, a cultural expression of our time and it too may pass.
> Keep in mind, however, that how you communicate God's timeless message will constantly be changing and, yet, God's Word won't.[53]

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[51]See York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 200-13. Moreover, "it is important to recognize that, as television has taught us, congregations are not merely *listeners*, but also *viewers*" (Jay E. Adams, "Sense Appeal and Storytelling," in *The Preacher and Preaching*, 354).

[52]Many in the NT Church came to believe in Jesus Christ because they "saw" His power at work in the ministry of the Apostles (see Acts 3:9-4:4; 5:12-16; 8:6-7; 9:33-35; 13:8-12).

[53]Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World*, 163.

Preachers should not view the use of modern technology for visual communication as a *substitute* for the message but as an *enhancement* of it. Rowell notes, "If I'm not passionate about God's Word, no amount of technology can correct that deficiency."[54] Many conservative evangelicals remain skeptical of certain methodologies largely because of their abuse. They often see "*the radical inconsistency that exists between the message of the bloody cross and the slick, sophisticated, Spielberg-like methods of communicating it.*"[55] It does not have to be an either-or, however, for imagination does not mean imaginary or fanciful. In the end video technology can help audiences to visualize and understand the biblical message better.

Second, preachers will need to spend more time in preparation, thinking creatively and imaginatively. Warren Wiersbe asserts, "Biblical preaching means declaring God's truth *the way He declared it*, and that means *with imagination*."[56] He defines imagination as "the image-making faculty in your mind, the picture gallery in

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[54]Ed Rowell, "Where Preaching Is Headed: 4 Forces Shaping Tomorrow's Sermon," *Leadership* 18, no. 1 (1997): 97. The preacher's "goal is not to entertain . . . but to communicate the gospel in the most culturally relevant method possible in order to change lives" (ibid.).

[55]Arturo G. Azurdia III, "Preaching: The Decisive Function," in *The Compromised Church: The Present Evangelical Crisis*, ed. John H. Armstrong (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998), 190. Similarly, Brown asserts, "The visual does not supplement language, it displaces it" ("Theology in a Postmodern Culture," 162). While not wanting to take away from active reading and listening, a good "picture is [still] worth a thousand words."

[56]Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching & Teaching with Imagination: The Quest for Biblical Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 9. Henry Ward Beecher claimed, "The first element on which your preaching will largely depend for power and success, you will perhaps be surprised to learn, is *Imagination*, which I regard as the most important of all the elements that go to make the preacher" (*Yale Lectures on Preaching: First, Second, and Third Series* [New York: Fords, Howard and Hubert, 1881], 109). Likewise, Arthur John Gossip writes, "To make doctrinal preaching effective for the mass of people, we must appeal to them through the imagination" ("The Whole Counsel of God: The Place of Biblical Doctrine in Preaching," *Interpretation* 1, no. 3 [1947]: 334). For suggestions on stimulating and sustaining imagination and creativity in the sermon, see David L. Larsen, *Telling the Old, Old Story: The Art of Narrative Preaching* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1995), 248-54.

which you are constantly painting, sculpting, designing, and sometimes erasing."[57]

Larsen, likewise, notes, "Imagination is an aspect of creativity. Imagination nurtures

impulses, flashes of insight and excitement over ideas; creativity is the result."[58] Further,

"creative delivery enables the listeners to discover the truth for themselves as opposed to

having ideas dropped in their lap."[59] A creative, yet biblically-focused, imagination helps

reach people in this image-saturated culture.

No matter how many preachers and theologians lament the contemporary

image-culture, each must face-up to reality. To expound doctrine effectively in this

postmodern world does not require "a choice of word over symbol nor of symbol over

word, but rather the proper relation of the two."[60] Michael Glodo adds,

> The "word" (i.e., propositional, didactic) forms of Scripture must be enriched
> and vivified by the "image" forms as well as the latter being controlled and
> organized by the former. What makes an image-driven culture arcane or cabalistic
> (a la Postman) is not its image-drivenness, but the disconnection of image from
> word. Images become contentless or, worse, connected to propositions to which
> they bear no relation. An unrestrained dive into the image-character of the Bible
> without the proper dialogue with word could result in the same arcaneness. *But
> word uninformed by image will bear the marks of the modernist who proclaims it.*[61]

One way of employing creativity and imagery in doctrinal exposition might be

to dramatize the biblical text or even the preaching event. While drama should never

replace the preached Word, it can most certainly enhance an audience's understanding of

Scripture. Mini-dramas on Ruth, Jacob and Esau before Isaac, or Abraham and Isaac

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[57]Wiersbe, *Preaching & Teaching*, 25.

[58]David L. Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching: Identifying the Issues in Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 109. See also Wiersbe, *Preaching & Teaching*, 289.

[59]Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World*, 75.

[60]Glodo, "The Bible in Stereo," 118. For the relationship between image and word in worship, see appendix 2.

[61]Ibid., 120-21.

prior to preaching the sermon can enable visualization of the biblical narrative. On the

other hand, a preacher portraying the Apostle Paul in dramatic monologue could recount

his conversion and service to Christ, highlighting the doctrinal elements in Paul's own

message.[62]

> Third, preachers must work harder at translating
>
> the abstract, Transcendent Word from scripture and doctrine into the concrete experience of human existence. Preaching is frequently too abstract, using language and images with which the listeners have no corresponding concrete identification."[63]

Referring to Jonathan Edwards's use of images in preaching, John Piper similarly writes,

"Experience and Scripture teach that the heart is most powerfully touched, not when the

mind is entertaining abstract ideas, but when it is filled with vivid images of amazing

reality."[64] Thus, when employing images in preaching, the images will need to be

explanatory and/or practically applicable.[65]

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[62]The point of such dramatization is not to bring Hollywood to the church but to bridge the distance between the ancient Scriptures and the contemporary world. Commenting on dramatized exposition, Johnston says, "Sermons can become like *Rocky* pictures, if the inevitable victory becomes boring and predictable. So to best intrigue and inform, invite listeners along as you investigate the spiritual journey of Bible characters" (*Preaching to a Postmodern World*, 111). Though not speaking of formal drama, Larsen's point is still valuable: "Long ago Aristotle maintained that the soul never thinks without pictures. People today are even more taken with images than with ideas. We have too much argument— discourse stripped of its mystery—in our sermons and not enough drama" (Larsen, *Anatomy of Preaching*, 108).

[63]Kenneth L. Carder, "Doctrinal/Theological Themes for Preaching: John Wesley and the Galatian and Colossian Letters," *Quarterly Review* 12, no. 2 (1992): 105.

[64]John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1990), 88. Wiersbe claims that metaphorical language helps the preacher "turn people's ears into eyes and help[s] them see the truth" (Wiersbe, *Preaching & Teaching*, 43).

[65]Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 142-43. See below for applying doctrine.

The Use of Story in Doctrinal Exposition

Since mankind's beginning in the Book of Genesis, storytelling has been an important part of life as people passed on different accounts to each generation. Even today, stories make for best-sellers, whether they are biographies of famous people or novels of make-believe characters and events. The bottom line is that everyone loves a good story. Storytelling in preaching is gaining ground everyday, perhaps as never before in the history of preaching. Its popularity alone demands the attention of homiletics.

Problem. In addition to re-language and re-imaging in twenty-first century preaching, proponents of the New Homiletic centralize their discussion on the use of story. In fact, they claim that "the role[s] of story and imagery. . . . are themselves the substance of the sermon and are what impacts and changes listeners' consciousness."[66] The substance they speak of is a misnomer, for they attest that images and stories may be ambiguous. In this case "each takes on a new dimension. The story or image has many possible and different meanings."[67] If image and story as the heart of preaching can have a multitude of meanings, then the substance they offer must be about as filling as cotton candy—though it can come in different flavors, it does not satisfy hunger pains.

Furthermore, the New Homiletic pushes story so far as to insist that it is fundamental, even pointing to Jesus' parabolic preaching as the model.[68] Larsen warns

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[66]Hughes and Kysar, *Preaching Doctrine*, 12.

[67]Ibid., 57.

[68]See David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); idem, *Speaking Parables: A Homiletic Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000); Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985); Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*, rev. ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

that "when the story is primary and the parables paradigmatic we have, in effect, a new

canon."[69] Similarly, Wiersbe cautions,

> *The metaphor is not the subject of the sermon.* If handled properly, the metaphor
> expands the subject, illumines it and helps to make it vivid and personal to our
> listeners; but the metaphor is not the message. To turn a metaphor into an allegory
> is a dangerous step for the biblical preacher to take. . . .
> [Furthermore], metaphor must never replace precise definition of doctrine. . . .
> our pictures must not be substituted for theological precepts.[70]

Story, while important, must not shape the sermon but rather supplement it.

Proposal. With all of the problems that Hughes's and Kysar's work raises,

they provide some helpful advice. One of their suggestions for using story in preaching

is "that story may bridge the gap between literate and post-literate mentalities."[71] Herein

lies an important point: the older the group, the more likely it is to learn through *reading*;

the younger the group, the more likely it is to learn through *watching*; both groups,

however, are accustomed to stories.[72] Moreover, a reason storytelling is essential today is

because "the climate is right. Storytelling thrives in times and places where imagination,

intuition and affect assert themselves."[73] At the same time, "The rediscovery of the story

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[69]Larsen, *Anatomy of Preaching*, 146.

[70]Wiersbe, *Preaching & Teaching*, 82-83.

[71]Hughes and Kysar, *Preaching Doctrine*, 66.

[72]Today's churches usually consist of a collaboration of different generations, ranging from the builder generation born before WWII to the boomers, busters, and bridgers (see Thom Rainer, "The Great Commission to Reach a New Generation," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 1, no. 4 [1997]: 40-50). Furthermore, the younger generations now outnumber the older generations in many congregations, making the need for visuals and stories all-the-more important (see Barna, "The Pulpit-Meister," 11).

[73]Gabriel J. Fackre, *The Christian Story: A Narrative Interpretation of Basic Christian Doctrine*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 5-6.

can bring us healthy variation and greater balance as well as grip our people anew with the power and appeal of the gospel."[74]

Because of the high probability of ambiguity through story, contemporary preaching must avoid strict narrative preaching. While some people may very well get the main point of a biblical text through narrative preaching, its inductive approach often leaves too many people guessing. As mentioned in chapter 4, sermons on narrative texts represent the Bible best through re-telling the story, but something of an inductive-deductive approach will make certain that the audience does not miss the point of the story.

Hughes and Kysar adamantly disagree with this approach:

> Reflecting on a story is not the same as telling the hearers what the story *means*. To do so violates the power of the story to mean something on its own without reducing it to some moral. Reflecting on story does not close the tale. It does not limit what the hearer can find in the story for themselves.[75]

Fred Craddock defends this approach, arguing that preaching is best done as "overhearing the gospel." He favors indirect application, letting the listeners decide what to do with the message.[76] Advocates of this position often point to the preaching of Jesus, the prophets, and the apostles for their support.

Evidently, the preaching of the prophets, apostles, and Jesus were not as open-ended as New Homileticians like to think. In Nathan's story-telling, inductive approach to King David concerning his sin against Uriah and his wife Bathsheba (2 Sam 12:1-6),

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[74]Larsen, *Anatomy of Preaching*, 150.

[75]Hughes and Kysar, *Preaching Doctrine*, 70. They conclude that "reflection on story seeks always to honor the ambiguity of a story" (ibid., 71). How the audience is supposed to learn doctrine from this kind of ambiguity still remains unanswered.

[76]See Fred B. Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978).

Nathan had to tell David the meaning—"thou art the man!"—in order for him to acknowledge his sin and repent. Simply ending the message without applied meaning would have left David angry but *unrepentant*. Moreover, Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin seems to be a retelling of OT narrative (Acts 7:1-50). The Sanhedrin did not really understand the message until Stephen switched from an inductive analysis of the OT to a clear explanation of their own sinfulness (7:51-54). Of course, repentance did not take place in this situation, but God motivated the church to carry out her mission through this event (8:1-3).

Jesus may be the only occasional practitioner of the inductive method, but it most certainly was *occasional*. Like chapter 3 mentions, preachers should not emulate everything in Jesus' preaching. Speaking of Jesus' preaching in parables, York and Decker write,

> First of all, Jesus had no single methodology of preaching parables. Sometimes they were short, other times more extended. Sometimes he clearly explained them, and other times he offered no explanation at all, simply an admonition that whoever had ears to hear, let them hear. We might wonder why Jesus did that, but the Bible provides us with the answer. After preaching the parable of the sower, Jesus concluded with, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:9). But then, afterward, his closest disciples asked him about the meaning of the parable. He answered them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; *otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!*'" (Mark 4:11-12). It might give us pause, but the text clearly states that Jesus' sovereign purpose was to keep some of his listeners in the dark. It was all part of God's plan to culminate in Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.[77]

These three examples indicate that, with the exception of some of Jesus' preaching, the inductive preaching in the Scriptures almost always ends deductively.

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[77]York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 16.

Thus, doctrinal exposition of narrative texts will be most biblical when they include both inductive story and deductive doctrinal explanation.

All of this is not to say that story has little value, for preaching profits greatly from it. Story is so valuable for preaching today that a good rule of thumb would be the more theologically loaded a sermon is, the more important it is to communicate a real-life story.[78] In a discussion about preaching stories, Robinson writes,

> You can deal abstractly with a great principle—God is sovereign—in a way that gets boring. Such a sermon reminds me of a hovercraft that floats eight feet above the ground but never lands into life. Without the human element, you lose the specific, the historical narrative, the emotional interaction.[79]

Likewise, Charles Duey claims, "Theology is only stuffy when made stuffy, and only obscure when preached in erudite terms *ad nauseum*, without illustrations."[80] A sermon's use of story also helps the audience experience the text, leading to a greater understanding of it.[81]

As should be evident by now, preaching must continue to use theological terms, especially those found in the Scriptures. At the same time, definitional clarity

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[78]Allen claims, "Nearly every sermon that gives priority to systematic theology should contain at least one real-life story that brings theology to life" (*Preaching Is Believing*, 89). Coffin agrees, "Still another necessity is telling illustrations. Doctrinal sermons, more than any other kind of preaching, are liable to be heavy in language" (*What to Preach*, 62).

[79]Haddon W. Robinson, "The Heresy of Application," *Leadership* 18, no. 4 (1997): 27.

[80]Charles J. Duey, "Let's Preach Theology," *The Covenant Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (1963): 17. Commenting on Luther's uses of images and story, Sproul says that Luther "advises that, when preaching on abstract doctrine, the pastor find a narrative in Scripture that communicates that truth, and to communicate the abstract through the concrete" ("The Teaching Preacher," 164). Schreiner employs this method in explaining his stance on the warning passages of Hebrews. He believes every Christian will heed the warnings, and, thus, he views them as a means to the believer's perseverance. Schreiner illustrates this explanation with the story of Paul as a prisoner and the shipwreck in Acts 27. God promised the deliverance of each person on ship, but they had to heed Paul's warning (see Thomas R. Schreiner, "Perseverance and Assurance: A Survey and a Proposal," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 2, no. 1 [1998]: 32-62).

[81]See David C. Deuel, "Suggestions for Expositional Preaching of Old Testament Narrative," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 2, no. 1 (1991): 54. For ways to tell the story more effectively, see Mathewson, *Art of Preaching OT Narrative*, 132-42; Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World*, 158-62.

needs to be at the forefront of doctrinal exposition, so that today's listeners can better

comprehend the message of the Bible. Imagery and story are significant factors in this

discussion, and expositors will want to strike a proper balance between word-pictures and

story on the one hand and biblical fidelity and theological substance on the other hand.

Doctrinal exposition for the twenty-first century certainly must deal with the theology of

each text, taking time to explain the doctrine in its passage in a way that the audience

understands.[82]

Application in Doctrinal Expository Preaching

Application in expository preaching should be a given. In order for application

to be as effective as possible, it needs to be both doctrinally sound and practically

useful.[83] Evangelical preachers should regret that many of the biblical doctrines of the

Reformation are foreign to their contemporary listeners. Doctrines associated with such

terms as justification, atonement, original sin, imputed righteousness, and even

repentance need clarification so that today's church can both understand the nature of the

good news and appropriate it by faith.

Knowing the Audience

William Perkins speaks of applying doctrine as "the skill by which the doctrine

which has been properly drawn from the Scriptures is handled in ways which are

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[82]See Walter L. Liefeld, *New Testament Exposition: From Text to Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 41.

[83]Of course, when applying Scripture, the expositor must determine whether the message of the text depends on certain cultural factors. Such an issue revolves around Scripture's limited and universal messages. J. Robertson McQuilken asserts that "every teaching in Scripture is universal unless Scripture itself treats it as limited" ("Problems of Normativeness in Scripture: Cultural versus Permanent," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus [Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1984], 230). See also Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 114-21.

appropriate to the circumstances of the place and time and to the people in the

congregation."[84] Touching on the congregational focus of application, Klaas Runia

writes, "A sermon is like an *ellipse with two foci*: the *text of the Bible* and the *situation of*

the hearers. And preparing and delivering a sermon means that these two foci have to be

interrelated in a process of continual reciprocity."[85] Similarly, Johnston says that

preachers have

> two burdens: Reach the listener, a fellow human being, with the message of Christ, and at the same time uphold the Word of God, faithfully and with integrity. The best biblical communicators will not sacrifice either burden but will allow these dual desires to fuel one another.[86]

These statements underscore the importance of people to preaching, for "if the

people are forgotten, then preaching is not preaching; and the sermon is no sermon, but

merely an essay which is a very different type of thing—the consideration of some

subject in the abstract."[87] Indeed, "the pew craves clarity from the pulpit. It wants to

know particulars. It wants applications. It wants to know how a truth has impact. It

wants the descent from theory into practice, from ideas into life."[88] In order to apply

doctrine effectively, preachers must know both the text and the audience.[89]

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[84]William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying; with the Calling of the Ministry* (Cambridge: J. Legatt, 1592; reprint, Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 54.

[85]Klaas Runia, "What Is Preaching according to the New Testament?" *Tyndale Bulletin*, no. 29 (1978): 41. Robinson, too, writes, "Let's face it. We don't teach the Bible. We teach *people* the Bible. As vital as it is to know content, it's not enough. We must know our audiences" (Haddon W. Robinson, foreword to *Preaching to a Postmodern World*, by Johnston, 7).

[86]Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World*, 18-19.

[87]Gossip, "The Whole Counsel of God," 332.

[88]Mark E. Yurs, "Breaking the Story: Preaching as Naming the Activity of God Today," *Preaching* 16, no. 3 (2000): 42.

[89]See York and Decker, *Preaching with Bold Assurance*, 77-81; Robinson, "Heresy," 22.

Showing the Relevance

Knowing the audience to whom one is preaching will aid him in focusing the application on relevance. In this age of pragmatism, people often wonder about the "so what?" of biblical preaching. Thus, application in doctrinal exposition must portray both meaning and *relevance*. Lloyd-Jones states,

> This question of relevance must never be forgotten. As I have said, you are not lecturing, you are not reading an essay; you are setting out to do something definite and particular, to influence these people and the whole of their lives and outlook. Obviously, therefore, you have got to show the relevance of all this. You are not an antiquary lecturing on ancient history or on ancient civilisations, or something like that. The preacher is a man who is speaking to people who are alive today and confronted by the problems of life; and therefore you have to show that this is not some academic or theoretical matter which may be of interest to people who take up that particular hobby, as others take up crossword puzzles or something of that type. You are to show that this message is vitally important to them, and that they must listen with the whole of their being, because this really is going to help them to live.[90]

These aspects of meaning and relevance center on doctrine, for "to be always relevant, you have to say things which are eternal."[91]

Along with relevance comes the issue of practicality. As is often the case, "the cry has been: 'Give us practical sermons, not theology.' But nothing is so practical as doctrine of the right kind."[92] Therefore, doctrinal exposition "should be related as closely as possible to the problems of daily life in our modern world."[93] Tim Keller points readers toward the larger issue within practicality:

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[90]D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 76.

[91]Os Guinness, "Sounding Out the Idols of Church Growth," in *No God but God*, ed. Os Guinness and John Seel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 169. Guinness refers to Simone Weil as the origin of this quotation.

[92]Coffin, *What to Preach*, 47.

[93]Donald M. Ballie, "The Preaching of Christian Doctrine," in *The Theology of the Sacraments: and Other Papers* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), 151. See also Hershael W.

This is a critical and difficult balance for the Christian preacher. Every message and point must demonstrate relevance or the listener will mentally "channel surf." But once you have drawn in people with the amazing relevance and practical wisdom of the gospel, you must confront them with the most pragmatic issue of all—the claim of Christ to be absolute Lord of life.[94]

Finally, relevance in application will likely affect how the listener has experienced the doctrine. Some describe the application and experience of Christian doctrine through preaching as "experiential or experimental preaching," because

experimental preaching seeks to explain in terms of biblical truth how matters ought to go, how they do go, and what is the goal of the Christian life. It aims to apply divine truth to the whole range of the believer's personal experience as well as in his relationships with family, the church, and the world around him.[95]

So, applied doctrine touches relevant, practical, and experiential elements of the audience.

Features of Applying Doctrine

Once the preacher accepts the necessity of application in doctrinal exposition, he can begin to appreciate some of the features of applying doctrine. First, the application of doctrine is extremely important, for one's doctrine affects his duty, even as situations change. That is, Christian living rests on Christian doctrine. Much of the Great Commission involves teaching (doctrine) to observe (duty). Thus, doctrine and application go together. Ephesians 4 is a good example of theology applied, for Paul deals with individual problems from the basis of doctrinal truth.

York and Scott A. Blue, "Is Application Necessary in the Expository Sermon?" *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 2 (1999): 73; Scott Avery Blue, "Application in the Expository Sermon: A Case for Its Necessary Inclusion" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000).

[94]Timothy J. Keller, "Preaching Morality in an Amoral Age: How You Can Blow the Whistle When People Don't Believe There Are Rules," *Leadership* 17, no. 1 (1996): 113.

[95]Joel R. Beeke, "The Lasting Power of Reformed Experiential Preaching," in *Feed My Sheep*, 95-96.

Furthermore, in this experience-as-truth world, one needs to teach that Christian living "involves more than experience. Biblical Christian living is grounded in sound doctrine, sound experience, and sound practice."[96] Additionally, "theology is meant to be *lived* and *prayed* and *sung*! All of the great doctrinal writings of the Bible (such as Paul's epistle to the Romans) are full of praise to God and personal application to life."[97]

Second, doctrinal exposition, while presenting the great doctrines of the faith from its numerous heroes of the past, focuses on the here-and-now. Ferguson notes,

> Those preaching helps must rather be thoroughly digested by us, made our own, and applied to people today in today's language. . . .
> In this sense, biblical exposition must speak to the people sitting today in the pews, not to those who sat in them hundred [sic] of years ago![98]

Finally, expositors must apply "doctrine in a hortatory and practical way. . . . [driving] the doctrine home to the individual."[99] While discussing 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Perkins says,

> Practical application has to do with life-style and behaviour and involves instruction and correction.
> Instruction is the application of doctrine to enable us to live well in the context of the family, the state, and the church. It involves both encouragement and exhortation (*Rom.* 15:4).
> Correction is the application of doctrine in a way that transforms lives marked by ungodliness and unrighteousness. This involves admonition.[100]

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[96]Ibid., 125.

[97]Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 16-17.

[98]Sinclair B. Ferguson, "Preaching to the Heart," in *Feed My Sheep*, 205.

[99]Donald Macleod, "Preaching and Systematic Theology," in *The Preacher and Preaching*, 265.

[100]Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying*, 65. Lloyd-Jones writes, "It is vital to the sermon that it should always end on [a] note of application or of exhortation" (*Preaching & Preachers*, 78). For ways to apply doctrine with authority, love, integrity, conviction, etc., see Macleod, "Preaching and Systematic

Though correction is unpopular in a "judge not lest ye be judged" mindset of many of today's people, the application of doctrine upholds the truth and encourages change in accordance with that truth.

Valuable Doctrines for Evangelicalism Today

Many preachers need little persuasion when it comes to the need for doctrinal preaching today. What doctrines are important for conservative evangelicalism, however, is a matter of debate.[101] Though disagreement will most likely occur with at least some of the following issues, several valuable doctrines for evangelicalism remain.

Distinguishing between
Primary and Secondary

Since some might question how one is to know what is significant enough for all evangelicals and what can be left out, they will most certainly need to begin by distinguishing between primary and secondary doctrines. Hagner writes,

> Another way of expressing the distinction is through the terms core and periphery. Some matters of scripture are obviously of central importance while others are of relatively little importance. The tabernacle furniture is clearly subordinate in importance to the Sinai covenant. Whether or not women veil their heads in public worship is obviously peripheral to their behavior as disciples of Christ.[102]

Theology," 271; Larsen, *Telling the Old, Old Story*, 257-69; Clarence S. Roddy, "On the Preaching of Theology," *Christianity Today* 3, no. 23 (1959): 7.

[101]I use the term "conservative evangelical" to define historical evangelicalism and its acceptance of such subjects as biblical inerrancy and divine omniscience. The recent open theist movement evidently wants to re-define evangelicalism away from other historic definitions. For a thorough critique of open theism, showing it as outside the parameters of evangelicalism, see Bruce A. Ware, *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000).

[102]D. A. Hagner, "Biblical Theology and Preaching," *The Expository Times* 96 (February 1985): 138.

Likewise, Macleod says, "All revealed doctrines are important. But some are absolutely fundamental and primary."[103] He gives four criteria to determine the primary:

1. Those things which "are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation."[104]

2. Certain doctrines "are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them."[105]

3. Any doctrine "on which equally devout, equally humble, equally Bible-believing and Bible-studying Christians or churches reach different conclusions must be considered secondary, not primary, peripheral not central."[106]

4. Most importantly, Scripture places the greatest emphasis on the most fundamental doctrines.[107]

Furthermore, Grudem discusses the difference between major and minor doctrines:

A major doctrine is one that has a significant impact on our thinking about other doctrines, or that has a significant impact on how we live the Christian life. A minor doctrine is one that has very little impact on how we think about other doctrines, and very little impact on how we live the Christian life.[108]

Doctrines concerning biblical authority, the Trinity, Christ's deity, and justification by faith are all major doctrines within historical evangelicalism. At the same time, issues

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[103]See Macleod, "Preaching and Systematic Theology," 257-58.

[104]"The Westminster Confession of Faith" 1.7, in *Creeds of the Church,* 57, in The Master Christian Library, version 5 [CD-ROM] (Albany, OR: AGES Software, 1997).

[105]Ibid.

[106]John R. W. Stott, *Christ the Controversialist* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), 44.

[107]See, for example, Deut 6:4-5; Matt 22:37-40; John 3:1-21; 1 Cor 15:3ff; Gal 1:8-9; 1 John 4:2; etc.

[108]Grudem, *Systematic Theology,* 29.

over church government, details about communion, and some last things are not as

significant for evangelicalism.[109]

Preaching Primary Doctrines

A good starting place for determining primary doctrine is the doctrines of the

Early Church, for people have used them throughout history to determine orthodoxy.

The Apostles' Creed (ca. A.D. 215) and the creeds at Nicea (A.D. 325), Constantinople

(A.D. 381), Ephesus (A.D. 431), and Chalcedon (A.D. 451) stress the Church's basic

views concerning the Trinity and Jesus Christ. Irenaeus's "Rule of Faith" (second

century) precedes even the Apostles' Creed and declares belief in the Trinity:

> . . . this faith: in one God, the Father Almighty, who made the heaven and the earth
> and the seas and all the things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of
> God, who was made flesh for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who made
> known through the prophets the plan of salvation, and the coming, and the birth
> from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the bodily
> ascension into heaven of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and his future
> appearing from heaven in the glory of the Father to sum up all things and to raise
> anew all flesh of the whole human race. . . .[110]

Moreover, the Chalcedonian Creed confesses Jesus Christ to be Lord, fully God, fully

man, sinless, and eternal.[111] Therefore, evangelical doctrine must begin with orthodoxy.

Besides being orthodox, doctrinal exposition must be distinctly evangelical.

Tom Nettles correctly claims, "While great openness characterizes evangelicalism,

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[109]See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 29-30. Though some African-American preachers are guilty of making race a *major* doctrinal issue rather than a *minor* one, Russell D. Moore, writing about the growth of African-American churches, correctly notes that race is "a *theological* issue in the context of the Great Commission. Thus, the *Baptist Faith and Message* (2000) grounds racial justice in two gospel commitments—the *imago Dei* and the atonement of Christ" ("Resurgence vs. McWorld? American Culture and the Future of Baptist Conservatism," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7, no. 1 [2003]: 39). See also "III. Man," in the *Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: LifeWay Christian Resources, 2000), 10.

[110]Irenaeus, "Rule of Faith," in *Creeds of the Church*, 6, in The Master Christian Library, version 5 [CD-ROM]. For other creeds of the Early Church, see *Creeds of the Church*, 8-14.

[111]See "Definition of Chalcedon," in *Creeds of the Church*, 12, in The Master Christian Library, version 5 [CD-ROM].

definite parameters must exist."[112] Several theological issues—both biblical and

systematic—remain fundamental to evangelicalism today. As to biblical theology,

> here are some themes that may be useful: covenants, the kingdom of God, the
> gospel, the temple, promise and fulfillment, the people of God, the land and the
> inheritance, the promise of the Messiah, the promises to Abraham, atonement,
> resurrection, creation and new creation.[113]

Such themes will certainly provide a Christ-centered focus for both doctrine and

preaching.

Concerning systematic theology, expositors must, first, teach theology proper.

Such teaching should deal with God's Trinitarian nature and His various attributes,

including His holiness, sovereignty, omnipotence, omniscience, justice, grace, mercy, and

love. Second, biblical anthropology remains an important issue. The Bible presents man

as a sinner in need of salvation by His Creator. Sin's origin is with Adam and its penalty

is eternal death.

Third, doctrinal expositors must consistently declare Christology and

soteriology. Both the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ are essential, as well as the

exclusivity of faith in Him and His atoning work on the cross for sin. Leon Morris

speaks of the latter as the "key doctrine. The atonement is the crucial doctrine of the

faith. Unless we are right here it matters little, or so it seems to me, what we are like

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[112]Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 20. Nettles focuses specifically on evangelical soteriology which "asserts the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the personal revelation of God, the completeness of his work in humiliation and exaltation for the redemption of sinners, the effectual working of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the gospel, and the necessity of an uncoerced response of repentance and faith" (ibid., 21).

[113]Peter J. H. Adam, "Preaching and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and others (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 109.

elsewhere."[114] Moreover, Christ's glorious resurrection proves He is the Messiah and is the foundation for the future resurrection of believers.[115]

Fourth, evangelical preaching must retain the Spirit's work in sanctification as well as human responsibility. Issues of personal holiness, obedience, faith, repentance, and service focus more on practical doctrine, but it is biblical doctrine nonetheless. Expositors must uphold the church as the body of Christ and speak of it in terms of its gospel mission. Finally, doctrinal exposition must not forget matters of eternity. Heaven and hell are real, Christ will soon return to judge the living and the dead, and everyone begins life on the road to hell, spared only by receiving God's glorious gospel of grace by faith.[116]

Individual preachers will most surely want to emphasize certain denominational doctrines, and they should by all means do so. Even though evangelicals cannot agree on every minor doctrine, doctrinal expository preaching must herald these primary doctrines. Evangelicals would do well to listen to Ernest Reisinger on this issue, who claims,

> Let us . . . return to those doctrines which
> - give *all* the glory of saving sinners to God and do not divide it between God and the sinner.
> - see the Creator as the source and the end of everything both in nature and in grace.

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[114]Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965), 5.

[115]Graeme Goldsworthy observes, "Evangelical thinking has tended to stress, rightly, the substitutionary atoning death of Jesus. Sometimes this is at the expense of the importance of the resurrection" (*Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000], 57).

[116]Beeke, "Power of Reformed Experiential Preaching," 125-28. Cf. Coffin (*What to Preach*, 75-80), who highlights divine providence, prayer, the cross of Christ, and redemption as necessary subjects for doctrinal preaching.

- teach that history is nothing less than the working out of God's preordained plan.
- set forth the God who was sovereign in creation, sovereign in redemption (both in planning it and perfecting it), and sovereign in providence—both historically and right now.
- reveal a Redeemer who actually redeems; a God who saves by purpose and by power; the Trinity working together for the salvation of sinners (the Father plans it, the Son achieves it, and the Holy Spirit communicates and effectually applies it to God's elect).
- proclaim a God who saves, keeps, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners— and loses none in the process.[117]

When expositors focus on such doctrines, they will declare that

1. All are sinners—not sick and in need help [sic] but dead and in need life [sic].
2. Jesus Christ, God's Son, is the only perfect, able, and willing Savior of sinners (even the worst).
3. The Father and the Son have promised that all who know themselves to be such sinners and put their faith in Christ as Savior shall be received into favor, and none will be cast out.
4. God has made repentance and faith a duty, requiring of every man who hears the gospel a serious and full casting of the soul upon Christ as the all-sufficient Savior, ready, able, and willing to save *all* that come to God by Him.[118]

Such evangelical doctrines uphold the full authority of God's Word and stress the Bible's central message about the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

This chapter has shown how doctrinal expository preaching can be done in a postmodern setting. The postmodern culture demands that preachers deal seriously with truth, language, imaging, and story in contemporary preaching. Further, the pragmatic attitude of postmodernism makes applying doctrine crucially important. This study has noted several individual doctrines as primary within conservative evangelicalism and today's doctrinal expository preaching must retain these doctrines. May evangelical

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[117]Ernest Reisinger, "The Human Will and Doctrinal Decline," *The Founders Journal,* no. 26 (1996) [journal on-line]; accessed 2 April 2003; available from http://www.founders.org/FJ26/ article2_fr.html; Internet. Both Southern Baptists in particular and Baptists in general would want to claim that the doctrine of unconditional election was "the backbone of Gospel preaching and missionary endeavor" and is foundational to their doctrinal heritage (Selph, *Southern Baptists and Election,* 7, 17).

[118]Reisinger, "Human Will and Doctrinal Decline," Internet.

preachers engage the present postmodern culture with the sure message of truth from the

One True God!

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The reader has, one hopes, seen both the necessity and relevance of doctrinal

expository preaching. Before summarizing the main arguments of this study, several

aspects concerning doctrinal expository preaching should help emphasize its practicality

as well as the need for its implementation. The following sections also reiterate some of

the distinctive features of doctrinal exposition.

Reasons for Doctrinal Expository Preaching

In light of the biblical foundation for doctrinal exposition, a number of reasons

for this approach stand out. These reasons are both theological and practical. First,

doctrinal exposition reminds preachers to allow God to set the agenda in preaching.[1] All

expository preaching begins with God's Word, letting it drive the content and focus of

the message. Doctrinal exposition, at the same time, permits the theology of the text to

shape the sermon.

Second, doctrinal exposition treats the Scriptures the way God did, respecting

the history, literary features, and styles of the human authors.[2] Furthermore, in the book-

by-book approach preachers must necessarily deal with both familiar and difficult

passages. Preachers determined to preach the whole counsel of God can balance

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[1]Peter Adam, *Speaking God's Words: A Practical Theology of Expository Preaching* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 128.

[2]Ibid.

passages of God's love with texts on His holiness. In this approach expositors also treat issues they might rather avoid, such as divorce, just war, and church discipline. Additionally, since God saw fit to display an array of literary genres, preachers would do well to interpret the Bible accordingly. The fact that the Bible is a theological book also means that interpreters should observe the doctrinal content of each passage.

Third, this kind of preaching gives confidence and authority to the preacher. After careful biblical and theological exegesis, he can stand before people with an open Bible and a "thus saith the Lord" message.[3] As the expositor faithfully declares the Word, the Word itself assures him of its effectiveness in the lives of others (cf. Isa 55:11).

Fourth, doctrinal exposition provides enough time for preachers to clarify the larger contexts of the particular passage at hand week-in and week-out.[4] Moreover, preachers have little to worry about when it comes to preaching each Sunday, for the individual contexts of each book and its theological emphasis will set the boundaries of the sermon. Doctrinal expository preaching feeds people with the grand themes of the Scriptures in small morsels.

Fifth, doctrinal exposition helps keep preachers humble.[5] Realizing the vast expanse of the Bible's teachings in practicing doctrinal exposition makes preachers remember their own insignificance. At the same time, an attitude of gratitude should mark the expositor as he thanks God for using him for such an awesome task.

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[3]Kent Hughes, "The Anatomy of Exposition: *Logos, Ethos,* and *Pathos,*" *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 3, no. 2 (1999): 51.

[4]Adam, *Speaking God's Words,* 128.

[5]Charles J. Duey, "Let's Preach Theology," *The Covenant Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (1963): 14-15.

Sixth, while this method of preaching humbles the preacher, it also matures

him in his understanding of the Bible and its theology. Since every pastor is a theologian,

he should strive to be "mighty in the Scriptures." Doctrinal exposition drives the

preacher to this goal.

Seventh, many people are hungry for a holistic approach to preaching,[6] and

doctrinal exposition can satisfy their hunger. Even those who are not visually hungry for

this method need it for their spiritual health. As Reisinger states,

> Biblical doctrine is more important than most church members realize. Doctrine not only expresses our experiences and beliefs; it also determines our direction. Doctrine shapes our lives and church programs. Doctrine to the Christian and the church is what the bones are to the body. It gives unity and stability.[7]

One way doctrinal exposition achieves this holistic approach is by employing systematic

theology as the unifying factor in Scripture. At the same time, biblical theology helps

keep the message focused while exposition particularizes a portion of God's entire

message.

Eighth, doctrinal expository preaching helps fight against the problem of

theological illiteracy in today's pews. Preaching both doctrinally and expositionally

"raises doctrinal literacy which in turn encourages careful study and prayer by the

preacher."[8] Even though some criticize expository preaching as mere informational

preaching which does not affect one's behavior, research shows that teaching biblical

[6]Ronald J. Allen, *Preaching Is Believing: The Sermon as Theological Reflection* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 25-26.

[7]Ernest Reisinger, "The Human Will and Doctrinal Decline," *The Founders Journal*, no. 26 (1996) [journal on-line]; accessed 2 April 2003; available from http:// www.founders.org/FJ26/ article2_fr.html; Internet.

[8]Tom Ascol, "The Pastor as Theologian," *The Founders Journal*, no. 43 (2001) [journal on-line]; accessed 20 January 2003; available from http://www.founders.org/FJ43/editorial_fr.html; Internet.

doctrine affects both how one thinks and acts.[9] Furthermore, this preaching helps prevent

church members from falling prey to the cults. Commenting on the growth of cults,

Oswalt notes, "A weighty portion of their converts are from churches of all

denominations, leaving no doubt that inadequate teaching of the central doctrines of the

Bible by the churches is one primary reason why their members are vulnerable to false

doctrine."[10]

Finally, doctrinal exposition done rightly is the most interesting, effective, and

biblical of all preaching.[11] It teaches the truths of God passionately, practically, and

soundly. May God's servants of His Word find these reasons to be sufficient for

practicing doctrinal expository preaching!

Goals in Doctrinal Expository Preaching

In addition to several reasons for doctrinal exposition, a number of goals or

aims also exist. One might label these goals as the purposes of preaching. As such there

exists a three-fold purpose to doctrinal exposition: service to God and Christ, service to

God's Word, and service to God's people.[12]

First, the primary goal of such preaching is service to God and Christ, or

aiming for the glory of God. The fact that Scripture clearly reveals God receiving glory

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[9]See Brian Richardson, "Do Bible Facts Change Attitudes?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140, no. 558 (1983): 163-72. For criticism of expository preaching, see Charles Bugg, "Back to the Bible: Toward a New Description of Expository Preaching," *Review and Expositor* 90, no. 3 (1993): 417.

[10]Jerry E. Oswalt, *Proclaiming the Whole Counsel of God: Suggestions for Planning and Preparing Doctrinal Sermons* (New York: University Press of America, 1993), ix.

[11]See Faris Daniel Whitesell, *The Art of Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1950), 24-25. For the advantages of biblical preaching for both the audience and the preacher, see Whitesell, *The Art of Biblical Preaching*, 24-36.

[12]For a more complete discussion of this three-fold purpose, see Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 126-35.

from His servants makes this a worthy aim. Few have emphasized this goal as much as John Piper.[13] In order to fulfill this goal, preaching must be grounded in the cross of Christ, and the preacher must gladly submit to Christ in all things. These essentials in preaching and life form what Piper calls Christian hedonism—"God is most glorified in me when I am most satisfied in Him."[14] Following this line of thought, two of the main ways Christians glorify God the most are in the edification of the saints (Eph 4:11-16) and in the evangelization of the sinners (Matt 28:19-20). The primary means by which God is glorified in these actions is through the preaching and teaching of His Word (Acts 2:42). Such preaching awakens the hearers' response to seize the promises of God (Heb 4:12). By aiming for the glory of God, doctrinal exposition unfolds both God's majesty and His mercy through His own self-disclosure (Rom 11:33-36).

Second, the explanation and commendation of the gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ is a goal of doctrinal exposition.[15] As the central message of the Bible, the gospel entails a manifold aim in preaching's relation to Scripture.[16] Primarily, expositors must teach the content of Scripture. The week-by-week content contributes to the goal of declaring the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27). This preaching translates the theological words of the Bible without distorting their meaning (1 Thess 2:13). Also, preachers must show the purpose of Scripture. God has given Scripture not only for doctrine, but also "for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16).

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[13]See John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1990), 17-63.

[14]Piper explains this philosophy in his book *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Press, 1996).

[15]Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 89.

[16]See Walter L. Leifeld, *New Testament Exposition: From Text to Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 15-16; Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 103-04.

That is, Scripture both teaches and trains. Finally, preachers need to model a good use of Scripture. People ought to see preachers practice sound hermeneutics before them. In this way the authority of God can correct the misconceptions of tradition (Mark 2:22).

Lastly, doctrinal exposition aims at God's people in informing the mind, instructing the heart, and influencing behavior.[17] In relation to informing the mind, this preaching teaches God's truth and challenges people to let their minds be renewed biblically and Christologically (Rom 12:2; Phil 2:5-11). Moreover, it encourages people to test the sermon by Scripture. Such preaching falls within the largest context of the whole canon of Scripture and preachers should encourage people to compare the sermon with the full biblical teachings. As to the instruction of the heart, doctrinal exposition arouses people to a need to worship their Creator (1 Tim 6:14-16; John 4:24). Moreover, doctrinal exposition enables hearers to experience God speaking personally (Jer 15:16). Finally, the aim at influencing behavior motivates people not only to think with a Christian worldview but also to live with one in today's postmodern world (Isa 55:10-11).

In summary, it is refreshing to hear the words of James Stewart on the goals of preaching. He claims that the

> aims and ends of all genuine preaching [are] to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.[18]

Surely doctrinal expository preaching aims as high.

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[17]John Piper analyzes Jonathan Edwards' preaching as having similar aims in *The Supremacy of God*, 82-98.

[18]James S. Stewart, *Heralds of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), 73.

Some Benefits of Doctrinal Expository Preaching

The practice of doctrinal expository preaching also underscores a few benefits—preaching as well as the preacher and the congregation. First, as to preaching, doctrinal exposition glorifies God, the ultimate end of life.[19] Furthermore, it is valuable because it promotes a high view of several key doctrines in salvation—Scripture, God, Christ, the gospel, and the people of God.[20]

Second, doctrinal exposition also takes meaning seriously. Therefore, it defines theological terms openly, honestly, and faithfully to the biblical text. It conveys biblical truth in contemporary language.

Third, it serves as an important protection against the improper interpretation of Scripture. It defends the historic doctrines of Scripture against today's growing heresies, i.e., it can correct bad or false doctrine (2 Tim 4:1-5).[21] Moreover, it recognizes that certain doctrinal beliefs are absolute to salvation, such as the ability of God to save, the deity of Jesus Christ, and the repentance from sin to trust in Christ.

Fourth, this preaching allows Scripture to shape the sermon outline. By doing so, the sermon honors the substance and shape of the Bible. Biblical-theological

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[19]Alistair Begg, *Preaching for God's Glory* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1999), 33.

[20]Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 30. A footnote refers readers to an expansion of this discussion in Goldsworthy, "The Pastor as Biblical Theologian," in *Interpreting God's Plan: Biblical Theology and the Pastor*, ed. R. J. Gibbons (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997).

[21]Millard J. Erickson and James L. Heflin, *Old Wine in New Wineskins: Doctrinal Preaching in a Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 63.

exposition employs "the great variety of biblical revelation, exploring every genre of writing, every stage of biblical revelation, and every style of revelation."[22]

Concerning the preacher, doctrinal exposition provides him with authority and power, because he expounds the eternal truths of God's Word.[23] He can be confident in his preaching, because such preaching magnifies the Lord by relating any particular doctrine to God's redemptive plan in Christ.

Second, practicing doctrinal exposition makes it possible for the preacher to learn God's Word like no other kind of preaching. The grammatical-historical *and* the theological methods of interpretation strengthen the preacher's understanding of the text, which further equips him for the preaching event.

Third, whether one preaches consecutively through books of the Bible or systematically through expositions of doctrine, the preacher honors the Word of God. Moreover, this kind of preaching has an inexhaustible store of sermon material at its disposal and it aids expositors in preparing ahead, helping them avoid getting into ruts and worrying over what to preach.[24]

Fourth, exposition forces the preacher to deal with difficult texts and it demands that the preacher deal seriously and think deeply about *every* text. Even well-known passages should cause expositors to analyze the text critically and carefully while

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[22]Peter J. H. Adam, "Preaching and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and others (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 110; cf. Liefeld, *NT Exposition*, 11.

[23]R. Alan Day, "Theology and Preaching," *The Theological Educator*, no. 57 (1998): 102; cf. Merrill F. Unger, *Principles of Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1955), 24-27; Liefeld, *NT Exposition*, 10.

[24]See F. B. Meyer, *Expository Preaching Plans and Methods* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1912), 49, 119-30; Unger, *Principles of Expository Preaching*, 27-28; Derek Thomas, "Expository Preaching" in *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching*, ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2002), 91.

setting it within the larger theological framework. At the same time, this preaching can handle touchy subjects and doctrines within sequential preaching without seeming obtrusive.[25]

Fifth, doctrinal expository preaching is valuable because it declares the whole counsel of God. The passage-by-passage, book-by-book approach to exposition renders all the Scriptures as useful. At the same time, the doctrinal approach aims at connecting the passage to the larger theme of redemption-history.

Sixth, doctrinal exposition confines the preacher to the biblical truth of a given passage.[26] While explanation and supplementation may come from other Scripture, this kind of preaching puts a leash on the expositor, keeping him from wandering away from the text at hand.

Concerning the congregation, doctrinal expository preaching, first of all, meets human needs. It does this primarily through making much of God, confronting sin, presenting Christ, and challenging people to follow Him.[27]

Second, doctrinal exposition strengthens people spiritually, giving them "*a balanced diet of God's Word*"[28] and encourages them to become students of God's Word, for it "introduces the congregation to the entire Bible."[29] Through faithful hermeneutics

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[25]Liefeld, *NT Exposition*, 11.

[26]Ibid., 10.

[27]Unger, *Principles of Expository Preaching*, 28-29.

[28]Begg, *Preaching for God's Glory*, 36.

[29]Thomas, "Expository Preaching," 84. Sidney Greidanus comments that preaching Christ from the Old Testament—one aspect of doctrinal exposition—acquaints people specifically with the OT and provides them with a fuller understanding of the Person, work, and teaching of Christ (*Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 62-67).

and sound theology, people see how to understand the Bible better. At the same time, this kind of preaching broadens people's horizons about life. The result is that believers will have a greater desire to learn the Word and grow in Christ's likeness. Moreover, doctrinal exposition teaches a biblical worldview, helping people to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor 10:5).[30]

Third, doctrinal exposition may clarify a church's beliefs. It may also motivate churches "to *enlarge its theological vision or to recognize fresh possibilities* in its theology, life, and witness."[31] The audience receives a clearer picture of the Bible's message concerning redemptive-history. Rather than experience disconnection from God's purpose for His people, believers may have a greater sense for their own purpose to glorify the God of redemption.

Finally, doctrinal exposition is valuable because it applies doctrine to people's lives. In this pragmatic world, expositors can show people that truth is not only objective and absolute, but it is also practical, behooving people to live by it. On a similar note, doctrinal exposition contributes to the way people understand many contemporary issues; thus, it helps them make sense of the world.[32]

Dangers to Avoid in Doctrinal Exposition

As beneficial as doctrinal expository preaching is, there are some dangers that preachers must avoid. First, the preacher should avoid substituting his own conceptual

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[30]Adam, "Preaching and Biblical Theology," 111.

[31]Allen, *Preaching Is Believing*, 74; also, ibid., 77.

[32]Erickson and Heflin, *Old Wine in New Wineskins*, 29.

structure for the text's unifying structure.[33] Preachers usually commit this mistake in

forcing a straight-forward deductive method on a narrative text. Such an approach tends

to become monotonous, predictive, and uninteresting.

Second, the preacher must be careful he does not impose a doctrine into the

text, being guilty of doctrinalizing.[34] Positively stated, he must let the text determine the

doctrine. Failure to heed this warning has often resulted in heresies and cultic doctrines.

Third, the preacher should keep from forcing divisions on the text.[35] Since the Scripture

has the right to provide both substance and shape to the message, then one should strive

for faithfulness in textual divisions. If only *two* divisions naturally arise, the preacher

must avoid the temptation to find *three* points!

Fourth, the expositor needs to preach the whole counsel of God and, thus,

avoid preaching strictly in one Testament and on favorite doctrines.[36] Further, he must

avoid the temptation to suppress doctrines in a text in his own system's interest.[37] Fifth,

the preacher should focus on only the major and/or minor doctrine(s) of the text. William

Perkins warns,

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[33]David C. Deuel, "Suggestions for Expositional Preaching of Old Testament Narrative," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 2, no. 1 (1991): 56-58.

[34]D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 66-67; Hughes, "Anatomy of Exposition," 45.

[35]Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, 207.

[36]This area is specifically where John MacArthur fails in preaching the whole counsel of God. He has focused almost exclusively on the NT, failing to expound the vast majority of the OT. In his defense MacArthur claims to be a minister of the new covenant (John MacArthur, Jr., "Frequently Asked Questions about Expository Preaching," in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching: Balancing the Science and Art of Biblical Exposition*, ed. Richard L. Mayhue [Dallas: Word, 1992], 341-42). The new covenant, however, specifically builds upon the old covenant, and, thus, faithful expositors must preach both testaments.

[37]Donald Macleod, "Preaching and Systematic Theology," in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Samuel T. Logan, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986), 250-51.

> We should not try to expound every doctrine on every occasion; but only those which can be applied appropriately to the present experiences and condition of the church. These must be carefully chosen, and limited to a few, lest those who hear God's Word expounded are overwhelmed by the sheer number of applications.[38]

This is not to say that several doctrines cannot come out in a single sermon. A message on Ephesians 1:3-14 could touch on the doctrines of the Trinity, redemption, grace, election/predestination, eternal security, adoption, personal holiness, forgiveness, divine sovereignty, the gospel, and faith (to name only the obvious!). What is unwise, however, is incorporating a full systematic theology on all, or most, of these doctrines.

Sixth, the doctrinal expositor must be careful that he is not *too* detailed in his explanation.[39] Being overly meticulous can result in boredom and irrelevancy. Seventh, the preacher would do well to eliminate technical jargon from the message. The church pulpit is not the same as the classroom lectern. The people in the pew need doctrine taught in their own language. Adam claims, "Our task is to preach the text and to use its biblical theology to illuminate it, not overshadow it."[40]

Finally, in doing doctrinal exposition, one should never build a complete doctrine on a single text of Scripture.[41] This is where biblical and systematic theology prove to be so valuable. If no other texts cover a particular doctrine (e.g., baptism for the dead, 1 Cor 15:29), it is best to remain open and non-dogmatic.

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[38]William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying; With The Calling of the Ministry* (Cambridge: J. Legatt, 1592; reprint, Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), 68; cf. Macleod ("Preaching and Systematic Theology," 252), who suggests focusing on two or three points relevant to the doctrine of the text.

[39]Adam, "Preaching and Biblical Theology," 110.

[40]Ibid. See also Day, "Theology and Preaching," 98-99.

[41]Macleod, "Preaching and Systematic Theology," 250.

Aids for Doctrinal Exposition Today

Talking about doctrinal expository preaching is one thing, actually doing it is quite another. Every expositor allows the Scriptures to drive the sermon and steer it theologically. In addition to the Bible, several tools help equip the preacher better for the task of doctrinal exposition.

First, the preacher must employ both biblical and systematic theology. Biblical theology will keep the preacher focused and textual. Systematic theology will help relate the message to the major doctrines of the Bible. Puritan publications, theological journals, and well-tested theological works can aid the expositor for the tremendous task before him.

Second, doctrinal expositors would do well to become very familiar with their own denomination's confessional history. Baptists have a rich confessional heritage ranging from the First and Second London Confessions to the Philadelphia Confession to the New Hampshire Confession to the Abstract of Principles to the different revisions of the Baptist Faith and Message. Other denominations have similar confessions.[42] Such confessions help preachers frame doctrinal exposition with one eye on the past and the other on the present.

Closely related to confessions, catechisms may prove to be invaluable in communicating doctrine today. Though known for their use among children in both the home and the church, many adults in contemporary churches could benefit from such a tool. An important reminder is that both confessions and catechisms "have no

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[42]For a variety of different confessions among other denominations, see Allen, *Preaching Is Believing*, 66-67.

independent authority apart from the Bible, and they must always be tested by, and stand revisable in the light of, the Bible."[43] Moreover,

> creeds, confessions, and catechisms are not, in the Protestant understanding, in competition with Scripture. They do not violate the principle of sola Scriptura, but, rather, serve to strengthen it. After all, they are nothing more than the church's carefully thought-out interpretation of the infallible text.[44]

Since "a good catechism provides a theological framework for one's thinking,"[45] preachers would be wise to employ them in their preaching and teaching of God's Word.

Third, illustrating theological truth from great hymns of the faith may be helpful. Hymns like "Amazing Grace," "And Can It Be?" and "It Is Well with My Soul" stress themes of God's grace, love, and peace. Likewise, "Holy, Holy, Holy" and "Crown Him with Many Crowns" exalt the majesty and splendor of God and Christ.

Fourth, certain visual presentations can help communicate theological truth. Showing a new believer being baptized by immersion naturally pictures Christ's death, burial, and resurrection as well as God's work in making the old new. Breaking bread and pouring wine and even video clips of Christ's passion aid preachers in communicating how Christ laid down His life and shed His blood on behalf of sinners.

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[43]Timothy George, "Doctrinal Preaching," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching: A Wealth of Counsel for Creative and Effective Proclamation*, ed. Michael Duduit (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 97. Donald Macleod notes that preachers "should use [confessions and catechisms] as aids to exegesis" ("Preaching and Systematic Theology," 266). For the use of catechisms among Baptists, see Tom J. Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press, 1998).

[44]Michael S. Horton, "Recovering the Plumb Line," in *The Coming Evangelical Crisis: Current Challenges to the Authority of Scripture and the Gospel*, ed. John H. Armstrong (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 250.

[45]Ascol, "The Pastor as Theologian," Internet.

Furthermore, one may see more clearly some of the key themes in biblical theology and God's redemptive-plan in a diagram outlining biblical history.[46]

Fifth, doctrinal exposition can benefit from the lives of significant biblical and historical characters by way of illustration. The expositor may use the martyrdoms of the Apostles Peter and Paul, as well as church history figures like Polycarp, Athanasius, Tyndale, and Luther to underscore such doctrines as the believer's complete obedience to Christ, the Lordship of Christ, the Trinity, and biblical fidelity. George writes, "To show how Athanasius staked his life on the doctrine of the Trinity, or how Luther struggled against the fury of hell for the doctrine of justification by faith, is to impress on the congregation the gravity and relevance of the faith once for all delivered to the saints."[47]

Finally, keeping up with current events can aid doctrinal exposition. Even though the changes in culture should not shape one's theology, the well-equipped preacher-theologian should address current, relevant issues through his expositional approach to Scripture. Widely-read newspapers, magazines, and books, along with news programs on television and radio will point the preacher in the direction to address a contemporary audience with the unchanging truth.[48]

These tools will aid the preacher in doctrinal exposition. Without them he may as well attempt to build a house with only his bare hands. With them he can use the most proven and the best up-to-date tools for constructing and finishing the sermon.

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[46]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible*, 69-70, 101.

[47]Timothy George, "Doctrinal Preaching," 98.

[48]Ascol, "The Pastor as Theologian," Internet.

Planning Doctrinal Expository Preaching

In addition to describing the different forms of doctrinal exposition, the wise preacher puts a plan in place for practicing this preaching. Several issues will help the preacher plan his preaching accordingly.

First, every preacher needs to evaluate his own congregation. This evaluation tries to determine where the people are biblically and theologically so that textual and doctrinal considerations may be made in light of their spiritual state. The expositor can accomplish these evaluations through the use of surveys, group feedback, and areas of question/interest, among others.[49]

Second, the preacher should be sensitive to the Holy Spirit in making the most of timely opportunities and life-situations. The man of God can handle questions from people about life after death, divorce and remarriage, and exclusivist-inclusivist-pluralist issues quickly, effectively, and biblically while curiosity is high. Moreover, settings such as weddings, baptisms, funerals, and the Lord's Supper provide preachers a renewed interest among certain people to learn about faithfulness, obedience, eternal life, the atonement, and numerous other subjects. Preachers doing consecutive exposition will need to keep a few weeks out of the year open to address such unforeseen opportunities.

Third, expositors will certainly find it valuable to keep a record of the texts and doctrines they have covered. Subjects which have received a great deal of emphasis may be placed on the back-burner while addressing other important issues. At the same time,

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[49]These issues and others are found in Erickson and Heflin, *Old Wine in New Wineskins*, 244-55.

this suggestion highlights the analogy of biblical proportion and balance—those doctrines which the Scriptures emphasize the most should be declared the most.[50]

Fourth, reviewing the calendar or using the lectionary can help in planning sermons. Although subjects for sermons at Christmas and Easter are obvious, one may find it helpful to plan a series of sermons on the life and ministry of Christ from Christmas to Easter. Or, the preacher could preach the greatest events of salvation history during the year. Also, a series on selected Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ could help Christians prepare for the Christmas season. Additionally, a series on the family might fit well between Mother's Day and Father's Day, on such texts as Ephesians 5:21-6:9; 1 Corinthians 7; or 1 Peter 3-4. The possibilities here are virtually endless and valuable.

Fifth, expositors may employ current issues of local or national interest to instruct others in biblical teaching. Preachers can find helpful texts to preach on governmental elections (Rom 13:1-7; 1 Pet 2:13-17) and moral law (Exod 20; Deut 5).

Last, as stated in chapter 5, the preacher may decide to plan his preaching through several books, sections of books, or on categories of systematic theology. While the preacher will still need to plan his preaching, the former approach is more textually-driven and the latter is doctrinally-driven. Both are beneficial for people to learn.

Summary

This dissertation has proposed and analyzed the integration of expository preaching and doctrinal preaching in addressing the twenty-first century. How one is

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[50]See Macleod, "Preaching and Systematic Theology," 256-60, and chapter 5 for valuable doctrines in evangelicalism today.

taught (expositional preaching) and what one is taught (the Bible's theology) should be every preacher's concern for his church. Thus, blending expository preaching and systematic-biblical theology provides what I label "doctrinal expository preaching."

Hence, this proposal of doctrinal expository preaching for the twenty-first century shows the need for underscoring doctrinal truth within expository sermons. Because of the influence of postmodernism on today's church, preachers must declare the whole counsel of God. This kind of preaching demands both a doctrinal soundness and an expository style (book-by-book) in setting forth the truth in its proper context. Although volumes on expository preaching are abundant, doctrinal preaching receives little discussion today. More importantly, except for a chapter or section in a few isolated places, a tremendous void exists in doctrinal expository preaching. The lack of theological and biblical clarity and conviction in many modern pulpits makes this study necessary, relevant, and practical.

A solution to this biblical-theological identity crisis in the church is doctrinal exposition, where expositors preach Jesus Christ and His Lordship in the believer's life.[51] Along this line, Duey asks,

> With all the marvelous depth and width and height of God's Scriptures, and with all the subjects awaiting a Christian treatment, considering how rich is life and how hungry the average person for light on eternal matters, how can any preacher neglect this responsibility to his flock? Even worse, how can he criminally suffocate thirty minutes of God's precious time with poor preaching about things which are of questionable value?[52]

Likewise, even though McCollough wrote more than four decades ago, his words still ring true:

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[51]William J. Carl III, *Preaching Christian Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 12-13.

[52]Duey, "Let's Preach Theology," 19.

If the preachers of our day busy themselves with many things and fail to declare the gospel in its fullness and its immediacy they will share the guilt of a generation creating its own destruction. Theology and preaching must be the concern of the whole Christian church in our day.[53]

For preaching to return to its glory days, it must focus on the great doctrines of Scripture, for "great preaching always depends upon great themes. Great themes always produce great speaking in any realm, and this is particularly true, of course, in the realm of the Church."[54]

Furthermore, such preaching is the only kind which saves. Phillips Brooks adamantly stated the need to preach the truth about Jesus Christ for the salvation of sinners:

> But I cannot do my duty in making Christ plain unless I tell them of Him all the richness that I know. I must keep nothing back. All that has come to me about Him from His Word, all that has grown clear to me about His nature or His methods by my inward or outward experience, all that He has told me of Himself, becomes part of the message that I must tell to those men whom He has sent me to call home to Himself. I will do this in its fullness. And this is the preaching of doctrine, positive, distinct, characteristic Christian truth. . . .
>   The truth is, no preaching ever had any strong power that was not the preaching of doctrine. The preachers that have moved and held men have always preached doctrine. No exhortation to a good life that does not put behind it some truth as deep as eternity can seize and hold the conscience. Preach doctrine, preach all the doctrine that you know, and learn forever more and more; but preach it always not that men may believe it; but that men may be saved by believing it.[55]

Doctrinal exposition takes seriously the message of God's gospel of grace in Christ and the lives of sinners in need of salvation.

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[53]Thomas E. McCollough, "Preaching's Rediscovery of Theology," *Review and Expositor* 56, no. 1 (1959): 55.

[54]Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching & Preachers*, 13.

[55]Phillips Brooks, *The Joy of Preaching* (formally published as *Lectures on Preaching* [London: H. R. Allenson, 1895]; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989), 103.

This work has proposed and analyzed the incorporation of the all-too-often separated disciplines of doctrine and expository preaching with an eye on the twenty-first century. This proposal has shown the necessity for doctrinal expository preaching and it has demonstrated doctrinal exposition distinctively, biblically, systematically, and practically.

First, the rise of expository preaching and the decline of doctrinal preaching stress the necessity for this study. Even though the leading Reformers practiced expository preaching, the Puritans moved toward a doctrinal-thematic kind of preaching. This is not to say that their preaching was unbiblical, for Puritans exemplify the very best in doctrinal preaching. Somewhere around the turn of the twentieth century, preachers in line with Harry Emerson Fosdick began focusing on themes directed at people's felt needs. As a result, doctrinal preaching has suffered greatly since the mid-twentieth century. Only the last few years reveal a new interest in doctrinal preaching. Couple this interest with Haddon Robinson's efforts to recover expository preaching and the need for integrating the disciplines of theology and exposition come to the front.

Prior to the recovery of expository preaching, the rise of postmodernism ushered in a new wave of thought concerning truth. The audience of the twenty-first century consists of many who doubt the existence of objective truth. Further, many see the New Homiletic as the result of postmodernism's effects on preaching, where preaching as story is the new trend in homiletics. Thus, this movement provides narrative and inductive preaching as the way to involve listeners who are unfavorable toward dogmatic preaching.

As if the problems of postmodernism and the New Homiletic are not enough for contemporary preaching to contend with, it must also struggle with the changing face of evangelicalism. While doctrinal parameters have always existed within evangelicalism, some people want to re-define this group of Bible-believers. The growths of ecumenism and, more recently, open theism seek to twist evangelicalism to fit their beliefs rather than adjust their beliefs to fit within evangelicalism.

Second, elements from both expository preaching and doctrinal preaching help define doctrinal expository preaching. Expository preaching is the only method of preaching which upholds the full authority of the Scriptures. Exposition deals with a unit of Scripture and its main point(s), applies the Bible's teaching, and focuses on authorial intent. Doctrinal preaching, on the other hand, centralizes its message on the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, doctrinal expository preaching is distinct from the accepted understanding of either expository preaching or doctrinal preaching in that doctrinal exposition treats every passage of Scripture through the Christological-redemptive lens.

Third, a lexical study of some of the leading passages in Scripture on preaching doctrine stresses the biblical basis for this work. While Dodd's work distinguishing between *kerygma* ("preaching") from *didache* ("teaching") is helpful, Mounce and others prove that a great deal of overlap exists. Moreover, the semantic domain for preaching in the Scriptures indicates that many of the biblical authors often understood preaching and teaching nearly, if not completely, synonymously. Biblical practitioners of doctrinal exposition include Moses, Ezra, the prophets, Jesus, Paul, and Peter. If indeed doctrinal exposition was the common practice of biblical preachers, as

has been argued, then it would behoove preachers today to return to this kind of preaching.

Fourth, both biblical theology and systematic theology are faithful approaches to understanding biblical doctrine and vital tools for doctrinal expository preaching. Further, the value of both biblical and systematic theology aids the process of theological interpretation in doctrinal exposition. Doctrinal exposition, because it is expositional, allows the biblical genre to shape the form of the message.

Both biblical and theological exegesis contributes to the homiletical process. Preachers who transform the exegetical idea into the homiletical idea must pass through the theological process in order to assure biblical and theological fidelity. Moreover, the models of textual and consecutive doctrinal exposition offer a systematic approach in implementing doctrine and exposition regularly in preaching.

Finally, cultural concerns of truth, entertainment, language, image, and story in the contemporary postmodern world highlight this study's relevance and practicality. The application and practical nature of doctrine is as important as ever, for one of postmodernism's distinguishing features is its pragmatism. Therefore, expositors must show people that biblical doctrine is practical. Furthermore, evangelical preaching must insist on certain primary doctrines, including orthodox views of the Triune God and the deity of Christ. The major headings in systematic theology also serve evangelical preaching today. Of these great truths, conservative evangelicalism must especially stay faithful to the Bible's Christological and soteriological message as evangelicalism confronts postmodernism with the Word of Truth.

Christian preachers, especially those who serve as pastors, have always been called to declare the whole counsel of God (cf. Acts 20:27-28). Expositors can best accomplish this tremendous task through doctrinal expository preaching, for expository preaching goes through the biblical text systematically and doctrinal preaching declares the Bible theologically. Further, doctrinal exposition is most valuable whenever preaching is equally concerned with the Bible and the congregation. Therefore, the preacher's message will be faithful in biblical exegesis, sound in theological interpretation, and fruitful in practical application. This does not mean that preachers must rid their sermons of the Bible's language, but they must be diligent in this postmodern world to explain God's message to an audience ignorant of the theology of the Scriptures. Preaching in the twenty-first century demands that preachers be both theologically attuned and culturally aware.

Although preaching in the past has tended to favor either doctrine *or* exposition, preachers are often guilty of divorcing the two disciplines. This work argues, therefore, that an integration of theology *and* biblical exposition is a possible, and even necessary, approach to preaching. Only the faithful book-by-book, biblically-driven, and theologically-saturated preaching, i.e., doctrinal exposition, fulfills the challenge to declare the whole counsel of God.

In the face of a meltdown of truth and morality, anything less than a return to doctrinal preaching will result in a failure of evangelical Christianity to address the people of the twenty-first century. Hopefully, the pillars of biblical theology and systematic theology can team up with expositional preaching in leading today's expositors to a theological-biblical kind of preaching which is both faithful to the text and

fruitful in the lives of today's people. Such preaching can provide the desperately needed stability to uncertain pulpits and unsettled pews. May God's expositors return to His firm foundation of Christ and His Word and preach expositionally and doctrinally!

APPENDIX 1

THE PROCESS OF DOCTRINAL
EXPOSITORY PREACHING

The process of doctrinal exposition may be likened to a funneling process.

Biblical exegesis yields an exegetical product (exegetical idea). This product passes

through theological exegesis, resulting in a theological product (theological idea). The

theological product then helps shape the sermon process, which in turn, yields the sermon

product (homiletical idea). Figure A1 shows this entire process.
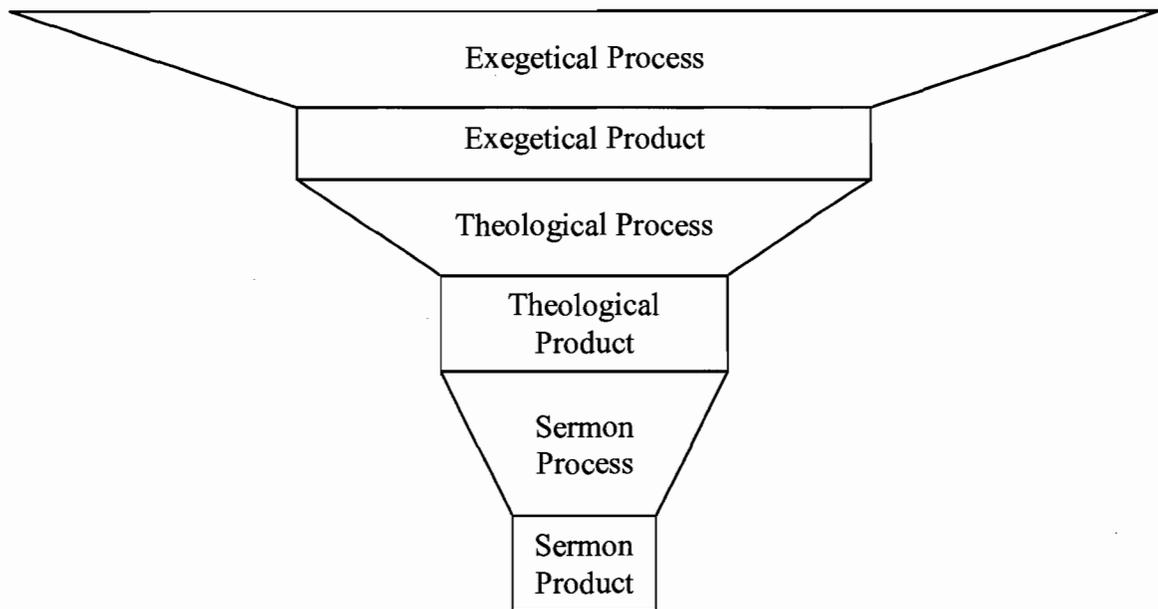
Figure A1. The Funneling Process of Doctrinal Exposition[1]

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[1]Though portrayed quite differently, this idea came from Timothy S. Warren, "A Paradigm for Preaching," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 148, no. 592 (1991): 474.

APPENDIX 2

IMAGE AND WORD IN WORSHIP

Doctrinal expository preaching in a postmodern culture needs to employ both

image and word. Figure A2 portrays how these two elements might interact in the

worship setting.

	Figure (word)	
Worship (image)	**Exposition (word)**	
Sacrament *Singing* *Liturgy*	*Preaching* *Teaching* *Education*	
	Image *Biblical imagery* *Motif studies* *Poetry* *Narrative*	**Word** *Didactic forms* *Prescriptive forms*
Ground (image) *Authentic Christian Community*		
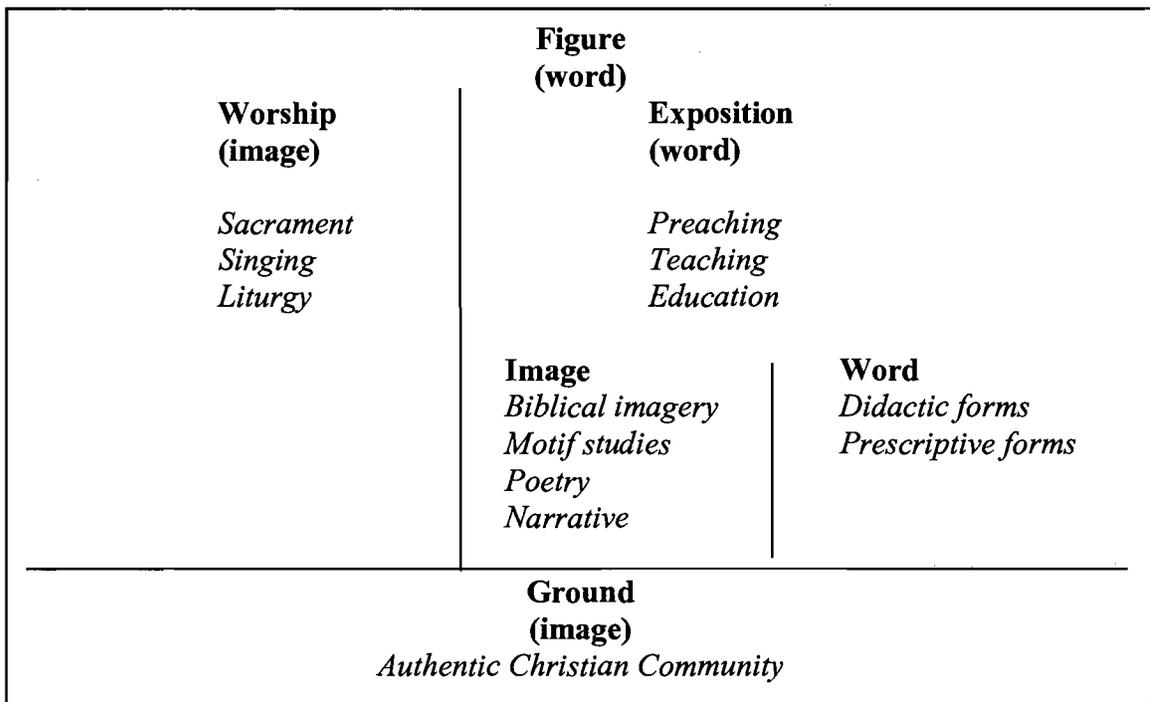
Figure A2. The Relationship of Image and Word in Doctrinal Exposition[1]

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[1]Taken from Michael J. Glodo, "The Bible in Stereo: New Opportunities for Biblical Interpretation in an A-Rational Age," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, 2nd ed., ed. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 125.

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ABSTRACT

INTEGRATING DOCTRINE AND EXPOSITORY PREACHING:
A PROPOSAL AND AN ANALYSIS FOR
THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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This dissertation proposes and analyzes the integration of doctrine and expository preaching for the twenty-first century. Chapter 1 traces the recent history of doctrinal preaching and expository preaching. Problems related to postmodernism, the New Homiletic, and the changes within contemporary evangelicalism also receive treatment.

Chapter 2 defines and blends the definitions of expository preaching and doctrinal preaching. These definitions form the basis for defining doctrinal expository preaching. Several doctrinal prerequisites of an expositor conclude this section.

Chapter 3 examines the biblical basis for doctrinal exposition. The semantic domain for preaching and the Bible's practitioners of doctrinal exposition support this basis.

Chapter 4 incorporates the disciplines of biblical and systematic theology for the task of theological interpretation. Moreover, principles for theological exegesis of literary genres prepare the expositor for the homiletical process. The chapter concludes

with steps in the doctrinal expository sermon process as well as with two valid approaches for implementing doctrinal exposition.

Chapter 5 covers postmodern issues of truth, entertainment, language, image, and story. Also, the subject of applying doctrine is discussed. Observations of valuable doctrines for contemporary evangelicalism end this section.

Chapter 6 describes many practicalities of doctrinal exposition. A summary concludes the work.

This study argues for the need to integrate doctrine and expository preaching for the twenty-first century. Furthermore, this work proposes doctrinal exposition distinctively, biblically, theologically, and practically. In order for preachers to declare the whole counsel of God, sermons must employ doctrinal exposition.

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