THE PREACHER AS NAVIGATOR: AN EXAMINATION OF CONTEMPORARY HOMILETICS THROUGH THE WORK OF ALBERT BORGMANN

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ABSTRACT

"The Preacher as Navigator: An Examination of Contemporary Homiletics through the Work of Albert Borgmann"

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This dissertation will explore the relationship between human agency and divine agency by bringing the work of Albert Borgmann into conversation with the approaches to preaching found in the New Homiletic. It asks: on what authority is the practice of preaching built? The New Homiletic movement began as a criticism of traditional (logical/propositional) approaches to preaching that emphasised the authority of the preacher. Alternatively, the New Homiletic relies on narrative and dialogical modes of preaching to relocate authority within the experience of the listener. The New Homiletic has made progress by shifting authority from the preacher, but this shift does not go far enough. The question of authority must be framed by way of God's authority as *the* primary authority of preaching.

This dissertation will draw on the work of Albert Borgmann. Central to Borgmann's work is the effect of technology on society which he calls the device paradigm. The device paradigm describes the cumulative effect of replacing things with devices. Devices sever the relationship between the means and ends of all things and encourage a life of consumption of commodities. An overemphasis on methodology in

preaching risks commodifying preaching by separating the means of preaching from its ends.

As an alternative, this dissertation presents preaching as a focal practice. Focal practices are Borgmann's proposal to counter to the disengaging nature of devices. By putting significant things, focal things, at the forefront of one's life a person can build their life around engagement. Preaching is a focal practice. The effective power of preaching is external to the practice of preaching, and it is God, as the focal thing, who gives it authority. Building on the principles of Polynesian navigation, the preacher will be presented as a navigator. The preacher cannot create the change they wish to see in their congregation. Instead, they work to orient the community to what God has done, what God is doing, and what God will do.

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For Kendra.

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INTRODUCTION

Preaching throughout church history has held a place in the common practices and worship of the church. Different iterations of church life and structure have given the practice of preaching varying levels of significance. However, today, amidst significant cultural shifts and a developing post-Christendom society in North America, preaching has been under serious scrutiny. Graves explains:

> In reality, good preachers are still few and far between, while questions about the health of preaching are more common than ever. It is hard to find a homiletics book of any sort that does not begin with either a jeremiad or apology on the state of preaching today. Something is indeed wrong with the pulpit.[1]

There is a present concern for the future of preaching in both academic circles and the wider Christian church.

Within this changing environment, the task of the preacher is increasingly difficult. The contemporary preacher must compete with forces from both within the church and the context of North America. The church increasingly no longer functions at the centre of the community but instead exists on the periphery. The preacher not only has the responsibility to preach a sermon but that sermon is responsible for drawing or at least maintaining an audience. At the same time, the culture of North America is increasingly shaped by media, and particularly entertainment. There is pressure in the pulpit to try to compete, on some level, with the latest blockbuster film or the popular

[1] Graves, "Timeless Question," 4–5.

epic drama on television. Even further, the changing nature of media has allowed the church to gain access to more preaching than ever before. The local preacher must not only compete with the compelling stories of Hollywood but has to compete with the likes of Andy Stanley, Francis Chan, and a wide range of well known, highly skilled preachers. While these notable preachers are not trying to compete with the local preacher, the comparison is somewhat inescapable. Finally, the preacher faces greater scrutiny over their ability to preach. All eyes are on the contemporary preacher to live up to the high expectations of preaching. The pressures of contemporary preaching are enormous.

This is not to say that homiletics has not been responding to these challenges. For roughly half a century, scholars in the New Homiletic have been prompting changes in the approach to preaching meant to address the challenges of contemporary preaching. The New Homiletic began as a criticism of the traditional (propositional) form of preaching. At the centre of this criticism was a concern for the nature of authority in preaching. The authority of the preacher was the foundation on which propositional preaching was conceived. When the preacher spoke, as an authoritative voice for the church, the congregation listened. However, at the conception of the New Homiletic, the idea that the congregation was listening could no longer be assumed and, as such, the New Homiletic began to question whether the authority of the preacher was the solid foundation it had been believed to be. As an alternative, the New Homiletic attempted to shift the authority away from the preacher to the authority of the listener. The listener became the centre of the preaching event. If the preacher could speak to the listener's experiences, then the listener could engage with preaching by way of their own authority.

In this manner, the preacher, by way of new methods of preaching, could rely on the authority of the listener over their own authority.

Herein lies the essential question of this dissertation: Does the New Homiletic's approach, an attempt to shift authority of the preacher to the listener, achieve the goal of diverting authority from the preacher? Even more so, is this conception of the nature of authority in preaching accurate? The answer to each is *no*. To the first question, it is the position of this dissertation that by relying primarily on new methods of preaching or on rhetorical technique the preacher remains in control and in a position of authority. The preacher appeals to the effective power of language to produce the anticipated results of their preaching. In this sense, the preacher by way of a sophisticated use of language remains at the centre of the preaching event. To the second question, the New Homiletic's insistence that the structure of authority in preaching needs to change is exactly correct, but did not take the effort to relocate authority far enough. It is the position of this dissertation that preaching requires a better conceptual framework to guide the effort of the preacher and the experience of the listener under the ultimate authority of preaching, that is God and his power. A conceptual framework will offer a way of looking at the whole process of preaching that aims to separate the work of the preacher from what makes preaching an authoritative practice in the church. In other words, this conceptual framework will suggest that the authority of preaching is found elsewhere than the quality of the preacher.

Before continuing this argument, it is helpful to pause and consider what sort of criticism is being offered in this dissertation. Though there will be considerable criticism of approaches to preaching that rely on method as the primary means of effecting change

this criticism is not aimed at an outright rejection of method. Alternatively, the criticisms found in this study are aimed at correction of an overemphasis on methodology as the primary means of preaching. That is to say, the relationship between method and the New Homiletic needs reconsideration and a rebalance.

To make this argument and to develop a conceptual framework, this dissertation will look beyond the scope of homiletics to consider insights from the philosophy of Albert Borgmann. Borgmann's work is fundamental to examining the approach of the New Homiletic because it is focused on the nature of engagement in a society shaped by devices, one very much like the societies of North America. Central to Albert Borgmann's work is the effect of technology on society. He describes this effect under the term "the device paradigm."[2] The device paradigm describes the cumulative effect of replacing the engaging world of "things" with the disengaging world of "devices."[3] For Borgmann, devices sever the relationship between the means and ends of a device. The ends become commodities, easily consumed with little burden on the user. In a society shaped by devices, engagement is replaced by consumption and all things, including preaching, are vulnerable to becoming commodities for consumption. In this manner, Borgmann's description and analysis of devices and their effect speaks directly to the issue of wielding authority in preaching. The approach of the New Homiletic reflects the device paradigm, and by focusing on the means of affecting the listener, the New Homiletic runs dangerously close to commodifying preaching, separating the means of preaching from the ends of preaching.

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[2] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 1, para. 3, location 94.

[3] "Things" and "devices" are two categories that are critical to Borgmann's assessment of the device paradigm. Much more will be said about these categories in subsequent chapters.

Further, Borgmann offers a counterforce to the effect of the device paradigm as a way of reframing the disengaging nature of devices. His counterforce is a commitment to focal things and practices. That is to say, that Borgmann wants to reframe the relationship between people and devices by putting significant things and practices at the centre of life. Devices themselves are not the problem but the manner in which a commitment to devices replaces things is. The choice that Borgmann offers is a choice to be oriented by way of devices or by way of focal things. It is through the framework of focal things and practices that this dissertation will offer a conceptual framework for preaching. Preaching is a focal practice that exists to draw the people of God into focus on that which is significant: God and his transformative power. Put another way, the effective power of preaching is located external to the practice of preaching, and it is the power of God that is at the centre of preaching, which gives it authority.

With these initial thoughts in mind, one can turn to the thesis of this dissertation. The "New Homiletic" began as a criticism of traditional (logical/propositional/ informational) approaches to preaching. In the traditional approach to preaching, the sermon was monological and the preacher was the primary voice of authority. Alternatively, the New Homiletic relies on narrative and dialogical modes of preaching to relocate authority within the experience of the listener. This dissertation will demonstrate the inadequacy of both approaches by appeal to the work of philosopher Albert Borgmann. It will argue that the New Homiletic has simply replaced the authority of the preacher with the authority of language. Following Borgmann, this dissertation will present preaching as a focal practice, and suggest that the role of the preacher be reconceived under the metaphor of navigation.

The thrust of this dissertation is not a rejection of the New Homiletic's insights into preaching. Alternatively, it intends to further the efforts of the New Homiletic by reframing the work within the framework of a focal practice. In this context, the authority of the preacher, of the listener, and of language are subject to the primary authority which is God's. The metaphor of the preacher as navigator helps to convey this authority structure and this reframing of the insights of the New Homiletic. This case will be made by building on the principles of Polynesian navigation, an ancient form of navigation that does not rely on technology. It will be argued that just as the navigator must rely on wind to move a ship, the preacher must rely on the force of God's power to move people toward transformation. Further, as the navigator relies on the signs of nature to orient themselves and their ship the preacher must be attentive to the signs of God's grace manifest in the community to point them toward God. In this context, the work of the preacher is not an effort to create the change they wish to see in their congregation. Instead, it is an effort to orient the congregation, and their self, to what God has already done, what God is doing in the present, and what God will continue to do in the future.

Research Methodology

This dissertation is a work of theological reflection. As such, based on the work of John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, it will employ the mutual critical correlation method of research. "Mutual critical correlation sees the practical-theological task as bringing situations into a dialectical conversation with insights from the Christian tradition and perspectives drawn from other sources of knowledge (primarily the social sciences)."[4]

[4] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, chapter 3, para. 9, location 1474

This method finds its origin in the work of Paul Tillich, who developed the method of correlation and was further developed by Stephen Pattison.[5] Pattison's model for mutual critical correlation is the basis of Swinton and Mowat's approach.

Mutual critical correlation has four stages: the situation, cultural/contextual analysis, theological reflection, and formulating revised forms of practice. The first stage describes the situation central to the research. In this "pre-reflective phase we begin to explore the nature of the situation and work out what we think are the key issues."[6] Central to this work is the development of a research question(s). For this dissertation, this method will be employed in the following way; first, a literature review will be undertaken that will focus on understanding the New Homiletic. The second stage, cultural/contextual analysis, begins the work of entering into dialogue with other sources of knowledge to further understanding of the situation. This stage requires the introduction of Albert Borgmann's device paradigm and focal things and practices. It will also include an initial examination of the approach of the New Homiletic in light of the dynamics presented in the device paradigm. From here research moves to the third step: theological reflection. At this stage "we begin to focus more overtly on the theological significance of the data that we have been working within stage 1 and 2, and how it can be used to develop our understanding of the situation we are exploring and the practices

[5] Tillich's approach suggested that questions arise from experience and reason which find their answers in Christian tradition and scripture. The relationship between questions and answers opened, for Tillich, a dialogue, which when explored proved to be productive. See Tillich, *Systematic Theology*. Pattison offered a conception of the mutual critical conversation as a conversation between old friends who have differences between them. Their conversation needs an open dialogue, a need to seek truth, and a mutual respect for the diverse perspectives present in the conversation. This takes the form of a back and forth dialogue, wherein, drawing from one source, such as human experience, one returns to consider scripture. This new consideration of scripture offers new insights into experience and so forth. See Pattison, *Pastoral Care and Liberation Theology*.

[6] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, chapter 3, para. 36, location 1774.

which emerge from the various practices we encounter."[7] Here the efforts of this dissertation will turn to further application of Borgmann's conceptual framework of focal things and practices to the practice of homiletics in an effort to develop a conceptual framework of preaching: preaching as a focal practice. The final stage, formulating revised forms of practice, attempts to draw out new implications for the practice being examined. For this dissertation, this stage will primarily be the development of the model of the preacher as navigator. This conception of the preacher will serve the conceptual framework of preaching developed in stage three. Taken together these four stages will guide the research suggested here.

Along with these stages Swinton and Mowat outline three requirements for this method: hospitality, conversion, and critical faithfulness. Hospitality is the posture by which one approaches this method. Hospitality describes a willingness to draw from sources outside of Christian faith. For meaningful dialogue to take place, the researcher must "create a context wherein the voice of qualitative research can be heard, respected and taken seriously, but with no a-priori assumption that theology needs to merge, follow or fully accept the perspective on the world that is offered to it."[8] With hospitality one also needs conversion. In conversion, the researcher aims at seeking God's purposes in research outside of the realm of theology. The dialogue between theology and alternative approaches or forms of research aims at ultimately finding "God's redemptive intentions for the world."[9] In this sense, the work of correlation aims at conversion. Finally, there must be critical faithfulness. The dialogue between theology and qualitative research

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[7] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, chapter 3, para. 38, location 1795.
[8] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, chapter 3, para. 30, location 1727.
[9] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, chapter 3, para. 31, location 1735.

acknowledges the importance of Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit to guide and aid in the interpretation.[10] These three elements, hospitality, conversion and, critical faithfulness, are considered fundamental in creating a space for meaningful dialogue between theology and other fields of research.

Following the four stages of the mutual critical correlation, this dissertation will begin with a description of the situation. Chapter 1 will survey contemporary homiletics with an emphasis on the New Homiletic. The result will be a description of the contours of the approach of the New Homiletic, particularly its origins and the development of critical ideas. This description will draw primarily from academic work in contemporary preaching with a particular focus on authors in the school of the New Homiletic.

Chapter 2 will move to cultural/contextual analysis by way of the study of the philosophy of technology and the work of Albert Borgmann. This study will introduce the critical conversation partner in Borgmann's assessment of the device paradigm, and focal things and practices. Chapter 3 will continue the work of cultural/contextual analysis by beginning to consider what an application of the Borgmann's device paradigm and focal things means for contemporary homiletics. This work will centre on a criticism of the approach of the New Homiletic established in chapter 1. Arguing that the approach of the New Homiletic is a reflection of the device paradigm and as a result, has commodified preaching.

Chapter 4 will begin the work of formulating revised forms of practice. Having criticised the approach of the New Homiletic, the work of reframing how one approaches preaching will begin here. This section will be an argument for conceptualising preaching

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[10] Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, chapter 3, para. 34, location 1756.

as a focal practice. Using Borgmann's description of focal things and practices as a framework this chapter will focus on offering a conceptual framework of preaching. Essential to this chapter is understanding the relationship between the practice of preaching and the work of God. Preaching conceived as a focal practice suggests that the power and effectiveness of preaching comes from the external focal thing (in this case God and His work in Christ). This framework requires that preaching is understood first and foremost through this relationship. Considerations of rhetorical form and methodology become secondary concerns to that which is focal, God and His transformative power.

Chapter 5 will finish the work of revising offering a new conception of the preacher: the preacher as navigator. A brief description of the role of the preacher as conceived by the New Homiletic will be presented and critiqued. Following this critique, this dissertation will develop the conception of the preacher as navigator. A study of the role of the Polynesian navigator will be presented. Further, building on what has been established in understanding preaching as a focal practice the concept of the preacher as navigator and its theological implications will be explored. Finally, some attention will be given to the practical implications of this conception of the role of the preacher.

This study will explore how technology has influenced contemporary preaching. Homiletics has often been concerned with the influence media, an aspect of technology, has over preaching. The effect of media on preaching can be found throughout the contemporary study of homiletics.[11] This influence is readily apparent, but it is merely

[11] Fred Craddock, in exploring the changing nature of language, suggests that media has contributed to the over saturation of words. Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 7. Graham Johnston explores the impact of television on the modern social experience. Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern*

the surface of the effect that a device oriented culture has on preaching. Given that the structure of modern life continues to be changed by ever new technology, it is necessary for the church to fully explore and consider the impact of that such an approach to life has on the matters of faith and spirituality. The following study hopes to track some of this impact by seriously considering how the New Homiletic reflects the values and approaches of a device oriented culture and the potential challenges that that presents for the future of preaching.

World, 54. It could also be argued that the narrative approach to preaching has been highly influenced by the storytelling of modern film. See Wilson, *Four Pages*, 10–11.

CHAPTER I

UNDERSTANDING THE NEW HOMILETIC

It seems increasingly strange to refer to the "New Homiletic" movement by this title as it is not particularly new anymore. At its inception, in the last century, it stood first, as a counterpoint to the traditional (that is, logical/propositional/informational) approaches to preaching prevalent at the time, as well as, a unique expression of what preaching could ultimately be. To speak of a new form of preaching was to challenge the normative approach to the pulpit and to step bravely into the new methods and techniques that would prove to be for the betterment of homiletics. However, it would not be strange to suggest that today the ideas of the New Homiletic, and the forms of preaching that have been built on these ideas, are equally, if not more, prevalent in the pulpit across North America than the ideas they challenged. Today inductive, listener focused, dialogical preaching is no longer revolutionary, rather it is the expectation and normative reality of preaching in this present age. These ideas have become ingrained in the contemporary vernacular of preaching. When something becomes so ingrained in the cultural consciousness, as the ideas of the New Homiletic have in North American Christianity, it becomes difficult to separate what made the New Homiletic so unique and revolutionary in the first place from the weekly rhythms of preaching that bring those ideas to life. Since this dissertation intends to re-examine and redirect the principles of the New

Homiletic, it is necessary to begin by retreading the ground that the New Homiletic paved. The goal of this chapter is to outline the development of the New Homiletic and to ultimately, offer a description of the approach of the New Homiletic.

It is helpful to begin by presenting a quick summary of the approach of the New Homiletic. The New Homiletic is a criticism of the authoritative approach of traditional (deductive) forms of preaching. As a result of this criticism, the New Homiletic attempts to relocate authority from the preacher to the listener by relying on the listener's experience to be authoritative. To serve this purpose, the New Homiletic develops new methods of preaching such as narrative preaching and dialogical preaching which bring the listener and their experience into focus within the preaching event.

To track these developments, this chapter will begin by looking closely at the work of Fred Craddock. His work pulls together the ideas that are central to the arguments of the New Homiletic and, as a result, an examination of his work will serve as a basis for the study of the New Homiletic throughout the chapter. Following from Craddock, the chapter will explore three critical ideas: the inductive method, the importance of the listener, and dialogical preaching. These will serve to frame the examination of key authors in the development of the New Homiletic. Following this survey, this chapter will offer an initial discussion of the New Homiletic and offer a critique of it that is central to the rest of this dissertation.

Fred Craddock: The Father of the New Homiletic

Fred Craddock's work is critical to understanding the approach of the New Homiletic. Craddock's thinking represents the fundamental shifts that are central to the approach

taken to preaching that is expressed in the New Homiletic.[1] His work, particularly in his book *As One without Authority*, is foundational to the ideas that shape the New Homiletic and give some categories from which to describe and analyse the work of others in the development of this approach to preaching.

Craddock's Analysis of Preaching

In *As One without Authority* Craddock begins his study of preaching by offering a juxtaposition in the first two chapters. The first entitled "The Pulpit in the Shadows"[2] and the second is entitled "The Pulpit in the Spotlight."[3] In the first, he is describing a shadow that is descending over homiletics which is diminishing the role of preaching in the life of the church. This diminishing is the result of many factors, but two critical issues are central to Craddock's argument for a new approach to homiletics. The first of these factors is a "minimization of the power of words to effect anything."[4] Craddock explains this minimization by way of a few cultural influences (both inside and outside the church). They include a culture that values actions over words, the over saturation of words by way of technology, and the tendency within the church to use outdated language.[5] These combined have led to slowly diminishing the power of words within the

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[1] As the editor of a collection of essays entitled *The Renewed Homiletic*, O. Wesley Allen Jr. identifies five critical authors that shaped the movement in homiletics in its earliest conception. They are David Buttrick, Fred Craddock, Eugene Lowry, Henry Mitchell, and Charles Rice. Using Craddock as a foundation to the analysis here is not meant to ignore their contribution or suggest Craddock is the originator of this view. However, Craddock's work in *As One Without Authority* represents a culmination of ideas central to the approach of the New Homiletic and as such offers a clear introduction to the topic at hand. Effort will be made throughout this section to speak to the parallels between Craddock's work and the broader contributions of these other key figures.

[2] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 3.

[3] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 21.

[4] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 6.

[5] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 6–10.

church. If words are not considered powerful then ultimately preaching, which is the spoken word, is robbed of some, if not all, of its power. For Craddock, the study of homiletics requires a reclamation of words. He writes "All considerations of structure, unity, movement, use of text, and so forth, must wait upon the prior consideration of what words are and what they do."[6] Understanding language and the manner in which it functions becomes a necessary first step in the study of contemporary homiletics.

The second of these factors is a changing relationship between clergy and congregation. Craddock writes with an awareness of the developing post-Christendom society around him. The assumed relationships between preacher and listener that once existed were changing. Expectations, such as basic biblical literacy or a cultural expectation to participate in Christian practices, were slowly disappearing. Craddock describes "No longer can the preacher presuppose the general recognition of her authority as clergy, or the authority of her institution, or the authority of scripture."[7] This change has a significant impact on homiletics as many of these presuppositions were ingrained into the function of preaching and the work of the preacher. The loss of these foundations contributed to the diminishing of preaching in the church and must be considered when approaching the work of preaching.

These shadows over preaching give direction to Craddock's vision for preaching. Here he has outlined the potential problems facing preaching and he begins to work toward the solution he will propose throughout his work. For there to be a significant rebirth of preaching two factors must be addressed and responded to appropriately. The first the problem of authority in preaching. As suggested above, there was an increasing

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[6] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 7.
[7] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 14.

tension between the cultural understanding of authority structures and the authority structure of the church. As a remedy, much of Craddock's work is focused on preaching in a way that is not authoritative but instead draws on the authority of the listener. This focus will prove to be central to Craddock's vision for preaching. In attempting to implement this shift in authority Craddock seeks to resolve the second tension: the relationship between preaching and the effectiveness/power of words. Words are critically important to preaching as they represent the primary connection point between the preacher and the listener. As a result, how the preacher uses language becomes the key to implementing the authority shift that Craddock is hoping for in his work.

Together the loss of the power of words and the changing nature of the relationship between the listener and the preacher meant, for Craddock, that the work of the preacher was up for re-evaluation. It was necessary, at a theological level, to begin with a fresh understanding of the nature of preaching, the role of the preacher, and how preaching functioned. Despite the shadows looming over preaching, in his second chapter, Craddock examines signs of a brighter future. He does this by examining a developing theological perspective: a "theology of speaking."[8] At the centre of this theology is the revitalization of language and its function which Craddock saw as critical to the future of homiletics.[9] In the midst of the crisis of words, touched on by Craddock in his previous chapter, the study of language blossomed in the fields of linguistics,

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[8] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 23.

[9] This shift in hermeneutics was a direct response to a changing understanding of the nature of objective truth and the interpretive power of language. Using language was in itself a form of interpretation which meant that when one reads or speaks a language they begin to interpret that text through the lens of their own experience. For hermeneutics this mean that there is a critical distance between the reader of scripture and the text of scripture. Gerhard Ebeling and Ernst Fuchs first applied this to preaching suggesting that the preacher must interpret both the text of scripture and the current context. These duel interpretations required a blending in the sermon which they called a language-event or word-event. Ebeling, *God and Word*, and Fuchs, *Studies of the Historical Jesus*.

speech, hermeneutics, and communication. Most notably, for Craddock, the study of the spoken word has great implications for preaching. The subtle difference between a speech (which reflects the traditional method of preaching) and speaking (which is the intention of his new method) is critical to Craddock's study of homiletics. An understanding of speaking and the role of language in the spoken word have significant implications for preaching. First, spoken words are dialogical. He writes:

> Unlike the written words, spoken words create and sustain among us a consciousness of one another and an openness to one another in trust. The reasons are obvious. Spoken words are by their nature dialogical, and in dialogue what one says is not fully predetermined but is in a large measure a response to the preceding comments of the other.[10]

A spoken word reaches its fullness only when there is both a speaker and a hearer. Failure to acknowledge the importance of the listener is to ignore a central part of what it means to speak. Second, the impact of this dialogue cannot be predicted or planned. "Again unlike written words, spoken words are never past or future; sound is always present, always an existential experience. Thus, there is in the act of speaking a consciousness of movement, change, uncertainty, openness to interruption, and, of course, insecurity."[11] In dialogue, the listener actively participates by responding to the words spoken. While the speaker may have an intended meaning or outcome, this intention is subject to the listener's interpretation which the speaker cannot completely control. For the speaker, this uncontrollable aspect of communication is possibly disheartening, but it remains a necessary aspect of dialogue; of speaking to another. This understanding of what it means to speak to another becomes the foundation from which Craddock develops his approach to preaching.

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[10] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 23.
[11] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 23.

Having examined the challenges facing preaching and armed with a clearer understanding of how the spoken word functions, Craddock presents the theological centre of his approach to preaching: how one preaches matters.[12] He suggests that content had been central to the development of sermons and the form of the sermon had remained relatively stagnant. For Craddock, content and form are inseparable halves of preaching and are equally important in what is communicated. He writes "How one communicates is a theological commentary on the minister's view . . . And it is probably a clearer and more honest expression of one's theology than is the content of sermons."[13] That is to say, the preacher shares a spirit with the artist, the writer, and the actor, and must be aware of both the intention of the sermon (content) and the performance of the sermon (form).[14] Both communicate in powerful and necessary ways, and both must be considered a serious aspect of preaching. As such, the preacher must be concerned with the method of their preaching because their approach communicates, not only the message intended, but further presents their theological perspective. For Craddock, there is a critical link between how one preaches and the final effect of that method on the listener which has an impact beyond simply transferring content. Thus, much of Craddock's work is a study of preaching methodology.

Deductive and Inductive Preaching

His study begins by contrasting his new method of preaching (the inductive method) with the traditional method (the deductive method). Deductive preaching began with general

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[12] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 44.
[13] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 44.
[14] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 44.

truth and moved toward specific application.[15] The central ideas were laid out first and then developed for the listener. This approach relies heavily on the authority of the preacher. "There is no democracy here, no dialogue, no listening by the speaker, no contributing by the hearer. If the congregation is on the team, it is as javelin catcher."[16] Here one finds a link to Craddock's initial concerns for preaching, as this method relies primarily on an authoritative preacher and passive listeners. In the deductive method, inactive listeners are subject to the "tyranny of ideas"[17] presented by an authoritative preacher.

In contrast, inductive preaching aims at moving *with* the congregation toward a conclusion. "In induction, thought moves from the particulars of experience that have a familiar ring in the listener's ear to a general truth or conclusion."[18] The starting point of induction is a common experience which serves as a common starting point for all in attendance: for both the speaker and the listeners. From this position, a preacher can begin to move toward a conclusion step by step with the hopes of moving from the same starting point through to a similar end. This application of experience differs greatly from deductive preaching in which drawing on universal experience is seen as a hindrance. Authoritative preaching relies on a "protecting distance"[19] between the speaker and the listener to maintain the perception of authority. Drawing on universal experience disrupts that perception and erodes the distance necessary to remain in authority.[20] In opposition to this reliance on the authority of the preacher, the inductive preaching relies on

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[15] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 48.
[16] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 46.
[17] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 54.
[18] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 47.
[19] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 49.
[20] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 49.

"identification with the listener and the creative use of analogy."[21] In other words, the preacher, by way of images and descriptions of common experiences, allows the listener to begin in a place that reflects their own experiences. From this starting place, a preacher can move forward inviting the listener, by way of induction, to journey from experience to conclusion. "Sermons should proceed or move in such a way as to give the listener something to think, feel, decide, and do during preaching."[22] Movement is instigated by the preacher but relies on the listener to identify, respond, and move.

A Concern for the Listener

Craddock's method reflects a significant change in the relationship between the preacher and the listener. The preacher is concerned with placing the listener's experience of the sermon as primary to the preaching event.[23] Craddock develops this position further in his work *Overhearing the Gospel.* In this work, Craddock describes preaching not simply from the position of the preacher but more so from the task of the preacher: to put the listener first. He writes "The relationship changes completely when the communicator moves toward the listeners, totally preoccupied with their experience of listening."[24] There is a positional change in the relationship between the preacher and the hearer. As

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[21] Craddock, *As One without Authority*, 49.

[22] Craddock, *Preaching*, 25.

[23] Henry H. Mitchell contributed much to this subject in his works *Black Preaching* and *Celebration and Experience in Preaching*. Mitchell's work highlights the unique dynamics of black preaching which had often been overlooked by scholars as it was assumed to be an uneducated style or merely a reflection of the European style of preaching. Mitchell's study criticized the strictly intellectual approaches to preaching and argued that black preaching incorporated both the mind and the heart. At the centre of preaching, is a moment of celebration wherein the congregation joins, in intellect and emotion, in celebrating the gospel. Celebration, for Mitchell, is about a particular experience in the preaching event. Faith comes about as a result of an experience not simply an intellectual argument. In this sense, the listener's experience of preaching was at the forefront of Mitchell's approach to preaching. For more see Mitchell, *Black Preaching* and Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience*.

[24] Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel*, 41.

described above, much of this change centres on the role that authority plays in preaching. Deductive preaching relied on the authority of the preacher and Craddock's method aims at moving authority away from the preacher. In essence, it is to preach as one without authority. Preaching in this mode suggests that the authority no longer belongs to the preacher and Craddock emphasises the authority of the listener in its place. He describes "The teacher or preacher who is consumed with the task of effecting a new hearing of the Word will be delivered from the fruitless questions of whether there is too much or too little distance or too much or too little involvement."[25] All matters of the preacher's authority are subverted to the work of effecting a hearing of the Word. If the structure of the relationship between the preacher and the listener is a hindrance to preaching, as Craddock suggests, it should be laid aside for the sake of affecting a hearing of the Gospel.

Preaching is Dialogical

As suggested above, Craddock is dissatisfied with preaching that assumes a passive listener. Passivity suggests a bland, lifeless, and inactive experience. Passive experiences rarely produce change in the one who is passive. A sermon must carry the traits of a conversation by allowing the response of the listener to be considered (if not heard). To this end, the preacher must speak dialogically and not simply to make their voice speak above all others. For Craddock, the induction has a dialogical nature which requires a response from the listener. Monological preaching assumes an invested listener, one who is already listening regardless of circumstance, whereas dialogical preaching works to

[25] Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel*, 41.

create an active listener, one who engages with the message being spoken. Central to this proposition is a change in the authority structure. Craddock writes "Dialogical methods are rather easily postured, while embracing the dialogical principle requires a radical reassessment of one's role as a preacher, one's view of the congregation as the people of God, one's understanding of whether the sermon is the preacher's or the church's, and one's theology of the Word."[26] Preaching as a dialogue requires a dramatic shift in what it means to preach the Word. In this manner, dialogical preaching speaks not from a position of an authority but as a friend, an equal, sharing with another.

These three concepts (inductive preaching, the importance of the listener, and preaching that is dialogical) are central to Craddock's argument. They are reflections of Craddock's larger concern and the problem which Craddock was addressing: the nature of authority in preaching. Inductive preaching relocates authority to the listener's experience, a focus on the listener aims at a change in the relationship between the preacher and the listener, and a dialogical approach to preaching alters the structure of the preaching event by making sermons *a* voice opposed to *the* voice. Further, each of these three concepts reflects a sophistication of speaking by way of an effective understanding of language. The distinction between the inductive and deductive preaching is a clearer understanding of how words function and Craddock's suggestion is that induction is far more effective. Induction is made increasingly more effective by emphasizing the listener as critical to the process of preaching and by giving it the conceptual framework of a dialogue. At all levels, the central concern of Craddock, and ultimately the New

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[26] Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 18.

Homiletic, is the matter of moving authority from the preacher and relocating it to the listener by the effective use of language.

To make this argument for the New Homiletic, broadly speaking, one must examine how authority is critical to this approach as it develops from Craddock forward. In tracking the development of the New Homiletic one finds a diverse group of scholars with a wide range of theological and methodological insights into the nature of preaching. To account for the development of ideas within the New Homiletic and to present these diverse perspectives it is necessary to offer some form of categorization in order to group common themes. For the purposes of this dissertation the development of the New Homiletic will be presented in terms of methodological similarity.[27] The category of method is particularly useful because of the suggested role that method has in the shaping of authority in the New Homiletic. That is, if, as suggested above, the New Homiletic is an effort to relocate the authority of preaching from the preacher to the listener by the effect use of language then the manner in which language is employed as a method of preaching is of the utmost concern to the argument here. Further, an overreliance on method is the fundamental problem that this dissertation seeks to correct and as such a study of the function of methodology in the New Homiletic is an appropriate framework. To that end, the following study of developments in the New Homiletic will be explore by way of two critical methods: narrative preaching and dialogical preaching. These categories will allow for some analysis of trends within the New Homiletic and give structure to the following section. Further, as a result of these categories, the examination is not strictly chronological but it reflects a trajectory of ideas within each category.

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[27] Methodological in this context referring to method of preaching rather than a research method or theological method.

Developments in the New Homiletic: Narrative Preaching

Narrative preaching becomes the foundation of many of the approaches to preaching that develop in the New Homiletic. This foundation is what links these authors together in what Richard Eslinger, in his text *The Web of Preaching*, terms as the "narrative center."[28] He uses this term because while there is a common ground in the use of a narrative method, there are significant differences in the way authors approach both the study of homiletics and the resulting understanding of the narrative method. This section will examine some of the key voices in the narrative method and consider their particular contribution.[29]

Eugene L. Lowry's Homiletical Plot

Lowry builds his perspective on preaching by way of the sermon's "plot."[30] Plot is the term that Lowry uses to capture the movement that is intended in his form of preaching. As with Craddock, Lowry believes that without movement there is no life in preaching. For Lowry, this movement takes place in sequence from one moment to the next. There is a development of thought that reflects a sequence from the start to the end of the sermon. He writes "A sermon is not a doctrinal lecture. It is an *event-in-time*, a narrative art form more akin to a play or novel in shape than to a book. Hence we are not engineering scientists; we are narrative artists by professional function."[31] Much like in Craddock's work, there is an emphasis on experience and the present moment in preaching.

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[28] Eslinger, *The Web of Preaching*, introduction, para. 9, location 115.

[29] It should be noted that this section looks at three notable figures in the development of narrative preaching. One of the limitations of this study is the inability to look closely at the wide range of methods and approaches to preaching in the New Homiletic. Charles L. Rice, known for developing preaching as storytelling is one such example. See Rice, *Interpretation and Imagination*.

[30] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 15.

[31] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 6.

Preaching is not simply something that happens but is, for all involved, happening as a unique experience. Where Craddock emphasised induction, Lowry emphasised narrative,[32] but in both cases, the key feature is the notion that in the preaching event there is movement, an experience, and the development of ideas.[33]

Expanding from this first premise, Lowry has high hopes for what preaching can be. It is not enough to simply speak for half an hour and call that preaching. Lowry writes "Preaching the sermon is a *task*; proclaiming the Word is the hoped-for *goal*."[34] Proclaiming the Word is altogether more complex than simply preaching and requires the preacher to be actively working to achieve the goal of proclamation. Lowry calls this work the work of "evocation."[35] There is a critical distinction, in Lowry's writing, between the proclamation of God's Word and the work of evocation. The act of evocation sets in motion the movement of thoughts intended in the sermon whereas proclamation of the Word is dependent on both speaker and listener to engage with the sermon so that the Word can be active in the listener's life. "Preaching is an offering intending to evoke an event that cannot be coerced into being."[36] So, when crafting a sermon the preacher works to evoke particular emotions, experiences, and thoughts so that the listener can engage with them that they might find, in the hearing of them, a life-changing proclamation of God's Word.

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[32] Narrative, in the sense that Lowry uses it, is not to suggest that one must tell a story but rather like a story narrative sermons have a plot.

[33] It should be noted that in both cases movement is a natural progression not a manufactured progression. The path that the preacher took to prepare a sermon is the basis for the path taken within the sermon.

[34] Lowry, *The Sermon*, 37.

[35] Lowry, *The Sermon*, 37.

[36] Lowry, *The Sermon*, 37.

With this in mind, one can turn to the matter of Lowry's method of sermon crafting. The preacher is called to draw to the surface (evoke) the particular experience of the Word that they have intended. To do this, the preacher must be focused on the experience of the listener from start to finish. Thus, Lowry stresses that the plot must move the listener and his resulting methodology is written from the perspective of the intended experience for the listener. He describes each stage of movement not from the perspective of the content of the sermon, but rather, how the listener experiences that content.

From these conclusions, Lowry developed what has become known in homiletical circles as the "Lowry loop."[37] The loop offers the idea that the sermon must move through various stages that can be envisioned as a loop.[38] The five stages play out in the following order: "upsetting the equilibrium, analyzing the discrepancy, disclosing the clue to resolution, experiencing the gospel, and anticipating the consequences."[39] They are modelled after a narrative with each step moving the listener forward.

The first stage, upsetting the equilibrium aims to create dissonance within the listener. The equilibrium being upset is the equilibrium of the listener. Lowry suggests that this section introduces tension which will be resolved by the four steps of the loop that follows. The second step, analyzing the discrepancy, is dedicated to the study of the particular tensions or issues raised in the latter step. The preacher, having already arrived at a conclusion, leads the congregation to consider the varied thinking about the subject. This analysis is an exercise in guided inquiry into the depth of the issue at hand.[40]

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[37] The term "Lowry Loop" has become a common term for Lowry's approach.
[38] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 25. An image of the Lowry loop can be found here.
[39] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 26.
[40] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 45.

Analysis leads to the disclosing of the clue to resolution. This clue is the turning point of the sermon. Here, the preacher offers the key insight that will reveal a path forward and the source of relieving the tension established in the first step of the loop. Having established tension and having found a clue to its resolution the preacher can move forward to the fourth step: experiencing the gospel. This step is a matter of timing. The previous steps laid the groundwork and established the context for the experience of the gospel to be heard afresh. The experience, which Lowry is hoping to arrive at, hangs on guiding the listener to this fourth step by way of tension, analysis, and a move to resolution.[41] Finally, the loop ends with anticipating the consequences. Having found an answer to the tensions in the gospel one must return to these tensions to realize the impact of the gospel on the situation. This step is dedicated to conclusions on the matter at hand. It is an examination of the possibilities that come from understanding, knowing, and applying the gospel to the particulars of the challenges presented earlier.

Each of these steps suggests an active form of preaching. From beginning to end the preacher is upsetting, analysing, disclosing, experiencing, and finally, anticipating. These active steps reflect Lowry's emphasis on the listener and their response to preaching. In practice, the preacher upsets the equilibrium the listener is moved to be upset as well. Lowry even uses common expressions to characterize the experience of each stage connecting them to an emotional response making the whole of the movement "Oops," "Ugh," "Aha," "Whee," and "Yeah." Each piece of Lowry's method focuses not simply on the theological content but emphasises how the listener should experience the presentation of the content.[42]

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[41] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 63.
[42] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 26.

Having outlined Lowry's approach to preaching one can return to the nature of authority in this approach. In Lowry's method, there is a discernable movement away from the authority of the preacher and a shift toward authority located in the listener. First, on the subject of preaching as evocation, the preacher has a particular role to play to evoke the entire event of preaching, and this carries with it a certain level of authority. However, in structuring evocation as secondary to the goal of preaching (an experience of the Word by way of proclamation) the authority of the preacher cannot be wielded as an authoritative voice but as a voice in service to the experience of the listener. Second, much like Craddock, the entire process of preaching is centred on speaking by appealing to the authority of the listener. The preacher, anticipating the concerns, questions, and thoughts of the listener crafts a sermon that moves through their thinking eventually leading them to the gospel. A listener must be given a chance to experience the fullness of the plot from the tension-filled beginning to the wondrous resolution because "the good news is not just something one now knows propositionally, but something one now experiences."[43] A preacher must craft their sermon to create this sort of experience so that the listener may hear it.

David Buttrick's Moves and Structures

David Buttrick's work is built on a theology of language.[44] This theology is important to his understanding of preaching because, much like in Craddock's work, language serves the inductive process: if one can understand how language works to impact the listener they can preach more effectively. It is for this reason that Buttrick's work is often

[43] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 33.
[44] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 6.

characterized as phenomenological as he examines how words shape the consciousness of the preacher and the listener.[45] To this end, Buttrick begins by examining the nature of language. First, language gives names to the world one lives in. To make sense of the world and to be able to communicate thoughts, ideas, and feelings about that world one must have names for the things in that world. He writes:

> Words do not create the world . . . but language does constitute the world-in-consciousness, the significant social world in which we live. People and places, things and symbols, social roles and moral values, lands never visited, persons never met, cosmologies, psychological 'models'–all these are named into consciousness and become a 'world' in which people live together.[46]

Language, by naming the world, makes way for understanding the very world it names. Second, language, by way of story, helps a person find identity in the world in which they live. Stories are a different sort of language. They go beyond simply naming to offer connections in the context of one's life. "Stories arrange past to present . . . and end up with us where we are. Thus stories conjoin in consciousness to tell us who we are and where we are in the world: *Stories give identity.*"[47] Taken together, language shapes the consciousness by giving names to the world and by giving context to one's place in the world by way of story.

Returning to preaching, Buttrick suggests that preaching "tells a story and names a name."[48] In other words, understanding that language has the power to define one's world and give identity to the individual, or community, in that world preaching, as spoken words, has that same power. "If preaching is to form and transform, somehow it

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[45] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, xii.
[46] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 9.
[47] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 10.
[48] Buttirck, *Homiletic*, 17.

must conjoin narrative and naming, and thus recover the primal power of words."[49] Returning to Buttrick's original desire to understand how words affect the hearer he concludes, in line with the narrative approach, that how one names and shapes narratives will fundamentally affect the hearer's understanding of Scripture.[50] It should be noted that while Buttrick's work shares the term "narrative" there is a fundamental difference in Buttrick's use of narrative from that of Lowry. Lowry emphasized understanding preaching as a narrative in its own right where as Buttrick use of the term narrative examines the power of story to effect change in the listener's worldview.

With this in mind, Buttrick does share a methodological similarity with Lowry, and others, in that his approach to preaching emphasizes the preacher's ability to create movement within the sermon.[51] Having established the critical power of words, Buttrick develops his thinking further suggesting that this power can be wielded, to great effect, by way of strategic planning. To this end, Buttrick suggests that preachers develop "moves" within a sermon.[52] Notably, "moves" are meant to be contrasted against the formation of a sermon by way of "points."[53] Propositional preaching offered a collection of points that one could connect logically by theme or shared concepts, but Buttrick argues that preaching happens not simply in the transmission of ideas but by the development of ideas. In other words, to affect the consciousness of the listener, one needs to develop ideas in a particular manner by forming a strategy in how one names and in the stories one tells. This need for a strategy is made evident by the difficulty of

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[49] Buttirck, *Homiletic*, 18.
[50] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 19.
[51] Movement being a key feature of the narrative approach to preaching.
[52] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 23.
[53] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 23.

transmitting an idea depending on the size of the listening group. In a one-to-one dialogue, information can move quickly, and ideas can be shared with less structure, but as that intimate setting grows to a large group, the transmission of ideas requires more than a list of concepts and is best achieved by an intentional process of moving step by step.[54] This strategic move is governed by more than simply the desire to transmit an idea by any means necessary. "By strategy we refer to a mode of presentation ruled by the content of the gospel on the one hand, and patterns of our contemporary mind on the other. We are asking *how* people may best grasp Christian understandings."[55] In this manner, moves, in a sermon, seek to bring into focus the movement already present in scripture.[56] Buttrick's approach to preaching is centred on a strategic use of language to affect the listener.

In Buttrick's work, he does not directly refer to the issue of the preacher's authority over the listener. However, in his attempt to understand the power of language he refers to an alternative authority: language itself. Here one finds a common approach of the New Homiletic: though Buttrick's focus is on how the listener hears and how the preacher can work toward reshaping the listener's worldview it is accomplished mainly by the power of words to alter and to change. Language becomes the tool by which the preacher can affect the experience of the listener.

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[54] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 23–7.

[55] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 34.

[56] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 23–36. Buttrick uses the term "scenes" suggesting that the natural movement in a text, whether a narrative or an alternative form of scripture, is to guide these scenes.

Paul Scott Wilson's Four Pages

Paul Scott Wilson offers the four page approach to preaching. At the outset, his approach seems to offer a parallel to the three-point sermon merely adding one additional page or point but to conflate the four pages merely to four points robs Wilson's method of its complexity. His argument is critical of forms of preaching that are modelled after an essay or written work. As an alternative, he offers a different metaphor to capture the essence of his understanding of preaching: movie making. This metaphor is examined in contrast to the metaphor of a written essay. Both have a particular form which influences how they are created and consumed by their audience. For preaching, to draw on the form of an essay is restrictive and counterintuitive to the nature of preaching as a spoken word. Wilson suggests:

> As long as we prepare our sermons by conceiving our task as equivalent to writing an essay . . . the essay concept will influence our preaching, often in negative ways, be we will unwittingly apply the rules of writing, which are not always effective for spoken presentations . . . The spoken word, not the essay, is the goal.[57]

Alternatively, movie making gives a suitable analogy for the type of presentation that needs to be at the centre the preacher's mind when sermon crafting. Movies are audibly and visually stimulating, and in presentation a movie can reach a person in a variety of ways. "More than simply telling plots, or becoming one character in a narrative, we will create entire worlds that address the senses, the mind, and the heart."[58] The preacher is not making a literal film but they are, in essence, writing a script and they are preparing the structure for the presentation they are about to make. Hence, when Wilson speaks of

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[57] Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon*, 10–1.
[58] Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon*, 11.

pages, he is not speaking of singular ideas but instead is speaking moments in a sermon which are important to both the theological and to the creative act of preaching.

Critical to the four page approach is the notion of unity within the sermon. Wilson suggests that a sermon requires an "organic unity."[59] A sermon with organic unity determines the form of the sermon and its content in relation to how the whole fits together. There is no predetermined form or a presupposed ordering of the content. To operate from a predetermined form is to develop a sermon with static unity. Here, there is unity, but something other than content structures it. A good example of static unity is the three-point sermon. If one holds to this model and this model alone, there is an inherent assumption that all passages of scripture can generate three points.[60] In contrast, Wilson offers his four pages to guide an organic sermon crafting process. The four pages are the problem in the text, the problem in the world, the gospel in the text, and the gospel in the world.[61] It is necessary, for Wilson, that a preacher examines each of these, but he does not presume to know how that unfolds across each sermon. Together the four pages give the preacher a loose structure from which to work toward organic unity within the sermon and to develop both content and form that moves naturally in relation to the text and the listener.

Wilson's four pages draw from his perspective on the relationship between the preacher and the listener, particularly as it pertains to the issue of authority. Wilson is concerned with the idea of "ethos."[62] Ethos is the essential character necessary for communication to happen. Wilson writes "If a community is not convinced of the

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[59] Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching*, 200.
[60] Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching*, 201.
[61] Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon*, 12–14.
[62] Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching*, 27.

integrity of a preacher, if they do not trust the relationship, no matter what is said, or how well it is said, they may not listen."[63] The preacher must work to establish this trust for the congregation to give them attention and, most particularly, a place of authority in their life. On the subject of ethos Wilson writes:

> It is the nurturing of relationship between the congregation and preacher. This happens in the course of preaching, in and through what is being said, as part of the actual message . . . When listeners make a positive judgement about the ethos of a speaker, they identify with the speaker and what the speaker is saying and give that person authority.[64]

The authority that a preacher has to speak to a listener is granted by the listener when they establish trust between each other. This authority is given most easily when the preacher shapes their words by a method that endears the listener to the preacher. In this manner, the narrative approach, as set out by Wilson, is built on rhetoric as a means to gain some level of authority from the listener which is achieved by appealing to the listener.

Summary of Narrative Preaching

This concludes the survey of material focused on the narrative approach to preaching. At the outset of this section, it was suggested that narrative preaching expanded, from its origins, into a mix of approaches. The authors highlighted here have been examined primarily as individuals but before concluding this section something should be said about the common ideas that reflect the whole. First, there is an emphasis on listener experience. How the listener experiences the sermon becomes a central piece of the narrative approach. Some metaphors are used to describe narrative sermons (a story, play,

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[63] Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching*, 27.
[64] Wilson, *The Practice of Preaching*, 28–29.

a movie, and the like) and each of these metaphors is employed because they reflect a certain kind of experience for the listener. Second, movement is the necessary component of preaching that was missing in traditional preaching methods. A recitation of ideas does not make for an engaging sermon. Deductive preaching makes a sermon the dramatic conclusion of a journey that the preacher took in the solitude of their study. Alternatively, ideas, in narrative preaching, must be developed by way of a journey, a story, a poem, or even by way of a logical argument. Third, there is an emphasis on rhetorical form as the means of developing ideas in the listener. Movement, as it is used above, is not something that can be left to chance. For ideas to be developed in a sermon, there must be a strategy, technique, or structure, to the intended movement. Taken together these three common ideas present a clear picture of how the narrative method reflects the broader approach of the New Homiletic which is being presented in this chapter. As a reaction to traditional authoritative preaching, the New Homiletic aims at shifting authority from the preacher to the listener by way of listener experience and through the application of increasingly effective methodology.

Developments in the New Homiletic: Dialogical Preaching

As explained above, Craddock's work reflected a move toward a dialogical approach to preaching. In the narrative form, this dialogue is, generally, intangible and represents an implied dialogue between the movement of ideas within the sermon and the engagement of the listener. From this push toward a conceptual dialogue there develops a dialogical form of preaching that places dialogue at the forefront of the preacher's work. Much like in the discussion of the narrative method it would be accurate to suggest that dialogical

preaching expands from a dialogical centre. That is to say, that while there is a methodological similarity in the respective works below there remain fundamental theological differences that expand from this common ground.

This dialogical form of preaching is central to the work of Lucy Atkinson Rose. She writes "The preacher and the congregation gather symbolically at a roundtable where there is no head and no foot, where labels like clergy and laity blur, and where believing or wanting to believe is all that matters."[65] The symbol of the roundtable was particularly important to her understanding of a conversational approach. At a roundtable, there is an implied equality between the speaker and those who are present. A focus on the community of faith, the development of a non-hierarchical approach to leadership, and an emphasis on personal experience are necessary components of Rose's conversational approach.[66] Each of these components reflects a need to locate authority in the community around the table and not in the pulpit. In this structure, there is a leader, but they are first a member of the community and second the preacher. "The term *preacher*, then, is not a synonym for one who is ordained or for the minister who controls access to the pulpit. Rather, it refers to the one whose function for the particular service of worship is to offer the sermon as one exchange in the ongoing conversations of the community."[67] For Rose, the preacher speaks not from the vacuum of their authority but amidst the life of the community. This community focus becomes the key consideration in the conversational approach to preaching. In the development of this approach, the nature of dialogue and the conversation partners present in the dialogue have expanded to include a

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[65] Rose, "Conversational Preaching," 27.
[66] Rose, *Sharing the Word*, 122–3.
[67] Rose, *Sharing the Word*, 123.

broader range than simply the preacher and the listener. Stemming from these considerations come models of preaching that take on forms of preaching that reflect an increasingly tangible dialogue and a radical shift in the nature of authority in preaching.

David J. Lose's Preaching as Confession of Faith

David J. Lose begins his argument by examining the contemporary listener within the framework of postmodernity.[68] For Lose, postmodernism's distrust of authority and structures of authority make traditional forms of preaching incompatible with the listener. The postmodern listener who hears a sermon built on the authority of the preacher will immediately be in tension between their culture and the sermon itself.[69] In an effort to

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[68] It should be noted that parallel to the development of the New Homiletic there are significant cultural changes that have impact on the preaching. These changes are typically described by the shift from modernism to postmodernism. As the cultural landscape was shaped, by way of postmodern challenges to modernism, homiletics was also shaped and changed to address the impact of these criticisms. This cultural shift has remained critical to homiletics, particularly in the school of the New Homiletic. The differences between modernity and postmodernity and the challenges that postmodernity had for modernity became the challenges that were addressed by homiletics. As one examines the development of contemporary homiletics, it is important to acknowledge that postmodernism has been a part of shaping the New Homiletic. While the contours and effect of postmodernity on preaching are important to note there is insufficient space here to fully explore these implications. See Middleton and Walsh, *Truth is Stranger than it Used to Be* for more on postmodernism. Further, Lose's treatment of the subject is particularly insightful as it pertains to homiletics. See Lose, *Confessing Jesus Christ*.

[69] Lose's study of postmodernity becomes a common approach in contemporary homiletics. An understanding of the postmodern listener offers many insights into how one preaches. Two authors, in particular, make for good examples of how a study of postmodernity offers specific insights into how one preachers: Chris Altrock and Graham Johnston. For instance, Chris Altrock, in *Preaching to Pluralists*, writes with a view of the listener. Altrock examines seven faces of the postmodern listener. In brief, he suggests that postmodern people are: uninformed about the Christian faith, engaged with spirituality, are anti-religion; are pluralists, are seeking to know the practical side of faith, are focused on the relational aspect to life, and are people who trust experience. (Altrock, *Preaching to the Pluralists*, 9–10) These faces reflect aspects of the postmodern listener and as such require the attention of the preacher in sermon crafting. Altrock proposes that each of these faces must be met with a strategy and does so in great detail throughout his text. He applies his analysis of the postmodern listener to direct the approach to preach that should be taken. As such, Altrock suggests that the seven faces of the postmodern person should aid in sermon crafting by becoming criteria through which a sermon should be evaluated. His use of this approach creates a new paradigm through which a sermon can be analysed and then adapted. If a sermon fails to live up to the changing face of the postmodern listener, it should be re-examined and rewritten with a concern for the listener in plain view.

Graham Johnston's *Preaching to a Postmodern World* follows a similar approach to that of Alrock to craft better sermons for the postmodern era. The majority of his text is cultural analysis. This analysis is layered throughout the text with a variety of implications for the shape of preaching. When he finally sets

resolve this tension, Lose draws from the work of two authors: Charles L. Campbell and Lucy Atkinson Rose. Campbell was critical of the notion of narrative preaching suggesting that viewing Scripture as narratives that prove a point fails to live up to the purpose of Scripture.[70] Scripture is not merely a collection of authoritative ideas, but it is a formative text; it is life-changing. The same is true of preaching. Campbell argues that preaching serves to teach the cultural norms of the church to those who are listening. In preaching, the language of the church is taught and the practices are explained. This instruction result is a community that is informed and shaped by the Word. For Lose, Cambell's critique offers an understanding of the preaching that emphasizes its function as formation in contrast to its function as an authoritative voice.

Conceiving preaching as formative, opposed to authoritative, allows the question of authority to be a secondary issue but authority remains central to the relationship between preacher and listener. To further resolve this tension, Lose relies on the work of Lucy Atkinson Rose. He draws on her metaphor of roundtable preaching and emphasizes the unified effort to examine and embrace God's Word in a general conversation within the community.[71] In this conversation, Lose finds the space in which to move toward a balance between the voice of the preacher and the voice of the listener. If such a balance can be achieved in conversation than the issue of authority can be further shifted into the

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out to offer suggestions as to how this analysis most tangibly impacts preaching the suggestions are primarily about communication style. He writes "Since the very word 'preacher' suggests 'having a message,' we would do well to think of ourselves by that new name—'communicators.' After all, communicators are about a process of imparting information that involves both message and listener." (Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World*, 150) Johnston builds on this shift suggesting that there are simple actions that can be taken in order to communicate better such as the use of humor and the use of media. See Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World*.

[70] Campbell reached this conclusion by engaging with the theological work of Hans Frei. Frei examined Christianity through a cultural-linguistic lens suggesting that the faith was grounded on its language and practices. Campbell, *Preaching Jesus*, 241–9.

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

background as each member has a role in the examination of the text of Scripture and the formative work of preaching.

Thus far, Lose has drawn to the surface of his discussion two key ideas: preaching is primarily formative opposed to authoritative and preaching is best realized as part of the conversation of the community. With these in mind, he proposes a new understanding of the preaching event: preaching as confession. In the confessional approach to preaching the authority of the preacher is given a more limited role than in a more traditional understanding of preaching. Lose attempts to balance between recognising the authority of the preacher while also minimising the force of that authority on the listener. On the one hand, he recognises the significance and importance of this voice, but on the other, it is channelled into a less forceful position as a confession. A confession does not impose but merely speaks to one's own experience. The listener is welcomed to listen and arrive at their own conclusion about what the preacher is confessing. In this way, the preacher is allowing the listener to filter the confession through their own understanding and experience. The confession of the preacher is merely a description of their own experience not a claim to authoritative truth.

Ronald J. Allen and O. Wesley Allen Jr. Conversational Preaching

Ronald J. Allen has been a critical voice working towards a conversational approach to preaching.[72] Allen argues that the text of scripture is unfamiliar to a Western setting and as such represents something which is other, apart from the culture. The sermon is an opportunity to engage in conversation between that which is other, Scripture, and the

[72] See Allen, *Interpreting the Gospel* and Allen, *Preaching and the Other*.

cultural voices which influence the listener.[73] In a similar vein O. Wesley Allen Jr., in his work, *The Homiletic of All Believers*, argues for a similar conversational approach to preaching. Allen Jr. is particularly critical of placing importance on each sermon individually. He offers that sermons have a cumulative effect and it is the sum of a lifetime of preaching amidst the broader conversation within the community that has a lasting impact on the effectiveness of preaching.[74] The dialogue that Allen Jr. is concerned with is present not in an individual sermon but in the way in which a sermon enters into the community, responding to needs and engaging in conversations already present in the community.

Ronald J. Allen and O. Wesley Allen Jr. expand on both their views in their text *The Sermon without End.* Wesley Allen Jr.'s original conversational approach examined a conversation primarily inside the church community this later work expands that conversation to include a postmodern, pluralistic culture and the Christian faith. Their central concern is developing an approach to preaching that is not apologetic but postapologetic.[75] They explain:

> The postapologetic preacher, like a good neighbor in a multicultural setting, enters into conversation with others in the neighborhood— listening, questioning, offering perspectives, being willing to change, being willing to challenge, and the multitude of other dynamics that are part of genuine conversations. Whereas classical evangelicals feud with culture, liberals accommodate to culture, and postliberals stand against culture, postapologetic preachers enter into deep give-and-take conversation with culture.[76]

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[73] Allen, *Preaching and the Other*, 85.

[74] Allen Jr., *The Homiletic of All Believers*, 51–52.

[75] Apologetics being a modern effort to explain and defend the Christian faith and postapologetics being a postmodern effort to have a genuine conversation with differing worldviews.

[76] Allen and Allen Jr., *The Sermon Without End*, chapter 2, para. 3, location 1155.

The nature of this conversation is not to form a consensus but to strive toward "meaning-making."[77] Meaning-making is the construction of meaning in relation to one's self.[78] The primary goals of meaning-making are to help the participants with their understanding. They suggest a preacher aim to help a listener in three ways: a better understanding of the topic, a better understanding of the varying views surrounding that topic and to help choose where to stand on the topic. The conversational sermon, they suggest, is shaped "by offering a tentative interpretation of, experience of, and response to God's character, purposes, and good news."[79] The key word here is tentative. The sermon acts not as a definitive statement to be accepted without question, but rather it stands as a voice in the crowd of the meaning-making conversation happening in each person.

There are some parallels between this conversational model and the confessional model of Lose when it comes to the matter of authority. Much like confession, preaching as conversation changes the balance of power between the authority of scripture, of the preacher, and of all other voices in the listener's community. Preaching is considered part of a bigger process of meaning-making and as a result, speaks not an authoritative word but a tentative word. Allen and Allen Jr. argue that a preacher should not entirely lay aside their authority (regarding their authoritative position within a church/denomination) but instead take a position that respects the limitations of their authority. "The preacher, however, has no more authority in the arenas of reason or experience than anyone else in

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[77] Allen and Allen Jr., *The Sermon Without End,* chapter 3, para. 5, location 1739.

[78] "Any question 'worth exploring' in such a conversational mode in postmodernity has underneath it a core question: How are we (am I) to make meaning of and in relationship to this topic? How are we (am I) going to deal with the questions in a way that constructs meaning for us (me)? The goal, then, is not to debate the topic in such a way that a consensus is formed in which all agree that A is true and B, C, and D are false." Allen and Allen Jr., *The Sermon Without End,* chapter 3, para. 5, location 1735.

[79] Allen and Allen Jr., *The Sermon Without End*, chapter 3, para. 40, location 1894.

worship. There are likely smarter persons in the pews than in the pulpit."[80] A preacher has a particular set of knowledge that gives them an authoritative voice on certain subjects, but they cannot assume themselves be the expert on all subjects. Beyond the scope of specialised education, the preacher does not have the monopoly on life experience. "Those in the pews have had different and varied experiences of the world and God-in-the-world than the preacher."[81] It is for this reason that a preacher can only offer something of tentative answers to the critical questions they explore in a sermon. The position of the preacher is not one of *the* authority but a critical voice within the varied authorities around each listener.

Doug Pagitt's Progressional Dialogue

Doug Pagitt's work, *Preaching in the Inventive Age*, argues that a tangible dialogue is central to preaching. "The crisis isn't how we preacher or what we preach or to whom we preach but the act of preaching itself, which has devolved into speaching [*sic*]."[82] Preaching in the past few decades has continued to be refined and improved on taking on the qualities of a well-rehearsed speech more than a sermon. He notes:

> We are surrounded by more great preachers than at any other time in history. We also have greater access to wonderful sermons, and every week in North America, more people listen to sermons . . . than at any other time in history. But if we look at how Christians continue to struggle with what it means to live in the way of Jesus, we soon realize that great preaching isn't sufficient.[83]

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[80] Allen and Allen Jr., *The Sermon Without End*, chapter 3, para. 49, location 1953.
[81] Allen and Allen Jr., *The Sermon Without End*, chapter 3, para. 49, location 1957.
[82] Pagitt, *Preaching in the Inventive Age*, 16.
[83] Pagitt, *Preaching in the Inventive Age*, 14.

In other words, it is not enough to simply speak better speeches. As an alternative, Pagitt turns to shaping the community through what he calls "progressional dialogue."[84] The idea is that rather than having a one-way conversation the church needs to have conversations, from many voices, which build on each other. Pagitt describes progressional dialogue noting:

> It works like this: I say something that causes another person to think something she hadn't thought before. In response, she says something that causes a third person to make a comment he wouldn't normally have made without the benefit of the second person's statement. In turn, I think something I wouldn't have thought without hearing the comments made by the other two. So now we've all ended up in a place we couldn't have come to without the input we received from each other. In a real way, the conversation has progressed.[85]

For Pagitt, the role of the preacher has been limited to one person when in reality it is a gift common to all of God's people. We are all preachers to one another.[86] In application, progressional dialogue is all about input from those present in the gathering. He writes "This is my hope for what preaching can be: the mutual admonition of one another in life with God."[87] This mutual contribution to the life of faith validates the mutual interests and struggles of Christians on a journey together.[88] Progressional dialogue works like the conversational approach examined above but extends that conversation into a very real dialogue present in the sermon as the content of the sermon.

Pagitt's progressional dialogue makes the most significant movement in changing the relationship between the authority of the preacher and the listener. Pagitt certainly

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[84] Pagitt, *Preaching in the Inventive Age*, 18.
[85] Pagitt, *Preaching in the Inventive Age*, 18.
[86] Pagitt, *Preaching in the Inventive Age*, 18–9.
[87] Pagitt, *Preaching in the Inventive Age*, 20.
[88] Pagitt is clear on the theoretical nature of his proposition but the practical application lacks some of the critical structure to this conversation in order to make it possible (i.e. leadership, direction). It is likely that his approach, when applied, shares the contours of the conversational preaching described above.

sees the value of what the preacher brings to the table in their unique position, but his approach effectively eliminates the necessity for a preacher. The preacher is not there as *the* authoritative voice, in fact, there is no single authoritative voice in the gathered community. The people, as a collective, carry with them the authority that was once granted to the preacher. In the gathering, one voice may speak with wisdom and insight but, regardless, it is the sum of the whole of the conversation that carries the weight of power.[89]

Summary of Dialogical Preaching

The dialogical approaches to preaching outlined here share some common ideas which should be examined before concluding this section. First, there is a criticism of monological preaching. A dialogical approach to preaching is clearest when contrasted against a monological approach. Dialogue is diplomatic whereas a monologue is tyrannical. A diplomatic approach reflects the approach to preaching that is suggested by the New Homiletic. Second, there is an expanding understanding of community in preaching. Community plays a critical role in the formation of a believer and the sermon functions as a voice in that community. Further, a preacher can rely on the broader community for insight, points of tension, and for some useful reference points for the development of their sermon. It is in the mix of the many voices of the community that a listener can be shaped to understand God's Word better. As a result, the community is

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[89] On the subject of dialogical preaching there is also some consideration toward what Michael Graves calls a "deep dialogue" which locates itself somewhere in between an intangible and a literal dialogue. He writes "Deep dialogue occurs when the preacher says something that matters, when the preacher names the longings of all God's children, in personal and global ways." Graves, "Deeply Dialogical," 25.

seen as a critical voice of authority in relation to preaching. Third, there is an argument for a tonal shift in how one preaches. In light of the important role that community plays in the lives of the listener, a preacher must alter the way in which they approach a sermon. The word "tentative" used above is not merely a posture for preaching, but it is the method by which a dialogical approach presents a word for the listener. Taken together these three concepts reflect, once again, the New Homiletic's approach to preaching.

Authority in the New Homiletic

The development of the New Homiletic outlined above reflects a wide range of thinking in the New Homiletic. Each author has contributed, in some manner, to the face of contemporary homiletics. Though each author has a unique contribution, there remains a common effort to alter the nature of authority in preaching. That is to say that, preaching from a position of authority is ineffective, and authority needs to be relocated from the preacher to the listener, and this can be accomplished by changing how one preaches.

The New Homiletic originates from a criticism of forms of preaching that remained transfixed on the preacher. These criticisms brought to the surface two critical aspects preaching that had been left unconsidered: the authority of the listener and the effectiveness of language. In both cases, the effect of understanding these component parts of preaching have reoriented preaching to great effect. By focusing on the authority of the listener, the New Homiletic offers dynamic and engaging forms of preaching for contemporary life, and this accomplishment should not be diminished.

However, these efforts primarily focus on matters of methodological concern. In attempting to relocate authority in preaching, the conversation has centred on human authority and human ability. Method has been given priority over matters of theological concern. It is the position of this dissertation that contemporary preaching needs to reconsider the theological nature of authority in preaching and hold a more concise theological framework for preaching that helps to guide the employ of method. Theology and methodology need to exist in a correlational state. This term will be developed more fully in subsequent chapter but it aims at describing a unity and relationship between theology and method rather than a division. The division between method and theology in preaching is not unfamiliar territory but is part of a consistent give and take in the study of homiletics. André Resner argues the history of homiletics "has been the story of a swing of the pendulum between two dominant frames of reference, the rhetorical and the theological."[90] Focusing on method and human agency tends to disregard the spiritual realities of the preaching event. What role, if any, does God play in preaching when authority is primarily located in the human aspects of preaching?

This highlights the critical relationship at stake in the discussion of homiletics: the relationship between God and humanity. Just as the pendulum swings between method and theology, the pendulum can be found in the treatment of God's role and humanity's role in preaching. Here again, there needs to be a correlational coexistence between the efforts of practicing preaching and what God is doing through preaching. In this case, it is not enough to merely change our understanding of authority on a human level from preacher to listener but further emphasise the critical relationship between divine

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[90] Resner, *Preacher and Cross*, 81.

authority and human authority. Returning to the matter of method, an over emphasis on the effectiveness of method tends to result in an overemphasis on the preacher as the effective agent of preaching.

In light of this, the application of language cannot be merely focused on human authority. Language or method remains the instrument of human authority, regardless of whether that language is used to create logical/propositional arguments or to elicit a particular experience in a listener. Hence, while there is a methodological difference between deductive and inductive preaching, there is little difference in the manner in which the preaching event is conceived as it remains a primary human endeavour, regardless if it is built on the authority of the preacher, the authority of the listener, or somewhere in between. Alternatively, it is necessary to examine the theological foundation of preaching to create a conceptual framework of the preaching event that serves to better capture what is happening in the preaching event and emphasise the correlation between God and humanity. A suitable theological framework for preaching can aid to orient the issues of methodology for the benefit of homiletics. To aid in this effort the work of Albert Borgmann will be brought into conversation with homiletics to critique the approach of the New Homiletic and to provide shape to the conceptual framework proposed in this dissertation.

CHAPTER II

ALBERT BORGMANN: THE DEVICE PARADIGM AND FOCAL THINGS/PRACTICES

> WHEN I heard the learn'd astronomer;
> When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me;
> When I was shown the charts and the diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them;
> When I, sitting, heard the astronomer, where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
> How soon, unaccountable, I became tired and sick;
> Till rising and gliding out, I wander'd off by myself,
> In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
> Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.[1]

Walt Whitman's poem *When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer* describes a listener's experience. Though the experience is of a lecture, there is in Whitman's description a parallel between the lecture and the state of contemporary preaching. The previous chapter outlined an approach to preaching that aimed to overcome the dry mechanics of deductive preaching and the lacklustre response, in the listener, to a deductive form. The New Homiletic offers diverse models of preaching that lay out the content of a sermon in what is believed to be more technically perfect forms of preaching for the contemporary listener. As suggested at the end of the previous chapter, that technical proficiency served to improve the form of a sermon so that it was more appealing to the listener. However, it still leaves much to be desired. How often do those listening to a sermon that follows the methods of induction still feel relatively unimpressed and, like the listener in the poem, long to leave and find a meaningful connection to the divine in a mysterious and wondrous way that a sermon may fail to deliver? This poem reflects, in few words, what

[1] Whitman, "When I Heard," 221.

will consume the bulk of the remaining dissertation: mainly, that contemporary preaching needs more than better methods of preaching, it needs a conceptual framework of preaching that draws to the surface the mysterious and wondrous nature of the practice of preaching. The following chapter will turn to the work of Albert Borgmann and the study of his philosophy of technology to make this case.

Technology as a Means of Understanding Contemporary Preaching

It may seem, at first glance, that there is a limited connection between the study of the New Homiletic, as laid out in the first chapter, and the study of Albert Borgmann's work in the field of the philosophy of technology. Before moving too far into the examination of Borgmann's thinking, it is helpful to consider where these two overlap. The last chapter offered a general description of the New Homiletic's approach to preaching: diverting authority from the preacher and relocating it to the listener by the effective use of language. It is in the understanding of, and the effective application of language where one finds a route directly from the world of homiletics to the world of technology.

To clarify this connection, one must first understand what is meant by "technology" in this context. For this dissertation, the word "technology" will be used in a similar sense as Paul C. Heidebrecht defines it in his book *Beyond Cutting Edge*. He suggests three key aspects of what is meant by the word "technology." First, there is technology that is "tools, instruments, or material artifacts."[2] These are the typical objects that one thinks of when referring to technology. They are the manifestations of technology that are most present in the world. These are the computers, cell phones, cars

[2] Heidbrecht, *Beyond Cutting Edge?* xii.

and the like, that represent the physical outcomes of technological advancement present in daily life. The second sense of the word "technology" that Heidebrecht describes is "technological systems, which include networks of tools and instruments, as well as the processes and institutional structures that make it possible for systems to function."[3] Technology, in this sense, refers to the processes that make an artifact, such as a computer, available. A computer, both in its creation and its function, is a result of a collection of processes that are gathered into the computer. These are the supply chains that provide the material necessary to produce a computer, the manufacturing that is required to assemble the components of a computer, the collection of programming that allows the computer to function, and further, the digital networks that connect a computer to the wider world. The processes represented here reflect only a fraction of the complexity of the technological systems to which the word "technology" can refer. Finally, the word 'technology' can be used to refer to "the techniques, methods, or ways of thinking that makes the development of modern technology, not to mention the operation of modern societies, possible."[4] This aspect of the word 'technology' refers to the foundation on which two previous senses of the word rely. These are the collection of cultural values, philosophical understandings, and scientific advancement that come together to make technological systems and artifacts possible both in concept and in reality. The word 'technology' is often used to refer to each of these three aspects: technological artifacts, technological systems, and technological ways of thinking. It will often be used, throughout this dissertation, in reference to each but it is this third meaning of "technology" that matters most to the discussion of homiletics and technology referred

[3] Heidbrecht, *Beyond Cutting Edge?* xii.
[4] Heidbrecht, *Beyond Cutting Edge?* xii.

to here.

With this understanding of what is meant by "technology," we can now return to linking the approach of the New Homiletic's uses of language to technological thinking. The New Homiletic, in its application of a sophisticated understanding of how language functions, reflects technological thinking. In line with this sort of thinking, problems, such as the problems of monological, authority based, deductive preaching, have technological solutions, and a better technique or method equates to more effective preaching. A technically proficient use of language is, for the New Homiletic, the solution to the critical problem of authority, not because the authority structure is functionally different than in the traditional model of deductive preaching, but because it aligns with a culture built around technological thinking and relies on technique. In essence, what the proponents of the New Homiletic offered in their development of homiletical method reflects a technological culture. We need to develop a more complete view of technology and, as a result, a more complex understanding of homiletical method that acknowledges the relationship between method and theology.

This argument is at the centre of the critique that is laid out in these first few chapters of this dissertation. Thus, having described the situation in the New Homiletic in the first chapter, we can now turn to examining more closely the nature of technological thinking and a culture built around technology to help shape the critique of preaching offered in subsequent chapters. As suggested at the end of the previous chapter this critique will take two forms: first, it will offer a challenge to the approach taken by the New Homiletic as a consequence of Borgmann's device paradigm and second, it will offer an alternative approach by way of Borgmann's focal things and practices. Thus, the

task of this chapter is to unpack Borgmann's thinking regarding the device paradigm, and focal things and practices and to begin to suggest how these ideas shape the criticism of the New Homiletic.

Albert Borgmann and the Philosophy of Technology

Albert Borgmann is the Regents Professor of Philosophy at the University of Montana. He is best known for his work in the philosophy of technology and the development of "the device paradigm."[5] The device paradigm is an attempt at describing the effect of technology on society. Of particular concern is the way in which the effect of technology changes the manner in which one engages with the world.

One of the foundational aspects of a philosophy of technology is one's conception of the nature of technology. Is technology a force unto itself? Is technology merely neutral with its impact determined by how it is used? How one answers this question typically defines their entire philosophy. Before exploring the details of Borgmann's proposal, it is helpful to identify two alternative conceptions of the effect of technology. This outline is based, primarily, on Borgmann's analysis of these approaches. These are the substantive and the instrumentalist views of technology.[6]

The substantive view sees technology as a force of its own that goes unchallenged within society. The work of Jacques Ellul is an excellent example of this approach. In his work, Ellul examines the "technical phenomenon." Technique, for Ellul, is defined as the "totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency in every field of

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[5] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 1. para. 3, location 94.
[6] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 2. para. 5, location 214.

human activity."[7] In other words, every facet of life, in a technological society, is limited to the most efficient means of achieving its intended end. The result is that the efficient way to do something is given priority over alternative approaches. The force of technique is unchallenged as all other things are caught up in its purpose: efficiency. This drive toward efficiency is also at the centre of Borgmann's criticism of this approach. For Borgmann, technique's end goal of efficiency remains obscure when technique is viewed as a force unto itself, as Ellul suggests in his work. In other words, the substantive view lacks a sufficient explanation of technique as a power in its own right.[8]

The instrumentalist view suggests that technology, as part of a long history of humanity creating and operating tools, is neutral within a society. Notable academics who hold to this perspective include Mary Tiles, Hans Oberdiek, and Manuel Castells.[9] In this view, technology is merely a sophisticated and highly complex tool or set of tools, which have no will or values of their own but are given purpose and meaning within the context of a society and its use of that technology. Borgmann takes issue with the instrumentalist view in that it fails to consider that pre-industrial tools and modern technology are different in the manner which one engages with them. Modern technology limits engagement with its machinery whereas tools require significant engagement with the tool to operate them.[10]

Borgmann, in challenging these views also suggests that they each, despite their limitations, offer insight into the nature of technology. He writes "modern technology is

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[7] Jacque Ellul, *The Technological Society*, xxv.

[8] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 2, para. 9, location 237.

[9] See Tiles and Oberdiek, *Living in a Technological Culture* and Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*.

[10] This argument is central to Borgmann's device paradigm and will be expanded upon below.

evidently too complex and powerful a phenomenon to fit one of the answers above to the exclusion of the others. This point, in turn, leads us back to the task of discovering a fundamental pattern in technology that, when explicated, corrects and unites partial and, at first sight, incompatible views."[11] As Borgmann seeks to determine the nature of technology he is not satisfied by either of these definitions but sees how they capture aspects of technology within a society. As a result, Borgmann works to examine and establish the pattern of technology to better understand its nature and character. This pattern is what Borgmann terms as "the device paradigm."[12]

The Device Paradigm

To discover this pattern Borgmann focuses on the movement in society from "things" to "devices." It is within this shift that the effect of technology is clearest. To better understand what Borgmann is suggesting in the change between things and devices it is helpful to begin with some examples. The following is a list adapted from the work of Eric Higgs, Andrew Light and David Strong as editors of the collection of essays entitled "Technology and the Good Life."

Things	Devices
Fireplace	Central Heating
Candles	Sophisticated Lighting
Wooden Tables	Plastic Tables
Traditional Foods and Drinks	Lite, Microwavable, and Instant Foods and Drinks
Shoe Laces	Velcro
Craftwork	Automation
Traditional Performance Physical Activity	Home Entertainment[13]

[11] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 3, para. 9, location 379.
[12] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 1, para. 3, location 94.
[13] Higgs et al., "Introduction," 10.

These represent a variety of shifts from a world of things to a world of devices. Higgs et al. describe this list saying "For Borgmann these substitutions constitute a repeated pattern that can be described, a pattern that Borgmann claims also has repeated consequences (which can be similarly described) for our relationships to our physical surroundings, our relationships to ourselves and others."[14] Each of these shifts taken as one instance of change would demonstrate little impact on life but, Borgmann suggests, the sum of these changes radically shapes the way in which one takes up living in the world and within a society. This shaping is present, for Borgmann, throughout a device oriented culture and permeates all engagement with the world, including the practices of the church. Thus, Borgmann's assessment, if correct, has significant implications for the contemporary church and most particularly, preaching.

At the outset, it is helpful to think of devices in terms of two defining qualities: the relief from burdens and the access to benefits. Consider the example of the fireplace in the pre-industrialized world and the central heating unit of today.[15] Both share a similar purpose of providing the same benefit: warmth for the home. Yet, the processes of acquiring that benefit are dramatically different. In the case of the fireplace, one must chop wood, light the fire, and throughout the day be engaged with tending to the fire. These efforts are a series of burdens that must be undertaken for the primary benefit of warmth to be gained. Alternatively, for one to acquire warmth from a central heating unit one need only flip a switch. In a central heating unit, the burdens, by which warmth is

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[14] Higgs et al., "Introduction," 11.

[15] This metaphor is originally developed by Borgmann. See Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 9, para. 4, location 950.

acquired from the fireplace, are relegated to machinery, and somewhere within the walls of a home, these burdens are met. The benefit, warmth, is given to the user and enjoyed with little engagement with the burdens of acquiring said benefit. In a device, there is relief from burdens and access to benefits.

In light of this, there is a significant change in the relationship between the burdens and the benefits as they pertain to things and devices. For things, the relationship between burdens and benefits is inseparable. One cannot get warm without some form of engagement with burdensome tasks. Alternatively, in a device burdens and benefits are increasingly separated. One stays warm with no real engagement with the machinery by which that warmth is produced. the burden, by way of machinery, is in fact hidden and unfelt by the user.[16] The result is that most benefits are free to be consumed with little to no burden on the user.

Relief from burden is central to the effect of technology. It is the fulfilment of the inherent promise of technology: technology, by way of devices, makes life better.[17] This promise has come to fruition in the steady elimination of hunger, disease, and other maladies. Further still, the pursuit of removing burdens has extended past these destructive forces and technology has been aimed, indiscriminately, at relieving all burdens.[18] However, is it beneficial to eliminate all burdens? Strong and Higgs, summarising Borgmann, suggest that there is a distinction between burdens that are "odious burdens" (such as hunger and disease) and those that are "ennobling burdens"

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[16] This is one of the key differences between the devices of modern technology and the tools of a pre-technological society. In a tool, there remains a fixed relationship between the benefits and burdens limited only by one's engagement with the tool by way of their skill and attention.

[17] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 9, para. 2, location 929.

[18] Relief of burdens in this way is termed "commodification." This is examined more closely below. For now it is sufficient to highlight the pattern: burdens should be eliminated and conversely, commodities or benefits should be freely consumed.

(such as the demands of community).[19] Not all burdens are equally worthy of elimination, and ultimately, not all "things" should be replaced by "devices."

Borgmann terms these things that should not be replaced as "focal things."[20] Focal things are central to the argument laid out in this dissertation as the relationship between focal things and focal practices form the basis for the conceptual framework of preaching that will be argued in subsequent chapters. Ultimately, it will be argued that preaching is a focal practice in service to the focal thing; God and His transformative work in Christ. The matter of focal things and focal practices will be examined in more detail below. Before giving serious consideration of focal things, it is necessary to take a closer look at some of the key features of the device paradigm.

The Separation of Means and Ends

Above, devices and things were described in relationship to their burdens and benefits. In Borgmann's writing, these are more specifically presented as the means and ends of a thing or device. Thus, in the examples of the fireplace and the hearth, outlined above, one could say that the burdens, such as the acquiring of wood and maintaining the fire, are the means of arriving at the ends: the warmth. Equally, the machinery of the furnace is the means of acquiring the ends of warmth. Focusing on means and ends will help to clarify the device paradigm, and with them in mind, one can bring Borgmann's insight into its finest point: that in a device the means and the ends are separated from each other.

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[19] Strong and Higgs, "Borgmann's Philosophy," 21.
[20] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 1, para. 5, location 119.

Presently, things and devices have been presented as follows: in a thing, the means and the ends are connected, and in a device, the means and the ends are separate from each other. To expand on these concepts, it is helpful to develop a visual representation of what is being discussed. At this point, one could tentatively offer an image of a thing that would highlight the connection between means and ends (see *fig. 1*)

A Simple Visualization of a Thing

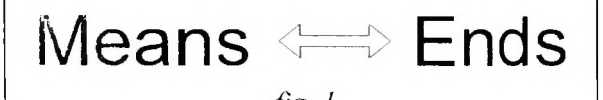

fig. 1

A Simple Visualization of a Device

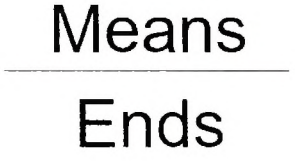

fig. 2

and an image of a device that would highlight the disconnect (see *fig. 2*). These images are very simple representations of what Borgmann is suggesting and are based on his analysis. Notice that the image of the thing has a bidirectional arrow linking the means and the ends. This arrow is meant to signify a connection between them that each depends on the other and each requires the other. In the image of a device, there is a clear separation between means and ends. This separation is largely a matter of experience by the user. That is to say, as suggested above, the user does not need to consider the means as they work to provide the ends. The image of the device is meant to highlight Borgmann's key insight that in devices the means and ends are separated from each other.

To develop the significance of this one needs to look closer at Borgmann's presentation of devices and things. For Borgmann, a thing, because of the joined relationship between means and ends, is "inseparable from its context, namely, its world,

and from our commerce with the thing and its world, namely, engagement."[21] That is to say because the ends of a thing are intricately related to the means of arriving at those ends there is a connection to not only the thing but also the context in which the thing exists. Borgmann, elaborating on the image of the hearth, demonstrates this sort of relatedness:

> A stove used to furnish more than mere warmth. It was a focus, a hearth, a place that gathered the work and leisure of a family and gave the house a center. Its coldness marked the morning, and the spreading of its warmth the beginning of the day. It assigned to the different family members tasks that defined their place in the household. The mother built the fire, the children kept the firebox filled, and the father cut the firewood. It provided for the entire family a regular and bodily engagement with the rhythm of the seasons that was woven together of the threat of cold and the solace of warmth, the smell of wood smoke, the exertion of sawing and of carrying, the teaching of skills, and the fidelity to daily tasks. These features of physical engagement and of family relations are only first indications of the full dimensions of a thing's world.[22]

The fireplace offers identity, a sense of place, community, rhythm, experience, and ultimately, an opportunity to engage in the complex context in which both the thing and the user exists. There is a relationship between things, user, and their world. These connections are a critical aspect of engagement, and these connections are lacking in devices.

The fireplace can be represented as a thing using the basic image of a thing developed above. That is to say that at a minimum it would include an image that shows the relationship between means and ends as inseparable but beyond that Borgmann's analysis suggests that the relatedness of a thing goes beyond simply the distinction between means and ends to include other aspects. Using Borgmann's description of a fireplace and its various relations one could visualize the fireplace as is seen in *fig. 3.*

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[21] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 9, para. 4, location 929.
[22] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 9, para. 4, location 950.

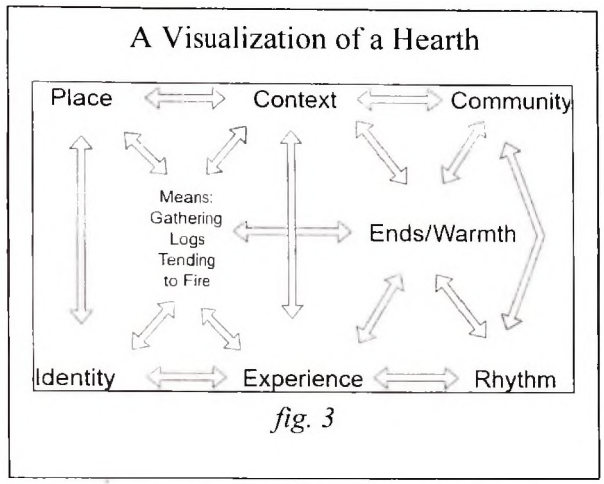

fig. 3

Here, there are a wide range of elements represented that include, the means and ends, but further include place, identity, community, rhythm, experience and context. Each are connected by a bidirectional arrow which is meant to demonstrate their necessary relationship. In an ideal representation, the arrows would connect every aspect to each other, but this appeared visually overwhelming. Suffice to say that the fireplace goes beyond simply the means and ends to connect a myriad of other critical aspects. Taking the image of the fireplace as a general form of what a thing looks like one could expand on the original image of the thing to include more than simply means and ends but rightly include the context in which the thing exists and the thing is experienced. It would now be more accurate to visualise the thing not only in the relationship between means and

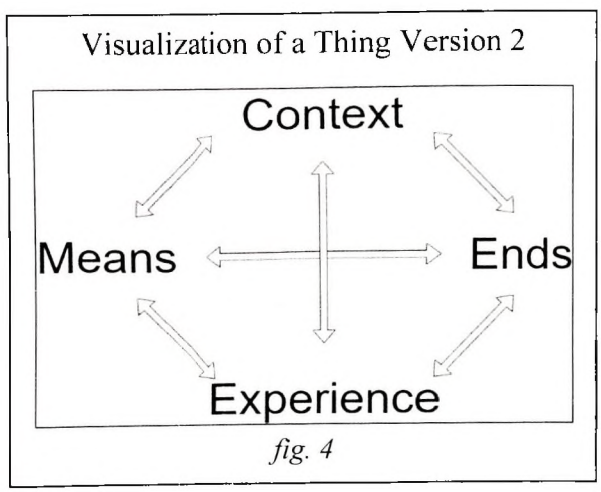

fig. 4

ends but to further include the aspects of a thing that are amplified by the relationship between the user and the thing. For this purpose, the original image of the thing developed above will be altered to reflect these relationships (see *fig. 4*). Essentially, this image is meant to demonstrate the experience of a thing in its entirety. Here, in line with Borgmann's assessment, one finds a relatedness between means, ends, context, and experience.

In contrast to a thing, in a device, the means and ends are separated. Borgmann makes this case by suggesting that the means are replaced by machinery. Strong and Higgs note "This world of the thing, that is, its ties to nature, culture, the household setting, a network of social relations, mental and bodily engagement, is taken over by the *machinery* (the central heating plant itself) of the device. All of these multifarious relationships are eliminated in the process."[23] Devices, in contrast to things, are disengaging. Devices offer their ends with little consideration by the user. The machinery of the device produces its intended end with ease. This process creates a definitive gap between the means (the machinery) and the ends (commodities). In this sense, commodities are free to be consumed and are the primary focus of the device.

This focus is not simply because commodities are alluring but largely because the machinery is hidden from the user. Borgmann explains:

> The machinery of devices, unlike the context of things, is either entirely occluded or only cerebrally and anonymously present. It is in this sense necessarily unfamiliar. The function of the device, on the other hand, and the commodity it provides are available and enjoyed in consumption. The peculiar presence of the end of the device is made possible by means of the device and its concealment.[24]

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[23] Strong and Higgs, "Borgmann's Philosophy," 29.
[24] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 9, para. 15, location 1109.

It is helpful to characterise the relationship between the means and the ends of devices in terms of the background of a device and the foreground of a device. Commodities exist in the foreground, present and available for the user while the machinery is in the background, obscured from and unconsidered by the user.[25] With commodities in the foreground and machinery in the background, commodities remain fixed, and machinery becomes replaceable. Strong and Higgs, elaborating on the example of the central heating unit, suggest that the commodity of warmth remains unchanged in the foreground while the machinery, the means of producing warmth, can change. For example, changing from a coal furnace to a gas furnace has little impact on the experience of the commodity.[26] The relationship between means and ends ceases to register with the user when only the

A Visual Representation of a Central Heating Unit

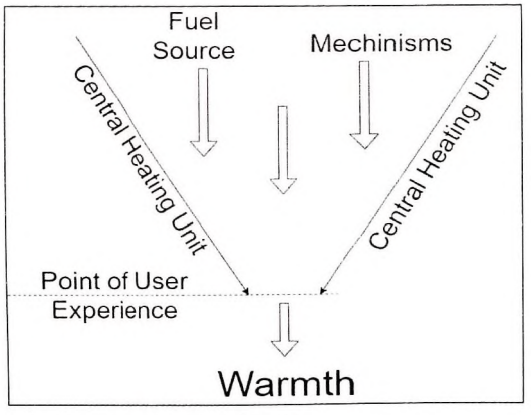

fig. 5

[25] Commodities are at the centre of experience in a society built around technology. Borgmann writes "Technology has delivered liberty and prosperity not through magic as fairy tales have it, nor through servitude as feudal lords enjoyed it, but through increasingly sophisticated and powerful machineries. As their development has progressed, the goods that these machineries are procuring have become available more instantly, ubiquitously, easily, and safely-more commodiously in an older sense of the word. Such goods may well be called commodities, not just because they are commercially available but, more important, because of their comfort and convenience as the word commodity, again in a less common sense, suggests." Borgmann, "Technology and the Crisis of Contemporary Culture," 36–37.

[26] Strong and Higgs, "Borgmann's Philosophy," 29.

ends are at the forefront as a result, in devices means and ends are fully separated into what Borgmann terms, "mere means" and "mere ends."[27]

One can here return to the original image of the device developed earlier. Using the original image of the device to model the central heating unit one could suggest something of a funnel wherein the machinery (the means) is moved to a fine point of contact with the user. *Fig. 5* illustrates the central heating unit. At the end of the funnel, the commodities or ends can be experienced without any meaningful contact with the means. Notably, the elements that make up the means, such as the aspects of fuel or mechanism exists outside the realm of the user experience hidden within the device. Using this example, the initial image (*fig. 2*) represented the disconnect between means and ends quite simply could be altered to more accurately represent mere means and mere ends. In light of this, it would be more accurate to present the device as a sort of funnel wherein the means are funnelled to their finest point at which the user experiences the ends, with little to no connection to the means (see *fig. 6*).

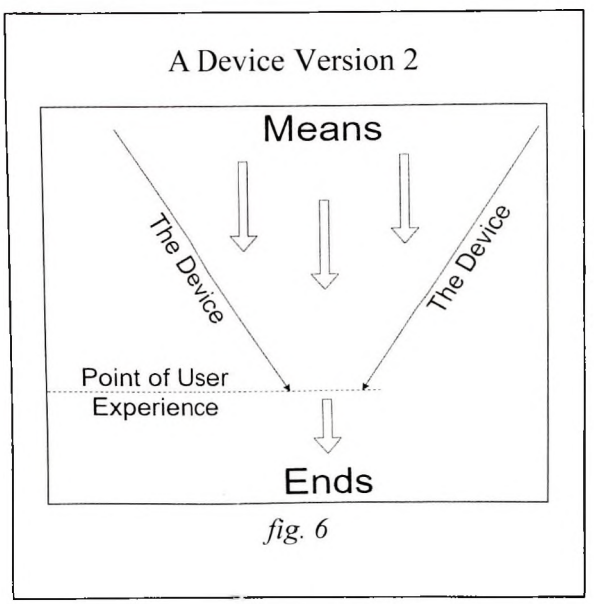

fig. 6

[27] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 9, para. 8, location 1002.

With these fuller descriptions of things and devices, the relationship between means and ends in each should be clearer. Further still, the visual representations that have been developed here will be used to help visualise how a particular thing or device functions. These images will be used to examine the shape of contemporary preaching and will be helpful in visualising the relationship between means and ends in preaching.

The Consequences of Replacing Things with Devices

The division of means and ends into distinct entities within a device is not, in itself, considered a negative as it lives up to the expectations of contemporary life. It fits within the patterns of a society that is oriented around devices. Borgmann suggests this division is the fulfilment of the promise of technology for freedom and a life of prosperity.[28] This promise implies that devices can free a person and enrich their life by the availability of commodities. The more that commodities are made available, the more likely that the life of the user will be free and prosperous. A device promises that it will, by delegating means to machinery, give the user more time to do other things and be free from the burden of means. Further, the availability of commodities in such abundance gives the user access to more goods allowing for more consumption of commodities. The separation of the means from the ends fits into the desire for freedom and opportunity for enrichment, and as such, this separation is seen as a part of a good life.

The promise of technology, for freedom and prosperity, is appealing but does that promise come to fruition? David Strong in his book *Crazy Mountain* suggests that the promise is ultimately empty and devices fail to live up to it. There remains a consequence

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[28] Borgmann, *Technology*, Chapter 8.

to ordering life around devices in that things are increasingly replaced by devices. This consequence dramatically changes the nature of the human experience and contemporary society.

To make this case he builds on Borgmann's description of things to suggest that humans and things have a symmetrical relationship which he calls a "correlational coexistence."[29] Correlational coexistence is the term that Strong uses to highlight the importance of things to the human experience. For Strong, things are central to humanity's existence and their understanding of that existence. He writes:

> We may say that humans are always and already correlated with materiality. We can account for feelings in two ways—by giving an account of the feeling *or* by giving account of what evokes the feeling. Similarly, we can speak of interests, desires and motives *or* we can speak of what is attractive, appeals to us or moves us. From the standpoint of being in the world, the former are accounts of the self, the latter accounts of the world.[30]

Things, in relation to a person, link that person to their world and can serve to illuminate their place in that world. This illumination is not simply because things are used by a person but that "both what people are capable of and what things are capable of are simultaneously disclosed in this relation."[31] This relationship is central to what Borgmann's example of the hearth is meant to describe. The hearth is a part of the home, a part of daily life, and its place within the home, within the family, was greater than its mere warmth. The hearth has a correlational coexistence with the members of the home. The relationship between things and a person, for Strong, is critical to what helps define a person's identity, purpose, sense of meaning, and to locate themselves in the world. "By responding to things in their full dimensions, I too emerge in the fullness of my

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[29] Strong, *Crazy Mountains*, 70.
[30] Strong, *Crazy Mountains*, 70.
[31] Strong, *Crazy Mountains*, 70.

dimensions. . . . If things are not allowed to be, neither am I allowed to be. If I sever my bonds with things by dominating them, I too am diminished."[32] The consequence of replacing things with devices is a disorientation, a displacement, and a disengagement from one's world.

The nature of things suggests that they are a crucial part of the human experience but how exactly do devices fail to be as engaging as a thing and result in the disorientation that Strong and Borgmann suggest? Strong argues that technological devices are "non-neutral," that is to say that they have a significant impact on the world in which they are used. He draws on the work of Don Ihde who describes this non-neutral nature.[33] Strong writes that a device "amplifies in some way certain aspects of normal embodied experience while simultaneously reducing other aspects."[34] Here, much like in Borgmann's discussion of foreground and background, devices emphasise certain aspects of the experience of using the device while allowing others to drift into the background. This experience of foreground and background becomes something of a norm for interacting with devices and things. Drawing on the fireplace/central heating example, Strong notes "Asked what a hearth is for, we find it logical, after having experienced central heating, to answer that it supplies heat, ignoring or not even seeing its other aspects."[35] Commodities become a way of life and exist in the foreground of all things. The hearth, despite its complex nature as a thing, is known and understood first by its commodity and, in comparison to the sophisticated furnace, is seen lacking because of the challenges of acquiring that commodity.

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[32] Strong, *Crazy Mountains*, 70.
[33] See Ihde, *Technics and Praxis*.
[34] Strong, *Crazy Mountains*, 84–85.
[35] Strong, *Crazy Mountains*, 85.

Further, Strong suggests that commodities, as mere ends, cannot bear the weight of significance and meaning that things offer in their correlative coexistence. Strong argues that warmth, as a mere end, "is no substitute for the thing because it lacks a world with which to become engaged."[36] Mere ends are narrow points of connection opposed to the full experiences of engaging with a thing. Further still, devices, by their nature, give no alternative to the separation of ends and means. "The very material structure of a device is such that it can be experienced only as holding up a commodity calling for consumption and nothing more."[37] Borgmann describes this himself suggesting that devices are understood primarily by their function. He writes "A stove is more advanced the closer it comes to being nothing more than a two-dimensional horizontal surface which heats, and a television set similarly tends to a mere vertical surface that lets pictures appear."[38] Devices are not concerned with their relatedness to the world in which they exist rather they are a matter of function and the fulfilment of that function's purpose. Experiences, in a device oriented culture, become a matter of isolated incidences of fulfilment from one device to another. These isolated experiences of consumption cannot compare to the engagement of things.

Although devices do not compare to things, there is still the remaining promise that devices grant freedom to pursue important things. For example, by no longer spending time chopping wood or tending to a fire, a family can spend more quality time with each other. This freedom, according to Strong, would be a positive outcome of devices but, he suggests that it rarely happens. "What people are freed up for are not

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[36] Strong, *Crazy Mountains*, 85.
[37] Strong, *Crazy Mountains*, 86.
[38] Borgmann, "Orientation in Technology," 139.

other things, but *more commodities*."[39] The reason is that "the totality of technological devices is far more consequential than any particular device."[40] Technological thinking is so pervasive that it overflows into other disciplines and aspects of society. The way of the device becomes the influential model of how all things, organisations, natural environments, relationships and the like function. "As the totality of our daily environment changes from an environment of things to an environment of devices, from an environment making demands on people to an environment of that is more at their finger tips, this change necessarily entails heedlessness and evokes an attitude of cultural petty homocentrism."[41] In this sense, the overarching influence of devices overwhelms all alternatives to devices and becomes the primary way of engaging with their world.

David Strong has highlighted some critical insights which are central to Borgmann's criticism of devices. To summarise: first, things are critical to the human experience. By requiring engagement, things give context to human existence. A person and a thing have a correlational coexistence, as a result, which causes deep connections between person, thing, and the world in which both exist. Second, the depth of a thing cannot be replaced by its equivalent device or its commodity. Devices are understood by their function: the providing of a commodity. Commodities, as mere ends, are isolated from their context and as such cannot offer the relatedness that things offer in their correlational coexistence with their user. Third, the cumulative effect of the device paradigm is all-encompassing. Devices, in the separation of means and ends, bring commodities to the forefront of the human experience. This approach to devices bleeds

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[39] Strong, *Crazy Mountains*, 87.
[40] Strong, *Crazy Mountains*, 87.
[41] Strong, *Crazy Mountains*, 87.

into areas not typically associated with commodities. Things, organisations, structures, nature and the like are measured by the device paradigm and seen only by their potential commodification. As a result, all things fall under the influence of the device paradigm, and the once engaging world of things becomes a disengaging world of devices.

Hyperreality

Following Borgmann's assessment of the device paradigm, he further explores the long-term ramifications of living under the rule of the device paradigm. One such outcome is the rise of hyperreality over reality.[42] The distinction between hyperreality and reality is the same distinction between devices and things. That is to say, that devices offer commodities that not only meet the similar outcome of a thing but exceed expectations. In this manner, the world of devices becomes hyperreal replacing the present reality. For clarity on the nature of the hyperreal in contrast to real one can return to the example of running in nature compared to running at the gym. Borgmann elaborates on the example by suggesting that one see running in nature as an experience of reality. In contrast, he offered the gym as a version of reality that was altogether artificial in which the experience had been honed to offer a close representation of what it was like to run in nature, and in this sense, is hyperreal. At the gym, one can choose the images, the sounds, and the atmosphere of their run within the comfortable and convenient confines of the

[42] Hyperreality is a part of Borgmann's greater assessment of postmodernity in which Borgmann elaborates on this topic in his book *Crossing the Postmodern Divide*. He proposes two outcomes for postmodernism: "hypermodernism" and the second as "postmodern realism." A culture that chooses hypermodernism is governed by an extension of the device paradigm by the further ordering of society by the rule of devices. Whereas a culture shaped by postmodern realism is a culture that puts focal things and practices are at the centre of life and guide the use of devices. Each of these reflect the fundamental choice between devices and focal things and practices respectively. Hyperreality is an outcome of hypermodernism. For a summary of this position, see Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide*, 1–5.

gym. Compared to the rich experience in nature there is, currently, a limit to the artificial environment at the gym but Borgmann considers the possibility of a perfect simulation of the run: a hyperreal version of running in nature within the convenience and comfort of the gym. He describes:

> a panoramic, finegrained, and vividly colorful screen; a running surface that rises and banks in coordination with the view that is being displayed; scented and temperature controlled blowers that simulate the air movement and fragrance according to the changes of shade, sunlight, and season; speakers that produce the sounds of rushing water, chirping birds, and whispering pines; monitors that adjust the velocity of sights, sounds, wind, and running surface according to the effort the runner expends.[43]

This version of running at the gym is meant to reflect hyperreal perfection and is used by Borgmann to describe three features of hyperrealism: hyperrealism is brilliant, rich, and pliable.

First, Hyperrealism is brilliant in that it is "inclusive and exclusive." It is inclusive as it engages all of the faculties of the human experience to enliven the experience beyond even the most enjoyable equivalent experience in reality. That is to say, that the entirety of a person's senses are caught up in the hyperreal experience. Still, it is exclusive in that the elements of the gym that are prohibitive of this experience are no longer present. "A truly brilliant hyperreality will exclude all unwanted information . . . that would betray the presence of the machinery beneath the hyperreal commodity."[44] Essentially, the hyperreal run is heavily controlled to give an ideal experience and limit distractions. Second, hyperrealism is rich in that it offers much more variety within the same space. For Borgmann, this means that a runner can choose the experience of the run. In a perfection simulation, the run can take place anywhere, the weather can be

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[43] Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide*, 86.
[44] Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide*, 86.

controlled, and finest detail can be set to create the perfect experience. There is an "encyclopedic completeness"[45] in that the hyperreal experience is unlimited, covering all the options. Finally, hyperreality is pliable in that the control is entirely in the user's hands. The choices which grant a richness to the simulation are further at the disposal of the user, and in offering such control, the user gains a power over the hyperreal experience that is impossible in reality. That is to say that, reality is not pliable and one does not find the endless choices at their fingertips. Alternatively, a perfect hyperreality offers control that is entirely pliable, full of choices that enable the user to tailor their experience. Borgmann links the brilliance, richness, and pliability of hyperreality under the term "glamour."[46] In this sense, something that is hyperreal is glamorous in a way that reality cannot match.

Though currently there remain technological limitations that make Borgmann's image of a perfect hyperreality unattainable, there is great potential for hyperreality to be present throughout a society shaped by the device paradigm. Borgmann suggests that the boundaries between real and hyperreal are being continually blurred. For instance, the television blurs this line by creating an experience at conflict with its context. There is a conflict between the "real social distance from a star like Johnny Carson with the intimacy of his apparent presence in their homes."[47] This experience blurs the line between real and hyperreal in that the relationship is simultaneously intimate and distant. The viewer has a hyperreal relationship with the television host despite having never met him/her. As another example, Borgmann suggests that the line between the real and the

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[45] Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide*, 86.
[46] Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide*, 87.
[47] Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide*, 91.

hyperreal no longer exists in the common definition of music. Though there are differences between a live performance and a prerecorded album both would be considered to be music worthy of experiencing. "It would not occur to us, listening to a compact disc . . . that we were in the presence of anything less than veritable music. If it is hyperreal music, flawless and of supernatural brilliance and clarity, so much the better."[48] The nature of music has expanded from performance to the perfection of recording and as such the term music applies to both a real experience, live performance, and a hyperreal experience, a recording. Increasingly, hyperreal experiences are found to be acceptable substitutes offering a similar experience, and possibly better experience in that the hyperreal is cheaper, easier, accessible, and in essence glamourous.

Hyperreality is glamourous but like the commodity described above hyperreality cannot sustain the human experience because they cannot last. Borgmann writes:

> A highly interactive hyperreality may provide you with fitness and coordination. Totally disburdening hyperrealities can keep emptiness at bay through ever more refined and aggressive simulation. But since the realm of commodity is not yet total, we must sooner or later step out of it into the real world. . . . reality with all its poverty inescapably asserts its claims on us.[49]

In the return to reality, one cannot help but be confronted with the inability of hyperreality to exist without costs. Eventually, all devices require maintenance, or a person is confronted with the limits of their existence in sickness or hunger. The setting in which a hyperreal experience exists is ultimately dependant on the limits of reality, and hyperreal experiences give nothing that can sustain a person when reality creeps back into view. "A hyperreal setting fails to provide the tasks and blessings that bring forth patience and vigour in people. Its insubstantial and disconnected glamour provokes

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[48] Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide*, 91–92.
[49] Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide*, 95.

disorientation and distraction."[50] Something that is hyperreal may be glamorous, in that it offers experiences that are brilliant, rich, and pliable, but these experiences cannot sustain a person when confronted with reality.

The long-term effects of devices on society, such as hyperreality, fundamentally shift what it means to experience life. It changes the manner in which each person engages with their context and serves to further the disorientation, alienation, and separation between a person and their world. The description of the device paradigm offered by Borgmann is essentially a warning, a growing concern, for the direction of contemporary life. Borgmann's device paradigm raises awareness of the cumulative effect of devices on all aspects of the human experience.

The practices of the church are not immune to this force. Borgmann's device paradigm offers a manner in which to examine the approach to preaching laid out by the New Homiletic. This effect on preaching will be the focus of the third chapter of this dissertation, but it may be helpful to reflect tentatively on how Borgmann's device paradigm will aid in the critique. The approach of the New Homiletic has already been presented as an attempt to relocate authority from the preacher to the listener by relying on the listener's experience to be authoritative. The New Homiletic attempts to draw on the listener's experience to create a particular experience of preaching wherein God's work could be made present in the listener's life. To control this experience, the New Homiletic isolates and analyses three key aspects of preaching: the preacher, the listener, and the effective use of language. In separating these aspects and attempting to shift their position in preaching the New Homiletic essentially turns the preacher, the listener, and

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[50] Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide*, 95.

most particularly the effective use of language into the means of arriving at the desired end. To that end, the authority and power of language is the means of effective preaching. The means, the effective use of language, become the primary focus of the preacher because the perfection of means, as with all devices, makes the ends more achievable. If, by way of appealing to the authority of language, the preacher can make the experience of preaching better, easier, or even simpler for the listener then it follows that preaching can be more effective. In essence, the approach of the New Homiletic reflects the device paradigm.

Much more will need to be said on this matter but, for the time being, this look at preaching as a reflection of the device paradigm will give some initial direction to the critique of the New Homiletic to come in the following chapter. Before considering that criticism in greater detail there is a second aspect of Borgmann's work which is critical to the argument of this dissertation; that is, focal things and focal practices.

Focal Things

The device paradigm influences and alters the way that one interacts with their world. This effect is not limited to devices but extends into other aspects of human interaction such as family life and structures, how one interacts with nature, and, as will be considered in future chapters, homiletics. This force, as suggested above, is imposing itself to such a degree that all things are subject to it, but Borgmann does not believe that this imposition is permanent, or a requirement of a society built on technological thinking. To see the force of device as such would be to align with the substantive view of technology. Alternatively, Borgmann offers a counterforce to the device paradigm:

focal things. Borgmann argues that a return to focal things could both resist the force of technology and clarify the role that technology plays in daily life.

Borgmann develops the concept of focal things in reference to the work of Martin Heidegger particularly his reflection on the Greek temple and other orienting forces of a pre-technological era. Borgmann describes Heidegger's conception of things when he writes:

> A jug, an earthen vessel from which we pour wine, is such a thing. It teaches us what it is to hold, to offer, to pour, and to give. In its clay, it gathers for us the earth as it does in containing the wine that has grown from the soil. It gathers the sky whose rain and sun are present in the wine. It refreshes and animates us in our mortality. And in the libation it acknowledges and calls on the divinities. In these ways the thing (in agreement with its etymologically original meaning) gathers and discloses what Heidegger calls the fourfold, the interplay of the crucial dimensions of earth and sky, mortals and divinities.[51]

Heidegger's fourfold dimensions point to the simplicity of focal things and begin a discussion of them. Borgmann expands this view in two ways. First, while Heidegger sought to return to pretechnological safe havens, Borgmann considers this unhelpful. Rather, focal things serve not as an escape from technology but rather, they affirm and orient it. Second, Borgmann suggests that Heidegger fails to emphasise the necessity of practice. Borgmann writes "Though Heidegger assigns humans their place in the fourfold when he depicts the jug in which the fourfold is focused, we scarcely see the hand that holds the jug, and far less do we see of the social setting in which the pouring of the wine comes to pass."[52] Borgmann found inspiration in Heidegger's understanding of things and pushes those ideas further in his conception of focal things.

For Borgmann, focal things are "things that of themselves have engaged mind and

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[51] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 23, para. 8, location 4711.
[52] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 23, para. 11, location 4748.

body and centered our lives. Commanding presence, continuity with the world and centering power are the signs of focal things."[53] These three aspects help to define what is meant by a focal thing. Higgs and Strong unpack these features by examining the act of running. As we have already considered, there are two types of experiences of running. The first is running in the outdoors along a road, a path, or trail. The focal thing, in this case, is the particular place where one runs and the experience of running in that place.[54] The second experience is running at the gym on a treadmill. Central to this experience is the device, the treadmill, which, for many, has replaced the experience of running outdoors. The experience of running on the path compared to the experience of running on a treadmill are drastically different and will help to illuminate the three features of focal things: commanding presence, continuity with the world, and centring power.

A focal thing has a commanding presence in that focal things make demands on a person and have an attractive quality. First, in the words of Strong and Higgs, focal things "demand patience, endurance, skill and the resoluteness of regular practice."[55] Consider the work of running on a trail. The path requires the runner to be in shape and exerting effort to be up to the task of the particular trail. Further, along the trail, one cannot simply quit and arrive instantaneously elsewhere, one must finish the journey or turn back. Entering into a run or a consistent practice of running is no simple task and requires much of the runner. In this manner, a focal thing, like running, is demanding. Second, commanding presence also refers to the attractive quality of focal things. Higgs and

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[53] Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide*, 119–20.

[54] Running in a particular place remains a focal thing regardless of whether one runs in more natural places, such as ocean roads or trails in wood, or in more urban locations, such as a running a city marathon or neighbourhood roads.

[55] Strong and Higgs, "Borgmann's Philosophy," 22.

Strong explain, "The sights and sounds, the events of the run, the uniqueness of a particular run, or the harmony one feels with the surroundings cannot be instantly replayed at our disposal."[56] There is, in a run, a uniqueness that is not easily reproduced and draws the runner to return. In this sense, running in nature is attractive, if only to chase those precious moments where harmony between runner and world are achieved. In contrast, to the demanding and attractive commanding presence of focal things is the disposability of the device. On the treadmill, some of the demands remain the same. There is similar physical exertion and opportunity to exercise, but these demands are lessened in the device. One can start and stop at will, and one can instantaneously change the difficulty of the task. The attractiveness of the treadmill is, generally, much less than the unique experience of running. The environment of the gym is sterile and empty, devoid of the richness of running in nature. In the device, many of the aspects of running that once required skill and resoluteness are controlled, the attractive elements are stripped back, and as a result, the act of running is less engaging.

Focal things also have continuity with the world around them. Focal things have a relatedness to their world and to the one who engages with the focal thing. "A focal thing is not an isolated entity, it exists as a material center in the complicated network of human relationships and relationships to its natural and cultural setting."[57] Along the trail, the runner is connected to, and impacted by, the scenery, the sounds, the weather on a particular day, the time of year, and the fellow runners. Devices, in contrast, emphasise discontinuity, "while the function of a device captures one or a few aspects of the original

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[56] Strong and Higgs, "Borgmann's Philosophy," 22.
[57] Strong and Higgs, "Borgmann's Philosophy," 23.

thing . . . devices sever most other relationships."[58] At the gym, the run is divorced from some experiences central to running outdoors. Further, time on the treadmill is often time spent simultaneously listening to music or watching a video. The device allows the body to be engaged in physical activity while the mind is enjoying entertainment unrelated to the run. "Mind, body, and world are all dissociated from one another."[59] Devices encourage this discontinuity whereas focal things require continuity.

Finally, focal things have a centring power. Here one must return to the separation of means and ends. In focal things, unlike devices, there remains a unity between means and ends. As a result, there is, in focal things, the power to orient oneself in the middle of the disorienting world of devices. It should be noted that the experience of a focal thing is not a guarantee of a centring experience. The task of running along the trail can become simply a chore, a burden, a means to an end. However, this does not remain the case in every instance. "Presumably, runners would not be runners were it not for better days. On the good days, runners come away appreciating these *centring powers* of the thing. They come away invigorated, knowing that 'this is where I want to be and what I want to be doing.'"[60] A focal thing can orient one's life and centre it by meeting the demands of a focal thing and by experiencing a focal thing in unity with the world in which a person lives. "Through focal things and practices they affirm the place where they live and the direction of their lives."[61] The centring effect of focal things is in contrast to the "glamorous appeal" of devices.[62] The convenience and simplicity of the gym are alluring.

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[58] Strong and Higgs, "Borgmann's Philosophy," 23.
[59] Strong and Higgs, "Borgmann's Philosophy," 23.
[60] Strong and Higgs, "Borgmann's Philosophy," 23.
[61] Strong and Higgs, "Borgmann's Philosophy," 23.
[62] Strong and Higgs, "Borgmann's Philosophy," 23.

It fits easily into the rhythms of life and serves to achieve the goal of promoting good health and exercise. However, devices require little attention and disconnect people from their world and ultimately, cannot orient one's life.

The three features of focal things counter the disengaging effects of the device. Strong and Higgs summarize:

> In this rising tide of technological devices, disposability supersedes commanding presence, discontinuity wins over continuity, and glamorous thrills trump centering experiences . . . Thus, if Borgmann's theory is right, there exists a profound conflict between the expansion of technological devices and the focal things and practices these devices displace.[63]

There is a conflict between that which is technical and that which is focal and in light of the pervasive nature of the device paradigm focal things and practices are at risk of disappearing.

Rather than simply allow focal things to disappear Borgmann offers focal things as the counter to the effects of the device paradigm. As suggested above, the device paradigm emphasises the consumption of commodities. Commodities, divorced from the means of acquiring them, are free to be consumed with little consideration. As devices replace things, consumption replaces engagement. Strong and Higgs elaborate, "Under the rule of the device paradigm, commodities provided by devices and consumption are what most of us spend our time on and build our lives around."[64] The force of devices and the patterns of consumption can be countered by a return to focal things as a centring force in one's life.[65] Strong and Higgs, describing Borgmann, continue explaining, "Focal

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[63] Strong and Higgs, "Borgmann's Philosophy," 24.

[64] Strong and Higgs, "Borgmann's Philosophy," 32.

[65] Borgmann's criticism is not strictly aimed at the act of consumption but the manner in which consumption replaces engagement and further eliminates the possibility for meaningful engagement with one's world. He writes "The first point that needs to be made is a moral one in a new key. Paradigmatic consumption is not a crime, a sin, or an evil in the traditional sense. But it is intrinsically disengaging. If it dominates our leisure, it debilitates our physical and mental vigor and displaces or destroys focal things and

things richly interweave means and ends, point to the larger context of their setting in nature, the community, and culture, call for attention, effort, skill, and fidelity to regular practice, and invigorate individual and community life."[66] To counter the device paradigm, Borgmann does not seek to turn back the clock on all things and enter a pre-technological state. Alternatively, Borgmann suggests that emphasising focal things reorients a person to the engaging world of things. Focal things inform and shape one's engagement with their world but only when given priority over devices. A return to focal things, by their orienting effect, will aid in reforming how one engages with their world and even how one approaches devices.

Focal Things and Focal Practices

However, this reformation cannot be achieved by merely identifying focal things. A focal thing requires dedication to a practice. Borgmann terms these practices as "focal practices."[67] In Borgmann's work focal things and practices are described in tandem to each other. This shared description is because focal things and practices are bound to each other and are often best understood in relationship to each other. In Borgmann's primary metaphor he discusses the nature of the hearth as a focal thing but further the hearth is known and experienced by way of the practices that engage the hearth, such as chopping wood or tending to the fire. In this context, these practices, in relationship to the

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practices. The second point is the acknowledgment that paradigmatic consumption and the culture of technology are so intertwined that a complete return to a life of engagement is no longer possible or desirable. From these two points follows the third. We should within limits accept paradigmatic consumption appreciatively and cheerfully. But the gains of safety, ease, space, and time carry an obligation to clear a central space in our lives for the engagement with focal things and practices." Borgmann, "The Moral Complexion of Consumption," 422.

[66] Strong and Higgs, "Borgmann's Philosophy," 32.

[67] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 1, para. 5, location 120.

focal thing, are focal practices in that they draw a person into relationship with a focal thing. One of the challenges of describing Borgmann's suggestion of focal things and practices is that the nature of the relationship between a thing and its relative practice is different depending on the specific thing and practice. Lawrence Haworth, in his article *Focal Things and Focal Practices*, offers insight into the relationship between focal things and practices and how practices bring focal things to the centre of one's life. It is helpful to see some examples of focal things and their relative focal practice. Haworth offers a list of the focal things and practices that Borgmann discusses throughout his work:

Focal Practice	Focal Thing
Cooking	The meal
Chopping Wood, etc. for heating the home	The hearth
Fly fishing	Either the trout or the rod
The arts and crafts	Paintings, pots, etc.
Running	The road or the course of the run
Backpacking	Wilderness
Grooming, training, riding a horse	The horse[68]

Haworth's article aims at examining how Borgmann frames the relationship between focal practices and focal things. Haworth writes "In some practices the focal thing has a subordinate role and the practice is dominant. But in many other practices the focal thing is prominent and as it were subordinates the practice."[69] As a result, Haworth describes two initial models of this relationship: the "guarding model" and the "internal goods model."

In the guarding model, the focal thing exists separate from a practice. "The thing has significance apart from the practice by which it is guarded, but is, shall we say,

[68] Haworth, "Focal Things," 55.
[69] Haworth, "Focal Things," 59.

fragile, at least under modern conditions, and so needs the practice to preserve it. The practice is subordinate to the thing."[70] A helpful example of this is the practice of religious worship. The practice of worship is in service to a focal thing: the divine. Worship does not bring God into being, but in the practice of worship, one directs their attention to the One who is already present. "The practice may be required to make that presence focal at a particular time and place, but the significance of the focal thing is not constituted by the worshipful practice."[71] The guarding model suggests that the significance of the focal practice is located externally in the focal thing that the practice is directed.

The second model is the internal goods model. Haworth describes this model saying, "In the practice one experiences the activity one engages in as good in itself, and one experiences the end of the activity, its product or what completes it, to be similarly good."[72] These sorts of practices are often a process of creating something. Unlike the guarding model, in which the practice merely directs attention to focal things already in existence, in the internal goods model focal things come from the practice. In this model, there are two places where focal things are found. First, the end results of creation, such as a handmade pot or an excellent cake, are focal things in their own right. Second, the act of participating in the practice is itself a focal thing. Haworth defines this sort of practice saying:

> Any practice with internal goods will have associated with it a shared appreciation of a manner of carrying on the practice that sets a standard for adequate and excellent practicing and by reference to which it can be explained why those goods are experienced as good.[73]

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[70] Haworth, "Focal Things," 60.
[71] Haworth, "Focal Things," 60.
[72] Haworth, "Focal Things," 60.
[73] Haworth, "Focal Things," 61.

It is helpful to see this described in the practice of baking. There is at the end of the practice a cake, and it is the intended result of the practice of baking. Arrival at that intended end requires a set of standard of procedures (in this case contained in a recipe) that must be followed. Equally, the end result of the cake is held to standards by which the excellence of the cake is judged. These standards reflect a level of excellence that comes from the tradition of the practice. Baking a cake is connected to a rich history and tradition of baking that has established the practice and the standards by which that practice is observed. It is in this connection to the history and tradition of the practice that these sorts of focal practices find significance.[74]

Haworth suggests that these two models remain incomplete in themselves.[75] Taken together, in a synthetic model, they aid in conceptualising two important aspects of the relationship between focal things and practices. The guarding model draws attention to the significance of focal things external to practices and the internal goods model draws attention to the significance of focal things within a practice in relation to the tradition and history of the practice. The synthetic model is seen most clearly in the practice of religious worship. Here, as described above, there is an external focal thing, the divine, that exists without the practice and the practice serves to turn one's attention to the focal thing. However, that practice is further rooted in a tradition and a history that informs and shapes the practice.[76] The guarding model and the internal goods model help

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[74] Haworth, "Focal Things," 62.

[75] Ultimately suggesting a synthetic model that sees the guarding model and the internal good model as opposite ends on a spectrum of relationships between focal things and practices.

[76] The example of cooking, used to describe the internal goods model, could also be more completely understood by considering the guarding model. In this case, significance comes externally when one conceives their practice in terms of a profession in service to a community. While the role of a cook in a community is not central to the practice of cooking (or even necessary to the practice) it does impact how one conceives the practice.

to frame the synthetic model and demonstrate what is meant by a focal practice and its relationship to focal things.

The relationship between a focal thing and a focal practice is critical to understanding Borgmann's counterforce to the device paradigm. In light of the description above, it is necessary to return to the image of a thing developed above to include an understanding of focal things and focal practices. *Fig. 7* is an image of a focal thing. First, for matters of simplification, the means and the ends of a thing have been

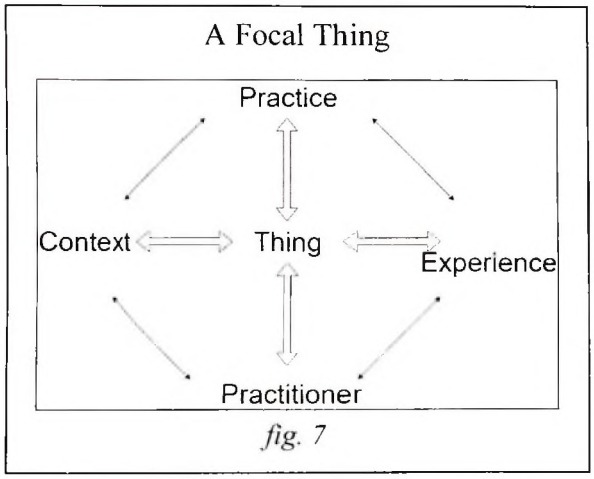

fig. 7

captured under the term thing. It should be clear, at this point, that a thing is whole only when considered by way of a unified means and ends. So, as with the previous visualisation there is a relationship between a thing, its context, and the experience of that thing. However, in light of Borgmann's description of focal things and focal practices, two more elements have been included: practice and practitioner. Here, much like with context and experience, practice and the practitioner are inextricably linked to the thing. It is further connected to the context and the experience. It should be noted that the thing is placed in the centre of the image as it is the thing that is essential to the entire process. The second critical change is that the connections between the focal thing and the other aspects are emphasised. This emphasis is meant to demonstrate the manner in which

dedication to a focal thing amplified all other aspects. That is to say, that, as Borgmann suggests, a focal thing can reorient oneself and in doing so reframes their context, their experience, the practitioner, and the practice itself.

This simplified version of a focal thing uses the term "practice" and the term "thing" as distinct elements. As Haworth has suggested, depending on the nature of the relationship between a focal thing and practice, the significance of the practice is variable. This variability is captured in Haworth's final suggestion of the synthetic model and the image of a focal thing offered above (*fig. 7*). For this study, it is further helpful to model the two extremes of the relationship between a focal thing and a focal practice. The essential difference between the guarding model and the internal goods model is the centre of the image. In the internal goods model (*fig. 8*), the practice is the source of the

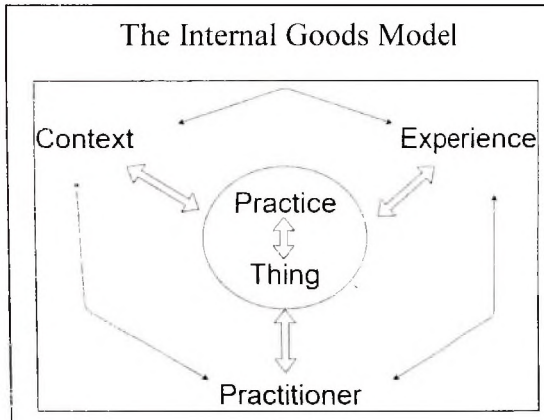

fig. 8

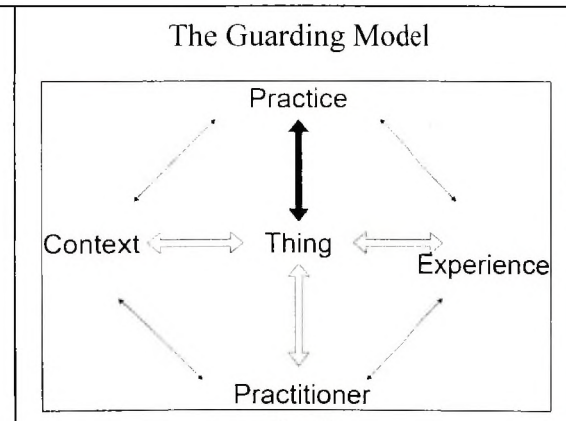

fig. 9

focal thing and as such the practice is located at the centre, joined with the thing, because the practice is considered to be the source of significance. In the guarding model (*fig. 9*), the thing remains at the centre of the image and looks similar to the broader image of a focal thing offered above. In this case, the image has further emphasised the arrow between focal thing and practice as a way of demonstrating the practice as pointing to the focal thing. These images will be most significant when determining what is meant by

this dissertation's primary assertion that preaching is best understood as a focal practice in chapter IV.

The discussion of focal things and practices has covered a few key ideas. First, focal things were identified as having commanding presence, continuity with the world, and a centring power. These three features represent the essential qualities of a focal thing. Second, the relationship between focal things and focal practices was examined in Haworth's guarding model, internal goods model, and synthetic model. Taken together these present a picture of Borgmann's description of focal things and practices, and their relationship to each other.

Here one can return to the notion of preaching as focal practice. As suggested, a focal practice is related to a focal thing. Much like the example of worship, preaching gains its significance and importance from an external source. It is not the practice that is worthy of attention nor is it the effective agent by which the remarkable happens, but it is the focal thing that the practice refers to that is significant. In the case of preaching, it is God and His transformative work in Christ that both inspire the practice and fulfils the practice. It is God who makes preaching effective and significant, and a preacher cannot, by relying on rhetorical technique or reasonable argumentation, bring said effectiveness or significance into being. This argument will be expanded upon in chapter four following the critique of the New Homiletic in chapter three.

Ecological Restoration: A Primer in Application of Borgmann's Thinking

Before proceeding with this criticism, it is helpful to get a clear picture of how the broad concepts of Borgmann's device paradigm and focal things and practices have been

applied to other fields of study. To this end, the following is an examination of how Borgmann's work has influenced an approach to ecological restoration. Ecological restoration is an excellent test case because it shares some similarities with the field of homiletics. First, ecological restoration and preaching are practices.[77] As such, they exist as a collection of traditions, ideas, and conceptions that do not naturally fit into Borgmann's categories of devices or things. In other words, there is not a clear thing or device. It is easy to point to the device paradigm where there is an obvious device, but it is much harder to see the relevance or effect of the device paradigm when it is affecting a practice. Second, both fields are not directly related to technological consideration. Though one could point to the presence of technology in either field that change it, such as a backhoe to aid restoration or a microphone to amplify preaching, these sorts of improvements are not central to the practice or the effect of the device paradigm. It is the less apparent ways in which the device paradigm is shaping the entire endeavours of restoration, and preaching, that matter. For these reasons, ecological restoration makes for an excellent test case for the application of Borgmann. The work of Eric Higgs will serve as an example of applying the device paradigm, focal things and practices.

The Device Paradigm and Ecological Restoration

The foundation of Higgs' work is the device paradigm. He writes, "The device paradigm explains how a thing, such as wilderness, and a practice, such as ecological restoration, can be rendered commodities and stripped of sinuous connection with social and natural

[77] At this point, it is not yet established that these are focal practices. Both have many of the qualities of focal practices, as Higgs argues about restoration and this dissertation is arguing for preaching, but their focal nature is not a necessary feature of their similarities.

processes."[78] As a result, Higgs explains, ecological restoration stands at a crossroads. He writes "For many, restoration is about the perfection technique. For others, it is about building communities in relation to natural processes and patterns."[79] Both approaches are aimed at similar ends but arrive at very different conclusions as to how one approaches those ends. These two paths reflect what Higgs terms as "technological restoration" and "focal restoration." Technological restoration follows "the patterns of technological culture"[80] and the focal restoration is "constituted by engaged relationships between people and ecosystems."[81]

Technical restoration leads to the creation of hyperreal forms of nature. For Higgs, the best example of this is found in the development of the Wilderness Lodge attraction at Disney World in Orlando, Florida. The Wilderness Lodge is a place dedicated to creating a comfortable wilderness. The Lodge uses wilderness as a "theme" drawing on "deeply held American beliefs about wilderness, simpler lifestyles, the frontier, and Native Americans."[82] The Lodge creates an entertaining and majestic experience of the wilderness that is meant to be lavishly enjoyed and to inspire the imagination. It is this remarkable experience that Higgs notes is fundamentally altering the consumer's perceptions about wilderness. Higgs writes, "By turning wilderness into a conceptual product, one that is adaptable and pliable, Disney is also creating a new reality."[83] This new reality influences the cultural understanding of what it means to have wilderness. As a result, a place of wilderness, such as a national park, comes to be valued

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[78] Higgs, "Nature by Design," 197.
[79] Higgs, "Nature by Design," 198.
[80] Higgs, "Nature by Design," 196.
[81] Higgs, "Nature by Design," 196.
[82] Higgs, *Nature by Design*, 46.
[83] Higgs, *Nature by Design*, 52.

by this new reality, by a version of wilderness that reflects the vision of Disney over the original shape of the wilderness. For the practice of ecological restoration, this hyperreal version of wilderness comes to be influential over the entire process. For Higgs, the critical problem of a hyperreal wilderness is that "The goals chosen may resemble manufactured images."[84] A technical form of restoration is vulnerable to providing a hyperreal version of nature and potentially becoming less about restoration and more about replication of a hyperreal experience of nature.

Further, for Higgs, technological restoration is plagued by commodification. In commodification, focal things and practices are appropriated to reflect the device paradigm, becoming more like devices. To commodify something is to turn attention merely to the benefits (or ends) of a thing or practice. Higgs suggests that technological restoration commodifies both the focal thing (in this case, nature) and the practice of restoration. Higgs writes "To commodify a practice means to change the locus of attention from things to devices and to transform it to an exclusive professional enclave geared to efficiency."[85] In other words, a practice is commodified when the relationship between the focal practice and the focal thing is severed. The practice simply becomes a means to an end and becomes disengaged from its original purpose. Higgs uses the example of the seemingly advantageous partnerships between corporations and ecologists called mitigation. Mitigation is an approach to restoration wherein a company compensates for their development by purchasing and restoring an alternative property. It is a balanced and relatively efficient way of meeting the goals of restoration while furthering efforts in corporate development. However, by approaching restoration by way

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[84] Higgs, *Nature by Design*, 205.
[85] Higgs, "Nature by Design," 205.

of mitigation, restoration itself becomes a commodity that can be bought, sold and traded.[86] In effect, the practice becomes a commodity.

Higgs, following Borgmann, suggests technological restoration and the resulting commodification become the normative approach to nature. While the intentions of such approaches are well-meaning, they distort the focal things and the practices into commodities. Alternatively, conceiving of nature as a focal thing and restoration as a focal practice serves to frame one's approach to restoration by way of engagement rather than consumption. Expanding on this, Higgs suggests that focal restoration, seen as a focal practice, reorients the restorationist to consider the relationship between nature, restoration, community, and history. He writes:

> To restore successfully in the long run, people need to be strongly committed to restoration, which points us back to participation and community support. Focal practice joins two traditional concepts, *ecological integrity* and *historical fidelity*, which underlie most definitions of restoration. Together these three concepts extend the usual reach of restoration beyond ecological or technical matters. There is one more crucial ingredient. I argue that restoration is about *intention* or *design.* Restoring well presupposes an awareness that what is done in the name of restoration constitutes a deliberate intervention. Acknowledging our role as designers of ecological and social processes lends humility to the already-daunting challenge of restoration.[87]

Higgs' point is that technological restoration tends to focus only on the result, the ends,

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[86] Commodification does not simply refer to economic commodification, though it often has economic implications. Commodification broadly speaking refers to the ability to consume. Higgs suggests technological restoration may aim at taming nature so that the experience of nature may be enjoyed. Restoration, in this mode, may include rest stops and endeavours in tourism (such as trails, or parks). These serve to commodify nature but are not limited to economic gains. Borgmann also makes this distinction suggesting there is a difference between economic commodification and moral commodification. He writes "There follow qualifications that are explicated through a distinction between structural and technological commodification. The former is straightforward economic commodification brought about by social, political, and legal means. The latter is the more complex phenomenon where something is not only moved into the market, but is also transformed and given new and distinctive characteristics, through alienation, exclusion, rivalry, and standardization. What I call moral commodification is a more formal and specific articulation of alienation—the detachment of a thing or a practice from its context of engagement in a time, a place, and a community." Borgmann, "A Reply to My Critics," 88.

[87] Higgs, *Nature by Design*, 4–5.

and in doing so easily loses sight of the critical connection between the work of the restoration and the context in which they are working to restore.

The first of these aspects of ecological restoration is ecological integrity. Higgs describes "At the very root of integrity is the notion of wholeness, which in the context of conservation and restoration suggests that the goal ought to be the creation of whole, intact systems."[88] Essentially, efforts to restore should be guided by recreating systems that are complete and are of a high quality. Ecological integrity implies sustainability and completeness within the ecological system that is being restored. Historical fidelity is the second of the aspect of ecological restoration that is critical to Higgs' viewpoint. Higgs explains "Historical fidelity means loyalty to the predisturbance conditions, which may or may not involve exact preproduction–remember that there are social, economic, cultural, political, aesthetic, and moral goals from the present to factor in as well."[89] Historical fidelity draws on the restorationist's understanding of the original shape of the land. It is an attempt to give notice to what the environment would have been like before it was desturbed by the influence of humanity. This effort has significant limitations in relation to the list of contemporary factors that Higgs listed above. That is to say, that historical fidelity can only be achieved as best as possible within the context of present-day systems. Despite these limitations, there must always be a relationship between the work of restoration and the most accurate historical understanding of the landscape.

The final aspect of ecological restoration is the intentions of the restorationist. Focal restoration is "one that centers the world of the restorationist, expresses the commanding presence of nature and demonstrates continuity between that particular act

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[88] Higgs, *Nature by Design*, 122.
[89] Higgs, *Nature by Design*, 127.

of restoration and other activities on the landscape."[90] The pursuit of restoration cannot simply be the pursuit of any sort of restoration but must be guided by its relationship to the focal thing. Higgs gives an example of this by describing his experiences in restoration. He describes:

> My studies of ecology and countless hours in the field were no match for the knowledge required to arrange an integral assembly of organisms that would ultimately work together in a fashion closely resembling what must have once occupied this site. . . . I discovered myself making countless tiny decisions . . . rooted in the integrity of organisms and their relationships, and my art.[91]

Higgs' awareness of the relationship between restoration and the natural process informed his practice. On the surface his work may have seemed identical to other sorts of restoration but, as he suggests, emphasis on the relationship between the focal practice and the focal thing resulted in "countless tiny decisions"[92] that had an impact on his approach. There was a reciprocity between him and the garden that would otherwise be unconsidered or irrelevant to his work if approached as strictly technological restoration.[93]

With these critical aspects in mind, Higgs outlines two forms of restoration: technological restoration and focal restoration. Here, one finds a first chance to apply the visualizations of the device and focal things created above to visualise Higgs' notions of technological and focal restoration. *Fig.10* shows what is meant by technological restoration. In the image restoration is the device, the funnel by which a version of nature is arrived at. The notions of historical fidelity and ecological integrity are filtered and examined by their ability to produce the end result. Even further, practices within the

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[90] Higgs, "Nature by Design," 206.
[91] Higgs, "Nature by Design," 207.
[92] Higgs, "Nature by Design," 207.
[93] Higgs, "Nature by Design," 207.

field, such as mitigation, are filtered down toward the intended end. Finally, the ends are arrived at, but the experience of the average person (identified as the user in the diagram) has little relationship or consideration of the means. It is the restoration of nature by any

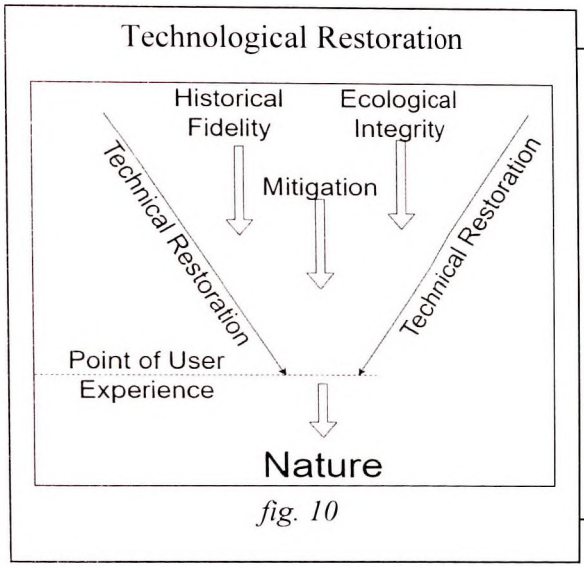

fig. 10

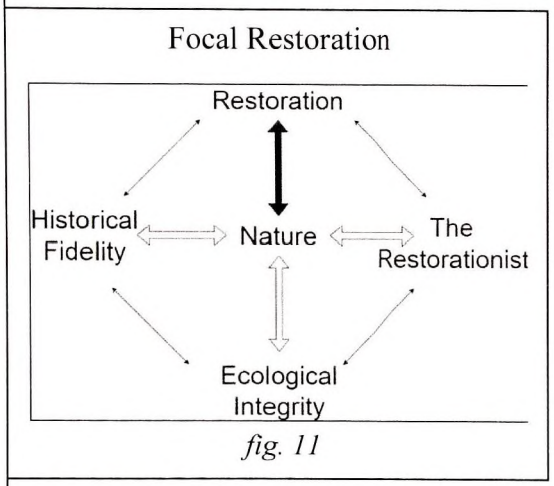

fig. 11

means necessary. In contrast, focal restoration (visualised in *fig. 11*) is represented in relation to nature.[94] Here the focal practice is undertaken in relation to nature and reflects a guarding model by emphasising this connection. Beyond this relationship, the elements such as ecological integrity, historical fidelity, and the restorationist themselves are connected to the process. As in all focal things and practices, the relatedness of each aspect to the focal thing of nature amplifies all other aspects.

Higgs' work offers a clear picture of how Borgmann's device paradigm, and focal

[94] Higgs' offers a similar diagram of ecological restoration in *Nature by Design*. His model is not intended to reflect the relationship between focal thing and focal practice as is being offered here and as such nature, as a focal thing, is missing from his diagram. This is intentional within the context that he is writing as he is trying to make a case for a specific kind of restoration and has chosen to model the relationship between various conceptions of ecological restoration. In this case, ecological restoration is at the centre with lines connecting four other factors: wild design, ecological integrity, historical fidelity, and focal practices. For Higgs, these become forces by which ecological restoration is shaped and, as such, ecological restoration should be understood by its relationship to each. Higgs' final model of ecological restoration seeks to present a version of restoration that includes each of these aspects. In this way, Higgs' conception of ecological restoration remains in the vein of Borgmann's assessment of focal things and practices as Higgs' final presentation of ecological restoration remains centred on the relatedness of ecological restoration to the context in which it happens.

things and practices can offer clarity to a practice. By examining the effect of the device paradigm on restoration Higgs can identify a critical distinction between technical restoration and focal restoration. He further can offer a meaningful critique of restoration that follows the device paradigm and give a corrective in dedication to restoration as a focal practice. His work will serve to guide the examination of the approach of the New Homiletic. A reflection on Higgs' application of Borgmann offers a few insights for the application of Borgmann to the field of preaching. Most notably, Higgs' work demonstrates how a practice that lacks the physical characteristics of a device can fall under the device paradigm. In Higgs' work, it is the manner in which the ends become the defining quality of the practice where the device paradigm is most clear. For restoration, this focus on the ends has fundamentally changed the outcomes and produced new ways of practising restoration, like mitigation, which conflict with the base intentions of the practice. Any exploration of preaching by way of Borgmann's device paradigm will need to consider the relationship between the means and the ends. If there is commodification in preaching the marker will be the relationship between the practice of preaching and its ends.

Higgs' work offers a second glimpse into what an application of Borgmann's focal things and practices looks like. The primary thing to notice is that focal things and practices create a framework by which Higgs examines, understands, and approaches the work of the restorationist. Higgs spends considerable time discussing the intentions of the restorationist and in so doing suggests that there are methods and techniques that are important to the task of restoration. However, these methods are put into perspective not simply as mere means towards mere ends but as an integral part of the whole practice.

His description of this integral relationship is akin to Strong's use of the term correlational. It is not enough to find effective methods and to apply them but instead they must be seen as integral and correlated to the whole practice. In this context, the methods and techniques of the restorationist are not chosen for their effectiveness or their efficiency but are chosen in relationship to the other aspects of restoration. Higgs' work establishes how Borgmann's focal things and practices can reframe the relationship between the means and ends of restoration. This dissertation intends to reframe the methods and techniques of contemporary preaching and to give context to them as part of a focal practice in relationship to a focal thing.

Conclusion

Returning now to homiletics, the overemphasis on methodology one finds in the New Homiletic is a direct by-product of the device paradigm. To borrow from Higgs, it is a move towards technological preaching, that is preaching in the pattern of a technological culture. It is akin to commodifying preaching, borrowing again from Higgs, a turn from the thing (God and his work of transformation) to the device (transformation by way of rhetorical technique). Similar to ecological restoration, viewed in light of the device paradigm, homiletics is at a crossroads of its own. One must choose between technological preaching and what one might term as focal preaching. Preaching conceived in this way draws attention to that which is already present in the transformative work of God and highlights the relationship between the practice of preaching and the work of God. The New Homiletic rightly examined the experience of the listener as important to preaching but wrongly located the significance of that

experience in the power of language to create authoritative experiences. Alternatively, preaching, conceived as a focal practice, reflects the guarding model of focal practice. The significance of the experience of preaching is external to the practice of preaching. That is to say that preaching is powerful and effective only in relation to the already effective power of God in whom the authority of preaching lies. That is to say, that method is an integral part of preaching and it cannot be isolated from its relationship to the theological nature of preaching. Further, the efforts of the preacher are integral to preaching and that effort cannot be isolated from God's role in preaching.

The following two chapters will expand on this initial analysis. Chapter three will return to the approach of the New Homiletic and, in light of the device paradigm, consider whether preaching has become commodified or has the potential to become commodified. Chapter four will examine more closely the implications of preaching as focal practice.

CHAPTER III

THE COMMODIFICATION OF PREACHING

The previous two chapters have been focused on description. The first offered a description of developments within the New Homiletic and focused primarily on an accounting of the shift in authority in preaching from the preacher to the listener. This focus on authority was demonstrated by exploring two major shifts in the form of preaching: narrative preaching and dialogical preaching. The second chapter offered a description of the work of Albert Borgmann, the device paradigm, and focal things and practices. Central to this description was the manner by which devices encourage the separation between the means and ends of a thing and fundamentally alter the nature of engagement with a thing or a practice. To counter this effect, Borgmann argues that people must make a definitive choice to give priority to focal things and practices in which the means and ends are related to each other. With these initial descriptions in mind, we will now turn to the matter of reflection on the two.

The argument being made in this and subsequent chapters is that preaching is not immune to the effects of the device paradigm. The vulnerability to the device paradigm is most apparent in the division between method and theology identified at the end of the first chapter. There it was argued that a reliance on method and human agency tends to overemphasise the human aspects of preaching while limiting the spiritual realities of preaching. A reliance on method to achieve the goals of preaching risks separating the

means of preaching from the ends of preaching. That is to say, that a focus on method can easily devolve into a discussion of the mechanics of preaching for the sake of gaining the commodities of preaching. It is critical that this overemphasis on method be corrected and balanced with a robust theology and by acknowledging the relationship between human and divine authority.

Of particular importance to this discussion is the issue of authority in preaching. The New Homiletic, broadly speaking, has begun an important work of considering the nature of authority and questioning the tradition of relying on the authority of the preacher as the means of affecting the listener. The movement from the authority of the preacher to the authority of the listener is a significant change in the structure of the preaching event. However, this change is largely accomplished by way of emphasising the power of human agency to enact the desired change. That is to say, the movement from the authority of the preacher to the authority of the listener emphasize the human aspects of preaching and further accomplishes this emphasis by way of the effective application of language, by method. As suggested above, this sort of approach is vulnerable to commodification.

All of this is made more complex by the necessary relationship between the work of the preacher and the work of God. That is to say, even though there is a potential pitfall in the reliance on method as effective means of preaching, a preacher is still responsible for creating a sermon. The very act of creating requires some form of method, and so it is critical to note that this dissertation does not wish to simply ignore the methods that have come from the New Homiletic or reject them outright. Instead, the argument laid out in these subsequent chapters is intended to offer a theological

foundation which will assist in balancing the relationship between method and theology, human agency and divine purposes. The goal of this dissertation is to offer a new conceptual framework for preaching that will help to orient the study and the practice of preaching within a culture shaped by the device paradigm. This framework will serve to help correct the overreliance on technique or method that stems from a culture shaped by the device paradigm.

James W. Thompson offers a similar argument in his work *Preaching Like Paul*. In the text he offers criticism of the New Homiletic and two connect directly to the criticism being explored in this chapter. First, he suggests "Homileticians have focused on technique to the neglect of a clear understanding of the aims of preaching."[1] Thompson is concerned that the act of preaching has taken on the quality of a serial television program where the story follows a formula and offers very little in terms of a grand narrative. For Thompson, giving each sermon a plot means that a sermon offers little in terms of a grand narrative. That is to say, each sermon becomes an isolated experience. He writes "We must look beyond the 'experience' of the sermon to ask the goals and strategies of the entire preaching ministry."[2] Much like the argument of this dissertation Thompson is suggesting that preaching in the context of the New Homiletic lacks a theological centre that understands and acts out of the theological purpose of the practice of preaching. For Thompson preaching lacks a suitable framework for the application of technique. Second, he argues that the New Homiletic "treats narrative as the primary, if not the only, mode of discourse for preaching."[3] In this case, Thompson is

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[1] Thompson, *Preaching like Paul*, 11.
[2] Thompson, *Preaching like Paul*, 11.
[3] Thomspon, *Preaching like Paul*, 11.

concerned that narrative becomes the normative approach to preaching at the exclusion of other genres. In doing so, the form of the sermon influences not only the outcomes of the sermon but also the outcomes of the preacher's hermeneutics. Thompson shares this concern with Charles C. Campbell who sees narrative as problematic particularly when applied to the life of Jesus.[4] Jesus' life, in Campbell's view, cannot be mined for key ideas or application theses.[5] Thompson's two positions give us a starting point for examining the relationship between techniques and preaching. Particularly, his suggestion that an overreliance on a particular method is both emblematic of the culture and problematic without a theological framework to guide the application of method. However, Thompson remains in the pure theological realm never fully addressing the particulars of a culture that encourages a reliance on technique. To take this issue further we can find insight in an application of Borgmann's device paradigm.

It is helpful to return to Borgmann's original critique of the device paradigm to consider how he addresses the potential for commodification in broader terms. Borgmann's critique of the device paradigm is not an effort to abolish technology and remove devices from daily life. Rather, his work is an effort to highlight the cumulative effect of orienting life around devices and bring to the surface the subversive manner in which the device paradigm has fundamentally changed how people engage with the world. In pursuit of a solution to the device paradigm, Borgmann writes "It must be a way of finding counterforces to technology that are guided by a clear and incisive view of technology and will therefore not be deflected or co-opted by technology. At the same time such counterforces must be able to respect the legitimacy of the promise and to

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[4] Campbell was one of the key authors used in David Lose's work.
[5] Campbell, *Preaching Jesus*, 241–9.

guard the indispensable and admirable accomplishments of technology."[6] In essence, Borgmann's approach to countering the device paradigm requires both a criticism of devices that understands the limitations and potential pitfalls of devices while also making room for the beneficial outcomes of technology. In his work, Borgmann does not simply identify the differences between the furnace and the fireplace and argue that all life should revert to the fireplace. Instead, he acknowledges the fundamental change in society through the example of the fireplace and the furnace and then turns to the question of ultimate concerns in focal things and practices as the counterforce to the device paradigm. Borgmann's resolution to the effect of the device paradigm is not the abandonment of all devices but instead to raise awareness of the cumulative effect of devices and to rely on engagement with focal things and practices to help reorient one's relationship to devices.[7]

Borgmann's approach to devices is equally important to the discussion of methodology found here. While this chapter will spend considerable time outlining the manner in which the effect of the device paradigm is felt in contemporary preaching, it is not meant to be a mere rejection of the methods that have been developed in the recent study of homiletics. Alternatively, the argument of this dissertation is a continuation the work that began in the New Homiletic, shifting authority from the preacher, by offering a

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[6] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 19, para. 23, location 3668.

[7] Borgmann comments on the importance of reforming technology within the context of the Christian faith. As the promise of technology, described in chapter II, aims to offer freedom and prosperity the gospel is challenged. He writes "The good news of the Gospels is directed toward oppressed and poor people, one might think, and when oppression and poverty have been lifted by technology, the good news becomes old . . . perhaps underneath the surface of technological liberty and prosperity there is a sense of captivity and deprivation, and we may hope that once we understand technology more incisively and clearly, there will be good news once again." (Borgmann, *Power Failure*, Introduction, para. 4, location 43) In this context, a clear understanding of technology allows for those of the Christian faith to work toward the redemption of technology. See Borgmann, *Power Failure*, Introduction, para. 7, location 56.

theological framework from which the various questions of method can be understood and applied. Similar to Borgmann, this dissertation is suggesting that the way forward is to acknowledge and consider the limitations of rhetorical devices and the study of methodological concerns while also recognising the accomplishments of the New Homiletic. It is a call for acknowledging the correlation between method and theology opposed to an overemphasis on one over the other. Following Borgmann's example this chapter will raise awareness of the cumulative effect of devices on contemporary preaching by exploring the potential pitfalls of relying on methodology and human agency as the primary means of preaching. Second, the remaining chapters will offer a framework of focal things and practices to help reorient the matters of methodology and human agency.

With this initial outline of the next few chapters in mind we can turn to the specifics of this chapter. The main goal of this chapter is to expand on the initial criticism of the New Homiletic offered in the first chapter by examining the approach of the New Homiletic through Borgmann's device paradigm. In order to do that we will take the features of Borgmann's device paradigm and establish how this understanding could be applied to various approaches within the New Homiletic. This task began in the previous chapter by identifying the contours of the device paradigm and by offering some tentative parallels between Borgmann's analysis and the approaches of the New Homiletic. This chapter will explore these connections further.

The first chapter of this dissertation focused on the issue of authority in preaching. It was suggested that this issue unites much of thinking in the New Homiletic. Notably, the New Homiletic began as a criticism of preaching that relied on the authority of the

preacher as the foundation of a sermon. Throughout the development of ideas in the New Homiletic there remained a focus on the authority of the listener suggesting that a listener's experience is authoritative and that a preacher could rely on the listener's experience as the authoritative foundation of a sermon. This was examined through two forms of preaching: narrative preaching and dialogical preaching. Within these methods, language serves to create a particular kind of experience for the listener and in so doing draws the authority of the listener to the surface of the preaching event. In this context, the issue of authority remains fixed on human authority in preaching and ultimately, relies on a sophisticated application of language as the means of preaching.

With this summary in mind, one can turn to the matter of how this reflects Borgmann's device paradigm. The main feature of the device paradigm is the manner in which devices separate means from ends. To identify the potential effect of the device paradigm on preaching it is necessary to consider how the means and ends of preaching have been separated in the forms of narrative preaching and dialogical preaching. The centre of this argument is the understanding established in the first chapter, that a shift in authority will achieve the intended goals of the preacher and that methodology is a way of achieving these outcomes. Building on that argument this chapter will argue that these solutions remain transfixed on the human aspects of preaching and do so at the risk of undermining the divine aspects of preaching and have the potential to commodify preaching. Further, a focus on method risks isolating and analysing the relationship between preacher and listener to such an extent that the preacher, the listener, and language become something of the machinery of preaching like in Borgmann's conception of devices. That is to say a better understanding of the preacher, the listener,

language, and how they interrelate, in the context of the device paradigm, is at risk of becoming the means to the intended ends of preaching.

The Two Fundamental Aspects of Preaching

To begin the discussion of how a reliance on human agency and methodology to achieve the goals of preaching is vulnerable to the effect of the device paradigm one must first establish some initial framing of the situation of preaching in general. For the analysis presented here, it is helpful to consider the preaching event in terms of two distinct aspects: the human aspect and the divine aspect. The former is a matter of the relationship between the preacher, the listener, and the sermon. The latter is what God is accomplishing in preaching and God's Word in Scripture. Between these two aspects there exists a line, a moment, and experience that somehow links human effort and to what God is doing through the practice of preaching. Although there is distinction between these two aspects there remains a connection between them. David Buttrick wrestles with the relationship between the human and divine aspects suggesting that preaching "is wised up with rhetorical strategy as it speaks to folk who may live in the center of language; it is poetic as it stretches ordinary conversation towards mysteries apprehended on the edges of language . . . The language of preaching is *a connotative language use with theological precision*."[8] Here he has established the human and divine aspects of preaching as specific from each other, as rhetorical and poetic, but they remain linked in the experience of preaching. What exactly is the nature of the relationship

[8] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 184

between human agency and divine power? To begin to explore how this question has been answered one must look closer at the divine and human aspects of preaching.

The Divine Aspects of Preaching

The divine aspects of preaching are best categorized under the broad term of what God is accomplishing through preaching. That is to say, that a listener engages in the practice of preaching and in that experience they encounter something of who God is and what he is doing. This experience is both mysterious and surprising. Craddock suggests it is "incredible that 'words' would be a means of God's giving."[9] Further still, it is difficult to offer with great precision a clear description of how God works through preaching. Buttrick describing preaching uses the phrase "dancing at the edge of mystery."[10] "Mystery" is a commonly used term in contemporary homiletics for those aspects which are rightly considered God's work that remain unaccounted for in the work of the preacher.[11]

With this understanding, one must acknowledge the limitations of preaching. A preacher is limited in that they cannot, regardless of effort, control or alter what God is accomplishing through preaching. This runs parallel to the issue of authority in preaching outlined in the first chapter. The preacher cannot be the foundation on which the preaching event hinges. Hence, the effort, found throughout the New Homiletic, to shift authority away from the preacher is a good and worthy cause. It is an effort to have the

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[9] Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 21.

[10] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 189.

[11] For instance, Eugene Lowry uses Buttrick's expression "dancing at the edge of mystery" as subtitle and motif for his book *The Sermon*. See other references to the mystery of preaching in Lose, *Preaching at the Crossroads*, 2–6. Wilson, *Preaching as Poetry*, 11.

preacher step away from the spotlight and allow the listener to encounter God without the preacher getting in the way.

It should be noted that the concern for the reliance on method offered by this chapter is not intended to suggest a failing to acknowledge God and his work. In fact, the methodological developments found throughout the New Homiletic are intended in service of God's purposes. The focus on methodology is a matter of achieving the goal of limiting the authority of the preacher over the listener in order to make space for an encounter with God. O. Wesley Allen Jr., describing the New Homiletic, explains "sermonic content is not propositional truth but a true, existential transformative experience of the good news."[12] In this context, the efforts of the preacher are aimed at the facilitation of this encounter not the creation of it. This distinction is a subtle but important change in homiletics. God remains at the forefront of the preaching event and the preacher is not the focus. However, an overemphasis on method risks dividing the human aspects of preaching from their relationship to the divine aspects.[13]

The Human Aspects of Preaching

There are three aspects which could be classified as part of the human, and therefore alterable, aspects of preaching.[14] Building off the model of simple communication offered by Buttrick, in his text *Homiletic*, communication is an interaction between a "Sender, Words, and a Receiver."[15] He writes "The sender translates some particular thought into a word code for transmission. The receiver, in turn, decodes the words and,

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[12] Allen Jr., O. Wesley, "The Pillars," 9.
[13] Even if these changes are directed at limiting the effect of the preacher.
[14] In that changes can be made by the preacher or the listener that impact these aspects.
[15] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 175.

thereby, reproduces the sender's original thought."[16] Extrapolating from this basic description, preaching, seen through the lens of communication, has three distinct elements which are the preacher, the listener, and language. It is here we arrive at an initial problem in understanding preaching by way of the interactions at a human level. If one focuses on purely the interaction between preacher and listener it is easy to ignore God's role in preaching. This is not what Buttrick is doing, as he is merely developing a starting place for the larger discussion of both human and divine aspects, but in offering this simple picture of communication he does give a sense of what the merely human aspects of preaching are in function. However, if a reliance on methodology is taken to the extreme, a methodological approach to preaching emphasises this model of communication. That is to say that method, as a function of the human aspects of preaching and isolated from its relationship to the divine, examines and takes control of the discrete elements of preaching. In this sort of approach, the preacher, the listener, and language, are treated like pieces of the complex mechanism of preaching, and as such, each piece can be shaped and altered to achieve a better form of preaching. Method, isolated from a proper theological foundation, can manufacture a particular experience for the preacher and the listener that produces the ends, the commodities, that are desired. It is this picture of a pure reliance on method that is alarming within the confines of the device paradigm. Despite effort to offer complex theological positions to justify or explain the purpose of methodology, the effect of the device paradigm can degrade the relationship between method and theology emphasising the abilities of method. In this context, the experience of preaching, which was suggested above to be a linking point

[16] Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 175.

between human and divine, becomes something of the ends of preaching and the preacher, the listener, and, most critically, language as the means of arriving at those ends. It is not to suggest that the proponents of New Homiletic have somehow fully embraced a methodological approach, as described in this paragraph, but instead we must be cautious, within the context of the device paradigm, to look beyond matters of human authority in order to emphasise God's authoritative action first. To explore this danger, one must look closer at the nature of authority in the approaches of the New Homiletic.

First, the experience of the listener is crucial to movement of the New Homiletic.[17] Questioning how authority functions in preaching is not simply as a matter of power and influence over the listener but it is a matter of how the listener experiences preaching. Is preaching dominating and intrusive with the preacher forcing a sermon's content on the listener or does it encourage cooperation and freethinking with the preacher in dialogue with the listener? The paralleled models of deductive and inductive were not merely about how an idea is developed but how an idea is experienced. Craddock writes "The place to begin is with the reader/listener experience. That is the alpha and omega of the whole effort."[18] The listener's experience of preaching, in Craddock's work, and ultimately throughout the New Homiletic, is given priority.[19] But what sort of experience is expected? Here, one returns to the divine aspects, briefly, because there is a relationship between the act of preaching and the work of God. There is a correlation between the effort of a preacher and the work of God. The correlation is the particular experience that is being offered by the preacher. The experience creates an

[17] A position found in Allen's article on the New Homiletic. Allen Jr., "The Pillars," 9.
[18] Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel*, 90.
[19] Though the nature of this experience is interpreted in various ways.

opportunity. Lowry, as mentioned before, identifies this work as "evocation."[20] The preacher works to evoke a particular kind of experience that creates an opportunity for God's work to happen. In this manner, the experience of preaching is the key to the human efforts of preaching, it is the goal, the intended ends of the work of the preacher.

The second of these human aspects is the preacher. As argued throughout the New Homiletic, the preacher, and their authority in preaching, is in need of a significant adjustment.[21] The image of a preacher standing at the pulpit barking orders under the mantle of God's Word is rejected by the proponents of the New Homiletic. It must be changed. In this manner, the preacher is given a new position, not as a dictator, but as a partner. Throughout the New Homiletic, there is a diverse understanding of who the preacher is and how they function but the issue of authority remains central. One's understanding of the role of the preacher and the function of the preacher can become a means of working toward the intended end of a particular experience even if these means aim at eliminating the significance of the preacher. This is demonstrated this most clearly in the treatment of the authority of the preacher. If the authority of the preacher creates an unfavourable experience, then it must be shifted, changed, or rejected outright. Isolating the preacher, in this fashion, allows one to alter their understanding of the role and function of the preacher. While this understanding leads to fruitful outcomes for homiletics it also risks treating the preacher, as an aspect of preaching, as a means to the hoped-for experience.

The third human aspect is the listener. The experience of preaching, described above, is focused on the listener. The preacher relies on the listener to become the

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[20] Lowry, *The Sermon*, 37.
[21] As suggested in chapter I.

authoritative voice in preaching. For this reason, the homiletics offers a wide range of cultural exegesis and study of the contemporary listener. A clear understanding of the listener allows the preacher to craft a sermon that draws on the listener's experiences, which uses images that connect with the listener, and is more pleasing to the listener. These potential benefits of understanding the listener are an argument for refining the art of sermon crafting. It allows the sermon to be crafted by way of the listener's authority. In this way, an understanding of the listener and the resulting implications for preaching can become a means to the goal of creating a particular experience of preaching.

Finally, language is a critical part of the human aspects of preaching. The discussion of the New Homiletic would be incomplete without a discussion of language. The preacher and the listener may be the intended targets of the analysis throughout New Homiletic, but it is in the details of an understanding of the preacher and the listener that one is led to the matter of the function of language in preaching. Again, from the outset, the entire discussion, in this chapter, has been about the methods, and, perhaps more specifically, the techniques by which a preacher can affect the listener to create a particular experience. While an understanding of the preacher and the listener can offer insights into preaching it is the effective power of language that makes the difference throughout the New Homiletic.[22] One must be careful that language does not become the critical power in preaching. If the preacher relies on language to make the difference, to enact the desired changes in the authority structure of preaching, then language can become the essential means of arriving at the intended experience.

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[22] Again, the specifics of how language functions is diverse but there is a common theme of understanding and applying language in a complex manner. This was discussed in chapter I and is also a position found in Allen, "The Pillars," 9.

These aspects have been examined to offer a description of the human aspects of preaching and how they exist in the preaching event. What is found in this approach is a potential to divide the human aspect of preaching into three distinct means toward one end. There is a criticism of the preacher as the primary voice of authority. There is a study of who the listener is and what they think, feel, and understand in order to rely on their authority. There is an application of language and how it can functionally change one's understanding of the world and experience therein. Each of these, by way of isolating them and refining them, can alter the end experience of preaching and as such are vulnerable to becoming the means to better preaching. This experience of preaching becomes the ends of the human aspect of preaching that connects the listener to the divine aspects of preaching, to the work of God and His Word. The effort of the preacher can work toward a particular experience which is controllable in a manner that the divine aspects of preaching are not.

Examining preaching by way of the two categories, the human and divine aspects, allows a distinction to be made on the way to identify the potential vulnerabilities of preaching to the device paradigm. This separation allows two important outcomes to become apparent. First, it reinforces the notion that the New Homiletic, and preaching in general, does not seek to manipulate or control the entire process of preaching but has an underlying appreciation for what the preacher cannot do by way of method. Second, this separation allows the discussion of methods offered throughout the New Homiletic to have an end, in Borgmann's sense of the word, that is not strictly the final ends of preaching. These final ends are rooted in the mysterious connection between the human effort and the divine manifestation, and as suggested, the preacher is not interested in

claiming the ability to control the divine. In this sense, the experience of preaching, which serves as a link to God's work and the final outcomes of preaching, can become an end of the efforts of the preacher. As such, these ends can be a targetable goal and can be arrived at by particular means.

The Means of Preaching

All of this hinges on the effort to examine the nature of human authority in preaching. It is important to note, that the authority described in the first chapter of this dissertation is entirely an examination of human authority. There is a shifting of this authority that is at the heart of the criticisms and changes offered throughout the New Homiletic. The discussion of human authority in preaching tends to divide practice of preaching in three subclasses: the authority of the preacher, the authority of the listener, and finally, the authority of language itself. Clearly, there is much to be gained from understanding these discrete aspects of preaching and their relationship to each other. However, in light of the device paradigm, consideration of these competing authorities risks commodifying preaching. That is to say, that shifting these authorities can become a means to arrive at the intended ends of preaching, mainly, a particular experience for the listener. However, any of these means seen as *the* authority in preaching risks distorting the preaching event because the ultimate authority, central to the entire process, is located in the divine aspects of preaching: God's work and Word. When we separate human authority from its relationship to divine authority we can easily lose sight of the necessary relationship between them. Before making a case for God's ultimate authority in the following

chapter, time will now be devoted to exploring the implications of the authority of the preacher, the listener, and language as the various means of preaching.

To begin, consider the authority of the preacher. By examining the authority of the preacher as a discrete aspect of the preaching event and working to alter, shift, or even replace this authority it is treated much like a part of the machinery of a device. In other words, preaching understood this way offers a version of the preacher who alters the way they present their authority. The result is an offering of an ideal form of the preacher that is assumedly more effective. In this understanding, it could be argued that the preacher and their authority become easily replaced by whatever form of the preacher is seen as most agreeable, excellent, or effective in a particular moment or context. The preacher, and their role in preaching can become a cog in the machine of preaching that can be refined or designed to fit what is perceived as the best form of the preacher. This design could be paralleled to Higgs' notion of a technological form of a practice. In this sense, the preacher's authority is shaped by a technically ideal form of the preacher.

The same case could be made for the authority of the listener with a slightly different outcome. The authority of the listener, in a traditional understanding of preaching, was given little consideration. In contrast, the approach of the New Homiletic seeks to bring this authority to the surface building sermons on the authority of the listener. The listener is reconceptualised to be in line with the vision of preaching where the authority of the listener is critical. The authority of the listener is amplified and emphasised. The conception of the listener's authority is altered to reflect this new focus. It is this conception that is, like the form of the preacher, open for refinement and design. A conception of the listener that emphasises the authority of the listener becomes the

ideal. The listener is further understood and the listener's authority is brought to the surface into a technically ideal conception of the listener.

Finally, there is a similar argument to be made for the effective use of language, of method, throughout the New Homiletic. However, unlike the form of the preacher or the conception of the listener, language is not merely recast, it serves a final means of achieving the intended presentation of the preacher and the listener. It is in the effective application of language, in an appeal to the authority of language, that the means of changing the relationship between the preacher, the listener, and the act of preaching come to fruition. As a result, it would be fair to say that while the form of the preacher and the conception of the listener are means of rethinking preaching it is in the effective application of language where the tangible means of shaping preaching are clearest. In this sense, the ideal method of preaching becomes central to achieving the goals of the preacher. In this context, method functions primarily as a means of producing the expected ends and this method is consistently refined, as evidenced by the myriad of forms of the sermon in contemporary homiletics. Borrowing again from Higgs, a technically proficient method can become the norm of this approach as the means of effective preaching.

With these initial descriptions of the ideal form of the preacher, the ideal conception of the listener, and the use of language as the means of preaching, it helps to examine how they are reflected throughout more specifically in the models of preaching found in the New Homiletic. To that end, this dissertation will now examine how each function within the within the methods examined in the first chapter: narrative preaching and dialogical preaching. For each, there will be presented an ideal form of the preacher,

an ideal conception of the listener, and a demonstration of how an understanding of language and effective application of language is the means of recreating both the preacher and the listener, and arriving at the intended experience.

Following this description, some examples of how these goals are accomplished through methodology or rhetoric are offered. These examples are not meant to completely dismiss the particular approach or author. They are merely being presented as examples of how methodology can be used to achieve the methodological ends that are desired by the preacher. Much like Borgmann, it is not that any one particular author or rhetorical tool is fundamentally flawed because of the use of techniques as part of preaching. Alternatively, the concern is that emphasis on rhetorical technique cumulatively influences preaching to increasingly reflect the device paradigm. What is being offered in these examples is not intended to disregard these good intentions. However, if the effect of the device paradigm is not acknowledged and addressed it is possible that the theological reasoning behind the techniques offered here will become irrelevant because the techniques offer the ends desired. All of this to suggest, that the following presentation of the means of preaching in narrative and dialogical preaching is an effort to identify what happens when the preacher, the listener, and language become the means of achieving preaching ends isolated from divine authority.

The Means of Preaching: Narrative Preaching

The ideal form of the preacher in narrative preaching is to see the preacher as a storyteller. The storyteller role is not strictly about creating a story as much as it is directed at guiding the protagonist through conflict toward resolution. The listener, in this

framework, is reshaped as the protagonist. The story being told, the path on which the preacher is developing a particular idea, is meant to prod the listener toward the endpoint. The narrative exists for the protagonist, and by way of the plot the protagonist will be challenged and changed. Thus, the storyteller moves the protagonist to the intended end of preaching. This movement is achieved by the effective use of language. In this sense, language becomes the means of movement. There are a number of ways that the effective use of language can function as the means by which the preacher moves the listener.

The first example of this is the use of tension. Tension is a technique by which the preacher arrests the attention of the listener by drawing conflicts to the surface. This use of tension takes place at the outset of the sermon. For instance, in the Lowry Loop, the first step is "upsetting the equilibrium."[23] This step is an example of using tension as a means of altering the listener's experience. Tension becomes the precursor to the resolution of that tension, and both the creation of this tension and the resolution are controlled by the preacher's effective application of language. The release of tension, which brings about the experience that is the desired outcome of the sermon is at the core of Lowry's method. Lowry explains:

> The purpose of the opening stage of the presented sermon is to trigger ambiguity in the listeners' minds. Such an ambiguity is not known simply as an intellectual matter; it is a mental ambiguity which is existentially felt. It becomes a part of their existence at that moment in time, and hence when it is resolved and the gospel proclaimed, the good news is not just something one now knows propositionally, but something one now experiences.[24]

Notice that resolution of tension and the presentation of the gospel are paralleled in the listener's experience. The gospel is felt, not necessarily because of an experience of the

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[23] Lowry, *The Homiletic Plot*, 28–35.
[24] Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 33.

gospel, but by the experience of resolving a tension that has been drawn to the surface by the preacher's effective use of language to create tension.[25] It is possible to see the power of tension as the effective tool to create a felt experience that is not the same as a genuine experience of the gospel.[26]

The second example of how language is used to move the listener is the use of storied images or analogy. In narrative preaching, the images can become simply a means of drawing something to the surface from within the listener. They are chosen, not for their truth,[27] but for their ability to create a particular kind of experience. Craddock writes of this ability suggesting "There are no strict rules to guide the preacher in the choice of analogy from the viewpoint of logic; he will be guided by the nature of the experience he wishes to provide as well as by the destination he has in view."[28] In this sense, analogy is a technique by which the preacher can create a particular experience or guide a listener toward a particular end. Analogy, as a means of better preaching, further has very few limitations. The questions of an appropriate analogy are governed not by a connection between preacher and listener but by the ends, the intended experience. The analogies employed by the preacher can be anything as long as they serve the purpose of moving the listener to the intended end.

Another way to classify these analogies is to consider them as common experiences shared by the average listener. This is to draw on the listener's experience

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[25] The gospel may be used to resolve that tension but even if it is, it is possible that the gospel itself becomes a means to arriving at the preacher's intended end.

[26] In the case of Lowry's use of tension, tension is seen as a natural part of preaching. "The homiletical view expressed in this writing assume that ambiguity and its resolution is the basic form-ingredient to any sermon, whether life-situational, expository, doctrinal, etc. in content." Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot*, 31.

[27] Though they are truthful or capture a true experience.

[28] Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 49.

outside of the sermon to create an experience within the sermon. This point is evident when David Buttrick breaks down the relationship between the content of the sermon and the use of a listener's life experience. He writes "Every move has a shape, an internal design. The shape of a move is determined in an interaction of (1) theological understanding, (2) an eye for oppositions, and (3) actualities of lived experience. Gradually, as we think out a move, we will determine a strategy of presentation, a rhetorical strategy."[29] In this analysis, Buttrick offers a sense of what is proposed in the use of life experience. The preacher can create movement through the use of a rhetorical strategy that draws on lived experiences. Theological understanding is arrived at through the lens of lived experiences as they conflict or align with each other. Thus, a preacher can move the listener from general experience to theological understanding. In this sense, life experience is employed as a rhetorical technique to shape the listener's experience in the sermon.[30]

These are two examples of how language can be used to move the listener. They demonstrate the level of control a preacher has when they focus on the effective use of language as a means of creating the experience. The preacher, working as a clever storyteller, uses language to shape the narrative, and equipped with an understanding of how a story can move a listener, such as in the use of tension or analogy, the preacher becomes a more effective preacher. Further, the listener, at the centre of the narrative, crafted specifically for them, can be led, as the protagonist, through the path laid out for them. The listener can feel the tensions and connect with the analogies not simply

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[29] Buttrick, *Homiletics*, 33.

[30] It has been noted above that Buttrick's view limits the abilities of rhetorical strategy, like analogy, to finish the work of God

because they exist but, because of the effective use of language, they have been perfectly created for the listener to experience. Language, in narrative, can become the means of creating a particular experience, of creating movement, and as a result become the means of effective preaching.

The Means of Preaching: Preaching as Dialogue

Dialogical preaching has a different sort of relationship between preacher and listener. The ideal form of the preacher is that of a dialogue partner, and similarly, the listener is also conceived as a dialogue partner. However, these roles have different outcomes for both the preacher and the listener. To cast the preacher as a dialogue partner is to level the playing field. Partnership implies that the effort is undertaken not by way of one person and their authority but by the sum of the whole. Even further, in dialogical preaching, the partnership extends past the relationship between preacher and listener to include culture, history, tradition, and a wide range of voices that are given a hearing in the dialogue. To cast the listener as a dialogue partner invites them to participate and see their role not as passive but as active. The listener can judge, reflect, and even speak to their own experiences. That being said, outside of a literal dialogue, dialogical preaching requires a particular type of speaking, one where the primary voice speaks not just for their personal position but also reflects on the position of other voices. To accomplish this language is effectively employed to simulate or create the sense of dialogue. In this manner, language becomes the means of creating the dialogue between listener and preacher. To illustrate this a few examples will be examined below.

The first example of this is the inclusion of conflicting voices. The use of conflicting voices is a technique by which the preacher presents multiple views on a subject to eventually arrive at the particular view they have chosen to present as preferred. The work of examining alternative approaches is used to draw in the listener as a thinking conversation partner and to set up these opposing views as less significant than the final view. The conversational approaches of Ronald J. Allen and O. Wesley Allen Jr. are an excellent example of using conflicting voices as a technique. In their book *The Sermon Without End*, Allen and Allen Jr. present a method of preaching in which "a single sermon can articulate a range of important ideas in the conversation while commending a particular perspective."[31] While the conversation between conflicting ideas is handled with respect and appreciation of diverse opinions, this very diversity is a means of arriving at the perspective of the preacher. While there is freedom for the listener to choose an alternative perspective to that of the preacher that choice is heavily influenced by the preacher's choice of structure to direct the conversation toward their conclusion. In this manner, conflicting voices can be used as a means of directing the listener toward a particular experience and become the means of effective preaching.[32]

The second example is offering of tentative conclusions. As discussed in the first chapter, the conversational approach of Allen and Allen Jr. relies on the technique of developing tentative conclusions. Here, the sermon is changed by merely altering the force, or tone, of the conclusions of a sermon. In a traditional sermon, the key concepts of

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[31] Allen and Allen Jr., *The Sermon Without End*, chapter 4, para. 25, location 2290.

[32] Again, seeing Allen and Allen Jr.'s views only for their effectiveness ignores the theological foundation from which they work. For Allen and Allen Jr., this framing of dialogues is consistent with the theological function of preaching. In that these dialogues are critical for the expansion of the understanding and faith of the community. The preacher is merely operating with the confines of their form to offers a complete view of the subject not simply manipulating the audience.

a sermon were presented as plain truth from the outset and examined, for their truth, by exploring the implications of that truth. In narrative preaching, the idea is developed slowly and arrived at in time. In a conversational approach, the idea is developed slowly, in dialogue with a range of material, but is presented with a different tone. It is not a tone of arrogant certainty but a tone of simple offerings. Tone is the technique that guides the conversational approach's suggestion of offering tentative conclusions. Their reasoning for this tentative tone is that it is a more favourable experience to the postmodern pluralist listener. Even more so, the tone of tentative conclusions casts the preacher as a partner on the road of discovery and welcomes the listener on that journey as well. In this sense, tone, as a technique, becomes a means of creating a dialogue between preacher and listener and becomes a means to the intended experience of preaching.

These two examples are subtle ways that the effective use of language can alter the experience of preaching. As dialogue partners, the preacher and the listener are meant to be understood as equals, but the dialogue itself remains in the hands of the preacher and functionally remains a monologue. Language can be used to conceal the monologue or at the very least recast the monologue as a part of a larger conversation wherein the sermon is mediating differing views and merely offering tentative conclusions. These two shifts in preaching change the experience of preaching, and as a result language can become the means of effecting this change. In this manner, language becomes the means of effective preaching.

In each of the sections above, the preacher, the listener, and the effective use of language are changed in some manner. The preacher is cast into a new form, one that is understood to be less authoritative, the listener is reconceptualised as having their own

authority, and language serves as the means of making these changes real within the context of a sermon. Each serves one particular end: creating an experience for the listener. In this way, there is a division of means and ends much like in Borgmann's description of a device. The preacher, the listener, and the use of language can change, however necessary, as long as they do so in service of the end goal, the experience of the listener. Preaching that is approached in this manner is technological preaching in its full form.

Again, the analysis above when broken into specific outcomes, such as the examples used in each case, does not necessarily set off warning signals for contemporary preaching. Each of the changes outlined are generally accepted as good, and when viewed individually these changes do not warrant a heavy criticism. However, as is the case with Borgmann's study of the device, the concern is not with the individual changes, but the concern comes from the effect of numerous changes on a thing or practice. In light of this, it is necessary to ask if an appeal to the authority of language, as is found throughout the New Homiletic, is at risk at reflecting the device paradigm by separating the means of preaching from the intended ends and what effect would that separation have on the practice of preaching as a whole? The answer, which will now be explored, is that preaching becomes commodified and a hyperreal experience.

Preaching Commodified

Again, commodification is the process by which a thing or practice takes on the characteristics of a device becoming more like a device. For a practice, such as ecological restoration or preaching, this entails the reorientation of its focus and purpose. In the

example of ecological restoration, developed at the end of the last chapter, the relationship between nature and the work of restoration has dissolved as restoration has become focused primarily on technique and on the development of means to arrive at intended ends. In this technical restoration, values such as efficiency, effectiveness, and convenience are considered over the relationship between restoration and nature. While the resulting techniques may be beneficial to the practice of restoration and to nature itself, they exist to further the practice without necessarily considering the relationship between the practice and its relative focal thing. The goal is improving the practice by any means necessary, and means are considered beneficial even if they fail to adequately help the effort to restore nature, such as restoration by way of mitigation.

In focusing primarily on the experience of the listener and appealing to the authority of language to create that experience, there is a reliance on method to be the means of effective preaching over and above all other aspects. For example, Craddock's work in *Overhearing the Gospel* laid out clearly that what matters in terms of the effort of the preacher is to affect the experience of the listener. "Once we have grasped something the of listener's experience, we will then proceed to talk of ways the teacher/preacher can work to effect that experience."[33] While there remains respect for the divine aspects of preaching they are approached primarily through the effective use of the sermon to create an opportunity for the divine aspects to manifest. This view of preaching is a false conception of the preaching event. It isolates preaching into its component parts and seeks to control as many of these components as possible to create the desired effect. It encourages a belief that the quality of the sermon is directly related to the spiritual

[33] Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel*, 90.

potential in preaching. It presupposes that a right hearing or an excellent experience of the sermon is necessary for God to act within the preaching event.

To explore this it is helpful to return to the diagram of a device offered in the previous chapter to make clear what is being argued here. Again, in the diagram devices function as a funnel. The means are accumulated within the device in order to arrive at the intended ends. The experience for the user is located at the fine point of the funnel of

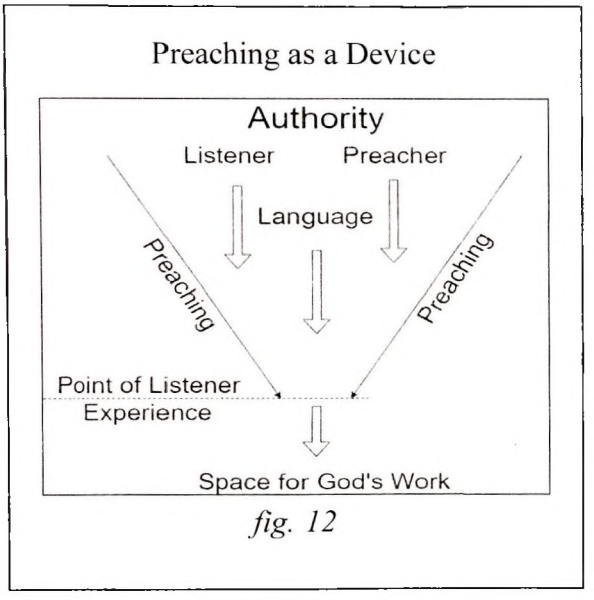

fig. 12

the device, and therein the user gains access to the ends. *Fig.* illustrates the potential problem with emphasizing the human aspects of preaching and the risks involved in focusing on methodology. Here, preaching functions like a device, funnelling all the understanding of listener, the preacher, language, and their relationship to each other down into the experience for the listener wherein they can encounter God. Again, much like the machinery in Borgmann's description of devices, the preacher, the listener, and language become replaceable parts of the whole. That is to say, that each of these aspects are adaptable for greater effect and so one's approach to the role of the preacher, such as an authoritative approach, is replaced by another, such as a dialogical approach. If

methodology is emphasized apart from the divine it becomes a precursor to God's work in preaching and as such becomes the focus of the practice of preaching. Altogether, the prevailing implication is that without the experience created by preaching God's work may never happen.

A focus on listener experience has the potential to orient the practice of preaching away from its relationship to God's work and toward preaching as its own end.[34] Following the presumption that the sermon, through the use of technique and rhetorical form, is effective in creating a profound experience, it is entirely possible to craft a sermon that elicits an experience in the listener that instigates the changes desired and does so without the need for God or his power to be present. In this sense, the practice of preaching, by way of appealing to the authority of language, is at risk of becoming its own end separate from the purposes of God. In this sense, it becomes a hyperreal experience.

Technical Preaching: A Hyperreal Experience

Technical preaching offers a form of preaching that is a hyperreal experience in that it aims at creating, by way of language, the perfect experience for the listener. Reusing Borgmann's conception of the hyperreal: the experience of preaching is glamorous. For something to be glamorous, as Borgmann uses the term, it must be brilliant, rich, and pliable.[35] Technical preaching is brilliant in that it keeps the ideal experience at the forefront and eliminates all inhibiting factors. Since, the authority of the preacher has

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[34] The same is true of an approach to preaching that is focused on the authority of the preacher as in both cases preaching remains focused on human agency.

[35] This was explained in greater detail in chapter two.

been identified as an inhibiting factor in contemporary preaching effort has been made to relocate this authority in order to eliminate it as a hinderence to the act of preaching. Even still, the authority of the preacher remains a part of the process of preaching and the preacher can effectively use method to limit the role of their authority which is not felt and is obscured. In this approach, language is used as a means of hiding or obfuscating the authority of the preacher. In this manner, this approach aims at being brilliant, much like a hyperreal experience, in that it manages the listener's experience by excluding the authority of preacher.[36]

Further, the experience of the listener is a rich and pliable experience in two senses. First, methodology is flexible and easily altered to cater to the specific desires of listeners. In this sense, a preacher is dependent on the listener for cues as to the effectiveness of their sermon. A failure to live up to the listener's expectation may lead the preacher to reconsider method by altering their style, by tweaking their vocabulary, or by employing compelling stories. In this sense, the preacher can offer an experience that reflects the desires of the listener, and as a result, the experience of preaching is rich and is pliable.

The second way preaching is becoming rich and pliable is a result of the availability of preaching and a resulting change in the expectations of preaching. Contemporary preaching is available to the listener in more diverse forms, from more sources, and from a wider range than ever before. The rise of the podcasts gives the

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[36] This criticism is not exclusive to the approaches found in the New Homiletic. Any model of preaching that relies primarily on human agency is susceptible to the creation of brilliant experiences. For instance, consider forms of preaching, such as propositional preaching, that relied on the authority of the preacher to be sufficient for the listener to be swayed by their preaching. This sort of authority structure has less effect in contemporary preaching but at the time applying institutional authority in this manner was an effective means of creating an experience that would have been desirable to the listener.

community of faith has access to more high quality preaching than in any point in history.[37] As a result, one listener can fill their week with any number of preachers and an unending supply of sermons. This accessibility means that the best preaching in the world is no longer a matter of geography. In this context, a listener is spoiled for choice. If one sermon fails to live up to expectations or a preacher is not very good, a listener can simply press pause. A direct consequence of the mass availability of preaching alters the relationship between the listener and preaching itself. This availability raises the general expectations for what excellent preaching is and puts significant pressure on the average preacher to perform on par with the most able of preachers. The practice of engaging with preaching, by way of sheer availability, becomes rich and pliable for the listener. In other words, if the experience of preaching is lacking at one church a more glamorous and appealing form can be found elsewhere or online. The choice between preachers becomes a choice between the best experience and if a particular experience fails to live up to expectations then it can be replaced. In this way, preaching can be rich and pliable.

Here, one begins to find some troubling implications for preaching that is a hyperreal experience, one that is glamorous. What happens when the glamour fades? As suggested by Borgmann, a hyperreal experience is limited. It cannot, on its own, sustain the glamour that makes it attractive. The same is true of preaching when it functions as a hyperreal experience, as an end unto itself. Eventually, the glamour of a particular

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[37] The Barna research group has studied some of the developing habits of contemporary Christians in terms of digital sermons. "The study found that 38% of evangelicals and 31% of other born again Christians had listened to a sermon or church teaching via digital recordings available on the Internet (often called a "podcast"), compared with 17% of other adults. In macro-terms, an enormous audience of roughly 45 million Americans reports going digital to acquire church sermon and teaching content." This was a decade ago and with the development of new technologies one can only imagine that these statistics have at the very least stayed level but more than likely they have grown. See "Barna Technology Study: Social Networking, Online Entertainment and Church Podcasts" [n.d.]

experience of preaching fades when it is sustained primarily by an appeal to the effectiveness of language or on human agency alone. The resulting options are two-fold: first, in the short term, effort can be made to sustain the experience by way of the continual reshaping of the means of preaching. Second, when these experiences cannot continue to be sustained, there will be an effort to find a different source of these experiences that do not require the same effort. These two consequences of preaching that is commodified and built on a hyperreal experience will be examined below.

Consequences of Technical Preaching

The first of these outcomes is an unending effort to sustain the glamorous appeal of technical preaching and to maintain the illusion of a hyperreal experience. In technical preaching there is an alignment between what is desired of preaching and what is given. That is to say, that because of the efforts to focus on the listener's experience the resulting insights into contemporary preaching reflect first the desires of the listener. It should not then be a surprise that the approach to preaching that meets the desires of listeners shaped by devices is a reflection of devices. However, conflict arises when the desires of a technologically minded culture conflict with the intentions of preaching as a spiritual practice.

Perhaps another way to describe this issue is to return to Borgmann's main point that devices encourage a severing of means and ends. When a practice like preaching is focused on the ends, the means are only worthy if they produce the expected end. If, as suggested above, the human aspects of preaching are separated into the means of preaching which serve an intended experience then eventually these means may, in

isolation from the intended end and the divine aspects of preaching, take shapes that conflict with the spiritual, divine, or even holy nature of preaching. In this sense, it is possible that a pursuit of the most excellent means of creating a particular experience, and the separation of means from ends in preaching, could result in a form of preaching that conflicts with the work of God.

The second critical outcome of creating a hyperreal experience in preaching is that it cannot last. Essentially, given time, it may be decided, in line with the device paradigm, that the effort to sustain the glamour of preaching may not be the most effective way of arriving at the intended ends. One of the core implications of technological thinking is a desire to arrive at a particular end with little burden. As part of their evolving nature, devices can become obsolete when a better means of arriving at the ends is found, or the promises of a particular device cannot be sustained. This obsolescence has been seen throughout development in the technological age as horse and buggies are replaced by cars, mp3 players are replaced by cell phones, and any number of devices are replaced by more capable products that provide the same results with greater effectiveness, convenience, and reliability. While homiletics will likely continue to encourage a commitment to preaching there is a danger in relying on human agency to create a profound experience. Ultimately, it may be found that alternative experiences, which either reflect the desires of contemporary Christians or more consistently give access to an experience of God's work, will be found more appealing than preaching. The beginnings of this kind of thinking are already coming to the surface in the work of Doug Pagitt. His argument is on the verge of becoming a proposal for the elimination of the practice of preaching in favour of a something that resembles a small

group discussion or Bible study.[38] After all, if preaching is a functional dialogue, as it is presented in Pagitt's work, then the aspects of preaching, such as preacher and listener, slip away and preaching is arguably not strictly preaching anymore. This elimination of traditional preaching structures may be a good thing, but it assumes that the outcomes of preaching can be recreated, or found fuller, in other forms of practice. Following this sort of thinking, it may be that without meaningful consideration of preaching as a whole, not split into means and ends, preaching will be found lacking and be replaced by a more effective practice.

A Relationship between Human and Divine Elements of Preaching

Homiletics has already begun to identify some of the fundamental problems of isolating the methodological concerns of preaching from the theological aims of preaching. At the outset of this chapter we explored James W. Thompson's critique of the New Homiletic's overreliance on particular methods. His solution was to clarify the theological aims of preaching. He is not alone in this approach. As we move toward concluding this chapter it is helpful to explore two authors who have been exploring the needed balance between the theological and methodological: Paul Scott Wilson and Kenton C. Anderson.

First, Wilson has already been discussed at some length in the previous chapter but his views of the relationship between method and theology, between divine and human effort, have been further explored in his more recent work. Notably, his book *Preaching as Poetry* begins with an emphasis on the shift in focus from human to divine authority. He writes:

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[38] Pagitt, *Preaching in the Inventive Age*, 18.

> We have the opportunity to reexamine how preaching might better meet the vertical, horizontal, and multidirectional needs of this changed world. Preaching needs to be artistic, creative, authentic, apologetic, and contextual, to find ways to speak to a culture whose basic values have changed, and to find fresh ways to speak of God.[39]

Here, there is a shared desire to look beyond the human aspects of preaching; to move beyond method. In offering a new vision for preaching, Wilson is considering not only the horizontal relationship between the human agents of preacher and congregation but is further concerned with the vertical relationship between God and the community of faith.

With this foundation, Wilson develops his conception of theopoetic preaching. Theopoetic preaching is "preaching that speaks of God in poetic ways. This is not preaching poems; it is poetic preaching that treasures language–with all of its frails images, symbols, and metaphors–to communicate God."[40] Wilson offers poetic speaking as a way of describing God. Wilson emphasises both the power of language and the frailty of it. Central to Wilson's proposal is a return to language as a descriptive force that can illuminate the present situation. Wilson's description of preaching as poetic is an appealing description of preaching. The preacher is not arguing or persuading but is doing something akin to painting, singing, and dancing. These acts of creation do not claim authoritative truth but offer insights toward understanding. These acts are experiences that shape and prod the community of faith toward God. Wilson writes:

> Poetry is a way of pointing to God in the world, of praising God's beauty and love, and finding both mystery and ongoing purpose and meaning, often in the midst of suffering. Poetry here refers to the capacity of the sermon to "put a frame around the mystery," as Frederick Buechner once described preaching, or to awaken a sense of wonder, as Thomas Troegger says. Poetry refers to the sermon's ability to take the fragmented nature of daily life and offer in and through it glimpses of a coherent and meaningful whole and, even more, the hand

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[39] Wilson, *Preaching as Poetry*, Introduction, para. 1, location 99.
[40] Wilson, *Preaching as Poetry* Introduction, para. 10, location 161.

of a loving God.[41]

In this description, Wilson is attempting to balance the actions of the preacher and the community of faith with the person and power of God.

Another voice attempting to strive for a balance in preaching and understanding preaching as a whole is Kenton C. Anderson. He develops an integrative model of preaching in his text *Integrative Preaching*. He argues that preaching is a task of both listening and leadership. The congregation listens for God's words, and the preacher is responsible for leading the listening. It is important for Anderson that the actions of listening to God and leading are integrated with each other. One's ability to preaching, or to lead the congregation through preaching, cannot be separated from the act of listening. He writes "The integrative model of preaching laying across two axes, the horizontal and the vertical, in a kind of map of the homiletic landscape. The horizontal (physical) axis overlays the vertical (spiritual) axis in the shape of the cross. As the sermon moves, it works by centripetal force to draw everything toward the center point. Head integrates with heart, and heaven comes in contact with the human."[42] For Anderson, it is essential that preachers stop looking at the act of preaching in terms of how the head and the heart or the heavenly and the human are separate from each other but instead the preacher must understand their work in the balance of these elements at the point where they meet and are seen as integral parts of the whole.

The dividing line between methodology and theology is problematic for both Anderson and Wilson. In both cases, there is an effort to balance and seek a critical relationship between the two categories. In line with these efforts, the criticisms of this

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[41] Wilson, *Preaching as Poetry*, chapter 1, para. 10, location 274.
[42] Anderson, *Integrative Preaching*, 2.

chapter have been directed at describing what happens when one over emphasises method. There is a chance, given the cultural context described by Borgmann, that with consideration a preacher may choose to overemphasise method. Borgmann's description comes with a corrective to the pattern of devices which will help the effort to correct the potential outcomes of relying on method as the primary means of preaching.

What about the Preacher?

The argument outlined in this chapter is a description of potential. Taking cues from Borgmann's device paradigm, it has been suggested that the approaches of the New Homiletic are vulnerable to the force of the effect of devices and the effort to examine the nature of authority in preaching comes dangerously close to commodifying preaching by relying primarily on the effectiveness of language. An over emphasis on the ability of language to create the ends of preaching results in a distortion of the practice of preaching. It takes the practice and isolates method and theology from each other and turns a correlational practice into a device: a means to an end. If the focus of homiletics and the work of the preacher remain fixed on the preacher's ability to change the listener, it is very likely, in a culture shaped by devices, that preaching will continue to reflect the values and strategies of a device oriented culture. That is to say, that the relationships between preacher, listener, and language will be increasingly isolated from each other, considered mainly for their ability to create an intended end and preaching will become a device. While we may gain much from understanding these components we must be careful to understand them first as correlated to the whole.

As suggested at the outset of this chapter, it is necessary to reorient the discussion of method within the proper theological framework. The primary concern of this chapter is not the elimination of methodology or to reject the movement started in the New Homiletic but, following Borgmann's lead, to identify the vulnerability of preaching to the effect of devices. The efforts of this chapter, and the whole project, are aimed at correcting a potential imbalance that stems from an approach to preaching that emphasises method and a culture that encourages consumption over engagement. In this context, it would be easy for preaching to become about how it is consumed but this would be a flawed approach. Methodology has its place in preaching and should be explored and understood but it cannot be relied on as the effective agent of the preaching event. The same is true for the role of the preacher and the role of the listener. Both of these aspects play a part in the preaching event but neither is the foundation on which preaching should be understood. All of these aspects are part of the preaching event but must be understood in relationship to the divine workings of preaching. They are correlational aspects of the preaching event and any in isolation is found to be lacking.

Borgmann's notion of focal things and practices will be used as the conceptual framework for preaching to achieve this balance. Preaching is best understood as a focal practice in relation to a focal thing: God. In this framework, the matters of the preacher, the listener, and notably the use of language remain important but not as the effective means of preaching but instead as interrelated aspects of the practice of preaching in relationship to the work of God. To put this another way, if preaching is understood as a focal practice the matters of language, of method, of rhetoric become not simply the means to an end but exist in relationship with the work of God as he inspires, instigates,

and affirms the practice of preaching. This framework fundamentally changes the relationship between the work of the preacher and the work of God by acknowledging the dependent nature of the preacher's work on what God has already achieved, what God is presently doing, and what God will do. This framework and its implication will be the focus of the following chapters.

Conclusion

The subversive effect of devices on society is by its very nature difficult to track. This chapter attempts to identify places where the approach of a device oriented culture is apparent in homiletics. This criticism not of the particular rhetorical devices or strategies of a particular author or a style of preaching. Rather, the concern is for the cumulative long-term effect of relying on the authority or effectiveness of language to achieve the goals of preaching. This emphasis on method must be corrected or at least balanced with a theological framework that reorders the relationship between method and theology and humanity and the divine as correlational aspects of preaching. The following chapter will present preaching as a focal practice in which the authority is located not in the practice itself. As a focal practice, preaching reflects Hayworth's guarding model of practice wherein the focal practice exists and is empowered by already existing focal thing. The focal thing that grants authority to the practice of preaching is God and His work. Essentially, much like in the image of a thing, the human authorities of preacher, listener, and language, are significant only in a relationship with the authority of God. They are significant and important to the practice but exist not as discrete aspects but as related aspects of the larger practice. The authority of God is central to the entire practice as it is

before the preaching event, during the event, and after the preaching event as the force of power within preaching. All other aspects, preacher, listener, language, and experience, are amplified in relationship to the authority of God's power in preaching, and as such, they fall under that relationship first and can only be fully understood in the context of that relationship. This argument is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

PREACHING AS FOCAL PRACTICE

Before embarking on a discussion of the pulpit let us turn briefly to the monastery, more specifically, to the published journal of Henri Nouwen. *The Genesee Diary* is a series of entries written when Nouwen spent seven months living in community at a Trappist Monastery. Throughout the text, Nouwen is challenged by the life style within the monastery and offers a wide range of reflections on both the nature of monastic life and the spiritual life in general. Having offered these insights, the published form of the journal ends with a brief retrospective. It is here where Nouwen outlines a critical idea about spiritual practices that speaks directly to the issues of this dissertation. He writes:

> Perhaps the greatest and most hidden illusion of all had been that after seven months of Trappist life I would be a different person, more integrated, more spiritual, more virtuous, more compassionate, more gentle, more joyful, and more understanding. Somehow I had expected that my restlessness would turn into quietude, my tensions into a peaceful life-style, and my many ambiguities and ambivalences into a single-minded commitment to God. None of these successes, results, or achievements have come about. If I were to ask about my seven months at the Abbey, "Did it work, did I solve my problems?" the simple answer would be, "It did not work, it did not solve my problems." And I know that a year, two years, or even a lifetime as a Trappist monk would not have "worked" either. Because a monastery is not built to solve problems but to praise the Lord in the midst of them. I had known this all along, but still I had to return to my old busy life and be confronted with my own restless self to believe it.[1]

Nouwen confesses here that his hopes for his monastic experience were high and that he had equated the monastic life with a level of spiritual maturity that went beyond his

[1] Nouwen, *The Genesee Diary*, 217.

personal experience. This confession is critical because, like many who reach for his journal, there is a hope that within the walls of a monastery, or in the journal of a spiritually wise individual, that one could unlock the secret to becoming a better Christian, a more devoted disciple, or a more faithful person. In reflection, Nouwen asks a universal question: "Did it work, did I solve my problems?"[2] This question cuts to the core of the issue: Can a person make miracles happen in their life? Can a person orchestrate their own salvation or even their own growth in faith? Nouwen thinks this is not possible. In pursuing the monastic life, Nouwen was attempting to solve some of his problems, but this is not what the monastery is about.

There are parallels in Nouwen's treatment of the monastery and the discussion of the effectiveness of method laid out in the previous chapter. These parallels are found in the relationship between a practice and the purpose of the practice. In pursuing the monastic life, Nouwen attempted to control his spiritual life by choosing to enter into an experience that would produce the results he wanted. Nouwen's pursuit in the monastery is similar to the reliance on method to create a life changing experience for the listener: both are an attempt to control and to produce spiritual growth. This approach to spirituality turns the practices of faith into a means to self-improvement and, in doing so, reflects the device paradigm dividing the life of faith into a series of means toward a spiritual end. However, as Nouwen suggests, the purposes of the monastic life, and by extension, the purpose of all spiritual practices, are not to make a person more spiritual. Instead, Christian practices are fulfilled in the practice's and practitioner's relationship to the Lord.

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[2] Nouwen, *The Genesee Diary*, 217.

Nouwen's time in the monastery reframed in relationship to God changes what the experience was about. He writes "If anything significant takes place in my life, it is not the result of my own 'spiritual' callisthenics, but only the manifestation of God's unconditional grace."[3] Here, Nouwen has offered two potential sources of spiritual growth: the self or God and his grace. The first, as suggested above, is a foolish notion and is a distortion of the purpose of a practice, such as monastic living. The second is a reminder that the special aspect of the monastic life comes from God and is fulfilled by God. In fact, as Nouwen describes the outcomes of his monastic experience it is the presence of God's grace in that experience that has had a lasting effect. He writes:

> I no longer can live without being reminded of the glimpse of God's graciousness that I saw in my solitude, of the ray of light that broke through my darkness, of the gentle voice that spoke in my silence, and of the soft breeze that touched me in my stillest hour. This memory, however, does more than bring to mind rich experiences of the past. It also continues to offer new perspectives on present events and guides in decisions for the years to come. In the midst of my ongoing compulsions, illusions, and unrealities, this memory will always be there to dispel false dreams and point in right directions.[4]

God's grace lingered in Nouwen's life. It has been shaped, not by the monastic experience, but by the presence of God in the midst of a monastic life. This presence continued to speak into Nouwen's life as the memories have encouraged and supported Nouwen in his daily living. Even more so, the experience of God's grace in the monastery informed his present reality, gave shape to his identity, guided his sense of purpose, and reminded him of the truth about himself.

Nouwen's reflection on his monastic experience offers a general truth about the practices of the Christian faith: they are predicated on God first moving in grace and exist

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[3] Nouwen, *The Genesee Diary*, 218.
[4] Nouwen, *The Genesee Diary*, 218–9.

in relationship with God's action. There remains, in all aspects of the life of faith, an indivisible relationship between a practice and God. They have a correlative existence.It is the intention of this chapter to examine how the practice of preaching is informed and empowered first, by its relationship to God and the manifestations of his grace. Most specifically, that by understanding preaching as a focal practice one can identify and emphasize the necessary relationship between the practice of preaching and the manifestation of God's grace that makes preaching something worthy of practising. Further, that by applying the conceptual framework of focal practice to preaching one can correct the overemphasison methodology in contemporary preaching and give context to the work of the preacher.

The following chapter will outline what is meant by preaching as focal practice by looking at two approaches to preaching: the pedagogical conception of preaching as a Christian practice, and the theological conception of preaching as testimony. Together, these will assist in shaping what is meant by preaching as a focal practice and help to clarify the nature of preaching. Finally, applying the conceptual framework of focal practice to preaching there will be a discussion of the implications for matters of method.

A Turn to Focal Things and Practices

Before proceeding, we must return to Borgmann's idea of focal things and practices, as laid out in chapter II. We recall that Borgmann argues that "Focal things and practices are the crucial counterforces to technology . . . They contrast with technology without denying it, and they provide a standpoint for a principled and fruitful reform of

technology."[5] Focal things and practices become the foundation on which Borgmann's solution to the device paradigm is realized. The centre of this solution is the engaging nature of focal things and practices. One of the key consequences of the device paradigm is the shift from engagement to consumption. As the means and ends of devices are increasingly unrelated to the end user experience, the user can be free to consume the benefits of the device without any meaningful engagement. In this context, the relationship between the person and their world is increasingly limited to isolated acts of consumption. As an alternative, a commitment to focal things and practices is an effort to orient one's life by way of engagement. Giving priority to focal things and practices in this manner allows a person to escape, even if just for a moment, the pattern of the device paradigm and in doing so experience life by way of engagement not merely consumption. This experience, in turn, allows a person to reconsider and reframe their relationship to devices.

Further, there is a complex relationship between focal things and practices. Throughout Borgmann's writing there are instances where they seem to be interchangeable with each other, and at other times there is a clear separation of the two. In attempting to clarify the nature of this relationship we recall the work of Lawrence Haworth described in chapter II. Haworth offered three models of the relationship between a focal thing and focal practice: the guarding model, the internal goods model, and the synthetic model. The guarding model suggested that some focal things and practices are distinct from each other. The focal practice guards the focal thing by emphasising the significance of the focal thing and by serving as a point of commitment

[5] Borgmann, *Power Failure*, chapter 1, para. 36, location 284.

to the focal thing. The focal thing exists separate from the practice, and the practice's significance is only understood in relationship to the focal thing. The internal goods model suggests that some focal practices and focal things are inseparable. In other words, some practices are significant in their own right. In the act of engaging with the practice, one is connected to a larger context of the practice's tradition and history in which the significance of the practice is rooted. The synthetic model suggests that an accurate reflection of the relationship between focal things and practices will reflect both the guarding model and the internal goods model. These two models represent something of extreme ends of a spectrum of relationships between things and practices. Further, all practices, to varying degrees, will have a significance that is external to the practice and significance granted from within the tradition and history of the practice.

Haworth's models of focal practice serve as a critical point of distinction when describing the nature of a focal practice, as this chapter intends to do. To this end, there remains a question of preaching as focal practice: where does preaching, as a focal practice, fall on the spectrum of Haworth's synthetic model? Towards which end of the spectrum does preaching lean? The answer can be found by exploring two approaches to preaching: preaching as Christian practice and preaching as testimony. It will be argued that the former offers a conception of preaching that reflects the internal goods model of focal practice and the latter offers a conception of preaching that reflects the guarding model.

Preaching as Christian Practice

This particular approach to preaching as practice comes from an effort to shape homiletical pedagogy. It is presented in a collection of essays entitled *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice: A New Approach to Homiletical Pedagogy*.[6] The notion of Christian practice is meant to reflect the practice's origins within Christian traditions and the specific manner in which the term "preaching" has been used within the church. That is to say that, preaching, in general, is not exclusive to Christianity and the title of Christian practice is meant to speak of a distinct practice within the history and traditions of the Christian faith. The intention of the collection of essays is to demonstrate how conceptualising preaching as a Christian practice helps to teach the complexities of preaching. In this sense, these essays argue a similar concept to the one being presented here: that contemporary preaching requires a new conceptual framework to guide contemporary preaching. While the authors intend to shape the preaching student, their pedagogical framework is essentially a conceptual framework in that it will shape the preaching student as they work toward becoming preachers. In this sense, the differences between a pedagogical framework and a conceptual framework are a matter of timing and semantics. In other words, how preaching is conceived in teaching becomes how preaching is conceived in the practice of preaching.

This particular view of preaching is of interest to the argument of this chapter because the description of preaching as a Christian practice includes an application of Borgmann's concept of a focal practice. Of particular concern is an article written by James Neiman in which he explores the nature of preaching as a Christian practice.[7] This

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[6] Long and Tisdale, eds., *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice*.

[7] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters." 3–17.

article will be looked at in greater detail below, but the connection to Borgmann needs to be made clear at the outset. In brief, preaching as a practice is presented by way of its critical components. These components are each presented as necessary to understand, and, by extension, teach preaching. One of these components is that preaching is meaningful. In making this case, Neiman offers a description of preaching as a focal practice that reflects Haworth's internal goods model. He suggests that preaching, in connection to its history and tradition to the Christian faith, has a significant and meaningful role in the church.

Neiman's description of preaching as a focal practice is one outcome for the application of Borgmann's ideas to the field of preaching and must be considered before furthering the argument in this dissertation. However, Neiman's approach reflects many of the issues discussed in the previous chapter in that his description of preaching as a Christian practice emphasises the human aspects of the preaching event. Preaching understood primarily by its history and tradition fails to properly acknowledge the role of God as an active participant in the preaching event. While preaching can be understood within the context of its history and tradition this context cannot sufficiently be the foundation on which the practice of preaching is built. With this initial description in mind, we can now take a closer look at the framing of preaching as a Christian practice.

Pedagogical Frameworks of Homiletics

Thomas Long, in his essay "A New Focus for Teaching Preaching," offers a brief history of pedagogical frameworks of preaching. The first of these come from the work of Phillip

Brooks in the nineteenth century. He defined preaching as "truth through personality."[8] While both truth and personality were important, Long suggests that Brooks focused primarily on the personality of the preacher allowing the discussion of truth to be sorted by biblical scholars.[9] As a pedagogical framework, the teaching of preaching focused mainly on the development of the preacher. "Ideally, students came to the preaching class with the fixed truth already mastered, and the teacher of preaching could turn to the variables–the shaping of the preacher's personality, the moulding of character, and development of the student's ethos."[10] Brook's approach focused the teaching of preaching toward matters of psychology and the development of the inner passion of the preacher which could ultimately be presented as an external passion in their preaching.[11]

Following the personalism of Brooks, homiletics, the work of Rudolf Bultmann and others, began to focus on the matter of hermeneutics. This focus, in turn, led to a conception of preaching as "a peak function of biblical hermeneutics."[12] Following this lead, preaching moved away from a focus on the personality of the preacher to the unique voice of scripture as God's Word. As a function of hermeneutics, preaching is about the right interpretation of scripture and so "the organizing frame for everything taught in preaching courses–content, structure, style, and all the rest–is shaped by the momentous and definitive act of biblical interpretation."[13] This framework, eventually, leads to traditional forms of preaching that the New Homiletic criticised. These forms, classified in the earlier study of Fred Craddock's work as the deductive form, emphasise

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[8] Brooks, *The Joy of Preaching*, 27.
[9] Long, "A New Focus," 7.
[10] Long, "A New Focus," 7.
[11] Long, "A New Focus," 7.
[12] Long, "A New Focus," 7.
[13] Long, "A New Focus," 8.

propositional truth, rely on deductive logic, and have the transferring of information as a primary goal.[14] Deductive preaching is the perfect form for a hermeneutically minded sermon in that it presents the results of good interpretation at the end of a study of scripture.

The framework of the sermon as an expression of hermeneutics and the resulting deductive form eventually fall under the criticisms of the New Homiletic. This particular subject has been explored in great detail thus far, but the New Homiletic offers its own pedagogical framework by which to understand preaching. The New Homiletic represents a shift from interpretation to presentation. Long notes that narrative becomes the reigning framework by which preaching is taught.[15] Even more so, "the inner life of the listener" becomes the central focus of this pedagogy. The New Homiletic offers, for Long, the most recent pedagogical framework for preaching.

With this brief sketch of the last century of preaching Long writes:

> In the last 125 years all the bases have been occupied at one time or another, and almost every conceivable category–the personality of the preacher, the encounter with the Bible, the form of the sermon, the inner capacities of the preaching student, and the inner life of the listener–has been put forward as the organizing centre of preaching and, consequently, of homiletical pedagogy. Where should homiletics go next?[16]

This quote is particularly telling of where Long, and the authors of these collected essays, are intending to go. Practice, as the next step, is aimed at unifying these complex frameworks. Long suggests that to some extent each of these aspects has a place of critical importance to preaching. Further, he argues that defining preaching under the

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[14] In this sense, they were informative in contrast to the contemporary emphasis on being transformative.

[15] Long, "A New Focus," 10.

[16] Long, "A New Focus," 11.

framework of practice allows each of these aspects to be considered in due course. To this end, Long defines the term "practice," he writes, "practice is a constellation of actions that people have performed over time that are common, meaningful, strategic, and purposeful."[17] This definition guides the study of preaching as a practice throughout the collection of essays.

This definition is unpacked and explored in greater detail in the essay "Why the Idea of Practice Matters" by James Neiman. Neiman begins by exploring what is meant by practice by outlining five characteristics of practices, drawn from the definition above. "A practice can be recognized as including common, meaningful, strategic, purposive actions. Unpacked just a bit, this phrase conveys the 'who' (common), the 'why' (meaningful), the 'how' (strategic), the 'where' (purposive), and the 'what' (actions) of a practice."[18] Each of these exposes what is meant by practice in the context of Long and Neiman's respective work and will be examined more closely before proceeding.

First, practices are made up of a cumulative grouping of actions. Actions, as Neiman defines them, involve the use of "energy and effort in the material realm."[19] In this sense, actions are not merely thoughts nor are they a matter of "attitude or disposition."[20] Actions have a physical result that can be observed by others. This initial description of actions is meant to convey the importance of actions within a practice in that merely holding a position or opinion does not constitute a practice. Actions are required for a practice. Even further, practice takes place within a domain that defines and shapes the practice. Neiman uses the example of pitching in baseball. Pitching

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[17] Long, "A New Focus," 12.
[18] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 21.
[19] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 21.
[20] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 21.

requires a number of actions and these actions are understood to be a certain kind of practice within the context of baseball. The same practice, and by extension the same actions, in the context of cricket have a different purpose. For Neiman, an understanding of a practice by way of its actions is important to teaching a practice. "Someone who wishes to teach a practice, whether pitching or preaching, needs to know the component actions, the shape of the pattern into which they are arranged, as well as the larger domains that give those practices meaning and purpose."[21] Here, Neiman has given some immediate context to the term practice. Practices are a collection of actions that take place within a particular domain.

Second, Neiman describes practice as common. Common "refers to the social dimension of practices as something that is held and known in common, whether or not performed in common of having a commonplace aesthetic."[22] There are two ways in which this commonality is made present in a practice. First, they have a common origin. The origin of a particular practice comes from a shared history. Second, they have common goals. The outcomes of a practice are further established from within this shared history. The common origin and goals are categorised under the idea of a tradition. Neiman is careful to note that tradition is not meant to be a reference to an unchanging practice but instead "practices seek to bring a shared tradition to bear on the present situation."[23] Common tradition gives a further dimension of context to a practice in that tradition shapes expectations of excellence. A practice, in light of a tradition, is understood and qualified by its excellence.

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[21] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 22.
[22] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 22.
[23] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 23.

Third, practices have meaning. However, this meaning is not always clear or readily apparent. In Neiman's description, a practice does not exist because it was thought to be meaningful, rather, "the actions within a practice convey meaning and intentionality already, to which the assignment of explicit thoughts or reason is usually a later step."[24] For Neiman, the nature of practice is such that the collection of the component actions discloses greater meaning than the actions would on their own. Neiman suggests that this meaning is due to the focal nature of practices in general. His use of focal is derived from Borgmann's work on focal things and practices. He argues, as is argued in Borgmann's work, that focal practices can disclose many meaningful things that would be lost if considered only by matters of technique. To develop this argument, he describes the experience of a community choir that sang diligently and fervently at a routine practice. This practice, which eventually blossomed to include an audience of regular listeners, offered for the practitioners and the audience a wide range of meaning beyond the intended goal of practicing. In Neiman's description, these rehearsals became something of a "communal song"[25] in which those present gained many layers of meaning. These meanings go well beyond the primary goal of the practice of singing in a choir. Neiman explains

> By entering into the singing, these men entered a deeper meaning that only made sense through the participatory performance itself . . . Because practices involve a complex of actions, moreover, this implies that they hold the potential to bear multivalent meanings, such as (in this example) camaraderie, musical growth, and pleasure.[26]

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[24] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 24.
[25] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 24.
[26] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 25.

Just as in Borgmann's description of focal practices, Neiman's suggestions about the choir are directed at understanding the practice by way of its ability to offer complex forms of meaning. To this end, Neiman is arguing that a practice, such as singing in a community choir or preaching, is focal in nature and carries with it many layers of meaning.

Fourth, practices are strategic. "They offer guidance and strategies toward attaining group aims and goods, suggestions for how to proceed, respond, and even rethink the practice in its continued use."[27] There are, for Neiman, intended goals for practices and they are not arrived at randomly, rather they are a result of a strategy. These strategies, like recipes in cooking or the narrative form in preaching, are critical to the development of the student who is trying to master a practice. To teach a practice is to acquaint a student with the strategic elements of a practice. "Adept practitioners are so formed by a practice that they naturally have this feel for it, a repertoire of strategies that both guides their own actions and becomes a key component to teaching the practice to others."[28] Neiman further notes that strategies are not simply tricks or shortcuts for producing the ends of a practice, but they are connected directly to his final aspect of a practice: its purpose.

Finally, a practice is purposive. Though purpose has been left to the end of the discussion of practice, Neiman suggests it is the most critical aspect, and all other aspects are directed toward a practice's purpose.[29] The means of a practice are linked to the intended ends of the practice. Neiman suggests that a practice is a "synecdoche" of its

[27] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 26.
[28] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 27.
[29] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 27.

end result.[30] To speak of the practice is to say something about the intended ends of the practice. "The means . . . already and unavoidably express the ends they seek to attain."[31] Neiman presents the means and ends of a practice in a relationship to each other. However, this relationship is balanced towards the ends of the practice. To speak of the means of a particular practice will always, in some manner, express something about the ends of the practice. Therefore, for Neiman it is necessary to consider the particular benefit of the means by which a practice can be achieved. The ends of a practice cannot be attained by any means necessary but all means must serve to fulfill the end result of the practice. A practice does not merely exist to be practised but it has an aim and a purpose that must come to fruition as a result of the practice. In this sense, the aim of a practice is critical over all other aspects of the practice. Neiman uses the example of mountain climbing as a practice that aims for the top of a mountain. "Any component or action in this practice that fails to contribute to reaching the top is not just wasted energy but even contrary to the practice itself."[32] In Neiman's terms, the aim of a practice, like reaching the top of the mountain, is critical to everything that a practice is and does. The purpose of a practice becomes a critical component of Neiman's definition of a practice.

Before examining Neiman's description of preaching as a practice, it is necessary to consider his conception of practice. Neiman's description of practice is problematic. There is a contradiction between his description of meaning in a practice and the purpose of a practice. Neiman, in his description, suggests meaning in a practice comes from within the practice itself. This description is similar to Haworth's internal goods model,

[30] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 27.
[31] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 28.
[32] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 29.

as considered in chapter II. It is the multivalent layers of what it means to engage in a practice that give it meaning. He understands the connection between what is internally worthwhile in the practice and the connection that it makes between the practitioner and their world.[33] However, this understanding of the meaning of a practice is soon overwhelmed by Neiman's focus on the purpose of a practice. Though Neiman suggests that there is a relationship between the means and the ends of a practice he does not offer a very compelling vision of what that relationship looks like. To suggest, as Neiman does, that the purpose of a practice like mountain climbing is to arrive at the top of the mountain is a simplistic view of the practice of mountain climbing. His presentation effectively ignores the complexities of the relationship between the means of a practice and its ends/aims. The components of a practice that fail to help arrive at the intended aim are termed as wasteful. As a result, the meaningful and engaging aspects of a practice, like mountain climbing, are directed toward one end. In this sense, Neiman's description of practice ends up reflecting the values of the device paradigm, considering a practice primarily by its ends, and in doing so loses sight of the meaning inherent in the practice. Neiman's description intends to balance but his dedication to the strategic aspect reflects an imbalance.

The problematic relationship between the purpose of a practice and the meaning of a practice continues in his presentation of preaching as a practice. He writes "Preaching is a constellation of common, meaningful, strategic, purposeful actions governed by and contributing to the aims of Christians (such as witness to Christ,

[33] Neiman's description of tradition further reflects the internal goods model in that tradition becomes the manner in which a practice is judged and understood. Some of the meaning, which Neiman ascribes in his description, comes directly from the relationship between the practice and its tradition.

enactment of the gospel, and reconciliation with God), especially but not strictly as a community of believers in the church."[34] With this definition in mind, Neiman suggests that the five components of practice serve to emphasise the same five components of preaching. Effective teaching of these elements will serve to balance a student's understanding of what preaching is and how it functions. He further argues an overemphasis of one component can be corrected by consideration of the four other components. The suggestion of balance would be more compelling if Neiman had not already suggested that there is one component that is superior to the others. In the analysis of practice, Neiman offers a practice's purpose as the foremost important component and essentially invalidates the balance that he is suggesting. As a result, there is an apparent contradiction between his suggestion of equality and balance between the components of the practice, and the importance of a practice's purpose. It would be more accurate to suggest that for Neiman the purpose of the practice remains critical and balances one's approach to the other components. He makes this case when discussing teaching preaching. He writes "its aims or purposes govern all its other features and how they interrelate as an ensemble."[35] Thus, the aim of the practice informs all other aspects as the defining component of the practice.

Much like above, this dependence on the aims of preaching is problematic. The contradiction between the complex description of preaching as a practice and the simplification of preaching to its mere ends distorts the practice. In line with Neiman's assessment of the purpose of practice, it would be fair to suggest if particular components did not serve the aims of preaching then they would be considered a waste of time and

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[34] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 31.
[35] Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 35.

energy. In this sense, by emphasising the aims of preaching, as defined by Neiman, one risks falling into the patterns of a technological approach to the practice. This technological approach is made even more apparent in the ensuing essays dedicated to unpacking Long and Neiman's shared definition of preaching as Christian practice.[36] Notably, there is little mention of the component of meaning and a considerable emphasis on the purposive and strategic elements of a practice. The balance intended by the given definition of practice never comes to fruition in the application of the stated framework.

The reason for this failure is rooted in the manner in which preaching as a practice was originally presented. Neiman's study defines the practice of preaching primarily as a result of its history. Tradition is the foundation on which this view of preaching as a practice is understood and conceived. Of preaching, he writes "The practice of preaching deploys actions that Christians have traditionalized in familiar patterns that bear faith meanings, using warrants recognised within a particular community of belief, to express God's ways for the world known chiefly in Christ Jesus." Notice, it is the familiar patterns of tradition that bear faith meanings. For Neiman, preaching is a tradition that has a purpose within the community of faith, and it is that tradition which defines the benefit and value of preaching. What makes preaching a worthwhile endeavour in this framework? Preaching's connection to its history and tradition within the function of the church makes it worth practising. This description of preaching is not altogether wrong. Preaching has a history and tradition that speaks directly to the practice as it is understood today. However, the lenses of history and traditions are not suitable

[36] Long and Neiman respectively reference the definition of practice offered by the other as intending an identical framework. Long, "A New Focus," 12. Neiman, "Why the Idea of Practice Matters," 31.

foundations on which to value or understand preaching. This approach to practice reflects Haworth's internal goods model wherein the essence of what makes the practice of preaching focal is located from within the practice and its traditions.

Preaching and the Internal Goods Model of Focal Practice

Following the description of preaching as a practice laid out in Long and Neiman's work there remains a fundamental question: What are the implications of understanding the practice of preaching as a focal practice that reflects the internal goods model? First, the matter of authority in preaching remains unaltered. The desire of the New Homiletic to re-examine the nature of authority in preaching was a worthwhile endeavour but reliance on human authority remains a fundamental issue. To model the focal nature of preaching after the internal goods model is to rely on the history and traditions of preaching to establish excellence within the practice. A practice conceived in this way can develop and grow but will not be open to significant change. The history and tradition of preaching will serve to bypass the temptations and effects of the device paradigm but will equally impede the changes deemed necessary by the New Homiletic. Even further, preaching, conceived in this way, continues to rely on the preacher to effectively make changes to the preaching event. Preaching understood by way of the internal goods model will continue to focus on the craft and artistry of the practice. In this sense, the preacher will continue to be honoured for their ability, their tact, their handling of the complex relationship between authority and the listener, and a myriad of other abilities that a preacher is expected to be master of. As a result, the quality or value of preaching will rely heavily on the one who is seen to be creating. In the internal goods model, the

preacher, antithetical to the entire effort of contemporary preaching, becomes the key to the entire practice.

Second, the divine aspects of preaching, such as God's work and the power of the Holy Spirit, are minimalised if not entirely ignored in the practice. Neiman's definition of preaching demonstrates that a definition of preaching as a practice does not necessarily have a relationship to God's work and grace. Preaching, for Neiman, is a product of Christian tradition and it is in line with the intentions of the Christian life (witness to Christ, enacting the gospel, and reconciliation to God), but it is not presented as a place in which God is present and at work. God's role may be an assumed aspect of Neiman's proposal but it is absent within his discussion of his framework of Christian tradition. Even further, the discussion of meaning, much like the example of the choir, suggests that the meaning of a practice comes from within the practice itself. External meaning is secondary to that which is internal to the practice. Since God and the manifestations of his grace are unconsidered in Nieman's conception of preaching they remain external to the practice. As a result, they have a secondary position in relation to how one conceptualises the practice of preaching. God may be working, and his grace may be apparent in an experience of preaching, but this is an external consideration to the practice which has its own purpose and priorities.

Finally, a framework for preaching modelled after the internal goods model of a focal practice results in a practice for its own sake. That is, preaching becomes an end unto itself. It should be noted that as a focal practice there is a relationship between means and ends. To suggest that a practice exists for its own sake is not to suggest a focus on the ends of the practice or separation from the means of a practice.

Alternatively, as a focal practice with internal goods, it is the entirety of the practice, joined means and ends, which carry an internal good. Suggesting that a practice exists for its own sake is not simply a reflection of the device paradigm.[37] With this in mind, one can return to how Neiman framed his proposal of preaching as a practice to understand how a practice exists for its own sake. He offered five components which make up a practice and suggest that these five components exist in a balance with each other. The framework represents the entirety of the practice of preaching and therein the components are understood in relation to each other. As such, the entity of meaning is best understood in relation to the other aspects of the practice. That is to say, that the meaning of the practice is disclosed in relation to the internal connections between the common, strategic, and purposeful components and cannot be fully framed outside of them. In this sense, preaching has no meaning apart from its existence within the structure of the practice and even more so that meaning is entirely disclosed within the practice itself. Thus, when one asks, "what is the meaning disclosed by this practice?" the answer comes from within the practice itself. The members of the choir, in Neiman's example above, came to greater meaning only as a result of the practice. Extrapolating this assessment, the listener who hears a sermon finds meaning only as a result of engaging in the practice of preaching. Thus, in this conception, the meaningful aspects of preaching come from a commitment to the practice alone. In this sense, the practice is for its own sake.

Long and Neiman have begun to move in the right direction by attempting to reconceive preaching as a focal practice. Conceiving preaching as a focal practice serves to counter the effects of the device paradigm but beyond this, it matters what sort of

[37] Though it remains equally vulnerable to the effect of the device paradigm if left unconsidered.

model of focal practice one relies on. Despite not following through on it, Neiman's notion of balance between the five components of practice is essentially a description of the relatedness of a focal thing or practice in Borgmann's conception of them. It is an effort to counter the breakdown of preaching into categories of means and ends. However, the practice of preaching conceived as a focal practice with internal good ultimately does not reach its full potential. It places undue emphasis on the role of the preacher, downplays God's role in the practice, and makes preaching a product of human effort and tradition. This model of focal practice cannot hold together the spiritual and the regular elements of the practice of preaching, as it remains focused only on the interior aspects of preaching. Preaching understood as a tradition with a rich history may serve to avoid the commodification of preaching, but in doing so the divine component of preaching is lost, authority is claimed by human agency, and preaching becomes an end in itself. If, as is the hope of this dissertation and much of contemporary preaching, the goal is to relocate authority there needs to be a tangible leap forward in the conception of preaching. We must strive to emphasise the correlation between the human and divine aspects of preaching.

Preaching as Testimony

One of the primary goals of this chapter is to expand on the notion of preaching as a focal practice. At the outset, we began this discussion of the nature of preaching as a focal practice by attempting to determine what sort of focal practice preaching is. The core question being: does preaching as a focal practice reflect Haworth's internal goods model or guarding model? The previous section unpacked one such option by exploring the

already proposed preaching as a focal practice found within the work of Long and Neiman. Their model reflected the internal goods model of focal practice. While this model effectively protects against the device paradigm, it does not adequately describe the preaching event by failing to acknowledge the role of God in preaching. To achieve a complete sense of what preaching as a focal practice means one must establish a critical link between the practice of preaching and God's divine work. In this context, preaching is a focal practice that reflects the guarding mode' in which the practice, preaching, is dependent on its relationship to a focal thing, God. This next section will explore preaching as testimony which is an approach to preaching that is already acknowledging this fundamental relationship between practice and thing and will serve to expand on what preaching as a focal practice means.

Preaching as testimony attempts to relocate authority from the human elements of the preacher, the listener, and language to the true source of power in preaching: God himself. Preaching as testimony is a developing field of study within homiletics. There are only a few key authors on the subject, and these authors will be considered throughout this section. To that end, they must be identified as critical voices in the discussion to follow. They are Thomas Long, Walter Brueggeman, Anna Carter Florence, and Michael Knowles. Together, their collected work on the subject demonstrates the complexities of preaching as testimony and, as such, are critically important to the discussion below.

Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutic of Testimony

Before examining the characteristics of preaching as testimony in greater detail, one must first have a clear understanding of what is meant by "testimony." Notably, Long, Florence, and Knowles examine the work of Paul Ricoeur to establish what is meant by testimony. Ricoeur offers testimony as the foundation of Christian interpretation. Formally, the foundation of Christian interpretation was a pursuit of objective truth. Ricoeur's use of testimony is meant to contrast the hermeneutical efforts that had been directed primarily toward historical-criticism. Lewis S. Mudge, in his article "Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation," clarifies this distinction explaining that Ricoeur's "procedure is not to confront the text with the question whether it bears testimony to 'what really happened' in the modern sense, but rather ask what the text *means* by its assertion about the testimony it bears."[38] The testimony of scripture is not strictly a recounting of events or thoughts, but the scriptural testimony conveys meaning.

To begin clarifying testimony, Ricoeur aims at establishing the nature of testimony within the judiciary sense of the word. Florence notes "Ricoeur defines *testimony* as the act of testifying to an event and reporting on what was seen or understood. The crucial point, here, is that testimony is not perception; it is the report itself, or the narration of what has happened. We focus not on what is *seen* but on what is *said*."[39] This notion leads to the first feature of testimony: it is a form of communication. As such, testimony is given in the context of a relationship: there is both a witness who testifies and a recipient who receives the testimony. In the first case, the witness speaks, and in the second, the recipient hears. With this relationship in mind, there remains a gap

[38] Mudge, "Paul Ricoeur," 22.
[39] Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 62.

between what the witness knows to be true, that which they have seen and testified to, and what the hearer has been told, that which they have only heard. Ricoeur explains "It is only by hearing the testimony that he can believe or not believe in the reality of the facts that the witness reports. Testimony as story is thus found in an intermediary position between a statement made by a person and a belief assumed by another on the faith of the testimony of the first."[40] A testimony requires a response from the hearer as they can only accept or reject the testimony based solely on their hearing of the testimony. In essence, a testimony requires a judgment on the behalf of the recipient. Florence offers an excellent summary of Ricoeur's description of testimony:

1. There is a *dispute* between two parties, or a struggle of opinion, although neither testimony can ever claim absolute certainty; only probability.
2. There will be a *decision of justice* between two claims so that one of them will be invalidated.
3. There be will *rhetoric* or speech that attempts to persuade.[41]

In this context, a testimony requires that the witness be of excellent character. We recalled that, for Ricoeur, testimony is not simply a matter of factual accuracy but a telling of one's experience. In this sense, a false testimony relies on a willful act of deceit. Alternatively, a testimony relies on a true account on the part of the witness.

From this judiciary sense of testimony, Ricoeur develops a religious sense of testimony. His description comes from a study of the prophetic testimony, particularly an examination of Isa 43:8–13 and 44:6–8. Florence summarises:

1. The witness is not simply anyone who testifies but *the one who is sent* to bear witness to a testimony that comes from somewhere else.
2. The witness testifies not to isolated, pedantic, historical facts but to the *radical, global meaning* of human experience, or, in short to God.
3. The testimony is *proclamation for all people* by a single witness.

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[40] Ricoeur, "Hermeneutics of Testimony," 439.

[41] Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 62.

4. The testimony calls for a *total engagement of words and acts*, even at the cost of the life of the witness.[42]

These four points reflect what Ricoeur suggests of religious testimony. Religious testimony is enacted first by God who calls the witness into the act of testifying. The prophets do not decide upon a testimony the testimony is given to them to proclaim. Unlike judicial testimony where one attests to what they saw, the religious testimony attests to what they have been called to testify to.[43]

Before looking closer at how Ricoeur's work influences the study of preaching as testimony, it may be helpful to begin to consider how Ricoeur's approach to testimony already reflects something of focal things and practices. Ricoeur's description of religious testimony offers a fundamental paradigm for all encounters with the divine. Most notably, religious testimony exists in relationship to the divine. The testimony, a witness, and the one who hears all serve to draw focus toward God. First, religious testimony has an instigator, a first-mover, and a source of its significance/meaning. The practice of religious testimony places emphasis not simply on matters of history, or tradition but on a present revelation of God that is known by the one who testifies. Second, a testimony points back towards its source. In attesting to the testimony the witness is drawn back into relationship with the divine and as such the divine remains focal. Even more so, the hearer, in confrontation with a testimony, must make a choice and come to terms with the

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[42] Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 63.

[43] Further, Ricoeur establishes an evangelical sense of testimony in which all Christian testimony stems back to the cross of Christ. The testimony of the prophets, in the Old Testament, were given directly to them from God to account to who God was. In Christ, God has given a testimony to which the disciples and subsequently the whole of Scripture gives an account of. Knowles summarizes Ricoeur's account of God's divine instigation of testimony writing "Ricoeur traces the continuity between God's sending of the Son, the Son's testimony to the Father, the eyewitness testimony of the disciples (including John the Baptist), and testimony borne of the Holy Spirit." (Knowles, *Of Seeds and the People of God*, chapter 5, para. 17, location 4070.) In each case, once again, the source of the testimony is external to the testimony.

testimony. In this sense, the testimony focuses the hearer toward that to which the testimony refers. In each case, the elements of testimony serve to focus attention toward God and the manifestation of his grace.

The relationship between the practice of religious testimony and the source of that testimony, God, fits well into Hayworth's guarding model of the relationship between focal things and practices.[44] We recall that the guarding model of the relationship between a focal thing and its relative focal practice was such that the focal thing exists without the practice. The practice does not add to or create the focal thing. Alternatively, the focal practice serves to draw attention toward the focal thing. In this manner, the practice guards against the effect of the device paradigm by continually refocusing the practitioner(s) toward that which is focal. The practice gains its significance from the external presence of the focal thing, and in this manner, the practice is, on its own, insignificant. Religious testimony reflects this model in that there is a fundamental relationship between the testimony and God. The testimony exists because of God and exists to focus attention on who God is and what God has done. It further calls the hearer of testimony to consider the implications of the testimony which again focus them toward God. In this sense, it would be fair say that religious testimony, as described by Ricoeur, is very much a description of a focal practice, testimony, and focal thing, God, in a manner that reflects Hayworth's guarding model.

With this initial description of what is meant by testimony, one can turn to the specific works of Thomas Long, Anna Carter Florence, and Michael Knowles to track meaningful development within the study of preaching as testimony.

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[44] Discussed in chapter 2.

Thomas Long—Preacher as Witness

Thomas Long, in his text *The Witness of Preaching*, decisively moves contemporary homiletics toward preaching as testimony by offering a new metaphor for the preacher: the preacher as witness. Building on Ricoeur's ideas of testimony and witness, Long suggests that this metaphor offers a framework by which the act of preaching, the work of the preacher, and the experience of preaching can be properly understood. This framework alters the nature of the authority of the preacher. "The preacher as witness is not authoritative because of rank or power but rather because of what the preacher has seen and heard. . . . The preacher becomes a witness to what has been seen and heard through the Scripture, and the preacher's authority grows out of this seeing and hearing."[45] The source of the preacher's authority is external to their position as a preacher and comes from the testimony of Christ and of the Scripture. Long further suggests that the metaphor offers a new approach to Scripture, not simply as a source of Biblical truth but as a testimony to God. Further still, this metaphor guides the rhetorical work of the preacher. "The witness is not called upon to testify in the abstract but to find just those words and patterns that can convey the event the witness has heard and seen. . . . Preaching, in other words, will assume a variety of rhetorical styles, not as ornaments but as governed by the truth to which they correspond."[46] In this manner, Long offers witness as a guiding framework for all homiletical pursuits.

His ensuing method reflects the framework of witness. To find the right words, Long suggests, the preacher needs more than an exegesis that leads to a single idea that can be preached. This kind of distillation essentially is an effort to create a message for

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[45] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 52.
[46] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 54.

Scripture. Rather, the preacher must embrace the multifaceted and complex nature of Scripture which testifies in many ways. He writes:

> We have been sent to the Scripture on behalf of the people, and having encountered and listened to the text, we have experienced firsthand the claim of the text. Now we turn toward the sermon, toward the pulpit, toward the people to tell the truth about this claim. The move from text to sermon is a move from beholding to attesting, from seeing to saying, from listening to telling, from perceiving to testifying, from *being* a witness to *bearing* witness.[47]

To that end, he encourages finding both a focus statement and a function statement. These two elements represent both what the sermon is about (focus) and what the sermon is meant to cause to happen (function). "The goal is that, by the end of the sermon, the focus will have been said and the function will have been accomplished, and the entire sermon, therefore, will be an expression of, a witness to, this text's claim up this congregation."[48] In offering a focus and a function, Long's approach aims to stay true to the work of exegesis and the act of witnessing.

Walter Brueggemann's Preaching as Counterspeech.

Brueggemann proposes that the writings of the Old Testament resemble the form of testimony in his book *Theology of the Old Testament*. Building on Ricoeur, Brueggemann suggests that Israel's testimony is constitutive and gives shape to the person of God.[49] Brueggemann applies this to his approach to preaching as testimony in his text *Cadences of Home*. Of particular importance to Brueggemann is the cultural context into which he writes (that of American Christianity at the turn of the twenty-first century). He notes a parallel between the experience of Israel in exile and the exile-like nature of living as

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[47] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 114.
[48] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 129.
[49] See Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*.

Christian's in a post-Christendom society. Post-Christendom, though connected to postmodernity, acts as a distinct viewpoint of the cultural situation in the North American church. Given the dramatic shifts in culture and their effects on the church, the church finds itself displaced in a manner akin to that of an exile. This displacement serves to shape Brueggemann's examination of homiletics. To that end, Brueggemann highlights the importance of offering a "counterspeech" into the culture. Preaching is this "counterspeech." He writes "The hearing of a *counterscript* invites to a *countercontext* that over time may authorize and empower *counterlife*."[50] Brueggemann suggests testimony has the power to offer a counterspeech that is an appropriate framework for preaching, in the context of exile, because it is subtle and subversive. It speaks to the situation and the experience by painting a picture of what has been experienced by the speaker and in doing so it recreates the situation.

Anna Carter Florence—Preaching as Testimony

Anna Carter Florence offers her voice to this subject in her book *Preaching as Testimony.* Florence arrives at her understanding of preaching as witness as a result of her study of historical women who proclaimed God's Word. In attempting to rectify the tension between the role of these women in history, her own experiences as a preacher, and the stance of her denomination, and others, on women preachers she discovers the more ancient practice of testimony.[51] The central issue is again one of authority. In the case of female preachers, authority is typically a major problem both as it pertains to the preacher

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[50] Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home*, 36.
[51] Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 111–4.

and the listener. That is to say, that without institutional authority to preach women typically do not have the opportunity to preach and, if given a rare opportunity, a congregation is less likely to listen. Florence identifies testimony as the framework by which preaching is understood and in which the issue of institutional authority is subverted. She writes "More and more, it seems to me, preachers are relying not on outside authorities as the proof of their words (that is, ecclesial bodies that decisions about leadership or orthodoxy), but on the authority of testimony: preaching what they have seen and heard in the biblical text, and what they believe about it."[52] For Florence, the reliance on ecclesial authority has been the downfall of contemporary preaching. The preacher who relies on human structures will be prone to rely on their own abilities or the force of their own power. Alternatively, preaching as testimony relies on a position of powerlessness wherein the preacher speaks not from their own authority but on the authority of the testimony that has been given to them. Building on Brueggemann's treatment of the Old Testament's testimony, Florence emphasises the role of scripture in offering testimony of who God is to both the preacher and the congregation.

Turning from the theoretical to the practical questions of preaching as testimony Florence offers a critically different way of conceptualising sermon preparation. In developing a model of preaching centred around testimony, she suggests an approach that has three parts: attending, describing and testifying. Together, for Florence, these move the preacher from text to sermon by living with and in the text.[53] Attending is asking the question "What do you see?"[54] This question is not simply an exercise in understanding

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[52] Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, xvii.
[53] Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 133.
[54] Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 135.

what one sees but what one could see from a variety of worldviews and perspectives. Describing is the act of confessing what one believes about what one has seen.[55] Testifying is where the preacher asks "What am I going to say?" and even more "why?"[56] Notice, when Florence turns to the task of preparing a sermon she is not primarily concerned with method but takes a fundamentally different approach. It is no longer a matter of "how to preach this sermon?" but "why preach this sermon?" This question, in turn, leads the preacher back to the fundamental task of speaking about what they have seen and heard, and about what they believe.

Florence's approach represents a significant move forward in homiletics. Her approach focuses not on the preacher or their particular abilities but instead focuses on the text and the testimony therein. Even further, she recognises the critical power of preaching from within the margins, from the position of the powerless. It is not an accident that she arrived at preaching as testimony in the often overlooked history of women preachers. It is precisely that they spoke from a powerless position that their words spoke clearly and, paradoxically, powerfully of the gospel. They spoke, not out of duty or ambition, but from the desperate need to testify to what they had seen or heard. In presenting preaching as testimony, Florence has offered a signpost to what preaching is about: a position of powerlessness.

Michael Knowles—The Power of Preaching

Michael Knowles explains preaching as testimony in his work *Of Seeds and the People of God.* While testimony is the ultimate form that Knowles suggests, his text initially

[55] Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 143.
[56] Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 150.

considers the difficult challenge of preaching. Knowles states, "preaching is, in the most important sense of all, a humanly impossible task: it is not something that we can effectively undertake on our own."[57] For Knowles, the effectiveness of preaching, which has been a significant focus in homiletics in recent study, does not come as a result of human effort but from God alone.[58] While there is a necessity for human action in preaching the human action is not the focus but rather directs focus towards God. Knowles comments, "preachers must employ words, even artful words, all the while acknowledging the limitations of those words, and thereby referring hearers to the sole prerogative of God as the one who bestows the life and healing of which the preacher speaks."[59] For Knowles testimony, is the form that best accomplishes this dynamic.

Building on, the work of Long and Florence, Knowles locates the effective power of preaching in the power of God. Religious testimony, as suggested by Ricoeur, is given to the witness and as such the power of the testimony comes from outside of the witness. Knowles goes further to suggest that a testimony is powerful because it is first given and then confirmed. It is first offered as God gives the testimony in history, scripture, and in the manifestation of his grace in and around the community of God. It is further confirmed in the continued presences and action of God. For Knowles, all testimonies are possible "because they are first initiated and shaped by the divine testimony that precedes them, then corroborated and brought to completion by the divine testimony that

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[57] Knowles, *Of Seeds and the People of God,* Introduction, para. 1, location 255.

[58] "Preaching and teaching are thus means to a blessed end, not ends in themselves; they are not to be enjoyed for their own sake, but rather to be used for the sake of something greater. Even if preachers hope to lead their hearers to God, eloquence and human artistry cannot accomplish this task on their own, for the necessary power comes from God alone." Knowles, *Of Seeds and the People of God,* chapter 5, para. 2, location 3760.

[59] Knowles, *Of Seeds and the People of God,* chapter 5, para. 3, location 3786.

ensues."[60] In this sense, preaching is effective only as God goes before the preacher and comes after the preacher. Thus, in the conception of preaching as testimony, it is the cross of Christ that bears witness beforehand and the divine confirmation, in God's work of transformation, that bears witness after and it is the preacher who testifies to the former and waits for the latter.[61]

When Knowles' discussion of preaching as testimony turns to the matter of developing a model for preaching he suggests the model is that of crucifixion and resurrection. That is, the preacher requires a particular posture. He sketches two potential postures: the posture of the effective preacher or the posture of the cross. Of the first, he writes:

> Our assumption is that the purpose of ministry is to minister, to achieve the goals and accomplish the mission of a particular organization. On this view, the effectiveness of a given ministry can be measured in terms of its ability to achieve the goals in question. If this is the case, then our role is clear: preachers produce converts and augment the spiritual life (along with the size and social influence) of their congregations. We are agents of change; the instrument of change is the gospel; effective use of this instrument on the part of the agent brings about spiritual transformation, congregational growth, and passionate engagement in the work of God's kingdom. But the terrifying truth is that ministry doesn't always work like this.[62]

The posture of the effective minister places the burden of accomplishment on the preacher. This posture reflects the approach to preaching that has been criticised throughout this study. The approach that suggests that a preacher, by their own ability and creative use of the sermon, can create the change they long to see. This posture, for Knowles, is inconsistent with the nature of preaching as testimony. Thus, he offers the second posture, the posture of the cross, writing "If anything, a sermon should be an

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[60] Knowles, *Of Seeds and the People of God*, chapter 5, para. 42, location 4577.
[61] Knowles, *Of Seeds and the People of God*, chapter 6, para. 9, location 5071.
[62] Knowles, *Of Seeds and the People of God*, chapter 6, para. 6, location 5028.

exercise in modesty, directing attention away from itself as an instrument of change and toward God, who alone can accomplish the rescue, restoration, and ultimate transformation of spiritually lost hearers."[63] Preaching, in this model, recognises the inability of the preacher to make anything happen. Knowles suggests "This approach to preaching is more a question of character than of technique. Yielding our own words to the Living Word will require, first, deep courage, for the simple reason that we find it so threatening to be confronted by anything we cannot control."[64] In this sense, the preacher must, in line with the cross of Christ, give up all their notions of power, authority, and effectiveness to lay their words at the foot of the cross expecting that God can and will bring them to life.

Much like Florence, Knowles gives significant attention to Brueggemann's work as well but is generally critical of his view. Where Brueggemann would suggest the testimony of Israel is powerful and able to reconstitute the situation, Knowles' approach essentially refers to the external power of God that reconstitutes the situation and Israel testifies to that power.[65] This distinction marks two ways of framing preaching as testimony. The former frames preaching as power and the latter as dependent. Viewing preaching as dependent is essential to the argument for preaching as focal practice argued in this chapter and following Knowles' criticism, Brueggemann's approach must be lauded for its insights into the nature of the testimony of Scripture but reject the framing

[63] Knowles, *Of Seeds and the People of God*, chapter 6, para. 4, location 4965.
[64] Knowles, *Of Seeds and the People of God*, chapter 6, para. 15, location 5156.
[65] This discussion is explored in greater detail in Knowles, *Of Seeds and the People of God*, chapter 5, para. 10, location 3909.

of this testimony as constitutive. Alternatively, Christian testimony is dependent on God's action.

Borgmann on Testimony

Borgmann gives attention to testimony in his work suggesting that testimony is a necessary form of speech and acts as a counterforce to the effect of the device paradigm. Since devices shape society it is easy to fall into device oriented categories when attempting to argue for particular focal things and practices. It is possible, in an attempt to speak of the benefits of a focal thing and practice, to commodify the focal thing or practice and understand them only as a means to particular ends. A focal thing, in a society shaped by the device paradigm, can easily become about gaining the particular benefit of the focal thing and become a mere commodity. For instance, simplifying Borgmann's position, one might conclude that focal things and practices are worthy of time and attention because they can refocus a person. However, this assessment is only part of the whole picture because focal things and practices are more than their ability to focus. In essence, presenting focal things merely by their function as a focus is to rob focal things of what makes them a counterforce to technology; correlational engagement. Working from within the device paradigm, it is difficult to offer a meaningful argument for a particular focal thing as one can easily devolve into the very technological thinking that Borgmann is seeking to correct by focal things and practices. For example, Borgmann examines the culture of the table suggesting that it serves to refocus the family. However, this benefit is not the only aspect of dining together that makes it a focal thing. In considering the focal thing of dining together, Borgmann suggests, "In the

technological setting, the culture of the table not only focuses our life; it is also distinguished as a place of healing, one that restores us to the depth of the world and to the wholeness of our being."[66] Argumentation for a particular focal thing or practice will inevitably fall under the categories of the device paradigm and in doing fail to act as an engaging counterforce. To avoid this dilemma, Borgmann suggests that speaking of focal things and practices must take the form of testimony.

Borgmann offers testimony because it differs from a technological approach to things in that it does not seek to control the listener. Technology began as an effort to control the dangerous elements (such as nature or disease) and has blossomed into control over every aspect of life. Testimony, in contrast, is not controlling. Borgmann writes "It teaches us what we ought to do by telling us what is. . . . But it remains contestable because it cannot, nor does it want to, control its subject matter or the conditions of its reception."[67] Rather than control its subject or the experience of that subject, testimony is descriptive. For Borgmann, testimony is "the anticipation and recollection of real or concrete things that are their own warrant."[68] For Borgmann, focal things and practices offer an opportunity for engagement and to become reunited with their world. In giving witness to a focal thing, one anticipates future experiences and recalls past experiences. Anticipation and recollection are not coercive but merely emphasise what is clear to the one testifying and find their strength in referencing the experience of a thing. Testimony, in this way, works "to show, to point out, to bring to light, to set before one, and then also to explain and to teach."[69] Eric Higgs, in his book *Nature by Design*, describes this sort of

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[66] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 23, para. 22, location 4892.
[67] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 21, para. 24, location 4290.
[68] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 23, para. 13, location 4182.
[69] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 23, para. 17, location 4229.

testimony, "I do not need a mathematical proof to explain why a great meal is a good thing; I only need to recount my experience with that meal and to have it resonate with others."[70] Borgmann's presentation of testimony as a way of speaking of focal things is similar to the notion of preaching as testimony found in the authors above. Testimony is not a fabrication but an attestation to what is. Testimony is not an attempt to control or persuade but an appeal to what is and what could be.

Modeling Preaching as Testimony in Light of Focal Practice

Having explored preaching as testimony from the work of key authors one can now begin to sketch a sense of what is broadly meant by preaching as testimony. There are three elements of preaching which are essential aspects of preaching as testimony. There is a conception of the preacher as a witness, the form of testimony, and a reliance on God to enact, to create, and to make change. In witness, testimony, and the preacher's humble position, one has the components of preaching as testimony. It may be tempting to identify these elements and suggest that these elements have been isolated and refined, but this would be a false parallel because in each case the witness, the testimony, and a preacher's humble position are presented not as essential features but as dependent features. The witness receives a testimony from God, the testimony is empowered by God's action, and the preacher's words are confirmed in God's continued manifestations of grace. All elements are instigated and completed in relationship to God and his action in the world. It is in this sense that preaching as testimony offers what preaching as a Christian practice was lacking: preaching as a practice exists not for its own purposes but

[70] Higgs, *Nature by Design*, 245.

has instead been instigated, empowered, and confirmed by God. As a result, it would be accurate to suggest that preaching as testimony shares its framework with that of a focal practice in relationship to a focal thing.

Two approaches to preaching have been outlined above: preaching as Christian practice and preaching as testimony. Together they help to sketch what is meant by preaching as focal practice. With this conception in mind, it is accurate to suggest, as Neiman described, preaching understood as a collection of components that are interrelated to and dependant on each other. These components exist in balance with one another but, unlike Neiman's description, they do not exist in the vacuum of the practice alone. Layering the implications of preaching as testimony into Neiman's conception of preaching as a practice one would have to add two key ideas. First, meaning comes from primarily from outside the practice. Second, the components of a practice are interrelated to each other but first and most critically they are informed, empowered, and even instigated by a focal thing, in this case, God. In this manner, preaching as a focal practice does not model itself after the internal goods model of focal practice, as was suggested of Neiman's original description. Instead, preaching as a focal practice reflects Hayworth's guarding model of focal practice.

Conceiving preaching as a focal practice aims at correcting or guarding against many of the assumptions of a device oriented society allowing homiletics to be considered not just for its ends but as a whole practice devoted to God and his work. It is not merely a matter of choosing the best method for preaching or rejecting method altogether rather it is an effort to shape the entirety of preaching with a framework that better represents the nature of preaching. This nature is what is at stake in claiming

preaching as a focal practice modelled after the guarding practice. Such a framework, clarifies the assumptions of preaching, offers direction into the needs and goals of homiletics, and allows preaching to be understood separate from the cultural values of a device oriented society.

Reconceiving Preaching within the Framework of Focal Practice

Thus far preaching as a focal practice has been clarified to reflect the guarding model of the relationship between focal practice and focal thing. The authority of preaching originates in God and is instigated by God and his grace. It is important to acknowledge that framing preaching by way of a focal practice does not intend to swing the pendulum away from method entirely. That is to say, although the guarding model emphasises God's action as the key to understanding the practice it is only such because God's action predicates the entire practice. This emphasis is meant to order the practice not overwhelm it. All components of the preaching event need to be understood as correlative to each other. Thus suggesting that God is focal to the practice is meant to help orient the matters of method into relationship to the theological reality of preaching. Equally, emphasising God's action is meant to orient human action in relationship to God's action. To further this description, one must expand on what it would mean to identify God as focal thing.

God as Focal Thing

As suggested in chapter II, a focal practice is connected and understood only in relation to a focal thing. Preaching as a focal practice clarifies assumptions by directing the study of preaching toward its focal thing God. Before the argument for preaching as a focal

practice patterned after the guarding model can be fully articulated one must be clear as to the nature of its focal thing. In what sense is God, and his grace, a focal thing? Is this an appropriate term to use? To answer this question, we must look closer at Borgmann's treatment of focal things. This discussion is necessary as Borgmann does not extend the term focal thing to God in his work.

Matters of Ultimate Concern

To begin, it is helpful to look closer at what is meant by a focal thing. In essence, a focal thing is connected to matters of ultimate concern. We recall that a return to focal things and practices is Borgmann's counterforce to the effect of the device paradigm. However, what makes a particular thing focal? It has already been established that a focal thing has particular qualities, such as commanding presence, continuity with the world, and a centring power, but Borgmann's definition of focal things originates in a desire to maintain things of ultimate concern. For instance, Borgmann's primary example of the hearth is used throughout his work to demonstrate the shift between the thing and the device but Borgmann rarely suggests a complete return to the frontier life.[71] The loss of the hearth is not the issue. Alternatively, Borgmann suggests that the loss of the hearth leads to the loss of a centre for family life. In contemporary homes, the hearth is replaced by the kitchen which "encompasses cooking, eating, and living and so is central to the house whether it literally has a fireplace or not."[72] In this context, the hearth and the kitchen are things but in the daily use of them, they offer a centre to the family. For

[71] Though he often espouses that wilderness and nature are essential focal things. One could suggest that his desire to engage in practices such as camping would include the act of making and tending to fire and by extension affirm these practices.

[72] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 23, para. 3, location 4667.

Borgmann, family life needs this kind of centre, and so, this centring is a matter of ultimate concern.

To describe matters of ultimate concern differently, one must return to the promise of technology outlined in Borgmann's criticism of the device paradigm. In chapter II, it was noted that the promise of technology is a promise for the good life. This good life is a life of freedom and prosperity. However, Borgmann's criticism of the promise technology suggests that technology cannot live up to the promise and that the human experience requires more than the particular kinds of freedom and prosperity offered by technology. Things that are of ultimate concern are a critical part of the good life and as such must be sought within the device paradigm.

It is here where we arrive at a fundamental criticism of Borgmann's work: how exactly can one identify a focal thing or the matters of ultimate concern with any certainty? This question is particularly important in assessing Borgmann's position because he is not simply interested in the reform of individual life but for society as a whole. In the context of a society, Borgmann's proposals are harder to implement. An individual chooses for him or herself to engage with a focal thing or practice like dining together or running but who chooses what is focal or of ultimate concern to a society? Larry Hickman raises this concern suggesting:

> The issue here is not so much whether we often discourse about matters that are "transcendent" in some sense, and of "ultimate concern" to us, but whether someone might want to give a different account of what such things are, how they arise, and how they function. Simply put, I believe that Borgmann has given too much weight to the integrity of focal things and practices. He does not seem to be interested in their origins and he does not think that they are amenable to testing.[73]

[73] Hickman, "Focaltechnics," 93.

Hickman's criticism is that Borgmann fails to account for diverging and developing ideas of what is of ultimate concern. Hickman explains his meaning using the example of family life. Family life remains a central issue in the contemporary context, but there remain competing views of what family life should be. He writes:

> Discussions of the nature and function of the family are heard today in almost every quarter, and almost all of the parties to these discussions claim to hold the integrity of the family as a matter of ultimate concern. How, then, can there be so much disagreement about what a family is and should be? And more important, how can these profound disagreements be resolved?[74]

For Hickman, Borgmann's turn to practice as a way of disclosing the nature of the focal thing or of discovering the matters of ultimate concern is admirable but fails to fully address these disagreements. Hickman suggests that while practice can disclose much about the family, it must be paired with other strategies, such as studies of demographics and psychological insights, to "help us determine whether our intuitions about what is worthy of ultimate concern in these matters are warranted."[75] Hickman's observation is valid particularly when discussing matters of social order and the practices that make up that social order. However, Hickman's suggestion does not account for those things or practice that are harder, if not altogether impossible, to quantify in this manner. In the context of preaching, the divine elements of the preaching event cannot be quantified as easily as other focal things.

In the case of these divine concerns, it is helpful to examine a criticism, similar to Hickman's, that asks a different question of ultimate concerns. If we are to reject the vision of the good life offered by technology what is the alternative vision of the good

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[74] Hickman, "Focaltechnics," 102.
[75] Hickman, "Focaltechnics," 102.

life? Borgmann's call to pursue a different version of the good life is good, but he does not offer a clear picture of the good life. Brent Waters suggests:

> To expose the vacuity of the device paradigm does not necessarily render various focal things good. By and large we do not know why commended focal things are good in their own right, whether there is a hierarchy among these focal things, and whether or not there is a priority of focal practices internal to the respective things. For instance, why are the wilderness, running, family meals, and music good? What is the priority among these goods? Is it better to practice baroque rather than jazz?[76]

For Waters, Borgmann's criticisms of the device paradigm are clear and his reform by way of focal things is helpful, but Borgmann fails to offer direction as to the origins and foundations on which particular focal things are found to be of ultimate concern.

These criticisms acknowledge a limitation in Borgmann's treatment of focal things and practices that must be understood before turning to the matter of God as a focal thing. Borgmann presents focal things and practices in contrast to devices. The latter are instruments of creation and control and the former are "unprocurable and finally beyond our control."[77] Focal things and practices, presented as such, present a problem in attempting to quantify and discuss them. Borgmann acknowledges this limitation when he writes "An ultimate concern can so fully engage one's capabilities only because it has so many dimensions. But if I find that a thing engages my powers entirely, I must know that it also may exceed them. Thus I can never possess a matter of ultimate concern; I may fall short of it or even be mistaken about it."[78] This limitation is why Borgmann insists on the necessity of testimony. Testimony, as a sharing of one's experience, is not merely an argument or an act of persuasion but attests to that which is not fully within

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[76] Waters, *Christian Moral Theology*, 161.
[77] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 24, para. 19, location 5209.
[78] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 21, para. 17, location 4199.

one's ability to create or control. One's experience of a focal thing discloses something of ultimate concern. This disclosure, though we "may fall short of it or even be mistaken about it,"[79] is the foundation on which Borgmann's appeal to focal things is built.

With this discussion of the limitations of Borgmann's notion of ultimate concerns and focal things, we can now turn to the matter of God as a focal thing. It was noted earlier that Borgmann does not claim God to be a focal thing, but he does suggest that divinity plays a role in his desire to push past hyperrealism.[80] In examining Borgmann's proposal for focal things, Waters is surprised that Borgmann never fully embraces God's role in framing what the good life is. He writes:

> Presumably, divinity provides a transcendent *telos* that delimits and orders focal things and practices. To pass through technology, he claims, is to enter a realm of simplicity that is also the realm of the holy. Yet, unless he is invoking polytheistic divinity, is not the divine the highest good which in turn delineates all lesser goods, things, and practices? Borgmann drops some hints that this may very well be the case. He baldly declares that the most worthwhile public values, such as compassion and care, have religious origins, particularly Christianity in Western culture . . . And, arguably, Borgmann draws on the Eucharist as the paradigmatic model of what is entailed in focal things and practices. He asserts that only a short step separates the fellowship of the familial table and the Lord's Table, and that the former is the "little sibling" of the latter.[81]

Despite drawing on theology and ecclesial traditions, Borgmann never fully commits to them as central to his proposals. This lack of commitment is not problematic for the argument here, but it does mean that exploration of the idea of God as focal thing must be found in the application of Borgmann's ideas.

One such instance of connecting the divine to focal things is found in Marva Dawn's book *Unfettered Hope*. Building on Borgmann's work, she argues that

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[79] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 21, para. 17, location 4199.
[80] Borgmann, *Power Failure*, chapter 4.
[81] Waters, *Christian Moral Theology*, 161.

"Christianity provides focal concerns worthy of our creation as human beings and efficacious for dealing with the encroachments and fettering of our technologized, commodified milieu."[82] With this in mind, she suggests two ultimate concerns that can orient Christianity in contemporary life: the love of God and the love of the neighbour. She explains "These two loves are to be the central and controlling commitments of a Christian's personal and home life, working life, corporate life in the Christian community. These twin focal concerns change the way we spend our money, time, energy, and love."[83] Dawn has taken a first step toward appreciating what Borgmann offers theology by highlighting the focal concerns of loving God and loving neighbour. Christian virtues, such as love, are truly focal things in the Christian faith. These are both the fruits of God's Spirit at work and worthy pursuits by which to frame daily life and life in the community. In this context, virtues live up to Borgmann's notion of focal things. However, emphasising virtues as focal risks emphasising human agency and missing the essential role of the divine. Much like the discussion of Nouwen at the outset of this chapter, a virtuous life is not the product of human effort or devotion. It is not enough to emphasise virtues as matters of focal concern, but instead one must acknowledge the one who calls people to live a virtuous life and who is working to bring about this new life. It would be fair to suggest that Dawn's proposal for the virtue of love as a focal thing is helpful in that it points to the source of that love, to God, who is the ultimate concern and by extension the ultimate focal thing.

It is important to note that it is uncommon to apply Borgmann's notion of a focal thing to God. Much like Dawn, the practices of the church are put into the context of

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[82] Dawn, *Unfettered Hope*, 76.
[83] Dawn, *Unfettered Hope*, 77.

focal practice but the relative focal thing tends to be aimed at extensions of God's character and purposes in the world or left unconsidered. For instance, in his text *Transforming Our Days*, Richard Gaillardetz explores Christian spirituality through the lens of focal practice but does so by referring to that which is focal in a broad sense that encompasses focal things and practices under one general conception.[84] Paul Heidebrecht makes a similar use of Borgmann's focal practices. In his work *Beyond Cutting Edge*, he examines the relationship between theology and technology by exploring the theology of John Howard Yoder in light of the role of technology. Borgmann's work is used to help in describing the role of technology and the notion of focal practice is connected to reformation of technology but there is not clear indication as to focal things.[85] In both of these examples the notion of focal things is left unaddressed or homogenized into the broader idea of the focal. The homogenizing of focal things and practices into one concept can be forgiven because, as noted throughout this chapter, Borgmann's conception of focal things and practices is somewhat fluid in his writing.[86] At times, the distinction between a focal practice and a focal thing is vague but on the whole this distinction is critical to applying Borgmann and especially important for a theological application of Borgmann's ideas. Without a clear distinction, the specifics of what a practice is and how it relates to matters of ultimate concern can be lost. This is the case made in the descriptions of preaching as a Christian practice and preaching as a testimony. These descriptions could not have been made if not for a clear understanding

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[84] Gaillardetz, *Transforming Our Days*, 26.

[85] Heidebrecht, *Beyond Cutting Edge*, 20.

[86] This distinction is complex as seen in the discussion of focal practices which have an internal focal thing and focal practices that have an external focal thing. In the context of the former it is particularly hard to see a distinction between the thing and practice.

of the relationship between focal thing and focal practice in either approach. It is then necessary, in applying Borgmann to matters of theology to have a clear discussion of what Borgmann means by focal things and focal practices.

Dawn, Gaillardetz, Heidebrecht, and even Borgmann come close to identifying God within the confines of focal thing but stop short of it. Though, there are not clear reasons for this offered in these texts we can, at the very least, propose a few reasons why one might not extend the term focal thing to God. First, Borgmann's use of focal thing is easily conflated with his description of a thing. That is to say, that when Borgmann describes things in his description of the device paradigm and then suggests a return to focal things it can sound like a return to things. This is a faulty view. While some of what Borgmann describes as focal things can be understood as a thing, the term focal things is meant to doubly emphasise the engagement with the focal thing and the relationship between the focal thing and the person.[87] A focal thing does not necessarily have a strict physicality. The suggestion that God exists as a focal thing is meant to emphasise the need to engage with God and be in relationship with him. Second, the term focal thing might objectify God. Borgmann never applies the term focal thing to a person. It is either applied to a physical object, like the hearth, or it is applied to an engaging experience, like that of wilderness. Focal things, though one can engage with them, tend to be passive or lack will of their own. In using the term focal thing to describe God one must be careful not to describe God as exactly the same as the hearth or as wilderness because God is unique and has a personhood, a will, and is active. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, thinking of God as a focal thing risks creating a vision of God that suits

[87] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 23

one's interests. If we are to constrain God to this human metaphor it is very likely that the metaphor will be incomplete or faulty. God, in his complexities and mysteries, is difficult to constrain to one description. It is far easier to speak of the virtues as focal things or to merely emphasis the nature of focal practices because these are easier to describe within the confines of Borgmann's metaphor. This final concern is an important note of caution for the following discussion of God as focal thing. Describing God as focal thing is not meant to confine God to the limits of Borgmann's work. Rather, Borgmann's description of focal thing can apply to God but in every case God extends far past the contours of a focal thing.

The Contours of God as Focal Thing

With the matter of ultimate concerns in mind, we can turn to the matter of God as focal thing. Three considerations shape Borgmann's definition of a focal thing: a focal thing must have a commanding presence, continuity with the world, and a centring power.[88] To use the term focal thing to describe God and his work one must be able to describe God by way of these three features.

To the first, God has a commanding presence in that a relationship with God, in Christ, is both demanding and attractive. We recall that there were two key features of commanding presence: they make demands on a person, and they are attractive. The notion of making demands means that engagement requires something of the person who is engaging. It is important in this sense to consider the call of Christ is a call to engage in a certain way of life, a particular purpose, within the framework of the gospel. The gospel

[88] Outlined in chapter 2.

itself is a call to engaging with a difficult road that asks much of the people who follow it. It is this call to follow after Christ that is a key feature of the commanding presence of God. To follow in the way of Christ is to lay down all, to give everything, to sacrifice. As Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matt 16:24–25 ESV) The call to follow and sacrifice, by picking up one's cross, are the two ways in which a relationship with God is demanding, and as such God has a commanding presence. The second feature of the commanding presence is the attractive nature of the thing. In the example of running this attractiveness was the unique and wondrous experience of a particular run. A life in relationship with God is a uniquely inspired experience. To experience God, as Moses did on the mountain, as the disciples did in Christ, or as Paul did on the road to Damascus, is always a powerful and life-changing experience. In this sense, to say that God, in his nature, is attractive would be something of an understatement. Thus, attractive may not be a sufficient word for what an encounter with the living God is like, but for description, it is at the very least an acceptable parallel in an experience of God as attractive in the sense of having a commanding presence.

To the second, God exists in continuity with the world in that all of humanity's existence, and all of creation is ordered through him. Continuity with the world, as suggested by Borgmann, means that a focal thing is rooted in the context in which they exist. It would be difficult to imagine a sense in which God does not concern himself with the context of the world in which a person exists. The best example of this is again the example of Christ. In Christ, one finds the divine coming incredibly close to the

world, existing in human form as a part of the world. In this sense, Christ is eternally in continuity with the world in which he chose to act. Christ demonstrates that God is concerned with the world in which a person exists and even more so that God chooses to engage with his creation on a direct level. It might even be fair to say that Christ's example on Earth demonstrates God's desire to be in continuity with the world. Christ enters into the story of humanity, and in entering the world is not content to merely engage with the structure or social order of the day but pushes past the boundaries of tradition to explore and engage the margins. Christ not only is in continuity with the world but further challenges the reigning conceptions of the world. The life of Christ, and even his death and resurrection are linked in every step to the world and the call to consider one's place in it. Christ is not only is in continuity with the world but further challenges one's existence and understanding within the world. In this context, the continuity that Borgmann is describing begins to feel somewhat inadequate. To say that God exists in continuity with the world is again an understatement but there is, at the very least, a parallel to Borgmann's sense of a focal thing.

To the third, an encounter with God is a centring experience. Orientation toward God could be a theme for God's work of restoration in the world. That is to say, that the promise of God's work in the world is summed up in the promise of the book of Revelation where God proclaims "Behold, I am making all things new" (Rev 21:5). There is, in this statement and throughout the testimony of Scripture, a sense in which God at the centre of all things makes all things new. This centring happens in three key ways, restoration, reconciliation, and, most of all, resurrection. Each of these is a centring experience in which that which is out of order with God is reordered in light of him. This

centring goes beyond merely conceptual reordering as if God only enlightens one's understanding, but the reordering of restoration, reconciliation and resurrection is further made real in the work of Christ. These are not only matters of intellectual or psychological reordering but tangible, life-changing, world-altering reordering. Here, as is the case above, God not only fulfils the requirement of a centring experience his work in Christ goes beyond a centring experience to being the centre of all life. Thus, to describe an experience of God and his mercy as a centring experience is a shadow of a description but it does give some indication that Borgmann's term of focal thing has some application to God.

The parameters of a focal thing, as laid out by Borgmann, can apply to God but they offer, at best, a low view of who God is and what he is accomplishing in the world. While one can use the label of focal thing to describe God, it may be more appropriate to describe God as the most focal of all things. To play on biblical language, as Christ is the King of kings, one might describe God as the Focal Thing of focal things. If anything in this world has a commanding presence, is in continuity with the world, and offers a centring experience it is God and his work in Christ. If this is true, then Borgmann's concerns for the distortion of all things as a result of the device paradigm should cause great alarm for theologians and believers alike. In concept, a relationship with God is at risk of becoming commodified and distorting the nature of God as focal to one's existence. Even further, Borgmann's counter to the device paradigm, a dedication to focal things, is critical for living in a device oriented culture. Dedication to God, as the Focal

Thing of focal things, is the way in which one can orient their place in the world and as such counter the potential dangers of acquiescing to the culture of the device.[89]

In this framework preaching as a focal practice comes to the fore, not as a remarkable practice in its own right, but as a distinct aspect of dedication to God. The practice exists not simply as a culmination of tradition and history but as a response to whom God has revealed himself to be, to who God is in the present moment, and to whom God will continue to be.[90] The effort of preaching and the effort of listening to preaching is not an effort to make something happen in one's life or the community but to acknowledge what has already happened and what is happening in Christ. In this sense, preaching does not evoke God, as if it calls him to being or suddenly invites his presence. Instead, preaching acknowledges the relationship between God and the people by way of engaging in the practice. Preaching provokes those present, preacher and listener alike, into attentiveness of who God is, what he has done, and what he is doing. In the preaching event, a listener engages, not out of a desire for spiritual growth or wisdom, but so that they could be oriented to God. Further, the preacher does not enter this practice as the master practitioner (though skilled they may be) they enter as a servant called, as a witness, to speak of the God who is at the centre of the practice. A preacher preaches, not out a desire or ability to create change in the congregation, but to testify to that which is focal: God.

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[89] This study of God as focal thing has interesting implications for further study. The suggestions here are tentative and are certainly not exhaustive. However, for the purposes of this dissertation they should give some indication as to the focal nature of God.

[90] This is not to suggest that preaching does not have history and tradition that influences and shapes the practice but that the history and tradition do not primarily define the practice as suggested in the study of preaching as Christian practice. The history and tradition are best understood secondary to God's effective power and authority in preaching.

A Focal Community with Focal Practices

This chapter began by describing by way of Haworth's models of the relationship between a focal thing and a focal practice. It has been argued that while preaching, as a product of the history and tradition of the Christian faith, can be understood by way of Haworth's internal goods model this model fails to acknowledge the role of the divine in the preaching event. Alternatively, in conjunction with the concept of preaching as testimony, it has been suggested that the guarding model best reflects the relationship between the focal practice of preaching and the focal thing of God and his grace. Thus far, the description of preaching as a focal practice has focused on developing God as focal thing. This development is crucial to the description of preaching as a focal practice because God, as focal thing, gives context to the practice. With this foundation, we can now examine the nature of focal practices with the context of Christian community.

To assist in this examination, we will turn our attention to the work of Brent Waters in his book *Christian Moral Theology in the Emerging Technoculture*. Waters draws on Borgmann's focal things and practices to describe the church and its practices. He writes "The church is (or should be) a focal community with attendant focal practices. These practices do not draw attention to themselves or to the practitioners, but bear witness to Christ as Lord of the church and creation."[91] He calls the church a focal community because they do not merely engage in focal practices but as part of the community the people are mutually committed to these practices. To say another way, the church is united in the practice. As a focal community the church exists, not for its own benefit, nor strictly for the benefit of its members but to stand witness to what God has

[91] Waters, *Christian Moral Theology*, 253.

done and what God will do. For Waters, this means that the practices of the church are acts of remembrance and anticipation. The church is rooted in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and at the same time is an eschatologically minded community. "Whenever Christians remember Jesus as the incarnate Words of God, their attention is necessarily redirected toward the promised return that they anticipate."[92] In this manner, the focal practices of the church function as part of the rhythm of remembering and anticipating God's grace made manifest in Christ.

Building on this rhythm Waters identifies two orientations for the church that assist in countering the effect of technology. These orientations are "focal remembrance"[93] and "focal eschatology."[94] First, focal remembrance acknowledges what God has already done in Christ. Waters writes "One cannot be a Christian without remembering the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus. This memory is preserved is Scripture, refined in doctrine, enacted in worship, and celebrated in the sacraments."[95] God has chosen to disclose something of himself in the person and life of Jesus and within the words of scripture. These are remembered in the practices of the church and are the source on which the practices are established. Second, focal eschatology is an act of anticipation of what God has promised. Waters writes:

> The work initiated by God in the Word made flesh is not yet complete, or, to change the metaphor, the final chapter of this story is not yet written: hence the ensuing restlessness of the Christian moral life; its sense of unsettled but patient pilgrimage. This eschatological orientation inspires an awareness that new and renewing possibilities for ordering human life in this time between the times can and do occur, precisely because it acts as a mirror casting attention back to the

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[92] Waters, *Christian Moral Theology*, 273.
[93] Waters, *Christian Moral Theology*, 276
[94] Waters, *Christian Moral Theology*, 277.
[95] Waters, *Christian Moral Theology*, 277.

remembered.[96]

Looking forward the church is constantly reminded of the work of God not yet complete. It is necessary for the church, looking to an eventual future, to remain both faithful to their identity but engaged with the shifting culture around them. For Waters, engaging in focal practices that promote focal remembrance and focal orientation serves to orient the church within the context of shifting cultures and particularly within a device-oriented society.

This notion of orientation is important to Waters' argument because he suggests that a society shaped by technology is nomadic. He writes "The nomadic life of the emerging technoculture may be easy and convenient, but it cannot preserve the supportive social bonds that are crucial in orienting human life and lives toward their proper teleological and eschatological ends."[97] The disorientation of contemporary life is countered in Waters' proposal to focus on remembering and anticipation. Focusing on the past and the future connects the church to what God has done and what God has promised in order to get a sense of God in the moment.

Waters' framing of the focal practices of the church within the context of focal remembrance and focal eschatology creates an adequate context from which to explore a particular practice.[98] However, his view lacks specificity as to the focal nature of God in the moment. That is to say, that it seems that while the past and the future do give context to the immediate situation they do not, on their own, give focus to God as he is present and alive in the now. Waters' description implies that there is a sense of God in the

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[96] Waters, *Christian Moral Theology*, 277.

[97] Waters, *Christian Moral Theology*, 277.

[98] He uses them to briefly explore the practices of baptism, the Eucharist, and Sabbath. Waters, *Christian Moral Theology*, 278–90.

present but this sense is captured mainly as an extension of the other two focal orientations. With this in mind, one can add an additional focal orientation which can tentatively be called the *focal reality*. That is to say, a focal practice includes the acts of remembrance and anticipation, as outline by Waters, but must acknowledge the activity of God in whom the purposes of the practice are being realized.

The notion of focal reality is critical to understanding focal practices and the conception of preaching as focal practice being presented here. That is to say, that all Christian practices hinge on God's action. In the act of remembrance we draw on the written and communal memory of God's past actions. In the act of anticipation we expect that God will act again. Finally, focal practice must be founded on the focal reality that God is an active God, present and working in the world. The practice serves to draw all three orientations to the surface and in engaging in the focal practices of the church one is engaged in focal remembrance of God, confronted by the focal reality of God, and expectant of God's future action by way of a focal eschatology.

Waters' perspective offers a starting point for the discussion of preaching as a focal practice. His suggestion of focal orientations will be used to frame what is meant by preaching as a focal practice. However, before turning to these orientations one final matter must be clarified. Waters' definition for the church, as mentioned above, conceives of the practices of the church as practices engaged in by the church as a whole. This is critical to the description of preaching as a focal practice being offered here. In the previous chapter, it was suggested that homiletics needs to be careful to consider the practice of preaching as a complete practice in which the means and the ends of preaching are interwoven and related to each other. It was argued that, following the

device paradigm, there is a temptation to isolate the human components of preaching (preacher, listener, and language) in order to better understand how they function and can be improved. The view of preaching as a focal practice presented here will focus primarily on the practice by way of the relationship between the church and the divine. In this context, the church stands for the human aspects of preaching: the preacher, the congregation and their shared experiences of talking and listening. Though the preacher has a specialized role within the practice of preaching, preaching as a focal practice treats this role as part of the human aspect of the practice. The same is true of a listener. Both the preacher and the listener are part of the larger body of human engagement with the practice and as such in the description of preaching as a focal practice they must be understood in conjunction as co-members of the same body of engaged in one practice.[99] The following discussion will emphasise the role of the church as a whole entity. There may be an occasional need to describe the roles of preacher and listener but these are roles within the larger context of the community engaged in a focal practice.

Preaching as Focal Practice: A Pattern of Focal Orientation

Entering into this discussion of the three orientations of preaching as focal practice one must acknowledge something of a pattern. The nature of time and the manner in which we experience life means that we are always shifting from the expectation of what will happen to the moment in which it happens, and, finally, to the point where the experience becomes a memory. At the same time, that memory becomes the foundation for our future expectations in which the pattern begins again. This process of memory spawning

[99] This is framing of the practice is not unique to the proposal of preaching as a focal practice rather this is a point of emphasis in order to give some context to the material that follows.

expectations which are eventually realised is the fundamental pattern of preaching as a focal practice. This pattern becomes all the more compelling when we observe God's action through this lens. When we remember God's actions, experience God's actions, and expect God's action, we find ourselves in the midst of a most miraculous relationship, a relationship with God. In engaging in this pattern, we enter into a correlational coexistence with God and his purposes.

It is at this point that we must return to a critical aspect of things and practices. What separates things from devices is that in things the relationship between means and ends inseparable. One cannot emphasis either means or ends but must understand them as part of the whole. In the case of preaching, the description of remembering, encountering, and anticipating God's action are descriptions of human actions in relationship to God's action. While the model of focal practice suggests that God is at the centre of the practice it does not do so to the exclusion of human action in the practice. In the practice, people gather to remember God's action. We understand this action in relationship to what God has done but the act of remembering remains a human action. Preaching then is best understood not at the separation between God's action and human action but in the relationship between them. Preaching that overemphasises the role of method encourages the separation of human action from God's action. Preaching that is understood as a focal practice is meant to emphasis the relationship between God and his actions, and humanity and their actions. To that end, the suggestion that preaching is a focal practice is a suggestion that the human and divine aspects of preaching are inseparable and bound in a correlative coexistence. This will be made clearer in the descriptions of focal remembering, focal reality, and focal eschatology below.

Preaching as Focal Practice: Focal Remembering

The task of focal remembering is rooted in the past. In the act of preaching, the congregation draws on the testimonies of who God is to remember whom God has already disclosed himself to be. The most influential of these is the cross of Christ. That is to say, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is the definitive act of God's self-disclosure. When the community gathers to engage in the focal practice of preaching they recall the work that began in Christ. Further, the church has contact with the roots of the Christian faith in the testimony of scripture. The bible is a record of God's disclosure to first the people of Israel and second the followers of Jesus. As suggested above, scripture is a form of testimony of who God is and how he has acted and as such is a primary source of focal remembrance. Beyond the life of Christ and the broader disclosures of scripture, there are two other sources of memory: historical memory and living memory. First, historical memory is the testimony of the church. The stories, writings, and reflections that have been passed down through history. Here, the church can remember how God has disclosed himself in various contexts and to different people in the history of the church. Second, there is a living memory. This living memory is essentially the same kind of memory as historical memory, in that it captures how God has disclosed himself as a living God in the lives of the community of faith. The main difference here is that these testimonies are not merely a matter of history but are the testimonies of people who are present at the gathering. These are the experiences of the members of the community and are not a matter of record but a living memory of someone who is present. Together, there are four sources of focal remembering: the person of Christ, scripture, historical memory, and living memory.

The idea of focal remembering echoes what Charles L. Campbell has proposed in his work *Preaching Jesus*.[100] Following Campbell, preaching is not merely a matter of propositional truths rather it is a formative text. Campbell is correct in pushing against an effort to limit scripture to ideas that can be preached. However, a distinction needs to be made between Campbell and what is being suggested for focal remembering. Campbell argues that preaching is part of discipleship into the social norms of Christianity which teaches the language of faith by the speaking the language of faith.[101] While this may be a potential outcome of preaching, one must distinguish the essential difference between the purpose of preaching and the effect of preaching. That is to say, that while engaging with the practice of preaching may be formative, in the manner Campbell suggests, this formation is not primarily a result of the practice but by an encounter with God. In this sense, the account of Jesus in scripture is not to be mined for propositional truth or viewed merely as a means of transmitting social orders but it is a telling of who God is, a testimony of God, and a memory of God's past actions. In the context of preaching, it draws the community of faith into a relationship with God by way of focal remembering.

Here, the relationship between human action, remembering, and God's action in the past create a context in which the community of faith can encounter God.

Preaching as Focal Practice: Focal Reality

To describe preaching as a focal practice, one must acknowledge that which is focal. Focal remembering emphasises the nature of God as he has disclosed himself in the past.

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[100] We recall a brief discussion of Campbell's work in chapter 1 in the presentation of David Lose's work on preaching as confession.

[101] Campbell, *Preaching Jesus*, 241–9.

However, for a complete understanding of God as the focal thing emphasised in the focal practice of preaching, we must acknowledge God's presence at the moment. That is to say, that God, as a living and active God, is engaged in life today. When the community of faith gathers to participate in the focal practice of preaching, they are making God focal in the present. Notice again, it is not that people create God's presence but instead act in a manner that acknowledges God. This acknowledging of God's presence is a human action that in relationship to God's action is a fundamental part of what is happening in the preaching event. God's Spirit is present in the practice of preaching. It has been argued that human agency is incomplete without divine agency and that God is the one who is enacting change and working transformation in the practice of preaching. To suggest that God's Spirit is real and present in the community is to suggest that God is himself fulfilling the purposes of the practice. As noted in the discussion on testimony, God is active before, during, and after the practice of preaching by inspiring, working, and affirming the experience of preaching. Preaching, as a focal practice, is a matter of turning attention to God who, by his Spirit, is active and present in the community of faith. Here we find that the human effort of attentiveness is met by God's effort to be present and this relationship is drawn into focus by the practice.

Preaching as Focal Practice: Focal Eschatology

To describe preaching as having a focal eschatology, we must return to the pattern described above. The congregation gathers and participates in focal remembrance of what God has done in the past. The congregation experiences God in focal reality wherein God is present and active in the moment. Finally, the congregation awaits God's action in the

future by way of a focal eschatology. However, just as past was once present and the present was once an imagined future these three aspects of focal orientation are a part of a pattern of focal practice wherein God's action past, present, and expected in the future are considered again and again. Focal eschatology, as laid out by Waters, suggests that part of a focal practice is the anticipation of what will come. In making God focal in the present, the community of faith is also concerned with looking to God as the focal centre of their future. Preaching, as a focal practice, is not merely concerned with remembering but is also an act of anticipation. When the community gathers to share in the practice of preaching, they leave expectant that God, who has acted in the past and who was present in the gathering, will act again. In this sense, preaching, as a practice that serves to orient people to God, encourages the community to remain focused on God when the practice concludes, and the participants disperse. In this sense, preaching as a focal practice encourages a focal eschatology, an outlook on life that looks for God to act again.

Preaching as a focal practice has been described as a matter of focal orientation. This focal orientation entails consideration of God's action in the past, present, and the future. The practice then considers three focal concerns: focal remembering of God, the focal reality of God, and a focal eschatology. Taken together, they allow us to present a complete picture of what preaching as focal practice looks like. Preaching as a focal practice is a communal effort to engage in focal remembrance in which we experience something of the focal reality of God, and, as a result, we await God's future in focal eschatology. In all instances, the efforts of preaching are not simply a matter of human agency, as if we could manifest our own salvation, but instead, it is a communal effort to look to God as the source of all authority and power and expect that He will act.

Preaching as a focal practice exists and is understood first by God's action but this is not meant to completely disregard human action in the practice. Instead it is meant to frame the practice by way of the relationship between both divine and human action in a correlational coexistence. To make this clearer it may be helpful to return to Strong's use of the term. We recall that he suggested that things and people have a relationship that is more complex than the ends of that relationship. He argued that engaging with things helps give a person's life context, meaning, and purpose. This engagement is a critical part of human existence and to lose that level of engagement is to lose something of ourselves. Returning to the discussion of focal things and practices we can note that Strong's argument for the correlation between things and people could be applied to the relationship between God and humanity. That is to say, a relationship with God frames human existence giving a person context, meaning, and purpose. Thus, if, in our practices, we separate the relationship between human action and divine action we lose a critical part of why the practice exists and how the practice functions. Borrowing from Strong's language: by responding to God in his full dimensions, we too emerge in the fullness of our dimensions. If we sever our bonds with God by dominating him, we too are diminished.[102] Preaching as a focal practice emphasises the correlational relationship between God and humanity.

The Authority of Preaching

As we approach the end of this chapter we should return to the matter of authority in preaching. Through this study the question of authority has remained a critical issue. The

[102] Strong, *Crazy Mountains*, 70. This is an adaptation of Strong's word quoted in chapter 2 of this dissertation.

effort to relocate the authority of the preacher toward the listener, which began in the New Homiletic, was a first step toward reconsidering authority in preaching. However, this approach leaves authority within the context of the human aspects of preaching. As a corrective, this chapter has attempted to sketch a vision of preaching as a focal practice. As a focal practice, preaching is dependent on that which is focal: God and his grace. God is the instigator of the practice, God is the one who empowers the practice, and God is the one who affirms the practice. In every instance, preaching as a focal practice is dependent on God's action to frame the practice. In this context, preaching as a focal practice engages in three focal orientations: focal remembrance, focal reality, and focal eschatology. Each of these is meant to acknowledge God's role in shaping and inspiring the practice. As we return to the issue of authority, we must recontextualize human authority in relationship to God's authority.

Preaching as focal practice relocates authority in preaching to the external focal thing of God. In this sense, God is the one who makes preaching authoritative. At the centre of the focal practice is the focal thing that inspires the practice, that empowers the practice, and that completes the practice. Putting God at the centre of the preaching event locates the authority of preaching, the aspect of preaching that is worthy of time and attention, in God and the experience of his grace. This experience is not predicated on the quality of the preaching, on the previous experiences of the listener, or the effectiveness of language. The experience of preaching, in tandem with every experience of God's grace in the world, is entirely a result of God's effort to offer himself. This framework radically shapes the nature of every other component in preaching and with God as *the* authority of preaching the nature of the authority of the preacher, authority of the listener,

and the authority of language changes. As each moves from a potential source of power to a position of powerlessness, of submission to *the* authority of preaching: God and the manifestations of his grace.

As with the diagram of a focal thing and practice offered in chapter III, one could now model the relationship between preaching and God to capture further what is meant in framing preaching in this way (*fig. 13*). Notice, the centre is God and the manifestations of his grace. God is linked by a bold arrow to the various elements of the

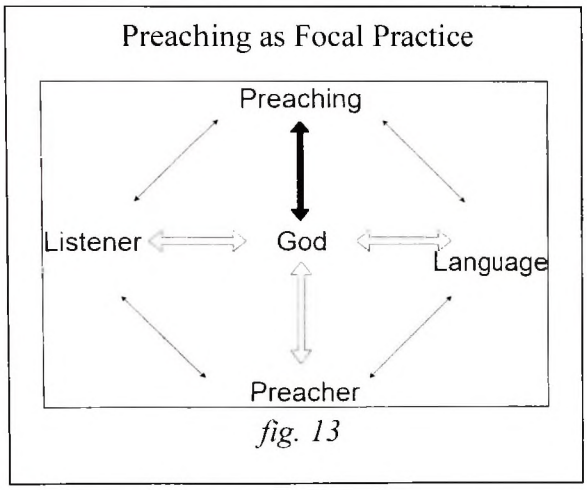

fig. 13

practice of preaching: the practice itself, the listener, the preacher, language, and experience of the practice. Notice each of these elements has a primary, or most critical, link to God (the focal thing) and then each has a connecting arrow between them.[103] Further, reflecting the guarding model of a focal thing and practice the link between God and the practice of preaching is further marked by a solid black arrow. This colouring is meant to emphasise the connection between the practice and the focal thing. Further, note that all the arrows are bidirectional. This is meant to emphasise that each element, though it can be identified as a part of the preaching event, is linked and inseparable from all

[103] Again, these arrows, in an ideal diagram, would connect all the elements to each other. For example, one would need to connect "language" and "preacher" to each other.

other parts of the practice. Though God is at the centre, focal to the practice, the diagram would be incomplete if all aspects went from God and never returned. Alternatively, they exist in relationship. It should further be noted that each of these elements could very well be broken down further into their own components which in turn could be related to God and the other elements on the diagram. Consider the example of the listener who is a collection of their own history, experience, understanding, etc. Similarly, one could break down the element of "practice" into the components of a practice identified by Long and Neiman's definition from above. For simplicity in the diagram, these elements have been summarised into their major heading, but there could be, understanding preaching as a complex practice, a more thorough diagram that includes a relationship between each of these elements as well. An extrapolation such as this would likely be impossible to be diagrammed as the sheer volume of connections would overwhelm the point of the diagram. With this diagram in mind, one can return to the discussion of the three authorities explored by the New Homiletic reframed in the context of preaching as a focal practice.

Preaching as focal practice reframes the authority of the preacher. In the study of Homiletics, the authority of the preacher can be subverted in one of two ways. The first, as identified in our study of the New Homiletic, is to obscure the authority of the preacher behind the experience of the listener by way of the effective application of language. However, this subversion is incomplete because preaching remains a form of communication. As such, there will always be the presence of the authority of the preacher, as one who speaks. One can try to minimise this authority by changing how that authority speaks but as long as one person speaks, or even if many people are given a

chance to speak, there will be an authority granted to them if only the authority as the one who is speaking. The second way to subvert the authority of the preacher, as modeled in preaching as testimony, is to understand its origins, its limits, and its potential. The authority of preaching, and by extension the authority of the preacher, is founded on the authority of God. When God calls someone to testify, they are given a responsibility and the authority to speak. That being said, the authority is limited. In conjunction with Knowles' perspective, the words of the preacher are incomplete without further confirmation in the manifestation of God's grace. Therein lies the potential in the authority of the preacher. The preacher must yield their authority, as the one who speaks and give up their moment of power for the sake of focusing on the one who is powerful.

Preaching as focal practice reframes the authority of the listener. The authority of the listener was placed at the centre of the preaching event in the approaches of the New Homiletic. This authority had been overlooked by homiletics, and the insights gleaned from considering the importance of the listener to preaching have been staggering. However, much like the authority of the preacher, the authority of the listener must be predicated on God's authority. We recall that the authority of the listener is based primarily on their experience. The preacher relies on the authority of these experiences to shape the listener. Much like the preacher's testimony, these experiences testify to the nature of God and the world. When these experiences prove to be authoritative and informative about God, it is not the result of the preacher creating this connection or drawing these experiences into view. Alternatively, the connections are an outcome of placing God at the centre of one's life, as a focal thing, and allowing his authority to reign in the moment and in doing so redefine the experience. To this end, a listener

chooses to submit not to the preacher or the sermon but to the authority of God that enacts and fulfils the practice of preaching. The listener does not submit to the structure of human authority, such as the dynamic of preacher over the congregation. Alternatively, they submit to the structure of divine authority understanding that, despite the limitations of the practice, God has chosen to act through preaching and will act in this manner again.

Finally, preaching as focal practice reframes the authority of language. Here, one arrives at the complex reality of the preaching event. Despite depending on God, at the centre of the practice of preaching, the practice exists in the context of a gathering of people within which the preacher and the listeners act. The preacher, despite yielding their authority, still speaks and the listener, despite submitting their authority, still listens to these words and has an experience of them. Even still, the practice requires the preacher to prepare and present something of the testimony they have been given. In this context, the authority of language must submit as well in service to God and his grace. Language must not be viewed merely as an effective agent of change but must become an agent of dependence. That is to say, that matters of the form of a sermon and the methods of preaching are not central to the practice of preaching but are used in service to God. The words become humble offerings waiting in expectant hope that God will act, as he has acted in the past, through these offerings. In this sense, the preacher cannot control the outcomes of preaching by effectively employing language instead the preacher submits their words to the authoritative power of God.

Placing God as the focal centre of the practice of preaching changes fundamentally how the preaching event is conceived. It turns the tables of contemporary

preaching by focusing first on God, and his work in preaching and in turn reframes the components of the preaching event. This helps to correct an overemphasis on method as the effective means of preaching. At the same time, we should be cautious that place God at the focal centre of practice does not lead to an undervaluing of human action. Alternatively, placing God at the focal centre is meant to acknowledge the fundamental relationship between God's action and human action. In this chapter, there has been a discussion of how this changes the preaching event, but there has yet to be a meaningful discussion as to how this impacts the preacher. With this new conceptual framework of preaching, one now must consider the implications for the daily task of the preacher. What does it look like to preach from a position of humility? How can a preacher write a sermon and at the same time yield their authority? The answer comes by way of a new metaphor for the role of the preacher: the preacher as navigator. Unpacking this metaphor will be the task of the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE PREACHER AS NAVIGATOR

The primary goal of this chapter is offer a description of the task of the preacher. We began this study by examining how the act of preaching is vulnerable to the effect of the device paradigm. Conceiving preaching as focal practice, as described in the previous chapter, serves to guard against this vulnerability by emphasising preaching's fundamental dependence on God's action. Following Haworth's guarding model of focal practice, preaching as focal practice gains its significance and purpose from its relative focal thing. God is the focal thing to preaching. In this sense, God inspires, instigates, empowers, and affirms the practice of preaching. Framing preaching this way re-contextualizes the issue of human agency and the danger of relying on methodology as the primary means of effective preaching. Instead, these are considered as secondary to God's authority and action. This re-contextualization requires some consideration and will be the primary focus of this chapter. At the centre of this discussion will be the role of the preacher. What exactly does the role of the preacher look like when we frame preaching as a focal practice? What are the practical implications of preaching as a focal practice?

The discussion of practicalities is complicated because, as noted throughout this dissertation, the prevailing way of thinking, talking, and writing about a practice, such as preaching, leans toward a discussion of means and ends. It is for this reason that the

efforts of this study thus far have focused on developing a conceptual framework. A framework, such as focal practice, gives clarity to the issues of the means and ends of preaching without merely dissecting them into their disparate pieces. This discussion is further challenging because while this dissertation has been critical of the approaches of the New Homiletic, it does not intend to abandon the insights into methodology that the New Homiletic provides. Eric Higgs, discussing his application of focal practice to ecological restoration, writes "The challenge is not, in my view, to describe which type of restoration is purer; rather, it is to be clear about the kinds of assumptions that generate the perceived needs and goals of any specific restoration project."[1] The following chapter will not be an argument for a particular rhetorical style or method of preaching but instead will develop a metaphor for preaching that aims to be clear about the necessary assumptions for preaching and the preacher going forward.

In the development of contemporary homiletics, there have been some critical questions explored. Long, as noted in the previous chapter, suggested that the pedagogy of contemporary preaching followed a particular path as it developed. Each approach, of the last hundred years, has to some extent focused on the question: how does the preacher preach? First, the approach of Phillip Brooks, looked at the personality of the preacher offering the passion of the preacher as the source of excellent preaching. The second, built on Bultmann's discussion of hermeneutics, focused on Scripture as the source of quality preaching. The third, in which the New Homiletic is found, offers the matter of method as the source of effective preaching. In each case, homiletics has been framed by the question of "How to preach?" The study of preaching as testimony shifted the

[1] Higgs, *Nature by Design*, 91.

question to "why preach?" and turned the attention of preaching away from method to its source. A preacher preaches because they have seen and heard what God has done and they are testifying to that. To further this pursuit, this chapter will consider a second critical question: the question of "what?" What does it look like, as a preacher, to participate in the practice of preaching as a focal practice? If, as suggested in the last chapter, a preacher must yield their authority to the authority of God what does that mean for the practicalities of preaching? Answering this question will look beyond the bounds of the preaching event to look closely at the preacher, their role, and how the preacher functions within the larger framework of preaching as a focal practice.

To accomplish this goal of describing "what preaching looks like" this chapter will focus on developing a metaphor for the role of the preacher: the preacher as navigator. To this end, the chapter will begin by exploring current models for the role of the preacher: herald, pastor, narrator, and witness. Following this exploration, this dissertation will develop the model of the preacher as navigator by exploring navigation as a focal practice. Particularly, this study will look at the ancient form of Polynesian navigation which, in contrast to traditional western navigation, does not rely on tools such as a compass or a map but instead the navigator finds direction in relationship to the natural environment such as stars, ocean patterns, animals, and weather. Following the insights from Polynesian navigation, the metaphor of preacher as navigator will be developed in which the preacher depends on God for both movement and signs of his grace and is the foundation on which the preacher's work is understood. To that end, the preacher as navigator suggests the preacher is dependent on the power of God for movement, the preacher must be attentive to the signs of God's movement within the

community of faith, and the preacher must be devoted, as a servant, to the orientation of the community to God.

The Current Metaphors for the Preacher

Thomas Long, in his book *The Witness of Preaching*, lays out a fairly extensive look at four metaphors: herald, pastor, narrator/poet, and, his own, witness. This study makes an excellent foundation for the work of this chapter and will be used to guide the description of these four metaphors. These four metaphors are not the only metaphors but represent some of the more significant metaphors of the last century. They will each be examined before proceeding to the development of the primary metaphor of this dissertation, the preacher as navigator.

Preacher as Herald

Long locates the prominence of this metaphor in the middle of the twentieth century in the work of Karl Barth. Barth wrote, "Proclamation is a human language in and through which God Himself speaks, like a king through the mouth of his herald, which moreover is meant to be heard and apprehended."[2] The essential framework of the metaphor is God as the king and preacher as a divine messenger. Long identifies three central premises of this viewpoint:

1. The message is critical to preaching. "The herald has but two responsibilities: to get the message straight and to speak it plainly"[3]
2. As result of the importance of the message, identifying the preacher as herald "de-emphasizes the personality of the preacher."[4]

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[2] Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 57.
[3] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 22.
[4] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 23.

3. The preacher exists as both outsider in the community, speaking on behalf of the divine, and insider called by the community and encouraged by the community.[5]

With this description in mind, Long offers the following notes on the benefits of the metaphor of the herald. He writes "The main value of the herald image, though, lies in its insistence upon the transcendent dimension of preaching. If the power of preaching is limited to the preacher's strength, if the truthfulness of preaching is restricted to the preacher's wisdom, it is ultimately too little to stake our lives on."[6] As Long's eventual metaphor is that of a witness, Long identifies the benefits of understanding preaching as limited without the divine. However, this benefit is outweighed because of the overemphasis on the divine aspect of preaching results in a diminishing of preaching. He explains "The herald image so stresses that preaching is something that God alone does, insists so firmly that preaching is divine activity rather than human effort, that the role of the preacher is almost driven from sight."[7] For Long, the preacher as herald is a pointless role, in that God's divine speech could come from almost anywhere, or anyone and the preacher is merely the vessel. In this sense, this approach serves as an "exaggeration, a corrective to preaching that had turned away from the Scripture and accommodated itself to cultural norms."[8]

Preacher as Pastor

Long identifies the metaphor of preacher as pastor as essentially the polar opposite to the preacher as herald. Where the latter emphasised the divine work in preaching, the former

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[5] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 23–4.
[6] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 25.
[7] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 27.
[8] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 29.

emphasises the work of the preacher above all else. This metaphor, drawing from psychology and therapeutic practices, conceives the preacher as working toward the betterment of their listener. Long offers three key markers of this metaphor:

1. "The crucial dimension of preaching is an event, something that happens inside the hearer."[9]
2. "The preacher's personality, character, experience, and relationship to the hearers are crucial dimension of the pastoral therapeutic process."[10]
3. The preacher as pastor views Scripture by way of its therapeutic content. "The Bible describes people trying by the grace of God to be human, and the pastoral preacher views it as a resource for contemporary people trying to do the same."[11]

Long values this metaphor as it emphasises the power of the gospel to transform and heal the listener. Further, it points the preacher to think of their preaching in a practical sense. Preaching, in this metaphor, is a source of great potential. Long is critical of this metaphor as it tends to place importance on the preacher as the effective agent in preaching. He writes "The pastor image of the preacher, which is intended to focus on the hearers and their needs, may well end up overemphasising the preacher by placing the preacher in the powerful position of healer and therapist."[12] In doing so, the approach tends to focus too much on the preacher's ability to make change through preaching. "It runs the risk of reducing theology to anthropology by presenting the gospel merely as a recourse for human emotional growth." As such, the metaphor of preacher as pastor runs the risk of becoming a form of self-help equal to other forms of spirituality or therapy that offer their unique brands of self-improvement.

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[9] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 33.
[10] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 33.
[11] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 34
[12] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 36.

Preacher as Narrator/Poet

The next metaphor of the preacher is that of narrator or poet. In this case, the preacher blends something of the herald and the pastor by rhetorically balancing the voice of Scripture and the experience of the community. This metaphor is the reflection of the approaches of the New Homiletic, where a concern for the listener's hearing has led to a rhetorical revolution. Long notes that for the proponents of this view "the storyteller/poet preacher actually blends the best traits of both the herald and the pastor without bringing along their most serious flaws."[13] The narrator pays equal attention to scripture as the herald metaphor does and is equally as concerned with the hearer as in the pastoral metaphor. Long describes five key features of this metaphor:

1. The preacher as narrator emphasises the relationship between biblical interpretation and rhetorical form. "The storytelling image . . . grows out of a conviction that the fundamental literary form of the gospel is narrative."[14]
2. "Narrative is not merely *one* way to proclaim the gospel; it is the *normative* way."[15]
3. This metaphor balances the divinely focused metaphor of herald and the humanity focused metaphor of pastor by viewing the sermon as "an intersection between the gospel story (or God's story) and the hearer's story."[16]
4. "The storyteller/poet image places an emphasis upon the person of the preacher, not as pastoral expert but as one skilled in narrative arts."[17]
5. "The storyteller/poet image, like that of the pastor, places a premium upon the experiential dimensions of the faith."[18]

Long suggests that the primary benefit of this metaphor is that it is balanced. It goes beyond the division between preaching on the one hand as purely scriptural and on the other preaching as purely self-help. This balance accounts for the primary value of this

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[13] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 42.
[14] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 46.
[15] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 46.
[16] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 47.
[17] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 47.
[18] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 47.

approach. In criticism, Long notes that this metaphor fails to account for non-narrative aspects of Scripture by treating the primary voice of Scripture as narrative. Further, much like the pastoral metaphor, the power of preaching remains focused on the preacher. He writes "There is a deep theological danger in measuring preaching by its capacity to generate religious experience."[19] While this metaphor is balanced, it fails to overcome the problem of authority in preaching and as such the balance remains somewhat lopsided.

Preacher as Witness

The previous chapter offered an overview of preaching as testimony but did not look closely at what it meant for the role of the preacher. Long identifies the metaphor of the preacher as witness. As suggested in the last chapter, this metaphor fundamentally changes the relationship between preacher and God, the preacher and Scripture, and the preacher and the congregation. In the first case, the preacher relies on God to enact the testimony they will witness to. In the second, the preacher approaches Scripture as a significant source of God's testimony. In the case of rhetorical form, the preacher uses rhetoric not as a means of creating something in the listener but as a way of bringing the full force of the testimony to bear.[20] Both Florence and Knowles embrace Long's metaphor of witness, but Knowles further emphasises the dependence of the preacher on God's acting by adding God's confirmation of the testimony.

As noted, at the end of the previous chapter, this dissertation shares much with the notion of preaching as testimony. The metaphor of preacher as witness is powerful, in

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[19] Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 48.

[20] See Chapter 4 of this dissertation. Alternatively, this metaphor is described in Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 50–57.

that it rightly frames the dynamics of the relationships between the preacher, God, Scripture, and the congregation. It establishes a clear link between God's work and the preacher's role. However, at times the metaphor lacks specificity when it comes to the preacher's role. In a theoretical sense, the metaphor is very clear as to the relationships involved, but in the tangible, in the week in and week out work of the preacher, the metaphor does not give shape to the role of the preacher. The metaphor needs to be expanded upon and developed.

Navigator as Metaphor for the Role of the Preacher

It is in this context that the work of this dissertation offers a new metaphor for the preacher: the preacher as navigator. The metaphor of the navigator is perfectly suited to capture the relationship dynamics of testimony/witness while further expanding on the tangible work of the preacher. The metaphor offers four key insights into the role of the preacher:

1. The work of the preacher is dependent on God
2. The preacher must be attentive to God's moving and the signs of His grace
3. The preacher keeps the relative position of the community they serve in mind
4. The preacher orients the community of faith to the movement and signs of God present in the past and in scripture, manifested in the present, and with a sense of the future.

These insights will be expanded upon as the metaphor is developed below.

There is some qualification necessary to give context to what is meant by preacher as navigator. First, the role of navigator, as it is intended here, is concerned with marine navigation. More particularly, this role will be described within the context of Polynesian marine navigation which is a form of navigation that does not rely on instruments or devices to navigate. Polynesian navigation will be developed in greater

detail below but, at this stage, it is sufficient to frame what is being suggested in the parallel between the preacher and the navigator in terms of general marine navigation. Second, marine navigation and the role of the navigator make a suitable framework for the work of the preacher and the role of the preacher. This framework is well suited because the practice of navigation and the role of the navigator exist as part of a specialised role within the context of a larger practice: sailing. The same could be said of the preacher and their work within the larger practice of preaching.[21] Just as the navigator and navigation exist as a particular part of the practice of sailing, so the preacher and their preaching of a sermon exist within the practice of preaching. It is in this sense that a study of the role of a navigator will give insight into the nature of a preacher. With this initial parallel in mind, this study will now turn to describing navigation in terms of Polynesian navigation.

Polynesian Navigation

There exists a fine line between the examination of a culture to gain an understanding of what they have already understood and robbing a culture of its rich heritage for one's purposes. It is with this fine line in mind that this section should begin by expressing marvel and respect for the Polynesian people and their tradition of navigation. It is the intention of this study of Polynesian navigation to follow the lead of the scholars, mariners, and navigators who have, at great cost, reclaimed the lost art of Polynesian wayfinding. This dissertation is indebted to the example of what it means to struggle to

[21] This distinction may not be immediately clear as what is meant by "preaching" is often understood both as a particular action of the preacher and as a classification of a practice within the church that preacher and congregation partake in together. It is within this broader sense of preaching as a practice that the specialized role of the preacher and the work of the preacher exist.

maintain important practices within the disengaging and pervasive nature of devices. With this in mind, one can turn to the matter of exploring Polynesian navigation.

A Brief History of Polynesian Navigation

Polynesia refers to an area in the central and southern parts of the Pacific Ocean. Roughly speaking, Polynesia is identified as the area within a triangle created between Hawaii, New Zealand, and Easter Island. The area is made up of more than 1,000 islands that vary in size and distance from each other. When Captain James Cook, the famed European explorer, sailed these seas he was astonished to find, spread out among these islands, a common people, in culture and language. He wrote:

> How shall we account for this nation's having spread itself in so many detached islands, so widely disjoined from each other, in every quarter of the Pacific Ocean! We find it from New Zealand in the south, as far as the Sandwich Islands to the north. And in another direction, from Easter Island to the Hebrides! That is, over an extent of sixty degrees of latitude or twelve hundred leagues north and south. And eighty-three degrees of longitude, or sixteen hundred and sixty leagues east and west![22]

Cook goes as far as to suggest that Polynesia was the "most extensive nation on earth."[23] Though there existed hundreds of kilometres of ocean between islands, there appeared to be a cultural consistency unheard of in the known world of Cook's day. He suggested it must be a result of travel between the islands. He was the first to be mindful of the traditions of navigation amongst the Polynesians and to suggest that they may have had expertise in the art of navigation.[24] Even more remarkable, there seemed to be no formal

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[22] Cook, *The Three Voyages of Captain James Cook*, 6:231.

[23] Cook, *The Three Voyages of Captain James Cook*, 6:231.

[24] Lewis has a good accounting of Cook's perspective on the Polynesian skill in navigation. He notes that despite Cook's original thoughts on the Polynesian's navigation that Cook would eventually encounter Tahitian castaways which would convinced him that his early assumptions of the Polynesian's skill for the sea was limited. Lewis, *We, The Navigators*, 8–12.

equipment for navigation, such as compasses, sextants, or the like. Despite the appearance of an underdeveloped culture, technologically speaking, they had somehow learned to traverse the sea without sophisticated devices. This sort of travel was a feat which had only been accomplished as a result of seafaring techniques developed in the Renaissance some three hundred years before Cook's arrival and only with the inclusion of devices that made navigation possible.

The nature of Polynesian navigation was a mystery to Cook and was unexamined by Europeans throughout the eventual westernisation of Polynesia. David Lewis, in his work *We, the Navigators*, suggests "The very idea that people without instruments, charts, or writing could have developed an elaborate and effective art (or pre-science) was so utterly foreign."[25] He further notes that the eventual missionaries and trade ships that made port throughout the Polynesian islands were more concerned respectively with teaching over learning from the Polynesian and business over understanding the craft of Polynesian navigation. The resulting westernisation led to a diminishing of traditional Polynesian navigation. "The cultures of Oceania became devalued in the eyes of the inhabitants and Westerners alike by comparison with the spectacular achievements of European technology."[26] With the westernisation of Polynesia came the addition of laws prohibiting this kind of navigation and as a result, much of the traditions of Polynesian navigation have been lost to the present.

It is in this initial history of Polynesian navigation that the first, and perhaps the most critical, parallel to preaching comes to the surface. Polynesian navigation was almost entirely lost because it was deemed less effective than western navigation. Their

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[25] Lewis, *We, the Navigators*, 9.
[26] Lewis, *We, the Navigators*, 10.

rich cultural heritage was undervalued and ultimately replaced. Reflecting on this loss in the present, Mau Piailug, a contemporary navigator in the style of Polynesian navigation, is quoted as suggesting "If my people didn't do this any more, we wouldn't be people any more."[27] Western influence and technology meant the destruction of a practice so critical to the Polynesian heritage and way of life that the loss of this practice would mean the loss of the heritage of the people. It is in this sense, that Polynesian navigation demonstrates the results of giving oneself and their culture up to the advantages of devices. In the case of Polynesian culture, the technology and religion of the West supplants the heritage of the Polynesian people. Borgmann addresses this loss when suggesting technology fundamentally changes a culture or society. He writes that technology:

> nevertheless deflects attention from the crucially different ways cultural decisions are made in our society. Our daily decisions are for the most part channeled and banked by fundamental decisions that are no longer at issue. Using or not using the interstate highway system is not a matter of choice anymore for most of us, and neither are the moral consequences of long commutes, the neglect of family, neighborhood, and inner city. When we finally come home, late and exhausted, greeted by a well-stocked refrigerator, a preternaturally efficient microwave, and diverting television, there is little choice when we fail to cook a good meal and summon the family to the dinner table.[28]

In other words, devices lead to a homogenising of culture. This homogenising is what happened to ancient Polynesian culture. The example of the loss in Polynesian culture is concerning for any group of people trying to exist in a society dominated by devices. The same is true for the practices of the Christian faith. This parallel is one of the reasons why Polynesian navigation can offer meaningful insight into a practice like preaching. As a practice, Polynesian navigation has felt the full force of the device paradigm, and it has

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[27] Recorded in Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 59.
[28] Borgmann, "Technology and the Crisis," 38.

been costly to the identity of the Polynesian people. The same is possible with any critical practice and preaching is no exception.

Polynesian Navigation and Religion

Before exploring the details of Polynesian navigation, we need to explore the potential religious connection between navigation and the Polynesian people. There are three limitations for this discussion. First, just as with navigation, the introduction of Western culture overwhelmed Polynesians religions. For this reason, there is something of a gap between what contemporary experts can describe of Polynesians religions and the actual religions.[29] Second, because of this disconnect between ancient religion and contemporary understanding, it is difficult to identify the connection between a practice like navigation within the larger cosmological and religious context. That is to say, that any attempt to sketch a connection between navigation and religion will be limited. Third, while the study of Polynesian navigation has been an effort to reconnect to the cultural roots of ancient Polynesia, there are limited references to spirituality, religion, or rites. This limitation is likely for two reasons: the gap between ancient and modern life, as already mentioned, and the purposes of studying Polynesian navigation tend to focus on the practice of navigation not the connection between the practice and religion.

With these limitations in mind, there is one word that best describes the relationship between Polynesian navigation and religion: relatedness. That is to say, that the faith of ancient Polynesia was built on the relatedness of all things. Pali Jae Lee describes this religious context in the book *Ho'opono*.[30] Ho'opono is the combination of

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[29] Although there are modern resurgences of some of these religions.

[30] Lee, *Ho'opono*.

two Hawaiian words *ho'o* and *pono*. Together, they suggest an effort to balance or to make righteous. Lee writes "During these ancient times, the only 'religion' was one of family and oneness with all things. The people were in tune with nature, plants, trees, animals, the 'āina, and each other. They respected all things and took care of all things. All was *pono*."[31] Thus, every person existed in connection with their ancestry, their community, and within the natural order. While there are some description of beings, that Western religions may classify as gods, these beings are more likely to be considered as powerful spirits. These spirits, which are often framed as ancestral spirits, are powerful and can make that power known in the physical realm.[32] That said, these spirits do not exist as the personification of the natural elements as one might find in other religions.

In this context, the notion of relatedness as a guiding concept for the relationship between Polynesian navigation and religion is helpful. In the description of navigation that follows, it is the relationship between the elements of nature that inform the navigator's understanding of their place at any given time. While these elements are not attributed to a particular being, they are treated with the respect and honour that powerful forces deserve. In essence, these elements are considered a part of the natural order and humanity, in relation to them, can find their place in that natural order.

As mentioned at the outset, this description of the connection between Polynesian navigation and religion is limited. However, it is clear that ancient Polynesians understood their place in the natural order of all things. It appears as though this understanding is rooted in the cultural practices of Polynesia, such as navigation.

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[31] Lee, *Ho'opono*, 28. Lee's description applies specifically to ancient Hawaiian religious practices. These likely share elements with the broader Polynesian religions. Further, "the 'āina" mentioned in the above quote is a word that is meant to reference connection to the land.

[32] Feinberg, *Polynesian Seafaring and Navigation*, chapter 2, para. 35 location 457.

Polynesian navigation, in particular, demonstrates a relatedness between sailor, ship, and nature that allowed the Polynesians to sail far beyond the expectations of contemporary Westerners. The loss of these practices equated to loss of critical traditions that were cultural and, by extension, connected to their religious beliefs.

Here we should return to the influence of Western culture over the Polynesian culture. One of the primary reasons why there is a gap in the knowledge of Polynesian religion is that it was supplanted under the force of the West. As noted above, Polynesian navigation was deemed less effective than Western navigation and was eventually forbidden by law.[33] The same could be said of the Polynesian religion. Christianity became the normative religion of the Polynesian islands and replaced or altered the religious practices of Polynesia. This is important to our discussion of focal practices because the replacement of Polynesian religion, just like the replacement of navigation traditions, equates to a loss of identity. Religious zeal overwhelmed Polynesian culture and has resulted in a significant loss. This parallels the fundamental concerns of this dissertation: technological zeal can overwhelm the critical practices of the church and this would result in a loss of identity within the church.

Polynesian Navigation: Accidental or Intentional?

In light of this lost tradition, there has been much scholarly debate as to the level of competency of Polynesian navigation in the modern study of Polynesia. There have been two explanations of Cook's original observations of the Polynesian people and their expansion across the islands of Polynesia. The first view is accidental expansion and the

[33] Lewis, *We, the Navigators*, 10.

second is intentional expansion. The accidental expansion view, explained by Will Kyselka in his text *An Ocean in Mind*, argues "that the Polynesians of old had neither the navigational skills nor vessels capable of reaching remote islands. So if they got there it must have been by accident."[34] Polynesian settlement and expansion through these islands were the results of unintentional drift away from an origin point or as a result of forced exile. In each case, the resulting expansion of Polynesian culture and settlement is the result of fortune, not skill. Navigation, as a complex science or practice, played no part in this expansion.[35] With the loss of meaningful accounts of ancient Polynesian seafaring, hypotheses, such as the accidental theory, rely on the limited source materials and recreations of the proposed journeys. In the case of the accidental theory, in 1947 an expedition called *Kon Tiki* attempted a drift from South America to the Polynesian islands as a potential route of origin for the people of Polynesia. This journey was a success and as such added to the credibility of the accidental theory.[36]

In contrast, the intentional voyaging hypothesis argues that the early Polynesians, originating from Pacific Asia, from New Zealand, or Australia ventured out to explore islands that they presumed were there. These presumptions were perhaps based on the patterns of the stars, the migration patterns of birds, or the patterns of the sea.[37] Whatever it may have been that inspired these journeys into the unknown, the intentional view holds that Polynesian's chose to explore, to build canoes, and to expand from island to island. There are limited sources available to prove this particular theory but Kyselka

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[34] Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 12.

[35] For a more detailed look at this approach see Heyerdahl, *The Theory Behind the Kon-Tiki Expedition*. Sharp, *Ancient Voyagers in Polynesia*.

[36] Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 12.

[37] Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 13.

notes "Chant, legend, song, dance, and story tell of repeated voyaging between Hawai'i and 'Tahiti of the Gold Haze.'"[38] These cultural references demonstrated, for Kyselka and others, that there was contact between islands which required seafaring that went beyond unintentional drift.

For a time, the limits of the intentional voyage hypothesis were a matter of these cultural references and computer modelling of what intentional expansion would look like. These limits changed starting in the 1970s when the Polynesian Voyaging Society was formed to attempt to add to the body of knowledge of Polynesian seafaring and navigation by way of study, experimentation, and expedition. With the formation of the Polynesian Voyaging Society and the resulting expeditions of the canoe *Hōkūle'a*, there has been a modern resurgence of Polynesian navigation that has attempted to recreate a form of navigation similar to ancient Polynesian navigation. It is this modern attempt at a recreation of Polynesian navigation that the description that follows is based on.

Rediscovering a Lost Art

The Polynesian Voyaging Society set out to make a canoe in as near an approximation to an authentic ancient Polynesian canoe as possible. Limitations, such as acquiring material no longer available, were met with modern substitutions but the effort was made to remain faithful to matters pertaining to performance. Kyselka, one of the documenters of this experiment, notes "For this to be a valid scientific experiment, the canoe must perform much in the manner of the ancient canoe. Modern modifications in hull design, such as shaping a small keel on the bottom of the canoe for better windward capability,

[38] Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 14.

could not be allowed; nor were deviations from traditional lashing forms acceptable."[39] The resulting ship, *Hōkūle'a*, was as close a representation of an ancient canoe as possible. Despite having a working model of a traditional ship, the problem remained of not having access to the principles of ancient navigation.

The method of navigation that ended up guiding *Hōkūle'a* on its journeys from Hawaii to Tahiti would come as a result of two critical sources. The first source was a man named Mau Piailug. He navigated *Hōkūle'a* on its initial journey to Tahiti to demonstrate the method of navigation taught to him by his father and grandfather. Piailug represented one of only a few remaining master navigators. His work, in initially navigating *Hōkūle'a* and eventually in training a new navigator, Nainoa Thompson, stands as the best link to the traditions of Polynesian navigation. The second source is the work of Nainoa Thompson. Thompson worked to teach himself navigation without the aid of devices and his initial work on the subject paired with Piailug's eventual teaching would allow him to be credited as the "first modern-day Polynesian to learn and use wayfinding for long-distance, open-ocean voyaging."[40] Together, the teaching of Piailug and the study of Nainoa Thompson has resulted in a contemporary revival of Polynesian navigation.[41]

Describing Polynesian Navigation

As mentioned above, describing a focal practice, like preaching or Polynesian Navigation, is vulnerable to the influence of the device paradigm. There remains, in the

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[39] Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 15.

[40] "Polynesian Wayfinding," [n.d.]

[41] This revitalization has contributed to the further training of five additional masters in the method of Thompson. As well as a worldwide voyage in 2017. "Polynesian Wayfinding," [n.d.].

description, a tendency to return to the values of the device paradigm, such as the effectiveness of the means and the commodification of the ends. In approaching the description of Polynesian Navigation, one must be careful to not only examine the process but to see that process as part of the whole practice. As such, the description that follows will examine Polynesian Navigation from multiple angles: first, the framework of the practice, second, the process of navigation, and third, the role of the navigator. Describing Polynesian navigation in this manner will establish the practice first in its relatedness and then second in its methods. This placement of methods as secondary is critical, as suggested in establishing preaching as a focal practice, as it is the relatedness of the practice that guides and shapes the methods within the practice.

Wayfinding

The term most commonly associated with Polynesian navigation is "wayfinding."[42] There is already in this title a distinction being made between western forms of navigation and wayfinding. Western navigation is founded on the principle that one know exactly where they are and exactly where they are going. Navigation, in this sense, is a matter of detailed study/preparation/execution of calculations and techniques. These are made easier, and possible, by relying on the devices that measure, record, and give context to one's location. Navigation has a sense of finality to it in that the work once completed is assured, is accurate, and is perfect. Wayfinding, as an alternative, suggests an active process. One does not exactly know where they are or exactly where they are going but instead, in relationship to the ocean, the wind, the stars, and all of nature, seek out

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[42] The term "wayfinding" was given to the method developed by Nainoa Thompson. Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, x.

direction on the journey. It is important to note that western navigation, such as at the time of Cook, relied on some natural clues, such as stars, but even then the knowledge of the stars and the resulting knowledge position are arrived at via devices that filtered the natural into the technical. In wayfinding, there is a direct relationship between the voyage, the navigator (or wayfinder), and the natural world.

Will Kyselka defines wayfinding writing "Wayfinding is a set of principles. An art. And at the center of the circle of sea and sky is the wayfinder practicing the art, trusting mind and senses within a cognitive structure to read and interpret nature's signs along the way as a means for maintaining continuous orientation to a remote, intended destination."[43] This definition gives a broad sense of what wayfinding is and offers key insights into the nature of the practice. First, wayfinding is not about moving a ship; it is about orienting a ship. Second, wayfinding depends on nature. Third, the wayfinder uses their experience and knowledge to interpret nature's signs. Finally, wayfinding leads to an approximate destination. Each of these needs to be examined more fully to get a clear sense of them.

First, wayfinding is a matter of orientation. This first point is critical understanding the practice. The wayfinder is incapable of controlling nature or generating the necessary wind patterns for motion. Throughout the process of learning to wayfind, described in *An Ocean in Mind*, there was a constant barrier to both the learning and the eventual sailing of *Hōkūle'a*. The primary source of this barrier was the wind and the weather. Jeff Evans, in his text *Polynesian Navigation and the Discovery of New Zealand*, notes "It is not uncommon for a navigator to wait weeks or even months for the

[43] Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 234–5.

right wind conditions."[44] Good sailing days were required just to start the journey from Hawaii to Tahiti. The 1978 voyage was ended by the force of the wind and the ocean when the canoe capsized. The 1980 voyage, which would be Nainoa Thompson's first successful navigation without devices from Hawaii to Tahiti, was delayed five days waiting for ideal conditions.[45] Thompson, the wayfinder, had no control over these factors. Wind and weather are dangerous and wild elements of seafaring, and a wayfinder cannot control them but instead must respond to them. "The canoe can only sail in the direction the wind allows it to sail. The art of wayfinding involves adapting to variable and unexpected conditions of wind and weather."[46] Navigators must be aware of the wind and its effect on the craft. With this in mind the work of a wayfinder, in response to the wind and weather, is directed to the orientation of the canoe. The wayfinder cannot move the canoe but can, by keeping in mind the current position of the boat and the effect of natural forces on the boat, maintain an orientation that will allow the natural forces to move the canoe near to their destination.

Second, wayfinding and the wayfinder depend on nature to orient their craft. The stars, the sun, the moon, the ocean swells, the wind, and birds are some of the key clues offered by the natural setting of the ocean. Thompson explains:

> How do we tell direction? We use the best clues that we have. We use the sun when it is low down on the horizon. Mau has names for the different widths and the different colors of the sun's path on the water. When the sun is low, the path is narrow, and as the sun rises the path gets wider and wider. When the sun gets too high you cannot tell where it has risen. You have to use other clues. Sunrise is the most important part of the day. At sunrise you start to look at the shape of the ocean-the character of the sea. You memorize where the wind is coming from. The wind generates the waves. You analyze the character of the waves. When the

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[44] Evans, *Polynesian Navigation and the Discovery of New Zealand*, chapter 5, para. 27, location 975.

[45] See chapter "Waiting for the Wind." Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*.

[46] "Hawaiian Voyaging Traditions: Designing a Course Strategy," [n.d.].

> sun gets too high, you steer by the waves. And then at sunset you repeat the process. The sun goes down-you look at the shape of the waves. Did the wind direction change? Did the swell pattern change? At night we use the stars. We use about 220, memorizing where they come up, where they go down.[47]

Essentially, every aspect of the world in which one sails and navigates offers insight into one's current position. There is a fundamental relationship between the act of wayfinding, the wayfinder, and nature.

Third, the wayfinder uses their experience and knowledge to interpret nature's signs. The wayfinder is a role of special importance to the journey. They are special, not because of positional authority, but because of their relationship to the natural signs. It is in the relationship between the wayfinder, their experience and knowledge, and the signs of nature that the wayfinder can get a sense of their position. It is a sense of position because the results are not meant to offer pinpoint accuracy. Instead, the wayfinder is consistently keeping in mind where the journey started, how far they have travelled, where their journey is taking them, and, in light of the effect of natural forces and clues from nature, where they are. The wayfinder constantly remains aware of these things to be oriented in the right direction. Thompson writes:

> You cannot look up at the stars and tell where you are. You only know where you are in this kind of navigation by memorizing where you sailed from. That means constant observation. You have to constantly remember your speed, your direction and time. You don't have a speedometer. You don't have a compass. You don't have a watch. It all has to be done in your head. It is easy-in principle-but it's hard to do.[48]

The wayfinder is not moving the canoe or magically finding a position. The wayfinder is dedicated to the work of observing the natural forces of the world and is mindful of the

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[47] "Hawaiian Voyaging Traditions: On Wayfinding," [n.d.].
[48] "Hawaiian Voyaging Traditions: On Wayfinding," [n.d.].

position of the canoe. These two insights help the wayfinder orient the canoe in the vast ocean.

Finally, wayfinding leads to an approximate destination. The results of wayfinding do lead a vessel from one place to another, but the resulting journey is not as simple as drawing a straight line from point A to point B. Wayfinding is centred on orientation, not precision sailing. Kyselka makes this point in his retelling of an interview he had during the journey from Hawaii to Tahiti in 1980. He speaks first:

> "'We've had good winds, and he thinks we're back on the reference course.'
> 'And that runs right to Tahiti, I suppose.'
> 'Actually to Takapoto in the Tuamotus. It's a line he has in mind, a way of staying oriented. Not a course to be sailed.'"[49]

The radio host assumed that a journey, governed by wayfinding, would be a matter of setting course on a direct line to Tahiti. This perception reflects a more western approach to navigating where the course can be controlled to a higher degree. Kyselka's response highlights the fundamental truth about this sort of navigation: wayfinding is focused on orientation over the destination. Yes, orientation, in the first hand, is determined by destination but on the water, in the vast empty ocean, one must be wholly concerned with orientation, responding to the forces of nature and the signs therein, to be moved toward a destination.

This completes the overhead view of wayfinding. Wayfinding, as a practice, relies on nature to both move a canoe and guide the wayfinder. The wayfinder by understanding where they have been, the effect of the forces of nature on their canoe, and in reference to where they intend to be travelling keeps in their mind the position of the canoe. This positional awareness helps the wayfinder to orient the canoe. This orientation

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[49] Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 141.

allows the wayfinder to guide their vessel toward the approximate location of their destination.

The Three Stages of Wayfinding

Thompson, over the last few decades, has continued to refine his description of the process by which he partakes in wayfinding. To that end, he suggests there are three stages to wayfinding.[50] The first stage takes place before the ship leaves the shore. This stage is dedicated to developing a course strategy. "Before a voyage by sail begins, the wayfinder designs a course strategy and reference course for reaching the destination from the departure point, given the capabilities of the vessel and the winds, currents, and weather conditions anticipated along the way."[51] This time is dedicated to envisioning what an ideal journey would look like. It is a time of study, reflection, and consideration of every detail of the journey that can be known before the journey begins. The most critical aspect of this is developing a reference course. The reference course represents an ideal journey and will be used throughout the voyage to give context to the immediate position of the canoe. Once at sea, it will be impossible to stay on this reference course, but the wayfinder will use it to understand the vessel's relative position. Thompson explains:

> The reference course is used as a local longitude line between the starting point and the destination. The wayfinder can plot his position east or west of the line as the voyage progresses. If the wind pushes the canoe off the reference course, the navigator usually tries to get back to it, or close to it, when the wind allows the canoe to do so.[52]

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[50] "Hawaiian Voyaging Traditions: Wayfinding," [n.d].
[51] "Hawaiian Voyaging Traditions: Designing a Course Strategy," [n.d].
[52] "Hawaiian Voyaging Traditions: Designing a Course Strategy," [n.d].

The work of developing a reference course allows the navigator to have in mind their relative position at any given moment.

The second stage happens during the bulk of the voyage. The wayfinder, at this stage, is "holding as closely as possible to the reference course."[53] It is hard to imagine just how much information the wayfinder must keep at the forefront of their mind on a journey. The journey from Hawaii to Tahiti is roughly 3000 miles. With a reference course, the navigator can keep in mind where the canoe is relative to the plan. Beyond this, the wayfinder must constantly seek out information from the ocean swells to the movement of the stars. Even further, the wayfinder must be aware of the force of the wind so that the ship can continue to move. When the wind changes the wayfinder must orient the ship so that it can remain close to the course. This orientation requires the wayfinder to consider their current position, their relative position, and the direction of the wind. All of this information comes together to allow the navigator to orient the canoe.

The final stage takes place once the canoe is near their final destination. In this stage, the wayfinder seeks to find land. The wayfinder does not intend to arrive at their destination on a precise route. For this reason, the wayfinder aims at arriving at a "screen of islands."[54] A screen of islands is essentially a term for a cluster of islands in which the destination exists. In the case of the journey from Hawaii to Tahiti, "the wayfinder can target a 400-mile wide screen of islands between Manihi in the western Tuamotus, and Maupiti in the eastern Society Islands. If the wayfinder can hit any one of the islands in this target screen, he can reorient the canoe after he identifies the island and determines

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[53] "Polynesian Wayfinding," [n.d.].
[54] "Hawaiian Voyaging Traditions: Locating Land," [n.d.].

its position in relationship to his destination."[55] The screen is a broad target in which one will be able to reorient the ship toward its final destination. Even still, the distance between islands is so great that when the anticipated destination does not appear when expected the wayfinder begins zigzagging along the intended latitude.[56] The wayfinder must again refer to the stars to identify their position and relative latitude. Following this strategy, a wayfinder will eventually encounter their destination and arrive at land.

Taken together, these three stages describe what the task of wayfinding looks like throughout a journey. It begins with strategic planning by developing a reference course. On the ocean, the navigator relies on the natural setting to disclose the clues to their position and compare that position to the reference course. Finally, having drawn near to their destination, they enter into a phase of finding land. It is true that these represent the technical plan for wayfinding but the work of the wayfinder is much more integrated than simply following these steps.

The Wayfinder

At this point, the study of wayfinding has been working in from the top to try and establish what the practice is about both in terms of an overview and the actual process of wayfinding. These two angles of wayfinding are meant to offer context to this final description of the navigator. There is a distinct difference between understanding how wayfinding works, by analysing the process, and actual wayfinding. This difference becomes most apparent in the reflections of Noania Thompson on his first journey. In *An Ocean in Mind*, some of Thompson's reflections on his first journey as navigator have

[55] "Hawaiian Voyaging Traditions: Locating Land," [n.d.].
[56] "Hawaiian Voyaging Traditions: Locating Land," [n.d.].

been collected and edited where he explains the difficulty of conveying what it is like to be a navigator.[57] One of the things that become most apparent when reading his material is a correlative relationship between his role as navigator and nature. In every sense, Thompson is rigorously dedicated to his work and to the formal processes of what he is doing, but at the same time, in the moments where his skill as a navigator are most needed, he tends to describe these situations in terms of dependence on his relatedness to his surroundings.

The role of the Polynesian navigator is dependent on the signs of nature. It has already been established that the work of navigation is only possible through a relationship with the natural setting. In this sense, the wayfinder can only offer guidance and work toward orienting the ship as a result of being aware of the already present markers of their position in nature. Even when these signs are impossible to see, because of the darkness of night and the cover of clouds the wayfinder still relies on something beyond strictly analytical skills. Thompson describes such an experience:

> When we arrived in the doldrums, the sky was black. It was solid rain. The wind was switching around. The wind was blowing at about twenty-five knots, and we were moving fast. That's the worst thing that can happen – you are going fast and you don't know where you're going. The guys steering the canoe were looking for direction and that increased the pressure, especially because it was my first voyage as navigator. I couldn't tell the steersmen where to steer. I was very, very tense. . . . Then something happened that allowed me to understand where the moon was, without seeing it. When I gave up fighting to find the moon with my eyes, I settled down. I suddenly felt this warmth come over me and I knew where the moon was. The sky was so black, I couldn't see the moon, but I could feel where it was. From the feeling of warmth and the image of the moon came a strong sense of confidence. I knew where to go. I directed the canoe on a new course and then, just for a moment, there was a hole in the clouds and the light of the moon shone through – just where I expected it to be.[58]

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[57] Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 205.
[58] "Wayfinding: Intellect and Instinct," [n.d.].

There is an instinctual quality to Thompson's explanation of his experience that night. This intuition is, in Thompson's estimation, an essential part of navigation. Thompson gives up the effort of trying to see, of trying to force an insight, and as a result, gains clarity in the moment. He describes this moment as a spiritual experience.[59] In light of the description of wayfinding offered thus far, one might suggest that spiritual moment is one of complete relatedness wherein, nature, wayfinder, and vessel are in sync.[60] The work of the wayfinder to be prepared for the journey, mindful of their current position, focused on the intended journey, and observant in the moment allows them to be free to yield and respond to the forces of nature and the signs therein, and, as a result, orient the canoe.

There is something of a paradox here, an inconsistency that cannot be adequately explained without some contradiction. The wayfinder is both competent and skilful navigator and at the same time utterly dependent on a relatedness to the natural forces and clues. It seems as though the wayfinder is both fully dedicated to their craft and then once on the ocean, they are fully at the mercy of external forces that cannot be controlled or conjured. All of the time spent studying, preparing, working, and doing all that they can to be ready for the journey impacts the intentions of the journey. However, in practice, the journey is not a simple matter of being prepared instead it is a matter of being fully willing to be moved by the wind, by the ocean. The wayfinder submits to these forces, allowing them to move the canoe, observing in the moment, and keeps a constant sense of the position of the canoe so that the ship can, while adrift at sea, be

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[59] "Wayfinding: Intellect and Instinct," [n.d.].

[60] Thompson's spiritual experience is similar to the spirituality of ancient Polynesia described above. It is possible that a clear understanding of navigation and an experience of it has given Thompson insight into the nature of ancient Polynesian religion.

oriented. This description, in one sense, is what is meant by the relatedness of the wayfinder to the natural forces and clues.

Thompson describes this complex relationship between the work of the navigator and their dependence on natural forces and clues as "understanding without knowing how."[61] This statement is intended to explain the nature of what it means to be navigating in relationship with nature opposed to navigating with devices. "There's a world out here that I didn't know anything about until forced into it by my choices. Analytic thinking alone cannot bring understanding, and I'm glad of that. We aren't searching for understanding, but understanding is coming as a result of the search."[62] His efforts to study navigation had given him a wide range of skills that represented a close approximation of Polynesian navigation, but it was not until he was on the ocean and dependent on natural forces and signs that he came to understand what it meant to wayfind.

Implications of Polynesian Navigation

The study of Polynesian navigation above is intended to give a sense of exactly what this practice is about. The description likely falls short of what it truly means to navigate in this manner, but that is a natural limitation of description because a practice, like wayfinding, does not easily lend itself to categorisation or the compartmentalisation of study. It is in engaging in the practice that the practice becomes the most clearly understood. Thompson made this case himself explaining "Navigating without instruments is a personal act. You must know the principles but you cannot reduce

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[61] Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 206.
[62] Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 298.

wayfinding to a set of formal operations. I'm constantly discovering new things that are useful in getting the canoe there. On this trip I've been getting glimpses of a greater world of navigation, far beyond what I prepared myself for."[63] In light of this shortcoming, it is helpful at this point to summarise the outcomes of this study as it pertains to developing a framework for the work of the preacher.

First, Polynesian navigation emphasises dependency on the force of nature and its signs. The living world around the canoe is the wayfinder's map, but this map is not presented in a technical sense, as if on paper or measured to perfection. Instead the map is known through an experience of the natural setting. Polynesian navigation presents an image of the navigator in the middle of a star chart.[64] The central position of the navigator is not meant to denote significance to the navigator above the stars, but instead, it is meant to reflect the necessary immersion of the navigator in the world around them. The wayfinder can only understand their position in relation to the signs of nature around them.

Second, the work of the navigator is concerned with preparation and attentiveness, not creation and control. This distinction is clearest when considering the methods of the Polynesian navigators to that of western navigation. Western navigation seeks to plot a course, and keeps a detailed accounting of information, to arrive at the destination. This way of thinking about navigation has, in contemporary life, led to highly sophisticated ways of navigating both on water and on land. The finest example of this is the GPS navigation used for driving. In this case, the driver merely needs to input their desired destination, and they will be given the best way of arriving. The word "best," in

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[63] Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 206.
[64] Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, x.

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[63] Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, 206.
[64] Kyselka, *An Ocean in Mind*, x.

this sense, refers to the most efficient or most convenient way of getting there. The resulting journey is created for the user, and the journey is controlled by the user. Even when taking a wrong turn the device can offer, with great precision, a course correction. The GPS reflects the Western tradition of navigation with the relative precision and detailed accounting of the journey from start to finish. The same could be said of traditional western navigation practices. The navigator, in this context, creates a detailed accounting of the movement of the ship every step of the way. In contrast, Polynesian navigation focuses on being prepared and attentive. To the first, the wayfinder holds a vast amount of knowledge and information about their journey in their mind. They use this information to have a point of reference when out on the open sea. In the second, the wayfinder's primary task is to be attentive to the contextual signs of nature. A star's rising, the moon's trajectory, a bird's flight path, and the ocean swells all give indications of the position of the canoe. The navigator must be aware of these indications. In this sense, the navigator is flexible and aware of the situation they are in and able to respond to the immediate situation. There is an intended plan, but that plan guides the navigator's understanding of where the wind is blowing them opposed to the other way around.

Third, sailing, by way of Polynesian navigation, is imprecise. This point is not to suggest that Polynesian navigation is poor but that arriving at the destination does not require perfection. There is, in the journey, an ebb and flow to the course that is sailed. While the navigator holds their reference course in their mind, they are also realistic about the limitations of that plan. Despite having a course in mind, they are willing to accept that course laid and course made will be different. This difference is deeply uncomfortable for people who are shaped by the device paradigm and traditional western

values. In those contexts, precision is a marker of excellence and a guarantee of results. Polynesian navigation, as imprecise, brings with it the potential for delay, for imperfection, and even for risk.

Fourth, at sea, the wayfinder is concerned with orientation over the destination. This point is perhaps the one most in danger of not being clear. Of course, the wayfinder has a destination in mind, and that hoped-for destination is significant to the work they are doing but when it comes to the actual work of wayfinding on the ocean the wayfinder concerns themselves with orientation. The wayfinder may have developed a strategic course and has in mind a reference course but practically speaking these are kept in mind as a way of arriving at correct orientation for the moment. When the ship is pushed off course, by wind and waves, the wayfinder does not point the canoe to their destination the wayfinder reorients ship to adjust for where the wind is moving them. In this sense, the wayfinder at sea is more concerned with orientation than the destination.

In summary, the four key insights from this study of Polynesian navigation; an emphasis on dependency on the force of nature and its signs, the work of the navigator is concerned with preparation and attentiveness, not creation and control, sailing, by way of wayfinding, is imprecise, and at sea, the wayfinder is more concerned with orientation than the destination. These four outcomes of this study of Polynesian navigation will help to shape the metaphor of preacher as navigator.

Applying Polynesian Navigation to Preaching and the Role of the Preacher

With a sense of what Polynesian navigation is and how it functions one can return to the matter of using navigation as a metaphor for the preacher. Navigation has been chosen

because of a number of parallels between the role of the preacher and the role of the navigator. First, as explored above, the roles function as part of a larger practice. Not every practice has a specialist who is responsible for directing an aspect of the practice but sailing and preaching both have a specialised role. Above, it was noted that the larger practice of sailing requires the specialised role of navigator and similarly the practice of preaching requires the specialised role of the preacher.

Second, the roles are equally dependent on external forces for both movement and orientation. In the case of the wayfinder, it was established that their work did not move the ship, but instead it was dependent on the right wind to move. Further, the wayfinder could only orient the ship and understand their position as a result of relatedness to the signs of nature. These signs were a requirement of their work, and the navigator depends on them. There is similar dependence between the preacher and God. In the previous chapter, it was noted that the preacher does not empower their own preaching, but instead is dependent upon God's Spirit moving and working in order to bring transformation in their listeners. Much like the wind is needed for movement, it is the same for preaching. The preacher cannot rely on their own power, and must recognize that they are largely powerless to accomplish any meaningful results without the movement of God. This is a position developed by Michael Knowles in his work on preaching as testimony. He writes "The true source of persuasion, conviction, encouragement, and sometimes even transformation lies largely outside ourselves."[65] Further, the preacher, as suggested in the study of preaching as testimony, preaches from what they have seen and heard. In this sense, the preacher relies on signs and clues of God's moving both in Scripture and in

[65] Knowles, *Of Seeds and the People of God*, introduction, para. 1, location 263.

their context. To say this another way, God does not simply or suddenly begin work at the end of a sermon or the beginning of a preacher's sermon writing. The work of God that began at the cross continues to spark hope and to transform darkness into light, and the preacher must be attentive, and observant of where God is already at work so that when they preach they call people to be oriented to God and his purposes.

Third, both practices are vulnerable to the effects of the device paradigm. Polynesian navigation was almost lost to history but for the efforts of the contemporary study of the subject. This loss is attributed to the influence of European culture and particularly western navigational techniques. It was only after fully giving into the techniques of western navigation that it became clear that the Polynesians had given up a significant part of their culture and identity. The return to wayfinding meant a return to cultural heritage and a reclaiming of part of what it meant to be Polynesian. It is the position of this dissertation that preaching is similarly an important part of Christianity's culture and history, but even further it is part of the practices of the Christian life that serve God's purposes. Allowing preaching to be valued primarily through technique and the device paradigm puts the practice at risk of disappearing or changing into something else. Wayfinding needed to be practised even if there were technically superior approaches to the same results. For preaching, it is all the more critical that technique does not overpower the divine.

Finally, the roles function as part of a communal effort. This last point is something that is easily overlooked in contemporary preaching. The congregation and the preacher are equally a part of the practice. The practice, as described in the last chapter, is entirely about submission and yielding to the power of God to affect the people of God.

As such, the work of the preacher is not merely their own, but instead, it is a part of a communal effort to focus on God. This communal effort is similar to the communal effort of sailing. The navigator is not solely responsible for the canoe at sea. The crew each works to serve the purpose of the vessel. One may navigate, but others tend to the sails or maintain supply. Each task is a part of the larger functioning of the vessel, and as such, they exist not as individual contributions but as a whole crew working together. In this context, the navigator or the preacher is not the feature on display but serves as part of a larger whole.

There is a parallel between the role of a navigator and the role of preacher. This metaphor will guide the remaining discussion of this chapter. The approach to navigation found in Polynesian navigation is an excellent source for how a preacher exists not at the centre of the practice of preaching but as part of the practice in dedication to God and his purposes. With that said, there are limitations of this metaphor which should be examined briefly before unpacking what exactly the preacher as navigator looks like.

The Limits of the Metaphor

One of the most critical differences between the role of navigator and the role of preacher is navigation's concept of a destination. This difference is one of the reasons why Polynesian navigation is particularly telling of what is meant by this metaphor. The preacher does not have the same level of control over the destination. Alternatively, the preacher, in writing and speaking a sermon, is preparing to lead the practice. The preacher may have a sense of where they intend a sermon to take the congregation, but there is a fundamental difference between the intentions of the preacher and the effective

work of God. What a preacher intends is not always directly related to how God will work. This truth is something of a phenomenon in preaching in which one's perception of their preaching and the result are at odds. David Lose offers an accounting of this sort of experience as a preacher. He references a common experience wherein a preacher feels they have put forward a high-quality sermon only to find the response is lacklustre.[66] Even further, on the days where the preaching feels rushed, poorly worded, and not up to the personal standards of the preacher the preacher is surprised to find out that the congregation, despite the sermon's apparent flaws, is alive with enthusiasm and the preacher sees a meaningful response from the congregation. What is the fundamental difference between these two outcomes? Success was not dependent on the preacher's perception of their work. The preacher is looking to see if people have arrived where they intended the sermon to lead, but God moved people despite the preacher's intentions and in ways unknown to the preacher. In this sense, there is a critical difference in the outcomes of preaching when compared to navigating. While navigation has a clear beginning and end, starting point and destination, preaching is cumulative and a continual practice within the church. Preaching as a cumulative act is not an original view but is shared with O. Wesley Allen Jr.. In Allen's conversational approach to preaching he frames the church "as a community of theological, political, historical, spiritual, ritual, and existential conversation."[67] The church participates in a continual conversation in which preaching is a formative voice. With this in mind, in preaching the community can be moved from one place to another and still not arrive at *the* destination. The church remains on a journey of discipleship and growth that does not finish when a sermon is

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[66] Lose, *Preaching at the Crossroads*, iii.
[67] Allen Jr., *Homiletic of All Believers*, 16.

finished. The church will continue to be changed, prodded and pushed by the wind of God's spirit, and the navigation that is taking place has more to do with attention to the situation, to the manifestations of God's grace, than arriving at a destination.

Expanding the Metaphor

To suggest the preacher as a navigator implies a greater metaphor than simply that of navigator. The context of the metaphor must be explained and described so that the following discussion of the preacher as navigator can be clear. To that end, there are three key aspects of preaching that must be described in the context of the metaphor: the community of faith, God in action, and the nature of the practice.

In the metaphor, the community of faith is like the members of the crew on a vessel in a vast ocean. God's action, and particularly the power of his Spirit, is like the wind that pushes and moves the vessel in accordance with God's purposes. The practice is a function of sailing and the larger effort to be moved by way of the wind. In this context, the crew has a fundamental choice to make in response to the force of nature that is the wind. They can choose to submit to wind and allow it direct their course or they can rely on alternative forms of movement by taking control through technology or devices. This choice is essentially a choice between a practice that encourages the relationship between the crew and the forces of nature, and practices that discourage this relationship. This is the fundamental choice being offered in this dissertation: a choice between focal practices that are empowered by God or reliance on methodology that fails to acknowledge God's action and, in the worst possible outcome, potentially work against God's purpose.

This description of the metaphor is incongruent with sailing. First, there is no mention of the destination. Though one might define destination by way of eschatological concerns or by growth, for the purposes of the metaphor it is helpful to frame the community of faith as on a journey. That is to say, that God has purpose and intention for the church and, in a sense, arrival at a particular destination will be met with a new leg of the journey. Defining the particulars of God's destinations will not ultimately help the metaphor except by the suggestion that God is working to move the church with intention. Alternatively, the metaphor is framed by following God's movement or intentions. Second, in this analogy the wind, as an extension of God's power, has a will and purpose that does not exist in sailing. When sailing the wind is not blowing with any intention over the vessel. To some extent, every form of sailing employs technology to control the elements. In this metaphor, the wind is purposeful and not only provides the means of propulsion but that propulsion also offers direction. To be in line with the force of the wind, is to be moved and to be moving in the right direction, in line with God's purposes.

Within this context, we are developing the metaphor of the preacher as navigator. The preacher, as a member of the crew, is responsible for being attentive to the wind of God's Spirit and aware of the signs of God's movement. In this context, the preacher is concerned with leading the church in a practice that will help the group be more attentive to God and how he is moving in their context. To that end, the preacher, much like the wayfinder, holds in their work three fundamental tasks: being attentive to God and the manifestations of his grace, keeping the relative position of the community they serve in mind, and seeking to orient the congregation to the movement of God's wind and the

signs of God's presence both as seen in Scripture, as manifested in the present, and with a sense of the future. These three functions of the preacher each reflect the focal nature of preaching. This reflection will be clearer as each is explored below.

Attentive to God and His Power

The work of a preacher begins by acknowledging their limitations. The best, most capable, preacher has a fundamental dependence on the work of God. Even if one supposed that a preacher could manifest something of spiritual importance in their listener, it would still be true that the preacher's work originated at the cross of Christ. The reason they preach, and the power they preach, come from the power that God made perfect in Jesus. This source of all grace in the world and this example of God's power to make all things new remains the governing action of the Christian faith and as such the preacher is fully dependent on God's action and power. This dependence takes two forms, modelled after the dependences of the navigator. As a navigator, the preacher depends, first, on the wind of God's Spirit to move the community of faith and, second, the preacher depends on the signs and clues of God's power in this world to give reference points to the preacher to enlighten their work. In light of these dependencies, a preacher must be attentive to God's presence and power.

In the first case, the wind of God's Spirit is the force by which preaching is empowered. God's action must be the foundation on which the practice of preaching is understood. What is being emphasised here is the distinction between excellent preaching and effective preaching. Doug Pagitt, as noted earlier, rightly challenged the notion of excellent preaching by suggesting that excellent preaching has not resulted in particularly

better Christians, better conversion rates, or better discipleship.[68] The work of a preacher can be excellent in form and put together in accordance with the highest standards of what preaching is but this alone does not equate to effective preaching. Effective sermons are empowered by God's transformative power and that power alone. To speak of excellent sermons is to speak to a cultural understanding of what a good sermon is, of how it is written, presented, and heard. To speak of effective preaching is to refer to the significance granted to the practice by way of the transformative work of the divine. In this sense, the preacher must rely primarily on the power of God to be effective for them. This reliance is the nature of a focal practice and as a practitioner a preacher must own this dependence as they approach their work. The work they do in preaching depends entirely on the moving of God and the power of the wind of his Spirit.

In the second case, the preacher has access to a number of signs of God's grace in the community of faith. The first, and most prominent of these signs, is the accounting of God's work in history and the testimony of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ found in Scripture. Scripture exists as an account of God and his relationship to this world and humanity. As suggested in the work of Florence, Scripture testifies to the person and character of God.[69] Attentiveness to Scripture will disclose to the preacher the nature of who God is and how his grace has been made manifest in the world. The second of these signs are present in the life of the community of faith. Stories of redemption, reconciliation, and transformation are woven into the community of God, and these experiences are markers as to who God is and how he is present in the community. The third of these signs is the resulting life change that follows the practice of preaching.

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[68] Pagitt, *Preaching in the Inventive Age*, 14.
[69] Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, 76–8.

Here, one can return to Knowles' work where he suggests that the testimony of the preacher is not only spurred on by God's action in giving a testimony but confirmed in God's power.[70] Any workings of grace that follow from the practice of preaching spur the preacher on to be attentive to God and once again disclose the nature of who God is and how He is present. The preacher must be attentive to these clues and signs of God as the preacher is dependent on them for clarity and understanding.

One of the critical issues at the centre of this dissertation is the nature of authority in preaching. Authority examined from within the human aspects of preaching focuses on three potential sources: preacher, listener, and language. In the previous chapter, it was noted that each of these aspects of preaching carry with them a certain kind of authority but only in reference to the ultimate authority in preaching: God. It is in the context of this discussion that the work of the preacher is governed by an attentiveness to God and his power. The preacher is dependent on the wind of God's Spirit for movement and dependent on the signs of God's grace. These two dependencies are directly related to the issue of the authority of preaching. In being attentive, the preacher is working to rely not on their abilities in rhetorical form or logical insight but instead on their relation to God's effective power which is a relationship of dependence.

It is essential that the preacher see their work in the context of dependence. The previous chapter outlined preaching as a focal practice. As a focal practice, preaching is dependent on God. God and his grace are the foundation on which the practice of preaching gains its significance. God, as a focal thing, has a commanding presence, continuity with the world, and a centring power. When God's role in preaching is

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[70] Knowles, *Of Seeds and the People of God*, chapter 6, para. 9, location 5071.

overlooked or unconsidered, there is a risk of replacing God as the focal thing and attributing the contours of a focal thing to something else. As a preacher, there is a temptation to fill the role of the focal thing to be the one who gains attention, to be the one who orders the world, and to be the one who centres the community. Although there are differences, these temptations have been described in the work of Henry Nouwen. In *In the Name of Jesus*, he outlines three temptations for the contemporary leader: the temptation to be relevant, to be popular, and to be powerful.[71] Nouwen draws these from the temptation of Jesus in the desert. Nouwen claims that the temptations of relevance, popularity, and power are common temptations that leaders in the church must address, much like Jesus did. The preacher is no exception.

The preacher as navigator frames the task of preacher within a dependence on God and his action. This dependence acknowledges that the preacher is not meant for relevance but irrelevance. Nouwen writes "The leaders of the future will be those who dare to claim their irrelevance in the contemporary world as a divine vocation that allows them to enter into a deep solidarity with the anguish underlying all the glitter of success, and to bring the light of Jesus there."[72] The preacher has a calling to a specialised role within the practice of preaching and Nouwen's term "divine vocation" is an appropriate framing of this role. However, we should notice that the special nature of this role is not founded on the preacher. The preacher is not special because of ability, but it is God's calling that establishes their work as a preacher. Even further, Nouwen's suggests that a divine vocation is a call to push against self-glorification. Christian leadership does not call people to strive toward the glamour of relevance but instead to give up personal

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[71] Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*.
[72] Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, 35.

relevance in service to the cause of Christ. Nouwen's criticism of the glitter of success echoes something of Borgmann's criticism of the hyperreal.[73] We recall that the hyperreal experience, an experience that is designed to be consumed and to fulfil the expectations of the user, is unsustainable. The hyperreal is glamorous, it is utterly appealing, but when confronted with reality it is found empty. The same is true of the pursuit of personal relevance in preaching. The preacher's desire to be someone who says something that matters can overwhelm the entire effort. However, personal relevance is a profoundly empty goal for the practice of preaching. It obscures the fundamental truth that the preacher is dependent on God's action. In this sense, the preacher is called to lose their self to the call and to be irrelevant so that God may remain in focus.

Further, the preacher as navigator acknowledges that the task of preaching is altogether impossible alone. Nouwen frames this temptation around the idea of popularity. While relevance focused on the leader's desire to make a difference in the world, popularity, as Nouwen uses it, looks at the desire to be seen as capable. However, a ministry is not built on the capabilities of its leaders. Nouwen writes:

> When you look at today's church, it is easy to see the prevalence of individualism among ministers and priests. Not too many of us have a vast repertoire of skills to be proud of, but most of us still feel that, if we have anything at all to show, it is something we have to do solo. You could say that many of us feel like failed tightrope walkers who discovered that we did not have the power to draw thousands of people that we could not make many conversions, that we did not have the talents to create beautiful liturgies, that we were not as popular with the youth, the young adults, or the elderly as we had hoped, and that we were not as able to respond to the needs of our people as we had expected. But most of us still feel that, ideally, we should have been able to do it all and do it successfully.[74]

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[73] Described in chapter two.

[74] Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, 55–56.

In leadership, there is a temptation to look to the abilities of the leader as the source of successful ministry. Preachers confront this challenge every time they step up to a pulpit. Preaching is a vulnerable act, and it is difficult, when listening to a preacher, to separate the practice of preaching from the ability of the preacher. In this sense, every time someone enters the pulpit, they confront the question of their ability. However, ability is not the foundation on which the focal practice of preaching is built. Framed as a navigator, the preacher must put aside the temptation to rely on their ability to move the congregation and depend on God's power for movement.

Finally, the preacher operates from a position of weakness. Nouwen's final temptation is the temptation to be powerful. In many ways, this is the key concern in describing the preacher as a navigator. The preacher, by their position, has an opportunity to wield power. There are very few opportunities like this in North America where one person gets to stand before their community and speak on a regular basis. The preacher has an incredible amount of power and, as a result, the preacher must carefully consider how they choose to use that power. Nouwen writes "The long painful history of the church is the history of people ever and again tempted to choose power over love, control over the cross, being a leader over being led."[75] There is a temptation to take hold of the power a preacher has and use it to great effect. However, the paradox of power, as understood in the Christian faith, is that it is most powerful when laid aside. The founding act of Christianity was Christ laying aside his power and submitting to death. This act set in motion a pattern of submission that is central to ministry. Whatever power a preacher may have must be set aside that God may be known and focal in the world.

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[75] Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, 78–79.

The role of the preacher is a role of utter dependence on God and his action. However, this dependence is consistently challenged by the temptations of relevance, popularity, and power. These must be set aside so that God can remain focal to the practice of preaching and the work of the preacher. The preacher, as navigator, must acknowledge their dependence and serve from a position of irrelevance and weakness so that God may remain focal. Nouwen describes these temptations from his experiences in ministry writing:

> Too often I looked at being relevant, popular, and powerful as ingredients of an effective ministry. The truth, however, is that these are not vocations but temptations. Jesus asks, "Do you love me?" Jesus sends us out to be shepherds, and Jesus promises a life in which we increasingly have to stretch out our hands and be led to places where we would rather not go. He asks us to move from a concern for relevance to a life of prayer, from worries about popularity to communal and mutual ministry, and from a leadership built on power to a leadership in which we critically discern where God is leading us and our people.[76]

Preachers must remain attentive to God and his actions. Failing to acknowledge the fundamental dependence of the preacher on God and his power risks missing the essential markings of what God is doing and where he is leading the community of faith.

A Community in Mind

One of the critical aspects of the work of a wayfinder is the development of a reference course. The purpose of this course is to help the navigator understand how the ship has moved relative to where they expect to be. The wayfinder must keep this reference course in mind at all times to track the changes and be able to respond to them. It is the difference between drifting blindly in a direction and responding to the forces of nature

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[76] Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, 91–92.

on the vessel. The preacher has a similar task, but instead of studying the journey they must know their community. This knowledge gives the preacher opportunity to be aware of God's working within the community and to be able to identify where God already working so that the community can respond.

To be clear on this matter, there is a critical distinction between knowing the community and what might be termed as exegesis of the congregation. In the latter, the preacher studies the congregation and the culture to understand the community better and to gain insights into how to best preach to the community. Though this approach has many positive outcomes, it fails to escape the fundamental problem of relying on methodology for effective preaching. Loenora Tubbs Tisdale's text *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art* examines the local culture of the congregation to contextualize the content of the sermon.[77] In this approach, the study of the congregation is focused toward the effective practices for preaching. In contrast, in the metaphor of preacher as navigator, knowing the community of faith is a function of the primary task of the preacher: attentiveness to God and his work. The congregation is not studied for strategic insights for preaching but is known so that the manifestations of God's grace, already present in the community, can have a light shone on them and become a focal point within the community. In this sense, the preacher is tasked with keeping the community of faith in their mind just as the wayfinder holds a reference course in their mind.

To have a community in mind, in the manner suggested here, requires that a preacher is submitted to the people they serve. The preacher does not exist as the local expert of all things divine, but more like the keeper of an oral tradition, or a wayfinder at

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[77] Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology*.

sea, they keep a living record of the church and its relatedness to God. Here again, one finds a critical shift in the nature of authority in preaching. As suggested above, the authority of preaching first comes from God's enacting in preaching. In being attentive to God and his work, the preacher relies on divine authority to preach by yielding their own power to God's purposes. Beyond this first yielding to God, the preacher must further be submitted to the people they serve. This submission is to take seriously the role of the preacher not in positional authority over the people but humble service for the people. It is to acknowledge their inability to effect the change they long to see in the community and, in that inability, point to the One who has worked miracles, is working in the midst of the community, and will continue to guide and shape the church.

In the previous chapter, the church was described as a focal community engaged in focal practices. It is essential to this framework that the preacher be identified first as a member of the community that is engaged in the focal practice of preaching. As argued in chapter three, there is a tendency to isolate the roles of the preacher and the listener from each other. While there are differences between the two roles, these differences are secondary to their shared identity as members of a community engaged in a focal practice. There is a mutual desire for God to be known, there is a mutual effort to submit to the practice, and there is a mutual sharing of God's response. To isolate these roles is to miss the essential relationship between the community of faith and God. Any discussion of the role of the preacher would be incomplete without acknowledging this shared participation. A description of the role of the preacher must acknowledge that the preacher is not wholly separate from the community but a member of it. The preacher

does not speak from on high, from a position of authority, rather they speak from within the community.

The suggestion of preacher as navigator goes further to suggest that preachers must give themselves fully to their calling. As a member of the community, they serve beyond the expectations of the average member and while the opportunity to preach gives the preacher influence over the community it also comes with a burden for the community. The description of Polynesian navigation above is meant to capture the sheer amount of work it takes to maintain awareness when at sea. The navigator must be attentive, at all times, to the path they have taken and how the wind has moved them. It is a demanding task and for sailing it is the difference between arriving and being lost. "If the wayfinder loses track of his position in relationship to his reference course (e.g., during a prolonged storm or in prolonged cloudy conditions), he is lost; he can determine his north-south position (latitude) through observations of the stars, but he can't determine know how far east or west he is along that latitude."[78] This description of the essential relationship between the attentiveness of the navigator to the forces of nature is exactly the same as Borgmann's concerns for contemporary society. That is to say, if we fail to focus on the matters of ultimate concern humanity may lose contact with essential aspects of human life. A commitment to focal practices, like that of navigation, encourage a person or a community to remain focused on that which is essential to their identity, their purpose, or their position. Broadly speaking, preaching as a focal practice serves to orient the community of faith to God but further, the preacher must remain

[78] "Hawaiian Voyaging Traditions: Estimating Position," [n.d.].

attentive and aware of God's movement in the community or else the community may well miss it and essentially be lost.

Of course, preaching and the work of the preacher are not the only way in which God's movement is seen or experienced but it is one of the ways that God's presence is made focal. In this context, the preacher is called to serve the community of faith by being their navigator. It should be noted that the navigator is not *the* authority of a ship and by extension, the preacher as navigator is not meant to raise the preacher to the highest authority. Alternatively, it captures the essential role that a preacher has been given, both in God's calling and the community's support, to be wholly committed, in service, to being attentive to God in the midst of the community of faith.

A Matter of Orientation

Just as orientation is the primary purpose of navigation, it is the primary task of the preaching; to orient the congregation to God and to make God the focal thing at the centre of the life of faith. These are all ways to express orientation. Thus far the metaphor of navigator has given two tasks, attentiveness to God and mindfulness of the community, these two tasks lead the preacher to the outcome of their work: orientation. In the context of wayfinding, orientation described the end product of the work of the wayfinder at any given moment. With an understanding of how nature is affecting the boat and a clear reference course in mind, the wayfinder leads the ship towards orientation. This orientation is not a matter of pointing where the wayfinder wants to go but, in light of natural forces and the reference, it points where the boat is being led. Orientation does not set a direct course, but it is the course that responds to what is

happening at the moment. To speak of orientation as the outcome of the preacher's work is to suggest much the same as in wayfinding. In light of God and his work and the way in which God is moving in the congregation, the preacher points the community of faith to God. The preacher orients the congregation to God who is the focal thing at the centre of the practice of preaching.

Here, one must ask "how does the preacher orient the congregation to God?" The answer is not by way of their abilities but by yielding their authority, their moment to speak, their power, to God. This response may seem like a simple answer to the question but, as suggested over the last chapter and throughout this chapter, the preacher cannot effect the change they wish to see. The preacher can only serve the purpose to which they were called: to speak to what they know, what they have seen and heard, and in doing so direct people to the source of that experience. To say this another way, the preacher interprets the signs and sees God's wind blowing and points the congregation to see them as well. Together, the preacher and congregation, as part of a community of faith, respond. This yielding is the final subversion of the preacher's authority. In giving themselves to God's purposes and devoting themselves to their congregation, the preacher can finally point away from themselves to the One who is already present among the community and the One who is powerfully working to make all things new.

As outlined in the previous chapter, focal orientation was a critical part of preaching as a focal practice. In the act of preaching, the community of faith engages in focal remembrance of God's action, encounters the focal reality of God acting, and expects God's future action in focal eschatology. The preacher plays a part in the practice by leading these exercises in focal orientation. In the present discussion, one must be

careful how they frame this leadership. The discussion of temptations, as outlined by Nouwen above, gives context to this leadership. It is not leadership that exists to glorify the leader, it does not rely on the ability of the leader, nor does it function by wielding the power of the leader. Further still, as in the description of the church as a focal community, the role of a leader is not simply one of higher authority, but this leadership is a function of the practice that the community is engaged in a particular focal practice. Thus, when it is suggested that the preacher plays a part in leading the practice, it is not meant to suggest that they are somehow the effective agent of the practice. Alternatively, it is meant to suggest that they are serving the purpose to which they have been called which is orientation toward God.

Practicing Navigation

With this description of the preacher as navigator, we return to the essential question: what does the work of the preacher look like? As an extension of the larger focal practice of preaching, the preacher engages in their own focal practice. That is to say; if the preacher's role in the larger practice of preaching is leading the people in being oriented to God, the preacher must themselves be oriented to God. In this context, the preacher engages in a microcosm of the larger practice. In preparing a sermon, the preacher needs to be engaged in focal orientation that engages in focal remembering, encounters God in focal reality, and expects God's future action in a focal eschatology. These three orientation frame the work of the preacher in preparing to participate in the larger practice.

It may be helpful to consider these practices within the scope of sermon preparation. It should be noted that all of these aspects are an extension of the larger focal practice of the community. Though the work of the preacher is often a solo task, it is not isolated from the larger context in which the task is being undertaken. With this in mind, the preacher engages first in focal remembering. In chapter four, we examined four sources of focal remembrance: Christ, scripture, historical memory, and living memory. These aspects all give testimony to who God is and how he has acted. In being attentive to God, the preacher engages in focal remembrance to dwell on who God is and to be aware of his past action. The preacher, faithfully engaging in navigation, must be continually engaged in this sort of attentiveness. They need to dwell on scripture, seek out the memories of how God has acted in the past, and be ever mindful of where God may be working in their community. The work of focal remembrance is critical to the preacher's attentiveness to God.

Even still, this effort is dependent on God's action. Eventually, a preacher needs to be confronted by the focal reality of God. That is to say, just as the larger practice expects that God will be active in the practice we expect that God will be active in the work of the preacher. To this end, the preacher needs to encounter the focal reality of God. This step is perhaps the most challenging in the work of the preacher: waiting. However, God's action is not simply a passing hope, but it is the basis of all of the Christian faith. God has acted and will act again. The preacher who engages in focal remembrance will eventually be confronted with the reality of God in the present.

As suggested above, an encounter with the focal reality of God leads us to await God's future action in a focal eschatology. This anticipation is a pivotal point in the work

of the preacher because the preacher, engaging in focal remembrance has had an encounter with God, and the preacher expects that God will act again. This is something worth preaching. It is here where we encounter the fundamental importance of testimony in preaching. The preacher has encountered God and now has something to tell the community of who God is, how he has acted in their own experience, and how he will continue to act. Thus, when a preacher prepares a sermon, they are not trying to be effective preachers but are trying to point the congregation to the reality of a living and active God. The anticipation of God's future action is the foundation on which the preacher prepares to lead the congregation in the larger focal practice. The anticipation of God's action guides the preacher's work in leading the congregation through the practice of preaching. In which, the preacher will lead the congregation in focal remembrance by drawing on the four sources listed above and framed by their encounter with God.

Having framed the work of the preacher by way of focal remembrance, focal reality, and focal eschatology, we must consider the downside of describing preaching in this manner. One possible interpretation of the description of the preacher's work above is that it is a process that is effective. That is to say, that by isolating the work of the preacher into focal remembering, focal reality, and focal eschatology one has created a process that the preacher can use to ensure inspiration for preaching. However, this process is not as simple as an if-then statement. It is not as simple as if a preacher engages in focal remembrance then God will act. Alternatively, it is meant to suggest that God is already active regardless of the preacher's effort. The preacher needs to be oriented to that action. Remembrance and anticipation are both actions that encourage

orientation to God. By engaging in the pattern of remembrance, encounter, and anticipation the preacher is oriented to God's action.

This dissertation began with the statement that a new conceptual framework was necessary to orient the work of the preacher and particularly the use of methodology. The framework being offered is that of preaching as a focal practice. This has led us to consider preaching by way of its relationship to God and his grace. This framework is meant to guard against an over-reliance on human agency and methodology. The preacher as navigator serves within this framework to lead the practice and to encourage the community of faith to engage in focal orientation. With this in mind, it is appropriate to return to the discussion of method.

Preaching as a focal practice has been framed as a communal effort to engage in focal remembrance in doing so we experience something of the focal reality of God, and together we await God's future in focal eschatology. Orientation to God as the focal thing is critical to the practice. In this context, it is appropriate to say the preacher's use of method is connected to their role in leading the communal effort to be oriented toward God. It is essentially in the act of focal remembrance that the preacher's work accomplishes something. However, we should be very clear on this: what the preacher accomplishes is the leading of the practice. For instance, when a preacher, taking up the narrative form, relies on storied images or common experiences these are not effective agents of change or even powerful tools in the hand of the preacher but they are fundamental aspects of what it means to be engaged in focal remembrance and by extension the focal practice. Further, when a preacher employs a dialogical form, they lead the congregation in a different kind of focal remembrance, one built on the broader

dialogue taking place in the community. This form does not in itself produce the good ends of preaching but alternatively serves the effort of the community to be engaged in focal remembrance of God. In both cases, the form is secondary to the endeavour. As such, the matters of the ability of the preacher, the quality of the sermon, and the enjoyment of the listeners are secondary to the purpose of the practice: orientation to God. In this context, methodology is an important consideration in how a preacher prepares to lead the focal practice, but it is far from the deciding factor. Alternatively, method serves, just like the preacher serves, the communal effort to be oriented to God and his actions.

Conclusion

This chapter has been an effort to give context to what the framework of preaching as focal practice means for the preacher. In light of this framework, what does the weekly task of preaching look like for the preacher? How does this framework change how one approaches the role of the preacher? The preacher as navigator intends to give shape to the role of the preacher by identifying the preacher's dependence on God. The intention is that the preacher recognises the unique authority they have within the church and, in light of that recognition, work, with every ounce of their being, to lay that authority aside to point to God who is the source of all authority. It cannot be overstated how powerful the role of a preacher is. A preacher has a relatively willing audience, a weekly appointment to speak, and the freedom to craft whatever sort of message they choose. To be a preacher is to have a position of authority, of power. Everyone who preaches must confront this authority. Homiletics, over the past century, has been attempting to soften

the preacher's authority by leaning into the preacher's ability to wield their authority with great skill and tact. Alternatively, this dissertation has argued that the preacher must yield their authority and centre their effort not on controlling or creating the preaching event but instead by being attentive to God and by working to orient the community to what God has done, what God is doing, and what God will do. In this way, the preacher acts in submission to keep God at the focal centre of the community of faith.

CONCLUSION

The church finds itself in the midst of a powerful culture force: the culture of technology, the culture of the device. The freedom and prosperity allowed by the role of technology in the world are stunning and are quickly changing the way in which humanity engages with the world around them. John Dyer, in his book *From the Garden to the City*, highlights how significant these changes are suggesting:

> Our world has changed so drastically over the last fifty years that the biblical character Abraham of 2000 b.c. would probably have more in common with Abraham Lincoln of the early 1800s than Lincoln would have with us in the twenty-first century. Though Abraham and Abe are separated by some 3,800 years and several important technological advances, our sixteenth president would likely find our world more incomprehensible than that of ancient Ur.[1]

The church must begin to take seriously this changing world and the increased impact that technology and devices have on what it means to be a part of the world. Homiletics is not immune to these changes and must begin to take a critical look at the influence of devices on the practice of preaching.

Central to the argument laid out here is Albert Borgmann's description and analysis of life in a device oriented culture. Devices are changing the fundamental way in which society is ordered, and humanity engages with their world. The separation of means and ends, machinery and commodity, in devices, has fractured the nature of engagement and encouraged an ordering of life around consumption. A good life, under

[1] Dyer, *From the Garden to the City*, chapter 1, para. 5, location 285.

the effect of the device paradigm, is defined by the removal of burdens. In the freedom and prosperity offered by devices, humanity has been given much but, as Borgmann argues, is at risk of losing many things that are essential to the human experience.

It is the position of this dissertation that preaching has not been immune to these changes and these losses. These changes are most prevalent in the study of human agency and methodology common in contemporary homiletic. For instance, the approaches found in the New Homiletic started the effort to change the authority of preaching from the preacher to the listener. The new forms of preaching that have come largely from within the New Homiletic have successfully created an experience for the listener that matches the intended ends of preaching. The listener no longer feels the force of the authority of the preacher.

However, it has been argued that this movement from preacher to listener does not sufficiently relocate authority in preaching. That is to say, shifting authority horizontally from the preacher to the listener does not overcome the essential problem of relying on human authorities. Further, the preacher's reliance on the effective power of language to create this change is at risk of becoming identical to devices. Methodology can become something of the ultimate means of preaching, the way of arriving at the intended ends of the preacher. In this framework, preaching becomes an entirely human effort and is similar to a device. Preaching becomes a matter of right form and proper action on the part of the preacher. If a preacher can produce, by way of language, the kind of experience that changes lives, then it becomes difficult, if at all possible, to identify preaching empowered by God or empowered by sophisticated rhetoric.

As a corrective, homiletics needs to reframe the issues of method within a new framework, one that acknowledges the priority of divine power. The source of this framework is Borgmann's counterforce to the effect of the device paradigm: focal things and practices. God, at the centre of life, can reorient the believer and the community of faith within the disorienting and disengaging world of devices. Preaching, as a focal practice, is a commitment to God and His role as a focal thing.

There remains a critical relationship to be made between preaching as a focal practice and the role of the preacher. God is at the centre of the practice of preaching, as instigator, power, and the one who confirms the practice, and yet there remains a preacher, someone who speaks and acts as part of the practice. To properly frame the preacher and give context to their role the metaphor of preacher as navigator has been offered. As a navigator, the preacher is wholly dependent on the force of God's wind and signs for their work. The preacher's effort is made complete, not through rhetorical skill or effective imagery, but through God's already present and acting power in the life of the individual and of the community. To preach is to make focal God and his work. It is to be attentive to who God is, whom he reveals himself to be in scripture, to what he has done at the cross, and what he is doing in the community of faith. It is to be an observer within the community of faith so to be able to see how God is moving in the community. It is to serve the communal focal practice by orienting the congregation to be aware and mindful of how God has acted in the past, how God is active in the present, and how God will act in the future. To present the preacher as navigator is to present the preacher not as the authority of preaching but in relationship to the ultimate authority, God.

This dissertation has been an effort to correct the overemphasis of methodology in contemporary preaching. As a function of correction, the direction of this discussion and the language used to describe preaching as a focal practice has tended to emphasis God's role in preaching. It is likely in doing so that some of the description of preaching as a focal practice and the metaphor of the preacher as navigator has failed to fully account for preaching as a whole. There are further nuances of the metaphor that were left unexplored. If, as suggested throughout, the fundamental notion of focal practice is to acknowledge the inseparable relationship between human and divine action and methodology and theology then much more can be said about how they relate to each other. The metaphor of navigator has emphasised dependence on God. While this has served to help correct the problem of independence from God by way of effective language and method, this emphasis is only part of the relationship. The preacher is dependent on God but because of the correlational coexistence between God's action and human action it may be that a more nuanced view needs to be developed that acknowledges both a dependence on God and an interdependence on God's action and human action. The scope of this project has focused on correcting an imbalance but much more needs to be done to continue to reflect on what the metaphor of the preacher as navigator means to homiletics as a whole.

It is the hope that this dissertation will help to correct some of issues facing contemporary homiletics within the conceptual framework of focal practice and the resulting metaphor of preacher as navigator. Both serve to contextualise the conversation of form and rhetoric as secondary concerns to that which is focal. Of focal things, Borgmann writes "They teach us both to accept and to limit technology in a principled

and sensible way. They allow us to be more fully human in offering us engagement, in calling forth a new maturity, and in demanding a rightful discipline."[2] By reframing preaching, under the framework of focal things and practices, one can approach the issues of form and rhetoric not as merely effective techniques but in relationship to God.

[2] Borgmann, *Technology*, chapter 22, para. 29, location 4643.

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