

UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND

**An Examination of a Narrative Approach
in Homiletics Training in Theological Institutions in the Pietermaritzburg
Area (KwaZulu-Natal).**

by

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Master of Theology in the field of Practical Theology at the University of Zululand.**

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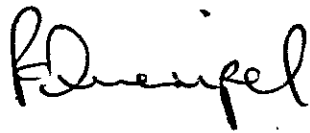
DECLARATION

I, ROBERT STITSON QUERPEL, declare that this dissertation entitled

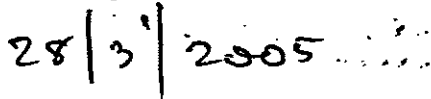
**An Examination of a Narrative Approach in Homiletics Training in
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represents my own work, both in conception and execution.

Signed:



Date:



Acknowledgement

A General

I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness as a Christian in both the general and academic spheres to two outstanding men of God.

1. **The Rev Dr Professor Emeritus John Norman Jonsson** who in the early years of my pilgrimage taught me to love the Scriptures. We are now separated by distance and the years but his memory and influence remain with me. He was, and is, a champion of those disadvantaged communities who, I hope, will benefit from these efforts of mine.

2. **The Right Rev Dr Warwick Neville Cole-Edwardes** who in these latter years has exemplified to me what it means to labour, with insight, for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Bishop Warwick has been a great inspiration to me and to many who attempt to study further in Christian things. He is at present actively involved in fruitful theological and homiletics training, and in ministry to the communities which form an important part of this dissertation.

My wife has been of enormous encouragement to me in every sphere and without her support I would not have dared to embark on an academic venture such as this so late in life. She is also a valued critic, helping me in my preaching to locate the boundaries between unfounded imagination and established truth.

The love of those mentioned above, though it be ever so great and valued, is merely a weak reflection of the love of my Heavenly Father to whom all honour and glory is due, and freely given.

B Specific

I have endeavoured to express in the dedication that follows my heartfelt appreciation

to **The Rev Dr Professor Arthur Song**, my supervisor in this dissertation, whose great influence in my academic life has been invaluable.

My sincere thanks are also due to members of the staffs of the following theological institutions who without exception have provided me with the information and other assistance which I have requested: Evangelical Seminary of South Africa (Rev. P Russell-Boulton). Lutheran Theological Institute (Prof. V Msomi). St Joseph's Theological Institute (Fr. C Chatteris). Trinity Academy (Rt. Rev. Dr. W Cole-Edwardes). Union Bible Institute (Dr. R Murray).

Dedicated

As a loving compliment to

The Rev Dr Professor Arthur Song

Christian pastor, academic, mentor, friend.

*Though I was one amongst so many, yet was I made to feel that
I was the focus of his attention and loving concern.*

Rob Queripel

Long may the Lord use him to minister to those who respond to the call, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2Timothy 2:15 (KJV)

SUMMARY

A narrative approach in homiletics courses has been more or less neglected in five theological training institutions in the Pietermaritzburg area of KwaZulu-Natal. That this approach would be beneficial in the training of preachers in this province is supported by the research of scholars concerning *inter alia* the workings in general of the human brain, the general suitability of “inductive” preaching for church-goers and the acceptability of narrative preaching for religious and secular society. Attention is paid to different approaches to the interpretation of Scripture, seeing that this impinges upon narrative preaching. The *literary* criticism of the Bible is singled out as being distinct from *historical* criticism and is examined as the best basis for narrative homiletics. In investigating the contribution of *interpretation* to meaning, attention is paid to the role of language and the various elements of narrative i.e. closure, order, plot, characters and setting.

The narrative portions of the Bible, both OT and NT, are then considered. In the OT the primary story takes place from Genesis to 2Kings and is followed by the secondary story which culminates in Malachi. Various elements in OT narrative are examined which render it distinctive. The same is done with respect to the NT with special reference to the parables of our Lord. Various practical aspects of the preaching of sermons are then considered.

An important aspect is the “fieldwork” i.e. the meeting and interviewing of a selection of the various role-players on the homiletical stage. These include past and present lecturers and past and present students of the five institutions. A purpose in the interviews was to ascertain the status of narrative in the homiletics instruction at the institutions.

The study concludes with the provision of a proposed series of lectures in narrative sermon preparation which I commend for use in institutions such as those which I have named in this dissertation.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 MOTIVATION AND MODUS OPERANDI

1.1.1 Statement of the problem

In homiletics training generally, and especially as it is being provided to future leaders of a number of Black churches in KwaZulu-Natal and other provinces of the Republic, the "Aristotelian" (otherwise known as the "linear", "propositional", "deductive" or "western") preaching model takes preference in some theological institutions in the greater Pietermaritzburg area. This is according to information which I obtained in 2001 while a postgraduate student at the University of Zululand in the BTh(Hons) program, especially when researching assignment #6 in TPT502 which was entitled **"The general standard of preaching in our churches leaves much to be desired." Defend or reject this statement and provide a carefully reasoned argument to support your viewpoint.** I approached this assignment by examining the homiletics training which ministers in "our churches" had received. I have found that one problem which church-goers often have to contend with is the feature of the "boring sermon", the sermon which for some hearers conveys hardly any meaning and results in no change in them. I was also made aware while researching that assignment that further investigation needed to be carried out in order to ascertain to what extent the "linear" model is preferred in homiletics instruction and whether it is indeed the most effective model in catering for the needs of these churches or whether a narrative approach to preaching would be more suitable under certain circumstances. That further research forms the basis of this dissertation.

I do not mean to imply that expository preaching, for example, will inevitably be less meaningful to church-goers in townships and rural areas than a narrative approach. My point is that a narrative preaching model should be seriously considered as an additional, rather than an alternative solution of how best to present theological truth to people who, like all of us, need to hear and respond to it so urgently.

1.1.2 Aims in the dissertation

1.1.2.1 To establish a critical-theological basis for the use of narrative in preaching, examining also the role of narrative in the OT and NT.

1.1.2.2 To examine and assess the homiletics curricula presently in place in five selected institutions viz. Evangelical Seminary of SA, Lutheran Theological Institute, St Joseph's Theological Institute, Trinity Academy of PMB, Union Bible Institute.

1.1.2.3 To prepare a course of lectures and construct a model for possible use in training students in narrative preaching for the particular predominantly black churches served at present by these institutions.

1.1.3 Methodology

1.1.3.1 The conducting of an extensive survey of published and unpublished material with regard to the literary, theological and biblical aspects of narrative. As stated in 1.1.2.3 above, one of the aims of this dissertation is to construct a model for preaching which is an alternative to one which has a linear structure involving a logical succession of propositional arguments. The setting-out and execution of this dissertation itself, however, follows the rational approach which is decreed by academic authorities for the presentation of such offerings. Christopher Chatteris in his dissertation **Teaching preaching where cultures cross** (2001:19) describes the academic dissertation as "... a Western academic tool modelled on a somewhat dated Cartesian-Newtonian scientific view of reality in which distance, objectivity and logical structure are paramount." Chatteris speaks, rather wistfully one feels, of one dissertation known to him which departs from this model. The theme of SME Bengu's dissertation **"Chasing gods not our own"** (unpublished MTh dissertation, University of Natal: 1995) is the cultural and religious despoliation of Africans by Western religion. Bengu's work is written in a genre characterised by

much anger and “fire in the belly” and Chatteris raises an interesting question as to whether writing as Chatteris has done of preaching and African culture, could rather have been done more effectively in the manner that Bengu has done, in a form which is not of the “Cartesian-Newtonian” genre. Perhaps the day will come when academic polity and circumspection will give way more often to the vivid narration of a prophet Nathan culminating in a crushing, “You are the man.” (2Sam 12).

1.1.3.2 The interviewing of lecturers in the named institutions and/or the obtaining of copies of homiletics curricula, overviews or headings of lecture notes, etc., to ascertain and examine the approach to homiletics training which is followed at the selected institutions.

1.1.3.3 Selecting, visiting and interviewing a total of approximately twenty students, evenly distributed amongst the named institutions, who are presently studying there but have completed their homiletics subjects. I proposed to follow a modified “set structured questionnaire” approach in which all candidates are given a questionnaire containing the same questions. I proposed to allow the subjects some time in which to consider and answer the questions and then for the individual respondents and myself to discuss the answers together privately “one-on-one”.

1.1.3.4 Selecting a total of at least ten pastors or church leaders who received their training at one of these institutions, sending them a modified version of the students’ questionnaire and endeavouring to discuss their replies with them where appropriate.

1.1.3.5 This dissertation will be developed from the viewpoint of one who holds tenaciously to the conservative evangelical position regarding the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures of the OT and NT. However I trust that my awareness and knowledge of alternative views concerning the Scriptures will be apparent in this study which I hope will be of use to Christians of different theological persuasions. Our gracious God will not be bound within the confines of the systems of dogma which we construct for ourselves.

1.1.3.6 The version of the Bible which will be used (unless mentioned otherwise) is the New International Version © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.

1.1.3.7 Much used authors

It will be noted that I have made far more use of certain academic authors than of others in substantiating the insights and information that I have provided. I am indebted to the following authors whose work I have found particularly helpful. J.Chapman (4.1, 4.2), M.Ellingsen (2.1, 2.2, 4.2), D.N.Fewell & D.M.Gunn (3.1), T.Longman III (2.2, 2.3), D.Marguerat & Y. Bourquin (2.5), S.D. Mathewson (1.2, 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2), H.J.C.Pieterse (1.2, 4.1, 4.2), M.A.Powell (2.2, 2.4, 2.5), A.C.Thiselton (1.2, 2.1, 2.3, 2.4), J.J.van Rensburg (1.2).

1.1.4 Gender pronouns

My use of the male pronoun may on occasion be irksome to gender-sensitive readers. No offence is intended. I have explained in 6.3.1.2 that my use of the male pronoun there contributes to anonymity. In other places such as 4.1.2.1.4 where an oft-repeated pronoun is called for, I have chosen the male pronoun rather than the he/she or him/her couplets in the interests of a smooth-flowing narrative.

1.1.5 Hypothesis

For substantial numbers of members, adherents and attendees of certain rural and township churches served by five particular training institutions, a narrative approach to sermon preparation has distinct advantages over the linear approach.

1.2 DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS

1.2.1 The linear model

1.2.1.1 A description

A common way of describing a linear, deductive approach in preaching is to use the adjective "Aristotelian". CJA Vos says (1999:120), "In homiletics the Aristotelian

structure of introduction, middle and conclusion is usually adhered to.” It will be shown, however, in 2.3.2.3 and 2.5.3.4 that the Greek philosopher Aristotle (3rd century BCE) also had an important contribution to make to the understanding of the non-linear or literary type of speech or address, but for the purposes of this dissertation “Aristotelian” will be regarded as a synonym for the words “linear”, “deductive”, “propositional” and “western” when it comes to comparing and contrasting sermon types. It may be because of Aristotle’s system of philosophy of logical deductions that his name is linked to the linear sermon, rather than because he personally taught the theory that formal public addresses should consist of an introduction, three or more points proceeding in logical interdependence and a conclusion. Another writer A Vos says of Aristotle, “Penetrating analysis of the processes of thought are found in his logical works.” (1988:43)

1.2.1.2 The mental process

Much has been written and said about what is known as cerebral asymmetry, the functions of different localities within the human brain. Lewis & Lewis (1983:9) report on studies of human personality and function that seem to show a clear distinction between the part played by the left and right hemispheres of the brain. These studies aim to show that critical thought, reading and linear logic are processed in the left side of the brain while creativity, visual memory, feelings and imagination are activities of the right-brain. HG Wetmore (2001:45) says that skills relating to speech, grammar, mathematics, lineal time sense and abstract thought are related to the left-brain while activities such as synthesis, imagination and skills related to art, invention, poetry, metaphor and allegory are associated with the right-brain. If this hypothesis were wholly true, it would add strength to the contention that a distinction can be drawn between the linear, deductive type of sermon and the narrative, inductive type. They would each mainly tend to rely for their development and appreciation, their giving and receiving, on opposite sides of the brain! This matter is, however, not as simple as Lewis, Wetmore and others imply, as I will show.

JJ van Rensburg (2002:227) is of the opinion that one of the factors which would influence a preacher to concentrate on preaching narrative sermons would be

whether his or her natural inclination is to be left-brain or right-brain dominant. Van Rensburg says that traditional preaching methods tend to be almost entirely left-brain structured, while, he says, “many people are more right-brain inclined or even right-brain oriented” (*ibid*). It has to be reiterated at this stage, however, that caution is necessary in this aspect of the study of mental function. Neuropsychology, say the experts, has had its waters muddied by a great deal of “quackery” and it is inappropriate, for example, for a homiletics student to expect to be examined by a neuropsychologist and told conclusively whether he or she has a “left-brained” or “right-brained” personality. In an article by M & D Bobgan entitled “Right-brain/Left-brain – Science or Pseudo-science?” (Bobgan M & D, 2004) a neurologist at The University of California, Los Angeles, school of medicine is quoted as saying, “Even on the most trivial tasks our studies showed that everything in the brain was in flux – both sides, the front and back, the top and bottom. It was tremendously complicated. To think that you could reduce this to a simple left-right dichotomy would be misleading and oversimplified”. With regard to left-brain/right-brain function, a renowned international neuro-psychologist Dr Warren Brown, the director of the Travis Research Institute, Fuller graduate School of Psychology, Pasadena, California, contends that the issue with regard to research in this field is not what *has* been said on the subject of brain hemisphere dichotomy but what *has not* been said. While there is evidence of some “lateralisation of function”, i.e. the identifying of separate left-brain and right-brain responsiveness in brain function, neuro-psychologists these days stress that the brain *still works as a whole*. In other words nothing in the left (or right) hemisphere is done without consulting the other hemisphere. If a listener for example is presented on the one hand with language requiring analysis or on the other hand imagery requiring imagination the *whole brain* will process it - the two hemispheres working together as one. Having stressed this phenomenon, Brown says, one can then go on to say that the pathways *into* the brain may differ. This means that while language goes in through the left-brain, the right-brain nevertheless also participates in understanding secondary meanings such as in metaphors and narrative (Brown WS, 2003).

The implications of this research are twofold.

1. The argument of JJ van Rensburg (1.2.1.2) concerning the importance of left-brain/right-brain dominance is weakened, and aspirant preachers should not be discouraged from a commitment to narrative preaching on the grounds that their brains may not be attuned to that preaching genre. I disagree with Van Rensburg when he advises preachers with a talent for expository preaching not to, as he says, "change his preaching style all together for a narrative approach" and that he or she should be told, "stick to what you know best" (2002:227). I contend that all preachers, especially in their formative years of training in homiletics should be encouraged to consider the narrative form of preaching so that their creative cognitive faculties may be stimulated. As Christ's servants they should in preparing to preach, determine the best ways in which they can meet the needs of their people.

2. Preachers should always be aware that they are engaging the *whole* brain in their hearers. What listeners hear in the form of stories, etc., might stimulate the right brain in some more than others but if the goal of preaching is to be achieved and any significant change is to be experienced by the hearer, then the preacher must go beyond the entry point and consciously ignore the left-brain/right-brain dichotomy theory. By doing this the preacher avoids the distraction of considering that only part of the audience is attuned to the particular homiletical approach which has been chosen. The Holy Spirit can and does use our preaching to speak to whomever he will!

Although it is not wise to compartmentalise the human mind and its workings, it operates on the levels of both logic and imagination. Narrative preaching applies itself effectively to both spheres, especially the latter. At the very least, psychological studies show that the human mind is particularly responsive to the reception of story.

1.2.1.3 A comparison

The linear type of sermon has been described as *deductive* while the narrative sermon as being *inductive*. M Taylor (1998:98) in speaking of inductive preaching

says,

Each of the 2930 characters in the Bible shout one message. Each is a monument to one chief idea: we can learn from experience. When God wanted to deliver his sermon, he did not lower a 24-volume set of theological works down from heaven. He told a story. Maybe we should learn something about communication from God and his Word. He is the best there is! In short inductive preaching is biblical. It provides the thought patterns and structures for the sovereign Holy Spirit to do his work for convicting, convincing and converting.

Taylor (1998:96) provides a useful comparison between the deductive and inductive sermon. It will be seen that narrative preaching qualifies to be described as inductive preaching.

- Inductive preaching, he says, begins with facts, illustrations, experience and examples. Deductive preaching begins with assertions, postulates, propositions, generalisations and principles.
- An inductive sermon builds upon and goes beyond the particulars with which it starts. The deductive sermon defines, dissects and defends its first premise.
- In the inductive sermon, its examples lead to assertions. In the deductive sermon, its examples bolster assertions already made.
- The inductive preacher seeks to help listeners see the truth so that they are ready to accept it and in some way respond to it. The deductive preacher begins with truths and sets out to prove them.
- The inductive preacher asks questions to which the listeners find their own answers. The deductive preacher seeks to impart the answers.
- Circular in design, inductive preaching explores to discover. Linear in design, deductive preaching explores to declare.

FB Craddock (1981:60) speaks of abstract thought as being deductive and the concretisation of the abstract as being inductive. He says, "Everyone lives inductively, not deductively. No farmer deals with the problem of calfhood, only with the calf."

While it can be said that the *deductive* type of sermon is a useful tool in the preacher's workshop, there are nevertheless aspects of *inductive* preaching which

are eminently suitable for certain target audiences. If one's hearers have not had sufficient academic experience and opportunities to enable them to effectively consider, reason and deduce, then a non-deductive model could well prove to be a more effective means of communicating theological truths. (See also 6.4.1.3).

1.2.2 The narrative model

Robert Fulford says (1999) that although many of us like to put some logic and structure to our thought, the problem is that this form of construction does not match the shape of our lives which are plotted, not outlined. We live in time, one event after the other.

1.2.2.1 Description of narrative preaching

CJA Vos (1999:126) contrasts humans and animals by saying that animals have a *situation* while people have a *world*, and that narrative preaching speaks to the person's world. HJC Pieterse (1987:166-7) provides a useful description of narrative preaching by saying that it represents the intersection between the preacher's story and God's story. The preacher so communicates the words of God's story found in the Bible that they illuminate the world of the individual listener in the congregation, bringing liberation and change to their lives. The result is that those who respond become part of the great history of the cause of Jesus and find their niche there. These expressions of CJA Vos and Pieterse are strongly reminiscent of the views of AC Thiselton (1977B:308-29) when he says that the "new hermeneutic" involves the "fusion" of the two "horizons" of the biblical text and the interpreter. This thought will be pursued in 2.1.4.1 and 2.1.5.2.

Pieterse reminds us that biblical truth is often conveyed by stories (1987:163). An example of this can be seen in the plagues against the Egyptians and their gods, the deliverance, the preparation to enter the promised land and the conquest of Canaan. God communicates the most profound truths through the medium of the occasion of human experience. Whole books such as Job and Acts have a narrative basis and Jesus in teaching by means of parables was the supreme preacher of narrative sermons. His death on the cross and resurrection from the tomb were stories which

are at the heart of our faith. Clearly by “stories” I do not mean myths, fiction and fantasy but rather the communication of truth to us transcendently by means of narrative rather than discourse (Pieterse, 1987:163).

The great value of narrative is that it involves the hearer and carries him with it (Pieterse, 1987:169). We identify with one or other of the characters and without necessarily having a direct appeal addressed to us we find ourselves caught up in the tension of the story and are faced with the choices and decisions portrayed in the plot by the characters. For “outsiders” who would react against the rhetorical and argumentative sermon approach of “because of this and this, you must do that”, the narrative approach should be considered for its non-threatening nature. A story is more elastic than a proposition and gives the listener permission to participate in the creation of truth. It should not, however, stray too far from the biblical sense of preaching as proclamation.

1.2.2.2 Popularity of narrative preaching

Robert Fulford (1999) says that of all the ways in which we communicate with one another, the story has established itself as the most comfortable, the most versatile, even if perhaps the most dangerous. He continues:

For all its promise, however, narrative has only recently come to be appreciated as a critical component of biblical preaching. Traditional preaching has tended to view narrative as incidental to the more critical task of explaining and applying propositional truth. Narrative has been understood, at best to be a supportive element, and at worst to be an unwelcome distraction.

There has been a marked increase in the popularity of narrative preaching in the Western world and one of the reasons for this is that people generally are becoming anti-authoritarian (Pieterse, 1987:164-5). The status of certain icons has been challenged which for centuries have been accepted as authoritative points of reference in society. People today resist appeals to the authority of family, school, university, state, church, the Bible, the Pope and the Almighty and this poses a problem for preachers.

I once participated in an informal discussion concerning the difficulties encountered when attempting to modify children's behaviour. Someone contributed to the discussion by quoting a respected missionary as having said, "Sometimes the only way to approach a child is through the back door." This can be applied in a situation where a direct approach has lost its power to break down resistance in the face of a rejection of authority. Often the "back-door" approach of narrative preaching will gain the entrance we want.

With regard to the local situation, this revolution in respect for authority structures is also taking place in both township and rural KwaZulu-Natal. Slowly but surely the authority of the king, amakhosi, izinduna and township councillors is being eroded. Societal norms are not esteemed and observed as they once were and although this state of change has both positive and negative results for the functioning of our modern society, there are bound to be negative effects on the success of preachers in their congregations. I have found while moving in KwaZulu-Natal society, both church and secular, that no longer does youth defer readily to age, children to parents, wives to husbands, women to men, as well as church members to their leaders, and the process of change seems at the present time to be gaining momentum as fortunes swing from the conservative to the liberal parts of the political spectrum.

1.2.2.3 Drawbacks in narrative preaching - where we may fail

Mention has already been made of the danger of departing from the biblical principle of preaching as proclamation (1.2.2.1). The narrative preacher seeks to align himself or herself with the great traditions of preaching Christ and him crucified (1Cor 1:23), and would be conscious of failure and loss if he or she were not to do so (1Cor 9:16).

1.2.2.3.1 Stories and culture

Respondent Ap1033 (see 6.3.1), told me that narrative takes up the greatest space in the sermons preached in his own local church but he also warned that in telling stories (as in all kinds of communication) one has to be sensitive to the culture of the listeners. He had read of the experience of a missionary to a certain tribe who was

attempting to convey to his listeners the truth of Christ's sacrificial death by means of the stories of our Lord's passion. The preacher was shocked to discover later that the people approved very enthusiastically of the actions of Judas Iscariot because in their culture the feature of clever betrayal was greatly admired. Judas was the hero in their eyes and it was a tragedy that the story-teller had him taking his own life!

1.2.2.3.2 The attitude of the preacher

SD Mathewson identifies a few negative attitudes relative to narrative which are characteristic of many preachers (2002:23-25) as follows:

- Stories are viewed as "fluff". It is common to look upon stories as a matter of taste rather than necessity. They are good for children but not adults, for primitives but not sophisticates. It is a matter of form in many churches that on Sunday morning while the Sunday School children in the back rooms are learning from stories, the adults in the auditorium are receiving teaching from the epistles!
- The role of stories in the canon, especially OT stories, is minimised. Often preachers who feel that their priority is to proclaim the New Covenant, use biblical stories only as illustrations when they preach on NT doctrine. The fact is lost sight of that OT stories provide not only useful background for NT theology but also contain teaching on creation, law and covenant not found in the NT.
- Preachers become enslaved by a particular style of preaching. FB Craddock (1981:45) asks very piquantly why a preacher should preach so that the Gospel is always "impaled upon the frame of Aristotelian logic".

Van Rensburg (2002:220) contends that below the surface this genre is "a difficult art form" and that its initial attractiveness has led to its enthusiastic use before the preacher has mastered and understood its true nature. He says that narrative preaching does not come naturally to most preachers but like other art forms such as sculpture and painting it requires study and hard work. As for undergraduate

homiletics students, their interest in this genre should be given the opportunity of being stimulated and their latent ability of being developed (2002:223-5). After all, some might say, who is devoid of the right side of the brain? Van Rensburg's expressions of caution are, however, worth taking note of. He thoroughly approves of the enthusiasm with which narrative preaching is being greeted, but cautions that a better understanding of the nature of this type of preaching is essential if it is to be effective as a communicative act in the service of God's Word (2002:230).

1.2.2.4 Suitability of narrative preaching - where we may succeed

1.2.2.4.1 The attitude of the listener

Narrative preaching is described as being "open-ended" i.e. the conclusions toward which a narrative sermon leads its hearers are often left to the hearers to make of what they will, under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Other types of sermon tend to draw the hearers to an inescapable conclusion with which they are faced and a decision which the preacher tells them they cannot avoid having to make. Narrative preaching is particularly suited to those who are not prepared to be dictated to because they have an anti-authoritarian attitude. Narrative does not make overt demands on people to the same extent that a more direct propositional appeal does. The narrative approach would be especially valuable for the fringe church attendee, the "distant-listener" who lacks a commitment to follow true Scriptural teaching wherever it may lead.

1.2.2.4.2 Because of vital issues

The indirect appeal in narrative preaching also makes it suitable for broaching sensitive but important issues. It can at the same time, however, pack a powerful punch. An example of this can be seen in 2Samuel ch12. "The Lord sent Nathan to David" (12:1). Nathan was the humble servant in the presence of the Almighty while David was God's anointed king over his people. The Lord's purpose in sending Nathan was to rebuke and announce judgement upon his king. The plot is introduced by the characters Nathan and David. Nathan addresses David, weaving a tale of two men, one rich and the other poor. The one was very rich, with many sheep and cattle.

The other had nothing except one ewe lamb which was like a daughter to him and a companion to his children, sharing their hearth and home. In a dramatic turn, tragedy struck this family when the rich man, who in fact had all that he needed, came to their home and took away the lamb. He slaughtered it to provide food for some traveller who had come to him on a visit. David found himself caught up in the story and he "burned with anger" as he closely identified with the poor man and his family in their misery. King David called down judgement on the evil man. Then the story takes a second dramatic turn. Nathan announces, "You are that rich man." David now has to suddenly identify with the one who caused the appalling misery. He finds that the judgement he called for has descended on his own head. It is he who has offended against "the word of the Lord" (12:9). Narrative often causes the hearer's defences to be lowered and he or she is made receptive to ideas bringing change.

Numerous important issues present themselves to the churches of KwaZulu-Natal and further afield, not the least of which is the HIV-Aids issue. The sensitive preacher, even though he or she may have to go against the mainstream of sermon style and content, has many opportunities for using stories from the Word by which to approach this subject. Divine truths can be found clothed in Bible stories of experiences such as the suffering of the innocent, chastity, faithfulness or unfaithfulness in marriage and comfort in bereavement.

1.2.2.4.3 Because of hearer-participation

It cannot be denied that the expository sermon, as distinct from the narrative sermon, has the power to persuade the hearer. The Scriptural passage, whether in an epistle, a discourse in a Gospel, or an apocalyptic passage, was written through the agency of the Holy Spirit with the real needs of real people in view. As the portion is expounded by the competent preacher, the hearer under the influence of the same Spirit perceives the voice of God in the words of Scripture and in applying the mind is persuaded about its truth, obeys the injunctions and undergoes change. Narrative preaching, on the other hand, contains an additional factor which contributes to meaning. The hearer identifies with the *characters* in the divine story. The Bible stories actually revolve around these real types of people with their real needs,

failures, strengths, attitudes and aspirations. The narrative carries the hearers along by involving them with it, capturing them so that they side with one or other of the players. "The story evokes experience, something happens. People come alive to the listener with all their stresses, sorrows, joys and wonderment. ... the listener of his own accord chooses to side with some character or characters, sharing their indignation, their view points and solutions" (Pieterse, 1987:169). The hearer is presented with the possibility of being changed and this opportunity is portrayed in the narrative through characters, plots, settings, etc., and the hearer is drawn in to take part in the opportunity.

Narrative communicates meaning to people through the imitation of their human life. It creates a verbal world that centres on human characters and their relationships, desires and actions.

1.2.2.4.4 Because of cultural predilection

JJ van Rensburg (2002:221) is of the opinion that factors such as people's attention to TV dramas (including of course the ubiquitous "soapies"), novels, movies and plays have prepared congregations for narrative preaching. I will attempt to show below something of how rural and township people in KwaZulu-Natal and further afield are exposed to these factors in the course of interviews which I report. Van Rensburg says that it comes naturally to the African to hear and tell stories of liberation, poverty, gender and race (2002:227). Healey & Sybertz have constructed a whole narrative theology of inculturation from the "African proverbs, sayings, riddles, stories, myths, plays, songs, cultural symbols and real life experiences" (1996:13).

Mark Ellingsen gives four advantages of the narrative sermon over other types of preaching (1990:91).

- (i) Christian faith's viability is not called into question by historical inquiry or the contemporary psychologised consciousness.
- (ii) Scripture can provide its own criteria for its interpretation.
- (iii) The transcendence of the Word and its uniqueness is more sharply presented.
- (iv) This kind of proclamation can more readily shape unique Christian piety.

Van Rensburg gives a further advantage when he says that people of all ages (and, I would add, of all cultures) love to hear stories. "When a story is initiated ... 'the ear perks and begins to listen'. The listener spontaneously leans forward as he or she is drawn into the plot" (2002:220). On the other hand, of course, as C Chatteris (2004) says, "People will almost always listen to a story, even a bad one, because at first they do not know the length, outcome, ending. The question is whether it is worth listening to."

1.2.3 The inspiration and authority of the Scriptures

1.2.3.1 θεωπνευστος (*theopneustos*) - inspiration

The way in which the student understands the inspiration of the Scriptures will have a marked effect on his or her preaching and teaching of its subject matter. In his book "Biblical inspiration" IH Marshall identifies five current developments with regard to understanding the place and importance of the Scriptures in God's self-revelation to mankind (1983:10-12). These five developments are as follows:

A number of mainly North American writers have reiterated in the strongest possible terms the traditional conservative evangelical position that the Bible is God's infallible word throughout, and they claim that the hallmark of orthodox Christianity is acceptance that the Bible is *inerrant*. In the sense in which this word is used by the proponents of this view it means that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments *as originally given* i.e. the autographs which came from the actual writers of the books of Scripture, are totally and completely truthful, containing no mistakes. See also 2.1.

- James Barr, himself a former evangelical, has been the protagonist in an attack on the whole evangelical position including particularly the manner in which evangelicals interpret the Bible, labelling it *fundamentalism*. In a book review of Barr's book *Fundamentalism* (1984. Philadelphia: Westminster) DW Dayton (2004) says, " ... this book is primarily a devastating attack on the biblical interpretation and

underlying theological substructure of the recent “postfundamentalist evangelicalism” epitomised in this country by the student movement Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, Christianity Today magazine, and an earlier era at Fuller Theological Seminary.” Dayton goes on to say (*ibid*):

(Barr) suggests that the heart of fundamentalism is not, as is often supposed, a commitment to a “literal” reading of the Bible but rather a reading that preserves the Bible’s “inerrancy” in every detail, even if its literal sense must be violated. Barr then analyzes such classics of postfundamentalist biblical interpretation as *The New Bible Commentary* and *The New Bible Dictionary* ... to demonstrate forced harmonization, resort to nonliteral interpretation, and other dodges used to maintain the inerrancy assumption.

Dayton also mentions (*ibid*) that Barr seems to be reticent concerning the fact that he himself was president of the “Christian Union” (Inter-Varsity) at Edinburgh in about the late 1950’s.

- DE Nineham has drawn attention to the great cultural gap which exists between today’s world and that of the biblical writers. We cannot, he says, use the Bible directly as a source of divine revelation and teaching because of this unbridgeable gap (see 2.1.3).
- Attempts are being made by those adopting a “middle of the road” position to re-examine traditional views and find new ways of expressing them in a manner which will take the findings of present-day scholarship into account. Marshall welcomes this approach, stating that it is the constant duty of the Christian scholar to re-examine the doctrines of the church and express them for today.
- It has become axiomatic to many modern scholars that the way the Bible is *interpreted* is of primary importance in describing its character as the inspired Word of God. Hence there has appeared a spate of books from all sides on how to understand and interpret the Bible.

It would be useful to examine some of the above five approaches in greater detail as each of them in some way impinge on the subject of narrative preaching. In principle

I would locate my own theological position firmly within the first of these descriptions - that of the traditional conservative position. I find it unfortunate, however, that the manner in which some aspects of this view are currently described leaves no room for the fourth and fifth views, a shortcoming which, I feel, needs to be rectified in our training institutions.

CHAPTER 2. A CRITICAL BASIS FOR NARRATIVE PREACHING

Although it is a trite saying, it is nevertheless true that in order to be preached to others the Bible must first be “read” and interpreted by the preacher. The principles and art of hermeneutics must first be harnessed in order to arrive at an understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacred text before sharing its message with others. However, as IH Marshall says (1.2.3), for many scholars the manner in which the Bible is interpreted is inextricably linked to a description of its authority and inspiration. It is appropriate therefore in establishing a critical hermeneutical basis for narrative preaching to address in some detail the issue of biblical inspiration at the same time. Marshall's summary of current approaches to inspiration (1.2.3.1) provides a convenient framework for this discussion.

2.1 INFALLIBILITY AND INERRANCY OF THE BIBLE

The affirmation that the Scriptures as originally given are infallible and inerrant is at the heart of the conservative evangelical understanding of the inspiration and authority of Holy Writ.

I agree with the view held by JI Packer (1988:337) that the two words “infallibility” and “inerrancy” taken together rightly signify the total truthfulness and trustworthiness of the Bible, a guide and source that is not deceived, does not deceive and contains no mistakes. Packer rejects the criticism that the two words infallible and inerrant are from the 19th century and are therefore outdated. They express a belief held for centuries by members of the Christian community and a belief which is also valid today. Packer warns against the use of procedures emanating from “enlightenment scepticism” which have “midwived God's authority”, removing it from certain Biblical material, causing the material to be viewed as “uneven and unreliable human tradition”. This view of Scripture, he says, should not have been founded on intellectual grounds as this has made human reason the test of divine realities. For Packer the objective evidence in support of inerrancy and infallibility is rooted in the testimony of Christ and his apostles as to the nature and place of the (OT) Scriptures.

The subjective reason for the acceptance of this view lies in the conviction induced by the Holy Spirit of the Bible's divine authority (Packer, 1988:337). R Nixon (1977:334-350) supplements this view when he calls for the examination of the authority of the NT Scriptures. He says, however, that the NT cannot derive its authority from Christ's apostles for there is incomplete evidence that the NT writers were all apostles or companions of apostles. I agree with his conclusions when he says that a belief in the providence of God points to his provision of the canon of Scripture, and a belief in the incarnation of our Lord enables one to see the divine and (I would add, inerrant) human elements in the inspired Scriptures.

2.1.1 The Chicago Statement on Biblical hermeneutics

This is a treatise which has come to be regarded as something of a creed by many who are of the conservative evangelical tradition. Some of its affirmations will be examined with particular reference to narrative criticism and preaching.

Two "summits" were held in Chicago, Illinois under the auspices of an organisation naming itself The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, the first in 1978 and the second in 1982. A statement was issued after the second summit expressing the conclusions arrived at by consensus among the approximately one hundred delegates present. The statement comprises 25 articles, each of which is a couplet of affirmation and denial in some aspect of biblical interpretation. In 1983 NL Geisler produced an article "Explaining hermeneutics: a commentary on the Chicago Statement on biblical hermeneutics" (Geisler, 1983) in which he reproduced the Chicago statement and at the end of each article adds some supporting comments of his own. The Statement as well as Geisler's comments are reproduced in Appendix A. I will return to the Statement after considering some of the alternative approaches outlined by Marshall and others.

2.1.2 The canon of Scripture

Scripture is called "canonical" when, as I understand the term, it acts as the depository of the sum total of the declarations and directives by which God requires us to live. "The canon" is a list of books that are canonical in this defined sense.

Bruce C Birch (1986:9-10) outlines an approach of Brevard Childs in which he focuses on the final “received” form of the text as providing a *canonical context* for Biblical interpretation. In his book **Biblical theology in crisis** Childs (1970) examines the idea of context. He endeavours to determine the proper context for interpreting the Bible and concludes that it should be the context of the canon. It is apparent, however, that he does not necessarily understand the canon to be a collection of writings embodying universally applicable objective theological truth in the same way that those who hold to the inerrancy of the scriptures understand the canon. He claims that Scripture “does not exist as a book of truth in itself”. The canon, however, is the ideal context for interpreting the Bible, according to Childs, because it is what the church since its earliest days has held to be the vehicle of God’s revelation of his truth to the church. The value of Old Testament interpretation in the context of the canon, he says, is that it provides a testimony to God in his redemptive work. The actual manner in which God worked must be heard from the text itself. As Birch says, Childs’ methods help the interpreter to focus on the text as a whole and to relate it more easily in the modern context to the communities which claim the text as scripture (Birch, 1986:10). Childs comes under criticism from Birch for being too rigid in confining interpretation to the final stage of acceptance of the traditions of the text and ignoring the study of God’s activity in the biblical communities which shaped these traditions (*ibid*). However this hermeneutical approach has much to commend itself as being useful in the study of narrative criticism as will be seen in 2.2.2. Childs follows a relativistic approach, implying that he does not rigorously hold to the tenet that the canon is a collection of true and authoritative scripture but that he approves of it as a context for the use of those who do. This view would be the converse of my own which could be expressed, “I do hold to the tenet of the canon as being true and authoritative Scripture but I also commend all these thoughts for the use of those who may not.” Further comments concerning the canon and its relevance in sermon preparation can be found in 4.2.4.1.

2.1.3 Cultural distance from *then* to *now*

Dennis Nineham in contrast to the canonical approach outlined in the previous

chapter advocates that Christians should allow fully for the “pastness” of the Bible. They should adopt a “distancing” attitude, not demanding an immediate relevancy to their present situation (Harrington, 1986:13-14). Nineham in his work **The use and abuse of the Bible** (1977) maintains that such were the effects of the cultural revolution which took place at the end of the eighteenth century that westerners are completely separated culturally from the biblical setting. The divide between biblical and contemporary western culture is so wide that the basic assumption of most hermeneutical systems that the present is like the past, should be seriously questioned. In Nineham’s view the problem in deriving meaningful theology from the Bible lies in the fact that the Bible “expresses the meaning system of a relatively primitive cultural group” (Harrington, 1986:13). He is also quoted as saying in his book that from the sort of narrative we have discovered in the Bible no irrefutable deductions could possibly be made. This is an indication of the position from which he argues and it is apparent to him that the God of revelation cannot or has not enabled us by hermeneutical studies to bridge the cultural gap between “then” and “now”. I strongly disagree with this assumption.

Both Nineham and TE Provençe recall that Lessing’s “ugly ditch” hypothesis also expresses the belief that it is not possible to span the distance between the present day and any historical happening within the biblical sphere. I approve of the words of Provençe (1986:258-59) interpreting Karl Barth’s position as to the inspiration and authority of Scripture when he says that the biblical writers of the OT and NT were enabled by virtue of *their close proximity* to the Word of God (*viz.* Christ) and the inspiration of the Spirit, to record truth. Readers of these scriptures are also enabled by the sovereign choice of God and by the inspiration of the same Spirit to grasp the subject matter of the revelation. By these words Provençe shows how Barth counters the argument of Nineham that modern day readers are too far removed culturally and historically from biblical writers to participate in any “revelation”. Nineham, however, summarily rejects the evangelical position that the Bible expresses infallible truths by the “out-breathing” (θεωπνευστος) of God. He finds the hermeneutical systems commonly in place today to be inadequate and the historicist view in particular is

untenable because the historical elements in the Bible are so embedded in interpretive stories that it is impossible to disentangle them (Harrington, 1986:14). According to M Wisse (2002), Nineham has adopted the “narrative turn”, an idea that “Christian theology’s use of the Bible should focus on a narrative presentation of the faith, rather than on the development of a metaphysical system which draws infallible logical references from the data of Revelation”. Nineham may have turned away from the type of methods of interpretation employed by traditional evangelicalism and so have turned to a narrative-based approach but his motivation is certainly not mine for advocating such an approach.

An answer to this scepticism of Nineham is that the phenomenon of *narrative* is universally understood and accepted and for the purpose of communicating divine truths to certain communities can be used as an ideal theological bridge provided by the Holy Spirit to span the gap stretching from “then” to “now”.

2.1.4 Cultural distance from *now* to *then*

Whereas Nineham and Bruce Malina (Harrington, 1986:14) have serious difficulties in travelling in the forward direction across the divide from Bible times to the present, others have the converse problem. In features such as “the new hermeneutic” the interpreter seeks to go backwards, starting in the present context and travelling towards the text which lies in the past.

2.1.4.1 Existential and phenomenological hermeneutics

Traditional hermeneutics had to do with formulating rules for the understanding of the ancient New Testament text especially in linguistic and historical terms. In other words it was traditionally recognised that the meaning of a text was conditioned by its historical context. The modern understanding of the term hermeneutics, however, requires that not only the text but just as importantly the *modern interpreter* also stands in a given historical context and tradition (Thiselton, 1980:11). In an attempt to adequately acknowledge the historical contexts and traditions of both the New Testament writings and the modern day interpreter, AC Thiselton has adapted a

phrase of H-G Gadamer, “the fusion of horizons” and produced a work **The Two Horizons** (Thiselton, 1980). His goal was to enable the set of variables from the past to be brought into a relationship with those from the present in order to provide meaningful understanding (Harrington, 1986:16-18).

In this hermeneutical approach, an examination is made of the experiences and standpoints around which the interpreter’s life is organised. According to this approach it is impossible to begin investigation from a point other than within the interpreter’s “horizon”. One’s horizon determines the limit of thought dictated by one’s viewpoint or perspective (Thiselton, 1980:xix). In order to investigate the interpreter’s horizon and ascertain the extent to which this coincides with the horizon of the ancient text, the help of philosophy must be called upon. This discipline enables one to investigate the very nature of language and communication (Thiselton, 1980:10-16), which I will attempt to do in 2.2. According to this approach the interpreter enters the real “world” of the text and is grasped by it. Instead of the interpreter actively scrutinising the text as object, the text actively addresses and scrutinises the interpreter. This approach is sometimes called “the New Hermeneutic”. “The text must translate us before we translate the text” is the watchword of Gadamer and Fuchs (Thiselton, 1980:10-16). A warning must be sounded, however, that this approach shows existentialist signs in that emphasis is laid not on the objectivity of theological truth derived from an interpretation of the Bible text but on the subjective effect which that text has on the reader. Nevertheless students of narrative preaching would do well to heed the example, placing themselves under the authority of the ancient text and allowing it to judge and equip them before they pass the story on to their hearers.

2.1.5 An assessment.

It would be useful to examine some of the above features *vis-à-vis* some of the beliefs expressed in the Chicago Statement.

2.1.5.1 The centrality of Christ.

Articles I - III of the Chicago Statement (Appendix A) express the belief that Jesus Christ is a central figure in the interpretation of Scripture. Christ attests the divine authority of the Bible (Art. I), his divine/human nature is analogous to the divine/human authorship of Scripture (Art. II) and he provides in his person and work the central focus of the whole Bible (Art. III). However in many articles concerning current discussions in biblical interpretation (McKim, 1986; Birch, 1986; Harrington, 1986) which are typical of current hermeneutical approaches one looks in vain for more than a vague passing reference to the person or work of Christ. The possible reasons for this are that the unifying theme of Christ is regarded simply as "pre-critical" or that he is merely not "seen" to be of significance in features such as a link between Old and New Testaments, or perhaps he is taken for granted as being somewhere "at back of things". At least the Chicago Statement gives to our Lord the honour due to his name.

2.1.5.2 The influence of the interpreter - the "two horizons".

The "New Hermeneutic" sets a great deal of store by the study of the setting and concerns of the interpreter which is claimed to be as important as the study of the setting of the biblical text itself. Some even go as far as to commence their study in the contemporary context and work backward toward the setting of the text. Some barely succeed in reaching the given text, claiming that the distance to be travelled is very great (2.1.4). Over against this, Article IX of the Chicago Statement states, "... WE DENY that the message of Scripture derives from, or is dictated by, the interpreter's understanding. Thus we deny that the 'horizons' of the biblical writer and the interpreter may rightly 'fuse' in such a way that what the text communicates to the interpreter is not ultimately controlled by the expressed meaning of the Scripture."

This statement seeks to controvert the position held by Gadamer and Thiselton that the interpreter's understanding has a hermeneutically definitive role and that the meaning of the text must be shaped by the interpreter. Geisler commenting on Article VII maintains, "What a passage means is fixed by the author and is not subject to change by readers. ... Meaning is determined by an author, it is discovered by the

readers.” The point is well taken but it is undeniable that the interpreter/preacher within his or her own “horizon” and that of the hearers interprets (“discovers”) the meaning of the textual story for the hearers and can apply its insights and lessons to their needs and problems in narrative preaching. As M Ellingsen explains (1990:90) although each narrative passage has only one normative meaning, there is a variety of stories available to preachers for conveying its conceptual meaning for appropriation by their hearers.

2.1.5.3 Propositional truth.

Article VI affirms that the Bible expresses God’s truth in propositional statements and further seeks to clarify the distinction between truth and misrepresentation. Article VII claims that the meaning expressed in each biblical text is single, definite and fixed.

In opposition to this position, in 2.1.3 & 2.1.4 it is described how Nineham, amongst others, expresses doubt that the Bible contains infallible truths or statements from which logical deductions can be made. In comments he makes following Article VI Geisler refers to the nature of truth and he speaks of “contemporary relativism” as being in contrast to the declaration that truth is absolute. He also describes contemporary hermeneutics as being characterised by subjectivism whereas Art. VI attempts to uphold the objectivity of truth. He also affirms the belief that truth corresponds to reality, in contrast to pragmatic and existential views of truth.

While we may agree with the affirmations in the Statement which are expressed here, we would do well to tread carefully. When approaching Scripture texts such as, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex 20:3) and “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth ...” (Matt 6:19) it is reasonably clear on the face of it that God in each of these texts is making a statement about himself and his would-be worshipers. These statements can be held to be “infallible truths”. However what, we may ask, is the “statement” or “infallible truth” present in the text, “When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help.” (Matt 8:5-13)? As Marshall says (1983:54) it is important to be clear what is meant by inerrancy. He gives some examples of the problem from John ch11. In v18 there is the statement, “Bethany is

15 stadia from Jerusalem.” This is a factual statement of the type which could be verified as being true or false. In v39 there is a command given by Jesus, “Take away the stone.” To ask whether this statement is true or false is of course meaningless. What does make sense however is to examine the whole statement. “Jesus said, ‘Take away the stone’” Now it can be asked, did Jesus really say those words on that occasion? Those holding to inerrancy would answer the question in the affirmative. The evangelical preacher regards it as important to understand that these narratives are historically factual as they purport to be, because he or she would find it difficult to conceive of infallible truth embedded in an errant matrix. However whether or not the narrative portions which appear in the Bible were actually narrated according to the historical details which may or may not be given is not important for the examination and construction of a narrative model of preaching. What is important is the recovery of infallible truth embedded in the narratives and the application of them to one’s audience.

It is appropriate for narrative preaching to consider the statement of Jesus, “A certain man had two sons ...” If the question were to be asked, “Is this statement true?” the answer in all probability would have to be answered in the negative as Jesus was telling an invented story. There will, however, be certain truth-statements in the story which await uncovering by the preacher and it is these valid and infallible truths which are to be appropriated and proclaimed. It is clear that often a considerable amount of interpretative work is necessary before propositional truth-statements can be uncovered. Some may protest that it was not the mind-set of the biblical story-tellers to think and express themselves in terms of propositional truths and so it is not appropriate to look for them. This feature will be examined in chapter 4. Let it be said for now that it is my strong contention that truths of great meaning to all who seek God are present in the many narrative texts of the Bible but it is often no simple matter to make their discovery and convey their meaning to others. One of the purposes of this dissertation is to assist the student so to do, relying on the Holy Spirit.

2.1.5.4 Cultural concerns.

Nineham would disagree with the possibility or advisability of attempting this recovery

of truth. As stated previously he sees an insuperable problem because of the perception that truth in the Bible is so embedded in the *culture* of the times that it is virtually irretrievable for appropriation today. His understanding is that the cultural groups reflected in the Bible are very primitive and this has serious implications for the transfer of meaning for present use. Geisler, on the other hand, in commenting on Article VIII of the Chicago Statement affirms that biblical teachings are universal in their applications (Appendix A) and that most commands in the Bible transcend all cultural barriers and are binding upon all people everywhere. He acknowledges that some biblical injunctions are directed to specific situations but affirms that even these are normative to the situation(s) to which they speak. He maintains that the distinctions between mandates that are universal and those that are particular are not to be decided purely on cultural and situational grounds. The relationship between command and culture is such that a command transcends culture. The cultural situation alone never determines what is right.

While an evangelical can understand the need for this statement as a reaction against the relativistic approach that says, "this affirmation is correct in this situation but false in that situation", the question of the bearing of culture on interpretation cannot be ignored. It will be shown in 2.5.3.5 that one of the few appeals which the narrative critic normally makes to the historical critic for assistance is in the sphere of the understanding of culture. It must be emphasised, however, that cultural considerations are peripheral and that the narrative preacher's attention must be concentrated on the story alone.

2.2 LITERARY CRITICISM OF THE BIBLE

When it comes to preparing oneself or one's students for narrative preaching, the most appropriate hermeneutical route to follow is that of *narrative criticism* which is generally held to constitute part of the wider discipline of *literary criticism*. In this chapter the broader aspects of literary criticism will first be examined in order to provide a context for the more detailed consideration of narrative criticism.

2.2.1 The literary era.

Without finding it necessary to follow in detail the historical course taken by the literary study of the Bible, I must note with T Longman III (1987:15) that early on in post-Biblical times, the positive aspect of the Church Fathers' approach to the study of the Bible was that they recognised the literary quality of the biblical stories. The Latin Fathers of the 4th and 5th centuries, notably Augustine, also found authority within the Scriptures for the allegorical method of interpretation. Sadly, however, as time went by and the Reformation period drew near, this awareness gradually diminished as the content of the Scriptures was abstracted into various theological systems. The Enlightenment period saw the rise of historical criticism in the 17th to the 20th centuries.

PW Macky announced (1986:264) that biblical criticism was now moving from the historical era to the literary era and he forecast that there would be a paradigm shift from a model of interpretation in which historical criticism predominated, to one in which a literary approach would yield the most satisfactory results. In support of this contention the quotation of Cotterell & Turner (1989:31), "It is surely time for biblical scholars to engage linguistics", is an indication of the neglect by scholars to apply the science and art of literary studies to the ancient and modern discipline of interpreting the New Testament. However, as Macky (1986:268) and Cotterell & Turner (1989:32) concede, neither linguistics nor any other activity can provide certainty in New Testament interpretation. The value of the literary approach lies not so much in providing assured *answers*, as in clarifying the important *questions* that biblical interpreters should be asking. It is not that historical-critical methods should be abandoned and replaced by discourse or narrative analysis but that the latter disciplines seem recently to have gained the attention they deserve. Critics such as M.A.Powell, while in some respects distinguishing between historical, redaction, form, tradition and source criticism, classify them together as the "historical-critical method" (Powell, 1990:2). As Powell says, literary critics do not generally question the legitimacy of historical inquiry, they would rather bracket out questions of historical and critical importance in order to concentrate on the nature of the text as literature (1990:8). The historical-critical method has dominated the scene of studies for more

than a century as it has sought to reconstruct the life and thought of biblical times by means of an objective scientific analysis of the material. The biblical writers have variously been seen to have been users of sources, to have represented traditions, to have been regarded as historians and as editors but they have not until recently been seen purely as *authors*. Hand in hand with the neglect of narrative criticism has gone the neglect of sound and effective narrative preaching.

2.2.2 A comparison with historical criticism

Elizabeth Malbon traces the advent of literary criticism back to an earlier movement in the interpretation of secular literature known as the New Criticism (2000:3). This movement started in the 1940's and had as its basic premise that the key to reading a poem, play, novel or short story lay in the work itself and not in the cultural or biographical information of the author nor in any external data.

M.A.Powell describes the main differences between literary criticism and historical criticism and shows that there are a number of benefits which the former provides in comparison with the latter (1990:7-9, 85-91).

1. Literary criticism (and hence narrative criticism) focuses on the finished form of the text, its goal being to interpret that text and not the historical processes which gave rise to it. It seeks to understand the Bible on its own terms rather than with reference to anything external.

- 2 It provides an insight into texts of which the historical background is uncertain. Other critical methods usually start with a hypothesis, e.g. "Of the synoptics, Mark wrote last, abridging the other two." The literary-critical approach, however, starts with a "given" i.e. the text itself.

- 3 It is based on models of speech-act theory. R Jakobson (Powell, 1990:9) has proposed a model which portrays a *sender* (the author) sending a *message* (the text) to a *reader*. On the other hand the typical historical-critical model portrays an evolutionary approach by which the text is the end-product of a development starting

with the *event* and progressing through stages of *oral tradition* and *early written sources* to finally reach *the text*.

4 It emphasises the unity of the text as a whole. For example the Gospels are not regarded by the literary critic as compilations of loosely related pericopes, but rather as coherent narratives, and individual passages are interpreted in terms of their contribution to the story as a whole.

5 It views the text as an end in itself while historical criticism regards the text as a means to an end. That end for historical critics might for instance be "the nature of the life and times of Jesus." Literary criticism deals with the text's *poetic* function while historical criticism deals with its *referential* function i.e. its referral of the critic to conclusions of a historical nature. As has been seen in 2.1.5.3, however, it is necessary to treat the contentions of Powell with caution when he implies (1990:8) that literary critics are not required to consider to what extent the biblical narrative reflects reality, nor do they regard the historicity of the text as of any great importance. The point which Powell makes, however, is well taken. Narrative critics pass over questions of a historical nature that they might concentrate their attention on the literary aspects. Literary critics do not ignore the findings of historical criticism and it will be shown, as has been mentioned in 2.1.5.4, that when the understanding of meaning in the narrative occasionally requires an examination of certain cultural features in the story, an appeal will be made to studies of a historical nature merely to contribute to this insight.

6 It provides for checks and balances on traditional methods. A literary reading of a particular passage may or may not be compatible with the traditional historical interpretation. If it is, then the accuracy of the historical interpretation is corroborated. If not, then scholars from both fields will need to re-evaluate the evidence.

7 It tends to bring scholars, preachers and non-professional Bible readers closer together. The implied reader is not expected by the author of the narrative to be up to date with the latest theories propounded by the historical critic seeking to

arrive, for example, at the *sitze im leben* served by passages before they were incorporated into the narrative as a whole.

8 It stands in a close relationship with the believing community. The Christian church has always regarded the Scriptures themselves to be authoritative rather than the traditions lying behind the final form of the text. Narrative criticism, therefore, seeks to interpret Scripture at the canonical level. It is also in sympathy with the doctrine that revelation happens in the present time as well as the past. The Spirit by whom God breathed out the word is active today in assisting the work of interpreting the text.

9 It offers potential for bringing believing communities together. Scholars of different persuasions can engage with each other in discussions concerning the literary meaning of the Bible stories without having to agree on historical issues which are often intractable. In this way a scholar with conservative evangelical views, for example, can interact meaningfully with one who has liberal views without them both having to agree on whether or not the narrative events really did happen. Narrative criticism also makes provision for multiple meanings of the text and this allows communities of different traditional interpretations to discuss and overcome their ecumenical differences.

10 It offers fresh interpretations of biblical material. It enables the biblical stories to engage readers in today's world. Feminist and third-world theologians have found that it opens the door for the interpretation of texts in a manner which is unfettered by patriarchal or provincial restraints. Those and other theologians must realise, however, that narrative criticism is not the exclusive property of any particular interest group.

11 Most importantly for narrative preaching, it unleashes the power of biblical stories for personal and social transformation. There seems to be an intrinsic narrative quality underlying all human experience. "Stories have the power to shape life because they formally embody 'the shape of life.' " (Powell, 1990:90). Some have

suggested that modern scholarship tends to “objectify” the Gospels, forcing one to deal with them only on the rational level. For most Christians, however, the indispensable source of life and vitality for faith is the stories of the Bible themselves, “remembered, treasured and interpreted within their narrative form.”

2.2.2.1 Historical criticism and the narrative preacher

Mark Ellingsen (1990:62-69) advises preachers of narrative sermons *not* to be interested in following *standard* historical-critical procedures. (i) The narrative preacher should not give time to determining the text’s *sitz im leben* (see above). He maintains that the historical “situation in life” must not be made authoritative but rather that the authority of the canon of Scripture must be honoured. (ii) The genesis of the text or speculations about the intention of the (real) author should not be used as a foundation for exegesis. In commenting on this point of Ellingsen, JJ van Rensburg (2002:230) states that this approach corresponds with the postmodern concept of “the death of the author” and “there is nothing outside of the text”. (iii) Ellingsen (1990:69) warns preachers that they should allow the text to judge themselves. They should not judge the subject matter of the text on the basis of their own historical speculation. In this way the transcendental nature of the Scriptures is preserved. (iv) The text should not be regarded in a historically referential manner, concerned only with the political, social, or economic factors of its day. If this is done its relevance for today would be compromised. Rather, “a literary approach to Scripture is necessary to safeguard its contemporaneity”. Ellingsen, however, does not dispense altogether with historical-critical tools when preparing his biblical narrative sermons. While for him the narrative approach endorses the priority of the techniques of literary analysis it does not preclude the use of historical-critical methods, it merely restricts them to being used in a certain way. He advocates the use of form criticism (1990:71, 77) and source & redaction criticism (1990:71, 82-83). For an outline of Ellingsen’s model of narrative sermon preparation and the way in which he advocates the use of historical criticism see Appendix B.

SD Mathewson would take issue with Ellingsen in his (albeit restrained) use of form-source- and redaction criticism in narrative sermon preparation. In his reaction

against the negative effects of historical criticism Mathewson goes so far as to speak of “our evangelical neighbourhood” (we South Africans would speak of it as the evangelical “laager”) saying that in times past when evangelicals ventured outside their neighbourhood they encountered a bully known as “historical criticism” (Mathewson, 2002:34). Longman III also draws attention to the danger of relying too much on historical criticism (1987:60) and he gives an example that the repetition of stories, pericopes or formulae is not necessarily a sign of multiple sources but should be seen rather as a literary device.

Evangelicals spent much time and energy defending the historicity of the biblical text. Now it is time to lay aside the conflict with historicity (not that the battle has been lost!) and make friends with narrativity. In so doing there will be other bullies to be engaged, notably one identified by Mathewson as Postmodernism.

Historical criticism, despite some early impressive hypotheses, has yielded findings which have proved mainly inconclusive. The best efforts of historical critics have failed to capture the complexity of meaning produced by biblical stories. Perhaps the last word on this subject, however, should be afforded to T Longman III who says, “While evangelicals might in some respects be glad to see the end of historical criticism, they, along with historical critics, have a high stake in the question of history.” (1987:56-57). He refers to the fact that evangelicals hold to the historicity of the biblical narratives, within, of course, the constraints outlined in 2.1.5.3.

2.2.3 The literary-aesthetic dimension

2.2.3.1 An overview

Three dimensions in biblical interpretation are identified by Macky (1986:267). There is a philosophical-theological approach which entails a search for ideas, a historical approach in which there is a search for background insights, and there is the hitherto neglected dimension of the literary-aesthetic approach. In the last-mentioned, the scholar goes beyond the traditional methods and asks questions such as, what *form* does the literature take? Is it for example poetic, discourse, description or narrative

in form? If narrative, what is the inter-relatedness of plot movements, the activity of the characters and its outcomes? How are the stories structured? What are the unifying narrative principles? What is important about the ordering of events and how is the thematic meaning of the story embodied in the narrative form? An important feature for Macky is, what *feelings* are communicated by the passages? (1986:268).

2.2.3.2 Feelings and the intellect

With regard to the emotional and intellectual aspects of church attendees in KwaZulu-Natal, I recall a conversation which I had during the 1960's with Dr AD Hart, now Dean Emeritus and Professor in the Fuller Graduate School of Psychology, in which, in the context of our discussion on the charismatic movement and emotionalism in certain churches in KwaZulu-Natal he stated that where there is a diminished level of intellectual ability there is a corresponding increase in the reliance on feelings and emotionalism in church worship, evangelism and other activities as a means of securing Christian commitment and as a support for faith. Dr Hart (Hart, 2003) recalls the gist and confirms the accuracy of what he would have conveyed to me on that far-off occasion. However he says that over the years there has been a change, especially in his (American) part of the world. While the general rule remains that the highly educated tend to "intellectualise" their worship, more and more "intellectuals" are embracing a more emotional style of worship. He says that some of the reasons for this are that some have come to feel that a "cognitive" style of worship is less satisfying and therefore look for a strong "affective" component. For others, the increased popularity of affective based worship experiences has removed their defence against it. Popular worship styles across the board lean heavily toward the emotional or affective style. In Dr Hart's opinion neither extreme is spiritually healthy and that there needs to be a balance between affective and cognitive experiences. He says that there should never be the "heart without the head" or the "head without the heart" but always "the heart with the head." The effective narrative preacher aims at both the heart and the head.

Whatever method of preaching may be used, whether expository, topical, narrative or any other, the possibility exists of the preacher playing unduly on peoples'

emotions whether of fear, happiness, contentment or guilt. I recognise that this approach is inappropriate. The basic application of the Scriptures to people's needs in preaching must be *primarily* on the intellectual rather than the emotional level. The beauty of narrative soberly and responsibly portrayed, however, will not fail to appeal to the feelings as well as the understanding. As emotions are harnessed and kept in check by the intellect of both preacher and hearers, it can be expected by the grace of God the Holy Spirit that successful changes in the hearers will result.

Allusion has been made to the "bully" of postmodernism (2.2.2). It is perhaps inappropriate to use such definitive a term as "*tenets*", but one of the *assumptions* of postmodernism according to Mathewson (2002:35) is emotionalism – that feelings and relationships supersede logic and reason. In our narrative preaching we dare not sink to the level of the TV "soapies" where emotionalism and relativism reign as the supreme providers of meaning. On the other hand the truism "TV entertains but preaching engages" can bear closer examination. If the literal meaning of "entertain" is "hold the attention" then preaching must surely entertain in order to engage the hearer in enjoying and doing Gods' will. If, however, the main purposes of the "soap opera" are to titillate and amuse, then the preacher disclaims such base motives.

2.3 LANGUAGE

It would be helpful before examining narrative in terms of characters, plots and story-structures to pay brief attention to the phenomenon of language, supplier of the raw materials for building the house of story. In this way it can be examined how the house is built before discussing the feelings and experiences of those who live there. All narrative information is, of course, communicated through the medium of language.

Obviously the Bible has come to us in a fixed written linguistic form. If it were in oral form it would be extremely difficult if not impossible to study it by using literary methods. In order to evaluate a literary approach to the study of the NT, one must first understand the basics of language and how it functions in conveying meaning from transmitter to receptor, especially in its literary form.

2.3.1 Characteristics of language.

2.3.1.1 Its building blocks.

As well as providing materials for narrative, every language is itself a unique structure or system (Cotterell & Turner, 1989:29), although there are some features which are common to all languages. The basic units of language are words, phrases and sentences. (The basic linguistic units of *meaning* are not words but speech-chunks, but this feature will be discussed in 2.3.2). A limited range of sounds is used in speech and these sounds are common to most languages, although some have unique sounds of their own. Sounds are grouped together and separated by silences to form words which in turn are strung together in complete groups called sentences. Sentences are produced linearly - not one word at a time but one chunk at a time - starting at the beginning and proceeding to the completion, the length of the sentence being mainly determined by the memory of the speaker as to the developing meaning. Behind this simple description, however, lies the fact that languages are extremely complex systems.

2.3.1.2 Its form.

Language has a variety of functions, and comprises symbols by which its purpose of conveying meaning is achieved. Apart from the symbolic features of metaphor and imagery, every individual word is a symbol which the speaker or writer uses to convey meaning. A purpose of language which is most relevant in the formation of narrative is not so much to convey information but to effect change in people who read or listen (Macky, 1986:268).

2.3.1.3 Its purpose

Most people (and this is particularly true of evangelical Christians) seem to understand the purpose of language to be the transmission of information so that when they study the Bible they look for information. There is an instance in which a particular organisation provided a certain framework for the daily devotional study of the Bible. Readers were encouraged to study the given passage in relation to the

following questions: Does the passage tell you anything about God the Father, Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit? Express the main truth of the passage in as few words as possible. In the passage is there a sin to be avoided or a good example to be followed? With the possible exception of the last two phrases the emphasis is on the gathering of information.

However to be informative, i.e. to inform, declare, assert, is only one function of language. Another function is to be *performative* i.e. language is powerful in that it performs actions and effects change. Literary language in the hands of the Bible preacher is performative in nature and at best it effects change in the hearer, not merely by enhancing the reception of information but by leading to a new experience, even at times to a new life. The performative nature of language is a biblical principle. In Genesis ch1 the formula "And God said ..." is invariably followed by the appropriate happening and experience. In Jeremiah ch1 God's promise to the prophet resulted in God's word being put in the prophet's mouth. When Jesus said, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home" the very thing happened. The supreme "happening" is described in John 1:1,14 – "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." This thought will be developed in 2.3.2.3.

2.3.2 Meaning in language.

2.3.2.1 Semantics.

Semantics is the study of linguistic meaning. This meaning is not simply derived by studying the "meanings" of the individual words and "stringing the thoughts together" in some mathematical formula, $x + y + z = \text{meaning}$. The meaning of an utterance depends greatly on the context in which the utterance occurs (Thiselton, 1977A:75; Cotterell & Turner, 1989:13).

2.3.2.2 Misconceptions concerning meaning.

There is a serious misconception that the isolated word, rather than the sentence or "speech-act" constitutes the basic unit of meaning in a language. The etymology of the words in a work of literature is not of the greatest importance in determining the

word's basic or "real" meaning. "The etymology of a word is not a statement about its meaning but about its history" (Thiselton, 1977A:81). For example, the etymology of the word "hussy" is that it has the same origin as "housewife". This fact, however, does not contribute much to one's meaning if one were to call someone a "hussy". As Thiselton says (1977A:79), dictionary entries about words are "merely rule-of-thumb generalisations based on assumptions about characteristic contexts." He does, however, acknowledge that word studies are not valueless as every word has a hard-core meaning which can only in a limited way be altered by context.

Another misconception is that the "rules" of language, especially of grammar, are prescriptive rather than descriptive, and that it is merely necessary for these rules to be applied with logic in order to extract the meaning of a passage. Language has been erroneously regarded as being external to, even merely imitative of, inner concepts or ideas. Thiselton quotes Max Black: "Until comparatively recently the prevailing conception of the nature of language was straightforward and simple. It stressed communication of thought to the neglect of feeling and attitude, emphasised words rather than speech-acts in context, and assumed a sharp contrast between thought and its symbolic expression" (1977A:76). Thiselton here shows up the folly of pronouncements common amongst preachers such as, "this verb is in the imperative case, therefore it expresses a command" and "this word is in the indicative, therefore it is a statement". Using the misconceived "rules" of grammar one could well expect a grammarian to interpret the phrase "how do you do?" as a call to self-examination! Logical function or meaning is not wholly determined by grammar (1977A:77). Meanings of words change both linguistically and sociologically with the passage of time. The word "gay" evokes different feelings today than it did fifty years ago.

2.3.2.3 Form and meaning.

The "New" literary approach asks the question, "what does the literary work have to contribute because of its own *form*?" (Macky, 1986:268). In this approach attention is confined to the actual text itself rather than its background i.e. how it came to its present form, the historical circumstances, who wrote or compiled it, etc.

As has been seen in 2.3.1.3, language in narrative is “performative” that is, it creates in its hearers a new experience or feeling. Aristotle drew a distinction between “rhetoric” and “poetics” in literature. Rhetoric is an ornamental form which is used to make content more attractive. In poetics, however, the form is essential to the meaning. The author does not merely intend to pass on information, he or she intends that something should happen to the reader. As has been already mentioned in 2.2.3.1 the author requires the reader to examine the unifying narrative principles, the ordering of events, the archetypal plot motifs, and how the thematic meaning of the story is embodied in the narrative form, and by the experience of so doing, to be in some way changed.

Macky provides criteria for identifying artistic narratives. The reader looks for a narrative which is carefully unified, a plot that has structured unity and pattern, and a story with structured forms such as foreshadowing, dramatic irony, climax, suspense, poetic justice, foils, image patterns and symbolism (1986:270).

2.3.2.4 Structuralism.

Hayes and Holladay also (1987:114) do not see language as communication merely through words, but they see that the communicating process in language includes the use of “any set of ordered symbols, verbal and non-verbal through which meaning is conveyed.” This is the basic premise in structuralism.

Certain linguistic emphases form the major components of structuralism. The text is “timeless” and the structuralist takes no interest in any time gap between writer and reader. The text exists in its own right and is only of concern in its present form. All matters of editing, interpolating, transmitting, historical setting, authorship, purpose of writing, etc., are ignored in this approach. Whatever is being conveyed is done so, not from the actual author through the text but from the text itself (Hayes & Holladay, 1987:113). The concepts of “actual” and “implied” author will be examined in 2.5.

Another emphasis in structuralism is that human behaviour and experience are

always concrete manifestations of universal principles and structures. For example there are dress codes, accepted ways in which marriage is practised, and other behavioural codes which form themselves into societal structures. This “behavioural structuralism” is reflected in people’s use of language and these underlying structures are important to the literary interpreter. A pair of categories which expresses this principle consists of surface structures and deep structures. In a piece of literature, on the surface is to be seen the outline of the plot and the flow of the story. A different level of meaning is derived from a deeper structure of the underlying order of convictions and principles from which the text comes but which are not mentioned in the text itself. It is on this level that the author’s “world order” or “evaluative point of view” (see 2.5.3.3) comes into play. We do well to be alert to the presence of what Hayes & Holladay term *binary opposition*. Pairs of opposites occur in both surface and deep structures. Light/ darkness, good/evil, divine/human, faith/unbelief, male/female, etc. Certain opposites are fundamental to all experience and will undoubtedly contribute to meaning in Biblical narratives (1987:114-15)

In the structural approach to language, Thiselton says, “words or other linguistic signs have no force, validity or meaning independently of the relations of equivalence or contrast which hold between them” (1977A:82). He likens the structural form of language to a game of chess. The values or potentials of every piece on the board are not only affected by their *legal* position (the manner in which every individual piece is able to operate according to the rules of the game) but by the *state* of the board at any given moment. One particular move can radically alter the value of any number of pieces and revolutionise the whole game.

Another important pair of categories which is central and fundamental in the structure of linguistics is what Thiselton calls “syntagmatic” and “paradigmatic” relations between words and the rest of the system. A syntagmatic relationship is *linear*, i.e. it is between words, etc., which are present in the system. A paradigmatic relationship exists with words or phrases not present in the system. For example in the phrase “a crown of thorns”, the word “thorns” has a paradigmatic relationship with the words “gold” or “laurel” which, while not in the system, contribute to the meaning of the

phrase.

2.3.2.5 Field semantics.

A word only has meaning within a “field” (Thiselton, 1977A:90) and meanings should be derived by analysing related meanings of different words, not of different meanings of single words. Words can yield their meanings by an analysis of their opposites, similarities, vagueness, precision, etc., but always only in context. Thomas Kuhn (2000:62) uses the same argument when calling for an understanding of the meaning of words by those who use them to communicate with other members of the language community within which the usage of those words is current. He says that words do not, with occasional exceptions, have meaning individually, but only through their association with other words within a semantic field. If the use of an individual term changes, then the use of the terms associated with it normally changes as well.

The language of biblical narrative is often multivalent, carrying more than one meaning at once. This verbal ambiguity appears in various forms and at times two or more meanings of unequal force are present in a single word or phrase. A careful reader of some of the OT stories can recognise the narrator’s play of one meaning off against another while the characters themselves usually perceive only one intended meaning. An example of this is given in 3.1.2.6

2.4 THE LITERARY APPROACH TO BIBLICAL STUDIES

2.4.1 The Bible as literature

While it is not to be reduced to literature pure and simple, the Bible is nonetheless amenable to literary analysis (Longman III, 1987:59).

The form of the Bible is not only “linguistic” but as Macky describes it (1986:269) it is to a significant extent “literary” or “poetic”, i.e. the form in the literature is essential to its meaning and inseparable from it. The new literary approach to the study of the Bible embodies the principles and methods outlined in 2.1 – 2.3 above.

2.4.2 The Bible as inspired literature

A great value of the literary method of interpretation is that it lays emphasis on the inspired text itself which is very important to those who have a high view of the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures. To one who stands in this position it is of lesser importance to ask *why* Luke, the historian, contemporary of Paul, etc., said what he said, than to ask *what* he said, i.e. what the Holy Spirit actually said through Luke.

It is precisely here, however, that some have committed an error. In holding to what they call the “verbal inspiration” of the NT they display an ignorance of the nature of language and this combination leads to a serious misinterpretation of meaning (Thiselton, 1977A:78). In following an “every word is inspired” approach, a passage is sometimes “atomised” into small components and examined according to the misconceptions mentioned in 2.3.2. As Longman says (1987:60), evangelicals commonly tend to atomise the text and to focus attention on a word or a few verses. The literary approach, on the other hand focuses on the force of the passage as a whole.

In an exchange of the roles of “cause and effect”, Macky (1986:271-72) actually sees the reverse happening to what has just been described. Instead of an erroneous view of inspiration leading to an erroneous interpretation, he sees a misdirection in interpretation leading to a misconceived view of inspiration. He maintains that the new literary approach takes biblical metaphor and symbolism more seriously than has been done in the past. Up to the 18th century, interpreters regarded the Bible’s use of stories, symbols and metaphors as expressing God’s accommodation of truth to our ignorance and simplicity: God speaking to us, as it were, in “baby-talk”. With the coming of the age of Enlightenment and its influence on theology, this principle of an all-wise God speaking in this manner to an ignorant, unenlightened humanity was lost. According to Macky the tragic result of the loss of this sense of God’s accommodation was the rise of a “literalist and fundamentalist biblicalism” (*ibid*).

When we encounter approaches by narrative critics in examining the Bible as narrative we sometimes gain the impression that they are examining the Bible as literature *instead of* Scripture. The Bible stories should be examined as both literature and Scripture.

2.4.3 Narrative in the Bible inspires the heart.

In the literary approach, metaphor, symbol and imagination are elevated above precision and the abstract. According to Macky recent theologians regard clarity and precision as marks of truth. Speaking particularly of the NT he says, however, that the biblical writers saw that truth "is a person, a profound mystery" (1986:271-72). True metaphor and sign not only teach about reality, they are actually bearers of it. The hearers not only learn through symbol and imagination, they participate in them. As Jesus and the Gospel writers teach us in their stories and parables, symbolic speech touches the heart. Prosaic discourses and abstract language such as is possibly emphasised in the teaching received by our theological students at some of our training institutions, only touch the head. Macky sees imagination to be at the core of man, the place where mind, emotions, will and memory all come together (1986:273). It is a mistake therefore to ignore the symbolism in the biblical narratives or reduce them to concepts. Thiselton agrees with this assessment when he says that too often in biblical exegesis the interpreter has looked for exactness where the author has chosen vagueness. Metaphor is a type of vagueness that gets the hearer to think through the meaning (Thiselton, 1977A:94). Thus metaphor, symbolism and the imagination by which they are handled are powerful tools in the hands of the narrative preacher. Warren Wiersbe (1994:35) seeks to encourage all preachers to consider a more imaginative approach in their preparation. He says that preachers must address the imagination, presenting the truth the way that the biblical writers presented it:

In our noble attempt to be biblical preachers we have so emphasized the analytical that we have forgotten the poetic. We see the trees waving their branches, but we hold the branches still, examine them scientifically leaf and twig, and all the while fail to hear the trees clapping their hands to the glory of God.

2.5 NARRATIVE CRITICISM

According to MA Powell literary criticism can be partitioned into structuralism, rhetorical criticism, reader-response criticism and narrative criticism (1990:19). The last-named, narrative criticism, says Powell, is unknown in secular literary scholarship and developed exclusively as a discipline of biblical examination, an independent parallel movement in its own right.

One of the foci of narrative criticism is on the question, who is the reader?

"Rhetorical criticism is interested in the original readers to whom the text was addressed (sometimes called the *intended readers*). Structuralism wants to define the responses of a *competent reader* who understands a work's codes. Fish and Iser (reader-response criticism) describe the responses of a *first-time reader* who encounters the text in its sequential order. ... Narrative critics generally speak of an *implied reader* who is presupposed by the narrative itself." (Powell, 1990:19).

Narrative critics speak not only of an implied reader but also of an *implied author* (Marguerat & Bourquin, 1999:12). The real author and the real reader are considered to lie outside the parameters of the text but the implied author and implied reader are products of the text itself. Narrative criticism regards the real author and the real reader as extrinsic to the communication act that transpires within the text itself. This concept of the implied reader, the reader in the text, moves narrative criticism away from being a purely reader-centred (pragmatic) type of criticism and makes it a more text-centred (objective) approach (Powell, 1990:20). EV McKnight sounds a further warning that we are not to equate the poetic creativity of the biblical authors with fiction and depreciate the importance of the real author's intent, of historical reference, and background information for understanding the text (McKnight, 1992:475).

In this dissertation where the words "author" and "narrator" appear they are both to be regarded as equivalent to the implied author unless otherwise explained.

2.5.1 The nature of narrative

A broad definition of narrative is that it is any work of literature that tells a story

(Powell: 1990:23). This definition can, of course, be expanded and Marguerat & Bourquin give the following parameters:

In his "*Décrire des actions*", JM Adam has listed four parameters of the narrative. For it to be a narrative there is a need for:

1. A temporal succession of actions/events;
2. The presence of an agent-hero inspired by an intention which draws the story towards its close;
3. A plot which overhangs the chain of events and integrates them into the unity of a single action;
4. A relationship of causality and consecutiveness which structures the plot by an interplay of causes and effects. (Marguerat & Bourquin, 1999:16)

This list of features distinguishes the narrative form of literature from a description or a discourse. For example temporality (the occurrence of events in time) distinguishes it from discourse, and causality distinguishes it from description.

2.5.2 Story and discourse

In both Powell (1990:23) and Marguerat & Bourquin (1999:18) a distinction is drawn between two elements of narrative, viz. story and discourse. Story refers to the *content* of a narrative: events, characters, settings, etc., while discourse refers to the *rhetoric* of the narrative, i.e. how the story is told. Stories which contain the same events, characters and settings can be told in markedly different ways and the four Gospels, especially the synoptics, provide excellent examples of this variation of rhetoric. Narrative criticism distinguishes between these two features and can examine them separately although they cannot in fact be separated in any particular narrative without destroying it (Marguerat & Bourquin, 1999:20). ES Malbon defines rhetoric as "the art of persuasion" (2000:18). She indicates that the implied author persuades the implied reader, by the way in which the story is told, to first understand and then to share and extend the story's levels of meaning.

2.5.3 Narrative patterns

2.5.3.1 Closure

This can be defined as “the totality of narrative indicators which fix a beginning and an end to the narrative, thus delimiting a space where meaning is produced” (Marguerat & Bourquin, 1999:30). It is of considerable importance in the production of meaning that the expositor or story-teller should be able to decide where narratives in the scriptures begin and end. A feature of our Bible which sometimes complicates this choice is the chapter-and-verse division. In modern novels the author gives the reader signs of closure by demarcating the text into chapters. In the Bible it is not so simple. For the Hebrew Bible the division into chapters and verses can be traced back to the fifth century CE and the actual numbering of the verses to 1553 CE. With regard to the NT, division into chapters and their numbering goes back to Stephen Langton c.1203 CE. It has to be noted that the structuring of the OT and NT into chapter divisions is not a trustworthy indication of closure in the narratives. This structure may, of course, have been more reliable had narrative criticism been a discipline familiar to scholars in those far-off times!

FE Deist goes further (1988:13) and decries the division of the OT into complete books which was necessitated, he says, so that the narrative could be fitted onto scrolls. Referring to what he calls the hexateuch, i.e. Gen 12 – Joshua 21, he says that division into books has the drawback that readers today find it difficult to grasp the OT story as a whole.

While the ancient chapter and verse divisions have had their influence on how closure is to be determined in the narrative, the translators of modern versions of the Bible have apparently sought to modify this influence by smoothing out these divisions while at the same time introducing structural devices of their own. Examples of this can be seen in the Revised Standard Version (RSV) (1946-1952) and the New International Version (NIV) (1973, 1978, 1984). The NIV, goes a step further than the RSV by introducing headings into the structural divisions but these divisions are not

necessarily definitive of the narrative patterns present in the text itself. One suspects that often the translators' divisions reflect more the findings of historical criticism rather than narrative criticism.

The author may use four parameters by which episodes are marked out in the narrative (Marguerat & Bourquin, 1999:30). These indicators of closure are the time, the place, the group of characters and the theme. Examples of a time delimiter found in the Gospels are, "six days before Passover" and "after these things". The criterion of place can be determined by the words, "he entered the synagogue" or "they crossed to the other side". Thirdly, the appearance or departure of a character or group of characters can also indicate closure in a narrative and the fourth parameter, theme, can be regarded as additional to the other three. The last-mentioned often functions as a unifying principle of the narrative, maintaining its unity even though the time, place and even the characters may to some degree change. We will see the influence of theme in the Nicodemus narrative (see 3.2.1) and this leads us to be cautious when pronouncing upon closure. When embarking on narrative preaching at least two or three of the four criteria should be present in the narrative before a decision is made concerning closure.

2.5.3.2 Order

Sometimes the author of a narrative will jump ahead in time or go back into the past in the course of telling the story. If stories always proceeded in strict chronological order they would not be as interesting or as effective in contributing to meaning and the all-important effecting of change.

2.5.3.3 Characters

These are the author's actors and they bring the story to life. They are not necessarily individuals, in fact they are not necessarily human as witness the serpent in Gen 3. In some NT narratives "the Twelve" or "the Jews" constitutes a character if the group functions collectively as one, and the reader does not imagine that the individuals in the group speak or act in unison. "Such stereotyping is a literary device by which a number of characters are made to serve a single role" (Powell, 1990:51).

Narrative information is presented through the viewpoint of the narrator and the characters. These perspectives in conjunction with that of the reader form a system of relationships. A reader reconstructs character by observing, assessing, comparing and contrasting what the characters do and say, what the narrator says of them and how other characters relate to them or say of them. A most common error which readers of biblical narrative make is to confuse a character's viewpoint with that of the narrator. An example of how this confusion can arise is given in 3.1.2.5. The nature or role of a character in biblical narrative can be revealed to the reader as the narrator either *tells* or *shows*. In the modern novel it is usually regarded as stilted for the author to use the technique of "telling" to extol the virtues of a character. AC Doyle would not explicitly state, "Sherlock Holmes is a brilliantly perceptive man". He would rather proceed to *show* the fact in the narrative. A preacher tends to become boring when continually telling the audience that Jesus was a "fantastic teacher" or that Paul was an "outstanding theologian". Nevertheless this method does thrive in the Gospels. Matthew tells us that Joseph is a "just" man (1:19), Luke, that Zechariah and Elizabeth are "righteous before God" (1:6), and John, that the Pharisees "loved praise from men" (12:43). The preferred method used in the Gospels, however, is the technique of "showing". This method is less precise than telling but it has the advantage of being more interesting and of inviting the reader's participation more. The reader has to work harder, collecting data from various sources and applying the mind and imagination in order to arrive at the author's view of the characters. The reader assesses the author's characterisations, sometimes accepting them as reliable and sometimes dismissing them. When according to Matthew, John the Baptist calls the religious leaders "a brood of vipers" the reader has to weigh up the evidence. The Baptist has been characterised as reliable. Jesus (who is himself reliable) vouches for him (11:9). The confirmation comes when Jesus himself calls them "a brood of vipers" (12:34). When the religious leaders characterise Jesus as one who drives out demons by the prince of demons (Matt 9:34) the reader dismisses this saying as unreliable and finds that it teaches more about those leaders than about Jesus.

Marguerat & Bourquin identify three different types (not traits) of characters (1999:60). There are those that fill a major role, a subordinate role and there are the "walk-ons". They call the ones occupying major roles the *protagonists*. These are in the foreground and include the hero and others who play an active role in the plot. The least important or visible are the walk-ons who are in complete contrast to the protagonists and remain in the background. In between these two extremes are the subordinate roles whose function is to help the plot along.

Individuals and groups in the narrative are distinguished by their character "traits". MA Powell defines a character trait after JP Guilford as "any distinguishable, relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from another" (1990:54). If the narrative technique employed is predominantly that of "showing" then a character trait usually comes to light by having to infer it from the text. Once again it must be pointed out that only assumptions that the text makes are valid in narrative criticism and all insights, such as the "psychologising" of characters, gained on a basis extraneous to the text must be ignored. Narrative critics sometimes distinguish between characters with *flat* character traits, which are all consistent and predictable, and those with *round* traits which are various and potentially conflicting. The religious leaders who opposed Jesus show flat character traits. They are consistently hypocritical, unloving and self-righteous. The author Luke provides a good example of a round character trait. He describes Jesus' disciples (possessing a composite character - see above) as humble (5:8), self-denying (5:11) and loyal (22:28), but also as over-confident (22:33), status-conscious (22:24) and cowardly (22:54-62). We would expect Jesus to be classified as a "flat" character, consistently righteous, loving, mighty, etc., but in fact he is also portrayed as "round". Although he is consistently portrayed in a positive light, again in Luke the power of his miracles is contrasted with his "weakness" on the cross. He castigates his opponents (11:37-52) and prays for them (23:34). He both welcomes freely those who would follow him (9:11) and is cautious about them (9:57-62). The difference between the round traits of Jesus and those of his disciples lies in what Powell calls the "evaluative point of view" (1990:53). This is the general perspective that an author establishes as normative for a work, and in the Bible the term expresses the general orientation of

a character towards truth or untruth. While Jesus, despite his range of diverse character traits, consistently espouses the evaluative point of view of God, the disciples on the other hand are inconsistent both in their character traits and in their alignment to God's viewpoint. When the author has established his evaluative point of view we find as readers that we identify with Mary Magdalene rather than Pontius Pilate, with David rather than Goliath and with the disciple Peter rather than with Judas Iscariot.

The protagonist in a narrative is usually found to have a round character. A character whose traits lead it to fill an unvarying role throughout the narrative or macro-narrative is called a *block* character (Marguerat & Bourquin, 1999:61) and could be a round or a flat character. The Pharisees, as they appear in Matthew's Gospel, are collectively a block character.

The characters in the stories of both the OT and the NT can be likened to doorways by which the reader enters the world of story and finds himself or herself captivated by the events and situations in which the characters become involved. Deep and intimate bonds are woven between reader and character and for a time the reader takes on the destiny of this "paper hero". The ease with which a reader is beguiled by a character depends on the closeness of the character's life to the reader's life (real or imaginary). "The power of the character is an effect of reading, which means that it arises between the text and the reader; it is the reader who adopts a particular character in the narrative or invests in it an expectation, a hope, a question" (Marguerat & Bourquin, 1999:65). The narrative preacher exploits this potential bond between reader and character, with the purpose in mind that the listeners, using their God-given imagination, should seek a destiny that resembles that of an appropriate character in the story.

2.5.3.4 Plot

The characters are the visible face of what is known as the plot. This is the unifying structure which links the various happenings in the story and organises them into a continuous account. A reader comprehends a plot both in terms of the simple

sequence of action and in terms of the rise and fall of dramatic tension. An alternative definition of the plot is that it is the set of combinations by which events are made into a story (Marguerat & Bourquin, 1999:40). These events have a causal link and are inserted into a chronological process. For Aristotle the plot comprised only two sides, the *complication* and the *denouement*. The complication occurs from the start of the story to the part which immediately precedes some occurrence of a change from bad fortune to good fortune or the reverse. The denouement runs from the beginning of the change to the end of the story (1999:42). P Larivaille is credited with having developed and elaborated upon the Aristotelian model by defining five stages in the standard plot (Marguerat & Bourquin, 1999:43). (i) The *initial situation*. The readers are given the information concerning the particular situation which the story is about to alter. The “who”, “what” and sometimes the “how”. (ii) The *complication* triggers off the action. The dramatic tension usually begins with the complication which can be a statement of a difficulty, conflict or other hindrance to the resolution of a problem. (iii) The *transforming action* constitutes the turning point in the story and can consist of some action or process of change which resolves the problem. (iv) The *denouement* is a stage symmetrical with the complication. It states the resolution of the problem, describing the effects of the transforming action on the people involved or on the renewal of the original situation. (v) The *final situation* reveals the new state after the tension in the narrative has been relaxed.

This five-stage plot structure is known as the quinary scheme and is implemented in very different ways depending on the narratives. Compared with the modern novel the Bible has a limited variety of narrative forms for the reader to contend with and enjoy. Nevertheless there is at times a variety which is present to such a degree that often a Bible story cannot be reduced to the quinary skeleton outlined above. The value of such a model is that it is a scale by which one can measure a narrative and discover which of its characteristics are unique or common. Where should one locate the denouement? Is there more than one final situation? This investigation can have important results for narrative preaching. In the story of the cleansing of the lepers (Lk 17:11-19), does the narrative tension in the “complication” lie in the fact that ten

men had leprosy, or that one was a Samaritan, or that nine were unthankful? Is the “final situation” in the story that the one healed leper was thankful, or is there a hint of an additional “final”? The narrative closes with the remark of Jesus to the one who had already been healed, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.” The words *your* and *you* are in the singular. Is there a hint that the healing of the other nine may have been in the balance as a result of their thanklessness? The nine were, in fact, merely “cleansed” while the one was “made well”.

One can identify types or combinations of plot in addition to the “sandwich” type common in the Gospel of Mark (see 3.2.4). The author can create a new narrative by interlacing several plots with one another. Further, different genres in the literature can be mixed, with narrative and discourse alternating with each other. A plot can be named *episodic* if the narrative plot markers coincide with the episodes (micro-narrative) and *unifying* if the plot of a narrative sequence (macro-narrative) overhangs and encompasses the plots of the episodes which it contains.

2.5.3.5 The setting

Settings provide context for the actions of the characters in the plot. The crowd in some Gospel stories constitutes a character and sometimes merely a setting. In the latter case it simply acts as part of the context of the story. If a crowd yells, “Crucify him!”, it is a character. If it simply hears the teaching of Jesus without any reported response, it is a setting. A setting never espouses a point of view but can contribute to the reader’s point of view. Given a certain setting the reader can easily imagine events occurring even though they are not specifically reported in the narrative. In this way settings contribute to the mood of the story (Powell, 1990:70). Some examples of the influence of settings are provided in 3.2.5.

Settings in Biblical narrative can have three elements. (i) The temporal setting. In this setting the reader is told the time when the story took place and perhaps how long it lasted. The anointing at Bethany took place “six days before the Passover” and the triumphal entry “the next day” (Jn 12). The (final) Passover was a significant occurrence theologically and is used to set the scene. We are told that Nicodemus

came to visit Jesus “at night” (Jn 3:1, 19:39), by which we gather that there is something significant about the time at which the meeting took place. (ii) The geographical setting. The teaching of Jesus from the boat is in a spatial setting. Other significant settings are “the region of the Gerasenes” (Lk 8:26) and “... went up to the temple to pray” (Lk 18:10). (iii) The social setting. It is to understand this setting that the benefits of historical criticism are appropriated. Something of the world depicted in the narrative needs to be known in order to understand the story. The world of the author also needs in some measure to be understood as the author has recomposed the world of the story (at least partially) in the image of his own world (Marguerat & Bourquin, 1999:82). This is one of the few occasions in which appeal is made to historical studies for assistance in indicating factors in the setting which would contribute to meaning.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Interpretation (hermeneutics) is vital for preaching, whatever position the student adopts with regard to the inspiration of the Scriptures. A course in hermeneutics should precede, or at least run concurrently with, courses in theoretical and practical homiletics in our training institutions. If narrative preaching is an important element in a course in homiletics, as I maintain it should be, then narrative criticism should also feature prominently in a course in hermeneutics.

CHAPTER 3 NARRATIVE PORTIONS OF THE BIBLE

In 3.1 below I have made consistent use of DN Fewell and DM Gunn's very helpful article "Narrative, Hebrew" in *The Anchor Bible dictionary* (see bibliography).

3.1 THE OLD TESTAMENT

The major part of the OT is narrative. The remainder consists of discourse such as lyric poetry (Psalms), proverbs, and legal code (e.g. Exodus ch 20, Deuteronomy). The prophetic and apocalyptic portions of the OT must also be included as essentially narrative in nature.

3.1.1 The primary story

This is discerned from Genesis through to 2 Kings (Fewell & Gunn, 1992:1023). God initiates the plot in which he attempts to establish and develop a relationship of interactive love and trust with mankind whom he has created. He selects one particular family, that of Abraham, and establishes an agreement by which he undertakes to provide the family (and its descendants) with a land and nationhood and other blessings such as his presence and a commitment to sustaining the relationship. The element of conflict in the overall story is very pronounced. There is often an incompatibility between the human desire for identity, independence and locality and the divine desire for meaningful relationship. The people attain their prize but finally lose it because they fail to take seriously the lessons of their own story and are not radically changed thereby. They fail to respond to the divine desire as expressed in the primary narrative.

Within this primary story there lie other narrative complexes such as what FE Deist calls the "Hexeteuch" (Deist, 1988:1) in which Genesis 1-11 is a "foreword" to the narrative of Genesis 12 – Joshua 21 (Genesis to Joshua being the six books of this hexeteuch). In Genesis 12 Abraham is called to become the father of the Jewish nation and Joshua 21 concludes the narrative with the giving of the land to that nation.

A second major narrative begins with 1Chronicles and culminates with Ezra and Nehemiah and tells the story of the monarchy of Judah from the death of Saul through the reign of David. This story centres on the deeds and doings of King David, how he established a united state, organised the manner in which it functioned, founded the temple, provided for its functionaries and especially promoted the Levitical priesthood. David's reign is the high point in the narrative and what follows is essentially a retrogression from the Davidic ideal. The low point is reached in the seventy years' exile when all that could be said positively of the land was that, though it had been desolated, it "enjoyed its sabbath rests" (2Chronicles 36:21). The books of Ezra and Nehemiah recount the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple and the restoration of a theocratic state.

The prophetic books also contain narrative in the form of the prophets' describing the life and times of their work. Visions and divine discourses resemble narrative but lack the temporality, the rise and fall of tension and the closely constructed plot which are hallmarks of true narrative. The books of Ruth, Jonah, Esther and Daniel 1 - 6 contain well-constructed narratives which harmonise with the larger stories. They develop the theme of God's desire for relationship and human faith and unbelief in ways which agree with the main elements of the primary tales.

The book of Ruth is an example of what JA Loader calls a novelette, "a masterful example of the narrative art" (1988:107). He sees Ruth as a distinguished literary work with well-planned, convincingly motivated scenes and contains an interesting tension line. He also sees merit in the view that the book is a protest narrative against the prohibition of Ezra and Nehemiah on mixed marriages but I see a problem here in that it would require a date after the exile whereas I would take the conservative view that it should be dated during the monarchy (New International Version Study Bible (NIVSB): 363). Loader similarly examines the story of Joseph (1988:99-106) and the books of Esther and Jonah (1988:114-127).

3.1.2 Elements within OT narrative

3.1.2.1 Genre

Form critics have identified a variety of genres in Hebrew narrative. "Saga" is used to describe the ancestral narratives in Genesis, "legend" is used of the narratives about Moses in Exodus and Numbers and about Elijah and Elisha in 1 & 2 Kings and "novella" describes the Joseph story in Genesis. The latter term has also been used for the books of Esther, Jonah and Ruth and the story of David's family in 2Samuel 9-20 and 1Kings 1-2. These genre labels have been used in some perceived relation to history/non-history and fiction/non-fiction, i.e. to investigate the relation between the various genres and "what really happened". However as DN Fewell and DM Gunn say, once the biblical authors (or editors) have selected material from historical records and put this material into order to form narrative, especially when the author's main purpose is ideological, a certain distance is established between the narrative and the manner in which the events "actually happened". Genre labels, therefore, especially those which are formulated in terms of historiographical purposes, are of very limited value (Fewell & Gunn, 1992:1024).

3.1.2.2 "Dialogic" and "monologic" narrative

A valuable distinction can be made, however, between these two forms. Dialogic narrative characterises much of the primary story and the shorter stories such as Ruth, Jonah, Daniel 1-6 and Esther. Monologic narrative is a characteristic of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah.

Dialogic is more open to multiple interpretations as the reader "hears" different "voices" expressing different ideological points of view, often in tension with one another. A characteristic of this form is the restraint exercised by the narrator who prefers to "show" the plot by means of the characters' words and actions rather than simply "telling" (see 2.5.5.3). An example of this restraint is the absence in the book of Esther of any mention of God, worship, prayer or sacrifice. Far from being an expression of secularity this feature shows a deliberate refraining from the mention

of God or any religious activity as a literary device to heighten the reader's awareness that it is God who controls all the seemingly insignificant coincidences which make up the plot and issue in deliverance in that book.

Monologic narrative has more in common with the rhetoric of public persuasion such as the sermon, as it endeavours to elicit a narrower range of responses from the reader. This form tends to minimise tensions and ideological plurality and concentrates on "telling" through extended monologues from the lips of both narrator and characters. The most striking example of this type of narrative is to be seen in the books 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. The monologic factor is one which has led many scholars to conclude that these books are all the work of one author (NIVSB: 670).

While the narrative preacher may tend to concentrate on the dialogic narratives and regard the monologic passages as too close to being labelled Aristotelian for comfort, this would be a mistake. Often the passages containing direct monologic speech are essential to the story line. When the David and Goliath story is examined it will be seen that the action in the story is of short duration and the speeches are of more importance than the action.

3.1.2.3 Plot structure

As stated in 2.5.3.4 the plot can take the *quinary* form consisting of the initial situation, the complication, the transforming action, the denouement and the final situation. In 1Kings chapters 1 & 2 is the story of the succession to king David. The initial situation is that the king is old and senile and that his oldest son Adonijah desires and expects to succeed him. The complication is that there is a rival party which backs Solomon's claim to the throne. Tension mounts as David opposes Adonijah's claim and sides with Solomon and his mother Bathsheba. The transforming action is introduced in the institution of festivities and the crowning of Solomon but the tension remains below the surface. The denouement occurs when the tension comes to the surface. Adonijah seeks marriage to a member of David's

harem, a ploy which was widely regarded as making a claim on the throne (NIVSB: 474). Solomon orders his execution and those of his fellow-conspirators, for treason. The final situation is: "The kingdom was now firmly established in Solomon's hands" (1Kings 2:46).

Certain factors can make the OT plot structure complex. There may be several points of tension or climax depending, for example, on which character's viewpoint is understood by the reader to be predominant in the narrative. In the story of Jephthah (Judges 10-12) the various "characters" comprise the Israelites, who alternately "do evil" and confess to the evil, Jephthah the illegitimate son of the head of the tribe, and Jephthah's tragic daughter. From the Israelites' point of view the major climax is Jephthah's defeat of the Ammonites (11:32). This could also be true from Jephthah's viewpoint whose initial predicament was his expulsion from Gilead and exclusion from the family fortune on the grounds of his illegitimacy. On the other hand Jephthah's story of being early deprived of family could be seen to reach its climax in his decision as a result of the Lord's victory to sacrifice his only daughter, a virgin. Then again if the tragic role of the daughter is seen to be predominant, the climax for her is the acceptance of death as her lot.

Another factor which complicates OT plot structure is that the story is often constructed from a number of apparently separate narratives. The historical critic sees these stories as coming from disparate sources and is bent on separating and identifying these sources, while the narrative critic sees them as sub-plots or episodes which contribute to the form of the larger unitary final narrative. Within the larger Genesis narrative of promised land and nationhood are to be found the stories of Abraham and Sarah in Egypt (Genesis 12), Sarah and Hagar (Genesis 16 & 21), and the wooing of Rebekah (Genesis 24). Frequently in the larger narrative complexes, the sub-plots and episodes centre on one or two main characters as hero or heroine. With regard to the larger plot, however, the main protagonist (see 2.5.3.3 para. 3) is normally a composite character such as the ancestral family or the people of Israel.

While OT plot movements can be complex, Mathewson (2002:44) regards plots as having the same basic *shape* and advises preachers of OT narrative to commence their analysis with the plot rather than the characters as OT stories focus more on action than on the development of particular characters. He also advises preachers not to agonise over exactly where the plot changes from one element in the structure to the next. He likens the changes in a plot which occur from, say, the transforming action to the denouement as sometimes similar to the automatic transmission in a motor car. The change from fourth to fifth gear can be almost imperceptible.

It will be seen in 3.1.2.6 that the Hebrew language finds enjoyment in the repetition of certain words, phrases and sentences. An important element in Hebrew narrative is the repetition of story *patterns*. These repetitions are known as archetypes or plot motifs (Mathewson, 2002:47) and identifying them is useful to the interpreter. Two examples of these are the comedy and the tragedy. The testing of Abraham in Genesis 22:1-19 has a comedy shape to it, as has the book of Esther. A comedy can be defined as “a U-shaped story that begins in prosperity, descends into tragedy, and rises again to end happily” (*ibid*). A tragedy has been defined as “the story of exceptional calamity in which there is a movement from prosperity to catastrophe” (Mathewson, 2002:47-48). Examples of this motif are the stories of Samson (Judges 13-16), Saul (1Sam 8-31) and Esau (Gen 25-27).

Another example of a motif useful for the preacher can be seen throughout Genesis where repeatedly the elder is seen to serve the younger. This repetition points to the foundational truth that God’s blessing is extended to those who have no other claim to it.

3.1.2.4 Character

Because in the OT the plot is of primary importance, the function of characters should be analysed in relation to the plot. JL Ska (1990:83) says, “The predominance of action and the lack of interest in the psychological processes of the characters are

two of the main characteristics of Biblical narrative art ... characters are most of the time at the service of the plot and seldom presented for themselves."

Characters in OT narrative mimic real life, conveying only limited human viewpoints. The characters are frequently prejudiced and self-serving, and for this reason the reader cannot always rely upon what other characters say of them. Nevertheless these characters contribute meaningfully to the larger picture. 1Samuel 25 contains the story of David, Nabal and Abigail, Nabal's wife. The narrator tells us that Abigail is "intelligent and beautiful" and Nabal (whose name means "fool") is "surly and mean in his dealings". Abigail is extremely disdainful of her husband and regards David as the angel of God who can do no wrong. The reader's suspicions are aroused, however, when consideration is given firstly to the dubious nature of David's unsolicited "protection" of the exceedingly rich man's flocks, secondly to the haste and vehemence with which David orders reprisals against the whole of Nabal's household when after all Nabal could have been merely exercising caution in the face of concerted begging, and thirdly to the desperation of Abigail in seeking to placate David, even discretely offering to join him (v 31). For the sake of the bigger story, however, the narrator has a higher purpose in mind. Nabal's stated character and actions and his sudden death at the Lord's hand all parallel Saul (whose "flock" David had also protected). This allows the narrator to indirectly characterise Saul as a fool (see 13:13 and 26:21) and foreshadow his end. This story fits in between the two incidents in which David exercised restraint and spared the life of Saul despite the urging of his men. This is shown as remarkable in view of the fact that David's natural tendency was to be vengeful and exact retribution as is displayed in his reaction to the surliness of Nabal (NIVSB: 411). Abigail's prudent action prevents David from using his power as leader for personal vengeance (the very thing Saul was doing). In this way the Lord (who in the end avenged his servant) keeps David's sword clean and teaches him a valuable lesson for future use. Abigail by confidently acknowledging David's future accession to the throne foreshadows this event, even anticipating David's "lasting dynasty" (v28). Her marriage to David in circumstances different from those in which he married Bathsheba provided him with a "wise and

worthy" wife, while Saul gives away David's wife Michal to another, illustrating how the Lord counters every move which Saul makes against David.

FE Deist in commenting on the narratives of Genesis 12-50 confirms that characterisation plays a minor role in the stories (1988:11). The characters are stereotyped and do not develop. They are not delineated as heroes as is common in ancient epics but are rather depicted as the "bearers" of the developing theme and "experiencers" of the intrigues of the narrative.

Although characters are secondary to plot, it has been seen that characterisation is by no means unimportant in OT narratives. Many stories illustrate the point that the relationship of character to plot is not simply that characters enact plot. It is the forces of desire and ambition which operate within the lives of the characters that motivate the movements and changes which constitute the plot. To understand the complexity of the character the reader needs to determine the desire. After God promised Abraham land, nationhood and blessing he set out to find this land without apparently saying one word about it to his wife. When famine strikes he eagerly departs from the land for Egypt. What motivated Abraham to try to pass off Sarah as his sister in Genesis 12 (which he did again in Genesis 20)? Was it only fear of Pharaoh or was she to be a kind of surety for "blessing"?

3.1.2.5 Narrator's viewpoint

As was stated in 2.5.3.3 a common error which readers make is to confuse a character's point of view with that of the narrator. This can be avoided by carefully comparing and contrasting what the narrator tells the reader directly with what the characters say. An example of this can be found in the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38. The narrator tells the reader that Judah's first two sons died at the hand of the Lord because they did evil in his sight. In contradiction to this, however, the main character Judah has a different idea. His aside, "He may die too, just like his brothers" indicates to the reader that Judah looks upon Tamar, his first two sons' widow, as the jinx that led to their deaths and he accordingly goes against the levirate

code and withholds Tamar from his third son Shelah. This distinction between the two viewpoints enables the reader to evaluate the two characters Judah and Tamar. Firstly the reader is guided to accept the narrator's assessment that Tamar is innocent. Secondly, the reader notes Judah's readiness to blame the woman rather than see fault in his sons, and the reader sees his error compounded when he condemns what he considers to be her harlotry when in fact it is his harlotry alone.

The interpreter is well advised to pay attention not only to repetition but also to variations in words or expressions. These variations often indicate changes in a point of view and offer insight into characters' values or their attempts to manipulate others in the course of the narrative. In the Judah-Tamar story there is a subtle change in the term used to describe Tamar and the role which she is seen to be playing. Judah sees her along the road and regards her as a common prostitute (*zonah*) and this assumption is reflected in his subsequent dealings with her. When, however, his dealings with her become public and he sends payment to her at the hand of his friend she is elevated to the description "cult prostitute" (*qedesah*). Judah's shift in terminology points to his double standards. His private moral actions are base, but when these actions are brought into the public domain he portrays them in a more socially acceptable light.

3.1.2.6 Language and meaning in OT narrative

As has previously been stated (2.3.2.5) in some OT narratives a word or phrase can express more than one meaning. An example of this can be seen in the Judah-Tamar story.

Tamar, disguised as a prostitute, bargains with an overly eager Judah for his cord, seal, and staff as a pledge of payment for her sexual services. Judah understands her to be referring to the staff that he is carrying in his hand and he willingly leaves it along with the other articles in her care. An astute reader might note, however, that the Hebrew word for staff also means "tribe" and might muse over the fact that Tamar, in the course of the story, indeed controls the future of Judah's tribe. The phallic shape of the staff also allows sexual connotations to play in an already sexually loaded story. Tamar is essentially bargaining for a phallus that will bring her children and security, and with Judah's staff in her possession, she is able to emasculate him publicly when he attempts to have her burned for harlotry. (Fewell & Gunn, 1992:1025)

The ambiguity of different meanings in the same word or phrase is sometimes recognised in OT stories by the characters as well as the reader although the significance of the ambiguity is usually left to the reader to determine. An example of this is to be found in Ruth 2. When Ruth gleans in the field of Boaz he gives her preferential treatment and she returns to Naomi her mother-in-law with the resulting haul. When she sees the results of Ruth's efforts Naomi exclaims, "The Lord bless him." ... "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." The grammatical construction makes it unclear to the reader whether Naomi is referring to the kindness of the Lord or of Boaz. What is not lost on the attentive reader is that a major theological point which is made in the book of Ruth is that it is often difficult to distinguish between divine and human action. This textual ambiguity expressed by Naomi is one of the indicators of theological ambiguity.

Repetition is another device which influences meaning in OT narrative. In English prose repetition is frowned upon. My English master at high school would mark an essay down if there was a significant repetition of key words and phrases. He strongly recommended the use of Roget's Thesaurus in order to find synonyms which would render our work more acceptable. OT narrative on the other hand enjoys repetition. The structuring of the story, the creation of atmosphere and suspense, and the emphasis of certain points can all be effected by the repetition of words, phrases, sentences or even sets of sentences.

3.1.2.7 Irony

Irony is the expression of meaning by using language of opposite or different meaning. An example is seen in the speech of Saul's daughter Michal to David after he returned from the parade which brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem (2Sam 6:20). "When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul, came out to meet him and said, 'How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would' ". She intended to convey that David had *not* distinguished himself.

Irony can also be defined as incongruity of knowledge, and it occurs in narrative when more levels of meaning are present than the characters involved can recognise. Some characters in the OT narratives think that they know what they are doing when in fact they may be doing something rather different. The workings of the world appear to them in a certain way when in fact they are different. Sometimes the discrepancy of knowledge in the story is such that some characters know more than others. In 2 Samuel 11 both David and Joab are aware of the irony of Uriah the Hittite carrying the letter which is in effect his warrant of execution. In this case the reader is also aware of the irony while in other cases it is the reader alone who is aware of it. When Uriah dies, David sends a message to Joab in which he says, "Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another." However to the reader the narrator says a short while later that the thing David had done displeased the Lord.

Irony as an element of narrative varies in the frequency in which it occurs in the OT. The dialogic narrative of Genesis – 2 Kings (see 3.1.2.2) is rich in irony while in the monologic narrative of Chronicles – Nehemiah it occurs less often. Its use becomes particularly significant when it is played out between narrator and reader. Fewell & Gunn (1992:1026) give an example of this from the closing chapters of the book of Judges. The narrator repeatedly uses the phrase, "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he thought fit" (17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25). This observation highlights the situation of chaotic self-interest which dominated this period. What is the reader to make of this repeated statement? Is it a recommendation that the introduction of a monarchy would be a cure of ills? To accept this would be to gloss over the episode of Abimelech in Judges chapter 9. He was an unprincipled and brutal man but had great personal force and he practically assumed the position of king, in the process murdering nearly all of his brothers in order to establish his position. In all probability the narrator in Judges was aware to some extent of the resulting history of the monarchy where kingship seems to be no barrier to the further exercise of a degrading self-interest.

The manner is ironical in which the reader is told in 1 & 2 Kings of David and

Solomon's rectitude in such positive terms that one is led to see in them some absolute standards of behaviour. One word, however, creeps into the statements which evaluate their kingly lives. "For David had done what was right ... and had not failed to keep any of the Lord's commands ... - *except* in the case of Uriah the Hittite." The word "except" has a most powerful effect on the way the reader understands the statement, especially if the affair of Uriah the Hittite is recognised to be the pivotal episode in David's life and the low point of his doing what was right in his own eyes. In 1 Kings 3:3 we are told that King Solomon loved the Lord, "walking in the statutes of his father David, *except* that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places." By the end of the account of Solomon we are obliged to consider whether that assessment is ironical. "He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. He followed Ashtoreth ... and Molech So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, ..." (1 Kings 11:3, 5, 6).

3.1.2.8 Reader's point of view.

As in the cases mentioned above irony is often produced in the setting up of a conflict of facts and values. Awareness of irony is then a matter of point of view. In fact playing with the reader's point of view is a characteristic of much of OT narrative, not just with regard to irony. A common way of effecting this play is through allusion to other stories, episodes or characters (Fewell & Gunn, 1992:1026).

Structurally speaking the book of Ruth has striking parallels with the Judah-Tamar story in Genesis 38. There is separation from family or homeland, a sojourning elsewhere, marriages to foreign women, deaths of two sons and spouse. As has been noted above in 3.1.2.5 Judah suspected Tamar the Canaanite widow of his two eldest sons of being the cause of their death. Without openly accusing her, however, he urges her to return to her homeland. Naomi's attitude towards her daughters-in-law is not openly declared by the narrator but she too urges them to return to their mothers' houses. The reader, sensitive to the analogy between the two stories, cannot help wondering whether Ruth has become to Naomi what Tamar was to

Judah, an albatross around her neck. In seeking to understand Naomi's motives, therefore, the reader is prompted to examine her words and actions with suspicion instead of merely taking them at face value. The narrator in the book of Ruth encourages this sensitivity by having the elders say to Boaz in the closing verses, "May your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah."

The reader of the book of Ruth should also be aware of the symbolic value of Moab in other OT stories enabling the reader's viewpoint to be aligned with that of the implied ancient Israelite readers. Moab has its origins in Lot's incestuous relationship with his daughter (Genesis 19) and in Numbers 25 the incident of Baal Peor is related in which the Moabites seduced Israel to indulge in sexual and idolatrous sin. The subject of Moab, therefore, is charged with connotations of racial and religious prejudice. The depiction of Naomi sending Ruth down to the threshing floor at night to lie with Boaz calls to mind not only the way Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Leah rather than Rachel (Genesis 29) but again the deception of Lot by his daughters and Judah by Tamar. The allusion of these stories encourages suspicion in the minds of the reader that entrapment is an important possibility in explaining the meaning of this puzzling episode.

Sometimes narrative clues can be deduced from a precise choice of words as well as from structure. The tragic story of Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11) centres on his arrival home after victory and his vow to sacrifice the first to come and meet him. He encounters his daughter who has gone out to meet him, "dancing to the sound of tambourines. She was an only child (*yehida*). Except for her he had no son or daughter" (v 34). Being an only child recalls to mind God's speech to Abraham in Genesis 22: "Take your son, your only son (*yahid*), Isaac Sacrifice him there ...". In 1 Samuel 14 a further incident is relevant. Saul threatens to sacrifice his son Jonathan in terms of an oath that he has made on behalf of his army. Jonathan's fellow soldiers rescue him in the name of the Lord and his life is spared. These parallels enhance the reader's perspective and enable some significant questions to be addressed. Why is it that the sons are spared and the daughter is killed? Is this

the priority of patriarchy? The angel reaches out and stays the hand that wields the knife against a blameless youth; the people stand between Saul and the innocent hero Jonathan and the half-crazed Saul, but no one is found to intervene on behalf of the innocent daughter – she stands alone apart from those who weep upon the mountains for her virginity. Another narrative analogy reinforces the point. In Exodus 15:20 Miriam and the women with her went out to meet Moses who had returned victorious from the Red sea, “with tambourines and dancing.” In 1 Samuel 18:6 when David and Saul returned from the rout of the Philistines and their champion Goliath, the women went out to meet them with songs of praise and “tambourines and dancing.” By contrast the daughter stands before her father isolated and abused. It is a vicious circle. Jephthah, the son who desires acceptance and security, is rejected by father and family and in turn destroys his own child. Human failure ensures that oppression accompanies Israel’s deliverance from oppression.

3.2 THE NEW TESTAMENT

In this chapter some NT examples of the main features of narrative patterns (see 2.5.3) will be provided. These features include closure, order, characters, plot and setting.

3.2.1 Closure

As was seen in 2.5.3.1 meaning in narrative is produced within delimited spaces. The limits are determined by the interpreter examining the parameters by which episodes are marked out. Mention has been made of the complication introduced by the divisions of book, chapter and verse.

An example of the confusion which is brought about because of these comparatively recent sub-divisions in our Bible can be found in the Nicodemus narrative in John ch3. A common assumption is that the narrative opens at Jn 3:1 with the words “Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of ...”. This assumption arises for the following reasons. (i) The chapter begins here. (ii) The character Nicodemus appears in 3:1 for the first time. (iii) There is a formulation

which suggests the beginning of a narrative: "Now there was a man ...". However there are such strong links between ch3:1 and ch2:23-25 that the conclusion should be drawn that the Nicodemus narrative commences not with the "now" of ch3:1 but rather with the "now" of 2:23. This being so, the "now" of 3:1 would relate to what is described in ch2:23-25. We are told that many believed in Jesus because of the *miraculous signs he was doing*, but he did not entrust himself to them because he knew what was in them. Now, Nicodemus approaches Jesus saying, "... we know that you ... come from God for no one could perform the *miraculous signs you are doing* if God were not with him." The scene has been set in 2:23-25 where we are informed that Jesus mistrusts those who believe in him merely on the basis of the miraculous signs, and now Nicodemus appears, stating that this is the very basis of the belief of himself and of his associates! The reader has been warned! Nicodemus is in danger. How will he manage to walk through this minefield? What will be the result of his conversation? The rhetoric in this narrative will be the means of telling all!

3.2.2 Order in the narrative

An example of a change in order (see 2.5.4) can be found in Matthew's Gospel. Readers are not told of the death of John the Baptist until Matt14:1 at which stage they are taken back in time and given the details of his execution.

3.2.3 Characters

Characters in the NT elicit our admiration or disgust and many different emotions in between.

The Gospel of Luke is well-known for the women characters which it portrays. RC Tannehill (1986:136) draws attention to the importance of passages which present female followers of Jesus who are led by him beyond normal restrictive social and familial roles. The story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42) contrasts Martha who represents the expected role of a woman serving dinner, with Mary who neglects this duty in order to listen to Jesus' word. Martha's complaint highlights the question of whether Mary was right in neglecting her duty and spoiling her filial relationship with

Martha. Jesus affirms that Mary has chosen rightly. The picture of Mary sitting at the Lord's feet amongst the (male) disciples and being taught by him is revolutionary in the culture represented by that group.

The characters Mary and Martha and the disciples together are encountered once again in John 12:1-8. The time-setting is described as being "six days before the (final) passover" and a time when Jesus lived under threat of imminent arrest (John 11:57). Martha was again serving while Mary, it seems, was again aspiring to the role of disciple. Her loving rite of the anointing of Jesus with expensive perfume was harshly criticised, this time by a disciple, Judas. Jesus again comes to Mary's support, commending her that what she had done was significant in relation to God's plan for his Son.

3.2.4 Plot

Certain theories relating to plot were outlined in 2.5.3.4. Marguerat & Bourquin draw attention to the numerous combinations which can be identified in the composition of plots. They uphold the evangelist Mark as a champion of the "Markan sandwich".

The story of the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5) begins with the father coming to Jesus and asking for the master to come and lay hands on her (5:21-23). Jesus complies with the request and goes with him, followed by a large crowd (v.24). The complication is brought about by someone from Jairus' house saying, "Your daughter is dead, why trouble the master further?" (v.35).

In the mean time another episode has taken place, with its own plot (v.25-34): a woman who has been afflicted with a loss of blood for twelve years has come up to Jesus on the way, touched him and has been cured, But from v.35 on the plot of the first narrative resumes with the arrival of the people from Jairus' house; it continues with the arrival of the group at the home ... the revival of the girl ... and Jesus' command to keep silent about this miracle.

The interlocking of the two stories, the one inserted into the other, makes them resonate. There is no lack of parallels. Both stories are about a woman. In both cases the figure twelve is mentioned: it is the duration of the woman's sickness and the age of the little girl. On both sides the suffering is dramatized: the gravity of the haemorrhage is emphasized and the death of the girl is announced. On both sides there is a prominent dualism between public and private, but in a reverse order: The woman has to move from a secret to a public confession (vv.30-33), while with Jairus Jesus passes from public to private (vv.40-43). (1999, 53-54)

The significance and purpose of the insertion of one plot into another in the above example is that there is a transfer of information from one to the other. In v36 Jesus says to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe." The call not to be afraid finds its strength in the event of the healing miracle just portrayed (the plot-within-a-plot) and the type of faith which Jairus must exercise is that faith which is possessed by the woman in that event.

3.2.5 Setting

The influence of setting on the narrative was described in 2.5.3.5.

Were it not for the setting in which the baby Jesus is encountered lying in a manger as there was no room for them in the inn, the humble nature of the birth of the messiah-king would not be grasped.

A further example of the significance of a setting can be seen in Mark 3:21, 31-35. Jesus and his (newly-chosen) disciples were in a house (probably in Capernaum) addressing a large crowd. They did not even have time to eat a meal. The family of Jesus assumed on the basis of these carryings-on that Jesus was out of his mind and they decided to come and take charge of him. When they arrived (presumably from Nazareth) they remained in the street and sent inside for Jesus. A crowd of people was sitting around him when the message came that his family was outside looking for him. He responded to this information by pointing to "those seated in a circle around him" and saying that those who were bent on doing the will of God constituted Christ's true family, his "brother and sister and mother". In this narrative the setting is the house, with the earthly or social family of Jesus standing in the street outside. The spiritual family of Jesus is inside the house, sitting in an unbroken circle around the master. This setting contributes much to the meaning of the words of Jesus concerning those who belong to him in both the "physical" and "spiritual" senses.

When Jesus taught the crowd from a boat (Mk 4:1) the setting again has a symbolic

effect on the narrative. The shoreline forms a spatial boundary between land and sea. The land symbolises mankind while the sea in Mark's Gospel is where God manifests divine power. The listeners are on the land and Jesus is actually on the sea mediating in a sense between land and sea. As ES Malbon states, spatial location underlines the differences between characters. The Greek of Mark 4:1 is dramatic and says literally, "He got in a boat and sat on the sea" (2000:22). This image has the potential to convey to the listeners Christ's mediatorial function at levels in the story other than spatial. The narrative preacher could even venture to make the comparison between the wooden boat which carried the Lord that day and the wooden cross which carried him as he was lifted in mediation between heaven and earth.

3.2.6 The Luke-Acts narrative.

Luke-Acts is the longest most complex narrative in the NT and was written by an author of literary skill and rich imagination (Tannehill, 1986:1). The Gospel of Luke consists wholly of narrative except for features such as the songs of chapter one, the genealogy of chapter three and some discourses of Jesus. Even the discourses are not without narrative. Jesus' sermon at the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:14-30) has a high narrative content and his "sermon on the plain" (Luke 6:20-49) is applied to his hearers by means of the illustrations of a good or bad tree bearing fruit, the heart storing up good or bad things and the two men who built their houses on very different foundations.

The book of Acts has an even higher narrative content than its companion volume Luke. It is noteworthy that the sermons which Acts contains are firmly anchored in the narrative of history as well as what had recently taken place within the experience of some of the characters. An example of this is the sermon which Stephen preached before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:2-53). In our Bibles this consists of fifty verses of narrative followed by three verses of application. This sermon is a testimony to the power of narrative to draw out its hearers to see their guilt in the face of a powerful and gracious God. It could be speculated that this sermon had a profound effect on

the great apostle Paul, who was part of the group which did Stephen to death (Acts 7:58, 8:1), and ultimately led to his conversion on the Damascus road. Perhaps Paul identified with the character Moses who was "educated in all ... wisdom ... and was powerful in speech and action" (Acts 7:22) until, that is, the story had Moses prophesying concerning the advent of this Jesus. It is noteworthy that Stephen in a sense is placed in juxtaposition to Paul. "Godly men buried Stephen But Saul began to destroy the church." (Acts 8:2f). When Paul was arrested by the Lord on the Damascus road he said to Paul, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads." (Acts 26:14). It is possible that Stephen's sermon had acted like goads to Paul while all the time he was being driven on to his destiny.

3.3 CONCLUSION

The narrative portions of both the OT and the NT and their various characteristics can be held up by the homiletics lecturers at our institutions as very meaningful examples of the manner in which narrative can be handled but especially of the abundant narrative material to be found in our Bibles which can form the basis of our message of salvation in Christ.

CHAPTER 4 A SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR PREACHING

4.1 THE PRIMACY OF PREACHING

4.1.1 Defining preaching.

It is a basic premise of all who are Christian and worthy of the title, that God is, and that God desires to communicate with humankind. The Incarnation is evidence of this in human form and in human terms (Pieterse, 1987:21). The evangelical position concerning the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures also points to God's willingness to reveal himself, and true preaching is the communicating to mankind of this revelation of God.

But what exactly is preaching, and how do we define a sermon? The way in which this question is answered will have a bearing on deciding exactly what should go into preparing to be a preacher of sermons. Some years ago I happened to be visiting a certain city, and my wife and I attended Sunday morning service in a church near to where we were staying. The auditorium was comfortably full with 250 - 300 worshippers and we waited expectantly for the time when the sermon would be preached, participating willingly in the preliminary acts of worship. It was our first visit to this church and the hymns and Scripture readings gave no clue as to what the preacher's theme might be. Would he indeed have a theme? If he did, would his theme come from the Bible? Would he announce a text or a passage of Scripture to be expounded? As far as we knew the particular Sunday was not of major significance on the Christian calendar although it was the weekend on which the country celebrated Heritage Day. Would the preacher use the occasion on which to preach on the faithfulness of God and the faith of our fathers? As it happened we were deeply disappointed when the venerable gentleman ascended into the pulpit and commenced to speak to the congregation. "My sermon this morning consists of a letter which I would like to read to you - a letter which was written by a father to his son before the father went into battle." I seemed to remember that this "letter" was a popular theme for preachers at that particular time. The body of the "sermon"

consisted, I felt, of no more than a series of sentimental platitudes which bore only a weak relationship to social or family life, no explicit or implicit relationship to the Scriptures that we could discern, and there was no valid conclusion and almost no practical application of any truth to the lives of the listeners. I maintain that this was not preaching, and what we heard was not a sermon.

4.1.1.1 The sermon - a transaction.

D Martyn Lloyd-Jones shows his bias in favour of the convention that preachers should be exclusively male when he says (1971:53):

Any true definition of preaching must say that that man is there to deliver the message of God, a message of God to those people. If you prefer the language of Paul, he is 'an ambassador for Christ'. ... He has been sent, he is a commissioned person, and he is standing there as the mouthpiece of God and of Christ to address these people. ... Preaching should make such a difference to the man who is listening that he should never be the same again. Preaching ... is a transaction between the preacher and the listener.

In 1Peter 4:11 the apostle says, "If anyone speaks he should do it as one speaking the very words of God." Article 1 of the Second Helvetic Confession (1566) states, "The preaching of the Word of God *is* the Word of God." Now I found it impossible to apply this statement to the type of "preaching" which we experienced in the visit mentioned above so I would find it necessary to qualify the statement recorded by the Reformers in the Helvetic Confession. Pieterse (1987:9) in fact advises a revision of this statement by saying, "The Word of God can be heard in preaching insofar as the message of Scripture is proclaimed. To the extent that the text functions and speaks in the sermon, the Word of God can be heard in it."

4.1.1.2 The Mode or Style of the sermon.

Preachers adopt a certain mode or style of preaching which has a general influence on their sermon preparation and delivery.

Pieterse (1987:39) embarked on a research project between February 1983 and March 1984 in South Africa in which, amongst other data, he collected and examined

105 recorded sermons of fifteen selected ministers who were of the reformed tradition. The hypothesis which he had formulated before commencing the research was confirmed to a large extent at the end of it. This was that there are three main types of preacher in this and presumably other traditions (Pieterse, 1987:40).

A. Scripturally oriented preachers, who dwell at great length on the text, using its language and its conceptual world and barely touching on the context of the congregation.

B. Situationally oriented preachers, whose thought and sermons are so much attuned to their own context that the message of the text as such hardly enters into the picture.

C. Topical (relevant) preachers, who manage to effect a hermeneutic marriage between the text and their own context, so that the message of that text is disclosed in the situation, the language and the conceptual world of the congregation.

4.1.1.3 The Thrust of the sermon

For all of the different types of sermon which may be preached the main point or thrust of the Biblical passage is of great importance. This is emphasised by a number of writers - (Adams, 1982:27-33), (Chapman, 1999:91), (Lloyd-Jones, 1971:203-205), (Robinson, 1980:31-44), (Stott, 1982:224-226). These scholars do not in fact have narrative preaching uppermost in their minds in writing these passages but what they say is particularly relevant to that genre.

Adams (1982:27) describes as disastrous the recurring failure of preachers to determine what he calls the *telos* of the chosen passage of Scripture. The Holy Spirit, he says, included the particular passage in the Bible for a purpose and the preacher has failed unless he has come to understand what that purpose was. Everything about the sermon - the organisation of the material, the style of language and even the body language and delivery of the preacher - should contribute to furthering the Holy Spirit's intention in the passage, while remaining subservient to it.

Robinson (1980:31) asks the question, "What's the big idea?" and he says that whereas it is felt by some that members of congregations complain most often that sermons contain too many ideas, the real problem with the sermons which they hear is not an abundance of ideas but that the ideas are actually unrelated to each other. In expository sermons particularly the danger is that the preacher presents scattered

comments based on the passage under consideration and fails to show how the various thoughts fit into a main idea. He goes on to powerfully argue concerning the Scriptural mandate for the "single idea" approach (1980:36-37). The sermons of the Old Testament prophets are called "the burden of the Lord" and were mainly single-idea talks complete and entire, delivered for one purpose only. In the New Testament the historian Luke presents extracts of sermons which appear as single-idea talks directed towards a particular audience for a particular purpose. Translated into the preacher's experience as he sits at his desk preparing his sermon, this means that his idea should be capable of being expressed in one clear unambiguous simple sentence (1980:35,99). That sentence should be winsome and compelling without being sensational. It should sparkle, be easily remembered and in fact be well worth remembering.

Lloyd-Jones (1971:205) requires that once the main thrust has been determined and understood it must be stated to the audience in its own context and situation and then shown to be an external principle which has to be applied to the situation of the hearers. It must also be shown that this main principle is not an isolated idea by buttressing it from other Scriptural passages. The mind must be further applied in checking on the validity of this thrust against commentaries, Bible dictionaries and other reference works. This suggestion does not necessarily fly in the face of the principle enunciated in 2.2.2 (closing paragraphs) that in a literary examination of a passage the results of historical criticism should be laid on one side in favour of concentrating on the literary aspects. What Lloyd-Jones has in mind is that the preacher should compare his own conclusions with those of others concerning the theological meaning of the passage under consideration.

Stott (1982:225) states that the main difference between the lecture and the sermon is that the lecture may have many ideas and thoughts but the sermon has only one major message. He further warns against the danger of the preacher's own meaning being twisted into what God is actually saying. The preacher in his preparation should jot down all his random thoughts concerning the dominant idea of the passage and

then ruthlessly discard any which do not accord exactly with this dominant theme and which would weaken the final effect which he purposes to achieve.

Chapman (1999:152-153) warns against overloading the sermon with more information than is necessary to support the point that is being made.

4.1.2 The Preacher.

We will adopt the stance of the idealist and assume that all preachers worthy of the name fall into category C above in Pieterse's types of preacher even though in his actual study (Pieterse, 1987:55) only 39% of the 105 sermons examined were actually adjudged to have conformed to this ideal. (12,4% of the sermons could not be fitted into any of the three categories). Should we, however, be cautious when looking at some of Pieterse's findings? In systematising his results he discovered the remarkable fact that in his sample of preachers those with Bachelor's and Doctoral degrees were predominantly topically oriented (category C) while those with Master's degrees tended markedly towards a scriptural (category A) orientation. No doubt many Masters students would claim that further research should be called for before admitting these findings as conclusive evidence concerning the significance of the Master's degree in relation to homiletics!

The aims of this present dissertation do not require the examination of the ideal preacher in great detail – his or her educational and academic qualifications, calling to a pulpit ministry, the development of general gifts and techniques, general application to on-going theological study and reading, etc., all of which form an essential background to preachers who prepare week by week to enter into the transaction of preaching with their listeners. It would be sufficient to note that the preacher's toolbox (perhaps a better word than "arsenal") should include the narrative sermon and the student preacher should attend to adequate preparation for the use of that tool.

4.1.2.1 The preacher's preparation

In preparing to preach there are certain processes which preachers have found helpful in all types of preaching, including narrative preaching. The following processes, therefore, which apply to all sermons worthy of the name, regardless of their type, are strongly recommended, even though not all of these processes may fall into the category of the Monday to Saturday preparation for the Sunday sermon.

4.1.2.1.1 The preacher's knowledge of the audience

As has been noted in 1.2.2.3.1 times have changed since the days when the pulpit was held in awe by the pew and when an argument could easily be settled by words such as, "*Die dominee het so gesê.*" (The minister said it). Lloyd-Jones (1971:122) relates the story of a woman of humble circumstances coming out of a church service at which a learned Scottish professor had been the preacher. When asked if she had enjoyed the sermon and whether she had been able to follow it she replied, "Far be it from me to presume to understand such a great man as that." This story is significant for two reasons. Not only is it indicative of an age when a lofty preacher was universally held in unquestioning awe by his lowly listeners, but the learned professor is also symbolic of preachers who are out of touch with the men, women and young people who attend the churches at which they preach.

Pieterse (1987:7) says that a New Testament word used to describe sermons is *ομιλία* (*homilia*) which literally means dialogue or conversation and indicates the dual involvement of pulpit and pew in the transaction of preaching. The Scottish professor mentioned above would have benefited from the advice given emphatically to a very young Lloyd-Jones (1971:257) by a senior minister, that simplicity is an essential feature in preaching as only one in twelve members of any given audience is really intelligent and that he should model his sermon preparation on that incontrovertible truth. Pieterse (1987:105) advocates some mechanism whereby the preacher can meet with members of his congregation either at a formal weekly meeting or regular informal get-togethers with the express purpose of ascertaining both whether the needs of the congregation are being understood by the preacher and whether the

preaching is being understood by the listeners. This arrangement could be built in to the minister's weekly preparation regardless of the type of sermon which has been prepared. This feature could be suggested to students either during the homiletics lectures or as part of the subject Pastoral Theology.

4.1.2.1.2 Diligence in Preparation.

Stott (1982:212) says, "The great preachers who have influenced their generation have all borne witness to the need for conscientious preparation." Not only will the preacher strive to know his audience but he will also make every effort to know his sermon. The preacher who hides his laziness behind the Scriptural quotation, "... do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given you in that hour." (Matt 10:19) is guilty of a poor understanding of the text in which our Lord actually addresses this encouragement to those who, probably at short notice, are persecuted and imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel and who are expected to defend their actions and way of life. Lloyd-Jones (1971:223), however, says that although diligence in preparation is essential, care must be taken not to over-prepare. Some make the mistake of trying to create "art for art's sake" and in their sermons the Word of God is obscured by nicety of language, cleverness of alliteration in the headings, or, in the case of the preacher of narrative sermons, the presentation of a story with superior attention to details of plot, characterisation, setting, etc., but which has the effect of titillating rather than effecting change. These things must not be exhibited to draw admiration for their own sakes and the form of the sermon must never be allowed to override the substance of what is spoken..

Sincerity is essential in influencing others to change their lives and thinking, and as the diligent preacher prepares he will be trying to assimilate the truth he would proclaim, into his own life and thought. Pieterse (1987:93) says that the preacher must not hesitate to disclose himself to his congregation, his humanity, inner conflict and his experience of faith as a fellow-believer. Humour can also be a useful communicative tool especially, as Chapman says (1999:113), when the speaker can get the audience to laugh at both the speaker and themselves.

4.1.2.1.3 Procedure in preparation

Mathewson sets out ten stages of sermon preparation (2002:26).

- Select the passage
- Study the passage
- Discover the exegetical idea
- Analyse the exegetical idea
- Formulate the homiletical idea
- Determine the sermon's purpose
- Decide how to accomplish this purpose
- Outline the sermon
- Fill in the sermon outline
- Prepare the introduction and conclusion

4.1.2.1.4 Prayer

This subject is not placed last in this section by reason of being least important in the process of general preparation but because it is dealt with least in books about homiletics. The reason for this may be that prayer is not regarded as an intellectual exercise, but it most emphatically is! It may be felt that prayer is worthy of specialised treatment in books of its own, and perhaps it is. What is surprising, however, is that we are told that a preacher stands between heaven and earth with a message from God to man and yet no emphasis is placed on the preparation of his spirit in the presence of God before he appears in the presence of men. He needs to spend time in prayer. He prepares in penitence and with confession because he is not worthy to be a representative of the great and awesome God. One of his sins may be that of pride. He sees at times an expression on the faces of his listeners that tells him that the Word has found its mark. There are occasions while in the pulpit that he feels himself to be in heaven and he needs to bow low before God and confess that he is "of the earth, earthy" (1Corinthians 15:47 AV). As he wrestles with the narrative to come to grips with its meaning he may turn his struggles into prayers that the Holy Spirit, the author of the Word, may help him in his desire to understand and communicate the truth. Finally, like the Apostle Paul he will confess his fear "...lest

after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified." (1Corinthians 9:27)

4.2 TYPES OF SERMONS

Other than the narrative type, sermons take on a number of different forms which have developed since New Testament times. One or other of the forms has perhaps been more popular than others at different times and in different places. For each preaching opportunity a particular form of sermon is usually chosen according to a variety of considerations. The Scriptural passage chosen may dictate the type of sermon to be prepared; the preacher may have a preference for a particular form according to his personal gifts or style; according to the type of congregation and their needs, or whether there is at hand a special occasion or period. All these factors may exert an influence on the choice of what type of sermon to prepare.

Pieterse (1987:134-190) identifies the following sermon forms: the text-thematic (in his research sample of sermons, 99% were found to be of this type), the homily, the narrative sermon form and the poetic form. I will adopt this framework although I will divide the text-thematic form into "expository", "textual" and "thematic" sermons and I would add a further type, namely the "evangelistic" sermon which deserves to be looked at as a separate sermon form. The four types of sermons distinguished by CJA Vos (1999:122) are homily, narrative, text thematic and thematic but he stresses that there is no such thing as a pure sermon form and that most sermons are mixtures of the various forms. However as we have already adopted an idealistic stance in considering our typical preacher, so now we will also shape up in the same idealistic way with regard to sermon form and we will determine that each type of sermon will be prepared in its purest form.

Pieterse (1987:141) is of the opinion that the main consideration when choosing the form of sermon to be prepared is the Scriptural text which has been chosen. He presses for the breaking of the monotony of moulding every text into the one favourite sermon form. Does the text naturally lend itself to narrative, argumentation, dialogue or poetry? Then that is the sermon form which should be used. Another factor which

influences choice is the nature of the congregation. A local church placed almost within the precincts of an advanced tertiary educational institution will have a very different congregation in comparison with that of either a suburban church located close to a sub-economic housing scheme, or a rural or township church. Whether it is any of the above factors or the personality of the preacher which leads to the type of sermon to be chosen, it is the message of the text which is supreme and how best to convey it to the listeners.

Bearing in mind the description of the above general processes which apply to most if not all of the common forms of sermon which have been used, there are certain factors which apply particularly to the preparation of each individual sermon type. These will now be examined.

4.2.1 Evangelistic Sermon

J. Chapman, for many years the head of the Department of Evangelism in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, Australia rightly says (1999:49) that the evangelistic sermon can be recognised by the following three features: (a) its content is a summary of the whole Bible message of Jesus as the Saving Messiah; (b) it is aimed specifically and solely at unbelievers and therefore, (c) its style is controlled by the target audience so that there is an absence of jargon ("evangelese") & technical terms. There is a sense in which all preaching should, in terms of Chapman's definition be evangelistic, given the premise that preaching in the Christian and Biblical context should always point people to Christ. However an evangelistic sermon differs from most other types in that its range is broad while its aim is specific. In the case of a thematic or an expository sermon the range is restricted to the theme or what the particular passage is dealing with. The response which is called for is normally in line with the one main thrust of the sermon. However in the evangelistic sermon although the target may be approached by way of a diversity of Scriptural situations such as the rich fool of Luke 12, the woman who anointed Jesus' feet of Luke 7, or the words "I am come that they might have life" in John 4, the aim is restricted to calling men, women and young people to repent of their sins, put their

trust in Christ as Saviour and resolve to follow him as their Lord.

In preparing an evangelistic sermon one would naturally choose Scripture passages which lend themselves to capturing the “nutshell” that Jesus is the Saving Lord (Chapman, 1999:81-82) without stretching the meaning or introducing concepts which are not already in the passage. Certain passages stress different aspects of the Gospel message. Generally from the perspective of evangelistic talks the Gospels stress the person of Christ while the Epistles stress his saving work and in the Old Testament, Jesus is the “picture” behind all that is happening.

Gone are the days when one could be reasonably sure that most people had had some exposure to a Sunday School or at least a Scripture class at school and a problem which is peculiar to evangelistic sermons is how to draw the audience’s attention to the Biblical text as being the source of what we discover about Jesus. The speaker endeavours to say to the listener, “... look at the Bible with me and together we discover its meaning” (Chapman, 1999:95). The people who come to evangelistic talks, however, almost never bring their Bibles with them and would in any event find it difficult to locate the passage on which the speaker bases his talk. The Bible passages should therefore be printed and made available to the listeners in some way. They could be distributed on a leaflet before the talk, printed on the inside of a menu or program or even printed on place mats at a breakfast or dinner (Chapman. 1999:95).

The centrality of the Scriptures in evangelistic sermons is also emphasised by Lloyd-Jones (1971:65) who rejects the argument advanced by those who say that evangelistic sermons should be “non-theological” and that the preacher should first bring men and women to Christ and only thereafter should they be taught the truths about God. If we do this, Lloyd-Jones says, we are merely calling for people to make a decision and are not providing a basis for that decision. If we make no mention of the doctrine of God how do they know to whom they must come? If we do not tell them of man and sin, why should they come? If they do not hear of the wrath of God will

there be any concern and urgency in their coming?

The time-length of the sermon is especially important when it is evangelistic. Chapman (1999:163) has noted that public speakers in his part of the world (Australia) have over the years cut down drastically on the length of time they have been prepared to take in order to get their point across. Political speeches, even important policy speeches at the launching of campaigns, and other forms of public speaking in most parts of the world are far shorter these days than they ever were and this is largely because of the influence of the communication media. This is the era of the eighty second radio "spot", the fifteen second TV commercial and the six-hour cricket match instead of the five-day boring draw (Taylor, 1998:95). Preachers whose target audience has been conditioned by the entertainment media have to "adapt or die." Chapman (1999:163) says that most people outside the church will not have heard anyone speak for longer than five minutes at a time and he himself even when speaking to regular church congregations whose attention spans would be considered longer than those of the general population, normally does not speak for longer than twenty minutes. He says that if someone says to you, "I could have listened to you speak for another half-hour", then you know that you finished at the right time!

4.2.2 The Homily

The word from which "homily" is derived means dialogue or conversation, and the sermon form of this name can hardly be termed an address (Pieterse, 1987:140) but rather, being very simple in form, it is conversational in character and promotes dialogue amongst the listeners and between preacher and congregation. While not being the most popular form of preaching today, this was the form most widely used in early Christian preaching and in the sermons recorded in the Scriptures. While Peter was preaching on the day of Pentecost a dialogue was being created. Peter accuses his hearers of causing Jesus to be put to death. They respond during the sermon by interrupting Peter and saying, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter continues the dialogue and answers their question.

One of the leading men in a congregation known to me many years ago said fairly light-heartedly, "There should be a flag system in the church. If the preacher says anything which you don't understand (or with which you may disagree) you should be able to wave a flag to gain his attention and ask him to clarify the point he had been making." At a different time and in a different congregation an attempt was once made by a preacher to introduce into the morning service a conversational type of sermon which aimed to elicit a congregational response and dialogue. The reasons for introducing this innovation would have been to give due emphasis to the principles that the preacher's pulpit should not be situated "two metres above contradiction" and that the congregation is not merely a passive receptor of truth. The attempt was not successful, however, as too few in the congregation were adaptable enough to accept this "new" Sunday sermon situation. The attitude that "change is tantamount to heresy" was unfortunately in that instance too difficult to circumvent.

Is there a place today for a sermon which emphasises and encourages audience participation? My reply is - decidedly! All preaching should call for a response of some kind but it is the nature of that response which we now consider. Taylor (1998:95) describes people today as living in a "picture-driven world." They are sometimes bored and impatient with the point-to-point sermon structure, he says, and require action, excitement, human interest and constant variety. It is at this point that narrative preaching comes in to assist this type of listener. As was seen in 1.2.1 Taylor advocates what he calls "inductive preaching" which will keep the people listening to what the preacher is saying, the goal being to keep the attention of the audience throughout the talk and in so doing involve the listeners in taking part in the thinking process of the sermon. Taylor (1998:96) does not seek to abandon the deductive approach of the sermon, communicating doctrine, God's grace, exegesis, exposition, Biblical principles and logical reason, in favour of adopting only the inductive approach which majors on human needs, search, communication, relationships, weakness, life's experiences and common sense. He says that an overall view of what is needed is not an "either-or" but a "both-and" approach.

Returning to the three categories of preacher identified by Pieterse (see 4.1.1.2) his category C (“topical” or “relevant” preachers) would seem to represent those who attempt to combine both inductive and deductive preaching methods.

4.2.3 Text-Thematic Sermon.

4.2.3.1 Textual Sermon.

Some preachers, especially in the early part of the last century, have been strong advocates of what was known as the textual sermon although the term seems latterly to have gained a slightly different meaning. Before the advent of modern translations of the scriptures the Authorised or King James Version held sway as virtually the only Bible available. A feature of the KJV is that each verse (the verses being divisions created arbitrarily at a historical time subsequent to the formation of the biblical books) is numbered and indented as if it is a separate paragraph denoting a self-contained thought, almost independent of the rest of the passage. A modern example of this feature is the daily newspaper where almost invariably the columns comprise one-sentence paragraphs. The newspaper editor justifies this layout on the grounds that the readers require news-items to be presented in easily-digested single-thought paragraphs and that this arrangement suits the given column-width. The translators of the NIV and similar versions have done us the service of reminding us that longer divisions are more appropriate in coming to grips with the meaning of the passages. Most serious advocates of the study of the Scriptures as pericopes rather than as short disjointed bites, frown on the practice of having in one's home a “promise box” which consists of a small receptacle containing scores of “texts” written on small pieces of paper which were then rolled into tubes and inserted into the box in honeycomb formation. A pair of tweezers was required (often actually provided with the box) by means of which a single paper was withdrawn at random, opened up and the promise of the day was read for the user's encouragement, edification or delight. In Sunday-school, children were rewarded for their good behaviour by being given at the close of their lesson small paper-card “texts” containing a picture of an unrelated object or scene and some Scripture verse very often difficult for a child to understand

such as, “The love of Christ constraineth”. At sermon time in the Sunday service the preacher would “announce his text” which usually consisted of a single verse of Scripture which he then proceeded to expound, punctuating his sermon at regular intervals with the sonorous recitation of his chosen text.

Perhaps this is an unkind caricature of the past emphasis on the “text”. CH Spurgeon has been called the Prince of Preachers and he knew virtually no other sermon form than to take a single verse of Scripture and expound it in relation to its Biblical context and apply it to his hearers (Lloyd-Jones, 1971:189). Spurgeon forbade his students to enter their pulpits to preach unless in the process of their diligence and prayer God had specifically revealed to them what text He would have them share with their congregations on the next Lord’s Day. The process which is followed in preparing this type of sermon is similar to that for the Expository Sermon dealt with below.

4.2.3.2 Expository Sermon.

“Expository preaching is the communication of a Biblical concept, derived from, and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher...” (Robinson, 1980:20,33). For Haddon Robinson preaching reaches its highest form in the expository sermon, and the “literary study” which he says the preacher will conduct alongside the “historical” and “grammatical” is merely one element in the preparation of this type of sermon. Robinson is acutely aware, however, of the need for the accurate, effective, focussed handling of the narrative portions of scripture as is shown in his foreword to SD Mathewson’s book on preaching OT narrative where he says (Mathewson, 2002:12), “In recent years, many literary critics, both Christian and Jewish, have also read the stories again for the first time (!). Instead of regarding the narratives as cadavers to be dissected and ‘demythologised,’ they began to approach them for what they were – sophisticated literature of great significance and splendid power.” Robinson goes on to point out that narrative is the dominant genre of the OT and that the narrators were not only “corking good storytellers” but brilliant theologians who taught their readers about

God through stories.

To many in the reformed evangelical tradition expository preaching as traditionally understood is the purest, most sublime form in which the word of God is communicated to others. In this form, a particular bible passage governs the sermon (Robinson, 1980:20). Nothing else will succeed in exerting its authority over the portion under consideration, not any external theme or subject, not the preacher's theological predilections, not his congregation's foibles nor his training nor even the treasured pronouncements of his most respected teachers. If the textual passage conflicts with his most passionately held beliefs then it is not the Bible which will have to change.

The expositor takes up the passage of Scripture and in terms of 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 applies all due diligence, wrestling with it until the *telos* appears. Setting aside for a while introduction and conclusion, attention will be paid to forming the outline, gathering supporting Scriptures, illustrations, anecdotes, and above all the matter of what needs to be said in order to communicate the main thrust of God's Word to the particular audience who will gather to listen. The preacher will have in mind the greatness and glory of God as it appears in the passage, the beauty and honour of the Son and the strength, comfort and wisdom of the Spirit. He or she will also have in mind the needs, fears, weaknesses, sins, strengths and aspirations of the congregation as these needs are particularly relevant to the passage. Attention is then given to the introduction and conclusion. When the material has been gathered, the superfluous discarded and the accuracy of what remains has been confirmed, then at last the preacher will choose the actual words to be used. These are important building blocks (Pieterse, 1987:147). There are weak and strong words and must be chosen with care. The nouns and verbs must be as concrete and commonplace as possible. The adverbs and adjectives are there merely to ornament, clarify and describe and must be used sparingly. The sermon may be written out word for word or merely in summary. When preparation is complete the sermon is often practised in private before delivered in public. For many preachers the time taken to prepare is not a matter of a couple of hours but often in all of the above stages the

material is mulled over for some days before it takes shape.

What Robinson expresses with passion about preparing the expository sermon is eminently suitable to be applied to the preparation of narrative sermons, the main difference being that the narrative preacher lays aside what Robinson calls the “historical” aspects and concentrates on the “literary”. In fact Mathewson regards narrative preaching as being in a real sense expository preaching. His loose definition of expository preaching is, “... preaching that exposes the meaning of a text of Scripture and applies that meaning to the lives of the hearers.” This, he says, is exactly what narrative preachers should aim to do (2002:21).

4.2.3.3 Thematic Sermon.

In this form the preacher chooses a Biblical theme and then collects data from far and wide in the Scriptures. A wide variety of themes is available to be chosen such as forgiveness of sins, poverty and wealth in society and the disciplining of children. Using a topical concordance if necessary or other tools such as the Thompson’s Chain Reference Bible the data is collected. In the case of the thematic sermon the *telos* constitutes the theme, but apart from this the preparation methods of the expository sermon apply equally well to the thematic sermon.

4.2.4 Narrative Sermon.

This type of sermon has been extensively examined in 1.2.2.1 and it remains in this section to address the methods of preparation, how they compare with those of other sermon types and to draw attention to a model which may be of use to the narrative preacher.

Preparing to preach this form of sermon has features in common with other forms. The passage will be examined for its main thrust but instead of a phrase-by-phrase exposition the passage is narrated rather than expounded (Pieterse, 1987:171). The introduction and conclusion are just as important as for other types, although in the conclusion the preacher must be aware of the possibility of spoiling the effect. The narrative itself should carry the application and conclusion. Metaphors, symbols and

images will all be used to heighten the effect of the story.

4.2.4.1 Ellingsen's model

In Appendix B a twelve-step method of biblical narrative sermon preparation by M Ellingsen (1990:70-72) is provided (see also 2.2.2.1). This model would be of interest both to preachers in whose theological training historical-critical methods of exegesis have been prominent as well as those to whom, like Mathewson (2.2.2.1), those methods are of lesser importance. As an aid to understanding the superiority of the narrative approach for certain purposes, Ellingsen's model is of great importance and for this reason it is provided as an appendix and is commented on below. As it stands, however, I do not regard it as entirely suitable to form the model for teaching narrative preaching in the five institutions with which we have to do. I provide a model of my own in 8.1.

While in this model Ellingsen "endorses the priority of the techniques of literary analysis" (1990:70), he maintains that the tools of historical criticism must not be discarded as they will perform a significant ancillary function. He warns the preacher, however, against regarding historical-critical methods as constituting a purely objective, scientific methodology. It is of crucial importance for Ellingsen that ultimate authority does not lie in the hands of the critic but in the *text as canonically given* (*ibid*). I heartily agree with this expression of principle insofar as he is referring primarily to the canon in the transcendental sense – that Scripture is God-breathed – and not merely in the historical sense as some historical-critical scholars do when they speak, for example, of a variant textual reading as representing an ancient "pre-canonical" version. The implication is that the finalising of the canon represents merely a stage in the development of what we call "Scripture" when the religious authorities decided finally on determining the limits of what is inspired. The emphasis is placed on the human literary functions which were involved in these decisions and the resulting literary unifying features in the canon.

It would be useful to critically examine what Ellingsen presents in each of the twelve steps of his model. What follows below is such a critical examination point by point

of his model which I have provided in Appendix B.

1. Determine the text's boundaries.

Not only is attention paid to the element of closure (2.5.3.1) in order to do this but the boundaries of the text are determined in relation to the book in which it appears and to the canon as a whole. The type or genre of the passage is determined. Ellingsen says that he has put this step before step 2, the identification and translation of the most authentic manuscript, and by so doing has acted contrary to "most books on exegesis and sermon preparation" (1990:73). He wants to break the mould which produces preachers whose primary commitment is to the suppositions of the historical-critical method "unchecked by the literary analytic concerns and sensitivity to Scripture as a canonical text ...".

2. Establish the text.

Ellingsen decries the fact that there is an increasing ignorance of biblical languages amongst preachers (1990:75) and he regards it as very important that the preacher should not rely on contemporary translations of the Bible, too many of which in his view contain inaccuracies. He proceeds to give some examples of contemporary translations and where he feels they are inaccurate and misleading. From the reasons which he puts forward to substantiate his views it is apparent that for him an appeal to literary analysis is necessary even for determining which version of the English text is preferable in cases where translators differ (1990:75-76).

3. Identify grammatical features.

Form criticism is used, not so that the preacher can ascertain the biblical writers' sources and the historical factors which were in play when he wrote, but solely to facilitate understanding the text as canonically given.

It is at this point in the preparation of the narrative sermon that investigation of the text is made with reference to the various features of language (see 2.3).

4. Do comparative philology.

This term denotes the study of Scripture in relation to similar extra-biblical literary texts of the same period (Ellingsen, 1990:81-82). This exercise is done simply in order to arrive at a sense of the ordinary understandings of reality in biblical times. The idea is similar to that of examining the culture of the day in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of meaning in the text (see 2.2.2).

5. Compare parallel texts.

This is an extension of the previous step but confining the attention to biblical material. The historical-critical student might find redaction and source criticism of assistance here. The general idea is not to dilute the narrative or lessen its impact by introducing material from the parallel account. The purpose is to allow the themes, intentions, etc. of the passage to stand out in sharp relief when compared and contrasted with those in the parallel passage. Ellingsen gives the example of the synoptics' resurrection appearance accounts (1990:83). Comparison of the various gospel versions shows that Mark fails to provide such an account but that this causes the disciples' misunderstanding of the crucifixion event to stand out in sharp relief.

This principle may also be applied to certain words, phrases and terms in the parallel passages. The meaning of a word in the passage being studied might be enhanced when compared with its use in passages by other authors.

6. Investigate key words.

The warning given in 2.3.2.2 should be heeded. The isolated word is not the basic unit of meaning in a language and should not be examined on the dissecting table as if it were. A word only has meaning within its linguistic "field" (2.3.2.5).

In the previous step words were examined according to their use by other authors. In this step it is very important to examine how a word is used by the same author.

7. Consolidate findings.

Now that the exegetical work has been completed, the material is trimmed of all that

is extraneous and the subject-matter which remains is summarised. It is important that the prepared narrative sermon should not be burdened with exegetical baggage, technical terms, detailed background insights and Greek and Hebrew words. All this should be seen for what it is – mere scaffolding which is put out of sight when the building is complete. When the story is related the focus is solely on the text's content.

It is at this stage that attention is given to an analysis of the characters (2.5.3.3), plot (2.5.3.4) and setting (2.5.3.5). All these elements of the passage are examined in order to apply the biblical material to our contemporary situation, finding modern meanings in the text (Ellingsen, 1990:84-85).

8. Use systematic confessional material.

Another type of scaffolding which is in place while the building is in progress is the theological system subscribed to by the preacher. Perhaps "scaffolding" creates the wrong picture because it implies removal before the presentation. Systematic theology should rather be looked upon as the steel reinforcing embedded in the structure itself. It is invisible but gives the building its shape and stability.

Ellingsen, himself an adherent of the Reformed, Lutheran tradition, gives cogent reasons why preachers should analyse their exegetical summary in relation to certain core theological truths to which they adhere (1990:85-86). Firstly, it assists them in ordering their material and in seeing things in a passage that they may not otherwise see. Secondly, it helps preachers to avoid improper, even heterodox interpretations. Their hearers, who presumably also by and large are of the same persuasion, will not be subject to confusion and undue distress. It is not to say that every interpretation in conflict with the preacher's denominational heritage is incorrect. There may be occasions when it will be necessary to differ implicitly from one's own confessional tradition. Ellingsen cites the situation where there is an apparent conflict between Reformation teaching on justification by faith and James 2:17 ("... faith by itself, if not accompanied by action, is dead."). Thirdly, it provides a framework by which preachers can assess the overall impact of their efforts and what they seek to

accomplish in their ministry "... insofar as a confessional position is understood as a summary of Scripture" (*ibid*). For this reason Ellingsen affirms that faithfulness to his own tradition entails that his preaching should be more about justification than about characteristic themes of the letter of James.

9. Apply to the contemporary situation.

Ellingsen, referring to Luther, states that a biblical pericope is not "the Word of God" for us when its literary context has no commonalities with our contemporary situation. This is the basis of a very important decision which the preacher has to make – is this passage the Word of God for the hearers of this sermon? If there is no ease of application then consideration must be given to choosing another portion on which to preach (1990:87-88). Ellingsen makes a very thought-provoking statement that the working supposition concerning God's Word just expressed suggests a framework for dealing with what are for many of us problematical texts. A biblical narrative approach to a subject such as slavery reveals to Ellingsen that a careful study of the literary context represented by such passages as Ex 21:1-11, Deut 15:12-18, Philemon, and 1Cor 7:20-24 suggests that they address a situation with no analogues for the contemporary situation. Similarly when considering a subject such as "the role of women in the church" he sees the literary context of passages such as 1Cor 11:2-16, 14:34-35 and 1Tim 2:8-15 to be such as to reveal no analogue with the present time in that Paul was concerned in his day with the preaching of the gospel in view of an imminent End. As, according to Ellingsen, "... twentieth century Christian proclamation is not so concerned to speak to social problems posed by an imminent End, Paul's comments do not apply to present times." (*ibid*). I would say that one of the faults of "present times" gospel proclamation is that it lacks an "end-time" urgency and while Ellingsen's pronouncement appears to me too much like sweeping the problem under the proverbial carpet, it does indicate the possibilities of a literary approach in dealing with contemporary "hot potatoes". (See also 1.2.2.4.2). Another problem I have with Ellingsen's concept of the Word of God is that it tends to detract from the objectivity of Scripture. I do not have the right to deny the divine inspiration of a passage merely because I cannot see its application to my present situation. Ellingsen, however, affirms the authority of the canonical text when

he compares the approach of the literary critic with that of the historical critic who attempts to “get behind the text” (1990:88).

It is at this stage that the preacher concisely identifies the precise issue that connects the contemporary situation with that of the narrative.

10. Concretise the analogues.

Ellingsen suggests (1990:89-90) that “vignettes” or short portraits or descriptions can be culled from contemporary literature, one’s own experience or that of the people being addressed, and used to make real to the audience the analogues derived from step 11. It is important, however, to convey that these stories are subordinate to the story in the text and this may be achieved by introducing them only after the biblical account or main theme has been fully articulated.

11. Outline the sermon.

The title of this step seems to be a misnomer as Ellingsen is a strong advocate of the practice of writing the sermon out in a full manuscript (1990:91-93) rather than a mere outline. He recognises, however, that many homiletics lecturers would not agree, and that this method has its drawbacks. It is rendered ineffective if the manuscript is simply read from the pulpit so it must be memorised. It can also lead to very stylised, artificial rhetoric so the preacher who is to follow the practice of writing out the sermon in full must develop a style of writing prose to be spoken, not read.

As for the form which the narrative sermon must take, it must obviously reflect the characteristics of the narrative form of proclamation. These characteristics have to be learnt by careful study of the theory, and much practice in the aspects of preparation and delivery.

12. Rehearse the delivery.

For preaching to be effective, delivery must be given the same amount of attention as preparation. When the preacher is a good story-teller the listeners will hang on every word and as Ellingsen says, “... there is more of a chance that hearers will

participate in the same relationship with our Lord that the biblical texts depict. Good storytellers make their characters – even the reality of God – come alive.” (1990:94). He also reminds preachers that despite all their efforts in preparation and delivery they can never turn what they may say into the Word of God. This is the work alone of the Holy Spirit of God.

4.2.4.1.1 Additional comment on Ellingsen’s model

There will be those who regard it as unrealistic to expect all or even most of the students who graduate from the five institutions which form the basis of this investigation to be in a position to apply all the steps of Ellingsen’s model to their sermon preparation as rigorously as the model’s creator intended. It may be that not all will have a good working knowledge of the biblical languages. Not all will have access to works of reference to enable them to apply the principles of form criticism and study non-biblical literature of the same period. Not all will have available more than one or two versions of the Scriptures with which to work. Nevertheless it is the duty of all who are involved in learning to preach and training the preacher to strive for excellence and not to be satisfied with mediocrity.

4.2.5 Poetic Sermon

This form, which could be considered as a sub-set of the narrative form, also has a powerful influence in the experience and thinking of people of a certain type of disposition. Poetry can move one at a very deep level (Pieterse, 1987:185) and has the advantage of transporting one out of the realm of everyday and into a new world. Not every hearer has both the imagination and mindset to enable him or her to respond adequately to this talk-form nor does every preacher have the gift of the Muse, but it is a valid art-form worthy of being explored for use by the right preacher with the right listener. Does a preacher have an affinity with the Psalms? If so then he or she might consciously or unconsciously have been given the gift of poetry. May he or she also have the courage of King David to develop this gift and translate it into action!

4.3 CONCLUSION

It is hoped that lecturers in homiletics at our training institutions will find useful material in this section which they can incorporate into their lectures. I commend especially to their attention 4.2.4 Narrative sermon.

CHAPTER 5 THE MASTER PREACHER AND HIS PARABLES

5.1 THE NATURE OF PARABLES, ALLEGORIES AND PROVERBS

FB Craddock (1981:65) quotes CH Dodd as defining a parable as “A metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought.”

RVG Tasker (1962: 932-34) points out that the word “parable” is derived from the Greek παραβολή (*parabolé*) which means “putting things side-by-side”. Similarly the word “allegory” derives from αλληγορία (*allegoria*) which means “saying things in a different way”. The apparent reason for teaching in both parables and allegories therefore would be to enlighten listeners by presenting them with interesting illustrations from which they can draw out moral and religious truth. The value of this method of teaching, according to Tasker, is that truth is easier to assimilate because “truth embodied in a tale enters in at lowly doors” (1962:932), and that it is remembered longer because, in deriving the truth from the illustrations for oneself, one becomes one’s own teacher. While, however, by definition allegories and parables are almost identical, in practice the parable has come to constitute the story which teaches a single truth or answers a single question and the allegory a story in which all the details can convey essential meaning.

Tasker is right to point out that a complication in the understanding and interpretation of parables has arisen because of the question, exactly what constitutes a parable? In Luke 4: 23 Jesus says, Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’ The translators rightly chose the word “proverb” because that is what Jesus’ saying is. However the word “proverb” in that passage is actually παραβολή. What Peter calls a παραβολή in Matt 15:15 is more like a conundrum, and the simple illustration in Mk 13:28, called a “lesson” (NIV), is also actually a παραβολή. The more elaborate

comparison between children at play and the reaction of Jesus' contemporaries to John the Baptist and himself is usually called by scholars a parable because, having one central truth it fits the commonly accepted description of a parable. What then, we may ask, of the parables of the Sower and the Weeds of the Field (Matt 13:18-23, 36-43) which are given detailed allegorical interpretations? Other "parables" which should more accurately be named allegories are the Drag-net (Matt 13), the Wicked Tenants (Matt 21, Mark 12, Luke 20), the Wedding Banquet (Matt 22) and the Great Banquet (Luke 14). In a reaction against the tendency down through the ages of preachers to find more truth in the parables than was originally intended some scholars have maintained that each parable teaches one truth and only one. Adolph Jülicher (Tasker, 1962:932) went so far as to claim that Christ's allegorical interpretation of parables such as the Sower is actually an interpolation by the evangelists and is an example of early Christian excessive allegorisation! It is not possible, however, to draw so clear-cut a distinction between parable and allegory in New Testament usage. Some of Jesus' parables teach several lessons. The parable of the sower has already been mentioned. In the parable of the Prodigal Son stress is laid on the joy which the Father experiences in forgiving his children (this feature is also present in the other parables in the group in Luke 15), on the nature of forgiveness and on the sin of jealousy and self-righteousness. In the parable of the Weeds in Matt 13 no less than *seven* features are explained by the Master. On the other hand it is clear in some of the parables that certain details are merely part of the story and should be allowed to have little influence on the teaching. It is problematic, for example, to interpret the feature of the two coins given to the innkeeper by the Good Samaritan as representing the two Protestant sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper bequeathed to the church by Christ. Augustine was of the opinion that no fewer than sixteen items in that parable are of great theological significance. Applying the principle of one or at any rate only a few significant truths, to that of the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16) enables one to circumvent the problem of having Christ apparently approve of the dishonesty of the manager. In fact in the parable the manager exhibits three different attributes. Two of these, namely wastefulness (v1) and dishonesty (v8), conflict with our understanding of acceptable Christian conduct. The third attribute, shrewdness, is the only one which was actually commended by

the master and this is the main teaching of the parable. The NIVSB (p.1571) takes pains to exonerate the manager of dishonesty by accusing the manager of overcharging his customers and in so doing circumventing the Deuteronomic law on the charging of interest (Dt 23:19). If this were so, the manager was merely returning the figures to their original amounts. This is all unnecessary if the main point is emphasised and the residual details are kept in their rightful place. It is safest to maintain the principle of one truth per parable unless the context demands otherwise (e.g. Prodigal Son) or specifically instructed otherwise (e.g. Sower and Weeds).

5.2 HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION

The Scholar Jülicher has been mentioned above. His two-volume work on the parables (1888, 1889) has dominated studies of the parables although it has never been translated from the German (Snodgrass, 1992:591). Throughout history before Jülicher the parables of Jesus were allegorised rather than interpreted but Jülicher's work sounded the death-knell on that approach. He maintained that Jesus' parables were simple and straightforward comparisons that did not require interpretation. This proposition required the stripping of all allegorical elements from the present form of the parables and what Jülicher ended up with were simplified structures very similar to the parables of the Gospel of Thomas, an apocryphal collection of sayings of Jesus dating from the late first or second century and discovered in 1945. The fact that this work came to light after the basic conclusions of Jülicher and his "successors" in parabolic studies CH Dodd and J Jeremias, has encouraged many to add support to the contention that the Gospel of Thomas preserves the original form of some of the parables. The conclusions of Jülicher and his supporters, however, have been criticised for a number of reasons some of which are important from the aspect of literary studies. As stated in 2.2.2 the narrative preacher has to do with the finished form of the text and ignores (or at least treats as having far less importance) any question of interpolation or other extraneous influence on the given text. Jülicher and others on the contrary have no truck with thoughts of the unity of the text.

The historical-critical approach of scholars such as Dodd and Jeremias has largely

given way to a more literary approach (Snodgrass, 1992:593). GV Jones, AN Wilder and D Via have focussed in recent times on the artistic and existential character of the parables. "They are aesthetic works which address the present because in their patterns is an understanding of their existence that calls for decision" (*ibid*). Snodgrass speaks disparagingly, however, of the literary approach of structuralists and others. He sees in these studies a too-highly subjective approach which has bedevilled the recent ascendancy of the literary approach over historical-critical methods, especially with regard to reader-response studies. He is of the opinion that emphasis must be placed on the historical context of the parables in the quest for their meaning (1992:593). We will need to view these criticisms in a cautionary rather than a condemnatory light. As we have seen in 2.2.1, 2.2.2 and 4.2.4.1 above, the historical-critical approach does not possess a monopoly on objectivity! Snodgrass gives the example of some who would treat the parable of the Prodigal Son in the light of Freudian psychology where the prodigal, the elder brother and the father reflect respectively the id, the super-ego and the ego. He describes such a treatment as not an interpretation but rather a retelling of the story in a new context. His point is well taken. It comes down, however, to a matter of authority. Does the narrative preacher interpret the parable on the basis of the authority of the pronouncements and "theology" of Sigmund Freud or any other extra-biblical authority or does he or she stand on the authority of Jesus Christ and the truth of God the Father whom Jesus came to reveal, and the authority of the Holy Spirit who communicates these truths through the Scriptures to both preacher and congregation. Those who listen to our preaching find themselves in various contexts of need. They might even find themselves in need of delivery from Freudian psychology!

5.3 THE PURPOSE OF THE PARABLES

Tasker says that some have found the passage Mk 4:10-12 difficult to interpret (1962:934). Christ says, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those outside everything is said in parables so that, 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding ...'. The question which may be asked by those finding the passage difficult is, Did Jesus tell parables to explain truth or conceal it? Did he wish to attract people to his kingdom or deny

them access? As with many questions in life, these two do not qualify to be answered with a straight “yes/no” type of answer. Tasker’s assistance for those who find a difficulty here lies in affirming the probability that what seems to be a clause of purpose in Mk 4:12 “... so that ‘they may be ever seeing but never perceiving ...’”, is actually a clause of consequence. He refers to the parallel passage in Mtt 13:11 in which the words “so that” are omitted, implying that hearing the parables has the inevitable consequence that for many, unbelief is strengthened and rejection of the call confirmed. Tasker draws a parallel between Christ’s parables and his person and he says that the two are inseparable. He says that for other teachers and moralists their parables can be separated from the teachers themselves but the parables of Jesus are unique. If any fail to understand *Him* then no amount of teaching concerning the mysteries of the kingdom will enlighten them (1962:934).

The Reformers had no problem with the concept of a God who hid himself from some and enlightened others. They would not have felt obliged, as Tasker seems to have done, to avoid causing offence to those who feel more comfortable with the thought that those who disbelieve need look no further than themselves for the cause.

There are, of course, obvious reasons why the Lord would have hidden his truth from his hearers. Let us consider the parable of the sower as it appears in Luke 8:1-15. Closure (see 2.5.3.1) occurs in v.4, “While a large crowd was gathering ...”. Jesus tells of a farmer scattering his seed and of the four soils which received it. A type of closure again occurs immediately after this in v.8b, “When he said this, he called out, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’” In the narrative Jesus is then silent until his disciples ask him the meaning of the parable whereupon he explains the application. One imagines most of the casual listeners going away mystified and the malicious listeners going away disgruntled. Some, however, were lured into asking the meaning of the story and they were rewarded with the explanation. The NIVSB (p.1553) remarks that although the parables clarified Jesus’ teaching they also included hidden meanings needing further explanation. Not only did these hidden meanings challenge the sincerely interested to further inquiry but they also meant that Christ’s enemies would not have direct factual statements from his lips which they could use

against him, statements which they would sorely like to have appealed to and which they had to fabricate in the end (Matt 26:59-61).

5.4 PRINCIPLES FOR PREACHERS

In 7.5.2.4 respondent Bs1013 affirmed that the example of Jesus must be followed and a narrative approach adopted, not only because it is the way the master preached but also because it appeals to the African mind. The student would obviously treat this advice prudently. Jesus is the Son of God with his own agenda for the salvation of the world. We would not normally expect to do everything the Master did in the way that he did them. For example it is not normally the purpose of the preacher to be obscure, and it is to be lamented if his or her preaching has that effect on truth! However there are certain principles which can be followed and expressed by the narrative preacher.

5.4.1 A stronger impression

By dramatising the facts and circumstances, a parable can convey the truth more forcefully and achieve results more easily. The parable of David the adulterer (see 1.2.2.4.2) is a case in point. In another parable in which David is also both character and hearer, Joab sends the woman of Tekoa to persuade him in parabolic form to be reconciled to his son Absalom (2Sam 14:1-21) and the desired result is achieved.

5.4.2 A clearer impression

We do well to imitate the Master in the way that he took features of life which were common and even banal and invested them with glory in the interests of clarity. Which of Jesus' hearers would ever again see a mustard seed without imagining the finished product and the birds nesting in the shade of its branches, and hopefully also visualising Christ's church and its welcoming appeal to them (Mk 4:30-32)? How else could the Lord have conveyed to cold and hungry hearts the love of the Father without describing how a father saw his lost son while he was still a long way off, and ran and "... threw his arms around him and kissed him." (Luke 15:20)?

A chart showing the parables of Jesus and where they can be found is provided in

5.5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this section is not so much to persuade students of preaching to create a parabolic style of preaching of their own, although this is a possibility. It is rather that narrative preachers will find in the parables of our Lord a rich source of preaching material. They will, however, need to follow sound principles of interpreting the parables in order to convey their truths to their hearers. Compilers of the curricula at our training colleges could ensure that the subject of Christ's parables and their interpretation are thoroughly dealt with, if not in the homiletics lectures then as part of a course such as New Testament Introduction.

CHAPTER 6 INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

6.1 PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEWS

Having laid down the foundational theory to support the view that narrative preaching is a valid and desirable method of communicating biblical truth by preacher to audience, the next logical step was to test this view in the practical situation. Also as stated in 1.1.3.2 one of my intentions is to examine the approaches to homiletics training in the named institutions. Interviews with staff and students provided opportunities of doing this. I commenced the “fieldwork” phase of the dissertation with the view that confining the interviews to students and lecturers of the particular institutions involved would be preferable from various points of view.

- I have found that students are often critical by nature and being so closely associated with the lectures “at source” it was felt that a reliable assessment of the efficacy of the homiletics teaching would be gained.
- Before embarking upon ministerial training it is assumed that the students would have gained experience in, and perhaps been recommended by, one or other local church congregation. The students would therefore have a degree of knowledge of a congregation at least similar to one in which they would expect to be placed at the conclusion of their training and would be able to assess the value of their homiletics training as a preparation for their ministry. It is assumed that all homiletics lecturers on their part would appreciate hearing the opinions expressed by their students as to the efficacy of their courses. Sharing these insights would, of course, have to be done in a manner which would not infringe the rights of those who wished to remain anonymous.
- Access to students of these training institutions is normally easy in comparison with access to priests and pastors of rural and township churches. Interviewing three students who had previously been provided with questionnaires can be completed in about one hour whereas travelling to

distant churches could be time-consuming and inconvenient. A whole day could be taken up with discussions in just one rural interview. A further difficulty in tracing candidates is encountered if one were to confine one's attention to pastors who are past students of the named institutions.

6.2 PROCEDURE OF THE INTERVIEWS

6.2.1 The candidates

The basis for the interviews was a questionnaire which I had prepared to be answered by theological students (see **Appendix C**). The procedure was that I would request a staff member of a particular institute to suggest some students, preferably Black Africans, who had completed some or all of the homiletics courses. Another criterion was that I would prefer students who were likely to become either priests, pastors, church leaders or career missionaries rather than those who were likely to follow an academic career path (unless, of course, it were to be in the sphere of homiletics studies!). I would deliver the questionnaires to the chosen students and arrange a time one or two weeks later when I would return to the institution and discuss the answers with the students individually and privately. The time lapse would allow enough time for the candidates to consider and answer the questions and the personal interview would confirm our mutual understanding of the more germane questions and would also draw out additional information which the student may feel reluctant to commit to writing.

During the very first set of interviews, however, I encountered a problem. I was forced to the conclusion that either the critical faculties of these particular students had not been developed adequately or their homiletics instruction was of surpassing efficacy or there was a third possibility. Amongst those who were interviewed initially, all of whom were students from one of the named institutions, there was not an ounce of criticism of their courses whereas I suspected that some valuable insights were lurking just below the surface. I considered that a possible explanation for their reticence was that despite my assurance of preserving their anonymity should they so desire, they didn't want to risk being seen to accuse their lecturers of "not doing

their job properly". There could well be the sense that "if I contradict or criticise what my lecturers are presenting as the ideal then I will be 'marked down' when it comes to my final assessment." There could, of course, also be an attitude of respectfully submitting to the authority of their teachers, in terms partly of the dictates of their culture and partly of the injunction of Heb 13:17 to submit to the authority of the leaders who in their turn will have to give an account. It could be pointed out that the student can nevertheless respectfully criticise those who exercise the office of teacher and in so doing the student can participate meaningfully in the process of the teacher's "giving account".

There was consequently a need to adjust my approach as interviewer. Firstly, I was forced to go beyond the confines of the named institutions and search for additional suitable candidates to interview. I tried to restrict my search to immediate past students of the named institutions in order to maintain the link while at the same time achieve a more comfortable distance between student and lecturer. I modified the students' questionnaire for use by pastors, etc. (see **Appendix D**). This approach soon brought satisfying results. At a "workshop" gathering of pastors of a certain denomination I distributed questionnaires to the African pastors who were present and provided stamped, self-addressed envelopes for returning the completed forms to me. Amongst the completed forms which I received was a submission from a young pastor of just two years experience who happened to be a past student of the very institution at which the students were studying whom I had interviewed first and whose apparent lack of critical appraisal I was concerned about. This pastor's remarks brought some of these latent truths to light and are discussed under 7.3.6.1.

6.2.2 The questionnaire

Both questionnaires (**Appendices C & D**) are basically the same except for minor differences to accommodate the two distinct groups, students and pastors, for whom they were respectively intended.

6.2.2.1 The purpose

One of the purposes of the questionnaire was to enable the respondents to focus on their homiletics training and assess whether it was adequate for the purpose of preparing themselves as theological trainees for their ministries. To this end the respondent was also asked to focus on a particular congregation in its setting – its demographics, education, economic status, etc. Having been a student at a theological institution myself I am aware how easy it is, when immersed in one's studies and in the life and fellowship of what tends to be a closed community, to divorce oneself for a time from the real world of people in need. I sensed during the interviews that students welcomed the opportunity of having their thoughts redirected towards the type of people whom they would serve in the future.

A small touch was to ask what proportion of the households possessed a TV set. This not only focussed the respondent's attention on the households' economic and intellectual condition but also drew attention to how many in the congregation were exposed to the presentation of stories through the medium of TV programs.

When the completed questionnaires were received, the interviews conducted and the results considered, I was faced with a dilemma, whether or not to carry out a detailed analysis of all the data provided. Because of the subjective nature of the church details solicited by the questionnaire and the fact that I did not consider these details to be of primary importance in terms of the purpose of the dissertation, I originally decided not to perform a detailed statistical analysis and draw conclusions from it. I did not consider it important for the examination of the hypothesis of 1.1.4, for example, to record how many churches mentioned by the respondents had more women than men at their services, had more people having had secondary school education than only primary, had more people living in mud huts than brick houses, etc. As explained above, the main purpose of the statistic-related questions was to focus the respondent's attention on the real-world congregational situation. For this reason I did not pay attention during the course of the interviews to addressing certain statistical anomalies such as the fact that in a few of the questionnaires the percentages filled in under "education" did not add up to 100 and in other instances

where a high proportion of households had informal housing yet most of the congregation were recorded as having undergone formal tertiary education. In retrospect I consider it possible (but not probable) that in this particular instance the formula “formal tertiary education” was not fully understood. I did not think it appropriate to return and re-interview students in order to correct the anomalies.

Another factor which weakens the value of the data from a purely statistical point of view is that potential respondents were not chosen randomly. Lecturers at the named institutions chose candidates according to my wishes stated in **Appendices C & D** and referred to in 6.2.1.

All things considered, however, in view of the amount of data provided by the completed questionnaires I came to the conclusion that it was right and proper that, having put the respondents to the trouble of answering questions, a simple statistical analysis of the results should be provided. I have accordingly done so in 6.4.1.

6.2.2.2 Aspects requiring clarification

The concept “formal housing” required explaining to the respondents. I did not classify as “formal” the thatched houses built with sun-dried mud bricks or wattle and daub walls that are often found in a rural setting though some indeed have electricity and water reticulation provided. The boundary between “formal” and “informal” housing is by no means clearly defined, but as I have stated matters like this are not important for the purposes of the questionnaire.

The meaning of “percentage” was a rather advanced mathematical concept for some of the respondents, a small number of whom were not aware that all the given percentages of, say, the question dealing with the educational status of the congregates should add up to 100. In retrospect, perhaps I should have rephrased those particular questions to read for example, “Of all the adults attending on an average Sunday, how many are women?” and “... how many have had little or no education, how many with primary ..., “etc.

I also had to clarify for a few the meaning of the word “anonymous”. In the end such a high proportion of respondents requested anonymity that I decided to regard everyone as having requested it. When I interviewed some who had answered the final question to the effect that anonymity was not required and upon explaining to them exactly what the word meant they almost invariably changed their answer and requested to remain anonymous. For those who responded by post and were not available for personal interviews I could not be certain whether they had understood the implication of anonymity and this confirmed my decision to regard every respondent as anonymous. I find it an interesting thought that if all who are, have been, or will be associated in any way with this dissertation were enclosed within a perfect Christian environment in which love and the quest for wisdom and knowledge reigned supreme, and suspicion, ignorance and error were excluded, there would be no need to consider anonymity. However that is not the way things work in the fallen world of which we are all a part. I felt that if I were to allow respondents to remain anonymous this would help them overcome the inhibitions which they might have and thus allow valuable insights to be gained.

The size of the congregation described by the respondent was also not of vital importance to the success of the questionnaire. Respondent Bp1033 said that his attendance on a “normal” Sunday was about 100 but at the quarterly communion service he had an influx from other areas with close on 1000 communicants. I told him to rather consider the 100 regulars as being those with whom he would be most familiar.

The purpose of questions 9 and 10 was to focus attention on the adults in the congregation. Children under the age of 15 deserve to have a study such as this devoted to themselves alone. As has been mentioned in 6.2.2.1, the original purpose of a number of these questions was not so much to provide statistical data for use in demographics as to enable the respondents to examine and consider the circumstances and nature of the type of people amongst whom they will work, as a background to considering their preaching needs.

6.2.2.3 Focusing on preaching

With regard to question 12 which asks the respondent to describe the *quality* of the preaching which takes place in the church he or she visualises, I had considered removing or altering the question when it came to adapting the questionnaire for pastors. However, I was led in the end to consider that it would be quite in order for a pastor to assess the quality of his own preaching.

Questions 12 to 17 come to the crux of the matter and embody the whole purpose of the questionnaire. Does our homiletics training leave much to be desired? Can my homiletics course be improved so that I will be better equipped to preach to the particular people I have in mind as those I am likely to be called to serve?

6.2.2.4 Discretion

During the interviews I studiously avoided mention of the low average academic level which would be and is encountered in the township and rural communities served by the named institutions. This fact, however, seemed to me to be implicitly acknowledged by most of the respondents notwithstanding their perception that many more attendees possessed a tertiary qualification than was probably the case (see 6.4.1.3).

6.3 METHOD OF PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS

6.3.1 Coding

The following means of codifying the respondents was adopted for convenience and to preserve the anonymity of those who requested it. To each respondent was assigned a six-character code. As has been stated in 6.2.2.1 the church details were of limited importance and so are not coded.

6.3.1.1 Training institutions

A	Evangelical Seminary of SA
B	Lutheran Theological Institute
C	St Joseph's Theological Institute

D	Trinity Academy of PMB
E	Union Bible Institute

6.3.1.2 Status of respondent

s Present student

p Past student (or one who has a relationship with the

institution such as a past or present lecturer)

It was decided not to record the gender of the respondent. Most of the respondents were male but there were a significant number of females. The use of the male pronoun does not necessarily signify a male respondent and does in fact contribute to anonymity.

6.3.1.3 Number of respondent

A three-digit number was assigned to each respondent. The first in a group to be recorded would be 101, the second 102, etc.

6.3.1.4 Years of study

A single digit 1–9 indicates the number of completed years of study at their particular institution (present and past students). Where, in a few cases, the number of years spent at the institution was not indicated, I have used the numeral zero.

6.3.1.5 Example

A respondent with the code Cs1075 would be a present student of St Joseph's Theological Institute, the seventh such student to be recorded, who has completed five years of studies.

6.4 RESPONSES

As indicated in 1.1.3.3, twenty-one students' questionnaires were issued to the training institutions and I received a 100% response. I also distributed 22 pastors' questionnaires, 9 directed specifically to certain identified individuals and the remainder distributed in a fairly random manner at pastoral gatherings. Five of the

nine were duly completed and returned, and three of the remainder. An additional eleven people were interviewed with regard to general homiletics training matters not directly related to the questionnaires.

6.4.1 Statistical results

It will be noted from reading the preambles to the questionnaires as well as the wording of the questions themselves that the respondents were expected to merely provide estimates and that the importance of the responses lies not so much in the accuracy of the data that comes to light as in the perceptions that the questionnaires encourage and reveal. However a useful yardstick by which to assess the value of collected data such as this is "Census 2001" which can be accessed through the internet web-site of Statistics South Africa (see Bibliography). The title Census 2001 denotes the data which was collected during the official national census of 2001. It will be seen below that in some respects the results of my questionnaires are in fairly close agreement with Census 2001 while in other aspects there is a divergence to which attention will need to be paid. It should be noted that the data extracted from Census 2001 is that which relates to Black African individuals and households for the province of KwaZulu-Natal. To provide a comparison I have extracted from my questionnaires, data relating to KwaZulu-Natal churches.

6.4.1.1 Church attendance

The total number of congregations (i.e. the total number of questionnaires returned) is 30. Of this number 3 are outside the Republic, i.e. Namibia, Swaziland and Mozambique, 20 are in KwaZulu-Natal and 7 are in the remainder of the Republic. The estimated total number of adult members of these congregations is 4970, of which 125 are in the foreign churches, 3605 in KZN churches (of which an estimated 1180 are male and 2425 female), and 1240 in churches in the remainder of the Republic. When the figure of 3605, representing (almost exclusively Black African) church attendance in KwaZulu-Natal, is compared with the census returns for that province of a stated Black African church allegiance of 2,8 million, it will be seen that my questionnaires have to do with an extremely small sample, in fact 0.13% of the numbers processed in Census 2001.

Census 2001 returned figures of a total Black African population for KwaZulu-Natal of 7,98 million, of which 3,71 million or 46,5% were male. The total number of Black Africans stating allegiance to the mainline Christian churches in KwaZulu-Natal was 2,78 million of which males constituted 1,23 million or 44,2%. This accords fairly closely with the male/female balance in the Black African population of KwaZulu-Natal. According to the returns from my questionnaires the average percentage of Black Africa males attending the KwaZulu-Natal churches was estimated to be 35,0. The discrepancy of 9,2% between this attendance figure and the Census 2001 allegiance figure can be explained partly in terms of the very small size of the statistical sample and partly that the stated allegiance of a substantial number of Black males has not issued in actual physical attendance at their Sunday services.

6.4.1.2 Household economy

In this aspect my respondents provided data which fairly closely agreed with the census statistics. My questionnaires indicated that 44% of the KwaZulu-Natal contingent of church households had brick houses. The comparable census figure was 39,2% (Census 2001).

The questionnaires indicated that in KwaZulu-Natal 11,7% of the church households had a motor vehicle. There was no comparable statistic available in Census 2001, the closest of which was the proportion of Black Africans in KwaZulu-Natal who drove themselves to work in a motorcar (1,9%) and who were driven to work in a motorcar as passengers (4,5%).

According to my figures, 47% of Black African households in KwaZulu-Natal had TV which is higher than the census figure of 36,8%.

6.4.1.3 Education

Whereas in economic terms my questionnaires have generally yielded moderately higher figures than Census 2001, when it came to levels of education some substantial divergence was encountered. Of a total of 4,1 million KwaZulu-Natal Black

Africans 20 years of age and over, counted in the schooling aspect of the Census, 26,3% had received no schooling, 25,8% had only primary school education, 43,7% had some secondary school teaching or had matriculated and only a meagre 4,2% had progressed with their education beyond grade 12 (see FIG. 1). My questionnaires, however, reflected that a surprising 21% of church attendees in KwaZulu-Natal had undergone some form of “formal tertiary education” (see FIG. 2).

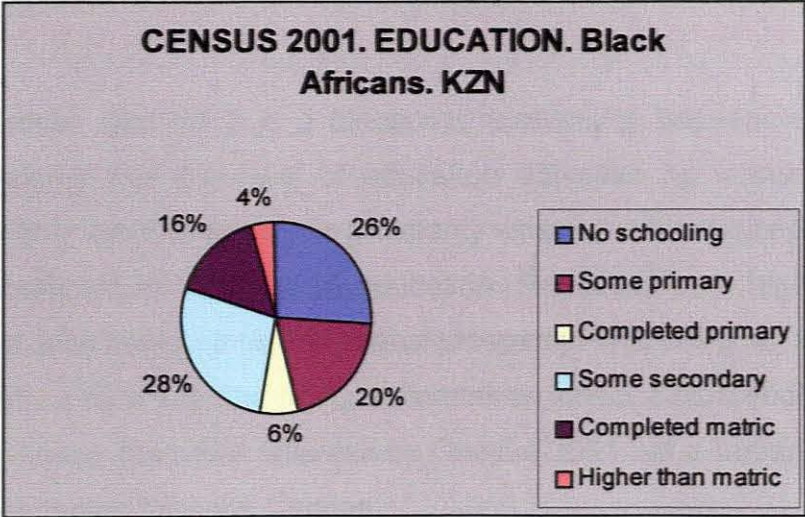


FIG. 1

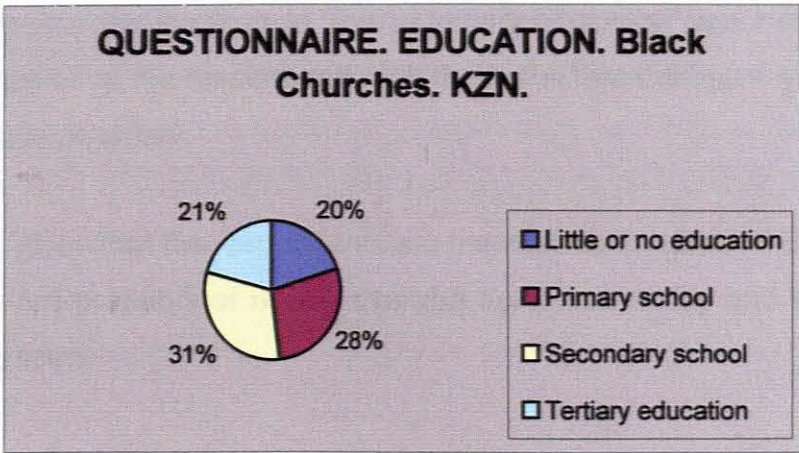


FIG. 2

There are three possible explanations for this statistical discrepancy:

1 It just so happens that in the churches represented in my returned questionnaires there is a far higher than average presence of attendees who have progressed beyond grade 12 with their education.

The following matters, however, indicate that this is improbable. My questionnaires' figures of 31% of attendees having completed high school and 21% of attendees having completed a tertiary qualification can be interpreted as meaning that on average 40% of attendees who had completed high school went on to complete tertiary studies.

It is likely, however, that there is a functional relationship between the level of household economy and the level of education achieved by members of that household. A higher level of economic prosperity would result in higher aspirations and empowerment when it comes to education. Reciprocally, a higher level of education would contribute to a higher level of prosperity. This being so, the problem with explanation number 1 is that my questionnaires reflect a household economy only marginally higher than that reflected by Census 2001 but a tertiary education level many times higher than the Census.

For this reason explanation number 1 does not commend itself for acceptance.

2 It is possible that the formula "formal tertiary education" was misunderstood by the great majority of the respondents with the result that the figure given for that group was greatly distorted.

This is unlikely, given that the respondents are themselves involved in formal tertiary education and are probably of above average academic ability and thus able to understand the term.

3 It is possible that the number of attendees in Black African churches in KwaZulu-Natal who have qualified at a tertiary level of education is in fact approximately 4% - 5% as the Census states but that there is a *perception* amongst

theological students that the figure is far greater and that the academic level in Black congregations is far higher than it actually is. I regard this as the most likely explanation for the divergence.

Certain points can be made in regard to this third possibility. The theological courses at the named institutions are of a high academic standard and each of the institutions has strong links with universities and other centres of advanced learning. In addition it would be natural for the lecturers to nominate their more intellectually capable students to receive and complete my questionnaires. It would also be natural for the students who complete the questionnaires to hope and expect that there is a *reasonable number of church attendees who are on a par with the students academically and will be able to relate meaningfully to what the students will be trying to get across to them especially in the sphere of preaching.* Whether their perceptions are accurate will remain for them to discover! There is a strong possibility that they will find, as Census 2001 revealed of Black Africans in KwaZulu-Natal, that only 20,2% of their attendees will have succeeded in obtaining Senior Certificate or higher, and that more than fifty percent have not progressed beyond primary school. It is my contention that a narrative approach to preaching rather than the Aristotelian approach is likely to be more suited to hearers who have had basically a *non-academic life's experience.*

6.4.2 Insights

I have recorded responses to my questionnaires which contained remarks which I considered to be of significance. It was not possible to go into detail at every interview concerning the need and desirability of narrative preaching and a description of it. At least two of the institutions have invited me to speak to the students on the subject at the conclusion of the study. Their response or reaction to such lectures could form the basis of further investigation.

Significant insights gained from the completed questionnaires and interviews are recorded under the various institutions to which they apply.

I consider it likely that not only did I gain insights from the students but that the students and other respondents also gained insights from the interviews which would have stood them in good stead in their future studies and ministries.

CHAPTER 7 THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE PIETERMARITZBURG AREA

Pietermaritzburg, situated in the midlands of KwaZulu-Natal, has long been considered the educational centre of the Province. With regard to theological training it is strategically sited for easy access to a large part of the Province and its favourable climate and pleasant surroundings makes it conducive to study. It is home to a number of fine theological training institutions.

Each of the chosen institutions will be looked at in turn in various general aspects such as their history, vision, lecturing structure and especially their attention to preparing their students to preach. With regard to their lecturing structure it was found that they generally worked on a lecture period of 45 minutes. In quantifying the total amount of time assigned to homiletics in relation to the sum total of all lecture periods I have conveniently assumed one hour per lecture.

7.1 EVANGELICAL SEMINARY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

This is a tertiary level theological seminary situated close to the central business district in Pine Street, Pietermaritzburg.

7.1.1 Vision and outlook

The seminary aims to train dedicated Christian leaders for the Church-in-Mission in an urban setting in Africa. It is noteworthy, however, that of the questionnaires completed by past and present students of this institution, almost half described churches in a rural rather than an urban setting. The seminary aims to equip its students on three levels: the head, the heart and the hands. It is committed to providing quality tertiary education which is evangelical, holistic and contextually relevant. Families are welcome and both spouses are encouraged to study. The seminary "brings together committed staff and students from a multitude of backgrounds and cultures into a warm Christian community" (ESSA 1, 2004).

Three "tracks" are offered: mission, ministry and development studies.

7.1.2 General information

7.1.2.1 History and finances

The seminary was established in 1980 and, as their leaflet "Partnership Plan" (ESSA 2, 2004) states, "as a faith organisation, one of our privileges is to trust God to provide the resources to carry out the vision of the Seminary". Part of the funding is provided by individuals and groups both locally and overseas.

7.1.2.2 Academic courses

Undergraduate study programs are offered at certificate, diploma and degree levels while a post-graduate program was launched in 2004. Most of the students are live-in full-time students while some study by means of part-time courses and evening classes.

The seminary is accredited by the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA) and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

7.1.3 Homiletics

From the literature with which I was provided it appears that lectures in homiletics are confined to one module in the students' third year. This means that a student receives no more than 24 hours of homiletics lectures in their three years of study. Calculated as a percentage of the total theoretical lecture time this comes to 2.5%. I regard this as far too little time to devote to developing skills necessary to communicate from the pulpit the truths of the Word and evangelistic insights which would, in line with true evangelical tradition, bring people to God.

7.1.3.1 Practical Theology 330: Preaching

This information was obtained from leaflets kindly provided by a lecturer at the Institution, Rev. P.Russell-Boulton. An examination of the information sheet for this module elicited both a positive and negative response. According to the "Assessment" and "Course Requirements" it is noteworthy that students taking this course are assessed by means of a "practical" (60%) and "assignments" (40%).

Examining the course requirements for this practical, one notes that only two preached sermons are required to be prepared during the course. One is a five-minute sermon to be preached in class and the other is a twenty-minute sermon to be preached in the chapel. The preacher of the five-minute sermon is liable to be penalised for every minute by which the five minutes is exceeded. The twenty-minute chapel sermon is specifically required to be an expository sermon. Apart from these two sermons the remaining two course requirements are one five-page written assignment on the importance of preaching and a newspaper article suitable to be published on the Easter weekend. I consider all these requirements to be very inadequate to prepare students to share on the practical level their knowledge of the Bible and Christian theology with others. These feelings are shared in the main by present and past students whom I interviewed.

7.1.4 Interviews

Respondent Ap1010 was of the opinion that narrative preaching had an important place in the postmodern world. He said that it was imperative, however, that the truth of Scripture be preserved and projected in our preaching, whatever homiletical method we employed.

Respondent As1013 was, according to his written submission, of the opinion that the homiletics course should start in the second year. The theory was regarded as adequate but more practical work should be set and assessed. When interviewed (after the mid-year vacation) he revised his opinion and said that the homiletics course should preferably start in the first year of studies with regard to both theoretical and practical instruction. He said that the students' home churches had certain expectations regarding theological students, one of which was that students under instruction should at least be able to preach acceptably. If the students were not to receive homiletics instruction until their final year then these expectations would not be met during the periods when they returned to their home churches during vacations. A further improvement to the course which should be considered is the greater acknowledgement of the cultural distinctions of the different churches represented amongst the students. This occasion would provide an opportunity of

considering a narrative approach.

Respondent As1023 also implied that the practical assessment in the course was inadequate. He stated that time should be made available for the students to discuss and assess on a practical level the methods which they already employ in preaching in their own churches. This was an expression of this respondent's concern that the course should take into account the different approaches which were appropriate in preaching the Gospel in different communities. An increase in the attention paid to practical assessment would also greatly benefit those who were inexperienced in preaching and leading in English. Each student should have more than one opportunity of preaching a "full" sermon as then it would be possible to assess progress in their development.

Respondent As1033 was strongly of the opinion that theoretical homiletics instruction should start in the student's first year of studies and continue in the second year. The third year should be balanced between theoretical and practical studies. He described the method of teaching practical homiletics. Each student had one opportunity during the course of preaching a "full" 20 minute sermon and this was done in a service in the chapel attended by the whole student body. Only the lecturer assessed this sermon and he did so informally and gave a brief opinion to the student privately after the service. I maintain that a better method would be the preaching of a prepared sermon in the lecture room to his or her fellow homiletics students and for these students to assess the sermon using a standard assessment sheet. I feel, further, that during the course there should be at least two opportunities for each student to prepare and deliver a full 20 - 25 minute sermon. I feel that it is preferable for a student to preach his or her trial sermon in the lecture room rather than the chapel during the weekly students' devotional service, and for the whole of the homiletics class to assess him or her.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones was reputed to have said that he regarded the subject of "homiletics" as an abomination and that he would never allow students to preach before their fellows solely for the purpose of being assessed. Nevertheless I feel that

this is vital for the development of the preacher.

Each respondent expressed the opinion that not enough provision was made at this institution for either theoretical or practical homiletics instruction. Respondent Ap1023 who graduated from this institution in 1996 stated that the homiletics course was too brief and was not made relevant to preaching cross-culturally. Respondent As1043 was of the opinion that homiletics should commence in the first year with theory but not the practical element as students were not yet sufficiently developed in their personal grasp of theology and hermeneutics to start preaching. In the second year there should be a balance between theory and practical and similarly in the third year.

7.2 ST JOSEPH'S THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

This institute is situated in Cedara, a few kilometres from Pietermaritzburg.

7.2.1 Vision statement (St Joseph's, 2003).

The Institute, centred in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and situated in the African context, seeks to:

- Empower people through philosophical and theological enquiry and learning based on the Catholic tradition yet always in a living dialogue with other Christian communities, religions and cultures.
- Provide men and women with the philosophical and theological education necessary for both ordination and a variety of other ministries in both church and society.
- Advance the philosophical and theological endeavour through researching issues of faith and culture, experience and tradition, and other contemporary questions, so that the Word of God may be more effectively proclaimed.
- Foster co-operation within the Pietermaritzburg Cluster of Theological Institutions as well as with other theological institutions both national and international.

7.2.2 General information

7.2.2.1 Courses offered

- Two-year program in philosophy
- Four-year program in Theology
- Catholic studies program
- Post-graduate program

7.2.2.2 History and intentions

The Institute was founded in 1943 by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) to prepare their candidates for ordination to the Roman Catholic priesthood. It has developed into a non-residential academic facility for both Catholic and Anglican, male and female candidates to prepare themselves for both lay ministries and ordination in their respective communities. The primary focus is on preparing candidates for ordination and for this a comprehensive six-year course of studies is provided with two years of philosophical studies followed by four years of theological studies.

7.2.2.3 Academic program

Diplomas are granted by the Institute. These include the Diploma in Philosophy, Diploma in Theology and Diploma in Theological Studies. Degrees at bachelors level are granted through the Pontifical Urban University in Rome. These include B.Phil, B.Th and the proposed Bachelor of Missionary Spirituality Degree. Masters and Doctors degrees are granted through the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

7.2.3 Homiletics

The lecturer in homiletics, Fr CD Chatteris, provided me with summaries of the particular lectures the titles of which caught my attention. His hospitality on two days and also his invitation to attend a practical homiletics lecture were gratefully accepted. During the practical two students presented 12-minute homilies to the assembled homiletics students who had been provided with assessment sheets.

What was unusual was that the two presented their homilies in their own vernaculars. The one spoke in Jozi, a Zambian language, and the other in Afrikaans. Their presentations were also captured on video and the cartridges presented to them afterwards so that they could assess their presentation in terms of clarity, appearance, gestures, mannerisms, etc. They distributed English translations of their talks for the benefit of those in the class who were unfamiliar with the languages used.

7.2.3.1 Content of the course

The bulletin of information records that during the first two years of the Philosophy portion of the basic course the student would be lectured (4 hours per week) on Language, Rhetoric and Study Skills (LRSS) (St Joseph's, 2003:12,17). The Rhetoric portion of the course aims to develop confidence and clarity in students in their ability to speak publicly through dramatic games, role play, formal speeches, the study of rhetoric, dialectic, poetry, biblical scripts and video reports.

More detailed, intensive instruction in homiletics is provided during the students' second year in theology (i.e. the fourth year of their six-year course). During this year Homiletics I is provided during the first semester and Homiletics II during the second. Both Homiletics I and II are divided into 12 Sessions each of two hours duration. A brief selection of session titles is as follows: Homiletics I, Session 1 is entitled "Preaching with stories", Session 2 "Beginnings and endings" and Session 3 "Preaching in images". Homiletics II, Session 5 is entitled "Inductive movement & preaching", and Session 6 "preaching and imagination". The lecturer, Fr C Chatteris, kindly provided me with summaries of these particular lecture sessions. The narrative sermon is not taught as a separate style of preaching but the principles upon which narrative preaching is based are clearly to be found in the lectures.

In "Preaching with stories", the "stories" are not the narrative portions of the Bible but are true to life stories from everyday experience which are to be used in the sermon as "attention-grabbers", illustrations or as the message itself. In the last-mentioned case a well-chosen story constitutes the sermon or homily in its entirety. Our Lord's

parables are examined in this lecture, not to be presented to hearers in the narrative genre but to be considered by students as ideal examples of what to look for when choosing a true-to-life story for a sermon. The student is also advised by the lecturer about the “two-thirds rule”. The ideal spot in the sermon for a story is 2/3 of the way into the sermon. The following quotation is from the lecture notes of Fr CD Chatteris, kindly provided by him:

Two-thirds the way through any sermon, speech etc., with the midpoint clearly past and the ending now on the horizon, the concentration of both speaker and audience tends to slacken. The speaker, to compensate for this, must deliberately gather himself, and by some phrase, touch of humour or unexpected gambit, rally the listeners and lead them on with revived interest into the final third.

The lecture session entitled “Preaching in images” seeks to encourage the student to concretise the abstract. The lecturer points out that speaking in abstract terms takes less effort in preparation than looking for concrete examples, down-to-earth metaphors and apposite stories. This reinforces what Van Rensburg says (see 1.2.2.3.2) concerning the greater effort required to master preaching in the narrative genre. The lecturer quotes FB Craddock (1981:80) as saying, “Images are not in fact to be regarded as illustrative but rather as essential to the form and inseparable from the content of the entire sermon.” According to the summary provided, the lecturer closes this particular lecture with the statement, “Our training here necessarily deals in abstractions but we have to convert these into concrete language which is memorable because it has impact, colour and life. This is the language we find in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments.” One can understand this statement in view of the fact that by the end of their course the student will have been studying philosophical and theological subjects for six years and they would be sorely in need of encouragement to concretise what they have learnt. To all students it should be pointed out, of course, that in the narrative portions of the Bible, God’s truth has already been concretised in the stories that abound there. This fact is also brought out in this lecture.

For this course the book **As one without authority** by FB Craddock (1981) is a recommended text. This book has much to say about narrative. Although biblical narrative preaching, i.e. the presentation of biblical stories in a narrative homiletical

format, is not explicitly dealt with and encouraged at this institution there is more background support for this approach to be found in Fr Chatteris' lectures than I encountered in any of the other named institutions.

7.2.3.2 Quantifying homiletics lectures

Each year of studies comprises two semesters, each week of which contains approximately twenty hours of lectures. An average student, therefore, embarking on the six-year course culminating in ordination would have received approximately 2500 hours of lectures. Formal homiletics lectures take up two hours per week for one year, i.e. approximately 50 hours. Therefore expressed as a percentage, formal homiletics takes up about 2.0% of the six-year course.

7.2.4 Interviews

Respondent Cp1010 was of the opinion that in his own (Roman Catholic) tradition it was easier to concentrate on performing the ritual rather than preparing good sermons as it was far easier to do the former than the latter which required a great deal of work.

The homiletics lecturer allowed me to peruse some homiletics course assessment sheets which had been submitted by about twenty students in respect of the year 2000. The great majority of the students asked for more practical and less theory to be taught in the course. Some said that more practice *and* theory were required and a few said there was sufficient of both. These assessment sheets also revealed the overwhelming approval of the students of the efforts being made to assist the students to translate their preaching efforts into the indigenous languages.

Without exception the students interviewed expressed the opinion that their homiletics course should be extended. Some respondents felt that there should be more theory and others felt that there should be more of both theory and practical.

Respondent Cs1025 said that the course should be extended and that there should be a homiletics course in both the third and the fourth years. He was also of the

opinion that the practical element of the course should be structurally related to one or other local parish. At least one sermon should be preached in a local rural or township church and be assessed by that church. This respondent also called for assistance in preaching to specific needs such as HIV/Aids.

Respondents Cs1035 and Cs1045 were also of the firm opinion that homiletics should relate to a local parish on an on-going basis. They were of the opinion that in the lecture room the student was assessed for credits but in the parish he was assessed for a higher purpose. The policy of the institute is that students are given appointments to preach at local churches Sunday by Sunday. On every such occasion the student should be accompanied by one or more fellow students and the preacher should be formally assessed in some way. It is important that the student contextualise his sermons for the benefit of those to whom he preaches. Respondent Cs1035 advocated that homiletics courses should be offered in both the students' second and sixth years of study. Respondent Cs1015 was of the opinion that more practical sessions were required.

7.3 TRINITY ACADEMY OF PIETERMARITZBURG

This institute is located at 8 Cross Road in the suburb of Pelham, Pietermaritzburg. The Academy is in some legal senses autonomous, but is inextricably linked to Holy Trinity Church, Pietermaritzburg, a constituent church of the Church of England in South Africa and it adheres to the traditions and beliefs of that Church. The Academy, however, receives students from all denominations. A substantial number of its students come from outside South Africa, mainly African countries.

7.3.1 Vision statement

The vision, faith and doctrinal statements were kindly provided by the principal. The curriculum of the Academy is designed to focus primarily on the Bible through individual book studies, surveys, interpretation and Theology. Other subjects such as church history, practical Christian living, "Christianity in the World" and ministry skills are also regarded as of great importance. It is noteworthy that in the vision statement "preaching" is emphasised immediately after the mention of ministry skills. This is an

indication of the importance ascribed to homiletics in the curriculum.

Missions is understood to mean primarily the taking of the Gospel to previously unevangelised people and this subject is also offered.

7.3.2 Statement of faith

While it recognises that no statement of faith is complete in and of itself and affirms that the Bible alone is the final authority in matters of faith and practice, Trinity Academy adheres to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion (1571) as set out in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. The Academy also acknowledges the value and truth of certain expressions of faith which emerged from the Protestant Reformation, namely the Heidelberg Catechism of 1562, the Westminster Confession of 1646 and the Shorter Catechism of 1647.

7.3.3 Doctrinal Statement

A list of eleven doctrinal expressions has been drawn up (see Appendix F). All members of the T.A.P. governing body and all lecturers (full-time and part-time) are obliged to signify their agreement with the Doctrinal Statement by signing a copy of it every year in which they are associated with the Academy in their various ways of service. Some academics may say that this procedure is restrictive in the sense that for example a practicing Jew and Muslim would be precluded from lecturing on their respective belief-systems. However with regard to lecturing in the subject of homiletics there should be no reasonable objection to the Statement.

7.3.4 General information

7.3.4.1 Courses offered

The following diplomas and certificates are granted by the Academy:

The basic three-year course of the Academy consists of the following:

- One year Diploma in Ministry (34 courses)
- These graduates may then proceed to a one year Diploma in Theology (34

courses)

- Graduates from this in turn may then proceed to a one year diploma in Pastoral Theology (34 courses)

As a first step towards the diploma in ministry a student may enrol for the Certificate in Theology (15 courses).

Selected students may enrol for the BTh Arts degree which is offered in conjunction with the University of Zululand Faculty of Theology and Religion Studies. In each of the three years 16 modules are completed.

7.3.4.2 History and structure

The Academy was founded in 1986 as an extension of the Bible-teaching ministry of Holy Trinity Church of Pietermaritzburg (CESA). At present approximately fifty students receive instruction, over forty of which are accommodated and fed in residences on or near the campus. The Academy follows the term structure of the KwaZulu-Natal school year. The entire three-year syllabus is taught every year so that a student who misses a subject is able to complete that subject the following year. This procedure enables the Academy to enrol new students at the start of every term if necessary.

7.3.5 Homiletics

True to traditions which can be traced to the Reformation, studies in preaching are given prominence. During the student's first year, for three terms he or she will attend lectures on the theory and practice of preaching. Some of the subjects of these lectures are as follows:

- The nature of preaching
- Types of preaching
- Preparation for preaching
- The choice of text
- The spadework of preparation

- The construction of the sermon
- Theme, introduction and conclusion
- The use of illustrations
- The finishing touches
- The act of preaching
- The preacher's devotional life
- The call of the preacher
- The preacher and his library
- The nature and importance of pastoral work in relation to preaching

During this year each student will write out in full a total of six sermons. These will be submitted to and assessed by the lecturer. Each student will also preach one sermon to fellow students in a homiletics lecture period during the year. Under the guidance of the lecturer the class will criticise that sermon using a structured assessment list. In the first year Homiletics is an examinable subject – the student has to achieve a pass. This feature shows the status of homiletics at the academy and the practice of examining homiletics is by no means common in the theological and ministerial institutions in our country.

7.3.5.1 Comments

In gathering further material to ascertain what *types* of sermons are described in the first-year lectures I was given a sheet with the following information:

3.5 Expository Preaching

- (i) One verse of Scripture
- (ii) Whole section of Scripture
- (iii) Major ideas, overlooking detail
- (iv) Single phrase of Scripture

3.6 Doctrinal Preaching

3.7 Evangelistic Preaching

3.8 Topical Preaching

- (i) A theme

(ii) A current event

3.9 Biographical Preaching

3.10 Missionary Preaching

3.11 Ethical Preaching

In discussion with the lecturer currently responsible for lecturing in the different types of preaching, I was told that the nearest they come to dealing with narrative preaching was under the heading Biographical Preaching. I consider this to be a weakness, however, as I believe that the main features of narrative sermons should be presented as a sermon model separate from the others.

In the second year a far more practical approach to homiletics is taken than in the first year. Each student has to preach before the class four times during the year. As many students as possible are assigned preaching appointments in various ministries emanating from Holy Trinity Church such as the Ministry to the Poor, and the Factory Ministries. The lecturers encourage feed-back of information from these preaching points and endeavour to encourage and assist the preachers where necessary. It is a real advantage from a practical viewpoint for a training institution to be "church-based" as there are great benefits for students in honing their practical preaching skills. It is, of course, necessary for lecturers and other mentors to take time to monitor the extramural preaching activities of the students.

In the third year of homiletics lectures there is a focus on studies which will enable the student to preach through extended Scripture passages or whole Bible books. As in the second year attention is given to the practical aspects of the student's preparation and presentation. Often it happens that the third year class at Trinity Academy consists of only four or five students and individual attention can be afforded them.

The academy has adopted a conservative stance on the subject of women-preachers and encourages (but does not coerce) women students to prepare themselves for a preaching ministry exclusively to women and children.

7.3.5.2 Quantifying homiletics lectures

When examining the lecturing rosters for all four terms of 2003 it appears that during the typical three-year course a student will attend 1662 hours of lectures. The lecture-periods labelled "Assignment Period" have been excluded from this reckoning. Of this total, homiletics lectures account for 99 hours or 5.96%.

7.3.6 Interviews

Respondent Ds1013 stated without elaborating upon it that the narrative form of preaching was not presented at this institution. Respondents Ds1023 and Ds1032 made no comments or suggestions concerning the homiletics courses (these three students formed the first batch to be interviewed for this dissertation and are alluded to in 6.2.1). At a later date respondents Ds1043, Ds1052 and Ds1061, while not making specific comments concerning their homiletics training, contributed church congregation data.

Respondent Dp1013 made a cogent remark in answer to the question "What improvements to the (homiletics) courses would you suggest?" The respondent wrote, "But it (the homiletics courses) should be more African than Western. The other thing is that most lecturers are White people with Western thinking! We are in Africa, not Europe!" In examining this statement and determining how the situation could be rectified one is reminded of the responses described in places including 7.1.4 where students called for an acknowledgement of the need for relating preaching to various communities who were not familiar with the methods taught at some institutions. I maintain that the narrative approach should be explored as being suitable for these communities. This respondent had gone on to another denominational training institution after completing his course at Trinity Academy. I asked him what he would suggest as a solution to the problem of "western-thinking" lecturers which he had written about. Would he rather see Africans in place as lecturers in homiletics? He said not necessarily. It merely required the White lecturers, he said, to give time and effort to try to understand their students' cultures. They would achieve this if they were to visit the students in their own communities, homes and churches. He cited an instance in which an overseas man came to this

country to take up an appointment as principal of the theological college from which this respondent had recently graduated. The principal spent some considerable time visiting the homes, communities and churches of his students in order to acquaint himself with the culture and Christianity of those to whom he would lecture. However there was an anomaly in what the respondent said. At that institution theology was taught in terms of “Biblical theology” rather than systematic theology. This created serious problems for the simple-minded. When a preacher having a “Biblical theology” mindset prepared a sermon for simple folk they often found it difficult and confusing. He said that if the preacher were to, for example, start in Ruth, jump to Genesis, move to 2 Kings, then to Amos, all in the interests of pursuing the theme of “God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule” – a theme beloved of the proponents of Biblical Theology – then non-academic listeners often failed to grasp the meaning of what was being taught. I asked whether narrative preaching would be more appropriate and he enthusiastically agreed. He pointed to a “spiritual giant” in the denomination the late Bishop Stephen Bradley who was well-known in preaching narrative sermons in the rural and township churches. The respondent said, “Many came to know Christ through his preaching.”

Respondent Dp1023 is ministering cross-culturally to rural congregations in a neighbouring country. He advocated the inclusion in the homiletics courses of more information on African traditional beliefs including spiritism and how to apply the Gospel to this situation. I feel that, strictly speaking, this information belongs to the sphere of pastoral theology and not homiletics. However I regard narrative preaching to be an ideal vehicle for the conveying of Christian truth concerning extra-biblical belief systems including occultism. Such useful narratives can be found in the Gospels and the book of Acts (for example chapter 19).

Respondent Dp1053 was of the opinion that the type of sermon to be preached would depend on the type favoured by the preacher. I would make the point, however, that the preacher-in-training should be exposed to various types of homiletical approaches, notably narrative preaching, in order to make valid choices.

7.4 UNION BIBLE INSTITUTE

This institution is located at 45 Dennis Shepstone Drive, Hilton on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg.

7.4.1 Expanded purpose statement

Information provided in this section was obtained from leaflets kindly provided by the Principal. The Union Bible Institute provides biblical, evangelical and practical training for the development of servant-leadership. The Institute's purpose is to develop Christlike servant-leaders who are committed to Christ and his Great Commission:

- By thoroughly grounding prospective Christian workers in the Word of God, so that they will be able to understand its basic content and apply its principles to their lives and ministries. UBI is a Bible college holding the belief that the Bible is the Word of God and the chief means of developing Christlike servant-leaders.
- By prayerfully depending on God in continuing and accelerating the process of transformation in the students. UBI does not create leaders but seeks to develop those who are called by God and identified by churches as potential leaders.
- By guiding students through teaching and counselling, in the development of their character, that they may become more like Christ. UBI acknowledges that while knowledge and skills are important, the Bible emphasises Christlike character as the chief qualification for leaders.
- By providing both theoretical and practical training in leadership and ministry skills, while modelling a humble attitude of a leader as one who serves. UBI equips students in ministry skills such as preaching, teaching, counselling, administration and evangelising, not so that they may glorify themselves and dominate others, but so that students may use these skills as servant-leaders.

- By exalting Christ through music, prayer, testimony and every aspect of the life and curriculum of the school, and by challenging our students to commit themselves wholeheartedly to him. The goal is not merely academic but spiritual.
- By exposing students to the need of worldwide evangelisation and involving them where possible in cross-cultural ministry, yet seeking also to equip them for ministry in their own cultures. UBI aims to instil in the students a commitment to the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations.

7.4.2 General information

7.4.2.1 Courses offered

7.4.2.1.1 Diploma

UBI offers a three-year diploma course in Biblical Studies in either IsiZulu or English.

7.4.2.1.2 Degree

Qualified students may enter a degree program leading to a Bachelor of Theology accredited by the University of Zululand. This is conducted in English.

7.4.2.1.3 IsiZulu degree under investigation

UBI was given, by the University of Zululand, the task of investigating the possibility of providing studies towards the degree of Bachelor of Theology in the medium of IsiZulu.

7.4.2.2 Computer training

The Institute's literature records that each student receives computer training to assist with sermon preparation and future church administration.

7.4.2.3 Homiletics

The Institute's literature mentions that students are trained in teaching and preaching and that opportunities in open-air evangelism ("Sowers") are also provided.

7.4.2.4 Quantifying the homiletics lectures

This calculation was not as easy as for example with Trinity Academy as I was not provided with a sample roster. I was told that, while in the subject of homiletics every lecture period was used as such with the lecturer present whatever was being done, in the other subjects often the class would be permitted informally to use the lecture period to work on assignments, etc., without it having being designated as an assignment period on the roster. For this reason all that was possible was an estimate of the percentage of time afforded to homiletics. My estimate amounted to 6% which compares closely with the figure for Trinity Academy of PMB. Respondent Ep1010 felt that the figure of 6% was too low. I replied that this figure was my considered estimate for the basic course but that I would consider amending it if presented with a more accurate assessment by the Institute. In the absence of such an assessment my estimate of 6% stands.

7.4.3 Interviews

Respondent Ep1020 outlined one of the ways in which the students spontaneously made use of narrative in the presentation of theological truths. Recently in the course of a lecture on pastoral theology the lecturer advised the students to use great care and discretion when as pastors they would interview and counsel members of the opposite sex. Some of the students composed a skit (satirical play) in which the principles expressed in that lecture were acted out for students and staff at an institute function. In this dramatic presentation the principles of narrative were used to excellent effect in imprinting these truths on the minds of the audience.

Respondent Es1043 expressed approval of my inclination toward narrative preaching. He said that story-telling is a much-loved part of his (Zulu) culture. Typically the extended family would gather in the evening around the fire and the elders in the family would tell stories to the gathering. Some of the stories would be fictional and

some would be true anecdotes. The story-teller would weave truths into the story and the hearers would, it was hoped, identify with the characters and appropriate the truths. This respondent was also of the opinion that instruction concerning the preacher's devotional life should feature somewhere in the homiletics course. I said that I was in agreement with this (see 4.1.2.1.4).

Respondent Ep1010 outlined for me the model on which homiletics lectures to the English-speaking students at Union Bible Institute was based. The lecturer claimed exclusive allegiance to what he termed the "expository" model of preaching. Following this model the student chooses the "text" according to a number of criteria such as whether the preacher is conducting systematic preaching through a scripture book, the spiritual needs of the congregation, the Christian calendar, a special national event or crisis, etc. The "text" is not normally one verse of Scripture (although it can be) but a passage from a Bible book or epistle. The student examines the chosen text and determines the "dominant theme", then the "subordinate truths". The lecturer's notes (a copy of which was kindly provided by the lecturer Dr R Murray himself) contain an example outline of a sermon on the passage John 1:35-42 which the lecturer derived from the application of this model to the passage. In summary, the actual scriptural passage describes how John the Baptist was baptising converts at the River Jordan. He points out Jesus, who is passing by, as "the Lamb of God". Two of John's disciples, including Andrew, having heard John's words approached Jesus, accompanied him to his home and stayed with him for the day. Andrew told his brother Peter that they had found the Messiah and brought him to meet Jesus who announces prophetically the name by which Simon Peter would become known.

The lecturer, according to his notes, sees this passage as having a dominant subject, "witnessing", and a dominant theme, "leading others to Christ through witnessing". The "purpose statement" is seen to be, "To motivate believers to lead others to Christ through witnessing." The resulting sermon would have an introduction, then the following three points, then a conclusion.

- (1) The requirements for witnessing to others about Christ
 - (a) Like Andrew we must first realise that Jesus is the Lamb of God (vv 35,36)
 - (b) “ “ “ “ “ follow Jesus as our Teacher (v 37)
 - (c) “ “ “ “ “ get to spend time in Jesus' presence (vv 38,39)

- (2) The enthusiasm of witnessing to others about Christ.
 - (a) Like Andrew we must want to tell others about Christ as the promised Messiah (v 41).
 - (b) Like Andrew we must bring others to Christ (v. 42a) and want others to know Jesus (vv 40-42a).

- (3) The results of leading others to Christ through witnessing.
 - (a) Like Peter they may be radically changed (v 42).
 - (b) Like Peter they may become strong and dependable followers of Christ (Cephas means “rock”) (v 42).
 - (c) Like Peter they may become powerful leaders of Christ's church.

There would then be an appropriate conclusion.

I feel that if the passage were to have been examined and preached upon from a narrative point of view, however, the result would have been rather different. There is much in the passage that can contribute to a narrative approach. There is closure – “The next day” (v 35 & v 43). The geographical setting (“there” v 35) is the Jordan River near Bethany where John has been baptising candidates (v 28). The baptism of Jesus is also part of the narrative setting in which John dramatically announces Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”. The development of this correspondence will depend in part on the preacher's understanding of baptism (is Jesus' baptism a symbol of his death, burial and resurrection, tying up with the “Lamb of God” announcement?). There are a variety of characters. John the Baptist whose two disciples including Andrew were apparently being enticed away by Jesus (would John react against this or would he continue to direct others away

from himself, v 27, to the Lamb of God?). The central character is Jesus. In the story he is announced by John and “supported” by Andrew and the other of John’s disciples. This anonymous disciple is enigmatic. From early times it was believed that this disciple may have been the disciple John, the one conservatively held to have been the author of the fourth Gospel (NIVSB: 1595). Jesus shows signs of having a “round” character trait (see 2.5.3.3, paragraph 4) in that he expresses (or implies) ignorance in v 38 and advance knowledge in v 42. The opening words of Jesus are significant. “What do you want?” This accords with his character expressed elsewhere in that he often tests or draws out those with whom he deals. He gives a gracious invitation, “Come and see.” The two disciples spend the day with Jesus. The story-teller even gives the time at which they left (the tenth hour), an indication that the story-teller was present as an eye-witness! Andrew goes and calls his brother Simon to come and see the Messiah whom they have found. Jesus displays his prior knowledge of Simon and renames him Peter.

The theme of the story can indeed be “witnessing’ to Christ” and this theme can be seen to be expressed in a number of ways in the narrative. The story-teller witnesses to the truth of the incident (especially if one accepts that the story-teller was present!). John the Baptist witnesses to Christ’s saving grace by his words of annunciation, “Look! The Lamb of God!” Andrew as a matter of urgency witnessed to his brother Simon that the Messiah had been found. All the sub-characters witnessed from a position of knowledge. John the Baptist had personal knowledge of Jesus directly from on high (v 32). John the disciple (or the anonymous person) was an eye-witness of the events along with Andrew as they spent the best part of the day with Jesus learning of him.

Respondent Ep1010 was firmly of the opinion that every student of the basic course of the Institute, lectured as they were according to the principles of expository preaching, would have been adequately prepared to preach narrative sermons. I am just as firmly of the opinion that narrative preaching is so distinct a method from any other that it requires a completely separate treatment in the lecture room. These students would no doubt have been trained to expound a passage of Scripture, which

may be a narrative passage, according to the principles of expository preaching but they would not have been made thoroughly conversant with the genre of narrative preaching and specifically exposed to features such as closure, order, setting, characters and plot.

Respondent Es1033 considered that the homiletical training which he had received was excellent and that it had given him confidence and authority to preach to his rural community. An improvement to the course would be the setting up of a facility by which the students could go out into the real township and rural situations and do their practical homiletics training there. One or two students would accompany the student being assessed in order to assess him or her but the main assessment would be undertaken by the pastor or a competent leader of that church. The respondent observed that in the practical homiletics class the students were almost invariably too aware of the student audience to which they preached and often used language which a township or rural congregation would find difficult to understand. He affirmed that expository preaching was a superior method. Not having been exposed to narrative preaching I am not sure what he was comparing expository preaching with. He said that the isiZulu stream at the Institute was taught to preach textual sermons.

Respondent Es1013, while not commenting concerning narrative preaching, appealed on behalf of "struggling students" to the lecturer to be patient and to only criticise "constructively (sic) and with optimistic attitude." He affirmed his satisfaction with expository preaching and said that on coming to this Institute he had to change his way of preaching. I consider it a pity that he did not have the option of narrative preaching presented to him for his consideration. It may well be that this option is just what struggling students need!

Respondent Es1023 commented that he would welcome training in a diversity of preaching methods and not just one single method.

7.5 UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL (Lutheran Theological Institute)

7.5.1 University vision statement

The University is a secular institution of learning but within its bounds exists a School of Theology. This School falls within the Faculty of Human and Management Sciences. The University as a whole in its new name has recently proclaimed the following vision and mission statements:

- Its vision is to be the premier university of African scholarship.
- Its mission is to be a truly South African university that is academically excellent, innovative in research, critically engaged with society and demographically representative, redressing the disadvantages, inequities and imbalances of the past.
- Fourteen goals are enumerated on the last page of its handbook for 2004 of the faculty of human and management sciences.

7.5.2 Lutheran Theological Institute

In some respects this institution lies within the bounds of the university's School of Theology but it retains an independence in some aspects.

7.5.2.1 History of the institution

According to respondent Bp1040 the Institute traces its beginnings to a seminary which was established at Rorkes Drift in 1912 and which offered a four-year theological diploma course. In the course of time the seminary moved to Mapumulo and both diploma and degree courses were offered. UNISA accredited these qualifications. More recently what is now known as the University of KwaZulu-Natal became the academic institution of reference for the institute.

7.5.2.2 Vision and modus operandi

It is mandatory for would-be Lutheran pastors to be trained at the Lutheran Theological Institute although the Institute is by agreement with the University open

to students of other denominations. Students of the Institute receive their theological training at the School of Theology and their practical training at the Institute. Lutherans as a denomination have always laid a strong emphasis on preaching.

7.5.2.3 Homiletics quantified

See 7.6.3, FIG. 3

7.5.2.4 Interviews

Respondent Bs1013, while stating that the training in homiletics which he had received *has* adequately prepared him to preach, suggested some improvements to the homiletics courses. He said that homiletics training must concern itself with enabling the trainee-preacher to come down to the academic level of the audience. The reading of well-prepared sermons to one's peers in the practical-homiletics lecture period tends to be an unnatural presentation of truth and not entirely helpful in preparing students to communicate biblical truths to the listeners. The example of Jesus must be followed and a narrative approach should be adopted. This approach appeals greatly to African congregations and the respondent sees story-telling to be an important part of African culture. He said that in his opinion narrative preaching has been a major factor in the survival and growth of South African groups such as the Shembe-ites and the Zionist Christian Church. He writes, "In the mainline churches members are few and some are leaving the churches, joining those who put in use the Narrative approach." This respondent reported to me how he enjoyed being part of the crowd of passers-by listening to the Shembe church holding open-air services in Durban at the taxi rank near "The Workshop". Their homiletical approach was almost exclusively narrative.

This respondent also criticised "the mainline churches" as being too "formal". When asked to explain what he meant by this I understood him to mean that preaching in the mainline churches was too structured, rigid and "well-prepared", whereas narrative preaching, he said, was more "relaxed" and "attractive". I gathered that what he meant was not that narrative preaching required less preparation but that it was formed in a less formal mould. By "mainline churches" I sensed that he was referring

mainly to his own denomination as the following respondent Bp1040 seems to confirm. Bs1013 also felt that although narrative preaching was a gift, and that there were difficulties in developing it, it could in fact be learned and developed (see 1.2.2.3.2 final paragraph).

The above response was most favourable in supporting the hypothesis of 1.1.4. I feel that his point may be somewhat overstated and that there are significant factors in addition to narrative preaching which account for the growth of AIC's at the expense of mainline churches. Nevertheless he believes, and I concur, that narrative preaching is very significant in this type of congregation in the communication of scriptural truth.

This respondent also complained that a fault in his training was that insufficient stress was laid on the need to "come down to the level of the congregation". This point was also made by respondent Bp1033, a past student who stressed the importance that the preacher should be "as simple as possible to the rural people" regardless of the type of sermon that was preached. My contention is that narrative preaching is the ideal vehicle for simplicity.

Respondent Bp1040 stated that the students were encouraged to make use of the Lutheran church almanac when preparing to preach. The first step in preparation is to identify the Sunday on which the sermon would be preached. The "text" is then selected accordingly. The exegesis of the text then proceeds in accordance with the lectures that the students have received on the subject. Attention is paid to the context, parallel passages, an analysis of the text into sections, and an examination of the literary type and underlying tone. Detailed interpretation is next followed by the sermon's conclusion. It is regarded as important that attention is paid to contextualisation, e.g. examining what the passage says to a person suffering from HIV/Aids. From my viewpoint an encouraging feature is that if the "literary type" and "underlying tone" are examined then there is hope that a narrative sermon may result! It does not seem, however, that this type of sermon is actively encouraged. My criticism of this formal, rigidly structured approach is that a key element in the preparation of

narrative preaching, imagination, is suppressed.

This respondent also stated that the recommended text book for the course was HJC Pieterse: *Communicative Preaching*. This book has an excellent section on narrative preaching (see 1.2.2.1). No emphasis is, however, placed on narrative preaching in the lectures.

Respondent Bs1023 called for more practical homiletics instruction and assessment and that his fellow-students needed to be encouraged by positive criticism. Respondent Bs1033 called for the equipping of students in *all* methods of preaching. Respondent Bs1043 regarded the contextualisation of preaching to be most important. I maintain that narrative preaching is the ideal vehicle for making scriptural truth relevant to the hearer's circumstances and context.

7.6 SUMMARY

7.6.1 The lecturers

With the exception of the Lutheran Theological Institute all the main homiletics lecturers at the named institutions were Whites. Only one respondent expressed the view that this led to problems of understanding the best methods of teaching homiletics and even he did not advocate that Blacks would necessarily prove to be better lecturers than Whites but he felt White lecturers should endeavour to understand the township and rural situation and mindset. Many of the respondents, however, expressed obliquely that there was a lack of appreciation in the lecture room of the situation in which students would find themselves preaching after their studies had concluded. Some stressed the need for relating the training they had or were receiving to the "real world" which I continually gained the impression was on a lower intellectual level than that catered for in the lecture room.

7.6.2 The methods

All of the institutions except St Joseph's formally claim that expository preaching is the method of choice. The Lutheran Theological Institute and Trinity Academy describe in addition a number of formal types of sermon such as textual, biographical,

topical, etc. In none of the institutions is narrative preaching formally acknowledged as a separate genre in its own right although in its approach to preaching St Joseph's comes closest to the narrative approach.

7.6.3 A comparison of lecture time and homiletics time

An estimate for each institution as to how many hours the student spends in lectures *with the lecturer present and presiding over the lecture or practical.*

Training Institution	Basic Course	Total lect. Hrs.	Total homiletics hrs	±%
1. Evang. Sem. S.A.	3 years	±960	±24	2,5
2. St Josephs Th. Inst.	6 years	±2500	±50	2.0
3. Trinity Acad. PMB	3 years	±1660	±100	6,0
4. Union Bible Institute	3 years	±1700	±100	6.0
5. Univ. KZN (LTI)	3 years	±960	±24	2.5

FIG. 3

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 THE HYPOTHESIS REVISITED

8.1.1 The hypothesis of 1.1.5 stated:

"For substantial numbers of members, adherents and attendees of certain rural and township churches served by five particular training institutions, a narrative approach to sermon preparation has distinct advantages over the linear approach."

8.1.2 Proving the hypothesis

I have endeavoured to show in chapters 1 – 5 that there is an abundance of academic evidence for the validity of the narrative approach in both hermeneutics and homiletics, especially the latter. The human mind is naturally predisposed (or conditioned) in the processing of story (Chapter 1). This fact is acknowledged in the academic discipline of hermeneutics in the sphere of narrative criticism. Its proponents even maintain that the age of historical criticism is giving way to the age of narrative criticism (Chapter 2). Narrative portions of the Bible take up more than 50% of the space of each of the OT and NT (according to my estimate) and in chapter 3 the different features of narrative are examined where they occur in both NT and OT narratives. There is a clearly defined scriptural basis and scope for preaching (Chapter 4) and the supreme exponent of narrative preaching is our Lord Jesus Christ who favoured the genre of parable (Chapter 5).

According to the interviews which I conducted with past and present students and lecturing staff of the named institutions this approach has not been followed or even investigated in any of these institutions at present or in the recent past. Further, in only four of the thirty churches for which data was collected was narrative preaching mentioned, and then only along with other types and not as the main approach to preaching. In no instance, however, was I made aware of any opposition to my view that a narrative approach in homiletics has great promise as a vehicle of the preaching of the Gospel to a significant number of church folk served by these

institutions, in fact those who had been exposed to narrative preaching in the context of rural and township Blacks were very positive regarding its suitability.

Hence, according to my research, analysis and subsequent findings the validity of my hypothesis is established.

8.1.3 A philosophy of preaching.

It cannot be denied that for sharing the Gospel there is great value in the private interview. The seeker-after-truth, or what long ago was called the "burdened enquirer", comes in touch with the trained pastor privately and God's servant counsels the person on what today is called a "one-on-one" basis. The advantage of this method lies in its convenience. The exact problem or need can more easily be established by a private personal interview and the solution can more readily be directly applied. Follow-up meetings can be arranged to ascertain the success of the response to the offered teaching. The disadvantage of this method lies in its inconvenience. The minister can fit only a limited number of private interviews in to his or her busy day and in any event not every serious enquirer would feel at liberty to seek a close encounter of the ministerial kind. The NT, however, vouches for the potential for the success of this method by providing a number of examples. Our Lord responded to Nicodemus who sought a private interview and he also reached out privately to the Samaritan woman at the well even though she did not arrange to meet him.

The overwhelming impression in the gospels of the NT, however, is that Christ's main method of choice in communicating his truth was *public proclamation*.

I approve in a general way that at the named institutions greater emphasis is laid on the acquiring of academic knowledge than on techniques of imparting it to others. My philosophy of preaching is such that the content takes precedence over the communication. If a choice had to be made it would be preferable for students to be strong in their grasp of the message and weak in methods, than *vice versa*. However the making of such a choice ought not to be necessary. A minister of the Gospel by the

very name of this calling must be able to communicate God's truth to people in need. Is it not suggestive of imbalance in the ministers' training if a scant 2-2½% of lecturing time is taken up with preparing them to share what they have learnt with those to whom they are called?

I am a follower of the great Apostle Paul when he says of the importance of preaching, "... it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1Cor 1:21 KJV), and again, "... I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1Cor.9:19). I would paraphrase this latter quotation as follows: "What a miserable failure I would regard myself to be if deprived of the privilege of preaching the truths of the Word of God."

8.1.4 A proposed lecture series

8.1.4.1 Outline of the course

It is in the spirit of the previous paragraph that I have attempted to state and prove the hypothesis and that I now provide the following outline of a proposed series of lectures which could be presented at institutions such as those named and which, I believe, would satisfy the need which has been identified. Details of every feature in this outline are present in the dissertation, and references to the most salient features are given in brackets.

I BACKGROUND TO NARRATIVE PREACHING

1. Spiritual

All Christian preachers should rely on God the Holy Spirit for their inspiration.

2. Mental

In comparison with many types of preaching which rely heavily on logic, narrative preaching gives due acknowledgement to imagination and the need for the hearers to identify closely with the passage of Scripture.

3. Historical

In post-biblical times the Church Fathers in the 2nd and 3rd centuries and the Latin Fathers in the 4th and 5th centuries recognised the literary qualities of the biblical stories. As the Reformation period approached, this awareness diminished as the content of the Scriptures was abstracted into theological systems. In modern times the historical-critical era of the 19th and 20th centuries is gradually giving way to the literary era (2.2.1).

II SUITABILITY OF NARRATIVE PREACHING

1. Aesthetic appeal

In most cultures and in all age groups, stories have great appeal. The listeners identify themselves with one or other of the characters. Negatively, some are prejudiced against stories and illustrations in sermons, regarding them as “fluff” and more suited to juveniles (1.2.2).

2. Open-ended form

Because stories have an indirect appeal they do not make the demands on their hearers that other sermon-forms do. They are more suitable for addressing sensitive issues. They also appeal to the anti-authoritarian hearer (1.2.2.4).

III THE MECHANICS OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

1. Characteristics of narrative

2. The purpose of language

Not only to be *informative* but *performative*, effecting change. Erroneous methods of interpreting the Scriptures are sometimes based on an inadequate view of language (2.3.1).

3. Features of narrative (including Biblical examples) (2.5.3)

- (a) Closure**
- (b) Order**
- (c) Characters**
- (d) Setting**
- (e) Plot**

IV NARRATIVE PORTIONS OF THE BIBLE

God communicates his truth to a large degree through narrative. A high proportion of the Bible is in narrative form.

- 1. Genesis – Nehemiah (3.1)**
- 2. The Gospels. Christ's parables. As a composite work Luke-Acts has the greatest volume in the NT and has a very high proportion of narrative (3.2).**

V. MODEL FOR PREPARING A NARRATIVE SERMON.

This model is a modification of a model by M Ellingsen (see Appendix B). It is given in summary form.

- 1. Choose a narrative portion according to the needs of the congregation and the preacher, using a suitable translation of the Scriptures.**
- 2. Identify the extent of the story using the principles of closure (2.5.3.1, 3.2.1).**

3. Determine the main theme or themes of the narrative (4.1.1.3).
4. Look at the order of events to determine any complications (2.5.3.2, 3.2.2).
5. Examine the characters in the story (1.2.2.1, 1.2.2.4.2, 2.5.3.3). Classify them as "round", "flat", "block", etc., according to what they do or say in the narrative portion.
6. Outline the plot (2.5.3.4).
7. Examine the setting (2.5.3.5), temporal, geographical and social.
8. Outline the sermon.
9. Rehearse the delivery.

10. Booklist

The following is a suggested list of books which can be used in conjunction with the lecture series.

10a Hermeneutics

Cotterell, P & Turner M. 1989. **Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation**. London: SPCK.

Ellingsen, M. 1990. **The Integrity of Biblical Narrative**. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Longman, Tremper III. 1987. **Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Marguerat, D & Bourquin, Y. 1999. **How to Read Bible Stories: an Introduction to Narrative Criticism**. London: SCM.

Powell, MA. 1990. **What is Narrative Criticism?** Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.

10b. Homiletics

Chapman, J. 1999. **Setting Hearts on Fire**. Sydney: Matthias Media.

- Craddock, FB. 1981. **As One Without Authority**. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Pieterse, HJC. 1987. **Communicative Preaching**. Pretoria: Unisa.
- Robinson, HW. 1980. **Biblical Preaching**. Grand Rapids: Baker.
- Stott, JRW. 1982. **I Believe in Preaching**. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Wiersbe, WW. 1994. **Preaching and Teaching with Imagination**. Gr. Rpd: Baker.

8.2 CONCLUSION

Jesus told a story about a fig tree which grew in a vineyard (Luke 13:6-9). The vines were the owner's livelihood but the fig tree caught his eye and was important to him. It had a privileged position and grew in good soil, unlike another fig tree of that time which grew by the roadside (Matt 21:19) and suffered a fate similar to the one which threatened the tree in our story. *The owner was tolerant but he found no fruit. The tree had been barren for three seasons and so he was deeply displeased that it was taking in the goodness of the soil but not giving anything in return. The one who took care of the owner's interests urged him to delay judgement and promised to care for the hapless tree. The story ends not in success but in hope.*

We look for fruit as a product of our labour. Fruit is enjoyable and satisfying to the eater. In the spiritual sense it is formed as the result of life from above where the Spirit reigns supreme and does as he wills (Jn 3:8). We as servants of Christ look first for fruit in our own lives and then in the lives of those who learn from us and we are distressed at the thought of barrenness.

Fruit also bears the seed of the promise of fruitfulness to come. The seed that we sow carefully in our students will, as it pleases God, result in a harvest to his glory out there in the fields and highways of life. Our responsibility is like that of the caretaker of the vineyard (v.7), having chosen and planted the right tree, to nurture it.

This dissertation was planted with care and grew up in privilege. It is offered in hope that it will bear fruit to God's glory.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

The following article was available on line (Geisler, 2002) and contains the affirmations and denials of the Statement in bold type, each couplet being followed by NL Geisler's comments.

Norman L. Geisler, *Explaining Hermeneutics: A Commentary on the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics*. Oakland, California: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1983.

Preface

Summit I of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy took place in Chicago on October 26-28, 1978 for the purpose of affirming afresh the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, making clear the understanding of it and warning against its denial. In the years that have passed since Summit I, God has blessed that effort in ways surpassing most anticipations. A gratifying flow of helpful literature on the doctrine of inerrancy as well as a growing commitment to its value give cause to pour forth praise to our great God.

The work of Summit I had hardly been completed when it became evident that there was yet another major task to be tackled. While we recognize that belief in the inerrancy of Scripture is basic to maintaining its authority, the values of that commitment are only as real as one's understanding of the meaning of Scripture. Thus, the need for Summit II. For two years plans were laid and papers were written on themes relating to hermeneutical principles and practices. The culmination of this effort has been a meeting in Chicago on November 10-13, 1982 at which we, the undersigned, have participated. In similar fashion to the Chicago Statement of 1978,

we herewith present these affirmations and denials as an expression of the results of our labors to clarify hermeneutical issues and principles. We do not claim completeness or systematic treatment of the entire subject, but these affirmations and denials represent a consensus of the approximately one hundred participants and observers gathered at this conference. It has been a broadening experience to engage in dialogue, and it is our prayer that God will use the product of our diligent efforts to enable us and others to more correctly handle the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

Article I

WE AFFIRM that the normative authority of Holy Scripture is the authority of God Himself, and is attested by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church.

WE DENY the legitimacy of separating the authority of Christ from the authority of Scripture, or of opposing the one to the other.

This first article affirms that the authority of Scripture cannot be separated from the authority of God. Whatever the Bible affirms, God affirms. And what the Bible affirms (or denies), it affirms (or denies) with the very authority of God. Such authority is normative for all believers; it is the canon or rule of God.

This divine authority of Old Testament Scripture was confirmed by Christ Himself on numerous occasions (cf. Matt. 5:17-18; Luke 24:44; John 10:34-35). And what our Lord confirmed as to the divine authority of the Old Testament, He promised also for the New Testament (John 14:16; 16:13). The Denial points out that one cannot reject the divine authority of Scripture without thereby impugning the authority of Christ, who attested Scripture's divine authority. Thus it is wrong to claim one can accept the full authority of Christ without acknowledging the complete authority of Scripture.

Article II

WE AFFIRM that as Christ is God and Man in One Person, so Scripture is,

indivisibly, God's Word in human language.

WE DENY that the humble, human form of Scripture entails errancy any more than the humanity of Christ, even in His humiliation, entails sin.

Here an analogy is drawn between Christ and Scripture. Both Christ and Scripture have dual aspects of divinity and humanity, indivisibly united in one expression. Both Christ and Scripture were conceived by an act of the Holy Spirit. Both involve the use of fallible human agents. But both produced a theanthropic result; one a sinless person and the other an errorless book.

However, like all analogies, there is a difference. Christ is one person uniting two natures whereas Scripture is one written expression uniting two authors (God and man). This difference notwithstanding, the strength of the likeness in the analogy points to the inseparable unity between divine and human dimensions of Scripture so that one aspect cannot be in error while the other is not.

The Denial is directed at a contemporary tendency to separate the human aspects of Scripture from the divine and allow for error in the former. By contrast the framers of this article believe that the human form of Scripture can no more be found in error than Christ could be found in sin. That is to say, the Word of God (i.e., the Bible) is as necessarily perfect in its human manifestation as was the Son of God in His human form.

Article III

WE AFFIRM that the Person and work of Jesus Christ are the central focus of the entire Bible.

WE DENY that any method of interpretation which rejects or obscures the Christ-centeredness of Scripture is correct.

This Affirmation follows the teaching of Christ that He is the central theme of Scripture (Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Heb. 10:7). This is to say that focus on the person and work of Christ runs throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. To be sure there are other and tangential topics, but the person and work of Jesus Christ are central.

In view of the focus of Scripture on Christ, the Denial stresses a hermeneutical obligation to make this Christocentric message clear in the expounding of Scripture. As other articles (cf. Article XV) emphasize the "literal" interpretation of Scripture, this article is no license for allegorization and unwarranted typology which see Christ portrayed in every detail of Old Testament proclamation. The article simply points to the centrality of Christ's mission in the unfolding of God's revelation to man.

Neither is there any thought in this article of making the role of Christ more ultimate than that of the Father. What is in view here is the focus of Scripture and not the ultimate source or object of the whole plan of redemption.

Article IV

WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture acts through it today to work faith in its message.

WE DENY that the Holy Spirit ever teaches to any one anything which is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

Here stress is laid on the fact that the Holy Spirit not only is the source of Scripture, but also works to produce faith in Scripture He has inspired. Without this ministry of the Holy Spirit, belief in the truth of Scripture would not occur.

The Denial is directed at those alleged "revelations" which some claim to have but which are contrary to Scripture. No matter how sincere or genuinely felt, no dream, vision, or supposed revelation which contradicts Scripture ever comes from the Holy

Spirit. For the utterances of the Holy Spirit are all harmonious and noncontradictory (see Article XX).

Article V

WE AFFIRM that the Holy Spirit enables believers to appropriate and apply Scripture to their lives.

WE DENY that the natural man is able to discern spiritually the biblical message apart from the Holy Spirit.

The design of this article is to indicate that the ministry of the Holy Spirit extends beyond the inspiration of Scripture to its very application to the lives of the believer. Just as no one calls Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3), so no one can appropriate the message of Scripture to his life apart from the gracious work of the Holy Spirit.

The Denial stresses the truth that the natural man does not receive the spiritual message of Scripture. Apart from the work of the Holy Spirit there is no welcome for *its truth in an unregenerate heart*.

This does not imply that a non-Christian is unable to understand the meaning of any Scripture. It means that whatever he may perceive of the message of Scripture, that without the Holy Spirit's work he will not welcome the message in his heart.

Article VI

WE AFFIRM that the Bible expresses God's truth in propositional statements, and we declare that biblical truth is both objective and absolute. We further affirm that a statement is true if it represents matters as they actually are, but is an error if it misrepresents the facts.

WE DENY that, while Scripture is able to make us wise unto salvation, biblical truth should be defined in terms of this function. We further deny that error

should be defined as that which willfully deceives.

Since hermeneutics is concerned with understanding the truth of Scripture, attention is directed here to the nature of truth. Several significant affirmations are made about the nature of truth.

First, in contrast to contemporary relativism it is declared that truth is absolute. Second, as opposed to subjectivism it is acknowledged that truth is objective. Finally, in opposition to existential and pragmatic views of truth, this article affirms that truth is what corresponds to reality. This same point was made in the "Chicago Statement on Inerrancy" (1978) in Article XIII and the commentary on it.

The Denial makes it evident that views which redefine an error to mean what "misleads," rather than what is a mistake, must be rejected. This redefinition of the word "error" is both contrary to Scripture and to common sense. In Scripture the word error is used of unintentional acts (Lev. 4:2) as well as intentional ones. Also, in common parlance a statement is in error if it is a factual mistake, even if there was no intention to mislead anyone by it. So to suggest that the Bible contains mistakes, but that these are not errors so long as they do not mislead, is contrary to both Scripture and ordinary usage.

By this subtle redefinition of error to mean only what misleads but not what misrepresents, some have tried to maintain that the Bible is wholly true (in that it never misleads) and yet that it may have some mistakes in it. This position is emphatically rejected by the confessors of this document.

Article VII

WE AFFIRM that the meaning expressed in each biblical text is single, definite and fixed.

WE DENY that the recognition of this single meaning eliminates the variety of

its application.

The Affirmation here is directed at those who claim a "double" or "deeper" meaning to Scripture than that expressed by the authors. It stresses the unity and fixity of meaning as opposed to those who find multiple and pliable meanings. What a passage means is fixed by the author and is not subject to change by readers. This does not imply that further revelation on the subject cannot help one come to a fuller understanding, but simply that the meaning given in a text is not changed because additional truth is revealed subsequently.

Meaning is also definite in that there are defined limits by virtue of the author's expressed meaning in the given linguistic form and cultural context. Meaning is determined by an author; it is discovered by the readers.

The Denial adds the clarification that simply because Scripture has one meaning does not imply that its messages cannot be applied to a variety of individuals or situations. While the interpretation is one, the applications can be many.

Article VIII

WE AFFIRM *that the Bible contains teachings and mandates which apply to all cultural and situational contexts and other mandates which the Bible itself shows apply only to particular situations.*

WE DENY *that the distinctions between the universal and particular mandates of Scripture can be determined by cultural and situational factors. We further deny that universal mandates may ever be treated as culturally or situationally relative.*

In view of the tendency of many to relativize the message of the Bible by accommodating it to changing cultural situations, this Affirmation proclaims the universality of biblical teachings. There are commands which transcend all cultural

barriers and are binding on all men everywhere. To be sure, some biblical injunctions are directed to specific situations, but even these are normative to the particular situation(s) to which they speak. However, there are commands in Scripture which speak universally to the human situation and are not bound to particular cultures or situations.

The Denial addresses the basis of the distinction between universal and particular situations. It denies that the grounds of this distinction are relative or purely cultural. It further denies the legitimacy of relativizing biblical absolutes by reducing them to purely cultural mandates.

The meaning of this article is that whatever the biblical text means is binding. And what is meant to be universally binding should not be relegated to particular situations any more than what is meant to apply only to particular circumstances should be promulgated as universally applicable.

There is an attempt here to strike a balance between command and culture by recognizing that a command transcends culture, even though it speaks to and is expressed in a particular culture. Thus while the situation (or circumstances) may help us to discover the right course of action, the situation never determines what is right. God's laws are not situationally determined.

Article IX

WE AFFIRM that the term *hermeneutics*, which historically signified the rules of exegesis, may properly be extended to cover all that is involved in the process of perceiving what the biblical revelation means and how it bears on our lives.

WE DENY that the message of Scripture derives from, or is dictated by, the interpreter's understanding. Thus we deny that the "horizons" of the biblical writer and the interpreter may rightly "fuse" in such a way that what the text

communicates to the interpreter is not ultimately controlled by the expressed meaning of the Scripture.

The primary thrust of this Affirmation is definitional. It desires to clarify the meaning of the term hermeneutics by indicating that it includes not only perception of the declared meaning of a text but also an understanding of the implications that text has for one's life. Thus, hermeneutics is more than biblical exegesis. It is not only the science that leads forth the meaning of a passage but also that which enables one (by the Holy Spirit) to understand the spiritual implications the truth(s) of this passage has for Christian living.

The Denial notes that the meaning of a passage is not derived from or dictated by the interpreter. Rather, meaning comes from the author who wrote it. Thus the reader's understanding has no hermeneutically definitive role. Readers must listen to the meaning of a text and not attempt to legislate it. Of course, the meaning listened to should be applied to the reader's life. But the need or desire for specific application should not color the interpretation of a passage.

Article X

WE AFFIRM that Scripture communicates God's truth to us verbally through a wide variety of literary forms.

WE DENY that any of the limits of human language render Scripture inadequate to convey God's message.

This Affirmation is a logical literary extension of Article II which acknowledges the humanity of Scripture. The Bible is God's Word, but it is written in human words; thus, revelation is "verbal." Revelation is "propositional" (Article VI) because it expresses certain propositional truth. Some prefer to call it "sentential" because the truth is expressed in sentences. Whatever the term—verbal, propositional, or sentential—the Bible is a human book which uses normal literary forms. These include parables,

satire, irony, hyperbole, metaphor, simile, poetry, and even allegory (e.g., Ezek. 16-17).

As an expression in finite, human language, the Bible has certain limitations in a similar way that Christ as a man had certain limitations. This means that God adapted Himself through human language so that His eternal truth could be understood by man in a temporal world.

Despite the obvious fact of the limitations of any finite linguistic expression, the Denial is quick to point out that these limits do not render Scripture an inadequate means of communicating God's truth. For while there is a divine adaptation (via language) to human finitude there is no accommodation to human error. Error is not essential to human nature. Christ was human and yet He did not err. Adam was human before he erred. So simply because the Bible is written in human language does not mean it must err. In fact, when God uses human language there is a supernatural guarantee that it will not be in error.

Article XI

WE AFFIRM that translations of the text of Scripture can communicate knowledge of God across all temporal and cultural boundaries.

WE DENY that the meaning of biblical texts is so tied to the culture out of which they came that understanding of the same meaning in other cultures is impossible.

Simply because the truth of Scripture was conveyed by God in the original writings does not mean that it cannot be translated into another language. This article affirms the translatability of God's truth into other cultures. It affirms that since truth is transcendent (see Article XX) it is not culture-bound. Hence the truth of God expressed in a first-century culture is not limited to that culture. For the nature of truth is not limited to any particular medium through which it is expressed.

The Denial notes that since meaning is not inextricably tied to a given culture it can be adequately expressed in another culture. Thus the message of Scripture need not be relativized by translation. What is expressed can be the same even though how it is expressed differs.

Article XII

WE AFFIRM that in the task of translating the Bible and teaching it in the context of each culture, only those functional equivalents which are faithful to the content of biblical teaching should be employed.

WE DENY the legitimacy of methods which either are insensitive to the demands of cross-cultural communication or distort biblical meaning in the process.

Whereas the previous article treated the matter of the translatability of divine truth, this article speaks to the adequacy of translations. Obviously not every expression in another language will appropriately convey the meaning of Scripture. In view of this, caution is urged that the translators remain faithful to the truth of the Scripture being translated by the proper choice of the words used to translate it. This article treats the matter of "functional" equivalence. Often there is no actual or literal equivalence between expressions in one language and a word-for-word translation into another language. What is expressed (meaning) is the same but how it is expressed (the words) is different. Hence a different construction can be used to convey the same meaning.

The Denial urges sensitivity to cultural matters so that the same truth may be conveyed, even though different terms are being used. Without this awareness missionary activity can be severely hampered.

Article XIII

WE AFFIRM that awareness of the literary categories, formal and stylistic, of the various parts of Scripture is essential for proper exegesis, and hence we value genre criticism as one of the many disciplines of biblical study.

WE DENY that generic categories which negate historicity may rightly be imposed on biblical narratives which present themselves as factual.

The awareness of what kind of literature one is interpreting is essential to a correct understanding of the text. A correct genre judgement should be made to ensure correct understanding. A parable, for example, should not be treated like a chronicle, nor should poetry be interpreted as though it were a straightforward narrative. Each passage has its own genre, and the interpreter should be cognisant of the specific kind of literature it is as he attempts to interpret it. Without genre recognition an interpreter can be misled in his understanding of the passage. For example, when the prophet speaks of "trees clapping their hands" (Isa. 55:12) one could assume a kind of animism unless he recognised that this is poetry and not prose.

The Denial is directed at an illegitimate use of genre criticism by some who deny the truth of passages which are presented as factual. Some, for instance, take Adam to be a myth, whereas in Scripture he is presented as a real person. Others take Jonah to be an allegory when he is presented as a historical person and so referred to by Christ (Mat. 12:40-42). This Denial is an appropriate and timely warning not to use genre criticism as a cloak for rejecting the truth of Scripture.

Article XIV

WE AFFIRM that the biblical record of events, discourses and sayings, though presented in a variety of appropriate literary forms, corresponds to historical fact.

WE DENY that any event, discourse or saying reported in Scripture was invented

by the biblical writers or by the traditions they incorporated.

This article combines the emphases of Articles VI and XIII. While acknowledging the legitimacy of literary forms, this article insists that any record of events presented in Scripture must correspond to historical fact. That is, no reported event, discourse, or saying should be considered imaginary.

The Denial is even more clear than the Affirmation. It stresses that any discourse, saying, or event reported in Scripture must actually have occurred. This means that any hermeneutic or form of biblical criticism which claims that something was invented by the author must be rejected. This does not mean that a parable must be understood to represent historical facts, since a parable does not (by its very genre) purport to report an event or saying but simply to illustrate a point.

Article XV

WE AFFIRM the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text.

WE DENY the legitimacy of any approach to Scripture that attributes to it meaning which the literal sense does not support.

The literal sense of Scripture is strongly affirmed here. To be sure the English word literal carries some problematic connotations with it. Hence the words normal and grammatical-historical are used to explain what is meant. The literal sense is also designated by the more descriptive title grammatical-historical sense. This means the correct interpretation is the one which discovers the meaning of the text in its grammatical forms and in the historical, cultural context in which the text is expressed.

The Denial warns against attributing to Scripture any meaning not based in a literal understanding, such as mythological or allegorical interpretations. This should not be understood as eliminating typology or designated allegory or other literary forms which include figures of speech (see Articles X, XIII, and XIV).

Article XVI

WE AFFIRM that legitimate critical techniques should be used in determining the canonical text and its meaning.

WE DENY the legitimacy of allowing any method of biblical criticism to question the truth or integrity of the writer's expressed meaning, or of any other scriptural teaching.

Implied here is an approval of legitimate techniques of "lower criticism" or "textual criticism." It is proper to use critical techniques in order to discover the true text of Scripture, that is, the one which represents the original one given by the biblical authors.

Whereas critical methodology can be used to establish which of the texts are copies of the inspired original, it is illegitimate to use critical methods to call into question whether something in the original text is true. In other words, proper "lower criticism" is valid but negative "higher criticism" which rejects truths of Scripture is invalid.

Article XVII

WE AFFIRM the unity, harmony and consistency of Scripture and declare that it is its own best interpreter.

WE DENY that Scripture may be interpreted in such a way as to suggest that one

passage corrects or militates against another. We deny that later writers of Scripture misinterpreted earlier passages of Scripture when quoting from or referring to them.

Two points are made in the Affirmation, the unity of Scripture and its self-interpreting ability. Since the former is treated elsewhere (Article XXI), we will comment on the latter here. Not only is the Bible always correct in interpreting itself (see Article XVIII), but it is the "best interpreter" of itself.

Another point made here is that comparing Scripture with Scripture is an excellent help to an interpreter. For one passage sheds light on another. Hence the first commentary the interpreter should consult on a passage is what the rest of Scripture may say on that text.

The Denial warns against the assumption that an understanding of one passage can lead the interpreter to reject the teaching of another passage. One passage may help him better comprehend another but it will never contradict another.

This last part of the Denial is particularly directed to those who believe the New Testament writers misinterpret the Old Testament, or that they attribute meaning to an Old Testament text not expressed by the author of that text. While it is acknowledged that there is sometimes a wide range of application for a text, this article affirms that the interpretation of a biblical text by another biblical writer is always within the confines of the meaning of the first text.

Article XVIII

WE AFFIRM that the Bible's own interpretation of itself is always correct, never deviating from, but rather elucidating, the single meaning of the inspired text. The single meaning of a prophet's words includes, but is not restricted to, the understanding of those words by the prophet and necessarily involves the

intention of God evidenced in the fulfilment of those words.

WE DENY that the writers of Scripture always understood the full implications of their own words.

This Affirmation was perhaps the most difficult to word. The first part of the Affirmation builds on Article VII which declared that Scripture has only one meaning, and simply adds that whenever the Bible comments on another passage of Scripture it does so correctly. That is, the Bible never misinterprets itself.

It always correctly understands the meaning of the passage it comments on (see Article XVII). For example, that Paul misinterprets Moses is to say that Paul erred. This view is emphatically rejected in favor of the inerrancy of all Scripture.

The problem in the second statement of the Affirmation revolves around whether God intended more by a passage of Scripture than the human author did. Put in this way, evangelical scholars are divided on the issue, even though there is unity on the question of "single meaning." Some believe that this single meaning may be fuller than the purview of the human author, since God had far more in view than did the prophet when he wrote it. The wording here is an attempt to include reference to the fulfillment of a prophecy (of which God was obviously aware when He inspired it) as part of the single meaning which God and the prophet shared. However, the prophet may not have been conscious of the full implications of this meaning when he wrote it.

The way around the difficulty was to note that there is only one meaning to a passage which both God and the prophet affirmed, but that this meaning may not always be fully "evidenced" until the prophecy is fulfilled. Furthermore, God, and not necessarily the prophets, was fully aware of the fuller implications that would be manifested in the fulfillment of this single meaning.

It is important to preserve single meaning without denying that God had more in mind than the prophet did. A distinction needs to be made, then, between what God was conscious of concerning an affirmation (which, in view of His foreknowledge and omniscience, was far more) and what He and the prophet actually expressed in the passage. The Denial makes this point clear by noting that biblical authors were not always fully aware of the implications of their own affirmations.

Article XIX

WE AFFIRM that any preunderstandings which the interpreter brings to Scripture should be in harmony with scriptural teaching and subject to correction by it.

WE DENY that Scripture should be required to fit alien preunderstandings, inconsistent with itself, such as naturalism, evolutionism, scientism, secular humanism, and relativism.

The question of preunderstanding is a crucial one in contemporary hermeneutics. The careful wording of the Affirmation does not discuss the issue of whether one should approach Scripture with a particular preunderstanding, but simply which kinds of preunderstanding one has are legitimate. This question is answered by affirming that only those preunderstandings which are compatible with the teaching of Scripture are legitimate. In fact, the statement goes further and demands that all preunderstanding be subject to "correction" by the teaching of Scripture.

The point of this article is to avoid interpreting Scripture through an alien grid or filter which obscures or negates its true message. For it acknowledges that one's preunderstanding will affect his understanding of a text. Hence to avoid misinterpreting Scripture one must be careful to examine his own presuppositions in the light of Scripture.

Article XX

WE AFFIRM that since God is the author of all truth, all truths, biblical and extrabiblical, are consistent and cohere, and that the Bible speaks truth when it touches on matters pertaining to nature, history, or anything else. We further affirm that in some cases extra-biblical data have value for clarifying what Scripture teaches, and for prompting correction of faulty interpretations.

WE DENY that extra-biblical views ever disprove the teaching of Scripture or hold priority over it.

What is in view here is not so much the nature of truth (which is treated in Article VI), but the consistency and coherence of truth.

This is directed at those views which consider truth paradoxical or contradictory. This article declares that a proper hermeneutics avoids contradictions, since God never affirms as true two propositions, one of which is logically the opposite of the other.

Further, this Affirmation recognizes that not all truth is in the Bible (though all that is affirmed in the Bible is true). God has revealed Himself in nature and history as well as in Scripture. However, since God is the ultimate Author of all truth, there can be no contradiction between truths of Scripture and the true teachings of science and history.

Although only the Bible is the normative and infallible rule for doctrine and practice, nevertheless what one learns from sources outside Scripture can occasion a reexamination and reinterpretation of Scripture. For example, some have taught the world to be square because the Bible refers to "the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:12). But scientific knowledge of the spherical nature of the globe leads to a correction of this faulty interpretation. Other clarifications of our understanding of the biblical text are possible through the study of the social sciences.

However, whatever prompting and clarifying of Scripture that extrabiblical studies may provide, the final authority for what the Bible teaches rests in the text of Scripture itself and not in anything outside it (except in God Himself). The Denial makes clear this priority of the teaching of God's scriptural revelation over anything outside it.

Article XXI

WE AFFIRM the harmony of special with general revelation and therefore of biblical teaching with the facts of nature.

WE DENY that any genuine scientific facts are inconsistent with the true meaning of any passage of Scripture.

This article continues the discussion of the previous article by noting the harmony of God's general revelation (outside Scripture) and His special revelation in Scripture. It is acknowledged by all that certain interpretations of Scripture and some opinions of scientists will contradict each other.

However, it is insisted here that the truth of Scripture and the facts of science never contradict each other.

"Genuine" science will always be in accord with Scripture. Science, however, based on naturalistic presuppositions will inevitably come in conflict with the supernatural truths of Scripture. Far from denying a healthy interchange between scientific theory and biblical interpretation, the framers of this statement welcome such. Indeed, it is acknowledged (in article XX) that the exegete can learn from the scientist. What is denied is that we should accept scientific views that contradict Scripture or that they should be given an authority above Scripture.

Article XXII

WE AFFIRM that Genesis 1-11 is factual, as is the rest of the book.

WE DENY that the teachings of Genesis 1-11 are mythical and that scientific hypotheses about earth history or the origin of humanity may be invoked to overthrow what Scripture teaches about creation.

Since the historicity and the scientific accuracy of the early chapters of the Bible have come under severe attack it is important to apply the "literal" hermeneutic espoused (Article XV) to this question. The result was a recognition of the factual nature of the account of the creation of the universe, all living things, the special creation of man, the Fall, and the Flood. These accounts are all factual, that is, they are about space-time events which actually happened as reported in the book of Genesis (see Article XIV).

The article left open the question of the age of the earth on which there is no unanimity among evangelicals and which was beyond the purview of this conference. There was, however, complete agreement on denying that Genesis is mythological or unhistorical. Likewise, the use of the term "creation" was meant to exclude the belief in macro-evolution, whether of the atheistic or theistic varieties.

Article XXIII

WE AFFIRM the clarity of Scripture and specifically of its message about salvation from sin.

WE DENY that all passages of Scripture are equally clear or have equal bearing on the message of redemption.

Traditionally this teaching is called the "perspicuity" of Scripture. By this is meant that the central message of Scripture is clear, especially what the Bible says about salvation from sin.

The Denial disassociates this claim from the belief that everything in Scripture is clear or that all teachings are equally clear or equally relevant to the Bible's central saving message. It is obvious to any honest interpreter that the meaning of some passages of Scripture is obscure. It is equally evident that the truth of some passages is not directly relevant to the overall plan of salvation.

Article XXIV

WE AFFIRM that a person is not dependent for understanding of Scripture on the expertise of biblical scholars.

WE DENY that a person should ignore the fruits of the technical study of Scripture by biblical scholars.

This article attempts to avoid two extremes. First, it affirms that one is not dependent on biblical "experts" for his understanding of the basic truths of Scripture. Were this not true, then a significant aspect of the priesthood of all believers would be destroyed. For if the understanding of the laity is contingent on the teaching of experts, then Protestant interpretive experts will have replaced the teaching magisterium of Catholic priests with a kind of teaching magisterium of Protestant scholars.

On the other hand, biblical scholars do play a significant role in the lay understanding of Scripture. Even the very tools (Bible dictionaries, concordances, etc.) used by laypersons to interpret Scripture were produced by scholars. And when it comes to more technical and precise understanding of specific Scripture the work of experts is more than helpful. Hence the implied exhortation in the denial to avail oneself of the fruit of scholarship is well taken.

Article XXV

WE AFFIRM that the only type of preaching which sufficiently conveys the divine

revelation and its proper application to life is that which faithfully expounds the text of Scripture as the Word of God.

WE DENY that the preacher has any message from God apart from the text of Scripture.

This final article declares that good preaching should be based in good hermeneutics. The exposition of Scripture is not to be treated in isolation from the proclamation of Scripture. In preaching the preacher should faithfully expound the Word of God. Anything short of a correct exposition of God's written Word is pronounced insufficient.

Indeed, the Denial declares that there is no message from God apart from Scripture. This was understood not to contradict the fact that there is a general revelation (affirmed in Article XXI) but simply to note that the only inspired and infallible writing from which the preacher can and must preach is the Bible.

APPENDIX B

DESIGNING THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE SERMON

M Ellingsen (1990:70-72) provides the following twelve-point system for preparing a biblical narrative sermon. See 4.2.4.1 for a critical assessment of this model and its suitability for use in teaching narrative preaching.

1. Determine the text's boundaries.

Establish the text's literary context, its relation to other pericopes and dominant themes in the book, by means of a preliminary reading of the text and the identifying of its overarching themes.

2. Establish the text.

Identify the most authentic manuscript and provide an accurate translation of the text.

3. Employ form criticism.

Identify the grammatical features and syntactical structures of the passage. Determine its genre. The technique appropriate to the kind of literary genre that has been identified in the text is employed in subsequent exegetical work. Use literary analytic tools – structuralism, American new criticism (basically, the critical method by which the focus is upon the work of literature itself and not anything extraneous to the text)..

4 Do a comparative philology.

Study a text in a similar literary genre of the same historical period in order to determine the possible range of meanings of the pericope in question. Compare and contrast the texts in terms of exegesis.

5 Compare parallel texts (source and redaction criticism).

Use *Gospel Parallels* if the text is from the Synoptics.

Identify how the cited passage has been used in your text if the text cites another pericope.

Question whether the text's use of a concept or term differs from that of analogous biblical pericopes. Determine what this reveals about how traditional material is functioning in the text.

6 Investigate key words

In light of the preceding step, identify terms in the text which may be especially significant for its meaning.

Use a concordance to identify how the term was used by other biblical authors in comparison to your text. Use the comparison to find clues to the term's meaning in the text.

7 Consolidate findings.

On the basis of the research undertaken, identify again the text's literary context in order to determine the issues in the life of the Christian community to which the text credibly applies.

Summarise how the text deals with the issue.

8. Use systematic/confessional material.

Identify which theological themes typical of your denominational tradition are evident in your skeletal interpretation. Should your exegesis conflict with your confessional denominational witness, be sure to account for this conflict or else reconsider your interpretation. Draw upon the insights of theologians (both classical and contemporary) who deal with the text.

9. Apply to the contemporary situation.

Determine if analogues exist between the text's literary context and some aspect of our contemporary situation. If no such analogues exist, it may be that another text would be

more appropriate. The pericope that has been considered may not be "God's word pertaining to us."

10. Concretise the analogues.

Think of vignettes in contemporary secular literature or from your own life that seem to parallel the life issues with which the characters in the text are confronted. We cannot deal with these vignettes as the story model of preaching advocates, as if they had a life of their own and would be sufficient in themselves for the sermon. But these vignettes may suggest events in our own lives and context or legitimately may function themselves to illustrate the interactions between the characters of the biblical text, provided that the material drawn from these secular sources is employed after the biblical text or its main theme has been articulated. When identification between the characters of the biblical text and the prospective hearers of the sermon is vivid enough in the preceding step, this tenth step may be omitted.

11 Outline the sermon.

12. Rehearse the delivery

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

To the Theological Training Institute:

Background information to questionnaire on narrative preaching.

This would be of interest to the training institutions listed below.

My target group for this questionnaire is to be found among the students who during 2004, have been in training at the five theological institutions which figure prominently in my dissertation, namely:

- Evangelical Seminary of SA – Pietermaritzburg
- School of Theology – University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg
- St Joseph's Theological Institute – Merrivale
- Trinity Academy – Pietermaritzburg
- Union Bible Institute - Sweetwaters.

I am particularly interested in the sub-set of students who have a substantial knowledge of at least one predominantly Black local "mainstream" or AIC Christian congregation which has been established either in a township or rural area in KwaZulu-Natal or elsewhere in the RSA. In seeking respondents I would tend to favour students who are likely to become pastors, priests or "career missionaries" rather than for example those who are bent on a mainly academic career. My intention is that in the course of answering this questionnaire the student will be able in some measure to assess whether his or her instruction in homiletics is adequate in preparing the student to minister in a church or congregation similar to the one which he or she has described

Should it be necessary to supplement the information obtained from these students by questioning other target groups, then the wording of the questionnaire would be amended accordingly. Another possible target group would be experienced pastors, priests and leaders of congregations in rural or township RSA. The advantage to be gained in targeting students lies in the convenience of access to them. Travelling to one of the Black churches for an interview can be a time-consuming and difficult exercise. A possible solution would be to make use of denominational synods or other gatherings at which members of the new target group are likely to be present in one place at one time.

In distributing this questionnaire the intention is not to place on the respondent the burden of having to conduct research of his or her own in order to provide factually correct answers. Approximations, including even the occasional "educated guess", are quite in order. I have in mind that a dean or lecturer or other official at the training institution who has some knowledge of students' backgrounds would be able to nominate some students to receive questionnaires who have a reasonably intimate knowledge of at least one predominantly Black local congregation in KwaZulu-Natal or other provinces in the country.

My intention is that the questionnaires would be handed to the nominees for completion a few days before my visit. At a time convenient to the respondent I would meet with him or her and discuss the answers and any difficulties which came to light. In this way interpretations of the questions can be discussed and information can be added and enhanced. I envisage processing a total of about 40 student responses.

I will be indebted to you for any assistance provided.

To the Theological Students:

QUESTIONNAIRE R S Queripel Tel: (H) 033 345 4682

Notes (Please read before answering).

1 My purpose in requesting you to complete this questionnaire is to obtain information which can be used in my dissertation in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Theology in the Department of Practical Theology of the Faculty of Theology and Religion Studies of the University of Zululand, KwaZulu-Natal. The title of my proposed dissertation has been accepted by the University and is as follows: **"An examination of a narrative approach in homiletics training in theological institutions in the Pietermaritzburg area (KwaZulu-Natal)".**

2 Your assistance by completing this questionnaire would be very much appreciated. It is hoped that this effort will have positive results for those to whom we will minister. Please provide your name in the appropriate space. **AT THE END OF THE**

QUESTIONNAIRE THERE WILL BE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO DECLARE WHETHER YOU WISH TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS AND NOT BE IDENTIFIED WITH THE INFORMATION WHICH YOU PROVIDE. Your wishes will be respected. Should you choose to remain anonymous you will not be named or identified in the dissertation and any local congregation which you describe will also not be named in the summary of results. I anticipate that the total number of responses which I will process will be at least 40.

The appropriate answer can be ticked, circled or underlined. If the space provided is insufficient for your answers the back of the answer pages may be used or you may add an additional page. If the back is used please write "PTO" at the bottom of the page in the right-hand corner. If an additional page is used please clip or staple the page to the answer pages.

As you may know, "homiletics" means the study of preaching and "narrative" refers to preaching in which story-telling dominates the sermon, and "narrative" also refers to the story portions of the Bible.

By "Formal Housing" (question 12) I mean houses which are usually built of brick or concrete with iron or tiled roofs, having glazed windows and electricity and water laid on.

Questionnaire

A. Biographical details

1. Name of respondent: : (Title, first name, last name)

.....

2. Name of institution at which you are presently studying, and the course of study:

.....
.....
3. Present stage of studies and expected duration (e.g. near end of 2nd year of 3 yrs):
.....

4. Homiletics courses completed (e.g. 1st year and ¾ of 2nd year, or TPT115, TPT125, or Homiletics 1 and 2, according to how your institution describes the modules):
.....

B. Church data

5. Which local church or congregation in the Republic are you most familiar with?
.....
.....

6. Approximately where is it situated? (e.g. 10km from Elandskop in the Mncane area)
.....
.....

7. Approximately how many people altogether attend at least one service on an average Sunday at this local church? <20 50 100 200 400 >600

8. What approximate percentage of the average adult Sunday attendance are women?
None 20% 50% 80%

9. What percentage of the average attendance at Sunday services are children under 15 years?

None 20% 50% 80%

10. **Education:** Approximately what percentage of the adults who attend on an average Sunday have: Little or no education.....% Primary school.....%
Secondary school% Formal tertiary education%

11. **Economy:** What percentage of the households represented by the church attenders have: Formal housing% Motor vehicle% TV set%

12. Generally how would you describe the **quality** of the preaching which takes place in that church? Very poor. Poor. Average. Good. Excellent

13. In your opinion is the preaching which takes place in that church suited to the needs of the people who attend? Totally unsuitable. Hardly suitable
Occasionally suitable Normally suitable Always very suitable

14. How would you describe the **types** of sermon which are preached most often in that church at Sunday services? Topical Textual Expository Character study Narrative Other (describe if possible) Uncertain

.....

.....

.....

.....

15. Has the homiletics training which you personally have received, adequately prepared you to preach to a congregation in which you hope to be placed? Y N
Uncertain

16. What improvements would you suggest to the homiletics courses currently being offered in the training institute at which you are studying?

.....

.....

.....

.....

17. Do you wish your response to be regarded as anonymous? Yes No

Signed Date

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PASTORS

To Pastors of “mainline” and AIC Christian churches:

QUESTIONNAIRE. R S Queripel Tel: (H) 033 345 4682 1 Voortrekker Rd,
Pietermaritzburg, 3201

Notes (Please read before answering).

1 My purpose in requesting you to complete this questionnaire is to obtain information for use in my dissertation in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Theology in the Department of Practical Theology of the Faculty of Theology and Religion Studies of the University of Zululand, KwaZulu-Natal. The title of my proposed dissertation has been accepted by the University and is as follows: **“An examination of a narrative approach in homiletics training in theological institutions in the Pietermaritzburg area (KwaZulu-Natal)”**. As you may know, “homiletics” means teaching students how to preach. “Narrative” means “stories”. **“A narrative approach in homiletics training”** therefore means the training of students in the use of stories to preach God’s Word, and the effective use in preaching of the story portions of the Old and New Testaments.

2 Your assistance by completing this questionnaire would be very much appreciated. It is hoped that this effort will have positive results for those to whom we minister. Please provide your name in the appropriate space. AT THE END OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE THERE WILL BE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO DECLARE WHETHER YOU WISH TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS AND NOT BE IDENTIFIED WITH THE INFORMATION WHICH YOU PROVIDE. Your wishes will be respected. Should you choose to remain anonymous you will not be named or identified in the dissertation and any local congregation which you describe will also not be named in the summary of results. I anticipate that the total number of responses which I will process will be at

least 40.

The appropriate answer can be ticked, circled or underlined. If the space provided is insufficient for your answers the back of the answer pages may be used or you may add an additional page. If the back is used please write "PTO" at the bottom of the page in the right-hand corner. Please post the completed questionnaire to me at the above address.

Questionnaire (for Pastors)

A. Biographical details

- 1. Name of respondent: (Title, first name, last name)
.....
- 2. Name of the denomination or organisation in which you are ministering:
.....
- 3. How long have you been a church pastor?
.....
- 4. At what institution did you obtain your theological training (incl. approx. dates)?
.....

C. Church data

- 5. Give the name of a "local church" or congregation with which you are familiar.
.....
.....
- 6. Approximately where is it situated? (e.g. in the Mncane area, 10km from Elandskop)

-
-
7. Approximately how many people altogether attend at least one service on an average Sunday at this local congregation or church? <20 50 100 200 400 >600
8. What percentage of the average adult Sunday attendance are women?
None 20% 50% 80%
9. What percentage of the average attendance at Sunday services are children under 15 years?
None 20% 50% 80%
10. **Education:** Approximately what percentage of the adults who attend on an average Sunday have: Little or no education.....% Primary school.....% Secondary school% Formal tertiary education%
11. **Economy:** What percentage of the households represented by those who attend have: Formal housing (e.g. brick/tile, glazed windows, etc.)% Motor vehicle% TV set%
12. In your opinion is the preaching which takes place in that church suited to the needs of the people who attend? Totally unsuitable. Hardly suitable
Occasionally suitable Normally suitable Always very suitable
13. How would you describe the **types** of sermon which are preached most often in that church or meeting-place at Sunday services? Topical; Textual; Expository; Character study; Narrative; Other (describe if possible); Uncertain

.....
.....

14 Do you regard the homiletics training which you have received or are receiving, or the training currently available, adequate to prepare one to preach?

YES NO Uncertain

15. Regardless of what your answer to Question 14 was, what improvements to homiletics training would you suggest?

.....
.....

16. Do you wish your response to be regarded as anonymous? YES NO

Signed Date

APPENDIX E**THE PARABLES OF JESUS**

This chart is available on line at www.discipleship.net/parables

PARABLE	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Barren Fig Tree			13	
Drag-net	13			
Friend at Midnight			11	
Good Samaritan			10	
Good Shepherd				10
Fine Pearl	13			
Great Banquet			14	
Hidden Treasure	13			
Householder		13		
Workers in the Vineyard	20			
Wedding Banquet	22			
Pharisee and Tax Collector			18	
Lost Coin			15	
Ten Minas			19	
Lost Son (Prodigal)			15	
Rich Fool			12	
Rich Man and Lazarus			16	
Growing (Mustard) Seed		4		
Sheep and Goats	25			
Weeds	13			
Talents	25			
Ten Virgins	25			
Two Debtors			7	
Two Sons	21			
Persistent Widow			18	

Shrewd Manager			16	
Unmerciful Servant	18			
Unworthy Servants			17	
Wedding Feast			12	
Wise Servant			12	
House on the Rock	7		6	
Yeast	13		13	
Lost Sheep	18		15	
New Cloth	9	2	5	
New Wine in old Wineskins	9	2	5	
Fig Tree	24	13	21	
Mustard Seed	13	4	21	
Sower	13	4	8	
Wicked Tenants	21	12	20	

FIG. 4

APPENDIX F**DOCTRINAL STATEMENT OF TRINITY ACADEMY OF PIETERMARITZBURG**

- 1 We believe that the Bible is the Word of God and revelation of God. We therefore accept the trustworthiness of its historical records, the authority of its teaching, and the truth of all Christ's utterances contained in it.
- 2 We believe in one God eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- 3 We believe in Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and is therefore true God and true man.
- 4 We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, voluntarily bearing our guilt and suffering as a Substitute; and that all who believe in him are now justified by his blood, and shall be saved from the wrath of God through him (Rom 5:9).
- 5 We believe in his corporeal resurrection and ascension into heaven, and his present life there as our Priest and Advocate.
- 6 We believe that man was created in the image of God, that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death which is separation from God, and in consequence of "the Fall", all human beings are born with a sinful nature.
- 7 We believe, therefore, in the universality and heinousness of sin, and in the necessity of being saved by grace, and that sonship with God is attained only by regeneration through the Holy Spirit, and faith in Jesus Christ.
- 8 We believe in the personality and Godhead of the Holy Spirit who came down upon

earth on the day of Pentecost, and in his offices, to convict the world in respect of sin and of righteousness and of judgement, and to indwell believers as their Teacher, Sanctifier and Comforter.

- 9 We believe in the great commission which our Lord has given to his church to evangelise the world, and that this evangelisation is the great mission of the church.
- 10 We believe in “that blessed hope”, the personal return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
- 11 We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust; the judgement of the living and the dead; the everlasting punishment of the lost.

APPENDIX G

SUMMARY OF RETURNS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

Code no. of respondents	Ap1023	As1013	As1023	As1033	As1043	Bp1033	Bs1013	Bs1023	Bs1033	Bs1043	Cs1015	Cs1025	Cs1035	Cs1045	Dp1013
Congregation															
Congregation - Adults (no.)	60	50	65	40	160	80	480	40	10	160	500	500	320	500	80
Women (%)	65	75	70	50	80	50	60	80	80	80	80	50	50	80	80
No. of women	39	38	46	20	128	40	288	32	8	128	400	250	160	400	64
Household economy															
Formal Housing (%households)	3	90	30	5	30	15	80	80	5	80	30	70	60	60	30
Motor Vehicle (%households)	3	10	20	5	30	5	40	40	0	20	10	40	15	30	1
TV set (%households)	0	98	50	1	40	4	20	80	0	60	80	80	25	90	20
Education															
Little Education (%)	53	4	20	30	5	20	20	0	5	20	10	10	10	3	0
Primary Education (%)	30	15	30	10	35	20	50	5	65	20	40	20	20	12	50
Secondary Education (%)	15	68	30	40	40	30	15	70	15	40	20	20	25	75	35
Tertiary Education (%)	2	13	20	20	20	30	15	25	15	20	30	60	45	10	15
Preaching															
Preaching Quality 1-5	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	3
Preaching suitability 1-5	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	3	2	3	4	2	3	4
Preaching type	topical	topical	topical	textual	topical	textual	narrative	topical	other	uncertain	textual	topical	uncertain	uncertain	exposit
Locality	Foreign	RSA	KZN	KZN	RSA	KZN	KZN	Foreign	KZN	KZN	KZN	RSA	KZN	KZN	KZN

Dp1023	Dp1033	Dp1043	Dp1053	Ds1013	Ds1023	Ds1032	Ds1043	Ds1052	Ds1061	Es1013	Es1023	Es1033	Es1043	Fp1010	Overall	KZN
25	80	80	45	180	45	380	50	50	600	20	80	50	190	50	4970	3605
80	50	20	80	80	80	50	80	20	70	20	80	60	80	80	65.3	65
20	40	16	36	144	36	190	40	10	420	4	64	30	152	40	3282	2424
0	2	10	0	100	40	80	5	60	40	100	50	40	95	70	45.3	44
0	1	1	1	30	15	20	0	15	25	1	0	10	10	1	13.3	11.7
0	50	10	5	85	80	80	10	25	99	100	20	100	90	70	49.1	46.95
100	5	14	73	10	10	10	70	15	5	10	20	30	1	20	20	20
0	30	34	26	20	10	35	15	35	12	15	35	10	40	49	26.1	27.9
0	60	48	1	50	50	35	10	25	32	65	40	10	40	30	34.4	31.1
0	5	4	0	20	30	20	5	25	51	15	5	50	19	1	19.5	21
4	3	3	3	4	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	4	2	3	3.4	
4	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	3.6	
exposit	exposit	exposit	exposit	topical	topical	exposit	exposit	topical	topical	exposit	exposit	textual	textual	topical		
Foreign	RSA	RSA	KZN	RSA	KZN	KZN	KZN	KZN	KZN	KZN	KZN	KZN	RSA	KZN		

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Respondents:

Ap1010. Interviewed by me on 18/5/2004.

Ap1023. Questionnaire completed on 17/6/2004

Ap1033. Interviewed by me, date unknown.

As1013. Questionnaire completed on 27/5/2004, interviewed by me on 24/8/2004

As1023. Questionnaire completed on 26/5/2004, interviewed by me on 24/8/2004.

As1033. Questionnaire completed on 31/5/2004, interviewed by me on 24/8/2004.

As1043. Questionnaire completed on 26/5/2004, interviewed by me on 24/8/2004.

Bp1033. Questionnaire completed on 5/3/2004.

Bp1040. Interviewed on 26/02/2004.

Bs1013. Questionnaire completed on 3/03/2004, interviewed by me on 17/03/2004.

Bs1023. Questionnaire completed on 24/03/2004, interviewed by me on 24/03/2004.

Bs1033. Questionnaire completed on 27/03/2004, interviewed by me on 27/03/2004

Bs1043. Questionnaire completed on 24/03/2004, interviewed by me on 24/03/2004.

Cp1010. Interviewed by me on 23/8/2004.

Cs1015. Questionnaire completed on 19/8/2004, interviewed by me on 25/8/2004.

Cs1025. Questionnaire completed on 23/8/2004, interviewed by me on 25/8/2004.

Cs1035. Questionnaire completed on 20/8/2004, interviewed by me on 26/8/2004.

Cs1045. Questionnaire completed on 23/8/2004, interviewed by me on 25/8/2004.

Dp1013. Questionnaire completed on 31/1/2004, interviewed by me on 27/8/2004.

Dp1023. Questionnaire completed on 29/1/2004.

Dp1033. Questionnaire completed on 16/3/2004.

Dp1043. Questionnaire completed on 17/3/2004.

Dp1053. Questionnaire completed on 4/2/2004.

Ds1013. Questionnaire completed on ?/11/2003, interviewed by me on ?/11/2003.

Ds1023. Questionnaire completed on ?/11/2003, interviewed by me on ?/11/2003.

Ds1032. Questionnaire completed on ?/11/2003, interviewed by me on ?/11/2003.

Ds1043. Questionnaire completed on 27/10/2004.

Ds1052. Questionnaire completed on 26/10/2004, interviewed by me on 2/11/2004.

Ep1010. Interviewed on 11/6/2004 and 10/11/2004.

Ep1020. Interviewed on 10/11/2004.

Es1013. Questionnaire completed on 25/8/2004, interviewed by me on 26/8/2004.

Es1023. Questionnaire completed on 25/8/2004, interviewed by me on 26/8/2004.
 Es1033. Questionnaire completed on 25/8/2004, interviewed by me on 26/8/2004.
 Es1043. Questionnaire completed on 26/8/2004, interviewed by me on 26/8/2004.

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