

ABSTRACT

There have been only a few serious reflections on Pentecostal preaching although Pentecostals number over five-hundred and fifty million adherents. In this article we develop a theory of Pentecostal preaching based upon Luke 4:16-20 where anointed preaching and signs, wonders and miracles go hand in hand. From this backdrop we develop a hermeneutical and the homiletical theory of Pentecostal preaching that is reflective of Pentecostal preaching today.

We develop our theory of Pentecostal preaching from exegetes of New Testament passages on preaching, from a qualitative and quantitative analysis of 100,000 Pentecostal ministers on their understand of Pentecostal preaching, from analyzing the history and theology of Pentecost preaching, from analyzing sermon literature and sermons of the last one hundred years, from analyzing personal interviews of Pentecostal preachers, from analyzing a qualitative analysis of two Pentecostal preachers sermons, and from analyzing audio and video of sermons.

Although Charles Fox Parham started the modern day Pentecostal movement in 1901, (He had a limited influence in a small geographical area in the United States of America.) it was William Seymour,¹ a lay African-American preacher, who birthed the worldwide Pentecostal movement in 1906 in Southern California, United States of America. The movement was born as a result of people wanting to experience the power of God in their lives as the apostles did.

1.1 Homiletical hermeneutics

Seven principles will guide our discussion on the hermeneutics of Pentecostal preaching.

1.1.1 Pentecostal preaching is in keeping with**Luke 4:16-20**

Research has shown that Pentecostal pastors seek to model their preaching after the ministry of Jesus found in Luke 4:16-20. However one may exegete this passage, it

¹ Douglas Nelson, "For Such a Time as This". Ph. D. diss., Faculty of Arts, Department of Theology, University of Birmingham, England 1981 Cf. Walter J Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972.

teaches that anointed preaching, signs, wonders and miracles go together.² We see this model of preaching throughout the ministry of Jesus. In Mark 1:21-39 Jesus preaches in a synagogue in Capernaum and delivers a man from demon possession. In Mark 2:1-12 he continues on the same day of ministry preaching in a home, as in Mark 1, and heals a paralytic. Matthew 4:23 tells us:

Jesus went throughout Galilee teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.
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Pentecostal pastors see the anointing of the Holy Spirit as imperative for Biblical preaching to take place. We define the anointing as the Spirit of God coming upon a person to do the work of ministry. In preaching, the Holy Spirit anoints the sermon. (Bob Menzies a New Testament Pentecostal scholar in an email he sent to me indicated that the anointing in the generic term to describe the power of the Holy Spirit and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the specific word to describe the empowering of the Holy Spirit.)³

Pentecostal pastors do not see preaching as an art and/or a science: they see preaching under the anointing of the Holy Spirit as preaching that penetrates the will of man. All Christians believe the Holy Spirit anointed those who wrote the Word of God but research

² There are two ways to interpret verses 18 and 19. 1. If we make the main verb 'anoint', the infinitive (infinitives tell the purpose of the verb) followed by the infinitive, it could be interpreted to mean that Jesus was anointed and "sent" (verb) "to preach" "proclaim liberty to the captives" "to open the sight" of the blind and "to proclaim" this is a time of God's liberation. 2. These verses can also be interpreted by looking at the two main verbs "anoint" and "sent" separately. Then the passage would read: Jesus was anointed to preach (infinitive). Jesus was "sent" (verb) to "proclaim release" (infinitive) to the captives, "release" (infinitive) those that have been bound and "proclaim" (infinitive) this is the acceptable year of the Lord (this the time God is releasing people). Whichever interpretation one chooses both interpretations would mean the same thing. Jesus came to preach, to heal, and set people free from bondage (demonic). In other words the anointed preaching ministry of Jesus, and signs, wonders and miracles go together or were followed by healing and setting people free from demonic activity.

See my additional comments, Aldwin Ragoonath, "*Pentecostal Preaching in North America*" ,108, 109. "Jesus began his ministry as a result of the anointing at the river Jordan (Mark 1:10.), and his appearance in the synagogue confirms this anointing. It is because of the work of the Spirit that Jesus can do the rest of the things mentioned in this passage. He can preach the gospel to the poor, heal the broken-hearted, preach deliverance to the captives and the recovery of sight to the blind, and set at liberty those who are bruised. Although there are some textual problems in this passage: the insertion of Isaiah 58:6, "to heal the broken hearted" and the deletion of, "day of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance," that does not rob anything from the accuracy and application of the passage. As it applies to the above, Luke may be quoting from the Q source. (The Q source is referred to by New Testament scholars as a written document that recorded the life of Christ and was used by Matthew and Luke as their primary source.) But what we see here is Luke quoting from the LXX (Septuagint), and emphasizing his own pneumatic view of the Spirit." At the heart of the discussion on anointing is one passage of Scripture, Luke 4:16-20 quoted from Is. 61:1, 2, and the exegesis of Lk. 4:16-20, "anoint" and "anointing."

³ Bob Menzies in an email in September 2002 helped me define anointing.

indicates that Pentecostal ministers are different: they depend totally upon the anointing of the Holy Spirit. They believe the pastor should be in tune with the Holy Spirit to make the Word alive to the hearers. To facilitate the Holy Spirit working through their lives they spend an average of one day per week in fasting and prayer and 72 minutes in daily devotions.⁴ They believe that through fasting and prayer they can be a better channel for the Holy Spirit to use.⁵

1.1.2 Pentecostal preaching is predicated by a spirit worldview

Much of Western Christianity has a logical worldview. Research has indicated that Pentecostals have a spirit worldview. A spirit worldview is in keeping with the Bible, especially where Paul speaks about principalities and powers in high places, Ephesians 6:12. A spirit worldview believes in a personal devil, a spirit world, dreams and visions as well as a physical world. Most of the peoples of the world have a spirit worldview.

From this backdrop Pentecostals stresses the experiential and supernatural part of Christianity. Pentecostals are not mystics nor are they generally anti-intellectual. They are orthodox Christians. They stress that the experiences of the apostles can be experienced today. We do not mean they neglect the basic teachings of Christianity but, in addition, they lay emphasis on the experiential/supernatural part of Christianity. This includes: salvation as a personal experience (knowing one's sins are washed away); the baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues is for all New Testament believers; healing of the sick through prayer and the gifts of the Spirit can be experienced today; praying and walking in the Spirit.

1.1.3 Pentecostal preaching emphasizes a holistic New Testament theology

A holistic approach to Scripture is that all the things the apostles experienced can be experienced today. Pentecostals do not make a difference between the gospels and the epistles in teaching doctrine.⁶ They teach and preach that all of Scripture is normative today. They have a simple view of the canonicity of Scripture. They take 2 Timothy 3:15, 16 literally.

⁴ Aldwin Ragoonath, "Pentecostal preaching in North America" (Th.D., University of South Africa, 1999), p. 147-183.

⁵ Eric Reed, "Sermon Assessment: The Preaching Report Card", *Leadership* (Summer, 1999): 82-87. The writer of this article suggests that spiritual preparation is the most difficult part of preparation for Evangelicals.

⁶ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 181. Cf. Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of Luke*, 1984.

Matthew Clark (cf. Menzies 2000⁷) in his second doctoral dissertation, “An Investigation Into The Nature of a Viable Pentecostal Homiletic”⁸, 1997, suggests that we need to look at the ways the Holy Spirit is involved in the text and how we may experience the text. He gives an example found in Romans 8:1-37. Three principles guide his hermeneutic: *demonstration*, *implementation* and *realization*. *Demonstration* means a radical life-style change from walking in the flesh to walking as a disciple of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. Such living shows that the interpretation is understood and viable today. Pentecostal *implementation* begins when the reader accepts the depiction of reality offered by the text, as opposed to that assumed by the secular consensus in which they live. *Realization* is linked to ‘making real’ the promise of the text. It is experiencing what it means to walk in the Spirit and to live a radical life-style. It is to experience the comforting power of the Holy Spirit in the midst of suffering and persecution.⁹

Research indicates that Pentecostal theology teaches that the gifts of the spirit can be experienced and practiced today. I am highlighting a few of the gifts that help preaching: discerning of spirits, prophecy, word of wisdom and knowledge, pastoring and teaching, evangelism, and healings and miracles¹⁰.

The gift of the discerning of spirits helps the preacher to determine what the attitude and response of the congregation is to the preaching: is a demonic activity hindering the preaching?

The gift of prophecy helps the preacher to comfort and confront God’s people with the claims of the gospel. Today, when politically correct language is the norm, the Pentecostal minister can exercise the gift of prophecy to confront and comfort his congregation in a positive, caring attitude in obedience to the Holy Spirit. The gift of prophecy gives the minister insight on the selection of his words, his attitude and his gestures.

The gifts of the word of knowledge and wisdom enable the Pentecostal preacher to say things in his preaching that are revelatory, usually without preparation, while preaching

⁷ Robert Menzies, *Spirit and Power: Foundation of Pentecostal Experience* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000).

⁸ Matthew Clark, “An Investigation into the Nature of a Viable Pentecostal Hermeneutic”, Th.D. diss., University of South Africa, 1997.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 125-126.

¹⁰ Aldwin Ragoonath, “Pentecostal Preaching in North America,” 129-144.

from his prepared sermon. He is in tune with the congregation and listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The gifts of pastoring and teaching help Pentecostal ministers to work effectively. Pentecostals believe in training ministers for full-time ministry but stress the gift of pastor/teacher is more important than training for ministry. Since lay ministers are given opportunity to preach in the local setting, if one has the gift of pastor/teacher he is recognized by the body of Christ and over time will be given opportunity to pastor and will enjoy a fruitful pulpit ministry.

The gift of evangelism helps the Pastor to do the work of an evangelist by leading people to faith in Christ. In the Christian community, including the Pentecostal community, the gift of evangelism is a well-acknowledged gift. Pentecostals do not see the gift of evangelism resident only in the full-time evangelist but they teach that a pastor may also have the gift of evangelism, as may a layperson. We know people have the gift of evangelism when they are soul winners.

The exercising of the gift of healings can bring healing to the sick and confirm the gospel. The gift of miracles is a supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit. Some healings can be considered miracles but not all healings can be considered miracles. Miracles are not limited to the body but can be an intervention of the Holy Spirit in nature. In non-Christian countries healings and miracles serve as catalysts to preach the gospel.

Pentecostal preaching emphasizes that empowerment for Christian service comes through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals believe and teach that they are empowered for Christian service when they are baptized in the Holy Spirit as experienced by the apostles in Acts 2:4. The anointing and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are the same. They teach that this empowerment is available to all Christians today. The emphasis is not so much on speaking in other tongues but about a spirit worldview. The results of the Spirit's baptism are boldness, effective witnessing, powerful preaching, signs, wonders and miracles following the preaching, personal holiness and fruits of the Spirit evident in the life of the preacher.

1.1.4 Pentecostal preaching is motivated by the needs of the audience and the Christian calendar

Generally, Pentecostal preaching does not start with the Bible per se but with the needs

of the audience. The questions the minister may ask are: what are the needs in the audience, the world, and what is the Spirit saying today. The needs can be: disaster in the congregation life such as: a prominent leader in the church died in a car accident; a healing service; the celebration of Easter or other events in the Christian calendar, the baptism of the Holy Spirit; evangelism, missions and a new direction for the church etc. The needs in the world may be frustration, confusion, guilt, hopelessness, fear and anxiety etc. We determine what the Spirit is saying from the preceding, an impression the Holy Spirit may be making upon the preacher to preach about (usually in the context of prayer and fasting). Pentecostals are convinced and practices recognizing and obeying his voice. In Acts we read the Holy Spirit forbidding Paul from speaking or allowing him to speak (Acts 16:6. In Acts 10 Peter was directed by the Holy Spirit to speak to Cornelius house hold.). The Holy Spirit may be calling the minister to speak about an unrelated subject in the Christian calendar. He may be calling the minister to speak about a new direction he wants to lead the church into or speak about a subject such as: child abuse, missions etc. Always the needs of the congregation and the nature of the service always determine the sermon.

Furthermore, the first choice of sermons in meeting the needs of the audience is through preaching expository sermons or topically oriented sermons.¹¹ Expository or topically oriented sermons give equal emphasis on Scripture and the needs of the audience. In this type of sermon we try and apply the Holy Spirit purpose¹² of the passage to the audience. When the purpose (telos) of a passage is applied preaching becomes alive and relevant to societies needs.

A second way Pentecostal ministers meet the needs of the audience is to preach situationally oriented sermons. Situationally oriented sermons are sermons that have to do with problems in society (e.g. how to overcome fear? breakdown in marriage, child abuse), and less with a selected text.¹³ H J C Pieterse coined the terms topically and situationally oriented sermons to mean sermon that have to more with need and less with Scripture.) The application component in expository sermons, and giving answers to the needs of the world in the situationally oriented sermons, makes Pentecostal preaching very attractive.

¹¹ Ibid., 186.

¹² Jay E Adams, *Pulpit Speech*, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1971), 11-13.

¹³ H J C Pieterse, *Communicative Preaching* (Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa, 1995.)

Declaring that Jesus is the way to salvation drives their preaching. Generally speaking this type of preaching may not always be a result of meticulous exegesis but always highlights the main themes of the Bible. But Scripture is intertwined throughout the sermon. Pentecostal preaching is Biblical, practical, simple, clear and relevant to society. The concern is with winning the lost and helping Christians to become reproducing believers, (not with redundant exegesis).

1.1.5 Pentecostal preaching is preaching the gospel in demonstration of the Spirit of God

To the best of our knowledge, no Pentecostal pastor's oratory skill has ever reached the status of Charles Haddon Spurgeon or Alexander Maclaren or other great preachers; neither do Pentecostal ministers desire oratory skill per se. (A recent Time article indicates otherwise, see 2:2.) What they passionately desire is to preach the gospel under the power of the Holy Spirit in the demonstration of the power of God similar to Paul (in 1 Cor. 2:4, 5). It appears that Paul had a similar problem in oratory skills. Apollos seemed to be a better preacher than Paul was (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4-6 cf. 2 Cor. 10:10). Paul desired not to be dependant upon the oratory skills of his time but to preach under the power of God or with the objective of seeing lives changed, deliverances taking place and bodies healed. Research has shown that Pentecostal ministers today yearn for the same things as Paul. The same word "power" in Acts 1:8 is used in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 by Paul to describe preaching that demonstrates the power of God. To preach with "power" on the one hand means anointed preaching and on the other hand means sings wonders and miracles.¹⁴

1.1.6 Pentecostal preaching starts with the re-experiencing of the text.

One way to explain the hermeneutics of Pentecostal ministers is to borrow from other scholarly works that explain more fully what Pentecostal ministers do in sermon preparation, especially Paul Ricoeur 1976.¹⁵ Pentecostals ministers start their sermons with the re-experiencing of the text they are planning to preach from. Augustine also

¹⁴*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 2, s.v. "Dunamis" by Grundman, 310-311; Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle of the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, English translation, 1975), 55; Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968), 68; Fred Fisher, *Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*. Paul uses the same word "power" in Acts 1:8 to describe his preaching. Paul then was saying (in 1 Cor. 2:4, 5) his preaching was not dependent upon the popular oratory of his time: he demonstrated his preaching by changed lives and miracles.

¹⁵ Joseph Byrd, "Formulation of A Classical Pentecostal Homiletic in Dialogue with Contemporary Protestant Homiletic," Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1990, 203.

preached after he re-experienced a text.¹⁶ Ricoeur's¹⁷ view of preaching from a text is to look at both the literal and symbolic meaning of a text. His main concern is to make the distant text applicable today. While the literal meaning in a text gives *the primary meaning*, the symbolic meaning of a text gives *a meaning* of a text or adds to the preaching of the text. For example, the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt is the literal event of history and the primary meaning of the text, but symbolically it means leaving the old life.

Joseph Byrd¹⁸ is the first scholar to use Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical method to explain Pentecostal preaching. Byrd research has shown that if Pentecostal pastors will apply Ricoeur's method together with his development of this theory, they will be able to interpret the Biblical text both literally and symbolically. This method can help Pentecostal pastors to go back to their roots and make preaching relevant. Pentecostals' root of preaching is the re-experiencing of the text.

The way I re-experience the text is to let the Lord impress upon me one truth at a time in my personal devotions one Bible book at a time. I use the truths the Lord makes real to me as a starting point for preaching.

1.1.7 Pentecostal preaching culminates at the altar

In keeping with the spirit of the gospel (to invite men and women to become disciples of Jesus Christ) research has shown that Pentecostals have developed a theology to facilitate the needs of the world. They do this through the altar call. The altar is usually in front of the church facing the minister. The altar is used for several purposes.¹⁹

It is a place for people to make a decision to follow Christ. Pentecostal pastors preach for a verdict. People are presented with the claims of the gospel and, like Paul in front of King Agrippa, they seek to persuade people for Christ. Whether it is a pastoral message or not, pastors usually present the gospel. Upon the completion of the message the congregation is asked to respond to the message. People are asked to accept Christ as saviour and backsliders are asked to re-dedicate their lives to Christ. Those who respond

¹⁶ Jay E Adams, *Pulpit Speech*, 51-61.

¹⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed., Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980), 54; quoted in Byrd, "Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Theory and Pentecostal Proclamation", 207; Lorettes Dornisch, "Symbolic System and the Interpretation of Scripture: An Introduction to the Work of Paul Ricoeur," *Semeia* 4 (1975): 14; quoted in Byrd, "Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Theory and Pentecostal Proclamation", 209.

¹⁸ Joseph Byrd, "Formulation of A Classical Pentecostal Homiletic in Dialogue with Contemporary Protestant Homiletic," 203.

¹⁹ Ragoonath, "Pentecostal Preaching in North America," 186.

to accept Christ as saviour are asked to come forward to the altar where someone prays with them to accept Christ.

Secondly, the altar is a place for people to respond to the Word. Since Pentecostal pastors preach for a verdict, the altar call may end with an invitation for people to respond by coming to the altar. For example, if the pastor is seeking to influence people to give themselves to missions, he will ask people to come forward for prayer and confirm their decision for Christian service. Someone usually prays with them to confirm a decision.

Thirdly, the altar is a place where one can bring personal needs and someone will pray with them. It may be prayer for a family problem, employment, healing or deliverance. It is also a place to receive counseling about a spiritual problem. Usually, after a Sunday morning sermon, people are asked to come to the altar with their needs. They are usually anointed with oil by the pastor, elders or designated persons from the congregation and receive prayer. In cases where one is very sick or a non-Christian is demonized, others are asked to join in prayer and for the person or special service is organized for that specific purpose.

The Sunday evening service is more relaxed and people can bring their needs and receive more extensive prayer. The evening service usually ends in a time of prayer by the congregation around the altar.

We turn our attention now to sermon delivery or homiletical communication.

2 Homiletical communication

2.1 The terminology

Language is communication skills. Paul Ricoeur's rhetorical theory has to do with the meaning of words and symbols. The reception of listeners and the effects have to do with how the sermon affects the congregation. Dialoguing is a communication skill that involves a person speaking and the other person responding.

2.2 Language and rhetoric

Research has shown that one hundred percent of Pentecostal ministers responding to a survey said they believe the character/ethos of the preacher communicates more effectively than the sermon.²⁰ Paul seems to think the same thing when he stated that the

²⁰ Ibid., 173, 185.

good character of the minister is imperative for preaching, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9. Aristotle says the same thing about character.²¹

By character, Pentecostal ministers mean the devotional and spiritual life of the pastor (such as fasting and prayer mentioned earlier) and the outer behaviour such as honesty, humility and trustworthy. In one Pentecostal denomination Pentecostal ministers are addressed as “men of God.” William D. Thompson²² says that preaching is self-disclosure. Pentecostal pastors disclose themselves by their deportment, gestures, mannerisms, the words they use, the tone of their voice, their facial expressions and the sense of the presence of the Lord upon the preacher. People can tell the pastor’s relationship to Christ by self-disclosure.

Research has shown that Pentecostal ministers are very good communicators of the gospel. A recent article in Time Magazine has indicated that T D Jake, a Pentecostal minister is the best preacher in America.²³ They use simple words when preaching. In North America they speak so a child in grade school can understand. Depending on the geographical location and race, verbal communication will be different. Generally speaking, in Canada and the Northern States, the language is more inclusive and middle-of-the-road while among African-Americans and in the Southern States the language is more direct.

Pentecostal ministers use a mixture of “you” and “we” in their sermons.²⁴ These are drawn from Dr. Jay Adams class notes he gave while I attended at Westminster Theological Seminary. He insisted that we should use “you” consistently. I disagree. Generally speaking we need to mix “you” and “we” in preaching.) For example “we need a revival”, not “you need a revival”; “you” need to get right with God seems more appropriate.

Pentecostal ministers use non-verbal language very effectively. It is estimated that 80% of communication is non-verbal. Using the body to gesture is a common mannerism of Pentecostal ministers. The gesture is usually coordinated with verbal communication. To enhance communication many Pentecostal pastors have replaced the large wooden pulpit with a small transparent plastic pulpit. The congregation can see the whole body of the pastor, enhancing his gestures and communication. It is common for Pentecostal ministers

²¹ Microsoft Encarta 1998.

²² Thompson, William. *Preaching Biblically*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), 29-39.

²³ David Van Biema, and Nadia Mustafa, “America Best Preachers.” *Time Magazine Canada*, September 2001:62-64.

²⁴ Doctor of Ministry class at Westminster Theological Seminary in California

to use dramatics and non-verbal language to communicate a point. They may also use non-verbal sounds to communicate the message: laughing about a jubilant point and crying when speaking about a sorrowful point. A Pentecostal minister also uses the senses to communicate. For example, if a Pentecostal minister is preaching about blind Bartimaeus, he may ask the congregation to close their eyes and imagine what it means to be blind or the preacher may try and describe the world of blind people.

Dress also helps to communicate the message. In the two major Pentecostal denominations in North America, (The Assemblies of God and The Church of God in Christ) the pastors of one wear a conservative suit, and of the other wear a clerical robe. To keep within a tradition will enhance or hinder communication.

Research has shown that Pentecostal preaching can be best described as a mixture of various forms of communication in preaching—verbal, non-verbal and with gestures. Pentecostal preaching is melodramatic and uses the whole person in presenting the gospel.

Pentecostals speak a lot about depending upon the anointing of the Spirit to anoint their preaching. Pentecostal pastors believe they are anointed when they are baptized in the Spirit, walking a Spirit-filled life, and separated from the world. They not only believe the Holy Spirit wrote the Bible but also believe He is the one who knows which sermon is the most appropriate and is able to communicate the mind of the Spirit in the sermon. Some ministers will literally spend hours in prayer to know the mind of the Spirit and seek to communicate the thoughts of the Holy Spirit for the occasion. They believe that without the anointing of the Spirit upon their lives the sermon will fall to the ground.

The nature of a Pentecostal service is relaxed, jubilant, emotional and contemporary. Usually when Pentecostals gather together they come to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord on the first day of the week. They usually celebrate by singing the most contemporary form of music to enhance worship. Older churches use music that is more traditional with the singing of hymns or a mixing older with newer forms of music. The congregation is usually happy and participates in the singing of songs that exalt the risen Lord. In such an atmosphere it is easy to preach.

2.3 Reception of the sermon and its effect on listeners

The pastor serves as a model in listening to sermons. He exemplifies listening by listening attentively to his congregation in counselling and in pastoral visits.²⁵ If he listens to

²⁵ Thompson, William. *Preaching Biblically*, 44-49.

the congregation the people will find it easier to listen to his preaching. Over time the pastor develops trust and this trust is²⁶ translated into the right to be heard.

Research has shown that Pentecostal pastor does not preach to the emotions nor to the intellect but to the will of man. He has distinct goals in mind when he preaches: salvation for the non-Christian, helping Christians to become reproducing Christians and building up the body of Christ.

In obedience to Matthew 28:19, 20, Pentecostal ministers usually make an altar call for salvation in every service. If there are visitors, the call to respond to the gospel is even stronger. If someone responds to the call for salvation there is much rejoicing in the congregation. And if there are no people saved on a regular basis, the pastor and congregation feel something is wrong. They usually look for remedial measures to correct the problem.

The second goal of Pentecostal preaching is to bring Christians to a place where they become reproducing Christians. It appears that the same thing was required of Christians in the early church. Pentecostals view mature Christians as those who are involved in helping other Christians²⁷ to find and use their spiritual gifts in the body of Christ.

By the goal of preaching we also mean the building by encouraging of the body of Christ by encouraging through preaching. Most Christians come to church seeking to be encouraged by the sermon, especially if the preacher says something that is meaningful to the congregation. Sitting in the pew for the last four years has given me a different viewpoint of preaching. We concur with Warren Wiersbe, former pastor at the Moody Church of Chicago and teacher on "Back to the Bible" radio program, when he said:

Some of the sermons that have moved me greatly would not be considered great preaching. I don't care if the (preacher) stumbles. If he says something that really touches my heart and gives me the strength I need for the week, I'm happy.²⁸

In addition to the preceding, the sermons that have moved me are the ones that the pastor re-experienced; the sermon has spoken to him and he intertwines his experiences with the preaching text.

²⁶ H J C Pieterse, *Communicative Preaching*, 56-73.

²⁷ Win Earn, Institute for American Church Growth, Pasadena, California, offered in a seminar in the 1970s in Winnipeg, Canada.

²⁸ Reed, Leadership Journal, Summer, 1999:82.

2.4 Pentecostal preaching is dialoguing with the Word of God.

From our research it does not appear that all sermons in the New Testament are dialogues, e.g., the Sermon on the Mount was a lecture. But a component of dialogue exists in all sermons in the New Testament.²⁹

In the majority of Pentecostal churches in North America the pastor will share the pulpit with the elders of his church. Others in the congregation will lead the singing, lead in prayer and use their spiritual gifts. The pastor is then a team player. Keeping this in mind, we theorize that dialogue in preaching will naturally take place when everyone is participating in the life of the church.

Call and response is dialogue preaching it is a normal way of preaching for Pentecostal ministers. Call and response is where the preacher preaches and the congregation responds by saying hallelujah, Praise God, and clapping at the end of point. However the mode of dialoguing preaching varies within social, economic, educational and racial groups. In most African-American congregations an organ is played in the background as the sermon is preached.³⁰ (As the preacher raises his voice to make a point, the organ music intensifies as the preacher makes his point. The congregation joins in by saying: 'hallelujah, Praise the Lord').

In other racial and ethnic Pentecostal churches, depending on the geographical location, the communication style varies. In educated congregations in the Northern States and Canada dialogue preaching is less prevalent. However the dialogical character of preaching is constant. 'Hallelujah and praise the Lord' are common, a dialogical practice; so is clapping during a sermon. Clapping means the preacher is getting through to the congregation and the congregation agrees whole-heartedly with the point the pastor is making.

The altar call is part of dialogue preaching. The altar is a place to receive Christ, to receive prayer for needs. The altar call serves as a dialogue in that the congregation has opportunity to respond to the sermon, speak to the pastor, and ask questions.

²⁹ George Scipione, presented "Lectures in Preaching in the Gospels" as a class project in the Doctor Ministry in preaching program, Westminster Theological Seminary in California 1989,14.

³⁰ Gerald L. Davis, *I Got the Word in Me and I Can Sing It, You Know: A Study of the Performed African-American Sermon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 64-111.

3 Pentecostal preaching is a means God uses to bring people to salvation

Pentecostal preaching has its roots in historic Christianity, the Reformation and the great revivals. Pentecostalism has a theology of preaching that is practiced by Reformed Christians. They believe the Bible is the Word of God and is relevant today.

Preaching is declaring the *kerygma*, *didache* and *paraklese*. *Kerygma* is preaching, the announcement, the proclamation of the unique gospel here and now. It is proclamation that salvation is possible through Jesus Christ. Pieterse in *Communicative Preaching* states that *didache* is dedication into a life of discipleship³¹ but our research indicates that there is no difference between *didache* and *kerussein*; both words mean preaching the gospel. *Didaskein* means “to teach: to deliver didactic discourse (Matthew 4:23); to discharge the duty of a teacher (1 Corinthians 4:17; to impart instruction and instil doctrine (Acts 1:26).”³² But in a general sense both words are used interchangeably to preach the gospel. Preaching and teaching mean the same (Matthew 4:23, 9:35, 11:1; Luke 20:1).³³

Furthermore, Pentecostal preaching has elements of preaching sermons joyfully (*kerussein*), and declaring the gospel with power under the anointing of the Holy Spirit (*euangelizesthai*).

Paraklese is coming alongside and comforting the congregation by preaching sermons that edify and build up the body of Christ. All the preceding elements are present in Pentecostal preaching.

Homilia means conversation or dialogue in the New Testament and it is the word most used throughout the history of the church to describe preaching. Paul’s method of preaching was *dialegesthai* where questions were asked and interaction took place. (Pieterse 1995: 7) We agree with Pieterse that most of Paul’s preaching was dialogue preaching but not all the sermons in the book of Acts are purely dialogical, e.g., the sermon on the day of Pentecost. Furthermore, Jesus’ preaching was a mixture of dialogues and lectures. The Sermon on the Mount was a lecture. We theorize that all of New Testament preaching is dialogue and lecture in its methodology. Research has shown that Pentecostal preaching is a mixture of dialoguing and lecturing.

³¹ H J C Pieterse, *Communicative Preaching*, 6-8.

³² Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968), 68.

³³ Aldwin Ragoonath, *How Shall They Hear? The Art of Effective Biblical preaching* (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge.Logos: 1996), 12.

In preaching, God communicates through humans to other humans. In Pentecostal preaching there is a dance that goes on between the Bible, the Spirit, the preacher and the audience. In their preaching they are seeking to listen to all these voices at the same time while preaching.

Paul reminds us that God uses the “foolishness of preaching” (1 Cor. 1:21) to bring people to Himself. God uses ordinary fallen humans to speak to other humans about salvation and people come to know Christ. The gospel then is communicated through fallen humans to fallen humans.

Unlike most Reformed Christians, Pentecostal ministers believe that the gospel is usually communicated by preaching the gospel³⁴ but not limited to preaching the gospel in the traditional way. Pentecostals also believe God speaks through films, movies, dramas and soundtracks. However, the gospel must be included in the presentation.

Summary

In homiletical hermeneutics we demonstrated that Pentecostals have a Biblical hermeneutical basis for preaching the way they do, that Pentecostal preaching is Biblical and contemporary. They preach mainly topically and situationally oriented sermons.

We theorize that homiletical communication is Biblical and relevant to the needs of contemporary man and that Pentecostal ministers have excellent communication skills. Pentecostal pastors use dialogue as a normal communication skill in preaching after re-experiencing the text. God speaks primarily through preaching as a means of salvation. And the objective of preaching is to bring non-Christians to faith in Christ and to influence Christians to become reproducing Christians.

I have always remained open to other ideas and traditions. I am a better person for it. Use what can be helpful to your situation.

³⁴ David H Schuringa, “The Preaching of the Word as a Means of Grace. The Views of Herman Hoeksema and R. B. Kuiper,” Th.M. Thesis. Calvin Theological Seminary, 1985.

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