ABSTRACT

WE PREACH CHRIST:

RECOVERING THE GOSPEL IN CHRISTIAN PREACHING

by

Richard G. Hutchison

This study evaluates the effectiveness of a ministry intervention which the researcher designed in order to influence preachers toward a Christ-centered approach to preaching rather than Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. The impetus for the study came from the researcher's initial observations that much of so-called Christian preaching falls short of actually proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. Instead, it offers the listener good advice, moral exhortations, or therapeutic words for coping with life's problems.

In 2005, sociologist Christian Smith published the initial results of his National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) in which he explored the religious beliefs and attitudes of American teenagers from a wide range of socio-ethnic and religious backgrounds. In the summary of his findings, he described their predominant beliefs as Moralist Therapeutic Deism (MTD). MTD is essentially a religion of "niceness" which imagines a God who stays out of the way unless he is summoned to intervene in a personal crisis. It also affirms the existence of a generic moral code which is found in the Bible and in all world religions. This world view is also found among Christian teens who come from both mainline and conservative Protestant traditions.

Using the five tenets of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism and the five *solas* of the Protestant Reformation as an evaluative rubric, the researcher analyzed questionnaire and interview data collected from a purposive sampling of fifty-one pastors and pastoral

trainees in the Philippines, in order to measure the relative changes in their levels of

knowledge, disposition, and practice with regard to preaching as Christ-centered

proclamation and not Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled

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A Dissertation

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Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF the PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter provides an overview of the ministry transformation project including the background, rationale, and methodology for the research. It describes the problem which the project addressed and the purpose of the research. It also clarifies the meaning of key terms and explains the delimitations which the researcher established for the completion of the study.

Personal Introduction

Both my spiritual journey and my journey as a preacher began very early in life. Growing up as a preacher's kid, I spent countless hours observing a wide variety of preaching styles and sermon content. As a very young boy, I once took a little chair, turned it upside-down, and using it as my pulpit, commenced "preaching." I don't remember the topic of the message. But, according to my mother, my younger brother was not pleased when I tried to "convert" him at the conclusion. However, something even more significant happened to me through which my childish imitation would eventually become a serious calling.

At five years of age, after hearing a clear explanation of the gospel from my kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Parker, I experienced a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. That moment remains vivid in my memory. Of course, there were so many things that my five-year-old mind could not yet understand about this spiritual encounter. But the Word of God, spoken through the witness of this Christian school teacher, awakened me to the reality of sin, judgment, Christ, and forgiveness. During recess in the school gymnasium,

I approached Mrs. Parker and told her that I would like to receive Jesus as my Savior. While the other children were running and playing, she led me in a simple prayer of repentance and faith in Christ. A few minutes later, I rejoined my classmates, running and playing like the rest of them. But I knew that something had happened inside of me. I did not fully understand how or why. Nor did I realize the full implications of the gospel at that moment. But I knew that Jesus had entered my heart, and that I was no longer the same.

During the succeeding years, while being raised in a Christian home as well as a Christian school environment, I learned more and more about the Christian life. My fascination with preaching grew during my high school years. I began to seriously pray about whether or not God was calling me into some type of full-time ministry vocation. I graduated from high school and enrolled in a Bible college in Cincinnati, Ohio. During my sophomore year, I reached a point of inner assurance that God had called me to "preach the Word."

During my junior year of Bible college, I came under the influence of Dr. Allan P. Brown, the new chairperson of the ministerial department. In the classroom, he taught us to always ask, "What does the Bible say?" In the pulpit, he modeled for us an expository approach to preaching—attempting to bring out of the text the central message which the writer had intended to communicate. For some reason, this biblical-expository approach to preaching resonated with me. So, as I began receiving opportunities to preach, I gravitated toward expositional preaching. It was hard work, but I always felt that, unless my sermons flowed out of the natural meaning of the text, I really had no right to claim "Thus says the Lord."

At the same time that Allan Brown was influencing my approach to preaching, another professor, Reverend Larry Smith, became my systematic theology instructor. Reverend Smith came from a Free Methodist background, and I can still recall his booming voice as he spoke with deep passion about the ancient roots of our Christian faith. He often told stories from church history, through which we learned about our great heritage not only as Methodists, but as Christians. Sometimes, he would practically bellow at us as he spoke about the *solas* of the Protestant reformation. Both in the classroom and behind the pulpit, Larry Smith proclaimed with crystal clarity that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. But, in keeping with good Wesleyan tradition, Smith was always careful to turn our focus from the depravity of human nature toward the transforming power of God's grace. "Our message" he thundered, "is not about the pessimism of nature. It is about the optimism of grace!"

Somehow, in the succeeding years, those biblical and theological foundations have undergirded and shaped everything that I have believed and become—first as a pastor for more than twelve years and now as a cross-cultural missionary living in the Philippines where I am helping to teach and train both current and future pastors. I believe that the greatest privilege in the whole world is to be set apart as one of God's messengers, proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ—His life, death, and resurrection. I believe this first and foremost because of what Jesus has done in my own life. So, my spiritual journey and my journey in preaching are inseparably intertwined.

However, as I have continued in this journey of personal faith and public proclamation, I have been surprised to see how much passes as preaching which is neither rooted in Holy Scripture nor in the gospel of Christ. I have listened to many

sermons which may have taught good moral principles and standards of living, but they did so without a clear biblical foundation and without a Christ-centered focus. First of all, much of the preaching which I have personally encountered has tended to use the scripture text as a launch pad from which the preacher may go into orbit expounding on any particular points which he/she may wish to convey, regardless of whether there is any legitimate connection between the message of the preacher and the intended message of the biblical text. Secondly, much of this preaching focuses on what people should be and do but makes very little connection to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

As a pastor, I also have witnessed how this kind of pulpit theology has also infected the personal witness of lay persons. I have often been alarmed to hear well-meaning people explain the plan of salvation with phrases such as "Just tell God you're sorry for your sins" or "Start doing God's will instead of your own." Often, a similar approach is taken in describing how Christians should endeavor to live a holy life. It is not that I disagree with these kinds of statements, but these things are not the gospel.

Being sorry is not enough to appease the righteous wrath of a holy God. And how can I, a sinner by birth, choose to do God's will when my own human nature is so hopelessly weak? This is not good news. It is good moral instruction given to weak sinful people who can never fully live up to it. It is like offering swimming lessons to a drowning man. It informs, but it does not save. It may produce outward conformity to a moral code, but it does so without the life-giving, transforming fruit of the Holy Spirit.

In 2010, Sarah and I moved to the Philippines where we are presently serving as resident missionaries for Bible Methodist Missions. I am serving as the Philippine Field Director and working in partnership with more than eighty indigenous Bible Methodist

congregations on Luzon Island. My primary ministry role in this context is that of an educator at the Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherd's College, where I am serving as both an instructor and the dean of academic affairs and spiritual life. Of all the courses that I teach in the college, the one which I am the most passionate about is expository preaching. I began teaching this course a few years ago, and I have enjoyed developing and adapting my own system for training people how to prepare and preach expository sermons.

However, I do not want to produce preachers who merely tell people what the Bible says and what it means. The deep desire of my heart is that they will become women and men who preach Christ from all of the scriptures. I am convinced that even expositional preaching falls short of God's purpose if it does not draw people up into that great divine meta-narrative of Christ and redemption. And so, while recognizing that I am not the first to address this problem, I nevertheless feel compelled to join the ranks of those who have already done so. Hopefully this study will make some further contribution to the great task of training preachers who will faithfully proclaim the Word of Christ and Christ, the Living Word.

In 2015, while just beginning this project, I shared with my dissertation coach, Dr. Lenny Luchetti, about this desire to help preachers move away from the shallow waters of moralistic preaching and to launch out into the deep currents of divine grace that are found in Christ-centered exposition. But how could I get a handle on this problem and measure the progress of those whom I am teaching? Dr. Luchetti immediately suggested that I should read about moralistic therapeutic deism (MTD), a term that was coined by

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sociologist Christian Smith as a result of a study which he published in 2005 on the religious views of American teenagers.

As I began to read and explore the literature which has come out of Christian Smith's study, I quickly saw that MTD very aptly describes the problem with which I have been wrestling both as a pastor and as one who is training others in the task of preaching. And that is how this project began to take shape. Using MTD and Christ-Centered Preaching (CCP) as opposite ends of a continuum, I have developed a rubric by which to measure the effectiveness of my training course in expository preaching.

Statement of the Problem

The problem which this study addressed is the gravitation of much contemporary preaching away from Christ-centered gospel proclamation toward MTD. This trend appears to be influencing even many Protestant, evangelical pastors who consider themselves to have a high view of scripture and regard for biblical preaching. MTD is a multi-faceted phenomenon which may manifest itself in a variety of ways. But its end result is always the same—drifting away from proclaiming the gospel of Christ toward another gospel which is not gospel at all (Gal. 1:6-7). This study focused on evaluating a researcher-designed expository preaching course in order to discover how effective it was in addressing this problem.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to measure the changes in knowledge, disposition, and practice regarding the task of preaching as a Christ-centered gospel proclamation rather than Moralistic Therapeutic Deism as the result of a one-

semester expository preaching course at the Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherd's College and a one-day expository preaching seminar for pastors and students.

Research Questions

In order to achieve the purpose of this project, the study was guided by three primary research questions.

Research Question #1

What were the participants' levels of knowledge, disposition, and practice regarding the task of preaching as Christ-centered gospel proclamation rather than moralistic therapeutic deism prior to the researcher-designed expository preaching course?

Research Question #2

What were the participants' levels of knowledge, disposition, and practice regarding the task of preaching as Christ-centered gospel proclamation rather than moralistic therapeutic deism following the researcher-designed expository preaching course?

Research Question #3

What aspects of the expository preaching course contributed most to the observed changes among participants in knowledge, disposition, and practice regarding the task of preaching as Christ-centered gospel proclamation rather than moralistic therapeutic deism?

Rationale for the Project

1. The first reason this study matters is that the Christian scriptures affirm the pre-eminence of Christ in all things.

2. The second reason this study matters is that the gospel of Christ is central in the biblical meta-narrative.

3. The third reason this study matters is that the root cause of the historic struggles within Christianity can always be traced back to a misinterpretation or misrepresentation of Christ and his gospel.

4. The fourth reason this study matters is that the influence of MTD upon contemporary Christian preaching threatens to undermine the Church's witness to Christ and his gospel.

5. The fifth reason this study matters is that much of today's preaching appears to be oriented toward MTD rather than CCP.

Definition of Key Terms

Expository Preaching

For the purposes of this study, expository preaching refers to an overall approach to the task of preaching which begins with the biblical text and endeavors to bring out of the text a message which is consistent with the intended meaning of the biblical author.

Christ-Centered Preaching

For the purposes of this study, Christ-centered Preaching (CCP) is Gospel proclamation that is rooted in the words of Holy Scripture and centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

Moralistic therapeutic deism (MTD) is a term coined by sociologist Christian Smith (*Soul Searching*). It refers to a generic set of religious views in which God is perceived as someone to be summoned only when he is needed, and being "nice" and

"fair" are the highest moral virtues to which a person may aspire. MTD furthermore sets aside the concept of salvation by grace through faith, replacing it with personal goodness as the means by which a person may go to heaven.

<center>**Delimitations**</center>

This project focused on a small group of four participants in a one-semester expository preaching course at the Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherd's College and a larger group of forty-seven participants in two different one-day preaching seminars. The initial purpose of the project was to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the researcher-designed expository preaching course and seminar. However, in order to enhance the focus of the research, the study needed to include some kind of a rubric by which the course effectiveness could be measured. Therefore, the researcher selected two antithetical concepts from which to form a continuum for evaluation purposes. These two concepts are moralistic therapeutic deism (MTD) and Christ-centered Preaching (CCP).

This study intentionally focused on the effectiveness of this course in transforming the participants' knowledge, disposition, and practice with regard to the task of preaching. While expository preaching is the primary focus of the researcher-designed course, this study deliberately zeroes in on the even more specific aspect of CCP and makes it the ultimate standard of effectiveness for the course. Therefore, although the course includes additional learning objectives, they were not included in the qualitative evaluation of the course's effectiveness.

The concept of MTD is being used as a measurable point of reference for evaluating the effectiveness of the researcher-designed expository preaching course. However, this concept flows out of research data which was taken from an American

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sociological context. Therefore, it is important to note here that, were the same study conducted in the Philippines, one cannot say with any degree of certainty what results would emerge from such a different socio-cultural context. Nevertheless, the purpose of this study was not to establish any kind of equivalency between Christian Smith's study in America and current religious attitudes and practices of Filipinos. The researcher only used key aspects of MTD as an established point of reference from which to measure the participants' levels of knowledge, disposition, and practice regarding the task of preaching.

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Review of Relevant Literature

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The analytical framework for this study is grounded in three general bodies of literature which will be presented in chapter two.

First of all, this study is grounded in biblical literature which includes both the Old and New Testaments of Christian scripture. In this section of the literature review, the researcher shows the biblical origins of Christ-Centered Preaching.

Secondly, this study is grounded in a representative sampling of theological literature. In this section, the researcher examines the writings of several key Christian thinkers who represent significant developments in the Church's understanding of the gospel which the Church is called to proclaim.

Thirdly, this study is grounded in more recent literature which provides the theoretical foundations which help to bring the biblical and theological literature into conversation with contemporary developments and issues related to this study. In this section, the researcher examines literature relevant to the concepts of CCP and MTD.

Research Methodology

Type of Research

In order to answer the three primary research questions posed by this study, the researcher used a qualitative approach for the research design. It evaluated the effectiveness of the researcher-designed intervention (the expository preaching course) by gathering qualitative pre- and post-intervention data from the participants.

Participants

The participants in this study included two distinct groups. The first was a group of four students at the Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherd's College in Villasis, Pangasinan, Philippines. These students enrolled in a one-semester expository preaching course which was designed and taught by the researcher. The second was a group of forty-seven seminar participants, consisting primarily of Filipino Bible Methodist pastors, who participated in a one-day preaching seminar in which the researcher taught an abbreviated form of the same course in expository preaching. This seminar was conducted in two different venues with two distinct groups of pastors.

Data Collection

The researcher collected data from the participants using one-on-one interviews and questionnaires. By utilizing multiple methods of data collection, he was able to triangulate each set of data with the data gathered through other methods, thus increasing the validity of the study's findings.

The one-on-one interviews were conducted twice with each participant—once before and once after the participants' completion of the researcher-designed intervention (expository preaching course). The interviews followed a semi-structured format which

was based upon an interview guide. The interview guide was designed with open-ended questions which focused on the research questions. The interviews were conducted using a mixture of English, Ilocano, and Filipino languages. All of the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The researcher has a working knowledge of both Ilocano and Filipino and was able to examine the transcripts in their original languages.

Data Analysis

The researcher developed an evaluation rubric which shows a measurable continuum between MTD and CCP. The key categories and criteria within this rubric also established the initial themes which were used for labeling and sorting all of the qualitative data. For the analysis of the interview data, the researcher labeled and sorted relevant themes which emerged from the interview data. He also identified where key themes intersected, thus showing possible correlations between two or more themes within the body of data.

Generalizability

While, in other ministry contexts, differing approaches to intervention may be necessary, the researcher-designed rubric could still be helpful in evaluating the effectiveness of said interventions—even if they differ from the intervention used in this study. For example, if a professor of preaching at a seminary in India wants to evaluate the effectiveness of a preaching course, she/he could utilize this same rubric for evaluation, even though the course design itself might be very different. Furthermore, this rubric need not only be used for academic studies. It can also be used for simple evaluation purposes.

Project Overview

Chapter two of this project will establish the biblical, theological, and philosophical foundations upon which this study was based, showing how it is grounded in established theory found in existing literature. Chapter three will discuss the analytical framework of the project, including the methodology which the researcher employed for gathering and analyzing data relevant to the research questions. Chapter four will present the data that was discovered during the study. It will show how this data provides evidence to support the researcher's findings. Finally, chapter five will share the findings of this project. These findings will be based both upon the existing body of literature presented in chapter two and the body of evidence presented from the data in chapter four.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter offers a survey of the relevant literature from which the researcher established the theological and theoretical framework for the ministry transformation project. It also establishes the relevance of this project by showing the gaps in current literature which this project has addressed. After reading this chapter, the reader will understand how this project builds upon and extends current discussions related to the task of preaching as Christ-centered, gospel proclamation in clear contrast to preaching that is characterized by Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.

Description of Literature Surveyed

The literature which the researcher has surveyed begins with the Bible as a primary source for the foundational themes upon which this project was based. Secondly, it traces the development of these biblical themes throughout the history of Christian thought, thus demonstrating the theological foundations which connect current theological thought with its biblical and theological roots. Thirdly, it surveys recent literature which has been written about Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, bringing it into the overall discussion as a reference point for evaluating the success of the researcher-designed expository preaching course in transforming the knowledge, attitude, and practice of the participants toward a Christ-centered approach to expository preaching. Finally, it brings these biblical and theological foundations into dialogue with current literature in the field of Christian preaching, and more specifically, literature which focuses on expository preaching that is Christ-centered.

<center>**Biblical Foundations**</center>

At the most fundamental level, the analytical framework for this study is grounded in certain clear affirmations of Christian scripture regarding the nature of preaching and of the message preached. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to attempt a comprehensive biblical theology of preaching. However, this section will present three specific theological themes which emerge from the biblical literature as especially germane to the problem addressed in this study.

Old Testament Foundations

The first relevant theme which emerges from the survey of biblical literature is that of *preaching* as *proclamation*.

The phrase "thus says the Lord" occurs 420 times in the OT. If the search is expanded to include the phrases "says the Lord" and "the Lord says," the occurrences reach 841 times. The frequent occurrence of this simple theme holds great significance for the biblical theology of preaching. For, at its most basic essence, the Bible presents preaching as a prophetic ministry—forth-telling the words of God to the people of God.

The prophets, when speaking in their official capacity, had no right to speak their own mind or heart. They could only declare what God had already revealed. Regardless of the place, the audience, the historical setting, the political climate, or the moral issues with which they found themselves confronted, the prophets' message was always prefaced (either explicitly or implicitly) by "Thus says the Lord . . . ." Walter Kaiser presses this point even further, noting that these prophets ". . . were under a holy obligation to speak what was often contrary to their own personal interests and wishes

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(cf. Jeremiah's agony of soul in this regard); but speak they must" (*Toward an Old Testament Theology* 24).

"Thus says the Lord" was invoked by God's spokespersons as they gave instructions (2 Sam. 7:5, 8; 2 Kings 3:16; 2 Kings 4:43), confronted sin (2 Sam. 12:7, 11), confronted kings (1 Kings 14:7; 21:19; 2 Kings 1:4, 16), offered assurance from God (1 Kings 17:14; 20:28), announced God's saving activity on behalf of His people (1 Kings 20:13, 14; 2 Kings 19:6, 20, 32), announced healing (2 Kings 2:21), and announced God's choice of a king (2 Kings 9:3, 6). This phrase occurs most frequently in the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and Zechariah. Sometimes it was spoken falsely, as in the example of Zedekiah (1 Kings 22:11). Therefore, as Jonathan Griffiths has noted, ". . . the Christian preacher stands in a line of continuity with the Old Testament prophet" (Excursus 2: Biblical-theological Connections).

New Testament Foundations

In the New Testament, this same theme of prophetic proclamation continues, but with increasing Christological clarity. In the Old Testament, the emphasis was upon the prophet speaking forth the words that God had revealed. But in the New Testament, Jesus Christ appears as God's full and final "Word" which must be proclaimed (John 1:1; Heb. 1:1-2; Col. 1:25-28).

Preaching in the Gospels

The preaching of John the Baptist marks both the continuity and transition which takes place when moving from the OT into the NT scriptures (Matt. 3:1; Mark 1:4, 7; Luke 3:3, 18). Like all the OT prophets, John the Baptist views himself as simply "a voice" proclaiming God's message (John 1:23; Luke 3:4; Mark 1:3; Matt. 3:3; Isa. 40:3).

Only now his proclamation begins to bring into focus that to which all the OT prophets had been pointing for centuries—the incarnation of God in Christ as the culmination of His saving activity in the world.

In one sense, John's preaching was not at all unlike the preaching of the OT prophets who emphasized truth, justice, and righteousness as they perpetually called upon God's people to repent and return to the Lord who alone could save them (Matt. 3.1-12; Mark 1.1-5; Luke 3.1-18). But in another sense, John's preaching carries with it the urgency of immediate expectation. Like a herald announcing the imminent arrival of a king to a group of wilderness-dwellers who felt far-removed from the king and his kingdom, John endeavored to awaken the people of Israel from their spiritual slumber as he cried out, "Prepare the way of the Lord!" (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4). What his prophetic predecessors had been saying for centuries, John is now repeating, but with a stronger sense of immediate urgency.

And then one day, along the Jordan River, John the Baptist's announcement changed from immediate urgency to official introduction. "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" he exclaimed as he pointed out Jesus of Nazareth from among the crowd (John 1:29).

As John the Baptist fades, Jesus moves to center stage in the gospels, and he is also preaching (Matt. 4:17, 23; 9:35; 11:1, 5; Luke 4:18, 43, 44; 7:22; 8:1; 20:1). Jesus' ministry also exemplified prophetic proclamation. In fact, he insisted, "For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it" (John 12:49, NIV), and "The words that I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (14:10b).

Jesus "preached the word" (Mark 1:14, 38, 39; 2:2). He commanded his disciples to preach (Matt. 10:7, 27; Mark 3:14; Luke 9:2, 6, 60) and they obeyed his command (Mark 6:12). He saw a connection between the law and the prophets, the preaching of John the Baptist, and the Gospel of the Kingdom which he and his disciples were preaching (Luke 16:16). He also saw his preaching as calling for a response to and participation in the message which he and his disciples were proclaiming (Luke 16:16). He foretold that the gospel would be preached throughout the whole world (Matt 24:14; 26:13; Mark 13:10; 14:9; Luke 24:47). This prediction immediately began to happen after Jesus' ascension, with the birth of the church during Pentecost and the subsequent spread of the Gospel through apostolic proclamation (see below).

The Acts of the Apostles

Luke's writings include this account of the birth and early years of the Christian Church. He describes how Christianity overflowed the geographical confines of Judea and the parochial structures of Judaism, surging out of the synagogues into the pagan pantheons and public markets of the Greco-Roman world. Woven into these recorded events is the recurring theme of preaching.

The preaching which Luke describes indicates a further development of the Old Testament concept of prophetic proclamation, but now the message proclaimed centers upon the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the living Word of God. Christ has now been crucified, has risen, and ascended. He is bringing the long-anticipated kingdom of God to earth. Luke's description of the preaching of the apostles indicates that their preaching now centers upon these things. And he often uses one word to describe the message which they proclaimed. It is the *euangelion*—the *gospel*. Luke seems to use *euangelidzo*

and *kerusso* interchangeably. He often describes the ministry of the apostles using these terms of preaching as proclamation.

They preached the resurrection of Jesus (4:1-2; 17:18).

They preached Jesus as the Messiah (5:42).

They preached the Word of God (8:4; 11:19; 13:5; 14:25; 15:35, 36; 16:6; 17:13).

They preached Christ (8:5; 11:20; 17:18).

They preached the good news—the gospel (8:12; 14:7, 21; 16:10; 17:3).

They preached the kingdom of God (8:12; 20:25; 28:31).

They preached "the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (8:12, NRSV; see also 28:31).

"Now after Peter and John had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news to many villages of the Samaritans" (8:25).

One of Luke's most intriguing accounts of preaching in the early church took place between Philip and an Ethiopian eunuch who was reading from Isaiah chapter fifty-three about the suffering Servant. He asked Philip of whom Isaiah was writing. "Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus" (8:35).

Saul (who became known as Paul), after his conversion, "immediately . . . began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God'" (9:20).

In Acts chapter ten, God directs Peter to the house of a Roman centurion named Cornelius, who had been seeking after God. When Peter arrives at this gentile home, he begins to speak to them. Beginning with John the Baptist, he rehearses God's redemptive

acts in and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He declares to them that Jesus Christ "is Lord of all" (37) because he is "the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead" (42, NRSV). He furthermore tells them that "All the prophets testify about him…" (43a), thus making Christ the ultimate referent of all the Old Testament scriptures. And furthermore, "…everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (43b).

In Acts chapter thirteen, Paul and Barnabas are in Antioch in Pisidia when they receive an invitation to expound from the scriptures to a group of devout Jews in their local synagogue. So, Paul begins to preach to them, and his message takes them through some of the key events of salvation history which he then connects to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. At a key point in this message, Paul declares, "Let it be known to you therefore, my brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you; by this Jesus everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses" (38-39).

Preaching in the Pauline Letters

One of the key figures who emerges in the early church is a man originally known as Saul of Tarsus, but who eventually became known as Paul the Apostle. He first appears in the book of Acts as Saul of Tarsus, an arch-nemesis of the early Christians. But then, one day along the road to Damascus, he experienced an unusual encounter with the risen Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 9:1-22). A radical conversion resulted, and Saul the Persecutor became Paul the Preacher.

So great was the impact of this encounter with Christ, that Luke records two other occasions when Paul told about his experience to others as a testimony (Acts 22; 26).

From that time forward, he was gripped with an unshakeable sense of divine calling to become a herald and ambassador of the "heavenly vision" which he had received (26:19-20). Over the ensuing years, Paul's prolific pen has left us with a body of literature which contains numerous references to the way in which he viewed his own preaching and that of his companions in the ministry.

In fact, there is so much data on preaching in the Pauline literature that the limited scope of this literature review will not permit a more thorough analysis. Nevertheless, several important themes emerging from Paul's writings will be mentioned below.

1. Paul's preaching was based in the Gospel (Rom. 1:15-16, 10:13-17; 1 Cor. 9:16, 15:1-8).

2. Paul's preaching centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:23-24; 2 Cor. 4:5; Rom. 16:25).

3. Paul's preaching relied upon a Gospel which he considered to be "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16) rather than upon human wisdom (1 Cor. 2:4).

4. Paul preached that this Gospel is a message of God's saving grace which is received by faith apart from any human works, although this same grace will produce good works as the fruit of grace-induced faith (Eph. 2:8-10).

5. Paul also viewed Christ-centered, Gospel proclamation as the means by which Christians could go on to experience greater degrees of sanctification with the end result of being presented complete in Christ at the time of His appearing (Col. 1:28).

6. Paul looked to Holy Scripture as something God-breathed and profitable for the perfecting and equipping of God's people (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Therefore, Paul's

Christ-centered, Gospel proclamation was based upon the witness of the written Word of God.

Preaching in the Petrine Letters

The apostle Peter, while not writing as prolifically as Paul, has also left some clear indications as to his view of preaching. First, he describes the gospel that is being proclaimed as something which has been revealed by God, and which the ancient prophets, and even the angels, did not fully comprehend until God made it known through Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:10-12). This gospel is based on the redemptive events of "the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow" (1:11). It is eschatological in its thrust, offering future hope to those who anticipate Christ's future appearing (1:13). Furthermore, this gospel places believers in a spiritual standing from which they can respond to God's call unto holiness (1:14-16) because of the redemption which Christ has already accomplished through His sacrifice on their behalf (1:17-20). The power of this gospel produces transformational holiness in the lives of those who are believing and hoping in the God who raised Christ from the dead (1:21). The cause of this transformation is a new birth (1:23) which is produced by the "incorruptible" seed of God's Word (1:23) which "endures forever" (1:25). This is the written Word of God which reveals "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" through the testimony of those who were "eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Pet. 1:16). Peter did not view this gospel as coming from "any private interpretation [or, origin]," but rather, viewed it as part of the long line of prophetic utterances spoken by "holy men of God . . . as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (1:20-21).

Synthesis of Biblical Themes for Preaching

This brief survey of the biblical literature reveals a progressively developing theme, the relevance of which will become increasingly clear in the presentation of historical and theological foundations which will follow.

Preaching as Proclamation

The OT literature presented above lays the foundation for the NT concept of preaching. NT preaching is based upon the OT prophetic practice of declaring "Thus says the Lord." Thus, a clear theme emerges of preaching, in its most basic essence, as the proclamation of something that God has already said. But this is only the kernel form of the full theme which emerges from the biblical literature. The Christian scriptures paint an increasingly clearer picture of something that is more than just *words* of God. They reveal that there is some divine *Word* which is central to what the Lord is saying through all the prophetic utterances.

Preaching as Christ-Centered Proclamation

In the NT literature, it becomes explicitly clear that Jesus Christ is that *Word* to which God was referring through all the *words* spoken through the prophets (John 1:1; Heb. 1:1-2). The OT is replete with images and signs which were pointing toward Christ. But in the NT, the prophetic task of announcing "Thus says the Lord" takes on a much sharper Christological focus. Thus, the underlying theme coming out of the NT literature is not merely "Thus says the Lord," but rather "Thus says the Lord *through Jesus Christ, the living Word*" (John 1.1-14; Heb. 1.1-2).

Preaching as Christ-Centered Gospel Proclamation

But what does the Lord say through Jesus Christ? What is this message to which all the Christian scriptures are referring? The NT refers to this message as *euangelion* which means *good news*, and it connects Christ-centered proclamation with the proclamation of this good news.

Hermeneutical Issues and Presuppositions

Having traced the salient biblical themes upon which the theological framework for this study is based, certain hermeneutical issues arise which must be addressed. The purpose here is not to attempt a comprehensive treatment of these issues, but rather to offer further explanation of the significance of each theme together with a valid hermeneutical and philosophical basis for the researcher's use of them in this study.

Hermeneutical Issues for Preaching as Proclamation

The most basic meaning of "preaching as proclamation" is that, together with the prophets and apostles of old, the preacher is declaring, announcing, heralding a message which God has already spoken—"thus says the Lord." But, in order to develop a biblical framework of preaching as proclamation, there are three key questions which must be addressed—the question of inspiration, the question of interpretation, and the question of authority.

Kevin Vanhoozer has written a book addressing hermeneutics from the perspective of a systematic theologian (*Is There a Meaning in This Text?*). He distinguishes it from other books written on biblical interpretation, preferring to call it "a systematic and trinitarian theology of interpretation" (Preface). In it, he makes a sound argument for "author-oriented interpretation" utilizing both "Reformed theology and

speech-act philosophy" (Preface). He structures his argument around three key areas in which such a theology of interpretation has been challenged: The author (Chaps. 2 and 5), the text (Chaps. 3 and 6), and the reader (Chaps. 4 and 7). It is to these general categories that the questions below will loosely correspond.

The question of inspiration touches upon the challenge which Vanhoozer calls the "Undoing [of] the Author" (Ch. 2). *The question of meaning* parallels in some ways with what he refers to as the "Undoing [of] the Book" (Ch. 3). Finally, *the question of authority* somewhat corresponds with what he has described as the "Undoing [of] the Reader" (Ch. 4).

1. **The Question of Inspiration**

How can one be sure that what the preacher is proclaiming is, in fact, what the Lord has spoken? The framework of this study is based upon the presupposition that the Bible, as recognized historically through the Protestant Christian canon of scripture, is the written Word of God which has been inspired by the Holy Spirit through human writers. But even this presupposition should be placed within a philosophical and theological context. After all, not all readers of biblical texts assume anything more than a human authorship. It is, therefore, to this broader set of philosophical underpinnings to which this study now turns.

The presupposition that the Bible is the inspired Word of God is based within an even deeper set of philosophical assumptions which constitute what is commonly known as Christian theism (Sire 22-44). James W. Sire summarizes the key components of Christian theism as follows:

1. *God is infinite and personal (Triune), transcendent and immanent, omniscient, sovereign and good.*

2. *God created the cosmos ex nihilo to operate with a uniformity of natural causes in an open system.*

3. *Human beings are created in the image of God and thus possess personality, self-transcendence, intelligence, morality, gregariousness and creativity.*

4. *Human beings can know both the world around them and God himself because God has built into them the capacity to do so and because he takes an active role in communicating with them.*

5. *Human beings were created good, but through the Fall the image of God became defaced, though not so ruined as not to be capable of restoration; through the work of Christ God redeemed humanity and began the process of restoring people to goodness, though any given person may choose to reject that redemption.*

6. *For each person death is either the gate to life with God and his people or the gate to eternal separation from the only thing that will ultimately fulfill human aspirations.*

7. *Ethics is transcendent and is based on the character of God as good (holy and loving).*

8. *History is linear, a meaningful sequence of events leading to the fulfillment of God's purposes for humanity.* (25-43)

These basic tenets of Christian theism comprise a worldview which forms the broad philosophical parameters within which a wide range of Christian theological

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traditions find their moorings (23-25). It is not within the scope of this study to give an

extensive treatment or defense of this worldview, though numerous writers have done so.

But it is important to note that the theological basis for practicing preaching as a Christ-

centered gospel proclamation versus moralistic therapeutic deism requires the ministry

practitioner to make some unavoidable decisions regarding the philosophical starting

point from which she will engage in this discussion.

Graeme Goldsworthy explains that certain presuppositions are unavoidable when

one approaches the Bible:

> Thus in dealing with the biblical text, the assumptions we make about the
>
> sender, both divine and human, about the nature of the message as part of the
>
> Bible and about us will all be relevant to the interpretation of the text. These
>
> assumptions either directly or indirectly deal with the question of God. We
>
> assume that either he is or he is not the sender of the message. We assume that the
>
> text of the Bible is a word from God or it is not. We assume that we as receivers
>
> are subject to God and created in his image or we are not. (*Gospel-Centered*
>
> *Hermeneutics* 43)

One may rightly add to Goldsworthy's comments that these assumptions regarding the

biblical text and God himself are also relevant to the way in which the task of preaching

will be understood. Furthermore, it is impossible to be neutral with regard to this question

of inspiration or the other questions which follow (Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered*

Hermeneutics 43).

2. The Question of Meaning

In developing a framework for the practice of preaching, one must also address the question of meaning in relation to the biblical text. Kevin Vanhoozer has addressed it at length, building a case in favor of the concept that, when considering a biblical text (or any written text for that matter), "… meaning is independent of our attempts to interpret it…" (Preface). He admits however, that this is currently a minority position (Preface).

In recent times, the post-modern influence of deconstructionism has produced an environment in which any suggestion that an accurate interpretation of a text even exists is met with strong skepticism from many quarters (Vanhoozer, Ch. 1). The deconstructionist writings of thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and others have greatly eroded any previously-held confidence in the ability to know anything with any degree of certainty, including one's own self (Vanhoozer, Ch. 1). Paul Ricoeur has taken the Augustinian approach to hermeneutics and formulated a "hermeneutical circle" (Vanhoozer, Ch. 1). According to Ricoeur, "You must understand in order to believe, but you must believe in order to understand" (quoted in Vanhoozer, Ch. 1). Vanhoozer also takes an Augustinian stance, emphasizing a hermeneutic of belief which leads to understanding versus the "hermeneutic of suspicion" seen in the writings of the deconstructionists (Ch. 1).

3. The Question of Authority

The very fact that the Bible repeatedly asserts "thus says the Lord" in and of itself gives off an aura of authority (Osborne, Introduction). This question of authority touches not only on one's theology of preaching, but also has far-reaching ramifications for the Church's theology of mission (See Newbigin, Ch. 2, "The Question of Authority").

Vanhoozer notes that, for Derrida, "Neither Priests, who supposedly speak for God, nor Philosophers, who supposedly speak for Reason, should be trusted; this 'logocentric' claim to speak from a privileged perspective (e.g., Reason, the Word of God) is a bluff that must be called, or better, 'deconstructed'" (Ch. 1). The full range of concerns which prompted the skepticism of Derrida and others must be left for another discussion. But for those who subscribe to a Christian theistic worldview, God is fully capable of communicating both through written words and through the Living Word (the incarnation) in such a way as to make himself known (Sire 33-36; Vanhoozer Ch. 1). Therefore, rejection of a knowable meaning within a biblical text is ultimately to reject the authority of God himself (Vanhoozer Ch. 1). This study is deeply rooted within the historical conviction that when a person proclaims the gospel from Holy Scripture, he is speaking with a God-given authority, to whatever degree that his message corresponds with the meaning which God intended to communicate from that particular text.

Hermeneutical Issues for Preaching as Christ-centered Proclamation

In a sense, one might argue that *Christ-centered* proclamation and *gospel* proclamation (see below) are one and the same thing. However, for the sake of a thicker and richer description of the full concept, the researcher prefers to view these two terms separately, although they are inseparable and thus will overlap with each other in some respects.

The writer of Hebrews states that "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son…" (1:1-2a, ESV). John describes Jesus as the "Word" that "was with God and…was God" (John 1:1, NRSV). This "Word," he continues, "became flesh and lived among us"

so that we could see "his glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth" (1:14).

And then, lest there be any doubt about the communicative power of this "Word," John

goes on to say that "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the

Father's heart, who has made him known" (18). Paul the apostle declares that "…there is

one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself

human…" (1 Tim. 2:5).

The import of these scriptures is that the early apostles viewed Jesus Christ as the

key to knowing who God is and how humans may approach him. Jesus himself made the

same claim when he said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the

Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on

you do know him and have seen him" (John 14:6-7).

Thus, as James W. Sire explains, "Jesus Christ is God's ultimate special

revelation. Because Jesus Christ was very God of very God, he showed us what God is

like more fully than can any other form of revelation. Because Jesus was also completely

human, he spoke more clearly to us than can any other form of revelation" (36). Or, as

Dennis Kinlaw has succinctly put it, "If we get him, we get God; if we miss him, we miss

God" (*Let's Start With Jesus*, Preface).

E. Stanley Jones wrote about this with both eloquence and clarity:

Christianity is Christ. . . . We do not begin with God, for if you do you do

not begin with God but with your ideas of God, which are not God. We do not

begin with man, for if you do you begin with the problems of man. And if you

begin with a problem you will probably end with a problem, and in the process

you will probably become a problem. . . . We don't begin with God, and we don't

begin with man, we begin with the God-Man and from Him we work out to God, and from Him we work down to man. In His light we see life—all life. For He is the revelation of God and man—the revelation of what God is and what man can become—he can become Christlike (Quoted by Stephen Seamands in *Give Them Christ* 44).

It is based upon this understanding of Jesus as the ultimate revelation of God to human beings that the framework for this study includes *Christ-centered* proclamation as one of the key criteria for Christian preaching. This in no way minimizes the importance of scripture, for it is through the scriptures that one may know and believe in Christ (Rom. 10:13-17). But on the flip side of the same token, it is *of* and *to* Christ that the scriptures testify (John 5:38-40). Therefore, without a Christological lens for the interpreter, the message proclaimed will become distorted.

Some might question, "Why *Christ*-centered proclamation? Are we not Trinitarians?" These are fair questions, and the answer to the latter one is a resounding "Yes." The trinitarian-ness of Christ-centered preaching will be explained later. But first we must address the question of why preaching should be *Christ*-centered proclamation even as we also acknowledge and honor the triune nature of God in every message. As Goldsworthy explains, "According to the gospel the real link between the communicator, the message and the receivers is the incarnated God/Man, thus:

- Jesus is God, the infallible communicator;

- Jesus is the Word, the infallible message;

- Jesus is the God/Man, the infallible receiver." (56)

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Essential to the gospel and the Christian-theistic worldview is the belief that humans are comprehensively affected by what theologians refer to as "the Fall" which originated with Adam's sin (Gen. 3; Goldsworthy 56; Sire 36-40). This means that the human intellect and human will have been greatly diminished (though not completely), and thus humans find themselves in a condition of moral, spiritual, and mental impairment (Goldsworthy 56; Sire 36-40). Put in practical terms, this means that human beings, if unaided by divine grace, are greatly limited in their ability to understand, much less respond to the message of the gospel (See 1 Cor. 2:1-16). But this is exactly why Jesus Christ—the Son of God incarnate—is at the center of the gospel, and in fact, the entire written revelation of God's Word. Thus, in the incarnation, God the Son made it possible for fallen humans not only to understand the meaning of the divine message, but also to respond to it, because both the message and the acceptable response were embodied in his life, death, and resurrection.

Christocentricity versus Christomonism

Goldsworthy is careful to clarify, however, that "Christocentricity is not Christomonism" (65). By *Christomonism,* he is referring to "the virtual separation of the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth from God the Father and God the Holy Spirit" (Goldsworthy 65). According to G. E. Wright, examples of this error can be found in the musical lyrics of J. S. Bach together with "many of the popular hymns of the nineteenth century" (Cited in Goldsworthy 65). It is also reflected in the theological writings of Barth and Bultmann (65). The outcome of Christomonism is an over-emphasis on subjective experience while neglecting the broad biblical landscape (especially in the Old Testament) which reveals the triune nature of God, who is working in and through all of

salvation history (66). For Barth and Bultmann, this tendency seems to have come from the philosophical influence of existentialism (65).

In more recent times, a general "pragmatism" seems to have characterized popular evangelical hermeneutics, which places great emphasis on what Christ does in a person's life while largely ignoring the historical, textual, and trinitarian bases (Goldsworthy 179-180). Again, Goldsworthy argues that these current tendencies may be traced to the influence of twentieth-century philosophical pragmatists such as John Dewey, in the field of education theory, and Carl Rogers, a well-known proponent of "non-directive psychotherapy" (179). Therefore, he warns, "A hermeneutical framework that has shifted away from God's activity in human history can lead us to a Jesus whose saving work is no longer the climax of salvation history two thousand years ago in Israel, but is primarily an experience in the believer now" (66). The dangerous implications of such a hermeneutical framework will be elaborated further in the section of this chapter which deals with moralistic therapeutic deism.

In clear distinction from Christomonism, however, a Christocentric approach to hermeneutics, and thus to biblical preaching, does not ignore the trinitarian emphasis of scripture. To the contrary, Christ-centered proclamation, when practiced with an author-oriented and text-oriented view of interpretation, will of necessity present Jesus Christ as someone who "talked about God the Father and the Holy Spirit" (Goldsworthy 65). Furthermore, a truly Christ-centered proclamation will follow the pattern of Jesus' apostles who, while Christocentric in their preaching, also clearly formulated their message of Christ within a trinitarian theological framework which was grounded in salvation history as progressively revealed in the Old Testament scriptures (65).

Timothy Tennent states:

> At the heart of trinitarianism is Jesus Christ, who is the apex of God's
> revelation and the ultimate standard by which everything is judged. Rather
> than comparing and contrasting Christianity with other religions, we
> measure all religions, including Christianity, against the revelation of
> Jesus Christ, who is the embodiment of the new creation. This is why it is
> important that an evangelical theology of religions be both trinitarian and
> Christocentric. (Ott and Strauss Ch. 12)

In *The Deep Things of God*, Fred Sanders writes:

> It might seem odd to point anywhere but to Jesus Christ as the center of the
> history of salvation. He is indeed, in person, the very center of the divine plan,
> and in fact we are not pointing elsewhere than to him for the revelation of God.
> But our goal is not just to put our finger on the center but to point to it in such a
> way that the total form of the economy also becomes apparent. To get that big
> picture, we have to see Jesus not in isolation but in Trinitarian perspective. (Ch. 7)

Bruce Ware offers several "Axioms for Christological Study" which provide a
succinct explanation regarding the importance of placing Christ-centered preaching
within a Trinitarian theological framework:

> Jesus Christ cannot be understood in his person or his work without the
> Trinity. Without the Father and the Spirit, Jesus would not be who he is and could
> not have done what he did.
>
> The person and work of Christ are based not merely on his being divine, but
> on his Sonship both in eternity and in history.

The identity of Jesus as Savior is inextricably tied to his being the Spirit-

anointed Messiah, whose very person requires the indwelling and empowering

Spirit for him to be who he is and to accomplish what he has come to do. (Quoted

by Sanders and Issler, *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective* Chapt. 5)

Fred Sanders states, "The plotline of the New Testament, presupposed in even its

nonnarrative documents, but rendered explicitly as story in the Gospels, is the salvation

accomplished by Jesus Christ" (*The Triune God* Ch. 7). He argues this from the

standpoint that Jesus naturally stands out as the central character in the story line of the

Gospels, while noting that the Father and the Holy Spirit are also prominent in the story

as Jesus' close companions (Ch. 7). He refers to the Apostles' Creed as "one of the

earliest postbiblical attempts to make a theologically significant list of the main

characters in the plot of the New Testament," noting that while Jesus, the Son, is

"bracket[ed]" between "God, the Father Almighty" and "the Holy Spirit," the person and

work of Christ is clearly the central focus of the creed's affirmations (Ch. 7). Sanders

goes on to explain, "While Jesus is the focal point of the New Testament's attention, he is

presented as the one who always understood in reference to the Father who sent him and

whose work he is carrying out," and he is "consistently depicted as surrounded by the

person and work of the Holy Spirit" (Ch. 7).

Steve Seamands succinctly summarizes ministry which conforms to the image of

the Triune God as follows: "The ministry into which we have entered is the ministry *of*

Jesus Christ, *to* the Father, *through* the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the church and the

world" (*Ministry in the Image of God*, Ch. 1).

Hermeneutical Issues for Preaching as Christ-centered Gospel Proclamation

Grant Osborne has noted that some confusion exists among Christians who, on the one hand, believe that the Bible is intended to be understood by ordinary people, and yet frequently encounter scripture passages which present multiple options for interpretation, thus causing some to either question the perspicuity of the scriptures or, in the other extreme, to ignore "the need for hermeneutical principles to bridge the cultural gap" between the biblical setting and that of the contemporary reader (Osborne, Introduction). However, he argues, both these extreme responses stem from the tendency "to confuse hermeneutical principles with the gospel message itself" (Introduction). As a case in point, he mentions Martin Luther, who, in *The Bondage of the Will*, explains that perspicuity of the scriptures rests in, as Osborne summarizes it, "the final product (the gospel message) rather than the process (recovering the meaning of individual texts) . . ." (Introduction).

If indeed this is correct, then the key tenets of the gospel, when rightly understood, should serve as hermeneutical channel markers which will keep both the reader and the preacher from getting caught in the shallow waters of theological heresy—even when they encounter difficult passages whose interpretation does not enjoy strong consensus among otherwise like-minded, Bible-believing Christians. Perhaps one of the most thorough treatments of this assumption has been presented by Graeme Goldsworthy (2006, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*). Craig Ott writes, "Because of the great diversity in the Bible itself with its many narratives, literary genres, and historical and cultural contexts, one must be cautious about reducing the rich diversity of the Bible too narrowly to a single theme or motif. Yet within this diversity broad unifying contours stand out" (Ott and Strauss, Ch. 1). Goldsworthy forthrightly states that "Christ as mediator means

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the gospel is the hermeneutic norm of Scripture" (62). This study operated within the framework of the assumption that the major themes of the Gospel of Jesus Christ should form those "broad unifying contours" of which Ott writes, and thus provide the expositor with the kind of hermeneutical bridge which can span the long gap from local exegetical context to the context of the contemporary audience.

<div align="center">**Historical and Theological Foundations**</div>

The historical and theological foundations for this study flow out of the themes presented above from the survey of biblical literature. In this section, the researcher will demonstrate how these same themes have continued to emerge from the writings of key Christian thinkers as they endeavored to contextualize them in various ways during different historical-cultural periods in the history of the Church. Although the scope of this study does not permit an exhaustive review of all such literature, the researcher has attempted to provide a representative sampling from some of the thinkers who are believed to be most influential in articulating and developing these themes throughout the history of Christian thought.

Irenaeus (c. A.D. 135 - c. A.D. 202)

Irenaeus is especially well-known for two key works which have survived from antiquity. The first of these is *Adversus Haereses*, in which he attacks the false teachings of the Gnostics, whose influence was then threatening the Church (Cairns 107-108; Gonzalez, Vol. 1, 158-160). Perhaps it was his careful refutation of the Gnostics with their negative view of all things material including human flesh, which then gave impetus for another of his works—*The Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*—with its emphasis on Christ's union with humanity (Gonzalez 167-68; Greathouse 35-36). In this latter

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work, Irenaeus focuses more on fortifying the faith of Christians through a systematic, catechetical presentation of the person and work of Jesus Christ through the incarnation (Gonzalez 160).

On the one hand, Irenaeus' writings do not reveal anything particularly striking or unique by which his theology might be distinguished from others within the apostolic tradition (Gonzalez 160). And yet, as someone else has contended, he was "the first patristic writer to provide us with a clear and comprehensive doctrine of Atonement and Redemption" (Greathouse 35). Perhaps this seeming paradox is actually the beautiful genius of Irenaeus' thought. In *The Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*, he articulates Christian doctrine with a simplicity which is deeply grounded in salvation history as presented in the Old and New Testament scriptures (Gonzales 160-161). Thus, as Bruce Shelley has observed, "His theology was grounded in the Bible and the church's doctrines and helped provide a steadying, positive influence in the church" (33).

In developing a theological-historical framework for Christ-centered preaching, this section begins with Irenaeus not only because of his chronological position in the long history of Christian thought, but also because his writings have proven to be a seminal body of work, the influence of which can be seen in the further developments of Christian doctrine. Of particular relevance to this study is the fact that, as Gonzales has succinctly put it, "Christ is the center of Irenaeus' theology" (165). If there is any particular emphasis which stands out in Irenaeus' writings, it would probably be his teaching of "recapitulation" which comes from the Greek word *anakephalaiwsis,* which, in its most literal sense, means "to place under a new head" (Gonzalez 165-166). He uses this concept to describe God's grand purpose, throughout salvation history, of making

Christ the "head of a new humanity" through his incarnation, death, and victorious resurrection (Gonzalez 165-67). This recapitulation will be fully and finally realized at the end of the eschaton when all things will be put under Christ's feet (Gonzalez 167-68).

Irenaeus did not describe the effects of the gospel of Christ in merely forensic terms. Rather, he wrote with a distinct eschatological thrust, emphasizing the transformation which Christ ultimately will bring to the world in the final consummation of his kingdom, and which is even now being manifested in those who are already united with him through faith (*The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, Sections 56-61). He makes reference to Isaiah's beautiful blending of these two themes, in which he anticipates a dramatic change in the character of even the animals, when the lion will lie down beside the lamb and the little child will play beside the cobra's nest without any cause for alarm. In like manner to this anticipated future age, Irenaeus writes, Christ is even now:

> gathering together in peace and concord . . . [people] of unlike races and (yet) of like dispositions. . . . (But now) coming together in one name [225] they have acquired righteous habits by the grace of God, changing their wild and untamed nature. And this has come to pass already. For those who were before exceeding wicked, so that they left no work of ungodliness undone, learning of Christ and believing on Him, have at once believed and been changed, so as to leave no excellency of righteousness undone; so great is the transformation which faith in Christ the Son of God effects for those who believe on Him. (Section 61).

For Irenaeus, however, this transformation is clearly a work of God which is produced through faith in Christ, and not something to be achieved through the mere

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adherence to a set of moral principles. Thus, he writes, ". . . not by the much speaking of the law, but by the brevity of faith and love, men were to be saved" (Section 86). It is "by means of faith" that "all who care for their own salvation" may be sure not to "turn aside and wander from the right" (Section 1). Furthermore, while "purity of the flesh" requires the discipline of righteous living, "purity of soul" on the other hand, "is the keeping faith toward God entire, neither adding thereto nor diminishing therefrom" (Section 1). This does not mean that obedience is unnecessary, for "we must needs hold the rule of the faith without deviation, [65] and do the commandments of God, believing in God and fearing Him as Lord and loving Him as Father" (Section 3). So, then how does this correlate with faith? Irenaeus goes on to explain, "Now the doing is produced by faith" (Section 3).

So then how does one receive faith? Again, he anticipates this question, and thus explains that "faith is produced by the truth; for faith rests on things that truly are" (Section 3). This truth is something which has been passed down to us from the apostles (Section 3) and is centered in the Son of God, whom the Holy Spirit revealed through the prophets (Section 5). This "rule of faith" is summarized in the baptismal formula given by Christ himself (Matt. 28:19), in which each believer acknowledges that "God the Father [is] bestowing on us regeneration through His Son by the Holy Spirit" (Section 5). Thus, he writes:

> Without the Spirit it is not possible to behold the Word of God, nor without the Son can any draw near to the Father for the knowledge of the Father is the Son, [84] and the knowledge of the Son of God is through the Holy Spirit; and,

according to the good pleasure of the Father, the Son ministers and dispenses [85]

the Spirit to whomsoever the Father wills and as He wills. (Section 5)

Furthermore, Irenaeus places the recapitulation of all things into Christ within the

framework of Christ's victory of Satan, which is seen repeatedly throughout salvation

history, including at such events as the temptation of Christ in the wilderness, Christ's

resurrection, and his anticipated ultimate triumph over Satan at the end of the age

(Gonzalez 167-68).

Other theologians would certainly go on to clarify, expand, and develop the

teachings of the apostles, but one might argue that Irenaeus, with his emphasis on

apostolic succession, the rule of faith, and salvation history, was in large part responsible

for making sure that they received a solid foundation on which to build the house of faith

which the Church enjoys today (Cairns 108; Shelley 33; Gonzalez 170). Furthermore, his

Christ-centered approach combined with a solid understanding of the Trinity, has set a

pattern for preaching which should still help us to navigate the cultural crosswinds which

threaten to undermine the integrity of the gospel we preach.

Athanasius (c. A.D. 296-373)

As Irenaeus is known for defending Christianity against the teachings of the

Gnostics, Athanasius is probably best-known for his protracted defense of the Christian

faith against Arianism (Gonzalez 291-92). He insisted that Christ is "coequal, coeternal,

[and] consubstantial with the Father"—a position for which he would be put into exile

five times throughout his turbulent life (Cairns 128). More will be said about this in the

next section (below).

While he also wrote several works, many of which were directed against the teachings of the Arians, two of his best-known written works actually came earlier, as the conflict with Arianism was just developing (Gonzalez 292). *Against the Heathen* was written in defense of monotheism, and *On the Incarnation* was written for the purpose of building upon the foundation of Christian monotheism with a thoughtful articulation of the doctrine of salvation (296).

As the title implies, *On the Incarnation* is a treatise in which Athanasius presents his understanding of who Christ is and what Christ has done through the incarnation (Cairns 128). He approaches this matter more as a practical theologian with pastoral concern than as a systematic theologian who is only thinking in the abstract (Gonzalez 292-93). Of particular relevance to the theological framework for Christ-centered preaching in this study is not only Athanasius' Christology, but also the way in which he connects his Christological views to soteriology (Gonzalez 296-97). In a manner which is similar to Irenaeus' approach in *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, he also presents his Christology through a panoramic recounting of salvation history.

Athanasius begins his presentation of salvation history with a recounting of Creation and the Fall (*On the Incarnation*, Chapter 1). In creation, God "bestowed a grace which other creatures lacked—namely the impress of His own Image, a share in the reasonable being of the very Word Himself, so that, reflecting Him and themselves becoming reasonable and expressing the mind of God even as He does . . ." (Chapter 1, Section 3). But in the fall, humankind misused their God-given freedom, "went astray and became vile, throwing away their birthright of beauty" and thus brought themselves into a "state of death and corruption" (Section 3). Thus, as Gonzalez rightly discerns, in

Athanasius' view, "Sin is not . . . a mere mistake that must be corrected; nor is it a debt that is now necessary to pay; nor is it even that we have forgotten the way that leads to God and must be reminded of it. Sin is rather the introduction within creation of an element of disintegration that leads toward destruction, and that can only be expelled through a new work of creation" (Gonzalez 297-98). The need for a new creation, therefore, necessitates another work of the Creator (297). This became an important basis for his subsequent arguments for the deity of Christ and against Arianism (297).

Athanasius then goes on to explain how the incarnation of God in Christ resolves "The Divine Dilemma" created by human sin (Chapters 2 and 3). His sense of the fallen condition of human beings was such that Athanasius did not believe that mere repentance was an adequate solution for human sin and corruption (Chapter 2, Section 7). Thus he writes, ". . . [W]hat, then, was God to do? Was He to demand repentance from [people] for their transgression? You might say that that was worthy of God, and argue further that, as through the Transgression they became subject to corruption, so through repentance they might return to incorruption again" (Section 7). But, he goes on to say, mere repentance does not "recall [people] from what is according to their nature; all that it does is to make them cease from sinning" (Section 7). He then goes on to argue that if "trespass" were the only concern, then repentance would be an adequate solution (Section 7).[1] However, the subsequent state of corruption necessitates something more than just human acts of repentance in order for the fallen human condition to be remedied (Section

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[1] On this point, I believe that Athanasius would be at variance with the broad consensus of Protestant theologians, who would view human transgression as making us culpable before a righteous God in such a way as could not be erased simply by an act of repentance. Nevertheless, his sensitivity to the nature of sin, or as some would call it, human depravity, is significant here.

7). Why? Because ". . . when once transgression had begun [people] came under the power of the corruption proper to their nature and were bereft of the grace which belonged to them as creatures in the Image of God" (Section 7).

But God resolved this dilemma in the incarnation of Christ through the miraculous creation of a human body that was uncorrupted by sin, in the womb of a virgin woman (Section 8). "This He did", writes Athanasius, "that He might turn again to incorruption [people] who had turned back to corruption, and make them alive through death by the appropriation of His body and by the grace of His resurrection" (Section 8). Thus, the same "solidarity" of humankind which places everyone under a state of corruption because of Adam's sin, also makes it possible for God, through "indwelling in a single human body", to resolve this great dilemma created by Adam's sin (Section 9).

Christ's incarnation accomplished what the law and the prophets were powerless to do. In his review of salvation history, Athanasius describes how God, out of his goodness and love, gave the law and the prophets to humankind (Section 12). "Yet," he says, "[people] bowed down by the pleasures of the moment and by the frauds and illusions of the evil spirits, did not lift up their heads towards the truth. So burdened were they with their wickednesses that they seemed rather to be brute beasts than reasonable [persons], reflecting the very Likeness of the Word [Jesus Christ]" (Section 12).

But what the law and the prophets could not do, Christ accomplished through his death and resurrection. Building upon his argument of Christ's union with all of humanity through the incarnation, Athanasius now describes how Christ died and rose again for all of Adam's fallen race. Therefore, the culmination of the incarnation is seen in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ (Chapters 4 and 5). In fact, he argues, the "bodily

death" of Christ is "the very center of our faith" (Section 19). Because even in his death, Christ accomplished a great victory. He explains:

> Now that the common Savior of all has died on our behalf, we who believe in Christ no longer die, as [people] died aforetime, in fulfillment of the threat of the law. That condemnation has come to an end; and now that, by the grace of the resurrection, corruption has been banished and done away, we are loosed from our mortal bodies in God's good time for each, so that we may obtain thereby a better resurrection. (Section 21)

Athanasius goes on to argue that the radical transformation of human lives testifies to the truth of Christ's resurrection. "We are agreed that a dead person can do nothing:" he writes:

> Yet the Savior works mightily every day, drawing [people] to religion, persuading them to virtue, teaching them about immortality, quickening their thirst for heavenly things, revealing the knowledge of the Father, inspiring strength in face of death, manifesting Himself to each and displacing the irreligion of idols; while the gods and evil spirits of unbelievers can do none of these things, but rather become dead at Christ's presence, all their ostentation barren and void. By the sign of the cross, on the contrary, all magic is stayed, all sorcery confounded, all the idols are abandoned and deserted, and all senseless pleasure ceases, as the eye of faith looks up from earth to heaven. (*On the Incarnation*, Section 31)

The Nicene Creed (A.D. 325)

The fourth century brought a very pivotal development in the establishment of Christian orthodoxy (Gonzalez, vol. 1, 261). A controversy had erupted between

Alexander, bishop of the Church in Alexandria, and Arius, who was one of his presbyters, over the divinity of Jesus Christ (Gonzalez 262-264). Justo Gonzalez suggests that, while interpretations vary regarding certain aspects of Arius's teaching, Alexander's controversy with him centered on the fact that "when the question was posed as to whether the one incarnate in Jesus is divine in nature, or is a creature that has been adopted into divinity, Arius and his followers chose the latter option" (262-264).

Arius was so popular among the people that even after Alexander "condemned and deposed" him, his influence still threatened to divide the church (Gonzalez 265). Upon learning of this, the Roman Emperor Constantine felt that it was also in the best interest of his empire to hold a "great council of bishops" in order to resolve not only this controversy but also "several problems that needed a common solution" (265-266). And so, in A.D. 325, the council of Nicea convened with over three hundred bishops attending (266).

Out of that church council came what we know today as the Nicene Creed, which was written as follows:

> *We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible:*

> *And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, Who because of us humans and because of our salvation came down and*

became incarnate, becoming human, suffered and rose again on the third day,

ascended to the heavens, and will come to judge the living and the dead;

And in the Holy Spirit.

But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and, Before being born

He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the

Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or is created, or is subject to

alteration or change—these the Catholic Church anathematizes. (Gonzalez 267-268)

The Christological explicitness of this creed has served as a major historical-theological channel marker throughout the succeeding centuries in the life and witness of the Church.

Augustine (A.D. 354-430)

As one of the most salient theologians from Christian antiquity, Augustine's writings have particular relevance to this study because of his far-reaching influence upon Christian theology. As Gonzalez has succinctly explained, "He is the last of the ancient Christian writers, and the forerunner of medieval theology. The main currents of ancient theology converged in him, and from him flow the rivers, not only of medieval scholasticism, but also of sixteenth-century Protestant theology" (Gonzalez, vol. 2, 15).

Confessions (A.D. 397-401)

In his *Confessions,* Augustine gives a first-hand account of his own spiritual journey, including his early struggles with sinful passions for which he found neither ability nor desire to control. At one point during his adolescence, his prayer to God was "Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet" for, as he explained, "I was afraid you

might hear my prayer quickly, and that you might too rapidly heal me of the disease of lust which I preferred to satisfy rather than suppress" (145). But his sense of guilt became so great that his soul felt "as if it were facing death . . . terrified of being restrained from the treadmill of habit by which it suffered 'sickness unto death' (John 11:4)" (146). Augustine marveled that people less educated and with less cultural refinement than himself were "rising up and capturing heaven" while he, a highly cultured and educated man, could not seem to conquer his own fleshly appetites (146).

The turning point came when, one day as Augustine was "weeping in bitter agony of heart," he heard the voice of a young child, chanting repetitiously the phrase "Pick up and read, pick up and read" (152). At first, he thought that perhaps these were just the words of a game that children play, but after thinking about it, he could not recall any such game (152-153). He then sensed that this was indeed a message from God, telling him to pick up the Bible which he had been reading, and to read whatever might be the first scripture he would find (153). He did so, and the first scripture that he came to was Romans 13:13-14: "Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts" (153). Augustine testifies, "I neither wished nor needed to read further. At once, with the last words of this sentence, it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart. All the shadows of doubt were dispelled" (153).

Augustine's Controversy with the Pelagians (Beginning A.D. 405)

What Augustine first learned experientially through his struggles with sin and encounters with grace began to find more careful expression in his subsequent writings. Of particular relevance to this study are several treatises which he wrote throughout the

course of his controversy with a group known as the Pelagians. They were followers of a man from the British Isles known as Pelagius, who in A.D. 405 began to publicly oppose Augustine's teaching that human beings are totally dependent upon God's grace in order to live righteous lives (Gonzalez 29-30). He insisted that, while God has extended grace to humankind through creation and through the forgiveness provided by Christ on the cross, righteous living is, nevertheless, purely the product of the human will which was created by God with natural freedom of choice (Gonzalez 30-33; Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin*, Chapter 4 – Pelagius' System of Faculties). The teachings of Pelagius and his followers were eventually rejected by the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431 (Gonzalez 30). But Augustine's writings which stemmed from this controversy continue to serve as theological touchstones for the Church as theologians endeavor to articulate the gospel in ways that are contextually relevant and yet consistent with orthodox soteriology.

On the Spirit and the Letter (A.D. 412)

In his treatise *On the Spirit and the Letter*, Augustine focused specifically on the powerlessness of the law of God to transform a sinner into a righteous person in the sight of God. The main thrust of Augustine's argument in this treatise is directed toward those who (influenced by Pelagius) did not believe that God's grace was necessary in order to live righteously. What made their teachings especially deceptive was the subtle way in which they nuanced their argument. In fact, according to Augustin, the Pelagians conceded that God does help people to live righteously. However, they taught that this help comes in the form of a free will and through enlightenment from the teaching of God's commandments (chapters 4). But Augustine, while not denying the existence of

free will, nevertheless insisted that without the help of the Holy Spirit, even the free human is not strong enough to choose righteousness but, rather, chooses to sin (chapter 5).

On Nature and Grace (A.D. 414/415)

Faith in Christ's death is unnecessary if human beings are capable of obtaining eternal life by means of "perfecting righteousness" through obedience to the law (Ch. 2).

On the Grace of Christ and Original Sin (A.D. 418)

Augustine pointed out that the grace to which Pelagius referred as helping the natural human capacity was nothing more than "the law and the teaching" (chapter 8) while the grace to which Paul the Apostle refers in his letter to the Romans is categorically different from the law of God, which serves in a completely different function (chapter 9).

The Protestant Reformation and the Five *Solas*

The Protestant reformation began in 1517 when a German monk named Martin Luther nailed his "Ninety-Five Theses" to the door of the castle at Wittenburg. What began as a call for reform within the Roman Catholic Church rapidly developed into a movement which has resulted in several different Protestant traditions outside of the Roman Catholic Church. It would be difficult to overstate the influence of this movement upon succeeding generations of Christian adherents, particularly within those traditions flowing within the stream of Protestant evangelicalism.

Germane to this study is the notable influence of the Protestant reformation on both the preaching of the gospel (the medium) and the gospel which is being preached (the message). According to Earl Cairns, "Luther restored preaching to its rightful place

in the church and thus recreated a medium of spiritual instruction that had been so widely used in the early church" (289). With the reformers' emphasis on the principle of *sola scriptura*, expository preaching flourished within Protestantism, beginning with key figures such as Martin Luther and John Calvin who were known for their careful exposition of scripture texts. Furthermore, as will be seen below, there are five key theological emphases which emerged from this period which now form the "presuppositions" for Protestant evangelical proclamation of the gospel (See Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics* 45-47).

The limited scope of this literature review does not include scholars from the medieval period in church history. However, this should not be interpreted as meaning that no relevant figures appear during that era. Nor should the emerging focus on the five *solas* of the Protestant reformation be understood as implying that this was something that was totally missing during previous periods of church history. To the contrary, as Vanhoozer explains:

> The *solas* are neither a confession of faith nor a substitute for the ancient Rule of faith. Rather, as evangelicalism is a renewal movement in the heart of Protestantism, so the *solas* are a renewal of catholic Christianity, providing deeper insights into the triune logic of the gospel. Each *sola* contributes something to the pattern of interpretive authority, and, interestingly enough, each *sola* corresponds to one of the five distinguishing marks of evangelicalism. (*Biblical Authority After Babel* Conclusion).

Vanhoozer's perspective is important at this point, because part of the researcher's initial concern was that much of contemporary preaching falls short of

authentic, Christ-centered gospel proclamation. But, in order to measure this, one must establish some fixed points of reference by which to evaluate the relative degree to which a sermon does or does not represent a Christ-centered, gospel proclamation. The question of defining the gospel will be specifically discussed further below. But here, we take note of how the Protestant reformation helped to "retrieve" key aspects of the gospel from ancient Christianity, and how Protestant evangelicals, in turn, would do well to also "retrieve" these same principles from Reformation theology (Vanhoozer, Intro.).

Goldsworthy notes that these *solas* "are distinct emphases on the one essential truth of the gospel" (46). Furthermore, they should be understood in a certain logical sequence which he describes as "a priority among equals, that in no way compromises the others" (46). We will follow this suggested order below, but with the addition of a fifth *sola* which Goldsworthy does not address.

Sola Gratia

First, there is *grace alone* which "speaks of the priority of God's being as the source of all things and the measure of all things" (47). Thus, he equates *sola gratia* with "*the ontological priority of God*" (47). During the reformation, this emphasis was seen as a "repudiation of the Roman Catholic notion of nature plus grace" (47). Central to a historical-redemptive reading of scripture is the unfolding narrative of an eternal, holy, infinite God who took the initiative not only in the creation of humankind, but also in redeeming us. Kevin Vanhoozer reminds us that "Christianity is not primarily a system of ideas but an account of how the Creator has reached out with both hands, Son and Spirit, to lift up a fallen world in a loving embrace" (*Biblical Authority After Babel*, Ch. 1). This is at the heart of *sola gratia*.

This emphasis on "grace alone" also has implications for the exegetical and theological approach to task of preaching, because, it acknowledges that the illumination of Scripture comes not from "the light of autonomous reason but [from] the light that originates from the Father, radiates in the Son (Heb. 1:3), and penetrates the hearts and minds through the Spirit" (Vanhoozer Ch. 2). Therefore, "Mere Protestant Christians read Scripture in the economy of grace in order to be drawn higher up and further into that light" (Ch. 1). Thus, *sola gratia* militated against what Luther referred to as the "theology of glory" which was based on "the assumption that creation and history are transparent to the human intellect, that one can see through what is made and what happens so as to peer into the 'invisible things of God'" (Gerhard Forde, quoted by Robert Kolb in Wengert 37).

Solus Cristus

Central to the unfolding story of redemption in Holy Scripture is the Son of God, who was sent by God the Father, and who was conceived, led, and empowered by the Holy Spirit throughout his earthly life. His sacrifice on the cross provided for the redemption of all sinners, and "salvation is found nowhere else but in the person and work of Jesus Christ" (Goldsworthy 47-48). This has far-reaching "ramifications for the redemption of the whole created order" (48). Goldsworthy suggests that "*The principle of 'Christ alone' points us to the soteriological and hermeneutical priority of the gospel of Christ*" (48 – italics original). Thus, *solus Cristus* provides the hermeneutical and theological bridge that is needed to connect biblical exegesis and expository homiletics in such a way that gospel proclamation will be the result. This emphasis during the Reformation produced a "revival of Christian preaching" (Wengert 110).

Sola Scriptura

The questions of revelation and authority have already been discussed (above). Here we simply note that, in terms of revelation, "the Reformers . . . asserted that there is no other source of truth available to us by which we can know Christ, and through him, God" (48). They furthermore, pushed back against the Roman Catholic tendency to equate the Church and its traditions as being of equal authority with holy Scripture (48). Cairns states, "In the place of an authoritative church [Luther] put an authoritative Bible as the infallible rule of faith and practice that each believer-priest should use for guidance in matters of faith and morals" (289). Goldsworthy states, "*The principle of 'Scripture alone' points us to the phenomenological and material priority of Scripture*" (49). In plain language, this "simply means that we must read the Bible or hear the message of the Bible if we are to know God" (49).

The significance of oral proclamation of God's Word should not be underestimated here (Gonzalez, Vol. III, 49). For Luther, the preaching event was not merely an opportunity to communicate with words "*about* God" (H. S. Wilson in Wengert, 102), but rather, God was the One communicating through the words of the preacher (100-112). Furthermore, God's speaking and his redemptive activity cannot be separated, for where God is speaking, he is also acting (109-110; Also see Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, Ch. 8, "Trinitarian Hermeneutics").

H. S. Wilson clarifies, "Luther's view that God continues to communicate with us through the Word proclaimed by the preacher as found in the Scripture reflects his high regard for the preacher's role in the church. However, this means that a preacher both has and does not have something new to say" (Wengert 105). Thus, while *sola scriptura* does

not preclude the divine activity of God who, by the Holy Spirit, both speaks and acts

through the proclamation of the living Word of Christ, it still maintains a commitment to

the written Word of God as the sole basis of authority and revelation.

Sola Fide

Goldsworthy states, "*The principle of 'faith alone' points us to the ontological*

inability of the sinner and the epistemological priority of the Holy Spirit" (50). The

emphasis on salvation through faith alone was what gave impetus to the Reformation

(Vanhoozer, Ch. 2). It subsequently became one of the core themes around which the

reformers developed their theology. For Luther, this flowed out his own personal study of

the scriptures which was prompted by a very deep struggle in finding assurance of

salvation (Latourette 703-07). But what he found in the scriptures, and experienced

through personal assurance of faith, Luther also saw attested in the witness of the ancient

church through the writings of Ambrose, Augustine, Anselm, Bernard of Clairvaux, and

others (707).

At the core of *sola fide* was the Reformers' insistence that "[people] can never

save [themselves]. Salvation is through Christ and Christ alone, through His profound

grace and through radical confidence (faith) in Him" (Garlow 187). Luther's teaching of

"faith alone" found perhaps its clearest depiction in the contrast which he painted

between the "theology of glory" and the "theology of the cross". Gonzalez explains the

difference between the two in this way:

> A theology of glory attempts to see God as manifested in works. A theology of
>
> the cross believes that God can be rightfully spoken of and rightfully worshiped
>
> only as seen in suffering and the cross. A theology of glory is blind and puffed up,

for it claims that we in our actual sinful state can see God's works as such, and

God in them. . . . Over against this type of theology stands the theology of the

cross, which is the only true theology. It does not claim to discover God's own

self, but rather is content with knowing God in revelation, that is in suffering and

in the cross. (41)

Luther contrasted these two approaches to theology as being a "'legal' and 'evangelical'

knowledge" respectively (Gonzalez 42). He rejected the theology of glory for two

reasons: First, because it was rationalistic, assuming that sinful human beings could know

God purely through the exercise of their natural abilities; Secondly, because it was

moralistic, and failed to fully appreciate the hopeless condition of sinful human beings in

the presence of a holy God (42-43).

Thus, as Robert Kolb observes, these theologians of glory "put human

epistemologies in charge of divine revelation" (37, citing Gerhard Forde, *On Being a

Theologian,* 72-73). This was the product of the "medieval theological systems" which

placed "an emphasis on the glory of human performance, of works that can capture God's

favor by sheer human effort, plus some help from divine grace" (37). Therefore, the

"[r]eligions of glory have as their first and foremost goal the encouragement of good

human performance" (37). "The theology of the cross," on the other hand, "aims at

bestowing a new identity upon sinners, setting aside the old identity, by killing it, so that

good human performance can flow out of this new identity that is comprehended in trust

toward God" (37-38).

Soli Deo Gloria

Some writers mention only the preceding four *solas* (or some part thereof) in conjunction with the Reformation (For example: Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics* 46; Garlow 186-87; Noll 219). However, *Soli Deo Gloria* is also a significant theme which emerged particularly from the writings and preaching of John Calvin, and it formed "[t]he cornerstone of his theology, life, and ministry . . ." (Lawson 39). Calvin's influence can also be seen in the doctrines of the Anglican Church which resulted from the reformation in England. In 1647, the Anglican Church produced *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, which begins with this foundational statement, "Man's [sic] chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever [sic]."

Kevin Vanhoozer also includes this fifth *sola* in his book *Biblical Authority After Babel*. He states, "To glorify God is to publish his greatness, which entails making it public. . . . We glorify God when we show the world the goodness of his attributes and the goodness of his gospel, including our unity in Christ" (Ch. 5). Vanhoozer suggests that the Protestant principle of *soli deo gloria* should lead to a "*catholicity*" which is based in the gospel so that there may be a "coming together of mere Protestant churches from east and west, Anglican and Baptist, Pentecostal and Presbyterian, [and, let us add, Wesleyan-Methodists] to 'recline at the table in the kingdom of God' (Luke 13:29), and there to feast on the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8)" (Ch. 5).

Reformation Theology and Christ-Centered Gospel Proclamation

The Reformation emphasis on *Sola Scriptura*, together with the Protestant understanding "that the church is *semper reformanda*, always to be reformed" (Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority*, Conclusion) reminds us that no system of theology or

hermeneutical grid, including the five *solas*, should be placed in judgment over Holy

Scripture (Goldsworthy 50). Biblical expositors must continuously practice the

"hermeneutical spiral" to cross-check both theological presuppositions and exegetical

hermeneutics, in order to "maintain the integrity of . . . method" and also of the message

which they proclaim (Goldsworthy 52). Nevertheless, the five *solas* do provide a well-

established rubric for evaluating the doctrinal and hermeneutical integrity of one's

preaching.

John Wesley (1703-1791 A.D.)

John Wesley was primarily a preaching theologian (Pasquarello ix-xxvi). His

theology was deeply rooted in the *solas* of the Protestant reformation (Olson 24; Noll

217-222). Nevertheless, he made some adjustments which were sorely needed at a time

when many within the reformed tradition had lost their evangelical piety and fervor

(Gonzalez, Vol. 3, 306-16). His emphasis on holiness of heart and life helped to tilt the

balance of theology in England away from what Gonzalez refers to as the "cold,

propositional orthodoxy" found at that time among much of Protestantism in Europe

(306). Furthermore, as Mark A. Noll has observed, "In both preserving and adjusting the

message of the early Protestants, the Wesleys' [John and Charles] work kept alive the

message of God's grace and greatly broadened its outreach" (217).

While Wesley did not accept the Calvinistic interpretation with regard to

predestination and some of its cognate teachings, he also was careful to avoid articulating

his soteriology in such a way as to fall into the ditch of Pelagianism (Gonzalez 311-13).

He did this by emphasizing the "twin doctrines of original sin and prevenient grace"

(Williams 41). Gonzalez points out that Wesley came into a religious environment in

which "Anglicans as well as Dissenters seemed content with a bland form of Christianity that rested on ritual and outward observances, but that did little to nurture the faith of the believer" (307). In a rather striking observation, the relevance of which will become even more evident in the section dealing with Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (below), he states, "Preaching had often become little more that moral exhortation" (307).

Wesley and Solus Cristus

In a sermon entitled "The Lord Our Righteousness," he states, "There is no true faith, that is, justifying faith, which hath not the righteousness of Christ for its object" (Wesley, *Works* 5, 237). Wesley wanted to make it clear that faith itself is not what merits God's favor any more than human works. Rather, it is the merits of Christ Himself—His righteousness—which is received by faith in Him and in Him alone (239).

Wesley and Sola Scriptura

Wesley's sermons and other writings show that he embraced the reformation principle of *sola scriptura*. Perhaps no other statement by Wesley demonstrates this like the following:

> I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God. . . . I want to know one thing,--the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way: For this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri* [a man of one book]. (Wesley, *Works* 5, 3)

In the words that follow, Wesley goes on to describe how he listens for God's instruction through careful meditation upon the words of scripture in solitude, asking for the Holy Spirit's illumination of the meaning of the text (3). He then goes on to say, "If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God; and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach" (3-4). Thus, Wesley makes it clear that by claiming to be "*homo unius libri*", he certainly does not mean that he disregards the value of other books or other students of the scriptures. Rather, he gives ultimate and final authority to only one book—"the book of God."

Even a casual perusal of Wesley's sermons will confirm that he practiced the principle of *sola scriptura* in his approach to preaching. His sermons are saturated both with direct quotations and allusions to scripture. Wesley's approach to theology involved four key components: scripture, tradition, reason, and experience (Oden 55-99). As seen above, scripture was given priority within this framework (Oden 55). But he also valued the insights yielded from reading after the various thinkers and writers from Christian antiquity and throughout church history (Oden 65-71). He also gave due regard to the place of reason in the Christian pursuit of truth, while carefully acknowledging its limitations (Oden 71-84). Finally, Wesley expected that sound doctrine which conformed to scripture, was affirmed by tradition, and which did not contradict good principles of sanctified human reasoning, should also find confirmation in human experience while also avoiding the extremes of emotionalism and factionalism (Oden 84-99). Nevertheless, it was always scripture which was both his first and the final basis of authority in Christian proclamation and teaching.

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Therefore, for Wesley, those who claim to be God's messengers must speak the pure Word of God. Thomas Oden describes three characteristics by which Wesley identified preachers who were "corrupters" of God's Word (*John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity*, 63). First, there are those who "are predisposed to blend Scripture with political interests, economic motives, or various human admixtures, diluting the divine word either with errors of others, or the fancies of their own brain, usually without any awareness of their own self-deception" (63). Secondly, there is the preacher who "perverts the sense of a passage of Scripture, taking it out of context" (63). Third, are the preachers who "corrupt the Word not by adding to but subtracting from it" (63).

However, while Wesley's preaching flowed out of his understanding of scripture, which was subject to the checks and balances of tradition, reason, and experience, he also was guided theologically by his focus on the major themes of *Sola Gratia*, *Sola Fide*, and *Solus Cristus.*

Wesley and Sola Gratia

One can hardly speak of Wesley's understanding of grace without also including his emphasis on the doctrine of original sin. Wesley's theology coupled, on the one hand a strong sense of sinful humanity's inability to bridge the gap between themselves and God and, on the other hand, an equally strong emphasis on prevenient grace, through which God works to enable human beings to respond to his overtures of love (Williams 41).

In his sermon on "Original Sin" Wesley describes fallen humanity's inability to know, love, or even fear God (*Complete Works* 6, 54-65). He concludes with these words of hope:

Know your disease! Know your cure! Ye were born in sin: Therefore, 'ye must be born again,' born of God. By nature ye are wholly corrupted. By grace ye shall be wholly renewed. In Adam ye all died: In the second Adam, in Christ, ye all are made alive. 'You that were dead in sins hath he quickened:' He hath already given you a principle of life, even faith in him who loved you and gave himself for you! Now, 'go on from faith to faith,' until your whole sickness be healed: and all that 'mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.' (65)

Wesley and Sola Fide

Another key theme in Wesley's preaching and teaching was that of justification by faith alone. One time he was responding to a tract which someone had published in which, among other things, they had stated (apparently in an accusatory manner) that Wesley believed in justification by faith alone (Wesley, *Complete Works*, Vol. 8, "The Principles of a Methodist," 361). In response to this intended accusation, Wesley wrote:

That I believe in justification by faith alone. This I allow. For I am firmly persuaded, that every [person] of the offspring of Adam is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil; that this corruption of our nature, in every person born into the world, deserves God's wrath and damnation; that therefore, if ever we receive the remission of our sins, and are accounted righteous before God, it must be only for the merit of Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings of any kind. Nay, I am persuaded, that all works done before justification, have in them the nature of sin; and that, consequently, till he is justified, a [person] has no power to do any work which is pleasing and acceptable to God. (361)

In Wesley's collection of sermons, the very first one is entitled "Salvation by Faith" and his text is from Ephesians 2:8 (*Complete Works*, Vol. 5). In it, Wesley asks, at one point, "What faith is it then through which we are saved? It may be answered, First, in general, it is a faith in Christ." (9). He goes on to say that true saving faith "acknowledges the necessity and merit of his death, and the power of his resurrection. . . . Christian faith is then, not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life." (9).

Interestingly, Wesley's very next sermon after "Salvation by Faith" is entitled "The Almost Christian" in which he describes those who appear to be Christian because of their honesty, moral uprightness, and outward "form of godliness" (17-21). In contrast to the "Almost Christian" he goes on to describe those who are "*altogether a Christian*" (21). There are really three primary characteristics by which he identifies such a person. "First. The love of God" he writes, and then second is "the love of our neighbour" (21). He then comes to the third characteristic of one who is "*altogether a Christian,*" and this one, he says, "may be separately considered, though it cannot actually be separate from the preceding." (22). And it is "the ground of all, even faith" (22). He then goes on to explain how this faith is one which is "working by love" so as to produce all manner of outer and inner righteousness, coming out of a purified heart (23).

What kind of faith produces this kind of genuine Christian? It is a faith which not only chooses, he writes:

> to believe that holy Scripture and the articles of faith are true, but also to have a
> sure trust and confidence to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ. It is a

sure trust and confidence which a [person] hath in God, that, by the merits of

Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God; whereof doth

follow a loving heart to obey his commandments. (23)

In another sermon from the same text (Eph. 2:8) entitled "The Scripture Way of

Salvation", Wesley emphasizes that "Faith is the condition, and the only condition, of

justification" (*Complete Works*, 6, 48).

Wesley and Soli Deo Gloria

As a loyal Anglican, Wesley would have been well-schooled in the opening

words of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* which state that the "chief end of

[humankind]" is "to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever [sic]." An important

component of Wesley's theology was his concern for the restoration of fallen human

nature into the image of God. Wesley understood that human beings in their fallen

condition do not naturally desire to do all things for God's glory. He described this rather

vividly in one place:

Man [sic] was created looking directly to God, as his last end; but falling into sin,

he fell off from God, and turned into himself. . . . And this is the case of all men

[sic] in their natural state: They seek not God but themselves. Hence though many

fair shreds of morality are among them, yet 'there is none that doeth good, no, not

one.' For though some of them 'run well,' they are still off the way; they never

aim at the right mark. Whithersoever they move they cannot move beyond the

circle of self. They seek themselves, they act for themselves; their natural, civil,

and religious actions, from whatever spring they come, do all run into, and meet

in, this dead sea. (quoted in Williams 50)

Wesley's teachings on Christian perfection emphasized that the human heart can be re-oriented so that perfect love for God and for fellow human beings becomes the controlling center of a person's entire being. As Gonzalez explains, "This perfection does not mean that the Christian who has attained it no longer errs, or no longer needs the grace and sustenance that comes from God. What it actually means is that the person who has attained it no longer willfully breaks the law of God, but rather acts out of love (Vol. III, 313). In his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Wesley gives an extended explanation of this doctrine. In a beautiful way, he took the Reformation theme of *Soli Deo Gloria* and presented it in a way that was Christ-centered, based in holy Scripture, received by grace through faith, and which endeavored to carry out the full implications of the gospel in the human heart and life.

Wesley and Reformation Theology

At this point, it would be no stretch of the imagination to suggest that Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Augustine are nodding their heads in whole-hearted agreement with Wesley—not to mention also Luther, Calvin, and the other Protestant reformers. But some of their theological offspring have not always seen Wesley and his Methodist children in the same light.

While researching the respective bodies of literature dealing with moralistic therapeutic deism and Christ-centered preaching, which will be addressed further below, it became evident that, with a few notable exceptions, most of the scholars addressing these issues are coming from a Calvinistic theological orientation; there are scant few Wesleyan-Arminian writers who are addressing these topics. This is lamentable for several reasons.

First of all, John Wesley's theology is deeply rooted in the soil of the Protestant reformation, including the five *solas* (*sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *solus Cristus*, *sola scriptura*, and *soli deo gloria*). As will be seen later, these five *solas* provide the evaluative rubric in this study for discerning whether preaching is more oriented toward a Christ-centered approach versus moralistic therapeutic deism. But an unfortunate misperception seems to have developed, particularly among Calvinistic theologians in America, for whom anyone associated with Arminian theology (as is Wesley) is often assumed to be theologically liberal (Olson 23).

Roger Olson suggests that this common misperception may be traced back to the eighteenth century in America, when notable Arminians such as John Taylor (1694-1761) and and Charles Chauncy (1705-1787) "blended Arminianism with the new natural religion of the Enlightenment" which resulted in an "Arminianism of the head that often leaned perilously close to Pelagianism, universalism and even Arianism" (23). Taylor and Chauncy drew strong criticism from the influential American Calvinist theologian Jonathan Edwards and his followers (23). This perception is not helped by the fact that many subsequent theologians from within Wesleyan and/or Arminian circles may rightly be accused of having taken a similar path in one way or another.

But, as Olson points out, some stalwart "Methodist and Arminian theologians" in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have vigorously condemned these errors as well (24-25). He specifically mentions Richard Watson (1781-1833), Thomas Summers (1812-1882) and William Burt Pope (1822-1903) as examples of Methodist theologians who wrote significant theological works, and who were thoroughly committed to the grand themes of reformation theology while also identifying themselves in agreement

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with the writings and teachings of Arminius (24-26). However, despite these outstanding examples (and others which could be included here), it must be admitted that there has been a significant element within the Wesleyan-Methodist tradition that has continued to develop a more liberal vein of theology. Olson observes that John Miley (1813-1895), while himself remaining within the camp of evangelical Methodism, nevertheless "introduced a somewhat liberalizing tendency into Wesleyan theology." (26).

The twentieth century did bring about a considerable number of solid Wesleyan-Arminian theologians, including many from within various denominations which had branched off of Methodism such as the Nazarenes and others (Olson 28). H. Orton Wiley (1877-1961), a Nazarene systematic theologian, also made a careful "distinction between semi-Pelagianism and true Arminianism and demonstrates the difference in his own doctrinal statements" (28). Another important twentieth century voice, coming from the United Methodist Church, is Thomas Oden (1931-2016). Olson notes that, while "Oden's debt to Arminius and Wesley is beyond question," he nevertheless does not consider his work to be Arminian, because of his approach which draws upon "the consensus of the early church fathers" (29). Nevertheless, as one speaking from within the Methodist family, Oden would be considered one of the most outstanding recent examples of an element of Methodism that has remained faithful to the grand themes of Christ and the Gospel which have been passed down from ancient Christianity, through the Protestant reformers, and which were so clearly modeled in the preaching and writings of John Wesley himself.

The second reason that this shortage of Wesleyan-Arminian scholars who are writing about issues related to moralistic therapeutic deism versus Christ-centered

preaching is lamentable is that it is through the field of Christian proclamation that

theology becomes established among grass-roots Christian communities. Thus, by

forfeiting a seat at the discussion table for these issues, Wesleyan scholars are, by default,

recusing themselves from a theological issue of massive importance to both the Church

and the broader culture.

The third reason that this is lamentable is because Wesleyan scholars and ministry

practitioners could make a valuable contribution to the Church's response to these kinds

of issues, and, in doing so, find areas of common ground for working together with

Calvinist sisters and brothers while remaining true to their own theological heritage.

The Gospel We Preach: A Synthesis of the Theological Literature

Kevin Vanhoozer has rather curtly warned that, "Without the gospel, it's 'Good

night, Christianity'" (*Biblical Authority After Babel*, Conclusion). Likewise, without a

clear hermeneutical and homiletical framework for proclaiming the Gospel from all the

scriptures, preaching loses the salt which makes it distinctively Christian, and it becomes

fit only to be trodden under foot in the crowded thoroughfares of bland, irrelevant,

mainstream religion. But what does it mean to preach the Gospel? Or, more precisely,

what is the Gospel that we preach? The framework for this study hinges upon the answer

to this question.

This section of the literature review has presented the way in which several

different Christian theologians have refined and developed the Church's proclamation of

the Gospel. This next section now considers how the term "gospel" should be defined and

understood in light of these historic theological foundations.

Richard Stearns, President of Word Vision U. S., argues for a more holistic understanding of the Gospel. He states, "Proclaiming the whole gospel . . . means much more than evangelism in hopes that people will hear and respond to the good news of salvation by faith in Christ. It also encompasses tangible compassion for the sick and the poor, as well as biblical justice, efforts to right the wrongs that are so prevalent in our world" (22). He argues that "a verbal proclamation of the good news of salvation and how it can be received by anyone by asking God's forgiveness and committing his or her life to Christ . . . is not the whole gospel" (22).

The complete gospel, Stearns insists, will also deal with issues such as "poverty, disease, and human brokenness in tangible ways" (23). He places "verbal proclamation" (22) within the narrow scope of evangelism (23) while insisting that a failure to live out the implications of the gospel leaves us with a gospel that is incomplete (23-24). He uses as an example the early Methodists in England who became agents of change on a wide range of social issues such as "prison reform, labor laws and factory working conditions, . . . the availability of education for the poor" while also challenging British colonial involvement in India and engaging in "the fight against gambling, drunkenness, and other social vices" (200). He also refers to American evangelist Charles G. Finney and the "great revival of 1830" as another such example, noting how his influence contributed to "the abolition of slavery in America" and encouraged the fight "for women's rights, temperance, and education reform" (200).

The early twentieth century brought a deep divide between theological liberals, who advocated social justice to the neglect (or even exclusion) of personal salvation, and

theological conservatives, who emphasized personal salvation while dismissing social activism as part and parcel with liberalism (200-201). Stearns believes that this is an unnecessary dichotomy between the social and personal aspects of the same gospel—"a kind of war between faith and works" which leaves "both sides with only half a gospel, that is, a gospel with a hole in it" (201).

The latter part of the twentieth century saw significant effort on the part of evangelical theologians and missiologists to reconcile the two (201-202). Nevertheless, he laments that this perceived dichotomy still lingers in the Church and its view of the gospel (202).

Stearns' observations are correct. Many conservative evangelicals have neglected to allow the gospel of Christ to bear fruit in areas of social concern and missional living. However, his theological analysis of this tendency is also problematic. In attempting correct the lack of concern for social justice and social action among evangelicals, Stearns seems to be confusing the *implications* of the gospel with the *essence* of the gospel (Dever 108). This is perhaps most evident in the introduction to his book, in which he states:

> When we committed ourselves to following Christ, we also committed to living
>
> our lives in such a way that a watching world would catch a glimpse of God's
>
> character—His love, justice, and mercy—through our words, actions, and
>
> behavior. . . . God chose us to be His representatives. He called us to go out, to
>
> proclaim the 'good news'—to *be* the 'good news'—and to change the world. . . .
>
> The whole gospel is a vision for ushering in God's kingdom—now, not in some
>
> future time, and here, on earth, not in some distant heaven. (3-4)

The problem in Stearns' analysis is not with the desired outcome which he describes, but with the way in which he defines the gospel itself. As seen already in the theological foundations for this study, the good news does not rest in human beings and what they can do, but rather, in what God has already done—and continues to do—for fallen human beings through the person and work of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Goldsworthy defines the gospel as "the event (or proclamation of that event) of Jesus Christ that begins with his incarnation and earthly life, and concludes with his death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father. This historical event is interpreted by God as his preordained programme [sic] for the salvation of the world" (*Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 58). This definition speaks of both God's redemptive acts in human history, and of the future, eschatological implications of those acts. It further suggests that while the basis of redemption (Christ's incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension) is already finished, God's redemptive activity in the world is not yet finished. He is still actively and redemptively working in this world.

Lesslie Newbigin, while acknowledging "the necessary involvement of missions in world development," nevertheless cautions against "trying to demonstrate the usefulness of missions for some purpose that can be accepted apart from the ultimate commitment upon which the missionary enterprise rests," which is the Gospel itself (Ch. 2). Although his argument is addressing the issue of authority for gospel proclamation, it still touches on this question of defining the gospel. If the good news may be defined by the desired result, then what will actually produce the change that the world so desperately needs? If Christians are supposed to *be* the good news that the world needs,

then by what good news will they themselves be transformed? This way of defining, or even nuancing, the gospel quickly devolves into little more than a humanistic approach to solving the world's problems.

Jim Belcher writes with some much-needed sensitivity to the legitimate concerns which lay on both sides of this discussion. He confesses that, as one who "grew up . . . in mainstream evangelicalism," he heard very little about the kingdom implications of the gospel. "For us," he writes, "salvation was primarily personal—being saved from our sins and living morally before God" (105). He then chronicles some of his own personal journey into seeing a broader picture of the implications of God's kingdom on earth (105-107). He notes how the rise of the emergent church has brought with it a resurgence of interest in the kingdom implications of the gospel (107-110). These emergent leaders have correctly identified the tendency of "traditional" evangelicalism to reduce the message of the gospel to a "privatized," "individualized" form of Christian beliefs and morality which is rather small and self-centered in comparison with the gospel of the kingdom of God which is globally and missionally oriented (107-110).

But traditional evangelicals have expressed their own concern that this new way of understanding the gospel is also guilty of reducing the very gospel which they desire to enlarge (110-112). By moving away from theological emphases such as "the doctrine of the atonement," emergent thinkers are removing, as it were, "the hub of the wheel" and leaving the church to proclaim a so-called gospel which "merely promotes" the "benefits of the kingdom" such as "social justice", concern for the poor, and "liberation theology" (112).

Belcher specifically points out how emergent writers, such as Brian McClaren, present the gospel in a way that "stresses obedient living, Christ's victory over the powers, and the kingdom" (117). But McClaren fails to describe "'how' Jesus accomplishes this through the cross, through the blood of Jesus and forgiveness of our sin" (117). He fears that this is resulting in a "gospel of reductionism" which "leaves us powerless to enter the kingdom and to live it out" (118). Instead of "liberating" us, it "tends toward legalism" (119). Even when writing about the need for "internal change," McClaren suggests that we must (in Belcher's words) "learn to do this by developing correct habits that lead to a changed heart" (119). Belcher's concern is that instead of teaching a character formation which flows out of the "doctrine of transforming grace," McClaren (and others) are leading people to believe that "they can change the world through their own efforts" which results in "social gospel reductionism" (119).

Belcher goes on to propose an alternative approach which endeavors to avoid both forms of "reductionism" while remaining focused on the gospel (119-122). It is an approach which they have implemented in the church where he serves, and it focuses on developing a "deep church" (119) which is focused on a "deep gospel" (chapter title) in everything that they do (120). Their approach focuses on four key words: "Gospel—Community—Mission—Shalom" (121). The latter three practices flow out of the gospel. Belcher's approach, while not neglecting the biblical mandate for Christians to practice "Community" in order to engage in "Mission" which promotes "Shalom," also avoids the dangerous pitfall of confusing these *implications* of the gospel with the *essence* of the gospel which the church is called to proclaim.

Pursuing the implications of the gospel out of a solid, gospel-centered theological framework will also help us to avoid preaching a shallow gospel which lacks a comprehensive framework for application in all areas of personal and public life. J. D. Greear states that "being 'gospel-centered' is . . . not moving past the gospel, but continually going deeper into it. It's about realizing that the gospel is the final answer to every issue and problem in life and about seeing the whole world through the lens of the cross" (191). Fred Sanders puts it this way, "Our great need is to be led further in to what we already have. The gospel is so deep that it not only meets our deepest needs but comes from God's deepest self" (*The Deep Things of God*, Intro.). The deeper one goes into the "unsearchable riches of Christ" and his gospel, the more its implications will be manifested in and through one's life. But, as Belcher warns, "Without the gospel, Christianity is just one more system of morality or man-made religion" (122).

Therefore, Christ-centered gospel proclamation requires a careful distinction between the implications of the gospel and the essence of the gospel. Furthermore, it should always be leading the hearers deeper into the whole gospel of Christ. Failure to do so may result in some form or degree of MTD coming through in our preaching.

Theological Parameters for Proclaiming the Gospel

Christ-centered preaching assumes the scriptural mandate to proclaim both the *essence* of the gospel and its *implications*. This means that the preacher must embrace both the universality and the particularity of the gospel which they are called to proclaim. Universality here refers to the scope both of God's intentions and of the gospel's implications. Particularity here refers to the core doctrines which flow through the gospel as revealed in the person and work of Christ. Without the particularity of a theologically-

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explicit gospel, the universality of its scope and intentions loses both meaning and efficacy.

At this point, it is important to acknowledge that the gospel is something of such breadth, depth, and overwhelming grandeur that, like a well-cut diamond, one may examine it in a myriad of different facets and from a wide range of theological angles. However, for the purposes of this study, the researcher has opted to focus on the five *solas* of the Protestant Reformation which are rooted in both holy scripture and ancient Christian teaching. These five theological themes, as already described above, provide preachers with a well-established set of theological parameters for Christ-centered gospel proclamation. When rightly understood, the *solas* preserve the particularity of the gospel without restricting its universality. They also help to accurately define the essence of the gospel while still fully embracing its far-reaching and comprehensive implications. In a sense, one may say that this ministry transformation project is also a call for recovering the five *solas* in Christian preaching.

Conflicting Paradigms in Christian Preaching

The biblical and theological foundations for this study have demonstrated that there is an inseparable connection between the task of preaching and the message preached. The outcome of theological conflicts will be proven by what is actually preached by local church pastors to their congregations. This is why the theologians considered above were concerned with deep matters of theology, because they understood that not only was the integrity of the Church at stake, but also the destiny of countless souls.

It is with this in mind that this section now addresses the relevant literature for two conflicting paradigms in Christian preaching. The first paradigm is based upon what sociologist Christian Smith has identified as the five major tenets (for lack of a better term) of moralistic therapeutic deism. The second paradigm is based upon the theological framework of the five *solas* of the Protestant reformation and is understood within the theoretical framework of the more contemporary books on preaching which promote a Christ-centered hermeneutical and homiletical approach.

As these paradigms are presented, it will also become apparent that the present-day conflict between Christ-centered preaching and moralistic therapeutic deism is really nothing new. Today's demographics and sociological trends may have created some unique twists with this phenomenon which the church now faces. But is it really so different from Irenaeus and his battle with the Gnostics, who thought that their special knowledge could save them? Or Athanasius and his conflict with the Arians, who denied the full deity of Christ, and thus undermined not only the doctrine of the Trinity, but also the incarnation, and, in fact, the significance of all salvation history? Or Augustine and his struggle against the teachings of the Pelagians, who emphasized the raw power of the human will to the detriment of the doctrines of divine grace? Or Martin Luther and his controversy with those who were preaching a "theology of glory" rather than a "theology of the cross"? Or John Wesley and the contrast which he painted between the doctrine of justification by faith alone and the "almost Christians" who trusted in their own works of righteousness for salvation?

This study's exploration of these two conflicting paradigms for preaching reveals that, fundamentally, the struggle is still the same. Will the Church produce heralds of

Christ and of the Good News of the kingdom that he is bringing? Or will it produce peddlers of human wisdom, human effort, and human salvation? In order to show this contrast, we will now discover how these two respective paradigms unfold in more recent literature.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism refers to "a widely shared, largely apolitical, interreligious faith fostering subjective well-being and lubricating interpersonal relationships in the local public sphere" (Smith, *Soul Searching* 169). The term was coined in 2005 by Christian Smith in his book *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. In this book, Smith presents the initial results of the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) in which he and others at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill conducted an in-depth study of the religious and spiritual lives of American adolescents (3-8). The initial findings of that study revealed that American teenagers, regardless of religious affiliation, had largely assimilated into an "alternative religious vision" which, according to Smith, has been effectively "colonizing many historical religious traditions" (171). He delineates five key characteristics which help us to define MTD:

1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.

2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.

3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.

4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.

5. Good people go to heaven when they die. (162-63)

He describes this as the "de facto creed" by which the majority of American teens are living—regardless of their particular faith tradition—whether mainline or conservative Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, Hindu, or Muslim (163-71). It also is seen across a diverse range of racial and ethnic categories (163-71). What are the implications of this for Christian teens in America? For them, Smith suggests, "The language, and therefore experience, of Trinity, holiness, sin, grace, justification, sanctification, church, Eucharist, and heaven and hell appear . . . to be supplanted by the language of happiness, niceness, and earned heavenly reward" (171).

New Twist on an Old Problem

While the sociological and cultural phenomena surrounding MTD may be unique, many of its key, underlying components have been around for a very long time. As already seen (above) in the theological foundations, the Church has repeatedly faced various struggles which, at their essence, were between a Christ-centered, Gospel-based view of salvation, and, on the other hand, a view of salvation that rests upon human initiative and human effort.

More than sixty years prior to the initial publishing of Christian Smith's findings, C. S. Lewis penned what has since become a classic work entitled *Mere Christianity*. In the second section of the book, in which he discusses Christian beliefs, Lewis begins with a chapter entitled "The Rival Conceptions of God" (43-46). With profound simplicity, he begins by noting that the majority of people around the world "believe in some kind of

God or gods" while only a "minority" do not (43). It is only their *conceptions* of God which divide most people, and not the question of whether or not God actually exists (44-45). Therefore, he goes on to say (in the next chapter) that "atheism is too simple" (47). He then continues, "And I will tell you another view that is also too simple. It is the view I call Christianity-and-water, the view which simply says there is a good God in Heaven and everything is all right—leaving out all the difficult and terrible doctrines about sin and hell and the devil, and the redemption. Both these are boys' philosophies" (47).

In 1967, sociologist Robert Bellah wrote about something which he described as "the American civil religion" (Saunders, "Crabgrass Piety" 29). Nathan Joseph Saunders gives the following summary of Bellah's description:

> This civil religion consists of 'a set of beliefs, symbols and rituals' that point toward a spiritual aspect of America's history and current activities in the world. This civil religion is 'neither sectarian nor in any specific sense Christian,' although it employs broad Judeo-Christian language. The American civil religion is in fact 'an understanding of the American experience in the light of ultimate universal reality' and incorporates 'certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share.' Bellah described the civil religion as 'unitarian,' 'on the austere side,' and 'more related to order, law, and right than to salvation and love.' After the Civil War, it incorporated themes of sacrifice and rebirth. The civil religion stands in judgment over the will of the people, and it constitutes the true center of American unity/ (29, summarizing and quoting Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World,* 170, 171, 175, 177, 185).

Bellah wrote about this from the context of "post-1960s America" when social upheaval within American society seemed to threaten the survival of civil religion (Saunders 30). Saunders then describes the 1970s and 80s as a time of "emerging suburban social religion" which "combined to differing degrees the American civil religion, meritocratic consumerism, Therapeutic Moralistic Deism, and managerial ethos" in which "[p]ersonal success and happiness were not simply worthy goals, but signs of God's blessing" (31).

At this point, one should notice a common thread running through the "Christianity-and-water" view of which C. S. Lewis wrote, the American "civil religion" and "suburban social religion" as described by Bellah, and any number of other religious, philosophical, and sociological trends which have emerged since—most especially MTD as discovered by Christian Smith. In each case, one sees a form of Christianity which is no longer distinctively Christian, though it retains certain Christian words and symbols.

Still more than a decade before the release of the initial results of Christian Smith's NSYR, Marsha Witten conducted a study which examined "the texts of forty-seven sermons on Luke 15:11-32 [Jesus' story of the prodigal son] preached between 1986 and 1988 by a sample of pastors within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Southern Baptist Convention" (*All Is Forgiven: The Secular Message in American Protestantism*, 13). The PCUSA is a more progressive or liberal-leaning mainline Protestant denomination while the SBC is primarily controlled by leaders who are conservative and fundamentalist in their theological and social views (7-9). And yet, all differences aside, Witten discovered certain troubling areas of commonality between the preaching of both groups of pastors. On the one hand, she observed that while there was

evidence of "substantial adaptation of religion to the norms of secular culture," most of the sermons did, nevertheless, maintain "talk about God and about ultimate meaning . . . at the center of concern" (140). This came as no surprise, because this study took place at a time when recent Gallup polling data was giving strong indications that the vast majority of Americans believed in the existence of God and were conscious of some type of perceived relationship with him (31). However, Witten was troubled by "the tendency of many of the sermons to downplay 'negative' aspects of Christian belief and practice" (140). "What, for example," she asks, "of the immensely potent Protestant doctrine of grace, which appears eviscerated in much of the speech as speakers fail to acknowledge notions of human depravity and separation from a transcendent God?" (140). Witten suggests that this may stem from nineteenth-century ideologies such as "voluntarism, democratism, and pragmatism" which gave way to "new repertoires of religious speech" which departed from the "Calvinistic doctrine of predestination", thus "suggesting that human beings can, in fact contribute to their own salvation" (33). Astute Methodist scholars may rightly take Witten to task for neglecting to make any mention of American Methodism which, while not following Calvin's view on the doctrine of predestination, nevertheless taught a thoroughly biblical and gospel-centered view of human depravity and the need for prevenient grace. But her observations of these religious trends are otherwise valid.

A few years after the release of Christian Smith's study, Michael Horton wrote a book which addresses the ways in which American Christianity is perpetuating MTD (*Christless Christianity*, 2008). As in Witten's study, Horton has also observed a theological void in both conservative and liberal-leaning churches. "Conservatives and

liberals moralize, minimize, and trivialize Christ in different ways," he writes, "of course with different political and social agendas, showing their allegiance either to elite culture or popular culture, but it is still moralism" (24-25). Either way, the result is essentially the same— the focus shifts away from Christ and his redemptive work on our behalf toward various human-centered activities which are bereft of the good news which Christians profess to proclaim (119-124). In some cases, it may reflect the harsh legalism for which many fundamentalist-type churches have been known, but, as Horton points out, many other churches, while having thoroughly rejected this type of legalism, have nevertheless opted for a "softer version of legalism—a constant stream of exhortations to follow the example of Jesus while assuming familiarity with the gospel of Jesus" (108-110).

For Horton, the fatal error behind much of the so-called Christian version of MTD lies in the failure to make a proper distinction between the law and the gospel (109). Both the law and the gospel are necessary, but their purpose and function are completely different (109). The law of God speaks with the imperative voice, instructing, guiding, telling people what they must "do or feel" (131). The gospel, on the hand, speaks in the "indicative" voice, announcing what God has already done for humanity through the person and work of Jesus Christ, and telling people what they, therefore, must believe (131). Even many who profess faith in Christ and his gospel are living under the assumption that, as Horton puts it, "We got in by grace but now we need to stay in (or at least become first-class, sold-out, victorious, fully surrendered Christians) by following various steps, lists, and practices. There was this brief and shining moment of grace, but now the rest of the Christian life is about our experience, feelings, commitment, and

obedience" (120). The problem with this approach is that it follows our natural

inclination to "always gravitate back toward ourselves" (120).

Methodist scholar Kenda Creasy Dean (*Almost Christian*) has also observed this

self-oriented trend in contemporary American churches. As one of the early members of

the NSYR research team, as well as a mother and a youth minister, she is especially

familiar with the various facets of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism in American culture.

She primarily attributes this problem to "theological malpractice" within the church

rather than to methodological deficiencies (11-12). What most churches are

communicating "has little to do with God or a sense of a divine mission in the world," but

rather, a theology of "niceness" in which smooth "interpersonal relationships" are the

priority (28-29).

Both Dean and Horton acknowledge that the integrity of the gospel proclaimed is

at the core of this crisis, but Horton focuses on this from the standpoint of reformed-

Calvinist theology with its emphasis on the sharp distinction between law and gospel.

Dean, on the other hand, draws deeply from her Methodist roots as she analyzes the same

problem. While not denying that a legitimate distinction exists between law and gospel,

she also sees, at the core of this MTD-infected Christianity, the loss of "missional

impulse" coupled with a shift away from emphasizing personal holiness.[2] This loss has

resulted in many churches proclaiming an inward, self-focused message rather than the

other- and others-oriented gospel (39-40).

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[2] It should be noted here that there are also Reformed-Calvinist writers who
emphasize personal holiness in connection with the gospel. For one such example, see
Kevin DeYoung, *The Hole in Our Holiness: Filling the Gap Between Gospel Passion
and the Pursuit of Godliness* (2012).

Dean notes that both John Wesley and George Whitefield preached sermons which, although unique in their content, shared the same title: "The Almost Christian" (4). Wesley boiled down the difference between the "almost Christian" and the "altogether Christian" as being a question of whether or not the love of God could be found in one's heart and manifested in one's desires toward God and behavior toward fellow human beings (5). Drawing upon this core Wesleyan emphasis on divine love, Dean points out that MTD is the polar opposite of such love. Instead, she writes, it "does not ask people to lay down their lives for anyone, because niceness does not go that far. *Love* goes that far—and true love is neither nice nor safe" (40). Nevertheless, in keeping with the key tenets of reformed Protestantism, she is quick to clarify that "to participate in the divine plan of salvation in Jesus Christ" is "to rely on God's goodness, not our own," and "[o]nly grace makes this kind of faith possible" (40).

In a more recent publication, Ross Douthat (*Bad Religion*) observes that while most Americans still draw their religious beliefs from Christianity, "a growing number are inventing their own versions of what Christianity means, abandoning the nuances of traditional theology in favor of religions that stroke their egos and indulge or even celebrate their worst impulses" (4). Furthermore, he also concurs that this ongoing trend can be seen among a wide range of religious and socio-cultural perspectives— "conservative and liberal, political and pop-cultural, traditionally religious and fashionably 'spiritual'" (4). Noting the current trend toward MTD, Douthat points out that Smith and Denton are not referring to classical eighteenth-century deism but rather a "revised" form of it, in which God remains distant and uninvolved except in times of crisis, when God may be summoned to intervene (233). Thus, Douthat suggests that the

weight of MTD leans more heavily toward the "therapeutic" side rather than the deistic aspect (233). He further points out that the so-called "moralism" of MTD is not the strong, demanding kind of moralism which is normally associated with that word, because, as Smith and Denton themselves explain, MTD portrays a God who prefers "niceness" over strict adherence to a moral code (233-34). It is here that Douthat's analysis parallels with that of Dean when he states that "…a tolerant society is not necessarily a just one. Men [sic] may smile at their neighbors without loving them and decline to judge their fellow citizens' beliefs out of broader indifference to their fate" (234). Nevertheless, in every previous season of decline, "[t]he story of Christianity has always featured unexpected resurrections" (277). He envisions the possibility (but not the inevitability) of "a renewed Christianity" in America, which he believes will be characterized by "a faith" that is "*political without being partisan,*" "*ecumenical but also confessional,*" "*moralistic but also holistic,*" and "*oriented toward sanctity and beauty*" (284-291).

While Douthat's analysis of the problem of MTD shows profound awareness of the cultural, social, and religious trends which give context to the present phenomenon, the solution which he seems to be suggesting centers more upon moral reform and religious consolidation within particular Christian traditions, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant Reformed (277-293). In one sense, these outcomes may be very desirable. But it also begs the question of whether or not he is putting the proverbial cart before the horse. Is the solution to moralism really a more holistic version of the same thing? What may one propose as the unifying center for a Christianity that is both "ecumenical" and "confessional"? And furthermore, can further introspection into the moral and theological

ills of a society produce this outward and upward orientation "toward sanctity and beauty" which Douthat yearns to see?

It is here that writers such as Witten, Horton, and Dean point back to a rather simple solution to this complex problem. What the Church needs today is really no different than what it needed when threatened by Gnosticism, Arianism, or Pelagianism. It is no different than what was needed during the days of upheaval surrounding the Protestant Reformation. It is not some new thing that is needed. But rather the recovery (or, as Vanhoozer prefers, "retrieval") of "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3, NKJV; Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority*). The depth and breadth of this faith has been carefully defined and clarified through the historical creeds of the Church. But no single word encapsulates it better than the biblical word "gospel."

Matt Chandler describes how, as a pastor, he became concerned with some of the testimonies which he was hearing from young adults who had been raised in evangelical churches, and yet they claimed that it was only recently (at Chandler's church) that they had heard and understood the gospel (11-12). At first, Chandler was skeptical of their claim that the gospel had never been clearly presented to them as teenage or college-age young people. So, he decided to interview some of these young adults in order to find out what kind of gospel proclamation (or lack thereof) they had previously encountered. What he discovered was that while "a few of them . . . could go back and read journals and sermon notes from when they were teenagers or college students and see that they had indeed heard the gospel," many others could not. In fact, "their old journals and student Bibles were filled with . . . 'Christian Moralistic Therapeutic Deism'" (12-13). Chandler goes on to state:

The moralistic, therapeutic deism passing for Christianity in many of the churches these young adults grew up in includes talk about Jesus and about being good and avoiding bad—especially about feeling good about oneself—and God factored into all of that, but the gospel message simply wasn't there. What I found was that for a great many young twentysomethings and thirtysomethings [sic], the gospel had been merely *assumed*, not taught or proclaimed as central. It hadn't been explicit. (13)

This sounds strangely familiar. Nearly fifty years ago, Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote:

There are [some] who seem to think that a sermon is a moral essay or some kind of disquisition on ethical principles, with an appeal, and a call, and an urging to a certain type of ethical behaviour. "o others the message is to be one of general uplift, a kind of psychological treatment. It may use Christian terminology, but it evacuates it of its real meaning. The terms are used to do something psychologically to people, to make them feel happy, to make them feel better, to teach them how to face the problems of life—'Positive thinking' and so on. . . . I suggest to you that this is not the business of the [person] who stands in the pulpit. Why not? Because the world can do that; there is nothing special about it. . . . Let me make it clear that I am not saying that the effect of preaching should not be to make people happier, it should; . . . it effects the whole person. But all the effects and results which arise in that way . . . are results or consequences of the message preached, and not the message itself. (*Preaching and Preachers* 60)

Christ-centered Preaching

Admittedly, MTD is a complex phenomenon which likely stems from multiple factors in both the Church and society at large. However, as Chandler discovered, there does seem to be at least some link between what is preached from the pulpit and this trend in the world view of teens and young adults. Kevin Vanhoozer concurs with this when he writes, "I have come to think that the way individuals and communities interpret the Bible is arguably the most important barometer of larger intellectual and cultural trends" (*Is There a Meaning in This Text?* Preface). It is from this angle that the researcher delved into literature that would provide some theoretical foundations for pursuing a Christ-centered, gospel-proclaiming approach to preaching which would offer a clear alternative to many of the hermeneutical and theological pitfalls which are manifest in MTD.

Defining Expository Preaching

The researcher has come to this study from a training background which emphasizes the primacy of biblical preaching in general and the expository approach to preaching in particular. While other schools of homiletic theology are part of a broader conversation on preaching, this portion of the literature review focuses primarily on the concepts of expository preaching and Christ-centered preaching, especially from the latter portion of the twentieth century into the present time.

This tradition of expository preaching has strong biblical and historical precedent. Although some critics are quick to point out that Jesus and his apostles did not practice expository preaching as it is commonly known today, Greg Scharf has made a valid argument, based upon numerous summaries of apostolic preaching found in Luke's writings, that their preaching was, nevertheless, expository in that they "let each text do

what it was given to do: instruct, convict, rebuke, or exhort [their] listeners" while expecting "God to speak through it to create faith in Christ and gospel obedience" (65-93; 92). James Stitzinger traces the practice and development of expository preaching from the Old and New Testaments through key periods of church history until modern times (MacArthur et al, 36-60). Particularly the Protestant Reformation, with its emphasis on *Sola Scriptura*, gave birth to a strong tradition of scripture exposition among subsequent generations of reformed preachers (47-60).

This Protestant emphasis on the authority of scripture in the Church has greatly influenced the way in which the task of expository preaching has been defined and practiced in subsequent years. In his well-known text *Biblical Preaching* (1980), Haddon Robinson defines expository preaching as "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 him [sic] to his hearers" (20). While definitions may vary, this one encapsulates how most conservative evangelical writers have understood this particular approach to the task of preaching.

Richard Mayhue draws upon John Calvin's concept of exposition which emphasized a careful study of the natural meaning of a particular scripture passage, explanation of its meaning, and application to the lives of the hearers (MacArthur et al, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* 11). He also quotes approvingly from Merrill Unger who, after defining expository preaching in a similar way, then added, "It is emphatically not preaching about the Bible, but preaching the Bible. 'What saith the Lord' is the alpha and the omega of expository preaching. It begins in the Bible and ends in the Bible and

all that intervenes springs from the Bible. In other words, expository preaching is Bible-centered preaching" (MacArthur et al, 11, quoting Merrill F. Unger, *Principles*, 33). Jason C. Meyer has recently written a biblical theology of preaching in which he identifies three phases of preaching which are described in scripture: 1) Preaching involves the "stewardship of the word" which "focuses on the content of preaching"; 2) Preaching is also described as "heralding" the word of God, which refers more to the "*tone* of the delivery"; 3) Preaching is done in a manner which causes people to have "an encounter with God" (Ch. 1).

As recently as 2011, influential Southern Baptist writer and seminary president, Albert Mohler, stated that "the essence" and "pattern" for expository preaching "is for the Word to be read and for the Word to be explained. Expository preaching comes down to a man [sic] of God who commits himself to reading and explaining the words of Scripture and then trusts God to honor His Word in the people who hear the proclamation" ("As One with Authority" 89-90).

While still mindful of the reformers' battle for the authority of scripture versus the authority of Church tradition (Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority*, Ch. 3), the salience of this theme in preaching literature from the mid- and late-twentieth century stems more from recent debates over the authority of scripture within the context of modern liberalism and post-modern deconstructionism. In 1955, Merrill Unger decried the lack of "Bible preaching" which he attributed, in part, to modern liberalism in general and biblical criticism in particular (230, 235). In 1971, Fred Craddock wrote a book (*As One Without Authority*) which spawned "the New Homiletic" which, following the influence of "Niebuhr and Tillich," pitted "propositional and personal revelation" in a false

"dichotomy" against each other (Allen 509). The result of this was a shift in homiletics which "placed the audience instead of the text in the driver's seat regarding the sermon's purpose" (509). Thus, the preacher was left without an objective source of authority upon which to base the message preached (Mohler 91). As Craddock himself put it, "Rarely if ever in the history of the church have so many firm periods slumped into commas and so many triumphant exclamation marks curled into question marks" (Mohler 91, quoting from *As One Without Authority*, 11). As David Allen has noted, "Enlightenment modernity distrusted authority. Radical postmodernity dismantles it" (489).

It is against the backdrop of these shifting paradigms of preaching that conservative evangelicals have painted a very different picture of what biblical preaching should look like. In reaction to the influences of both modern liberalism and post-modern deconstructionism, many advocates of expository (or biblical) preaching have sought to restore the strong sense of biblical authority which has been such a vital part of their Protestant-reformed tradition.

The hermeneutical presuppositions which informed the framework of this study have already been presented above. These same issues are intricately connected with the concerns which Mohler, MacArthur, Robinson, and many others have attempted to address while contending for both an authoritative Word of God and a homiletic approach which reflects this. As Albert Mohler explains, "We use a hermeneutic of obedience rather than a hermeneutic of suspicion because we believe this is the Word of God" (96). Thus, for them, the preacher speaks not "*As One Without Authority*" (Craddock), but rather, as one whose "authority is a delegated authority" which is "not our own" (Mohler 96).

Jason C. Meyer (2013) has recently written a biblical theology of preaching in which he identifies three phases of preaching which are described in scripture: 1) Preaching involves the "stewardship of the word" which "focuses on the content of preaching"; 2) Preaching is also described as "heralding" the word of God, which refers more to the "*tone* of the delivery"; 3) Preaching is done in a manner which causes people to have "an encounter with God" (Ch. 1).

The Theological Gap Between Exegesis and Exposition

For the sake of full disclosure, it should be noted that the researcher is in full agreement with this latter view. However, in many cases, the way conservative evangelicals define preaching reveals a subtle flaw in their hermeneutic and homiletic approach which may offer a plausible explanation as to why so many conservative, evangelical pulpits are proclaiming messages which are, fundamentally, not so different from those being preached in liberal mainline Protestant churches (See Witten's study; also Michael Horton, referenced above).

Many of the books advocating an expository approach to preaching have not offered the reader a clearly-delineated process for discovering the connection of the text to the person and work of Christ. In other words, they are Bible-centered but not explicitly Christ-centered or Gospel-centered. This does not mean to say that these writers do not, themselves, have an orthodox view of Christ and the Gospel. Instead, it seems, that the logic of their assumption goes something like this:

1. The Bible is God's Word.

2. The Bible reveals Christ and the Gospel.

3. Therefore, to preach the Bible accurately (using a grammatical, historical, literary hermeneutic) will automatically result in a Christ-centered, Gospel proclamation.

The flaw in this reasoning is that it assumes that if the preacher focuses on the responsibility of historical-literary-grammatical exegesis of the text (1), then Christ-centered Gospel proclamation (3) will automatically take place, even if he neglects the theological and canonical themes regarding Christ and the Gospel (2) which should inform both the exegetical and homiletical processes. It should come, then, as no surprise that even many well-intentioned "biblical" preachers are delivering messages which fall short of being distinctively Christian, all the while making a painstaking effort to connect each point of the sermon with the chosen text. Goldsworthy admits, "As simple as it is to state this central fact about the New Testament, the practicalities . . . are sometimes much harder to implement" (*Preaching the Whole Bible* 19-20).

The problem with many expository preaching textbooks is that they place heavy emphasis on exegesis and exposition, while virtually ignoring the hermeneutical and theological bridges which are needed in order to guide the expositor from the text toward a Christ-centered Gospel proclamation. This leaves both a hermeneutical and theological gap between exegesis and exposition. The assumption seems to be that one can go directly from exegesis to exposition with virtually no need for a theological reading of the text. While considering this point, the researcher did a brief review of the two textbooks on expository preaching which were most influential during the formative years of his preaching ministry (*Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, by John MacArthur, and *Biblical Preaching*, by Haddon Robinson).

Both books teach a methodology which moves directly from a historical, grammatical, and literary interpretation of the text to homiletical application (via exposition), with virtually no discussion regarding hermeneutical or theological bridges from the former to the latter. The researcher also looked back at several other texts on exegesis and exposition which were assigned to him as part of his training during seminary (*Biblical Exegesis*, Rev. Ed., by John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay; *From Exegesis to Exposition*, by Robert B. Chisholm, Jr.; *Old Testament Exegesis*, 3rd Ed., by Douglas Stuart; *New Testament Exegesis*, 3rd Ed., by Gordon D. Fee). Each of these books, once again, seemed to focus on moving directly from analysis of the text to exposition, while offering scant, if any, help in bridging the gap.

After discussing various critical methods for use in the exegetical process, Hayes and Holladay include a very short section near the end of the book, entitled "For Proclamation." In it, they acknowledge the gap between exegesis and proclamation, and furthermore acknowledge the need for the preacher to use theology in order to bridge that gap (149-50). However, no significant discussion is offered on how to accomplish this. After giving extensive instructions for the exegetical side of the process, Gordon Fee advises the reader to "remember that the sermon is *not* simply a rehash of the exegesis. To be biblical, you must let your words be clothed in the authority of the Word as it is found in the first-century setting; but to be relevant, you must make that Word come alive in your own setting" (153-54). So, how would he suggest that a preacher should do this? He ends the chapter by tersely advising that "[f]or help in this area," the preacher should "consult the better books on homiletics" (154). Chisholm dedicates an entire chapter to "Crossing the Bridge from Exegesis to Exposition," but once again, the primary focus is

on identifying key principles or applications from the immediate (or general) context of an Old Testament passage (221-278). It is quite helpful, as far as it goes, but still does not offer the reader any hermeneutical or theological channel markers to help keep the message centered on Christ and the Gospel. Douglas Stuart at least acknowledges the need for additional theological and hermeneutical considerations while moving from exegesis to exposition but does not offer any kind of process by which the preacher can do this (148-50, 160-62).

All of this affirms what James D. Smart observed in 1970, in a book which he entitled *The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church*:

> The predicament of the preacher has been created to a large extent by the hiatus between the biblical and practical departments in our theological seminaries. . . . [where] the Biblical departments in [the] seminary rightly make the student labor with care to discern what the text meant when it was first written or spoken. But frequently the assumption is made that, without any further research or assistance or extension of his methodology, he can move from the original meaning to the contemporary meaning, as though there were no serious problems in making that transition. (Quoted in Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology* 29, 34).

Walter Kaiser comes closer to bridging the gap (*Toward an Exegetical Theology*). While a strong proponent of careful exegesis of the biblical text, he acknowledges that a "gap of crisis proportions" often exists between exegesis and exposition (18). He suggests that this is why many pastors have opted to minimize the amount of effort they put into exegesis, choosing rather to focus more on the final product of the sermon itself, in an effort to make their messages more relevant to contemporary culture (18-21). He

quotes favorably from George Landes, who wrote that "the seminary Bible teacher does a gross injustice to the biblical documents he interprets if he interprets them only in their historical setting. Though that is indeed where he must begin, if he does not go on to articulate their theology and the way they continue to address him theologically in the present, he ignores not only an important part of their intentionality for being preserved but also their role and function." (Kaiser 21, quoting from Landes, "Biblical Exegesis in Crisis" 275). Grant Osborne has rightly noted that "theology is supposed to be the mediator between exegesis and preachin" (Ch. 18).

Jason Meyer (2013), a strong advocate of expository preaching, nevertheless writes, "We seek God himself in his word, not just something called 'intended meaning.' God is the author, and he intends to reveal himself to us through his word" (Ch. 20). Meyer's point is not that the "intended meaning" of the author of a text is unimportant, but rather that it is not an end unto itself. The ultimate goal in preaching is that, during the preaching of the scriptures, people will have a fresh encounter with the living God (Ch. 1). But even Meyer seems to place most of his emphasis upon expounding the biblical text, while offering little, if any, advice about bridging the theological gap.

Kaiser argues that, in order for the expositor to correctly understand the "informing theology" of the biblical writer in a particular context, he or she must also have some sort of "canonical center" (or, as he later puts it, "theological center") by which to make sense of "this accumulating body of theology" which he or she is gathering in the study of various texts (138).

Randal Pelton concurs with Kaiser on this point, and argues for "[a] gospel-centered, canonical center" because it "helps explain most preaching portions" (123).

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However, Kaiser rightly observes that this is the very thing which many biblical theologians and, one might add, biblical expositors, have been reluctant to do, for fear of forcing "any kind of philosophical or theological grid upon the text" (138). Expositors like MacArthur and Robinson would likely fall within this latter category. All of this provides some contour to the researcher's personal journey which has led him from a so-called Bible-centered approach to exposition toward a Christ-centered approach which remains grounded in holy scripture.

Closing the Theological Gap: Toward a Christ-Centered Gospel Proclamation

Francis Rossow states:

Christian preaching is from the Word, about the Word in words. That is to say, the Christian sermon is based on the Word of God (the Bible), it proclaims the Word of God (Jesus Christ), and it is presented in words, in the everyday language of everyday people. Therefore, a text is normally used, the message always contains the Gospel, and the presentation is an honest effort to communicate. (29)

He refers to this as the "double commitment to preach the text and to preach the Gospel" (32). And there is no conflict between these two commitments, when both are properly understood. Timothy Keller suggests two mistakes which preachers often make in this regard: "1. Preaching a Text, Even About Jesus Without Really Preaching the Gospel" and "2. Preaching 'Christ' Without Really Preaching the Text" (63, 66).

In the past few decades, some important works on Christ-centered Gospel proclamation have emerged. While maintaining essentially the same commitment to biblical authority and expository preaching as MacArthur, Robinson, and others, Bryan Chapell further spells out the responsibility of the expositor to discover and preach the

"Fallen Condition Focus (FCF)" that is revealed in each text (*Christ-Centered Preaching*, 48-57). Chapell connects this with 2 Timothy 3:16-17, stating, "Since God designed the Bible to complete us for the purposes of his glory, the necessary implication is that in some sense we are incomplete. We lack the equipment required for every good work. Our lack of wholeness is a consequence of the fallen condition in which we live. Aspects of this fallen-ness that are reflected in our sinfulness and in our world's brokenness prompt Scripture's instruction and construction" (49-50). Therefore, "The Bible is *not* a self-help book" (277).

But this does not mean that the entire focus of a sermon must be negative. To the contrary, proper exposition will also bring out what Chapell calls the "redemptive signals" which are in a given scripture text "so that listeners understand a text's full meaning in the context of its God-glorifying, gospel intent" (273). Failure to connect a message with the Fallen Condition Focus and the Redemptive Signals found in the text will result in a sermon that is "sub-Christian" because even a "textually accurate discussion of biblical commands does not guarantee Christian orthodoxy" (274).

Paul Scott Wilson concurs with this, suggesting that the preacher must always look for both "trouble" and "grace" while going through the process of sermon preparation (73). He writes:

> As Christians we seek to be instructed by God, thus from a theological
> perspective we do not presume to understand what is wrong. Even the knowledge
> of sin and evil is often a matter of revelation. We rely upon the Holy Spirit and
> Scripture to illuminate our individual and societal wrongdoing, and we approach

the Bible with open minds and prayerful hearts, ready to discover and be

discovered. (73-74)

Eswine points out that in order to help people understand their fallen condition,

the preacher must first help them to "take a look through the *garden lens*" so that they

can understand God's original design and intention for human beings (43). This "garden

lens" brings to light the image of God in which human beings were originally created and

which, to some limited degree, can still be seen in spite of the fall (43-45). Without this

backdrop of a good and perfect creation, people will not be able to understand the image

of God from which they fell and to which God desires to redeem and restore them (43-

45).

Carl Kromminga discusses the "traditional moralistic use of Old Testament

narrative" in preaching (32-38). He presents a lengthy montage of homileticians who

have condemned the practice (32-33). He also notes that this moralizing approach to the

OT has been practiced often throughout "vast stretches of the history of Christian

preaching" (37). Nevertheless, in spite of its good intentions, it "slowly works to reduce

the dimensions of full-orbed biblical faith and obedience" (38; See also Osborne,

"Homiletics II", Principles for Determining Application). This does not mean to say that

there is no legitimate place for moral or ethical teaching in scripture, but this "moralistic

approach" shows three weaknesses: 1) Moralizing tends to either miss or to minimize

"the author's intention and the divine intention in narrating a given event . . .", 2)

Moralizing can actually make the ethical teaching of a passage too narrow by failing to

see "broad structures" with their themes "of covenant, theocracy, and holy office, and the

ethical responsibilities which they imply . . .", and 3) Moralizing from the text can

encourage "religious individualism" rather than affirming "the church's sense of corporate responsibility for God's cause and work in the world and in history" (38; See also   ). He suggests:

> What is needed is a hermeneutic which maintains the unity of God's progressive revelation and *its* function in revealing God's will and claiming our obedience. Whatever of good or bad is to be praised or condemned must not be split off from the text's recital of God's coming in judgment and grace to his people as this coming moves toward, is realized in, and radiates from our Lord Jesus Christ. (39)

The distinction between the *essence* of the gospel and the *implications* of the gospel is very important when drawing moral applications from a particular scripture text.

Lenny Luchetti suggests six theological questions which can assist the preacher in finding reliable theological bridges for moving from solid exegetical work in the text to a Christ-centered, gospel proclamation for contemporary audiences:

1. What does the overall story of the Bible reveal about the nature of God?

2. How does this sermon faithfully reflect what the biblical story overall reveals about God?

3. What does God seem to be saying and doing in and through this particular biblical text?

4. How does the purpose of the sermon align with the purposes of God manifest in this text?

5. What does the sermon say about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit that is true, insightful, and compelling?

6. Does the sermon present the gospel by both honestly assessing the problem of human sin and hopefully proclaiming the resolution of divine grace? (*Preaching Essentials*, Ch. 3).

These are the kinds of questions which can help the expositor to find appropriate theological bridges from the exegesis of the text to the contemporary context of a particular audience. Christ and the gospel should also serve as the canonical center and hermeneutical norm by which all theological bridges are evaluated.

Evaluating the Process and Product of Expository Sermon Preparation

The two conflicting paradigms for preaching, presented in figure 1, offer the preacher an evaluative rubric by which to examine both the approach to preaching and the product of that process as manifested in a particular sermon(s). The five *solas* provide the theological basis for the Christ-Centered Preaching paradigm. The five tenets of MTD, on the other hand, provide a contrasting paradigm of preaching which may resemble this pervasive view of Christianity. This rubric formed the basis for researcher's analysis of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaire and interview data in this study, in order to identify the participants' levels of knowledge, disposition, and practice with regard to preaching as a Christ-centered, gospel proclamation rather than MTD.

TWO CONFLICTING PARADIGMS FOR PREACHING

MORALISTIC THERAPEUTIC DEISM:

CHRIST-CENTERED PREACHING:

1. God Exists.

2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.

3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about one's self.

4. God doesn't need to be particularly involved in one's life except when he is needed to resolve a problem.

5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

1. God speaks and acts through his Word (*Sola Scriptura*).

2. God wants people to live by faith in Christ, who alone can produce the genuine fruit of holiness and righteousness in all aspects of life (*Sola Fide*).

3. The central goal of life is to glorify God (*Soli Deo Gloria*).

4. Through the incarnation, God reveals his desire to be intimately involved in every aspect of our human existence (*Solus Cristus*).

5. Only by the grace of God in Christ can anyone have hope of entering heaven (*Sola Gratia*).

Figure 1

Gaps Analysis in Literature

1. There appears to be very little literature written from a Wesleyan-Arminian perspective which addresses the challenge of MTD. Therefore, there is a need for Wesleyan theologians to join this conversation.

2. There also appears to be scant literature written on expository, Christ-centered preaching from a Wesleyan-Arminian perspective.

3. While much has been written about MTD in general, and with relation to youth and young adults in particular, there appears to be scant (if any) literature addressing this problem from the standpoint of preaching.

4. While some writers appear to be addressing the theological gap between the exegetical and homiletical processes, the need remains for further research and development of processes by which to bridge this gap as part of the overall process of sermon preparation.

Research Design Literature

The purpose of this study is to examine the participants' pre- and post-intervention levels of knowledge, disposition, and practice with regard to the task of preaching, order to evaluate the effectiveness of the researcher-designed intervention (expository preaching course or seminar) in helping them to move toward a Christ-centered, gospel proclamation rather than Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. The researcher employed pre- and post-intervention questionnaires and interviews in order to gather the relevant data for analysis. Both of these data collection instruments utilized open-ended, qualitative questions which were germane to the purpose statement and research questions presented in chapter one. He then used the "Two Conflicting Paradigms for Preaching" (figure 1), which is grounded in the biblical, theological, and theoretical foundations presented in this chapter, as a basis for analyzing and interpreting the qualitative research data.

While various steps and procedures are not without importance in research methodology, the researcher followed Sensing's advice by remaining focused primarily on finding answers to the research questions connected with the problem addressed in this project (Ch. 3). Sensing proposes an approach to D.Min. projects which emphasizes "participatory action research that introduces an intervention in order to provide ministerial leadership for the transformation of the organization" (Ch. 3). This practical

approach to qualitative inquiry guided the researcher in conducting the research for this Ministry Transformation Project.

Marshall and Rossman state, "The researcher should use preliminary research questions and the related literature developed earlier in the proposal as guidelines for data analysis. This early grounding and planning can be used to suggest several categories by which the data could initially be coded for subsequent analysis. These are theory-generated codes" (Ch. 8). Sensing suggests that, for D. Min. projects, a theological lens may sometimes be helpful for analyzing the data (Ch. 7). This is the concept which the researcher followed in using the five *solas* as theological themes for evaluating the relative degree to which the data indicated a Christ-centered gospel proclamation versus Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.

Sensing also points out that while various data gathering tools may be used in a qualitative study, the researchers themselves are, ultimately, the "key instrument" as they are the ones who make observations, conduct interviews, and collect the data (Ch. 9). As a resident missionary who has lived and worked in this ministry context for more than seven years, the researcher was able to assume this participant-observer stance throughout the conduct of this study, thus fortifying the validity of its findings.

<div align="center">**Review of Chapter**</div>

This chapter has presented the biblical, theological, and theoretical literature which has informed the framework for this study as well as the research design.

A review of the biblical literature has revealed three pertinent themes regarding the scriptural foundations for preaching. First, the Old Testament literature establishes the concept of preaching as proclamation. Like the prophets of old, the preacher declares,

"Thus says the Lord." Secondly, in the New Testament, preaching is presented as a proclamation which centers on the person and work of Jesus Christ, who is the full and final revelation of God (John 1:1; Heb. 1:1-2). Thirdly, the New Testament literature further describes the task of preaching as a Christ-centered proclamation of the gospel— the good news of the kingdom of God.

In conjunction with the biblical foundations, this chapter also considered some of the hermeneutical issues and presuppositions which informed the researcher's approach to this study. The hermeneutical presuppositions are rooted in a theistic worldview which assumes the existence of a God who is personal and who has communicated to humankind both through written words (the Christian scriptures) and the Living Word, Jesus Christ. This personal God is triune—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But He has chosen to make himself known through the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity—Jesus Christ, the Son. Jesus is both the ultimate referent and the ultimate fulfillment of all the scriptures. Through his incarnation, birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension he embodied both the meaning of the scriptures and the God-honoring response to them. Therefore, the person and work of Christ must be the hermeneutic norm of scripture and the central focus in all preaching. This must be done, however, within a Trinitarian framework which avoids the error of Christomonism.

Next, this chapter examined the historical and theological foundations for this study with a review of selected figures from several critical junctures in the development of Christian doctrine. It began with a look at Irenaeus and his response to the threat of Gnosticism. His emphasis on apostolic succession and the rule of faith helped to stabilize the teachings of the church. Furthermore, his emphasis on the recapitulation of all things

into Christ provided a strong precedent for further development of a Christ-centered approach to the scriptures. Next was Athanasius, whose writing on the incarnation of Christ continued in a similar vein to that of Irenaeus—emphasizing the centrality of Christ, as the eternal Son of God, throughout salvation history. His courageous defense of the deity of Christ against the onslaughts of Arianism show just how vital he considered his Christocentric theology to be for the survival of the Church. Augustine and his careful refutation of Pelagianism brought the biblical doctrines of divine grace into sharper focus. He clarified that the power to live a holy life does not rest upon the raw power of the human will but, rather, upon the working of divine grace in a person's life by the Holy Spirit, who is received through faith in Jesus Christ. Next came a brief look at the teachings of Martin Luther and other Protestant reformers. Luther's "theology of the cross" militated against the "theology of glory" which had become prevalent at that time. Historians have identified five key theological touchstones which came out of this period of Protestant reform: 1) *Sola Scriptura*, 2) *Sola Gratia*, 3) *Solus Cristus*, 4) *Sola Fide*, 5) *Soli Deo Gloria*.

A few centuries later, John Wesley brought a much-needed revival of reformation theology to England which would eventually spread to America and also become a global movement known as Methodism. While embracing the five *solas* of Protestantism, Wesley also approached them from an Arminian vantage point and did not accept the Calvinistic interpretation of predestination. His teaching on Christian perfection offered the Church a beautiful way of teaching the concept of *Soli Deo Gloria* as he emphasized the ability of divine grace to so transform the human heart until divine love becomes the controlling impulse in all things.

The theological foundations which culminate in the five *solas* provide the preacher with a set of theological parameters by which to avoid the common mistake of confusing the *implications* and *intentions* of the gospel with the *essence* of the gospel.

Next, this chapter reviewed the theoretical foundations of the study. It explored two conflicting paradigms for preaching: Moralistic Therapeutic Deism and Christ-Centered Preaching. It revealed that even in expository preaching literature, there is often a theological and hermeneutical gap between the exegetical process and the homiletical process. A Christ-Centered hermeneutic and theological reading of the text using gospel-centered themes such as the five *solas* can help the expositor to bridge the theological gap and connect the exegetical and homiletical processes in ways that result in Christ-Centered Gospel Proclamation. The five tenets of MTD were placed in clear contrast with the five *solas* in order to offer a theological rubric by which to evaluate participants' levels of knowledge, disposition, and practice with regard to CCP versus MTD.

Finally, the chapter took a brief look at the literature which provided theoretical precedent for the research design and implementation of the study. This design will be further described and explained in chapter three.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

In order to answer the three primary research questions posed by this study, the researcher used a qualitative approach for gathering data from participants in a researcher-designed ministry intervention. It evaluated the effectiveness of the researcher-designed intervention (an expository preaching course and preaching seminar) by gathering qualitative pre- and post-intervention data from the participants.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

The problem which this study addressed is the apparent shift in much contemporary preaching away from Christ-centered Preaching (CCP) toward moralistic therapeutic deism (MTD). This trend appears to be influencing even many Protestant, evangelical pastors who consider themselves to have a high view of scripture and regard for biblical preaching. MTD is a multi-faceted phenomenon which may manifest itself in a variety of ways. But its end result is always the same—drifting away from proclaiming the gospel of Christ toward another gospel which is not gospel at all (Gal. 1:6-7). This study focused on evaluating a researcher-designed expository preaching course in order to discover how effective it was in addressing this problem.

The purpose of this project was to measure the changes in knowledge, disposition, and practice regarding the task of preaching as a Christ-centered gospel proclamation rather than Moralistic Therapeutic Deism as the result of a researcher-designed four-month expository preaching course at the Philippine Bible Methodist

Shepherd's College and one-day expository preaching seminar for pastors in the

Philippine Bible Methodist Church.

Research Questions

The entire research design for this project was guided by three primary research

questions, each of which was directed toward the over-all purpose statement.

RQ #1. What were the participants' levels of knowledge, disposition, and practice regarding the task of preaching as Christ-centered gospel proclamation rather than Moralistic Therapeutic Deism prior to the researcher-designed expository preaching course?

This question was intended to establish a baseline from which to measure any

changes in the participants' knowledge, disposition, and practice after completing the

researcher-designed expository preaching course or seminar. In order to answer this

question, the researcher employed three different data-gathering tools: 1) a pre-

intervention questionnaire which was distributed to all of the participants, 2) a semi-

structured interview guide for conducting in-depth interviews with eight participants, and

3) pre-intervention sermon outlines or manuscripts which were solicited from all of the

participants.

First of all, the researcher created a pre-intervention questionnaire (appendix A)

which was distributed to study participants before they took part in the researcher-

designed expository preaching course or seminar. This survey asked a series of six open-

ended questions. Questions 1-2 addressed knowledge; questions 3-4 addressed

dispositions; questions 5-6 addressed practices.

Second, the researcher used a semi-structured interview guide (appendix A) to

conduct in-depth interviews with eight participants prior to their participation in the

researcher-designed expository preaching course or seminar. This interview guide

consisted of nine open-ended questions. Questions 1-5 addressed knowledge; questions

6-8 addressed dispositions; and question 9 addressed practice. These questions were also

designed to elicit participant knowledge, dispositions, and or practices with regard to

specific terms and/or points of view as explained in the purpose statement and research

questions (chapter one) and also in the evaluative rubric which the researcher developed

for conducting data analysis (figure 1). Question 1 addressed rubric item 5; question 2

addressed the term "Gospel" which is included in the purpose statement and RQ's;

question 3 addressed the term "preaching" which is included in the purpose statement and

RQ's; question 4 addressed rubric items 1 and 4; question 5 addressed rubric item 4;

question 6 addressed rubric items 2 and 3; question 7 addressed rubric item 1; questions 8

and 9 addressed preaching as mentioned in the purpose statement and RQ's.

Thirdly, the researcher solicited sermons from the participants which they had

prepared and preached sometime prior to their participation in the researcher-designed

expository preaching course or seminar. This manuscript data was gathered as a

supplementary source of information for validating the other data gathered in answer to

RQ #1.

**RQ #2. What were the participants' levels of knowledge, disposition, and
practice regarding the task of preaching as Christ-centered gospel proclamation
rather than Moralistic Therapeutic Deism following the researcher-designed
expository preaching course?**

This question was designed to gather a second set of data from participants after

they had participated in the researcher-designed expository preaching course or seminar,

so that any changes in knowledge, disposition, and practice could be measured

qualitatively as indicated in the purpose statement. The same data-gathering tools and

procedures were used for this question as those used for RQ#1, except that some

modifications to the design the post-intervention questionnaire and the post-intervention interview guide. The participants were asked to send a copy of post-intervention sermon outline or manuscript within two weeks of the completion of the course or seminar.

The post-intervention questionnaire was designed with three open-ended questions (appendix A). Question 1 addressed changes in levels of knowledge; question 2 addressed changes in levels of disposition; question 3 addressed changes in levels of practice.

The post-intervention interview guide used the same questions as those in the post-intervention questionnaire, along with two additional questions for a total of five questions. But the researcher also reviewed the transcripts from the pre-intervention interviews and allowed flexibility for additional follow-up questions and/or probes during this interview. Questions 1-3 were especially designed to help answer both RQ#2 and RQ#3.

RQ #3. What aspects of the expository preaching course contributed most to the observed changes among participants in knowledge, disposition, and practice regarding the task of preaching as Christ-centered gospel proclamation rather than Moralistic Therapeutic Deism?

While addressing the specific questions related to knowledge, dispositions, and practices, the questions used in the post-intervention questionnaires and interviews were also designed in order to enable to researcher to probe for answers which would also address the question of what aspects of the expository preaching course contributed the most to any perceived changes. Questions 4 and 5 of the post-intervention interview were also designed to further probe for answers to RQ#3.

Ministry Context(s)

This study was conducted among a group of Bible Methodist students and pastors on Luzon Island in the Philippines. Within this country of 100 million people, Luzon is the largest and most-populated of the 7,000 islands which make up the Philippine archipelago. Having lived there as a resident missionary since September 2010, the researcher had already assimilated significantly into the local culture before beginning this project.

The Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherd's College is located in the town of Villasis and in the Province of Pangasinan on Luzon Island. Most of the people in this area identify themselves as Ilocanos, which is the third largest ethno-linguistic group in the Philippines.

Participants

Criteria for Selection

The researcher selected participants for the study by means of a purposive sampling which took into account the following criteria (Sensing, ch. 4; Creswell, ch. 9):

1. Participants should be members of the demographic setting in which the study is being conducted. In other words, they should be Filipino Bible Methodists who are living, studying, and/or ministering in the Philippines.

2. Participants should be either active in preaching ministry or enrolled in pastoral training.

3. Participants should undergo the researcher-designed expository preaching course which is designated as the intervention in this study.

4. Although this was not intended to be a random sampling, the researcher endeavored to select an overall group of participants with what Lincoln and Guba refer to

as "maximum variation" (Cited in Sensing, ch. 4).[3] Areas in which diversity was sought included gender, geographic regions, denominationally-designated districts or areas, ethnic groups, age, socio-economic background, family-kinship connections, or other factors which might enhance the depth and descriptiveness of the study.

5. Accessibility was also considered in the selection of participants. Although difficulty in accessing a particular participant did not necessarily preclude his/her selection for the study, it was, nevertheless, an unavoidable factor in terms of feasibility. Accessibility issues included such factors as the coordination of schedules, logistics, and the willingness of eligible participants to take part in the study. Some participants may also have been selected based, in part, upon their level of English fluency in order to compensate for the researcher's limited level of fluency in Ilocano and Tagalog languages. However, some participants were also selected who had very limited English fluency. In these cases, the interview was interpreted, transcribed, and translated as necessary in order to facilitate clear communication of both the interview questions and the participants' responses. In this way, the researcher attempted to balance the need for clarity with the need for diversity among participants.

Description of Participants

There were fifty-one total participants in this study—thirty-one male and twenty female. All of the participants were Filipinos who are either active in pastoral/preaching ministry or currently enrolled in the Christian ministry program at the Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherd College. They were from twenty to fifty-eight years of age, with a median age of forty-two.

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[3] Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1985) 202.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained a signed informed consent form from each participant prior to their involvement in the study (appendix F). The researcher's translation and transcription assistant was required to sign a form agreeing to maintain strict confidentiality with regard to both the names of participants and the questions and answers that were recorded in each interview. The researcher also agreed to delete all digital files and to dispose of all hard copies of the raw data within one year of the final approval of the research project.

<center>

Instrumentation

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In order to collect sufficient evidence from the participants, the researcher utilized a qualitative research design for gathering pre- and post-intervention data. The study incorporated two methods of data collection: 1) questionnaires (Sensing, ch. 4), and 2) semi-structured interviews (Sensing, ch. 4; Marshall and Rossman, ch. 6).

The researcher collected both pre- and post-intervention data using the aforementioned tools in the following sequence:

Pre-Intervention Data Collection

1. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with eight of the participants before they participated in the researcher-designed expository preaching course. Four of these interviews were conducted with the four college students who enrolled in the one-semester (four-month) version of the expository preaching course. The other four interviews were conducted with four of the pastors who attended the one-day seminar version of the expository preaching course.

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2. The researcher sent out a letter soliciting participants for copies of at least one sermon outline or manuscript that they had preached within the past twelve months. These documents were then collected either early in the semester (for the college students) or during the registration period (for the seminar participants). Each document was marked with the name of the participant who contributed it, so that it could be analyzed in connection with other data gathered from the same participants.

3. The researcher also conducted a survey of all the participants before they underwent the expository preaching course. This survey was administered to the college students during the first class meeting of the one-semester version of the course. It was administered to the one-day seminar participants during the registration period before the start of the first seminar session.

Post-Intervention Data Collection

4. The researcher conducted a follow-up survey of the participants after they had completed the expository preaching course. This survey was administered to the college students during the last regular class meeting of the one-semester course. It was administered to the seminar participants during the final session.

5. The researcher also distributed a letter to all of the seminar participants requesting them to contribute a copy of a sermon outline or manuscript which they would prepare and preach within six weeks after participating in the expository preaching course.

6. The researcher also conducted eight follow-up in-depth interviews with the same participants who were interviewed before undergoing the expository preaching course.

Procedure for Analyzing the Evidence Collected

For the data analysis portion of this study, the researcher generally adapted and followed the seven phases suggested by Marshall and Rossman which are as follows: "(1) organizing the data, (2) immersion in the data, (3) generating categories and themes, (4) coding the data, (5) offering interpretations through **analytic memos**, [sic] (6) searching for alternative understandings, and (7) writing the report or other format for presenting the study" (ch. 8).

Phase One – Organizing the Data

The in-depth interviews were transcribed and translated into English by one of the researcher's Filipino colleagues who is fluent in English, Ilocano, and Tagalog. The English transcripts of these interviews were then organized for coding and analysis. The researcher labeled and sorted the data, identifying key themes which emerged from the interviews and the sermon manuscripts. The researcher also looked for significant correlations between the various themes.

Phase Two – Immersion in the Data

Next, the researcher spent considerable time reading and re-reading the interview transcripts, survey data, and sermon manuscripts in order to gain a general familiarity with all of the data collectively as well as with each particular set of data.

Phase Three – Generating Categories and Themes

One of the most important decisions for the research design involved choosing appropriate categories and themes for analyzing and interpreting the data. Due to the nature of the purpose statement and research questions for this study, a pre-determined set of categories seemed the most appropriate way to prepare for coding and sorting the various themes which would emerge from the data. As Creswell has noted, "Qualitative researchers often use lens to view their studies" (ch. 9). He refers to this as a "theoretical lens" (ch. 9), but for the purpose of this study, it might be more appropriate to call it the *theological lens* through which the data will be analyzed (Sensing, ch. 7).[4] Sensing also concurs with this approach, advising that "[a] first attempt at determining the codes you will use begins during the writing of your theoretical and theological constructs chapter, or when writing the problem and purpose statements" (ch. 7). Therefore, the themes emerging from the data were organized based upon their relevance to a set of pre-determined theological categories which, in turn, are grounded in the literature review presented in chapter two of this study. Those initial categories for this study were informed by the contrasting continuum between Moralistic Therapeutic Deism and Christ-Centered Preaching as explained in the literature review (ch. 2) and summarized in the evaluative rubric (figure 1).

Phase Four – Data Coding

The researcher coded, tagged, and clustered the data in such a way that it could be analyzed for points of converging themes between various data sets.

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[4] Marshall and Rossman similarly refer to "theory-generated codes" (Ch. 8). Again, perhaps "theologically-generated categories" might be an appropriate adaptation of their concept for this study.

Phase Five – Data Interpretation

Then, using the coded data, the researcher began to look at the emerging and converging themes from the data using the evaluative rubric (figure 1) as an analytical key for assessing the levels of change and the factors which contributed to those changes (See the purpose statement and RQ's above).

Phase Six – Cross-Checking Initial Findings

Throughout this process the researcher also cross-checked his interpretations, comparing them with his findings in the related literature and looking for any divergent themes or trends coming from within the data itself.

Phase Seven – Finalizing the Presentation of Findings

After sufficient cross-checking, adjusting, and re-checking of the data, interpretations, and findings, the researcher then organized the study's findings into their final form for presentation.

Reliability & Validity of Project Design

In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the study, the researcher incorporated multiple layers of triangulation into the project design.

Reliability

The question of *reliability* simply asks whether or not the tools and procedures which were employed for data gathering and analysis actually measured what this study claims to be measuring. In order to bolster the reliability of this study, the researcher included three different layers of triangulation within the data gathering and analysis process.

First of all, two different sets of data were used in the study. The first set of data came from four college students, all under the age of twenty-five, who were enrolled at the Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherd's College. The second set of data came from thirty Bible Methodist pastors in the Philippines. This second group of study participants was mostly above the age of twenty-five and included a greater range of diversity in terms of age, ministry experience, and personal backgrounds.

Secondly, the study design utilized two different methods of data collection—in-depth interviews and questionnaires.

Thirdly, both pre- and post-intervention data was collected in order to make it possible to measure levels of change which took place as a result of the researcher-designed expository preaching course. Each of the three data collection methods was employed for both pre- and post-intervention data.

Validity

The question of *validity* seeks to ensure that the research tools which were used in this study are actually aligned with the purpose statement and research questions as stated in chapter one. This study incorporated two established points of reference from which to analyze and interpret all of the research data, thus creating a three-part system for interpreting and cross-checking the emerging themes. This concurs with Marshall and Rossman's recommendation to "use preliminary research questions and the related literature developed earlier . . . as guidelines for data analysis" (ch. 8).

Research Questions

First, the research design began with establishing three primary research questions, each of which focused on the knowledge, disposition, and practice of the

participants. These three research questions were designed to answer the primary question of this study as stated in the purpose statement.

Data Collection Instruments

Secondly, each question in the in-depth interview guides and the surveys was designed to elicit information relevant to specific aspects of one or more of the research questions.

Evaluative Rubric

Thirdly, the researcher designed an evaluative rubric which was informed by the biblical, theological, and theoretical foundations as presented in chapter two of this study. All of the research data was analyzed using this evaluative rubric. This rubric made it possible to define and measure to what degree various aspects of the participant data reflected an orientation toward Moralistic Therapeutic Deism or Christ-Centered Preaching.

Thus, the researcher triangulated the research data and interpretations with two fixed points of reference: 1) aligning them with the purpose statement and research questions, and 2) analyzing them through the interpretive lens of the evaluative rubric (Figure 2, below) which was based upon the biblical, theological, and theoretical foundations stemming from the literature review. Figure 2 (below) depicts how this study was designed for continuous cross-checking and self-correcting within the research process.
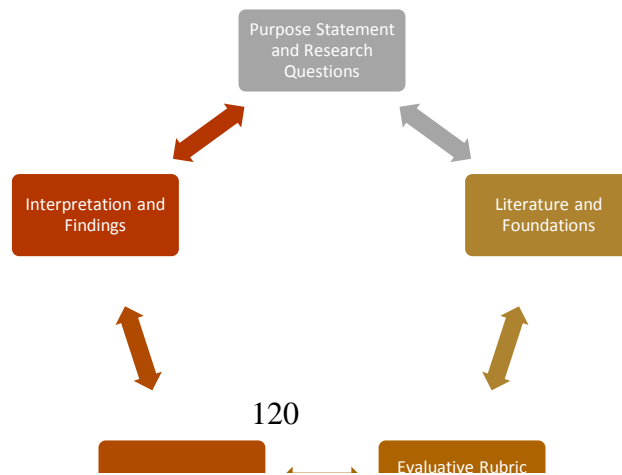
Figure 2 – Research Design for Establishing Reliability and Validity of Findings

Review of the Chapter

  This chapter has demonstrated how the research design for this project was designed with multiple methods for cross-checking the validity and reliability of its findings. The study was built around a purpose statement and three closely-related research questions. The data-gathering instruments were designed to address specific aspects of the purpose statement and research questions. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling. An evaluative rubric which was based upon foundations grounded in relevant literature was also used as a systematic means of analyzing the research data. The research data was analyzed and interpreted through a seven-phase process which included organizing the data, immersion in the data, generating categories and themes, data coding, data interpretation, cross-checking initial findings, and finalizing the presentation of findings. Thus, multiple layers of triangulation were built into the research design in order to insure the validity and reliability of its findings.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

In this chapter, the researcher will present the evidence which came out of the qualitative study which he conducted. The evidence comes from data collected through open-ended questions which were answered in pre- and post-intervention questionnaires and personal interviews.

The data will be presented as it correlates to the purpose of this study and the problem which it addresses. The problem addressed in the study is the tendency of much contemporary preaching to move away from Christ-centered Gospel Proclamation toward something which more closely resembles one or more aspects of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD). The purpose of the presentation of data in this chapter is to provide a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the researcher's intervention (a one-semester expository preaching course and/or a one-day expository preaching seminar) in helping participants to move away from MTD toward a more Christ-centered approach to preaching. Each of the three research questions for the study, therefore, are intended to measure changes in the knowledge, disposition, and practice of the participants as a result of the researcher's ministry intervention.

Participants

The participants for this study were Bible Methodist pastors and students enrolled in the Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherd's College (PBMSC). All of the participants live on the large, main island of Luzon which is in the northern part of the Philippine archipelago. This is also where the researcher resides as a teacher at PBMSC and as a field supervisor for Bible Methodist Missions, USA. A marginal number of participants were non-Bible Methodists who were enrolled as students in PBMSC.

Matters of accessibility and logistics created some challenges in terms of the selection of participants. Nevertheless, the researcher endeavored to conduct a purposive sampling which included maximum variation among participants in terms of age, gender, and other areas of personal background. The participants include thirty-one male and twenty female participants.

Four of the participants were enrolled in the researcher's one-semester (four-month) expository preaching course at PBMSC. These participants would identify themselves as Ilocano, which is the third largest ethno-linguistic group in the Philippines.

The other participants took part in a one-day expository preaching seminar which presented a condensed form of researcher's expository preaching course. This seminar was presented at two different dates and in two different venues. The first seminar consisted of a mixture of PBMSC students and faculty together with several pastors from the Nehemiah District of the Philippine Bible Methodist Church. These participants were also of Ilocano ethnicity. The participants in the second seminar came primarily from various highland tribal groups. Most of them identify with various tribes of the Ifugao people, while some also identify themselves as Kalanguya. All of the participants were fluent in the Ilocano language, although a lesser number of them also speak frequently in Tagalog (also known as Filipino). Virtually all of them can speak and understand at least a minimal level of English.

Table 1

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender	# of Male Participants	31
	# of Female Participants	20
Age (years)*	Range	20-58
	Median	42
	Average	41
Affiliation	PBMC (Nehemiah District)	6
	PBMSC (faculty)	1
	PBMSC (students)	6
	BMGLC	38
Ethnicity	Ilocano (Lowlanders)	
	Ifugao and Kalanguya (Tribal People / Highlanders)	

*6 out of 51 participants did not disclose their age. Numbers here are based on 45 participants who did give their age.

Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

RQ #1. What were the participants' levels of knowledge, disposition, and practice regarding the task of preaching as Christ-centered gospel proclamation rather than Moralistic Therapeutic Deism prior to the researcher-designed expository preaching course?

The evidence for answering research question number one comes from the data obtained from pre-intervention questionnaires and pre-intervention interviews. The questions for the questionnaires and the interview guides were identical (See appendix A). The pre-intervention questions were as follows:

1. According to your own definition, what is preaching?

2. How would you describe the preacher's responsibility (or responsibilities) in the task of preaching?

3. Please describe the process of how you normally prepare to preach?

4. What do you consider to be the most important thing(s) that a sermon should do or accomplish? Please explain each.

Table 2 (below) shows the relevance of questions 1-4 of the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires and interview guides to three key aspects of the research questions for this study (knowledge, disposition, and practice). The responses to the first question overlapped primarily with levels of knowledge. The responses to the second and fourth questions overlapped primarily with levels of disposition. The responses to the third question overlapped primarily with levels of practice.

Table 2 – Correspondence of Data-Gathering Questions with Specific Aspects of the Research Questions

DATA-GATHERING QUESTIONS:	CORRESPONDENCE TO SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS:
Questionnaire / Interview Question #1	Levels of Knowledge
Questionnaire / Interview Question #2	Levels of Disposition
Questionnaire / Interview Question #3	Levels of Practice
Questionnaire / Interview Question #4	Levels of Disposition

Knowledge – "Facts, information, and skills acquired through experience or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject" (*Oxford Dictionaries*).

Disposition – "A person's inherent qualities of mind and character. . . . An inclination or tendency" (*Oxford Dictionaries*).

Practice – "The actual application or use of an idea, belief, or method, as opposed to theories relating to it" (*Oxford Dictionaries*).

Pre-Intervention Levels of Knowledge

   A. Questionnaire Data

      When asked "According to your own definition, what is preaching?" (Pre-intervention Questionnaire Question #1), forty-nine participants responded. The

researcher identified the following themes and the frequency with which they occurred

out of forty-nine total responses:

1. Scripture – (32/49)

2. Knowledge – (28/49)

3. Jesus Christ – (17/49)

4. Gospel – (14/49)

5. God Speaking – (6/49)

6. Salvation – (5/49)

7. Salvation History – (4/49)

8. Obedience / Right Behavior – (4/49)

9. God Acting – (3/49)

The two most frequently-occurring themes (Scripture and Knowledge) also

occurred together frequently. In fact, in ten out of forty-nine responses to this question,

these two themes were the only significant components of the participants' definition of

preaching. In other words, they indicated that their primary concept of preaching was that

of causing others to know or understand what the Bible says and what it means. Three

additional responses grouped the themes of Scripture and Knowledge with either

Salvation, Obedience/Right Behavior, or Spiritual Growth (respectively).

This emphasis could easily be seen in the participants' choice of Ilocano words

for describing the act of preaching. They used words such as *panangipalawag*

(explaining), *panangisuro* (teaching), *ipatarus* (to cause someone to understand),

panangipakaawat (another word also meaning to cause others to understand something),

panangibinsabinsa (giving detailed clarification of something – See Rubino, *Ilocano*

Dictionary and Grammar). A similar range of Ilocano words were also used in these responses to describe preaching in the sense of proclamation, sharing, or making something known. However, the significance of the former set of words is that for many of the participants, the focus was not only on telling the message, but also on endeavoring to make sure that the listeners could accurately understand its meaning.

Jesus Christ and the Gospel were the next two most-salient themes with seventeen and fourteen occurrences respectively. The other themes occurred with considerably less frequency.

B. Interview Data

The same question (definition of preaching) was also answered by seven of the participants during personal interviews.[5] The researcher identified the following themes in these responses and the frequency with which they occurred (out of seven total responses):

1. Scripture (6/7)

2. Knowledge (5/7)

3. Jesus Christ (2/7)

4. Gospel (1/7)

5. Salvation History (1/7)

6. Holy Spirit (1/7)

The top two themes emerging from the interviews were the same as those coming from the questionnaire responses—Scripture and Knowledge. The specific mention of

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[5] It should be noted here that the interview participants in this study also filled out written questionnaires.

Jesus Christ only occurred twice. The themes of Gospel and Salvation History occurred only once each. The only significant new category which emerged was the Holy Spirit, which also occurred only once.

Pre-Intervention Levels of Disposition

    A. Questionnaire Data

When asked, "How would you describe the preacher's responsibility (or responsibilities) in the task of preaching?" (Pre-intervention Questionnaire Question #2), forty-seven participants responded. The researcher identified the following themes and the frequency with which they occurred out of forty-seven total responses:

1. Process (12/47)

2. Spiritual Disciplines (11/47)

3. Scripture (11/47)

4. Knowledge (7/47)

5. Jesus Christ (6/47)

6. Faith (6/47)

7. Transformation (6/47)

8. Salvation (4/47)

9. Obedience/Right Behavior (4/47)

10. Holy Spirit (3/47)

11. God Acting (2/47)

12. Healing (2/47)

13. God Speaking (1/47)

It should be noted here that there seemed to be some confusion among the

participants as

to the intended meaning of this question. Some respondents seemed to understand it to be

asking about the actual process involved in sermon preparation, while others seemed to

think it had more about the goal or desired result of the sermon. This can be seen in the

variety of themes which came out of this particular data set. However, it is possible that

the vagueness of the question may have actually helped in discovering the pre-

dispositions of the participants toward the task of preaching.

When asked "What do you consider to be the most important thing(s) that a

sermon should do or accomplish? Please explain each" (Pre-intervention Questionnaire

Question #4), forty-nine responded. The researcher identified the following themes and

the frequency with which they recurred out of forty-nine total responses:

1. Knowledge (21/49)

2. Obedience / Right Behavior (17/49)

3. Jesus Christ (15/49)

4. Glory of God (14/49)

5. Salvation (13/49)

6. Scripture (12/49)

7. Spiritual Growth (9/49)

8. Faith (9/49)

9. Transformation (8/49)

10. Emotional (6/49)

11. Salvation History (4/49)

12. Gospel (3/49)

13. Fallen Condition Focus (1/49)

B. Interview Data

When asked, "How would you describe the preacher's responsibility (or responsibilities) in the task of preaching?" (Pre-intervention Interview Question #2), seven interview participants responded. The researcher identified the following themes and the frequency with which they recurred out of seven total responses:

1. Scripture (4/7)

2. Spiritual Disciplines (3/7)

3. Process (3/7)

4. Gospel (2/7)

5. Holy Spirit (1/7)

6. Knowledge (1/7)

7. Jesus Christ (1/7)

8. Personal Example (1/7)

9. Salvation History (1/7)

10. God Speaking (1/7)

The same apparent confusion over the meaning of this question persisted also in the interviews, and because this had not been anticipated, it was difficult to give a clear and consistent explanation. However, as stated above, it may have inadvertently left open some leeway for each participant to show his or her pre-disposition toward the task of preaching.

When asked "What do you consider to be the most important thing(s) that a sermon should do or accomplish? Please explain each" (Pre-intervention Interview Question #4), seven interview participants responded. The researcher identified the following themes and the frequency with which they recurred out of seven total responses:

1. Obedience / Right Behavior (6/7)

2. Knowledge (5/7)

3. Scripture (3/7)

4. Transformation (3/7)

5. Jesus Christ (3/7)

6. Glory of God (2/7)

7. Holy Spirit (2/7)

8. Salvation (2/7)

9. Emotions (2/7)

10. Spiritual Disciplines (1/7)

11. Spiritual Growth (1/7)

Pre-Intervention Levels of Practice

A. Questionnaire Data

When asked, "Please describe the process of how you normally prepare to preach?" (Pre-intervention Questionnaire Question #3), fifty questionnaire participants responded. The researcher identified the following themes and the frequency with which they recurred out of fifty total responses:

1. Prayer (40/50)

2. Reading / Study (34/50)

3. Meditation (27/50)

4. Scripture (27/50)

5. Fasting (15/50)

6. Knowledge (13/50)

7. Holy Spirit (10/50)

8. God Speaking (10/50)

B. Interview Data

When asked, "Please describe the process of how you normally prepare to preach?" (Pre-intervention Interview Question #3), seven interview participants responded. A few of the participants seemed to drift onto this topic while answering the previous question. When it was obvious that they were intentionally describing the process by which they prepare to preach, the researcher also included themes from that data under this heading. The researcher identified the following themes and the frequency with which they recurred out of seven total responses:

1. Process (7/7)

2. Prayer (7/7)

3. Scripture (7/7)

4. Reading / Study (6/7)

5. Meditation (4/7)

6. God Speaking (4/7)

7. Knowledge (3/7)

8. Holy Spirit (3/7)

9. God Acting (2/7)

10. Fasting (1/7)

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

RQ #2. What were the participants' levels of knowledge, disposition, and practice regarding the task of preaching as Christ-centered gospel proclamation rather than Moralistic Therapeutic Deism following the researcher-designed expository preaching course?

The evidence for answering research question number two comes from the data obtained from the first four questions found in the post-intervention questionnaires and post-intervention interviews. The final two questions of the post-intervention questionnaires and interviews (questions 5 and 6) pertain more to research question number three, and thus will be discussed under that section. The questions for the questionnaires and the interview guides were identical (See appendix A). The first four post-intervention questions were as follows:

1. According to your own definition, what is preaching?

2. How would you describe the preacher's responsibility (or responsibilities) in the task of preaching?

3. Please describe the process of how you normally prepare to preach?

4. What do you consider to be the most important thing(s) that a sermon should do or accomplish? Please explain each.

Post-Intervention Levels of Knowledge

A. Post-Intervention Questionnaire Data

When asked "According to your own definition, what is preaching?" (Post-intervention Questionnaire Question #1), forty-five participants responded. The

researcher identified the following themes and the frequency with which they occurred out of forty-five total responses:

1. Scripture (26/45)

2. Jesus Christ (24/45)

3. Gospel (18/45)

4. God Speaking (12/45)

5. Knowledge (6/45)

6. Salvation History (2/45)

7. Salvation (2/45)

8. God Acting (1/45)

9. Obedience / Right Behavior (1/45)

10. Fallen Condition Focus (1/45)

The post-intervention responses to questionnaire question number one continued to show a strong emphasis on scripture. The second most frequently-occurring theme was Jesus Christ. The third most significant theme was the Gospel. The fourth most recurring theme was references to God Speaking. Knowledge remained a significant theme, but with less salience than what appeared in the pre-intervention questionnaire responses to the same question. Also, unlike what was noted in the pre-intervention responses to this question, scripture and knowledge did not overlap alone (apart from other themes). In other words, they always occurred in combination with various other themes.

B. Post-Intervention Interview Data

When asked "According to your own definition, what is preaching?" (Post-intervention Questionnaire Question #1), seven post-intervention interview participants

responded. The researcher identified the following themes and the frequency with which they occurred out of seven total responses:

1. Scripture (7/7)

2. Jesus Christ (5/7)

3. Gospel (4/7)

4. Knowledge (4/7)

5. God Speaking (2/7)

6. Salvation History (1/7)

Post-Intervention Levels of Disposition

A. Post-Intervention Questionnaire Data

When asked, "How would you describe the preacher's responsibility (or responsibilities) in the task of preaching?" (Post-intervention Questionnaire Question #2), forty-one participants responded. The researcher identified the following themes and the frequency with which they occurred out of forty-one total responses:

1. Scripture (14/41)

2. Jesus Christ (12/41)

3. Process (9/41)

4. Salvation (8/41)

5. Knowledge (8/41)

6. Spiritual Disciplines (5/41)

7. God Speaking (4/41)

8. Spiritual Growth (3/41)

9. Grace (2/41)

10. Holy Spirit (2/41)

11. Personal Example (2/41)

12. Salvation History (1/41)

13. Deliverance (1/41)

14. Faith (1/41)

When asked "What do you consider to be the most important thing(s) that a sermon should do or accomplish? Please explain each" (Post-intervention Questionnaire Question #4), forty-four participants responded. The researcher identified the following themes and the frequency with which they recurred out of forty-four total responses:

1. Jesus Christ (20/44)

2. Glory of God (13/44)

3. Obedience / Right Behavior (12/44)

4. Knowledge (12/44)

5. Salvation (11/44)

6. Faith (6/44)

7. Scripture (5/44)

8. Healing (5/44)

9. Fallen Condition Focus (4/44)

10. Redemptive Signals (4/44)

11. Salvation History (4/44)

12. Transformation (2/44)

13. Grace (2/44)

14. Holy Spirit (1/44)

15. Deliverance (1/44)

16. Spiritual Growth (1/44)

17. Emotions (1/44)

18. Gospel (1/44)

B. Post-Intervention Interview Data

When asked, "How would you describe the preacher's responsibility (or responsibilities) in the task of preaching?" (Post-intervention Interview Question #2), seven interview participants responded. The researcher identified the following themes and the frequency with which they recurred out of seven total responses:

1. Scripture (3/7)

2. Transformation (3/7)

3. Salvation (2/7)

4. Spiritual Growth (2/7)

5. Jesus Christ (2/7)

6. Spiritual Disciplines (1/7)

7. Knowledge (1/7)

8. Process (1/7)

9. Faith (1/7)

10. Obedience / Right Behavior (1/7)

11. Deliverance (1/7)

12. Pastoral Care (1/7)

When asked "What do you consider to be the most important thing(s) that a sermon should do or accomplish? Please explain each" (Post-intervention Interview

Question #4), seven interview participants responded. The researcher identified the

following themes and the frequency with which they recurred out of seven total

responses:

1. Obedience / Right Behavior (4/7)

2. Knowledge (3/7)

3. Fallen Condition Focus (3/7)

4. Redemptive Signals (3/7)

5. Scripture (2/7)

6. Jesus Christ (2/7)

7. Transformation (2/7)

8. God Acting (2/7)

9. Glory of God (2/7)

10. God Speaking (1/7)

11. Grace (1/7)

12. Faith (1/7)

13. Process (1/7)

Post-Intervention Levels of Practice

A. Post-Intervention Questionnaire Data

When asked, "Please describe the process of how you normally prepare to

preach?" (Post-intervention Questionnaire Question #3), forty-five questionnaire

participants responded. The researcher identified the following themes and the frequency

with which they recurred out of forty-five total responses:

1. Reading / Study (31/45)

2. Prayer (29/45)

3. Scripture (28/45)

4. Meditation (23/45)

5. Process (23/45)

6. Fasting (12/45)

7. Knowledge (7/45)

8. God Speaking (7/45)

9. Holy Spirit (6/45)

B. Post-Intervention Interview Data

When asked, "Please describe the process of how you normally prepare to preach?" (Post-intervention Interview Question #3), six interview participants responded. One interview participant did not get to answer this question because the researcher mistakenly skipped it during the interview. The researcher identified the following themes and the frequency with which they recurred out of six total responses:

1. Process (6/6)

2. Prayer (4/6)

3. Reading / Study (4/6)

4. Scripture (4/6)

5. Meditation (3/6)

6. Fasting (2/6)

7. God Speaking (2/6)

8. Knowledge (1/6)

One interview participant's testimony exemplifies several of the themes which appeared in the data summarized above:

Before our expository preaching class, I prepare differently from what I have studied or what I have learned now. Now [when] I prepare my sermon, first I always pray and after I prayed, after I asked God what He wants me to share to the people, I go to the text, read the Bible and I read it again and again, and I . . . like, I'm familiarizing myself with the text and I also read the text before and after my chosen text my chosen text and as I read the text, as I familiarize with the text, I am like … making a natural outline and I will make my short outline, and then after I make my natural outline, of course I study he phrasing, I study the words, I looked for root words and for some key phrases and key words and then it will lead me to the study outline where I'm going to add or I'm going to study about my text and like putting flesh to the bones and I study about the key phrases what really mean and what the author really mean when he wrote those, and after my study I go back to the text, I pray and really ask God for His message and after that I will go to preaching outline where I will … like, simplify my study outline and editing my notes and make it more simpler so that when I'm going to preach, they will understand it, they can … like, it will be easier for them to remember or to understand the message of God. (2243, Post-intervention interview, Question 3)

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

RQ #3. What aspects of the expository preaching course contributed most to the observed changes among participants in knowledge, disposition, and practice regarding the task of preaching as Christ-centered gospel proclamation rather than Moralistic Therapeutic Deism?

Observed Changes in Levels Knowledge

A. Comparison of Pre- and Post-Intervention Questionnaire Responses.

Questionnaire Question #1: According to your own definition, what is preaching?

Table 3

PRE- AND POST- INTERVENTION RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE Q#1			
Themes:	Pre-Intervention Frequency:	Post-Intervention Frequency:	Change:
Scripture	65%	58%	-7
Knowledge	57%	13%	-44
Salvation History	8%	4%	-4
Gospel	29%	40%	+11
Jesus Christ	35%	53%	+18
God Speaking	12%	27%	+15
God Acting	6%	2%	-4
Transformation	--	4%	+4
Obedience / Right Behavior	8%	2%	-6
Salvation	10%	4%	-6
Fallen Condition Focus	--	2%	+2
Glory of God	2%	--	-2

B. Comparison of Pre- and Post-Intervention Interview Responses.

    1. According to your own definition, what is preaching?

Table 4

PRE- AND POST- INTERVENTION RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW Q#1			
Themes:	Pre-Intervention Frequency:	Post-Intervention Frequency:	Change:
Scripture	86%	100%	+14
Knowledge	71%	57%	-14
Jesus Christ	29%	71%	+42
Gospel	14%	57%	+43
Salvation History	14%	14%	No change
Holy Spirit	14%	--	-14
God Speaking	--	29%	+29

Observed Changes in Levels of Disposition

A. Comparison of Pre- and Post-Intervention Questionnaire Responses.

Question #2 - How would you describe the preacher's responsibility (or responsibilities) in the task of preaching?

Table 5

PRE- AND POST- INTERVENTION RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE Q#2			
Themes:	Pre-Intervention Frequency:	Post-Intervention Frequency:	Change:
Scripture	23%	34%	+11
Jesus Christ	13%	29%	+16
Faith	13%	2%	-11
Transformation	13%	--	-13
Salvation	9%	20%	+11
Knowledge	15%	20%	+5
Obedience / Right Behavior	9%	--	-9
God Acting	4%	--	-4
God Speaking	2%	10%	+8
Healing	4%	--	-4
Holy Spirit	6%	5%	-1
Spiritual Disciplines	23%	12%	-11
Process	26%	22%	-4
Spiritual Growth	--	7%	+7
Deliverance	--	2%	+2
Salvation History	--	2%	+2
Grace	--	5%	+5
Personal Example	--	5%	+5

Question #4 - What do you consider to be the most important thing(s) that a

sermon should do or accomplish? Please explain each.

Table 6

PRE- AND POST- INTERVENTION RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE Q#4			
Themes:	Pre-Intervention Frequency:	Post- Intervention Frequency:	Change:
Glory of God	29%	30%	+1
Salvation	27%	25%	-2
Jesus Christ	31%	46%	+15
Salvation History	8%	9%	+1
Fallen Condition Focus	2%	9%	+7
Obedience / Right Behavior	35%	27%	-8
Emotions	12%	2%	-10
Knowledge	35%	27%	-8
Scripture	25%	11%	-14
Spiritual Growth	18%	2%	-16
Faith	18%	14%	-4
Gospel	6%	2%	-4
Redemptive Signals	--	9%	+9
Grace	--	5%	+5
Holy Spirit	--	2%	+2
Healing	--	11%	+11
Deliverance	--	2%	+2

B. Comparison of Pre- and Post-Intervention Interview Responses.

Question #2 - How would you describe the preacher's responsibility (or

responsibilities) in the task of preaching?

Table 7

PRE- AND POST- INTERVENTION RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW Q#2			
Themes:	Pre-Intervention Frequency:	Post-Intervention Frequency:	Change:
Holy Spirit	14%	--	-14
Spiritual Disciplines	43%	14%	-29
Scripture	57%	43%	-14
Knowledge	14%	14%	No change
Process	43%	14%	-29
Jesus Christ	14%	29%	+15
Personal Example	14%	--	-14
Gospel	29%	--	-29
Salvation History	14%	--	-14
God Speaking	14%	--	-14
Salvation	--	29%	+29
Faith	--	14%	+14
Spiritual Growth	--	29%	+29
Transformation	--	43%	+43
Obedience / Right Behavior	--	14%	+14
Deliverance	--	14%	+14
Pastoral Care	--	14%	+14

Question #4 - What do you consider to be the most important thing(s) that a

sermon should do or accomplish? Please explain each.

Table 8

PRE- AND POST- INTERVENTION RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW Q#4			
Themes:	Pre-Intervention Frequency:	Post-Intervention Frequency:	Change:
Knowledge	71%	43%	-28
Obedience / Right Behavior	86%	57%	-19
Jesus Christ	43%	29%	-14
Glory of God	29%	29%	No change
Scripture	43%	29%	-14
Holy Spirit	29%	--	-29
Spiritual Disciplines	14%	--	-14
Salvation	29%	--	-29
Spiritual Growth	14%	--	-14
Transformation	43%	29%	-14
Emotions	29%	--	-29
Redemptive Signals	--	43%	+43
Fallen Condition Focus	--	43%	+43
Faith	--	14%	+14
Process	--	14%	+14
God Acting	--	29%	+29
God Speaking	--	14%	+14
Grace	--	14%	+14

Observed Changes in Levels of Practice

   A. Comparison of Pre- and Post-Intervention Questionnaire Responses (Questions 1-

   4).

   Question #3 - Please describe the process of how you normally prepare to preach?

Table 9

PRE- AND POST- INTERVENTION RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE Q#3			
Themes:	Pre-Intervention Frequency:	Post-Intervention Frequency:	Change:
Reading / Study	68%	69%	+1
Prayer	80%	64%	-16
Meditation	54%	51%	- 3
Fasting	30%	27%	-3
Scripture	54%	62%	+8
Knowledge	26%	16%	-10
Holy Spirit	20%	13%	-7
God Speaking	20%	16%	-4
Process	68%	51%	-17

   B. Comparison of Pre- and Post-Intervention Interview Responses (Questions 1-4).

Pre- and Post-Intervention Interview Question #3 - Please describe the process of how

you normally prepare to preach?

Table 10

PRE- AND POST- INTERVENTION RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW Q#3			
Themes:	Pre-Intervention Frequency:	Post-Intervention Frequency:	Change:
Prayer	100%	67%	-33
Reading / Study	86%	67%	-19
Fasting	14%	33%	+19
Scripture	100%	67%	-33
Holy Spirit	43%	--	-43
Meditation	57%	50%	-7
God Speaking	57%	33%	-24
God Acting	29%	--	+29
Knowledge	43%	17%	-26
Process	100%	100%	No change

A. Post-Intervention Questionnaire Responses (Questions 5-6).

When asked, "What aspects of this expository preaching course / seminar were most helpful to you? Please also give some examples" (Post-intervention Questionnaire Question #5), thirty-eight participants responded. The researcher identified the following themes and the frequency with which they recurred out of thirty-eight total responses:

1. Process (30/38)

2. Natural Outline (11/38)

3. Christ-centered Preaching (10/38)

4. Study Outline (7/38)

5. Fallen Condition Focus (4/38)

6. Redemptive Signals (4/38)

When asked, "Are there any specific ways in which your understanding of the task of preaching has been influenced and/or has remained the same as a result of this expository preaching course / seminar? Please explain" (Post-intervention Questionnaire Question #6), thirty-one participants responded. The researcher identified the following themes and the frequency with which they recurred out of thirty-one total responses:

1. Process (11/31)

2. Christ-centered Preaching (8/31)

3. Fallen-condition Focus (1/31)

4. Redemptive Signals (1/31)

B. Post-Intervention Interview Responses (Questions 5-6).

When asked, "What aspects of this expository preaching course / seminar were most helpful to you? Please also give some examples" (Post-intervention Interview

Question #5), seven participants responded. The researcher identified the following themes and the frequency with which they recurred out of seven total responses:

1. Christ-centered Preaching (5/7)

2. Process (4/7)

One interview participant shared that one of the helpful aspects of the course was "knowing about the . . . like, those not Christ-centered preaching. It helped me to avoid those and it helped me to really see and really know what . . . preaching is" (2243, Post-intervention interview, Question 5). Another interviewee concurred, saying that by learning about the six types of sermons which are not Christ-centered, such as egotistical preaching, moralistic preaching, and others, she saw that ". . . if you continue to [preach those kinds of sermons] many will be affected" (2258, Post-intervention interview, Question 5).

An almost equal number of the interviewees mentioned the helpfulness of the aspects of the course/seminar dealing with the process of sermon development, in which they were taught about the different phases, moving from the biblical text, to the natural outline (phrasing), to the study outline, and finally to the sermon outline. One of them commented:

> What was helpful to me . . . in this seminar was [part about] making the outline, the expository one. Of course, I am doing that, but it is somewhat disorderly. At least now I already know how to make organize it and I know how to distinguish those different . . . [sic] it seems that in the study, in the preaching of the Word of God, it seems before as if I am not combining, not unfolding [the message of the text]. Now at least my knowledge was made more complete [in terms of how] to

outline the expository and [how] to do the other . . . like: study, sermon outline . .

." (2256, Post-intervention interview, Question 5)

Another participant described how, through the course/seminar, he/she had

learned:

It is very important . . . that if you preach to the people, it must be Christ-centered, not self-centered . . . 'I,' 'I,' 'I,' not 'Moses,' 'Moses,' 'Abraham,' 'Abraham,' but the only one who should be central is . . . the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Because there is one that I heard before . . . I tried to criticize him. While he was preaching, it seemed like, in his sermon, he shared about Moses, so I . . . recognized that preaching was not focused on what Jesus has done, but he focused on what Moses had done. It was like, 'Let's be like Moses!' Like this, 'We need to be like Moses who obeyed God.' Like that. So that is where you recognize that it is not Christ-centered but Moses-centered. (2240, Post-intervention interview, Question 5)

When asked, "Are there any specific ways in which your understanding of the

task of preaching has been influenced and/or has remained the same as a result of this

expository preaching course / seminar? Please explain" (Post-intervention Interview

Question #6), seven participants responded. The researcher identified the following

themes and the frequency with which they recurred out of seven total responses:

1. Process (5/7)

2. Christ-centered Preaching (2/7)

As with the questionnaire responses, so also the interview responses to this

question indicate that the most significant area of change took place in the way in which

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the participants understood the process of developing a sermon. Most of these responses talked about how they had been helped by the segments which dealt with the four phases of sermon development, in which they were taught how to move from the biblical text, to the natural outline, then to the study outline, and from that to develop their preaching outline. One of them put it this way:

> My perspective now is that [this course/seminar] made a big change. . . . At least that way of outlining, to make the natural outline, until the sermon outline. Because sometimes we go immediately to the sermon outline. That is the common way we are doing, the normal way we previously did it. But now, because of this seminar, you need to start that [new way of doing it]. What I learned there is that while you start with the natural outline, that is really pure. What you preach is purified. What you preach is not out of context. What you study or teach from God's Word does not go far [from the intended meaning of the text]. (2255, Post-intervention interview, Question 6)

A smaller number of participants did indicate that they were influenced toward a more Christ-centered approach to preaching. One of them expressed it as follows:

> [Before taking this course/seminar] I have small ideas about preaching and how to preach God's Word. In [this course], especially when I learned about Christ-centered preaching and those not Christ-centered [kinds of] preaching I became more aware on how to . . . like, live with integrity . . . also in my personal relationship with God. I became like more . . . knowledgeable . . . [that the] preacher or servant of God has a deep responsibility in sharing the Gospel. (2243, Post-intervention interview, Question 6)

Key Factors Contributing to Changes in Levels of Knowledge, Disposition, and Practice

Having presented the changes in participants' levels of knowledge, disposition and practice with regard to the task of preaching, this paper now turns to the primary thrust of research question number three—"What aspects of the expository preaching course contributed most to the observed changes . . . ?"

There are three primary aspects of the researcher-designed course / intervention which the data seems to indicate were significant factors in whatever changes that were initiated.

1. The Quantity of Time Focused on Each Segment

Some seminar participants specifically mentioned in the post-intervention responses that that they felt the seminar was too short, and that they wished it could have been longer so that they would have more time to practice and absorb what was being taught.

The observed areas of change (and lack thereof) as a result of the intervention also seem to correspond with the participant feedback. As will be noted below, in the summary of findings for this study, there was some indication of notable change among participants in their movement toward a more Christ-centered approach to preaching in terms of their emphasis on the words of Scripture (*Sola Scriptura*) and their emphasis on connecting each message to Jesus Christ (*Solus Cristus*). It so happens that these were segments of the researcher's course/seminar on which, proportionately, to which a larger quantity of time was dedicated. In corollary to this, it is no surprise that the participants also did not fare so well with regard to their emphasis on *Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide*, to

which the researcher gave less proportional time during the course/seminar presentations and activities.

2. The Quality of the Content in Each Segment

The second aspect of the course/seminar which seems to have contributed to the levels of change (or lack thereof) among participants was the quality of the content presented in each segment. The areas which saw the most positive change (*Sola Scriptura* and *Solus Cristus*—see above) were also the segments of the course/seminar for which the researcher was able to prepare much more detailed lecture notes, and the over-all quality of the material was much better relative to the quality of the material presented which was intended to influence the participants toward a greater emphasis on *Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide*, but which did so with only marginal success.

3. The Degree of Participant Involvement in Each Segment

The third aspect of the course/seminar which seems to be a factor in the observed levels of change is the proportional amount of participant involvement in each segment. Specifically, the seminar included a lot of hands-on participation in which the participants practiced identifying the natural outline of a scripture passage and developing a study outline which was based upon the natural outline. These segments were also the ones which seemed to influence the most significant levels of change, whereas the researcher included proportionately much less participant activities and/or hands-on practice for the segment dealing with the concepts of Fallen Condition Focus (FCF) and Redemptive Signals (RS). This latter segment should have resulted in higher levels of knowledge, disposition, and practice with regard to Christ-centered preaching through greater participant emphasis on *Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide* but may have failed to

do so, in part, because of a lack of concrete examples and opportunities for to practice making application.

Evaluative Rubric for Data Analysis

The literature review, presented in chapter two, establishes the biblical, theological, and theoretical foundations for the evaluative rubric by which the researcher measured relative changes in the levels of knowledge, disposition, and practice in participants' approach to preaching as Christ-centered gospel proclamation and not Moralist Therapeutic Deism. The chart below (Figure 3) summarizes the broad categories or themes which make up this rubric. It served as the analytical lens through which the researcher examined the data in order to determine the major findings of this study.

TWO CONFLICTING PARADIGMS FOR PREACHING

MORALISTIC THERAPEUTIC DEISM:	**CHRIST-CENTERED PREACHING:**
1. God Exists.	1. God speaks and acts through his Word (*Sola Scriptura*).
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.	2. God wants people to live by faith in Christ, who alone can produce the genuine fruit of holiness and righteousness in all aspects of life (*Sola Fide*).
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about one's self.	3. The central goal of life is to glorify God (*Sola Deo Gloria*).
4. God doesn't need to be particularly involved in one's life except when he is needed to resolve a problem.	4. Through the incarnation, God reveals his desire to be intimately involved in every aspect of our human existence (*Solus Cristus*).
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.	5. Only by the grace of God in Christ can anyone have hope of entering heaven (*Sola Gratia*).

Figure 3 - Evaluative Rubric for Data Analysis

Summary of Major Findings

It is based upon emergent themes from the data presented in this chapter, analyzed within the general framework of the rubric presented in figure 3 (above), that this study has yielded the following findings:

1. The participants' pre-intervention levels of knowledge, disposition, and practice in preaching were generally more oriented toward Christ-centered Preaching than toward Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, but with some observable areas of weakness.

2. The participants' pre-intervention responses lacked a clear articulation of *Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide* in the way they described their approach to the task of preaching.

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3. The participants' pre-intervention responses also indicated a tendency to focus on *Sola Scriptura* over *Solus Cristus* in their approach to the task of preaching.

4. There was some movement among participants toward a more Christ-centered approach to preaching, as indicated by the relative increases in levels of knowledge, disposition, and practice with regard to *Sola Scriptura* and *Solus Cristus*.

5. A strong emphasis on *Sola Dei Gloria* already existed (pre-intervention) in the participants' approach to preaching, and this emphasis remained strong in the post-intervention data.

6. This study reveals little indication of change in the participants' levels of knowledge, disposition, and practice in terms of emphasis on *Sola Gratia* or *Sola Fide*.

7. The areas of measurable improvement toward Christ-centered Preaching (*Sola Scriptura* and *Solus Cristus*) and lack of improvement (*Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide*) also correspond in relative proportion to the degree of time, explanation, and hands-on practice which was dedicated to corresponding subject matter as part of the ministry intervention course and seminars.

The meaning, basis, and implications of these seven findings will be further discussed in the chapter five.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter begins with analysis of the major findings which came from the data presented in chapter four. It will examine each finding through three lenses: the researcher's personal observations, the literature which was discussed in chapter two, and the biblical and theological framework for the project. It will then consider the implications, limitations, and personal reflections to which the study's findings have led. The focus of this final chapter is to use the results of this study to explore the path forward in continuing to address the influence of various aspects of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism on the way in which many pastors approach the task of preaching.

Major Findings

1. Limited Pre-Intervention Orientation Toward Christ-centered Preaching

The pre-intervention data, as explained in chapter four, reveals that the participants came into this study with a certain level of orientation toward Christ-centered preaching. This was observed particularly in their responses which emphasized the importance of *Sola Scriptura* and *Soli Deo Gloria*. This comes as no surprise, because the researcher anticipated that, even pre-intervention, the participants would likely fall somewhere on a relative continuum between the two paradigms. It should also be noted here that this study does not claim that the participants necessarily come from a framework which exactly matches that of MTD. It only anticipated that participants would likely reflect various elements of one or both paradigms in their levels of knowledge, disposition, and practice with regard to the task of preaching.

One reason for this finding is that, contrary to the MTD paradigm, in which personal happiness and self-esteem are considered the ultimate purpose of life, a very significant number of the study participants (both pre- and post-intervention) indicated very specifically that God's glory is their ultimate goal in every message that they preach. So, although other aspects of the Christ-centered preaching paradigm (such as *Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide*) may be weak in their overall responses, one may safely say that, in the least, their answers do not reflect the kind of self-centered orientation seen in MTD (Smith, *Soul Searching* 147-154).

Another reason for this finding is that their strong sense of *Sola Scriptura*, when considered together with other references to obedience and righteous behavior, would seem to indicate that the participants lean generally more toward an absolute sense of truth and morality versus the more relativistic view of MTD (Smith, *Soul Searching* 143-146). This does not mean that the pre-intervention responses do not indicate certain elements of moralism or deism. In fact, some examples of MTD tendencies in the pre-intervention data will be given below. Rather, it simply means that their sense of what is right and wrong would probably be considerably more absolute when compared to the rather fluid, uncertain beliefs of those who reflect MTD.

2. Weak Pre-Intervention Emphasis on *Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide*

The pre-intervention data indicates that the participants came into this study with a less than satisfactory emphasis on *Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide*. While themes such as Christ, salvation, and transformation occurred frequently, there was also a strong emphasis on these things in connection with knowing and understanding the Word of God. If this emphasis upon knowing and understanding the Bible is included within the

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context of a redemptive, grace-based, Christ-centered approach to hermeneutics and proclamation, then it can prove to be a helpful, and even necessary, focus in pastoral preaching. However, the weak emphasis on grace and faith, coupled with the aforementioned emphasis on scripture knowledge could easily cause one to drift into preaching a moralistic, and possibly even deistic, message.

Particularly as Wesleyan-Arminian ministers who are often unjustly accused of leaning toward Pelagianism (Olson 20-30), we must be especially careful not to validate those concerns through our own carelessness in articulating the Gospel. This emphasis on scripture knowledge as a means of personal transformation was, in fact, one of Augustine's specific points of contention with the Pelagians. Augustine also understood the important role of scripture in leading a person to salvation, as it had played an important part in his own conversion experience (*Confessions*, 152-153). But the problem with the Pelagians was that, while they agreed that the grace of God enables a person to live righteously, they insisted that this help is given through the gift of a free will and through the instruction which is received from God's commandments (*On the Spirit and the Letter*, Ch. 4). For Augustine, this fell short of the true Gospel, because it neglected to acknowledge the limitations of the human will and the direct role of the Holy Spirit in bringing the grace of God to bear in a person's life (Ch. 5). In the pre-intervention responses to question number four, in both the questionnaires and the interviews, respondents mentioned terms related to knowledge, and obedience or right behavior more than any other theme (See tables 6 and 8). While it is difficult to draw exact conclusions, this kind of emphasis, with the corresponding lack of emphasis on themes such as faith, grace, or the fallen condition focus revealed in the text are certainly reasons for concern.

3. Pre-intervention Tendency to Focus on *Sola Scriptura* Over *Solus Cristus*

The same concerns mentioned above with finding number two also apply to this finding. However, this particular finding also points to a short-coming in the participants' concept of Christian preaching. They seem to focus more on the *words* of scripture than to the *Word* (Christ) to whom the scriptures point. I do not intend to create a dichotomy here. The strong emphasis on scripture is indeed a core aspect of expository preaching, of which I consider myself to be an advocate. However, as Goldsworthy has well-said, a truly evangelical preacher must always ask herself the following question: "How does this passage of scripture, and consequently my sermon, testify to Christ?" (*Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* 21).

In one sense, the participants appear to know this. In fact, while most of the pre-intervention data shows more emphasis on scripture than on Christ, the pre-intervention questionnaire responses to question number four shows a greater emphasis on Christ than on scripture. Furthermore, this particular question is one of the questions which tends to reveal levels of disposition (table 2). This would seem to indicate that, while the participants were lacking in some aspects of knowledge and practice, they were nevertheless pre-disposed with a desire to proclaim Christ. Thus, it seems that the disconnect may be in terms of knowing how to connect this desire with a clearer understanding of how Christology and soteriology should inform one's theology of preaching.

4. Increased Post-Intervention Emphasis on both *Sola Scriptura* and Solus *Cristus*

The positive result which came from the researcher's ministry intervention was the measurable improvement in the participants' overall emphasis on *Sola Scriptura* and

Solus Cristus. In reading the individual survey and interview responses, there was a noticeable shift in the focus of the participants toward a more textually-oriented approach to sermon preparation.

There was also a significant increase in the level of emphasis which respondents placed upon Jesus Christ in response to the post-intervention questionnaire and interview question number four, which asks them to describe the desired result or outcome of their preaching. While other post-intervention questions still received slightly more emphasis on *Sola Scriptura*, this particular question showed a very significant shift, with *Solus Cristus* receiving the most emphasis (See tables 6 and 8 in chapter four). In the post-intervention responses to the first question, in which participants were asked to define preaching, *Sola Scriptura* still received slightly more emphasis than *Solus Cristus*. However, there was a shift in how some of the participants emphasized *Sola Scriptura*. In the pre-intervention responses to the same question, there were a significant number of overlaps of the scripture theme with words which emphasized knowledge. But in the post-intervention responses, this emphasis was no longer present. In other words, it seems that the respondents were no longer thinking of preaching primarily as a transfer of information or an emphasis on certain principles which must be followed. But rather, they were, at least to some relative degree, thinking of preaching in terms of a proclamation of Christ and his Gospel. This is further reinforced by the significant increase in the frequency of the term "gospel" in the post-intervention responses to this question (See tables 3 and 4). When rightly understood, this latter theme in the data may overlap with virtually all of the five solas in the CCP paradigm, including *Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide*. However, the researcher was not able to probe as deeply as needed in

order to determine precisely what these participants intended when they used the word "gospel." As will be brought out in finding number six (below), the lack of explicit emphasis on grace and faith would seem to indicate that, regardless of how the participants understand the gospel itself, there may be (at best) an incongruence between their personal soteriology and their theology of preaching. Or, it is also possible, that their personal understanding of soteriology is also weak when it comes to understanding the more precise nuances of grace and faith in scripture and how they are connected to the person and work of Christ in salvation history.

5. **Strong Pre- and Post-Intervention Emphases on *Sola Dei Gloria***

A significant number of both pre- and post-intervention responses showed a strong disposition toward *Soli Deo Gloria* in their approach to preaching. In examining the overall picture presented by the data, this category the primary determining factor for finding number one (above), that the overall pre-intervention orientation of the delegates already leaned more toward a Christ-centered approach to preaching rather than Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. Although the data reveals significant pre- and post-intervention weaknesses in other categories, this single category provides, in my estimation, the strongest indicator of this and may be further verified by the strong emphasis on *Sola Scriptura* when considered together, and in context. These emphases seem to go directly opposite of the MTD paradigm which views personal happiness and self-esteem as the central goal of life (See figure 3).

6. **Only Marginal Increases in Emphasis on *Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide***

Although there was sporadic evidence of increased emphasis on *Sola Gratia* and

Sola Fide, it did not occur with enough frequency to indicate a significant level of improvement. The ministry intervention, which employed a semester-long preaching course and a one-day preaching seminar, included segments which attempted to teach participants how to look for what Bryan Chapell refers to as the Fallen Condition Focus and Redemptive Signals in each text (269-328). This concept is very closely connected with the principles of *Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide*. However, the results reflected in the post-intervention data do not show a significant level of change.

7. **Relative Correspondence Between Categories of Improvement and the Level of Emphasis During Intervention**

The mixed success of the researcher-designed ministry intervention revealed that areas of improvement happened in more or less relative proportion to the amount of time that was dedicated to segments relevant to each aspect. Furthermore, the area of most noticeable impact, which was *Sola Scriptura* also coincided with course segments which involved more hands-on, practical application in which the participants were given opportunities to actually do what had been explained in those segments of the course.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

The Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary refers to this type of study as a "ministry transformation project." The purpose for doing it is clear. As with everything else in this program, it is intended to help ministry practitioners improve the way in which they serve Christ and his Church. Therefore, my local ministry context has been a primary matter of concern throughout this study. How am I doing in terms of helping men and women to faithfully proclaim a Christ-centered gospel which flows out of an accurate exposition of the biblical text? Are they becoming more Christ-centered in

their approach to the task of preaching? In what ways is my personal teaching ministry helping (or not helping) them to become more Christ-centered in their preaching? These are the sort of questions which underlie the problem, purpose, and research questions which have guided this study.

The findings of this study, as presented above, have offered some answers to the ministry problem and the related research questions. It has been much more of an exercise in self-evaluation rather than an evaluation of the participants. Now, based upon these findings, there are several ways in which I anticipate further ministry transformation will take place as a result of this study.

Improved Preaching Curriculum at the Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherd College

First of all, I anticipate that this study will help me to make substantive changes not only to the expository preaching course which I have been teaching at PBMSC, but also to the over-all curriculum as it pertains to preaching. These changes may include the following:

1. Developing a sermon preparation process which bridges the theological gap between exegesis and exposition. By demonstrating the use of theological lenses such as the "Garden Lens" (Eswine 43-45), the "Fallen Condition Focus" (Chapell 48-57), and the "Redemptive Signals" (273), students can learn how to align both their exegetical work and their homiletical efforts with the "canonical center" (Kaiser 138; Pelton 123) which is Christ and the gospel.

2. Expanding the preaching curriculum to include one or two additional semesters which would incorporate more instruction for developing Christ-centered expository sermons from various biblical genres.

3. Include course segments which teach how to preach topical, doctrinal, and other types of sermons using the same concept of the theological bridges.

Enhanced Teaching Methods

I also expect to make some adjustments to my teaching methods so that, through better andragogy, more of the content of the preaching curriculum that is being taught will be retained. These changes will enhance not only the effectiveness of the college preaching courses that I will teach, but also future seminars or other training sessions which I will conduct with pastors and lay leaders in the Philippines and possibly also in the U. S. and other countries.

A Book on Christ-Centered Preaching in Wesleyan Perspective

Finally, as a result of this project, I would like to do further reading in relevant literature connected with this study, and to adapt and expand its content so that it can be published as a book on Christ-centered preaching which is accessible and engaging to a more general readership—especially for pastors and evangelists who are involved in regular preaching ministry. I would welcome any opportunities which God may open for becoming a life-long advocate for Christ-centered biblical preaching which embraces the contributions of historic Wesleyan-Holiness theology while also joining in collegial conversation with the broader Body of Christ.

Limitations of the Study

While this study has been conducted within a careful set of self-imposed delimitations, there are also some ways in which it has been limited due to other factors. While these limitations did not prevent the researcher from answering the primary

problem and the connected research questions, they nevertheless may suggest future areas of exploration in order to enhance and expand the generalizability of the study.

First, the study would have been further strengthened if I could have collected pre- and post-intervention sermon outlines from the participants. Time and other factors prohibited me from gathering a viable sampling of this type of data. However, it might be worth considering if this study would ever be expanded or conducted among another group of participants.

Also, it is possible that I could have collected a more diverse set of data if I had been able to include two additional districts of the PBMC in the study. These districts likely would have some unique theological and preaching orientations which may have given thicker and richer texture to the overall range of data collected. However, due time constraints, logistics, and accessibility concerns, I was not able to expand the data collection any further.

Unexpected Observations

Probably the greatest surprise coming out of this project is how much my own approach to the task of preaching is changing. For several years, I have sensed this need to do more than just explain a text. I have felt that something was often missing from my own preaching, and I knew that gospel proclamation was at the heart of what was lacking. The hours spent going through related literature has brought me to the surprising realization that my own training background, while very strong on biblical exegesis and homiletical exposition, was rather weak when it came to showing how to build theological bridges which can bring both the text and the contemporary audience under the glorious light of the gospel of Christ.

I was somewhat startled, after going through the questionnaire and interview data, to discover that my students have been learning almost exactly what I was teaching them. They have been learning to put greater emphasis on analyzing the text, developing a natural outline from that text, transforming the outline into a study outline for further interpretation of the text, and then finally, I have taught them to find a way to communicate the results of their study in a homiletical outline which employs good communication techniques. The same gap that existed in my training, and in my preaching, has remained to some extent in the way I am instructing my expository preaching students. Although I did make some initial changes to my course materials prior to implementing the field research for this project, my emphasis was still lopsided—treating the theological bridgework as something of an after-thought rather than a key ingredient.

These days I am a mildly-chastened preacher (to borrow Vanhoozer's language) who is grateful for the grace of correction which I have received even while endeavoring to correct what was wrong in the preaching of others. While seeking to remove a splinter from their theological and homiletical eyes, God has been patiently extracting a rather large plank that has been obstructing my own view of this glorious task we call "preaching the gospel."

Future Directions for the Study

The findings of this study suggest that while the researcher-designed intervention does seem to create a minimal level of impact in the participants' levels of knowledge, disposition, and practice with regard to a Christ-centered approach to preaching rather than Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, there are still several key areas in which the

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intervention may still be improved in order to maximize the potential impact. The study

also points to additional ways in which future research projects may explore this or

related problems.

Changes in Practice

There are three key changes which seem critical for improving the effectiveness

of future preaching courses and seminars.

Better Definition and Description of Key Terms or Concepts

First, this study revealed that the course and seminar content still leaves some

serious gaps in the content—specifically in when it comes to the definition and

description of key terms of concepts. This will require more than just adding a few

additional terms and definitions to a glossary. It will also require careful consideration of

how to paint concrete-relational pictures that are culturally transferrable in order to help

future participants to conceptualize what is being taught. In particular, terms such as

gospel, Christ-centered, fallen-condition focus, redemptive signals, grace, faith, and

proclamation need to be not only defined but also described and explained.

More Hands-On, Group-Oriented Learning Activities

One of the findings of this study is that the levels of transformation in

participants' knowledge, disposition, and practice seemed to correspond relatively closely

with the amount of time that was spent doing hands-on activities designed to teach a

particular segment of the course. Considerable time was spent practicing the natural

outlining of a passage and also developing a study outline from the natural outline, and its

effectiveness was reflected in the post-intervention data. However, there was a

corresponding lack of such activities to help participants identify the fallen condition

focus and redemptive signals of a passage, or to apply other key terms or concepts from the lessons. In order to correct this, I am planning to develop both some examples of FCFs and RSs together with some hands-on exercises where the students (or seminar participants) will be able to practice identifying these themes from specific scripture passages. I might also include some sermon clips in which they are given the opportunity to identify these themes (or lack thereof) on the other end of the process, in actual sermons.

More Time Needed for Seminar Participants

Some seminar participants indicated that one day was not enough time for them to fully absorb the material that was being taught. Therefore, while time constraints may not be completely avoidable when conducting seminars, it is possible that such an event could be extended to encompass two days instead of only one. Other options might be to provide more take-home activities and exercises in order to encourage participants to continue practicing what they have learned after the conclusion of the seminar. More use of technology in order to increase the frequency with which participants are exposed to the material is another way in which valuable time can be economized.

Future Areas of Research

This study has also yielded several suggestions for further exploration of this problem and related topics.

First, a revised and improved set of questionnaire and interview questions might enhance the thickness and richness of the data generated from a similar study in the future. As indicated in chapter four, a few of the questions used in the data collection may not have been sufficiently clear or specific. This was a calculated risk which I was willing

to take in order to encourage participants to give share their own unique perspectives during the questionnaires and interviews. However, in retrospect, a little more specificity might prove helpful, without tilting the balance too far in the other direction.

Secondly, I believe that a study similar to this, but conducted from a sampling of either American pastors or American students who are training for pastoral ministry would yield an even more interesting range of data. In conjunction with the possibility of writing a book on Christ-centered preaching, I am considering the possibility of developing a questionnaire to distribute via the internet (such as Survey Monkey) in order to learn more about the knowledge, dispositions, and practices of American pastors in relation to these conflicting paradigms for preaching (MTD vs. CCP). I believe that this type of data, if taken from a large and diverse sampling of pastors, could provide a useful backdrop for expanding the literature and framework provided in chapter two and using it to further challenge the Church toward a more Christ-centered approach to preaching.

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Review of the Chapter

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This chapter has examined the findings which came from the data presented in chapter four. It has examined them through the multiple lenses which have been used to give validity to this study—the lens of a biblical and theological framework, the theoretical lens provided in the review of relevant literature related to Moralistic Therapeutic Deism and Christ-Centered Preaching, and the lens of the researcher's own personal experiences as both a ministry practitioner and a participant-observer in this study. Based upon this analysis of the study's findings, it has then presented insights, personal reflections, and recommendations for further ministry transformation and field research.

Postscript

From start to finish, it has felt as if I was aiming at a moving target while conducting this study. The foundational literature has expanded and sharpened my own understanding of what it means to engage in Christ-centered gospel proclamation. This means that, even while attempting to measure the effectiveness of the ministry intervention, my own understanding of both the desired outcome and the path to reach it was also changing. But then again, such is the life of a ministry practitioner. We do not work in the sterile confines of a controlled environment. We live and work with real people and real problems. Our "laboratory" for developing life-transforming initiatives includes ministry environments that are dynamic, organic, shifting, evolving, sometimes predictable, sometimes chaotic, and always messy. We desperately need the same grace that we are proclaiming to others.

As a missionary-educator, I am learning that the only hope for transforming the way we preach the gospel is found in the very gospel which we preach. Just as people cannot transform their own lives in order to earn God's favor, neither can preachers give new life to their anemic preaching by simply employing a few more steps within the homiletical process. We must "taste and see" the gospel goodness which we are proclaiming to others. My prayer is not that we will "try harder" to "be better" preachers, but rather, that we may simply come early and often to the table of the Lord, and feast on His goodness while telling others to "taste and see."

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE & QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS

Pre-Intervention Interview & Questionnaire Questions

1. According to your own definition, what is preaching?

2. How would you describe the preacher's responsibility (or responsibilities) in the task of preaching?

3. Please describe the process of how you normally prepare to preach?

4. What do you consider to be the most important thing(s) that a sermon should do or accomplish? Please explain each.

Post-Intervention Interview & Questionnaire Questions

1. According to your own definition, what is preaching?

2. How would you describe the preacher's responsibility (or responsibilities) in the task of preaching?

3. Please describe the process of how you normally prepare to preach?

4. What do you consider to be the most important thing(s) that a sermon should do or accomplish? Please explain each.

5. What aspects of this expository preaching course / seminar were most helpful to you? Please also give some examples.

6. Are there any specific ways in which your understanding of the task of preaching has been influenced and/or has remained the same as a result of this expository preaching course / seminar? Please explain.

APPENDIX B

SEMINAR SCHEDULES & TOPICS

WE PREACH CHRIST: RECOVERING THE GOSPEL IN CHRISTIAN PREACHING

Session Schedule & Topics

Richard G. Hutchison

8:15-10:00 a.m.	SESSION 1: THE ROLE OF SCRIPTURE IN CHRISTIAN PREACHING	
	Segment 1	Biblical Foundations of Preaching
	Segment 2	The Revelation of Christ in All the Scriptures
	Segment 3	Defining the Gospel for Christian Preaching
	Segment 4	What is Expository Preaching? and Why is it Important?
10:30-12 noon	SESSION 2: THE FOUR PHASES OF EXPOSITORY SERMON PREPARATION	
	Segment 1	Overview: Phase 1 - Biblical Text Phase 2 - Natural Outline Phase 3 - Study Outline Phase 4 - Preaching Outline
	Segment 2	Group Activity – Practicing Phase 1
	Segment 3	Group Activity – Practicing Phase 2
	Segment 4	Group Activity – Practicing Phases 3 and 4
1:45-3:15 p.m.	SESSION 3: PREACHING CHRIST FROM ALL THE SCRIPTURES	
	Segment 1	Introduction to Christ-centered Preaching
	Segment 2	Characteristics of a Christ-centered Sermon
	Segment 3	Characteristics of a Sermon that is NOT Christ-centered
	Segment 4	How to Preach Christ in Every Sermon
3:30-5:00 p.m.	SESSION 4: RECOVERING THE GOSPEL IN CHRISTIAN PREACHING	
	Segment 1	What Makes Preaching Christian? Proclaiming the Gospel of Christ in Every Sermon
	Segment 2	Identifying the Fallen-Condition Focus of the Scripture Text
	Segment 3	Identifying the Redemptive Signals in the Scripture Text
	Segment 4	Group Practice – Looking for the FCF's and RS's in a Text

WE PREACH CHRIST: RECOVERING THE GOSPEL IN CHRISTIAN PREACHING

Presented by: Richard G. Hutchison

Date & Time: Friday, September 22, 2017 – All-Day (6:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.)
Participants: Pastors & Lay Leaders, Philippine Bible Methodist Church (Nehemiah District)
Location: Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherd's College, Caramutan, Villasis, Pangasinan
Venue: PBMSC Library & Dining Hall

TIME:	ACTIVITY:	VENUE:
6:30-8:00 a.m.	**Arrival & Registration** *Coffee & Pandesal will be served. **Study participants may also fill out questionnaires during this time.	Dining Hall
8:00-8:15 a.m.	**Praise, Worship, and Prayer Time**	Library (upstairs)
8:15-10:00 a.m.	**Session 1: The Role of Scripture in Christian Preaching**	Library
10:00-10:30 a.m.	**Break for Merienda**	Dining Hall
10:30-12 noon	**Session 2: Four Phases of Biblical Sermon Preparation**	Library
12 noon-1:30 p.m.	**Lunch Break**	Dining Hall
1:30-1:45 p.m.	**Praise & Worship**	Library
1:45-3:15	**Session 3: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures**	Library
3:15-3:30	**Merienda Break**	Dining Hall
3:30-5:00	**Session 4: Recovering the Gospel in Christian Preaching**	Library
5:00-6:00 p.m.	**Fellowship & Sharing** *Study participants may also fill-out questionnaires during this time.	Campus
6:00 – 7:00 p.m.	**Supper Meal**	Dining Hall
7:00 p.m.	**Departure**	

<h1 style="text-align:center;"><u>Session Schedule & Topics</u></h1>

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2017		
2 – 3:30 p.m.	SESSION 1: THE ROLE OF SCRIPTURE IN CHRISTIAN PREACHING	
	Segment 1	Biblical Foundations of Preaching
	Segment 2	The Revelation of Christ in All the Scriptures
	Segment 3	Defining the Gospel for Christian Preaching
	Segment 4	What is Expository Preaching? and Why is it Important?
3:30 - 4 P.M.	BREAK TIME	
4-6 p.m.	SESSION 2: THE FOUR PHASES OF EXPOSITORY SERMON PREPARATION	
	Segment 1	Overview: Phase 1 - Biblical Text Phase 2 - Natural Outline Phase 3 - Study Outline Phase 4 - Preaching Outline
	Segment 2	Group Activity – Practicing Phase 1
	Segment 3	Group Activity – Practicing Phase 2
	Segment 4	Group Activity – Practicing Phases 3 and 4
7-9 p.m.	SESSION 3: REVIEW & PRACTICE of the FOUR PHASES OF SERMON PREP	
	Segment 1	Review & Practice of Phase 1
	Segment 2	Review & Practice of Phase 2
	Segment 3	Review & Practice of Phase 3
	Segment 4	Review & Practice of Phase 4
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2017		
8-10 a.m.	SESSION 4: PREACHING CHRIST FROM ALL THE SCRIPTURES	
	Segment 1	Introduction to Christ-centered Preaching
	Segment 2	Characteristics of a Christ-centered Sermon
	Segment 3	Characteristics of a Sermon that is NOT Christ-centered
	Segment 4	How to Preach Christ in Every Sermon
10 – 10:30 a.m.	BREAK TIME	
10:30 - 12 noon	SESSION 5: RECOVERING THE GOSPEL IN CHRISTIAN PREACHING	
	Segment 1	What Makes Preaching Christian? Proclaiming the Gospel of Christ in Every Sermon
	Segment 2	Identifying the Fallen-Condition Focus of the Scripture Text
	Segment 3	Identifying the Redemptive Signals in the Scripture Text
	Segment 4	Group Practice – Looking for the FCF's and RS's in a

		Text

PHILIPPINE BIBLE METHODIST SHEPHERDS COLLEGE
Caramutan, Villasis, Pangasinan 2427

SYLLABUS

CM202 - Expository Preaching

School Year 2017-18
First Semester

INSTRUCTOR: Richard G. Hutchison

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION
- Cell Phone # - 0905 361 4022
- e-mail – rghutchison867@gmail.com

COURSE SCHEDULE: M-T 10:15-11:45 a.m.

PBMSC VISION
We are a holiness institution serving as a fire center and training ground for Spirit-filled Christian ministry workers and church leaders in the Philippines and beyond.

PBMSC MISSION
We are committed to develop church leaders and to equip pastors, church planters, missionaries, evangelists, Christian leaders, and other ministry workers for the purpose of spreading the Gospel of the kingdom of God and Scriptural holiness.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course guides the student through a process of learning both the discipline and the art of expository preaching. Special emphasis will be placed upon importance of preparing sermons which flow directly out of the actual words of scripture, using accurate observations, interpretation and application of the chosen text.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
- To apply the principles learned in Bible Study Methods, Hermeneutics, and Introduction to Preaching to the task of preparing and preaching from a specific passage of scripture.
- To recognize what makes a message (sermon) "biblical".
- To be able to choose, exegete, and outline a passage of scripture.
- To be able to make an exegetical outline into a preaching outline (or manuscript).
- To be able to make every sermon Christ-centered.
- To be able to deliver an expository message with biblical accuracy, doctrinal purity, prophetic clarity, and spiritual power.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1) Attendance and Classroom Participation
Please be advised of the following policies regarding class absences, late attendance, and other related matters.

CLASS ATTENDANCE
Part of the discipline for developing students into responsible leaders is maintaining a high standard for punctuality in class attendance. Accumulated absences will either mean a decrease in grade or automatic failure.

A maximum of 3 hours of absences for a three-unit course is allowed. Exceptions will only be made on the basis of prolonged illness (see policy above for incomplete courses). Students who arrive more than 3 minutes after the appointed time for their class period to begin shall be marked as (T) tardy. *Tardy* means "late". Students who arrive more than 15 minutes late for class shall be automatically counted as (A) absent even if they attend the remainder of the class period.

If the class meets twice per week, then two tardies will be counted equal to one absence, and one absence shall be equal to 1 ½ hours. If the class meets three times per week, then three tardies will be counted as one absence, and one absence shall be equal to 1 hour of classroom time. For example: If a student accrues three absences in a class which meets three times per week, he/she will have 3 hours of accumulated absences for the course. But if a student accrues three absences in a class which meets only twice per week, he/she will have already accumulated 4 ½ hours of absences, and therefore will automatically be given a grade reduction of 5% (for one-half hour's excess absence).

Classes Meeting 2x per Week:

Record of Absences
1 absence = 1.5 hours
2 absences = 3.0 hours
3 absences = 4.5 hours
4 absences = 6.0 hours
5 absences = 7.5 hours

Record of Tardy (late arrivals)
- Tardy (late) = Arrival more than 3 minutes past start time
- Every 2x tardy (late) = 1 absence
- More than 15 minutes late = automatically counted absent

Classes Meeting 3x per Week:

1 absence = 1.0 hours
2 absences = 2.0 hours
3 absences = 3.0 hours
4 absences = 4.0 hours

5 absences = 5.0 hours
Record of Tardy (late arrivals)
- Tardy (late) = Arrival more than 3 minutes past start time
- Every 3x tardy (late) = 1 absence
- More than 15 minutes late = automatically counted absent

Grade Deductions for Accumulated Absences:

Accumulated Absences	Final Grade Reduction
1 hour	no grade reduction
2 hours	no grade reduction
3 hours	no grade reduction
4 hours	10% grade reduction
5 hours	20% grade reduction
6 hours	30% grade reduction
7 hours	40% grade reduction

Any student who is counted absent for more than three (3) class periods will receive an automatic grade reduction of 10% for every succeeding absence. FOR EXAMPLE: If your course grade is 85% and you are counted absent for 6 class periods, then your grade will be reduced an additional 20% (10% for each absence above 4 class periods), making your final grade 65% (a failing grade).

WAITING FOR THE INSTRUCTOR
A class required to wait 15 minutes from the time the class should have begun for the instructor. If the instructor does not arrive, the class is considered dismissed. If a student leaves before the allotted time, he/she will be considered as absent.

ASSIGNMENTS
All assigned works shall be passed on or before the dates announced by the instructor. Failure to submit assignments when due will result in deduction of grade or refusal of the instructor to accept the assignment.

EXAMINATIONS
- To avoid confusion and conflict, the following uniform principles and procedures concerning examinations have been adopted:
- *Mid-term Examinations* (Optional) may be scheduled at the discretion of each teacher during any regularly-assigned class period.
- *Final Examinations* may be up to two hours in length. The date and time for final examinations will be scheduled by the Dean of Academic Affairs & Spiritual Life.
- All examinations must be taken when scheduled, except when serious illness or injuries occur.
- Students officially excused from taking a scheduled exam may make it up only after a fee is paid, per exam missed and late test fee receipt slip is given to your instructor before you take the exam.

Each student is also expected to participate in each class by:
  a) showing a good attitude toward the instructor(s) and fellow students,
  b) attempting to answer the instructor's questions to the best of his/her ability, and
  c) being alert, awake, and attentive to the instructor(s) and to fellow students.

2) Homework Assignments

The instructor will usually assign homework to be completed by a certain date. Homework assignments may include such things as reading, paperwork, or any other activity which the instructor asks the students to do.

3) Quizzes

The instructor may give a short quiz <u>at any time</u> during this course. Therefore, students should always be ready in case a quiz may be given. These quizzes will include questions related to the things which have already been taught during previous class meetings. In order to prepare for these quizzes, the students should REVIEW their class notes before each class meeting.

4) Mid-term and Final Examinations

Students will be tested over the materials that have been taught by the instructor during the class meetings. The date of these examinations will be announced in advance, and the instructor will provide the students with a study guide, so they will know how to prepare for these examinations.

5) Expository Sermons

Students will be required to prepare and preach three (3) expository sermons at assigned dates throughout the semester. The instructor will provide further instructions for these assignments. Students must carefully follow the instructions provided by the instructor for the preparation and preaching of these sermons. Each sermon will be evaluated by the instructor and may also be evaluated by any other faculty member(s) whom the instructor may invite to join in listening to the students as they preach. An evaluation sheet will be used by those who are evaluating each sermon.

<u>PLEASE NOTE</u>: All course assignments must be submitted to the instructor at the beginning of the class meeting ON the prescribed date. Not before. Not after. If the student(s) need extended time to complete an assignment, they may request this from the instructor IN ADVANCE. Any requests made on the day in which the assignment is due will not be granted. Late assignments (without an extension) will receive a reduced grade of 10% for every weekday (Monday through Friday) beyond the due date until they are submitted. <u>EXAMPLE</u>: If the assignment is due on Friday, October 31, but the student does not submit it to the instructor until Wednesday, November 5, then it would be reduced by 20%. Therefore, if the original grade was 95%, it would be reduced to 75%.

COURSE ASSESSMENT (GRADING)

Attendance and Participation 10%

Homework Assignments 20%
Quizzes 10%
Mid-Term Examination 15%
Final Examination 15%
Expository Sermons (3 .... 30%

COURSE SCHEDULE

A tentative schedule for course topics and assignment due dates will be given on Friday, November 6. Please carefully note the due dates on this schedule and submit all your assignments on-time. Late assignments will receive a 10% grade deduction for each class period that they are late. Each reading assignment will be reported based upon the percentage of reading that was completed by the beginning of the class period in which it is due.

Bibliography

Baab, Otto J. *Prophetic Preaching: A New Approach.* New York: Abingdon Press, 1958.

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Girao, William B. *Preaching with a Message*. Manila: OMF Literature, 2004.

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Robinson, Haddon W. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995.

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Wiersbe, Warren W. (series editor). *The Dynamics of Preaching.* Ministry Dynamics for a New Century (series). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000.

Willhite, Keith and Scott M. Gibson (editors). *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003.

CM-202 EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Tentative Course Schedule [per one-hour class segment]

1. Introduction / Overview of the Course
2. What is Preaching?
3. **What is *Expository* Preaching?**
4. *Why* expository preaching?
5. **Preparing the preacher**
6. Gathering your tools for expository sermon preparation
7. **Choosing the text**
8. **Absorbing the text**
9. **Analyzing the text**
10. Discovering the natural outline of the text
11. Identifying the main point of the passage
12. **Developing a study outline from the text**
13. Interpreting the text
14. Revising your study outline
15. Applying the text to real life
16. **Developing your preaching (homiletical) outline**
17. Choosing the main point of your sermon
18. Revising your preaching outline
19. Adding content to the preaching outline
20. Introductions
21. Conclusions
22. Illustrations
23. Mid-Term Exam
24. **The *goal* of expository preaching – Christ-centered Gospel Proclamation**
25. What makes preaching "Christian"?
26. The Five Pillars of Christian Preaching
27. Five Characteristics of Sub-Christian Preaching
28. A Redemptive Approach to Preaching (Bryan Chapell)
29. Identifying the Fallen Condition Focus in the Text (Bryan Chapell)
30. Discovering the Redemptive Message of the Text (Bryan Chapell)
31. Preaching the Redemptive Message of the Text (Bryan Chapell)
32. Recognizing Nonredemptive Messages (Bryan Chapell)
33. Developing Redemptive Sermons (Bryan Chapell)
34. Preaching Practicum
35. Preaching Practicum
36. Preaching Practicum
37. Preaching Practicum
38. Preaching Practicum
39. Preaching Practicum
40. Final Examination

APPENDIX D

PERMISSION REQUEST LETTERS

October 25, 2017

Richard G. Hutchison
Doctor of Ministry Student
Asbury Theological Seminary
Beeson International Center for Preaching and Church Leadership

Pastor David Yucaddi, Sr.
Overseer
Bible Methodist Gospel Light Church

Dear Pastor David,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am writing to your good office in order to request permission to invite pastors of the BMGLC to participate in a research project which I am conducting in connection with the teaching of an expository preaching seminar. The purpose of this research project will be to evaluate the effectiveness of this seminar in helping pastors to move toward a more Christ-centered approach to preaching.

In order to gather data for the study, I would need to invite some BMGL pastors to participate voluntarily in this study. Each pastor who is invited will receive a cover letter explaining the nature of the project and an informed consent form which they will sign if they wish to join the study. I will also may include some faculty colleagues as research assistants to help with interpreting, translating, transcribing, and processing the data that is collected.

Those who participate in the study may be asked to fill out pre- and post-course/seminar questionnaires, to participate in pre- and post-course/seminar interviews, and to share some pre- and post-course sermon manuscripts/outlines. The personal interviews will be digitally recorded, transcribed, and translated. All of the data from the study will be kept strictly confidential, and all research assistants will also be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Although no compensation can be given to the study participants, their participation will greatly benefit future students and pastors who will receive enhanced instruction because of the feedback which this study will provide to me as a teacher.

Attached to this letter, you will also find a copy of the cover letter and informed consent agreement which I would like to distribute to the pastors.

If you are able to grant me permission to do this, then please kindly read and sign the consent form below and return it to me.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

Richard G. Hutchison

I, _____, in my capacity as Overseer of the Bible Methodist Gospel Light Church, do give Richard G. Hutchison permission to conduct the above-requested study.

Signed: Date:

_____   _____

Richard G. Hutchison
Doctor of Ministry Student
Asbury Theological Seminary
Beeson International Center for Preaching and Church Leadership

Rev. Jefferson Lucena
OIC / Administrator
Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherd's College
Caramutan, Villasis, Pangasinan 2427
Philippines

March 3, 2017

Dear Pastor Jeff,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am writing to your good office in order to request permission to conduct a research project on the campus of the Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherds College in connection with teaching an expository preaching course and also a one-day expository preaching seminar. The purpose of this research project will be to evaluate the effectiveness of this course/seminar in helping students/pastors to move toward a more Christ-centered approach to preaching.

In order to gather data for the study, I would need to invite PBMSC students who are enrolled in the one-semester expository preaching course and also Philippine Bible Methodist Pastors who will attend a one-day preaching seminar to participate voluntarily in this study. Each student or pastor who is invited will receive a cover letter explaining the nature of the project and an informed consent form which they will sign if they wish to join the study. I will also may include some faculty colleagues as research assistants to help with interpreting, translating, transcribing, and processing the data that is collected.

Those who participate in the study may be asked to fill out pre- and post-course/seminar questionnaires, to participate in pre- and post-course/seminar interviews, and to share some pre- and post-course sermon manuscripts/outlines. The personal interviews will be digitally recorded, transcribed, and translated. All of the data from the study will be kept strictly confidential, and all research assistants will also be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Although no compensation can be given to the study participants (students or pastors), I will be providing them with some free meals, snacks`, preaching resources, and/or other tokens of appreciation. Furthermore, their participation will greatly benefit future students and pastors who will receive enhanced instruction because of the feedback which this study will provide to me as a teacher.

Attached to this letter, you will also find a copy of the cover letter and informed consent agreement which I would like to distribute to the pastors.

If you are able to grant me permission to do this, then please kindly read and sign the consent form below and return it to me.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

Richard G. Hutchison

I, Jefferson F. Lucena, in my capacity as administrator at the Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherds College, do give Richard G. Hutchison permission to conduct the above-requested study.

Signed: Date:

_____   _____

Rev. Jefferson F. Lucena

September 22, 2017

Richard G. Hutchison
Doctor of Ministry Student
Asbury Theological Seminary
Beeson International Center for Preaching and Church Leadership

Rev. Jimmy Ignacio
Nehemiah District Overseer
Philippine Bible Methodist Church

Dear Pastor Jimmy,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am writing to your good office in order to request permission to invite pastors of the Nehemiah district to participate in a research project which I will be conducting on the campus of the Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherds College in connection with teaching an expository preaching course and also a one-day expository preaching seminar. The purpose of this research project will be to evaluate the effectiveness of this course/seminar in helping students/pastors to move toward a more Christ-centered approach to preaching.

In order to gather data for the study, I would need to invite some Philippine Bible Methodist pastors to attend a one-day preaching seminar and also to participate voluntarily in this study. Each student or pastor who is invited will receive a cover letter explaining the nature of the project and an informed consent form which they will sign if they wish to join the study. I will also may include some faculty colleagues as research assistants to help with interpreting, translating, transcribing, and processing the data that is collected.

Those who participate in the study may be asked to fill out pre- and post-course/seminar questionnaires, to participate in pre- and post-course/seminar interviews, and to share some pre- and post-course sermon manuscripts/outlines. The personal interviews will be digitally recorded, transcribed, and translated. All of the data from the study will be kept strictly confidential, and all research assistants will also be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Although no compensation can be given to the study participants (students or pastors), I will be providing them with some free meals, snacks, preaching resources, and/or other tokens of appreciation. Furthermore, their participation will greatly benefit future students and pastors who will receive enhanced instruction because of the feedback which this study will provide to me as a teacher.

Attached to this letter, you will also find a copy of the cover letter and informed consent agreement which I would like to distribute to the pastors.

If you are able to grant me permission to do this, then please kindly read and sign the consent form below and return it to me.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

Richard G. Hutchison

I, _____, in my capacity as District Overseer of the _____ District of the Philippine Bible Methodist Church, do give Richard G. Hutchison permission to conduct the above-requested study.

Signed: Date:

_____   _____

COVER LETTER

Dear _____:

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing to share with you about a ministry transformation project which I'm currently working on as part of my study in the Doctor of Ministry Program at Asbury Theological Seminary. The title my study is: "We Preach Christ: Recovering the Gospel in Christian Preaching." The focus of this study is to evaluate an expository preaching course which I will be teaching both as a one-day seminar for pastors and as a one-semester (approximately four months) course at the Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherds College.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the course in developing preachers who understand, desire, and practice a Christ-centered approach to the task of preaching.

I will endeavor to accomplish this by collecting data from a select group of study participants who are either Bible Methodist pastors or students in the Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherds College and who also are either attendees of the one-day expository preaching seminar or enrolled in the one-semester expository preaching course. I will be collecting this data from the participants by requesting them to fill out some pre- and post- seminar/class questionnaires, share some pre- and post-seminar/class personal sermon notes/manuscripts, and, in some cases, to allow me to conduct one or two personal (one-on-one) interviews with them. The personal interviews would also be audio recorded. All the information from each participant will be kept strictly confidential. The results of this study will be shared in such a way that does not reveal the identity of any participant.

But in order to do this, I will need to recruit some willing participants who would like to volunteer their time so that others may benefit from the results of this research. Although there will be no compensation for the participants of this study, they will receive some incentives as a token of appreciation for their help, including some free meals, snacks, and class and/or seminar materials. Participants who attend the one-day seminar will also be given free registration. Other token gifts of appreciation may also be included if possible. Best of all, future pastors, preaching students, and entire congregations will be blessed by the improvements which will be made to this preaching course as a result of your personal participation in this study.

That is why I am inviting you to be one of the participants in this study. If you would like to volunteer your help and participation, please kindly read and sign the informed consent letter which is attached with this invitation.

Thank you so much for your gracious consideration.

Your Brother in Christ,

Richard G. Hutchison
Student – Doctor of Ministry Program
Asbury Theological Seminary
Beeson International Center for Biblical Preaching and Church Leadership

APPENDIX F

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER [Student Version]

We Preach Christ: Recovering the Gospel in Christian Preaching

Dear Student:

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Richard G. Hutchison from the Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are enrolled to take an expository preaching class this semester at the Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherd's College.

If you agree to be in the study, you may also be asked to complete written pre- and post-course questionnaires and to share pre- and post-course sermon notes with Richard G. Hutchison. You may also be asked to participate in pre- and/or post-course personal interviews which will require you to come twice to Richard G. Hutchison's office or to another private location in order to participate in a pre- and a post-course interview.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Therefore, your participation (or non-participation) will not in any way affect your grade. Your participation will not earn extra credit or any other privileges except those which are offered equally to all students in the class (including students not participating in this study).

Your family and friends may know that you are participating in the study. A few people (1-6 persons) will be assisting Richard G. Hutchison with processing the information that is shared in this study. All of these research assistants will be required to sign a strict confidentiality agreement which means that they will not disclose any information which they may see or hear while assisting with handling data from participants in this study. Furthermore, he will share the findings of this study in such a way that the confidentiality of each participant will remain protected.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable while you are in the study, please tell Richard G. Hutchison. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

You can ask Richard G. Hutchison questions any time about anything in this study.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

_____   _____

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study   Date Signed

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER [Pastor Version]

We Preach Christ: Recovering the Gospel in Christian Preaching

Dear Pastor:

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Richard G. Hutchison from the Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are a Bible Methodist pastor and you are eligible to attend an expository preaching seminar this semester at the Philippine Bible Methodist Shepherd's College on [date] from [time] until [time].

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in the one-day expository preaching seminar which is designed and taught by Richard G. Hutchison. You may also be asked to complete written pre- and seminar questionnaires and to share pre- and post- seminar sermon notes with Richard G. Hutchison. You may also be asked to participate in pre- and/or post-seminar personal interviews which will require you to come twice to Richard G. Hutchison's office or to another private location in order to participate in a pre- and a post-seminar interview.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Therefore, if you choose not to participate in this study, you are still welcome to attend and enjoy the seminar. All seminar attendees who stay for all of the seminar sessions will also be eligible to receive a continuing education certificate, whether or not they participate in this study.

Your family and friends may know that you are participating in the study. A few people (1-6 persons) will be assisting Richard G. Hutchison with processing the information that is shared in this study. All of these research assistants will be required to sign a strict confidentiality agreement which means that they will not disclose any information which they may see or hear while assisting with interviews and/or handling data from participants in this study. Furthermore, Richard G. Hutchison will share the findings of this study in such a way that the confidentiality of each participant will remain protected.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable while you are in the study, please tell Richard G. Hutchison. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

You can ask Richard G. Hutchison questions any time about anything in this study.

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

_____   _____

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study   Date Signed

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

MM/DD/YEAR

I, _____, have agreed to work as a paid research assistant for Richard G. Hutchison while he is conducting research for his ministry transformation project / dissertation for the Doctor of Ministry Program at Asbury Theological Seminary. I understand that the primary nature of my work will involve assisting with translating and transcribing the audio recordings of personal interviews which are conducted by Richard G. Hutchison with various participants in this study, and may also involve translating additional data from participants, such as written questionnaires and sermon notes or manuscripts. I also may be asked to assist with some translation during personal interviews with participants if needed.

Furthermore, I understand and agree that all the research data from interviews, questionnaires, sermon notes / manuscripts, and/or other sources of information from the participants is considered highly confidential and therefore shall not be shared or discussed with anyone except for with Richard G. Hutchison or one of the other authorized research assistants who are part of this project. I also understand and agree that this information shall not be discussed with other participants in the study. The analysis and discussion of the data from this study will only be disseminated by Richard G. Hutchison, and only in a manner that is consistent with his confidentiality agreement with the participants.

Recognizing my responsibility to help protect the dignity and well-being of each participant, I hereby agree to strictly adhere to this policy both during the conduct of the study and thereafter.

Signed: Date:

_____   _____

Witnessed: Date:

_____   _____

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