Preaching in the
African Context
Why We Preach
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by
Bishop Eben Kanukayi Nhiwatiwa

Africa Ministry Series
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Preface

This book is one of two volumes on Preaching in the African Context. In this first volume, I explore Why We Preach and the principles of contextual preaching in Africa. In this second volume, I explore How We Preach and explore the practice of contextual preaching in Africa. The two volumes go hand in hand; principles need the practice to become a part of us, and our practice needs the principles to have integrity in our cultural context. The two volumes together are intended to address the dearth of literature on preaching from an African point of view that I saw while on the Faculty of Theology at Africa University. There is compelling need in theological education to teach and study all disciplines contextually. Contextual preaching entails a recognition and use of the modes of communication that are prevalent in African culture. I sensed the need for a preaching text that pulls together information from existing literature and texts for the African preacher. Discussions with students from all corners of Africa helped me contextualize preaching. It is presumptuous to claim to write a book on preaching that does justice to the divergent experiences in Africa. But shared experiences can be adapted and applied to particular contexts.

Contextual preaching serves as the most appropriate way of communicating the gospel in Africa—it can connect with and engage the minds of people in effective ways. It is incumbent upon African theologians to preach the gospel in ways that recognize African cultural modes of communication. African preachers are not oblivious to the need for cultural sensitivity. The use of vernacular languages in African churches is in itself a milestone in the process of contextualization.

Congregational responses with ululating or songs accompanied by drums, rattles, and dancing are positive signs of a people worshipping
in context. What preachers still lack is intentionality towards contextual preaching. This observation is further affirmed through experiences I have as I itinerate as the resident Bishop of the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area. This book will be helpful in encouraging pastors and lay preachers to be more sensitive to African cultural nuances.

Finally, this book is for both seasoned preachers and beginners, including students in seminaries, Bible colleges, and universities. Preaching is an urgent aspect of ministry that can open new horizons and give fresh outlook for the future. Christian preaching is sustained by the belief in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I wish to thank Africa University for according me sabbatical leave for study. Further, a special word of appreciation goes to Professors Edward P. Wimberly and Anne Streaty Wimberly for facilitating my family’s one-month stay at the Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, and for arranging for me to use the Clark Atlanta University Library. To all preachers whose sermons found their way into this study, I say thank you. In addition, a word of thanks goes to Mrs. Redempter Gambinga, the typist who fed my longhand manuscript into the computer at the Ocasia Typing Services in Mutare, for her patience and diligence. More expressions of thanks go to Mrs. Patience Gwaradzimba, my secretary in the Bishop’s office, for sorting out material of the book for rewriting as required by the editor.

My wife, Greater Tarememredzwa, and daughter Nyasha left me undisturbed for long hours while I worked on the book. I thank them for their patience and encouragement. To all present and former students in my homiletics class, I am grateful for the discussions and divergent views we shared whose fruits have found their way into this book. In addition I thank and dedicate this book to my first professor of homiletics, the late Reverend Dr. Maurice Culver and to my late pastor at Old Mutare Mission, the Reverend David Mudzengerere, who encouraged me to join the ordained ministry. Reverend Mudzengerere urged me: “Nhiwatiwa, kana uchiparidza usazotamba nevanhu,” translated literally, “Nhiwatiwa, when you preach don’t ever play with people.”

Additionally, allow me to thank a team of co-workers who later became involved in this book as if by divine providence. Reverend Steve Bryant and Mrs. Kara Lassen Oliver of the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship work with Central Conferences in Africa to
produce devotional and theological education material for the church and seminaries. It was during such processes and discussion that Steve came to know of my manuscript and became interested. With instant insight, Kara suggested that the manuscript could be divided into two books: the first part focusing on the theory of preaching and the second on the practical side of it. Without their support this work would still be in the shape of a manuscript. To the General Board of Discipleship, I say thank you for seeing something in these books worth publishing under your auspices.

Finally, to Kathleen Stephens, my editor for the books, for putting a refining touch to the manuscript and thereby shaping the material into readable books, I say thank you. It is indeed my hope to always take preaching seriously, as Reverend Mudzengerere urged me. May this book inspire more preachers in their proclamation of the gospel.

E. K. N.
Preaching in the African Context: Why We Preach

Chapter 1

Contextual Preaching in Africa

A discussion of preaching and African culture cannot be fully appreciated outside the context of the larger question of Jesus Christ and culture. In his book *Christ and Culture*, H. Richard Niebuhr analyzed the perennial question, how does Christ relate to culture? Niebuhr identified a number of answers to the question. Some see Christ as one who belongs to culture, or a Christ who is against culture. Others view Christ as the transformer of culture. Faced with this intricate problem, Niebuhr concluded, “The problem of Christ and culture can and must come to an end only in a realm beyond all study in the free decisions of individual believers and responsible communities.”\(^1\)

The way individuals and communities relate to Christ culturally is a matter of free choice rather than an act of arbitrary decision making. Contextualizing preaching in Africa can be done by individuals who are mature in faith within responsible communities of believers.

Unfortunately, most African missionaries in the early twentieth century adopted the position that Christ was against culture. For example, in the Methodist Episcopal Church in Zimbabwe, missionaries urged Africans to plant lemon and orange trees so that the fruit would take the place of *mahewu* (sweet beer).\(^2\) Anyone aware of the nutritious value of *mahewu* would not have substituted anything for that drink. Those who grew up drinking *mahewu* lament that the practice of brewing this drink is dying. But missionaries decided that for the sake of the gospel the only way of subduing a craving for beer among the Shona people was to make them grow lemon and orange trees. This is an example of the misguided
understanding of Christ and culture that has been etched on the minds of Christians in Africa.

There were, however, a few missionaries of exceptional insight who were able to proclaim the gospel in the African context. Charles A. Kent, a missionary working in Zimbabwe in 1913 under the Methodist Episcopal Church, observed some anomalies in the way his colleagues regarded African culture. He said:

Preaching through an interpreter is alien to the thought of the native as astronomy to kindergartners. We denounce what we see bad in his life but are neither ready to utilize what is good in his religion or to get on common ground to lead him out into the new and better way of Christianity. We must know his customs, beliefs, superstitions, speak his language and think what he thinks. We must do this sympathetically.³

The history of the church in Africa is replete with stories of missionaries who understood that the gospel must be preached in a way that is relevant to a given culture. Thus, the call for contextualization is not new and has never been the province of the African people alone.

It was, however, the African people themselves who were able to define and delineate the parameters of their culture as it pertains to the Christian faith. Africans strongly felt the impact of the interface of culture and the gospel. It was therefore incumbent upon them then, as it is today, to take the lead in determining what to shed and what to carry into the Christian faith. Thus, we hear the worship and music committee of the Methodist Episcopal Church reporting to the 1956 Rhodesia Annual Conference: “We recommend our Shona-speaking preachers to preach in Shona throughout the service.”⁴ It appears that there were Shona preachers who mixed Shona and English in their sermons. This practice, awkward as it is, occasionally is used today in some congregations, especially when the preacher wants to emphasize
a point. Expression in one’s own language is essential for one to be grounded in a given culture.

More emphasis on acculturation came when the worship committee urged the 1964 Rhodesia Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church that worship in the church must be Africanized:

We recognize that the worship in our church should not be European, but should reflect African customs, and adopt African ways of worship as well as African music. Because we are not sure what this means we ask a special committee to study this matter and make concrete suggestions as to how Christian worship should become more African.\(^5\)

This recommendation led to the use of African traditional musical instruments such as *ngoma, mbira, chipendane, hosho*, and many more.

**Background of the African Church**

Contextual proclamation of the gospel calls upon African theologians to revisit the origins of Christianity in Africa and also to examine the role that Africans played in the biblical drama of salvation. Attempting to answer a rhetorical question, Can anything good come out of Africa? John Wesley Kurewa, E. Stanley Jones Professor of Evangelism at Africa University, writes, “I fear that some people have painted so dark a picture of Africa that in spite of the money and lives that have been given for the cause of Christ in Africa, they do not believe that Africa is also in the gracious plan of God for salvation.”\(^6\)

It is this African niche in God’s plan of salvation that we must explore. In both the Bible and in contemporary liturgies, the African country of Egypt is consistently presented as an opposing force to God’s plan for salvation. While the Hebrew people were enslaved in Egypt it is also the place to which the angel instructed Joseph to flee with the infant Jesus for safety. This episode is not trivial for African people. Those who are trying to contextualize the gospel and find their rightful place in God’s plan find the role of Egypt encouraging.
Africa’s place in God’s plan also includes being the birthplace of African church fathers and mothers like St. Augustine and Perpetua. Contextualization of the Christian faith in Africa cannot afford to sideline the contribution of these African Christians to the holy catholic church. Christianity in Africa also incorporates the Coptic Church of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Christian Church is one of the oldest in Africa. African preachers must remember that their continent is not a newcomer to Christianity. Consequently, African preachers should proclaim the message, bearing in mind that they have a rich Christian heritage.

The second wave of Christianity on the continent is commonly known as the missionary movement that spread the gospel in Africa. While missionaries made some positive contributions, the type of Christianity that missionaries passed on to the African people alienated many because it rejected so much of African culture. In music, the African drum gave way to the piano. And Africans were required to adopt Western or so-called Christian names in order to be baptized. Africans need to rectify this situation in a deliberate and concerted effort through the contextualization of the gospel.

Another aspect of tradition for the church in Africa that needs to be discussed is the traditional religious role of women. In African traditional religion women were priests. With the coming of Christianity to Africa, African women converts became invisible Christians within the church. While the church liberated African women from some oppressive cultural practices, such as when a father forced his daughter to be married to a man in order for him to settle some debt with another family, the spread of the gospel actually disempowered African women in the church.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye observed that in its early days the church and colonialism harmed the condition of African women by propping up the patriarchal system. The church trained women for subservient service to men as wives. Women were expected to be docile and submissive to their husbands. Further, the British brought in a Victorian relationship between women and men. Men were expected to look after and provide
for their wives. Such a view entrenched the subservient status of the African women. In addition, it should be remembered that the church’s refusal and procrastination to ordain women for the ministry cannot be traced to African cultural roots. It is the Christian church that deprived African women of their priestly role and kept them from being full participants in the new faith.

In contextualizing preaching in Africa, women must play a visible role in the proclamation of the gospel. Contextualized preaching in Africa must include the intentional promotion of female preachers. The church in Africa is growing by leaps and bounds and many of these new converts are women. When the gospel is communicated largely by male preachers to congregations with a greater proportion of female worshippers, one wonders what the majority of female church members is missing each Sunday.

One Sunday after preaching at a church where the pastor-in-charge was female, I stood with her by the door to greet the people as they filed out. In greeting male and female I merely extended a handshake. She, however, gave her whole body and embraced every woman. Culturally I could not embrace the women the way she did, but I did not embrace the men either. Maybe that wholesome embrace communicated God’s love to those women in ways that my sermon could not. This is not to say that the gospel cannot be communicated across the spectrum of gender. But we hope that the ordination of female pastors, which has taken root in some Protestant churches, will be accelerated. For Africa, with a background of women priests, such a step is part of contextual preaching.

**Traditional African Community**

Preaching takes place in a community. When standing in a community to proclaim the gospel, the preacher needs to understand the culture of that community. Writing about analytical philosophy but applicable to this topic, William E. Hordern said, "A weakness of much analytical
philosophy is that it ignores the persons who speak.” The same could be said about preaching. At times preachers ignore the community within which they speak. “Preaching happens in a worshipping community. Therefore it is a communitarian act,” asserted M. Thomas Thangaraj.

It is in light of this relationship between preacher and community that we examine some of the salient features of the traditional African community. The dominant feature of the African community is its communitarian nature. An African belongs to a community. When asked about our personal identity, it is not enough to only give our names. Everyone is related to everyone else. All such relationships constitute our identity. In Africa we say, “I am because we are.”

In most African societies this communitarian aspect is reflected in relationship not only with the living but with the departed as well. As one African chief stated concerning ancestors, “We in turn speak to him [the ancestor] and we commune and fellowship as though the present and the departed community were one community.”

There is also a heightened sense of hospitality among Africans. In Nigeria, presentation of kola nuts to a visitor is a sign of warm welcome. A guest is invited to join in a meal even if his or her arrival is unexpected. In Zimbabwe we have a tribe, the Buja of Mutoko, who greet visitors by offering them water to drink before even talking to them. When my own parents prepared supper, they set aside some food in case a hungry person might come by. Traditional proverbs strengthen this communal nature of the African people. The Lozi of Zambia say, “Go the way that many people go; if you go alone you will have reason to lament.” For the Hausa of Nigeria the following proverb undergirds the importance of friendship: “Friendship with the ferryman right from the dry season means that when the rains come, you will be the first to cross.”

Directly related to preaching is the predominantly aural nature of the African community. In Zimbabwe, close members of the family feel slighted if you send them a printed invitation to a wedding. Word of mouth is still given high regard in communicating messages. Oduyoye
pointed out, "Africans, so adept in our culture of orality, have a prodigious memory for what ‘the Bible says’ just as we do for our myths, tales, and proverbs."18

The scripture, topics, and ways of preaching are usually influenced by the expectations and lived experiences of a community. A preacher who ignores the values expressed in a given community will create tension through his or her sermons. Because missionaries did not understand the communal nature of Africans, they emphasized individual salvation. Given a choice on the continuum of individual and corporate salvation, Africans opt for the latter. The corporate story of salvation as emphasized in the Hebrew scriptures is more amenable to the African culture.

Former president of South Africa Nelson Mandela relates the reflections he had on the day he cast his first vote for a democratically elected government. As he prepared to vote at the high school in Inada township, Durban, Mandela stood on the grave of John Dube, the first president of ANC who was buried there. He later wrote of his reflection there, "I did not think of the present, but of the past. I thought about all the men and women who had fallen in the struggle. I did not go into the voting station alone that day. I was casting my vote with all the people who had given their lives to make this day possible."19 In Africa this communal worldview is predominant.

Contextual preaching in Africa calls upon the preacher to be cognizant of these nuances because they can affect the level of receptivity to the gospel of their African congregations. The relationship between the preacher and the community for any situation or context has been aptly articulated by Fred B. Craddock: "To be a minister in a community is to be a resident, a citizen, a responsible leader, and one who shares the blame and credit for the quality of life in that place."20 He added, "One preaches in and out of as well as to that community."21

This does not mean that the community dictates what it wants to hear. But the preacher can be more effective when he or she knows where that community is in its corporate experience. And the preacher
can challenge those values that conflict with the gospel whenever necessary.

**Preaching and African Culture**

By connecting the preacher with the community we have underscored the symbiotic relationship between preaching and culture. Hugo Söderström, my professor of systematic theology in Zimbabwe, noted that when a preacher goes into the pulpit the purpose is to communicate the gospel in a relevant, contextual way. The question for the preacher is, "How can I make my listeners understand that God speaks to them through this Bible passage?" This quest for the contextualization of the proclamation of gospel is a point of convergence for a number of authors. "First those that proclaim the Gospel must understand themselves, their culture, and the backgrounds from which they come. Secondly they must understand the people and the cultures to which they are addressing God’s word," asserted Ambrose Mavingire Moyo. For Laurent Magesa the pertinent question is, "How would Christ have given His message, had he been born, grown up and taught in the heart of Africa?"

Effective preaching in Africa or any community must be grounded in a given culture. What makes contextualization of preaching in Africa an urgent issue is the current foreignness of the type of Christianity to which Africans are exposed. When an African says, “My intention is to show that God wants to speak to black people of South Africa in their language, in terms of their culture, worldview, and needs,” the tension between the Christian faith and African culture is starkly revealed. M. P. Moila went on to conclude that Africans will be more receptive to the gospel “only if it is communicated in terms of their culture . . . ”

Others, such as Bénézet Bujo, have identified a pitfall in the process of African contextualization when African theology remains aloof from the practical exigencies of the African situation. African theology has become too esoteric "and is for the most part irrelevant to what is going on in
African society,” he wrote. Bujo suggested a way out of this theological pitfall. He asserted that African theologians should identify traditions in African culture that must be maintained or “perhaps recalled from a kind of cultural limbo into which they may have fallen.” He went on to suggest that the available data could then be sifted for use in preaching. John Wesley Kurewa expressed the same, saying, “The point is that some cultural concepts enrich our understanding of Christian faith, and the church in Africa today has a responsibility to study its culture in order to communicate the gospel effectively.” Kurewa went on to say that African preachers must begin to shape “more balanced perspectives on the African experience. We must devote ourselves to reaching a deeper understanding of Africa’s past, its present frustrations as it struggles to move forward, and its dream and vision for its future.”

**Assessment**

Most African theologians today appeal to anyone who will listen about the need to contextualize the gospel in Africa. But these same theologians are not moving from this theoretical proposal to the actual work of contextualization. The situation is made complex by the fact that in most cases African theologians are not yet writing for the African audience. A further complicating factor is that the African environment is not readily conducive for the publication of these thought-provoking texts. A quick survey shows that most African theologians have by necessity had their work published overseas. Thus, the African reader does not have ready access to these books.

Another limiting factor for some African theologians who call for contextual preaching is that they are uprooted from the people. They reminisce over past or distant experiences of their people in the rural areas or urban centers, but they can no longer identify with that song of hope the women sing as they stand patiently around a drying borehole hoping for another drop of water. Nor can they understand the actual enactment of theology as they sing, *Ndoifamba seyi nzira ineminzwa inobaya*
pfugama unamate (How do I walk this path with pricking thorns, kneel and pray), as the women gather around a coffin. These are the concerns of people whose lives are becoming more precarious by the day. Contextual preaching in Africa is therefore existential preaching. It is that type of preaching that aims to address the concrete situation of the people.

Until African theologians develop what I call village theology, the hunger for contextual preaching will remain. By village theology I mean theological reflection that considers the rural situation of the majority of African people. It is a theology that faces the glaring reality that the problems of our people cannot be solved by endless presentations of learned papers at conferences and workshops in Africa and abroad. Village theology demands that African theologians be where the people are. Jean-Marc Éla summed it up when he said, “A theologian must stay within earshot of what is happening within the community so that community life can become the subject of meditation and prayer.”

If we African theologians and preachers are not living within earshot of what is going on in the village, then we miss vital themes for preaching. Pfugama unamate is the response to the question of how to walk the proverbial path of life overburdened by harsh conditions. After mingling with the people during the week and listening to such affirmations of faith in prayer, the preacher will do well to reaffirm the people’s theologies from the pulpit. But if we live in isolation from the people’s daily experiences in the village, then our call for contextual preaching is in vain.

In fact, Robert J. Schreiter hinted at this possibility of a village theology when he stated that in African villages, theology “could best be expressed in proverbs rather than in Bantu philosophy.” Even though we differ on his implied separation of Bantu philosophy and the use of proverbs in doing theology in African context, Schreiter and I agree that all aspects of African culture should be brought to bear whenever one is doing contextual theology.
Concerns

Contextual preaching in Africa raises some concerns that must be addressed. The majority of African churches have preachers who have not received in-depth training in biblical studies. Aylward Shorter put his finger on the problem when he observed, "African congregations prefer a substantial homily, spaced with stories, proverbs and aphorisms, but the lengthy homily is often the least well organized and the most doctrinally superficial . . . "34

Kurewa rightly warns preachers to “guard against eisegesis” in the development of a sermon.35 He goes on to urge preachers “to use the original biblical language (if possible), commentaries, theological wordbooks, and other resources.”36 But not all preachers possess such resources or have ready access to them. Compounding the problem of lack of training is the fact that in a number of congregations sermons are preached by laypersons. These lay preachers dutifully stand in for the pastor who may be at another of the many churches under her or his charge.

What Inus M. Daneel has noted about the African independent churches is equally true for the mainline denominations in Africa. Daneel observed,

As far as content is concerned there is great variation, from coherent messages which propagate biblical truths realistically and fairly undiluted, to extreme fragmentation of texts, used out of context and manipulatively to proclaim stereotyped ideas. Throughout the accent is not on systematized, rational preaching, but on mobilizing God’s people by testifying to experiences of God’s presence, salvation and protection culminating in festive rejoicing.37

Contextualizing preaching in Africa cannot afford to ignore such concerns. The African church must invest its meager resources to train preachers. This training should go beyond traditional biblical studies and homiletics.
African preachers must be urged to study their culture in depth and to be able to express themselves in the indigenous languages with felicity. It is indeed paradoxical that students in theological institutions in Africa preach their practice sermons in English, French, or other European languages. Yet when they leave the seminary they have to preach to their people in the indigenous languages. Ironically, instructors (myself included) encourage them to improve their communication skills in a foreign language.

The call for contextual preaching argued in this chapter demands a change in the training of African preachers. In addition to commentaries and other tools for biblical studies, a student preaching in Africa should possess a dictionary of the indigenous language, a collection of proverbs, idioms, and some African novels.

Further, I suggest that students be required to attend the village courts and observe how the chiefs and elders conduct themselves in speech. Oral expression in its refined style can be witnessed whenever the elders are gathered in formal or ordinary conversations. I remember listening to a conversation at a funeral in my home village, Gandanzara. As we sat by the fire, the elders reminded each other of how their fathers found protection from lions by going into the thicket of the dungwiza tree. I learned that no lion would dare come near that tree. They lamented that such trees no longer existed because of deforestation. In my first sermon following that conversation, I proclaimed that Jesus Christ is the dungwiza of our lives, under whose protection nothing will attack us. There were echoes of agreement from among the members.

Finally, there is the concern about the extent to which one can contextualize the gospel. "Are there limits to contextualization? Can it reach a point where the gospel message is lost or communion between churches is no longer possible?" asked Schreiter.38

Contextualization must never obscure the message of the gospel. Thus, the focus should not be on the limits of contextualization but on whether Jesus Christ is preached in any context. E.A. Obeng has also
expressed the fear that in the process of contextualization there could be syncretic “inroads” into the Christian faith. Like Schreiter, Obeng hoped that proponents of contextualization will always remember that the message is Jesus Christ.

Preaching Jesus Christ should not be the only test in assessing the limits of contextualization. The message should be based on the Bible, the source that informs the Christian faith. Further, the rich heritage of the universal church should undergird the sermon. The universal church has reached consensus on important matters of belief, which every preacher must take into consideration. For instance the Apostles’ Creed and other affirmations of faith should guide the preacher in following the path of those who shared the Christian faith.

All these genuine concerns, however, should not deter Africans from the contextual proclamation of the gospel. To regard contextual preaching as a process that shrouds the message of Jesus Christ is to miss the point. We have argued that preaching is closely linked to the culture in which the preacher finds him or herself. Consequently contextualization of the gospel is not an option but the norm for the African preacher.

**Conclusion**

This chapter highlights the need for contextual preaching as the most effective way of proclaiming the gospel in Africa. Contextual preaching entails a recognition and use of the modes of communication that are prevalent in African culture. Some examples shall be given in subsequent chapters of this book. Of course this effort to enhance receptivity to the gospel does not mean that the hearer absorbs everything uncritically. George W. Swank noted that “No matter what expectations may be in the preachers’ mind, the Protestant congregation is going to take the sermon and do with it what it will. Meanings will be added and subtracted.” Such an observation is applicable in any situation where preaching is undertaken.
A preacher can never be certain how hearers might receive and appropriate the message. But we continue to preach with assured faith that, in the last analysis, the prerogative to preach the gospel belongs to God. Thus, God will find ways of touching the hearts and minds of those who avail themselves to hear the message.
Chapter 2

What Is Preaching?

Preaching as a discipline evokes divergent views and is difficult to define.¹ In this chapter, I will refer to several definitions and share my observations of preaching in general and in the African context in particular.

Categories of Definitions

Three categories of preaching have emerged in academic circles: preacher-centred, message-centred, and congregation-centred. First, this is a narrow understanding that overlooks the varied distinctions involved. Second, these categories are not comprehensive enough to do justice to the breadth of preaching. Third, any definition of preaching that confines itself to a certain category tends to define the preacher rather than the process of preaching.

I would add function-centred or method-centred, preaching to these three categories, because whenever I ask students to define preaching they refer to proclaiming the gospel and communicating the gospel. Proclaiming and communicating are task-oriented words that describe preaching by its function. Storytelling is a popular example of method-centred preaching, with the preacher as the storyteller.² And the Bible is viewed as a book of narratives with different literary genres. The preacher is an interpreter of the Bible, at the center of the message.³

Definitions of preaching are in themselves theological convictions. Karl Barth urged, “We need to view the study of preaching primarily as a theological concern, and not solely as a process of learning how to
preach." It is important that each preacher have some sense of what type of preaching he or she is engaged in because the preacher’s definition shapes the whole process. If the preacher understands preaching as moralizing, she or he sees the congregation figuratively as a child to be told how to behave. If preaching is taken as idealistic, then ideas of behaviour are held high and listeners are asked to emulate them and make their lives happier. Moralistic and idealistic preaching has a place in the pulpit, but only focuses on behavior and ignores the root cause to problems.

Some authors say that preaching falls into the realm of art. The sermon itself is a process and product of creativity. Elizabeth Achtemeier, author of *Creative Preaching: Finding the Words*, argues that there is nothing new in the gospel. Its newness comes from the creative process of preaching. The preacher enables the text to be heard anew. The tool for such creativity is imaginative language.

I recall preaching at St. Peter’s United Methodist Church in Mutare, Zimbabwe, on Palm Sunday in 1997. In my introduction I imagined that I was reporting on Jesus Christ’s entry into Jerusalem. As I reported I noticed interest on people’s faces, and at the transition into the sermon the congregation erupted in applause. The congregation recognized and affirmed the creative effort in the sermon.

Students of preaching need to understand these broad definitions of preaching before we focus on the African perspective.

**A Cluster of Definitions**

Phillips Brooks defined preaching in a lecture at Yale University in 1877:

> Preaching is the communication of truth by man to man. It has in it two essential elements, truth and personality. Neither of these can it spare and still be preaching. The truest truth, the most authoritative statement of God’s will, communicated in other ways than through the personality of brother man to man is not preached truth.
Brooks highlights that at the center of preaching is the art of communication. M. Thomas Thangaraj agrees, viewing preaching as a process in communication. Without basic communication skills, rich ideas can get lost between the preacher and the hearers. I recommend that a student of preaching read Stephen E. Lucas’s comprehensive and user-friendly *The Art of Public Speaking.*

Brooks uses the word *truth* to stand for the will of God. Preaching is, therefore, communicating God’s will. Such an assumption puts a heavy burden on the preacher. The responsibility of discerning God’s will gives the preacher certain and distinct authority. With such authority there is a danger of projecting a holier-than-thou attitude toward the congregation. But if by *authority* we mean sharing convictions about our understanding and faith in certain and convincing ways, then every preacher must claim that authoritative position. Preaching is not a series of hypotheses or tentative statements waiting to be validated in some future time. More often than not the preacher must say with Martin Luther, the reformer, “Here I stand,” because that is the will of God. Preachers cannot run away from their responsibility: “A theology of preaching is the acknowledgement and affirmation that preaching is the primary, divine mandate and medium for communicating, educating, and, illuminating God’s revelation for God’s people.”

Brooks’s definition also has implications for preaching, highlighting the role of the preacher’s personality. One’s personality is that which makes an individual unique among others. The preacher’s personality—the ability to master communication skills, intuition, and poise—is as important as the content of the sermon. Sometimes the problem is the preacher’s failure to connect with the audience. I once overheard a member so preoccupied with a pastor’s facial expression that he could not hear the sermon. As Gijsbert D.J. Dingemans put it, “My problem in many services is that the preacher is often placed by the church (and sometimes places himself or herself) between the text and me. And
sometimes I feel that my relation to God is blocked by the personality, the attitude, the intention, or the theology of the preacher.”

A number of other attempts to answer the question, what is preaching?, also revolve around the human factor or personhood in communicating the gospel. “The sermon then is the point at which the word of God comes to a congregation in the human words of today,” asserted David H.C. Read. He went on to say, “These human words are based on the written word, the Bible, which is our authority for the story of Christ and the apostolic gospel.”

Incarnation, God’s presence among us, is accomplished through preaching when a human being offers him/herself for the congregation. Maybe this is what Patricia Hickman Livingston had in mind when she claimed that preaching requires the preacher’s presence. This presence “involves a personal presence both to the group and to the material.”

This focus on presence and incarnation is fully captured when Jung Young Lee stated that preaching is self-disclosure, because the task demands the presentation of the “embodied self, the self that embodies not only the text and context but also Christ and culture. What is said while preaching, therefore, must come from the whole self.” Or as another author noted, preaching is a process that entails “inner perceptions and commitments, and [is] about outer relationships and conversations. Because preaching has to do with perception, intuition, and sensitivity we should take all the more seriously the processes by which we do our work.”

All that is involved in pastoral relationships constitute the preacher’s personality and will in turn impact the nature and outcome in communicating the gospel. Preaching is “consonant with the person of the preacher. In a sense, the sermon is incarnate through the preacher and the congregation.”

Anyone called to preach should approach the task with an overwhelming sense of obedience and humility before God and the people. Further, the preacher must know him/herself in the light of one called to be the servant of the gospel. Knowing oneself starts with
recognition that though called to convey God’s Word to the people, the preacher is fully human. It is God who strengthens the preacher despite his or her human frailty.

Second is the view of preaching as the concerted engagement of one’s faculties of body, mind, and spirit. It is then skilled activity. But preaching has to do with a particular content, a certain message conveyed. As eating is not merely chewing, but chewing food, so is preaching necessarily defined not only by speaking but also by what is spoken.

Preaching demands everything the preacher can offer. Our whole being is involved in the preparation and the act of preaching the sermon. No matter how we learn the skills of preaching these are never a substitute for the message to be communicated. It is in this context that Clyde E. Fant assessed Bonhoeffer’s lectures on preaching and concluded: “The only valid source of the sermon is the commission of Christ to proclaim the gospel, and also the knowledge that this commission comes to us from an already existing church. The source of the sermon is nothing other than the existence of the church of Christ.”

Another element in this definition is that preaching should wholly engage the faculties of the mind. As Helmut Thielicke put it, “I do not hesitate to assert that preaching even from the point of view of a pure job or work is one of the greatest intellectual tasks that can be expected of a man [or woman].” Most preachers do not consider the intellectual nature of preaching. Yet the training of a preacher cannot afford to sideline the need to enhance intellectual capabilities because preaching is one of the key opportunities for ideas learned in theological disciplines to be shared with the church.

Third, Stott urges preachers to understand that “birthing of the Word in the world is not something optional; it is an indispensable characteristic of true Christian preaching.”

The whole concept of preaching as Stott sees it centers on the
metaphor of bridge building, the process of making the biblical worldview intelligible to the contemporary mind in a way that remains true to the gospel.\textsuperscript{23} Preaching links the Word and the world in a comprehensive and understandable manner.\textsuperscript{24}

Similarly Karl Barth says, "Preaching is the attempt enjoined upon the Church to serve God’s own word, through one who is called thereto, by expanding a biblical text in human words and making it relevant to contemporaries in intimation of what they have to hear from God himself."\textsuperscript{25} Preaching loses its meaning and purpose if it becomes esoteric.

I remember a meeting overseas in which we discussed funding for a conference to be held in Zimbabwe. One gentleman at that meeting openly challenged the rest of us to tell him the value of the conference for him and his neighbourhood. While annoying to several people, this question is what the congregation asks the preacher (though inaudibly) each week, "Is this relevant to my situation?"\textsuperscript{26} A sermon cannot look at people, let alone move them, unless the message relates to their contemporary situation. "The preacher’s business," advises Fosdick, "is not merely to discuss repentance but to persuade people to repent; not merely to debate the meaning and possibility of Christian faith, but to produce Christian faith in the lives of his listeners . . . "\textsuperscript{27} Such an accomplishment is only possible where preaching speaks to the daily experiences of the people.

In fact, what distinguishes good preaching from mediocre preaching is the extent to which people experience God’s presence in the context of their daily existence. A sermon is an instrument that urges the hearer "to recognize and respond to the living God in the concerns and work of each day."\textsuperscript{28} Preaching allows listeners to meet, live, and walk in God’s presence in the midst of their stories. After listening to a sermon the people should be able to revisit their stories of joy and sorrow with renewed awareness that God gives sustaining meaning to each one.

Fourth is the definition of preaching that centers on worship. In
his book *The Embodied Word: Preaching as Art and Liturgy*, Charles L. Rice says, "The origin of preaching is Baptism, and the aim of the sermon is Eucharist. The preacher stands between font and table, scripture in hand, leading the people once more, because of and in spite of all that may have happened that week, to renew their Baptism and come to the table." Preaching takes place within the sacramental continuum in the context of worship. It takes place before a gathering of people who assent to and believe in baptism. The aim of the sermon is joy and celebration, an offering of thanksgiving through participation in the Eucharist. Preaching is a process through which believers renew their baptism and celebrate their life in Jesus Christ by sharing in the Eucharist.

In some congregations preaching is favoured at the expense of other aspects of worship. Sometimes even the biblical text is shortened, or verses of a hymn are left out, so that the preacher has more time to preach. These adjustments result from a flawed understanding of preaching as an activity detached from worship as a whole. As one author put it, "At its heart, preaching is an integral aspect of the great and dynamic mystery of God’s saving grace operative in history." From the human end the mystery of God’s saving grace is reenacted in and through worship. Thus, preaching is a mysterious event in God’s saving grace, which takes place where people are gathered for worship.

**The African View on the Meaning of Preaching**

Because matters of Christian faith are universal and particular, historical and contemporary, preaching has particular meaning and tradition within the Shona culture. Preaching, one person delivering a message based on a passage read from the Bible did not previously exist in Shona culture. In African traditional religion, spirit mediums, *svikiro*, delivered God’s message to the people. At the national level, *Mwari* (God) spoke through oracles at places such as *matopos* and other sacred areas. The spirit medium was chosen for this sacred duty to communicate God’s
message. Those attending the event were expected to obey certain rules of conduct before the message could be given through the svikiro.

At Epworth Theological College in Harare, Zimbabwe, it was our habit as students to go to the nearby hill and witness the spirit possession of a man who claimed to be a prophet. We were required to take off our shoes and sit cross-legged. Music from mbira (African piano) and clapping of hands constituted the prelude to the spirit possession. If anything was done improperly the spirit would not come. But under proper circumstances we witnessed the possession and heard him tell people about their future job prospects and other insights into life.

Understanding these cultural roots in African traditional religion and spirit possession is vital to seeing preaching in African culture as incarnational; the divine spirit possesses and dwells for the time being in the chosen svikiro or spirit medium. The communicated message depends on what God wants the people to hear at the time.
Chapter 3

The Proclaimed Word of God

Without a studied understanding of the Word of God, a preacher risks abusing scripture by using it to justify willful or manipulative speech. To avoid this abuse, African preachers need to grapple with the concept of the Word of God theologically and within the cultural context.

The Word in African Context

When I was young, a new bridge was built over the Nyatande River linking my home village of Gandanzara, under Chief Makoni, to Mutasa, under the Mutasa dynasty. Chief Makoni did not attend the opening of the new bridge but sent a representative, the chief’s mouth, to speak. Those present received the spokesperson’s words with the same weight and authority as if the chief had been there. This was because the chief was the source of the words. In African culture the word bears weight not because of the speaker but because of the source.

One can see this in Shona culture when the people sing,

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Izwi raidizira richi tzvapera} \\
&\text{Hapana anoriramba} \\
&\text{NdiiMwari: Baba, ndiiMwari Baba} \\
&\text{Hapana anoriramba.}
\end{align*}
\]

Translated,

The Word has called in
The middle of the mountains
Saying, it is finished, thus says
God the father, thus says
God the father, No one can refuse it.

The word is called out by God the Father in the middle of the mountains, the abode of the sacred and holy. These words sent out take on a life of their own apart from the sender precisely because God the Father is the source of the word.

In addition to the source, the occasion at which the word is spoken also adds weight to the words. When my father’s elder brother was seriously ill he called all his younger brothers to his homestead. In their presence he told the one born after him that he wanted the liver of a bull from that younger brother’s herd. After they departed, the message came to them that their older brother had died. The brother asked to supply the bull went ahead to fulfill his task. Others tried to restrain him from slaughtering his prize bull since the brother was already dead. But his response was simply, “Baba vature” (The father has spoken). The words of a dying person are highly regarded in Shona culture.

Therefore, African congregations highly value the words uttered by Jesus Christ while hanging on the cross. African preachers will serve their congregations well and preach better if they are cognizant of these cultural nuances.

In Africa the spoken word has inherent power. A word has the power to bless life, “to heal or to condemn.” There are times in the life of an African that nothing fulfills like hearing a word of assurance from a person in a traditional position of authority. When an African hears the word originating from a source of authority, he or she understands that the word must then be “performed” through obedience and deeds. The African understands perfectly when the prophet Ezekiel says, “I will speak the word and perform it, says the Lord God” (Ezek. 12:25).

The Bible and the African Christian
When Christianity came on the scene the Bible gained widespread
acceptance among African converts to Christianity. As we already discussed, African traditional religion was primarily an oral tradition. The spoken word, rather than the written word, passed tradition from generation to generation. But as Kurewa observed there is no book as highly valued among African Christians as the Bible.² There are many reasons for this. First, books typically were available only to persons having a certain level of education, but the Bible was available to anyone. Second, literacy education used the Bible as its primary text. Most African converts learned to read and write in their mother tongue using the Bible. Thus the Bible marked an observable transition from the illiterate world into the arena of Western civilization. Further, since missionaries placed a high value on the Bible, owning a Bible meant respect in their eyes and within the community of believers.³

Third, access to the Bible meant getting to the roots of the Christian faith without having to depend on missionaries for hearing the story of salvation. As Michael Bourdillon observed, the ability to read and interpret the Bible in their own way fueled the rise of independent churches among the Shona people. They were free to discern their own meanings that were contextually relevant rather than depend on the missionary point of view.⁴

Fourth, the biblical worldview reflects an African’s cosmological experience more than westerners could ever imagine. The world of demons and evil spirits, being buried together at the place of rest with the ancestors, and marrying from within your community, to mention a few examples, are cultural trappings familiar to the African. “In an African perspective,” wrote Frans J. Verstraelen, “the Bible confirms their traditional acceptance of the role of dreams, the reality of witchcraft and spirits, and the importance of the dead, especially the ancestors; and consequently, in their view it demonstrates the gross ignorance and misrepresentation of these elements by expatriate missionaries.”⁵

While the African worldview is still closely related to the experiences of the Bible, the Western worldview is confronted with contradictions
emanating from the biblical world. Westerners lament that they cannot make sense of a book that sounds strange to them. What does the westerner make of the biblical stories of demons and dead-raisings, its blood sacrifices, its miracles of healing and exorcising, its visions and dreams and theophanies, to say nothing of the dominant images drawn from the rural society of two thousand years ago: shepherds and stewards and vineyards and seed sowers. What can it possibly mean to a person born and raised in an urban and technological society?6

Ironically, the things that baffle Christians in the West are the affirmations that buttress the faith of the African believer. To be assured that through Jesus Christ demons are driven away, the sick are healed, dreams convey messages, and that people see visions, helps ground the African in the Christian faith.

Fifth, in the hands of an African convert the Bible represents a tangible faith. The African would rather operate in the environment of the concrete rather than the abstract. Christianity could be seen and touched by way of the Bible.

This history and perspective on the Bible are informative for Christian ministry in general, and for the preacher in particular. In a testimony given at the funeral of an elderly woman in my home village, we learned that she prescribed the Bible as the cure for every illness. She even told a friend with vision problems to go and read the Bible so that she could see!

African preachers largely view the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God. Regardless of training in Biblical study tools and exegesis, most African preachers are not preoccupied with historical criticism and other critical approaches to Biblical interpretation. That learning is left to the classroom. In the pulpit the Bible is lifted up as that which God speaks in and through.

African preachers are typically confused by westerners’ ever-changing opinions on the Word of God. Missionaries taught the African believer that the Bible was God’s inspired Holy Book. In the Bible, God speaks. Therefore, it does not make sense to question what is attributed to
the infallible God. Traditionally, Africans do not question the word of their elders, so why should they question God? To make matters worse it shakes the African worldview to suggest that there are events and episodes in the Holy Bible that did not happen as described.

I have never heard an African preacher straining to explain that the Hebrews may not have literally crossed the Red Sea in the way the Bible states. Instead, I have heard sermons affirming the story and encouraging the contemporary hearer to draw wisdom from it to cross their own various “Red Seas” of life. African preachers have learned to separate biblical events into material for academic and esoteric debates from faith content for the pulpit. Critical analysis done in the pulpit is to illumine the text rather than to cast doubt upon it.

While the majority of African Christians and preachers see the Bible as the Word of God, there are divergent theological views regarding its meaning and implications for the preaching ministry. It is to that segment of study that we now turn.

The Word of God and Preaching
A long debate ensued between Emile Brunner and Karl Barth in which Brunner asked Barth pointedly; “What does it mean to say the Word of God to a human being?”7 In one of his writings, not necessarily directly responding to Brunner, Barth said, “The Word of God on the lips of a man is an impossibility; it does not happen: no one will ever accomplish it or see it accomplished.”8 He went on to explain that the Word of God belongs to God and must always remain God’s Word. When the word of God turns to be something else irrespective of how biblically based it seems to appear, it ceases to be the self-contained word of God.9

Barth would say this has implications for preaching: “Speaking the Word of God is the promise of Christian speaking.”10 The preaching event involves a series of questions between the preacher, people, and God. If the preacher “answers the people’s question but answers it as a man who has himself been questioned by God, then he speaks the
word of God; and this is what the people seek in him and what God has commissioned him to speak.” Barth continues, “Having heard myself, I am called upon to pass on what I have heard.” The preacher must be intuitive enough to be attuned to what God may be saying.

The image of the preacher going back and forth between God and the people of Israel in the wilderness can be of help in our reflections. The Bible depicts encounters between God and Moses in the book of the Exodus. In the familiar words of that book Moses would go up to God and hear what God had to say and then take the Word of God to the people. Today’s preacher must discover for him/herself what going up to God means. Whether through prayer, meditation, fasting, or other means, there must be a way that the preacher hears the word of God first before coming to the people. In The United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe the Shona hymnal has a hymn that calls upon God to give the preacher the message, “Muparidzi wedu, ngaapiwe zvino Mazwi anogutsa mwoyo yedu nhasi.” Translated, “Our preacher be given words which will satisfy our hearts today.”

African preachers must also consider their own understanding of biblical authority and the congregations to which they are preaching. Stevenson says, “The words of the Bible are the words of men. These words bear witness to the Word of God, which is his Deed, never reducible to any verbal formula, but always calling for a response on the part of those whom God claims through his Deed.” But the average African Christian will have problems hearing that the words of the Bible are the “words of men.” Most African Christians see the Bible as the Word of God. Craddock encourages all Christians to clarify the relation of God to the scripture. To suggest that scripture contains the word of God and is not itself the Word of God may create tension and disagreement in African churches. But when Craddock says, “The Word of God, if it is to be located, is to be located in movement, in conversation, in communication between scripture and church,” he names a similar perception of the Bible by Christians in the West and in Africa.
The African preacher is limited in her/his preaching by what people already believe. People cannot be pushed to abandon a certain belief system before they find something better to replace what they have. When Stevenson referred to “two thousand years of reasonable religion,” he betrayed the Western mindset that sees everything from the point of view of logic and reason with little room for feelings and experiences. Religion is not reasonable in all its aspects, otherwise there would be no need for faith to fill in the mysterious gaps that surpass human understanding. Hence, the African preacher should not be preoccupied with whether the people see the Bible as the Word of God or not. This is a developmental stage in the people’s understanding of the Christian faith that shall mature and ripen at God’s appointed time. In the words of Roy L. Smith, “Whatever authority preaching may have will derive, not from the logic, information, or psychology, but from the fact that the hearers are led to believe they are hearing from God.” Each time the preacher stands before the congregation to preach, the people are expectantly attuned to hear whether there is a word there from the Lord. “Life depends upon the answer to that question.”

For Bonhoeffer, the Word of God is Jesus Christ. Not only does Christ say the word, he is the Word. Jesus Christ does not stand behind the sermon as if to merely affirm it; he is present in the spoken word of preaching. “The whole Christ is present in preaching, Christ humiliated and Christ exalted. . . ,” declared Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He went on to say, “Christ is not only present in the word of the church but also as the word of the church, i.e., as the spoken word of preaching.” Vatican II Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy focuses on the Christocentric nature of preaching. “Christ is present in His word since it is He Himself who speaks when the Holy scriptures are read in the Church.” What comes out in the midst of divergent views about the Word of God is that the Word of God is Jesus Christ and we preach not about Christ, but Jesus Christ himself, crucified and risen. The Bible contains the Word of God,
which is “scriptural, incarnate, and contemporary. And it is God’s speech that makes our speech necessary.”

**Affirming the African Preacher**

The African preacher is constantly exposed to new theological initiatives coming from the Western world and must decide which ideas to accept, reject, or alter. For example, the West talks of preaching in postmodern times. If modern is defined by the level of industrial and technological development, then postmodern thought is irrelevant to Africa. But if modern refers to aspects of human concerns where people still shun individualism and incline to communal togetherness, then Africa has something to contribute. Where the West hears the Word of God propping up individualism, the African is likely to hear the same word from the same Jesus Christ confirming the African’s hospitality and a sense of caring for one another in the midst of poverty.

By the same token, the African preacher should not rush to dislodge the Bible from its position of authority to match a trend in Western academia, where authority of any nature is suspect. In Africa persons are still regarded with respect and as authorities because of their positions. Similarly, the Bible occupies a place of high honor and will not be brought under human scrutiny and questioning.

Dreams, visions, and nature hold messages for the African to decipher. Africans share their dreams, seeking understanding and meaning or to vindicate past events. A particular song may mean impending disaster for a homestead or entire village: “The *hungwe* (Zimbabwe bird) forebodes catastrophe—some gathering gloom as yet undisclosed.” To this day the African people in Zimbabwe still associate mysterious happenings with messages that the elders can easily interpret. And persons assume that these messages cannot be interpreted apart from God. For the African preacher, the Word of God can be encountered anywhere and can be revealed through different avenues.

The litmus test is whether the revealed message represents what
Jesus Christ stands for and has witnessed through the scriptures. African preachers should not be too preoccupied with comparing the African context with the Western world or academics, but instead appreciate that the Word of God is still "pronounced with assurance and heard with acceptance." To use the word of God is "to invoke in one’s behalf a divine utterance of incontestable authority . . . "25 The challenge is to address contemporary issues through the Word of God instead of echoing the voices of the world.26 "Preachers do not enjoy absolute freedom of speech. They are constrained to preach a definite message and to do so in a particular responsible way."27 God will always speak God’s Word and the Church shall continue to listen.
Chapter 4

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Preaching

Africa probably is the only continent with a widely accepted anthem that calls upon the Holy Spirit. In Shona this is "Mwari Komborera i Africa, Uya Mweya," translated as "God Bless Africa, Come Spirit." Therefore, as with the theme of the Word of God, the African preacher should do some soul-searching concerning the place of the Holy Spirit in preaching. Just to say from the pulpit, "By the power of the Holy Spirit," is likely to generate interest and agreement in an African congregation. Literature on preaching mentions the Holy Spirit in passing, though implicitly. There is hope that God makes our preaching possible, even helping us to select the text. As we shall see later, the Bible informs us of the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching. For this and other reasons the African preacher should pay attention to matters of the Holy Spirit.

The African and the Spiritual World

Before we discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching it is important to examine the background of the spiritual world that is interwoven in the life of the African. My point of reference is the Shona culture, although much of the same could be true in other African cultures.

African traditional religionists and some African theologians argue that the ancestral spiritual hierarchy is the heart of the African spiritual world. But the heart of the African spiritual world is the concept of God under whom the ancestors come. The misconception that ancestors are at the center led missionaries and observers from the Western world to conclude that Africans worship their ancestors. In Shona, Mwari (God) is
the Musikavanhu—the creator of human beings. The abode of this God is in the air and hence the saying vari kumhepo where the ancestors also join. The role of ancestors is that of mediums, to take human messages to the embodiment of all the spirits (God). The Biblical teaching that God is spirit finds a secure place in the mind and heart of the African. God the Spirit can only be approached by ancestors, who as dead human beings were transformed into spiritual beings accustomed to the workings of the spiritual world.

It is true that at the center of most traditional religious ceremonies, whether for the whole clan or the individual family, is the ancestor. What is usually forgotten, however, is that the African does not ascribe power and authority to the ancestors, which would displace God in the chain of command in the spiritual hierarchy. The African religious leader simply reminds the ancestors to pass the message through to Musikavanhu, God. In essence, the African practices a religion that is true to the doctrine of incarnation. By incarnation we simply mean that God decided to be with the people, and the role of the ancestors is to bring Mwari close to where the people are. The African spiritual world can be intricate to perceive, but the path out of that web, meandering through it might be, leads to the Great Spirit, Mwari (God).

**Mudzimu, the Benevolent Spirit Medium**

The Mudzimu is the representative of all the minor spiritual mediums that are benevolent or compassionate, protective, and good-natured. When a person has miraculously escaped danger that might have even led to death, the protective powers are ascribed to the Mudzimu. It is common to hear words of assurance to one another, such as mudzimu wako unokumirira, that your benevolent spiritual ancestor or medium will stand for you. If an African feels that the Mudzimu is not going to be there to stand by, he or she feels abandoned by the whole world.

We need to focus on the Mudzimu because this spiritual aspect in the African traditional religion and conception of the spiritual world
is the springboard for the African’s understanding of the Holy Spirit. Although the African does not believe that Mudzimu is a direct extension of God, being one and the same in existence and essence, there is a strong belief that the Mudzimu is abundantly endowed by God, Mwari, and is in direct communion with this creator. In John 14 we read, “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, . . . that I have said to you” (John 14:26). Such teaching is agreeable to Africans. Akin to this Counselor, the Holy Spirit whom the creator, musikavanhu, sends is the mudzimu. The mudzimu is the Counselor who communicates the instructions of God for the daily lives of the people.

Missionaries clearly understood the African culture when they let Shona translators name the Holy Spirit mudzimu unoyera. Although this may imply that there is another mudzimu that is not holy, mudzimu in all contexts is holy and cannot be otherwise. In any case, mudzimu unoyera clarifies the meaning beyond any possible doubt. The concept that the Holy Spirit can indwell someone and leave at will when the conditions are not proper is similar to the understanding that mudzimu cannot stand by and guide a person of bad character. The difference is that while the Holy Spirit extends a protective hand and guidance to anyone who believes, a particular mudzimu cares only for its family or clan. An individual has his or her family mudzimu from the cradle to the grave. This pervasive nature of the belief in matters of the Spirit is evident by listening to how Shona people refer to the mudzimu in their rituals, especially during death.

**Possessed by the Spirit**

We have already noted that the Holy Spirit can indwell an individual. Nowhere is the belief that the spirit can possess a person for good or ill indelibly etched in a people’s culture more than among the African people. This is why the power of the Holy Spirit is a familiar concept for African congregations.
Africans in Zimbabwe and elsewhere believe that a spirit has power to possess an individual for a specific task or purpose. The possessing spirit, who can be either good or evil, is usually one of the deceased members of the immediate family or the extended family. Possession of an individual usually takes place in one of two ways. The spirit can select an individual to possess and cause some mysterious illness to fall upon the person. The assumption is that no modern medicine can cure the sickness, which evades any formal diagnostic methods. Only when the patient is taken to a diviner can the problem be revealed that the spirit of such a person wants to come out through the individual. The *n’anga* (African doctor) prescribes a ritual to be followed for the spirit to reveal itself. When all is done, the person is possessed for life as long as the prescribed procedures and occasional rituals and ceremonies are followed. The other process by which the spirit possesses someone is through the rare situation in which an individual wishes to be possessed by a particular ancestral spirit and does all that is required to facilitate the process. People usually like to be possessed through free and open selection by the spirit itself rather than by manipulating the spirit.

The vocabulary of being possessed by the Holy Spirit has freely borrowed from this African background and has gained entry into the African church. Two common words that come to mind are *kugarwa* and *kusvikirwa*, meaning to be possessed. Congregations often talk about the preacher being possessed by the Holy Spirit during the delivery of the sermon. This usually occurs during animated sermons in which the preacher is engrossed both physically and spiritually. Often, there has been depth of content related in a way meaningful to the lives of the hearers. Possession by the Holy Spirit can take place during a sermon that rings with the truth of the gospel and begs to be heard by more people than those in attendance.

This background of the spiritual world helps the African preacher to view the Holy Spirit not only as a church doctrine for theological reflection but as a concrete element to be made use of in preaching.
If Western preachers feel hesitant about aligning themselves with the spirit world, not so for African preachers who should ceaselessly seek to be possessed by the Spirit. Thus, reference and attachment to the Holy Spirit is one of the most crucial steps in the contextualization of preaching in Africa. The power of the Holy Spirit and belief in and the actualization of this Spirit gives African preaching a vibrancy that sets it off from other traditions.

The Biblical View of the Holy Spirit and Preaching
The African preacher should add to the understanding of the world of the spirits by referring to what the scripture says about the Spirit as it relates to preaching. With the help of Nave’s Topical Bible I selected some biblical texts that have some direct or indirect teaching about the role of the Spirit in preaching. What we learn from our cultural backgrounds should be measured against the teaching of the Holy Bible. There is usually confusion in churches about the nature and scope of the Holy Spirit, especially about how it manifests in an individual. One way to clear the confusion is to hear what the Bible says about terms such as Spirit, Holy Spirit, Comforter, Counselor, and Holy Ghost.

In the Old Testament, Pharaoh acknowledged that Joseph was under the inspiration of the Spirit after he interpreted his dreams (Gen. 41:38). In this example, we see that the Spirit gives the power of interpretation to humans. The preacher as the interpreter of scriptural texts and of the phenomena in people’s lives surely needs this power of the Spirit to discern meanings. Again in Exodus 31:3 we hear of Bezalel who was filled by the spirit of “ability and intelligence” (Exod. 35:31). It was in the wilderness that the Spirit instructed the people of Israel (Neh. 9:20). These are attributes of the Spirit that the preacher will do well to believe in and to cherish.

Again, Scripture says:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has
sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty
to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who
are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor (Isa. 61:1–2).

Jesus Christ quoted this text in the synagogue at Nazareth as he preached
(Luke 4:18–19). This text is usually cited to show that Jesus Christ is
the liberator, for the Spirit led him to speak a liberating message. The
implication is that the Holy Spirit initiates preaching that liberates
and empowers people’s lives. Some sermons are bereft of power and
messages that free people from shackles of bondage because there is
no undergirding current of the Holy Spirit. It is not the human speaker
who speaks, but the Spirit of God.

Jesus Christ told his disciples that when rulers accuse them and take
them to trial they should not be anxious about what to say, “For it is
not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you”
(Matt. 10:20). There are some preachers who misuse the omniscient
power of the Spirit by neglecting sermon preparation on the pretense
that the Spirit will speak for them. As one writer noted, we need to
remember that the Holy Spirit sparks fire in the preacher who has put
some effort into gathering firewood.1 Having the power of the Holy Spirit
can in fact mean working harder than before on our sermons.

One of the challenges of preaching is having the ability to discern the
truth and speak it. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit guides us into
the truth: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the
truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears
he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come”
(John 16:13). The text gives the assurance that through the Spirit the
preacher is linked to God, who is the ultimate authority. As told in Acts 4,
Peter and other disciples faced arrest and imprisonment for healing and
for preaching the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ. But filled with
the Holy Spirit, Peter confronted the rulers and religious leaders with a
bold message that it was through the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth that the crippled were healed. The Holy Spirit gave him courage to speak the revealed truth. To that effect we read in 2 Timothy 1:7, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control."

Africa is a continent that calls for courageous preaching. The church should take a leading role in proclaiming a message that challenges injustices and other forms of evil emanating from those in positions of authority. From time to time the preacher should bring to the people a prophetic message that is dependent on the truth and power of the Holy Spirit. At times preachers are bereft of any meaningful courageous and prophetic message because the power of the Holy Spirit is missing. Preachers should ask and answer the following question with soul-searching honesty: What fills me when I get up to preach? Sometimes we get into the pulpit to preach when we are filled with anger arising from our frustrations instead of being filled by the Spirit of courage. On this, 2 Peter 1:20–21 says: "All you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God."

Given the right conditions the Holy Spirit should be the prime mover of preaching. Again, 1 Peter 1:12 dwells on the same conviction that the good news is preached through the Holy Spirit: “It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.” St. Paul added, "And my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4). These biblical texts are not exhaustive and were of course said under different circumstances. If anything, they tell us that the place of the Holy Spirit is central in preaching. This is welcome news for Africans whose lives are naturally infused by the spiritual world.
African independent churches have taken the lead in championing the role of the Holy Spirit in their ministries. The leaders do not shy away from telling anyone who will listen that they are who they are in their careers because of the power of the Holy Spirit. Johanne Marange, founder of one of the popular independent churches in Zimbabwe, claimed that the law and codes of his new church were revealed to him under the spell of the Holy Spirit. The date when Marange heard voices connected with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is recorded as 17 July 1932. He had an experience in which the Holy Spirit named him John the Baptist and told him to do the work of God. A similar experience befell Simon Kimbangu, an independent African church founder in Zambia. On 16 April 1921, the Holy Spirit chose Kimbangu to preach and perform miracles.

In their effort to contextualize the gospel, leaders of the African independent churches grounded their work on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Mainstream churches can learn from these leaders.

**Holy Spirit and Preaching: A Leaf from the West**

Homileticians in the West often state the need of preachers to take the Holy Spirit seriously in their preaching. This conscious call of the preacher’s attention to the Holy Spirit is vouchsafed by James Forbes’s book *The Holy Spirit and Preaching*. People have different understandings and perceptions about the working of the Holy Spirit. African preachers can benefit from hearing what others across the world say about the Holy Spirit and preaching. It is therefore the intention of this segment to examine some thoughts of Western homileticians on the Holy Spirit and preaching.

Maybe the place to start is the concept of anointing by the Holy Spirit. One of the images of the preacher as perceived in African context is the anointed one of God. In Shona this is *mudzodzwa wa Mwari*. The anointed one is that preacher who is filled by the Holy Spirit. Forbes has identified the challenge before the church regarding anointing. "The
challenge before the Church is to find a way for all of its members to talk together about the anointing of the Spirit and to seek the depth of experience to which it points,” he noted. Forbes went on to explain that the anointing of the Holy Spirit “is that process by which one comes to an fundamental awareness of God’s appointment, empowerment, and guidance for the vocation to which we are called as the body of Christ.”

This challenge to the church includes the African church. With the rise of Pentecostal movements there has been some confusion concerning the meaning of being anointed of the Holy Spirit. In these churches, anointing of the Holy Spirit can be manifested by preaching without notes or even by declaring before the congregation that one did not prepare but that the Holy Spirit will give the preacher what to say. Healing, ability to cast away demons, and prophesying while speaking in tongues are other hallmarks pointing to the anointed one of God.

These churches have been growing by leaps and bounds, especially among youth and adults—reason enough to indicate something vital is occurring that the mainstream churches in Africa cannot afford to minimize. Unfortunately, the responses by the mainstream churches have been disjointed. In some cases anything resembling Pentecostalism has been banished. On the other end of the spectrum are cases where the response is wholesale imitation without scrutiny, which ends up confusing the particular denomination about its espoused identity. As Forbes suggested to the church at large, rather than merely swimming with the Pentecostal current, the African church should reflect on which experiences actually manifest the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Without such an effort confusion will continue to reign and might lead well intentioned African preachers to be hesitant about affirming the work of the Holy Spirit.

A point of convergence among the homileticians in the West whose writings I had access to is that the Holy Spirit is an important variable in preaching. Hadden Spurgeon simply urged ministers, “To us, as
ministers, the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.”12 “Preaching is a spiritual business,” affirmed Ralph Lewis.13 In ancient times preachers conveyed the message they felt had been revealed to them by the Holy Spirit.14 Lewis quoted Raymond Calkins about the need to rely on the Holy Spirit in preaching. It is worth quoting again for our purposes.

A sermon has been defined as the overflow of the soul. If the soul itself be empty, there can be no overflow. A preacher may possess every other qualification. He may have a fine presence, and his [speech] may be perfect. He may be well trained and intellectually the master of his subject; he may have a good set of ideas and a healthy grasp of the practical problems with which he has to deal. He may have all this and much else. But if he lacks, or in proportion as he lacks, a deep vital and personal experience of God and of the Christian revelation of God, he is sure to fail as a preacher. For preaching is simply the uttering of one’s own experience. And if one has no experience, neither can one utter it.15

Despite the lack of gender inclusiveness of the times, the point is well made for both male and female preachers.

Others have named the Holy Spirit as the outstanding variable in preaching. Neil Mahoney wrote, “While there are a sea of variables interacting between preacher and congregation, there remains one immeasurable variable: the power of the Holy Spirit.”16 In addition to affirming the Holy Spirit as a crucial variable in preaching, writers have attempted to point out the function of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit may acknowledge the authority of the preacher.17 The Holy Spirit may also work among the listeners to accept the preacher as the authentic messenger of God. It is the Holy Spirit who must give the preacher what to preach. The means of communicating can be contemporary, but the message comes from the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.18
Further, the Holy Spirit plays a positive role in the delivery of sermons. “The Holy Spirit enables effective preachers to speak in an oral-visual language listeners can understand,” asserts Richard F. Ward.\(^{19}\) It is the Holy Spirit who makes preaching come alive.\(^{20}\) Whenever the power of the Holy Spirit is absent in the delivery of the sermon, we experience “a sad repeat of the futile efforts of the seven sons of Sceva described in Acts 9:11–16.”\(^{21}\) To be sure, these references and convictions about the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching do not represent a comprehensive picture. Nevertheless, the effort serves to alert the African preacher not to marginalize the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching.

**Implications for Preaching in Africa**

What we have discussed in this chapter has far-reaching impact on the nature and scope of preaching in Africa. If Western writers, whose environment is no longer based on the spiritual world, still highlight the need to take cognizance of the Holy Spirit in preaching, then the African preacher has no choice but to believe and ask diligently that by the grace of God this power be endowed on him or her.

There are a number of challenges for the African preacher in circumstances where there is subtle demand that one proves that he/she is a recipient of the Holy Spirit. What James H. Harris says about preaching in the African-American tradition is true for the African preacher. Harris asserted that preaching in the African-American church “is a spiritual enterprise.” He went on to say that one who preaches “is expected to be anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit before there is any attempt to preach the word.”\(^{22}\) The general and daily expectation among members in African congregations is that the preacher before them on a given Sunday or on any other occasion has subjected his or her life under the dominion of the Holy Spirit. It is common to hear rumours circulating in local churches or whole denominations that a pastor or church leader does not have the Holy Spirit. This accusation should be the last thing to come from another mortal.
I remember an incident in which a missionary from one of the Western countries was asked to offer an opening prayer in a routine school staff meeting. She refused—giving as her excuse that she was not notified beforehand. I cannot think of any African Christian who would take such a way out. Africans are generally endowed with aptitudes of impromptu speaking. Few Africans would turn down an opportunity to speak regardless of how large the gathering and how important the occasion might be.

Ironically, this talent turns out to be a challenge for the African preacher who is further assured that the Holy Spirit does the preaching. At no point have we come across any hint that where the Holy Spirit is there is no need of preparing. The presence of the Holy Spirit is to affirm and direct what is already there, to add the missing essentials and to remove that which is trivial and turn that which remains into the saving word of God.

Further implication for the African preacher is to practice a self-discipline that attunes one to live within the power of the Holy Spirit. One thinks of a life of prayer at times and moments outside the routines of the public prayer at church. The life of an African preacher is usually crowded in the literal sense. The house is almost always full of extended family and people of the community who come for help of all sorts ranging from a matter of hours to overnight. There are few opportunities for secluded moments of prayer. But if Jesus Christ managed to occasionally go to places away from the crowds, the African pastor should be able to carve out sometime to do the same. The natural environment of mountains and forests in most African countries provides a conducive atmosphere for intense moments of prayer for the preacher.

Most African preachers do not own libraries full of books. This lack of numerous reading materials can be turned into a positive focus on the Bible itself and on what it teaches concerning the Holy Spirit and preaching. Although volumes of books have been churned out on the topic of the Holy Spirit and preaching, the Bible has said it all. When
approached prayerfully and in obedience, the Bible will reward the reader.

Finally, there are stories about the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in different denominations at certain points in time. African preachers should be aware of those stories and find out more through reading or by interviewing participants who are still alive. Interestingly, people often experienced the manifestation of the Holy Spirit within the context of preaching. In Zimbabwe, I am reminded of two manifestations of the Holy Spirit. One was at Rusitu mission, a center of the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe. This revival, which took place in 1916, is billed as "a great revival of the Holy Spirit." Another similar manifestation of the Holy Spirit took place at Old Mutare mission, a center of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. This phenomenal event, which took place in 1918, is talked about in denominational circles with nostalgia. Additionally, there is the story in the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe of Benard Mzeki who died a martyr for his faith.

The African preacher should be aware of these events as occasions that testify to God’s presence among the African people. When it comes to the Christian faith and its historical events, Africans have documented instances to offer as the story of faith from their soil. African preachers should be encouraged in their search for the power of the Holy Spirit in these and other stories throughout the continent. We cannot risk losing the rich and empowering heritage of our preaching.
Chapter 5

The Portrait of the Preacher

The question of who should have the privilege of preaching is crucial. On seeing a preacher, I assume that the person is a disciple of Jesus Christ who feels the urge to proclaim the mighty works of God. He or she is willing and happy to do so because this is an important task. I bring to mind everything I know about the individual in order to assure myself that there is nothing in the life of this preacher that goes against the image of one whom God sends to preach. Nothing escapes this mental search—family background, private and public life, and much more.

If I do not know the preacher personally, I trust other members of the community of believers will have done this search already. But I still expect to be given a glimpse of the preacher through an introduction that focuses on the Christian pilgrimage of the individual. Preaching is a complex task with many variables that have the potential to sustain or undermine one’s effort in proclaiming the gospel.

One of these variables is the way a preacher is viewed by the listeners. The perception that listeners have of the preacher influences their receptivity to the gospel. Equally important is the way the preacher views him or herself. Preachers’ self-images influence the way they present themselves and preach. In light of these needs this chapter will paint a mental picture of one who should be entrusted with the ministry of preaching. My approach is to search for images from within the African context. I will also examine views by homileticians from outside Africa and juxtapose those views with African experiences.
Images of the Preacher: African Perspectives

Using the Shona culture as the entry point for the African perspective, we see that African traditional religion and culture is a valid source for images of the preacher. Linked with a belief in and veneration of ancestors, as we have already discussed, is the place and role of spirit mediums.

The central image of the preacher is as a spirit medium who brings the message of those above in the air or wind, vari mumhepo, to those in the community of mortals. The ultimate big spirit is Mwari, God, the creator, to whom ancestors take their concerns and also from whom the final word is passed on to the spirit medium. If the preacher is seen as spirit medium, the element of possession comes into the picture. The preacher can only preach under the spell of some supernatural spiritual powers that dwell in the preacher and possess him or her. What the preacher does is no longer from him/her but from the spirit in that individual.

In a novel about Chaminuka, the Shona prophet of Chitungwiza, Solomon M. Mutsvairo wrote an imaginary conversation between Chaminuka and a young woman, Bavheya. The young woman, who had been sent to Chitungwiza to spy on Chaminuka, told the great prophet about Jesus Christ. Although Chaminuka believed in Jesus Christ, Chaminuka maintained that he had a mission to his people. The author records Chaminuka’s words:

I am called to serve my people in a way that is peculiar to their understanding and needs. Mwari—our ancestor God—is a Mwari of all people. In his generosity, he has shown to us a way for worshipping him that is peculiarly suited to us. Our ancestors are not dead and gone. They are alive and about us. Pay attention to their demands and you will live a happy life, for they are our advocates before Mwari—our God.1
Based on a true story about Chaminuka, the novel takes us back to the roots of Shona culture and religion, which revolved around ancestors.

Ancestors are seen as the people’s advocates before God. It is within that spiritual hierarchy that the image of the preacher as spirit medium (svikiro in Shona) is to be understood. The only difference is that during the delivery of the sermon it is God advocating his case before the people. God, the spirit, possesses the preacher, the medium, and communicates the message to the people. Bourdillon has shown that spirit possession is a common phenomenon in African traditional religious cults. He noted that among the Shona the focus is usually on communicating the message of the spirit “in oracular pronouncements; the emphasis is on mediumship rather than possession, with the possessed person being the medium for the spirits’ oracles.”2 The image of the preacher is the spirit medium who has access to the world of the immortals and of mortal beings.

The spirit medium does not assume religious responsibilities by popular acclaim but through actions beyond everybody’s control, including the selected individual. When some pastors attempted to deviate from God’s call, they were overwhelmed by the powers beyond their imagination and eventually spoke the expected words as God’s messenger. The idea of voting to approve potential preachers is not wholly removed from traditional culture. The spirit medium had to go through rituals and ceremonies (similar to ordination in today’s churches) to the satisfaction of all stakeholders in the community.

It is not enough to say that the African preacher could fit the role of the spirit medium without also looking at the idea of being set apart for God’s work. Such concepts as the call to ministry or the anointed one of God and other images should be understood in the context of one set apart for God’s work. In this regard I would like to relate the mysterious stories that circulate among African communities about the magic powers of the mermaid (nzuzu).

My contemporaries and I grew up under strict instructions that under
no circumstances were we to swim in some pools because we might be taken by the mermaid and never be seen again. Parents told us stories of the material wealth the mermaids display to entice people to come closer. These included clothes, cattle, lovely beads, and at times beautiful girls. As part of the story, the sound of a drum was usually heard at such pools. One of the major pools associated with the mermaid is Chirikuutsi in Pungwe River, in the Eastern District of Zimbabwe. It was named Chirikuutsi for its thick mist, especially in the mornings. Young people wished to be taken by the mermaid because if they were fortunate they could come out and rejoin their people as a different and important person. For all the time they would spend underwater with the mermaid, they would be learning the all-powerful trade and rituals of becoming a great n’anga, or African doctor. They would come back with prepared medicines to treat any type of illness, even those that defied conventional medical wisdom. To replenish their collection of herbs, they simply had to dream and everything would be revealed to them. You can see why the cautious instructions that young people stay away from such pools were overruled by their inner cravings for the mysterious endowment they could receive at the hands of a mermaid.

As I was writing this book, a newspaper carried a story about a female n’anga in one of the townships of Mutare, Zimbabwe, who claimed that the source of her healing powers is the mermaid. Her fame as a traditional healer has spread far and wide, and Zimbabweans with all sorts of ailments flock to her. Whether or not African preachers adopt the spirit medium image for their preaching ministry, the idea of separation from the community for a period of concentration is pervasive. When one is taken by the mermaid, others do not mourn, for they know he or she is in for life not death. The person was one of them, but now will be great among them for their sake. Similarly, a preacher who is taken away and consecrated by God will be returned to the people to serve them, to heal all forms of illness, and to give them life. We shall come back later to this concept of being set apart for the purpose of preaching.
Besides the spirit medium, there are other images we can use to paint a portrait of the African preacher. There is *mutumwa wa Mwari*, God’s messenger. Another English word closely related to this concept is *herald*. The *mutumwa* messenger or herald carries the message from God to the people. An African preacher is God’s messenger and herald who speaks only that which God has spoken.

The other concept is *muparidzi*, the preacher or one who proclaims the message. We have already referred to the hymn “*Muparadzi wedu ngaapiwe zvino . . .*” (“Our preacher be given now . . .”). Related to this term is *mushumiri* or *mushumairi*, meaning the one who presents God’s word to the people. The root of the word goes back to *shuma*, to “represent, report (to higher authority),” and at times it means work has been done. The preacher is *mushumiri* in that he/she introduces the word of God to the people for deliberation. Following such a task, work has been done, *mashuma*. *Muparidzi* is the direct Shona translation for *preacher*, but a closer look shows that there is a noun related to *muparidzi* that is informative in this regard. This is *muparidziri*, which means the talebearer. The preacher is indeed a bearer of a tale that must be told at every opportune moment to those willing to listen.

One image of the preacher that indicates the African congregation’s conflicting expectations is that of the prophet. While Africans do not see the preacher as a prophet, they expect her or him to play that role occasionally. Unlike in the West where *prophecy* means proclaiming a courageous message without exception to persons and institutions, in Africa *prophecy* means the powers of seeing through an individual’s life and foretelling the future. In some apostolic churches in Africa a prophet posted at the entrance tells people the sins they committed during the week if they do not voluntarily confess. Mainstream churches sometimes wish that the preacher would be a prophet among them.

Apart from prophesy, the prophet image is appealing to Africans for other reasons. The prophet in the Bible is usually one called by God under protest. Isaiah protested that he was not worthy for God’s
revelation and said, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (Isa. 6:5). After a seraphim with a burning coal touched Isaiah’s mouth to cleanse it, the Lord spoke, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (Isa. 6:8).

Or take Jeremiah’s call where the Lord told him, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, . . . I appointed you a prophet to the nations” (Jer. 1:5). Then Jeremiah said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth” (Jer. 1:6). As with Isaiah’s call, the Lord touched Jeremiah’s mouth and put his words in the youthful prophet. Amos spoke of his humble background and how God called him from herding sheep. “I am no prophet, nor a prophet’s son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel’” (Amos 7:14b–15).

The preacher as prophet appeals to Africans because prophets were unassuming in their ministry. None of them seemed to desire the job. Africans take this to mean that their careers depended on the will of God and not on what they could do on their own. In the examples I have given, all three prophets felt they were unworthy of the task because of personal shortcomings. Isaiah claimed that he was a sinner, a man of unclean lips. Jeremiah tried to use his youth as an excuse. Amos came clean that it was God who called him, not that he had any prophetic pedigree. While they stood before God as sinners, nevertheless when they confessed their sins God cleansed them. And in a dramatic fashion the Lord gave them words to speak. Not only was Ezekiel’s mouth touched, he even was asked to eat the scroll. God said to him, “Son of man, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel” (Ezek. 3:1). Images like these assure Africans that the preacher is not speaking out of whimsical calculation of human words or skilled rhetoric. The African church waits expectantly to hear, “Thus says
the Lord.” But who can speak these words except a preacher whose lips have been cleansed, one who has been asked to eat the scroll?

The term pastor comes from shepherd. In the African church shepherd is broadly used to embrace all of pastoral ministry. The concept of a shepherd, mufudzi, is still meaningful to Africans in rural areas who herd domestic animals. Many urban dwellers also have some experience in herding cattle or goats. Although the image of the preacher as shepherd may evoke different memories than that which prevailed in Palestine, the African does have some experience to draw upon.

How does the image of the preacher as shepherd apply? The sermon is regarded as the Word of God calling back the lost sheep and directing those in the fold to green pastures. The only thing that might dissuade Africans from seeing the preacher as the shepherd is that Jesus Christ claimed the title for himself. In their humble tradition, Africans shy away from appearing to stand in the place of Jesus Christ.

**Biblical Images of the Preacher**

Relating biblical portraits of the preacher to the African context is helpful. John R.W. Stott wrote the book on images of the preacher in the New Testament. His approach was to do some word study in an effort to see “a portrait painted by the hand of God Himself on the broad canvas of the New Testament.” Stott discusses images such as steward, herald, witness, father, and servant. For the metaphor of steward Stott references the passage where the Apostles regard themselves “as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1–2). I am not aware of Africans viewing the preacher as a steward. Although the word is translated muchengeti in Shona, it is not commonly used for preachers in the church. In The United Methodist Church and in other denominations, the term steward is reserved for those serving on stewardship committees or boards of trustees and not for the preachers.

Yet from the vantage point of African traditional religion, the preacher
as steward has some basis. Religious leaders in African traditional religion are custodians of the mysteries of the ancestors and God. Stott says the steward metaphor represents the content of the preacher’s message, which does not come from the preacher but is given by God. For the African preacher, being a steward of the Word also means relying on the Bible for authentic teaching in the church. When I cite a biblical text in a sermon a good number of listeners write down the verse or turn to their Bibles. By being stewards of the Word, African preachers can revitalize their preaching.

The image of a herald is based on biblical claims such as Mark 1:4, where John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance. The herald image also is used to describe the preaching of Jesus in Galilee and also in Matthew 10:7 where Jesus urged the disciples to preach as they went on their mission. In the letters of St. Paul the term herald appears in 1 Timothy 2:7 and 2 Timothy 1:11. The image of the herald augurs well in the African context where the preacher proclaims the message whenever the Lord sends.

St. Paul viewed himself as a servant of the gospel (Eph. 3:7, NRSV), as did Timothy (1 Thess. 3:2). This metaphor of preacher as servant is not commonly used in the African Church. In Shona, servant means Muranda, one who is under the authority of a king in a relationship of obedience. The image has some promise for the African preacher in reminding him/her of the need to be humble before God.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:11–12, St. Paul compared himself to a father in relationship to his children. The preacher, by implication, loves the congregation in the same way a father loves his children. Again, this is an image of the preacher that must be tested for validity in the African church. For a society that is still basically patriarchal, the image of father for the preacher can enhance the approach to preaching.

That these images come from the Bible does not necessarily mean that they are applicable to all cultures. It is important for the preacher to have some clear understanding of the metaphors and images that
influence his/her preaching and then assess their validity in light of biblical teaching.

The Preacher’s Call
A discussion of the portrait of the preacher must include the dimension of the call. This is more so in the African culture where traditional religion demanded that religious gurus be called to the task by the powers that be. More than any other aspect of ministry, African congregations are aware that the pastor enters this career through a call. Matters of the preacher’s image and personality are regarded as secondary to the call. How that call is defined and understood is a different thing altogether. What matters is that behind every preacher is a call to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. The practice in the West of admitting for theological training people who are not decided about their call to the ordained ministry is out of consideration for the African church. In light moments laypeople tease pastors about whether they still feel called or they now feel cold spiritually. The idea of the call and all its ramifications for preaching and ministry is worth our attention.

There is agreement among homileticians that those who preach must have a sense of being initiated to ministry that is beyond the call of duty. The one who initiates that call to preach is none other than God. “No one has a claim to the pulpit of the Christian Church who has not experienced the redemptive touch of Christ upon his life,” asserted Daniel J. Baumann. African theologian J. S. Pobee echoed those sentiments when he argued that to be authentic, preaching must come from one called by God whose lifestyle conforms to that of Jesus Christ and is “accompanied by powerful deeds.” In a curious and emphatic way of expressing the need for the preacher’s call, another author put it thus: “There is no greater privilege than to know that God called me, that God called me, that God called me.” These sentiments faithfully represent the understanding of the preacher’s call and its centrality to preaching in the African perspective.
There are those who rightly view the call as a mysterious act that cannot be easily explained. The call is indeed “one of the blessed mysteries of the ministry.” And in the words of Samuel D. Proctor, “Until one’s dying day a preacher will not know absolutely that this call is from God; but one bets a lifetime that it is, and the fruits of one’s labor have to stand as the only evidence.” The point is that the essence of the call to ministry lies not in our being certain about it but in the outcome. A similar trend of thought is heard from Jung Young Lee, who pointed out, “What makes preachers different from other people is not so much the call of God itself but their commitment to that call.”

For the African preacher, though, the story is different. Concerning the call to preach, there is no room for indecision. Africans in general do not entertain uncertainties in life. That is why they usually explain the course of events irrespective of what the eye can see. The African worldview is saturated with the concrete and the dramatic. This explains why the call of the prophets constitutes a favorable reference point in African preaching. The African preacher does not waste valuable time analyzing what might have happened concerning Isaiah’s vision in the temple. If anything, the African preacher will go down on his or her knees praying fervently that God will send another seraphim with a burning coal to cleanse the unclean lips. These and other stories such as the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus are favorites of the African preacher who needs some grounding in the call to preach. The implication that one can enter the ministry and carry on in the work without being sure of the call is anathema to Africans. It is no wonder that leaders of the African independent churches speak publically about how they were called to ministry under the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Character and Personality of the Preacher**

The portrait of the preacher as reflected in the images and the call does not portray a complete picture of the one who stands in the pulpit. While the ideal is usually unattainable, it is important to know what
ought to be. In the African church no one can hold a leadership position let alone be given the opportunity to preach unless one’s character is put under strict scrutiny. Agapit J. Mroso wrote of a proverb that says, “What you are speaks so loud that I do not hear what you say.” This is true for the whole of the church in Africa. Mroso went on to point out that in Africa how one conducts him or herself in daily life bears heavily on how people will listen to and hear what that person says. In a survey conducted in Malawi, Kenneth R. Ross found out that forty-one percent of preachers identified character as the most important quality in their ministry. Laypeople put educational qualifications for preachers as the most important element. That forty-two percent of the laity put education as the vital element and character of the preacher second is surprising. My hunch is that if that survey were replicated in other countries, both the preachers and the members would agree that character is the most important attribute in preaching ministry. In any case, the preachers surveyed in Malawi knew well that character is a determinant factor in one’s preaching. Among its reflective declarations the African Synod concluded that one’s whole life becomes an essential means of proclaiming the gospel.

Lewis has come up with a list of personality qualities expected in a preacher. Although the list is not all-inclusive it is still a helpful starting point. The first quality for preachers is glad sharing or a happy mood. The last thing people expect of their preacher is a gloomy face. If the preacher must err in an African congregation it is pardonable to be too happy for no apparent reason than to wear a sober face.

The second quality is humility, where the preacher holds God and the people in a place of regard. This humility in the African context means refusing to accept credit for something even if you know it is due to your capabilities and skill. When positive comments are made about the sermon, the African preacher does not say thank you, but instead finds a way to refuse to accept the accolade.

Sincerity is the third quality, one that assures the congregation that
the preacher means what he or she preaches. There is a proverb in Shona, "Totenda dzamwa mombe dzaswera nebenzi," which translates, "We shall be thankful after the cattle being herded by a insane person have had water to drink." No preacher wants the congregation to doubt what he or she says because of a lack of sincerity. The fourth quality the preacher should show is earnestness, which means to be filled by a sense of interest in what is being said.

Fifth, the preacher must be enthusiastic. The word *enthusiasm* has a Greek root *en theos*, meaning a God within. To be enthusiastic means that the preacher is moved by God within. Sixth and related to enthusiasm is vitality. One must be filled with *ruach*, the Hebrew word for spirit. I am reminded of my first professor of homiletics Rev. Dr. Maurice Culver, who finished every lesson by telling us that we must be filled with *ruach* in our preaching. We students even came to nickname him *ruach*. What he urged us to do fits well in the African culture where the world of the spirits still pulsates. The preacher in this culture must preach as a messenger of God filled with *ruach*.

Seventh, there is need for humour. Africans are humourous people who use this form of speech to survive harsh conditions. They even use humour as a way of grieving. We shall say more about humour in preaching later in this book.

The eighth quality the preacher must have is Christian love for others. People can accept all types of criticism if they are convinced that it is said in love. Ninth, the preacher needs confidence, which means to be assertive in preaching. Preaching is not a set of propositions that are waiting to be tested for their validity. Tenth, a pastor should be positive toward the people.

It is worth revisiting how homileticians have emphasized these and other characteristics. Lewis has gone further in reminding preachers that there is no substitute for personal integrity in a preacher. Other weaknesses may be compensated for through alternative means, he says, but not character. The preacher preaches two sermons at a time.
One is preached through the delivered words and the other through the preacher’s character. As Bishop Quayle perceptively noted, to preach is not to deliver a sermon but “it is the art of making and delivering a preacher.”

One other characteristic highlighted is that of sympathy. In Shona there are a number of words synonymous with sympathy—mutsa, tsitsi, tsiye nyoro—meaning sympathy, mercy or grace, and good hearted, respectively. Tsiye nyoro is a figurative expression for a person who is characteristically sympathetic and always does something to help others and mobilizes others to do the same. Literally, tsiye nyoro means “wet eyelids,” meaning that the person sheds tears upon seeing suffering people. With all forms of afflictions, hunger, and civil wars, all sorts of sin induced by poverty and more that the African experiences daily, the African preacher should understandably move about with “wet eyelids.” It is not out of the ordinary for an African preacher caught up in the sermon to start crying, followed by members of the congregation. Such deep expression of sympathy, “tsiye nyoro,” should not be stultified and pushed out of the African sanctuary under the pretext of being dignified in the pulpit. In the words of Ray G. Jordan, “The minister must be so understanding that sympathy will be the natural quality of his life. The sincere desire to understand and feel with others will make us sit where they sit, walk in their shoes, and even crawl into their skins!”

Good character does not mean that preachers should pretend to be super beings. Preachers will have both high and low moments, but all for the glory of God. I will never forget the telephone call I received from a colleague in ministry who told me that he was contemplating committing suicide. He felt his ministry was a failure, and that people were not responding to his sermons or to anything he said. I did all I could to save the situation and, thank God, disaster was averted. “Great preaching, like great art,” said R.E.C Browne, “cannot be the work of those who know no chaos within them and it cannot be the work of those who are unable to master the chaos within them.” St. Paul gave us
the appropriate metaphor in circumstances of feeling disillusioned: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us” (2 Cor. 4:7). Good character or otherwise, God is the ultimate performer in the pulpit. On our own, we are nothing but fragile earthen vessels.

**Disciplines of the Preacher**

Our discussion of the portrait of the preacher should include the total lifestyle of the minister. The disciplines of the preacher are those habits and principles that have crystallized into a pattern of behavior. Followed regularly these disciplines combine to form a vital force in aiding one’s preaching ministry.

First, a life of prayer must be the cornerstone of the preacher’s life. By prayer I do not refer only to the time when one actually goes to a place to kneel and pray. I have in mind one’s whole attitude to life that is molded and guided by a spirit of thanksgiving to God. Great moments of prayer are those times when the preacher pours out his or her heart for the congregation. A preacher who takes time to pray for individual members of the congregation in private will be enriched in unfathomable ways.

Second is a life of study, which means using the whole of God’s creation as the source of knowledge. Since books are scarce for the African preacher, study may mean meeting with the elders and listening to their distilled wisdom in matters of life. Africans believe that with old age comes more wisdom. The knowledge that will sustain us as preachers does not concern cutting-edge technology but the perennial issues that gnaw at the spiritual well-being of humans. Studying books should not be neglected, and effort must be made to build a church library through church funds if the individual pastor cannot afford it alone. Visits to surrounding seminary libraries to replenish oneself should be encouraged.

Such reading should go beyond the study of theology. I surprised myself to discover that although I have talked about marriage contracts I
have actually never read a law book on the nature of contracts. I recently bought an introductory book on law and rued the time I have already spent in ignorance. The African preacher must read literature in his/her language for insights into human life and to improve the level of facility with language. I urge that a dictionary in one’s language, a collection of proverbs, and books about the ethnic culture of one’s people are a must for one’s study.

Study also means visiting other churches during vacations to hear how your colleagues are delivering the gospel. Preachers are so isolated that they rarely learn from each other. This is more so in Africa where access to printed sermons is almost non-existent.

Third is the discipline of pointing one’s whole life towards the maintenance of good health. Preaching is exhausting, and takes a toll on one’s body and soul at the same time. A senior pastor used to tell us young pastors that after delivering a sermon in the true sense of the word, the preacher feels like she or he has been doing heavy manual work for six hours nonstop. Most preachers will testify to the truth of this statement. Our bodies may be trying to tell us that preaching is a sacred undertaking. The African preacher should revisit foods that our ancestors ate—foods low in fat and other injurious nutrients. Recently, I heard a story that in one of the Western countries it is a liability for anyone campaigning for the office of the presidency to have a bulging stomach. The reasoning is that the candidate is sluggish and will not be energetic enough to run the country. The same is true for the African pastor. It is a liability to your church and the congregation for you to develop a bulging stomach in the midst of poverty and hunger. African preachers have lots of natural occasions for exercise, as those in rural areas walk long distances from one preaching point to the other. Even if they manage to catch a bus or a commuter, the roads are adequately rough that the bumps and the zigzagging are enough to satisfy one’s needs for exercise. I am not extolling these bad conditions, but there is a Shona proverb that says, “Kushata kwezvimwe kunaka kwezvimwe,”
which translates, “When other things are bad the other side of that bad situation is good.”

Fourth, for those who have spouses and families it is imperative that peace and order exist among the members of the household. The worst thing a preacher can do is to live a disjointed family life while trying to build the family of God from the pulpit. Preachers assume that their spouses will somehow know what it takes to be in ministry. But preachers need to open up to their families about how they should live as a family. If they see that you welcome their contributions, family members may even make valuable suggestions.

Fifth, I return to the idea of being set apart that has been referred to earlier in this book. I talked about the analogy of what happens when one is taken by a mermaid. The African preacher should always go into the pulpit filled with this mysterious sense of having been away in the pool with a mermaid. The idea of being set apart, being scheduled for a sacred purpose, is engraved in African culture. There were occasions when some activities were suspended so that people would be successful in a given task. In times of hunting some words and behaviours were forbidden for those who remained at home for the success of the hunt and the well-being of the hunters. Abstaining from eating and from other activities is not new for Africans. Whatever enhances one’s focus in preparing and delivering a sermon should be relentlessly pursued.

Sixth, and finally, the preacher should develop a habit of writing down distinct observations or insights that come as spotlights of inspiration in the day. The preacher’s whole being must be homiletically magnetic to attract and be attracted to material that might generate ideas for building and delivering sermons. Relying on memory alone means that many of these insights are soon forgotten.

The portrait of the preacher is an open-ended expectation that every preacher will fill in his or her own peculiar way. We should always remember that the ultimate portrait against which all others must be reflected is that of Jesus Christ himself.
Chapter 6

Analysis of Six Preached Sermons

To this point we have discussed the existing environment for preaching in Africa. We have attempted to urge African preachers to adopt certain understandings and approaches in communicating the gospel. Preceding chapters have discussed images of the preacher, the hoped-for message, demands put on the preacher in preparing to preach, and how the gospel is preached. Now we turn our attention to how we assess the extent to which preachers in African pulpits are using proverbs, idioms, storytelling, song, imagination, and other skills in their preaching.

The aim of this chapter is to answer the above question in a most modest manner. Modest in the sense that six sermons preached in one area in Zimbabwe are a far cry from representing the whole of preaching the gospel in Africa. My hope, however, is that analysis of these six sermons from Zimbabwe might open an invaluable window through which readers can see the tone and texture of preaching in the African context. For this analysis we will use issues that have already been raised in previous chapters. The rationale is that if preachers are employing some of the ideas suggested in this book in their preaching, then they need encouragement to keep on in the right direction through workshops and other forms of continuing education. However, if it is concluded that the analyzed sermons do not reveal use of the discussed views, then homiletical pedagogy should incorporate those concerns in seminaries.
Sermon Analysis

Sermon analysis is determined by what the analyst values most in the preaching event and what is of interest for his or her particular purposes. Whichever way one decides to go, sermon analysis is framed by specific questions that are designed to draw desired information from the sermon. In an attempt to streamline an open-ended approach to sermon analysis, German homileticians and scholars have developed a methodological framework within which such an exercise can be undertaken. Some basic ideas about the method come from the paper “Theses Concerning Sermon Analysis,” translated from the German by Birgit Taylor. These theses reflect what has come to be known as the Heidelberg method of sermon analysis that got its name from the university in Germany where the method was first popularized in 1986.

The methodology tells us that sermon analysis is necessary because the preacher is not the Word as was Jesus Christ. It is therefore evident that in preaching there is a world of difference between the intention of the pastor and the actual speech that forms the sermon. Language used in preaching is crucial and forms one of the central aspects of analysis. The sermon reflects many languages. There is the language of the Bible, the language of the preacher, and the language of the people. Behind sermon analysis in whatever context it is done is the hope that preaching as the proclamation of the gospel and as a learning/teaching process could be revitalized.

To date, the Heidelberg method is not yet accepted as the norm in sermon analysis although the approach has opened new horizons for homileticians. In his studies of Chewa sermons preached in Malawi, Wendland concluded that existing methods of analyzing sermons are good for the deductive approach still prevalent in the West. There is need for a method of analysis that could be useful for evaluating the participatory inductive preaching that characterizes sermon delivery by the Chewa and other Africans.

What appears to be normative in sermon analysis is that specific
questions must be raised about the sermon and that the door through which any preaching event could be entered is language. Which questions and which categories of language to focus on is the prerogative of the sermon analyst. My observation is that sermon analysis, like preaching itself, makes sense only when done contextually. Unfortunately, as already noted, because African preachers are not in the habit of writing full sermon manuscripts, a wealth of wisdom has been lost. In the West there is access to sermons by Barth, Tillich, Luther, and others, a privilege non-existent in most cases for the African continent. African analysis of sermons will therefore depend on learning from contemporary preachers by means of tape-recording and transcribing their sermons.

One of the major weaknesses of sermon analysis at present is that it is focuses on satisfying the intellectual curiosity of the analyst rather than searching for the affective impact the sermon had on the original hearers. Written sermons deposited in archives will never capture the congregations’ responses to them. Further sermon analysis does not reflect the feelings, the non-verbal expressions, and sounds that filled the place where the sermon was preached. Nevertheless, the practice of sermon analysis will go a long way in challenging both preachers and listeners to the preached word to be objective in understanding the process.

**Procedure**

In order to analyze preaching in my context it was necessary to tape-record sermons and transcribe them from Shona to English. I had some help in this. My colleague Professor Jean Lambert also was interested in tape-recording African sermons for use in her theological studies. After we tape-recorded the sermons together in churches, she transcribed as I dictated the English translation.

Of the six tape-recorded and transcribed sermons, three were preached in different United Methodist congregations, one in a Roman Catholic church, one in an Anglican church, and the other in a Baptist
church. We selected churches to visit based on their accessibility. All but one of the churches are urban congregations. Three of the preachers are lay people and the other three are ordained pastors or priests. This outcome of who preached was not by design. African pastors often rely on lay preachers to relieve them or to enable them to visit and preach at other congregations under their charge.

The advantages of tape-recording live sermons for analysis is that unlike the written sermon manuscript from the past, the analyst is able to be both the observer and participant in the worship service. One of the characteristics of preaching is that it is a ministry of presence. Both the presence of the preacher and the listener is crucial if a sermon is to exist. Preaching gives birth to a living entity, the sermon, which has a life of its own during and after delivery.

Methodology
In analyzing these sermons, we considered these questions based on aspects of preaching discussed in preceding chapters:
1. Concerning the image/portrait of the preacher: Does the preacher manifest in any way whom he/she envisions him/herself to be? Is the preacher’s self-image that of mutumwa, the herald, mudzidzisi or mufundisi, teacher, prophet, or any other?
2. Concerning the role of the Holy Spirit: Is there evidence in the sermon that the preacher referred to the Holy Spirit or intentionally invoked the power of the Holy Spirit?
3. Concerning theological content and matters of faith and conviction: How has the God language and human speech intersected to form the message? To what extent are the issues and assertions in the sermon of sound theology in the traditional heritage of the universal church?
4. Concerning sermon preparation—exegesis and hermeneutics: How has the preacher handled the biblical text and the general use of the Bible?
5. Concerning skills in preaching: Which skills has the preacher used in the proclamation of the message? How effective were the use of such skills?

6. Concerning the contextual and contemporaneous issues: How well has the preacher used traditional background and contemporary events in the language employed to enhance the content and meaning of the message?

**Sermon I: United Methodist Layperson**

**Setting.** *Text: John 10:1–3.* The sermon was preached 27 September 1998 by a lay preacher, Mr. Muchena, at Saint James United Methodist Church, Dangamvura, Mutare. Dangamvura is one of the high-density suburbs of Mutare comprised mainly of low-income housing. The sermon topic is “Giving our lives to the good shepherd, Jesus Christ.” The purpose of the sermon is to encourage listeners to stay in the fold and to not be led astray by the thief who is the devil.

**The Image/Portrait of the Preacher.** The preacher named how he perceived himself: “This morning I have found it proper to be here in this church. I am here serving in the kitchen of the Lord as a servant.”

By using the English word *kitchen*, the preacher painted a picture in the minds of the hearers—the preacher is one who serves food that the Lord has prepared. People came to church to be fed by the Word of God. The image of hearing a sermon as analogous to eating food is common among the Shona. One can hear statements such as “we have been fed well” or *taguta*, meaning we have been satisfied by what we have eaten. This image of the preacher as the servant is biblical as St. Paul tells us: “This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1). Mr. Muchena used this term not as a result of having been schooled in its theological ramifications and biblical context but out of his awareness of cultural wisdom. This cultural
wisdom informed him that one way to be humble before God and his people is to see himself as mushandi, a servant for the gospel.

**Role of the Holy Spirit.** Mention of the Holy Spirit came at the beginning and the conclusion of the sermon. The reference to the Holy Spirit at the beginning was made in the form of a song that Mr. Muchena started and the congregation joined in. Hymn 99 in the United Methodist Church Ngoma (Hymnbook) is “Mweya mutsvene, muri Mwari” meaning “The Holy Spirit you are God,” with the chorus “Ndizadzenyi, Ndizadzenyi,” that is, “Fill me, Fill me.”

On hearing such a song at the start of the sermon one may think that the theme is the Holy Spirit. Not really, for in African preaching the Holy Spirit is considered a reliable and constant companion from start to finish. Then at the end of the sermon, Muchena stated, “As we are about to close this service now, I am asking those who are filled with the Spirit to help us by praying.” By implication, people pray after hearing the sermon if they are filled by the Spirit.

Above all is the adopted motto of the congregation inscribed above the chancel: “Mwari Mweya, avo vanomunamata wanofanirakumunamata mumweya nemuchokwadi” (God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth) (John 4:24).

**Theological Content and Matters of Faith and Convictions.** Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd who safeguards people from falling prey to “Diabolus.” If people cry, kuchema, meaning weeping with or without tears loudly before God, he will hear their prayers and address their concerns. In Shona culture if an adult cries for something, that means the issue is serious and the specific request must be addressed. A figurative expression has developed where people talk about “kuchema chema,” meaning seriously and earnestly pleading for mercy and consideration by those in position of authority. A young Zimbabwean woman singer has composed a song, “Tachema chema,” that emphasizes this pleading with the powers that be.

There is strong belief in the efficiency of prayer in this sermon. Prayer
can even stabilize the depreciating dollar. Because God himself says, “If my people turn to me I will hear their prayers and heal their land.” Yes, God said, “If they come and repent, confess their sins, indeed I’ll heal their land.” The preacher went on to be more specific and urged, “Let us pray for our dollar.” Muchena’s idea and faith that prayer could make the dollar to appreciate against hard currencies comes from the biblical affirmations about prayer and also from the belief that Americans trust God in everything to the point of inscribing on their money, “In God we trust.” The conviction here is that the American economy is strong and prosperous not only as a result of economic planning, acumen, and other factors, but because the American people rely on God in all things. The other conviction is that Zimbabwe is going through hard economic times because of the sins of its people. This is implied by the preacher’s reference to the biblical text, “If my people turn to me I will hear their prayers and heal their land.”

The God language is clearly stated in that the Good Shepherd takes care of all people, and through prayer God responds to people’s requests. Human speech reflected the existing conditions of economic pressures and sins of the people. This is basic, sound theology insofar as God is omnipotent and able to deal with any situation confronting humanity. Faith is all-embracing—there is no aspect of human experience outside the purview of faith in God.

**Sermon Preparation—Exegesis and Hermeneutics.** Sermon preparation is not confined to exegesis and hermeneutics, but for the purpose of this exercise that is the aspect of preparation we shall make reference to. The scripture was used merely as a launching pad for the sermon. There was no attempt to explain the text in any way. Mention of the text was merely to illustrate and emphasize a point. There are, though, a number of specific and implied references to biblical texts. When Muchena received a letter of invitation from the pastor to preach he entered into prayer so that God could cleanse him. “Make me a clean person,” he prayed. This is a reference to the cleansing of Isaiah (Isa.
The preacher also said, “And when the letter came, I said, I am here.” Again this is similar to “Here am I! Send me” (Isa. 6:8b). Twice in the sermon the preacher said, “Because God himself says, ’If my people turn to me I will hear their prayers and heal their land.’ Yes, God said, ’If they come and repent, confess their sins, indeed I’ll heal their land.’” Of course this text is from: “If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14).

More often than not, African preachers make literal use of the Bible and pick favourable texts to authenticate the message. This approach should be understood in the context of what has already been stated earlier that the Bible is the Word of God. The African preacher doesn’t hesitate to use the text because it might be taken out of context. For him/her the Bible and the message contained in it are one.

After hearing a sermon on the same text by Bishop Lawrence McCleskey at the United Methodist Women Revival held at Nyakatsapa, Zimbabwe, in 1999, I saw the wide difference between a sermon preached on an exegeted text and one based on literal translation of the same. The Bishop led the congregation to see the meaning of shepherd in ancient Israel. He added his own experiences in the Holy Land where he saw a demonstration of how shepherds guarded the entrance to the sheep’s pens throughout the night. As the Bishop demonstrated this, the image of the shepherd took on a new lively meaning for the congregation. This element of exegesis and hermeneutics that searches for the hidden meanings of the text for the purpose of communicating the gospel is a rare treat for African congregations.

Concerning Skills in Preaching. Muchena’s introduction focused more on gaining the people’s confidence. He started by telling the congregation not about what he was going to preach, but who he was—the servant serving in God’s kitchen. He went on to tell them about how he was happy and humbled to be in the house of the Lord. The
people were called upon to join him in prayer but first he started to sing a hymn, which was followed by prayer for opening to the Word. The preacher repeated the text, “Even if you build your houses if I am not in the midst of it, you are working in vain.” He then went on to narrate how he received a letter of invitation from the pastor for him to come and preach. “They wrote the letter knowing I stay far away, so they had to write a letter to invite me,” he said. “When I received the letter I thought the pastor would not be here, and now I am surprised to see that he is here. Well, it is nice that I am here. This is a fulfillment of a prophecy. It was prophesized that I should be here to preach.” The preacher viewed every step in the context of faith. He believed that he was invited according to God’s will.

Although he used a hymn as part of the sermon, it was not related to the theme of Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd but to the Holy Spirit instead. Muchena used concrete language and at times he demonstrated what he meant. The congregation was drawn in by occasional personal references and by some humour. The preacher did not use notes, but could improve in arranging the logical progression of thought.

**Concerning Contextual and Contemporaneous Issues.** From the opening remarks the preacher referred to contemporary issues of the people of Dangamvura and Zimbabwe at large. For example, he said, “When I look around in these times when people are falling like flies because of deaths while I am still alive, whilst I have not fallen, I am happy to stand here and say God be praised. “In a nation hit hard by AIDS-related deaths, with newspaper reports that AIDS is claiming over two thousand lives per week in Zimbabwe, it is a contextual and contemporaneous way of beginning the sermon.

Further, the preacher raised the issue of economic hardship in the country, evidenced by the sudden depreciation of the dollar. One more contemporary issue in the sermon is about men who have wives yet go live with concubines in wooden shacks in the townships. All sorts of crime and illegal dealings take place in those shacks. There was no
attempt to relate the economic hardship and other socioeconomic factors to the sins of the people, although implied linkages were in the sermon. The preacher stated, “In times when things are so difficult, in times when people are living in poverty, there are people performing miracles even in this poverty. There are people performing miracles.” The people performing miracles are those with faith in God who are empowered to overcome those difficulties almost miraculously in the face of adversity.

Sermon II: United Methodist Ordained Elder and Theology Student

Setting. Text: Luke 1:26–38. The second sermon was preached 22 November 1998 at Hilltop United Methodist Church, Sakubva, Mutare. Sakubva is another high-density suburb of Mutare. The preacher, Rev. Samson Mungure, was a fourth-year theology student at Africa University who was already an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church. Mungure has served as pastor in numerous churches and as an assistant to the Bishop. At the time, he was attached to Hilltop Church for his field education and was giving his farewell sermon to the congregation on that Sunday. His topic was “The Clan of Christ.” He called upon the congregation to join the holy, sacred, and everlasting clan of Christ through repentance.

The Image of the Preacher. There is the pastor-teacher mufudzi-mufundisi image of the preacher. Mungure explained and taught the meaning and characteristics of the three clans: the clan of Adam, of Abraham, and of Jesus Christ. The people were then shepherded by being reminded that those in the clan of Christ “love their wives, . . . take care of their children, . . . work hard and are victorious.”

Role of the Holy Spirit. Those of the second clan, headed by Abraham, were people of great faith, filled with the Holy Spirit. Members of this clan, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were thrown into the
fire, but nothing happened to them because they stayed in the power of prayer. The preacher said that when you are staying in the power of the Holy Spirit, and God says, “I want to demonstrate the power,” if you pray for the sick, the person gets healed. When people pray “with the power of the Holy Spirit, knowing that you are talking to a Great Person,” everything become possible. Those of the clan of Jesus Christ “are baptized in the power of the Holy Spirit, and they receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and then begin to live the life of a Christian.”

Thus the power of the Holy Spirit is experienced through prayer and the believer receives it through baptism. The Holy Spirit empowers and protects the believer from danger.

**Concerning Theological Content and Matters of Faith and Conviction.** In this sermon, Jesus Christ is the clan leader. Ironically, no founder of the clan can escape from being the ancestor of the same. Although the preacher did not specifically say it, the development of the analogy of the clan presupposes that Jesus Christ is an ancestor of the third and last clan in God for the salvation of humankind. By implication, the preacher affirmed everlasting life in a way understandable to Africans. About ancestors and the Christian faith, Jean-Marc Éla asserted that most Africans would not say that “a person has died, but rather that one has departed, one has left us, one is no longer, one has passed on.”

Other theological themes raised in the sermon were the power of prayer and the Holy Spirit. Faith is concomitant with a life lived in prayer through the Holy Spirit. Further in the development of the sermon was an eschatological thrust. “This congregation of Hilltop, the congregation of Christ, is now victorious. They are now singing, now expressing happiness, even the grandmothers. They will now be in heaven singing hallelujah,” the preacher said. Christians are people of the eschatology who live in between the times. They are here, but on the other hand, they will taste victory in the hereafter.

**Concerning Sermon Preparation—Exegesis Hermeneutics.** No attempt was made to exegete the biblical text selected for the
sermon. The preacher did interweave in his remarks the clan theme. We know that Adam is the generic personification of all humanity, but the preacher ignored all that in order to develop the idea of the clan. The approach used the scripture to undergird the theme. The text was used mainly as an entry point to the whole Bible. Mungure saw the biblical story as a unified whole with clearly preconceived progression in the three clans. Indeed, the scripture read, Luke 1:26–38, could usually be developed in the confines of exegesis and hermeneutics as our preacher did. Nevertheless for the African preacher there is a unique freedom of expression in the use of the Bible in the pulpit. Whatever corrections could be made, one should do it in a way that does not discourage the view firmly held by most African preachers that the whole Bible is the inspired and living Word of God whose texts can be meaningfully used in any sermon.

**Concerning Skills in Preaching.** His approach was relational and conversational. Mungure drew the congregation into the sermon slowly but surely. The introduction started on a courteous note by thanking the congregation for all the time they had together. The preacher did not use notes in the pulpit apart from his brief checks of the outline. His delivery was lively, involving the whole body. He jumped in excitement in the pulpit. Throughout the sermon the language was concrete. Those who were thrown into the fire were seen *wachivhakacha* visiting, as a sign that they were relaxed and there was nothing to fear. He even imitated the way of *kuvhakacha* visiting, thereby creating clear pictures in the minds of the listeners.

The preacher varied his voice, although some shouting could be modified. Imagination saturated the sermon in a way that made it lively. The key method of delivery hinged on the story. Each of the three clans formed a segment of the whole story. To make the sermon more specific the preacher called the names of some members of the congregation. For example, “God does not bother about our looks or age even if you are a grandmother like Mrs. Madhlazi.” Mrs. Madhlazi is an elderly woman.
who is a staunch member of the congregation. The use of song came at that time but with appropriate meaning to the theme. The hymn was "Ndofamba, Ndofamba, Ndosuva Kudenga." Later stanzas mention "madzinja ariyo" clans are there. The song basically says, I am on a journey yearning for heaven but only the strong and the courageous will get there where clans are represented. The use of the hymn in the context affirms the existence of clans in the life hereafter.

**Concerning the Contextual and Contemporaneous.** It is obvious that Mungure’s sermon was developed in the traditional contextual milieu. The theme of the clan is something the Shona people could understand and identify with appropriately. The preacher went on to mention some of the clans such as Mukanya (monkey) totem and many more. Those of the clan of Jesus Christ share sadza. Sadza is the staple food in Zimbabwe made of corn meal or maize meal in the form of thick porridge. Sharing sadza is a sign of love and concern for the well-being of the other person. The preacher created a strong and positive cultural image for the hearers of the gospel.

Another cultural motif Mungure raised was that a baby boy is considered more of an asset to a family than a girl. The preacher stated, “When a boy is born, you should know that you have started a new clan.” By so saying the preacher unwittingly reinforced the cultural tradition and heavily subscribed to the belief that boys are more valuable than girls, especially in continuing that family name and heritage. He upheld a way of perception that the Christian church must discourage. I am aware of a number of families in our churches that have only girls. Such statements by the preacher used exclusive language that can alienate worshippers. It is always helpful to give some contextual background and state the Christian position. Further, the preacher jokingly said that women of the older generation would thank their husbands mentioning their totems but this was no longer the case with “the wives we are marrying these days.” There was laughter but women sensitive to gender-related issues could view such comments with disdain. Again this is a cultural trait
in Zimbabwe and Africa as a whole where relations between men and women are still based on male domination. With the issues raised in this sermon affecting women and my previous observations regarding the way women are projected in sermons I could conclude that women are often projected in a negative light in congregations.

**Sermon III: Roman Catholic Priest**

**Setting.** *Texts: Revelation 7:2–4, 9–14, 1 John 3:1–3, Matthew 5:1–12.*

The third sermon was preached on 1 November 1998 by Father Mabvudzi of the Holy Trinity Cathedral, a Roman Catholic Church in Mutare. The Roman Catholic Church follows the lectionary and on this day it was All Saints Sunday. The sermon topic was “Follow Jesus Christ the Great Ancestor Who Enables People to Enter Heaven.” The purpose was to show people that the only way to be with God in heaven is through Jesus Christ.

**Concerning the Image of the Preacher.** Father Mabvudzi came across in the pulpit as a teacher. The sermon was basically didactive and prescriptive in tone. In a well-planned development of the sermon the preacher showed how ineffective African traditional rituals were as a means of reconciling estranged people to God. He was, however, aware that the need to have Jesus Christ to show us the way applies to all races. “Those in America, in Europe, in China, in Japan, in India, in Africa, all races at their death, they went to the underworld,” he asserted.

**Concerning the Role of the Holy Spirit.** The preacher made no specific mention of the Holy Spirit and there was no need to do so. Here is an example where the preacher did not refer to the Holy Spirit in a generalized manner. Of course, not mentioning the Holy Spirit does not mean that the power is missing in the sermon. The preacher had a specific theme to develop and he did just that.

**Concerning Theological Content and Matters of Faith and Convictions.** What is lacking most in African pulpits as I have observed
is doctrinal preaching. Father Mbvudzi, though not saying it in specific terms, tackled the doctrine of atonement. Jesus Christ reconciles humans to God and humans to their ancestors. But the ancestral connections will be forged in new relationships.

“In heaven, there is no Washawasha, no Korekore, no Biya, no Manyika, no Karanga. In heaven there are the holy ones of God,” Father Mbvudzi said. These African ancestors are now counted among the saints because Jesus went to preach to the souls in the underworld. This idea of giving the ancestors a chance to accept the kingdom of God strikes a happy chord for Africans. The sense of community lives on because the ancestors—who died before Christ—are also brought into the kingdom of God! The only way for us to be with these saints is to follow Jesus Christ who defeated the devil at Calvary.

Father Mabvudzi went on to lift up the theme of everlasting life, saying everyone should know that “here on earth we are just passing through. . . We don’t have a home here, on earth. Our home is in heaven. And that which no eye has seen is everlasting life.” Therefore as a matter of faith and conviction people were taught that belief in Jesus Christ is the only sure way to go to heaven and be reconciled with God. God’s language was well blended with the human condition and experience in a meaningful way.

**Concerning Sermon Preparation—Exegesis and Hermeneutics.** The Bible was used mostly as a supportive tool. Fragments of the biblical text were cited to support or exemplify points. For example, “We hear in Revelation that he [Satan] was bound for a thousand years.” Or, “That is what Saint Paul said. When he said, in heaven there are things that cannot be described with words. That which has not been seen by anyone.” For the most part the preacher exegeted and critiqued the African culture, especially traditional religion, rather than the biblical text.

**Concerning Skills in Preaching.** The language of preaching was concrete and personalized. The battle between Jesus Christ and Satan involved some heaving *kugomera*, which included acting out by the preacher. God could use Shona idioms, thus God said, “I just want you
to see this on your own Kuzvionera pamhuno sefodya,” that is seeing it at your nose like snuff. Reference to well-known names of Shona tribes such as Chaitezvi, Dzapasi, and the ancestor of the Chishawasha people helped to form vivid images in the minds of the listeners. Father Mabvudzi was inclusive in his approach. Ancestors did not include only the Shona but also the Ndebele. Although his delivery was not tied to the manuscript, he had extensive notes in the pulpit. This was confirmed indirectly by the fact that Father Mabvudzi was the only one who produced an original manuscript upon request.

Concerning the Contextual and Contemporaneous Issues. By making reference to the ancestors, Father Mabvudzi touched the nerve center of the African culture. To be sure, the preacher emphasized the point that ancestors were also at the mercy of Jesus Christ for salvation. Bear in mind though that what he dismissed is the belief in an ancestral religion that saves and not the existence of ancestors themselves. “Even us, we don’t have relationship with our ancestral spirits who are the holy ones of God if we have no relationship with Christ,” he said.

The issue of kurova guva, which Mabvudzi raised, is still central in the belief system and practice of some families in Zimbabwe, sometimes involving converted Christians. This kurova guva is a ritual of cleansing intended to bring back home the spirit of the deceased about a year after death. A goat or an ox is slaughtered in the belief that the blood of the sacrificial animal will affect some cleansing. The use of an idiom—kuzvionera pamhuno sefodya—further contextualized the language of preaching. Specific names were called within the congregation, such as Chaitezvi, Karimubute and Mungu, with the effect of making the sermon more specific to the congregation. His inclusive language point was that Africans are at par with other races because the ancestors of Americans, Chinese, Russians, and Japanese were also in need of Jesus Christ.

In matters of contextualization of worship in general, I have a hunch that the Roman Catholics in Zimbabwe are far ahead of others. More follow-up on this hunch revealed in the preaching event is needed.
Sermon IV: Anglican Layperson


The fourth sermon was preached on 29 November 1998 at the Holy Name Anglican Church, Sakubva, Mutare. The preacher, Mr. Elisha Farirai, is a layman. Like the Roman Catholics, the Anglicans also follow the lectionary. In this sermon the preacher stated the theme: “To be prepared for the coming of the Lord.” This is an appropriate theme for the Advent season. The purpose of the sermon was to alert the people to be always prepared because the Son of Man will come at anytime, even when we are not ready.

Concerning the Image of the Preacher. Even though a layman, Farirai projected himself as a pastor. The message was meant to shepherd the flock so that they stay in the fold. “Christians, we must do things which are good in our lives,” he cautioned.

Concerning the Role of the Holy Spirit. The preacher made specific reference to the Holy Spirit. “When the Holy Spirit came,” he said, “the disciples were together, with one mind. Can the Holy Spirit come here in Holy Name?” Later he asked, “Do we have one heart, one mind, that the Holy Spirit can say I can come because I have seen Holy Name full of worshipping spirit?” It was not the role of the Holy Spirit that concerned the preacher but the condition under which the presence of the Spirit could be experienced. There is need for the people to have one heart—a Christian euphemism for faithfulness and singleness of mind.

Concerning Theological Content and Method of Faith and Convictions. Jesus Christ is understood to be so close to the people that there is two-way direct communication between him and the people. Jesus says, “I am coming now. I am coming to you.” And the people should be ready to respond, “You can take me now, I am prepared.” To the African believer in the Christian faith, Jesus Christ is closer than God. As already noted in Shona traditional religion God is approached through intermediaries. But God is so gracious that he wants to save every
person. “God will save the person whom he created.” The communal sense among Africans is reflected here. Rather than save individuals according to the response he or she makes to the proclaimed gospel, God will save everyone.

The power of prayer came up in this sermon in a similar context as raised by Rev. Mungure’s sermon at Hilltop United Methodist Church. Like Mungure, Mr. Farirai referred to the story of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel. Daniel, under the power of prayer and God’s protection, walked around in the den of lions. Remember in Mungure’s sermon, Abednego and others were able to *kuvhakacha*, to visit in the midst of galloping flames of fire. Here Farirai has Daniel walking around in the den of lions. “But when they decided to throw him [Daniel] into the den of lions, they saw him just walking up and down in there,” he said.

He also mentioned the Holy Spirit. The presence of Jesus Christ in everyday life, the power of prayer, and the power of the Holy Spirit are some of the pillars of belief and faith among the African people. What is meant by preparing for the coming of Jesus Christ? Even though this was Advent season, the meaning of preparedness here is referring to the coming of Jesus Christ at one’s death. We die because Jesus Christ comes to take us. Thus the response, “You can take me now, I am prepared.” The joy and celebration in anticipating Christmas is not the intended goal for this sermon. It is eschatological joy and hence the listeners are called upon to make penultimate preparations.

**Concerning Sermon Preparation—Exegesis and Hermeneutics.** There was no attempt to focus on texts for the purpose of having an in-depth understanding. It is the meaning of the Christmas season and Advent and not the text that determined the theme and content of the sermon. Biblical texts are either specified or alluded to throughout the sermon. For we are now “living in a time which demands that people worship in spirit and in truth.” In another instance, the reference was to the ten wise and foolish virgins waiting for the Lord.
**Concerning Skills in Preaching.** The preacher began by establishing rapport with the congregation: “The first thing I would like to say is good morning to the congregation. Are we not happy with the rain which has fallen? "The people responded with joy since the country had been experiencing sporadic rainfall. He continued by expressing trust in the people: “I am happy because I am going to talk to people who are always prepared for the coming of somebody.”

The preacher also mentioned specific names in the congregation in this sermon. He wondered what people were going to say if they saw a gentleman like Mbutsa coming out of the shack. Or in another question, “Mr. Chadzingwa, you want someone to prophesy? Does that mean you yourself don’t know what you are doing?” The congregation laughed at the humorous statement. Also, "Grandmother Chimwaza, are you under pressure in life? “Of course the questions were not answered. The approach served to make the sermon concrete and also to maintain a sense of dialogue with the congregation.

The introduction focused on the theme of being prepared. Mr. Farirai gave examples of how wives prepare for the coming of their husbands or sons from towns to the rural areas. Or it could be preparing for a visitor. In any case we do our best to ensure that the house is clean and that delicious food is made ready. Then after the long introduction the listeners were told, “Now I am talking about the coming of a very important person, who is Christ.”Using speech that was familiar to the people, there was talk about *zvakapresa*, meaning that one is under economic hardships. The preacher made constant reference to that phrase. "If there is anything putting you under pressure, go back to your Lord and say, "Why am I under pressure? “His approach of communicating the message was conversational but with a loud, forceful voice befitting preaching. There was use of the idiom “say phoo!” In Shona the full statement is *Phuu kowo kowo*, meaning that the spitting symbolizes the cleansing and total shift from that specific bad habit. So the act of spitting is like taking an oath, though it is not a voluntary act but is
usually done under force of an authoritative person. This congregation was being asked through the idiom to get all sins out of them.

There was mixture of Shona and English throughout the sermon. Sometimes it was a word or a phrase. Maybe Mr. Farirai’s background as a teacher had something to do with this approach. It could also be that the presence of my colleague Professor Lambert influenced him. One could not tell whether this use of English and Shona was experienced only in this sermon or this is his usual pattern.

Concerning the Contextual and Contemporaneous Issues. The sermon was contemporaneous in content. Farirai raised the issue of prostitution and other nefarious activities that take place in the shacks, the wooden shelters dotted all over in Sakubva township. “Now for us men, we are going to be taken [that is to die] when we are coming out of a board [shack] where a gentleman is not supposed to come from,” he said. As stated earlier in examining the Saint James sermon by Mr. Muchena, preachers perceive adultery as a serious problem facing the church.

There are self-seeking prophets who claim to have solutions to all suffering and any other human problem. Further, the African church has not yet fully defined for itself the roles and place of the traditional healer, the n’anga, in the context of the Christian faith. Mr. Farirai is aware of the problem and he stated, "But many people say instead if I don’t go to a n’anga or to a prophet nothing will be successful . . . It is embarrassing to hear elderly persons saying they are going to a prophet. “The churches teach that consulting an African traditional doctor n’anga or the emerging self-proclaimed prophets is a sign of lack of faith in an omnipotent God capable of resolving all people’s problems.

Sermon V: Baptist Layperson

Setting. Text: John 12:20–36. A layman, Mr. Robert Maziti, preached the fifth sermon at the Baptist church along Plantation Drive in Morningside
on 11 October 1998. The topic of the sermon was “Coming to Jesus Christ.” Maziti said that he wanted “to talk about the thoughts of his death,” but that is a vague idea. His purpose for the sermon was evangelism for “the death of Jesus will bring other believers.” He went on, “You should question yourself this week—who else have I called also to become a believer?”

**Concerning the Image of the Preacher.** The preacher was the herald, *mutumwa*, with the message of evangelism. He was an evangelist urging others to bring more people to Jesus Christ.

**Concerning the Role of the Holy Spirit.** One would expect that a sermon in a Baptist church would say something about the Holy Spirit. This was not the case and as we have said, mention of the Holy Spirit is not a must for every sermon.

**Concerning Theological Content and Matters of Faith and Convictions.** The process of becoming Christian is based on the doctrine of atonement. “We become Christians through the blood of Jesus Christ. The blood of Jesus Christ makes us Christians,” Maziti said. Through the death of Jesus Christ salvation is extended beyond the Jewish people to include Gentiles. In addition to what the death of Jesus Christ does, the preacher urged people to love each other, have faith, give of themselves. “We should not allow the world to force us into its mold,” he said. The main thrust of the sermon was salvation for all through the death of Jesus Christ. It was only toward the end of the sermon that Maziti introduced other themes, such as love and faith, which he did not develop fully.

**Concerning Sermon Preparation—Exegesis and Hermeneutics.** The preacher approached the text imaginatively by filling in the gaps himself. For example, he said, “It looks like Phillip was the receptionist.” Because the people who wanted to see Jesus were Greeks not Jews, that troubled Phillip who remembered that Jesus Christ had instructed the disciples to go to the Jews only. At one point Maziti admitted, “I have not seen that in the text.” In any case his general understanding of the text was in the
right direction. Another positive thing he did was to keep to the text and attempt to explain it. A number of verses were read by members of the congregation during the sermon.

**Concerning Skills in Preaching.** The sermon was conversational and delivered in a normal voice. The preacher did not raise his voice at any point in the sermon. There was an attempt to create images in the minds of the people at a modest level. Philip as a receptionist could evoke some specific perception. Maziti involved the congregation by requesting individuals read specific selected texts during the sermon. The preacher would call out a verse and ask, “What do you see there?” Then a member of the congregation would read the particular verse. Much of the presentation was the articulation of ideas with little focus on how to make them concrete. On a few occasions the preacher used a mixture of English and Shona.

**Concerning the Contextual and Contemporaneous Issues.** There was no evidence of the preacher trying to speak to the contextual and contemporary situation of the hearer. Much of the sermon kept the listener within the world of the text with nothing or little said about how that text related to the hearer’s context. A specific point where the preacher addressed the hearer is when he said, “The world in which we are living is full of evil. Full stop!” He then urged people to “do good because others cannot be Christians if we ourselves are dirty.”

**Sermon VI: United Methodist Pastor**

**Setting.** Luke Chapter 8:26-39. This sixth sermon was preached by Pastor Paul Nyandoro on 13 December 1998 at Pafiwa United Methodist Church. Pafiwa is a small rural congregation in Mutasa area along the Mutare-Nyanga highway. The preacher stated the topic of the sermon as “There is power in Jesus Christ.” His purpose was for the people to be transformed by that power in Jesus Christ.

**Concerning the Image of the Preacher.** The preacher was the
herald and storyteller of the power in Jesus Christ. Here we have the preacher as a narrator, a witness of the good tidings centering on the power of Jesus Christ. There was also the clement of the preacher as teacher.

**Concerning the Role of the Holy Spirit.** Nyandoro referred to the Holy Spirit in the sermon when he told of Jesus Christ reading the scripture in the Temple at Nazareth: “When He opened the Bible he read the story: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, to enable me to cure those who have leprosy.” The words were not those of the text word for word but served as a general reference to what Isaiah says. The power to heal could be possible only if people have this power in Jesus Christ referred to in this text—the Spirit of the Lord. At the end of the sermon there were fervent spontaneous prayers and also speaking in tongues. Such experiences are associated with the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is not far-fetched to conclude that the congregation related the theme of the sermon to the Spirit of the Lord as the power in Jesus Christ. To have his power is to be endowed with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables people to cure illnesses.

**Concerning Theological Content and Matters of Faith and Convictions.** Nyandoro’s theological focus is that there is power in Jesus Christ. It is power to heal, power to restore life. This power was in Jesus Christ right from the temptation in the wilderness to the stories of his miraculous healings, centering on the man with a legion of demons.

**Concerning Sermon Preparation—Exegesis and Hermeneutics.** The preacher indulged in the freedom of picking stories from the birth of Jesus Christ to the flight to Egypt, through the temptations to healing miracles. There is no evidence that he tried to explain a given text or texts. So the sermon was a broad narrative in the literal sense about any part or episode in the life of Jesus Christ. A series of biblical texts were raised with no clear connection. But since anything Jesus Christ did signified the presence of this “power,” that was adequate for the preacher.
Concerning Skills in Preaching. Nyandoro is a storyteller and employed that skill well. He was conscious of this storytelling: "Now we come back to the story we have read . . . "At another point he stated, "This is the story I want to talk about this morning." These stories were both biblical and from Nyandoro’s contemporary experience and they made up the greater part of the content of his sermon. One of the stories, about a girl who was insane, went on so long that I wondered if the congregation was able to follow all the details.

There was much use of song in the sermon. Some songs were led by the preacher and others by some members of the congregation. In addition, Nyandoro made use of at least one proverb, "Gavi rinobva kumafuriro," meaning in its literal sense that "bark fibre comes from where one takes the flock for grazing." This means that what one does in life will lead to consequences, or simply put, what you do will follow you in life. For the sermon this means that the mad person in the graveyard was experiencing the consequences of a past lifestyle.

Calling names of members in the congregation was also done here as well: "When you see a person staying away from home every day, day after day . . . For example, let us take brother Philip. You see your father, Mr. Njopera, staying away from home, and you go to bring him back home." The preacher attempted to create some concrete images. He imagined that when the people heard that their neighbour was staying in the graveyard they did not care: "Those who danced to the traditional music went to dance their shangara . . .” Shangara is a name of one of the traditional dances in Zimbabwe.

The preacher made use of what people experienced in their daily lives to relate to ideas in the sermon. At some point in the sermon he referred to Mr. Manyeruke, a gospel singer in Zimbabwe who composed and sings the song, “I am legion, because we are many." Most likely many people had heard Manyeruke sing this song and were able to follow the sermon meaningfully.

Concerning the Contextual and Contemporaneous Issues.
As indicated in the skills in preaching, the preacher attempted to use contextual language. However, his theme about the need to have power in Jesus Christ could be applicable to anytime. There was no clear connection in the sermon to why the congregation needs this power at this time in point. People who claim to be religious prophets able to heal all sorts of ailments are mushrooming in Zimbabwe and people flock to them for help in their physical and spiritual need. Our preacher raised this contemporary issue in the sermon: “You people, you know that even these days, even in this country, if we hear a word that there is a great prophet, if we hear of this prophet who can heal various types of diseases, who can remove some items in people’s bodies, the fame of that prophet will spread all over.” You remember that the Anglican Church preacher, Mr. Farirai, raised the same issue about people going to these prophets. The problem is that the preachers did not explain adequately why Christians should not consult these prophetic healers. What crisis in faith would be created by getting help from these prophets? Nevertheless the church views this contemporary trend in the Zimbabwe society as a problem to be addressed.

**Preaching of Independent Churches and Charismatic Movements**

I feel obliged to say a word about how preaching is experienced in other denominations apart from the mainline churches dealt with here. Sermons were tape-recorded from the ZAOGA Church, Greenside, Mutare, and Victory Tabernacle, also in Mutare. All these churches fall under the Pentecostal and charismatic umbrella. Unfortunately these tapes were hard to follow because of mechanical problems. Some broad generalizations can still be made from the observations I made and still remember. At the ZAOGA church, the leader who was supposed to preach did not come so a preacher was picked on the spur of the moment from among the elders. Evidently there was no preparation for the sermon. In any case there was nothing unusual about this
because preparation in the sense of making notes and searching in commentaries is not emphasized in the Pentecostal churches. It is the Holy Spirit who does the preaching. Preaching follows a general sweep of biblical texts to bolster the theme of the sermon. The preacher holds the Bible and opens it for the appropriate key text and preaches. Other verses are referred to along the way. This was my experience at Victory Tabernacle.

Concerning African independent churches in the Apostolic fold, preaching is open to any member who feels inspired. I videotaped the worship service for the Ruponeso rweVapostori (Salvation of the Apostles) who meet by the roadside on the way to Chikanga township in Mutare. A biblical text was pre-selected and all preached on it with each preacher free to add other verses. The preacher holds a staff that is sign of authority and source of inspiration for preaching. Men and women were all given the opportunity to preach. I was also asked to share in the preaching and I gladly did! The forms of preparing to preach as taught and practised in homiletics are of no concern to them; what matters is the presence of the Holy Spirit as the preacher. Unlike in the mainline denominations where the Holy Spirit is referred to along the way in sermons, for Pentecostals and especially African independents, preaching is done by the Holy Spirit.

While I regard as irresponsible any suggestion that sermon preparation is irrelevant and that preachers should only wait for the Holy Spirit to do the job, I am, however, inclined to reflect on the practice of these churches. When you examine the preaching of Peter and John and other early Apostles, it is clear that they preached their personal lived encounters with Jesus Christ. The more preachers are removed from personal experiences with Jesus Christ, the more they must rely on techniques in imparting the gospel. Even the question of what to preach becomes urgent and daunting when preachers have not personally witnessed what Jesus Christ has done for them. I am not suggesting that because those in the Pentecostal movements and
independent churches downplay detailed sermon preparation they all in turn have personal experiences with Jesus Christ to preach about. Regardless of this disclaimer the preaching practices in these churches can serve as a reminder to the mainline denominations to maintain clear boundary lines between the gimmicky and the authentic approaches in preaching. Whether proverbs are used, stories are told, songs are sung in the delivery of sermons, the question still remains, which stories are we telling and singing?

Assessment of the Six Sermons
Positive Characteristics. First, these sermons have lifted the name of Jesus Christ. Preachers might not have given adequate attention to develop their Christology, but at least they know that it is the risen Christ who is preached.

Second, three of the six preachers focused the congregation’s attention on the power of prayer. There can be no effective hearing of the gospel among people who disregard the significance of prayer. Through the power of prayer God can even stabilize the Zimbabwe dollar. This sounds like childish faith but the crux of the matter is that God is real and alive for these African preachers and there are no limits to what God can do. About contemporary preaching in the Netherlands, F. G. Immick noted it is no longer easy to find the appropriate way of naming God because of widespread secularization of that society. This is not yet the problem of the African church.

Third, the Bible is still held as the inerrant inspired Word of God among the African people. Ross observed that there is “massive importance of the Bible for mainstream churches in Africa.” Preaching will lose its purpose, meaning, and impact if the preacher and the hearers of the gospel approach the Bible in doubt. Of course this assertion does not rule out the need for exegesis and hermeneutics.

Fourth, the language of preaching in these sermons was concrete. Preachers were able to create images in the minds of the hearers rather
than rely on the abstract. It is no wonder that most of them did not find the need to rely on illustrations to clarify their points.

Fifth, the contextual and contemporaneous motif was highlighted in each of the six sermons. For preaching to be effective it must focus on the human condition—all that the preacher has “heard, seen, read, felt and experienced about that condition.” These preachers attempted to relate to shared experiences of the listeners.

Sixth, most of the preachers talked about what are evident moral issues facing the church in Zimbabwe or in Africa as a whole. Three of the preachers touched on immoral and adulterous practices. In a survey of what temptations the church in Malawi preaches about, Ross found that seventy-nine percent named adultery. Similarly, in three of these sermons there was mention of husbands having illicit relationships with concubines living in the wooden shacks. They urged spouses to be faithful to each other.

Seventh, delivery of sermons was forthright and convincing without the use of notes. The view that many African preachers do not write down their sermons because they are either illiterate or have too many pastoral responsibilities is an inadequate explanation. A much more convincing assessment is that many African preachers don’t write down their sermons because to do so would mean interrupting the flow of communication between the preacher and the people. Further, many African preachers avoid the use of notes in the pulpit because oral communication is still highly prized in Africa today. What is not clear is whether not using notes in the pulpit is a conscious decision by African preachers. They however naturally bring with them into the pulpit their impromptu speechmaking and conversational storytelling experiences.

Eighth, although not adequately measurable in only these six sermons, the use of song, proverbs, idioms, and storytelling was evident in a number of these sermons. The impact of such African forms of speechmaking cannot be overemphasized.

Ninth, a distinct pattern that emerged in a number of these sermons is
the deliberate calling of names of selected members of the congregation to personalize the point and the process of delivery. I have heard African preachers use that method on many occasions. The pros and cons of this approach in preaching are not yet clearly understood. What we know however is that the African communal lifestyle has a direct bearing on this method of calling people’s names from among the members of the congregation. Family and village members know each other in a network of closely-knit relationships. Those gathered for worship form a community in which people know each other. Thus, calling individual names is one way of recognizing the presence of the other. Relationships form the dominant concern between the preacher and the congregation in an African context.

Tenth, use of humour was not labored—it came naturally as preachers described events or told stories. African people do not feel inhibited in expressing themselves in response to the sermon. They will laugh if something is humorous and the atmosphere is right. It is up to the preacher to find ways of involving the people in the sermon and one of the means is by the use of humour.

Eleventh, preachers made numerous references to the Holy Spirit. This is a favourable topic in African pulpits and the theme relates well to the spirit-filled African worldview. It is one of the distinguishing features of African preaching that preachers call upon the Holy Spirit as a reliable companion in proclaiming the gospel.

**Negative Characteristics.** First, most sermons dealt with numerous ideas and themes with little or no development of thought. Effective preaching should be selective rather than attempt to say everything in one sermon.

Second, the Bible is used in a literal sense with no serious attempt to exegete the selected text. Mere reference to various biblical texts by way of “uncritical transfer” is meaningless, inspite of the good intention of the preacher.\(^\text{12}\)

Third, in some cases delivery was circuitous rather than progressing
from one segment to the other in recognizable “moves,” to use Buttrick’s language. There was too much warming up at the beginning of sermons. We have already noted that this is an inherent African approach of not rushing into the gist of the conversation, which is finding its way into the pulpit. In any case the circles through which the sermon winds its way to the ear of the hearer could be reduced.

Fourth, the ultimate goal of preaching took the form of escapism. Sermons were eschatological in their focus. Andre Karamaga noted that the idea of salvation in African churches is limited to the individual “who is called to renounce himself, and to adopt certain attitudes and to flee the influence of his environment while preparing to leave for Heaven and to expect the end of this age.”13 Granted that the Christian faith has an otherworldly component to it, it still behooves the African preacher to preach a balanced message that empowers hearers to deal practically with existential issues while on this God-given earth.

Fifth, the six sermons revealed a lack of concerted effort in preaching doctrinal sermons. The seeds for preaching doctrine were present in each of these sermons, as is the case in any preaching. What was lacking was the focusing and doctrine as a theme in itself. Take Nyandoro’s sermon on the power of Jesus Christ. If that power is named and then the sermon develops from there, doctrinal preaching on the Holy Spirit evolves. There was much mention of the Holy Spirit, but none of these sermons developed that doctrine.

Sixth, preaching without notes should be the result of thorough and arduous preparation, which takes place behind the scene. Impromptu speaking should not be used as a display of nonchalant attitude toward preaching. Too much meandering and lack of clear progression and depth of ideas in some of the sermons was probably due to the fact that there was no meaningful sermon outline to guide the preacher.

This exercise in sermon analysis is a helpful tool despite the fact that it is a case study with limited possibilities for generalizations. Future researchers could follow up with the congregations to determine
the nature and level of human receptivity to the gospel in each given context.
CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY

This book is based on the assumption that contextual preaching is the most appropriate option for communicating the gospel effectively in Africa. The gospel preached in Africa should take into consideration the African existential situation both for its message and modes of communication.

We have shown that contextual preaching in Africa should be done within the wider spectrum of the debate on the interface of the Christian faith with culture. In Africa, the contextualization of the gospel should address questions about the identity of the African church within existing historiography. There will be no serious contextualization of preaching in a church that is body-and-soul alien to the African people. Community has emerged as a rallying point and life-giving entity for Africans. Any talk of contextualization of the gospel can only be realistic and comprehensive if it is cognizant of the role of the community in African culture.

This text indicates that there is a plethora of ways to define preaching. We have noted that the traditional categories of preaching—message-centred, preacher-centred, and congregation-centred—leave much to be desired. More than just being descriptions of preaching to be grasped for future recall, we noted that these definitions contain insightful theological convictions held by their proponents. These attempts at articulating what preaching is can serve as useful tools in the study and practice of preaching irrespective of the context. For the African context, using the Shona example, preaching is God (Mwari)
communicating the message through a spiritually set-apart medium. The medium becomes God’s herald who delivers the message irrespective of the consequences.

In African context the idea of the Word of God is all-inclusive in intent and meaning. The Bible does not only contain the Word of God but it is the Word of God in its totality. This inseparable relationship between the Bible and its content as the Word of God is the main explanation behind the widespread attachment to the Bible of most African Christian converts. What the Bible says reflects a worldview understandable to the African reader. It is the hermeneutic of the biblical texts that removes the Bible far from the African context and not its literal context. Preaching in Africa must address the issues of demon possession, the general spirit world, and the role of dreams. These are still real issues for African Christians that cannot be easily dismissed by calling upon the discipline of psychology.

Unlike in other quarters of homiletic study where the Holy Spirit is treated in passing, this theme holds a central position in the preaching experience in the African context. Not only is the Holy Spirit a trusted companion in the preparation for sermons, the preacher in fact relies on the efficacy of the power of the Holy Spirit to authenticate the messenger and the whole preaching event. With lives steeped in the spiritual worldview, the African listener to the sermon values the role and place of the Holy Spirit as affirmed by the preacher.

On the image of the preacher we have highlighted in the text that the salient belief in African culture is on being set apart for a great mission. We have used the legendary beliefs surrounding the mermaid (Nzuzu) and how such traditional belief can be inspirational for the African preacher. Being set apart entails trappings of the Holy Spirit, and above all the African congregation wants to regard their preacher as holy. We have also hinted that a word study in each indigenous African language will capture people’s view on the portrait of the preacher that can serve to expand our understanding of the subject.
In this book I have attempted to address the growing need and call that theology must be studied in context. More work must still be done in the area of pastoral theology in general and in preaching in particular. To be effective and comprehensive, there is need for more field-based research in which sermons will be collected from different parts of the African continent and then analyzed. This study has made modest but crucial points by analyzing some preached sermons and by way of observation.

My analysis of preached sermons from Zimbabwe has confirmed the approach in delivering sermons. It was heartening to note that sermons were Christocentric despite the fact that in some cases Christological understanding is not developed. Power of prayer in alleviating people’s suffering was highlighted in these sermons. These and other factors showed that African preaching, if these six sermons could serve as an entry point, is alive and on the right track. There are however weak areas such as lack of in-depth exegesis, few sermons clearly developed on doctrinal lines, the other worldliness of the sermons, and other negative trends need attention and remedial procedures taken.

Further, there is urgent need for African theologians to reach some consensus on issues like Christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, deity, humanity, and other theological themes. It is from the reflections of these African theologians that preaching will be to wear a contextualized garb.

If any headway is to be made in the move toward contextualizing preaching, it follows that the teaching/learning format must be germane to the existing African situation. It is an area that begs for collegial spirit among those involved in teaching other theological disciplines. It will be futile to urge students of homiletics to be contextual if there is not a well-coordinated intention throughout the curriculum. Our clarion call for doing theology contextually will be of little use until it is accompanied by learning resources produced with the African context in mind.

It is my hope that this book will combine with efforts of others to
provide a solid starting point for those who wish to preach contextually in Africa. Preaching is an act of worship that is accomplished in the context of faith. This context of faith indeed takes precedence over any other context we might imagine.
Endnotes

Chapter 1: Contextual Preaching in Africa

2. Official Journal of the East Central Africa Mission Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1922, p. 43. Prohibitions were extended to marital customs such as *elopment matorwa* and other areas of African culture.
3. Official Journal of the East Central Africa Mission Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1913, pp. 32–33. Unfortunately, Kent had come to Old Mutare Mission only for a brief time to relieve another missionary who had gone on furlough.
5. Official Journal of the Rhodesia Annual Conference of the Methodist Church, 1964, p. 147. The residual practices of European worship are still evident in African Churches, in Zimbabwe, for example.
9. I had such experiences each time I visited St. Mary’s United Methodist Church, Dangamvura, Mutare, Zimbabwe, during the time of Reverend Margaret Bondera. I am convinced that other female pastors also have other means of communicating God’s love in ways men cannot.
17. Ibid., p. 19.
21. Ibid.


26. Ibid.


28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.


31. Ibid., p. 69.


36. Ibid.


38. Ibid.


40. Ibid.


Chapter 2: What Is Preaching?

1. Technical definitions of preaching can readily be accessed in most introductory textbooks on preaching.


8. Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, n.d), p. 5. This is a definition of preaching that has been in circulation for a long time.

9. M. Thomas Thangaraj, *Preaching as Communication* [publisher?? Abingdon Press 1981 version shows Myron Raymond Chartier as author]. Thangaraj developed the theme of preaching as communication. This definition derives from the method by which the preached word is released.


11. By saying the preacher is given authority, I am hinting the opposite of Fred Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979). Craddock’s groundbreaking book shifted the paradigm of preaching from deductive and authoritative style to inductive, inclusive, storytelling approach. Ironically, for in the African context the preacher must enter the pulpit with assumed authority.


Chapter 3: The Proclaimed Word of God


2. The Bible has been the most valued book among Africans, especially the older generation of Christians. Kurewa, Biblical Proclamation for Africa Today, pp. 11–13.


9. Ibid., p. 701.

10. Ibid., p. 700.

11. Ibid., p. 699.


15. Fred B. Craddock, As One Without Authority, p. 133.

16. Ibid.

17. Stevenson, In the Biblical Preacher’s Workshop, p. 23.


25. James T. Cleland, *Preaching to be Understood* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), p. 15. All the quotations in this section on the Reformation tradition are for this footnote.

Chapter 4: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Preaching

8. Ibid., p. 60.
11. Ibid., p. 37.
14. Ibid.
Chapter 5: The Portrait of the Preacher


4. Ibid., p. 395.


7. Ibid., pp. 17–23.


15. See again Daneel, *Quest for Belonging*, pp. 56, 60. Evangelist Shadrack Wame of Malawi is not a founder of an African independent church but his reference to visions and the Holy Spirit at the time of his being born again and being called to preach is worth noting for our purposes. See Wame’s testimony in Wendland, *Preaching that Grabs the Heart*, pp. 241, 243.


17. Ibid.


20. For the list of personality qualities presented in this section see Lewis, *Persuasive Preaching Today*, pp. 20–28.

21. Ibid., p. 34. Lewis noted that good character for the preacher is mentioned more often in the prestigious Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching at Yale Divinity School.


23. Ibid. This is a citation in Sweazey.


25. This colleague in ministry later died from natural causes. I always wonder how many others there are who do not call for help when they are down spiritually.


Chapter 6: Analysis of Six Preached Sermons

1. Gerhard Debus, with Rudolf Bohren, Ulrich Brates, Herald Grun-Rath, Geog Vischer, “Theses Concerning Sermon Analysis,” trans. Birgit Taylor. This paper was distributed to the members of the Societas Homiletica Conference at its biannual meeting in Kyoto, Japan, 1997.

2. For the reason sermon analysis is necessary in our time see Tsuneaki Kato, “Preaching as God’s Mission—A Lecture,” in Kato, ed., *Preaching as God’s Mission*, pp. 70–73.


5. I videotaped this worship service with the help of Jean Paul Olangi, one of my students at Africa University. The video was in preparation for my presentation at the Societas Homiletica Conference, held in Kyoto, Japan, June 1997. For details, see E. K. Nhiwatiwa, “Preaching Task in Zimbabwe,” in Kato, ed., *Preaching as God’s Mission*, pp. 154–57.


10. See this attempt to explain why African preachers don’t write down their sermons in Mugambi, ed., *Critiques of Christianity in African Literature*, p. 14.
11. For this contrary view see details in Karamaga, comp., *Problems and Promises of Africa*, p. 82.
Selected Bibliography

Books


Preaching in the African Context: Why We Preach


**Journals and Magazines**


**Newspapers**


**Theses and Papers**


The six sermons analysed in Chapter 6 were tape-recorded by the author. For other sermons referred to in the study only notes were taken for reference purposes.


