

TOWARD A HOLISTIC PREACHING MODEL FOR POSTMODERN AMERICA:
INTEGRATING THE PHILOSOPHY AND METHODOLOGY OF HADDON ROBINSON,
DAVID BUTTRICK, AND RICK WARREN

Daniel J. Waite, Ph. D.
First Free Methodist Church of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan

Abstract: The Biblical mandate to preaching requires studying methodologies to communicate to contemporary society effectively. The clash between postmodernism and modernism leaves the preacher in need of a new communication model. Ideally, a new model will be holistic and address the needs of the human psyche. A comparison and contrast of selected works by Haddon Robinson, David Buttrick, and Rick Warren, representing expository preaching, narrative preaching, and application preaching reveals common areas a sermon should address.

The purpose of this study is to discover, within the defined homiletical models, common factors needed to reach the human psyche. John Tornfelt suggests, “Awareness of information processing styles can lead to the crafting of stylistically integrated sermons” (Tornfelt, 2003, p. 11). Using the understanding gleaned from the Kolb educational model can help preachers understand the necessity of appealing to different types of learners and listeners. Theoretically, the discovery will lead to a means of creating relevant and meaningful dissonance in the individual through the crafting of stylistically integrated sermons and a vehicle to evaluate sermons in general. Also, the discovery should transcend the debate between modern and postmodern ideology. The quest for these factors comes from a desire to understand what effectively communicates in preaching. It is recognized that effective communication transcends style. Thus, common factors other than style must be at work in reaching the human psyche.

Thus, the presentation of a model, based on the discovery of certain elements found in expository, narrative, and application models, is the primary concern of this paper. Haddon Robinson’s *Biblical Preaching*, David Buttrick’s *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*, and Rick Warren’s two sets of teaching tapes will be the primary focus of this study. Gleaning from the selected works yields a holistic model that transcends types and address the four areas of volition, obedience, thought, and emotion (the VOTE model) by using kinetic, visual, auditory, and spiritual language.

The Church and American Culture

American culture is at twilight. This twilight demands change in the philosophies and methodologies of the pulpit. Disillusioned with modernism and humanism, the battle cry has been to question authority and reality. In a search for authentic life, the current cultural trend has been to abandon the past. Community has become a rallying point where individualism is lost to “groupthink” (D. Smith, 1992, pp. 211, 308). Decisions are made according to how society understands information. The effect is a deterioration of “mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment” (D. Smith, 1992, p. 308). Postmodernism has placed the American preacher in the position of communicating cross-culturally to an American society.

The challenge is to understand the shifting nature of American culture and how it affects pulpit communication. A cursory review of postmodernism will point out trends within the general American church. The movement toward praxis and authenticity is accompanied by image over substance. The loss of objectivity as a value is one result. Douglas Groothuis indicates, "These are not philosophical games reserved for intellectuals or the otherwise bored. They are matters of personal rectitude and integrity" (Groothuis, 2000, p. 10). Steve Rabey claims, "Changes in world view and philosophy transform the ways people receive and process information" (Rabey, 2001, p. 108). The question is how the pastor, preaching at twilight, adjusts to the changing culture in a way that is faithful to scripture and the people. John R. W. Stott has proposed that a preacher stands between "the biblical world and the modern world" (Stott, 1982, p. 138).

Answers may be found beyond sermon philosophy and methodology. Today's sermons need to transcend traditionalism, modern humanism, and postmodernism to create dissonance. Dissonance with the culture and current spiritual position will help the listener overcome obstacles to spiritual understanding and growth. Along with dissonance, the preacher must show how the sermon is relevant to the daily and eternal needs of the postmodern listener. Dissonance shows the need, while relevance shows why and how to fulfill the need.

Relevance is the perception of the listener that the preacher is speaking to felt needs (Kraft, 1983, p. 84). The issue of relevance drives proponents of the application philosophy of preaching. Relevance occurs when the preacher ties the two together. This happens as preachers address behaviors that are causing dissonance, thoughts that are inconsistent with faith, and emotional struggles.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism is both a philosophy and a culture. As a philosophy it holds to certain perceived notions. As a culture it is a response to these perceived notions. For instance, postmodernism rejects the concept of truth as propositional, absolute, or universal. Rick Warren acknowledges, "There is no longer an accepted standard of values – truth is dying. We live in a society where everything is accepted as plausible and nothing is certain" (Warren, 2004). Rabey notes that this shift is resulting in a story-oriented preaching, because "Stories communicate effectively in a visual oriented, postmodern age that lacks an overarching meta-narrative" (Rabey, 2001, p. 111). Knowledge and experience are interpreted as a matter of personal perspective (Anderson, 2001, p. 24).

Meanwhile, traditional expository preaching has depended on propositional, absolute, and universal truth. The discussion is about the nature of truth, the means of obtaining truth, and the possibility of communicating truth (Anderson, 2001, p. 21). Postmodernists will approach truth from the presumption of suspicion. The reaction to the demand of suspicion is a belief that power twists knowledge and authority is arrogant (Anderson, 2001, p. 38). In other words, those in power delineate and manipulate knowledge and "truth." Rejection occurs because of the existence of power, not because the knowledge is faulty. To a certain extent, this distrust has become a function of pessimism and lack of confidence (Anderson, 2001, p. 19).

The gist of postmodernism is twofold. First, a distrust of authority infers a rejection of propositional truth and institutions that seek to maintain such truth. Postmodernists feel that propositional truth is a construct and the means of an oppressive authoritarian structure (Anderson, 2001, p. 25). This may be due to the “chief moral value” of “absolute liberty of personal volition, the power of each of us to choose what he or she believes, wants, needs, or must possess” (Hart, 2003, p. 47). This has created the image that the church is the bad guy, because it preaches an imposed construct. Thus, tolerance has become the new reality. Diversity is preferred as the ultimate value.

Second, a flight from objective truth implies a rejection of absolutes (Reno, 2001, p. 37). The net effect is rejection of obedience to an outside will and self-discipline. On the other hand, a social subjectivity that rejects individualism or autonomy is created. Social subjectivity then leads to “nonfoundationalism.” This, in effect, shifts the sermon from text-centered to listener-centered. Thus, church ministry and preaching is needs-based, and doctrine will come from ethics (D. Adams, 1997 – 1998, p. 524). Logic is irrelevant to postmodern communication. Deductive and inductive reasoning suffers from warrants challenged, ignored, or rejected.

Postmodernism can be critical of propositional truth, constructed authenticity, and authority but has no reasons other than a general mentality of suspicion about these things. Postmodernism is not interested in the onus of proof, which can cause confusion. Subjectivity replaces objectivity with no moral compass or foundation other than the individual. No authority, except community or society, outside the individual is recognized. Avoiding responsibility may be the crucial point for postmodern people (Anderson, 2001, p. 76). The possibility of many subjective truths has also created a movement toward pluralism in the church.

However, the trend toward pluralism leaves no means of evaluating conflicting realities (D. Adams, 1997 – 1998, p. 522). Walter Brueggemann suggests, “A normless world is not a world for self-actualizing individuals. It is a jungle of competing, savage interests” (Brueggemann, 1982, p. 20). This means culture is in free fall if no absolute outside the individual or society is recognized. Without absolutes outside itself, society is inventing standards and rules as it goes. The effect is chaos.

The Church and the Trends

The church might be struggling with the cultural shift for two reasons. First, postmodern proponents, like their modern humanistic predecessors, have decided that Christianity is the enemy. Adams calls this the “legitimation crisis” where “metanarratives and their agents” have been rejected (D. Adams, 1997 – 1998, p. 524).

Second, Christianity has conscripted modern humanistic philosophy into its service (D. Adams, 1997 – 1998, p. 524). For instance, confidence in human ability and potential runs deep on its quest for success. This attachment has produced inflexibility and the opinion that everything that challenges the underlying philosophy challenges Christianity. As the culture changes, the church is threatened due to the move away from the familiar and comfortable. Unfortunately, the move

to defend the familiar will inhibit the church from responding to cultural changes. The church is obliged to recognize that its culture is outside and contrary to any human philosophy.

Summary

Culture is the context of the preacher, while social standards influence the structure of the sermon. While the preacher exercises certain control over elements of the model, life change occurs on the unction of the Holy Spirit. Since the model is holistic, dealing with the human mind and experience, the issue of persuasion is not the primary concern. The general intention is to tender one possible sermon idea in an attempt to address the human psyche holistically.

Three Models

Each model has defined contours and a body of literature to help the preacher understand the particular elements of a sermon. The expository model is typically strong on the thinking scale. Haddon Robinson claims, "Effective expository preaching will be occupied largely with the explanation of Scripture" (Robinson, 1974, p. 58). Narrative sermons characteristically do well on an emotional basis. The application model stresses the obedience aspect of the sermon, in "how to" sermonic construction.

Each model seeks to influence volition in a different way. The expository sermon seeks to shape volition through logical ideas. The narrative model aims to avoid a perceived authoritarian position. Paul Scott Wilson advises, "Do not seek to explain or moralize the text. . . . We do not want to turn the text into our own set of rules by which to live" (Wilson, 1988, p. 80). The application sermon's purpose is to frame an answer to life's questions. Application sermons depend on what the listener brings to the preaching event.

Ideally, each model has attempted to correct natural deficiencies within the framework of its philosophy and methodologies. For example, the expository model uses illustrations to generate emotional appeal. Meanwhile, the narrative model looks to details of the narrative to appeal to the thought process. Having narrative practitioners expunge an appeal to volition is common. An application sermon makes the assumption that felt needs will cover the emotional and volitional needs of the human psyche, and the preacher's job is to teach the concrete skill. The focus on "how to" may leave the listener floundering without a theological foundation.

Expository Model

A search for a definition of expository preaching proves elusive. Bryson claims expository preaching is eclectic (Bryson, 1995, pp. 11 – 39). However, using the etymological definition, expository preaching is the accurate interpretation and explanation of scripture for application. James Daane put it this way, "Expository means setting forth" (Daane, 1980, p. 49). The elements of accurate interpretation, explanation, and application seem to dominate popular literature espousing expository preaching.

Narrative Model

Narrative preaching focuses on the story found in today's world. Donald L. Hamilton notes, "Narrative preaching has become a term used to describe a sermon that varies from the traditional points-that-explain-a-central-idea homiletical arrangement to one which purposely tells a single story, a story with a spiritual point" (Hamilton, 1992, p. 104). The focus is not on persuasion through explanation; it is on persuasion through emotional appeal. As Rabey puts it, "A story does something that no abstract proposition can ever do. It stops you in your tracks and forces you to think" (Rabey, 2001, p. 111).

Narrative leans heavily on the theory of right-brain and left-brain psychology. The idea is that both sides of the brain must be appealed to, instead of the traditional left-brain proposition-proof model common in the expository method. One tendency is to advocate or encourage human insight rather than biblical truth. Another tendency is narrative's association with what some may consider the liberal perspective in Christianity. This makes narrative unattractive, by association, for many conservatives.

Application Model

Application preaching emphasizes relevance. The focus and starting point of the sermon is the individual. These sermons tend to be topical in nature with a goal of being practical in advice. The underlying philosophy, that people want to change, may seem naive but is balanced by the homiletical need to show the listener why the change is important or necessary. One thing that the application sermon must avoid, due to its topical tendency, is the temptation to give good advice proofed by scripture. The appearance of heavy-laden scripture quotes may mask a descent into popular or psychological advice out of context to the truth of scripture.

Does the preacher start with the listener and work from that point, or start with the text, recognizing that the listener is the wrong place? The loyalty of the preacher is to God and therefore the text. However, the reason for the sermon is the listener. The preacher could begin with both the listener and the text in mind. The needs of the text do not necessarily oppose the felt needs of the listener.

To Suggest a Holistic Form of Biblical Preaching

It is the argument of this paper that all models will be effective if one becomes conscious of the four main needs of the human psyche as reflected in the VOTE model. For instance, content and purpose define the very act of preaching (Craddock, 1985, p. 170). Robinson claims, "The Scriptures provide no single form that Christian sermons must take" (Robinson and Robinson, 2003, p. 11). Using the VOTE model will enable the preacher to use a variety of styles and philosophies while reaching the total human psyche. Thus, each sermon will address the volitional aspect in dealing with the spiritual directly. Obedience will challenge behavioral patterns. Thought will teach and reflect on past knowledge and experience. Emotion will allow motivation through feeling.

Appealing to the four elements of VOTE will move the sermon and listeners through the various stages of cognitive dissonance and reconciliation. The use of various types of language will help the listener absorb, process, and articulate life change. The use of language will deliberately move the sermon and listener through the VOTE model. The VOTE model gives the preacher the means to move the listener through both strengths and weaknesses.

The Kolb Model

David Kolb suggests that humans learn through concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE) (Kolb, 1984, p. 30). Preachers should balance these four areas for progress to be made in learning (Swenson, 2005). According to the Kolb model, two ways of knowing are through direct experience, known as “apprehension,” and comprehension. These refer to the poles of concrete experience and abstract conceptualization. Also, according to Atherton, the Kolb model offers two ways of transforming information called “connotation” and “denotation,” which correspond respectively to reflective observation and active experimentation (Atherton, 2002). This paper will use the terms Experience (CE), Enquiry (RO), Extraction (AC), and Experimentation (AE) to reflect established research in relationship to preaching and the balanced appeal to the human psyche.

McCarthy 4MAT System

Bernice McCarthy expands Kolb’s cycle, in an attempt to affect all learners. Noting that 70 percent of learners’ styles are not native to the traditional classroom lecture, she suggests that the educational process “move around the circle,” because “all of the learners need all of the cycle” (McCarthy, 1987, p. 49). McCarthy uses right-brain and left-brain ideas as the means of moving sequentially through the Kolb model. To use the Kolb model effectively and left and right mode processing, McCarthy encourages the teaching of modalities: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (McCarthy, 1987, p. 128). McCarthy argues, “It is based on the belief that people respond to change in uniquely personal ways; therefore, the individual must be the primary target of change” (McCarthy, 1982, p. 20).

Further research is needed to discover the importance of sequence. However, for the purposes of defining and explaining the VOTE model, a sequential order is being followed. In discussing the Kolb model, Jarvis claims, “The learning cycle may begin at any stage and that it should be a continuous spiral” (Jarvis, 1995, p. 68). For instance, deductive sermons, which aim to prove a proposition, would logically begin with volition. However, inductive sermons, which attempt to arrive at a conclusion, could logically begin with obedience or thought. A narrative type sermon, which seeks to establish the importance of the matter first, could begin with emotion and end with an appeal to thought to solidify a commitment made in process.

John Tornfelt claims, “One neglected factor has been learning styles which account for why people relate well to some sermons and struggle with other ones. Responses are not necessarily related to content but stem from the orientations of listeners” (Tornfelt, 2003, p. 1). David Buttrick observes, “The issue is listening” (Buttrick, 1987, p. 213). The VOTE preaching model will also help pastors deal with the shifting cultural and expectational demands of effectively

communicating God's Word in a local church. Design will shape the construction of sermons that systematically and holistically deal with the human psyche.

Christian Use of Kolb's Model

Christian thinkers have mirrored the Kolb's model for understanding communication and preaching. Howard Hendricks claims there are three components to communication: "Intellect, emotion, and volition – in other words, thought, feeling, and action. . . . all three components must be present" (Hendricks, 1987, p. 100). Hendricks is referring to communication in general. However, action and volition are not necessarily the same. Volition could include attitude, accepting a value, preference for a value, and commitment (Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, 1964, p. 36). The public choice can be very different from the behavior that results.

Kenton Anderson's integrated model uses some aspects of the Kolb model, especially in the handling of scripture (From personal correspondence with Dr. Anderson). However, Anderson suggests both cognitive and affective under the Kolb concept of apprehension (Anderson, 1995). Jacqueline Lapsley argues, "Obedience and feeling are interdependent; obedience follows feeling and feeling follows obedience in an endless circuit of faithfulness" (Lapsley, 2004, p. 127). The question is how the two relate and what connects obedience and emotion.

Another pole for Anderson is the tension between explanation and experience (Anderson, 2005). The question at stake is the understanding of authority. Traditional expository philosophy sees authority in solid explanation and logic. Postmodernism sees authority in experience. While subjective, the power of experience might be gaining strength in American society. Dismissing the power of experience is difficult. Thus, the power of experience can be a strong opponent to logic.

The VOTE model sets explanation and experience in a dichotomy rather than the diametrical pattern of thought and volition. The reason for the shift is that the affective function (emotion) of the human psyche can be directly linked to behavior (obedience) and cognitive function (thought). Also, explanation (thought) can be seen to affect the experience (obedience) and volition. This movement creates cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance motivates change.

INTRODUCTION TO THE VOTE MODEL

The holistic VOTE model is named after its four components. The four components are volition, obedience, thought, and emotion. Each component is found in some way in the three models. However, several components are emphasized or de-emphasized in one or more of the models.

Volition

Volition is the spiritual component where choices are made. Christian theology speculates that people act upon beliefs (Warren, 2000). As a person gives value to something, the resulting behavior "is sufficiently consistent and stable to have taken on the characteristics of a belief or an attitude" (Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, 1964, p. 139).

All three schools attempt to influence the decision-making process. However, this attempt is done in different ways. Expository preaching attempts to influence volition directly through logical argument or an appeal to thought. Narrative preaching attempts to influence volition indirectly through an emotional appeal of story or discovery. Application preaching would influence volition directly through relevance and an appeal to obedience. Volition is directed by extraction and experimentation and becomes a “process of action control and self-regulation” (Corno, 2004, p. 1672).

Obedience

Obedience is the human component of action in line with held beliefs and theories. Obedience occurs in a “high level of certainty” that “may border on faith, in the sense of being a firm emotional acceptance of a belief upon admittedly nonrational grounds” (Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, 1964, p. 149). Obedience symbolizes what one does and is a reflection of how one organizes multiple values (Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, 1964, p. 154). It is what one consistently invests considerable energy into (Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, 1964, p. 150). This spirals back to experience (M. Smith, 2001). It is through the things done and the evaluation of those things that impressions are solidified and judgments passed on new things.

Obedience is the call to authenticity (1 John 2:6). It is directed by experimentation and experience. Experience includes the methods, habits, and behaviors one uses unreflectively. The skill used to move from experimentation to experience is application through kinetic language. Obedience is applied volition and is meta-liminal. It is here that people tend to be outside the influence of dissonance. Buttrick insists, “We do not question our in-action lives until prereflective strategies are confounded or postreflective precedents do not apply” (Buttrick, 1987, p. 326). Only when the person begins the mental journey through thought, emotion, and the deliberate challenge to volition can there be dissonance.

Thought

Thought is the human component of thinking and reasoning. What one thinks about directs emotion, obedience, and volition. Critical to the reasoning process is to reflect on experience and ask questions. The individual makes sense of the word spoken in a meaningful manner within the individual’s past and learned tradition. When the thought and emotion agree, dissonance is reduced, and there is willingness to change. Thought is directed by experience and enquiry. Thought is obedience questioned and is pre-liminal.

Emotion

Emotion is the human component of feeling, which motivates the individual. Knowledge alone does not motivate change. Knowledge by itself cannot produce obedience without the motivation of emotions. If the heart is divided or unwilling, then effective life change will not occur. However, emotion alone cannot turn change into behavioral habits.

Emotion is directed by enquiry and extraction. Visual language is used by drawing a word picture. Donald Demaray suggests, “Pictures motivate . . . Communication falters and fails because of misplaced abstractions. Pictures with concrete, specific, and selective detail create points of contact” (Demaray, 1999, p. 140). Word pictures are an attempt to influence emotion. Emotion is ambiguity toward previous beliefs and theories and is liminal. Unger suggests, “In preaching, however, there is a greater appeal to the emotions and the will than is proper in pure instruction” (Unger, 1955, pp. 35 – 36). The idea is to bring the person to a moment of choice with cognitive dissonance at its peak. Self-defense mechanisms take over, and the tendency is to fall back into comfortable beliefs and theories.

HADDON W. ROBINSON AND VOTE

Robinson suggests a fourfold goal for preaching: “In dependence upon the Holy Spirit, the preacher aims to confront, convict, convert, and comfort men and women through the proclamation of biblical concepts. People shape their lives and settle their eternal destinies in response to these ideas” (Robinson, 2001, p. 29). The aim to convert is an appeal to the volition as the preacher seeks change. Confrontation brings the listener face to face with what the listener is obeying that results in behavior patterns. Conviction, for Robinson, is an appeal to thought in an attempt to prove a particular point.

On a chart describing the purpose for a particular sermon, Robinson lists verbs under four categories: Knowledge, Insight, Attitude, and Skill (Robinson, 2001, p. 111). Under the category of Knowledge, he suggests things like “enumerate,” “identify,” “become aware with,” “become cognizant of,” “define,” and “describe.” These appeal to the thought. Under Insight, Robinson offers “evaluate,” “reflect on,” “discern,” and “discover.” These are functions of emotion in the VOTE model. Robinson describes Attitude as “determined,” “be convinced of,” “commit yourself to,” “desire to,” and “feel satisfied about.” These are functions of volition in the VOTE model. Skill is indicated by verbs, such as “apply,” “internalize,” “practice,” and “experience.” These function as obedience.

Robinson’s concept of application, “the theological purpose of the biblical writer” (Robinson, 2001, p. 88), is that of the obedience. The theological purpose of scripture is always obedience, not knowledge (Matthew 7:21, 1 John 2:3, James 1:22, etc.). Emphasizing knowledge is safer for the preacher, because application can be authoritarian. Churches have suffered abuse due to authoritarian preaching.

Expository sermons have traditionally focused on thought. Robinson suggests three developmental questions every sermon must address. First, “What does it mean” (Robinson, 2001, p. 77)? This is an exercise in understanding the meaning of the text. The preaching emphasis on this question is on explanation. Explanation focuses on particulars and expansion (Robinson, 2001, p. 77). Explanation is dependent on knowing and anticipating the listener’s needs and questions. What does the listener think when a particular thought is introduced? If there are questions, they need to be addressed. If there are objections, they need to be answered.

The second question is “Is it true” (Robinson, 2001, p. 80)? This is the necessity of proof. Robinson suggests using the “logic of experience” as the first proof (Robinson, 2001, p. 81). Natural theology” is Robinson’s second suggested proof (Robinson, 2001, p. 81). This means drawing implications and making deductions about the known experience. The last proof Robinson suggests is, “insights consistent with biblical revelation” (Robinson, 2001, p. 86).

However, instead of proof, the preacher who is speaking to postmodern people should look for validation. Even with the pervasive attitude of skepticism, the thought can appeal to the experience, reason, and tradition of the listener, as Robinson has pointed out through his three proofs. Addressing the issue of authenticity is difficult, because it is different from certainty. Robinson perceives, “Because we have not been willing to live for a time on the sloping back of a question mark, we may become hucksters for a message that we do not believe ourselves” (Robinson, 2001, p. 85).

The last question is, “What difference does it make” (Robinson, 2001, p. 86)? This is application. Orthodox thought can be preached. However, relating the text to the experience of the listener is critical. If accurate application is not made, it creates what Robinson calls “practicing heretics” (Robinson, 2001, p. 86). Robinson argues, “Listeners are deceived if they simply know God’s Word but do not practice it” (Robinson, 2001, p. 96).

These questions correspond to what Anderson suggests as the consequence of postmodern thinking. The first catch phrase is “works for me” (Anderson, 2001, p. 30). The observation here is that if knowing something for sure is not possible then only pragmatism is left as a measure. Sometimes, pragmatic concerns miss underlying meaning. The second consequence is the catch phrase, “whatever” (Anderson, 2001, p. 30). Because everything is tentative, “whatever” allows the individual to decide independently of what modernists would call proof. The last catch phrase that sums up the consequence of postmodern thinking is “who cares” (Anderson, 2001, p. 31). The expression, “who cares,” is both a question and statement. Robinson’s insistence on relevance can be one possible response to “who cares.” If the thought is relevant, then the answer to the question is “God cares,” and the response to the statement is “you do.”

Responding to God’s revelation is the function of volition. Anderson puts it this way, “The . . . mind is convinced, but his will is not yet affected sufficiently to influence real behavioral change” (Anderson, 2001, p. 96). Argumentation may convince the listener of the need or the reasons. Unless the person changes belief and behavior systems, the sermon will ultimately accomplish nothing.

Obedience is necessary. Robinson contends, “The purpose behind each individual sermon is to secure some moral action” (Robinson, 2001, p. 107). This highlights the shortfall of thought, emotion, and volition alone. Realizing the power of applying the Kolb model to preaching, Anderson states, “It is moving all the way around the circle that the message has power” (Anderson, 2001, p. 96). Buttrick expresses, “Sermon scenarios must travel in a way that is natural to human consciousness” (Buttrick, 1987, p. 310). The ideal is to construct a sermon that moves appropriately to human consciousness and meaning (Buttrick, 1987, p. 404).

On the other hand, Lindbeck argues that a sermon focused on “experiential-expressive” values is self-defeating (Lindbeck, 1984, p. 16). The issue might be the inability of information to deal with “inner feelings, attitudes, or existential orientations” (Lindbeck, 1984, p. 16). In essence, what Lindbeck suggests is that focusing on one element of the human psyche creates a sermon that is out of focus. If the experiential-expressive element is elevated above other aspects, then the exercise of religion becomes lopsided, favoring emotional over rational and volitional or vice versa. This creates a lack of depth needed for spiritual growth. However, obedience must be present as part of the sermon, or the sermon will lack direction.

Sermon development is an issue for homiletics. Expository sermon development typically follows Aristotelian ideas of persuasion. Robinson suggests three major ways a sermon be developed (Robinson, 2001, p. 117). The deductive way begins with an idea or thesis, while the points are developed in support of that idea. These sermons take on various shapes. Robinson suggests three. First is “an idea to be explained” (Robinson, 2001, p. 118). The purpose of this type of deductive sermon is doctrinal. The next shape is “a proposition to be proved” (Robinson, 2001, p. 121.) Points are proofs, and the issue at stake is the question of truth. The last shape a deductive sermon can take is “a principle to be applied” (Robinson, 2001, p. 122). This type of sermon is concerned with the difference the truth or information makes in the listener.

The second method is the inductive method where the points lead one to the logical conclusion of the idea. This is more of a discovery than an argument (Robinson, 2001, p. 127). The tactic used in this type of sermon is a series of questions that build on one another. Robinson states, “Through induction you can present a series of ideas that the audience will agree with until you come to your major idea, and they are forced to accept it” (Robinson, 2001, p. 127). The problem is that a postmodern person may interpret this adversely. Arguing in such a way to produce agreement does not necessarily translate into life change. It has a possibility of translating into resentment. The key word in Robinson’s attitude is “forced.”

The final method is a combination of deductive and inductive. This leads to two possibilities. The first is the “Inductive-Deductive” development. This is an exploration of an issue or problem (Robinson, 2001, p. 126). The first point is the issue, where the thesis is proposed at the end. From there the thesis is argued or explained. The last type of combination is the “Subject-Completed” development (Robinson, 2001, p. 117). The subject is introduced, and the points come from that subject, instead of building on one another. The conclusion is where the idea is stated in relationship to the points.

DAVID BUTTRICK AND VOTE

David Buttrick suggests that in-church preaching encompass four aspects. The sermon “calls the people of God,” “prompts contrapuntal behavior,” “speaks to the question,” and is “answered by recourse to story” (Buttrick, 1987, p. 233). The idea of calling the people of God is an appeal to volition, while prompting contrapuntal behavior is an appeal to obedience. Speaking to the question is addressing the thought process. The recourse to story evidences an appeal to emotional aspects. Reasoning for sequential movement, Buttrick states, “The sequence of a sermon will be influenced not only by the shape of biblical material but, crucially, by ways in

which human consciousness functions” (Buttrick, 1987, p. 310). One explanation for how human consciousness functions is through volition, obedience, thought, and emotion.

Volition, as Buttrick suggests is, “True knowledge of Christ, as Calvin observed, is not information about him, but a knowing-in-praxis of him by doing his will in the world” (Buttrick, 1987, p. 234). Thus, the sermon will find a way to appeal to the doing of God’s will in the world (Buttrick, 1987, p. 294). Applying traditional methods of persuasion invites or motivates the individual or community to change. Information is not an appeal to volition. In essence, volition becomes the moment of decision (Buttrick, 1987, p. 410). Buttrick suggests that the sermon be “faith seeking understanding” (Buttrick, 1987, p. 257).

“Faith’s contrapuntal style” displays obedience (Buttrick, 1987, p. 228). However, Buttrick sees behavior in terms of community. The problem occurs when the church believes that character is more important than words (Buttrick, 1987, p. 226). Buttrick debates this idea by insisting scripture never advocates good living without witness (Buttrick, 1987, p. 227). The point is that preachers need to understand the “performative nature of language” (Buttrick, 1987, p. 297). Buttrick also states, “All preaching is performative, an intending to do” (Buttrick, 1987, p. 301). Maybe this is a reaction to the common perception that there is no discernable difference between the Christian and non-Christian lifestyle in America. He argues, “When communal behavior abruptly counters set cultural values, commonplace patterns of socially approved life style, political or economic sanctities, then questions may well be asked” (Buttrick, 1987, pp. 227 –228). Living faith becomes articulate (Buttrick, 1987, p. 228). However, he suspects most evangelism is “thinly disguised institutional self-interest” (Buttrick, 1987, p. 229).

Training represents thought (Buttrick, 1987, p. 230). Buttrick’s argument is that preaching is a matter of training and not ordination, because, “In-church preaching is not so much a matter of faith kindling faith, as it is of giving faith understanding” (Buttrick, 1987, p. 231). This opens the concept of identity. Preaching discovers and reinforces identity (Buttrick, 1987, p. 232). The objection may be that the preacher is trained to articulate the dogma of the church. The dogma becomes defined as it is rehearsed in the sermon. This information ingrains itself into the thought process of the community and is finally reflected through communal behavior.

Emotion, for Buttrick falls under the category of conviction. Conviction occurs when the listener agrees with the preacher’s description of pain, chaos, and guilt (Buttrick, 1987, p 232). This agreement will create a sense of cognitive dissonance, allowing the listener to respond to the Holy Spirit. As Buttrick expressed it, “Christian preaching will also disassociate” (Buttrick, 1987, p. 42). One method of appealing to the thought process is through naming. The recourse to story is the appeal to the emotion, because a story can affect people differently than facts. If naming defines the image, then story creates the feeling toward the image (Buttrick, 1987, p. 11). The result may be that “Christian preaching poses the possibilities of faith” (Buttrick, 1987, p. 13).

The use of language becomes important in Buttrick’s model: “In preaching, language is functional; it is trying to do certain things” (Buttrick, 1987, p. 199). He also claims, “We can isolate different languages, related to particular modes of consciousness. These languages may

be labeled temporal, spatial, social, and personal” (Buttrick, 1987, pp. 42 – 43). By temporal he refers to the human penchant for historical context. This is the experience aspect of obedience. Spatial features of language refer to whether we seek to understand things that are internal or external. This demonstrates the workings of enquiry in reflecting on human experience, thus creating the context for the thought process. Social language is seen in context to the being-saved community. For Buttrick community is the major emphasis of the sermon. The challenge is to extract the details of how one feels about the experience and move toward a spiritual resolution or challenge. Personal language is internalizing the willingness to experiment through an appeal to volition which will result in a newfound understanding of obedience and experience. Buttrick maintains, “Ultimately, the language of preaching is language related to consciousness, concerned with bringing out and forming in” (Buttrick, 1987, p. 184). This is done through rhetorical (auditory), poetic (visual), concrete (kinetic), and metaphorical (spiritual) language (Buttrick, 1987, p. 184).

Kinetic language is important at the onset of what Buttrick would consider a move (Buttrick, 1987, p. 63). His thought is that using language that moves will signal the listener to follow along. The idea is that the kinetic language acts as a clue that reveals whatever point-of-view the preacher will take. This will bring focus and frame the sermon in real life. Attrition of spoken language makes it difficult for the sermon to maintain focus and address consciousness (Buttrick, 1987, p. 65). Thus, Buttrick urges performative language for the sermon to accomplish its end (Buttrick, 1987, p.98).

Spiritual language relates to how one structures consciousness (Buttrick, 1987, p. 116). The reason is that spiritual language is not confined to time and space. Using what Buttrick calls God analogies tends to be projections of oneself and personal desires which are “twisted by our incurable will-to-be-God” (Buttrick, 1987, p. 117). The result is to make God like humans (Buttrick, 1987, p. 119). To guard against this error, the spiritual language must be hedged with amplification and denial (Buttrick, 1987, p 119). Amplification is qualifying the analogy so that God is considered so much more than what human minds can understand. Denial is a technique used to impress mystery and otherness on the listener. For instance, God’s ways are not human’s ways (Isaiah 55:9), which stresses the mystery and otherness of God.

RICK WARREN AND VOTE

Warren argues that the objective of a purpose-driven sermon is to develop “Christ-like conviction, Christ-like character, and Christ-like conduct” (Warren, 2000). These come from his definition of being Christ-like, which means to think (thought) like Jesus (Philippians 2:5), feel (emotion) like Jesus (Colossians 3:15), and act (obedience) like Jesus (Colossians 3:17). Warren asks the preacher to address the volition, when he states, “What you believe influences everything you do” (Warren, 2000). Warren also offers, “To produce lasting life-change you must enlighten the mind (thought), engage the emotions (emotion), and challenge the will (volition)” (Warren, 2000). Arguing from 2 Timothy 3:16 – 17, Warren proposes four means to an end. The means are doctrine (thought), reproof (emotion), correction (volition), and instruction in righteousness (obedience). Warren points out, “Every message comes down to two words: will you” (Warren, 2000)?

Referring to the five levels of learning, Warren asserts a variety of questions. The first is “What knowledge of the Bible is needed” (Warren, 2000)? The human psyche needs information. Knowledge of the Bible is critical to understanding what behavior is acceptable to God. This is the appeal to the thought process.

The second question is “What perspectives do our people need to develop” (Warren, 2000)? Information needs to be processed correctly. Adjusting perspective can be an emotional response to information. It gives people a template for evaluating information and bringing order to understanding. The challenge for the sermon is to invite the listener into an internal dialog, which will allow for an emotional reaction that will solidify or question prior arrangements and applications of information. In a sense the issue of perspectives questions the listener to decide the next step.

The third question is “What convictions do our people need to develop” (Warren, 2000)? Conviction, for Warren, is a function of volition. As emotional creatures, humans can form opinions based upon emotion independent of reason. However, one aim for the sermon is to present correct information so that it will rearrange preconceived thought processes and agitate for an emotional response that challenges the volition.

The fourth question is “What skills do our people need to develop” (Warren, 2000)? Skills refer to obedience. An unused skill is like no skill. Unless something is applied, verifying its existence is difficult. The object of teaching skills is for the listener to do something with them. One weakness in Warren’s application model may be the assumption that information will lead to life change. Application depends on the interaction between the text and the circumstances of the congregation (Ventner, 2002). If the interaction is weak, then the invitation to change will be on human authority.

The last question is “What character qualities need to be formed in their lives” (Warren, 2000)? Character qualities are the internal result of volition, obedience, thought, and emotion. This is the finished package. As the listeners have traveled through pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal stages, they should come to some conclusion that will shape them. This meta-liminal stage gives the listener a basis to continue through the cycle again and becomes the point of reference for the process (Buttrick, 1987, p. 326). However, Buttrick suggests, “Most human deciding is either prereflective on the basis of ‘I like’ or ‘I want’ or ‘this is what is usually done,’ or it is postreflective as previous precedent decisions are merely enacted.” Information has been sorted and verified. New behavior has been tested, giving the listener the qualities necessary to teach a specific cycle (Hebrews 5:12 – 6:2).

Volition is reflected in Warren’s teaching on repentance. Warren insists, “Repentance is the central message of the New Testament. You can’t compromise the message” (Warren, 2004). He defines repentance as “to change the mind, specifically about God, sin, the world, and the future” (Warren, 2004). This means “to think God’s way rather than your way” (Warren, 2004). This is an appeal to the decision process through spiritual language. Warren assumes one behaves according to what one thinks. He states, “What you believe influences everything you

do” (Warren, 2000). Again, he argues, “You only believe the parts of the Bible you do” (Warren, 2000).

Warren is concerned about obedience when he notes that listeners are “informed but not transformed” (Warren, 2000). The information gained is through enquiry and extraction, which is accomplished in the thought part of the VOTE model. Applying is a conscious decision, or volition, of change. As the Holy Spirit changes the individual, the decisions line up with God’s will. Warren pushes the concept of obedience when he offers, “Suggest a practical assignment.” An appeal for obedience moves the sermon and the listener past the information and the emotions. It also challenges past behavioral patterns and invites the listeners to change.

Warren pushes the concept of obedience when he offers, “Suggest a practical assignment” (Warren, 2004). To define “practical assignment,” he offers the acrostic “SMART.” This stands for specific, motivational, attainable, relevant, teachable (Warren, 2004). In other words, the idea is to do rather than simply be. An appeal for obedience moves the sermon and the listener past the information and the emotions. It also challenges past behavioral patterns and invites the listeners to change.

In Warren’s eight questions, he pushes the concept of obedience in question three, which is “What is the most practical way to say it” (Warren, 2004)? By practical he means application or obedience. He argues the point when he states, “It’s not just enough to interpret scripture. You must apply it in a practical way” (Warren, 2004). Warren emphasizes this argument stating, “Interpretation without application is abortion” (Warren, 2004). To Warren the practical application of the text is paramount.

Thought mostly depends on information for Warren. The application method emphasizes information for the sake of life change. Warren’s definition of relevance is a discussion on motivation to change.

An appeal to the emotions occurs as the preacher must envision the needs, hurts, and interests of the listener (Warren, 2004). Warren mentions needs, hurts, and interests when he suggests that the sermon begin with the hearer. These appeal to the emotional state of the listener at that moment. He argues, “The goal of preaching and teaching is to move people from where they are to where they ought to be. . . . You have to start with where they are and show them the value of getting to where they ought to be” (Warren, 2004). Philip Winne contends, people “strive for outcomes they value” (Winne, 2004, p. 1881). Warren continues by saying the preacher gains attention through “things that we value, things that are unusual, and things that threaten us” (Warren, 2004). He considers things that are valued as the only legitimate means of gaining attention. The gaining and holding of attention for Warren is on an emotional level. Buttrick, on the other hand, accuses this approach of being preoccupied with a “one-to-one self” and addressing an abstraction (Buttrick, 1987, p. 420).

Summary

Robinson emphasizes thought mixed with emotions with the need for volition and obedience. However, he is cautious about application because of historical and potential abuse of volition and obedience. Buttrick emphasizes thought and emotion as a means to appealing to obedience. He would seek to influence volition indirectly. Warren stresses volition and obedience. For him, thought and emotion are a pragmatic means of getting results. Each stresses the use of language for achieving the sermonic goal. Various reasons may account for emphases or caution. Informing each other they make a balanced whole. This whole will be an appeal to volition, obedience, thought, and emotion. In all likelihood, the emphasis of the sermon may stress the various parts of the VOTE model differently. The sermonic goal may alter how the sermon moves through the four elements of VOTE. Nevertheless, Robinson, Buttrick, and Warren all see these elements as necessary for the sermon, in some shape, with the use of shape appropriate language.

Reference List

- Adams, Daniel. 1997 – 1998. “Toward a Theological Understanding of Postmodernism.” *Cross Currents* 47 (Winter): 518 – 530.
- Anderson, Kenton C. “Integrative Model for Preaching.” Database online. Available from www.preaching.org (accessed in 2005).
- _____. “Traditional Homiletical Categories.” Database online. Available from www.preaching.org (accessed 2005).
- _____. 2001. *Preaching with Conviction*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications.
- Atherton, James S. 2002. “Learning and Teaching: Learning from Experience.” De Montfort University 2002. Database on-line. Available from www.dmu.ac.uk.
- Brueggemann, Walter. 1982. *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press.
- Bryson, Harold T. 1995. *Expository Preaching*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers.
- Buttrick, David G. 1981. "Interpretation and Preaching." *Interpretation* 35 (January): 46 – 58.
- Corno, Lyn. 2004. “Introduction to the Special Issue Work Habits and Work Styles: Volition in Education.” *Teachers College Record* 106, no. 9 (September): 1669 – 1694.
- Craddock, Fred B. 1985. *Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Daane, James. 1980. *Preaching with Confidence*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Demaray, Donald E. 1999. *Introduction to Homiletics*, 2d ed. Indianapolis, IN: Light and Life Press.
- Groothuis, Douglas. 2000. *Truth Decay*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Hamilton, Donald L. 1992. *Homiletical Handbook*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.
- Hart, David B. 2003. “Christ and Nothing.” *First Things*, no. 136 (October): 47 – 56.
- Hendricks, Howard G. 1982. *Teaching to Change Lives*. Portland, OR: Multnomah.
- Jarvis, Peter. 1995. *Adult and Continuing Education. Theory and Practice*, 2d ed. London: Routledge.

- Kolb, David A. 1984. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Kraft, Charles H. 1983. *Communication Theory for Christian Witness*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.
- Krathwohl, David R., Benjamin S. Bloom, and Bertram B. Masia. 1964. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. New York: Longman.
- Lapsley, Jacqueline E. 2004. "Friends with God? Moses and the Possibility of Covenantal Friendship." *Interpretation* 58, no. 2 (April): 117 – 129.
- Lindbeck, George. 1984. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press.
- McCarthy, Bernice. 1982. "Improving Staff Development Through CBAM and 4MAT." *Educational Leadership*, October, 20 – 25.
- McCarthy, Bernice. 1987. *The 4MAT System: Teaching to Learning Styles with Right/left Mode Techniques*. Barrington, IL: Excel.
- Rabey, Steve. 2001. *In Search of Authentic Faith: How Emerging Generations Are Transforming the Church*. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbook Press.
- Reno, R. R. 2001. "American Satyricon." *First Things*, no. 116 (October): 35 – 41.
- Robinson, Haddon W. 1974. "What is Expository Preaching?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 13, no.1 (January – March): 55 – 60.
- _____. 1997. "The Heresy of Application." *Leadership Journal* 18, no. 4 (Fall).
- _____. 2001. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2d ed. Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic.
- Smith, Donald K. 1992. *Creating Understanding: A Handbook for Christian Communication Across Cultural Landscapes*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Smith, Mark K. 2001. "David A. Kolb on Experiential Learning," *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*. Database on-line. Available from www.infed.org (accessed 2005).
- Stott, John R. W. 1982. *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Swenson, David X. "The Kolb Learning Cycle." *The College of St. Scholastica*. Database on-line. Available from www.css.edu. (accessed 2005).
- Tornfelt, John V. 2003. "Preaching and Learning Styles: How to Communicate so People Can Listen." *Vancouver BC: Evangelical Homiletics Society*. Database on-line. Available from www.ehomiletics.com.
- Unger, Merrill F. 1955. *Principles of Expository Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Ventner, C. J. H. 2002. "Expository Preaching – a Re-evaluation for Today." *Chicago: Evangelical Homiletics Society*. Database on-line. Available from www.ehomiletics.com.
- Warren, Rick. 2000. *Preaching For Life Change: Because Lives Are Dying To Be Changed*. Purpose Driven Preaching, tape series.
- _____. 2004. *Teaching and Preaching That Makes The Difference*. Purpose Driven Preaching, tape series.
- Wilson, Paul Scott. 1988. *Imagination of the Heart: New Understandings in Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Winne, Philip H. 2004. "Putting Volition to Work in Education." *Teachers College Record* 106, no. 9 (September): 1879 – 1887.