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Robert A. Allen
Liberty University, raallen3@liberty.edu

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THE EXPOSITORY SERMON—CULTURAL OR BIBLICAL?

Robert A. Allen
Associate Professor of Bible
Baptist Bible College
Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania

INTRODUCTION

Questioning expository preaching at the end of the twentieth century could be compared to questioning the use of automobiles for transportation. Certainly there are other ways to get around, but the convenience, comfort and comparative cost of the automobile give it unmistakable advantages over everything else from roller blades to private helicopters. In a similar manner the advantages of the expository sermon have been touted to the present generation of preachers. "The type of preaching that best carries the force of divine authority is expository preaching,"[1] says Haddon Robinson. Walter Kaiser adds his recommendation of the expository methods when he writes, "A consistent and systematic exposition of the Scriptures will help restore order, end the habits of a violent society and repair damaged relationships at every level of society. I rest my case for an urgent return to expository preaching."[2]

The question to be raised concerning expository preaching cannot be answered, however, simply by extolling the value of the method. In fact, it would seem possible to draw a distinction between the expository method, closely associated with the concept of hermeneutics, and the expository form, more closely associated with homiletics. This paper will suggest that the expository method, as biblical, should continue to provide the basis for sermon preparation while the expository form, as cultural, should be recognized as only one of many forms an exegetically developed sermon can take.

This understanding will not necessarily disagree with either Robinson or Kaiser. Robinson seems to make room for such a distinction when he argues that the sermons of the apostles were each based on a single unifying theme and then remarks "that each idea received different treatment by the apostolic preacher."[3]

The value in such a distinction, if indeed it can be made, will be in enlarging the repertoire of the preacher in relationship to form while at the same time restricting him to biblical fidelity in terms of content. This distinction could be of great value to a preacher faced with a cross-cultural situation or even with the encroachment of post-modern thought on his present audience. In order to explore that distinction, this paper will evaluate the forms of preaching found in Scriptural examples, define and evaluate the two concepts it seeks to distinguish, and delineate the possible forms available to the preacher who decides to contextualize the expository sermon.

THE FORMS OF PREACHING IN SCRIPTURE

Any discussion of biblical forms of preaching must be influenced by a presupposition concerning inspiration. Since "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God,"[4] their preaching contained a significant difference from preaching today. They did not need to start from a text because they were writing the text. Discovering that they did not build their sermon on the exegesis of previously existing Scripture should not affect methodology of contemporary sermon preparation because today's preacher does not speak by inspiration. Even in the New Testament the examples of preaching must be examined in the context of the ongoing development of the inscripturation of the canon of revealed Scripture.

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[1]Haddon W. Robinson, Biblical Preaching (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 19.

[2]Walter C. Kaiser, "The Crisis in Expository Preaching Today," Preaching (September-October 1995): 9.

[3]Robinson, Biblical Preaching, 36.

[4]2 Peter 1:21 NASB (New American Standard Bible).

The admonition from Paul to Timothy to "preach the word,"[5] along with the theological presupposition that divine revelation ceased with the completion of the canon,[6] limits today's preacher to exegeting the Biblical text. That process of exegesis commonly forms the basis for definitions of expository preaching. An investigation of the styles of preaching portrayed in Scripture, if they can be separated from the content of the message preached, would conceivably allow for preaching which remains faithful to the text while assuming a variety of presentational styles.

The styles or forms which preaching assumed in the Bible do suggest a variety of methods. The prophet Jeremiah made extensive use of visuals to illustrate his words.[7] Isaiah used a poetic structure called the "taunt."[8] Ezekiel involved himself in his proclamation, dramatically visualizing the siege of Jerusalem by his own actions.[9] Jonah's preaching to the city of Ninevah involved a simple repetition of the message God had given to him.[10] When Daniel read the words of Jeremiah and realized the seventy years of captivity were nearing completion, he developed a prayer based on his exegesis rather than a sermon.[11] Many of the prophets make allusions or direct references to other prophetic writings.[12] But the quotations are not used as the basis for a discussion of the previous text. Instead they serve as appeals to authority, providing support for the arguments made by the one quoting from the other source.

Some have argued that the entire pattern of communication in the Old Testament involves an inductive rather than deductive approach. Ralph Lewis and Gregg Lewis support this viewpoint forcefully, saying, "Could God's extensive use of narration, perhaps the most inductive of potentially inductive elements, say something about God's basic communication philosophy?"[13] Even if the conclusion concerning God's method of communication appears overstated, induction definitely forms a large part of communicative form in the Old Testament.

As we have seen, preaching in the Old Testament took many forms, but one form it did not take was that of exposition as commonly defined today. There appears to be no clear Old Testament example of one who organized a previously written text into discernable parts and commented on those divisions. That observation should not lead to premature conclusions, however. George Swank, while arguing for greater use of dialogue in preaching, nevertheless warns that "too rigid an adherence to historic models of prophetic preaching may insure our failure to achieve the biblical goal."[14]

Preaching in the New Testament also assumed a great variety of forms. John Stott suggests that while there is only one church service recorded in the New Testament specifically mentioning a sermon,[15] "there is no reason to suppose that is exceptional."[16] Certainly many sermons are recorded in the gospels and Acts which provide examples of the preaching of Christ and the apostles.

Recent studies concerning the preaching of Jesus often emphasize His inductive, or narrative, style. Certainly He was a master storyteller who "instructed His listeners by repeatedly going from the concrete to the abstract, from the facts to the principles, from the data to the dictum."[17] Parables and stories form the majority of Christ's communicative methodology. They do not, however, exclude the fact that He also used a deductive method when the occasion

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[5]2 Timothy 4:2.

[6]Revelation 22:18-19.

[7]Jeremiah 19:1-13.

[8]Isaiah 14:4 (NASB).

[9]Ezekiel 4:1-17.

[10]Jonah 3:2-3.

[11]Daniel 9:2-19.

[12]Malachi 3:7 and Zechariah 1:3.

[13]Ralph Lewis and Gregg Lewis, Inductive Preaching (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1983), 58.

[14]George W. Swank, Dialogic Style in Preaching (Valley Forge: Judson, 1981), 20.

[15]Acts 20:7.

[16]John R. W. Stott, Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 123.

[17]Ralph Lewis and Gregg Lewis, Learning To Preach Like Jesus (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1989), 27.

warranted. In the synagogue at Nazareth He read a text from Isaiah and then developed his sermon on the basis of that text.[18] On the road to Emmaus, although the text of the sermon has not been preserved, He "explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."[19] Thomas Chadwick summarizes the preaching of Christ by saying, "He spoke from Scripture (both affirming and contrasting Scripture), from real life situations, from His own experiences of God, from his own authority, from analogy."[20]

Discussions of New Testament preaching after Christ have often centered on the words used to describe the act of communicating the gospel. C. H. Dodd and others centered on the meaning of proclaim (*kerysso*), proclamation (*kerygma*) and herald (*keryx*) "in order to sum up the New Testament mission and message."[21] "Michael Green rightly takes issue with Dodd and insists that *kerysso* is but one of three great words used in the New Testament in this connection, the others being the previously mentioned *euangelizo* and *martyreo* (bear witness)."[22] Hesselgrave, however, goes on to identify thirteen different Greek words in addition to those already named which fall under the umbrella of communication as it is discussed in the New Testament.[23]

Simon Peter began with a text from the Old Testament when he preached on the day of Pentecost.[24] It could easily be argued, however, that the sermon form was inductive since he withheld his proposition until the end. One chapter later "he uses as his opportunity popular excitement over the healing of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful (Acts 3:12-26).[25] On that occasion, although Peter quotes from the Old Testament, his argument rises from the miracle's attestation to the power of the risen Christ, saying, "It is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know, and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all."[26]

Paul appealed to his listeners in Lystra on the basis of God's revelation of Himself through creation.[27] With the Athenians he developed his argument from their own religious practices and quoted one of their own poets.[28] John Stott discusses the word *dialegesthai*, which is frequently used to describe the evangelistic preaching of Paul and concludes, "Presumably it was a vocal dialogue in which he presented his case, some questioned it, others contradicted it, and he replied to their questions and criticisms."[29]

The form which preaching assumed in both Old and New Testaments demonstrated a great variety of methodology. At the same time, because of the process of inspiration, the content of the preaching was always consistently biblical even when the sermons were not overtly drawn from previously inscripturated passages. The next question which must be answered concerns the process of preaching today. Is it possible within the umbrella of expository method to make a distinction between expository preparation or hermeneutic and expository organization or form?

DEFINING THE EXPOSITORY SERMON

Definitions of expository preaching often lean toward either the preparation or the organizational aspects of the process without delineating between content and form. Andrew Blackwood leaned toward the technical aspect when he wrote, "Expository preaching means that the light for any sermon comes mainly from a Bible passage larger than

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[18]Luke 4:17-30.

[19]Luke 24:27 (NASB).

[20]Thomas Chadwick, Study of Non-Verbal Communication (Ann Arbor: Xerox University Microfilms, 1978), 28.

[21]David J. Hesselgrave, Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 24.

[22]Ibid., 24-25.

[23]Ibid., 25.

[24]Acts 2:14-36.

[25]Michael Philibert, Christ's Preaching and Ours (Richmond: John Knox P, 1964), 34.

[26]Acts 3:16 (NASB).

[27]Acts 14:15.

[28]Acts 17:22-31.

[29]Stott, Between Two Worlds, 76.

two or three consecutive verses."[30] John Stott leans toward the hermeneutical aspect when he says, "Properly speaking 'exposition' has a much broader meaning. It refers to the content of the sermon (biblical truth) rather than its style (a running commentary)."[31] Others would, of course, object to his equating expository style with a running commentary.

James Braga includes both hermeneutical and style elements in his definition. "An expository sermon is one in which a more or less extended portion of Scripture is interpreted in relation to one theme or central idea. The bulk of the material for the sermon is drawn directly from the passage and the outline consists of a series of progressive ideas centered around that one main idea."[32] Haddon Robinson offers a definition which emphasizes the content base of sermon preparation, but goes on to describe a method of linear, propositional organization which he also calls expository preaching. Only incidentally does he refer to other forms and even then he defines them in relationship to his primary method of logical organization. "In a narrative sermon, as in any other sermon, a major idea continues to be supported by other ideas, but the content supporting the points is drawn directly from the incidents in the story. In other words the details of the story are woven together to make a point, and all the points develop the central idea of the sermon."[33]

Others argue against the exclusive use of the expository style of preaching while seeming to support what could be called the expository method of preparation. "The classic three-point sermon, a didactic type of preaching often heard from many of these pulpits, which had its origins in the nineteenth century, abandons the biblical world and its literary forms."[34] George Swank suggests that the linear, didactic expository method stems more from a cultural than biblical impetus. "The sermon based on neat, orderly, deductive logic, which is the kind of preaching that most of us have expected to hear, is derived from an age of writing."[35]

It is possible that this diversity of definition really stems from a failure to distinguish between two very different homiletical endeavors, both of which have indiscriminately been called expository preaching. John Broadus hinted at the distinction many years ago when he said, "Rhetoric has to do with the use we make of material, the choice, adaptation, arrangement, expression. But, after all, the material itself is more important."[36] Robert L. Dabney wrote over one hundred years ago that "our business with it (the text) is to commend God's own meaning in it—nothing more, nothing less, to every man's conscience in His sight."[37]J. Alfred Smith also implies that black preachers have made that distinction while practicing a cultural style of narrative preaching which has little resemblance to the linear, didactic style often termed expository. "Early black preachers, who took seriously the preaching responsibility, worked tirelessly to perfect the preaching gift of storytelling. Their sermons were artistic pieces of style related to sound principles of hermeneutics."[38] More recently Bryan Chappel reminds the biblical communicator that "Scripture's portrayal of its own potency challenges us always to remember that the Word preached rather than the preaching of the Word accomplishes heaven's purposes."[39]

Paul addressed this question in his first epistle to the Corinthians. "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."[40] The emphasis in Paul's mind had to be on the content of the message rather

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[30]Andrew Blackwood, Expository Preaching For Today (Nashville: Abington-Cokesbury, 1953), 13.

[31]Stott, Between Two Worlds, 125.

[32]James Braga, How To Prepare Bible Messages (Portland: Multnomah, 1969), 36.

[33]Robinson, Biblical Preaching, 124.

[34]Mark Ellingsen, The Integrity of Biblical Narrative (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 18.

[35]Swank, Dialogic Style In Preaching, 9.

[36]Richard Lishcher, Theories of Preaching: Selected Readings in the Homiletical Tradition (Durham, NC: Labyrinth P, 1987), 232.

[37]Robert L. Dabney, Sacred Rhetoric (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1979), 105.

[38]J. Alfred Smith, Preach On! (Nashville: Broadman, 1984), 51.

[39]Bryan Chappell, Christ-Centered Preaching (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 19.

[40]1 Corinthians 1:21 (NASB).

than on the style of delivery. There is no efficacy in any style of preaching; the efficacy is in the message which is preached.

It would seem possible, then, to differentiate between expository preaching as a method of sermon preparation and expository preaching as a method of sermon organization. The method of sermon preparation, grounded in a high view of Scripture and founded on a historical-grammatical exegesis, remains normative for today's preacher because that is the only method by which we can be sure we will indeed "preach the word."[41] The method of sermon style commonly called expository preaching, which endeavors to form the biblical text into a propositional, linear, didactic outline, would then be open for discussion as simply one among many methods of organization, all of which could conceivably remain faithful to the text of Scripture.

CONTEXTUALIZATION AND THE EXPOSITORY SERMON

At this point it becomes necessary to approach the question of value. What will be gained by making the distinction between expository hermeneutics and expository style of delivery? Since the expository method in both aspects has served the church well for many years, is it possible to lose more than is gained by trying to divide the procedure from the product? The answer lies in the matter of how the process of communication works. The ultimate purpose of communication includes reception by a listener or audience. If our style of preaching makes it hard for our audience to understand the message, then the importance of the message seems to demand that we look for a style which will communicate more effectively.

The linear, western-style logic of the expository preaching style has indeed served the western church well for many years. But is it not possible to retain a faithful exegetical approach to Scripture while at the same time contextualizing our style of preaching so that the exposition of the text can be communicated cross-culturally in a style which will be more effective among non-western thinkers? Is it not possible that, with the encroachment of post-modernism on the western mind, even American preachers may have to consider the possibility that linear logic may very soon not be the best way of communicating with their own audiences? George Swank says, "Let us at least notice that today's congregation, leaving its TV sets briefly to hear a sermon, will not have the patience to follow extended logical discourse that could have been expected a generation or two ago."[42]

Missionary strategists have long noted that "organization is largely a matter of cultural preference."[43] "The missionary evangelist needs to develop an indigenous style of preaching that will fit the background and life-style of his audience."[44] To a Japanese audience "if the speaker has good ethos and is a recognized authority, specific proofs and support are not needed."[45] Donn Ketcham suggests that "many cultures are not given much to thinking in the abstract, but respond to the sort of teaching that conjures up in their minds mental pictures that are easily remembered."[46]

Surely a Book replete with stories and narratives could be communicated to such people in a style which most effectively matches their cultural traditions. Tim Matheny suggests that certain portions of Scripture might even fit one culture better than another. "The frequent use of poetic passages in the Old Testament usually do not impress the Westerner nearly as much as they do the Arab, whose life is filled with poetic expression."[47] Likewise a culture which has a history of Christian influence should be able to use life stories from its own history rather than illustrating messages from the culture of the American missionary. "It is important to make a conscious effort to incorporate the life

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[41]2 Timothy 4:2.

[42]Swank, Dialogic Style In Preaching, 9.

[43]Hesselgrave, Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally, 155.

[44]John T. Seamands, Tell It Well (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1981), 139.

[45]Hesselgrave, Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally, 156.

[46]Donn Ketcham, No Uncertain Sound (Cherry Hill, NJ: Association of Baptists for World Evangelism, 1982), 34.

[47]Tim Matheny, Reaching the Arabs (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1981), 155.

stories of Korean figures as much as possible into Korean preaching so that it becomes truly indigenous and accountable to the Korean cultural context."[48]

Word choice is also very closely tied to cultural tastes. Not only must the communicator learn the language spoken by the audience in terms of French, or Spanish, or Arabic. The communicator must also learn the language choices acceptable to sub-cultures within those language groups. Randall Speirs gives an illustration of the lack of such adaptation among the native Americans from Mexico.

> In Mexico, for example, some Indian preachers use Spanish even though they can barely get along in it. They do this despite the fact that a large part of their congregation, particularly the women, understand nothing of what they say. This strange behavior is brought about by the wrong kind of pride. Spanish is the language of prestige, and the preacher wants everyone to appreciate his ability to speak it.[49]

Speakers of English, if honest, would admit that there are also times when pride of the same kind affects the ability to communicate with an audience. The speaker either has not taken the time to analyze his audience, or he has learned a theological language which holds great meaning for him but is not translated into the language of those to whom he is preaching.

Warren Stewart discusses the experience of black preachers who in recent years have had the opportunity to attend college and seminary. "With the exposure to theological institutions of higher learning has come the necessity to learn and acquire another language uncommon in form (but not in substance) with the language of those to whom most of their preaching will be directed. The language to which I have reference is the primarily cerebral and abstract vernacular of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant theologians and biblical scholars."[50] Once this new language is acquired, Stewart argues that "the truth that needs to be conveyed through the Word must be posited before the people in an understandable tongue."[51] Word choice as well as organization must communicate with the target audience. Attention to capturing the exact meaning of the words from the original languages will not be of benefit to the listener unless the preacher goes through the process of phrasing those ideas in words which carry meaning for them.

The growth of missions work among those of Jewish heritage has likewise required some careful and culturally sensitive word choices. Among some of the congregations of those who prefer being called Messianic Jews "the Anglicized word *Christ* is dropped in favor of *Messiah*."[52] Although a western audience might be uncomfortable dropping the familiar word *Christ* from its worship experience, using *Messiah* certainly communicates the same concept.

This process of interpreting the text for the audience is really the essence of the homiletical task. "We appropriate the meaning of a text when we let its world into ours," writes Kevin J. Vanhoozen, "when we put its pages into our practice."[53] If a sermon faithfully explains the text so that the audience understands the biblical revelation of God and His will, that sermon can be called expository even if it does not fit the strictures of expository preaching as a method of organization. In fact, for that audience it may be far more effective in expositing the Word. Walter Liefeld implies this distinction when he writes, "The essential nature of expository preaching, then, is preaching that explains a passage in such a way as to lead the congregation to a true and practical application of that passage."[54]

Preaching cross-culturally then could conceivably be accomplished through story-telling, inductive argument, debate, drama, generalization, specific examples, narrative preaching, or any number of other styles while at the same time maintaining absolute fidelity to the exposition of the text. "The missionary mandate is to make the Bible clearly

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[48]Jung Young Lee, Korean Preaching (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 87.

[49]Tom Claus and Dale Kietzman, eds., Christian Leadership In Indian America (Chicago: Moody, 1976), 86.

[50]Warren Stewart, Interpreting God's Word in Black Preaching (Valley Forge: Judson P, 1984), 55.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Gary Thomas, "The Return of the Jewish Church," Christianity Today, 7 September 1998, 64.

[53]D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, eds. God and Culture (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 25.

[54]Walter Liefeld, New Testament Exposition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 6.

understood and to help the national apply the Word of God in his own situation in his own culture."55 William Thompson suggests a model by which such a sermon could be shaped.

> Any model we might produce would certainly have to utilize the techniques of exegesis and the principles of interpretation. It would have to provide for an honest engagement with the biblical text and an equally honest facing of life as the listeners are living it out. A model would have to take seriously the theological dimensions of the material at hand, placing the gospel—the work of God—at its center, but taking into account the doctrine of sin and also the ethical consequences of the gospel. The model ought also to recognize and utilize the dynamic of the biblical story, the encounters of people and ideas. It ought to facilitate the formulation of a central idea that will control the selection and arrangement of the sermonic material, but it should not, however, be primarily a homiletical model that might make all the sermons it produces sound alike; it should engender variety rather than uniformity.[56]

Such a model would remain faithful to the spirit of the expository hermeneutic if it incorporated the characteristics which Liefeld says are present in every true expository message. These are characteristics which depend on our approach to the text and not our approach to organization. They include a method which "deals with one passage of Scripture" (while allowing for a topical method which draws its essential information from the text), "hermeneutical integrity," "cohesion," "movement and direction," and "application."[57]

All of those characteristics can be present in styles of preaching which adapt to a variety of cross-cultural audiences. "The message is totally from God, but its form is culturally conditioned."58

IMPLICATIONS OF THE CONTEXTUALIZATION OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Acceptance of the distinction between expository preparation and expository preaching as a style will carry some implications for preachers in whatever culture they serve, as well as for schools who seek to train men in homiletics. The first of these implications will be presented in the context of warnings.

While seeking to distinguish between expository content and expository form, a preacher must heed the warning of William Willimon not to lose the message while seeking to contextualize the form the message takes.

> I see here (in Acts 17) an invitation and a warning to preachers who want to contextualize the gospel. The invitation is to start where the people are, but the warning is to recognize our limited ability to adapt the gospel. Eventually the gospel is about something for which there is no precedent—the resurrection—and we can only testify to it. The truth claims of Christianity are not easily validated externally. They're a matter of faith.[59]

This warning is echoed by John Stott, who says the preacher must avoid two opposite errors in the process of sermon preparation. "The first is belief that though it was heard in ancient times, God's voice is silent today. The second is the claim that God is indeed speaking today, but that His Word has little or nothing to do with Scripture."60 While trying to contextualize the form of preaching in order to adapt to an audience, the preacher must always heed the warning not to give up the message of Scripture which has been discovered through historical-grammatical exegesis.

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[55]Ketcham, No Uncertain Sound, 23.

[56]William D. Thompson, Preaching Biblically: Exegesis and Interpretation (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 78.

[57]Liefeld, New Testament Exposition, 6-7.

[58]Ketcham, No Uncertain Sound, 10.

[59]Steve Brown, Haddon Robinson, and William Willimon, A Voice In The Wilderness (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1993), 65-66.

[60]Stott, Between Two Worlds, 102.

The second warning involves the matter in which sermon preparation takes place. There is a danger when using other forms of preaching than the one commonly called expository that the emphasis will jump from the research of the text to the needs of the audience. The preacher will begin with the application and neglect the disciplined study which should be present before adaptation and application. Calvin Miller says, "Precept preachers are, by their very nature, more given to consistent spiritual disciplines (and for that matter, discipline of any sort) than story-oriented preachers."[61] The preacher who desires to use story must be warned against neglecting the discipline of ardent study.

The other implications for preachers and those who train them will involve some questions communicators must face.

1. Am I open to learning from other cultures or have I concluded that the methods I use are the only legitimate way to preach? D. A. Carson says, "Genuine exchanges and mutual correction among leaders who hold a high view of Scripture but who work and labor in highly diverse contexts should prove enriching to the entire church of God."[62]
2. What kind of preaching should we expect from our missionaries when they return from the field if they have been ardently working to contextualize their communication?
3. Should our training in the area of homiletics, especially in academic institutions we start in other countries, include the possibility that expository content may need to be communicated in some other form than an expository organization depending on the target audience and culture of the potential listeners?
4. Is it possible that continued influence of post-modernism will bring the American preacher to the place where he must explore the possibility of using other styles of preaching to communicate to an audience which is no longer able to follow linear, logical reasoning?

These questions must be answered in light of the fact that Scripture holds the preacher to textual faithfulness but does not limit him to any particular style or form of communication. They must be answered if we can legitimately distinguish between expository content and expository organization.

CONCLUSION

Expository preaching, both in content and organization, remains the best method for the communicator to the western mindset, the average American audience today. It is still the best way to assure one that he is conveying the biblical revelation of God and His will because the preacher is "confined to biblical truth."[63] It would be a tragedy for the Western church to lose that close connection with Scripture in preaching.

At the same time there are some great values in seeking to make a distinction between expository content and expository organization. It would also be a great tragedy if, in swearing allegiance to a particular preaching style, the communicator hindered understanding of the very content he desires to share. That tragedy becomes a real possibility when the communication of the gospel to other cultures within a framework of western thinking is attempted. It is even a possibility within a western culture when a potential audience has been heavily influenced by post-modern thought.

The very nature of the message entrusted to the communicator by God requires him to consider the form as well as the content of preaching. "Would-be evangelical contextualizers need to recognize their own culture-boundedness; they ought to wrestle with the relationship between the biblical text and their own cultural context. They must allow Scripture to judge their own enculturated interpretations and lifestyles."[64] That process of judging ourselves should include a preaching style, which, though serving the western church well for many years, may actually be an impediment in communicating the truth of Scripture to other cultures.

Accepting a view which makes a distinction between expository content and organization enables the preacher to maintain fidelity to Scripture by means of a historical-grammatical hermeneutic, while adapting to an audience in

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[61]Calvin Miller, Spirit, Word and Story (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 14.

[62]Carson, God and Culture, 65.

[63]Liefeld, New Testament Exposition, 10.

[64]Hesselgrave, Contextualization, 34.

the way those biblical truths are communicated. In this way narrative preaching, dialogue preaching, debate, drama, storytelling, and inductive preaching can serve as viable communicative styles while at the same time the preacher faithfully exposits the God-given meaning of any text. The expository method of preparing content is demanded by Scripture and should not be abandoned. The method of organization commonly called expository preaching is not demanded by Scripture and is therefore only one of many styles of preaching available to the preacher today.