

Applying Integrated Theology to Persuasive Preaching

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The opinions expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the South African Theological Seminary or the supervisor(s) of the research.

I hereby declare that the work contained in this research report is my own work, based on my own research, and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H. J. ...', written over a horizontal line.

Date:

08 March 2018

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1. Introduction

This Research Report seeks to provide a consolidated account of my topic as studied through various theological perspectives that comprise the integrated master's programme at the South African Theological Seminary (SATS). Integrated theology¹ implies studying a topic from various theological perspectives, namely, biblical, historical, systematic and practical theology, to arrive at a biblically faithful synthesis of truth, in order to know and perform God's will in our church and world. The integrated theological study begins with a theological problem that is then deployed across these four theological disciplines to ultimately manifest God's will in practice. This paper is the final step in the integrated master's journey, namely, to offer a summary of each of the four perspectives concerning my topic with a view to inform, reform and transform church praxis.

The topic chosen for this integrated master's programme was the place of persuasion in preaching². The purpose of this programme was twofold: (i) to investigate in what sense biblically faithful preachers may use persuasion in their preaching; and (ii) to facilitate in eight evangelical churches in the same socio-economic position the most biblically faithful understanding of, and commitment to, legitimate persuasion in preaching. The practical perspective is related to researching one pastor (the senior pastor if more than one pastor) from the above-mentioned eight churches to discover their understanding of the role of persuasion, and if any. The research report, after presenting a summarized version of each perspective, formulates for these eight pastors an operative theology regarding persuasion in preaching.

One motivation for this integrated master's project was my observation of an apparent incongruity with Paul's method of preaching. The Apostle makes the following statement in 1 Corinthians 2:4, 'And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power' (NKJV)³. It appears here *prima facie* that Paul denounces the use of rhetoric

¹ Using the integrated theological approach for my master's studies was a requirement mandated by SATS. The nature and benefits of this approach are discussed in sections 2 and 7.

² By preaching I mean proclaiming the truth of God's Word, but first and foremost heralding the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Davis 1961:199; Litfin 1985:272; McLaughlin 1972:98).

³ All Scriptural quotations are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV), unless otherwise indicated.

in proclaiming the truth. By rhetoric I mean persuasion in the historical sense, namely, to persuade audiences. Yet in other verses Paul seems to commend the use of rhetoric, such as 2 Corinthians 5:11: 'Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...' My task, therefore, has been to search Paul's writings to reconcile this apparent contradiction.

Another motivation surrounds the practical implication. If a preacher is mandated biblically to use persuasion then it ought to enliven the pulpit to carry an inherently urgent message to the hearers with the greatest communicative effectiveness as possible. This would ameliorate sermon delivery that might be lacking in fervour, dynamism, conviction, clarity and other features of persuasive communication. And, on the other hand, it would bring biblical parameters to the level of persuasion permitted in order to obviate the other extreme of sermon delivery, namely, showmanship, sensationalism and emotionalism that might move biblical teaching and application from the centre of preaching and water down the truth of God's Word.

My problem statement from the commencement of my studies was thus worded as follows: To investigate the biblical legitimacy, using Paul's ministry⁴, for a preacher to employ rhetoric in effective preaching, especially in light of 1 Corinthians 2:4.

Section 2 of my Research Report will present a discussion and evaluation of integrated theology. Sections 3 to 6 will address the four theological research perspectives covered by this integrated theology programme with regard to persuasion in preaching. Each respective section will define the perspective, delineate methods used in researching the perspective, and summarize the findings of the perspective. The perspectives will be handled in the following order: biblical, historical, systematic, and practical. Section 7 presents the implications of the findings of the research from the various theological perspectives for the eight preachers. Lastly, Section 8 discusses how effective the integrated theology methodology was to establish the most biblically faithful way to preach with regards to using persuasion.

⁴ The term 'ministry' is preferred to Paul's 'letters' or 'writings' in that it includes a wider scope, namely, the book of Acts, which records instances of Paul's preaching.

The books and articles cited within the body of this Research Report do not cover all the works cited in the papers presented on each theological perspective. However, the bibliography at the end of the Research Report contains a complete list of all the works cited in the whole integrated master's journey.

2. The Integrated Method of Doing Theology

Integrated theology, the SATS preferred method of doing theology, integrates theory and practice, as well as the various branches of theology (Smith 2013:11). Rather than studying theology using stand-alone theological disciplines that remain in isolation, integrated theology is more holistic, namely, it seeks to engage these disciplines to form a well-rounded synthesis of truth.

Smith (2013) proposes an integrated model of doing theology in his book, *Integrated Theology: Discerning God's Will in Our World*. In essence, integrated theology seeks to discern God's nature and will by examining the spectrum of proven theological branches of studies such as historic, biblical, systematic, and practical, and then correlating and integrating them into a proposed model for practical application (pp. 20-21). In Smith's foreword, Peppler notes the great advantage to Smith's proposed model of doing integrated theology, of holistic study: it produces thinking and well-rounded practitioners of the Scriptures who will impact the church and the world with truth and related praxis (pp. 7-8). Smith mentions that theological education needs to return to theology as a single composite discipline, rather than a fragmented, encyclopedic one (p. 157). Demarest and Lewis (1987:23) concur by believing that theology is more comprehensive than the study of separate doctrines. SATS's approach then to evangelical theology is one that galvanizes disciplines across the spectrum of theology into a single discipline, a working model, which leads to clarity on God's will in different situations.

An integrated theological study begins with a theological problem which is often signaled in church praxis. The topic is then examined from each theological perspective. The biblical theological perspective initiates an exegetical study of specific texts as well as a progression of biblical insight across the various corpora of the Bible, with the intention to uncover God's message as a whole on the specific topic. This perspective, therefore, probes God's written revelation alone. The historical theological perspective examines church belief and behaviour in history to

inform current and future praxis. It is based on the principle that the church can benefit in its journey to a faithful understanding and practice of God's word by carefully noting how the topic was handled in previous church ages. The systematic theological perspective involves the scientific construction of truth regarding the topic comprising biblical data and corroborated by fields outside the Bible that accentuate the truth. Lastly, the practical theological perspective facilitates, firstly, a small-scale empirical-descriptive study of the topic in a concrete church situation; and secondly, it synthesizes all the perspectives to produce a biblically faithful operative theology regarding the topic for the concrete situation. Thus doing integrated theology is aimed at leading to the reformation and transformation of the relationship between Christian belief and practice to maximize faithfulness to God and achievement of his purposes in the church and world.

Smith (2013:29-30) points out that at the heart of integrated theology are Christocentric and missional awareness. Theology ought to be Christ-centred if it is to fulfill God's will (p. 24). This includes seeking to honour Christ, become Christ-like, centralize all doctrine and ministry on the person and work of Christ, and interpreting God's Word through the lens of Christ (pp. 24-25). Peppler (2012:134) insists that a Christocentric principle is not merely a hermeneutical system but something that should test, inform and influence all other systems. This would mean that both interpretation of Scripture and application to the believer, church and world ought to be in harmony with, and not contradict, Christ's mind, words and work.

By missional awareness is meant that theological reflection should keep in mind the objective that the mission or purpose of God to redeem mankind and reconcile the lost to Himself is the overarching motif of Scripture (Smith 2013:117-18). God's revelation to mankind hinges on salvation and restoring his righteous rule.

I agree wholeheartedly with Smith's emphasis of being Christocentric and missionally aware when discerning God's will in His Word. The Bible explicitly and implicitly centres on the person and work of Jesus Christ as it unfolds God's redemptive purpose for humankind. It is primarily in this context that a theological pursuit seeking God's nature, purpose and will should operate.

The integrated method of doing theology builds on the assumption that when combined the different theological perspectives will result in a fuller understanding of

God's will. This would firstly be seen where the perspectives are congruent and throw more light on each other. Secondly, where one or more of the perspectives differ from the others, this would result in a more careful consideration of the various perspectives and how to best correlate them to ensure a more faithful interpretation of the theory and related praxis of the issue under consideration.

I chose the integrated theological approach for my master's programme because I believe it offers the most biblically faithful rendering of God's will and purpose due to its broad-based approach to theology. It thus also produces well rounded practitioners of God's Word. I particularly find merit in the practical emphasis of such a study in that it takes theology to the person, the pew and the pavement. Our church and world ought to be informed, reformed and transformed by the study of God and his will, otherwise it remains a purely theoretical undertaking. My topic of persuasive preaching is, therefore, best understood and investigated by the integrated holistic approach, with a motivation for practical outworking, and undergirded by Christocentric and missional awareness.

Since this work is a research report it does not cover all details of the actual areas of research on which it reports. For instance, it does not include my literature review of my topic. This presented scholarly work on preaching itself and also persuasiveness in preaching as a technique. But there was much less research done in terms of the validity of employing persuasion, specifically in light of Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 2:4, which was the focus of my research. Further, my topic was limited to Paul's preaching. My definition of preaching is given above in footnote 2. However, it will be noted from the reports on the different perspectives in the integrated approach how Paul viewed and conducted preaching.

My master's programme was not devoted to how to communicate persuasively in preaching but rather its legitimacy. Further, it needs to be noted that the integrated method in the case of persuasion in preaching could not devote the major part to the field of rhetoric. My study of persuasion in Paul's preaching had to be limited mostly to what can be discerned from his writings. But it will be also seen that his theology, especially of the gospel and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, plays a huge role in his approach to persuasion (biblical preaching is not the same as giving an inspired, convincing talk on some general topic).

3. Establishing the Biblical Perspective on Persuasive Preaching

Biblical theology is that branch of theology interested in formulating the teaching of a theme or topic across the whole Bible. It is the tracing of God's progressively revealed truth over the ages to bring clarity to a topic. Before one can study pertinent Scriptural texts in relation to one's topic spread over various corpora of the Bible, it is necessary to exegete the texts first. Smith (2013:137) explains the importance of exegesis by describing biblical theology as comprising two stages: biblical exegesis and then biblical theology is made possible. I concur that the hermeneutical principle of sound exegesis is the foundation upon which one can build the biblical theological framework. To this end, this section on establishing the biblical perspective will be divided into two halves, namely, exegetical and biblical, each handled hereunder respectively. Each section will have three sections: defining the perspective; methods used in establishing the perspective; and the findings of the perspective.

3.1.1 Defining the Exegetical Perspective in Integrated Theology

Exegesis is the application of hermeneutical principles to a biblical text for the purpose of explicating meaning. It involves the careful and critical analysis of the text in its original setting and from every possible angle to derive the author-intended meaning. Fee (2002:1) underscores the importance of this intentionality by arguing that the author's intention was for his immediate audience to understand him. The task of exegesis is, therefore, never easy. This is because one has to empty oneself of bias and subjectivity in a quest to find the meaning of a passage rather than one's own meaning. A commendable exegetical study, therefore, involves implementing with deliberate care objective principles and procedures in order to extract the most honest rendering of the meaning of the passage as possible. The discovery of the meaning of the text in its original setting in no way diminishes the applicability to the modern reader. In fact, as Stuart (1992:§12)⁵ argues, the goal of exegesis is not merely intellectual, but ought to be applicable to the reader today. God's Word correctly understood should impact the reader's faith and practice.

⁵ Where page numbers did not appear in some sources, such as some SATS' readers, I have used section headings, indicated by the symbol §.

Ideally an exegetical study of every text that is pertinent to one's topic should be undertaken (Smith 2013:13). However, as Smith points us, this type of study is 'seldom feasible'. Selecting some key texts to elucidate one's topic is enough. In other words, one selects the most appropriate texts that have a direct bearing on one's topic and provides an in-depth analysis.

3.1.2 Methods Used in Establishing the Exegetical Perspective on Persuasive Preaching

I chose to formally exegete only one verse of Scripture, namely, 1 Corinthians 2:4. The reason for this choice was that my problem statement itself provides the one verse to scrutinize, 'To investigate the biblical legitimacy, using Paul's ministry, for a preacher to employ rhetoric in effective preaching, especially in light of 1 Corinthians 2:4.' Naturally, in the process of contextualizing this verse, other surrounding verses comprising those early chapters of 1 Corinthians are considered.

My starting point in the exegesis process is my evangelical viewpoint, namely, that I regard the Scriptures as the inerrant, infallible, plenary inspired Word of God, which alone is authoritative. My approach is a literal interpretation except where the genre requires otherwise. Furthermore, as explained previously, I will interpret with a Christocentric and missional awareness, as these issues are crucial to understanding the canon and therefore its parts.

An exegetical study covers both the content and context of the passage. The questions 'what' and 'why' respectively are sought to be answered. The study thus involves tools to uncover the content, such as textual criticism, lexical analysis and grammatical analysis, and tools to unearth the context, such as the historical-sociological-cultural setting and the literary features of the text.

My process of exegesis followed the twelve steps recommended by Stuart (1992). I found it to be an easy to follow, step by step, clear method of doing exegesis. Jabini and Verhoef, too, favour Stuart's twelve steps (SATS Biblical Perspectives 1 Introduction Notes). The format of my exegesis was what Smith (2008:179) calls the 'topical structure', namely, each step of the exegetical process is treated as a heading.

Step One: Hebrew/Greek Text. This involves deciding on the most likely original wording of the selected text by consulting the manuscript evidence. Stuart (1992:§1) suggests selecting the length of the text based on its 'logical beginning and ending point'.

Concerning unearthing the original wording of early manuscripts, there are a number of Greek manuscripts that are helpful. Schreiner (2011:39-40) mentions the strength of manuscript evidence by noting the ubiquity of over five thousand manuscripts which form the basis of the critical⁶ editions of the Greek NT. In terms of 1 Corinthians, there is sufficient evidence, including extant papyri of the second and third centuries, for my problem text (1 Cor. 2:4). For instance, **P46** covers almost all of 1 Corinthians (Barrett and Comfort 2001:202).

I compared two major text types, the Alexandrian⁷ and the Byzantine⁸, or Majority text, to arrive at a suitable original wording. I had many valuable books at my disposal concerning Greek manuscripts, including *Nestle-Atland Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th ed.) (hereafter referred to as NA²⁷), as well as the *United Bible Societies' The Greek New Testament* (4th rev. ed.) (hereafter referred to as UBS⁴) and *Novo Testamento Grego Textus Receptus*. I consulted various Greek New Testaments and Interlinears, for example, by Aland et al, Farstad and Hodges, and Pierpont and Maurice. Other helpful scholars included D.P. Barret, P.W. Comfort, G.D. Fee, M. Grosvenor, M. Zerwick, and B.M. Metzger.

Step 2: Translation. This step involves translating the original Greek verse into the receptor language, namely, English. I consulted a variety of Greek-English translational aids and compared over ten different English Bible versions to assist in arriving at what I consider a suitable translation of the text.

Step 3: Historical Context. Here I attempted to reconstruct the historical atmosphere of Paul's day and sought to understand the general milieu surrounding Paul's

⁶ The critical textual reconstruction of a vast number of manuscripts are available in two basic editions of the Greek New Testament, namely, the *Nestle-Atland Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th ed., 1993) and the *United Bible Societies' The Greek New Testament* (4th rev. ed., 1993), which are indispensable aids for both students and scholars (Fee 2002:9; Schreiner 2011:40).

⁷ The Alexandrian text's chief two witnesses include the Codex Vaticanus (B) and the codex Sinaiticus, dated about the middle of the fourth century (Metzger 1994:xix).

⁸ The Byzantine text, not as early as the Alexandrian text, was widely used from the sixth century down to the invention of the printing press (Metzger 1994:xxi). The Textus Receptus was born out of these manuscripts.

audience. I specifically wanted to understand the general parlance of Paul's words 'persuasion' and 'wisdom'. What was important in my investigation here was the understanding of the use of rhetoric in that society. I consulted a number of books dealing with Greco-Roman culture.

Step 4: Literary Context. This deals with the placement of the text in the Bible, and within its own book with its unique structure to establish its genre and checking what goes before and what comes after 1 Corinthians 2:4. With reference to 1 Corinthians, this include aspects such as style, structure, authorship and argumentation. I focused here on Paul's writing style and his thread of argument to better understand 1 Corinthians 2:4.

Step 5: Form. This step looks closer at the genre of the text, both in a general sense and in a specific sense. Establishing clearly that 1 Corinthians is a letter, I was able to shed light on some of the techniques Paul used in conveying his message to the recipients, thus homing in on his argumentation of chapter two of 1 Corinthians. Consulting some New Testament scholars, like T.R. Schreiner, helped me to note features endemic to Paul's epistles and specifically his use of rhetorical elements.

Step. 6: Structure. Here I noted the pattern of structure surrounding 1 Corinthians 2:4, paying close attention to how the parts relate to the whole, and the whole to the parts.

Step 7: Grammar. This step involves a grammatical analysis of the text in the original language. Vocabulary is not enough to create the intended meaning. One needs to decipher how the words relate to each other in the sentence and the necessary rules of grammar imposed on the sentence. Stuart (1992:§7) warns that a lack of understanding of simple syntactical use of common words will cause 'distortions in comprehension'.

Step 8: Lexical Analysis. Vital to exegesis is the correct understanding of words and terms (Stuart 1992:§8). The exegete needs to consider all the possible meanings of a word, the various contexts in which it is used, its change of usage over time, as well as its function as a part of speech. I consulted Greek lexicons, grammars and theological dictionaries in my efforts to clarify the words in 1 Corinthians 2:4.

Step 9: Biblical Context. At this step the exegete provides the overall meaning of the text in light of the information gathered from all previous steps (Stuart 1992:§9). One moves from the discovery of specific features from the prior steps to treating the text as a whole. It is here that I attempted to reconcile 1 Corinthians 2:4 with Paul's overall teaching, thereby resolving any apparent contradiction.

Step 10: Theology. This step furnishes the contribution the exegetical and interpretive study makes to theology. Theological concepts would have emerged from the study which ought to aid the spectrum of theology. The exegete looks for its rightful place in the systematic theological framework of the Bible. I attempted here to show how 1 Corinthians 2:4 corroborates with Pauline doctrine.

Step 11: Secondary Literature. It was noted above that the previous ten steps are to be conducted by the exegete himself, whereas the last two steps are the work of others. Here secondary sources are consulted to find out how other scholars have interpreted the text. It is a verification step. Drumwright and Osborn (2009:§F) refer to this step as 'testing your conclusion'. Stuart (1992:§11) cautions that this stage transcends mere 'ad hoc' literature, such as commentaries, to more definitive works of passages that directly relate to one's passage or theme. Many scholarly works on 1 Corinthians 2:4 were consulted in my journey, even after doing the literature review, and because they were legion not many are quoted here due to space constraints. I specifically noted what was being understood by the implication of the verse, that is, if persuasive preaching is commended or condemned by Paul and the implications for the preacher.

Step 12: Application. I agree with Stuart (1992: §12) that the exegetical process ends with application of the derived meaning to the current world in faith and practice. Stuart does however caveat that some passages only relate in time to the writer's immediate audience and their application cannot be replicated in a modern world. For instance, where the author directed his message to a particular person or group in a specific sense. I was, however, able to show the importance of persuasive preaching today born out of, I believe, a correct interpretation of 1 Corinthians 2:4.

After having applied Stuart's twelve step process of exegesis to my problem verse, 1 Corinthians 2:4, I was able to conclude with a satisfactory biblical interpretation.

3.1.3 Findings of the Exegetical Perspective on Persuasive Preaching

Using Stuart's (1992) twelve step process to my exegesis of 1 Corinthians 2:4, I arrived at the following conclusions. They are presented in summary form without using the headings of the twelve steps for the sake of space limitations.

I firstly delimited the range of the text to span between 1 Corinthians 1:17 and 1 Corinthians 2:16. I believe this range adequately elucidates the concept of human wisdom as applied to Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians about his speech and preaching. My primary verse, 1 Corinthians 2:4, is placed in the range that deals with Paul's argument against human wisdom. Ellingworth and Hatton (1993:43) accord with this sentiment by noting that 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 in particular 'rounds off' what Paul argues from 1 Corinthians 1:17 in terms of human wisdom versus God's wisdom.

When comparing my problem verse, 1 Corinthians 2:4, across various manuscripts, I found no major variants that would lead to challenges in determining the meaning of the original text. The Byzantine text form (or the Majority text) reads as follows: 'καὶ ὁ λόγος μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμα μου οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως' (Pierpont and Robinson 1995:§1 Cor. 2:4). This text appears exactly the same in the Textus Receptus (Novo Testamento Grego: Textus Receptus [1550/1894], 2007:§1 Cor. 2:4). One notices here the inclusion of the word ἀνθρωπίνης, as compared to the earlier manuscripts of the Alexandrian type which has no such word.⁹

The NA²⁷ w/Apparatus (1993:443) reads as follows: 'καὶ ὁ λόγος μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου οὐκ ἐν Χπειθοῖ[ς] σοφίας [λόγοις] ✕ ἀλλ' ἐν □ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως'. In terms of variants, we see here the siglum used for substitution¹⁰ – both for a single word (□) and for two or more words (✕✕), namely, ἀποδείξει¹¹ and πειθοῖ[ς] σοφίας [λόγοις] respectively.

⁹ More specifically, the word is omitted in P46, Codex Sinaiticus, and Codex Vaticanus; but included in the Majority Text, Codex Alexandrinus, and Codex Ephraemi Syri Rescriptus (1985:514).

¹⁰ A substitution is a variation where a scribe substituted a word/s when copying (Fee 2002:61).

¹¹ This variation is not worth elaborating, in that it appears isolated to the Western type text of Codex Claromontanus (NA²⁷ Apparatus Criticus 1993:443).

I noted that the only difference between the Textus Receptus and the Alexandrian is that the word ἀνθρωπίνης (anthrōpinēs, translated ‘human’) is omitted in the latter. That creates no problem of any significant value in that the wisdom referred to by Paul is implied to be human, and his argument in the greater passage deals with human wisdom as an antithesis to God’s. Metzger (1994:481) calls the addition of ἀνθρωπίνης ‘secondary’ and really just an explanatory gloss. Furthermore, the substitution variants ‘πειθοῖς σοφίας [λόγοις]’ create no real alteration on the whole. The Committee decided to include the square brackets for πειθοῖς to show that this word (peithos, translated ‘persuasive’) is never used in any Greek literature as an adjective, but rather as a noun πειθώ (peithó, translated ‘persuasion’) or of the dative case πειθοῖ (Metzger 1994:481). Plummer and Robertson (1911:32) are in favour of λόγοις and πειθοῖς staying (as in the Byzantine text) believing the evidence to be ‘decisive’, but do acknowledge the rarity of the word πειθοῖς as an adjective giving rise to other alternative renderings, which he believes would be simply ‘conjecture’. Arndt, Bauer and Danker (2000:791) concur that the word translated ‘persuasive’, πειθοῖς, is also a rare formation of πειθώ (peithó, translated ‘persuasion’), but nevertheless has extremely good manuscript attestation.

Regarding [λόγοις], the square brackets are inserted as some early manuscripts omit it, like **P46**. Farstad and Hodges (1985:514) show this omission as uncommon, compared to the majority of other manuscripts that do include λόγοις¹². They also note that the variation of form λογῶν only appears in some manuscripts¹³. I do believe that the inclusion of λόγοις in no way alters Paul’s meaning in that he states his speech was not in persuasive words, so whether ‘words’ is inserted here or not, it is implied, for how else is speech uttered?

Overall, when comparing manuscripts I found that 1 Corinthians 2:4 presents no real material altering variations that would subvert the meaning. A suitable Greek wording of 1 Corinthians 2:4 would thus be: καὶ ὁ λόγος μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖς σοφίας λόγοις ἀλλ’ ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως.

Regarding the translation of the verse into English, space constraints do not allow me to detail every word of the sentence, as I did in my research, but as pointed out,

¹² Critical Text (UBS and NA collectively), Majority Text and others.

¹³ Mc (from the Majority Text family that includes 29 manuscripts).

there is little controversy. The preposition ἐν (en, translated 'in') some translators have rendered 'with' (Louw and Nida 1996:§1:422), both having the same meaning. The words λόγος (logos) and κήρυγμά (kerugma) are often translated 'message' and 'proclamation' respectively (instead of 'speech' and 'preaching'). The reason is that it is a gospel message that Paul preached rather than other types of teaching. Half the English translations use 'message' in place of 'speech' for λόγος, and most translations keep 'preaching' for κήρυγμά. I do not see any difficulty with the word 'preaching' as it implies the message of the cross (1 Cor. 1:18), a ubiquitous notion in Paul's writings. The word ἀποδείξει (apodeixei) has been accepted by most Bible translations as 'demonstration' (ESV, KJV, NAB, NASB, NET, NIV, NJB, NKJV, NSRV). The only other rendering is 'proof', which is not ideal as it suggests the demonstration is more mathematical than faith-based (Ellingworth and Hatton 1993:48). I also showed in my research that the words 'Spirit' and 'power' do not pose any real challenge either.

The most debated word was πειθοῖς (peithos, translated 'persuasive') in that it appears nowhere else in the Bible in that form (i.e. as an adjective). The English Standard Version and New Revised Standard Version employ 'plausible', and the King James Version 'enticing', while the majority of other versions 'persuasive' (NAB, NASB, NET, NIV, NKJV, NLT). Thiselton (2000:218) believes 'persuasive' is a positive term, 'plausible' neutral, and 'enticing' pejorative. I am happy to keep the word 'persuasive', in that the other forms of the word, namely, as a verb and noun do appear elsewhere in Paul's writings (all come from the same Greek root). Having said that I do not believe it is used in a positive sense, but rather a negative one, in the context of Paul vilifying human wisdom (see below). In that sense it does carry the connotation of the word 'enticing'.

In terms of a suitable English translation, after utilizing Greek translational aids as well as various English Bible versions, I noted that there were very few discrepancies that would alter the meaning of the text. A suitable English translation of 1 Corinthians 2:4 would thus be, *'And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.'*

In terms of the historical context of 1 Corinthians 2:4, I found that the Greco-Roman milieu certainly enjoyed the use of rhetoric as a learned art in the education system,

indeed part of the curriculum. Witherington III (1995:39) and Kennedy (1994:3) both underscore the ubiquity of rhetoric in Paul's day as part of both the culture and the discipline in education. Paul's audience, therefore, who were predominately Gentile at Corinth (1 Cor. 10), would have been very familiar with rhetorical features of argument, arrangement, style and delivery. Paul was a well-educated Roman citizen (Witherington III 1995:21) who would have fitted into the cultural codes and practices of the Greco-Roman world (O'Mahony 2000:181), and would have understood the convention of rhetoric. This study on the historical setting convinced me that Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 2:4 is not vilifying rhetoric itself because he, himself, used rhetorical devices elsewhere, such as 1 Corinthians 9:19-22 where he employed all means to win people to Christ.

I discovered that the literary context of 1 Corinthians 2:4 aligns with the spirit of admonition and warning with which Paul addresses the Corinthians in the opening two chapters. Paul develops a sustained argument, true to his style (Schreiner 2011:99), so that by the time he makes his statement in 1 Corinthians 2:4 it has followed a line of argument for his proposition of man's foolishness being antithetical to God's wisdom, which is displayed in the simple message and straightforward preaching of the cross. The world is foolish because it is without Christ, who alone is wisdom (1 Cor. 1:31). It is in this context that he mentions his preaching was not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of Spirit and power, since it is only the gospel of Christ that has the power to change people.

In 1 Corinthians 1:17 Paul states that the cross would be emptied of its power should he rely on the wisdom of words. In the second chapter he provides even more clarity. In verse 1 he reiterates that he declares to them the testimony of God not with 'excellency of speech or of wisdom'. In verse 5 he explains why, namely, 'that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God'. Paul is not so much against the use of rhetoric, but rather the faith one can place in men with words that entice rather than faith in the objective truth of the gospel, the source of power of which originates with God. In terms of the use of words, Paul once again stresses the source as important in verse 13: 'these things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches.'

The literary context of the early chapters of 1 Corinthians, therefore, proved to me that Paul's antipathy towards persuasive words is regarding the message and not the medium. As such Paul does not altogether denounce the use of persuasion in preaching, but rather emphasizes the corrupt source of flattering words embraced by the Sophists of his day.¹⁴

In terms of form and structure, I showed how 1 Corinthians as the genre of epistle, unlike a narrative or gospel book, contains advanced syntax and argumentation. It certainly embodied the features of a typical Greco-Roman style of writing (Schreiner 2011:13). It is not always agreed among scholars that Paul would have used rhetoric in his letters in a formal sense of schooled Roman rhetoric. Schreiner (2011:12) cautions labelling Paul's letters as prime rhetorical examples, whereas Witherington III (1995:35) believes Paul's letters would have contained rhetoric. I agree with Witherington in that the very nature of the epistles presupposed they be read out aloud, and as speech they would therefore have contained rhetorical elements. We also see, for example, many rhetorical features that permeate Paul's epistles, such as paraenesis, irony, diatribe, and hyperbole (Fee 2002:17). Again all of this aided me in understanding that Paul did not simply dismiss persuasion in 1 Corinthians 2:4, but used clever argumentation himself throughout the epistle in the greater scheme of correcting the errors of the Corinthians, censoring the evils, and instructing the immature. And more specifically, the range of 1 Corinthians 1:17 to 1 Corinthians 2:5 contains Paul's thesis on human wisdom versus divine wisdom, and the differences in their means of proclamation.

In terms of the grammatical structure of the verse, there is no need to alter the English translation. The original Greek sentence has no verb. καὶ ὁ λόγος μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖς σοφίας λόγοις ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως literally reads 'and the speech of me and the preaching of me not in persuasive words of wisdom but in demonstration of Spirit and power'. The verb 'were' or 'was' was added to make the sentence flow, but it certainly does not change the meaning ('my speech and preaching were not in persuasive words...').

¹⁴ A more in-depth discussion on the nuances between Sophistic persuasion and Paul's persuasion is dealt with in the biblical, historical and systematic perspectives sections below.

There were two grammatical features I noted that have a bearing on the meaning of the verse. The first was the expression ‘words of wisdom’ (the two nouns σοφίας [sophias] and λόγοις [logios]). Does this mean words about wisdom or words directed by wisdom, given the relation of the two nouns in the genitive construction (Trail 2008:80)? I came to discover it was the latter. Barrat (168:65) explains that the word σοφίας is subjective and therefore cannot be words about wisdom, but rather directed by wisdom. Plummer and Robertson (1911:32) believe it was the cleverness of the rhetorician that was specially directed to the art of persuasion. Paul always made the case that his preaching was sourced in the Divine and not in the cleverness of false wisdom.

The other term was ‘demonstration of the Spirit and of power’ (ἀποδείξει [apodeixei] πνεύματος [pneumatos] καὶ [kai] δυνάμεως [dynamēōs]). After looking at the various possibilities of how each noun relates to each other, I came to the conclusion that there are two demonstrations at work, namely, the Spirit and also power, rather than ‘spiritual power’, although the two words are connected. The main idea is that the gospel message brings true conviction not through man’s words, but through a divine source.

In terms of lexical analysis, I have already touched on most of the words in passing. I could add here that the words ‘speech’ (λόγος) and ‘preaching’ (κήρυγμά) have raised questions regarding why Paul made a dichotomy between the two. Some scholars, like Hodge (1995:§1 Cor. 2:1) believe it is possible that ‘speech’ refers to private discussion and ‘preaching’ public discourse. Plummer and Robertson (1911:32) reject this and say λόγος refers to the gospel and κήρυγμά the act of proclamation. The word λόγος can either refer to the content of what is being said or the act of speaking (Louw and Nida 1989:§1:399). Paul does use the word λόγος in 1 Corinthians 1:18 to mean the message of the cross, namely, the gospel, and therefore there is some sense of interchange between the two regarding content. But having said that, I believe Paul is referring to his manner of speech when he uses the word ‘speech’ by virtue of the fact that he was wanting to disarm those who used Sophistic words and ‘excellency of speech’ (1 Corinthians 2:1).

After observing the textual and contextual features in the steps of exegesis, I arrived at an overall meaning of the verse. It appears that there is no contradiction in 1

Corinthians 2:4 to other passages where Paul commends the use of persuasion. Paul was not against the style of rhetoric, but the source of rhetoric. 1 Corinthians 2:4 is placed in a line of argument where Paul emphasizes the emptiness of human wisdom manifested in cheap persuasion, versus the substance and life changing power of the gospel. He was an educated man with Roman citizenship and would have been well accustomed to the common practice of Greco-Roman rhetoric of his day. It seems implausible that he would have been against employing rhetoric in his preaching. For instance, his discourse at Mars Hill in Acts 17 exemplified rhetorical technique, as well as his testimony before Agrippa in Acts 26:28, 'almost persuading' the Roman ruler. Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 5:11, in fact, mandates the use of persuasion, 'Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men'.

Paul did not come to preach with self-importance or self-promotion, but preach the message of the gospel, centred on Christ and Him alone. He is in essence opposed to the rhetor and not the rhetoric. Paul's speech and his preaching were not sourced in the persuasive words used by the Sophists of the day to impress, but rather with words sourced in the power of God to convict.

The last two steps in the exegetical process involved the contribution to theology and the practical application. I showed how the study on 1 Corinthians 2:4 involves the branch of Soteriology, in that the proclamation of truth is contained in the gospel, which saves and is inherently powerful. Homiletics is also involved, in that the preacher is a herald of truth and as such ought to convey an inherently urgent but unadorned message with the fervour and conviction that type of message behoves. The role of the Holy Spirit as a persuader is featured in Pneumatology. I further mentioned the importance of the Christocentric and missional emphases in the overall meaning of the passage.

1 Corinthians 1:17-2:16 applies as much today as it did in Paul's day. Modern wisdom is equally as dark as the philosophic wisdom of Paul's day. Paul is exhortatory in his address concerning human wisdom versus divine. And today we ought to be urged just as much to the exigency and efficacy of the preaching of the cross, both personally and corporately. The topic of preaching and persuasion is highly relevant for today's church. If a sermon delivery lacks persuasiveness it might result in ineffectiveness, or on the other end of the pole, one that is reliant solely on

rhetorical skill but lacking in spiritual reliance and doctrinal integrity might be equally as ineffective.

My exegetical findings can be summarised as follows: Paul did not resist the mechanisms of rhetoric in speech, but rather human wisdom manifested in Sophistic, ostentatious, enticing, empty words to impress. He deliberately chose to set aside any methods that would showcase his knowledge and wisdom (Garland 2003:84), no doubt because this would cloud the centrality and exclusivity and power of the gospel to alone save and draw too much attention to the preacher. The implication for today is that preachers are called to proclaim truth persuasively, but in a manner that promotes the message and not the preacher and makes clear the need for the power of God and not the wisdom of man.

3.2.1 Defining the Biblical Perspective in Integrated Theology

Biblical theology seeks to understand a topic or theme spanning either a corpus of the Bible, or ideally, the whole Bible. It is an analysis and synthesis of God's progressive truth regarding a matter. Naturally, God did not reveal His truth to mankind at once, but incrementally over time. Biblical theology then aims to synthesize parts with the whole (Elwell 1996:§Biblical Theology). Some of the important characteristics that comprise biblical theology include a systematic or schematic construction, regard for the historical milieu of the author's day, understanding God's progressive revelation, the need for church application in the modern day, and Christocentricity, namely, Christ and the redemption he offers being the overarching theme that unifies Scripture (Rosner's 2001:§Biblical Theology).

My definition of biblical theology which encompasses these various features is the following: It is the study of God's progressive record of truth to man and its implication for today, systemically collating the biblical data concerning a theme or topic across a book, author, corpi, period or the entire Bible, with historical and literary interaction, and with a bent that is Christocentric. For the student this means moving to a larger domain of Scripture having completed an exegetical study of a smaller unit. One commences with the trace of progressive revelation over a range of corpi and concludes with a synthesis of collected data, promoting the implications for the modern world in praxis.

3.2.2 Methods Used in Establishing the Biblical Perspective on Persuasive Preaching

There are variety of methods in doing biblical theology, such as dogmatic, diachronic, cross-section, redemptive-historical, and topical (Vanhoozer 2005:89). Scholars admit that no one method necessarily stands out with strengths alone, but rather each has its set of limitations (Elwell 1996:§Overview of biblical theology).

Methods range from one pole of exegesis to the other of praxis and everything in between, and also from diversity to unity. The range of corpus ideal to one's topic would dictate the chosen method. For example, one could synthesize many themes within one corpus, or one theme across many corpi. A descriptive method stays within the historical setting while the prescriptive method denotes application in a modern context (Hasel 1991:§The descriptive and/or normative tasks).

My topic's problem statement provides a natural delimitation of the corpus range, namely, Paul's ministry. Therefore the epistles of Paul and the book of Acts become my parameters of biblical enquiry.

I chose an eclectic method, drawing upon the strengths of a variety of methods to best suit my topic. The descriptive method suited my topic to a degree in that the setting of Paul's ministry elucidated my topic on Paul's use of persuasive preaching. This descriptive method, or analytical method, has the advantage of emphasizing a unique theology, rather than harmonizing messages into a unifying theme (Hasel 1991:§The descriptive and/or normative tasks; Osborne 2006:366). On the other hand the prescriptive element applied to my investigation as well, in that Paul's homiletics should not only apply to the audience at Corinth, but indeed to local churches today. The question of how to proclaim the gospel today in speech and conduct is highly relevant. Furthermore, my methodology involved a cohesive element akin to the multiplex (Osborne 2006:369) or synthetic model, in that my tracing of Paul's doctrine on persuasive preaching cut across the strata of his other doctrines to unify his overall theology. I believed that the validity of the use of rhetoric in preaching cannot stand isolated, but has to square with Paul's other teachings such as Soteriology¹⁵. This is also where a Christocentric emphasis applies, namely,

¹⁵ Paul's doctrine of salvation helps us understand what and why he is preaching, namely, the gospel that saves.

it is Christ that is a unifying theme across Paul's ministry, as his preaching of the cross is primary in his ministry (1 Cor. 1:18).

Furthermore, there are five levels¹⁶ suggested by SATS (Biblical Perspective 2 Course Introduction) in which the tracing of a single topic over a larger corpus operates. I chose two of these levels, namely, a range of books (the Pauline epistles and Acts) and a particular author (Paul).

My method for doing biblical theology was therefore eclectic, drawing on the strengths of a few models, but utilizing the descriptive/analytical approach as my starting point. My process was similar to the model proposed by Demarest and Lewis as described by Smith (2013:130), which begins by interpreting all the passages of the given author and then providing a synopsis. The deployment of my method happened as follows: Firstly, I commenced with a survey of all the principle verses in Paul's body of teaching that pertained to persuasive preaching, using the descriptive method. This included a brief description of the historical setting in Paul's day. I then attempted to harmonize the gleaned verses with the rest of Paul's theology in a quest to maintain doctrinal unity. This was followed by a brief Christocentric analysis. I then revisited my problem verse, 1 Corinthians 2:4, to resolve any residual tension. Lastly, I noted the implications of my findings within the context of church application.

3.2.3 Findings of the Biblical Perspective on Persuasive Preaching

Before I surveyed pertinent verses in Paul's body of writings on persuasive preaching, I wanted to first establish the historical understanding of persuasion, true to the descriptive method of doing biblical theology. As previously mentioned, the art of rhetoric was endemic to the Greco-Roman world and part of the culture of Paul's day. The meaning of rhetoric, derived from the Greek word *rhetorike*, which first appeared in Plato's *Gorgias* around the fifth century B.C., is a specialized form of communication intended to persuade audiences (Shin 2004:38; Kennedy 1994:3). The use of rhetoric, the art of persuasion, was prevalent among all classes of people in Paul's day, not just the wealthy (Witherington 1995:40). However, there was also a movement in the first and second centuries A.D. that revived Sophistic rhetoric, which was lacking in content but saturated with flattery and entertainment as a

¹⁶ These are: teaching of a single book of the Bible; a collection of Bible books; a particular Bible author; a complete testament; and the whole canon.

means to tantalize the audience. Witherington III describes this form of persuasion as 'the rhetoric of flattery or polemics', which sought to overtake the existing 'substantive rhetoric'. The Sophists of Paul's day, therefore, used a type of rhetoric which had become, as Witherington points out, 'an end in itself, mere ornamentation, elocution, and execution'. The aim of this rhetoric was merely to 'please the crowd' and not contain any 'serious content or intent' (p. 41).

It would appear that it was this type of persuasion that Paul repudiated, and not rhetoric as a convention of form of speech. Witherington III (1995:44) believes Paul himself was studied in rhetoric and would have freely engaged with it in his discourses. Porter (1997:534), on the other hand, does not believe Paul was formally schooled in the art of rhetoric, but does admit his letters do reveal intelligent use of it. Schreiner (2012:23) insists Paul would have been familiar with rhetoric, and even if he was not trained in it, certainly it is detected in his epistles.

This brief historical look at the rhetorical atmosphere of Paul's day gives insight to Paul's attitude towards persuasive preaching. Given the fact that there were two forms of rhetoric, one more conventional and one more ostentatious, makes perfect sense to why Paul disavowed persuasive words in 1 Corinthians 2:4, yet in other passages, such as 2 Corinthians 5:11, encourages it. He rejects the entertaining, flattering, beguiling rhetoric of the Sophists, but employs persuasive elements in his speech befitting of the culture of the Greco-Roman society.

Having surveyed Paul's letters as well as the book of Acts, I found many verses related to persuasion. The word 'persuasive' (peithos) as found in 1 Corinthians 2:4 is the only place it appears. However, the verbal form 'persuade' (peitho) appears on a few occasions. In Acts 26:28 King Agrippa responds to Paul's oral presentation with the words 'you almost persuade me to become a Christian'. This implies Paul's speech contained persuasive elements. Garry Smith (1997:68) references this account in favour of the use of persuasive preaching. In Acts 17:4 some Jewish hearers were 'persuaded' after Paul had been 'reasoning' (v. 2) and 'explaining and demonstrating' (v. 3) in the synagogue for three Sabbaths. Again we see Paul persuading by way of clever reasoning to the Athenians on Mars Hill in Acts 17. Paul references the audience's gods from their philosophical framework in order to present the gospel. Paul clearly used logical appeal, argumentation, and other

rhetorical principles (Chappel 1988:110; Overstreet 2004:§Biblical principles summarized; Robinson 2001:81-82).

There are a few more occasions in Acts where Paul persuaded people. Acts 19:8: 'And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God'; Acts 13:43: 'Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God'; and Acts 18:13 where a crowd of antagonistic Jews accused Paul of preaching contrary to the law: 'This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law'. I, therefore, found the book of Acts to contain enough instances during Paul's evangelistic efforts to suggest Paul was in favour of the use of persuasion, irrespective of whether the occasion was in defence or offence and whether the outcome was positive or negative.¹⁷

Turning to Paul's letters, I found a number of passages that enhance the validity of persuasive preaching, as well as some that diminish it. In 2 Corinthians 5:11 Paul reinforces the need to persuade men given the gravity of the gospel message: 'Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...' In 2 Timothy 2:4 Paul instructs Timothy to 'Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching'. It is clear that people ought to be urged, convinced and entreated. Paul understood the urgency of the message in that people cannot believe unless they hear: 'How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?' (Rom. 10:14) I do believe it is incumbent then upon each preacher to convey a message to the hearer with maximum effort to communicate effectively and for results.

Two chapters in Paul's letters which do not directly involve persuasion, yet speak of the importance of selective words and actions are Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 10.

¹⁷ Due to the integrated method including many theological perspectives, it was not possible to include a lengthy discussion of the rhetorical features in any of Paul's sermons in Acts. For the same reason, in the historical theology perspective (section 4) and the practical theology perspective (section 6), space and time did not permit a detailed study of persuasion in any sermons by famous and effective past or present preachers like Spurgeon or any contemporary preachers.

Both serve as examples of treating every situation on merit and exercising circumspection for each individual case, particularly when a Christian's speech or conduct can affect the weaker brother. The type of caution Paul speaks of here, even concerning food and drink, implies the sensitive nature of what Christians do and say, so that Christ may not be brought into reproach. Instances like these in Paul's ministry may well serve to add weight to the manner in which we utilize our words.

Further, in biblically legitimizing the use of persuasion there are verses that strongly suggest the *ethos*¹⁸ aspect of classical rhetoric. The character of the speaker and even the identification he makes with his audience can provide the impact in effective speaking. Chappel (1988:110) emphasizes the character of Paul in making himself an effective rhetor to his audience, not only in his Christ-centred character, but also his compassion for his audience in passages such as 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12; 1:5; and 1 Timothy 4:12, 13. Paul's motives were selfless and he identified with the audience through his purity and rejection of words of trickery (1 Thessalonians 2:3-8; Philippians 2:2; and 1 Timothy 4:16; 6:3-4). Paul's persuasion was in humility, not umbrage (Philemon 8-9,17). Paul's identification with his audience by speaking at their level is overtly seen in 1 Corinthians 9:22, where he says, 'I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some'.

What I discovered to further strengthen the case for persuasive preaching was my brief study I undertook on rhetorical criticism¹⁹. Although this hermeneutical study falls outside the ambit of my topic, it did show me that Paul must have been in favour of persuasion if his epistles were constructed using rhetorical features. Epistles were meant to be read out and so speech was important. Some scholars even believe that Paul's messengers were chosen specifically for, amongst other things, their capability of oration (Witherington III 1995:46). The letters of Romans and Corinthians are complex correspondence that contain many of the rhetorical types (Osborne 2006:317). Asumang (2014:70) mentions the discipline of rhetorical analysis in biblical interpretation and affirms the Bible is 'designed to influence the

¹⁸ The use of *logos* (reason), *pathos* (emotion), and *ethos* (character) have been widely used as techniques in effective speaking and preaching throughout history, initially distinctives of Aristotle's rhetoric (Shin 2004:21).

¹⁹ Rhetorical criticism attempts to understand the effect that conventional forms of argumentation and structure used in the Greco-Roman world had on early Christian literature composition (Schreiner 2011:20).

thoughts, emotions and imaginations of the first readers'. There is no doubt that persuasive elements are extant in both writ and speech.

I also discovered some verses that appear to challenge the notion of persuasive preaching. On closer inspection, however, there is no real contradiction to the use of persuasion (within its proper limits), and thus they do not necessarily cancel the use of biblical persuasion for which I have made a strong case. My chosen problem verse, 1 Corinthians 2:4, itself begins with Paul expressly stating he does not come using persuasive words. Litfin (1985:270) relies on this verse to emphasize that persuasive words of wisdom can never bring men and women to Christ, but rather a straightforward presentation of the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 2:1-3 Paul reinforces that when he declared the testimony of God to the Corinthians, he did not come with 'excellence of speech or of wisdom' (v. 1), but rather was weak and with them in 'fear and trembling' (v. 3). Liroy (2009:50) remarks of these verses that Paul relied on the Holy Spirit's power, and that owing to his timidity and trembling, would have been unable to preach with clever words and persuasive rhetoric. Furthermore, in 2 Corinthians 10:10 Paul underscores his lack of reliance upon sophistic prowess: "For *his* letters,' they say, 'are weighty and powerful, but *his* bodily presence is weak, and *his* speech contemptible". Rhetoric is cast in a poor light in Romans 16:18, where divisive people were deceiving the hearts of the simple 'by smooth words and flattering speech'.

These verses indeed carry negative connotations about persuasion, but that does not mean persuasion cannot be used for good. Persuasion as a tool is in itself neutral, and can be used for good or evil. Paul's main argument in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2 is to show God's wisdom and power in the cross as diametrically opposed to human wisdom and philosophy. The gospel is powerful on its own, and therefore effective by its divine source. The Greek philosophers on the other hand had to rely on sophisticated oratory techniques in order to convince, because their message was lacking in substance from their source, namely, human wisdom. Paul, therefore, vilifies the reliance on persuasion to impress, not the persuasion itself. Indeed, I agree with Liroy (2009:48-49) that Paul's humility of preaching stands diametrically opposed to Paul's opponents who deliberately used sophistic logic and oratory to impress. But Paul's manner was always one that centred on Christ alone for efficacy in his ministry. In 1 Corinthians 1:29 Paul denounces the seeking of fleshly glory, as

in Galatians 6:14 where his boasting is only in the cross of Christ. Indeed, Paul's message is the preaching of the power of the cross which precludes human wisdom (1 Cor. 1:17-18). These concepts in no way disqualify the use of persuasion in the presentation of the gospel when the motives are godly. Paul's writings are laden with warning against teachers who tickle ears with flattery, promote themselves, seek after greed and so forth. That is precisely why Paul denounces the use of persuasive words that are sourced in human wisdom which cause people to follow after men. Yet he himself uses persuasion in order for people to follow Christ. The gospel is not a message that either Jew or gentile finds desirable. This presents a temptation to use rhetoric in a way that hides the true nature of sin and that salvation is only through Christ and his gospel. But Paul will not make the gospel more palatable to the unconverted by dressing it up in impressive speech. The answer is not clever presentation but the work of the Holy Spirit to convince the hearers of their sin and need to embrace Christ as the only solution.

One last finding in my overview of verses relevant to my topic, was the extent to which the role of the Holy Spirit militates against the need for human ability of the speaker in conveying the message. After considering the applicable verses, I came to the conclusion that there is no contradiction in both the Holy Spirit and the preacher's efforts (i.e. both divine and human elements) being at work during the entire process of preaching, namely, from the preparation of the sermon to the reception of the message by the hearers (Smith 1997:68). Some who have relegated the role of the preacher to the sideline, stressing only the importance of the Holy Spirit's work in the preacher and the hearers, point to verses such as 1 Corinthians 2:13 where the Holy Spirit alone teaches: 'These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual'. Preaching itself is a gift from God (Rom. 12:6-7). Duduit (1992:16) emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in preaching: 'A theology of preaching must take the role of the Spirit into full view, for without an understanding of the work of the Spirit, the task of preaching is robbed of its balance and power'. Whilst I fully concur with this sentiment, that the Holy Spirit convicts, enlightens truth, glorifies Christ and inspired the Scriptures in the first place (2 Peter 1:20-21), it does not necessarily follow that man's ability to convey truth is terminated. Although 1 Thessalonians 1:5 gives credit to the work of the Holy Spirit in the conveying of the

gospel ('For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit'), it includes the role of words, namely, our gospel came to you in both word and power and the Holy Spirit. This underscores that human words are in fact involved in the process of sharing the gospel. The gospel message is indeed a divine one, but it is conveyed to humans, and as such should be executed orally with the greatest care and to the best of one's ability. That is why Paul could say that he became a Jew to the Jews to win them for the gospel's sake (1 Cor. 9:19-23). In 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12 we see a tacit use of persuasion: 'As you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory'. Smith (1997:62) believes this verse evidences Paul's persuasive intentions, and concludes that there is a co-mingling of the human and the divine elements when preaching.

And so my findings on persuasive preaching after surveying Paul's writings and Acts led me to conclude that in more passages than not, the Apostle condoned, and even employed and commended persuasion in preaching.

The next step in my process of doing biblical theology was to bring unity across Paul's corpus of truth, meeting the synthetic methodology requirement. Indeed I found doctrinal cohesion. I concluded that Paul's theology as the backdrop to his preaching is in no way contradictory to his methods of preaching. There is harmony. I was able to show that the 'how' of preaching ought to align with the 'what' of preaching. The power of the gospel ought never to be minimized by the manner of conveying it. Attention is directed not at the preacher but at Christ. Paul's preaching by nature was not self-assertion but the cross of Christ, for Christ alone is wisdom, and the cross is the power of God (1 Cor. 1:18-21). It seemed clear to me then that the very content of what Paul preached throughout his ministry, namely, the gospel, stood out in stark contrast to the Sophists of the day who relied on the flattery of rhetoric as a surrogate for content – their wisdom is contained within the flattery itself rather than any quality of content. Paul asserted the opposite: there was power in his message alone and not methods (1 Corinthians 1:18). In terms of using valid persuasive speech, it seemed to me then that there is no contradiction. Theologically, it is always the gospel that changes lives by its very content of divine

truth and the Spirit that effects that change, and that the persuasive presentation of the message need not detract from that but can indeed complement it.

Much of Paul's theology was shaped in light of rampant deception. Many of his epistles carry warning (such as 2 Timothy 4:3-4, Romans 16:18, Galatians 1:9-10 and 2 Corinthians 11:30). Opposition in Corinth to Paul's gospel message was initiated by various groups, such as libertines, ascetics, and ecstasies (Guthrie 1990:435). Perversion and contradiction of the gospel were encroaching upon the Corinthian church's belief and behaviour. The reason Paul disavows the use of enticing rhetoric in 1 Corinthians 2:4 is not because of any evil in the technique but rather in the rhetors themselves who were beguiling the Corinthian Christians with their false doctrines. Lim (1987:139) posits that Paul's main motivation for this statement was to separate himself from the super apostles and deceitful workmen of the day (2 Cor. 11), who as skilled Sophists, specifically employed techniques of flattery to deceive their audience. And so I discovered that Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 2:4 was made to disarm his opponents, rather than prescribe a form of communication.

In terms of the theological cohesion, I arrived at the following conclusion: Paul's message of the cross is unified throughout his letters. I mean that it is the gospel he is mandated to preach and not the wisdom of man, and he does so with an urgency and a demonstration of the Spirit. Nowhere is that message compromised with worldly wisdom. His means of communication is, however, a separate issue and he is free to be all things to all men (1 Cor. 9:22), except in instances where he caught out his opposition, in which case he highlights their speech as a front for deception.

I briefly correlated my overview of verses with the problem verse, 1 Corinthians 2:4, to resolve any residual tension. I defined the right and wrong use of persuasion by using the word 'reliance'. I made the statement that Paul does not *rely* on persuasion but God's Spirit, as opposed to the Sophists who relied on persuasion to impress, convince and get results because their message was empty. Paul, therefore, is not against the use of rhetoric, for he uses it elsewhere; but he is against the rhetor who convinces the crowd with worldly wisdom that lacks substance which is found in the true gospel. Words that serve Christ were important to Paul, as opposed to smooth words of flattery that serve one's own belly (Rom. 16:18).

I showed that the Greek word in Romans 16:18 is *eulogia* rendered 'fair speech' or 'smooth speech', which portrays the idea of empty content that necessitates smoothness to make the message palatable, much like some 'eulogies' at modern day funeral services. I cited many scholars who resolve the apparent tension of 1 Corinthians 2:4 with the permission to preach persuasively. For instance, Shin (2004:38) cites McLaughlin in dealing with 1 Corinthians 2:4 as saying that Paul's statement is not a rejection of rhetoric but rather a statement of how a Christian ought to use it wisely. Hays (1997:35) also interprets the kind of persuasion in this verse in terms of the 'basis' of wisdom and faith rather than technique. Dunn (1999:41) observes that the eloquence or technique of rhetoric of the Corinthian critics was in itself a type of wisdom, and that is what Paul opposed.

My findings in *toto* after having synthesized Paul's letters and Acts with respect to persuasive preaching can be summarized as follows: 1 Corinthians 2:4 is not disharmonious with other passages permitting persuasion. The verse is placed in a line of argument where Paul emphasizes the emptiness of human wisdom manifested in ostentatious persuasion versus the substance and life changing power of the gospel. The focus is not on the personality of the messenger, but on the Person of the message, namely, Christ. Paul did not come to preach with self-importance or self-promotion, and as such chose to set aside 'methods that would showcase his knowledge and wisdom' (Garland 2003:84). He is in essence opposed to the rhetor and not the rhetoric. Paul's speech and his preaching were not sourced in the persuasive words used by the Sophists of the day to impress, but rather with words sourced in the power of God. Paul was free to use persuasion only if it did not obscure the gospel, replace the work of the Holy Spirit in both the preacher and the hearer, and glorify man.

Before I close this section, I present very brief findings on the last two legs of my biblical theological enquiry, namely, the Christocentric focus, and the practical implication of the study. Paul's ministry was indeed Christocentric at its core and my biblical study on persuasive preaching showed that focus. Both Paul's content of preaching and his manner of preaching centre on the person and work of Christ. Paul's focus was always on preaching the cross of Christ alone. He wanted to know nothing else (1 Cor. 2:2). He imitated Christ and entreated Christians to do the same by imitating him (1 Cor. 11:1). Paul strove to impress upon, urge and persuade men

and women of all backgrounds to hear the truth and respond to it. Christ is the solution to sin and its effects (Rom. 6:23). The gospel message Paul preached was certainly preached with sincerity, fervour, urgency and persuasiveness.

If Paul was commissioned to reconcile the lost to God (2 Cor. 5:20), then he would be compelled to use all and every means to achieve this (1 Cor. 9:22). If Christ was at the beginning, middle and end of Paul's work, the use of rhetoric as a vehicle to reach the lost, most of whom were well accustomed with the practice, would not bring reproach to Christ, but compliment the gospel message given its gravity. Ultimately every means and method Paul used in preaching would be subject to bringing glory to Christ and not his own flesh (1 Cor. 1:29; 10:31).

The practical consequences are obvious, especially for a homiletical topic, by virtue of the mandate for preachers to herald the good news given Paul's mantra of 'how shall they hear without a preacher?' (Rom. 10:14). It behooves every preacher to herald the gospel message to the best of his ability with the necessary vitality, conviction and dynamism that necessitates. If the goal of preaching is to change people's lives (Fabarez 2002:xii), then a persuasive element is naturally endemic to preaching, particularly evangelistic preaching (Shin 2004:43).

When churches today are faced with the malady of ineffective preaching, persuasion is one of the areas that should be scrutinized. Some scholars believe that there is a direct correlation between the lack of sermon impact on the audience and the lack of persuasion. Haddon Robinson (2001:17-18) mentions the need to re-evaluate preaching in our times. He speaks of the 'low grades' audiences are giving preachers, largely attributing these changing communities to our 'over-communicated society' with the 'bombardment of mass media'. Shin (2004:1), too, attributes lack of church growth to weakened preaching, as history has shown. It is therefore incumbent upon all preachers to evaluate their preaching, and if necessary make changes, in order to better impact the lives of their hearers and thus be faithful to God.

I summarized a number of scholars on the importance and implications of preaching persuasively from the pulpit within the proper limits, and found the majority to endorse biblical persuasion. One such scholar is Haddon Robinson (2001:20) who believes preachers ought to 'pour out the message with passion and fervor in order

to stir souls', but adds a caveat that not all passionate preaching from the pulpit possesses divine authority. A preacher is a herald of the Word and hence anything short of 'crying out the Word' cannot legitimately pass for Christian preaching. Robinson is pro using techniques to aid in effective delivery of the sermon to impact the audience, for example, style and voice. He further cites Paul cleverly using the reference to pagan gods when addressing skeptics at Mars Hill to win assent from his audience (pp. 81-82). However, he concludes that in 'speaking to a secular world we dare not speak a secular word' (p. 29).

I concluded the biblical perspective module with the acknowledgement that Paul's preaching did in fact allow for persuasion, but within the framework of promoting Christ and rejecting false wisdom which relied on Sophistic rhetoric for efficacy. Clearly the biblical theology perspective on persuasion in preaching has demonstrated the importance of this perspective for understanding God's will regarding the kind and place of persuasion in preaching. I turn now to the historical perspective on persuasion in preaching to see if this perspective contributes to discovering God's will in this matter.

4. The Historical Perspective on Persuasive Preaching

4.1 Defining the Historical Perspective in Integrated Theology

The historical component of integrated theology seeks to glean from church history the doctrine taught and tailored over time. It would be naïve to suggest that today's church is precedential in providing accurate biblical teaching and not the church of yesteryear. Smith (2013:31) remarks that we ought to stand upon the shoulders of theological giants of church history to inform and reform our own understanding of theology. He explains that although we can see further now, we need to build upon their foundation. There are both errors from church history and valuable contributions, and so we sharpen our understanding of theology with their investigations. The historical enquiry includes church history, historical theology and the history of interpretation (p. 31). The historical perspective then engages one's topic with the historical development of its theological thought. This includes not merely the discovery of the doctrine in history, but the localized factors and environment which shaped the formulation and adoption in each era (McGrath 2013:8). Historical theology includes both church history, i.e. the church's

development over time as well as the theological nuances arising from theological discussion, debate and adoption over those various epochs (Domeris 2014:192). The ultimate objective of such an enquiry is to accumulate wisdom to sculpture one's current theology to better serve God and his people.

Historical theology functions at various platforms. It has a teaching function, in that it provides insight into theological formulations of the past to better strengthen our contemporary statement of theology by investigating writers, debates and documents (McGrath 2013:11). Historical theology also serves a critical function, in that it provides theological scrutiny to obviate erroneous teaching. Other functions include: providing examples of Christian faith over time, stimulating hope for church survival, and giving Christians a sense of family belonging (Allison 2011:24). Whilst evangelical scholars admit the Bible serves as theological authority alone, church history nevertheless provides insight into the practical outworking of those biblical formulations. Historical theology is a bridge between the Bible's first delivery to the New Testament church and the church's doctrine today (Bromiley 1977:xxvi). The purpose of an integrated theological study is ultimately to deploy truth in praxis, and as such historical theology contributes particularly well in that it illustrates that deployment over time to better equip today's practitioner.

4.2 Methods Used in Establishing the Historical Perspective on Persuasive Preaching

Smith (2013:143) espouses three methods in doing historical theology: the chronological, the confessional, and the case-study. The chronological traces a theme over the various time periods of church history, the confessional traces the topic across various theological traditions, and the case study method involves the study of a single time period, movement, event or theologian (pp. 143-44). The choice of method depends on the nature of the topic and whether one prefers a broad, holistic overview (chronological or confessional method), or a more intensive, specific one (case-study method).

The method I chose was the chronological method. This approach traces the topic through each time period, beginning with the church fathers and progressing through to the modern era (Smith 2013:143). Allison (2011:31) calls this method the 'diachronic approach', as it crosses the various epochs of church history. He does

caution that one must avoid two extremes with a diachronic study, namely, being too 'loose' in opinion that one ends up with fragmented and diverse opinions with no agreement, and the other extreme, being too rigid regarding a theological teaching that one imposes a particular bias. I believe the advantage in the chronological method is that it provides a broad overview of understanding of the topic across history, thus painting a clear enough picture, yet at the same time documenting changes and nuances over time.

The chronological method suited my investigation of persuasion in preaching, in that preaching has always been a quintessential work of the ministry in every era. Unlike some specific doctrinal development that is peculiar to one church period, preaching was a common practice across time. A broad, holistic survey over time therefore suited my enquiry.

In terms of the categorized church eras, McGrath (2013) provides a helpful timeline comprising the following divisions: the Patristic period (100-451); the Middle Ages and Renaissance (500-1500); the Reformation and Post-Reformation periods (1500-1750); and the Modern Period (1750 to present day). I decided to follow this chronology of demarcated eras, except for the last one, the Modern Period, due to space constraints.

I provided a general overview of each era regarding their views on persuasion in preaching. I also documented some specific examples of preachers or theologians within each era to better understand the practical effects of their views. I considered both the theology as well as sermons of certain key figures typical of each era, which in turn provided an honest depiction of the theological and societal milieu of the day. My study noted similar trends as well as discrepancies on the topic of persuasive preaching. As mentioned previously, my topic does not concern itself with persuasion itself but rather the biblical legitimacy for preachers to utilize it. I therefore searched for historical evidence regarding this, especially references to my problem verse, 1 Corinthians 2:4. Where the theology of my topic did not always overtly appear, I did manage to diagnose existing views based on the record of the preaching of some key figures in each era.

4.3 Findings of the Historical Perspective on Persuasive Preaching

My chronological method of doing historical theology comprised three church eras, the Patristic period, the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and the Reformation and Post-Reformation period. I shall summarize the findings of each of these eras respectively.

The Patristic period covers the period 100 to 451 A.D., namely, from the closing of the New Testament writings to the Council of Chalcedon (McGrath 2013:17). I discovered that this period arranged itself into two halves in terms of its views on persuasive preaching. The first half appeared reticent in allowing persuasion in preaching, while the second half promoted its use. McGrath (2013:26) explains that the first half of the patristic period (100 A.D. to 311 A.D.) was marked by persecution towards Christianity, and as such there was little accommodation of classical Greek and Roman rhetoric. The reason for this avoidance was that the state was perceived as the enemy and so the church distanced itself from the use of secular approaches to belief and behaviour. Shin (2004:27) agrees noting that the Latin Fathers scorned the use of classical rhetoric.

Broadus (1879:44) provides three further reasons why the early church fathers shied away from rhetorical sermons. Firstly, preaching of that day was more conversational and informal rather than a designed homily, with an emphasis of the work of the Holy Spirit to empower the conversation. Secondly, preaching was performed by most Christians and even the presbyters lacked formal training and had limited time to study. Even when scholars became Christians, such as Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus and Tertullian, their sermons were simple and impromptu. Thirdly, early Christian writers did not leave sermons behind but letters defending Christianity amidst a pagan world, albeit some letters containing oratorical form. Leonard (1992:21) furnishes a further reason for the reluctance of the church fathers to embrace persuasion, namely, the ubiquity of false preachers and teachers in the Apostolic era, which the Apostle Paul had condemned in 2 Corinthians 12 for their cunning use of flattery and charismatic elocution.

After 311 A.D., however, the status of Christianity changed due to Galerius' order to halt persecution, resulting in the church no longer viewing the state with a 'siege mentality' (McGrath 2013:20). This legalization of Christianity, particularly

championed by Constantine following his conversion in 312AD, led to theology emerging as a matter of public interest with extensive open debate within the Roman Empire (p. 21). We see, for example, Augustine reviving persuasive preaching during this latter period (p. 25). Kinzig (1997:645) endorses this change to adopt a rhetorical speech in that the church transformed from a persecuted sect to the official religion of the Roman Empire, with the fourth century Sophistic movement finally reaching Christian literature. Two notable examples of people during this era who utilized persuasion in preaching were John Chrysostom and Augustine of Hippo.

Chrysostom (347 – 407 A.D.), a prolific preacher during the Patristic period, who preached over a thousand sermons, was nicknamed the ‘Golden Mouth’ due to his excellent oratorical skills (Broadus 1879:71; Ferguson 2006:200; Parry 2000:128). Chrysostom acknowledged the effectiveness of persuasive skill in communicating the gospel, but did caution against the potential misuse of rhetoric for evil (Shin 2004:28). Thurén (2004:220) too believed Chrysostom both promoted the use of persuasive preaching and condemned aesthetic rhetoric used for deceit.

Chrysostom was a valuable historical contributor to my topic in that he left both sermons behind which detailed the use of persuasion, as well as commentary on my problem verse, 1 Corinthians 2:4. His sermons evidenced the use of classical rhetorical techniques, for example, he gave practical application of the Bible to his hearers (Ferguson 2006:200); he addressed the needs of the people in a timeless fashion to cover all conditions of all ages (Leonard 1992:25); and used rhetorical features such as encomium, paranesis, apostrophe, paralepsis, ethos, paradigm and witness (O’Mahony 2000:56). In commenting on 1 Corinthians 2:4, Chrysostom (1889, homily vi) believed that Paul was not against the use of persuasive words in preaching but rather its reliance to justify the message. Paul’s gospel did not need to be enticing, for it was in itself something quite staggering based on its divine essence.

Chrysostom shows that both the ‘thing itself which was preached’ and in the ‘manner of preaching it’ were enough to stagger people. The wisdom that Paul rejects in 1 Corinthians 2:4 according to Chrysostom is not the techniques of rhetoric, but rather wisdom that is from ‘without’. Chrysostom is really saying that Paul’s message does not derive from ‘without’ (as in the world’s source of wisdom) but rather is inherent to

this gospel. I concluded by looking at John Chrysostom, in both his sermons and his commentary of 1 Corinthians, that persuasion in preaching is legitimate as long as its reliance does not act independently of the gospel message.

The second historical figure of this later Patristic period included in my research is Augustine, bishop of Hippo (354 – 430 A.D.). I chose him because he is considered one of the greatest theologians and preachers of this era, and also because his writings are the largest corpus available to us from the Patristic era (Broadus 1879:78; Hart 2000:43; McGrath 2013:25). In fact, Augustine wrote about the subject of rhetoric in preaching, believing it to be valuable in the ‘service’ of transcendent truth (Shin 2004:29). His Book IV has been called the ‘first homiletical textbook on Christian history’ (Satterthwaite 1997:688; Shin 2004:31).

In Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana*, he describes three duties of the orator, namely, proving, pleasing and moving. Luecke (1986:309) explains that Augustine was trained in rhetoric before his conversion and afterwards still employed the art, but notes he transitioned from a ‘vendor of words’ to a ‘preacher of the word’ – hence a change in source, not necessary art. Satterthwaite (1997:688-89) shows that Augustine in his *De Doctrina* Book 4 permitted Christians to use rhetoric to either defend their faith to outsiders, or to exhort believers to godly living. Augustine argues rhetoric is in itself neutral and can be used for both good and evil. Harm can come when a man speaks sophistically but without godly wisdom, whereas some good will come from a man with little eloquence but godly wisdom.

Augustine did warn against self-centred and proud preaching, and caveated that preaching is a conviction from the heart and not from words (Leonard 1992:23). The clarity of the message should trump elocution in a situation where elegant sounding words might misrepresent the clear message (Satterthwaite 1997:689).

In his work *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine (1887, vol. ii, book iv, chap. 2) heads a chapter with the words ‘It is lawful for a Christian teacher to use the art of rhetoric’ and argues that Christians would be foolish to allow antagonists of the faith to use this art to great effect and not protagonists of the truth. His book clearly evidences that rhetoric should be used as a great service to promote divine truth.

Both John Chrysostom and Augustine of Hippo, then, gave detailed treatment on the subject of persuasive preaching, both in commentary and in practice, and appeared to endorse the use of persuasion in preaching within proper limits. Whilst the first half of the Patristic period, repudiated the use of rhetoric given the socio-political climate of the day, the second half, after the legalization of Christianity, witnessed a return of classical rhetoric into the church.

The second era in my chronological study on church history was the Middle Ages, which spans approximately one thousand years (500 – 1500 A.D.). I found this era to contain a dearth of preachers serving as any notable examples of persuasive preaching. Broadus (1897:90) believed there were no other great preachers since Augustine and Chrysostom in the Eastern and Western church for another seven centuries. He characterized the Middle Ages as reflecting a sudden collapse and cessation of effective preaching. The reason he cites is that the church turned to sacramental and sacerdotal rituals with little sincere and passionate preaching. Warby (2008:132) also believed the sacramental table replaced the homily.

Schaff (1996, vol. iv:§93) refers to preaching in the Middle Ages as the church's 'weak spot'. Priests, he reasoned, were too ignorant to prepare a sermon and hardly understood Latin forms of liturgy. The clergy tended to be well rehearsed in reciting the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, mass and other codified liturgies, thereby diminishing the role of the sermon. When congregations assembled, it was for ceremonies, chanting and incantations. Latin sermons were poorly understood by the laity, and educated clergy were embroiled in political maneuvering with often unchristian pursuits (Broadus 1879:93).

Schaff (1996, vol. v:§132) notes that only half of the priests in Germany during the twelfth century preached, and a sermon in England was a rarity until the friars came on the scene in the thirteenth century. Having noted the dearth of persuasive preachers in this era, as well as any helpful commentary on its biblical legitimacy, given the de-emphasis of the Word of God as the primary authority, I was nevertheless able to provide some examples of persuasive preaching. Broadus (1879:93) confirmed that although the Dark Ages neglected, and even suppressed, the role of effective preaching, it did produce some exceptions where preachers employed persuasive preaching to some extent. Bernard of Clairvaux, known as St

Bernard (1091-1153 A.D.), was a French monk whose sermons were impressive, with elegant simplicity and an irresistible persuasion (Broadus 1879:96). Luther praised Bernard for his sermons and referred to him as 'the golden preacher' (Schaff 1996, vol. v:§132). Leonard (1992:25) describes Bernard as having given a 'voice to monastic and mystical spirituality in the twelfth century' and whose preaching drew in the crowds.

Peter the Hermit is another example of someone considered to be a great preacher who spoke with fiery passion and fluid words (Broadus 1879:93). His impassioned discourses in fact evoked a following in the First Crusade (1095 A.D.). Through his appeals for support, ultimately thousands marched towards Palestine (Toon 1992:558).

The Dominican monastic order was expressly established to preach, and in turn fostered a revival of preaching in the medieval church (Leonard 1992:27). Sermon making became a new art, and literature abounded, such as Humbert de Romans' *The instruction of preachers*, which called for preachers to watch their tempo to obviate boredom. Schaff (1996, vol. v:§132) shows that Humbert de Romans, general of the order of the Dominicans, placed preaching higher than church liturgy. Antony of Padua, a Franciscan missionary of the thirteenth century, is hailed by some as the most popular preacher that ever lived, his sermons drawing crowds of over thirty thousand listeners a night (Broadus 1879:101). What is interesting to note is that Antony's method of preaching included divisions in the sermon, a novelty in the history of preaching, born out of the practical discourse methods taught at the latest universities; his method also displayed the ubiquitous use of illustrations and anecdotes (p. 103).

Lastly I showed that Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 A.D.) served as a further example of persuasive preaching. Although he did not employ much ornament or passion in his speech, he did use 'homely and lively comparisons' for explanation and argument, and became a popular preacher to the common people (Broadus 1879:106).

I summed up the church era of the Middle Ages by saying that although there were some examples of preachers who employed persuasive preaching, generally there was a dearth of persuasion in the church and therefore of effective preaching. The

reasons for this lack of persuasion centred not on biblical grounds, but rather factors such as the language medium of Latin, the strong liturgical emphasis during worship, corruption in the church, and political aspirations.

The third and last church era I considered was the Reformation and Post-Reformation Period (1500-1750 A.D.), which I considered a great example of the use and benefits of persuasive preaching. The sixteenth century witnessed an immediate revival of biblical preaching (Broadus 1879:113; Leonard 1992:36; Warby 2008:133). The Reformation brought church renewal and a resuscitation of the importance of the pulpit for preaching the Word. Not only was theology revolutionized in this period, but communication as well, with inventive new styles of speech to address the laity (Matheson 2004:3). Matheson firmly believed the Reformation was a discourse of rhetoric, which included 'prayer, protest, poetry and passion'. Edwards (2010:§Style) characterized the Reformation period as a rediscovery of the Greco-Roman rhetoric in sermons. Schwöbel (2001:1) notes the Reformers called the church the 'creature of the word' and that the divine Word calls for human words to be instruments of service for God's grace and truth.

I noted two prominent figures of this period to comment on the use of persuasion in preaching, namely, Luther and Calvin. Martin Luther (1483-1546) preached two to three times a week and considered preaching to be his first call of duty (Leonard 1992:28). Indeed, Luther employed rhetoric in his preaching, seen in his vast arsenal of sermons (Schaff 1996, vol. vii:§81). As a tool to begin the Reformation, Luther believed the sermon to contain the necessary elements of stirring and polemic (Leonard 1992:36). Schaff (1996, vol. vii:§81) confirms Luther's sermons were an antithesis to the previously 'dead language' of Roman worship, rather treating the laity as hearers and not spectators. Broadus (1879:121) views Luther as a notable example of employing personality in preaching, a classical rhetorical form on its own. Other features included the practical nature of his sermon and the use of identification with his hearers, and an array of figurative imagery, including paradox and hyperboles (Broadus (1879:121; Matheson 2004:242).

John Calvin (1509-64), both pastor and theologian, was not considered as winsome as Luther in his preaching, but was nevertheless designated as a 'great preacher' (Armstrong 1992:132; Broadus 1879:121). Although Calvin's sermons possessed

traces of rhetoric, he did not consider rhetorical style as always being appropriate for the pulpit (Broadus 1879:121; Edwards 2010:§Style). In my research on Calvin, I turned my attention away from him as pastor to theologian. Calvin provided a hugely valuable contribution to understanding the theological statements by Paul in 1 Corinthians 2. After carefully examining Calvin's commentary on Paul's views on preaching and persuasion, I concluded that in fact Calvin was congenial to the use of persuasive preaching, but only in the sense that it does not rely on rhetoric in order to embolden the message.

Calvin (1998:§1 Corinthians 2:3-5) in his *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* defines 'persuasive words' in Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 2:4 as oratory which aims by 'artifice' to allure the minds of men rather than by truth. Paul, he believes, used the opposite of persuasion in terms of human wisdom, namely, the 'spirit and power' of God. This does not exclude the use of persuasion in proclaiming the gospel as far as I can tell, but rather Calvin is rejecting the faulty kind of persuasion that is sourced in human wisdom, which needed to allure its hearers with blandishments. In fact, he qualifies this sentiment when commenting on the next verse (1 Cor. 2:5: 'that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men'), where he uses the word 'dependence', that is, that Paul's preaching of Christ was not dependent on human wisdom (which includes persuasion) for then it could not be based on truth.

Calvin concludes his commentary with an enlightening statement on the use of persuasion in proclaiming truth, namely, that truth may be 'helped by it, but ought not to rest upon it'. This statement shows that Calvin did not reject the use of rhetoric in preaching, but total reliance on it. Calvin's point was that Paul's ministry was not qualified by persuasive words of wisdom, but as an apostle of Christ, by the power of God alone.

I surveyed the post-Reformation period's feelings towards persuasive preaching by briefly noting two movements, Puritanism and Pietism. The Puritans in general repudiated the classical style of the Greco-Roman speech, and adopted a plain style, rejecting many tools of classical rhetoric (Edwards 2010:§Style). Broadus (1879:204) believed that none of the Puritan preachers and writers cared much for polished style, but rather preferred speeches that were lengthy and forceful. Topics would be

exhausted with little regard for elegance of expression and symmetrical arrangement.

John Wesley (1703-91), a leading preacher and founder of Methodism in the era of Pietism, which began in the late seventeenth century, is not considered an impassioned orator (Broadus 1879:222). He spoke with simple earnestness, and yet is believed to be a great preacher who carried out successful revival efforts (Vos 1994:§Methodism), leaving behind some 42 000 sermons (Partner 1992:710). Wesley's contemporary, George Whitefield, on the other hand, was an orator of the highest standard, one who would move crowds with vivid imagery and changes in tone of voice. Sellers (2006:444) describes Whitefield as a 'fervent persuader' who had a 'range of voice' that was 'astonishing'. He was a dynamic preacher, yet his style was unadorned and often colloquial. Mitchell (1992:716) notes that Whitefield's sermons were preached very differently from the preaching of his day, which was more doctrinally heavy and laden with multiple points. Instead, Whitefield preached with simplicity and directness, but with much life and passion. His rhetorical features included identification with his audience who were from every station of life, his abundant use of illustrations, and free use of natural gestures.

I concluded by stating that the post-Reformation period was too complex and vast for a thorough examination given my space constraints, but my brief sampling did show the period to be mostly friendly towards persuasive preaching. Whilst the Puritans were averse to the use of persuasion in preaching, rather preferring a plain style of speech, Wesley and Whitefield during the age of Pietism, on the other hand, provided effective preaching styles, with Whitefield dominating the scene as a highly eloquent itinerant preacher.

Concluding the historical perspective, after having noted both sermons and theological writings of key figures in each era, I affirm that church history displays congeniality towards the use of persuasion in preaching, within proper limits, and in fact exposes the dire consequences of occasions where biblical preaching was non-existent. Thus the historical perspective has proved relevant in seeking a biblically faithful understanding of the place of preaching, including persuasion, showing the value of the integrated method of doing theology. I turn now to consider the

systematic perspective on persuasive preaching to see if it too provides supporting evidence or further clarity on this matter.

5. The Systematic Perspective on Persuasive Preaching

5.1 Defining the Systematic Perspective in Integrated Theology

Systematic theology is a construction of truth regarding a topic of the Bible, comprising biblical data and corroborated by fields outside the Bible that accentuate the truth. Both theological and non-theological sources are used to inform the topic. Smith (2008:183) argues that although a definition simply put is a 'systematic study of a topic of the Bible', he does add that it hinges upon the method employed. Ware adds the component of theorizing when defining systematic theology (Smith 2008:184). In other words, he believes in taking the observable biblical data and developing it into a theoretical model, that is, a theory which accounts for all the gathered data. This does separate systematic theology from biblical theology in that there is a synthesis of the biblical research using all of Scripture. The ultimate aim of systematic theology is to formulate a statement or model concerning the topic (Smith 2013:124).

Grudem's (1994:21) definition of systematic theology is similar to Smith's in that it has to do with the whole Bible's teaching on a particular topic, but Grudem specifically defines it as how it applies in today's world. He, like Smith, believes it also relates to other disciplines, both theological and philosophical, but as an evangelical study, the Bible alone remains the final authority. Erickson (1998:23) reinforces in his definition of systematic theology that the isolated verses that are exegeted need to be coherently brought together to form harmony. Erikson, like Smith and Grudem, adds that the calculation of factors include both the theological and non-theological (p. 62). I agree with Smith's (2013:47) caution that other disciplines should only be utilized to aid what God has said in his Word.

There is also a practical trajectory that the systematic enquiry ought to follow. In other words, the findings of a biblical study that determines God's will is ultimately deployed in praxis, as the importance of an integrated study has shown. It is for this reason that systematic theology can be viewed as a bridge between the Bible and practice.

And so systematic theology involves both elements of biblical synthesis as well as other scientific disciplines, such as theological, natural, social and human sciences, to supplement the enquiry, as long as the latter supplementation in no way contradicts biblical precedence. This results in a defensible position that can be tested by established disciplines.

After having looked at scholarly definitions of systemic theology in my study, I concluded with the following, noting important elements: Systematic theological study is the culmination of biblical excavation, other disciplinary engagement (using both theological and non-theological sources), theoretical model enquiry, and defensible interaction, concerning a topic, which in turn leads to an effective deployment of God's will and purpose in the church and world.

5.2 Methods Used in Establishing the Systematic Perspective on Persuasive Preaching

In doing systematic theology I employed a five-step process. I incorporated mostly Smith's four-step model, which I preferred to others, but also incorporated some principles found in the models of Erikson, Grudem and Geisler. Smith's (SATS MIT5245 Manual:4) four steps in his model are by and large contained in both Erikson's (1998:70-82) and Geisler's (2002:218-224) models. Before I lay out my five step model, I shall briefly mention how I arrived at its final shape.

Smith's (2008:187) four-step model begins by reducing the biblical data to some timeless truths or propositions, then correlating these truths with other sources of knowledge, then constructing the theory that best explains the data, and lastly testing the model by applying apologetic pressure in order to stand up to alternative models. Erickson proposes a ten-step process which adds some detail to what Smith proposes, and also includes some nuanced steps. Smith's process concerns one topic, whereas Erickson's process ends with a compilation of all the topics. My proposed model does not include Erickson steps 9 and 10 (the central motif and stratification of topics²⁰), as that tends to codify one's angle of theology which primes the reader. I chose to absorb three of Erickson's steps, namely, historical treatments,

²⁰ The step 'central motif' suggests streamlining the theology into a central point, which is the researcher's concluding angle by which he will view the theology. The step 'stratification of topics' involves outlining the theology into enumerated topics and subtopics (Erickson 1998:81-83).

cultural perspectives, and illumination of extra-biblical sources, within my second step (the stage of corroboration with other sources).

Geisler's (2002:218-224) nine-step method begins in a very similar way to Erickson, namely, by examining the text inductively, then deducing the truths. At this point Geisler adds drawing on analogies to illuminate the teaching, and then further supports the truth with an examination of general revelation. Geisler's sixth step is the congealing of all information into doctrine. At this stage one takes the Biblical data and correlates it with all materials gathered that is non-contradictory (to biblical data) to produce the doctrine. Geisler's model's final steps include corroborating the findings with the Church Fathers and living out the theology in practical ways. My model does not include Geisler's step 3 (use of analogies), in that analogies are merely ways to explain doctrine and are not particularly necessary in the formulation of the topic, although apt illustrations would fit into the practical component of my model. I did, however, include some of Geisler's steps in my second step that pertained to looking at other sources, such as church fathers and general revelation.

Grudem (1994:32), like Smith, Erickson and Geisler, believes in doing systematic theology by looking at all relevant biblical texts surrounding the topic, but adds that one has to study with prayer, humility, reason, and rejoicing as an honest Christian researcher. I agree that these qualities ought to be inherent to a study in the attitude of the researcher.

I further reiterated that many models contained commencement steps that involved much of what my integrative study already investigated, namely, exegesis and biblical theology. I have, therefore, excluded them as steps in my systematic theology model. My model then begins where biblical theology ends.

I added a fifth step to Smith's proposed four-step model, which is a practical implication step. The very purpose of the study is to discern God's nature, will and purpose for the church and world, and as such the findings of the study need to point in the direction of praxis, at least highlighting the significance of the doctrinal formulation for believers today. Whilst the practical theological component appears after the systematic study is completed, I felt a focus on doctrinal and practical significance will help shape the model and create a bridge in the direction of practical theology. This is akin to Lewis and Demarest's final step (Smith 2013:60).

My five-step process can be summarized as follows: Firstly, I took the results from the exegetical and biblical theological studies regarding persuasive preaching and reduced them to timeless propositions. This resulted in my theological statement of my position. I, therefore, synthesized the biblical data of my problem verse 1 Corinthians 2:4 and all the key verses in Paul's writings concerning preaching and persuasion. At this first step I not only synthesized the biblical data, but also the historical data which firmly informed the position of Paul within the world of Greco-Roman rhetoric.

In my second step I correlated these timeless truths with other sources. I used both theological sources, namely, historical theology and contemporary theology, as well as non-theological sources, such as natural, social and human sciences. Whilst I made allusion to the value of natural, social and human sciences in the medium of communication such as linguistics, sociology and psychology, I considered merely two disciplines due to space constraints, namely, philosophy and linguistics.

My third step involved accounting for all gathered information by clarifying the collected data to ensure logic and consistency as well as adjust to eliminate any discrepancies. Step four involved a defence of my theological formulation against contrary theories, both theological and non-theological. I raised possible objections to my model and defended it as the most viable and correct. Lastly, I discussed the doctrinal and practical significance of my findings for the church and world. This step served as a bridge from a theoretical model to a practical one.

5.3 Findings of the Systematic Perspective on Persuasive Preaching

The mapping of verses pertaining to Paul's view on the use of persuasion in preaching was provided in my synthesis of biblical data. I will not revisit those arguments now, as I have covered them in the biblical perspective section earlier. Suffice to say I showed how Paul's sentiment of rhetoric in 1 Corinthians 2:4 was not umbrage to its use as a device of communicating the gospel, but rather a vilification of worldly wisdom. He repudiated not 'persuasive words' but rather 'persuasive words of human wisdom'. I contended in fact that Paul commends the use of rhetoric throughout his ministry. My problem verse is not necessarily a proverb of advice, but rather part of a sustained argument, true to Paul's writing style (Schreiner 2011:99).

The preceding chapter in 1 Corinthians (chap. 1) comprises Paul's antithesis²¹ of the foolishness of the world and man's wisdom (v. 18), party strife and personality following (vv. 10-13), the focus of his preaching being Christ and not himself (vv. 13-16) lest the cross be emptied of power (v. 17), and a denouncement of the Greeks for seeking after wisdom, which essentially opposes the message of Christ crucified (vv. 22-23). Chapter 2 then continues the argument of this pseudo wisdom which brings men to rely on excellence of speech rather than the testimony of God (vv. 1-5). From this line of argument, it appears that Paul is not against the use of rhetoric but the placing of one's faith in men's words, rather than God's Word, which alone has the power to change lives.

I then moved to historical evidence of the church from Paul's day to present which brings weight to the use of persuasive preaching, in that I showed general acceptance of persuasion of preaching over the years. Again, I shall not repeat those historical gleanings here as it has been covered mostly in Section 4 above.

After proving the biblical and historical endorsement of persuasive preaching, I provided six timeless truths which I believed emanated from the biblical data. The six were as follows:

1. A preacher is a herald of God who is called to proclaim the gospel. It is inherently urgent and ought to be proclaimed to all men.
2. The message is dynamic because it is sourced in the power of God and based on the truth of the cross of Jesus Christ, verified by the Holy Spirit and not the choice of man's words.
3. Human wisdom is an antithesis to godly wisdom, and is foolish at best.
4. The preacher ought to boast in Christ alone.
5. The preacher ought to use all means to win all men to Christ.
6. Urging, pleading, exhorting and admonishing are praiseworthy components in conveyance.

These principles are clear in Paul's writings. In honing my six propositional principles, I reasoned the following: preaching is a primary focus of the church, in that we are called to proclaim the gospel to all men; it is only the gospel of the Lord

²¹ Paul often used an antithetical style in his writings (Moulton and Turner 1976:96).

Jesus Christ that alone saves and therefore ought to be preached; the Holy Spirit is where the power originates and not with man's choice of words; as Paul was a 'Jew to a Jew', so we must seek to communicate to people with relevancy and persuasiveness; persuasion can be used for good and for evil; persuasion is simply a tool to help convey the gospel message effectively; persuasion ought not be sourced in human wisdom, but in spiritual wisdom and power; persuasion ought not draw men to the preacher, but to Christ; and Christian virtues such as humility and pure motives ought to undergird the preacher's speech.

1 Corinthians 2:4 in no way is contradictory to Paul's ministry of preaching, which employed forms of persuasion. I affirmed that Paul in no way rejected rhetoric as a mechanism in speech, but as a foundation of worldly wisdom. He deliberately set aside methods that would showcase his knowledge and wisdom as a disarming argument against his opponents, who used eloquence as a surrogate for truth. Paul did not come to Corinth as a contemporary Sophist, but in Christ's name for the sake of the gospel, which was in itself convincing.

I provided my theological statement regarding my topic, which I worded as follows: It is biblically legitimate for a preacher to proclaim truth persuasively, but in a manner that promotes the message and not the messenger, and sourced in the power of God and not the wisdom of man.

In documenting sources outside the Bible to corroborate my doctrinal model, I firstly examined some theological sources. I provided the voices of a number of contemporary homiletical scholars to speak on this matter, particularly looking at their views on the biblical parameters of persuasion, namely, what level of persuasion would be considered biblical and what would not.²²

Persuasion according to the *New interpreter's handbook of preaching* is the 'process by which a person seeks to influence the decision making and/or actions of another person by means of language and/or symbolic action' (Wilson 2010:§Persuasion). The Greek word *peitho* also carried the idea of a change of mind by influence of reason or moral considerations (Vine 1997:851). Gary Smith's (1997:72) definition of

²² I have discussed the scholarly congeniality of the legitimate use of persuasion, such as Smith (1997:68), Shin (2004:44) and Chapell (1988:110), in a previous section, and therefore I shall not repeat those arguments here, but rather highlight the parameters of persuasion.

persuasion also includes the word 'influence' and is really a form of communication designed to modify people's beliefs, values or attitudes. Having established that persuasion carries the idea of bringing a change or influence on the hearers, I wanted to probe what would be considered a biblical influence on a person. It appeared that the altruism of influencing someone's decision will depend on one's motive for doing so and the ethics involved in the methods employed.

Shin (2004:38-40) notes one of the safeguards, and that is to test whether the persuasion involves voluntary choice and will of the hearer, and does not violate a person's will by being coercive. Persuasive preaching then cannot be coercive or manipulative. Overstreet (2004:§Defining persuasion), too, believes in persuasive preaching that is conducted to autonomous individuals who may or may not be convicted. He believes persuasive preaching is both biblical and appropriate as long as it is ethical and not manipulative.

Haddon Robinson (2001:19-27) believes the change in the receiver of the message comes from the Word preached and nothing else. He notes Paul did not discuss religion but that God himself spoke through his personality and message to confront men and women in bringing them to himself. McLaughlin (1972:96-68) notes one can determine whether the rhetoric used is ethical by checking two areas - the ends of persuasion and the means of it. The evaluation is based on moderation, balance, law, and love. There appears to be both a false persuasion and a truthful persuasion. Gary Smith (1997:68) firmly believes Paul viewed truthful persuasion as a God-given task in reaching people, according to 2 Corinthians 5:11.

My contention is that the preacher as God's herald should never force the hearer into a specific response, but rather use persuasiveness in the highlighting of what the message is, by being passionate and convicting about what he is saying rather than manipulating the hearer's response. The decision on the part of the hearer is left up to his/her own volition and God's divine work. Urging and entreating are biblically mandated for the preacher and in that sense persuasion is legitimate. The English word for persuasion itself derives from the Latin *suasio* implying an 'urging'.

My overall conclusions on the views of contemporary theological scholars on the level of biblical persuasion were the following: Persuasion is used for good insofar as the techniques are mere aids in the communication of the message and not a

reliance, and that there is no coercion or manipulation of the hearers, nor an elicitation for a specific response. Understanding rather than yielding should be the focus.

In terms of non-theological sources, I pointed out that oratory is indeed inherent in many fields outside Christianity. Communication as a medium is a complex study on its own with various nuanced elements such as senders, receivers, decoding, and influences such as personal, social and cultural factors. I briefly observed two fields of study on the score of communication and persuasion, namely, linguistics and philosophy. I highlighted two prominent scholars, one a contemporary voice on classical rhetoric, George Kennedy, and one an ancient philosopher, Aristotle. Both provided insight into, not only the rhetoric of Paul's day, but also the type and level of rhetoric Paul employed.

I showed how George Kennedy believed that a reading of the New Testament has to incorporate the perspective of rhetoric given Paul's exposure to a Greco-Roman world of rhetoric. The discipline of rhetoric was part of the Greco-Roman civic, educational and cultural life. It was taught at schools and used practically in courts, market places and other public arenas (Kennedy 1994:3). It pervaded most of the bigger cities, including Tarsus and even Jewish towns like Jerusalem (Witherington III 1995:40). Kennedy (1994:9) firmly believed that although Paul denounced worldly wisdom and early Christians scorned rhetoric as worldly, Paul himself was a skilled rhetorician.

A dichotomy ought to be made between two types of rhetoric of Paul's day, the more commonplace type, which Paul employed, versus the more ostentatious kind flaunted by the Sophists which lacked in content and abounded in flattery and entertainment. The Sophist was an orator who emphasized style over substance and received payment for his work. Aristotle's predecessor, Plato rejected these Sophists because they did not possess the substance of truth, and as such needed to tickle the ears of the audience, preying on their pleasure and ignorance. Philosophy on the other hand, he believed, followed a line of reasoning and knowledge to arrive at the truth. Plato did, however, in later works come to accept a form of rhetoric that could be used in philosophy that was based on logic and psychology (Kennedy 1994:8). In

a Christian context we see Paul too focused on the substance of the gospel to convince his hearers, rather than the style of communication.

Rhetoric to the Greeks and Romans was defined as the theory of oratory, and as a pedagogical tool the objective was to persuade the audience to elicit a desired response (Shin 2004:12). The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, is considered the greatest figure on the subject of ancient rhetoric (p. 21). Aristotle believed rhetoric was an art of argument and not ornamentation. Aristotle lays out all the essential elements used in effective persuasion in his book *Rhetoric*²³ which includes the following: three species of public speaking, namely, speaker, subject, and person addressed; the types of rhetoric which include judicial, deliberate and epideictic; the modes of persuasion, namely, *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos*; and the major canons of rhetoric, namely, invention, arrangement, elocution or style, delivery and memory (Sandys 1909). The three modes, or proofs of persuasion, have been effectively used in preaching over the centuries – *logos* referring to reason, *pathos* to the emotions, and *ethos* to the character of the speaker.

Some scholars believe Paul manifested these three modes in his communication. Donald Sunukjian (1982), for example, proposes the use of *ethos* in preaching by highlighting Paul's use of it in his sermons in Acts 13, 17 and 20, where Paul's ethical character resulted in a more favourable acceptance of his message by the audience. Chapell (1988:110), too, believes Paul's character made him an effective rhetor to his audience by his Christ-centred character, his pure motives, and his compassion for the audience.

Using non-theological sources, then, gave me some understanding of the secular usage of Greek and Roman rhetoric in order to immerse myself into Paul's day to know what confronted him, and subsequently what form of rhetoric he repudiated and what he embraced.

At the apologetic step of doing systematic theology, I looked at likely objections to my theological position on persuasion for an appropriate response. One possible objection to using biblical persuasion is the role of the Holy Spirit when preaching. Some may argue that the preacher has no real part to play in the communication

²³ McLaughlin (1972:95) considers this book to be the most influential on the modern day subject of public speaking.

process by polishing his mode of communication to reach his audience, but rather that it is the Holy Spirit solely who controls the process of preaching, from the preparation of the message to the response of the hearer. Such a point of view might rely on the following arguments: preaching is a gift from God (Rom. 12:6-7); it is the role of the Holy Spirit to convict, inspire and fill (John 14:26; 16:8; Eph. 5:18, 1 Thess. 1:5); the Spirit of God works in the hearer to respond to his grace and be convicted to believe; a preacher's message could be marred by his own aberrant integrity, thoughts, deeds and intentions; the Holy Spirit is the One who teaches and not man's words of wisdom (1 Cor. 2:13); and natural men cannot perceive spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14). Scholars like Duduit (1992:16) emphasize that without the full view of the Holy Spirit in preaching, the sermon is robbed of balance and power.

I responded to this likely objection by affirming my belief in the role of the Holy Spirit in convicting, regenerating and inspiring, but also reiterated that the work of the Spirit does not negate the role of the human agency of the preacher. Each preacher has a unique will, set of emotions and intelligence to convey a message to the best of his ability. There is no contradiction in both divine and human agencies at work in the process of preaching. Smith (1997:68-71) admits the Holy Spirit's work in the entire process of preaching but notes that words, sentences, grammar and culture are left to the experience of the speaker or listener. Paul's mention of the role of the Holy Spirit in the conveying of the gospel in 1 Thessalonians 1:5 in no way excludes the choice of human words, but in fact supplements the work of God by the inclusion of the phrase 'not in word only.' This means words indeed play a part in sharing the gospel. Whilst the message never changes, the methods do, underscored by Paul's being a 'Jew to a Jew' (1 Cor. 9:20). I noted that Smith (1997:62) believed there is a co-mingling of the human and the divine elements when preaching, for without human participation in persuasion the message would remain a divine mystery (p. 72).

John Broadus (1898:7) concurs that there is a balance of the human and divine in preaching. He believes the preacher will preach the gospel, holding on to these old truths but clothing them with new interest and power. Haddon Robinson (2001:14), too, believes in the activity of both elements, and talks about how 'principles and passion' must be united before the pulpit becomes meaningful. A sermon, he believes, ought to be based on truth alone but that the preacher's own thoughts will

garnish the message. The Holy Spirit of course is involved, however inexplicable, in the personality and experience of the preacher (p. 21).

I concluded after considering possible objections to persuasive preaching that preachers should utilize their God-given abilities to communicate God's message to the best of their ability and by all means necessary for his glory and name's sake alone.

I completed my systematic perspective by mentioning some important implications of my viewpoint on persuasive preaching, both theological as well as practical. There are indeed theological impressions implicit in my topic, specifically Soteriology. The content of Paul's preaching was what made it persuasive in its own right. The gospel of the grace of God which Paul preached was powerful in itself in that it centres on the cross where God's salvific power is uniquely witnessed (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18). This spiritual power, the *dunamis* of God, was adequate to transform the hearers' lives for it is a message on the salvation of man that is divinely sourced. As mentioned earlier, the preacher is entitled to use varying methods to showcase this powerful message. However, if the content of the gospel is not clearly articulated or biblically satisfied, or if the preacher's rhetorical techniques in any way detract or diminish the value, integrity or substance of the gospel, then those methods are to be rejected. Theologically then, persuasive preaching ought to be firmly contextualized within the proper boundaries of Soteriology. This synchronization is of mutual benefit in that if persuasion of speech is used to good effect, the gospel can be brought into the centre of the hearer's arena more effectively. The implication then is that the gospel message might not be effectively heard without communication that is persuasive – i.e. urgent, convicting, beseeching, clearly understood, earnest, and passionate.

It was here at the implications step that I mentioned the value of using Christocentric and missional lenses to fully appreciate and contextualize the theological insight of persuasive preaching. The very definition of preaching centres on Christ and his redemptive work and its relevance for all of our lives. The Christocentric and missional emphases apply not only to the content of the communication but the manner of it too. Rhetorical techniques can be a helpful tool to bring men to Christ. After all, it is ungodly men (Rom. 5:6) who need to be reconciled to God, and as

such Paul used all manner of means to reach them with the gospel (1 Cor. 9:22). Of course these methods and means would be subject to bringing glory to Christ and not one's own flesh (1 Cor. 1:29; 10:31). Christocentrically then, one needs to check that one's manner of speech does not contradict the nature, purpose, will and work of Christ.

Duduit (1992:16) emphasizes the Christocentric nature of preaching by its power deriving from God's revelation of his Son, as well as its proclamation centering on the 'looming symbol of the cross'. Paul's Christocentric preaching is reiterated in 1 Corinthians 2:2 where he wanted to know nothing else but Christ crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). When Christ is not promoted in preaching, the preacher himself is. Paul warned of this in 1 Corinthians 1 and 3 where men were following after personalities.

Karl Barth (cited in Mohler 1992) believed that preaching is trying to say who and what Jesus Christ is. Scripture, he says, is prime, and preachers are to expound the Word alone with their free words, but on the basis of Scripture and not experience. Grady Davis (1961:199), too, believes in Christ-centred preaching and goes as far as to say it does not look for cultural endorsement but a cultural collision. I agree with this sentiment in that we have to check our preaching against the endorsement of the person and work of Christ if it is to make a genuine impact on the hearer. Any compromise on Christ's work on the cross or his nature and purpose would be to deny truth and therefore propagate lies and produce results not intended by the gospel.

Furthermore, the practical implications of preaching are far-reaching. The Scriptures are clear that one cannot hear without a preacher (Rom. 10:14). The primary task, therefore, of the church is to preach the Word. I showed how effective preaching results in the church impacting the world, and how ineffective preaching has the opposite effect. Biblical preaching should affect one personally (including the preacher), the church corporately, and the world evangelistically. Shin (2004:1) speaks of ineffective preaching as a crisis in the church today – he attributes lack of church growth to weakened preaching, as history has shown.

Having established previously that preaching is in itself a neutral commodity that can be used both for good and evil, there is really a two-fold implication of persuasion in church praxis. On the one hand, churches ought to be more effective in their

preaching by dynamic delivery, and on the other hand, should avoid showmanship that is empty flattery based on human wisdom and that fails to glorify Christ alone.

The love for people undergirds the motivation to preach, and seeking to understand the individual and local contexts helps to enable effective preaching. We cannot ignore the contemporary world as if this is piously suggesting fidelity to the Bible. Broadus (1879:41) notes that there are enough specimens of eloquence in Scripture to show the need of rhetoric in every generation. The homiletical task is not to embrace the modern milieu, but to contend with it on behalf of the claims of Christ (Hull 1992:571). What Hull is suggesting, which I endorse, is that the church ought never to capitulate to the contemporary culture, but ought to understand it, confront it and proclaim truth to it. In other words, we take the immutable biblical message and communicate it to the one generation we are called to serve, and not the one previous to it, or subsequent to it. Broadus (1879:40) goes as far as to say that every discourse needs to be carefully and precisely adapted to a particular audience and occasion to the extent that it would not suit any other occasion or audience without an important alteration.

The world remains dark, as in Paul's day, and the gospel remains the light. Ineffectiveness in the impact of preaching not only can result from poor communication techniques, but an over-reliance of rhetoric with no dependency on God's Spirit and truth.

In conclusion, my systematic theological task proved to be the perfect bridge between theory and practice. It showed there was no contradiction at all in Paul's views on persuasion when the whole range of biblical and historical data was screened and then tested and defended across other disciplines. I built a theological model of persuasive preaching that supported its use, but within acceptable boundaries demarcated in scripture for communicating the wisdom and power of God in the gospel. Once again, another biblical perspective has demonstrated its importance for understanding God's will for the kind and role of persuasion in preaching, underpinning the value of the integrated method of study. I turn finally to the practical perspective regarding the topic of persuasion in preaching to note its contribution to understanding God's will in this matter.

6. The Practical Perspective on Persuasive Preaching

6.1 Defining the Practical Perspective in Integrated Theology

As the last perspective in the integrated master's journey, practical theology seeks to yield transforming actions in the life of the believer, church and world. Its purpose is to bring Christian belief into action (Smith 2014:9). The goal of an integrated study is to allow God's revelation of truth to impact the recipient, rather than remaining a purely theoretical study. There is a natural trajectory of the integrated study that allows for practical deployment of a discovered truth on a topic, and as such the practical perspective adds detail and refinement to this trajectory. There is a dynamic engagement with concepts of theory and practice in the sense that theory not only informs practice, but practice informs theory. One studies the theory with a practical purpose as a starting point, and then ends the study by giving specific practical application, as well as suggestions to reform a current praxis.

Browning (1991:55) reinforces this basic premise of the practical study, and that is to answer the questions, 'How do we understand this concrete situation in which we must act?' and 'What means, strategies, and rhetorics should we use in this concrete situation?' Smith (2013:146) explains this dynamic by pointing out that the objective of practical theology is to transform an existing situation through 'informed strategic thinking' and 'action planning'. Osmer (Smith 2010:99), too, reinforces the purpose of practical theology as an equipping of congregational leaders to engage theological interpretation in various episodes, situations and contexts that occur in their respective ministries. Empirical research is key to understand the dynamic between the normative sources of the Christian faith and the people who participate in this Christian life (Osmer 2008:41).

Thus, the need for specific deployment of a topic in a ministerial context, led me to embark on an empirical study of my topic in a number of local church contexts. This was not only to discover the operative theology among the preachers with regards to the place of persuasion in preaching; but also see how the results might impact our understanding of the legitimacy and kind of persuasion in preaching; and finally to make recommendations for possible changes in order to bring the preaching into a

more faithful rendering to meet's God's standards for it. To this end I interviewed eight preachers in various local churches.

6.2 Methods Used in Establishing the Practical Perspective on Persuasive Preaching

My practical Perspective paper comprised qualitative research. The small-scale empirical study involved face to face interviews. The benefit of interviews is the gathering of a 'deeper and fuller understanding of the attitudes of the respondents' (Smith 2008:236). The interviews enabled me to effectively determine the beliefs and praxis of the selected preachers regarding persuasive preaching. Meeting one-to-one helped me to read their body language and also, if necessary, provide further clarity on the questions and the interviewees' positions.

I chose to interview eight preachers, each from independent evangelical churches in Cape Town. In accessing a variety of viewpoints on preachers' understanding of persuasion in preaching, I would likely reveal a number of legitimate effective persuasion methods in preaching that would benefit all the preachers I interviewed. Also, a correlation of the persuasion methods revealed in the survey could help arrive at a comprehensive approach to persuasion in preaching in the similar context of the eight churches. I also needed to interview a number of preachers to see what percentage held the biblically faithful understanding of the kind and role of persuasion pertinent to preaching developed from the previous modules in the integrated master's programme. A similar church context would produce more accurate results in that one would presume it would favour the same kind of persuasion. I therefore chose churches that were similar in social and cultural settings, specifically middle to upper-class suburbs with predominately educated and English speaking people.

I further selected evangelical churches because of their commitment to the final authority of Scripture, given my topic's seeking of biblical legitimacy to use persuasion. I also chose independent churches because they are free from the possibility of predetermined prescriptions of how to preach. I wanted to interview preachers that could arrive at their own biblical conclusions regarding preaching and not be bound to the views of someone higher up in the hierarchal structure.

I interviewed each of the eight preachers separately at their respective churches. I assured them of their anonymity, both their names and their churches. Each interviewee signed a consent form to agree to participate in the study and in which it was clearly stated that their anonymity was safeguarded. I recorded each interview in audio format with their permission, which helped me to render the data accurately. I also kept notes throughout the interview process.

The following were the five questions posed to each preacher:²⁴

1. What is the primary role of preaching?
2. Do you believe it is biblical to use persuasion in preaching, and if so, what kind of persuasion?
3. Do you have any reasons for your answer/s in Question 2 (biblical or otherwise)?
4. Can you think of any likely objections to your viewpoint on the use of persuasion in preaching?
5. If an in-depth evangelical study on this topic using integrative theology (namely, exegesis, biblical theology, historical theology, and systematic theology) were to draw conclusions that would differ from your viewpoint on persuasion in preaching, would you consider changes to your viewpoint and thus the way you preach?

The interviewees were furnished with a copy of the questions at the beginning the interview to serve as an easy reference. I read out one question at a time and recorded each answer. The questions asked were open in the sense that the preachers could answer in any way and in as much detail as they wished, though the greater clarity would enhance the study. I impressed upon them the need for honesty, and that they were free to digress if they felt it necessary. The questions were kept to a numerical minimum to avoid possible fatigue and disinterest, and also to probe at some depth their genuine views and actual positions.

The interviews were successfully conducted, with each of the eight preachers answering all the questions, mostly comprehensively and without hesitation. They appeared honest and open, and showed no reluctance in answering as freely as

²⁴ Summaries of each interviewee's answers, given in point form, can be found in the appendix at the end of the report.

they wanted. The average interview lasted thirty minutes. Every preacher was positive about the study and thought the topic to be interesting and relevant. I found the entire interview process extremely effective in gauging their respective views on the place of persuasion, and their church context in which their preaching devolves in a very real and practical sense.

The method I employed in presenting this empirical study was the IMRaD model, namely, Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion. I found this method to be logically and clearly laid out. I especially valued the discussion section which concluded the report, in that it allowed for my reflective commentary on the findings of the interview process.

6.3 Findings of the Practical Perspective on Persuasive Preaching

My report, modelled on the IMRad format, explained the intention of my qualitative research, with its corresponding chosen method of fieldwork, and then listed all eight preachers' responses to each of the five questions in a point-form summary. I then synthesized the results by finding commonalities as well as differences in their responses. I concluded with a discussion section which revealed the impact of the findings upon my topic.

Interviewing eight evangelical pastors proved to be very helpful in understanding the theological viewpoints on persuasive preaching as well as the practical importance and implications of biblical preaching in a church context. Overall, the study revealed a general congeniality towards persuasive preaching. All of the eight preachers believed in the biblical legitimacy of using persuasion in preaching within acceptable biblical boundaries.

The interviewees' definitions of preaching differed somewhat and to a lesser extent their definition of persuasion. Most gave biblical examples of the use of persuasive preaching, with the Apostle Paul being the most ubiquitous reference. All without exception were amenable to changing their viewpoint should this integrated study reveal a variant view, and assuming the study is a biblically grounded one. Each preacher also raised the importance of the pastoral element to preaching, noting his congregation's frame of reference, needs and responses to sermons. The eight preachers felt convicted to preach directly at their members' level and relevantly to

their contexts and thus confront real and contemporary issues with God's solutions. There was an emphasis on spiritual change, growth, and transformation, which meant that persuasion was inescapable in preaching.

The majority of the interviewees (five of eight) believed that preaching should bring about change in the life of the hearers. To this end they believed persuasiveness would assist in conveying the message in a manner that would urge and entreat the hearers to respond to truth. A helpful parameter set when dealing with effecting change in the hearers came from one of the interviewees who believed that pleading, convincing and compelling were biblical insofar as the hearer's freedom of choice is not violated. The audience should always understand not only the message but what is expected of them in terms of a biblical response to what they hear.

Furthermore, persuasion was defined as biblical when it promoted truth. Therefore persuasion should carry with it the idea of entreating, urging, and exhorting in the light of the Word of God to elicit an appropriate response. Persuasive preaching to most also included elements such as body language, voice, argumentation, reason, choice of words and clarity. Three of the interviewees spoke about the importance of the use of examples and day-to-day illustrations as a form of persuasion, especially because one is trying to convey a message to lay people who face real life challenges. Other connotations of persuasiveness included: being lovingly forceful in communicating truth; persuading from the heart (the preacher's) and to the heart (the hearer's), and voice control including pace, pitch and volume.

Persuasion also applied to biblical preaching in the *ethos* sense, namely, a preacher ought to be credible and transparent to his audience, as well as understand the hearer's frame of reference and reach their level. Some interviewees noted, however, that understanding the audience is not a licence to change the content of one's preaching by adjusting it to suit the needs of the hearers. Truth is to be guarded at all times and presented.

What also emerged from the interviews was a description of non-biblical persuasion. All eight preachers gave examples of when persuasion is biblically illegitimate. This included manipulation, flattery, coercion, control, and emotional appeal. This aligned with my previous findings from biblical theology where I showed that Paul repudiated the Sophists use of persuasion to flatter. Oratory and elocution that was devoid of

truth were symptoms of worldly wisdom and as such rejected by Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:4. This notion was detected among the eight interviewees.

My clarification in previous studies on the role of both human and divine agencies in preaching emerged in the majority of the interviewees. In essence, they believed that the Holy Spirit is involved in the entire process of preaching, from preparation of the message to conviction of the hearers, yet the preacher must use his unique abilities as best as possible. The two words 'dependence' and 'reliance' in relation to God were apparent. This is the very conclusion at which I arrived in terms of Paul's mentioning of the demonstration of the Spirit and power and not human wisdom in 1 Corinthians 2:4. Christ and the Word act as the only source of wisdom and truth, and the Spirit demonstrates that truth.

In the interview process I had not mentioned the canonical corpus of my topic, namely, Paul's letters and Acts. Yet, the majority interviewed made reference to the Apostle Paul as the most obvious example of the use of persuasion in preaching. What emerged were many verses I had noted in my biblical perspective, such as Paul's address on Mars Hill and his audience with King Agrippa whom he nearly persuaded. What was mentioned was Paul's ability to meet people at their level, and his excellent use of reason and argument to convince people of the truth, coupled with passion and exhortation.

My Christocentric approach to understanding the role of persuasion in preaching was vindicated by the majority of the interviewees. They mentioned the value of the cross of Christ being central to preaching and the person of Christ being promoted rather than the preacher.

There was little comment on the benefit of the sciences outside the Bible to aid the enquiry of biblical persuasion. For instance, the eight preachers made no reference to communication theories, or research in human sciences such as Psychology, and whether they could, or should, be utilized in effective preaching. In total, two made reference to preachers in history who favour the use of persuasion in effective preaching, and one other mentioned the value of science only when correlated with Scripture. Furthermore, my small-scale empirical study did not reveal any approaches or techniques that would aid preaching specifically to well-educated and financially stable congregants.

Overall, my qualitative study endorsed many of my conclusions in the other areas of the integrated master's programme, namely, that persuasion is indeed biblically merited within its proper limits. Such persuasion is not through impressive human rhetoric geared to impress or flatter based on human wisdom, but is sourced in the power and wisdom of God alone. Heralding the truth ought never to bring attention to the messenger, but rather the message and Christ, the ultimate subject of transforming preaching. It must always be rooted in the gospel as the only eternal solution to the brokenness in the human race. Having chosen evangelical churches as participants in the study, who thus regard Scripture alone as inspired and final, it was not surprising to observe the interviewees' commitment to the primacy of the preaching and promotion of biblical truth and the compliance with Scriptural parameters in how to present it. All the interviewees stressed biblically endorsed preaching and the need for them as preachers and church members to be convicted by the Word of God. It was noted that the purpose of preaching (both evangelistic and for edification of the Christian members) strongly influenced the role of persuasion in preaching.

The results of the empirical study showed that all eight preachers hold identical or similar perceptions about the nature and role of persuasion in preaching. Before conducting my qualitative research I had formulated a theological statement in the systematic perspective as follows: It is biblically legitimate for a preacher to proclaim truth persuasively, but in a manner that promotes the message and not the messenger, and sourced in the power of God and not the wisdom of man. The gathered data in the practical perspective confirmed my theological statement. The qualitative study, therefore, provided additional confirmation of this definition of the nature and place of persuasion in preaching. Further, all the preachers were open to reform or transform their viewpoint if my integrative theological research indicated this was necessary.

Once again the value of the integrated approach to doing theology has been demonstrated. It now remains to show the implications of the integrated method for studying persuasion in preaching for the eight preachers (and other preachers) interviewed.

7. The Implications of the Research Findings for the Eight Preachers

An integrated study necessitates a reformation or transformation to the existing praxis of church life in order for thinking practitioners to respond faithfully to God's truth. The point of departure in such a study is a real-life problem that demands Scriptural solutions (Smith 2008:206). The practical component to the theological problem is thus central to the theological enquiry. It is for this reason an empirical study was performed which involved eight pastors of local evangelical churches to diagnose their operative theology and call for a change should it be necessary. The ultimate purpose then of my theological journey is to implicate the Christian community with the transforming truth discovered from God's Word.

There are far reaching implications to such a study for the eight preachers who were involved in my practical study. My theological odyssey was born out of the real life problems that occur with ineffective preaching. As mentioned previously, the problems exist at both ends of the spectrum of the rhetorical paradigm: either the preacher lacks in persuasiveness and leaves the hearers unconvinced, or, at the opposite extreme, the preacher employs a rhetoric that is emotional, sensational and coercive, which detracts from the message. To obviate this possible problem in congregations, effective preaching is called for, which results in hearers impacted with the truth of God's Word. It was thus critical for me to establish the biblical mandate of persuasion – indeed its legitimate use as well as the biblical boundaries in which it may operate. Not only will this result in adherence to biblical integrity, but it will also allow the message to be convincing and thus bring effectiveness to preaching. With these objectives in mind, there are vital implications for the eight preachers examined. I wanted to establish their own theology on the matter of persuasion in preaching and then to what extent their own preaching reflects biblical commitment in their own church context. Where their theory and practice require reviewing, it is in the interest of becoming more effective in preaching and more faithful to God and his Word.

My aim in this section is to compare my suggested operative theology, shaped by the preceding five perspectives, with that of the eight churches and provide resultant recommendations. The eight preachers chosen in the empirical study were

researched within the common contexts of their theological and socio-economic status, namely, evangelical independent churches existing in suburbs that are more educated and affluent. The similarities of their beliefs and behavior came through strongly in my qualitative research and common trends were noticed. There were very few discrepancies on the whole regarding viewpoints on the use of persuasion in preaching among themselves. My conclusions drawn from my integrated study are harmonious with much of their positions, so there is little room for necessary change. However, I shall attempt to fill any minor gaps.

My biblical theological findings showed that Paul was not denouncing the use of rhetoric in 1 Corinthians 2:4, but rather reliance on a Sophistic type that impressed crowds by flattery. Preachers ought never to promote themselves, like the Sophists, but rather Christ and his message, and we ought never to rely on worldly wisdom as a basis of persuasion but rather the wisdom and power of God. These conclusions were underscored by valuable statements made by Paul throughout his epistles and Acts, which I tabulated in the study.

All the eight preachers on the whole believed the Bible does offer support of persuasive preaching. The eight churches believed preaching was both teaching and evangelism, but the majority did not focus on the concept of the gospel and that it is inherently urgent and powerful. I would like to suggest the emphasis on the gospel as the centre of preaching, which Paul accredits to biblical persuasion as the basis for conviction. In other words, Paul preached the cross of Christ and that was what impacted the hearers. Understanding the true meaning of 1 Corinthians 2:4 can only be done in the light of understanding the powerful gospel message, which Paul preached.

In collating my biblical theological findings with the eight preachers' positions I would recommend the following: Paul's epistles and Acts are laden with support for the use of persuasion in preaching and as evangelical preachers, they can rest comfortably in the knowledge that the Bible merits persuasive preaching. Most did not know (or make reference to) my problem verse, 1 Corinthians 2:4. Therefore I would recommend that they be biblically resolved to the fact that Paul does not denounce persuasion as a mechanism in preaching. No preaching should ever draw attention to the personality of the preacher, but rather showcase Christ and his gospel, for that

will bring real change in the lives of the hearers. I would recommend all preachers regularly examine their style of preaching to check that they never rely on worldly wisdom to make their message more palatable but rather God alone as their source of wisdom. I would urge them to not showcase their own abilities in a manner that would detract from Christ. Having said that, I would promote the use of rhetorical techniques that aid the message in bringing understanding to the hearers. There requires a dynamism of passion, urging, entreating, reasoning, arguing and convincing that reflects Paul's pattern of preaching.

Persuasion then is a biblical mandate which preachers ought to utilize, both in evangelism to unbelievers as well as equipping believers with the Word of truth. This principle can be propagated already at the educational level of theological students. Seminaries and Bible colleges ought to include persuasion in the subject of homiletics as a serious area of study.

Historical theology proved to augment the biblical position of the use of persuasion. Indeed history evidences the positive role of persuasive preaching in the church over the eras and also showcases the negative consequences of a lack of biblical preaching at various times. We ought to have a teachable spirit to look at the past to inform, or reform our theological thinking. I would urge the eight pastors to familiarize themselves with some fine examples of biblical preachers over the years who may inspire and strengthen their own resolve, and even offer critique to their own preaching style and sermon content.

I found the systematic theological study extremely helpful in noting modern homileticians and scholars who see merit in employing persuasion in preaching. There is also helpful insight in the communication and social sciences which expose the dynamics in human interactions that aids in understanding how to convey a message. The ministry of reconciliation assumes the use of human techniques since the call to preach the gospel is directed to the human condition. I noted how there is a co-mingling of a divine and a human work. By referring to sciences outside the Bible, the eight preachers might find value in noting the nuances of a modern, changing world, in order for the mechanisms of communication to befit that. As long as the message is not compromised, the means may be tailored to be societally appropriate. I would impress upon the eight preachers not to shy away from up-to-

date communication techniques and helpful sciences that would aid in promoting the truth of God's Word, without compromise and contradiction to it. Furthermore, given the dual involvement of both the divine and human agencies in the entire preaching process, I would encourage the preachers never to devalue their unique gifts and talents in this process. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate in the role of conviction, but the preacher is compelled to preach to the best of his abilities, especially given the gravity of the message.

The empirical study did well to determine the boundaries that should be set in the utilizing of persuasion in order to render biblical faithfulness. Throughout my integrated studies I certainly addressed what persuasion ought not to be. The coercive, controlling persuasion is wrong, as well as the sophisticated flattering and emotional type. This was clearly noted by the eight preachers who believed modern day preachers who are merely showmen drawing attention to themselves and telling tantalizing stories to tickle the ears of the hearers are unbiblical and their type of persuasion should be avoided. We are all in agreement that preachers should preach the Word only, and allow God's truth to penetrate the hearts and minds of the hearers. The preacher never promotes worldly wisdom, nor his own personality, but draws the audience to Christ and his message. The conveyance of truth may be aided by rhetorical mechanisms that highlight that truth and not diminish it.

Another implication of the study is the *ethos* aspect. If congregations are to be impacted with the truth, it behooves preachers to evaluate the 'heart' matters. In other words, there is an empathy and love for people that motivate the truth. Understanding one's own motives as a preacher and aligning one's heart with God's heart are part of the process of effective preaching. Pastors ought to strive for their own ethical credibility and character, as well as be willing to forge genuine relationships with their people in order to understand their frame of reference and be empathetic.

Finally, the integrated study was viewed through the Christocentric and missional lenses. The centrality of Christ as the undergirding principle of persuasive preaching and the objective of God's redemptive plan for mankind were essential to the beliefs of the eight preachers. I would suggest that one could use the Christocentric and missional foci as a litmus test when scoring one's own sermons. If the method of

preaching brings reproach to the life, nature, character and work of Christ and God's will for mankind, then it is to be corrected accordingly.

In conclusion, if the call of the preacher is to herald the good news of Jesus Christ's saving grace to hearers who might otherwise never hear the gospel, then every preacher is compelled to preach in an urgent, fervent and convincing manner. Persuasive preaching then within biblical parameters is absolutely necessary to affect the hearers' lives to do God's will and bring Him ultimate glory. By and large, my conclusions fitted the positions of the eight preachers, although I did make some recommendations which simply highlighted some important reminders in order to preach effectively and remain biblically faithful.

8. A Critique of Integrated Theology

As previously mentioned, the favoured position of SATS when theologically researching a topic is an integrated approach. It draws on the most important theological perspectives, namely, biblical, historical, systematic and practical theology. I applied this scheme to my master's research in investigating the topic of persuasive preaching. I found the integrated approach to be highly beneficial in receiving a well-rounded biblical impression on persuasive preaching. The idea of an integrated master's is that it is a more holistic approach to doing theology. If thinking practitioners are to be equipped in their church and world to believe and behave in a manner faithful to God's will, nature and purpose, then they are to be equipped in all aspects of theological thought rather than become an expert in one isolated discipline. I found this comprehensive approach to benefit me in widening my knowledge due to its inclusion of more disciplines than a single branch of theology.

I previously would have thought that my topic would only be served through biblical and exegetical studies, given the fact that my topic was to investigate the biblical legitimacy of persuasion. Yet I found that other disciplines like systematic theology and practical theology contributed greatly to bring further elucidation. By researching commentaries of homiletics and scholars on persuasive preaching and also on my problem verse, 1 Corinthians 2:4, and researching a number of preachers, I was able to clarify and endorse much of my findings from biblical theology.

I was also pleasantly surprised in the value historical theology brought to my theological journey. It really is naïve to believe that our generation alone has more answers to church matters, when in fact many biblically faithful church practitioners and theologians over the years have discovered and codified great truths of Scripture. It certainly helped me when observing church history to note how theory operates in practice and what pitfalls to avoid.

One of the biggest strengths of the integrated approach is the practical emphasis of the study. The research problem originates in a practical setting and the study ends in practical deployment. This emphasis brought real meaning to my topic, especially in light of the fact that my topic's field, namely, homiletics, is placed in the category of practical theology. Preaching is obviously something performed in practice and it was extremely valuable to gain insight from eight practitioners who preach every Sunday. Their understanding of persuasive preaching was shaped by the tangible realities and its effects among their congregants. My field work was insightful as I experienced the gravity of the office of preaching and the heart involved in it.

I found the integrated model to be a very logical development of enquiry. The scheme begins with the exegetical interpretation of the topic and ends with its practical significance. In between these two are logical steps of enquiry that impress upon the topic in the sequence of theoretical to practical. Another strength I found was that the five disciplines (if exegesis is treated separately) are not studied in isolation of the topic, but rather the topic is studied through the lenses of these disciplines. For instance, the study of historical theology did not require me to study Calvin's five points of salvation, but rather Calvin's view on persuasion combining theology and its related praxis. The study was thus very honed and yet was adequately exposed to each discipline, enough to create an all-rounded knowledge.

Of great value was the recommendation of Christocentric and missional lenses through which to view the topic. The Scriptures centre on Christ's person and work and God's redemptive plan, and that is what ought to shape every student's theology and life. The keeping of these foci throughout the theological journey helped to maintain biblical faithfulness in interpretation.

A perceived weakness of the integrated model, as I experienced in the beginning of my journey, might be a topic's limitation to fit within a certain theological field and not

always apply to all five perspectives²⁵. However, that very perception was unfounded for me as I soon realized that my topic, which deals only with the biblical legitimacy of persuasion and not persuasive techniques, was nevertheless informed by fields sometimes entirely or largely outside the Bible, namely, historical, systematic and practical theology. Each of the five perspectives in fact directly informed the question of biblical legitimacy of persuasion.

One of the weaknesses to an integrated model is the occasional overlapping of information. For instance, systematic theology begins with an overview of biblical insight on the topic, which was previously completed in the biblical perspective module. Also, each perspective often called for a section on the practical implications of the respective study, yet the integrated model ends with a devoted practical perspective section. Another possible weakness I found concerned the exegetical perspective. A considerable emphasis on Greek and Hebrew and searching the original texts and various manuscripts was required. We were encouraged to follow Stuart's twelve-step process of exegetical interpretation, which included complex studies in translation, form, literary context, etcetera. The space allotted to the completion of that perspective simply could not cater for the vast investigation needed to satisfy the complex study. A suggestion to obviate possible skimming might be to choose simply two or three steps in Stuart's model and focus only on those.

On the whole the strengths of the model definitively outweighed the possible weaknesses. I personally found the integrated Master's journey extremely enlightening and it prepared me to better grapple with difficult theological matters and praxes in the context of the life of the church.

9. Conclusion

My theological enquiry sought to resolve the apparent contradiction in Paul's view on the use of persuasion in preaching in light of his *prima facie* disavowal of persuasive preaching found in 1 Corinthians 2:4 pitted against his other statements where he promotes persuasion such as in 2 Corinthians 5:11. The question was whether it is biblically legitimate for a preacher to employ persuasion in effective preaching. I

²⁵ For example, at first glance one might feel that the historical perspective is irrelevant when pursuing a topic such as the use of computer technology in ministry.

applied five theological perspectives through the integrated method to clarify Paul's position on persuasive preaching. After having completed the exegetical and biblical theological studies, followed by the historical theological study, I arrived at the systematic theological perspective where I codified my theological statement on the matter, namely: It is biblically legitimate for a preacher to proclaim truth persuasively, but in a manner that promotes the message and not the messenger, and sourced in the power of God and not the wisdom of man.

This report has been a logging of a definition of each perspective, the methods used and my findings of each perspective studied regarding persuasive preaching.

I began with the biblical perspective, divided into two sections, exegetical and biblical. I reached the conclusion that the use of persuasion in preaching is biblically warranted. There are ample passages in Paul's epistles and Acts that prove he not only used persuasion in preaching, but he commended its use, given the urgency of the gospel message. I showed that Paul was against persuasion as a form of human wisdom and manipulation that drew attention to the speaker, and not persuasion as a means of communication. Paul exposed the Sophists of his day who employed ornamental rhetoric to flatter and impress. Essentially, Paul was opposed to the rhetor and not the rhetoric. Persuasion can be used for good effect in conveying the message, and preachers ought to plead and entreat the audience in a manner that is urgent, convincing and passionate. Paul was a prime example of persuasive preaching, but always in a matter that drew attention to Christ and not himself, and that displayed dependence on divine and not human wisdom.

The historical perspective involved a summary of evidence of both sermons and theological writings of key figures in each major church era. After completing that study I affirmed that church history displays a congeniality towards the use of persuasion in preaching, within proper limits, and in fact exposes the dire consequences of occasions where biblical preaching was non-existent.

During the systematic perspective I synthesized biblical and historical data to arrive at timeless truths about preaching, especially with reference to the use of persuasion. This resulted in my theological statement, which approved persuasive preaching. I noted some theological and non-theological sources that confirmed Paul's usage of conventional rhetoric in the Greco-Roman context and his rejection

of the ostentatious kind. I showed Paul's major argument in early 1 Corinthians centred on human wisdom versus divine wisdom which explained his stance on disavowing persuasion that is reliant on human wisdom. Paul's speech and his preaching were sourced rather in God's wisdom and power.

The practical perspective on my topic, which involved qualitative research, concluded that in fact evangelical preachers ought to employ persuasion in their preaching, but within Scriptural parameters. The eight preachers interviewed all believed in the biblical legitimacy of persuasive preaching and showed how it is manifested in practice in their church context.

I finalized my report with the implications of my findings for the eight local churches in the empirical study. I finally provided a critique of the integrated method of doing theology which showed its strengths heavily outweighing any possible weaknesses.

Appendix: Summaries of Each Interviewee's Answers

The five questions are taken in order. Under each question each interviewee is denoted by a capital letter, and under his name his answers are summarized in bullet format.

Question 1: What is the primary role of preaching?

Preacher A:

- element of teaching (of the Word of God)
- to win people to Jesus Christ
- help Christians grow spiritually, in a manner consistent with Word of God

Preacher B:

- heralding Word of God
- to cause a person to think, if necessary bring their lives in line with the message, and if necessary make changes

Preacher C:

- teaching believers from God's Word (building them up)
- reaching out to the unsaved

Preacher D:

- two words = 'life change'
- helping people to uncover and understand the truths as originally intended for hearers
- 2 Timothy 3:16

Preacher E:

- communicate God's truth in a way that people can obey what Jesus commanded
- mandate to make disciples

Preacher F:

- the Gospel
- facts of God's Word speak for itself, not an emotion

- three roles: 1) Holy Spirit convicts people, 2) growth – hear, then apply; 3) integrate - make people aware of their gifts to use for ministry

Preacher G:

- explaining Word of God in a way that the audience can understand it best
- taking God's word and applying it to the audience so that they can respond to it
- challenge audience

Preacher H:

- communicate and awaken truth based on the revealed Word of God contained in Scripture
- preaching is authoritative based on text (real authority is derived authority)
- conveying truth to lead to transformation

Question 2: Do you believe it is biblical to use persuasion in preaching, and if so, what kind of persuasion?

Preacher A:

- yes
- persuasion must be consistent with God's purposes for people
- use of biblical arguments
- lovingly forceful
- depends on audience – sometimes more gentle like Jesus' communication with woman at the well, or more stern ,e.g. a parent reprimanding a child who is playing with a hot stove
- includes body language, volume of voice, reason, argument, choice of words

Preacher B:

- yes, if it comes from your heart
- you are preaching truth therefore it requires persuasiveness
- if you believe the message, you will exhort people to believe it
- you are telling them an important truth
- purpose is so people can ultimately glorify God
- not about being in a better position if in a bad place, but rather is about preaching Jesus Christ

- must be clear and understandable
- use examples (day to day illustrations)
- exhort people to consider it, then put into practice (otherwise why are you preaching?)
- there ought to be a response to preaching (does not have to be visible)
- truth will always illicit a response

Preacher C:

- yes
- what happens in our church is reasoning in God's Word – using the Word to persuade people (very little emotional use)
- we discuss our sermon at a Bible study mid-week
- persuasion can also happen through voice and body language
- If persuasion is not overdone, then nothing wrong with it
- truth must be emphasized
- you can use examples and illustrations

Preacher D:

- Holy Spirit is primary persuader
- history shows different styles of preaching, but Spirit stays the same
- dependence on Spirit for preacher's life and to bring change, as well as during sermon preparation
- this reliance on Holy Spirit is no excuse for not using application
- you must do your best
- danger in a person being moved emotionally, with no change (celebrity style preaching)
- life change implies persuasion
- presentation is important, and if persuasion helps, then you can use it, but always subject to Spirit
- transformation, not just knowledge
- take what you have learnt and apply to situation
- we live in biblically illiterate generation, so often difficult to give them biblical understanding
- persuasion must not be manipulative

- not using psychology to make someone cry, emotional appeals
- many churches have wrongly succumbed to eastern mysticism (using techniques to make things happen)

Preacher E:

- yes most definitely
- persuasion speaks to the heart
- you can be as clever as you want with message but the Lord will convict people through the Spirit
- my persuasion comes in my prayer, my preparation, things comes out of text
- pressure is off me, my skills alone are not enough (but we can use our abilities – God can use me)
- Not just communication but seeking a response, begging people to God's truth
- also going after people's obstacles (their idols), so they can see power of God
- persuasion that brings reliance on the Lord

Preacher F:

- yes
- it must relate to biblical standards, truth, facts of Scripture
- nothing wrong with persuasion - Biblical persuasion
- but superimposed persuasion is wrong
- Bible is its own commentary, its own value
- use Bible to persuade, the validity and truth
- you need to bring sermons back to 'brass tacks' – i.e. get to level of people's heart – people are finite
- you can be an eloquent, big-worded preacher, but if you do not get to the heart of the people, you will lose them

Preacher G:

- at first I thought no, but actually yes, in fact the Lord Jesus used persuasion
- it must be understood correctly (consistent with Bible)
- includes the way you speak e.g. if you speak with a dull voice, boring if you don't raise your voice, or whisper etc – that is all persuasion, that is all acceptable
- use of illustrations
- reference to other preachers, books etc. to persuade to react to your sermons

- parables, e.g. Jesus used fig tree to get point across
- spice up your communication
- use of communication techniques
- using other verses to qualify what you are saying is also being persuasive

Preacher H:

- yes you can use persuasion if it is correctly defined
- persuasion must be free from control and power, and sociological baggage like shaming
- do not rob people of freedom to make a choice
- God has given us meaningful response abilities
- We can persuade people to activate a response.
- but you can make a moment, confront people to a moment (i.e. do not leave the opportunity for people to make a choice)
- the immediacy of God is an important factor (God truly speaks in that moment)
- not manipulation
- persuasion is part of information and communication that is rooted in good news
- if any preacher is indifferent to the claims that he is preaching, then he should not be preaching
- a preacher should be transparent about himself and the text, and allow the text to transcend itself, bringing people to God
- there is a unique enabling, power and presence for those who will respond, without the preacher involved in any coercion.
- even explaining to people what is going on in the moment, even in their heart ('God before, God after')
- there is no mind control by Holy Spirit, but rather that we might be attentive to Him
- God is working and stirring, and is the initiator, but we still have the choice to follow that initiative

Question 3: Do you have any reasons for your answer/s in Question 2 (biblical or otherwise)?

Preacher A:

- Jesus, apostles and prophets all used persuasion in their messages

- models/examples throughout Scripture
- Paul: 'we persuade men'
- words such as 'exhort', 'beseech you brethren'
- Romans 12:1
- Paul used it – he is a model preacher
- Acts 14 (I think) – Paul preached persuasively so people might believe
- Paul's preaching doesn't contradict God's work in it (God's sovereignty and man's call to persuade people not a contradiction)
- Paul at Athens: met people at their level – he did not cast pearls before swine

Preacher B:

- Paul was not afraid to use his personal testimony
- Paul told to preach Christ and Him crucified
- Paul faced opposition – so Paul used oratory (although not an orator)
- Paul said he came not in persuasion, but in fear and trembling, because of the gravity of the message

Preacher C:

- clear throughout Bible – prophets said idol worship is wrong (so persuasion and arguments used)
- Jesus Himself – used practical illustrations and parables, also arguing, sometimes clear and logical, other times persuasion was unexpected
- Book of Acts and Paul clearest examples – Paul used persuasion in groups and one-on-one
- Paul a master in arguing, then coming to a conclusion and application
- Paul best example in Scripture of persuasive preaching
- outside of Scripture – proven that people respond to persuasion, but there are different types (emotional persuasion is never ruled out completely, but try not to emphasize it. Because it is more short term and does not bring real change)
- Holy Spirit also brings real change to people, not our own efforts alone (therefore power comes from Holy Spirit and Word alone)

Preacher D:

- parables of Jesus – He always called people to respond (whether sermon on mount, or healing), sometimes his teaching was confrontational
- Paul – e.g. Philemon/Onesimus, calling brother in Christ to change attitude to a man once his slave (thus a call for life change)
- Paul's teaching either called for, or caused, a response.
- Paul was all things to all people (but message remains the same)
- Acts: Paul's reference to unknown God
- only use Scripture for reasons, not outside of Scripture
- Jonathan Edwards, he was 'dry', yet was powerful in his preaching (heart important)
- outside of Bible there are things like world events, news headlines etc. that help to bring a point across, but there always has to be a biblical response

Preacher E:

- Paul used persuasion
- battle of flesh and Spirit – so you need to persuade people for the fight (Paul – fight good fight, persevere, don't grow weary, keep going – hence convincing speech)
- people need to be moving all the time – need nudging
- Peter said to shepherd the flock – which implies giving direction to people

Preacher F:

- Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit who will bring persuading in us – to nurture us etc.
- we cannot go outside realm of Bible such as hot air preachers who focus on numerical growth
- Jesus spoke truth and truth brings conviction – real change comes only with Christ, the Word and the Holy Spirit
- if you use Science, it needs to correlate with the Bible
- Paul was down to earth and considered his situation – e.g. imprisonment or being shipwrecked – all occasions for Christ and not for himself

Preacher G:

- Jesus
- Biblical model to use techniques

Preacher H:

- Jesus, parable of sower – response is of the Lord, but people will make a choice (the outcomes of the kingdom will come from the response of your heart)
- Moses – God moves the heart of people (but there is still a God response in people)
- prophets – clearly intended to shift a nation
- Paul was persuasive: persuaded all men; he argued; apologetics is persuasive (its aimed at getting people to think through things); urging people (even when we counsel); power of Holy Spirit (1Thess. 1 – ‘you know how we lived among you’); words aimed at transformation; Romans 12:1-2 – worship response, which includes the renewing of the mind; Paul’s words to Timothy - preach the Word in season, also 2 Tim 3:16)
- We should try to be as compelling as possible

Question 4: Can you think of any likely objections to your viewpoint on the use of persuasion in preaching?

Preacher A:

- Some people do not regard scripture as authoritative and suggest everyone is entitled to their own opinions
- humanism has filtered into people minds

Preacher B:

- I have heard people say that it does not matter how you preach, it is the Holy Spirit who works and we should not get in his way (i.e. no human element)
- there has to be a human element
- I believe the Holy Spirit can use anyone, but you have to use passion when preaching (no-one will listen to someone who is dead)
- good preaching is important – you need to be the best you can
- make sure points are truth
- do not draw attention to yourself
- I am against oratory – orators play on your emotions, twist truth, and get you to do something e.g. televangelists and word of faith movement

Preacher C:

- yes, people might say there needs to be more emotional appeal
- our main aim is to expose the Word of God and then bring it into the life of the person

Preacher D:

- some strictly reformed settings where application is frowned upon (i.e. we should just exegete passage and not make any application)
- people's goals of preaching might be different, and then persuasion will be different

Preacher E:

- people want a nice pep talk and warm fuzziness
- people do not want to change or acknowledge conviction of the Holy Spirit
- on other spectrum there are preachers who just preach the Word like a parrot or lecture

Preacher F:

- Small churches tell the truth – people often only interested in big churches where preacher does not 'harp' on Word of God
- only truth can set people free and not music and other techniques to persuade

Preacher G:

- there are people who overstep the mark - use dramatic effects like sound, lighting, smoke, which is becoming the norm in church today
- opposite side to that – boring churches because they are not persuasive enough

Preacher H:

- postmodern view (relativism) would question authority as a notion and therefore would object to preaching truth
- narrative preaching is also wrong if no truth

Question 5: If an in-depth evangelical study on this topic using integrative theology (namely exegesis, biblical theology, historical theology, and systematic theology) were to draw conclusions that would differ from your viewpoint on persuasion in

preaching, would you consider changes to your viewpoint and thus the way you preach?

Preacher A:

- yes, if shown on Scripture
- I would like to think I could change my viewpoint
- but I do see a lot of persuasion in Scripture
- if a parent saw a child in danger, would we not use persuasive language? how much more in terms of God's holiness, e.g. preaching of Jonathan Edwards (persuasive preaching)

Preacher B:

- sure, if God's Word says so
- one always has to be teachable

Preacher C:

- yes, we would be open to change
- we need to be teachable

Preacher D:

- yes definitely
- I have never yet been convinced in that way, but yes I would change
- fields of biblical and exegetical theology most important (not really historical theology)

Preacher E:

- sure
- a leader needs to lead by example and be humble, learning, sit at the feet of those who went before him
- we need to be up for change, in fact I have changed my mind a few times

Preacher F:

- yes I think so
- we all grow and change
- I would prayerfully consider it, but I do not change easily

Preacher G:

- I would have a good look at it
- I would be very surprised if I heard persuasion was a misguided notion
- it depends on what type of persuasion, for example if I heard truth is relative, then I would not change my viewpoint (a fundamentally different starting point)
- preaching should be examined pastorally (people's lives need to change at their context)

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