CHAPTER 6

AN EVALUATION OF ROBINSON'S METHOD: NEW POINTERS

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapters of this study have provided an analysis and evaluation of Robinson's methodology and method of expository preaching. More specifically, the last chapter evaluated his ten-stage method of preparing expository sermons by discussing its positives and negatives. This chapter will now build upon these previous chapters by addressing the deficiencies found in Robinson's approach and thereby provide theoretical pointers for future textbooks on expository preaching. It should be noted that these pointers will be from an evangelical perspective and thus many questions outside of this perspective will not be addressed.[1]

6.2 Issues and Their Pointers

Each issue will be discussed in terms of its problem in Robinson's text and then a pointer will suggest a new theoretical and procedural approach for expository homiletics. It will be observed that in most cases the pointers suggest adding more discussion. The purpose of this added discussion is to address problems and issues that Robinson does not address. Furthermore, each pointer is intended to be only suggestive and not exhaustive.

6.2.1 The Issue of Theological Methodology and Expository Preaching

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[1]For critical questions of evangelicalism's methodology, see the works of Barr; for example, *Fundamentalism*; and *Beyond Fundamentalism*; for critical questions of the evangelical expository homiletic, see, for example, Buttrick, *Homiletic*; and *A Captive Voice*; and Eslinger, *A New Hearing*; *Pitfalls in Preaching*; and *Web of Preaching*.

6.2.1.1 Problem

It was noted in this study that Robinson chose not to discuss his theological methodology throughout *Biblical Preaching*[2] because he felt that a basic text in homiletics should be more practical and not address too many detailed theological issues.[3] Even though he alludes to his theological methodology occasionally,[4] he assumes that most readers already understand it.[5] This tendency motivated John MacArthur's complaint that Robinson assumed too much in the paper, "Homiletics and Hermeneutics."[6]

As such, his approach is pre-scientific and lacks a theological theoretical foundation. Unfortunately, since Robinson does not discuss in any detail his theological understanding of Scripture elsewhere, he cannot refer the reader outside of *Biblical Preaching* for his own view. As well received as this functional approach has been in evangelical circles, it still needs more discussion on theological theory concerning the nature of Scripture.

6.2.1.2 Pointer

J. I. Packer argues that evangelical theology is characterized methodologically by its "insistence on the clarity and sufficiency of the canonical Scriptures."[7] This methodological characteristic is at the heart of the evangelical expository homiletic[8] and any beginning text

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[2]See above, 132-133.

[3]See above, 89-90.

[4]*Biblical Preaching*, 20, 22, 23, 26.

[5]See above, 57, 89-90.

[6]See above, 89.

[7]Packer, "Encountering Present-day Views of Scripture," 63.

[8]See above, 2.3.

on expository preaching needs to address this important subject. It should be more than just "assumed."

We suggest, then, at the outset of any homiletic textbook, particularly one dealing with expository preaching, that the author should briefly discuss the nature of Scripture and how it relates to the particular homiletical method prescribed. Otherwise, the reader is left wondering exactly what is meant by certain phrases loaded with presuppositions.

For example, what exactly does Robinson mean when he refers to the Bible as "the Word of God"and the "orthodox doctrine of inspiration" in *Biblical Preaching*?[9] Even in today's evangelical community, this could mean different things.[10] Without explaining these terms, an evangelical reader oriented toward Barth's view of Scripture might read into the "Word of God" something Robinson never meant.[11] What does he mean by the "orthodox doctrine of inspiration?" This study has demonstrated that for Robinson, this means the concursive verbal theory espoused by conservative evangelical theologians such as B. B. Warfield, J. I. Packer, Carl Henry and Millard Erickson.[12] But in his textbook Robinson never spells this out for the reader.

Our point is that any introductory evangelical textbook on expository preaching should briefly elucidate the theological concepts of revelation, inspiration, inerrancy, and

[9]Robinson, 23, 26.

[10]See above, 55-56, notes 16-19; and 58, note 25.

[11]See above, 56, note 19, on Grenz's using Barthian terms to describe Scripture. This is not to imply that such a person would not find Robinson's method useful. But, most likely, such thinking would be more attracted to the New Homiletic (see above, 2.2.2.3).

[12]See above, 3.2.2.1.

authority. Because of the variety of evangelical thought on each of these concepts,[13] such a discussion is necessary. While theoretical, this discussion does not have to be lengthy or complex; it can be straightforward and explain how each concept relates to the task of expository preaching.[14] Thus, a methodological foundation is laid which will provide theoretical focus for the evangelical homiletical textbook, albeit introductory.

What would such a discussion look like? First, the foundational nature of revelation could be concisely set forth: the relationship of revelation and the biblical text, propositional and personal revelation, and the meaning of the phrase: the word of God. This discussion need only take several paragraphs. Second, based on the discussion of revelation, the nature of inspiration could be explained in the context of expository preaching, which should only take a page or so. Third, only a brief discussion on the issues of the trustworthiness of Scripture and its authority would be necessary since they both root in a high view of revelation and inspiration. The total discussion on these theological issues would require only a few pages.

The rationale behind a discussion of this nature is to provide the reader of the text with the theological and theoretical basis for the functional approach taken in a particular expository method. Functional helps need a theoretical basis.[15] It should be noted that if a homiletician has dealt with Scripture in other writings, the reader could be directed there.

6.2.2 The Issue of Verbal Inspiration and Word Studies

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[13]See the above discussions on the evangelical context of Robinson's view of revelation (3.2.1.1), inspiration (3.2.2.1), inerrancy (3.2.3.1), and authority (3.2.4.1).

[14]An example of this type of discussion can be found in Vines and Shaddix, 48-59.

[15]See Wolfaardt.

6.2.2.1 Problem

While Robinson espouses verbal inspiration, he expresses a concern that the expositor might take it too far when analyzing individual words in the text. Thus, instead of studying the word in its literary context, the expositor might isolate the word and fall into the error of eisegesis.[16] The error of eisegesis is a concern of other evangelical hermeneutical and linguistic scholars who assert that "the basic unit of meaning is not the word, but the sentence."[17] Our author then makes the curious statement, "words are stupid things until linked with other words to convey meaning."[18] It was pointed out in this study that this statement is inconsistent with the verbal theory of inspiration. If words and ideas cannot be separated, as Robinson asserts, then stupid words mean stupid ideas.[19] This hardly fits the "high view of inspiration" which embraces every word in the text.

6.2.2.2 Pointer

The view of verbal inspiration or a similar high view of inspiration does not have to lure the expository preacher into lexical fallacies.[20] Robinson could have pointed out that in the evangelical understanding, God inspired both the thoughts and the words which cannot be separated from each other. Thoughts find expression in words, which form sentences,

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[16]See above, 82-83.

[17]McCartney and Clayton, 123.

[18]See above, 83.

[19]See above, 84.

[20]See Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, chapter 1, "Word-Study Fallacies," 27-64, for discussion on the nature of lexical fallacies and how to avoid them.

paragraphs, as well as the entire discourse. Understood this way, verbal or entire[21] inspiration does not have to lead to an unhealthy focus on individual words, but can focus on the larger picture—sentences, paragraphs, etc. Again, this is a place where Robinson needed to explain his theological methodology and its relationship to semantics. Such an explanation would have canceled any need to call individual words "stupid."

Although Robinson admits to espousing the view of "verbal inspiration," it is possible that he might unconsciously embrace a more dynamic, holistic view of inspiration.[22] His burden to shift the emphasis of the expositor away from individual words to larger units of thought could be a possible indication of this view.[23] A question emerges at this point: Does "verbal" inspiration constitute the only "high view" of Scripture?

As noted above, we prefer the term "entire inspiration" rather than verbal inspiration.[24] Verbal inspiration is continually faced with the challenges of forced harmonization, mechanical dictation, and the dilemma of the human element.[25] Entire inspiration, while similar to verbal inspiration, is more inclusive of the multifaceted nature of Scripture's genres. As such, entire inspiration views parts of Scripture as verbally inspired only where sentences, paragraphs, or even chapters are attributed to God as the speaker.

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[21]This term is our preferred way of describing inspiration in the conservative context. It terminologically broadens the focus of inspiration to include the entire discourse as well as its individual units (see above, 81, note 139).

[22]See his discussion above, 82-83; see Lemke, "The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture," for discussion of a more holistic view of inspiration he calls the "multi-methodological approach to inspiration," 182-183.

[23]See above, 82-83.

[24]See above, note 21.

[25]Lemke, 181.

Other parts of Scripture, however, are inspired through different processes: the Psalms reflect more of a worship response through poetry, the wisdom literature reflects the wisdom of inspired sages, the narrative and historical portions of Scripture reflect the inspired historian gathering material together into a story, and the epistles reflect the inspired apostle addressing various issues in the church.[26] Thus, the different processes of inspiration are more dynamic and fluid, reflecting a holistic approach to the text rather than a more narrow focus on individual words. Nonetheless, the product of these different processes of inspiration, in our view, results in a high view of Scripture with reference to authority.

Entire inspiration, then, emphasizes both the human author as well as the text in the production of the Bible.[27] As such it brings into balance the tension between the human and divine elements found in Scripture and avoids the charge of mechanical dictation and the problem of forced harmonization.[28] A high view of Scripture compatible with expository preaching, therefore, does not have to be strictly "verbal" in nature. It can reflect the multifaceted nature of Scripture and still find it entirely inspired.

What would a discussion of semantic methodology in the context of this conservative evangelical view of inspiration look like? First of all, the inclusive, comprehensive scope of this understanding of inspiration would be discussed. For example, it could be pointed out that this view embraces the linguistic principle of communication that each element of text

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[26]For similar discussion, see Lemke, 181-182; and John Goldingay, *Models for Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

[27]The term "plenary" is often used to refer to both author and text as inspired (Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, 55).

[28]See Lemke, 181-182, on how a more holistic view of inspiration avoids these problems.

"is dependant upon the next higher level of discourse for its meaning." That is, "the meaning of a phoneme (a sound that is differentiated from other sounds in a language) is derived from the syllable in which it occurs; similarly, a syllable within a word, a word within a phrase, a phrase within a sentence, a sentence within a paragraph, a paragraph within a particular discourse, and a discourse within the works of a particular writer."[29] Our view of entire inspiration thus presupposes this linguistic principle which reflects the human dynamic of Scripture. As such, the issue of context should run like a thread through the entire discussion.[30] It could be explained that inspiration affects the entire discourse context and every part of the text should thus be studied in light of the whole. Secondly, the issue of synchrony and diachrony could be discussed. The value of the synchronic approach could, therefore, be stressed–how the word was used at the time of writing rather than the history of its development.[31]

A discussion such as this would help the expositor to maintain balance between an evangelical high view of inspiration and semantic analysis. Moreover, it would keep the focus where it ought to be—on the entire discourse context rather than on isolated units.[32]

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[29]McCartney and Clayton, 336, note 7.

[30]See Osborn, 78-80, 89-92, who stresses the importance of context in relationship to semantics.

[31]For discussion see Silva, *Biblical Words*, chap. 1, 35-51.

[32]Discourse analysis, a subdiscipline of general linguistics called "text linguistics" in Europe (according to Walter Bodine, in "Introduction," *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It is and What it Offers*, ed. Walter R. Bodine, Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Series [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995], 2), is the study of units of verbal utterances or written texts larger than the sentence (see Michael Shaw Findlay, *Language and Communication: A Cross-Cultural Encyclopedia* [Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, Inc, 1998], 49f). Pertaining to written text a "text linguist would like to know how the individual parts of a discourse combine to produce the text's overall meaning. Until relatively recently, how discourses operated was considered mysterious and unobservable, a phenomenon few had tried to analyze. However, advance in text linguistics have led to a growing understanding of the mechanisms by which discourses function" (David Allen Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek: A Survey of Basic Concepts and Applications* 2d. rev.

6.2.3 The Issue of Language and Preaching

6.2.3.1 Problem

Robinson spends significant time stressing the importance of clarity and precision in the language of preaching.[33] He spends no time, however, discussing the issue of the validity and reliability of human language for expository preaching.[34] Furthermore, he spends no time discussing the metaphysical limitations of language.[35] Most homileticians in the evangelical expository homiletic have followed Robinson in this regard.[36]

6.2.3.2 Pointer

The validity and reliability of language is a methodological issue that should receive more attention in evangelical homiletic textbooks. It provides the reason why clarity and precision is important in the expository sermon. Furthermore, because the conservative evangelical preacher espouses propositional revelation, a discussion of the validity of language is essential. John McClure discusses the vital role a theory of language plays in a preaching paradigm[37] and whether evangelical or not, a preacher should understand the

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ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988, 1995], 170); for introductory studies in discourse analysis, see, for example, M. Coulthard, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis* (London: Longman, 1977), who focuses more on conversation; R. de Beaugrande and J. W. Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics* (London: Longman, 1981) have a more textual focus; note also Joseph Brimes, *The Thread of Discourse* (The Hague/Paris: Mouton, 1975); see also Gillian Brown and George Yule, *Discourse Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); W. A. Pickering, *Framework for Discourse Analysis* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1978); and especially Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*; and Beekman, Callow, and Kopesec, *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication*.

[33]See above discussion, 72-74.

[34]For the reasons why, see above, 76.

[35]See above, 76-77.

[36]See above, 76, note, 118.

[37]McClure, "Theories of Language," in *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*, 292-295.

particular language theory he works with.

For the expositor, the evangelical view of language could briefly be set forth in the expository text. What would such a discussion look like?[38] First, a brief overview of different theories of language could be provided. Then the reasons why evangelicals believe human language is reliable and how this relates to expository preaching could be discussed. Finally, the metaphysical limitations of language and how the expositor can approach this issue could be dealt with.[39] The evangelical studies of Frame, Packer, Bartentsen, and Henry could be referred to as sources for further study.[40]

While this issue has not received much attention by evangelicals, it is important to the evangelical expository methodology behind expository preaching. As a result, the expositor will be equipped with an understanding of the presuppositions undergirding the evangelical mandate for clarity in preaching.

6.2.4 The Issue of Christ-Centered Preaching

6.2.4.1 Problem

As noted earlier in this study, Robinson says very little in *Biblical Preaching* on the issue of how the expositor can incorporate Christ into the expository sermon. He does, however, refer the reader to other books on the subject: Sidney Greidanus's *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* and Graeme Goldsworthy's *Preaching the Whole Bible as*

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[38]Our purpose here is not to provide the details of how this discussion would proceed, but to suggest a theoretical framework for such discussions in future expository textbooks.

[39]On this see, White, 190.

[40]See above, 68, notes 73-76.

Christian Scripture,[41] who both stress the importance of presenting Christ in the expository sermon.

6.2.4.2 Pointer

Both of the above evangelical texts by Greidanus and Goldsworthy provide a methodological framework with practical suggestions for preaching an expository sermon centered in the Gospel. One other text is Bryan Chapell's *Christ-Centered Preaching*, which has become an evangelical favorite on this subject.[42] Chapell also provides a methodology as well as a specific procedure for preaching expository sermons which focus on the redemption in Christ.

Notice the contributions of Greidanus, Goldsworthy, and Chapell to Christ-centered preaching, which reflect the reformed evangelical way of understanding Scripture.[43] Greidanus's approach to sermon preparation, for example, involves a ten-step procedure with step six focusing on what he calls "redemptive-historical christocentric interpretation." This methodological approach seeks first to understand an Old Testament passage in its own historical-cultural context and then moves on "to understand this message in the broad context of the whole canon and the whole of redemptive history" at which point "questions

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[41]See above, 61-62.

[42]Duduit, "What is expository preaching? An interview with Bryan Chapell," 6-9.

[43]A reformed classic on the progressive fulfillment in Scripture is Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948); see also Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (London: Tyndale Press, 1962); and Willem VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988); Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1981); and idem, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

concerning Jesus Christ, the center, emerge."[44] He emphasizes that his "concern is not to preach Christ to the exclusion of the 'whole counsel of God' but rather to view the whole counsel of God, with all its teachings, laws, prophecies, and visions, in the light of Jesus Christ." The issue, then, is "not to read the incarnate Christ back into the Old Testament text, which would be eisegesis," but to "look for legitimate ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament in the context of the New."[45] Based on this methodology, Greidanus discusses seven christocentric ways of preaching Christ-centered expository sermons from the Old Testament: redemptive-historical progression, promise-fulfillment, typology, analogy, longitudinal themes, New Testament references, and contrast.[46]

Goldsworthy provides a similar methodology of Christ-centered preaching which involves studying and preaching the text in light of the historical-redemptive progression of salvation history in Scripture.[47] His distinctive focus is on how the literary genre of any text should be identified in the framework of the major epochs of salvation history and linked to the contemporary hearer.[48] Each literary genre is thus examined in light of how "it testifies to Christ and is given its final significance by Christ." Out of this framework, Goldsworthy suggest that the preacher ask the question of every sermon, "Did the sermon show how the text testifies to Christ?[49]

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[44]Greidanus, 228.

[45]Ibid., 227-228.

[46]Ibid., 234-277.

[47]Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 1-139.

[48]Ibid., 140-244.

[49]Ibid., 138.

Chapell also reflects this reformed epochal approach to Scripture. He explains that a "passage retains its christocentric focus, and a sermon becomes Christ-centered, not because the preacher finds a slick way of wedging a reference to Jesus' person or work into the message but because the sermon identifies a function this particular text legitimately serves in the great drama of the Son's crusade against the serpent."[50] The preacher's task, then, is to "explain the role of any epoch, event, person, and passage within the divine crusade of redemption; i.e., the sovereign victory of the Seed of the woman over Satan."[51] To accomplish this, every biblical passage should be studied and explained in the context of one or more of four "redemptive foci." These are: 1) predictive—is the passage predictive of God's redemptive work in Christ such as in the messianic psalms; 2) preparatory—how does the text prepare the people of God to understand aspects of the person and/or work of Christ; 3) reflective—how does the passage reflect key facets of the redemptive message when there is no direct reference to Jesus's person or work; 4) resultant—in what way does a particular blessing, teaching, or command result from Christ's ministry.[52]

The above three approaches of Greidanus, Goldsworthy, and Chapell blaze new trails in developing evangelical christocentric expository methodology. Our pointer is that future evangelical expository texts should incorporate a hermeneutic procedure for Christ-centered expository preaching reflecting this methodological framework. Such a procedure would involve several steps in finding the Christ-centered redemptive element in a biblical passage.

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[50]Chapell, 293.

[51]Ibid., 297.

[52]Ibid., 275-280.

The first step of this suggested procedure would involve the exegetical process of determining the grammatical-historical meaning of the passage.[53] After the process of grammatical-historical exegesis has been completed, the second step would involve asking the question of the passage: How does this passage relate to Christ and his redemptive work? This immediately leads to another question based upon Chapell's four redemptive foci:[54] Is this passage predictive, preparatory, reflective, or resultant of Christ's redemptive ministry? One other step would be useful: Look for a later passage in the Old Testament or in the New Testament that develops and expands the literal sense of the earlier passage. A simple procedure such as this can be plugged into the larger exegetical procedure and provide help to the expositor looking for the redemptive element in every passage.[55] In addition to this procedure, several pages could be devoted to explaining the centrality of Christ to all of Scripture and why this is important methodologically to expository preaching.[56]

The reason for this type of approach roots in the evangelical understanding that every passage of Scripture testifies to Christ and reflects the overall structure of revelation which finds it coherence in the person and work of Christ.[57] To be consistent with this principle, therefore, a christocentric hermeneutic should be an integral part of any expository methodology and its procedure.

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[53]See below, 6.2.5.2, on suggested steps for exegetical procedure.

[54]See Chapell, 275-280.

[55]See below, 6.2.5.2, where this procedure is plugged into our suggested exegetical procedure for expository preaching.

[56]Insights from methodological approaches of Greidanus, Goldsworthy, and Chapell would be useful here.

[57]See Goldsworthy, 21.

6.2.5 The Issue of Exegetical Procedure and Sermon Preparation

6.2.5.1 Problem

Robinson's theological methodology, which views the text of the Bible as revelation and thus the inspired Word of God, manifests itself in his grammatical-historical-theological hermeneutic. Thus, the goal of interpretation for our author is to discover the literal meaning located in the divinely inspired text. It was pointed out in the evaluation that his exegetical procedure in the second stage falls short in its relationship to evangelical hermeneutical standards. That is, his exegetical procedure lacks depth and detail.[58] Leaving out these vital details is inconsistent with his hermeneutical methodology, which has at its core the grammatical-historical-theological method. While in theory he espouses grammatical-historical-theological exegesis, he only uses or applies an abbreviated version of it in his method.

6.2.5.2 Pointer

To be consistent with the evangelical grammatical-historical-theological method,[59] a biblical passage should be approached with all the necessary steps in the exegetical process. To leave any step out or cut it short, even for the sake of simplicity, short-circuits the process. We suggest a full-orbited exegetical process for the student of expository preaching.

First, the student should finalize the textual parameters. If the text is part of a systematic expository series, then the parameters already set from previous study can be

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[58]For discussion, see above, 5.4.

[59]For discussion on this method, see above, 4.2.2.

used. Second, the student should get an overview of the passage by reading it prayerfully and meditatively several times. Third, the student should determine the genre of the passage and apply the special rules of the particular genre to the passage during detailed exegesis. The possible options are: narrative, poetry, wisdom, law, prophecy, gospels, acts, parables, epistle, and apocalyptic. Various books on hermeneutics provide these rules. Fourth, the student should analyze the literary context of the passage by studying the book context, the section context (chapter or chapters), and the immediate context (surrounding paragraphs, sentences/verses). Then a structural display of the passage should be made.

Fifth, the student should analyze the historical/cultural context of the passage by using the following research tools: Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias, specialized studies on the historical/cultural context of the Bible, and commentaries. Notes should be taken in the following areas appropriate to the text: author, recipients, date, situation, culture, politics, and geography. Sixth, the student should analyze the passage in detail. The grammar and syntax of the passage, its significant words and genre should be analyzed with the following research tools: Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic texts, lexicons, concordances, grammars, and word-study books. Seventh, the student should analyze the theological/canonical context of the passage by studying relevant passages in other books in the same testament or the other testament. At this point, the three steps of finding the redemptive element in a passage as suggested above could be applied.[60] Eighth, the student should consult the commentaries and make notes of any relevant insights that apply or make any needed changes in conclusions thus far.

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[60]See above, 243-244.

Such an approach[61] covers all the major steps of exegesis in a step by step procedure which provides guidance for the beginning student of expository preaching. Early on in the process of sermon preparation it is very important for the student to have as full an understanding as possible of the issues in the passage. Moreover, this approach is consistent with expository methodology, which emphasizes the importance of a complete exegetical procedure as the foundation for effective expository sermon preparation.[62]

6.2.6 The Issue of the Audience and Application in Expository Preaching

6.2.6.1 Problem

While Robinson focuses the expositor on how to choose a preaching text in stage one, the role of the audience merits more discussion than he allots it. He does suggest that sensitivity to the needs of the particular congregation should be part of this planning process,[63] but neglects to discuss how to integrate it into that process. Moreover, one will find that in stage four, where Robinson attempts to bring the world of the Bible and the world of the contemporary audience together as the sermon is developed,[64] he still spends little time discussing how the preacher can know his audience better. This is a noticeable absence in light of his philosophy of preaching which stresses that expositors "must be as familiar with the needs of their churches as they are with the content of their Bibles."[65] In a text with such a practical focus, how to integrate the needs of the audience into the process

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[61]The sources used in putting this suggested procedure together can be found above, 119, note 67.

[62]See, for example, Johnson, *Expository Hermeneutics*; and Osborn.

[63]*Biblical Preaching*, 54

[64]See above discussion, 5.6.

[65]*Biblical Preaching*, 54.

of preparing the expository sermon should have received more attention.

It was also pointed out in this study that Robinson's approach to application and the contemporary audience is one-way: from the text to the present audience and not vice versa.[66] While this approach does not rule out the significant influence of the audience during sermon preparation, it endeavors to avoid going the other direction–letting the audience influence the exegetical meaning of the text.

Two issues thus present themselves for this discussion: Is Robinson's one-way application process the only valid evangelical approach or is there a way to go both directions and have the two meet in the middle? And how can the expositor gain a knowledge of the contemporary audience and integrate this into the sermon preparation process?

6.2.6.2 Pointer

Anthony Thiselton suggests that the problem in contemporary hermeneutics is whether the center of gravity lies in the past of the text or the present of the interpreter. He points out that recent hermeneutical theory has moved the center of gravity away from the historical context of the text to the present context of the interpreter. Consequently, any interpreter of Scripture must recognize that "the modern interpreter, no less than the text, stands in a given historical context and tradition."[67] As such, the interpreter cannot detach himself from his own time, his own tradition, and his own pre-understanding.

Thiselton's evangelical response to this problem is not to capitulate in the direction

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[66]See above discussion, 180-181.

[67]Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, 10-11.

of the view that the text can be understood only on the basis of the modern interpreter's presuppositions. Neither does he capitulate in the direction of those who believe that the interpreter's presuppositions must be ignored and the text objectively interpreted in its historical context and then applied to the present.[68]

Drawing from Hans Georg Gadamer,[69] his solution is to engage the two sets of horizons—those of the ancient text and of the modern reader or hearer. The horizon of the text is its historical setting, grammar, language, etc. The horizon of the contemporary reader is "a network of revisable expectations and assumptions which a reader brings to the text." The term "horizon" "calls attention to the fact that our finite situatedness in time, history, and culture defines the present (though always expanding) limits of our 'world', or more strictly the limits of *what we can 'see.'*"[70] The goal of hermeneutics, therefore, is "that of a steady progress towards a fusion of horizons." This "is to be achieved in such a way that the particularity of each horizon is fully taken into account and respected," which "means *both* respecting the rights of the text *and* allowing it to speak."[71] Thiselton, however, does not fully explain how to accomplish this fusion of horizons.[72]

For evangelicals, the most significant contribution of Thiselton's "fusion of horizons" is the dual focus on both sides of the hermeneutical endeavor—the past and present. It seeks

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[68]Ibid., 439ff.

[69]Ibid., xix; see Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, from which Thiselton significantly draws.

[70]Idem., *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, 46; italics his.

[71]Idem., *The Two Horizons*, 445; italics his.

[72]He does refer to the "hermeneutical spiral" and its "ongoing movement and progressive understanding," but does not fully explain it (ibid., 104).

to avoid a one-sided interpretive approach from the text to the present or from the present

to the text. It should be noted, however, that there is a leaning toward the side of the text, for

"there is an ongoing process of dialogue with the text in which the text itself progressively

corrects and reshapes the interpreter's own questions and assumptions."[73] This reflects

Thiselton's evangelical orientation.

As such, Thiselton's approach provides the theoretical context for our own approach

to the audience and application issue. First of all, we affirm that the viewpoint or horizon of

the expositor and his audience is an extremely important presence in the hermeneutical

process and thus makes a significant contribution during sermon preparation. Accordingly,

the expositor must take time to understand and reckon with his own horizon first and then

that of his hearers in addition to the horizon of the text.

Secondly, as to his own horizon, the evangelical expositor can employ the

hermeneutical spiral,[74] which fully acknowledges his own horizon (historical context and

pre-understandings) and engages it with the horizon of the text. The best description of this

spiral is found in Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard's evangelical *Introduction to Biblical*

Interpretation:

> Every interpreter begins with a pre-understanding. After an initial study of a Biblical
> text, that text performs a work on the interpreter. His or her pre-understanding is no
> longer what it was. Then, as the newly interpreted interpreter proceeds to question
> the text further, out of this newly formed understanding further–perhaps,
> different–answers are obtained. A new understanding has emerged. It is not simply

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[73]Ibid., 439.

[74]For discussion on this, see above, 132, note 113, 172-173; for a visual of the hermeneutical spiral, see the Appendix.

a repetitive circle; but, rather, a progressive spiral of development.[75]

Throughout this process the expositor thus reckons with his own horizon but also allows the text to reshape and reform it. Our first pointer for this section, therefore, is that the evangelical hermeneutical spiral should be discussed and explained as a viable methodological approach to exegetical process in future texts on expository preaching. Presently, the hermeneutical spiral is rarely mentioned in evangelical expository homiletic textbooks.[76]

Thirdly, concerning the horizon of the audience, the expositor must seek to understand it as throughly as possible in order to effectively communicate the Gospel. Thus, the best methods of research for understanding the audience should be employed. This derived understanding can then be engaged with the text through a process similar to the hermeneutical spiral.

For researching the audience, a pointer is found in the first chapter of Keith Willhite's *Preaching with Relevance*,[77] where he discusses tools for audience analysis. He first lists and describes a variety of sources that will help the expositor gather general information about the community and culture in America such as various studies on American culture. Next he provides the minister with sources for analyzing the city and neighborhood of his local church. Finally, he provides forms for theological analysis,

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[75]Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard, 114; for more discussion, see above, 130, note 113; Bryson describes this process thus: It involves personal experience with the text, and it involves both interpreting the text and allowing the text to interpret the interpreter" (175).

[76]One exception, for example, is Bryson, 175; but he calls it the "hermeneutical circle" instead; it should be noted that Bryson's text is a more advanced text rather than a beginning text for expositors; see also Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, 104, for discussion on the different ways the term "hermeneutical circle" is used.

[77]Willhite, *Preaching with Relevance*, 21-33.

psychological analysis, and demographic analysis of one's congregation. This information could be referred to regularly during sermon preparation. Also, Robinson's suggestions on how to understand one's audience found outside of *Biblical Preaching* are helpful at this point.[78]

Another pointer we suggest, as noted above, is a process of engagement between the audience and the text for application similar to that of the hermeneutical spiral. We call this the "expository spiral" where the expositor goes beyond his own horizon and engages the horizon of his audience with the horizon of the text. Like the hermeneutical spiral, this is a process of questioning the text in light of the audience's issues and thus expanding the horizon of the audience in relation to the text. It attempts to bring together the past of the text with the present of the audience, but ultimately it is the text that "reshapes and enlarges," to use Thiselton's terms,[79] the audience's horizon in relation to understanding the teaching and requirements of the text.

As such, this process is not the same as critically integrating information from the biblical text with the contemporary audience in such a way that the audience influences the meaning of the text.[80] Rather, the "expository spiral" places the center of gravity more on the original meaning of the text. This evangelical approach places heavy emphasis on implementing the exegetical procedure discussed above in 6.2.5.2 in the framework of the hermeneutical spiral to get as close to the original meaning of the text as possible. This

[78]See above, 182-183.

[79]Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, xix.

[80]See above, 154.

derived meaning or horizon of the text is accordingly engaged with the horizon of the contemporary audience. It is in this way that the "expository spiral" attempts to avoid a strict one-way application from text to audience while ignoring the horizon of the audience in the process.

6.2.7 The Issue of the Holy Spirit's Role and Prayer During Expository Sermon Preparation

6.2.7.1 Problem

As noted earlier in this study, Robinson mentions the Holy Spirit several times in his discussions on expository preaching,[81] but never discusses in any detail the work of the Holy Spirit in relationship to illumination during biblical interpretation. The absence of this discussion is a significant void in trying to follow Robinson's methodology. While the reader of *Biblical Preaching* can assume Robinson espouses the evangelical view of the Holy Spirit,[82] he or she can never be certain because not enough is said.

In our author's definition of expository preaching, the work of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in connection with application: "Not only does the Holy Spirit apply His truth to the personality and experience of the preacher, but according to our definition of expository preaching, He then applies that truth through the preacher to the hearers."[83] This is all he says about the work of the Holy Spirit during application. By not disclosing some details about his pneumatology, Robinson leaves the door open for some readers to wonder what

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[81]See above, 122, note 77.

[82]For evangelical discussion on pneumatology, see two major representative works: Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 861-898; and Grudem, 634-653.

[83]Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 27.

spirit guides expositors and how.

He does, however, give a hint on his view of the Spirit's identity when he says "the Holy Spirit confronts us primarily through the Bible."[84] This points to the evangelical understanding that the Holy Spirit is the one who guides Christians through the teaching of the Bible that he himself inspired.[85] But our author does not discuss how the Holy Spirit guides expositors in exegesis or application.

6.2.7.2 Pointer

While prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit are metaphysical in nature, to evangelicals they are considered a vital part of daily Christian experience. It is in this context that we suggest an expository preaching text should provide a brief theology of the Holy Spirit and explain the place of prayer during sermon preparation. Issues such as the identity of the Holy Spirit, his work and ministry in illumination should be discussed. The nature of the Spirit's work on the expositor during exegesis and application should also be addressed.[86] This kind of discussion involves presuppositions concerning the Holy Spirit that any evangelical homiletican can concisely set forth for the readers.[87] Furthermore, a discussion on the role of prayer and how to go about it in relationship to the Holy Spirit

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[84]Ibid.

[85]Robinson has authored a book on this subject: *Decision Making by the Book: How to Choose Wisely in an Age of Options* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1998), which spells out in more detail his understanding of the Holy Spirit in relationship to the Bible. In short, Robinson takes the traditional evangelical view of the Holy Spirit.

[86]See above discussion, 122-125; Calvin's classic discussion on illumination would be useful at this point, *Institutes*, 1:7-9.

[87]For more exhaustive discussion, see evangelical systematics Erickson, 861-898; and Grudem, 634-653; from the expository homiletic perspective, see Olford and Olford, 6-65, 241-250; and MacArthur, "The Spirit of God in Expository Preaching," 102-115; and Tony Sargent, *The Sacred Anointing: The Preaching of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1994).

should also be included to help the neophyte expositor.[88]

One other issue should be discussed. In terms of function, the preacher cannot depend on the Holy Spirit alone to give him the correct meaning of the text. "Being indwelt by the Spirit does not guarantee accurate interpretation."[89] Diligent exegetical study and prolonged exposure to the text with the hermeneutical spiral provide a safeguard against reading a personal meaning into the text and thinking it is from the Holy Spirit. The evangelical dictum is that the Holy Spirit does not work apart from hermeneutics and exegesis. He works within and through methods and techniques.[90] Understanding this function of the Holy Spirit in cooperation with human effort is thus essential.

The evangelical rationale behind such a discussion is two-fold. First, evangelicals consider the work of the Holy Spirit and prayer very important to sermon preparation because the preacher should be a person who maintains an intimate relationship with God, especially during the process of preparing a sermon. Second, this emphasis is consistent with evangelical theological methodology which stresses the initial work of the Holy Spirit in producing Scripture. The resulting corollary is that if the Spirit produced the original text of Scripture through human beings, he will also continue to help them in their quest to understand the original product.[91] With such a rationale, the two issues of prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit merit special attention in connection with expository preaching

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[88]On this, see, for example, Vines and Shaddix, 63-64, 68-69, 102-103, for a full discussion on prayer and the Holy Spirit in relationship to expository preaching.

[89]Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, 85.

[90]Ibid.; see also Ramm, *Pattern of Religious Authority*, 39-40.

[91]For sources on illumination, see above, 122, note 76; 123, note 80.

methodology and procedure.

6.2.8 The Issue of Articulating Sermon Purpose

6.2.8.1 Problem

It was pointed out during the evaluation of Robinson's procedure for articulating sermon purpose that his discussion lacked clarity due to the lack of specific steps.[92] According to Robinson and other expository homileticians, articulating sermon purpose is extremely important to the sermon preparation process. So important, in fact, that they believe it should be crafted into a specific sentence.[93] It was suggested that Robinson's template for writing this specific sentence needed modification based on insights from the learning objective templates of education scholars.[94]

6.2.8.2 Pointer

The rationale behind articulating this statement is the evangelical belief that the biblical authors had purpose in their writings.[95] If a biblical passage has purpose, then this purpose should be reflected in the expository sermon in the form a sermon purpose statement. As such, articulating this purpose statement is a very important part of expository sermon preparation. This was reflected in the fact that the center of gravity in Robinson's ten stages was focused on the homiletical idea and sermon purpose statement.[96]

Because of the importance expository homileticians place on this statement, the

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[92]See above, 198.

[93]See above, 193, note 157.

[94]See discussion above, 205-206.

[95]For discussion on this issue, see above, 5.9.3.

[96]See above, 228-229.

clarity of its articulation merits attention. The basic steps leading up to articulating this statement are: First, the expositor should determine the exegetical purpose of the text.[97] Second, based upon this exegetical data, the expositor should then determine what the contemporary purpose of the sermon should be. This step involves the "expository spiral" as discussed above in the previous section. Third, the expositor should write a one-sentence purpose statement for the sermon by utilizing Robinson's verb list.[98] Once the domain verb is chosen, the expositor should write the purpose statement using the following template: **My congregation will (domain verb) + (content) + (specific action).** The "+" allows the expositor freedom in choosing the appropriate filler words (prepositions, articles, etc.) between the domain verb, content, and specific action. An example would look like this: (Skill verb) "My congregation will pray (domain verb) about the lost in the community (content) during their morning prayers (specific action)."

To evangelical expository homileticians this approach of distilling a single purpose for the sermon is not reductionistic. Rather, it performs a very important role in sermon preparation. Like Robinson's homiletical idea which unifies the sermon, this statement provides the function of the sermon.[99] It gives the expositor a consistent template for writing out the sermon purpose statement in a user-friendly format and motivates him to write the sentence carefully. This facilitates efficiency in the sermon preparation experience and reflects the theological importance of this process in expository methodology.

[97]See Kaiser's exegetical procedure for discovering textual purpose above, 199, note 179.

[98]See above, 203.

[99]Thomas Long identifies the "function statement" of the sermon which is a description of what the preacher hopes the sermon will create or cause to happen in the hearers" (*The Witness of Preaching*, 86).

6.2.9 The Issue of Sermon Preparation and the Modes of Preaching

6.2.9.1 Problem

It was noted that Robinson needed to bring into his discussion of outlining the sermon the issue of preaching modes.[100] H. Grady Davis provided a seminal discussion of three modes in preaching and neither Robinson nor other expository homileticians have employed the insights from this discussion into expository methodology.

6.2.9.2 Pointer

Our pointer is essentially that Davis' discussion on the three modes–the indicative, imperative, and conditional–should be incorporated into expository sermon methodology and procedure. Each of these modes could be discussed in their relationship to the biblical text and examples provided to show how the mode of the text could be reflected in the sermon.

So important are the modes in Davis' mind that he writes: "Without doubt all modes are proper and necessary to a full-bodied preaching of the gospel."[101] Thus incorporating the issue of preaching modes into the discussion of expository preaching will promote variety and energy in the sermon as well as facilitate the sermon preparation enterprise.

In addition to the mode of preaching, Davis discusses the role of tense. Does the preacher speak of the text and its meaning in the past tense, as if it were finished long ago? Or does he speak of the message as if it were alive and present?[102] As such, tense should be an important issue to bring into the discussions of expository preaching. Davis' discussion

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[100]On this see above, 217-218.

[101]Davis, 211.

[102]Ibid., 203-209.

of both tense and mode should, therefore, be brought back into expository preaching texts.

6.2.10 The Issue of the Homiletical Idea, Purpose Statement, and Supportive Material

6.2.10.1 Problem

In stage nine, which focuses on filling in the sermon outline, it was pointed out that Robinson discusses the supporting elements in relationship to various ideas but not in relationship to the homiletical idea or the sermon purpose statement. Two questions were suggested to remedy this problem. First, does this repetition, restatement, explanation, definition, factual information, quotation, narration, or illustration amplify the homiletical idea of the sermon? And second, does this repetition, restatement, explanation, definition, factual information, quotation, narration, or illustration support the purpose of this sermon?[103]

6.2.10.2 Pointer

Our pointer is essentially that the expositor should use the two above questions to keep every element in the sermon tied to the homiletical idea and sermon purpose statement in every expository sermon. The rationale behind this is found in the nature of the evangelical expository sermon itself. It is a tightly woven structure with subpoints supporting major points that flow out of the central homiletical idea. Likewise, the purpose statement manifests itself throughout the sermon often influencing the entire structure. As a result, every aspect of the expository sermon, which includes all of its supporting elements, should consequently be integrated into these two centralizing statements. Because this understanding should be clarified in the expositor's mind early on in the process, these two

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[103]See above, 5.12.

questions would be useful in future texts on expository preaching.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter has endeavored to provide pointers of a theoretical nature along with procedural suggestions for strengthening expository methods. The ten issues addressed were suggested by problem areas in Robinson's homiletic methodology and method. Robinson's failure to address these problems merited the discussion suggested in each issue. By way of summary, the new theory suggested in this chapter for expository preaching pedagogy involves the following pointers: First, expository preaching textbooks should explain at the outset the theological methodology behind their expository method. It may be easy to assume that all texts of this nature have the same methodology but such is not the case. Presently, many expository texts do explain their theological methodology, but like Robinson some do not. Second, the evangelical view of inspiration should be explained in connection with semantic analysis to provide a holistic approach to word studies. Third, because evangelicals place a high value on clarity and precision of language in preaching, the reasons should be addressed in a discussion of the nature of language and preaching. Fourth, because evangelicals believe the entire Bible is a manifestation of Christ and his work, expository preaching methodology and procedure should incorporate into its teaching Christ-centered expository methodology and procedure. Fifth, because the grammatical-historical-theological method is so important to expository methodology, any expository preaching text needs to present a full-orbited exegetical procedure and not short-circuit any of the processes.

Sixth, concerning the issue of the contemporary audience and application, Thiselton's

metaphor of "horizons" is helpful in that it reminds expositors to focus not only on the biblical world, but on the contemporary one as well and seek to understand this world in terms of their own personal horizon and the horizon of their audience. As such, the expositor should apply the "hermeneutical spiral" approach to interpretation of the text and then apply the "expository spiral" to the audience for application. This approach attempts to help the expositor maintain a balance between both the biblical world and the contemporary world during application. These issues need discussion in expository preaching textbooks.

Seventh, because evangelical methodology views the work of the Holy Spirit and the role of prayer to be very important during sermon preparation, these two issues in connection with the concept of illumination should be clarified in expository texts in order to avoid problems of misunderstanding and abuse. Eighth, because evangelicals believe biblical authors have purpose in their writings, expository sermons should reflect this purpose. Consequently, a consistent template such as the one suggested above will aid the expositor in articulating the sermon purpose statement. Ninth, the issue of tense and mode in preaching can effectively be applied to expository preaching and will enhance the energy level of the sermon. Tenth, because the homiletical idea and sermon purpose statement are so central to expository sermon preparation, every supporting element in the sermon must be directly tied to each one. This can be done by asking two questions of each supporting element introduced into the sermon which will promote unity.

In sum the above pointers collectively provide a suggested theoretical framework for enhancing existing expository preaching pedagogy in the evangelical expository homiletic. This study of Robinson's homiletical method, a foundational method in this newly

developing expository homiletic, has found these ten issues to be areas in need of maturation.