

Cultivating the Preacher in the Free Christian Church of Lithuania

By

Artūras Rulinskas

B.A., Šiauliai Pedagogical Institute, Lithuania, 1992
M.DIV., Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary, 1999

Submitted to the Faculty of Theology, Acadia Divinity College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Ministry

Acadia Divinity College
Acadia University
Fall Convocation 2018

This thesis by Artūras Rulinskas was defended successfully in an oral examination on 4 April 2018.

The examining committee for the thesis was:

Dr. Stephen McMullin, Chair

Dr. Lina Toth, External Examiner

Dr. Stuart Blythe, Internal Examiner

Dr. John McNally, Supervisor

This thesis is accepted in its present form by Acadia Divinity College, the Faculty of Theology of Acadia University, as satisfying the thesis requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry.

I, Artūras Rulinkas, hereby grant permission to the University Librarian at Acadia University to provide copies of my thesis, upon request, on a non-profit basis.

Artūras Rulinkas

Author

Dr. John McNally

Supervisor

4 April 2018

Date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	vi
Abbreviations	vii
Introduction	1
CHAPTER 1. Biblical Rationale for Preaching and Preachers	7
Section 1. The Revelation of God and The Law. Exodus 3.....	8
Section 2. The Covenant and Ten Words. Exodus 19- 24.	14
Section 3. The Prophet Jeremiah	20
Section 4. Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God	36
Section 5. The Holy Spirit.....	48
CHAPTER 2. Anabaptist Theological Emphases for Preaching and Preachers ...	63
Section 1. Conversion and Baptism	65
Section 2. Bible and the Leading of the Spirit.....	73
Section 3. Church and Community	81
Section 4. Discipleship and Disciples	88
Section 5. Mission	97
Section 6. Peacemaking	105
CHAPTER 3. Preaching Literature	118
CHAPTER 4. Research methods	159
CHAPTER 5. Experiences of Lithuanian Preachers in FCC	165
Section 1. The Preachers' Testimony	170
Section 2. Research Findings and Observations	175
CHAPTER 6. Cultivating Preachers through a Multi-module Course	207

Section 1. Course Syllabus	208
Section 2. Course Schedule	212
Conclusion	219
Appendices.	221
Bibliography.....	223

Abstract

Very few evangelical churches in post-communist Lithuania have younger generation preachers. Most preaching in churches is done by preachers with experience, who started to preach as the churches were revived right after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Does the first generation Free Christian Church in Lithuania develop its preachers according to a plan that is portrayed in Scriptures? There is a need to examine the preaching and cultivate contemporary preachers and to attempt to do something better in the area of developing the younger generation of preachers.

With the goal to discover the things that would be helpful for cultivating the preachers in the Lithuanian context, a method of qualitative research interviews was chosen.

In order to have a broader view about cultivating a preacher, the additional following steps were taken: a) a Biblical rationale for preaching and preachers was examined; b) the sixteenth century Anabaptist church history and its messengers overviewed; c) theological-ecclesiological practices that lasted in Anabaptist churches throughout the centuries were considered; d) literature of contemporary preacher's experiences were reflected on and e) a course was developed for further development of preachers in the Free Christian Church of Lithuania. This thesis combines a biblical foundation with historical and theological reflection, and an ecclesiological survey.

The results that were discovered through this study have value to the Free Christian Church because they point to the weaknesses of the Free Church practice that prevent cultivating preachers, they reveal the strengths of contemporary generation preachers, and they include the impact of globally recognized preachers.

Abbreviations

EAAA - Euro-Asian Accreditation Association

EBI – Evangelical Bible Institute

EMM – Eastern Mennonite Missions

FCC – Free Christian Church

ICOMB – International Community of Mennonite Brethren

LCC – Lithuanian Christian University

MB – Mennonite Brethren

NRSV – New Revised Standard Version

Introduction

In today's world Google became a place where one looks for information and quickly finds answers to questions raised. However, Google will not be helpful with its multi-million files of information if one is interested to know how preachers are developed and cultivated in Lithuanian evangelical churches.

The first thing that stands out from this DMin thesis title "Cultivating the Preacher in the Free Christian Church of Lithuania" is that this thesis is written having in mind Lithuania, the Free Christian Church in Lithuania, and preachers in Lithuania. Although the title suggests that the thesis is about and for the preachers of one particular church, in reality the thesis may have implications for preachers of the broader evangelical community of Lithuania.

An important element is that this thesis is written by a Lithuanian, with a passion for the edification of preachers in the evangelical churches of Lithuania.

Lithuania is a country in Northern Europe, on eastern coast of the Baltic Sea. It is surrounded by these countries: Poland in the South, Latvia in the North, and Belarus in the East. On the southwestern side Lithuania shares a border with the province of Russia, Kaliningrad. In the fourteenth century, Lithuania accepted the Catholic form of Christianity more for political than for religious reasons – to stop invasions of German crusaders.

Today about 77% of population consider themselves to be believers in the Roman Catholic way¹.

A second thing that stands out in this title is the Free Christian Church (FCC) of Lithuania. It is a first-generation church that was begun in the last decade of the communist rule. It was begun by German Mennonites who subsequently left the Soviet Union. During the three decades of its existence it grew to approximately two hundred believers in seven different locations and it is one of smaller Christian denominations in Lithuania. In chapter 3 and 4 there will be more about the Free Christian Church and its preachers.

A third thing is that this thesis is about “cultivating the preacher”. This is the main thing that touches the heart of this thesis. The main concern of this thesis is the preachers of FCC. The primary purpose for this thesis is through research to examine the current situation, to provide pastors with resource, to present a rationale for preaching, to show an example, to motivate improvement for the existing and future preachers. For this reason, it is important that there is a biblical chapter that provides theoretical background for the existence of preachers, the analysis of the Anabaptist tradition and its preachers, and practice of preaching and experience of Free Christian Church preachers. This experience is recorded throughout the interviews of these preachers.

A reader must be aware that the thesis is about preachers and not about preaching, not about the sermons, and not about methods for how sermons could be improved. Yes,

¹ Donatas Glodenis, Svarbiausių religinių krypčių Lietuvoje statistika: 1999 duomenys, <https://religija.lt/straipsniai/tyrimai-analize-nuomones/svarbiausiu-religiniu-krypciu-lietuvoje-statistika-1999-m-duomenys>, (accessed 2018-01-13)

preaching cannot be separated from discussion about the preacher, and preaching also has a minor focus in this thesis. However, the thesis is much more about homileticians than about homiletics.

The word “cultivate” has a connotation with agriculture. Usually it is understood to be cultivation of the land. Cultivating is an ongoing process. Every year a farmer needs to work his land: to plow it, to fertilize it, to pick up and remove rocks, to plant seeds, to pull the weeds, etc, and at last there is the fruit of all this toil – a harvest. In some sense preachers are like that land. They can remain and be the same all the time, but they can be cultivated and can produce a larger and better harvest for his master. A wise farmer uses the tools available to him and cultivates his land for better production².

The thesis cannot be described by one word, although “cultivating” provides an appropriate image. Preachers also grow, develop and mature. Throughout this volume words such as *cultivating* and *developing* will be used interchangeably. It is hoped that best practices will be analyzed here that stimulate and cultivate preachers of present day. Their growth is impacted by their personal opinions, by the knowledge of God, by the history and tradition of their church, and other similar things.

There is a hope that the final fruit of this thesis will be a motivation for the FCC preachers to be at their best.

The first chapter is about “A Relational and Communicative God.” God is the main reason for preaching and preachers. In this chapter of Biblical theology there is a look at the Triune God. The Bible records tell how He communicated with people, how

² There are many biblical references to farming and cultivating land for the harvest which can have also a spiritual meaning of cultivating and developing spiritual gifts: Matthew 20:1; Matthew 21:28; Luke 13:6-9; Hebrews 6:7; James 5:7.

God called and made a covenant with Israel; how God the Son came and revealed himself to Israel; how God the Spirit comes to be close to the children of God in order to help and assist them to understand God and to do the mission they were called to.

In the middle of this chapter we meet the prophet Jeremiah. He is an Old Testament example with implications for a modern preacher. His main task is to speak to the people of Israel the words of God.

The second chapter is called “Anabaptist Theological Emphases for Preaching and Preachers.” This chapter includes an overview of main convictions and issues of Anabaptist theology. The church that follows the Anabaptist tradition, which is a church of the third stream of the reformation, in its own way is distinct from other churches. Anabaptist history reflects its theology; its theology shapes its preachers. These “theological emphases” of the Anabaptists are the result of the teaching and understanding of God and His Word, themselves, the world, and the history of the community of believers.

The third chapter is “Preaching Literature and Research Methods”. In this chapter of literature review a scholarly debate concerning the development and cultivation of preachers will be discussed. The research method consists of semi-structured interviews with practicing preachers.

Chapter four is “Experiences of Lithuanian Preachers in FCC”. This chapter follows research findings and observations in the light of the first three chapters. In chapter four, a personal story of conversion and a call to the ministry of preaching will be shared. This chapter is an attempt to assess the present situation in a preacher’s development. This past and present is evaluated through the personal story of the author

of this thesis, through the story of FCC in Lithuania, and through structured interviews with FCC preachers.

The language of the thesis in chapters three and four will change to writing from first-person position using the pronoun “I”. These chapters offer many insights from personal experience. One could ask the question, is “is it ok to use personal language in academic work?” Some academics do it. Gary V. Nelson, missiologist and President and CEO of Tyndale University College and Seminary in Toronto, tells about his experience of learning about preaching and writes about a situation when there was a discussion about preaching in seminary class. To answer the question: “What is preaching?” the professor stated to all the students “Preaching is God’s story in your story.”³ After this statement, Nelson explains, “Healthy and effective borderland leaders find their rootedness in “God’s story” as it relates to their unfolding story of church and community engagement.”⁴

This means that learning, teaching or writing about preachers and preaching could be done from a personal story perspective and be expressed and supported by personal reflection and experience. The narrative of preachers is a big part of their preaching and it is right that preachers tell their story from their own perspective, as it will be in this third chapter.

The fifth chapter describes a practical project. It is a course to address cultivating preaching and preachers by considering biblical, theological, ecclesiological, and experiential factors in a teaching course. The things that are learned and discovered in

³ Gary V.Nelson, *Borderland Churches* (St.Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2008), 73.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.

research are intended to be shared, discussed, and used for the cultivation, development and improvement of preachers. This course is designed to be used in the Evangelical Bible Institute and it can be used in non-formal discipleship training settings.

The goal of this research is to explore the process of cultivating and developing preachers in FCC. The cultivating of a preacher is a highly important task for a church in this post-modern era locally and globally.

CHAPTER 1

Biblical Rationale for Preaching and Preachers

Before beginning to deal with preachers a bigger question must be dealt with, which is foundational to the office of preacher. It is the nature of God. The questions “who God is” and “what He does” serve as the basis for a preacher’s existence, birth, growth, and ministry.

God is relational and communicative. God wants people to seek, establish, and continue living in relationship with Him, and for this reason He revealed Himself. God also wants to communicate with people. He expects that each person would relate to God and He relates and communicates to every individual in His own way as He decides to do it. Sending preachers to speak His words is one way of His communication to the people.

The British theologian, Christopher J.H. Wright, takes us to the Exodus story and claims it is “a major act of self-revelation by God, and also a massive learning experience for Israel.”⁵ The Exodus story is important in that God revealed Himself not to a single devoted individual but to the whole nation. The goal of this revelation in Exodus was “that Israel should know YHWH as God and should also know some fundamental truths about his character and power.”⁶ In a matter where we will attempt to speak about the preacher’s personality, at first, we have to start with the self-disclosure of YHWH, where

⁵ Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011), 75.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

we see that He is relational and He communicates. In his disclosure fundamental questions of human existence are answered.

Examining this theme that God is relational and communicative, we will look at two passages in the book of Exodus. One passage is where God reveals his essence – his name. The other passage discloses the Covenant and the Law where God reveals his character. Then we will look at prophetic preaching where we will examine the preaching of the prophet Jeremiah. In the New Testament in the Gospel according John, we will see that the Biblical rationale for preaching was modeled by Jesus and empowered by Holy Spirit. Summing it up, in the Triune God we see the Biblical rationale for preaching.

Section 1. Revelation of God and the Law

The Name. I am who I am. Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3

When Yahweh has called Moses from the burning bush and Moses encountered meeting with him, Moses asked God to reveal His name (Ex 3:13). Moses wanted to know who God is before he obeyed His will.

This simple question reveals to us that Moses in his encounter of God understood that God is relational, because at the burning bush was established God's – Moses relationship, and that God is communicative – he talked to Moses, he commanded him to do an assignment, and he answered his questions.

God's Name Tells that Yahweh is a Known God.

It is in Exodus 3:14 and in Exodus 6:2 that God revealed Himself to Moses and to Israelites by four Hebrew consonants YHWH, Tetragrammaton. - These four letters contain God's name. In English "the LORD" is substitute for YHWH. This revelation suggests that God is known through His name.

Even before this revelation, Israelites had a name for God. The most common names for God were Adonai, Elohim, El-Shaddai. In every revelation God would disclose himself with a different name that explained Him in new ways. Theologian Alan Cole in his commentary examined the names of God and he says that "when Israelites would ask Moses 'under what new title has God appeared to you?' it is equivalent to asking, 'What new revelation have you received from God?'"⁷

To know God's name is not just to know how to call Him but to know who He is and what He does. Another well-known theologian of the Old Testament says, "To learn a person's name was to have access to a person's very character."⁸ A human is not able fully to comprehend the nature of God even though he knows His name. Still much mystery remains there but also there is some certainty. A name indicated the nature and character of its bearer. "To pronounce the name of deity meant to call upon his power"⁹, says a commentator of the book of Exodus, Hyatt.

⁷ Alan Cole, *Exodus* (Downers Grove, Il, Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 69.

⁸ William Sanford LaSor, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1996), 66.

⁹J.R. Hyatt, *The New Century Bible Commentary, Exodus* (London, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1983), 75.

It is important to notice that by this name Yahweh revealed Himself to an individual whom he called to go and to fulfill an assigned task, and to the whole Jewish nation. Although earlier Yahweh did not reveal Himself in such a name but to Israelites this self-disclosure by the unknown and unheard name of Yahweh does not contradict their theological understanding of who God is. Elmer Martens, a Mennonite theologian says, “Since great importance was attached to names in ancient Israel, and among Semites generally, it is of considerable importance, especially for a theology of the Old Testament, to gain clarity on the meaning of the name Yahweh.”¹⁰

There have been many suggestions how to translate God’s revealed name. “The Greek tradition (LXX) translated it, “I am who I am.” The important point is that God’s name is first revealed as an active verb, not a noun. “Yahweh (the Lord) is not an abstraction, but a living, acting being”¹¹ - states another theologian, Bruckner. John I. Durham explains that meaning of the verb “to be,” is “connoting continuing, unfinished action: “I am being that I am being,” or “I am the Is-ing One,” that is “the One who Always Is”.¹² It is clear that the name Yahweh shows that Yahweh is a real and living person, with will, feelings, with interests and goals to achieve. Yahweh’s interest in this revelation was to make Himself known in such a way that it will cause Moses and the Israelites to respond to Him and to move out of their present state. They could relate to

¹⁰ Elmer A. Martens, *God’s Design* (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Book House, 1990), 15.

¹¹ James K. Bruckner, *The International Biblical Commentary, Exodus* (Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 45.

¹² John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary, Exodus* (Waco, Texas, Word Books, 1987), 39.

God's name in an action as God revealed himself to them as an active God. This God who revealed Himself as Yahweh appears to be willing to be known.

God's Name Tells that Yahweh is Present.

When Moses saw the burning bush, he realized that something in this place is different. Suddenly he was told to take off his sandals because he was standing on holy ground. In a geographical place (Midian or Egypt) where Yahweh's name was pronounced, God's presence was pronounced as well. With God being so close there is no other way to think about him – only as he is a very relational God. James Bruckner says, “God is the God of each individual journey and story. The transcendent and elusive “I AM” was rooted in an imminent historical and revealed God. Yahweh is both hidden and revealed; beyond us and near us.”¹³

Yahweh to our understanding is endless. He has no limits in time, there are no limits or boundaries for him in space and there is every reason to think that he can communicate with humans in many different ways. That is why to know Him by name is to be called into active relationship and into a life of his presence, as Hyatt says, “Specifically, the stress is upon God's presence with Moses and Israel; his ‘being’ is a ‘being with’, a divine presence.”¹⁴

“I am” is a clear statement of God's presence. Not of his presence somewhere else but His presence now and here. Yahweh's presence tells us that he knows everything that is possible to be known in that place where he is. In his presence nothing

¹³ James K. Bruckner, 45.

¹⁴ J. R. Hyatt, 76.

is hidden from him and he does not hide from anyone. Yahweh's name cannot be separated from fulfilling his promise of his presence when he said to Moses "I will be with you" (3:12). It is, as Martens says, is that "Yahweh is the name by which God represents himself as present, here and now, to act, especially to deliver."¹⁵

When there is suffering in life (like Israelites suffered in Egypt), the best thing for sufferers is to know that somebody knows their pain and how deeply they are suffering. It is every reason to think that the Israelites wanted to know whether their God knows their slavery and suffering.

God's Name Tells that Yahweh is the Name of Salvation

The Exodus story is very explicit in telling that Yahweh revealed himself to Moses and the Israelites for the purposes to redeem them from slavery and to bring them to a Promised Land. Yahweh appeared to them as God who relates to their suffering and God who leads them into salvation. In the Exodus story He is the Savior of the Israelites. It is very clear that the Israelites are unable to save themselves, either through political means, or through rebellion. They are perishing and living miserable lives. Exodus is a story about slavery and salvation.

Salvation is a major theme of Yahweh's revelation, and in this way "I am who I am" is name of Salvation. Durham explains how it can be, "The Israelites in Egypt, oppressed savagely across many years and crying out with no letup to their God, have

¹⁵ Martens, 17.

every reason to want to know, “What can *He* do?” – or perhaps better, “What *can* He do?”¹⁶

A question that is of major significance to the Israelites in Egypt is – is God able to save? God’s power that now is present with them is a question of major importance. Throughout the Exodus story, and to be precise throughout whole Bible, God’s power is a major theme. In the book of God’s story relatively few people believe that God is powerful and is able to save and to solve people’s problems, and a relatively large number doubt and do not believe.

For four hundred years the Israelites lived in Egypt and now He revealed Himself not as El-Shaddai, or Adonai but as God who is “I am who I am”. Yahweh is a salvation name, and as Martens says, “This name, the most frequent name for God (YHWH occurs more than 6,800 times in the Old Testament) becomes a frequent reminder that God is the saving God.”¹⁷

In both passages Exodus 3:17 and 6:2-8 there is a promise to bring them out to a promised land where they will be free persons and they will live in free society in “a land flowing with milk and honey”, where God will satisfy their needs.

Alan Cole calls us to look at His name through a historical lens and he says:

Perhaps the easiest way to understand what the name YHWH meant to the Jews is to see what it came to mean, as their history of salvation slowly unrolled. It ultimately meant to them what the name Jesus has come to mean to Christians, a ‘shorthand’ for all God’s dealings of grace.¹⁸

¹⁶ John I. Durham, 38.

¹⁷ Martens, 17.

¹⁸ Cole, 70.

Cole's reasoning is that for the Jews Yahweh's name was a name of salvation. These three revelations of Yahweh's name (He is known, He is present, He is saving) are meaningful and theologically significant in understanding that Yahweh is a relational and communicative God, that He has not only stepped forward to meet His enslaved nation but also expected them to step out into an unknown land trusting Him.

Section 2. The Covenant and Ten Words. Exodus 19- 24

The Covenant and Ten Commandments are essential in knowing that Yahweh is a relational and communicative God. By His covenant Yahweh was creating a kingdom culture, "a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Ex 19:6). The Covenant and Ten Commandments are not just for the people to tell by what laws they should live in new established society, but they communicated what kind of God Yahweh is. Our focus is to see that God is a relational and communicative God and that He interacts with people. It is correct to say that those who live in covenant with God live in relationship with Him. This relationship has to be established and maintained under certain agreements. LaSor says, "A covenant is a means of establishing a relationship (not naturally existing), which is sanctioned by an oath sworn in a ceremony of ratification."¹⁹

When we come to God who meets His nation at Mount Zion and affirms a Covenant with them we can be certain that relationship between God and His people is not only established, but under certain criteria it is affirmed. "I am who I am" is the same all the time in all places, but people are in constant need to be reminded to be faithful to

¹⁹ LaSor, 73.

the Covenant and to keep God's commandments. Bruckner teaches that, "With the covenant, as in the exodus itself, the people initially followed God's instruction and accepted his provision by faith (19:8; 24:3,7)."²⁰ That is why we are going to look at these narratives which talk how the Covenant was given and affirmed.

Covenant – a Relationship has to be Established

Exodus 19 is about the most dramatic event in the book of Exodus after the deliverance from Egypt. The Lord has delivered Israel from slavery, he has provided for their needs while they were in the wilderness, he patiently listened to their grumblings, and protected them from dangers. Now he has brought the nation to Mount Zion where he decided with them to establish a Covenant and to give laws to live new life and fulfill the Abrahamic mission.

Israel is called to keep Yahweh's covenant with them. A question that is important to ask at this stage is – what is a covenant? A covenant was not a new thing in Israel. We have to remember that the Israelites already had the Abrahamic covenant with the sign of circumcision, which in light of this new covenant was remembered many times.

Before establishing this new covenant, there was a word from Yahweh: "I will take you as my people, and I will be your God." (Exodus 6:7). Theologian Bob Stallman says, "The covenant as a whole describes the relationship that God has established between himself and his people by virtue of his act of deliverance on their behalf."²¹

²⁰ Bruckner, 224.

²¹ Bob Stallman, *Exodus and Work, Theology of Work Project*, December 18, 2012.

The word “covenant” comes from Hebrew *berit*, which occurs 287 times in the Old Testament. The meaning of *berit* is not very clear. Marten explains that *berit* is linked with the word “to eat” or partake of a meal. He concludes that “covenant originally had a connection with food.”²²

For a modern reader, it is easier to understand a covenant in light of the modern meaning of contract. Elmer Martens has looked at those two – contract and covenant – and he taught how they are different from one another. A contract and a covenant might look similar in their outer forms but not in meaning, they are very different in occasion – a covenant is relationship driven. It is made not for benefits but for relationship. A covenant is made not between equals but by a stronger person. It is made not through negotiation but as a gift and it is person-oriented. Loyalty to one another in covenant has a vital importance.

Through the Covenant Yahweh speaks that he is relational and wants to be in fellowship and communication with Israel. Through the Covenant, Israel gains a lot of benefits for themselves. Marten says that as a community “Israel was given an additional sense of solidarity and religious bondedness through the covenant.”²³

Exodus 24 is a narrative that shows how a covenant is sealed. On the Mountain of Zion, we now see Moses with seventy elders. Together they eat in the presence of God and confirm a covenant with Him. This image of a Covenant sealing is taken to the New Testament. Another Old Testament theologian Elizabeth Achtemeier explains,

²² Martens, 74.

²³ *Ibid.*, 84.

“Exodus 24:11 says that Moses, Aaron, Nabad, Abihu, and seventy elders eat and drink with God on Sinai in what could be described as the first Lord’s Supper, and “they beheld God.”²⁴ Bruckner sees that Exodus 24 is linked with New Testament, when Jesus said, “This cup is my blood of the covenant”. This covenant is “combining the image of the meal of the elders (v.11), the sprinkled blood upon the people, and the Levitical cleansing from sin (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; 1Cor 11:25).”²⁵

The Decalogue – the Relationship Needs to be Maintained

When speaking about Gods’ covenant with Israel, we have to speak about Gods’ commandments. Both God and Israel committed to each other to observe their part and to hold to their own obligations to the Covenant. Israel has received that which is usually called the Ten Commandments. They were spoken by words and engraved on stone plates (Exodus 24:12). A prominent theologian, Hamilton has noted, “The purpose of the covenant is to create a new relationship. The purpose of law is to regulate or perpetuate an existing relationship by orderly means.”²⁶ An established relationship has to be maintained and here is where the Law and commandments come. LaSor explains, “The Ten Commandments were never intended to institute a system of legal observances by which one could earn God’s acceptance. Rather they are the stipulations of a covenant

²⁴ Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Preaching Hard Texts of the Old Testament* (Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendricson Publishers, 1998), 32-33.

²⁵ Bruckner, 226.

²⁶ Victor R. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1996), 198.

relationship anchored in grace.”²⁷ To maintain this relationship it is necessary to speak to people, to remind, to teach, to encourage, even to punish them. It is easy to see that in word and in writing given in the future God’s Law will be taught in the spoken and in the written word.

The things that maintain a relationship and help people to stay in relationship with God are called commandments, law, statutes, words, instruction. The Bible itself calls it the “Ten Words” (Exodus 34:28; Deut 4:13, 10:4), in other words the “Ten Words” are called the Decalogue. If they were to be commandments, then there would be instructions about consequences if they were to be broken. These words are given for Israel to follow and to have guidance in living, but also, they reveal God as a person. Another Old Testament scholar, Rita Burns says, “The Decalogue, the very core of the life and integrity of the covenant community, must then be regarded as profoundly theocentric. The text bears witness to the notion that the very life of the community is centered in the person of the living and liberating God.”²⁸ Reading these words, Israel is called to learn about God as person and they are called to be like Him, called to imitate Him. Burns continues, “That is to say, the laws of the Decalogue are presented as flowing from the righteousness and justice of God’s own person.”²⁹

The Decalogue for the faith community was meant to help them to live a joyful and long life. It is not a burden that takes away joy and makes life miserable. The Decalogue is not only theocentric that reveals the character of God and helps to maintain

²⁷ LaSor, 75.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 174.

relationship with Him, but also is meant to be central in human life. Remembering the eight specific instructions not to do certain things to your neighbor or any other person builds up a community where people can trust each other. Elmer Martens writes, “The law is intended to ensure Israel’s well-being, for observance of it would ensure long life. Israel, by means of it, could enjoy life to the full, for the law was given ‘that it may go well with you’.”³⁰

The commandments are given for Israel’s community. It is not only a nation that is called to form its identity around them, but every individual as well. It is worthwhile to agree with Childs when he says, “Decalogue is consistent in touching upon only those areas of extreme importance for the life of the community.”³¹ The Decalogue helps to maintain a relationship with God and makes a better life for Israel. We ought to remember that Israel was led out of slavery from Egypt. They were so bitterly oppressed that at first, they could not hear and comprehend the words of Moses. The Decalogue stands as a critical principle of protest against every kind of exploitative social relation. Looking towards the future, it is meant to transform the nation and lead to liberating relationships.

Israel was not called to accept the covenant for the means of their salvation. The matter was much bigger, because through Israel and with Israel Yahweh was going into a mission for the whole earth and all the peoples. As Bruckner says, “The laws preserved and equipped the people for their mission in the world.”³²

³⁰ Martens, 80.

³¹ Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus*, (London, SCM Press LTD, 1991), 396.

³² Bruckner, 171.

The Covenant and Ten Commandments are essential in knowing that Yahweh is a relational and communicative God. The Covenant is about the establishment of a relationship and the Decalogue about maintaining this relationship. Although here we looked at the covenant and Decalogue of the Old Testament, we live today in the light and revelation of the New Testament. The Old Testament covenant has prepared the community of faith for the Covenant of the New Testament. The Son of God, Jesus, made this covenant with His disciples and His church.

Section 3. The Prophet Jeremiah

As we look at the Biblical text in Exodus, we can see that God revealed Himself to Israel as a relational and communicative God. This should be sufficient to understand that people have to communicate and to teach each other that God is a relational and communicative God. This character of God provides the church with the Biblical rationale for preachers and preaching. Preachers and preaching exist because such a relational and communicative God exists.

In this part of the chapter, we are going to examine the Biblical rationale for preachers and preaching by looking at the prophet Jeremiah. Although there are many other prophets in the Bible, Jeremiah is a classical case for the prophet, and what we can find in his life and teaching usually we can see similar things in the lives and teachings of other prophets as well. Jeremiah was very concerned about the life style of the Covenant nation and he was one who constantly reminded the Israelites about God's word. He spoke it, he studied it, he wrote it, he taught it, he lived by it, he rejoiced in it, he passed it on, and he suffered and probably died because of it.

Called and Appointed by God

Jeremiah 1:4-5 shows how prophets in Israel were made. There were far more than enough men who were trained and concerned about things of God: Levites, priests, wise men, scribes. These men were ordained and were meant to keep up the Jewish religion, to teach the Law, to offer sacrifices, to take care of the temple and offerings, to study the Scriptures. It would not be right to nullify their impact and influence in the spiritual development of the Jewish nation. All Israelites were called to be “a priestly kingdom” (Ex 19:6), which means they were called to serve the Lord. They were called to have a different occupation in their priestly ministry but the same purpose. The Apostle Paul in a similar way explained how believers ought to relate to each other in a church gathering where “there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord.” (1Cor 12:4-5). Prophets were called for a similar purpose as other “priests of the kingdom” of the Old Testament, but their role was different. They showed up in times of crisis. Martens noticed, “The rise of prophets in Israel coincides with the rise of the monarchy.”³³ In the Bible we can see that the monarchy brought more problems to Israel than did well to her. Abraham (Gn 20:7) and Moses (Dt 18:18) were prophets, but they played a different role than the prophets of the monarchy period.

A prominent teacher of the Old Testament, Brueggemann, explains, “The strangeness of these prophets, now remembered and given to us through a complicated

³³ Martens, 155.

editorial process, is that they did not (and I think could not) see the world in the same way as most of their contemporaries, especially the power elite.”³⁴

For the nation they represented God. They appointed kings: Samuel – Saul and David; Ahijah – Jeroboam; Jehu – Baasha; Elisha – Jehu. They also confronted kings with the demands for personal righteous conduct and announced their rejection by God.

They differentiated themselves that in Moses’ way they encountered a close experience with Yahweh, they saw a bigger picture of their world and were ready to do something about it. Usually they were involved in the ministry of God’s “word” – proclamation and preaching. However, in prophetic ministry we see other expressions of their service: building an altar and sacrificing an offering – priestly ministry, writing down the word of God in poetry – scribal ministry, taking part in the temple – Levite ministry, giving advices to the kings and elders – the sage or wise man’s ministry.

A Prophet is Made Through the Call and Appointment of God

Although Jeremiah is an example for prophetic ministry, other great prophets like Isaiah and Ezekiel began to operate through a similar call. Isaiah 6:1-13 records Isaiah’s call and Ezekiel 1-3 – Ezekiel’s call. “These utterers, like all good preachers, have “a sense of call,” an experience and conviction that their lives have been impinged upon in decisive ways to claim their energy and their future for purposes other than their own.”³⁵

The word of God came to Jeremiah and he was changed. In a call one detail is important – that unmistakably a called person knows that he is called to become a

³⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *The Word Militant* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2007), 50.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

prophet. A Prophet's identity is built around this call more than any other thing. During his lifetime Jeremiah had many difficult and painful experiences but he always remembered the authenticity of his call.³⁶

In a Called Relationship, God Serves as the Basis of the Call

God knows Jeremiah, and this is a basic truth for Jeremiah to respond to a call. It is difficult to resist someone who knows you longer and better than you remember yourself, who was and is involved in your beginnings, formation, birth, and growth. The Lord was thinking about Jeremiah before he was born and by it he says - I am more to you than your own mother. In a similar way we see Moses's story where from birth he is protected from genocide and is raised in the royal palace, and during the time of exodus, is one who can mediate between Pharaoh and the Israelites. When God selects someone, it means that He knows well this person whom He chooses, and he is able to fulfill God's mission. Statement "I knew" ranges from factual knowledge to carnal knowledge. In Jeremiah's call it involved choosing a relationship as it was with Abraham.³⁷

This aspect of God knowing the prophet and calling him to be the preacher of God's word, serves a prophet during difficult days. More than any other prophet in the Old Testament, Jeremiah had to challenge and contradict his opponent false prophets concerning the issue of God's speaking and God's will. "By implication Jeremiah's answer is not only that his opponents have not had access to the truth of the rule of

³⁶ F.B. Huey, Jr., *The New American Commentary, Jeremiah, Lamentations* (Nashville, Tennessee, Broadman Press, 1993), 50.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

YHWH; *he has*, and therefore he must be heeded!”³⁸ Divine authorization to prophetic ministry comes through the covenant relationship, remembering that the prophet is known by Yahweh, that the prophet “has stood in the council of the Lord” (Jer 23:18). Because of the prophet’s relationship with the Lord, a prophet has confidence to claim divine authorization and not his human imagination.

In a Call Personal Transformation Serves as the Basis of Prophetic Ministry

The prophetic ministry is not possible without personal transformation. A person of the past has to be broken and bankrupted and a person of the future has to be raised up. The Lord appointed (lit. “given”) Jeremiah to be a prophet without consulting him. As the Sovereign Creator the Lord can do whatever pleases Him and whatever He sees it is right to do. At the same time there is free will to choose (Gen 2:16-17) to be a person God designed to be, or to be a person according your own will.

In the appointment for Jeremiah to be a prophet, it is important to say that he is not a prophet at the time of calling. Other prophets that we know in the Bible also had to make a shift from their occupation to the ministry of their calling. A call to become a prophet is a call to become a disciple, which is “to be a learner – to stand under the tutelage of the Spirit of God”.³⁹ A prophet is going to learn: not only to hear from the Lord and to speak His words, but to adapt to a new style of living.

³⁸ Brueggemann, *The Word Militant*, 11.

³⁹ Daniel J. Baumann, *An Introduction to Contemporary Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978), 35.

If not called, Jeremiah probably would follow his priest father Hilkiah's occupation. In a similar way today, most people select their occupation by their interests, worldview, talents, circumstances, etc. It is in specific times when a person is called to become a prophet or preacher; he is called out to leave what he would choose to do naturally if it was his will, he is impacted by God for transformation, and he is developing and growing in his prophetic ministry. It would be correct to say that prophets are made and not born, and that making is through their transformational experience and obedient discipleship.

In a Call the Mission is Expanded to the Nations and Kingdoms

At first it appears that Jeremiah as a Jewish man is called to be involved in international missions (1:5 and 10v.). Through the book of Jeremiah, it is clear that he is more a prophet for Jerusalem and Judah than for the whole world. But because Jeremiah is called to be a prophet by the Lord, it is correct to say that he is a prophet for the whole world because the Lord cares about people of the whole world. Wright says that "Jeremiah was appointed a "prophet to the nations" (Jer 1:5), and he has many things to say concerning them, including God's utter fairness in dealing with them, whether in judgment or mercy (Jer 12:14-17; 18:7-10)."⁴⁰ God is the true king, who rules all nations, and "God's sovereignty extends beyond the individual to the nations and we read about it in Jeremiah 46-51 where there are his messages to the nations. This call to the nations and kingdoms also might mean that God's people, who broke the covenant with

⁴⁰ Wright, 240.

God, became like any other nation. A prophet was called into ministry during such a period. It also might mean that God designed the prophetic mission to influence kings and public officials to exercise righteous rule. Brueggemann says,

The sovereign word of YHWH is not an absolute, everywhere and always the same. It is a particular, concrete word spoken to particular persons in particular contexts, to impact persons, to impinge upon perception and awareness, to intrude upon public policy, and if possible to evoke faithful and transformed behavior.⁴¹

A call to the nations is a call not to leave Jerusalem and Judah but a call to be ready to accept everything that might happen, to be ready to go to people and places that never were in your eyesight. One who is to be a prophet for his own nation and people has to keep his eyes on the whole world and to understand the big picture of his time.

As we look at the call of God and appointment to be a prophet for covenant people and world nations the same things apply to preachers of God's word in Christ's church. "These three formulations of authority – call, divine council, messenger formula – all converge into the claim that the word uttered is from out beyond the preacher."⁴² The preacher is a person who is called, transformed and as a disciple is in a continuing relationship with his master and Lord. "Preaching is essentially a form of testimony, though it is much more than that. It implies a dynamic relationship with the Lord of the church,"⁴³ - says Baumann.

⁴¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Like Fire in the Bones* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2006), 7.

⁴² Brueggemann, *The Word Militant*, 12.

⁴³ Baumann, 34.

Fear and Excuses

The text is telling us that Jeremiah responded to the Lord with two excuses. This response indicates that Jeremiah feared to become a prophet. He was called to a prophetic ministry during the time of Judah's spiritual and later political crisis, at the time when other exilic prophets were active. Jeremiah definitely knew what it meant to be a prophet and he feared it. He is not alone who at first was not willing to become Yahweh's prophet. Moses also found excuses when God called him, and asked God for someone else to be in the role of Israel's deliverer.

"I do not know how to speak." Huey explains, "This is first excuse where Jeremiah feels that he is not adequate to be a public speaker and this same excuse is shared with Moses (Exod 4:10)."⁴⁴ Public speaking to many people is a very high barrier but speaking on behalf of God is even higher responsibility for it calls people to change their lives. Some are afraid that they will not be able to deliver what they have to deliver, some are afraid that people will reject the content of their message. This is Jeremiah's very honest response to the Lord.

"For I am only a boy" is Jeremiah's second excuse where he feels inadequate for the job. LaSor explains, "He believed his youth would hamper his delivering this word of gloom to a hostile audience."⁴⁵ King Solomon also expressed himself as young and inexperienced to be in the king's role (1Kings 3:7). The apostle Paul wrote a letter to his disciple Timothy and said to him "Let no one despise your youth but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1Tim 4:12). This shows how

⁴⁴ Huey, 51.

⁴⁵ LaSor, 329.

common it is to feel inadequate being called at a young age into God's service. God knows people. For this reason, in His selection are those who respond to Him in obedience. This also shows that there is no one who is ready and no one who thinks he or she is worthy to be called by God to the specific ministry to be a prophet or preacher. Either at a young age (Jeremiah) or in old age (Moses), belonging to a prestigious and elite social status (Isaiah) or the peasant class (Elisha), male or female, a calling is scary and is a challenging matter, and a called person is in a struggle concerning his/her calling.

It is probably correct to say that a called person has to face the cost of his/her calling and this usually creates a natural fear and then excuses follow. It is natural for humans to think that there might be easier way for life. To have answers that affirm the truthfulness of the call might take a longer time, till one understands that he/she is called to serve God in one or another capacity. But returning to the theme of Jeremiah and prophetic ministry, it is clear that no one can become a prophet by his or her own will, being led by desires, thinking about the possible success of such a life style. There is often uncertainty when the Lord calls and there is always fear, till someone learns to trust God and do His will and it seems Jeremiah lived with it throughout his days. LaSor continues, "He often desires to resign from his prophetic office because of the harshness of his message and his reception, but he perseveres to Judah's bitter end. He is the weeping prophet (9:1; 13:17) – lonely, rejected, and persecuted."⁴⁶

As Jeremiah feared that he is too weak and not skilled and too young to speak up against opposition, in a similar manner Isaiah was told that no one will listen to him and

⁴⁶ Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Through the Old Testament* (Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), 201.

pay attention. Ezekiel in his call was made to be like “hardest stone, harder than flint” (Ezek. 3:9) against rebellious house of Israel. A lesson that Tremper Longman III sees in Jeremiah is: “In God’s economy, it is not one’s inherent strength, abilities, or credentials that count, but rather God’s presence.”⁴⁷ For that reason, Jeremiah is not to be afraid to go to the people with God’s message. In the light of the divine command, he should only be afraid of not acting.

God’s Words in their Mouth

For Jeremiah to begin his ministry he needed to have a confidence and this confidence he received from the Lord. This confidence to Jeremiah is transferred through the Divine touch, as noted Derek Kinder, “The touch of God, ever creative, together with the words that clarified it, put beyond doubt the givenness of the message and the mandate of the messenger.”⁴⁸ The prophet Isaiah (Is 6:7) had a similar experience but his lips were touched not by God’s hand but by an angel, a seraph. “In part, then, this act shows that Jeremiah is a prophet in the line of Isaiah. It also shows the consecration of Jeremiah’s mouth, the tool that God is setting apart for the accomplishment of his purpose”⁴⁹ – says Longman.

A prophet’s mouth, as we see, is a main instrument to carry out God’s message. From this point on we begin to talk about the distinctiveness of preaching. Brueggemann

⁴⁷ Tremper Longman III, *Jeremiah, Lamentations, New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody, Hendricson Publishers, 2009), 22.

⁴⁸ Derek Kidner, *The Message of Jeremiah, The Bible Speaks Today* (Downer’s Grove, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press, 1999), 26.

⁴⁹ Tremper Longman III, 22.

says, “Good preaching is a gift that is given, and given again, by redefining divine impingement, and impingement that wrenches one out of one’s own assumptions.”⁵⁰

In essence, this divine touch of Jeremiah’s mouth for a reader means that Jeremiah is going to speak, not opinion or advice or human wisdom, but the divine word of God. Jeremiah is known as the prophet of the “word of the Lord” for he used “Thus says the Lord” or similar phrases one hundred and fifty-seven times out of the total of three hundred and forty-nine times such phrases are used in the Old Testament.⁵¹ Jeremiah’s preaching is like God’s preaching and Jeremiah is like God’s mouth to Israel. As the prophet Isaiah wrote a word of hope and said, “for the mouth of the LORD has spoken” (Isa 40:5), in a similar way Jeremiah was consecrated not only to speak words of divine revelation but also at Gods’ command to write them down (Jer 36:1-2). Technically, these revelations were written down by Baruch when Jeremiah was dictating them to him (Jer 36:18). These messages of God were not only written but many of them were written in a poetic style. “The poetic language of Jeremiah is not just a skillful or an occasional cloak for an external word. It is part of the strategy for letting the live word make a difference in historical reality.”⁵²

Prophets and preachers are meant to bring the word of God in ways that Bruggemann describes Jeremiah, whose “life consists in coming to terms with that word, finding ways to articulate it to his contemporaries, and living with the hazardous

⁵⁰ Brueggemann, *The Word Militant*, 10.

⁵¹ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 228.

⁵² Brueggemann, *Like Fire in the Bones*, 7

consequences of that reality.”⁵³ Like Jeremiah they speak the word of God, they write it down, and there are situations when they need to act it.

Pluck Down and to Pull Down, to Destroy and to Overthrow, to Build and to Plant

Here comes a clear statement of what it means to be a prophet in Israel and a preacher for people about whom God cares. A prophet is to lead people to a new Covenant. Kaiser claims, “The heart of OT theology and of the message of Jeremiah was his teaching on the New Covenant.”⁵⁴ The Biblical rationale for preachers and preaching remains the same. The method also remains very similar as it was given to Jeremiah; it is twofold – negative and positive. As we saw it before in the covenant on Mount Zion there also were spoken negative and positive words for Israel to live by. A prophet in a similar way has to speak the negative and the positive word of God, so that people would have a chance to take it and enter into the New Covenant with God.

A negative implication of the prophetic ministry for Jeremiah is to communicate an unpleasant message – God is angry with the people for breaking His Covenant and He is imposing judgment on them. They have to come to repentance and to get right with God but there is no escape from judgment. Because of the coming judgment Jeremiah himself is not allowed to marry and to participate in the feasts. “The matter of divine judgment in our discussion is a subset of the matter of loss: Jerusalem is a community in

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁴ Kaiser, Jr., 231.

loss. It finally experienced the loss that the prophets had long anticipated and seen beforehand”⁵⁵ - noticed Brueggemann. Through a period of a few centuries people developed a sense of security. They trusted the tradition of the Israelite religion and the Temple of the Lord (Jer 7:4). “Jeremiah’s task was to uproot and destroy a tradition now no longer valid” - thinks Martens.⁵⁶

Four words of demolition would characterize Jeremiah’s prophetic role, because people are not listening to Yahweh’s voice. The result of disobedience is the loss and destruction of Jerusalem and exile from the Promised Land. Jeremiah’s task of preaching is to do an unthinkable thing which is “to stand on the brink of the Exile, the great divide of Israel’s history, and would call the nations to accept the yoke of Babylon.”⁵⁷ Here as Kidner taught, it is worthwhile to notice that Jeremiah is commissioned to deliver a message not just for Judah but for nine nations and kingdoms (Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Arabia, Elam, and Babylon), which more explicitly we can see in chapters 46-51.

Although we look at Jeremiah, other prophets came to Israel with words of demolition as well. When Israel kept covenant and served the Lord – they prospered. When they turned away from the Covenant – they experienced calamities. The Covenant of God is made in such a model. Slavery in Egypt and the deliverance of the nation from this slavery is not allowed to be forgotten, and even has to be celebrated in celebration of

⁵⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2012), Kobo e-book reader, ch.3, p. 37.

⁵⁶ Martens, 161.

⁵⁷ Kidner, 27.

Pasha. If the Covenant will be broken by Israel, they are going to experience another slavery. Brueggemann says, “The prophets invite Israel to grieve. The prophetic anticipatory figuring of loss is an attempt to break the denial and to bring the community to active grieving that is commensurate with its coming circumstance.”⁵⁸

The common prophetic calling of divine judgment “to pluck down and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow” is a prophetic theme and a universal prophetic calling. It is one side of the Biblical rationale for preachers and preaching. The prophets are called to speak powerfully, boldly and without apology for God’s word. The Lord is offended by our distorted ways of living. The task of the preacher is to speak to the community about guilt and healing. Brueggemann says, that the preacher is entrusted with these truths that dare not be reduced:

- The reality of God: God notices and is attentive to the deep human quandary (Jer 6:13-15; 5:25-28);
- The God who notices and takes guilt seriously, *responds in anger and indignation* (Jer 5:7,9,29);
- God notices and responds in pathos and grief, and is beset by profound disappointment (Jer 3:19; 9:1; 31:20);
- *Reparations are specified which require intentional action toward neighbor* (Lev 6:4-5);
- The residue of ache is dealt with by *sacramental action* that mediates to us God’s own life given toward us (Lev 6:6-7).⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Brueggemann, *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination*, Kobo ch. 4, p.15.

⁵⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1989), 32.

Two Words of Hope - Build and Plant

The Israelites needed to go through the fires of God's judgment before they could move into the future of hope and restoration of the Covenant. Both words "build" and "plant" that Jeremiah is entrusted with are talking about the new creation that will give its fruits in the future. Hope for the restoration of relationship is not immediate but postponed and it is possible only through the renewed covenant. "The Covenant formula, "You will be my people; I will be your God" is well represented in Jeremiah and occurs also in Ezekiel (37:27) and Hosea (2:23),"⁶⁰ – says Martens.

This message of hope can be understood in two layers of hope. First, hope is hope of the Israelites returning back to Judah. It is time-framed hope. Jeremiah announces that the exile will last for seventy years and it stands in contrast to the messages of false prophets who insist that the exile will never happen. The Lord will not be angry with them forever. The kingdom of Babylon will fall and will not be restored, but the house of Israel will be restored. After they return from exile they again will start to build Jerusalem.

Second, hope is hope of the restored Covenant. Restoration will only come under the new Shepherd, the Messiah, the nation's future King. "The Messiah is seen in Jeremiah's prophesies: "He will bring in the new covenant (31:31-34), which will fulfill God's covenants with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:1-8), Moses and the people (Deut. 28-30), and David (2Sam 7:1-17)."⁶¹ Jeremiah also is "planting" the idea of a new Covenant. The "Righteous Branch" is proclaimed in Jeremiah 23:5-7 and 33:14-22 and

⁶⁰ Martens, 157.

⁶¹ Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, 200.

by the prophet Isaiah as well (Isa 4:2). The Branch will fulfill several ancient promises: the Noahic covenant; the Abrahamic covenant; the covenant with Phinehas on the continuity of the priesthood; and the Davidic covenant on the everlasting reign of his seed. Kaiser explains that “in every case these had been declared “everlasting” or “eternal,” and so they were in Jeremiah’s projections.”⁶²

Christians see that New Covenant, which was prophesied by Old Testament prophets, is fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of God. He is the Messiah, the Righteous Branch, the Suffering Servant, and Immanuel, God with us. As Brueggemann noticed, “In Christian tradition, that divine impossibility of exile and restoration is transposed in the life of Jesus and reperformed in his body.”⁶³ The message of prophetic preaching and proclamation is reenacted in Jesus, in His own body. By prophetic words of demolition, He was tortured, crucified and killed; by prophetic words of hope He was raised from the dead and is alive and is the eternal King. In this way Jesus himself is a message and a sermon of prophetic preaching, for in him the prophetic word of the Old Testament is incarnated.

The message of prophetic preaching and proclamation is re-acted in the Church, which is the community of God’s people. Brueggemann pointed out, “Crucifixion and resurrection are given dramatic sacramental force in the performance of baptism.”⁶⁴ In baptism by immersion under water the death of Christ on the cross is proclaimed, and by going out of the water the resurrection of Christ to life is proclaimed. In a baptism we

⁶² Kaiser, 230.

⁶³ Brueggemann, *The practice of prophetic imagination*, Kobo ch.6, 11.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

see more than a personal decision of a person who through New Covenant comes to the family of God but looking deeper we see the crucified and resurrected Christ, we see reperformed Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday, and we remember Israel's exile and restoration. Brueggemann continues, "When baptism is taken with sacramental seriousness, it is the performance of twinned evangelical impossibilities, of losing the old life and receiving the new life; thus, the baptized do indeed replicate and reiterate the Jewish drama of exile and restoration and the Christological drama of Friday and Sunday."⁶⁵

An overview from the book of Jeremiah not only reveals a Biblical rationale for preachers and preaching through prophetic example, but also shows how relational and communicative God is. He speaks not just through revelations, covenants, commandments, visions, spoken and written words, acted dramas but also through the week days of Friday and Sunday, through liturgical signs of New Covenant, through every public confession of the individual believer of his/her faith.

Section 4. Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God

What is special about Jesus Christ and what makes him different from other preachers, from other religious teachers? These questions probably are most important to answer to the preacher before being engaged in the ministry of preaching the Gospel. The Apostle John's introduction of Jesus begins by describing who Jesus is. His

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

description has a cosmopolitan aspect rather than a personal one. He is conscious of the big picture of Jesus. Bruce Milne has noted,

As other gospels begin with Bethlehem; John begins with the bosom of the Father. Luke dates his narrative by Roman emperors and Jewish High Priests; John dates his “In the beginning”. Matthew and Luke take us to the cradle and the manger, Mark to the prophecies of old, but John takes us back into the mists of eternity.⁶⁶

In first five verses John outlined the main characteristics that distinguished Jesus from the rest of the people and that showed Him to be supreme, divine. These outlined aspects of Jesus are: He is the Word, He is the Life, and He is the Light.

John recorded Jesus’ sermons that he preached to the Israelites. There are many great things that are said in them where Jesus revealed himself as the Son of God, as one who forgives sins, as one who gives freedom, who is the resurrection and the life. Out of these speeches that he told either to individual people, small group, or crowds, two sermons could be outlined. Those are public sermons. One was preached in the synagogue in Capernaum where the main point of Jesus preaching was – “I am the bread of life” (6:35). Another was preached in the Temple with the main point – “I am the living water” (7, 38). Both sermons have made their point and people were reacting to them. The statements that are outlined in these two sermons in the Gospel according to John are our focus for a Biblical rationale for preachers and preaching.

⁶⁶ Bruce Milne, *The Message of John. The Bible Speaks Today* (London, Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 29.

Jesus is the Bread of Life

It seems that in Capernaum (John 6: 22-66) Jesus said one of most outstanding messages during his ministry. His message “I am the bread of life” has three parts: one was given to the crowd that followed him (22-40); another to the Jews in the synagogue (41-59) and the third section (60-71) was addressed to the disciples. There was a very strong public reaction to these words of Jesus. Some believed Him, some were confused, most of the people were very angry, and many of his disciples turned back on him and no longer followed Him (6:66); only a few remained loyal to Him. The thing that shocked people in this narrative is that Jesus claimed that He is the bread of life and that those who eat Him will have eternal life.

John’s narrative tells us about a crowd whom Jesus fed. People wanted to make Jesus their king; they searched for him and found him in Capernaum. They were surprised that Jesus walked away after such successful recognition. Right away Jesus made a claim that their return is based on their appetites for carnal bread. Jesus’ miracle was misinterpreted and here is Jesus’ speech that corrects their understanding about who he is and what he wants to do. Summing up this message, Jesus talks about the direction of life – “labor for the food which endures to eternal life.” This is the constant challenge of preaching – to tell people the major issue of life – who God is and what he wants them to do.

In this situation Jesus meets people at the point of their needs. This is the first group of people to whom Jesus tells that “he is the bread of life”. He helped to fulfill their physical needs by healing the sick (6:2) and then he fed the hungry (6:12). They follow him to Capernaum and remember His miracle, but Jesus critiques them for not learning

from what he was doing and still thinking primarily about food. Tenney comments “The multitude was a group of materialistic curiosity seekers who were self-satisfied in their tradition.”⁶⁷ Tenny adds that Jesus probably talked with them so harshly because “He sought to awaken them from a supine complacency to active faith.”⁶⁸ The crowd reflected human nature and its need for food and livelihood.

The discourse about God is in the middle of this plot. Here Jesus flips the coin and starting with the side of physical needs, talks about their major spiritual need. It is obvious they rejected their need for God as their Savior, who calls them to believe and live by faith. Tasker noted, “They had not yet reached the first stage of Christian faith, which consists of profound dissatisfaction on the part of man with his spiritual condition.”⁶⁹ Their need was for God who provides them with the practical things of life. They were persistent and interested in their physical need (“give us this bread” v. 34) and had no longing for the higher kind of life. In this situation emerges a conflict for Jesus at their disappointment is talking about their need for God and not the food and about eternal life and food that will help them to endure to eternity.

God and not Moses gave manna in the wilderness, and in a similar way they experienced the same thing as the Israelites in the wilderness, so the best thing they could do is to believe Jesus. As Keener teaches, “Jesus is not only greater than Moses; he epitomized the very wisdom or Torah that God send through Moses.”⁷⁰ Along with this statement “I am the bread of life” Jesus invited them to receive him and to have eternal

⁶⁷ Tenney, 116.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁶⁹ Tasker, 94.

⁷⁰ Keener, 681.

life and resurrection on the last day (6:40). For the crowd he showed direction and what work to do, what food to eat in order to live in eternity.

Another group of people to whom Jesus continued to tell that “he is the bread of life” were Jews that Jesus met in the synagogue. Most likely these are religious and devoted Jews; they did not have the experience of eating free bread on the mountain. They are considering the question “who is Jesus?” They know him, as well as his father and mother. Jesus simply is too familiar to them.

With the Jews we have acquaintance as we read that they began to complain about Jesus. Their complaining is very similar to the one in the desert where the nation wandered on their way to the Promised Land. Beasley-Murray explains, “They grumbled about the water (Ex 15:24), at their lack of bread (Ex 16:2), and water (Ex 17:3), at their hardships in the desert (Num 11:1), at the difficulties in occupying the Promised Land (Num 14:1-3), and against the manna (Num 11:4-6)”.⁷¹ Jesus tells them to stop complaining. As by their complaining the Israelites rejected the Lord in the wilderness, now they in a similar way are rejecting Jesus, who is revealing who he is to them.

Opening scripture in the synagogue is a serious way to have a theological discussion. Jesus is doing exactly that as he opens Isaiah 54:13 and explains that those who know Father will know His Son. “Before anyone can be drawn to Christ in faith and partake of the bread from heaven, he must first have heard the voice of the Father, invisible though He is, directing him to this unfailing source of life-giving energy”,⁷² says Tasker. In the context of feeding thousands, teaching the scripture in the synagogue and

⁷¹ Beasley-Murray, 93

⁷² Tasker, 95.

revealing himself “I am the bread of life,” Jesus makes a magnificent statement which is either rejected or accepted. “I am the bread of life” is the first “I am” statement (out of seven) that reveal the divinity of Christ. Here in the synagogue, according to Brant, “Jesus asserts that, rather than bringing eschatological blessings, he is himself the blessing.”⁷³

It is possible to think about Jesus as the bread of life in comparison with the word of God, as Beasley-Murray writes, “Jewish teachers frequently spoke of the Law as “bread”; there are indications that some at least also identified the manna with the Torah.”⁷⁴ Jesus himself quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 that “one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). In this manner, “eating the bread of life” is feeding yourself on God’s word. This is a good explanation, but probably there is more than that in this revelation “I am the bread of life”.

Jesus says: “my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink” (55). Those who accept him and “eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood” will have eternal life. This statement is contrasted with the historical event of ancestors who died in wilderness because of their disobedience to God, although they ate the divine manna. It is most likely that Jesus in this public speech claims that he came to establish the New Covenant. “Eating and drinking Christ’s flesh and blood thus appears to be a very graphic way of saying that people must take Christ into their innermost being. There is, moreover, a reference to the death of Christ,”⁷⁵ teaches Morris. Without His death, His

⁷³ Brant, 122.

⁷⁴ Beasley-Murray, 92.

⁷⁵ Leon Morris, 335.

sprinkling of the blood and the sacrifice of His body, the New Covenant will not be established. Jesus is truly (and not figuratively) is the bread of life.

“This teaching is difficult, who can accept it?” The third part of Jesus’ teaching and His revelation that He is the bread of life is happening in the “church”, the meeting circle of His disciples. Simply to follow Him and experience the good things that Jesus does to people, to eat his free meal, to receive healing, to listen to his sermons, would be easier. Jesus’ preaching that He is the bread of life shows that such following is impossible; with such an intention people will not last in His church, receiving and “eating Him” is conscious decision-making. He was not interested in building up a cheap religion that is based on His charisma and popularity. Beasley-Murray writes that “those who wanted a temporal king who would give them food for the body turned their backs on the King’s Son when he promised a banquet truly royal for the soul.”⁷⁶

As John puts it down at the end Jesus’ teaching is difficult to accept, and truly is offensive. Here is the point where John challenges every reader of the Gospel to make up his mind. The core or essence of Jesus’ teaching is very hard to swallow. One who eats Jesus’ flesh and drinks his blood is obligated to proclaim such decision-making. In this discourse with his disciples (verses 60-66) Jesus does not even attempt to lower the standard so that the disciples would stay with Him. He continues to teach that His words are really true (spirit and life), and that those who come to Jesus have to be drawn by the Father. His will is not the quantity of disciples but the quality of disciples.

“Do you also wish to go away?” This is a question of respect and freedom. There is nowhere a discussion of Jesus and his disciples where Jesus would regret that He was

⁷⁶ Beasley-Murray, 97.

too harsh to people, that He demanded too much from them. On the contrary, He gave them freedom and also, He offered that freedom to the ones who were closest to Him. In Brant's view "God initiates a dialogue with humans but how they respond is voluntary."⁷⁷ The message remained uncompromised – the way to life and salvation and to the New Covenant is through Jesus' death, His sacrificial atonement, drinking His blood as the purifying drink for your soul and eating His flesh as food for eternal life. In such a fundamental worldview following Jesus is truly dangerous, but also knowing Him they realized that it is fundamentally safe. "It was surely impossible that they could now forsake the One to whose presence they were sure they owed their safety. To whom else could they look for guidance?"⁷⁸ - asks Tasker.

A biblical rationale for preaching in Jesus' style is to bring people to a difficult decision- making. His style was liberty and not force. If there are people who want to go away – the whole world is before them, but for those who will follow him they will eat His flesh and drink His blood.

Jesus is the Fountain of Living Water

In writing down the Gospel about Jesus John 7, the Apostle John wrote down what appeared to him be the very significant sermon of Jesus. Of course, it is possible to argue whether this is the most important sermon or not, but here are some things that help to establish this argument.

⁷⁷ Jo-Anna A. Brant, 130.

⁷⁸ Tasker, 97.

This is Jesus' sermon in Jerusalem, in the Temple. It was during the Feast of Tabernacles, which was celebrated annually in the fall as a harvest festival to remember the end of wandering in the wilderness. It was during the greatest day of the festival when Jesus stood up. As Morris recorded, "A teacher usually sat with his disciples, so that the Master's posture as well as his voice called attention to his words as important."⁷⁹ Standing He proclaimed the main goal of His life, the main message why He has come. Such things as a special place, time, person, the style of presenting the message, His desire that the maximum number of people would hear His call, and the message itself, should make a reader think that what Jesus is going to say is something very special. On this greatest day of the feast, Jesus proclaimed a two-point message. One point is that spiritually thirsty people should come to Jesus to drink and the other point is that those who drink from Him themselves will become rivers of living water.

Let us look at the first point "Those who are spiritually thirsty should come to Jesus to drink" (John 7:37). John records that the Jews who came to the celebration had expected to meet Jesus. They had already heard about him and reasoned whether he is the Messiah of Israel. Some had reached the conclusion that at least he is a good man; some thought that he is a deceiver. The Jewish authorities already had made their mind to catch and destroy Jesus. For Jesus the Feast of Tabernacles is a marking point for a Period of Conflict. Tenney commented that "the events within the period ended with the last Passover of Jesus' life, which would fall in the following spring. The Period of

⁷⁹ Morris, 374.

Conflict, then, covered the last six months before the crucifixion.”⁸⁰ The last day of the feast was the greatest because it marked the conclusion of the Feast and “the whole cycle of the feastal year.”⁸¹ At the Feast, there was a ceremony when priests offered water from Siloam by a golden vessel and they sang verses from the book of Isaiah, “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation” (Isa 12:3). According to Keener, “The water drawing at this festival was also indentified with the Spirit of God.”⁸² The ceremony reminded people of God’s provision to the Israelites when they wandered in the wilderness. With singing from Isaiah, they reminded that the source of life and source of salvation is the Lord.

One thing that is clear is that there was a group of people who thought that Jesus was a deceiver. To those who already made up their mind not to believe Jesus, His preaching did not have any effect, it only roused their anger and negative attitude towards Him. In John, preaching is less about convincing and more about inviting people to Christ. Christ came not to convince but to invite. Here we come to the other group of people - those who thought that Jesus is a prophet or the Messiah (v. 40-41). Jesus, with the message “come to me and drink,” is telling that He is able to give the water of life. He “repeatedly appears greater than traditional water rituals.”⁸³

A question comes here – so who is Jesus? Soon we will be examining that the Holy Spirit is the “water” and because the role of the Spirit is the water, then Jesus should

⁸⁰ Tenney, 130.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁸² Keener, 724.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 725.

be something else. In this instance, Jesus claims that He is the source of the living water. Morris thinks that “the thirsty soul will find that Jesus fills the need that cannot be supplied elsewhere.”⁸⁴ Brant noticed that the next verse has a strange linguistic construction, which has a double meaning. It allows “the belly to belong to either the believer or Jesus.”⁸⁵ Here we look at Jesus as at the fountain of living water, and those who come to him can quench their thirst. In John 7:37-38 the thirsty one is a believer convinced that Jesus can satisfy his thirst, and so he comes and drinks.

In the context of other claims of Jesus where John talks of Him being the Word of God, the Life, the Light, or the bread of life, the fountain of living water would simply support the logical intention of these claims. The message of Jesus is that he is the one who for living ones gives living water, He is the one who provides with this essential life-supporting element.

The second point in this sermon that was preached in the Temple is: “Those who believe Jesus themselves will become rivers of Living Water” (John 7:37). Jesus called people to believe in Him and to have eternal life. The essence of His call is their life. His preaching and invitation are meant to change people’s lives. Those who will come to Him and drink will quench their thirst. This means that as soon as they find Jesus, they experience the spiritual peace of God, they experience forgiveness of their sins, and they become children of God, who are born “not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of men, but of God” (John 1:12-13).

⁸⁴ Morris, 374.

⁸⁵ Brandt, 140.

Believing in Jesus is “becoming someone.” We already mentioned that there is a possible double interpretation of verse 38. One meaning is that the phrase “out of his heart” is talking about Jesus, and it makes Jesus a source of living water. Another meaning is that a believer in Jesus himself becomes a fountain of living water. Living water, as it is stated in next verse, is the Holy Spirit, which makes all the difference. The Spirit comes from Jesus and as a believer drinks from Jesus, it is through him the Spirit brings refreshment to other thirsty souls. “The Spirit would continue the presence (14:17-18, 23) of the Word who became flesh (1:14-18), it is not surprising that John would portray the Spirit as water,”⁸⁶ - says Keener. A person who comes to Jesus becomes a different person. An illustration of a spiritually thirsty person who experienced change is in John 4, where Jesus at the well converses with the Samaritan woman. At the end of the story the Samaritan woman believed that Jesus is the Messiah.

As Jesus stood up and cried out in Jerusalem on the greatest day of the Feast, he expected the Israelites to come to such a decision as the Samaritans did in John 4. “On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem” (Zech 14:8). Jesus preached with the expectation that people would respond. Jesus’ call is the fulfillment of the prophet Zechariah. In similar manner preachers are called to follow Jesus and by proclaiming Good News to fulfill their role.

These two sermons highlight some elements of Jesus’ preaching. One element is that preaching is an invitation to receive Jesus and to have eternal life. Another element of Jesus’ preaching is to be established in the New Covenant. This establishment is through drinking and eating Jesus’ blood and flesh. A third element in Jesus’ preaching

⁸⁶ Keener, 724.

was freedom and not force. People were called to make difficult life decisions. One more element visible in Jesus the preacher is that he teaches that people need to drink living water as an essential life-supporting element.

Section 5. The Holy Spirit

Reading the Gospel according to John, additionally seeing the example of Jesus, the Son of God, for the biblical rationale for preachers and preaching, one must consider the impact in preaching of the Holy Spirit. Without the influence of the Holy Spirit, even the best preacher will only preach to those ears that hear words but are not able to hear the Word of God.

Taking brief summary of the New Testament, we read that Jesus came “filled with the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14) and it is through faith in Jesus that the “rivers of living water” (John 7:38) transforms the lives of every believer. In the first letter to Corinthians (1Cor 2:1-5), the Apostle Paul said that his preaching depended very much on the Holy Spirit and in a similar way to the church of Thessalonians he explained that the Gospel came to them because of the Holy Spirit (1Thess 1:5). We also see in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit works in the lives of believers by giving them spiritual gifts (Eph 4:11).

The aim of this study is to examine how the Apostle John viewed the Holy Spirit impacting persons in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is no question that John’s view is much narrower than the broader Biblical revelation on the Holy Spirit, and John is presenting only a few aspects of Holy Spirit’s working.

Once Jesus said to his disciples, “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (John 6:63). The author Gordon T. Smith says:

This is the voice that will give clarity, meaning and direction to our lives, enabling us to know who we are and who we are called to be. We somehow know that the voice of Jesus will enable us to live with courage and grace in a broken world.”⁸⁷

Jesus continues to speak to His followers through the Spirit. Two additional aspects that we are going to explore that are very valid for preachers and preaching are about God the Holy Spirit.

In chapters fourteen through sixteen, the Apostle John highlighted two aspects of the Holy Spirit. One is that the Spirit Paraclete, who acts among His people as the presence of God and Jesus, is present with the believer through the Spirit Paraclete. Another is that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, who works to reveal truth.

God is With Us

Preachers often are people who need help from above. Preaching is learning, struggling, and always dealing with some unknown aspect of the human soul. Often even knowing what to do and what to say does not work, and the preacher is left with an unfinished task. As Jesus already was thinking that the time of His departure was close, he told His disciples that He is not leaving them alone. During His ministry Jesus was talking about God the Father and the divine Spirit. It was not a strange and new theology to the Israelites to hear that God comes to people through the Spirit’s presence. In the Old Testament “Spirit” (Heb. *ruach*; Gk. *pneuma*) occurs over 400 times as a third way

⁸⁷ Gordon T. Smith, *The Voice of Jesus* (Downers Grove, Illinois, IVP Books, 2003), 12.

of articulating the creative, revelatory, and redemptive activity of God.⁸⁸ Jesus assured His disciples that God the Holy Spirit will be with them and they will know how they ought to go on (John 14:16; 16:7).

The Paraclete will be with Us Forever

At first it is important to notice that the Spirit was with Jesus (John 14:16). The Holy Spirit in the New Testament is associated with the person and work of Christ. The Spirit “overshadows” Mary, is at Jesus baptism, inaugurates and empowers Jesus ministry, and leads and drives Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. The Spirit rests on Him as Jesus announces that the scriptures were fulfilled and that He is the anointed one. Jesus is preaching that the Spirit teaches, counsels, convicts, judges, regenerates, indwells, and is present. The Spirit was present throughout all the life of Jesus. As Olson and Hall noticed, “John’s gospel particularly focuses upon Jesus’ relationship with the Holy Spirit in the farewell discourse (John 14-17).”⁸⁹ In the New Testament teaching there are many parallels of Jesus and the Spirit, where it is clearly visible that the Spirit carries on Jesus’ mission and meditates His presence. “Did Jesus not say He would send “another Paraclete,” thus implying that He was one Paraclete and the Spirit was the other? John’s statement gives confirmation of this: “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”,⁹⁰ says Oswald Sanders.

⁸⁸ Roger E. Olson & Christopher A. Hall, *The Trinity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 6.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁹⁰ J. Oswald Sanders, *The Holy Spirit and His Gifts* (London, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1970), 20.

Keener helps readers to see how Jesus' mission and life is related to the Holy Spirit, and how much similarity they share together.⁹¹

The Holy Spirit was with Jesus and in a similar way He will be with His disciples and followers. They are special in God's eyes, because Jesus came for them and died for their sake, because they are to carry the message of his cross, suffer for his sake and come to live in eternity with him. These are the things that Jesus did with and to his disciples (teaching, saving, healing, encouraging, vision casting, suffering together, surprising them, etc.). The Holy Spirit is continuing to do the same things for them too. It seems that most translators do not agree how to translate Greek word *paraclete* and they are trying their best to put their own meaning. Words like counselor, helper, advocate, companion, guide, teacher, and comforter are used in the most often-read Bible translations. These words explain part of the true meaning of *paraclete*, but these words do not translate *paraclete* literally. Wayne Ward says, "The preposition *para* is well known in English: *parallel*, *paradigm*. It means "side by side," "alongside." *Kletos* is a noun that comes from the verb *kaleo*, "to call." It means, "one who is called". Put together and you have a beautifully simple meaning "One called alongside."⁹² When Jesus said that the Father will give us another Paraclete, he meant that the Spirit Paraclete will be with His disciples to help in all times and especially in times of our deepest need, in the time they really need a friend. Tenney says, "The indwelling of the Spirit in the

⁹¹ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John, Volume II* (Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 965.

⁹² Wayne E. Ward, *The Holy Spirit, Layman's Library of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville, Tennessee, Broadman Press, 1987), 73.

hearts of Jesus's followers would provide a fellowship with God even closer than they had experienced in the physical presence of Jesus."⁹³

The Paraclete is the presence of Jesus with His disciples. Now all Jesus' disciples through the Spirit can be in relationship with Jesus at any time and to receive help from Jesus in order to continue His mission of proclaiming the Good News. "The measure of the fullness of the Spirit may vary in the individual life; but the presence of the Spirit is essential to true Christian experience,"⁹⁴ claims Tenney.

The Paraclete Convinces the World about Sin and Righteousness and Judgment

Every preacher in preaching must relate and deal with the main spiritual topics that change the lives of people. In this sentence (John 16:7-8) Jesus outlined the activities of Holy Spirit. Oswald Sanders says that the Paraclete's role is more of strength and help.⁹⁵ In proclaiming the Good News there is something to say about bad news. To show that people are sinful, to point to righteousness, and to remind them about the coming judgment, anyone needs to have inner strength and divine help. Such a mission of proclamation for Jesus' followers may seem too heavy, and in fulfilling it they have to have divine strength to keep up their motivation. Brant notes that "the Paraclete

⁹³ Tenney, 220.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 220

⁹⁵ Sanders, 20.

acts to reinforce the disciples' confidence in the verity that Jesus's commandments are God's will."⁹⁶

Maybe there is a temptation to think that the Paraclete will force a disciple to do something that is too challenging and too difficult for him. Sanders noticed that "The Holy Spirit is Jesus' other Self – He was given to be to us on earth all that our Lord would be were He personally present."⁹⁷ Jesus was not forceful to his disciples; he gave them freedom to go their own way or to follow Him. The Holy Spirit in a similar way respects the freedom of every disciple, but in especially difficult situations He is present to help.

Jesus' priorities are the Holy Spirit's priorities. As John is writing the *Paraclete* is going to do the threefold conviction work that is focused on the cross. Jesus' followers may think that things like conviction of sin and righteousness and judgment are their duty, to change the world, to bring down the kingdom of God to this earth is their responsibility, to turn unbelievers to become followers of Christ is their calling. John Walvoord says, "The work of convicting or convincing the world of sin is given the specific character of revealing the one sin of unbelief as being the issue between the unsaved and God."⁹⁸

Many disciples of Jesus fail to do these things and then they live in guilt, feeling they are unworthy disciples. If preachers are not preaching these things with conviction, and preaching without effect, they most likely will feel inadequate as preachers, although

⁹⁶ Brandt, 215.

⁹⁷ Sanders, 21.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

in their heart they wholeheartedly are in relationship with Jesus and in continuing the work of His mission. What then to do? According to Kaiser, “We must in all good conscience point to the presence and work of the Holy Spirit as the source of any confidence that we might have in our message even after we have acted most responsibly in the study and preparation of the text for proclamation.”⁹⁹ Without Holy Spirit’s involvement the message is not sufficient. Even in its best presentation it is simply unbelievable. The Holy Spirit is a major factor when an unbelieving person transforms into believing one. A choice of every preacher and person is to allow the *Paraclete* to work through them, to give Him priority to be influential in their lives.

It is necessary to turn from the point that the Holy Spirit works to convince the world to the point that He works to convince every follower and disciple of Christ in the first place. Sin’s deadly influence distorts the picture of the world, of creatures of God, of people, and of God himself. Sin twists the meaning of what righteousness is, what justice, mercy, and goodness are. Sin denies holiness, repentance, and judgment. In this light according to Smith, “we seek, then, the grace of the Holy Spirit, who makes us aware not only of sin but also of the deadly character of sin and our potential for both forgiveness and life.”¹⁰⁰ Usually one’s natural inclination is to see more readily the sin of the other people than one’s own. It is always easier to apply rules to others than to oneself. The Holy Spirit, the *Paraclete*, is a great gift of Jesus, because in His presence

⁹⁹ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Books, 1981), 235.

¹⁰⁰ Smith, 91.

His disciples cannot hide from the truth, from the Spirit working in one's heart. Oswald Sanders explained it well as he said,

There is such a thing as sin, and its essence is the refusal to believe on Christ. There is such a thing as righteousness and it was embodied in the Incarnate Christ and attested by His return to heaven. There is such thing as judgment, which consists in the triumph through Christ of righteousness over sin and Satan.¹⁰¹

The Paraclete and His working is this threefold conviction, and preachers who follow Jesus are in a constant process of learning to see His Spirit moving and working.

The Spirit of Truth

Truth tellers are needed in this world where there is so much confusion.

Preachers and preaching are meant to proclaim to people the truth, to tell the truth about people, sin, the world, God, eternity, etc. Those who are called to proclaim usually meet resistance of the lie. Their assignment is to tell and to overcome the lie. As we start to speak about the Spirit of Truth, from the beginning we have to admit that there is a spirit of lies and deceit. Beasley-Murray has noticed that Judaism already discerned spirits. He quotes two Jewish sources (The Testament of Judah 20:1-5 and 1QS 3:18-21).¹⁰² In one it says, "Two spirits await an opportunity with humanity: the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." In the other source it says, "He allotted unto man two Spirits that he should walk in them until the time of his visitation; they are the spirits of truth and perversity."¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Sanders, 41.

¹⁰² Serek Hayyahad ("Rule of the Community", *Manual of Discipline*).

¹⁰³ Beasley-Murray, 257.

As we enter the world of spirits, we enter a sphere where we are very limited with our knowledge, and almost unable to discern which spirit is of truth and which is spirit of error and perversity. The only reliable source is the Scriptures, which in 1John 4:1 tells that we are able to discern true from false. The only reliable person is Jesus Christ, who was able to speak to evil spirits, and who said that He is sending to the disciples the Paraclete – the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17; 16:13).

Truth in Greek is “*aletheia*”. “This word for ‘truth’ can mean what is true, rather than false, or right, rather than wrong. But its characteristic use in John’s Gospel is to designate what is “real,” “enduring,” or “genuine”, as contrasted with something which is transient or artificial,”¹⁰⁴ says Ward. Truth is associated with permanence and endurance; in a context when everything passes away, but the truth endures forever. “Only those lives that are in touch with the Spirit of truth are in touch with the God who will never fade away.”¹⁰⁵ In the Gospel according John, we learn that those who worship Father must worship him in truth (4:23-24). It means that a person has to live a truthful life, has to be a person who came to acknowledge the truth in his life. Morris sees that these words of Jesus also are showing that “truth is very closely associated with the Godhead.”¹⁰⁶ Jesus describes his person as being “the truth” (14:6), and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who communicates truth, is the Spirit of Truth. It is not difficult to draw the

¹⁰⁴ Ward, 76.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁰⁶ Morris, 557.

conclusion that John believed in the God of the Trinity who is the God of Truth. Millard Erickson notes that the Spirit is “glorifying another member of the Trinity.”¹⁰⁷

If we speak about the spirit of error and perversity, it is in the world and this is a major reason why people of this world cannot know, see and receive truth. Once Pilate asked Jesus a question, “What is truth?” (18:38). He did not listen to the words of Christ and did not want to hear the truth but acted according what political pressure demanded from him. The Jewish leaders and crowds seemed more sensitive to the spirit of error and perversity than to the truth. They demanded to release to them the bandit Barabbas, and to crucify their “King of the Jews.”

The Spirit of Truth Guides

What does the Spirit of Truth mean to the people? Two important things that Jesus said in this sentence are that He comes to help a believer to live a renewed life, and He comes to reveal things that are important to God (John 16:13). It is no question that the Spirit of Truth has to be truthful. The Spirit of Truth cannot lie. This is how we know that the *Paraclete* is the Spirit of Truth because He guides, not into deceit and lies, but into all the truth. One rationale for Biblical preaching is to guide people into all the truth.

Jesus promised this to his disciples and told them that they will be guided into all the truth. As the Israelites were guided, the people of New Covenant, the church, also is guided to live in God’s truth; even more, every single believer lives under the guidance of

¹⁰⁷ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Books, 2003), 876.

Holy Spirit. Jesus was a teacher and leader, but his influence was that of external word and example. The Spirit according Erickson, “is able to affect one more intensely because, dwelling within, he can get to the very center of one’s thinking and emotions, and lead one into all truth, as Jesus promised”.¹⁰⁸ It is correct to say that every person who has been shown truth and who received it, becomes a changed person. The danger faced every day is that through temptations and the impact of sin it is rather easy to fall back into an old life style. The Spirit of Truth helps every believer to know the truth. The Holy Spirit is not going to change the will of a person but will be near in trying to show mistakes and will give a means to return and live a renewed life.

The Spirit of Truth Reveals Things that are Important to God

John wrote down that Spirit of Truth will “declare to you the things that are to come” (John 16:13). Those things are important to God. The Gospel of John sketches a picture of the Spirit giving special guidance and giving help to the Christian. Through the work of the Spirit, the Bible shows what kind of person he is. Erickson says:

The Holy Spirit engages in moral actions and ministries that can be performed only by a person. Among these activities are teaching, regenerating, searching, speaking, interceding, commanding, testifying, guiding, illuminating, revealing.¹⁰⁹

A mistake often repeated in recent decades of Christianity is when Christians and even leaders of the churches are teaching that the Spirit is a divine force, which helps them to achieve certain things. They call for the Spirit only to perform miracles, to heal the sick, to bring prosperity. It is offensive for the Spirit of truth, because the truth is that

¹⁰⁸ Erickson, 890.

¹⁰⁹ Erickson, 878.

the Spirit is a person and He knows better than we do what things of God we need to know and experience. The Mennonite theologian Stephen Dintaman explains that “The Spirit is not a freelance teacher making up new truths at will. New truths need to be tested.”¹¹⁰

The Spirit of Truth is building a new person by revealing to him and her God’s truth and strengthening inside in the most important area of human strength. Earl C.

Davis teaches:

He guides us into a deepening understanding of spiritual truth (16:13). He reveals to us in the Bible that which shall come to pass both in our individual lives and in the course of the world (v.14). He teaches us through our private devotions, through study of the Bible with other Christians, and through the preaching of the Word.¹¹¹

By revealing to believers things that are important to God, the Spirit of Truth helps them to stay away from meaningless things. Disciples are unable to live out the implications of the revelation until the Spirit of Truth comes to them. “The Spirit can reveal new truths and interpret the situations of our lives. That was the experience of the writer as he worshiped on the Lord’s Day,”¹¹² says Earl Davis. We need the help of the Spirit in our solitude when we are alone and need to hear from God. We need the Spirit of God to speak to the things that are important to us and important to God and help us out of these two wills to make one will – to follow Christ and to live a life of a faithful disciple.

¹¹⁰ James R. Krabill and David W. Shenk, *Jesus Matters* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, Herald Press, 2009), 150.

¹¹¹ Earl. C. Davis, *Life in the Spirit, Layman’s Library of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville, Tennessee, Broadman Press, 1986), 48.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 48.

The Spirit of Truth Testifies of Christ

Many textbooks on Christian systematic theology usually have big portions and many pages devoted to the person of Christ and relatively short chapters about the Holy Spirit. Why in teaching Trinitarian doctrines do theologians speak less about the Holy Spirit?

It seems that they do this because the Holy Spirit is one of the Holy Trinity, and in unity with God the Spirit wants to testify and glorify Christ. “The love between the Father and Son gives rise to the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit from both of them as their “bond of love,”¹¹³ say Olson and Hall. God the Father and the Holy Spirit are not offended if people will make Christ primary in their worship, because there is no rivalry within the unity of the Godhead. Sanders says, “In Scripture each Person is represented as delighting to serve the other.”¹¹⁴ The Father told the disciples that Jesus is His Beloved Son and that they should listen to Him. The passion of Christ was to glorify and to manifest the hidden excellence of the Father. The Spirit of Truth is working to show that Jesus is truly “the way, and the truth, and the life.” (14:6). The Divine Trinity is Unity. From the perspective of the Godhead, the most important work that God has done for humans is their redemption from slavery of sin and sanctification to the family of God. Jesus in this area has done the “dirtiest” work – voluntarily and in tremendous suffering He died on the cross. This is the reason why the Spirit is working to testify Christ. Leon Morris says:

¹¹³ Olson, 64.

¹¹⁴ Sanders, 72.

The work of the Spirit is Christocentric. He will draw attention not to Himself, but to Christ. He will glorify Christ. It is the things of Christ that He takes and declares, that is, His ministry is build upon and is the necessary sequel to that of Christ.¹¹⁵

What does it mean to have the Spirit of Truth in someone's life? It does not mean that such a person has a penetrative look into all the things of life and is able to make clever decisions. Even the most skilled and educated preacher, who loves Jesus a is not sufficient without the Spirit's work to testify to Christ and his atoning death. The Anglican theologian John Stott says, "The Holy Spirit came to 'convict the world of guilt', but only in order that he might more effectively bear witness to Christ as the Saviour from guilt."¹¹⁶ Humans can make only an external influence, but the Spirit is working internally. The Spirit needs those external speakers that tell people about Christ, but it is the Spirit who gets closest to the heart and the soul of every human being. The Spirit of Truth makes himself known in various ways. "He bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom 8:16), and cries, "Abba! Father!" (Gal 4:6). He provides a guarantee or a down payment of our future fellowship with Him in heaven (2Cor 1:22; 5:5) and reveals His desires to us so that we can be led by those desires and follow them (Rom 8:4-16; Gal 5:16-25)."¹¹⁷

The theme that is analyzed in this chapter is that Biblical preaching is grounded in the preacher's relationship with God. The focus of Biblical preaching is God. Christian preachers see God as Trinitarian. He is God the Father who revealed Himself in

¹¹⁵ Morris, 622.

¹¹⁶ John W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 1986), 99.

¹¹⁷ Erickson, 641.

revelation and in the covenant of the Old Testament. He was proclaimed by the prophets in Israel. God the Son, who came as Jesus of Nazareth, called the disciples, and established His church. God the Holy Spirit who was sent as the Paraclete, was with Jesus, the disciples, and the early church, and now is with us as we proclaim the saving message of the cross of Jesus. God is relational and communicative. God wants to communicate with people, God desires that people would seek, establish and continue to live in relationship with Him. The rationale for Biblical preaching is the preacher's relationship with God and communication of God.

CHAPTER 2

Anabaptist Theological Emphases for Preaching and Preachers

The previous chapter has analysed some texts from the Old and the New Testament and in them was found reference to the Biblical rationale of preachers and preaching. It was focused on foundational elements for preaching and preachers such as God being a relational and communicative God.

In this chapter, there will be a focus on preachers' theological emphases for preaching. The theological emphases that are typical for Anabaptist/Mennonite ecclesiological practice and for their preachers will be addressed. Preaching in the Anabaptist churches and congregations always was a central element. The Mennonite pastor, Dr. Arden Thiesen, says: "this was symbolically demonstrated by the absence of an altar and the centrality of the pulpit in their meetinghouses".¹¹⁸ In his article "Preaching in the Anabaptist Tradition", he explains that today preaching in Anabaptist/Mennonite churches is not substantially different for that of preachers who hold different ecclesiastic traditions. However, Thiessen explains:

There are still many Mennonite churches whose ministers are chosen directly out of their congregations, without having had any theological education, and who come to their pulpits straight from their fields or shops. These ministers, it would be expected, will probably stand much closer to their respective traditions than those who have been trained in theology and homiletics."¹¹⁹

Listening to Dr. Thiesen's words there is the difference between preachers who had formal and non-formal training.

¹¹⁸ Thiesen, Arden. *Didaskalia*. Fall 2003, 2.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

The focus of the study will be on theology and historical key elements that were characteristic of Anabaptists in the sixteenth century. The contemporary situation in Western or Eastern Europe or North America is different than that of the sixteenth century. The Anabaptist church has become global and most Anabaptist believers at this time live in Asia, Africa and Latin America, among Buddhists, Muslims, Hindu, atheistic or animist peoples. Because of mission work there are more churches and more Anabaptist people who are new in their faith, than those who grew up or inherited Anabaptist theology or traditions. The Free Christian Church in Lithuania is one of such faith communities. Even though there are many Anabaptist leaders who were trained in evangelical theological institutions, Anabaptist preaching with some distinctive emphases still exists, and it is a purpose of this chapter is to look at these distinctive emphases of Anabaptist churches. This will be helpful as the preachers and their opinions of the Free Christian Church of Lithuania will be evaluated.

Professors at the Eastern Mennonite Seminary Preaching Institute discussed preaching and one of them, David Greiser says that they agreed that good preaching has the following characteristics. It is: Expository (grounded in the biblical text); Relevant (speaking to contemporary listeners); Inspiring (engendering hope through judgment and grace); Prophetic (delivering a word from the Lord); Communal (co-creating with listeners the meaning of God's message); Evangelical (proclaiming God's good news); Charismatic (Empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit); Invitational (calling people to follow Jesus in the world), and Captivating (holding people's attention).¹²⁰

¹²⁰ David B. Greiser and Michael A. King (eds.), *Anabaptist Preaching* (Telford, Pennsylvania, Cascadia Publishing House, 2003), 14.

It is the task of the Eastern Mennonite Seminary Preaching Institute to help preachers to become better preachers in their churches. For this reason, this preaching institute is very helpful in cultivating preachers' communication skills and strengthening their identity. Most likely preachers will learn the skills of communication as they practice preaching. However, it is more challenging to be a preacher whom people trust, love, and follow.

The focus of this chapter is not preaching, but rather preachers and their theology, and the understanding of Triune God and the Church. The theological convictions of preachers are demonstrated in their preaching. For this reason, the main convictions (and not preaching) that are very dear to the Anabaptist tradition have will be examined.

They have been preached and taught by Anabaptist preachers who emphasize the Anabaptist way of living their life and the message. These theological emphases are conversion and baptism, the Bible, following the leading of the Spirit, church (community), mission, and peace.

Section 1. Conversion and Baptism

As the Anabaptist movement began in the sixteenth century, Roman Catholic Church priests and theologians after their conversion began to join the movement. One of the earliest Anabaptist theologians was Balthasar Hubmaier, who before becoming an Anabaptist was a professor of theology at the University of Ingoldstadt. He was baptized in Waldshut, Bavaria, on Easter Day, 1525 by the Anabaptist ex-priest, Wilhelm

Rublin.¹²¹ Another significant figure in first years of Anabaptism was Michael Sattler, a former Benedictine monk. He led the Anabaptist movement in Southern Germany and through his influence in 1527 in Schleithem a conference of Anabaptist leaders was organized, where they wrote seven core convictions of the Anabaptist movement. This document is known as the “Schleithem Confession”¹²² and there will be more discussion of this document latter.

Menno Simons is the most well-known Anabaptist pastor from Holland. The Anabaptist movement in Holland was named Mennonites, from his name. His journey toward Anabaptism began as upon his appointment to priesthood in 1524, he looked for answers in Scripture concerning the Eucharist and Baptism. About his conversion that came in coming years, Menno writes:

My heart trembled in my body. I prayed to God with sighs and tears, that he would give to me, a troubled sinner, the gift of his grace, and create a clean heart within me; that through the merits of the crimson blood of Christ, He would graciously forgive my unclean walk and unprofitable life, and bestow upon me, wisdom, Spirit, candor and fortitude, that I might preach his exalted and adorable name and holy word unperverted, and make manifest his truth to his praise.¹²³

The Anabaptist story begins with such men and women, who began to read the Scriptures, who came to a spiritual condition to pray and confess their sins, who yielded to God, who were inwardly changed - converted, and who took believer’s baptism and followed Christ.

¹²¹ Keith Jones, *A Believing Church* (Great Britain, GEM Publishing Company, 1998), 21.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 23.

¹²³ Menno Simon, *The Complete Works of Menno Simon*, Volume I (Grand Rapids, Christian Classics Ethereal Library), (accessed 25-07-2016).

The emphasis of conversion and baptism was and is essential in the Anabaptist tradition for every believer, especially for those who preach and teach Word of God.

Conversion is Becoming a New Person

As Jesus was teaching about the kingdom of God, at one moment he said a warning word about losing one's life and perishing (Matt 13:15; 18:1-4). Jesus was very clear that he is their only hope because he heals and restores spiritually sick people. This moment of a spiritual change is often called "conversion."

The definition and meaning of word "conversion" in Hebrew is *shub* and in Greek is *strephomai* and their meaning is "to turn, or return."¹²⁴ 'Conversion', a word that is used in English, comes from the Latin "*com*", together, and "*vettere*", to turn, and means primarily a "turning toward."¹²⁵ It also means turning toward something, which is God.

Conversion is an action in which a human turn to God. Millard Erickson in his widely recognized book, *Christian Theology*, explains that in conversion there is a negative and a positive element. One is repentance, which is abandonment of sin; and second is faith, that is acceptance of the promises and the work of Christ. By turning away from sin, a person cleanses his own soul, and this is a positive part, but to some people, who are sceptical about such philosophy, it is a very hard thing to believe; that is why it might look like a negative thing.

¹²⁴ *The New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J.D. Douglas, (William B.Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, (1967), 250.

¹²⁵ [Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Conversion#1988), <http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Conversion#1988> Article, (accessed 25-07-2016)

Conversion, according New Testament teaching, is the total change of a person's worldview. According to the the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia conversion can be described as follows, "The entire person is involved in the change at the intellectual, volitional, affective, and behavioral levels."¹²⁶ It changes his attitudes toward God, toward himself, toward other people, and toward worldly systems. Conversion in the biblical sense is not just an inward, spiritual religious event; it is an event of exodus from an old life in a fallen social order into a new life in a renewed social order, which is the church.

Through conversion, a person who was in enmity with God becomes a friend of God. The second element of conversion is an action in a human that makes him to be a different kind of person. Jesus taught that newness starts with new birth (John 3:3), with becoming like a child (Matt 18:3).

Conversion, in this way is a continuous action in which someone who now follows Jesus develops spiritual qualities like humility, trust, and love, and such a renewed person looks more like a child. Anyone who wants to enter the kingdom of God must become like a child (Luke 18:16-17). Through conversion there is a fresh and new looking into oneself as well. Menno Simons, in the moment of his conversion, described in the earlier quotation, prayed for this newness in his life in order that he could manifest the truth of God to His praise. A Christian life and following Jesus in the Anabaptist tradition started from one's conversion, from spiritual birth, and from belonging to the people of God's kingdom.

¹²⁶ Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online,
<http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Conversion#1988> Article, (accessed 25-07-2016)

Baptism is a Visible Sign of a Converted Person

A spiritual change, repentance, conversion, and a desire to live a new life were the main reasons for the sixteenth century disciples of the Zurich reformer Zwingli to initiate the return of a Biblical form of baptism – believer’s baptism. The British Anabaptist theologian, Stuart Murray, says that they intended to call themselves “brothers and sisters”, or simply Christians, but their opponents were prompted to label them “Anabaptists” (“rebaptizers”).¹²⁷ From Anabaptist perspective “Anabaptist” also shows how important Christ’s commandment of baptism was to these followers of Christ. The Catholic and Reformed churches in the 16th century and until now still put a high value on sacramental infant baptism, but Anabaptists continue to claim that baptizing infants without any conscious decision-making on their part is not a found in the Bible. The disagreement for baptismal practice exists up to this day. For their position of adult baptism practice, they had to pay a very high price.

Arnold Snyder, a Mennonite theologian, observes, “in many of their own writings the Anabaptists spoke of baptism as a threefold baptism of spirit, water, and blood, making reference to 1 John 5:6-12.”¹²⁸ To them, baptism was a spiritual process. Only an adult person could be involved in the spiritual process of following Jesus.

The first form of baptism is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist told that Christ will come and will baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11). Anabaptists understood that this baptism of the Holy Spirit is a baptism for

¹²⁷ Stuart Murray, *Naked Anabaptist* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, Herald Press, 2010), 36.

¹²⁸ Arnold Snyder, *Following in the Footsteps of Christ* (Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 2004), 69.

salvation. We ought to remember that the meaning of baptism is immersion, so the baptism of the Holy Spirit simply is immersion into the Holy Spirit. From an Anabaptist perspective the baptism of the Spirit precedes water baptism. There is no point to be baptized by water if there was no inner cleansing of one's heart. The baptism of the Spirit gives the good conscience necessary to take the step towards water baptism.

Snyder, in his book *Following in the Footsteps of Christ*, talks about Hans Schlaffer, who for fifteen years was a Roman Catholic priest and then became an Anabaptist. Because of his faith after one year he was arrested, tried and in 1528 was executed in Austria. While in prison, Hans wrote such words, "The fire is the ardour of the love of God and the neighbor in the heart. It enables him to suffer whatever befalls him because of the witness of God's truth, including death."¹²⁹ The baptism of fire for those who went to meet death was the love of God. As we look at the Bible we could find more meanings of what the baptism of fire means. It might mean the word of God (Jer. 23:30); it might mean a test of faithfulness as it was for Daniel's friends; it might mean the judgment of God (Isaiah 66:15). In any of these interpretations we see that the baptism of Jesus in the Spirit (wind gr. *pneuma*) and fire is a very hot and windy and uncontrollable burning spiritual matter.

Water baptism is the next step in the Anabaptist teaching about baptism. It is an outward witness. It is like washing the ashes that remained after the Holy Spirit's baptism of fire. The water baptism for Anabaptists was only a matter of witness, of inner spiritual change. In *Anabaptist History and Theology*, Snyder explains that Anabaptists like Pilgram Marpeck and Nicolass van Blesdijk argued that the central point of water

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

baptism was not obedience to the biblical law, but as an outward sign of an inner conversion, “Without the inner change, the outer was to no avail, be its observance "biblical" or not, because the water is just water and has no power.”¹³⁰ They, in a similar way as it is in the letter to the Romans, explained that water baptism is a sign and is a witness to the community and to the world about the new life that one starts to live with Christ (Rom 6:4-8).

In the early days of the movement, a very well-known Anabaptist theologian was Dr. Balthasar Hubmaier. He wrote a book entitled *The Christian Baptism of Believers*. Here he gave one of the best written defenses on believer’s baptism and he explains how they understood the meaning of water baptism:

Therefore, baptism in water is not what cleanses the soul, but the “yes” of good conscience toward God, given inwardly by faith, not that through it or by it sins are forgiven, but by virtue of the inward “yes” of the heart, which a man outwardly testifies to on submitting to water baptism, saying that he believes and is sure in his heart that his sins are forgiven through Jesus Christ.¹³¹

In a very similar way the position about baptism is explained in the Schleithem Confession of 1527, where the first article concerning baptism says:

Baptism shall be given to all those who have been taught repentance and the amendment of life and who believe truly that their sins are taken away through Christ, and to all those who desire to walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and be buried with Him in death, so that they might rise with Him.¹³²

Water baptism is a visible spiritual sign and it gives a testimony about a person’s spiritual status. In the sixteenth century for Anabaptists it meant obedience to the words of Christ.

¹³⁰ Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology* (Kitchener, ON, Pandora Press, 1995), 392.

¹³¹ William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 59.

¹³² Jones, 57.

The testimony of faith until death by Anabaptists was called the “baptism of blood.” They did not invent this third type of baptism but had insight of it from Jesus himself who a few times (Luke 12:49-50; Mk 10:38-39) mentioned his upcoming baptism of blood on the cross. The apostle John wrote to first century believers about it also in his letter (1Jn 5:7-8). Not many Christian traditions have this teaching about the baptism of blood, but some theologians spoke about it. One of them is the outstanding Biblical scholar F.F. Bruce, who explained this passage of John in such a way, “The baptism of water, which inaugurated his ministry, was a faint anticipation of the baptism of death, which crowned his ministry.”¹³³ It seems that according to F.F. Bruce, these two baptisms of water and death framed the ministry of Jesus. To the Anabaptists, the baptism of blood could be more a baptism of suffering than of death. However, persecution and death by violence was very common for them.

The first Anabaptist who died for his faith was a preacher, Eberli Bolt. He was burned at the stake in Sschwyz, Switzerland, by Roman Catholic authorities on May 29, 1525.¹³⁴ The first Anabaptist who was first to be baptized by water and who was first to die by protestant hands was Felix Mantz, who was drowned in the Limmat River, near Lake Zurich, on January 5, 1527.¹³⁵ The leadership in the Anabaptist movement was a major problem, because leaders were targeted, arrested and very soon executed. The

¹³³ F.F. Bruce, *Hard Sayings of Jesus* (Downers Grove, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 1983), 128.

¹³⁴ William R. Estep, 22.

¹³⁵ John A. Lapp and Arnold Snyder eds., *Testing Faith and Tradition* (Intercourse, PA, Good Books, 2000), 9.

“baptism of blood” was a reality and test of their faith and the validity of their water baptism.

Anabaptists differentiated themselves from other traditions of the Christian faith by putting emphasis on conversion and its sign – baptism. In preaching and in teaching this was their main emphasis that gave a reason for the movement and its spiritual tradition.

Section 2. The Bible and the Leading of the Spirit

In 2017 the western world celebrated five hundred years of the Reformation. In the previous section we looked at the human’s conversion, at a person’s need to abandon sin and to turn towards God, and to become a child of God. This concept of conversion has been applied for the church, but it was called the Reformation, because intentions were to reform the Roman Catholic Church.

For a long time, the Church was criticized for teaching doctrines and observing practices that were not founded on Scripture and even contradicted the teachings of Christ. The Church of Christ had a need to be changed again, to turn from sins and to look towards God. Probably the most significant influence for the Reformation of the Church was the Scriptures and their teaching. The Waldensians, John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, Erasmus Roterodamus, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli, and the Anabaptists are those names who are most known in the Reformation.

In this section we will look at this matter of how Scripture impacted people to initiate changes, but we will look at it only through the Anabaptist perspective. The Anabaptist movement came into existence because of the Scriptures and action of the

Holy Spirit (there was a conviction that it was the true word of God). In their book about the Anabaptist faith and tradition, Lapp and Snyder explain:

In contrast to the large state churches, the Anabaptist-Mennonites had neither a supreme leader nor a doctrinal office that could decide what was to be believed and what was to be done. These decisions had to be made by individuals and congregations for themselves.¹³⁶

Due to lack of leadership they decided to rely heavily on what Scripture says and how the Spirit leads. For them “orthopraxis always was more important than orthodoxy, life more than doctrine, doing what was right more than believing the right things.”¹³⁷ They applied the simple truths of Scripture in practice.

The Bible, Jesus and Anabaptists: Interpretation of the Scriptures

To understand the Scriptures and to know Jesus is a spiritual event. Two disciples of Jesus learned this as they met Jesus walking on their way to Emmaus. As they talked with him, they walked with him and even proclaimed to him about him and still they did not recognize him (Luke 24:31-32). Humanly speaking it was a very strange event. How it is possible to be spending a day with Jesus and not to recognize him, when you know him?

This story speaks very directly to the topic how Jesus relates to the Bible, since Jesus is presented as a teacher of Scriptures and in this story. Jesus was explaining to the disciples Moses, prophets and prophecies about himself. In this story, Jesus sets their

¹³⁶ John A. Lapp and Arnold Snyder eds., *Testing Faith and Tradition* (Intercourse, PA, Good Books, 2000), 20.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

hearts on fire and opens their eyes to understand scriptures. In similar way, Anabaptists learned to relate to the Bible – as they interpreted Bible through Jesus’ point of view.

The Mennonite professor of Biblical Studies from Canada, David Ewert, says that Anabaptists of sixteenth century were known as “radical Bible readers” and this commitment to the Sacred Scriptures remains; and still today to the Mennonite Brethren Church Scripture remains the supreme authority in both doctrine and practice.¹³⁸

The Bible, Jesus, and the disciples are related to each other, and the disciples are learning from Jesus to depend on the Scriptures. Jesus relied heavily on the Scriptures.

In first place, Jesus began his ministry explaining, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Lk 4:21). During his days Jesus underscored the authority of the Scriptures. He said: “The Scripture cannot be broken”. (Jn 10:35). Pharisees challenged Jesus in practical life issues, and one of those was Jesus’ position on divorce. Jesus responded to them on this issue, reminding them of the Scripture and original plan of God. (Matt 19:3-9). Then when he was tempted and probably in doubt again, the Scripture served for him as the authority to rely on and to receive strength from. In the time of temptation to rebuke Satan Jesus said, “It is written”. (Matt 4:1-11). In the Garden of Gethsemane during his arrest he denied the help of angels, saying “But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way? (Matt 26:54) and even in his death (Matt 27:46) Jesus shouted the words of Scripture.

Scripture for Jesus stood above his nationality, above the Jewish religion, above political issues of his time, and above cultural worldviews. Jesus often contradicted and

¹³⁸ Elmer A. Martens and Peter J. Klassen, eds., *Knowing and Living your Faith: A Study of the Confession of Faith* (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, Kindred Productions, 2008), 73.

resisted local customs that violated the principles of Scriptures. He often was condemned by religious authorities because he healed on the Sabbath, touched prostitutes and lepers, ate at a tax collector's house, etc.

Scripture for Jesus was the supreme will of God that helped him to find guidance. Scripture in a similar way was a foundational source and authority for his disciples. Now Anabaptists knew not only the Scriptures but also Jesus of the Scriptures. They proclaimed Jesus of the Scriptures; they formed communities of believers who would live by the Scriptures. Tom Yoder Neufeld, a New Testament professor at Conrad Grebel University College, writes, "Decades later they would put their memories and reflections down in writing, they once again went to the Scriptures, to the psalms and the prophets, to tell and make sense of Jesus' death."¹³⁹ As Neufeld noticed, the disciples's faith that Jesus the Messiah is the center of Scriptures led to the birth of the New Testament. The Scriptures as the Word of God were completed. The will of God is clearly expressed and explained in the Bible, the books of the Old and New Covenants.

The Anabaptist movement in sixteenth century came into existence and found its strength also by authority of Scripture. Due to the printing machine of Gutenberg, and to the Erasmus edition of the Greek New Testament, the Scriptures already were available, and those who knew Greek or Latin already could read and study the Bible.

The starting point for the Anabaptists was a Bible study with the Reformer Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531), who significantly influenced the Swiss reformation. Zwingli was a student of Erasmus and the influence of Erasmus's humanism upon

¹³⁹ James R. Kabill and David W. Shenk, eds., *Jesus Matters: Good News for the 21st Century* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, Herald Press, 2009), 51.

Zwingli is undoubted. “As Zwingli’s intention, on taking up his ministry as People’s Priest at the Grossmuenster in Zurich, to preach systematic and expository sermons can be understood as an expression of this humanism.”¹⁴⁰

Keith Jones, a Baptist theologian from Great Britain, explains that one of the aims of Zwingli was to promote reading of the Bible. Zwingli established the *Prophezei* School, where Scriptures were studied in the three languages of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.¹⁴¹ In this group of Zwingli were Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz. As they studied Scriptures these students of Zwingli didn’t feel that Zwingli was doing enough to obey Scriptures. They thought that the Reformation was not going far enough; they felt that the Reformation was not going according to the Scriptures. The disagreements led to division and division led to the birth of a new church and a movement that decided to follow Jesus’ interpreting Scripture in its own unique way.

Yes, it is possible to look at Anabaptists from a rebellious point of view. Before Anabaptists were a Lutheran stream of Reformation, and then Calvinistic and Zwinglian reformation streams. All of them emphasized the meaning and supremacy of Scripture.

The Bible, Anabaptists, and the Holy Spirit. Applying the Scriptures

Why did a people who studied Scripture together come to different conclusions? Why was Zwingli holding on to one opinion and his disciples to another point of view? Magisterial reformers read the Scriptures and they did not see a problem in a close

¹⁴⁰ Benjamin Sargent, *Biblical Hermeneutics and the Zurich Reformation*, *Evangelical Quarterly* 86.4 (2014), 325-342.

¹⁴¹ Jones, 19.

relationship between Church and State; they read the Scriptures and did not see a need for baptizing adult people; they read the Scriptures and found ways to justify believer's participation in wars.

Probably the most devoted people in the world who studied the Scriptures and wrote many commentaries about them were Jews. Biblical scholar Craig A. Evans says that the nature of Jewish faith was “centered on Scripture, which narrates Israel’s sacred story, a story that the Jewish people are admonished to know and to teach their children”.¹⁴² How is it that people who received the Holy Scriptures, who build their culture around it, missed applying the central message of it? To them Jesus once said, “You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life” (John 5:39). Jewish culture was grounded in the Scriptures, but in their diligence, they missed a point in the Scriptures to see Jesus, who is the Word of God. They thought that application of the Scriptures is in the tradition of their forefathers. Jesus confronted this point of view and was teaching that the Scriptures should be explained and applied with accompaniment of the Holy Spirit. To know the truth is a spiritual event.

The Mennonite theologian, John Howard Yoder, in his writings says that the Church fell into the same trap in which Jews had stumbled. A right to interpret Scriptures was given to scholars or those who had appropriate training. Even in the time of the Protestant Reformation, the interpretation of the Scriptures was left to ecclesiastical offices. In the Radical Reformation tradition, something new concerning explaining the Scriptures was introduced, which Yoder called a “hermeneutic

¹⁴² Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and His World, the Archaeological Evidence* (Louisville, Kentucky, Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 82.

community.”¹⁴³ Anabaptists thought that interpretation of the Bible belongs to the Holy Spirit-filled community. The Holy Spirit speaks and explains Scripture to the community of those who follow Jesus, “in the assembly of those who gather around Scripture in the face of a given real moral challenge.”¹⁴⁴ In community they agree; in community they apply the principles of Scripture; in community they give and receive council for one another. The necessary elements in the process of hearing God’s Word are the Spirit, the gathering, and the Scriptures.

A Japanese scholar and pastor, Takashi Jamada, after studying 62 doctoral dissertations on Anabaptist beginnings said, “The uniqueness of both the Early Church and the early Anabaptists was that they met in small groups where they confronted each other and made each other strong enough to confront the world.”¹⁴⁵ People in the Spirit-filled community are able not only to confront one another but also, to forgive one another, to encourage one another, to help one another, to pray for one another.

The word of God that is spoken to gathered individuals is transformed into action. This action might be negative if there is a community which is not sensitive to the Spirit of God or if the Spirit is denied within these recipients of God’s word. The positive action is obedience to God’s word. The gathered community affirms that it is the Holy Spirit explaining the Scriptures. Addressing Anabaptists of this time, Neufeld writes:

We encounter in the text a God, a “Word”, who does not want to be locked up on a page or in a scroll, who springs off the page, out of the scroll, to be present as

¹⁴³ John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom* (Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 117.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁴⁵ Palmer Becker, *What is an Anabaptist Christian?* Revised edition (Missio Dei, Number 18,) 2.

Spirit, infusing memories, tellings, hearings, and discernments, with full respect for the fragile humanness of the witnesses and our equally fragile humanness as hearers, readers, and interpreters.¹⁴⁶

His written thought is classic expression to the teachings of the sixteenth century radical reformers because they believed a Jesus who lives in the present and who through the Holy Spirit serves in the present world. Scriptures are very important, but without the Holy Spirit there is not the presence of Jesus who is Lord of the Scriptures. Scriptures are authoritative, but they are not sufficient to speak and to make a difference without the Spirit's work. Palmer Becker, a Mennonite theologian, explains, "Christians from an Anabaptist perspective see the Scriptures as the ultimate source of information; they see Jesus as the final authority for faith and life."¹⁴⁷ This means that Jesus is exalted above Scriptures. Jesus as "the word of God" (Jn 1:1) himself is Scriptures, he is the first and last letter of the Scriptures "the Alpha and the Omega" (Rev 1:1). Thus, to understand Scriptures one needs to know Jesus.

The Holy Spirit helps to understand Scriptures and the will of God in order that a disciple could fulfill his or her main life's goal. For a follower of Christ, especially for a preacher of the Gospel and the Holy Word, to follow Christ in life and death is the main living goal and to preach and teach Christ is the main ministry of his call. The Bible gives the foundation to know what the truth of God is, and the Spirit leads to do the will of God.

¹⁴⁶ Krabill, 60.

¹⁴⁷ Becker, *Missio Dei*, Number 18, 2.

Section 3. Church and Community

There are many opinions about what the church is. There is no reason now to go into this discussion about how every church explains what is church. For example, Lutheran reformers have concluded that the church is a place where there is preaching of the Word of God and correctly served Sacraments. The Anabaptists had a different understanding of what the church is than the church leaders in mainstream Christianity in the sixteenth century. The main reason why they were persecuted and punished was because of their reinterpretation of the meaning of the church. Palmer Becker explains that Anabaptists decided to continue the practice of the Apostolic Church and they took a position that being Christian for them was, “a combination of *believing* in Jesus, *belonging* to community, and *behaving* in a reconciling way.”¹⁴⁸ Such their understanding of the Scriptures and its interpretation forced them to choose sides. They were either with Jesus, or with the world.

In Relation to the State

We can go back to the Old Testament and to reflect on a development of faith community in history. As Israel was led out of Egypt to the Promised Land at Mount Sinai, the Lord established a Covenant Community. The Lord was their King and they were the people of His nation. Judges and priests were appointed to serve and lead Israel.

However, things began to change when the people noticed that Samuel’s sons who were to succeed their father were not walking with their Lord and were evildoers. Israel

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

demanded that Samuel would appoint a king for them. A king would rule and protect them. The Bible says that the Lord was saddened concerning this matter and told Samuel, “they have rejected me from being king over them” (1Sam 8:7). From here on a Covenant Community was closely related to the State. If a king of Israel was a godly person, then the Covenant Community followed the Lord and Israel flourished. However, a majority of kings in Israel and Judah were not following the Lord and the Covenant Community abandoned the Lord and did not keep the Law. The Lord punished Israel and gave a chance to improve by sending them to Babylon, where the Covenant Community and the State were separate entities and the Covenant Community had a time to rethink the essentials of their faith.

At the day of Pentecost through the Holy Spirit, Christ established a visible New Covenant Community. The Disciples of Christ entered this New Covenant Community and became one body – the Church of Christ. This new community was connected people into one body – Jews and gentiles, men and women, free men and slaves. They were from different cultural and social backgrounds and from different races. They fellowshiped and ate together, they followed the teachings of Jesus, the apostles, and the prophets; they proclaimed the Good News of Christ throughout the world known to them.

The Church has followed the foot steps of Israel and in the following centuries came into union with the State.

Church leaders of that fourth century had to make a difficult decision - to stay away from a plan to be united with the state, or to keep rejecting this union. They tried not to notice the consequences of temptation that Jesus rejected. A former president of the Mennonite Board of Education from 1964 to 1971, Paul Lederach, in a very popular book

among Mennonites, *A Third Way*, says that “church and government were united in a way like Israel’s when the people asked for a king. In retrospect, Constantine was the fall of the church, not the glory of the church!”¹⁴⁹

By this marriage with the State, the Apostolic Church ceased to function and a new type – the Catholic (*universal* from greek *katholikos*) church emerged that basically withdrew from the idea of a New Covenant Community.

Stuart Murray, a British theologian widely known among Anabaptists, explains “Whether or not he realized he was reinventing Christianity, Augustine, a “pioneer of Christendom”, believed his context required accommodation and reinterpretation.”¹⁵⁰ There is no question that in this union with the State the church gained security, recognition, authority, riches, and new converts. Because of this union the church also lost some of its uniqueness as the apostolic church. The message of Jesus was reinterpreted and applied to the structures and ideologies of the Empire. Baptism ceased to be a sign of an individual’s conversion; the church lost the aspect of being a community; evangelism lessened because there is no point to evangelize members of your own church; and discipleship vanished. Membership in the church became equal to citizenship in the State and citizenship in the State meant membership in the church.

The central message of Jesus’ reconciliation and peacemaking was reinterpreted and was made a private matter. Through the doctrine of Just War, the Church began to justify violence of “Christian” armies. Now the Empire could fight wars in the name of

¹⁴⁹ Paul M. Lederach, *A Third Way* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, Herald Press, 1980), 39.

¹⁵⁰ Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom* (Great Britain, Glasgow, Paternoster Press, 2004), 79.

Christ. The Cross of Christ became a sign in military conquests and less a sign of Christ's atonement and reconciliation with God.

Throughout Church history there were dissident Christian movements that tried to return church to the roots and challenged the church's alliance with the State. In the fourth century in North Africa Donatus, for forty years led a revivalist movement that became known as the Donatists. In the twelfth century a French businessman, Peter Valdes, initiated the first Bible translation into the vernacular French language, and formed missionary bands to go and to preach Gospel. The Roman Catholic Church issued decrees that the Waldensians were a heretic movement. In England in the mid fourteenth century through the influence of the Oxford philosopher and theologian John Wyclif, was born a movement that called people to return to the teachings of Scripture and was called "Lollards". Stuart Murray explains that this word "probably deriving from a word meaning 'mumble' and mocking their practice of reciting Scripture or their praying."¹⁵¹ They very much were involved in evangelism and in establishing of new churches. The Lollards were outlawed and persecuted and they went underground; however, they were able to spread and to continue meeting for Bible study and preaching the Word of God.

The Anabaptists were another dissident movement that was born in the time of the Reformation. In the sixteenth century they spread in territories that now comprise parts of Switzerland, Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Alsace, and the Netherlands. Stuart Murray points out that their distinguishing features included Christocentrism, emphasis on new birth and discipleship in the power of the Spirit, establishment of

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 330.

believer's churches free from state control, commitment to economic sharing, and a vision of restoring New Testament Christianity.¹⁵² Their point of view on the church as the body of Christ and community of His disciples contradicted the established norms of Church and State partnership in Christendom. A professor from Mennonite Goshen College, Marlin Jeschke, explains, "There are not two kinds of faith, one kind in a convert and a second kind in someone who grew up under the nurture of the church. There is only one kind of faith, the kind depicted in the New Testament."¹⁵³ In their perspective of the Scriptures and calling of Jesus they came to live their faith as they understood it.

The Anabaptist message was not just religious but political as well, because such a point of view was going to break a Christendom system which functioned very well for the State's sake and very poorly for the Covenant Community's sake. This was a major reason why Anabaptists were so harshly persecuted by States where both Catholic and Protestant (Lutheran and Reformed) Churches were established.

The Church is the Community of Disciples

As Anabaptists read the New Testament, they noticed that Jesus began his ministry by forming a community of disciples. They fellowshiped, traveled, learned, served, and after Pentecost this community of disciples became a new society that was called the Church. The Mennonite theologian Palmer Becker says, "Jesus wanted his followers to

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 334.

¹⁵³ Marlin Jeschke, *Believers Baptism for Children of the Church* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, Herald Press, 1983), 118.

not only *believe* in him, but also to have a strong sense of *belonging* to each other.”¹⁵⁴

This message was taught and preached and the community which believed the Jesus of the Scriptures was established.

It is not hard to see from the teachings of the New Testament that Jesus formed a community, which will continue to do the work of his mission. The Apostle Paul explains that Christ is the head of his body, which is the church (Eph 1:22-23). This community was the church and the church was a community of disciples. Dr. William R. Estep explains, “In a sense the Anabaptist concept of the church (Gemeinde) can be viewed simply as corporate discipleship.”¹⁵⁵ Because of persecution Anabaptists met secretly for Bible studies, prayer, and worship. They experienced Christ in their midst, usually in a home setting.

The key points of the early stage of Anabaptism were expressed in 1527 in the Schleithem Confession: The Seven Articles¹⁵⁶. Those points are:

- I. Notice concerning baptism
- II. We have been united as follows concerning the ban
- III. Concerning the breaking of bread
- IV. We have been united concerning the separation
- V. We have been united as follows concerning shepherds in the church of God
- VI. We have been united as follows concerning the sword
- VII. We have been united as follows concerning the oath

These Seven Articles were meant for community life, they were about values of Christ following community. It is not difficult to understand why Anabaptists committed and went into a dangerous situation, accepting a different point of view in matters of

¹⁵⁴ Becker, *Missio Dei*, Number 18.

¹⁵⁵ Estep, 180.

¹⁵⁶ Jones, 57.

faith. Already mentioned dissident movements within Christendom took such a position too because they also read the Bible and saw the difference between what was practiced and what was written in the Word of God. They based their views mostly on the New Testament teachings. James Stayer, who specialized in the German Reformation and Anabaptism, explains why they saw themselves as New Testament Christians who decided to obey God rather than humans. He writes:

Their preference for the New Testament was no doubt partly because during the height of their controversy with the Zurich church the New Testament was available in a Swiss German translation, while the work of the Old Testament was only completed in 1531.¹⁵⁷

As a good example of this faith Stayer sees in Felix Mantz, the first Anabaptist martyr, who taught the newly baptized adults to practice “love, unity, and community of all things, like the apostles in Acts 2.”¹⁵⁸ They did not desire to revive the existing church by doing some reforms. Their disappointment with Zwingli was that those reforms were not going far enough. Instead they proposed to return to first century Christianity, to the practices of New Covenant Community and to follow the example of Jesus. As one of the Anabaptist leaders Hans Denck, said, “No one can truly know Jesus unless he follows Him in His life”.

The Anabaptists took seriously the law of love as set forth both by Jesus and the Law of Moses. Once again, “the Christian disciple is to operate from the principle of sharing love, not selfish gain. This principle is to permeate all of the disciple’s life.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Benjamin W. Redekop and Calvin W. Redekop, eds., *Power, Authority and Anabaptist Tradition* (Baltimore, USA, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 54.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁵⁹ J.C. Wenger, *The Family of Faith* (Scottsdale, Pa, Herald Press, 1981), 39.

The Church to them was a community of disciples that live in faith and love and follow Jesus.

A preacher who is going to be cultivated into the Anabaptist tradition is encouraged not only to understand the Scriptures, to know Jesus and to live out his faith, but also to understand story of his Church and faith community.

Section 4. Discipleship and Disciples

In the Old Covenant God gave to Israel priests and Levites. They were responsible for Israel's spiritual nourishment. The tribe of Levites was "dedicated to the LORD, to perform the service of the tent of meeting." (Num 18:6). Priests were appointed from Levites to make offerings to God on behalf of Israel's people. There was expectation that the people of the Covenant will know and will observe the Commandments and the Law and will be able to discern what is the will of the Lord. Without a doubt in the Old Covenant there is an inclination for teaching and learning, for preparing to serve in the Temple and for the Covenant community.

The prophet Isaiah uses the term as he says, "seal the teaching among my disciples." (Is 8:16). This Hebrew word (*limmud*) also could be translated as 'learned' or 'taught'. The teacher and pupil relationship were a common feature of the ancient world.¹⁶⁰ Jewish prophets, rabbis, and Greek philosophers gathered around themselves groups of learners.

¹⁶⁰ *The New Bible Dictionary*, Ed. J.D. Douglas, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 312.

Discipleship in the New Testament

In the New Covenant a tremendous shift is made through Jesus the Messiah. In the New Covenant the concept of the priesthood of all believers was revived. The idea that there should be selected special people to be priests to offer sacrifices is a very foreign concept to the essence of the Gospel. There is no need for sacrifices. In the New Covenant there is only one priest “Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession” (Heb 3:1). He is the highest priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:6). He sacrificed a perfect sacrifice for all sinners of the world and this sacrifice was himself. Yes, there is sacrifice in New Covenant. The only sacrifice that people can offer to God is their own “bodies as a living sacrifice” (Rom 12:1). In this sense those who offer themselves to God are His priests. The French theologian Alfred Kuen explains, “it is spiritual worship (*latreia*), and all priests of New Covenant are invited to celebrate it. All believers are priests, and all received a gift to fulfill priestly ministry in community.”¹⁶¹

Discipleship in the New Covenant community begins from Jesus. He is the Priest, He is the Messiah and He is the Teacher. The title of a teacher (*didaskalos*) in the New Testament is given to Him many times (Matthew 8:19; Mark 8:38). Jesus said, “You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am.” (John 13:13). “You have one teacher” (*didaskalos*, Matthew 23:8). There are other titles that we could talk about Jesus (prophet, evangelist, shepherd, and servant), but the title of Teacher implies that His role is to teach.

¹⁶¹ Kuen, Alfred. *Tarnystės Bažnyčioje*. Lietuvos Krikščioniškas Fondas. (2005): 6.

Jesus went out and called people to follow Him and to learn from Him. He was interested to pass faith, knowledge, and principles of thinking, motivation, vision, and life style to people whom he chose to be His disciples. His commandment in Matthew 28, “therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” - shows that Jesus is interested in ongoing disciple-making.

His followers in the first place were his disciples who learned truths about the Kingdom of God and living as citizens of the Kingdom in this world. Their task was not to create a new religion on the surface of the earth but to pass this knowledge and faith in Christ to new generations and to the people of all the earth. Their task was to create Covenant communities that value the quality of relationships: toward God, toward one another, toward lost people of the world and even toward creation (Rom 8:19-21). As Christ was in the center in the community of his disciples, it was meant that He will remain and continue to be the center of other established communities.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his famous book *The Cost of Discipleship*, explains, “Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”¹⁶² Bonhoeffer has a significant voice in the school of Western world theologians. He lived as a disciple of Christ in Nazi Germany and he paid the ultimate price by his own life. For Bonhoeffer, who was Lutheran, discipleship, following Christ, learning it together in faith community was an obligatory element of Christian faith.

¹⁶² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, 1963), 64.

The example of discipleship is very well shown in the story when Jesus visited Martha and Mary. Here Mary was the one “who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying.” (Luke 10:39). By sitting and listening at the feet of Jesus, Mary was learning from him. At this time, she has been discipled by Jesus, one to one. Discipleship is happening when someone is “at the feet of Jesus”. The Apostle Paul in a very similar manner was also explaining to the Jews that he was trained “at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law.” (Acts 22:3)

The idea of discipleship is that it is learning by being in close relationship, in the case of our study, it is with Christ. The Mennonite theologian Steve Dintaman explains that the core issue in discipleship is a quality relationship:

In his own ministry, Jesus pointed to a quality of relationship that would bring unheard-of personal transformation and liberating joy and thus make it possible for us to be true disciples. Joyous, healing, empowering fellowship always precedes fruitful discipleship.”¹⁶³

Dintaman in loving critique of Anabaptist tradition is saying that discipleship itself is working in a person in such a way that it changes a person from within. This is the most important element in discipleship, not the form of it. It is oriented into a person, not into a subject; it is learned in fellowship more than in a classroom. True discipleship is happening in the spirit of liberty and genuine relationship. This we see in the case of Jesus and the apostles, and Jesus and Mary. This we hear in the Great Commandment, and we see in the book of Acts in the example of apostles and their disciples. Dintaman continues to explain his point of view, “What I covet is a fresh realization that to be a

¹⁶³ Dintaman, Stephen. „The Spiritual Poverty of Anabaptist Vision“. Mennonite Brethren Herald. (1993 March 5): 6.

disciple is not to do but to be in a new way. We are called to be Jesus' friends, not merely His servants (John 15:15). We are given the privilege of being children of God (1John 3:1-3). We are called to receive the spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1-17)."¹⁶⁴
The discipleship in the community of the New Covenant is a genuine relationship with Christ and his teaching.

Discipleship in the First Generation of the Church

The Christian belief is that Pentecost birthed the church as the Holy Spirit descended on gathered disciples and inflamed them to proclaim the Gospel. The word disciple comes from Latin word *discipulus*, and to many of us this word relates more to the word *discipline*. If we keep such thinking, then to be a disciple is a very tough decision. In the Greek language this word is *mathetes*, which means "pupil, learner."¹⁶⁵
In the Gospels the Twelve who followed Jesus are His disciples. They were called to follow Christ and to be in relationship with Him. In the book of Acts there is radical change and it seems that the disciples are all who began to follow Jesus and who embraced the New Covenant:

"The number of the disciples was increasing." (Acts 6:1)

"The twelve called together the entire group of disciples." (Acts 6:2)

"The number of disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem." (Acts 6:7)

There is no doubt that the apostolic church was a community where learning was one of key components if one wished to be belong to it. In the book of Acts, it says that

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *The New Bible Dictionary*, 312.

besides fellowshiping, praying and observing the signs of the New Covenant, they devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42).

Soon the disciples of Jesus were found in Antioch (Acts 11:29), and Lystra (Acts 14:20-22). Many gentiles who embraced faith in Jesus were recognized as disciples by the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:10).

Once Peter was talking to Jesus, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” (Mk 10:28). In simple words, Jesus explained to Peter that those who left everything to follow him would receive more than they imagine.

A Methodist Church theologian, Donald English, says, “Whatever it costs to be a disciple in terms of the self-denial is far outweighed by the gain of belonging to the family of God’s kingdom and all that it involves, with the experience of eternal life now and forever.”¹⁶⁶ That discipleship is costly was very evident to the disciples of Jesus, and to the members of apostolic Church, and it becomes more and more evident for many churches in the contemporary post-Christian era. However, we ought to look at discipleship not from a negative – losing position, but with a positive – gaining belonging. No one can leave something that he does not own, and no one can own something that he is not been given to own. A contemporary martyr missionary, Jim Elliot, who was killed on his missionary journey to the Huaorani people of Ecuador, is known by repeating an old saying “He is no fool who parts with that which he cannot keep, when he is sure to be recompensed with that which he cannot lose.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Donald English, *The Message of Mark* (Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1992), 178.

¹⁶⁷ <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/justintaylor/2010/01/08/he-ws-no-fool/>

Looking at Jim Elliot it is possible to say – he lost his life because of Jesus and the Gospel. However, the Bible teaches it as gaining. Jim Elliot is still living and for his sacrificial act he is in the most glorious place, because he acted like Jesus who came to save the lost and to die so that they would be saved.

Bonhoeffer also explains that leaving is gaining. He says: “For Christ has delivered them from immediacy with the world and brought them into immediacy with himself. We cannot follow Christ unless we are prepared to accept and affirm that breach as a *fait accompli* (accomplished fact).”¹⁶⁸ To Bonhoeffer, Christ is the one who delivers from the illusions of the world and welcomes to the realities of the eternal kingdom. This is only gain and not loss.

The Mennonite theologian Harold Bender, in his popular essay “Anabaptist Vision”, says that in Christianity there are three conceptions that have to be emphasized. Those conceptions are: the essence of Christianity is discipleship, the essence of the church is fellowship, and the essence of Christianity’s ethics is love and nonresistance. Bender reminds us that the strength of the Anabaptist movement in 16th century was in discipleship. He says: “The true test of the Christian, they held, is discipleship. The great word of the Anabaptists was not "faith" as it was with the reformers, but "following" (*nachfolge Christi*).”¹⁶⁹ He means that it is important both what we think about God, and what we do because of God. In discipleship is more important quality than quantity, following Christ is more important than “having right faith”.

¹⁶⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 106.

¹⁶⁹ Harold Bender, *Anabaptist Vision*, 7.

Disciples and their Role in the Church

It did not take a long time for the apostolic church to realize that disciples have to use their unique gifts. In Acts 6 we see that disciples are discerning their call and their role within the community. Here it says that “the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables.” (Acts 6:2).” It seems that at the beginning the Twelve tried to do everything they could till they came to the realization that they too are limited with their capabilities. This situation of theirs reminds us of Moses who tried to counsel all the people of Israel. Moses’ father-in-law Jethro saw what he was doing and advised Moses to share with other devoted men this heavy duty (Ex 18:17-23).

The Apostles made a decision that believers need to serve according to the Holy Spirit’s appointment and their spiritual gifts. The apostles understood that they have to teach the Word of God and pray. They also had a very high concern to do justice, to take social action (Acts 6:1-7). The other disciples had to fulfill different roles in the body of Christ because the church is doing a variety of ministries of the same Gospel.

The Apostle Paul in his letters wrote that there are about twenty¹⁷⁰ different spiritual gifts, and disciples are using them in a variety of ministries of the church. Those gifts are gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers (Ephesians 4:11); miracle workers, healing, praying, and interpreting prayer that has been spoken in tongues (1Cor 12:29-30); serving, encouraging, contributing, showing mercy (Rom 12:6-

¹⁷⁰ Lederach, 50.

8); speaking words of wisdom and knowledge, having a gift of faith, or of distinguishing of the spirits (1Cor 12:8-10).

There is a temptation to think that discipleship is only fellowshiping, reading the Bible and praying to God. The disciple who is learning is a disciple serving. As disciples have discerned their role in the church of Acts 6, so they are to discern their role in the church of the twenty first century.

The missiologist Al Tizon says that the Holy Spirit helps to determine the strategy of the church, and he names such functions of activities of the Gospel as verbal proclamation (evangelism), demonstration (social concern), lifestyle (example), music and the arts (beauty), and healing and miracles (signs and wonders) only begin to express church mission activities when it submits itself to the Holy Spirit.¹⁷¹

The disciple's role in the church is either to lead or to support a ministry that Holy Spirit is doing through the church. H. Bender says, "the Anabaptists not only proclaimed the ideal of full Christian discipleship but achieved, in the eyes of their contemporaries and even of their opponents, a measurably higher level of performance than the average, is fully witnessed by the sources."¹⁷² In his essay he names a variety of Lutheran, Catholic, and Reformed priests' as well as government officials' testimonies about the sincerity, honesty, and sobriety of Anabaptist believers. However, in most of these testimonies there are conclusions that they are such because of their devilish schemes. Today our conclusion is different and most of Anabaptists themselves think that the

¹⁷¹ Al Tizon, *Transformation after Lausanne: Radical Evangelical Mission in Global-Local Perspective* (Wiph and Stock, 2008), 109.

¹⁷² Bender, *Anabaptist Vision*.

sixteenth century Anabaptist church reflected the discipleship in the model of the apostolic church.

In the preaching ministry Anabaptist preachers felt that through preaching they are called to make disciples: to call them, to teach them, to empower them, to motivate them, to warn them, to strengthen them, to encourage them and to stay faithful to Christ.

Section 5. The Mission

In a speech to Israel about the deliverance from bondage prophet Isaiah wrote: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns”” (Isaiah 52:7). In this message about redeeming and bringing back people from exile, about the restoration of the relationship with himself, the Lord suddenly starts to speak about the beauty of the feet of messengers who traveled long distances to proclaim and announce the message from the Lord.

Can we say that a church that goes with the message of the Lord is the most beautiful church in his eyes? The term “mission” is relatively a new word. We cannot find this word in the Bible, but it is being perceived as sending in the world. One of most respected theologians of 20th century David Bosch points out:

For fifteen centuries the church used other terms to refer to what we subsequently came to call “mission”: phrases such as “propagation of the faith”, “preaching of the gospel”, “apostolic proclamation”, “promulgation of the gospel”, “augmenting

the faith”, “expanding the church”, “planting the church”, “propagation of the reign of Christ”, and “illuminating the nations”.¹⁷³

Hans Kasdorf, MB missiologist and theologian explains:

The term "mission" is derived from the Latin verb *mittere*, to send, a sending, or sentness. In the process of linguistic change from Latin to English, the word *missio* was extended to mission, the term *missiones* was reduced to missions, and *missionarius* was written missionary.¹⁷⁴

J.I. Packer, a well-known evangelical theologian writes: “Mission is from the Latin *missio*, which means “sending”. The words Jesus spoke to his first disciples in their representative capacity, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21; cf 17:18), still apply.”¹⁷⁵ Mission (or missions) is about the Church, the community of believers and about salvation of people. It matters that people come to know Christ and become a part of his body. Mission is mainly God’s purpose for the person on earth and it is about God’s calling and knowing Him.

From Augsburg into Europe

As we look at the time of Reformation, it was not a time when churches were thinking about missions. Magisterial churches had to fight battles to defend and define their own territories. The Catholic Church went to missions alongside with conquests and colonization of new territories, especially in South America. The Mennonite professor of history John D. Roth writes:

¹⁷³ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (New York, Maryknoll, Orbis books, 2005), 228.

¹⁷⁴ Hans Kasdorf, *It's Sunrise in World Mission* (Fresno, CA: Pacific Printing Press 1984), 6.

¹⁷⁵ J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1993), 223.

Columbus named the first island he encountered San Salvador, in honor of Jesus, and the second Santa Maria de la Concepcion, in honor of the Virgin Mary. The Indians he brought back in chains were baptized with great fanfare, with the King and Prince John serving as godfathers.¹⁷⁶

By reading this, it is not difficult to notice that the style of evangelization and methods of colonial missions were totally different than following Christ's teaching and the methods of the apostolic church. John D. Roth cites a historical book, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1517-1521*, whose translator and editor is Irving A. Leonard. In this book he shows records of how colonial missions were accomplished:

The campaign followed a pattern: first the men would destroy local temples and idols, then they would set up a cross and altar, and finally they would forcibly baptize Indian women, who were then distributed among the men, including Cortes, as concubines.¹⁷⁷

It is worthwhile to notice that the conquest of Mexico and Central America was during the time of Reformation in Europe. The Christian religion was brought by force, and baptisms were performed by threatening the lives of the people of the conquered world.

In a chapter about Colonialism and Mission, David J. Bosch points out, "In 1537 the pope authorized the opening of a slave market in Lisbon, where up to twelve thousand Africans were sold annually for transportation to the West Indies."¹⁷⁸ As the position of Roman Catholic Church was to extend Christendom through mass baptisms, with the cross in one hand and the sword and official enslavement of people who do not know

¹⁷⁶ John D. Roth. *Practicing Truth*. ed David W. Shenk and Linford Stutzman (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, Herald Press, 1999) 86.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 86.

¹⁷⁸ Bosch, 310.

Christ in the other hand, Anabaptist believers were going and testifying an alternative living in faith, pledging allegiance to the non-violent King and his peaceful kingdom.

The testimony and witness were a major reason for Anabaptist expansion in Europe. “As early as the year 1526 a Latin phrase cropped up in “Christian” Europe: *cuius regio, eius religio* (who’s the region, his the religion),” writes Wenger¹⁷⁹. This meant that the choice of which expression of the faith to practice, whether Lutheran, Reformed, or Roman, was decided by the rulers and princes of the region.

The Anabaptist church consciously decided to ignore the rule “who’s the region, his is the religion” for the sake of the Gospel and their own conscience. Their first act of this disobedience was to break the issued decree that forbade adult baptism and insisted on child baptism. They formed communities in Protestant and in Catholic territories.

As they realized that in Christian faith the most important thing is Jesus and following Him, they came to an idea that they need to share this news with everybody around. Hans Kasdorf explains their reasoning by noting this:

Christ's mandates command to make disciples of all peoples (Mt. 28:19) and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Lk. 10:27). The Church's mission assumes that we are God's people as disciples (I Pt. 2:10). All peoples who are not yet God's people constitute the potential church.¹⁸⁰

Around themselves they have seen many people who did not know the Lord – it was a great mission field, a great harvest for the Lord. The Mennonite theologian Alfred Neufeld writes: “The so-called Martyr’s Synod of over sixty Anabaptist leaders in Augsburg, 1527, might be the first solid effort during the Protestant Reformation to shape

¹⁷⁹ C. Wenger, *The Family of Faith* (Scottsdale, Pa, Herald Press, 1981), 41.

¹⁸⁰ Kasdorf, 4.

something which centuries later was called “missions”.¹⁸¹ Wilbert Shenk, who is considered one of most prominent missiologists of recent Anabaptist Mennonite writings, says that Augsburg synod of 1527 was a starting point for Anabaptist missions. He explains:

They staked out separate areas of mission responsibility in a “grand map of evangelical enterprise.” Then the conference commissioned leaders to visit communities in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland to encourage the faithful and evangelize the scattered communities . . . Opposition did not succeed in stopping this movement.¹⁸²

There are two ways how we can evaluate the expansion of Anabaptism throughout Europe. One is that they obeyed the commandments of Christ. They went into missions and decided that they needed to deepen the Reformation that was started by the reformers. They obeyed Christ’s commandment of Matthew 28:19, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (NASV). This is the commandment that sends disciples on a mission. They knew what they were doing. They knew what evangelizing Europe might cost them, but they held firm to their convictions. On early Anabaptist communities, John Howard Yoder says:

There are thus about the community of disciples those sociological traits most characteristic of those who set about to change society: a visible structured fellowship, a sober decision guaranteeing that the costs of commitment to the fellowship have been consciously accepted, and clearly defined life-style distinct from that of the crowd.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Alfred Neufeld, *The Church in Mission*, ed. Victor Wiens (Winnipeg, Kindred Productions, MB, 2015), 84.

¹⁸² *Ibid.* 86.

¹⁸³ John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B.Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 39.

This paragraph could be rephrased in three words: community, commitments and commission. This is the major reason that today keeps Mennonite churches involved in missions even in those countries where the Gospel has never been heard.

The second reason for the Anabaptist expansion throughout Europe was their persecution. Their story is very similar to the one we read in Acts 8:1 when the great persecution started in Jerusalem against the church “and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria”. On that day, the apostolic church became a missionary church. Because of their persecution, martyrdom and imprisonments, Anabaptists also were scattered throughout Europe and they were most of time on the run. Roth says:

If the Anabaptists of the first generation had tempered their critique of Christendom and had retreated into spiritualism, they might have escaped persecution. But their persistent determination to speak, teach, and preach their understanding of the gospel ultimately led to the martyrdom of some 3,000 Anabaptists and the imprisonment of countless more.¹⁸⁴

Justo L. Gonzalez, a professor of church history, says that “the martyrs were many – probably more than those who died during the three centuries of persecution before the time of Constantine.”¹⁸⁵ Such fierce persecutions moved people to seek for safe places to live. Gonzalez explains mainly due to the persecution they expanded; “they were scattered throughout eastern Europe, particularly Russia.”¹⁸⁶ In most cases it was very difficult to find places of rest, but sometimes it would happen that they would find a place where they could live and practice what they believed in.

¹⁸⁴ John D. Roth, 96.

¹⁸⁵ Justo L. Gonzalez. *The Story of Christianity*. Volume 2 (HarperSanFrancisco, 1985), 56.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

From Russia to the Whole World

Mennonites are the Anabaptist wing of the Reformation. They have survived persecutions and preserved many aspects of the Anabaptist faith. Mennonites came to Russia because of hard living conditions in Europe, including Prussia. The Russian Empire queen Catherine II extended the invitation to Mennonites at the end of eighteenth century to come to sparsely populated territories that were conquered by Russians. Land was given them to work; they were given freedom to practice their faith, and the Russian empire did not ask them to participate in their military. In 1789 Mennonites established their colonies in Chortitza and a few years later in Molotchna. A Mennonite historian, John Toews writes, "Among the chief provisions of the *Privilegium* was the guarantee of complete religious freedom and exemption from military service for "all eternity."¹⁸⁷ In these Russian colonies, Mennonites began to thrive. They were self-governed, they could freely practice their faith, and they became prosperous. However, moving to a new territory was not spiritually good for them.

Mennonite historians agreed that the spiritual life in the colonies was at a low ebb in the first half of the nineteenth century. Robert Kreider observes:

The Mennonite Church in the Russian Mennonite environment moved in the direction and exhibited many of the characteristics of the *Volkskirche* or what the English call the 'parish pattern of the Church'.¹⁸⁸

From one side, Anabaptist zeal for following Christ in manner of their forefathers was dying. From another side, the spiritual revival swept through these Mennonite

¹⁸⁷ John A. Toews, *A History of Mennonite Brethren Church: Pilgrims and Pioneers* (Hillsboro, Kansas:Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1975), 14.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

colonies. Due to the renewal movement in 1860, the Mennonite Brethren Church was formed in Southern Russia.

From the very beginning the Mennonite Brethren understood that they were called to be witnesses of Christ, and they felt the missionary responsibility toward people of Russia and the rest of the world. Mennonite Brethren missionary Ray Harms-Wiebe says that “at the first convention in 1872, mission was the main theme.”¹⁸⁹ This renewed Mennonite church was only 12 years old and they were already talking about taking the Gospel to the distant and unreached places. The spiritual revival revived the Anabaptist zeal for missions again.

Preachers of this newly formed church went to share the Gospel with their neighbors such as German colonists in Russia, Swedes, Russian Orthodox Christians and Jews. They even traveled to the distant tribes of Siberia. Ray Harms-Wiebe reminds:

Mennonite Brethren were instrumental in the founding and growth of the Baptist movements within the Russian empire. The convention of 1918 referred to forty-four itinerant preachers working in thirty-seven different locations throughout Russia.¹⁹⁰

On March 7-11, 2017 after 145 years from the beginning of MB movement, International Community of Mennonite Brethren has held an international convention where MB church leaders and their convention representatives came to meet in Chonburi, Thailand. There was a “Prayer Consultation” and the main theme was “The Church on Mission.” For leaders and preachers of this generation and MB churches, Jesus’ commandment of Matthew 28:19 is still one of the most important.

¹⁸⁹ Ray Harms-Wiebe, *Renewing Identity Mission*, eds. Abe J. Dueck, Bruce L. Guenther, and Doug Heidebrecht (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Productions, 2011), 219.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 219.

The theme of missions is extremely important in cultivating Anabaptist preachers. The mission is done not only because of lost souls but because it is life for the church itself. Missions is to continue reproduction and to renew hope for the future. In this way it is important for preachers to preach and teach about missions.

Section 6. Peacemaking

As in Isaiah 52:7 the message of the messenger to whom the Lord sends to proclaim, is the message of peace, good news and of salvation. Many things in the world change, but the message of the Lord remains the same – people need peace and people need salvation: to be saved from the darkness of death. As Anabaptists read the Bible, the message of peace, of reconciliation with God, and with fellow citizens is extremely important.

Yugoslavian theologian Miroslav Volf, who has experienced many terrors of war and wrote a book on the theological exploration on war and peace, says about Anabaptist faith, “The Anabaptist tradition, [is] consistently the most pacifist tradition in the history of the Christian church.”¹⁹¹ Further he continues to explain that such an Anabaptist view was based on the way they understood God. To them He was the one who at the end will sort things out. It is not the business of Christ’s followers to take judgment in their own hands. In *Exclusion & Embrace* M. Volf writes:

God will judge, not because God gives people what they deserve, but because some people refuse to receive what no one deserves; if evildoers experience

¹⁹¹ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1996), 298.

God's terror, it will not be because they have done evil, but because they have resisted to the end the powerful lure of the open arms of the crucified Messiah.¹⁹²

The choice of peace for Anabaptists was not because they came with a solution for how to run the life of a society in a violent world, but because of what they encountered while reading the Bible. M.Volf, like these Anabaptists, came to the conclusion that peace comes from God and not people.

Historian Arnold Snyder thinks that Swiss Anabaptism pacifism came from humanist Erasmus:

The humanism of Erasmus influenced Zwingli greatly, and although Zwingli did not adopt Erasmus' pacifism, it is possible that Grebel and Mantz, as aspiring humanist scholars, might have been influenced by the general humanist interest in pacifism."¹⁹³

Even if the idea of pacifism did not originate with Anabaptists, they borrowed it and applied it. There are three major Biblical influences that made the Anabaptist church to be a church of peace and be distinct among other confessions of Christian faith. To the question "why peace?" Anabaptists most likely would answer and would add: because of Jesus, because of the Gospel and because of the first century church.

Because of Jesus

It is no secret that these Anabaptists fell in love with Jesus. He was and is the main subject of their preaching and teaching. They decided that listening to Jesus is more important than listening to religious and political authorities. They decided that their responsibility is to follow Him, and they were ready to pay the consequences of their

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 220.

¹⁹³ C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, 57.

faith. They saw that Jesus himself suffered violence even though the cause of His mission was salvation of people. Through death on the cross, Jesus reconciled people of the world with the God of Heaven.

Anabaptists understood that by following Jesus, they had to proclaim this message of Jesus' Cross, the Gospel of Peace and Salvation, and costly discipleship. By following Jesus, they understood that Jesus himself lived in non-violence and his main teaching was about reconciliation. Jesus' decision to live in non-violence is visible at every crucial point in His mission.

In Luke 4:5-8 Jesus is tempted to receive political and military power of the world. Jesus rejects it. In Mark 8:27-34 Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah. As Jesus explains that he needs to suffer and die, Peter tries to rebuke Jesus for such thinking. Jesus' answer to Peter was: "Get behind me, Satan...you are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." Messiah in Jesus' teaching had to suffer and to die with violent death. In Luke 22:49-51 Jesus rebuked his followers, as they wanted to save him by using violence from those who came to arrest him. More than that, he healed the ear of an enemy that has been cut off by his disciple. At his trial in John 18:36, Jesus told Pilate that His kingdom is not of this world. He mentioned to him that His followers do not fight in violent ways.

To build the case for Jesus as a peacemaker and that his teaching was focused on peacemaking, we must remember Jesus' command to love our enemies and his Sermon on the Mount. Loving enemies was an unheard-of thing. Most people hate their enemies. Jesus came with the idea of loving our enemies. Ronald Sider in his book "Christ and Violence" says:

Jesus probably formulated His command to love one's enemies in conscious contrast to the teaching and practice of the Zealots. Thus, Jesus was pointedly rejecting one currently attractive political method in favor of a radically different approach.¹⁹⁴

Jesus knew that his teaching to love one's enemy will not be well received and will not gain popularity. However, truth is truth; let it be popular or not popular. Real peace is possible only by loving and not hating one's enemy. The Methodist theologian, Stanley Hauerwas, who is highly influenced by Mennonites and especially by John H. Yoder, says effort must be put into "learning to recognize our enemies before we try to love them. Nothing is more important than knowing our enemy. Indeed, the first task of the church is to teach us who is our enemy."¹⁹⁵ He thinks that it is good thing to have enemies, but it is important to know why we have them. Knowing your enemy is helpful in bringing God's love to him. Jesus taught his disciples "Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matt 10:16). A founder of the Anabaptist movement, Conrad Grebel, said:

True Christian believers are sheep among wolves, sheep for the slaughter; they must be baptized in anguish and affliction, tribulation, persecution. Neither do they use worldly sword or war, since all killing has ceased with them - unless, indeed, we would still be of the old law.¹⁹⁶

Jesus and his flock of sheep are living in the world of wolves. The sheep is aware of her condition and her weaknesses. She does not bite, she cannot run fast, she does not have the advantage of height and weight and she does not have horns. In Jesus' teaching

¹⁹⁴ Ronald J. Sider, *Christ and Violence* (Eugene OR, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 25.

¹⁹⁵ Stanley Hauerwas, *Where Resident Aliens Live* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1996), 34.

¹⁹⁶ Cornelius J. Dyck. *Anabaptism and Mission*. Ed. Wilbert R. Shenk, (Kitchener, Ontario, Herald Press, 1984), 34.

the sheep is called to love those wolves that eat them. In the same passage of Matthew 10:16 sheep are called to be “wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” Those are images of beasts that are shrewd and wise, and not able to do harm.

If we look carefully at Jesus, we will see that he not only experienced injustice, but also resisted injustices. He went to serve, to feed, to teach, to rebuke; He cast out demons, He cleansed the Temple, He forgave sins, and He even made Pilate think about the truth.

Ronald Sider explained that Jesus “certainly resisted their evil in a dramatic act of civil disobedience.”¹⁹⁷ This would take turning the other cheek, walking an extra mile, and giving one’s cloak, are truly dramatic expressions of how it is possible to protest and to react to the imposed injustice. It is clear that world powers acted in a coalition against Jesus, but Jesus remained faithful to the truth and subject to these powers. He was submissive but morally he broke their rules and unmasked them. Forces that people glorified and worshiped were unmasked as being untrue to themselves.

Another vital instruction on living in peace is the Sermon on the Mount. Anabaptists took this teaching of Jesus literally. The Sermon on the Mount is filled with teaching on how to treat other people with kindness, how lovingly to react to their evil doings, and what to be ready for concerning the outcome because of selfish life attitudes. Justo Gonzalez in “*The Story of Christianity*” about the Anabaptist faith and their

¹⁹⁷ Ronald J. Sider, 47.

approach to the teaching of Christ, writes, “The Sermon on the Mount must be obeyed literally, and any who object that this is impossible, simply show their lack of faith.”¹⁹⁸

To believe in Jesus requires a step of faith. For Anabaptists, faith in Christ came to this – they chose to believe Jesus and to live according his teaching. To believe in Jesus, but to live life only to a certain small extent of his teaching, for them was like living in a different faith altogether; practicing a Christianity that is not portrayed in the New Testament.

Because of the Gospel

The Good News is the message of Salvation. As Isaiah (52:7) says, the messenger announces peace, brings good news, and announces salvation. The Gospel is the message of God’s love and His peace. The Gospel is the message of freedom from sin, a message of restored relationships, a message of hope and eternal life. It is the duty of the Church to proclaim this divine love to all living human beings on this earth. The day of Pentecost began a new era for the faith community of God. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the apostles started to speak in foreign languages and declare the wonders of God (Acts 2:1-13). The Gospel of joy was carried away to the people of the whole world.

The Anglican bishop, Lesslie Newbigin, after citing Luke 24:50-52 in one of his lectures, proclaimed with a smile, “Mission begins with an explosion of joy!”¹⁹⁹ The joy

¹⁹⁸ Justo L. Gonzalez. *The Story of Christianity. Volume 2.* (HarperSanFrancisco. 1985), 54.

¹⁹⁹ Howard Peskett & Vinoth Ramachandrea, *The Message of Mission* (Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), p. 209.

of salvation and the preaching of the Gospel began in Jerusalem for the Israelites, in Antioch for the gentiles, and in the 16th century Wittenburg, Zurich, and Geneva for the Europeans. Another Anglican, Dr. Andrew Kirk, writes, “The mission of God flows directly from the nature of who God is. It is impossible to be more basic than that.”²⁰⁰ In agreement with Kirk we can continue his thought, saying that the Gospel is the expression of who God is, and it is also impossible to be more basic than that. The Holy Spirit is present with those who carry this message of salvation, who live lives of generosity, who proclaim good news to those who are willing to hear it, who are disciples and followers of Christ.

Because of the Gospel, a peaceful way to proclaim it is advocated by theologians of many different Christian traditions. Stanley Hauerwas simply says that people who received the Gospel cannot go and participate in the evil acts with other people:

Christians cannot easily go to war against other nations in which we might be asked to kill Christians. How can we get up from the table of unity and be willing to kill one another in the name of loyalties that are not loyalties to Christ?²⁰¹

By receiving a life according to the Gospel, a believer chooses to live the message of peace and chooses to reject lies, deceit, and evil schemes of the world. Europe in the sixteenth century was not a peaceful place to live. Citizens had their duties and obligations to the state and one of those was to defend their country and fight in wars. These Anabaptists thought that they must take the Gospel even to their enemies. Justo Gonzalez said that Anabaptists were often repeating, “Christians ought not to take up

²⁰⁰ Kirk, 28.

²⁰¹ Hauerwas, 42.

arms to defend themselves, nor to defend their country, even if the Turks threaten it.”²⁰²

And the Mennonite, Cornelius J. Dyck, explains their stand, “They refused to take the cross at the short end and make a dagger out of it because love, not violence, was the new key to life.”²⁰³

It makes a big difference how this message of joy and salvation is carried to people. As Dyck says that the same cross, taken at the wrong end, might become a symbol of force and power. John R.W. Stott, in his outstanding book *The Cross of Christ*, explains that in the first centuries Christians loved to use other symbols to express their faith. They even avoided the symbol of the cross because it was a direct association with the shameful execution of criminals. Those other symbols that still remain in the walls of catacombs in Rome as Stott explains were the peacock (supposed to symbolize immortality), the dove, the athlete’s victory palm, and the fish. They would also relate to some biblical stories such as Noah’s ark, Abraham’s ram, Daniel’s lions, the three friends in the furnace, the crib or manger, and the carpenter’s bench. All these symbols needed explanation and instruction, but one symbol was not there. Stott says, “It was Constantine, the first emperor to profess to be a Christian, who gave added impetus to the use of the cross symbol.”²⁰⁴ And through Constantine, the cross received an additional meaning. It became a symbol, not only of Christ’s suffering for humankind and his redeeming love, but also an emblem of the imperial army, a symbol of Christendom. It looks that symbols are very limited and not able to convey the true meanings. The

²⁰² Gonzalez, 54.

²⁰³ Dyck, 34.

²⁰⁴ John R. Stott, 29.

Gospel is an explosion of joy, an empty tomb. It is from the raising of the Lord Jesus, a hope for life after death. It is a restored and loving relationship with Jesus and the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Because of the Church

Earlier, the church had to learn that salvation is not just for Israel but for gentiles of all nations as well. It is the Church's responsibility to bring the Gospel of Jesus to all nations. It was believed that Israel was God's vineyard (Mk 12:1-12), God's flock (Matt 10:6), and the kingdom of God will be granted to Israel. Through Jesus' resurrection, the Disciples of Christ believed that the church is now God's vineyard (John 15), God's flock (Luke 12:32), and the kingdom of God.

Anabaptists began to preach the message that the Roman Catholic Church ceased to be a church of Christ. The same stands for the unsuccessful reformation of protestant churches. The true Church is Church that continues the mission of Christ. Today many theologians agree that those were good ideas. "People of God are not to live a life of blessings but to live a life of testimony to Christ for Christian mission is witness to the crucified Christ"²⁰⁵ – says the British scholar Richard Bauckman. One of the main things why the church exists is that it must carry Christ's witnesses. Anabaptists chose the way of peace because this is the nature of Christ's church and because such a model is found in the book of Acts in the New Testament. The Church must to proclaim and to bring God's Shalom to all people. Anabaptists looked not for the Reformation of the existing

²⁰⁵ Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission* (Grand Rapids, Peternoster Press, Baker Academic, 2003), 21.

Church, but for the restoration of the Apostolic church and they chose to become a peaceful church. A first-generation Anabaptist, Dirk Philips wrote:

No one can be born again or spiritually quickened, and no one can believe the Gospel except he first sincerely repent, as the Lord Jesus Christ himself testifies (Matt. 3:2), for he taught the people repentance first of all and then faith, and so he also commanded his apostles to do.²⁰⁶

In their preaching, as in Dirk Philips', they emphasized that following Jesus is one's choice. It is a voluntary gathering of convinced believers, by free will from cultural, political, or social coercion, and not by belonging to the parish system of medieval Catholicism or the territorial system of the Reformers.²⁰⁷ Because of them, the new terminology of "free" or "believer's church" emerged. The core of this newness was the church of believers. The desire was to restore the life, faith, and even the practice of the early church. "We believe that the sociological reality of the church is to be a gathered people separated from the world so that the world may know it is the world,"²⁰⁸ says Methodist theologian Stanley Hauerwas. Dyck says that for the Dutch Anabaptist, Menno Simons (under whose name the Mennonite movement was called), the church meant six things²⁰⁹:

- a) An unadulterated, pure doctrine.
- b) A Scriptural use of sacramental signs.
- c) Obedience to the Word.
- d) Unfeigned, brotherly love.
- e) A bold confession of God and Christ.
- f) Oppression and tribulation for the sake of the Lord's Word.

²⁰⁶ Dyck, 30.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁰⁸ Hauerwas, 68.

²⁰⁹ Dyck. 36.

Because following Christ was the core of their theology, they did the best they could do, following Him and imitating His life. They did not need to defend their territory and fight a war to survive as Protestant churches did. They did not send missionaries to colonize new territories, but they went to their neighbors to tell the joyful Good News of Jesus' Gospel. For Christians, the problem with violent ways to solve an existing problem or with war, is that it destroys the unity of the Body of Christ, and it corrupts the message of the Gospel. Stanley Hauerwas writes:

War is the enemy of Christians because war urges us to sacrifice our children to the wrong gods, because it brings people together around the wrong symbols, because it deceives us into thinking that nations, not God, rule the world.²¹⁰

The church is the intentional community of believers: “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” that is called to “proclaim the mighty acts of him” (1 Pt 2:9). Because the church was created for such a purpose, it has to live in the manner of Christ for the cause of bringing the truth as a sacrifice to God (Rom 12:1) and not to someone else.

The Bible is the main source for preaching and it is the “living water” for the human soul. The Bible reveals who God is, and this revelation is written in the 66 books of the Old and the New Testament. In the Bible we have God’s history (His Story) where we can see where certain things came from. This history reveals some events on how the Law was given, how people should behave in relationship with one another, how they should worship God, and what the meaning and purpose of life is.

²¹⁰ Stanley Hauerwas, *Where Resident Aliens Live* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1996), 43.

Sometimes speaking is confused with preaching. “Do not preach at me” is a popular saying in English and in Lithuanian as well. Somehow people confuse a strong-willed opinion with preaching. As a professor of homiletics, Calvin Miller writes:

The sermon is no more a mere speech than the Bible is a mere book. The sermon may involve the use of the same communication skills that a speech might use, but at its heart the sermon exists on a deeper, more existential level than a speech.²¹¹

A person does not become a preacher when he or she speaks his opinions, even though they are religious. A speaker, who speaks to few or to many people a message of the Bible with a goal to establish or strengthen their relationship with God, is the preacher in a biblical sense.

This chapter dealt with some historical, theological, and ecclesiological elements of the Anabaptist church. The history of the church is the theology in praxis. People show who they are more by what they do than by what they say. The theology of the church is visible in the behavior of its preachers and its believers. It could be said that what preachers and believers believe is reflected in their behavior.

Here were discussed the main beliefs of Anabaptism: the conversion, the meaning of baptism, the Bible as the ultimate word of God, the Holy Spirit who explains the meaning of the Bible, the Church as a community of disciples, the Mission of the Church, and Peace making as primary part of church mission.

These theological emphases are essential in Anabaptist preaching. The history of Anabaptism is reflected in the sermons and in the messages of Anabaptist preachers.

²¹¹ Calvin Miller, *Spirit, Word, and Story* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Books, 1996), 17.

This is what makes them to be disciples who follow Christ in the manner of Anabaptist teachings.

This chapter of Anabaptist theological emphases for preaching and is related to the first chapter of Biblical rationale for preaching and preachers. The Anabaptist theology flows out of reading and interpreting Scripture in a community context. This chapter is also related to the theme of this thesis concerning cultivating preachers in churches of Anabaptist tradition. In it is the focus for Biblical rationale of preaching and preachers. It flows from the Bible, from the history of God's self-revelation, from the teachings of Jesus, and from the apostolic church, to the Anabaptist people of the sixteenth century and presumably to the Mennonites of today their desire to follow Christ in a manner of the first century believers in the New Testament.

CHAPTER 3

Preaching literature

The first chapter in this thesis is foundational, because it provides a biblical theology for the preachers and preaching. The second chapter is foundational to develop Anabaptist-minded preachers for the Anabaptist-minded people. In second chapter there are important theological foundations for the preachers' denominational identity development. The preacher is not only preaching sermons, but also is directing people to a certain life style. Moses led God's people to the promised land, Jeremiah was teaching about requirements of Covenant, Jesus in his preaching was very clear that he is the promised Messiah.

June Alliman Yoder, who is professor of Pastoral Theology at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, in a book edited by Marlene Kropf about preaching *Preparing Sunday Dinner: A Collaborative Approach to Worship and Preaching*, writes and discusses how preaching could be defined. She comes with her own definition of what preaching means. However, at first, she discusses the definition of another Mennonite homiletics professor and former World Mennonite Conference president, Dr. Erland Waltner, who says, "Preaching occurs when a word from God intersects with human need."²¹² In this definition there are basic components of preaching. A Word of God, through the Bible and the Spirit tells us what his message is. The second part in this definition is that "God intersects with human need" and this part invites to consider that

²¹² June Yoder, Marlene Kropf. *Preparing Sunday Dinner: A Collaborative Approach to Worship and Preaching* (Kindle Locations 1392-1393). Kindle Edition.

the ones who are hearing this word have needs. In her analysis, Yoder explains that this definition is fit to describe what a sermon is, and not what preaching is. She says that influence of the preacher on the sermon is as great as the influence of the Bible and the human context. Yoder expands this definition and says, “Preaching is the public-address form of ministry in which a word from God intersects with human need, and out of that meeting comes new life.”²¹³ She explains that preaching expects change, and the transforming power of Holy Spirit is at work in the preacher, the Word and in listeners as they respond.

The third chapter is a transitional part of this thesis. It moves from Biblical and theological writings about the preacher’s cultivation to the practical task: how to cultivate such preachers, who can receive a word from God and to intersect it with human need. A new life that comes out of this intersection is not in the preacher’s hands but in Holy Spirit’s hands.

In this chapter there will be engagement with preachers through book reviews. The books were selected that write about preachers and preaching. The criteria for selection was to read books that reflect Anabaptist-Mennonite theology and preaching practice; also, to look at the books that would talk about contemporary issues of preaching in general; and that there would be a book which the author of the thesis values personally because it made an impact on him and his preaching. Also, an important criterion for this selection was that these books would be relevant and available for teaching other preachers. Two book reviews of Craig Larson and Simon Vibert are included from a

²¹³ *Ibid.*, (Kindle Location 1407).

course “Principles and Practices of Expository Preaching: Lessons for the Lithuanian Context” directed by Dr. Thomas J. Boone.

Craig Larson wrote his book with a concern – to edify preachers and show them the best tools that are used by other preachers. He notes, “We need to hear the wisdom of other “tribes” within the church, for each denomination or movement develops its own way of preaching, with its particular strengths and weaknesses.”²¹⁴ In this case Anabaptists are one of the “other tribes” in the mainstream of evangelical churches. The Free Christian Church is also an “other tribe” in Lithuania. Here is the wisdom for them and something can be learned from them.

Another author, Simon Vibert, is European, and he speaks out of a European context, even though he looks at some examples beyond this context. He takes twelve effective modern-day preachers and analyses their preaching, strengths, and weaknesses.

A book that is valued personally by thesis author was written by Calvin Miller. The author of this thesis knows this author personally. Miller taught Artūras in a class as he studied in a theological seminary. Calvin Miller has been teaching preaching for many years and is a widely-respected author and teacher in the North American evangelical Christian community. These three authors with their writings fit the goal and purposes of this thesis.

However, the books that are more important and better to fit the theme of the thesis are the books that are written from the Anabaptist perspective.

²¹⁴ Larson, Craig, ed. *Inspirational Preaching*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012. Kobo E-book reader, 2.

A book edited by Mennonite theologians David B. Greiser and Michael A. King is called *Anabaptist Preaching*. This book offers a window into the Anabaptist homiletical world and into Anabaptist preachers.

Another excellent book on worship and preaching edited by Marlene Kropf comes from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana. Although this book is not directly about preaching and preachers, it puts preaching and preachers at the right location in the picture of the Church's ministry puzzle.

Also, in a chapter of book reviews is included a book that is written by Dr. Leo Hartshorn, who serves as Minister of Peace and Justice with the Mennonite Mission Network of the Mennonite Church USA. He also is an Adjunct Professor at the Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, PA. His book *Interpretation and Preaching as Communal and Dialogical Practices* comes from within the Anabaptist church, from a former pastor and theologian, from someone who is expert in the field of Anabaptism and preaching, and who holds a respected ministry and work position in the Mennonite Church USA.

Another book is written by Stuart and Sian Murray. Both, Sian and Stuart Murray are Baptist ministers in Great Britain, but also, they consider themselves to be followers of the Anabaptist tradition and they are very interested in Anabaptist values and perspectives. Sian is an ordained Baptist minister and teaches in a Baptist college. Stuart has established an Anabaptist Network that unites Christians from many traditions as they learn and reflect on Anabaptist values; he writes books about church, mission, church planting, post-Christendom and Anabaptism. One of Stuart's books, *The Naked*

*Anabaptist*²¹⁵, became very famous among Mennonites, for it deals about essential faith and practical elements of Anabaptism.

These reviewed books the following:

- 1) David B. Greiser and Michael A. King, *Anabaptist Preaching*, Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 2003.
- 2) Marlene Kropf, *Preparing Sunday Dinner: A Collaborative Approach to Worship and Preaching*. Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 2003. Kindle Edition.
- 3) Leo Hartshorn, *Interpretation and Preaching as Communal and Dialogical practices*, Lewiston-Queenston-Lampeter, The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006.
- 4) Stuart and Sian Murray, *Multi-Voiced church*, Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2012.
- 5) Calvin Miller, *Preaching*. Michigan, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006. Kobo E-book reader.
- 6) Simon Vibert, *Excellence in Preaching*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011. Kobo E-book reader.
- 7) Larson, Craig, ed. *Inspirational Preaching*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012. Kobo E-book reader;

It is important to note that some parts of the book reviews will be written from first person perspective using the pronoun “I”. The reason to do it was mentioned in the introduction because preaching as God’s story is told throughout the personal preachers’ story.

Also, the reason for talking about preaching from the first person singular perspective is that the books were selected not by some kind scientific method of selecting the best book, but by the author of this thesis. The author thinks that every

²¹⁵ Murray, Stuart. *Naked Anabaptist* (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 2010).

book review is mostly personal opinion. For example, in talking about food it is possible to say that it consists of flour, eggs, water, milk, pepper, salt, vegetables and meat. Great products make great food. However, people after dinner might disagree on a matter of taste. This is a typical situation in a family where there are small children.

Calvin Miller, who is teacher, professor, author, pastor and whose book will be reflected upon, does a similar thing in his book “Preaching”. He explains it as follows:

The style of this book will be what I like to call conversational scholarship. So forgive me if I veer off a “third person stilt” from time to time and borrow from a lifetime of homiletic involvement and say what I personally think and feel about my subject. Quoting others says this is important, but writing in first person says, “this is important to me.”²¹⁶

If an outstanding academic and practicing homiletician says that writing in the first person is “conversational scholarship”, this means that writing in such a style will be an asset and not a loss.

From this perspective, a book review on preaching can include personal opinion and reflection, which invites the readers own personal reflection. The book reviews for books from the Anabaptist book shelf and three other reflected books follow in chronological order.

Anabaptist Preaching

In the contemporary world the Anabaptist voice is not very loud, but probably it would not be correct to say that it is silent. Yes, there are known Anabaptist scholars and theologians like J. H. Yoder, Elmer Martens, Stuart Murray, and Ronald Sider, but who

²¹⁶ Calvin Miller, *Preaching* (Michigan, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), Kobo E-book reader, Introduction, 6.

has heard about a Mennonite mega church? Who has heard about a Mennonite preacher being famous and very well known? There are not many well-known Mennonite or other Anabaptist family preachers. However, they have their voice in a choir of preachers of many Christian faith traditions.

What is the goal of writing a book about Anabaptist preaching? In the Editors' preface, editors Greiser and King list several purposes of this book, and they say this: "we hope the book will help seasoned preachers to think through some perennial preaching issues and approach their task more reflectively and intentionally."²¹⁷ The purpose of this book called *Anabaptist Preaching* coincides with the thesis "Cultivating the preacher in the free Christian church of Lithuania". In cultivating the preachers, it is essential "to think through some perennial preaching issues". Through reflecting on a preacher's weaknesses and strengths and through seeing other preachers and hearing voices in congregation, one builds upon experiences, upon knowledge, and upon spirituality.

The other moment that is important in cultivating preachers is to "approach their task more reflectively and intentionally". It is personal discipleship in learning something new, it is wisdom to get deeper in the Word, it is emotion to love God's people more with unconditional love and to have a big and open heart, it is courage to face injustices, it is sacrificing to forget one's own desires and to follow Christ even to the places where one does not want to go. Preachers should not forget that in preaching there is God's will and God's intentions to his people.

²¹⁷ Greiser, 10.

Anabaptist Preaching is written by fourteen authors, and this book is a collection of essays that are talking about preachers, preaching, theology, context, Bible, community, etc.

In a chapter written by David B. Greiser “What exactly is Anabaptist-Mennonite Preaching?” there is an important section named “the Evolution of early Anabaptist preaching”. Greiser notes that Anabaptist preachers were different from their contemporary Lutheran or Reformed preachers, who left behind themselves hundreds of sermon manuscripts or stenographically recorded sermons. However, there are some references to Anabaptist preaching and those references usually come not through their sermon manuscripts but through the records of court interrogations. In one of these called “Interrogation of Ambrosius Spitelmaier, 1527” there is a record about Anabaptist faith practice: “When they come together they teach one another the divine Word and one asks the others, “How do you understand this saying?” Thus, there is among them a diligent living according to the divine Word”.²¹⁸

Greiser calls this Anabaptist teaching and preaching “dialogical activities”. In their teaching and preaching Anabaptists kept dialogue with one another. Such a “hermeneutical community” reflected the truths of Biblical text through counseling one another, asking one another questions, interpreting the text in a community context and were ready to apply what it said. Probably the author Greiser would not be offended if I would transform his phrase “dialogical activities” to “dialogical preaching”. This “dialogical preaching” practice often was carried through the practice of testimony, called *Zeugnis*, and it was accepted and normative after the sermon to have a verbal response.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

Another illustration of *Zeugnis* was recorded when Esslingen police arrested twenty-one Anabaptist men who met for worship outside the city near a ravine. During investigation it became clear that there was no ordained leader amongst them. They functioned during their worship time taking turns to read and to interpret the Scripture. In comparison to other contemporary Catholic or Reformed or Lutheran religious systems Anabaptists neither maintained consistent biblical hermeneutics nor had carefully crafted wordings of their confessions. They simply talked to one another around the Word and trusted that the Spirit will guide them into the truth.

In later developments, especially in Mennonite and Amish communities, Anabaptists came to a more defined *Zeugnis* practice, where they placed confidence “in the power of the Spirit to speak through ordinary believers” and now for Anabaptism “as a whole the final authority for faith and life was not Scripture alone, but Scripture and the Spirit working together in the church.”²¹⁹ The main themes of preaching in following ages usually centered on obedience, separation from sin, general purity of the church, and seductive dangers of material wealth, to the necessity of separation from Catholic practices.

Michael A. King wrote a chapter entitled “Weaving Enchantment: Preaching and Post-modernity”. The issue that King deals is about authority in the church. In post-modern culture there is a different point of view than in an era of modernism. In modernity rationality was in first place. People of the Modern era (from Enlightenment into the twilight of the twentieth century) respected and listened to their authorities. In post-modern times this issue has changed drastically. Even those people who still are

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

longing for lost views of modernity unconsciously are acting as post-moderns. King, by telling a story of an elder member of his church, William, shows how this modernistic person has become post-modern with the question of authority. The doubt in postmodernity is natural thing; even experts (like theologians or pastors) are not trusted as in earlier days, and their thoughts and teachings in postmodernity are under question. Kings tells “the paradox for William is that I am his pastor, so according to the old modes he should trust and follow my authority, but he, too, is now unready simply to submit to such authority if it does not mesh with his values and beliefs.”²²⁰ One thing that really changed from modernity into post-modernity is that authority now is earned and not assumed. This insight applies very much in preaching to the post-modern listeners.

King tells that Jesus was in a very similar situation where today post-modern listeners are with their expectations. In Mark 1:27 there is a story of Jesus preaching along with the reaction of those who listened to Jesus, and they were “all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching – with authority!” King explains that Jesus came to people without the traditional trappings of authority. Jesus was not a pharisee or scribe and he was not a politician. He had to earn in their eyes his own authority. In similar ways preachers can learn from Jesus, and it is their duty in this age of post-modernity to earn the authority to speak the truths of God.

Authority in King’s chapter about preaching in postmodernity deals with other specific issues that are characteristic to this epoch. For example in post-modernity the power of storytelling has gained fresh prominence; it is more a period of “faith seeking understanding” than of “logical reasoning”, it is another way of thinking when the

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

conclusions of the biblical text are drawn not so much by *exegesis* (when we search the text, try to understand it, study its language and culture) but more by *eisegesis*, which is an opposite way of *exegesis*, where one who reads the text reads it straight through his or her personality and experiences. In this place it is important to ask ourselves a question: how do we guard against reading things into the text from our personal life that may have nothing to do with the original intention? Could it be that a communal Bible study and Reading that are common in the Anabaptist approach might guard from the reading by *eisegesis* and concluding what are the meanings of the texts?

Concluding his chapter about preaching in post-modernity, Michael King comes with positive outcomes that he sees in post-modernity. He sees it as new and open era to the fresh reign of God. In this new era preachers must earn the right to be heard through their integrity and authenticity. Another thing is that in their approach to the Bible preachers must come as seekers of their own self-authenticating and life-giving integrity. Thirdly, in their preaching they have come with less focus on logical argumentation but more as inviting listeners to live under different script.

Preparing Sunday Dinner: A Collaborative Approach to Worship and Preaching

The aim of the book is to show and to talk about worship, which is a multi-ministry event and it considers many dimensions of ministry leaders' collaboration in worship. First, the collaboration is with the Holy Spirit, and then with the other leaders (preacher, music leader, worship leader), congregation and the surrounding contexts.

This book was also written in collaboration of several professors from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. June Alliman Yoder wrote three chapters (3, 5, and 9), Marlene Kropf five chapters (1, 7, 8, 11, and 12), and Rebecca Slough wrote also five chapters (2, 4, 6, 13, and 14). They, in different times in AMBS, taught a course on foundations of Worship and Preaching. It is not difficult to notice that this book carries not only Anabaptist but also a feminine flavor. In evangelical circles books on preaching usually are written by men, so this book is a treasure that it considers other perspectives that men usually do not notice or do not write about. For example, it is also based on a passage from Psalm 23:5 “You prepare a table before me”. The thought of worship and preaching as serving spiritual food goes throughout book, throughout table of contents where chapters are entitled like this: Why eat? Who’s coming to dinner? Planning the menu, etc... In the introduction of the book Marlene Kropf writes:

Every preacher or worship leader eventually feels like the frustrated disciples. Faced with the weekly challenge of providing food that nourishes God’s people, we ask, “What do we have to give?” Our pockets are depleted, empty. But because ministry is about God’s resources, not ours, we should listen carefully to Jesus as he proceeds to ask his followers to bring him what they have.”²²¹

She starts this statement with a miracle of Jesus, when he fed five thousand people. The disciples gave away what they received from Jesus. It is clear, that the writer puts the perspective that the true source for preaching is Jesus, and preachers are only to serve him and his purposes. In all honesty Kropf notices that preachers without Jesus are empty, depleted.

²²¹ Kropf, *Preparing Sunday Dinner*, location 83.

As the title of the book suggests, preaching and worship reminds readers that it is a collaborative ministry, so Marlene Kropf reminds that it is the Anabaptist perspective to collaborate in ministry of worship:

How we preach and lead worship on Sunday morning vividly reflects our understandings of the church. As Mennonites, we stand in a 500-year tradition of Anabaptists who have valued collaborative approaches to leadership.²²²

In explaining the thought of collaboration, she states, “When worship is not a collaborative ministry, the body of Christ suffers.”²²³ Without collaboration in worship church misses creative insights, unique biblical and theological perspectives, and the diverse life experiences of the members of the church.

Alliman Yoder, in a 5th chapter “Preparing the Entrée”, has an outstanding section that is entitled “Draw near to God and listen to the Spirit.” She claims that preachers are the church’s chief listeners and points to Karl Barth’s quote who in defining preaching said, “The speech which obediently listens.”²²⁴ Yoder argues that it is mistaken to be focused on preachers and not on the source of preaching which is the Spirit of God. Only by intently listening to God, by putting themselves in the presence of God in prayer and reading Scripture in solitude and meditation does the preacher have something to say that is of the Spirit. Yoder thinks that “the most difficult things for preachers to learn is that preaching is not first of all about the preacher. It is first and foremost about God.”²²⁵ Here the Holy Spirit is a collaborative partner for the preacher in preaching. They are not soloists and not competitors but partners together in preaching. The paradox and danger

²²² *Ibid.*, 92.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 99.

²²⁴ Yoder, *Preparing Sunday Dinner*, location 1474.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1482.

in preaching is that the better skilled a preacher is, the less that preacher might call on the Spirit, and the less might ask the Spirit to do his work.

Yoder reminds that the Amish ministers have a practice before their services to decide who is going to preach that morning and what the emphasis on the text will be. Under these circumstances the preacher must completely rely for the preaching on the Spirit for inspiration.

Drawing near to God and listening to the Spirit is a thing that preachers are to do for preaching to happen. Preaching at its best is the work of both, the preacher and the Holy Spirit. It is a collaboration with God, it is a genuine partnership, it is a healthy listening relationship with God.

Interpretation and Preaching as Communal and Dialogical practices

In a chapter “Early Anabaptist Hermeneutic and Homiletic of Community” Leo Hartshorn deals with preaching in early Anabaptist communities. The Reformation concept of *sola scripture* was one part of Anabaptist beliefs and practices. The Reformation highlighted the authority of the Scriptures and it allowed the believer to interpret the Bible. However, Anabaptists re-examined the concept of *sola scripture* and distanced themselves from Magisterial reformers in a question of who has the right to interpret the Scriptures. Anabaptists thought that doctrine of *sola scriptura*, when was explained by learned scholars and theologians and clergy, separated Scripture from the interpretive community and consequently from communal interpretation. Hartshorn explains it:

Scripture was to be interpreted within the context of the *gemeinde* or believing community. The right of private interpretation of Scripture was not perceived to be

an isolated personal matter among the Anabaptists, but rather as the free access of believers to interpret Scripture for themselves within the Christian community.”²²⁶

The Anabaptists differentiated themselves choosing another way to interpret Scriptures for few reasons. One of the things was that they did not have very well skilled theologians. Most of those who were more educated, who knew original Greek or Hebrew languages, had died in first years of the movement. Anabaptists needed a simpler way of interpreting and understanding Scriptures. Interpreting Scriptures for themselves within the Christian community was the only option. Second, they were part of oral culture. Most Anabaptists were illiterate, low class, peasant people. As Hartshorn writes: “Their skill was not in the scholastic approach to Scripture, but in the memorization and oral use of the biblical texts.”²²⁷ Their contact with the Scriptures would be through the spoken words of sermons, disputations and discussions. Most of the time, after reading, the written Word was mediated through the oral word. Dialogue in such a setting was unavoidable. Thus, as Hartshorn writes: “The practice of preaching was especially interactive and dialogical.”²²⁸ Thus, the main principle in interpreting the Bible was a principle of equality, including all believers in the community setting, in dialogue and discussion and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Another reason for such interconnected communal and dialogical practices was the Anabaptist interpretation of 1 Corinthians chapter 14, known as “The Rule of Paul”. They appealed to this Scripture because in it they found the biblical model for their own

²²⁶ Leo Hartshorn, *Interpretation and Preaching as Communal and Dialogical Practices*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston-Queenston-Lampeter, 2006, 18.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

communal and dialogical practice of preaching. This practice had practical meaning and implications of this rule:

In practice this meant that lay, unlearned people would be deciding the meaning of Scripture for their lives in their situation. Since this would most naturally be based on the most obvious or literal meaning, it led to a further suspicion of scholars, whose exegetical work was seen as leading to an avoidance of this understanding of the text. Further this meant that the congregation was not bound by tradition nor by government but relied solely on the Holy Spirit working in their midst.²²⁹

In this way “the Rule of Paul” was the right of the whole Christian community, the laity and the leadership, to judge a difficult passage together, not individually or professionally. Also, by practicing “the Rule of Paul” Anabaptists distinguished themselves from the preaching practices of the Reformed congregations. For example, Hartshorn explains that Luther made a sharp distinction between the pastor and the congregation, and he believed “that neither laymen nor women should preach”.²³⁰ This “Rule of Paul” for Luther was more for pastors and clergy than for the meeting of a church. In their good conscience Anabaptists did not want to attend the Reformed congregations, and the major problem for Anabaptists with Reformed preachers was the fact that they did not allow for interaction with the sermons within congregational worship. For them it was opposite “the charismatic, Spirit-directed, spontaneous nature of some forms of early Anabaptism made their congregations fertile ground for this informal, interactive approach to biblical interpretation, worship, and preaching”.²³¹

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

Thus, Dr. Leo Hartshorn in his book shows how Anabaptism in its beginnings and later in different stages of its development continued and maintained a practice of interactive interpretation and preaching.

Multi-Voiced Church

A book, *Multi-Voiced Church*, is a newer book, published in 2012. Although it is not a book of Anabaptism theology and practice, in some ways it reflects Anabaptist thought as Stuart and Sian writes about their thinking of the future church as it enters post-Christendom and a post-modern time line. The *Multi-Voiced Church* authors explain their thought in the chapter “Rediscovering the Multi-Voiced Church,” and they write:

A recurring feature of renewal movements in the history of the church is their multi-voiced nature. No longer is the Christian community largely passive, dependent on a few authorized ministers to preach, conduct worship, provide pastoral care, engage in mission, and exercise leadership.²³²

Stuart and Sian in this book in a positive way with practical suggestions are reacting to the practice of mono-voiced churches, which usually are led by a single or a few leaders. They have noticed that many churches or denominations in their beginnings had a multi-voiced nature, but with time going on, with the establishment of full salary paid clergy, most churches have become mono-voiced churches. It is an easier way when few “professionals” are running church activities and programs than when it is done by non-paid members. The need to write a such book is at the doorstep, because in post-Christendom churches keep losing their membership numbers, there are less resources to finance the mission and programs of the churches, pastors are in a struggle to survive and

²³² Stuart and Sian Murray, *Multi-Voiced Church*, Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2012, 3.

usually are working another part-time job to feed themselves and are feeling bad about such a situation. *Multi-Voiced Church* is a book that is based on Biblical references, on historical records of an apostolic church practice, on examples of church renewal moments.

Multi-Voiced Church has a chapter that is called “Multi-Voice Learning”. This chapter is basically about preaching in multi-voiced churches. Both authors in this chapter are affirming the truth that they believe in preaching; however, they are going to suggest that the preaching style must change as the societies change in the post-modernistic times. They are aiming “to suggest that preachers and congregations learn new skills and discover new ways of wrestling with Scripture and applying its teaching to our lives.”²³³

The problem with preaching is that communication has changed but preachers did not notice it. The churches are almost the last bastion in contemporary culture where long monologues are still spoken. The Murrays say that “nowhere else does one person speak at length to a silent and passive audience that has no expectation or opportunity of engaging with the speaker.”²³⁴ They are not the only ones who say this, and books about cultural shift and the need of preaching change were written already thirty years ago, which one of those, which the Murrays highlight, is by Klaus Runia *The Sermon Under Attack*. Runia explained three decades ago that there were such things as cultural shift, societal shift and media shift, and these shifts present significant challenges to preachers. A generation of people grew up in a different context than previous generations.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 63

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

The question what churches must face is to find an answer to the question “What could be done in preaching?” It is not a question of removing preaching but an idea of making preaching more applicable to those cultural and societal shifts. What are the alternatives to the monologue sermons? Is more active participation of preacher and congregation possible as they together reflect on Scripture and its application?

The Murrays noticed that some churches already embraced the “shift” challenge and moved from mono-voiced sermons to multi-voiced learning, but a bigger number of churches are defending the mono-voiced preaching tradition. They see that in multi-learning and preaching there is a great need of dialog and debate. There are about six good reasons to keep up mono-voiced preaching. Summing them up they would be: 1) Preaching has nurtured and sustained the churches for many centuries; 2) Preaching is a biblical mandate; 3) Preaching is a sacrament, an encounter with God; 4) Preaching provides authoritative proclamation; 5) Preaching has changed and is now much better suited to the contemporary context; 6) Questioning preaching is retreating from authentic biblical practices.

All those reasons to keep up mono-voiced preaching are acknowledged and are very important, but why not to engage critically with these cultural and societal shifts? Why not to use opportunity to reflect the gospel carefully in shifted cultural and societal paradigms? The idea of the Murrays is not to abandon preaching practices but to seize the chance to re-examine the biblical and historical evidences.

In the middle of this chapter there is a paragraph of discussion about unrealistic demands on those who preach regularly. Preachers are expected “to produce week by week sermons that will inspire, encourage, challenge, equip, instruct, motivate, comfort

and transform those who listen. We are locked into a paradigm that requires greater skill than most preachers have,”²³⁵ – say the Murrays.

Most preachers, especially those of average or small churches, are not brilliant orators. Especially in preaching those preachers struggle who serve part-time, or serve as volunteers, without any pay, as they earn their living in their secular environments. In such a context why not reconsider multi-voiced preaching, as there are such biblical examples and historical examples?

We arrive at a question, what do the Murrays have to offer, by suggesting multi-voiced learning and preaching? They say that in multi-learning preaching there are three foundational principles:

- They are learner-oriented, concerned more about what is learned than what is taught.
- They are multi-voiced, inviting many people to participate in a dialogue rather than listening to a monologue.
- They are open-ended, prepared to leave loose ends, to run the risk of allowing people space to think, reflect, explore and ask how the biblical teaching might apply to their situations.²³⁶

The Murrays are saying that these principles and practices that they are suggesting will not appeal to everyone, but also monologue sermons are not appealing to everyone. Why not to try preaching practices that they have seen, experienced and practiced themselves that invite people to dialogical learning.

The first dialogical practice is pausing for reflection. In this practice, preacher stops once or twice and asks people to turn to one another or person sitting next to them and to discuss, to talk for few minutes together about what they have heard so far. This way

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

people have opportunity to reflect and to share with one another.

The second dialogical practice is discussion and feedback. Instead of moving to the next point in preaching, a preacher takes a pause and invites the congregation's reflection and feedback. This practice invites someone else to speak publicly. Not all people enjoy group discussion and it is a good thing is to ask a group to choose a representative who is willing to speak publicly on the group's behalf.

The third dialogical practice is opportunity for comments. The Murrays tell how in Explorers Christian Church in Sydney at the end of message by a preacher, a chance was given for a discussion, debriefing the message, and search for application. This gives the congregation an opportunity to apply the message at its freshest moment.

The fourth dialogical practice is invitation to interrupt. Stuart himself likes and often asks people to interrupt during his preaching. This is an effective way to remind people that it is acceptable to disagree with one another but remain friends.

The fifth dialogical practice is dwelling in the Word. This approach is popular in Mennonite churches in the United States, when congregation is invited to spend time quietly reflecting on a biblical passage that soon will be the basis of the sermon. In some ways this practice reminds one of the monastic practices of *lectio divina*. People carefully listen to the words and phrases as the Spirit of God draws their attention to the things that are important to them. This method teaches people to listen well and encourages everyone to be actively involved.

One more dialogical practice is to prepare sermons together. The last suggestion in this chapter how to do multi-voiced preaching is to prepare sermons in a small group. Here are creative ways how such preparation can be done. It is possible to meet every

week with a small group and discuss and reflect a passage together on the theme of biblical passage, to think of the best illustrations that reflect the sermon's theme. Another method is that small groups meet and share the themes and subjects that are relevant to the congregation. Or it can be decided that a few preachers will preach the same sermon, but they will explore different points of the same sermon.

Summing it up, in multi-voiced learning, what is important is not the method but the principle that preaching would have learner-oriented, multi-voiced and open-ended features.

Preaching

Calvin Miller writes for preachers who live Sunday by Sunday. Preachers know that next Sunday comes too soon and they have only five days to prepare a new message, a word that speaks from God to His people. In those five days, the preacher wants to hear from God, to understand the text and what God says through it, and to comprehend how this message fits in the life of believers.

An audience comes and gives a preacher a most important thing and an amazing gift – their attention. An audience waits for the words that will refresh, that will inspire, that will challenge, that will motivate, and that will force them to deal with the dark side of their soul. The expectation is high and preachers who preach from Sunday to Sunday appear to be weak vessels to meet those expectations. Preachers cannot do their own will, on their own intellect, on their own strength. They need empowerment to continue the ministry that they received from God.

Learning to preach is a process like learning to speak. Children at the beginning of learning to speak for a long period mumble their words which are difficult to understand, but one day from their mouth start to come out true words that are correctly pronounced and in the correct order of sentence structure. Preaching in some ways is like that, except preachers learn to speak the things that God wants them to say.

The best teachers for a child in learning to speak are parents and family members and thus, children learn to say words in a way they are spoken in a family. Preaching in some way is similar in learning to speak and communicate. Preaching is caught up in a spiritual family from spiritual fathers and ministry siblings.

Calvin Miller in some ways is a parent in teaching the author of this Doctor of Ministry thesis to preach. The elements of his influence were lectures in the classroom, books that were read and learned from, and the most important element was relationship and trust. This learning was based not so much on knowledge, but on knowing and trusting the teacher.

It is a subjective opinion, but one of the most influential books for learning to preach for Artūras was Calvin Miller's *Empowered Communicator*. However, after twelve years in 2006, Calvin Miller wrote another book for preachers which is called *Preaching*. In this book he expands, updates, and summarizes everything that he learned about preaching in thirty years of his preaching ministry and fifteen years of teaching.

Preaching is a book that helps to focus on essential things that strengthen preachers. Miller writes about typical subjects that are found in other preaching books: audience, Bible study, sermon preparation, argumentation, sermon delivery, establishing relationship between the audience and preacher, etc. Those things are told in the

narrative way of Calvin Miller's style; it is easy and interesting to read. Reading this book inspires preachers to be preachers of God's word. Calvin Miller's book *Preaching* relates very well to the thesis "Cultivating the preacher in FCC", especially those sections that talk about the personality of a preacher.

The focus on the preacher is so concentrated and so passionate that a preacher who reads it ought to be thankful that Miller is teaching significant things at the right time. In trying to find an answer – why did Miller write another book on preaching? – his answer comes in these words:

The sermon is the workhorse of the ecclesia. Preaching was established by Jesus because God has a job to do. To get the job done preaching must be committed to two goals: first it should be passionate and second, fascinating. Passion makes preaching seem imperative and urgent. Narrative is a force that postmodern preachers must use, and listeners must reckon with.²³⁷

A passion to keep people fascinated is the main goal of writing and talking to preachers. It does not take long for a preacher to become "dry" in preaching. Without being passionate and immersed in the living waters of God's word in close contact with Jesus, the preacher has a high risk to become a simple orator instead of keeping up as a preacher. The preacher is called to serve God and to feed the church with the words of God.

Thus, four principles are reflected in this book review that concerns the cultivating preacher in general, and that also might concern Lithuanian preachers as well. Those four principles are: The Preacher as a Person of Faith; The Preacher as a Person of Information; The Preacher as a Mystic; The Preacher as a Shepherd.

²³⁷ Calvin Miller, Kobo E-book reader, Introduction, 10.

First, “The Preacher is a Person of Faith.” If there is expectation from the congregation to the preacher than probably the first and foremost expectation is that people in the church want to see their preacher as a person of faith.

Yes, preachers want to look relevant and right there is a temptation to preach “how- to” sermons. However, as Calvin says, “The world is tired of hearing pulpit “how-tos” that have arrived to take the place of genuine transcendence.”²³⁸

The preacher must be conscious all the time that that right here, next door is the universe of God’s kingdom and it is not his duty to be preoccupied with small and tiny issues about how to succeed, how to be healthy, how to get rich, how to feel secure, etc. If a preacher is focused on a big thing, the Kingdom of God, then the main thing influences everything else. Preachers are not called to answer all questions. It is much better to see that preachers are simple humans but God-lovers. Here is a quote that preachers should remember how fragile they are while living in this sin-dominated world.

Preachers are people of faith, but they are not oracles. They have too little wisdom and often make dreadful mistakes even while they are preaching. But their confidence in God leads them not just to confess their humanity; they can actually – if occasion demands it – ask their parishes to forgive them.²³⁹

What matters – is to live by faith, to preach in faith, to encourage people to strengthen their faith.

Second, “the Preacher as a Person of Information”. This is a strange but honest statement. Miller says that people want that their pastors would be persons of information. Most pastors know how much they are limited in their knowledge. They

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

might know the Bible well and could explain what one or another verse means, but they can not know everything – in science, about nature, in matters of organizational leadership, in counseling etc. However, a congregation has this expectation from their preachers.

What then to do? There is expectation and there is limitation. Miller says that preachers have to try as much as they can to expand their knowledge. This means to read and to have interest not only in “Christian” literature, but in a whole range of different subjects. Miller writes “I think Karl Barth may have been divinely inspired when he said preach with a Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.”²⁴⁰

As the Bible interacts with the real world of today, so God interacts with people who live in this real world and meet their daily routine challenges: raising children, driving in the streets, earning a living, deciding to do surgery or to live and suffer without it, etc.

They need to be careful not to make a sermon into an intellectual documentary filled with footnotes and quotes and missing in it the force of spiritual truth. However, knowledge builds up a preachers’ reputation and that preacher lives not only in a two-thousand-year-old world but also in this world, which is full of contemporary challenges, pains, and uncertainties.

In this tension to preach the Word of God and to understand this world there is a danger. Miller says “It is hard to build a heart that burns for God while we develop minds that are informed and incisive. Rarely are big heads and great hearts found in the

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, chapter 1, 29.

same body.”²⁴¹ In listening to Miller, it sounds like a preacher needs to make a choice – a “big head” or a “great heart”. The head is addressed in being informed and the heart in being a mystic. In this question it is best to look at Jesus, who had a “big head” and “great heart”, who taught to love with all your mind and with all your heart. His death on the cross was more an expression of him having a great heart.

Third, “the Preacher as a Mystic.” There are different images that begin to pop up when someone starts to talk about mysticism. Looking at the history of the church mystics were desert fathers, looking at contemporary society in Lithuania mystics usually are those persons who practice or propagate cultic extrasensory practices and make a living out of it. Miller defines the term “mystic” in such words: “Mystics are those souls who walk with one foot on solid path of humanity and the other in the real world of the spiritual.”²⁴²

Mystic in this definition is a positive and not a negative term; because faith is so closely related to mysticism, to the unseen world, to the invisible laws, to the commands of God that many times seem to be illogical. However, faith also is so much related to the things that are impossible, to the things that are simply too big for humans to achieve or even to comprehend.

In the end, mystics are those who believe that all things are possible. Miller explains, “Homiletical mystics are positive thinkers. All good things are possible, but most of them are probable.”²⁴³

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 32.

For example, in the Bible, Miller looks at the example of Moses as a mystical preacher. He would come down from the mountain of the Lord with a shining face. Israel knew that Moses met the Lord; Israel knew that Moses spoke what he had heard from God.

Another mystic in the Bible is the apostle Paul, who once wrote that he was “caught up to the third heaven.” Paul was not able to explain what kind of experience it was, and how he was there in “the third heaven” but he talked about it.

The mystic experiences of a preacher invite listeners to the wonder of God. If someone is talking about mystical experiences it means either he or she is crazy or experiencing a thing that cannot be explained by another person. In either way it creates emotion, tension or fascination.

Maybe the best thing that helps to be a mystical preacher is for a preacher to have a deep interest in the Bible, in mission, in prayer, in worship and in many other similar things. Miller says that “Wherever such a pastor is found, life is found.”²⁴⁴ If preachers are interested in something that is beyond this world’s reality, then they are able to preach it with passion and enthusiasm; if they present their subject as an interesting and gripping theme, then they will discover those elements of enduring truth. As Miller writes about preachers with Spirit-led emphasis, such things were manifested within the Anabaptist renewal stream and were characteristic to Anabaptist preachers.

Finally, the fourth principle is “The Preacher as a Shepherd”. A shepherd’s task it to feed the sheep. That it is why the shepherd takes sheep where there is grass for them to eat. The preacher is a shepherd and the sheep are church members. The food for the

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

sheep is the Word of God. If sheep do not have food to eat, then they begin “to eat” one another. In their hungry condition sheep are angry, looking forward to another field, do not trust their shepherd because he does not feed them.

Churches lose their people because they have found food somewhere else. Miller says that “Good preaching feeds the flock, and nothing else will do it quite as well.”²⁴⁵ A preacher’s task is to prepare good food and to give it to the sheep to eat. This topic about sermons as about food was talked about in a book “Preparing Sunday Dinner”. This is the thing that the apostles did in the story of the Acts, when they said that it is needed to select deacons that they would serve food on the table and would do a social ministry, but they said about themselves “while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.” (Acts 6:4).

Miller teaches another good lesson about shepherding for he has found in Genesis 49:25, that God’s name Almighty (Shaddai) has similar root with the Hebrew word breast (shad). These two words are used in this Bible passage when Jacob before his death blessed his sons and it seems that these words are connected to one another. The image of God is like a mother feeding her baby with her breast. It is a very intimate, lovely, gentle image. Miller says “The nourishing of God is the imperative point of our preaching. When the apostle Paul teaches and encourages us to “feed the flock of God,” he has in mind the idea of feeding our sheep from the Bible.”²⁴⁶ For preacher-shepherd the major task is to know and to care for his congregation.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

The relationship in preaching is everything. Why would someone listen to a preacher? The only reason to listen to someone is because there is established trust and the audience can relate to the preacher. The preaching without established relationship is not effective. This relationship is established in the preacher's pastoral ministry. As the preacher knows his people, knows their struggles, knows their desires, knows what they can and what they can't do; and when they know their preacher, know his integrity, know his love of God, know his passion and ministry, then they hear the word of God.

In the Lithuanian context, where most churches are very small, and Evangelical Christianity is small, it is important that preachers-shepherds feed their sheep. There is not much spiritual food around and it has to be found in congregation where people belong. Preaching is a matter of feeding the Word of God, and loving people.

Preaching is one of many of Calvin Miller's books. To read a book and to learn from its principles is a great thing. However, a greater thing, as it was in my case, is to know the author of the book and to learn straight from him.

In the first place, a preacher's task is to improve their own devotion to God, their knowledge of the Bible, and their relationship with the people. Then a second task for preachers is to prepare sermons that move people toward God.

Excellence in Preaching

Before starting to reflect on this book and its impact on me, I want to stop at its title: *Excellence in Preaching* by Simon Vibert. As I read it, I must ask myself, "Do I really want to be excellent at preaching?" One answer is – oh yes. I want to be the best preacher I can be. I want to be an excellent communicator, an excellent expositor of

God's word. Second answer is, "maybe I do not want to be excellent in preaching, to be a normal preacher is enough for me." I ask myself if I need this change because it requires more studying, learning new ways of communication. To take the road to excellence in preaching, to me it means to suffer growth pains about preaching.

I will look at five preachers and their presentations and Vibert's conclusion on their preaching so that I could draw some lessons for myself. Simon Vibert has chosen these preachers as contemporary examples for learning and with their help to strive for excellency.

Tim Keller. I heard about Tim Keller eight years ago. He was one of the speakers in the Willow Creek Global Leadership Summit conference. When I watched Tim Keller's sermon about the prodigal son, I was touched by his simplicity and profound exposition and application of the Scripture. The things that I will be talking about Tim Keller are coming from my previous experience and from the book *Excellence in Preaching*.

First, Keller spends a lot of time to discover the true meaning of words, of sayings, of events, etc. He uses his imagination a lot, his reasoning, and he asks many questions. I think about myself that I am also "biblical" but in comparison to Keller, I still have a long way to go. Vibert writes Keller's words, "When you listen to and read only one thinker, you become a clone. If you listen to and read two thinkers, you will begin to develop your own voice. But when you hear two or three hundred thinkers, you become wise and develop your own voice."²⁴⁷ I am humbled listening to these words; I

²⁴⁷ Simon Vibert, *Excellence in Preaching* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011), Kobo E-book reader, chapter 2, 7.

totally agree with Vibert's concluding point about Keller's preaching: read thoroughly and widely.

Second, T. Keller's sermons create intrigue. I believe that it is the same reason why I like to listen to Tim Keller. In his preaching, he often puts a listener against a choice: your choice is black or white, stupid or smart, and you are destined for heaven or hell. People, who are well-known and want to please people, usually have a middle position. But it is not in Keller's case. In this sense, it is not difficult to say that in preaching he is the agent of God and he represents his position.

David Cook. David Cook distinguishes himself from other preachers by his pastoral ministry. He says: "First, there is the need for the systematic preaching of the Word of God and, secondly, for the systematic visitation of the people of God."²⁴⁸ This phrase shows that a road to excellence is by the commitment to God's people, to be there for them, and to bring the Word of God to them.

Personally, I like to preach systematically from the books of the Bible according to a plan that I have prepared ahead of time. It means that every time I sit to prepare a sermon, I need to learn and to hear from God first and then to communicate what I learned to the people. From my experience, I come empty to a Bible passage, and I leave with something learned. From my own experience, during this time I hear God speaking to me. Reading about David Cook's practice, I was encouraged by his commitment not only to preach what people want to hear, but also to visit them systematically.

At the end of this chapter, Simon Vibert concludes with lessons for preachers. In his conclusion towards excellence in preaching, he points out to be genuinely interested

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Chapter 7, p. 3.

in people and to apply the passage to oneself first. These things make the Word of God go further. Thus, it becomes clear that the heart of a preacher is a place where the Word of God is planted, the pulpit is a place where this word is exposed, and congregation is a place where it bears fruits.

John Ortberg. Simon Vibert chose Ortberg as one of the best examples for preaching. “John Ortberg preaches about matters of the heart and believes that ‘spiritual formation’ is essential to becoming more like Jesus Christ.”²⁴⁹ Spiritual formation applies in both directions: it is the preacher’s spiritual formation and the listener’s spiritual formation.

Starting with the preacher, there are many dangers and temptations into making a shortcut. Ortberg speaks about the “Ten Deadly Sins of Preaching”, and he explains that they are:

The temptation to be inauthentic; the temptation to live for recognition; the temptation of fear; the temptation to comparison; the temptation to exaggerate; the temptation to feel chronically inadequate; the temptation to pride; the temptation to manipulate; the temptation to envy; the temptation to anger.²⁵⁰

On the road to excellence in preaching, every preacher needs to overcome these temptations.

Secondly, preaching helps with the spiritual the spiritual formation of a believer. A preacher is a servant, or a tool that helps a follower of Christ to hear, to see, to understand, to feel, and to sense his Savior. People follow when there is someone who leads. It is interesting that it is not the preaching but the suffering that impacts spiritual

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Chapter 8, p. 2.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

growth. A believer should grow not through a preacher's preaching but through the Holy Spirit's work in his or her soul. A believer, who is growing in his spiritual formation, will take as much as he needs from a preacher. However, a preacher is still obligated to communicate all of God's word even though a believer might take only piece of it.

In my own journey, I have to be willing to let God shape and form me so that it is useful for Him. I want to thank John Ortberg for speaking about the preacher's need for spiritual formation.

Rico Tice. Some years ago, I was very much impressed by the book "*Christianity Explored.*" Now I have learned that Rico Tice is not only an author but a preacher as well and one that is worth learning from; and he is also from the continent of Europe. What Simon Vibert commented about his preaching is very noticeable and it is possible to see by watching Rico Tice video sermons.²⁵¹ Vibert noticed, "Rico owns the message. Everything he says has a personal and an urgent tone."²⁵² Rico Tice captures and makes a very clear sense of what he says in one of his video sermons. In his preaching I noticed the freedom of communication, confidentiality, owning the message, a pleasant invitation to receive, and inner conviction of the message. There are two things that I find relevant in "Lessons for Preachers" about Rico Tice's preaching. First, allow your vulnerability to show in order that the congregation may conclude, as Tice says, "If this gospel works even for you, then it should work for me too."²⁵³ Second, be passionate and urgent: "You can't fake it, but if you feel it, don't be afraid to show it." Learning about preaching from

²⁵¹ Rico Tice. *The Sermon*, <http://www.thesermon.co.uk/sermon/play.aspx?sermon=TSRT003>. (accessed 08-05-2017)

²⁵² *Ibid.*, Chapter 10, 4.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, Chapter 10, 6.

Rico Tice, I see that preaching in this post-modern context, when people are taught to doubt everybody and everything, is more effective by trusting someone you know, by observing a life that is consistent in words and deeds.

To conclude, it is good to return to the lessons that I have learned by reading *Excellence in Preaching*. I have no other way to live as a preacher but to grow spiritually. Ortberg would say that I need to take care of my “spiritual formation.” The preacher’s personality matters a lot and as a preacher, I am responsible for my walk with God and for following Christ. As a pastor of a small church, with the church members and in preaching I am more visible by my life and not by my words. I must keep growing spiritually and lead people by my own example in their spiritual growth.

If I ask myself whether I am still passionate about my faith, the answer is yes. I believe in God and I follow Jesus Christ. I serve in the ministry that God has called me to and I am still passionate for preaching but in a different way than I was in my younger years. I am comfortable, and I feel at home in my faith. It makes me relaxed and happy in my relationship with God and in the ministry that I am called to. This is a dangerous place to be for a preacher. I am satisfied with what I have or do not have. I am not jealous of pastors whose churches are bigger and ministries are wider. Truly speaking, I am open for spiritual formation, I want to have more passion, but I do not know how to get it.

Piper (who is one of preachers in this book) and Cook are helpful to me because they keep saying “glorify God” and “love people.” If I am not able to gain more passion for myself, then I am able to glorify God in everything and to love people as they are. I will keep focusing more on glorifying God and spending more time with people. And

here I can quote Tico Rice who says, “Pray myself hot; read myself full; let myself loose.”²⁵⁴ I must prepare myself for preaching by spending more time with God so that I could know what to tell people about Him.

Aiming towards excellency in preaching is strengthened by developing preaching skills. Extra things that I can do are: to gain more knowledge, to study diligently, get to know the texts that I need for preaching, to spend more time in preparing a sermon so that I would be owning the message and stand in front of congregation with conviction that God is speaking through this well-prepared sermon.

Inspirational Preaching

By reflecting on *Inspirational Preaching*, I will not discuss all 19 chapters of this book. Craig Larson wrote a book about preachers with the intention that preachers will learn from one another and preachers should be learning from one another. His book speaks to preachers, not through his own writing, but through their own voices, recorded words, and ideas. I will talk about some ideas that were and still are personally helpful in my journey towards better preaching.

John Piper. John Piper says, “If you do not lift up the glory of God and wean them of the breast of this God neglecting world, who’s going to do it?”²⁵⁵

What Piper is trying to say is that the preacher remains a very important person. This importance comes from God, who is supreme and holy. To very small churches it

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁵⁵ John Piper, The Supremacy of God in Preaching. In: Craig Larson, *Inspirational Preaching* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012), Kobo E-book reader, chapter 1, 4.

might seem that the preacher is insignificant and of no value, but what matters is lifting God's name on high. If someone would talk more about the significance of preaching only for just a few minutes each week to those preachers, it would make a huge difference in their way of delivering the message.

It might be my task as well talk to other preachers about how important their role is. Such encouragement of lifting the glory of God is very inspiring in a ministry. In these moments, I see God as the most important and the worthiest One who called me to do a glorious task and to proclaim His glory.

Haddon Robinson. Robinson tells us to take into consideration what the Bible talks about. He says:

“Do I really believe that God gave the Bible merely for some practical advice on how to have a happy marriage, how to get along with people, or how to be healthy and wealthy? Do I believe it's merely a textbook on good behavior or on how to be moral? We don't need good advice; the world's got better advice than it knows how to live up to. It needs God; it needs the power of God, the authority of God, the wisdom of God.”²⁵⁶

What Robinson is saying is that our primary goal is not to teach people to change their behavior nor how to manage their lives better, but to trust God, who is the goal and at the end of every human life. Today in many churches we will hear a lot of sermons on how to do “this” or “that”. They are practical sermons and people like them. It is good to give some practical advice, but preaching is primarily about God, about the Father's love, about Son's teaching, about Christ and His cross, about the Holy Spirit and the communion of saints, and about punishment and loss. Preachers need to remember these

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

words and not to give up on God-centered sermons. They need to hold on to Biblical truths and not to become the “how to do this or that” preacher.

Lee Eclov. Lee Eclov suggests that “the preacher cannot be only a professor; the preacher must also be a poet, painter, and prophet, determined to stir hearts for God’s sake.”²⁵⁷ This is a reminder that preachers have to be alive, to experience life and bring in things that reflect humanity in people. To be inspirational, one has to use tools that inspire people and probably more people are inspired by what they feel and not by what they know. Not only things like poetry and art are important, but also sports, adventures, technologies and charity. Even politics are playing an important role on our feelings and on our behavior. An idea of Eclov gives an insight, “We can sometimes see more through a tear than through a telescope.”²⁵⁸ Every preacher ought to notice people and events that are so close to him or her and to consider those things as in preaching.

Gordon MacDonald. Gordon MacDonald in *soul-deep* preaching claims:

Soul-deep preaching is several steps beyond brain-deep preaching or feelings-deep preaching or guilt-deep preaching. The former provokes conviction, conversion, brave new actions. The latter, a momentary experience of good feelings or an intellectual appreciation of a solid point well made. But not much more.²⁵⁹

Gordon’s reason for this comes from Hebrews 4:12, where the word of God “penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” It is not possible to go deeper than it is described in this passage. In such situations it is very clear that the person, on his own strength, is not able to do such

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Chapter 5, 5.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Chapter 6, 6.

speaking. God has to be involved and of course God is choosing people for Himself to preach His word, but these preachers have to be in submission to God. It is not that their education, crafting, or cleverness is of importance, rather their godliness and passion for God. Peter and Paul were very different people, but both were soul-deep preachers.

Personally, as a preacher, it is a reminder that God is the priority. It is my role to preach in such a manner that I was to know that I am sent from God. The point that MacDonald made fits very well with a well-known definition of preaching which says: “truth through personality.”²⁶⁰

Mark Batterson. The prayer of Mark Batterson is, “God, I don’t want to invest my time and energy in saying things that people are just going to forget anyway. Help me say things in unforgettable ways.”²⁶¹”

Batterson raises a valuable question: why to preach and waste your time if nothing is going to change? Maybe it is better to do other things that people value and where there will be more joy for myself rather than repeating the same thing over and over which nobody wants to hear?

The idea of the “Red Pill” is to try to do new things. Maybe people want to hear God’s truth, but they cannot bear my style of delivering them? It means taking the risk for something that is new to me personally and to people that I preach to. Here is a quote of Thomas Merton, “Do not be like one of those preachers, who rather than risk failure,

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Chapter 18, 2.

never attempts anything.”²⁶² Yes, I need to be encouraged to take a risk of failure and attempt new things.

Three convictions that Batterson is committed to and which makes his preaching more inspiring to people are: 1) The church ought to be the most creative place on the planet; 2) The greatest message deserves the greatest marketing; 3) The church is called to compete in the marketplace of ideas.

I struggle a little with these statements. Using the word “marketing” sounds a little like the church is in competition with other big things of modern society: shopping, entertainment, sports, etc. However, the reality is that many people (and sometimes Christians) are making many choices: (to go to) worship time on Sunday or soccer at the stadium.

For me, if I were to put into practice these ideas on the next upcoming Sunday, it would be challenging. I am afraid that if a preacher will shift his focus from God to creating the greatest meeting place by using the best marketplace ideas, he will not be doing the job of his calling. Batterson’s idea could be fulfilled in teamwork rather than by a single preacher. For these reasons, gifted people in the church need to find help and be encouraged and supported by the preacher in order to create a great place.

Inspirational Preaching is a great book if one reads a chapter at a time and thinks deeply about it. Personally, I came with six inspirational preaching ideas (out of nineteen chapters) that stirred my heart. It is a great book because it reminds me that I have to listen to other preachers and to learn from them. In a similar matter, I ought to share with other preachers what I have learned and what I see works best in my preaching

²⁶² *Ibid.*, Chapter 16, 2.

experience. They speak of things that every preacher could relate to, especially when it comes to giving glory to God.

Concluding the third chapter, which looked at the writings of practicing preachers of Anabaptist and of other evangelical traditions, it is seen that preaching is a relationship driven and directed activity. It is how preachers understand themselves, how is the quality of their relationship to God, how they can present God's message in the context they live and how good their relationship with the people they preach to is. These four statements are especially important in the Anabaptist perspective of preaching because they reflect the Biblical preaching and Anabaptist preaching of 16th century.

CHAPTER 4

Research methods

This qualitative research approach will use the method of a semi-structured interview. Summarizing Tim Sensing, the research should reach three goals: It should be vital, it should keep the researcher in a current conversation with the community of scholars, and it ought to increase the participant`s role in the field of a discussed topic.²⁶³

The research is vital because churches have very high demand for preachers who preach the gospel. The society itself that does not know Christ also has a demand for preachers, who will speak to them a message of hope in Christ in ways it can understand, believe, and live accordingly. From perspective of this researcher, Lithuanian society longs for the Good News of Jesus, but does not believe the Gospel. To most people the Gospel and the church are not relevant, not because they understood it, but because they have not understood.

The second idea is that this research is being discussed within the community of scholars and practicing preachers. Now, many researchers and authors and theologians are trying to examine this post-modern, post-Christian, and post-communist world (as it is the case of Lithuania), hoping to find what they have in common and what things are working in today`s world. As global warming is affecting the natural world, every aspect of the nature is related to the same cause, in the same way every local and national church

²⁶³ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research, A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Wipf & Stock, an Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), Kindle edition, location 513.

has to be enriched in a wider conversation within the international community of scholars.

As for the third goal, to increase the participant's role in the field of a discussed topic, I am looking for answers and it keeps me involved in the field of the discussed topic. The research will highlight the importance of the improvement of the preacher's development in the Free Christian Churches in Lithuania. My intention is to use the sources for this thesis and to reflect on the examined data for preparing a new generation of preachers in the Lithuanian Free Christian Churches. Interviews will provide different answers and these answers, compared to the biblical and ecclesiological criterias that are discussed in the first and second chapters, will shape the project of cultivating and developing FCC preachers.

For a fourth goal, this practical project would help to teach a course in the Evangelical Bible Institute on the development of the preacher in Lithuania and to share some of the insights at the international level in the fellowship of ICOMB.

The Research Method

The proposed research adopts a qualitative and semi-structured research methodology. Uwe Flick argues that, "Research is increasingly forced to make use of inductive strategies. Instead of starting from theories and testing them, "sensitizing concepts" are required for approaching social contexts to be studied."²⁶⁴ Grounded

²⁶⁴ Uwe Flick, *An introduction to Qualitative Research* (London, Sage Publications, 2006), 12.

Theory²⁶⁵ is one of the widely used methodologies in social sciences today. Paying attention to the Grounded Theory Method of B. Glaser and A. Strauss, it will be possible to gain a deeper understanding of what this qualitative and semi-structured research means. The gathered data is analyzed and is reduced to the main categories and ideas as Glaser and Strauss authors say, “The analyst may discover underlying uniformities in the original set of categories or their properties and can then formulate the theory with a smaller set of higher level concepts.”²⁶⁶

In interviews with preachers the questions are asked in such ways that they will form different categories, and in answering these questions the preachers will be talking about these categories. By conducting interviews, there will be gathered enough data to discern more specific observations. The data is recorded and transcribed to determine the specific categories. Then the received categories are compared with the biblical and theological and preaching literature review analysis chapters and conclusions could be drawn on this basis.

Why Use Interviews in Particular?

The interviews with experienced preachers are the best method that can provide an answer to the topic of my thesis. The preachers and pastors that are chosen are those who were and are active in preaching ministry and went through some kind of process that led them to the pulpit and pastoral ministry. There was no specific method applied

²⁶⁵ Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, (Aldine Transaction, New Brunswick and London, 2016).

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

for the selection of preachers. The interviews were conducted with six respondents. To identify potential interviewees for the research was not difficult. The respondents are preachers and pastors from FCC. They have been in preaching ministry for many years, and they are the main preachers in the local faith community. There are seven congregations in this denomination including me being the pastor for one of them, I also serve as a bishop for all the churches. I have interviewed four current pastors who are active in the preaching ministry and two former pastors. These pastors are those who were most involved in forming and developing the Free Christian Church in Lithuania. In FCC, there could be more preachers and pastors, but they were not included in this research because they are (were) missionaries sent by foreign mission agencies from USA, Canada and Germany to serve in Lithuania. They have been trained in western theological schools and they came to Lithuania as already experienced men and women in the field of mission work.

Also, in this research, I did not include female preachers. In the Free Christian Church, as in the Mennonite Brethren Church, there are two different views on female preachers. The old conservative churches hold only a complementarian theology. Younger Mennonite Brethren churches, especially those that are in the global south, see no difference whether the preacher is a male or a female and their theological position is more egalitarian. In Lithuania, the Free Christian Church agreed to disagree on this gender question. At least two FCC churches were planted by missionaries who had a more conservative point of view and a complementarian theological position. For the most part, the FCC leadership supports and encourages female preaching in the pulpit, but at present moment FCC does not have female preachers.

There was one woman as a preacher whom I considered including in one of the interviews. She previously served as a Methodist church pastor, but due to her health issues she left the ministry. After a while, she began to attend the Free Christian Church and started to work as an English and theology professor in a local university. She was accepted and confirmed in her preaching call by most Free Christian Churches and she regularly would preach in our churches. At the moment, due to her choice to study for a PhD, she relocated and lives abroad, and therefore is not an active member of FCC anymore. Apart from that, there are no more females, who by the Free Christian Church leadership would be identified as preachers.

The chosen participants were asked to partake in a semi-structured interview lasting approximately sixty minutes, in a location determined by the interviewee to ensure their comfort. The participants were contacted by e-mail and by phone call and were asked to take part in the interview according to the goals of the study. All preachers were informed about the Research Ethics Board (REB) process and affirmation concerning guiding questions. The REB documentation and consent form are included in an appendix of this thesis. All individuals agreed to participate in this study. Many participants saw a personal value in answering these questions and were personally encouraged. Several said that such a study is relevant to all Free Christian Churches. Their participation in this study was completely voluntary and all of them were willing to participate in interviews. Participants were assured of confidentiality, and there are no known risks and no safety issues associated with these interviews.

Preachers that were interviewed were given specific codes and they were assured that their identities would not be revealed, although they themselves were not concerned

whether their names were to be revealed. A specific code was chosen for each one of them, which consists of the “P” letter standing for “preacher” and a specific number. P1 was a pastor of the FCC during the first decade of the FCC development and growth. P2 is a part-time pastor and has a part time secular job. P3 is a part-time pastor and has a part-time secular job. P4 is a part-time pastor and has a part time secular job. P5 is a part-time pastor and has a part time secular job. P6 was an elder, who for 5 years had the position of a pastor. At the present time P6 is retired. Their unique perspectives were recorded. Then detailed transcriptions of these interviews were produced, and those transcriptions were translated into the English language. The Preachers’ insights were compiled, put in categories, compared, and finally analyzed.

CHAPTER 5

Experiences of Lithuanian Preachers in FCC

The purpose of this thesis *Cultivating the Preacher in the Free Christian Church of Lithuania* is to examine the biblical and ecclesiological reasons for preaching and preachers; to look at the experiences that were leading pastors into preaching, and to create a teaching syllabus to cultivate preachers in the Free Christian Church of Lithuania. The aim of this thesis is to explore preachers's health, to find weaknesses and strengths of FCC preachers by applying Biblical criteria and the criteria of the ecclesiological church tradition of the Mennonites. In response to some of the most important elements discovered in the research, an outline of teaching topics was developed to cultivate preachers in the contemporary post-modern society of Lithuania. The questions of the interviews will help to reveal the situation of FCC preachers and what they think of some issues pertaining to the biblical and ecclesiological criteria.

For these reasons, research for the study is obtained through a qualitative approach, because there are few respondents in the locally researched field (only 7 churches with potential respondents). Therefore, the tool of semi-structured interview was chosen. A semi-structured interview helps collect data from respondents who have their own authentic experience in the field without hindering a personal narrative. By using interviews with preachers, the research goal for the study is obtained through a qualitative approach.

Thesis focuses on the topic of cultivating preachers. Preachers cannot be separated from the church because the church is the family in which they were born, the

church is the flock they are in, the church is the house in which preacher is a living stone, the church is a tree, and the preacher is a branch of this tree, as Jesus once said to his disciples “I am the vine, and you are the branches” (John 15:5). It is right to say that a church gives birth to a preacher, because a church and its preachers are one entity.

As a background to the interview data, it is important to understand that the FCC of Lithuania is a relatively young community of believers. It was born during the last decades of the former Soviet Union. In the 1970s and 80s Russian-speaking German Mennonites gathered from remote parts of Soviet Union settled in Lithuania with an attempt to emigrate to their homeland, which was Germany. The Mennonite theologian David Shenk, who served as a dean in Lithuanian Christian College, explains:

Soviet Christians of German ethnicity discovered that exit permits to emigrate to Germany were more easily acquired in Lithuania than in most other Soviet republics. Nevertheless, the wait for permits could take several years. While in Lithuania, some of these Christians in transit learned the Lithuanian language, shared the gospel, and formed unobtrusive churches.²⁶⁷

By living Christ-like lives, these German believers attracted some Lithuanian people to this non-traditional expression of the Christian church and as the last German believers were leaving the Soviet Lithuania, they left a handful of Lithuanian disciples. Still they appointed a relatively new believer, Otonas Balčiūnas, to be the leader of a small underground church. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the FCC was established in Lithuania under Otonas Balčiūnas’s leadership. When describing the identity of the Free Christian Church in 1990s, Balčiūnas said:

We realized that we are an indigenous religious group. Our religious tradition goes back to the Radical Reformation, and we owe a lot to the Baptists and

²⁶⁷ David Shenk and Linford Stutzman, *Practicing Truth* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, Herald Press, 1999), 20.

Anabaptists in our way of thinking. In trying to put words to that identity, we came up with the name Free Christian Church. Freedom was a big word in that historic time and describing ourselves as Christian was essential.²⁶⁸

This Christian group for a decade was a part of Lithuanian Baptist Union. As Albertas Laužis, former president of Lithuanian Baptist Union writes in his book *Under His Wings* that for the purpose of having legal status, this Christian group became a daughter church of Klaipėda Baptist Church, and Otonas Balčiūnas officially was appointed as deacon of Klaipėda Baptist church and had an official document to lead church meetings²⁶⁹. Within the Baptist Union context Free Christian Church planted two other churches in Šilutė and in Vilnius that became a part of the Baptist Union. Artūras Rulinskas, under recommendation of Albertas Latužis, in 1998 was accepted to study in Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary. However, newly planted churches in Klaipėda, Panevėžys, and Kaunas did not see themselves as being part of the Baptist Union.

It was a conscious decision for all Free Christians churches to go their own way. It meant that three churches left the Lithuanian Baptist Union and with the remaining three joined and united into one body, Free Christian Church, leaning, learning and relying on the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition.

The newly established church was more relationally linked to the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition than consciously theological. At the beginning, there were not any intentions or vision to plant a cluster of Mennonite churches in Lithuania. The first idea

²⁶⁸ Bruce Troetschel, *Lithuania's Home Grown Christian Denomination*, International Community of Mennonite Brethren, *National Churches*.

²⁶⁹ Albertas Latužis, *Po jo sparnais*, Eglė, Klaipėda, 2009.

was to form a unique and independent church in Lithuania that borrows the best ideas and traditions from other surrounding churches. Otonas Balčiūnas said:

We continue to harbor a vision for freedom: freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom to explore and understand, and freedom in Christ. From our perspective, the freedom in Christ is the essential element. We envision many new ways in which evangelism can be accomplished. Church development, planting and nurture, along with Christian education, media, arts, and other means of communication can intensify the establishment of the Kingdom of God, its ethics and morality, among our people.²⁷⁰

The vision of a new church also included the vision for a new society. This led to ambitious attempts to foster that vision by establishing Christian organizations that would strengthen the work of evangelical churches in Lithuania. Some of those organizations succeeded like Lithuanian Christian Fund, LCC International University, Evangelical Bible Institute, and the “Good News” social center for neglected children. Some things, like planting and growing churches, discipling new leaders and church members, were and are developing very slowly.

Since 2014, the FCC belongs to the International Community of Mennonite Brethren. Now, the FCC is the youngest Mennonite Brethren Church in the global community.²⁷¹

After a quarter of a century of independence, the Free Christian Church of Lithuania, as well as many other Evangelical churches, is still searching for effective ways to prepare their leaders to minister in the congregations. Consequently, a formal local theological institution - Evangelical Bible Institute (EBI) was founded in 1999 and

²⁷⁰ Sarrah Klassen, *Lithuania Christian College, A Work in Progress* (Friesens Corporation History Book Division, Altona, Manitoba, 2001), 36.

²⁷¹ International Community of Mennonite Brethren, *National Churches*, <http://www.icomb.org/about-us/national-churches> (accessed 2016-08-03).

in the year of 2015, it has received an accreditation from Euro-Asian Accreditation Association (EAAA). Nevertheless, to foster theological education there is a shortage of academic literature in the Lithuanian language. EBI is in a continuous struggle to survive because it depends on western money and each year it gets more difficult to maintain this educational structure. Many preachers learn to preach the Word of God in their own way. At first, they serve in churches, then they begin to preach and seeing that this is their calling, and finally they get engaged in theological studies.

Also, in this fourth chapter will be presented a personal story of the Doctor of Ministry thesis researcher: Artūras Rulinskas. The things that one knows or have learned are meaningful, but sometimes experience and feelings have more meaning for decision-making than knowing something intellectually. Many preachers became preachers because they had experience. It is correct to say that personal experience is also an instrument that cultivates preachers.

The personal story is important for a few reasons. As a preacher, Artūras has been in the ministry of preaching for about two decades. Artūras belongs to the same Mennonite Brethren community as other FCC preachers. A personal story is important for understanding the context and seeing the whole picture of this thesis. Without his personal story, without an understanding of FCC preachers from the inside, the research on cultivating preachers in the FCC would not be complete. One of the goals for this thesis is to apply those lessons learned and principles discovered for cultivating a new generation of preachers in Lithuania. For this reason, the personal story of the researcher is important. And the impact of the readings and literature to his personal development is important as well.

Section 1. The Preacher's Testimony

During the last days of the Soviet Union's existence and first years of Lithuania's independence, a multiple layer change came into the country. The old communist system was collapsing and to many people a new, unknown system was emerging. In the spiritual realm, most Lithuanians suddenly remembered that they were Catholics, and so religious activities increased in the country. Many non-religious or atheistic-minded people began to discover the truths about God, the Church, the Bible, a free society, things that were forbidden in the atheistic Communist empire.

During this time, I was a student at the Pedagogical Institute (today it is Šiauliai University). Some close friends were "born again" believers and they began to attend a charismatic church that was in the process of growing. By their invitation, I also attended their church meetings a few times, but the things they talked about and the songs they sang did not make any sense to me. Seeing some practices unknown to me in this new church such as speaking in tongues and casting out demons, I thought they were dealing with some kind of psychological issues.

I grew up in a typical Soviet family. My grandmother was a Catholic, but my parents already were products of the Soviet propaganda. Our family never attended church; we did not celebrate Christian holidays (not even Christmas or Easter). We never talked about religion or about God. I honestly believed in the evolution theory and all talks about God sounded nonsense to me. At that moment, I was agreeing with Karl Marx who said: "Religion is the opium of the people."²⁷²

²⁷² <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm> (accessed 25-04-2017)

My spiritual journey began in 1992 when I graduated from the Pedagogical Institute and I was invited to play in the “Continental Singers” orchestra in Netherlands. I was playing the trombone and during my student years I played in a brass band. This was the time when the “iron wall” fell, and people of the former Soviet Union were given the freedom to travel. It was for the first time in my life when during a 6-week journey, while being away from home, that I began to think about the existence of God. I reasoned that communism probably deceived people not only politically but spiritually as well, including me.

My first encounter with God was already after the musical journey, when I returned to Lithuania. One day as I was walking on the street, suddenly I was pierced by a thought: “God is, and He is here.” I felt like he was just above me. Then another thought came: “If he is here, then I will perish.”

This moment on the street changed my life. My soul was awakened. I did not want to perish and I wanted to know more about God. On a sunny August afternoon in 1992, in the main street of Šiauliai, I began to change. A non-believer turned to God. It was for the first time in my life, at the age of 25, when by my own will I decided on a Sunday to go to a church. It was a small church near the bus station. This time the things they talked about in the church were of great interest to me. I sang the songs they were singing, and I felt that this is the right place for me to attend.

Preaching happened to me unexpectedly. After graduating from the Institute, I began to work as a third-grade primary-school teacher. At the end of the school year, in the spring, I attended a conference at Klaipėda’s Baptist Church. During this conference, a missionary preacher asked the audience, “is anyone here willing in the future to

preach?” It was the moment when I raised my hand. During this time, we read and discussed Paul’s missionary journeys from the Bible. Perhaps these stories awakened the desire in me to speak about God not only privately, but also publicly.

I had my first preaching experience when, with a team from our church, we visited a youth center in Joniškis, 40 km away from Šiauliai. We were allowed to show our program to the children. We sang songs and performed a sketch. In end, I came up to explain the Gospel and after that we had some snacks. For teaching, I used a small pamphlet with the 4 spiritual laws to explain that God loves us and that we are sinners. I explained that Jesus died for us, and that by believing in Him we will restore the relationship with God and will live in eternity. Surprisingly, for children it was an interesting lesson because they raised their hands and were asking questions. On this day my teammates from church said to me, “you have a gift of preaching and you need to keep doing that.” Similar events happened again and again: in orphanages, in profession schools, in other churches.

My preaching began to improve. I stopped using pamphlets with spiritual laws and began to write my own sermons based on stories from the Bible.

In 1995, I started studying at the Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary. In 1998, after finishing my studies, I returned to Lithuania with a vision to establish a church in Vilnius. Since then, I preach almost every Sunday.

For 19 years I have served in the pastoral and preaching ministry. I believe during this time, I have discovered my personal style of preaching and my own approach in crafting the text for a sermon. I spend a lot of time in sermon preparation and I write the whole manuscript of a sermon. The message and the text to me seems more important

than the way I deliver it. When I studied in preaching class at the seminary a professor asked us students who was our favorite preacher? I did not have an answer because I knew only one preacher in Lithuania who was my pastor, and some other visiting preachers. After this class, I was motivated to start listening to sermons and this is how I discovered C. R. Swindoll's preaching tapes. I learned from Swindoll the importance of the preparation of a sermon. Interesting sermons are well-prepared and developed sermons, with lots of Biblical, historical, spiritual and personal data. Good sermons always lead to application and decision-making. The best sermons are those that have the focus on God, and especially about Christ.

I am also very grateful for Professor Calvin Miller whose teachings, books on preaching, and mentorship have been influential to me. *The Empowered Communicator*, *The Empowered Leader*, *Marketplace Preaching*, and *Spirit, Word and Story* are books that I carried with me from Canada to Lithuania and they remind me not only of a man who taught me to preach with passion and love, but also those are the books that focus more on the edification of a preacher than on sermons.

I preach approximately 45 times per year. On some Sundays, I just sit in the audience and listen to someone else preaching. There are about ten to twelve Sundays per year when I am preaching somewhere else. In total, it would be that I preached about 855 sermons during my time in the ministry. Of course, these numbers are not very precise.

During one conference in Germany, I became inspired by the preacher, Gordon MacDonald. At that moment listening to MacDonald, I told myself and to God that I would love to be in the ministry for 40 years (a significant Biblical number). While this

is my desire, the reality can be different. At least I have a vision for my life and a plan for the next 22 years, which includes preaching. After that, at the age of 72, I can retire and be at peace.

If this will happen, then in the upcoming future I will be preaching around 990 sermons. It is even more than I have done. Today it seems to me that I am in the middle of a preaching ministry and I need help from the outside to change; to get deeper in God's word, to have more passion, to be more effective in reaching the lost and to disciple those who follow Christ. The question that is important for myself to answer is this, "what instruments help me to cultivate my preaching skills and myself as well?"

To be honest, many times I feel that I need more inspiration to continue. From my preaching experience, inspiration is the most important thing. The fire from inside is the thing that matters the most. To me personally this means that my biggest need is to be in touch with God, also it is very important to be in the right place, meeting people who have the same passion, receiving the right knowledge and doing the right things in order to continue serving my calling. By attending different conferences, listening to sermons online, reading books about preachers and preaching, I can receive such knowledge and I will be cultivated to be a better preacher. *Inspirational Preaching* is one of those books that recently I read and found a great encouragement in it. Matt Woodley, a preacher from this book claims:

When we are around inspirational preachers, we catch something from them. We catch their passion for a specific biblical text or theme. We catch their love for God. We catch a spiritual reality in their lives – namely, that they know and feel the beauty of the gospel.²⁷³

²⁷³ Larson, Craig, ed. *Inspirational Preaching* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012. Kobo E-book reader), 2.

I understand that inspiration does not come from an empty place. The instruments that cultivate a preacher, keeping up a relationship and being motivated are not far away. The hardest thing is to decide to pick them up and use them well. Someone needs to fire and to kindle the decision. All the positive and negative experiences that helped other preachers to become better men and women in God's ministry are very valuable.

Section 2. Research Findings and Observations

This section is about preachers in FCC. With the data available to me, I am trying to present a portrait of FCC preachers. As FCC is a first-generation church in Lithuania, there is a similar way in which these preachers are like the first-generation preachers. All of these preachers are "bi-vocational" pastors. They are bi-vocational because most of the free churches are small in number and they cannot provide a full-time worker's salary. Some pastors consciously have chosen to stay in the marketplace while others are working because there is no other option for them to earn a living.

Their secular types of work are very different: sales manager, engineer, owning a private business, working as a teacher and as a construction builder, theologian, and social worker. Only one of respondents from the beginning identified himself as a shepherd and a pastor and others identified themselves by the current occupation and how they make money for a living.

Three preachers, who are in the FCC ministry, are serving part-time in their church and working part-time in a secular environment. Two preachers work full-time in a secular environment and their ministry is totally voluntary. At the moment, one of

them is retired. Four preachers have College or a bachelor's degree in education. Two of them have only a high-school education. Three of them have finished theological institutions and have formal theological training. Another three have studied theology, but do not have any kind of diploma. They are the ones who have non-formal training. Three preachers are in their early 40s, two are in their 50s, and one is 60 years old. In the preaching ministry, one has been active for 24 years, others have been preaching already for 20, 19, 17, and 13 years.

Experiencing the Presence of the Lord

This question was asked to find out how the FCC preachers relate to God and in what relationship they are with Him. Are there any experiences that preachers can relate to? How they came to acknowledge God in their lives? If there are personal experiences, then of what kind are those experiences? How do these experiences relate to the preacher's everyday life?

First personal experiences

The P1 respondent²⁷⁴ answered that to him it was a process of one and half years with repentance, prayer, receiving God's grace, and converting. It was a process in which he realized God's forgiveness and His acceptance. The P2 respondent²⁷⁵ came into relationship with God after receiving a New Testament from an old lady; he started to read it and while reading the Gospel of Matthew he realized that in it is revealed the truth. There was a very big disappointment that only now he had received the truth. When

²⁷⁴ P1, Thesis interview by Artūras Rulinskas, via Skype call, 2017 January 22.

²⁷⁵ P2, Thesis interview by Artūras Rulinskas, Šiauliai, 2016 November 12.

crying, he thought of how he could establish himself in this new relationship. He thinks that it was a very personal meeting with God. Before this experience he was a Catholic. The P4 respondent²⁷⁶ had an experience and understanding that God hears and listens to him on a Sunday service during the prayer time. He has never experienced it before, but he understood that it was Jesus Christ.

Other preachers testified that to them such things as a personal experience with God have happened. Being twelve years old, P4 was praying on his knees and through the prayer he felt that he started to change. This was when the personal transformation began.²⁷⁷ P5 came to a personal devotion with God and at the same time came the desire to serve God.²⁷⁸ Another preacher was reading the Bible and by reading it he began to know God more.²⁷⁹

Current personal relationships

What about today? How do they live with this experience after few decades? For P1, God is present and very close to him even though there have been many difficult and painful days. He says that “relationship to God is constant, alive, vibrating, intensive, active and very positive.”

The P2 respondent says that in his current situation God is silent and not speaking. However, he knows that God has prepared something ahead and hopes someday again to hear his voice. Another preacher said that his current relationship is as “between father

²⁷⁶ P4, Thesis interview by Artūras Rulinskas, Riga, 2016 October 30.

²⁷⁷ P3, Thesis interview by Artūras Rulinskas, Panevėžys, 2016 October 23.

²⁷⁸ P5, Thesis interview by Artūras Rulinskas, Šiauliai, 2016 November 11.

²⁷⁹ P6, Thesis interview by Artūras Rulinskas, Aukštadvaris, 2016 November 22.

and son.” God to him is “a protector, a shepherd, a giver of simple and good things” (P4).

The P6 respondent experiences stability and peace and he knows that he is loved by God.

The other two respondents say that now it is different from what was in the beginning, and their relationship is overshadowed with a lot of responsibilities.

Observation: Experiencing the Presence of the Lord

As these preachers were asked questions about their personal experiences and is there such a thing as a current relationship with God a typical answer was – yes there were personal experiences that drew them to God; and yes, there some kind of relation today between them and the divine Trinity. As these preachers talked about these first experiences, they have talked not only with words but with body language as well. It was very clear that something significant had happened to them.

In trying to put together the pieces of the puzzle of experiencing and having a relationship to the divine, there is a very clear answer: these preachers remember when and how they entered into a new relationship and all of them are living, knowing that God is near. To them he is not a concept and not an idea, but a living being who sees, who hears, who leads, who heals, and who gives and takes away. They still are in journey of their call experiencing things that they did not expect to them to happen. They reflect their life events, sometimes doubt about their role, but knowing who they are they keep being what they were called to be.

Called to Preach

A question about the preacher’s call was asked in order to understand how they became preachers and why they chose this way. Where did the influence come from?

Called through the process

The P1 respondent says that to him it was a very natural process because the congregation that he attended practiced the principle of priesthood of believers. In a small congregation, brothers (only men) encouraged one another to share their thoughts about Holy Scripture. This was in line with the church's theological tradition and it seemed to them a natural thing to do. Preaching was a part of participating in community's life of faith. It was not an obligation but as respondent says, "naturally unavoidable".

The P2 respondent remembers that it was something that he could not avoid also. There were in congregation other three men who at the same time began to learn preaching and they preached to one another. In learning they used audio and video players; they reviewed recordings and talked about them. His first experiences of preaching were embarrassing, but as people responded and gave positive feedback, the P2 respondent realized that in this preaching God was there. When he began the studies in theology, one of the goals was to learn how to preach better.

The P3 respondent explains that this was a very difficult call that he resisted, and he did not agree with it. Simply he would not admit that he was called to be a preacher because he thought that it is a missionary's job to do it. With time and some experience, he came to the realization that God speaks through him. Finally, he had to admit that if God spoke through him then it is better to continue doing it. Then he began to prepare his sermons. It took about five years until he began to preach.

The P6 respondent reports that he did not have a calling for preaching and he did not have any kind of revelation. His pastor kept telling him to do it. He began to study in

the Evangelical Bible Institute and then he started to preach, and people were encouraging him while preaching. This calling for preaching came gradually. The main motivation was people. Personally, he did not feel a desire or a need to preach.

Called personally

The P4 respondent says that in one lesson at the church he learned about the Holy Spirit and then he prayed to the Holy Spirit. On the next day, he realized that it is not difficult to understand what is written in the Bible. It was such a gift to understand what was written there. Another occasion in his calling to preach was that he dreamed that he was standing in front of a church and preached a sermon.

He began preaching after teaching in a small group, then sharing at a prayer evening. He was also speaking in a youth meeting and one day he was invited to preach in another small church. It was somehow through the encouragement of other people.

The P5 respondent says that he knew about it that he was called to preach already in his teenage years. At a home gathering, he often assisted his home group leader. He read a lot and he knew the Bible very well. He even dared to argue with his Pentecostal denomination's bishop who did not want to baptize him until he turned the age of sixteen. Using the scriptures, he convinced the bishop to baptize him, but he could not convince him to let him participate in the Lord's Supper.

Observation: Called to Preach

There are many jobs and vocations where any person, who fits the right standard, has the required education or experience, can apply and get the desired job. Are such rules applied in preaching? Under what criteria does a person become a preacher in FCC?

From the interviews and answers that respondents answered, it looks like this criterion has a more spiritual dimension than any other occupation in the world. As we can see, out of these six preachers only one had a mystical call to preach through the dream, and another knew about his call from the time of his conversion. The other respondents became preachers because it was the practice in their church, because they preached, and people encouraged, because someone was telling them to do it, or because there was no other way.

Can these other experiences also be classified as a calling? In FCC preaching does not necessarily have any “calling” criteria. That is how preachers feel themselves. For example, one preacher commented that he thought that preaching is a thing that missionaries do. This is especially typical in Lithuanian context where the main person in a Catholic church is a priest and not a congregation. The priest serves, and the congregation receives service. It takes long time until one starts to feel personal responsibility for a certain ministry in an evangelical church. If there is teaching about the “priesthood of all believers”, then the transition to feel personal responsibility and duty is much faster. I believe that FCC preachers have similar experiences of Anabaptist preaching practices. They became preachers through dialogues and debates. In first place preaching would happen within community context when people responded, and only afterwards theological non-formal or formal studies followed.

From the respondents’ words, the congregation and individual believers were involved, by encouraging and approving the preaching of these respondents. It seems that there is such a thing as inward personal call and the outward communal call that affirms what is going on inside a particular person. If these preachers today still preach

after thirteen to twenty-four years, receiving a very small salary or not being financially rewarded at all, maybe that is a calling?

Learning to Preach

This question about a preacher's development was asked with an intention to find out what things, what influences, or what life events had helped them in their spiritual life, in their public speaking and personal communication, and in other areas.

The P1 respondent experienced his development as a preacher in two ways. One way was practice, because he had to prepare for every Sunday. Sunday service was a very special event. They (the preacher's family) had to drive 60-80 kilometers to the church meeting. There was also the responsibility not only to participate but also to share from the Word of God, and it helped to cultivate skill preparing messages for preaching.

The second way was through the inner development, because "by going deeper into the Word," says P1, "you have to let it go through you." "Preaching," he continues, "should not be declaration, but this speaking has to be understood, experienced, and comprehended. You have to be on the ground, searching the word of God and yourself." A part of his spiritual growth and development was in his studies in Moscow. He heard others preaching. However, things that shaped him as a preacher were "practicing, searching and going deeper into himself, maintaining integrity, and Scripture studying."

The P2 respondent explained that to grow in preaching, one has to practice discipline. He says that it is necessary to read the Bible. "However, as I go further," says P2, "God's word is catching me, and I cannot stop." For P2, a few aspects for developing as a preacher are encouragements from other people, their feedback and help, and

insights from his wife. She would read the manuscript of his sermon and would praise him. Then there was learning through listening to other preachers and even secular speakers. P2 also finished theological studies in Moscow. However, he could not tell that what he learned in Moscow was essential in growth of his preaching. He says that “the things that you notice, that you read, that you write, all of them matter.”

The P3 respondent developed by practicing preaching and by listening to other preachers. He likes to download sermons, to listen to other preachers, and to learn from them. P3 says that studying at LCC University has helped him a lot; there was a rhetoric class where he got the basics. In class they practiced public speaking. Translating sermons for missionaries was of good help when he started to preach. He translated around 300-500 sermons and he thinks that this left some kind of impact on him. It was already easier for him to begin to prepare his own sermons because of his experience in translating so many sermons. Later he realized that he just had to stop copying other preachers and he started developing his own preaching style.

The P4 respondent says that his spiritual leaders have helped him to develop as a preacher. He sees preaching as an explanation of Holy Scriptures. For this reason, he would read lots of commentaries and books in the process of preparation.

The P5 respondent explains that for him the time and his relationship with other people played an important role. As he matured physically, emotionally and spiritually, his attitude has changed, and his communication skills developed. There is a difference between feeling and doing. After finishing the seminary, he felt confident and thought that he can say things very well, but people could not hear him, nor could they understand his terminology. So, it was a process to lower himself down and to learn to speak in a

simple and understandable way. P5 says that “without understanding people it is difficult to say something to them.” In the end, his development as a preacher was more impacted not in homiletics class, but by being with people.

The P6 respondent says that he received a lot of help from his pastor as he was pushing him to speak publicly. His decision to study theology was a big help to develop in preaching, to gain practical and theoretical knowledge. The study time and relationship with other students impacted him mostly. A preacher has to know what to preach and has to know to whom he is preaching.

Observation: Learning to Preach

Preachers and those who are fulfilling a ministry as Jesus’ messengers, are growing and developing and learning in very different ways. There is no format that could be selected and used in offering non-formal or formal education programs in preparing preachers. Certain things are developing these preachers: the practice of their faith, life events, community, their inner spiritual situation, mentors, unexpected situations, time, etc.

As we try to reflect on the Bible, we see that there is also more than one model of spiritual growth and preaching skill development for all those who responded to God. In the New Testament, we can find the answer: The Holy Spirit comes to assist and help a person who is willing to serve and do God’s will.

In addition, the practice of preaching is also very helpful. A person who has doubts about his preaching capacity overcomes these doubts as they get more and more involved in the process of preaching.

The Biblical Characters that Shape them

The question “What Biblical examples and/or Biblical characters influenced your preaching?” was asked in order to discover what Biblical influences mostly helped FCC preachers. What Biblical characters helped FCC preachers the most in learning and teaching how to preach? The answers were that these preachers: Paul, Jesus, Peter, Timothy, Moses and Aaron, made the biggest impact for preaching.

The P1 respondent says that he is inspired by stories from the New Testament and by people of God. However, if to mention it has to be a specific person, then Paul would be an example. P1 is especially amazed by Paul, as he preached in a very difficult place, in Athens; that seeing a city full of idols he managed to say that they were godly people. Paul does it very often. In a bad, situation he sees something good and he pulls out something good where there is not much good. It was not easy for him then and it is not easy to do it in FCC.

P2 respondent compares preachers in the Old Testament. First is Moses, who has authority but is not able to speak. Second is Aaron, who is able to speak but does not have a personal invitation of God. Reflecting on these characters of Old Testament P2 says “I have a personal invitation of God to speak but not always am I able to communicate what I want to say”. By looking at the New Testament, two characters stand out to him. First is the Apostle Paul, and second is his disciple Timothy. Paul encouraged Timothy not to deny his youth. P2 says, “I came to preach in our church after a person who has been very influential and was able to preach without any notes, and some people compared me to him and told me that I am not like him.” In conclusion,

it seems that P2 relates to Moses in the Old Testament and to Timothy in the New Testament.

P3 respondent says that “The biggest impression to me is Peter’s sermon during the day of Pentecost.” He explains that it is difficult to imagine more effective preaching when thousands of people come to repentance. Also, it is needed to keep in mind that the Holy Spirit was there and that is why it was so effective. Peter was an instrument and he played his role very well. A good sermon is when someone hears a message and cannot live in the old way anymore. P3 concludes with, “Good preaching is preaching in Peter’s style.”

The other three respondents had very short but firm answers. Two of them said that they were mostly influenced by the Apostle Paul, while the remaining one (P5) said that “Jesus is the most extraordinary preacher. His preaching is the most important.” The majority of FCC preachers consider the example of Apostle Paul as the major one that impacts and influences their preaching.

Observation: The Biblical Characters that Shape Them

To say that there is one example that impacts preaching, maybe is not correct, but to say that there is someone in Scriptures who gives the most inspiration, who is a role model to whom a preacher returns in a difficult hour, probably is a good idea.

As a researcher, I was surprised that only one respondent has Jesus as his biggest inspiration when preaching. Jesus, for the sixteenth century Anabaptists and Mennonite churches, was and is the first and most important example. FCC preachers are in the most part influenced by the Apostle Paul. I wonder if this insight reflects a shift in emphasis from the Christocentric emphasis of early Anabaptists to a Pauline priority for

many missionaries coming to Lithuania. Or is it part of Baptist heritage or some other influence? However, it was good to hear that Bible heroes are an inspiration in preaching. Every preacher is coming to a preaching ministry in their own way and some, like Moses, lack self-confidence; some, like Timothy, doubt about their maturity; others are fascinated with Paul's boldness.

The Story that They Love to Tell

What is the story that FCC preachers are preaching the most? The most important themes for FCC preachers can be divided in three categories:

Preacher's relationship with Christ

"The love of God and our relationship with God;" "Turning back to God; following the Lord" - are the themes that P1 and P2 preachers are centered on.

The P4 respondent says that his main themes are "the person of Christ, character of Christ, and what Christ has done by redemption."

P6 says that his main messages are from the New Testament. For him it is important to preach "Who Jesus is and what relationship ought to be between me and Jesus?"

Christian Life

The P3 respondent explains that his themes that dominate are the "Practical life and God's presence in it." He also likes to preach "about forgiveness, about being received, about belonging and the purpose of life.

P5 says that the “Christian life” is the most important theme. He likes to tell that Christian life is not an easy one: “To be a Christian is to be in a conflict, it is going against the stream.”

Other themes that can be included in the category of the “Christian life” are social justice, taking care of the weak, and living in the middle of conflict. P4 preaches about “the character of godly people, about their faith and life, and about idols who take the place of God.”

Observation: The Story that They Love to Tell

As the question relates to the major preaching themes, the answers of FCC preachers are very united, and they are very sure what to preach. These themes are “Relationship with God, Christ, and Christian life.” These themes usually come out of reading the New Testament and they are in the center of the New Covenant. Also, it is worthwhile to notice that these are very much the Anabaptist preaching themes, because Anabaptists have put stress on reconciliation and relationship with God, on receiving new identity and living in community, on reading Scriptures and living by its’ guidance. The theme of *Christian life* is much more than Anabaptist theology, because Christian life in the twenty-first century is different than it was in the sixteenth century.

A Step Forward and a Step Backward

Preaching impacts preachers. Last year, a pastor friend traveled to visit his daughter and in the airport in London he had a heart attack. Due to people who were close to him, due to modern medicine and doctors that took care of him at the right time,

due to the mercy of God, he recovered and now he continues to serve in his church.

While being in the doctor's care, he was asked:

“Do you smoke?” asked the doctor.

“No, I never tried to smoke,” answered the pastor.

“How often do you drink alcohol?” asked the doctor again.

“I do not drink it at all,” answered the pastor.

“What do you work for living?” the doctor asked.

“I am a Baptist minister,” again answered the pastor.

“Oh. Then it is much worse than smoking and drinking,” replied the doctor to him.

Preaching is an emotional journey and stress is also present while preaching.

Some preachers experience more stress in the preparation of a sermon; others experience more stress in the delivery of a sermon. There are both positive and emotionally rewarding experiences in preaching, and there are negative and emotionally stressful experiences in preaching.

Negative Experiences of Preaching

The P1 respondent says that life experiences help you to change the way you speak. “You have to go deeper into yourself, into the teaching and your manner of speaking,” says P1. Then he tells story about someone he knows in another country who has leadership role in an evangelical organization and grew up in an evangelical church. He is the one who talks about marriage being between a woman and a man. However, his son has a boyfriend and lives with him. This man says, “he is still my son although I do not approve it.”

P1 draws the conclusion that a preacher needs to be very careful and very sensitive to the people. A preacher needs to guard his lips and the words that he says and having a friend like this you cannot speak the way you think. P1 says, “You can hold on to your opinion, maintain the same theology, but your manner of speaking is different.

Positive and negative experiences deepen and widen your manner of speaking.” His explanation is that preaching is a huge responsibility.

P2 remembers that in the beginning it was hard to hear some criticism. Critiques of the people made some wounds, but later he learned from being criticized. There is criticism because people do not understand, or they understand but do not like what you say. The good side of this criticism is that this negative experience helped him to become a better preacher and he is thankful for it. The worst thing is when there is silence.

The P3 respondent also says that criticism is not pleasant. For him it requires receiving help from God to accept the critique. He also says, “Was when I do not feel that my preaching makes any difference. When you preach, and nothing happens it becomes a negative thing.” To him, preaching is meant not to show how smart you are, but to encourage people. It is hard when there is no feedback, when people do not respond to the things you preach.

The same negative thing was reported by P4, who experiences negative feelings when he sees that people listen but do not change. P4 also noticed that negative personal problems and difficulties also impact his preaching and it became a double negative experience. He says, “When we lost a child, it made an impact on my preaching. Instead of focusing on preaching I had to reflect on myself, to try to understand my own feelings, thoughts, and where was God. It is difficult to preach about joy when I am downcast. I cannot be an actor.”

It is evident that preachers in preaching are more involved with their whole personality in authenticity, transparency and appropriate self-disclosure than with

performing well their job in making good speeches. What they experience and things they go through are part of their preaching.

Negative experiences of criticism were experienced by P5 in his earlier church where he was obligated to preach within denominational theological frames. The P6 respondent was the one who would criticize himself more than the people did. He thinks that he blamed himself “because he did not spend enough time in study and in preparing.”

Positive Experiences of Preaching

Although all preachers have talked about negative experiences, only three preachers said something that could be considered as a positive experience in preaching.

The P4 respondent says that it is good to hear words of encouragement, to see an interested audience and people who hear your words.

The P5 respondent talks with joy about his church. He says, “I can preach, and I know that there will not be any disagreements. I can preach the Word and not theology of local church.” P6 sees preaching as a positive experience because the last preached sermon motivates him to prepare a better sermon for the next time.

Observation: A Step Forward and a Step Backward

FCC preachers willingly talked about their positive and negative experiences, about their steps forward and backward. In these interviews, there was much more talk about the negative experience of preaching. Mostly negative experiences came because of people’s criticism and disagreement with what the preachers say. FCC preachers did not experience a threat to their life of persecution as it was with Jesus, Paul and the sixteenth century Anabaptists. Because of criticism preachers learn and grow. But

because of the silence, there is no change in people's lives, and so the preachers blame themselves and feel guilty.

Is Anyone There Listening to Me?

Preaching is much more than speaking to the public and passing certain information on to the others. The question that asks about preaching and the preacher's relationship to the faith community had the intention to discover whether the preacher listens to the community and responds to the needs of the people.

Discipleship

Yes, there is a mutual relationship between the preacher and the congregation. The preacher is the one who shares his knowledge of God and what he has discovered about him. The church has to be ready to hear the Word of God. An important element is that after the preacher delivers the message, he stands with the congregation and is one with them. "He and they (the congregation) have to live according the Word of God, as they understood it," says P1. In his opinion, a problem starts when there is no mutual relationship and when the church does not mature. Preaching is important, but "not the most important event in the church life," says P2. "We have to remember that there is discipleship during the week. Sunday is a mountain peak, reflection, but six days during the week are very important."

Pastoral Care

P3 explains that there has to be a context for preaching because preaching is meant to reach the needs of the people. "I often pray before preaching," says P3. "God helps me to preach what He wants to say to these people." P3 says that in order to preach

successfully there has to be a connection between the preacher and the congregation. People need to hear the Word of God and to apply this word in to their lives, but preachers usually do not know how to do it, and they cannot decide for other people.

The church where P6 served does not have a preacher at the moment. “We rely on visiting preachers, but a visiting preacher is not what the church needs,” says P6. “He does not feel the needs of the congregation; he cannot respond to the things that are happening inside of the church.”

P4 says that there is direct relationship between the preacher and the community “because you preach, and you are thinking what the needs of the people are, what direction church should move on.” To see the needs of the people, to pay attention what people want to hear and to learn about, reflecting on the questions that have been raised is necessary.

The Spiritual Authority

P3 says that in this mutual relationship between the preacher and the community, there is a question of spiritual authority: “I have to say that the authority of the preacher is the basic thing for the people who listen. If there is no respect for the preacher as for the believer, then it is difficult to listen to such a sermon.”

P5 explains that “Preaching is a time when people get inspired and corrected, and when people grow spiritually.” For him preaching is the core and the source of life. The Word of God is not preached during other aspects of church life like prayer time or meetings.

Observation: Is Anyone There Listening to Me?

Preaching is communication that can achieve its goals only within the faith community. There is more than one goal. The main tasks of preaching are discipleship, pastoral care, and spiritual authority. The preacher listens and so the community listens. The preacher listens to God and when he hears what he understands, he delivers the message to the community. The community listens to the preacher and to God. It meets for Bible studies where the believers encourage one another.

In a church where I am pastor in May 2016 we did a little research in area “what helps you to grow spiritually?” 40 members of our church marked from scale 1 to 10 the most significant things that help them to grow spiritually. The outcome of this research starting with least influence, two points, and ending with most important influence, ten points, was such: two points – meditating and thinking about spiritual experience; three points – spiritual literature and testimony of people; four points – preaching and difficult life situations; five points – serving and conferences; nine points – personal relationship with God, prayer; ten points – fellowship with believers and meeting for Bible study and reading.

According to this study in the Free Christian Church of Vilnius there are 5 other activities for believers to do in order to grow spiritually more than listening to preaching. In one way it disappoints a preacher who thinks that preaching is his most important duty to do. In another way it shows that the church is more Anabaptist and listens more to multi-voiced than mono-voiced preaching.

An audience, people in a community have to learn from a preacher, but more than this, they have to listen to God, who speaks in variety ways such as meditating on a preaching passage or praying about it which can be very unique to every believer.

Somewhere There is Someone to Help

This question had the intention to clarify where preachers find help to grow and to improve their preaching. The answers of this question will give guidance for teaching preachers and for reminding them where they can find help when they feel weak.

The Practice of Preaching

The most influential element in learning to preach and in growing as a preacher is the practice of preaching itself. More sermons make more opportunities to grow. P1 says that it is through “practice and life experiences.” Those two things are combined and interwoven into one thing all together. Preachers become better preachers because of their practice of preaching. “Here I would say that my experience helps me to grow,” added P6.

Into this journey of preaching practice also should be included as a discipline of preparation. P2 noticed “as starting the day with exercise, in a similar way one needs to start the day with prayer and reading. This is the foundation and on it everything else is built.” P3 says that practice in preaching was helping him to conquer his fear of speaking in public. “First you should be ready to not be successful. You have to try again and again. It is a blessed place in which a preacher can try more. One needs to conquer the fear of speaking in public. I was the one who felt very uncomfortable while standing up in public.”

Relationships Strengthen

The second important element in preaching is the relationships that cause preachers to do preaching. First is the relationship with God. However, before preparing himself for preaching one needs to prepare himself as a preacher. “There is the relationship with God and we need to grow in this relationship,” says P2. As preachers in FCC speak of reading the scriptures, they speak of reading the scriptures not as a text book for the sermons but as a way to come to God.

In the category of relationships many reported that relationships with other people are very important. “In every one of them is a part of God. And you recognize something of him in other people,” says P2. As in the previous part, preachers explained that without the faith community, preaching does not have a goal to them; the relationship with people motivates preachers to prepare sermons that would reach people’s ears.

Self-Evaluation

Most preachers reported that they know they have been evaluated by people in the congregation, and many said that feedback is important in their preaching growth. As preachers hear and receive feedback they have the opportunity to come to self-evaluation. “Feedback is best when it comes from friends, who can say what they did not understand or what was unclear. Then you are motivated to re-think it,” explains P1. Also, P6 says: “I am talking to people and I hear what people experience.”

Feedback can be constructive and can be non-constructive and emotional. If feedback is “I did not like your sermon” or “you were not inspired”, then it is aimed to hurt preacher and is driven more by the emotion of a listener than the reason. Preachers need to hear constructive feedback in order to know where and how to improve.

For myself, I have used “a sermon evaluation form” to receive feedback and gave it to the elders of our church to fill it. Similar forms are used in seminaries in preaching classes. However, I have found it useful in growing as a preacher myself. I often hear helpful feedback from my own wife.

As preachers preach they also are longing to hear what God is saying to them through other people. Most of FCC preachers said that they are listening to other preachers. The most common form to hear from other preachers is to download a sermon from the internet. P3 says that for growing, “listening to the other preachers helps.” “I watch preachers and I am trying to learn from those I like, who touch me, who change my way of thinking, and life.” Likewise, P4 tells of his practice: “I like to listen to the other preachers, thinking about how they look and what was their sermon preached for. I also evaluate myself and think about what kind of sermons I need to preach.” P6 says says that in the same way, he likes to read sermons.

Non-Formal Education

There are more ways in which a preacher finds a reason to grow. This would be a non-formal education. Those that are curious are learning extra insights that can be illustrative and down to earth, simple to understand.

P5 emphasized his practice of reading biographies, history, watching documentary movies. “These things help me. I like to see documentary, different movies, what is happening in other countries. I use those examples. Churches have to see more of what is happening in the world. That brings life, clarity, makes a sermon more authentic.”

Only P6 emphasized the value of non-formal teaching, as he says “I participate in seminars and there are many things where we can find a way to grow. That helps me achieve a better result.”

P1 uses what has worked for other preachers: “It is good to learn to preach by using sermons of other preachers. The composer Wagner learned composition by rewriting music of other composers. Take a sermon, translate it, and let it go through you. If you for some reason do not have your own word this might be very useful for the congregation.”

Observation: Somewhere there is someone to help

Most of the preachers learned to preach from someone who taught them or showed them the way to this ministry. Actually, there are many more things and many more people involved in giving support and causing a preacher's growth than it might appear from the first look at a preacher. FCC preachers discerned four practices that are helping them to grow in preaching. It seems that the help that a preacher gets in improving his sermons are the things that he gathers as he goes and picks up from different places. The first help is in the practice of preaching. A preacher improves by preaching. Second, the relationship with someone who loves and supports the preacher is very important. The third is self-evaluation. It is vital and necessary to keep on preaching. Fourth, non-formal training, participation in seminars, reading books, and listening to other preachers is a part of a preacher's life.

The Preacher and His Burden

And how does it feel for a preacher to preach a sermon and to see no result? To see that it did not reach any ears, did not touch any heart, did not open sight for any eye, did not produce a result that the preacher was aiming for. A preacher through his life is carrying his burden – preaching. If he or she faithfully goes with preaching to the end, along side with people thanking him or her and respecting for explaining to them Word of God, he or she will experience criticism and rejection; he or she might be humiliated, despised. FCC preachers identified two separate parts of a preacher’s burden, which hinder more effective preaching in his community.

His People

One pole of an FCC preacher’s burden is the people to whom they are preaching. It is not as bad as it sounds, because preaching is the people’s business. It is an area where preachers feel most sensitive. The Gospels also tell us that Jesus came to “the lost sheep of Israel,” but in the end these lost sheep of Israel stamped him down. The Bible also speaks about people being deaf to hear what is being told, about being blind to see what is shown, and not receptive to what is given to them.

Here are some factors about people that hinder more influential preaching in the community. P1 says, “People get used to sermons and do not want to change. People get used to good things; they are not ready to listen, and it is a negative factor. You cannot put more water into full glasses.” The perspective that people come to receive and do not want to give is disappointing to preachers. They want people already to be givers and they are aiming for this goal. “Congregation. Why did they come to church today? Did they come to receive spiritual services, to listen and not to act? People of faith have to

come with right attitude,” says P2. “If I were to see a bigger response of the congregation, maybe there would be a bigger desire to preach more effectively, there would be more reason to think. And another thing is if I could see my fruits of the preaching,” explains P4.

P5 is saying “As Jesus was telling a parable about the ground and the seeds, he showed that in many cases the ground is responsible for how it receives the seed. People are different, they do not attend regularly, and it is difficult to say something that would make an impact on them.” He continues, “I am affected by many factors like my children or a cleaned and prepared church.”

To the theme of people hindering more influential preaching, P2 says: “Sunday service is a team work.” “There are other people are also involved”. Many other things on Sunday service depend on the teamwork as a whole and not on a single preacher. If the team is ready to serve and to give its best, then the preacher’s sermons are more effective, and together they feed people with a spiritual food.

His commitment

Another pole of the preacher’s burden is the preacher’s commitment to preach. People look at the preachers and evaluate everything that is about them. P1 explains that “In our case we are outcasts in our society and people do not trust us. It is difficult to say something when they do not trust, when they look at you like at strange people. Those are culture and social barriers.” Often preachers feel being inadequate, foreign, and non-traditional and to earn trust it takes another effort to represent themselves.

Poor preparation is another weight to his commitment to preach. P2 says: “When I require too little of myself, when I did not do something where I could do more, when

did I not pray, did not read the Bible, when you are not ready.” There is a feeling of guilt when you stand before the congregation and when you know that you could do better and did not prepare it as well as you could. However, most of these FCC preachers are working part-time and others are only volunteers. Time is a serious concern for them. P3 adds, “My problem is that I cannot give enough time to prepare well for preaching. If I had more time for sermons, I would be more influential. My limitations or maybe the lack of talent does not allow me to be an influential preacher.”

There is one more burden in commitment to preach that has been mentioned, and it is personal sin. P5 says “The sin lives in me.” There is this need that a preacher would prepare himself for the preaching by taking care of his soul with his inner attitudes and finding the right motivation to preach. P3’s explanation very well fits this burden – the sin category as he says: “there is the lack of inspiration, because not every Sunday I have the inspiration to preach.”

Observation: The Preacher and His Burden

The things that hinder a preacher to be a more influential in preaching are a surprise. The preachers identified two areas – the people and themselves. The surprise is that the people who hinder preaching are not unchurched unbelievers nor angry persecutors, but usually are regular church attendees.

Another surprise was that preachers condemn themselves, feel inadequate and guilty for preaching sermons that do not make big difference.

Preaching is a public ministry and preachers are experiencing the pressure of being in public, the pressure of what and how they speak. An audience in a global world can easily compare well-known preachers and these bi-vocational preachers. Preachers

also compare themselves to these well-known preachers and in one way they are learning from them, but in another way they themselves feel inadequate preachers, because often they cannot preach like them. Often it is because they have the limitation of time, too many things going on in their life with their main or secondary work, personal issues where they also struggle with sin, their own slow spiritual growth and not hearing from God, and lack of understanding about the Bible or theology.

Development of Disciples

The Willow Creek church pastor Bill Hybels likes to say in leadership conferences that a leader produces leaders. In his book *Courageous Leadership*, he writes: “I think leaders are at their very best when they are raising up leaders around them. Or put another way, leaders are at their best when they are creating a leadership culture.”²⁸⁰ In a similar way, it is possible to say that preachers are at their best as they inspire other disciples to become preachers in order to preach the Good News of Jesus.

Not Too Many to Choose From

One of six preachers was active in preparing other preachers. P1 says: “Yes.” “We even started a Bible Institute in 1991. Before it, just as we began our church, five of us would meet together. We prepared for preaching, we would preach, and then we would talk about it, and afterward we would go for a run.”

²⁸⁰ Bill Hybels. *Courageous Leadership*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan. Zondervan.2002), 122.

The other five preachers said that they were not involved directly in preparing preachers. They would encourage (P2), they would help upon being asked for help (P4), they would give constructive criticism (P3), but would not teach others how to preach.

Spiritually Mature

The reason why it is difficult for preachers to develop other people as preachers was their need of spiritually mature people. “Preaching is a very personal thing and very much connected to what you know, what you understand about life, how it works, and how you live with what you preach,” says P1. His point of view is that preachers are people who are ready to take to the task of preaching; they are mature enough to start speaking to other people. It is not easy to find such devoted people for this ministry. Only one preacher saw himself inadequate to teach others for preaching (P6). Other preachers say that it is a thing of God (P5). P3 explains that “because the most difficult thing is to motivate another person. It requires that God would be involved.” He decided this thing for himself by his personal development as a preacher. “My experience was to copy and imitate what I have heard,” says P4.

Led by the Holy Spirit to Preaching

P4 explains that “preaching and teaching are spiritual gifts which we get through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is possible to learn to preach, to learn rhetoric, but in the long run rhetoric will not help you continue to be a preacher. A heavy load of work, being busy and you see that you need the help of Holy Spirit that the message would flow from the heart.” The same things, P3 suggested, considering: “I would advise a person to see whether he has a desire, whether he received a gift of Holy Spirit.” “If not, then

better to search for the gifts he did receive and to serve according to them. I would say – pray. But if one received a gift he will find mentors to help him to be a better preacher.”

It seems that FCC preachers are not in hurry to teach preachers. Rather it is the work of the Holy Spirit. They cannot tell whether this or that person is meant to be a preacher and they suggest waiting and seeing, and to become “sure of his calling to preach,” says P2. P6 gives this advice, “My advice for someone would be not to become a preacher, unless there is a very clear call of God.”

Who is willing to be a Learner and a Student?

There are a few ways that preachers are learning, but all of these ways fit into two ways of learning: non-formal and formal training. P2 is talking about it because formal studies had an impact on him and by looking at other preachers he says, “I would encourage finishing formal education. Not all are able to finish formal education, but if it is possible then it is better. There are things in the Bible that we need to know, and we need to know which tools to use.”

A non-formal way of learning for P2 was a mentor relationship with a pastor who was before him, and with a missionary who served in his church. “It is good to have a special relationship with someone whom I can trust, who could tell me, make a comment. It is important for a preacher. This was very positive when more experienced people are helping you.” P6 says that “one needs to study and to learn. I would suggest taking formal studies. That is a huge responsibility.”

Having the Attitudes to Live What They Preach

Being a preacher is an identity one has and not an occupation. It is much more difficult to develop a disciple who develops right attitudes than who learns how to speak

well. There is probably no other occupation that would be so much demanding of spiritual maturity, using the communication skills, understanding people, knowing the Bible, being in a relationship with God, and living according to Biblical standards of ethical behavior.

In this way P2 encourages “to practice and to live what is being preached, to know the Bible, to look and examine yourself.” Preaching requires attitudes that at first are formed within the preacher because of his relationship with God and his spiritual maturity and desire to fulfill his task in which he is gifted.

There is a way to become a better communicator, to practice humility and patience, and cultivating Christ-like character traits to grow in the fruit of the Spirit. About it P5 says, “I bring the Word of God so that it would be understood, and it helps to develop people.”

The preacher’s attitude is not to have a focus on himself but on the listener, and his communication is best understood not by his performance but by what people hear. P1 says: “You cannot ask people if I spoke well. It is better to ask if they understood what I spoke about.”

Observation: Disciples on Demand

The human race grows because it has the ability given by God to reproduce and to multiply. Churches grow because people are drawn to Christ, and in Him people find hope. We see that in the story of Old Testament the prophet Elijah appointed Elisha to be his successor. The Apostle Paul taught and trained Timothy, Peter, John and Mark. Likewise, one could argue that preachers should produce preachers and one preacher would inspire other people to come to the ministry of preaching.

Questions that were asked about the development of other preachers and difficulties that relate to this development were surprising as well and did not match the Biblical and Anabaptist worldview. FCC preachers tend not train their church members with a gift for preaching to become preachers. They wait for supernatural intervention. This in a way is understood because of their own experience, when they themselves have experienced a supernatural drawing and leading to become preachers.

In one there is a reason why they do not feel responsible for discipling preachers, and it is because there is the Evangelical Bible Institute. A person who is interested to grow in understanding how to preach ought to take classes in the Bible Institute. There has to be a strong desire to learn and then to teach others. It is a right perspective. Why would someone who is not willing to learn begin to teach others? From the other side somebody needs to push a believer and encourage. A preacher is the best person to encourage another person to begin to preach. A preacher can encourage, can correct and can be a decisive person who motivates someone to step out into ministry of preaching.

The preachers interviewed seem to be waiting for a spiritually mature believer, who would be led by the Holy Spirit to preaching, that he would be willing to be a learner. However, the Bible seems to teach that leaders must teach other men and women, so that the church equips for all the ministries entrusted to them by God.

CHAPTER 6

Cultivating Preachers Through a Multi-module Course

Multiple things are involved in cultivating a preacher of God's Word. Is a preacher's understanding about God, their knowledge of community, people, and culture that impacts them and values by which they are guided.

This chapter will build on the work that was done in previous chapters. It will be a short draft for a study guide, which will include the main points and the conclusion of the whole research. Here will be presented the steps that will be helpful to develop preachers who were called by God to do such a task from an Anabaptist perspective.

The aim is to cultivate and equip preachers. This goal will be reached by preparation of a teaching course for preachers. The course is designed in such a way that it could be used for formal and non-formal education. For non-formal education, the course could be taught in local churches to local church ministry leaders that serve in different areas of the church body and especially to the local preachers. When the course is taught in a non-formal format, in a mentor-type relationship, students will not be obligated to fulfill the requirements of an accredited course, but they would be encouraged and recommended to do so.

For formal education, the course would be a two-hour credit course for a bachelor's degree, according to the standards of the Euro-Asian Accreditation Association. It will consist of 10 seminars, each 50-minutes long, reading material (a selective book about preachers or about preaching, and theological articles), writing papers, and listening to sermons. One paper would count as a book report, a sermon

report, and the topic of the main paper will be discussed with each student. In between seminars, there will be scheduled coffee/tea breaks.

The best format for the part-time or bivocational nature of the students would be to teach the course in two or in four sections that are separated by one month so that students could do their home assignments. Here is suggested a plan for the course to be taught in two sections, each extending to two days (Friday evening and Saturday morning). There are possible different variations for the teaching schedule arrangements of the course.

This chapter will include suggested material that will guide the growing preacher on what to read, what to study, and what to practice becoming a better preacher.

Section 1. Course Syllabus

Course title: Preaching Today: Restaurants, cooks, recipes, food, and customers in a fast-food society, or preachers and preaching for the post-modern European world.

Course dates: September – December; or February – May.

Class location: Šiauliai, Žeimių g. 7, Lithuania

Instructor name: Artūras Rulinskas, MDiv

Contact information:

Email: arturas@lkb.lt

Phone: +370 676 34740

1. Course description

The course “Preaching Today: Restaurants, cooks, recipes, food, and customers in a fast-food society, or preachers and preaching for the post-modern European world” will focus on the biblical, theological, ecclesiological, and experiential rationale for the purpose to help the student to discern and to develop their capacity for preaching. The analogy of food, cooks, recipes will be used as helpful audio-visual aids to better understand what it

means to be a preacher and what is preaching in this post-modern world society. The course follows the flow of this DMin thesis and the outcomes of the research of preachers' interviews and the book reviews will be incorporated into the sections of the course.

Students will be introduced to the communication of God's message in the settings of the Old and the New Testament. Then there will be teaching about the challenges that Anabaptists faced at the time of the Radical Reformation and what they have developed out of their faith practice.

Students will explore a Trinitarian approach to the communication of the Gospel. They will reflect on the experiences, motives, styles, and preaching of different Biblical, historical and contemporary persons. Students will have an opportunity to share their own experiences that relate to the preaching and communication of God's Word in our contemporary, post-modern society. In a class they will receive affirmation and encouragement. Classmates will be free to express their opinion concerning their further involvement in preaching.

There are few reasons why the required and recommended textbooks for the course are all in English. First, there are no available books on preaching and about preachers in Lithuanian language that would fit the theme of the course. Second, it is a normal practice for students in Lithuanian public Universities to read English or Russian language text books. Third, if there will be opportunity to translate, Evangelical Bible Institute might initiate the translation of Marlene Kropf's book, *Preparing Sunday Dinner: A Collaborative Approach to Worship and Preaching*, for the purposes to use this book as a text book in the course of preparing preachers.

2. Course Objectives

After completion of this course, the student:

- a. Will understand the Biblical theology of what it means to be a Biblical preacher.
- b. Will be familiar with the involvement of the Trinity in the preacher's development and preaching.
- c. Will understand what it is to be a preacher in the Anabaptist and Free Church tradition.
- d. Will reflect contemporary challenges for preachers and their preaching.
- e. Will apply current homiletic theories to the Lithuanian evangelical and Free Christian Church context.
- f. Will understand more of the preacher's role for discipleship in the community context.
- g. Will synthesize spiritual, intellectual, and practical preachers' movements as the listener, and the messenger.

3. Course assignments

1. Students will be asked actively to participate in all 10 seminars of the course. To participate in discussion; to ask questions; to share personal experiences. Pre-course assignment: to prepare and be ready to share about their call to preaching and serving God. For participation in all lectures - 20%
2. To listen to 2 sermons, and to write reviews of each sermon: an outline, the main thought, the theme of the sermon, scripture that has been used, illustrations, and ideas that students thought God was speaking to them. 1000 words for both reviews. 20%

3. To read the required textbooks and articles and to write a 1000-word book report.

20%

4. To write a paper about contemporary challenges in preaching God's word, and in the current circumstances developing as His preacher. 2500 words. 40%.

4. Required textbooks

1. David B. Greiser and Michael A. King. *Anabaptist Preaching*. Telford, Pennsylvania: Cascadia Publishing House, 2003.

2. Kropf, Marlene. *Preparing Sunday Dinner: A Collaborative Approach to Worship and Preaching*. Herald Press, Scottsdale, PA, 2005. Kindle Edition.

Recommended textbooks (in English)

- Murray, Stuart and Sian. *Multi-voiced church*, Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2012. (for objectives c, d, e)
- Calvin Miller, *Preaching*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2006. (for objectives a, d, e, j)
- Larson, Craig, ed. *Inspirational Preaching*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012. (for objectives a, d, i, j)
- Vibert, Simon. *Excellence in Preaching*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011. (for objectives a, j)
- Brueggemann, Walter. *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination: Preaching an Emancipating Word*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012. (for objectives b, j)

Section 2. Course schedule

The course will begin with an introduction and sharing of the spiritual backgrounds of the students. Then this will be picked up by reflecting on forms of Biblical theology about our relational and communicative God as He is revealed in chosen Old and New Testament texts, and by reflecting on them, we will continue learning about their influence for preachers and preaching.

In the course, there is a big part which will bring students to a consideration of the historical synopsis of the sixteenth century Anabaptist preachers' lives, their thoughts, their motives, their understanding of Scripture, and their preaching. We will look at further theological Anabaptist developments that have been preached throughout establishment of the church and explore how this theological position is impacting Mennonite church preachers and their preaching today.

The last two seminars of the course will be focused on the post-modern world and current challenges in the preacher's life. These seminars will be more of a reflection of previous seminars in the current context, dealing with issues that preachers face and are struggling with today. To be a preacher there is a certain price to pay and there are certain blessings that preachers obtain.

Session One. Invited to the dinner. The Chef's special treat.

Aim: This session will aim to discuss basic understandings of how the Lord God revealed Himself and how He communicated about Himself to Moses and how Moses communicated about Him to Israelite people. God reveals Himself in unpredictable situations and the way He communicates about Himself and wants His chosen people to communicate about Him, is a challenging thing to learn.

Outcome: By the end of the class students will have a clearer idea that God speaks, that He is interested in relationship with people and He is acting on their behalf. Students are encouraged to consider and to reflect on their spiritual experiences and the things they mean to them.

Format: Lecture and class discussion.

Key Question: How do we know that God revealed Himself to us? What did He tell us?

Questions & answers.

Session Two: A picnic on the Mountain. There was more than could be eaten.

Aim: This session will aim to discuss basic understandings on how the Lord God spoke and acted so that the Israelite people could understand Him. The Decalogue and Covenant will be examined as visible and written reminders of God's spoken words. The role of community in hearing in receiving God's words and his message will also be discussed.

Outcome: By the end of the class the students will have a clearer idea that God speaks, that He is interested in relationship with people, He is acting on their behalf and He gives means to know His will. The students also will have heard and learned that God speaks not for someone's individual needs but for the cause of community.

Format: Lecture and class discussion.

Key Question: How do we understand what God spoke to us, and what he communicated?

Session Three: The dinner that got cold. Frustrations in feeding the spoiled family.

Aim: This session will examine God's call and task for Jeremiah's prophetic ministry, his life, his spiritual journey, his relationship to the common people, the religious elite and the political leaders. During this session, there will be a focus on a call and testing of this call.

Outcome: Students will come to an understanding that the call is challenging his/her life and offers outstanding opportunities to someone who responds to God's call. After this session, students will have more questions than answers. They will have been encouraged to deal with their own role in silence and private meeting with God.

Format: Lecture and discussion. Short student presentations of the pre-course required assignment.

Key Question: How do I know that I am called to do the task, and to be the person God wants me to be?

Session Four: Essential food for the desert. The Bread and the Water is enough.

Aim: This session will outline the main characteristics and aspects that distinguished Jesus from the rest of the people and that showed Him being supreme, divine. He is the major cause to be proclaimed.

We will examine two public sermons of Jesus. One was preached in the synagogue in Capernaum, the other was preached in the Temple in Jerusalem. Both sermons made their point and people reacted to them.

Outcome: Students will reconsider Jesus as the main goal of Christian preaching.

Students are challenged to live a life in relationship with Jesus and to know Him by following Him, so that they could preach about Him as they know Him personally.

Format: Lecture and discussion.

Key Question: Is it possible to preach about Jesus without following Him and knowing Him personally?

Session Five: The aroma of the divine banquet. A fortaste of the best food.

Aim: Additionally, to the example of Jesus for the biblical rationale of preachers and preaching, one should consider the impact of the Holy Spirit. Without the influence of the Holy Spirit even the best preacher will not be able to preach to those ears that hear words but are not able to hear the Word of God.

Outcome: Students examine how the Apostle John viewed the Holy Spirit impacting persons in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They see that Jesus continues to speak to His followers through the Spirit. They learn that the Holy Spirit is looking for preachers who want to preach and let the Holy Spirit speak through them. Preparing oneself for preaching is as important as preparing a sermon.

Format: Lecture and discussion.

Key Question: What role does the Holy Spirit play in a preacher's life?

Session Six: New forms of hospitality: starting to cook together.

Aim: The Anabaptist story begins in the 16th century with disciples of the Zurich reformer, Zwingli. Through reading of the Scriptures, Anabaptists came to a spiritual

condition and desire to live their lives in those ways that are taught in Scriptures. They did not want to reform the existing church; they wanted to become like a like first-century church. They began to pray and confess their sins, yielded to God, took believers' baptism and followed Christ. The emphasis of conversion, baptism, and Bible reading is essential in the Anabaptist tradition for every believer, especially for those who preach and teach the Word of God.

Outcome: By the end of the session, students will engage with the key themes of Anabaptist preaching with emphasis on the Anabaptist preaching about conversion and baptism and Bible reading.

Format: Short student presentations, lecture and discussion

Key Question: How does the Anabaptist emphasis on conversion, baptism, and Bible reading speak to today's church life?

Session Seven: New forms of hospitality: Restoring old recipes of the essential dish.

Aim: To show preachers that discipleship in the New Covenant community begins with Jesus. He is the Teacher. Jesus' followers were his disciples who learned the truth about the Kingdom of God and lived as citizens of the Kingdom in this world. Anabaptists picked up these forgotten concepts of faith community and discipleship in the 16th century and proclaimed them throughout Europe. For an Anabaptist to be a believer was to follow Christ and to be his disciple.

Outcome: Students will have engaged with the key themes of Anabaptist preaching with emphasis on teachings about the church and discipleship; about learning together, about the discipline in the church, and about doing what is right when following Jesus.

Format: Short student presentations, lecture and discussion.

Key Question: How does the Anabaptist emphasis on discipleship speak to today's church life in general and my church experience in particular?

Session Eight: Challenges in a fast-food world: Risky mission to feed the hungry.

Aim: To teach the preacher's aim to preach to the lives of people, and to think about their life reflecting the two main commands of Christ. One of them is to make disciples of all people (Mt. 28:19), and another is to love our neighbors as ourselves (Lk. 10:27).

Anabaptists saw Europe as their mission field and went to proclaim and evangelize their neighbors within their country and beyond. They lived and taught these commandments.

Outcome: Students will have reflected and understood why Anabaptists were a challenge to Christendom with their preaching themes of missions and peace. They will understand the Biblical, theological and practical basis for the peace mission worldview.

Format: Short student presentation, lecture and discussion.

Key Question: How do you see the relevance of the message of peace and mission of the 16th century Anabaptists for the 21st century world?

Session Nine: Challenges in a fast-food world: Prioritizing quality over quantity.

Aim: To talk about the preacher's challenge in the post-modern, post-Christian, post-communist world. To look deeper at one's own soul, one's own call, one's preparation for being a preacher and one's relationships.

Outcome: Students will become engaged and talk about their personal struggles in knowing what their call is, and how to live with such a call. They will understand the

challenges of “post” times and will see their present reality that they properly can respond to their call only in the context of a faith community.

Format: Short student presentation, lecture and discussion.

Key Question: What is it to be a preacher in a society where people are turning away from organized religion and seeking individual expressions of their spirituality?

Session Ten: Challenges in a fast-food world: Hard toil is worth the cost.

Aim: To motivate students to respond to God’s call to them; to follow Jesus faithfully, by enduring difficulties, hardships, rejection, poverty; to preach His message of hope and salvation with their life and their words.

Outcome: Students are challenged to submit and respond positively to the ministry that God has called them to do. They are warned about the results of their disobedience and rejection of His call, and about blessings of their obedience. They are warned of difficulties that they will face because of their service to Christ and of their rewards.

Format: Lecture and discussion and special commissioning prayer.

Key Question: What things cause us to respond in fear and to be the instrument of God in the things He wants to do through us? And what empowers us to want to be used by God and be His instrument in achieving His goals and doing His tasks?

Conclusion

The primary purpose for this thesis was through research to examine the current situation about preachers and preaching in Lithuanian Free Christian Church, to provide pastors with resources, to present a rationale for preaching, to show examples of long-standing preaching, to motivate improvement for the existing and future preachers. What can I say about what was written in these almost two hundred pages about cultivating preachers?

First, God is supreme, and he does speak to people. He revealed himself to people and he put his perspective in one book – The Bible. He uses faithful people to speak his will and his words to those whom he loves and for whom he cares.

Second, the church is entrusted with the Word of God. Through the flow of history, the church was changing, adapting to the cultures, challenging authorities, being quiet and silent or screaming out loud and working with force. My study theme leaned on the Anabaptist church, and it also (as churches of other Christian faith expressions), has been entrusted with a prophetic voice to the people of its own generation.

Third, preachers of this world of the 21st century are God's voices. People need God despite the high secularism or neo-spiritualism and God sends his preachers to speak. Preachers are learning to preach and teach; they're writing books and leading seminars. Their voices and opinions have influenced the researcher of this thesis, who is a preacher himself as well. Some churches are dying, being closed, etc.

Four, the interviews with Lithuanian pastors and preachers revealed that preaching is learned not so much in the classroom but in the pulpit standing in front of people, who have multiple needs and by personal relationship with God. The classroom, teachers and

mentors, help preachers to prepare, supports them to be strong, encourages them not to give up, enlightens them to understand the task, but the best teachers for a preacher is God and an audience. The role of the church and of elders and more experienced pastors is to encourage preachers to spend more time with God and before an audience.

Fifth, I am convinced through my experience, through the experience of other pastors, through the tradition of the Anabaptist church preachers and through the high demands of contemporary society that preaching must be taught. Preaching can be taught in a non-formal way and taught in Christian education institutions.

Also, I am convinced that today's world needs more preachers who are faithful and obedient to God. I believe that in the areas of preparing preachers and teaching about preaching it would be a necessary for churches of Lithuanian context to write material and prepare a textbook, to see how female preachers could be better incorporated into preaching ministry, and how to cultivate preachers who have no theological education background.

The Free Christian Church began at the age of changes in Lithuania, when the Soviet system collapsed. Today it is again a time of change. As society is experiencing its changes, so the church has willingly to think about changing ways of communicating the good news of Christ. Christendom of the western world is collapsing (or has already collapsed) and this new emerging society is swimming in streams of postmodernity and no one knows the direction to go. Churches and preachers need to hear the voice of God to not get lost and to find a way to peace and hope. The task of today's preachers is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit for the glory of the Father and for peace in the world.

Appendices

Guiding questions for the interview

“The development of a preacher in the Free Christian Church of Lithuania”

Introduction

1. What is your present occupation?
2. What is your education background?
3. How long have you been in the preaching ministry?
4. How old are you?

For going deeper into discussion about the preacher’s ministry

5. How would you describe your first *personal experiences* of being *called* into a personal relationship with God?
6. How do you describe your current *relationship* between you and the Lord?
7. How would you describe your *call* to the ministry of preaching in a local church?
8. Based on your experience, what shaped your *development as a preacher*?
9. What Biblical examples and/or Biblical characters *influenced your preaching*?
10. What are your most important preaching *themes*?
11. How have you been influenced by positive and negative *experiences* concerning the *ministry* of preaching?
12. How do you view connections between preaching and the *context of your faith community*?
13. What helps you to *grow in your preaching*?

Conclusion and recommendations

14. What *hinders* more influential *preaching* in your local community?
15. Have you ever helped someone *to develop as a preacher* in FCC?
16. What was the most difficult element in helping others *to develop as a preacher*?
17. What attitudes or actions would you recommend for someone who is on his/her way *to develop as a preacher*?

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This form is to be read aloud by the interviewer prior to conducting interviews. One copy is to be left with the participant and one copy is to be signed and kept by the interviewer.

Date of REB Approval: _____

Title of the Study: *The development of a preacher in the Free Christian Church of Lithuania.*

Principal Investigator: Artūras Rulinskas, Doctor of Ministry Student, Acadia Divinity College, Acadia University.

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. John McNally, Acadia Divinity College, Acadia University.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to explore *The Development of a Preacher in the Free Christian Church of Lithuania*. I am trying to learn more about the local preacher's development.

Procedure: You will be asked several questions in an oral interview. The interview may be conducted in person at a location of your choice in the Lithuanian language and/or by the free services of Skype. You will be asked some general questions about your preaching ministry. I will make an audio recording of the interview. The recordings and their transcripts will be stored on my password-protected personal computer and will be submitted to my thesis supervisor when requested. They will be destroyed after two years from the defense of the thesis.

Debriefing: Participants will be involved in a collaborative process with the researcher up until the thesis dissertation is in its final draft. Participants will be provided with their interview transcripts and will be asked to provide feedback to what is in the transcripts.

Time required: The interview will take approximately 60-90 minutes of your time and 15-20 minutes for debriefing.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may still refuse to answer any question that you do not wish to answer. You may also withdraw from the study by written request no longer than one week after the conducted interview.

Risks: There are no known risks and no safety issues associated with this interview.

Benefits: While there is no guaranteed benefit, it is possible that you will enjoy sharing your answers to these questions or that you will find the conversation meaningful. This study is intended to benefit the faith community by enlivening our discourse on the preacher's development.

Compensation: Participants will not receive compensation for participation in this research.

Confidentiality/Anonymity: Your name and your identity will be kept confidential in all of the reporting and/or writing related to this study. I will be the only person present for the interview and the only person who listens to the recordings. When I write the ethnography, I will use pseudonyms for all participants. For the online interview we will

use Skype services. Please use your private (not workplace) electronic device.

Otherwise, you ought to know that your employer may have a legal right to access any information you send using employer-owned equipment.

Deception: Deception will not be exercised in this research. Participants will be informed of the objectives of the study at the onset of the investigation.

Sharing the results: I plan to construct a written account of what I learned – based on these interviews together with my reading and historical research. This document will be submitted to my research supervisor at the end of the term. I hope that I will finish it by December 31, 2016. Once this dissertation thesis is completed, it is a public document and is available through the Library and Archives of Canada.

I also plan as I finish the thesis project to share what I learned from this study with the Free Christian Church leadership. Portions of the dissertation thesis may be printed and made available to the members. In sharing the thesis project results, the pseudonyms will be continued.

Before you sign: By signing below, you are agreeing to an audio recorded interview for this research study. Be sure that any questions you may have are answered to your satisfaction. By consenting, participants do not waive any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm. If you agree to participate in this study, a copy of this document will be given to you. Your participation is very important to me. Should you like to request any further information please feel free to contact me either by e-mail (arturas@lkb.lt) or by telephone (+370 676 34740). For any questions with respect to the supervision of this research project please contact: Dr. John McNally (john.mcnally@acadiu.ca).

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board at Acadia University. If there are any questions regarding ethical issues, please contact Dr. Stephen Maitzen (smaitzen@acadiu.ca), Chair of the Research Ethics Board. I would be grateful if you would sign this form to acknowledge that you understand the contents and that you provide your consent to participate in this research study.

Participant's Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date Signed:

Researcher's Name: Artūras Rulinskas Signature: _____ Date Signed:

LETTER OF INVITATION

Letter of Invitation to Participants

Dear _____,

To complete the requirements of my DMIN program at Acadia University, I will be conducting a research project entitled: *Development of a Preacher in the Lithuanian Free Christian Church*.

I am writing in the hope that you will consider becoming a participant in this study and will share your personal story with me. I am looking to conduct an interview lasting for 60 to 90 minutes.

This research, under the supervision of Dr. John McNally, is designed to explore how preachers can be developed in Lithuanian Free Christian Churches. You have been identified as someone who could provide valuable insight for future preacher's development.

If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, a consent form has been attached to provide a further explanation of your rights as a research participant. If you agree to participate, please reply via email and I will send you the full details of the study and start to discuss when would be a convenient time for the interview. Also, if you have any questions or concerns regarding this research project, feel free to e-mail or call me.

Thank you for any consideration given to this matter.

Sincerely, Artūras Rulinskas

Time schedule for the course

Preaching Today: Restaurants, cooks, recipes, food, and customers in a fast-food society, or preachers and preaching for the post-modern European world.

Date and time	Sessions	Home assignments
Friday: 18:30 – 19:20 19:30 – 20:20	Session I and II – YHWH. Self-revelation in Ex 3 and Ex 19-24. He is the relational God who reveals Himself and loves to communicate.	
Saturday: 9:00 – 9:50 10:00 – 10:50 11:00 – 11:50	Session III – Prophets. Jeremiah. The preacher who is called to “pluck down and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.” Session IV – Jesus. The Word. The Life. The Light. The Bread. The Water. Session V – Holy Spirit. Paraclete: One called alongside. To convince, to guide, to reveal, to testify Christ.	1) To listen to 2 sermons. 1000 words for both reviews. 20% 2) To read a selected book and write a 1000-word book report. 20% 3) To write a paper about contemporary challenges in preaching God’s word and in current circumstances developing as His preacher. 2500 words. 40%.
Friday: 18:30 – 19:20 19:30 – 20:20	Session VI – Anabaptist preachers and preaching themes: Conversion and Baptism. Bible through Jesus. Session VII – Anabaptist preachers and preaching themes: Faith Community and Discipleship.	

<p>Saturday: 9:00 – 9:50</p> <p>10:00 – 10:50</p> <p>11:00 – 11:50</p>	<p>Session VIII – Anabaptist preachers and preaching themes: Missions and Peacemaking.</p> <p>Session IX – The preacher’s challenge in the post-modern world: the determining call; self-preparation for preaching; being mentored and mentoring in preaching.</p> <p>Session X – The preacher’s challenge in the post-modern world: the preacher’s cross; the preacher’s reward. Review of two contemporary preaching books.</p>	<p>To present to the course instructor home assignments No. 1 and 2.</p> <p>Home assignment No. 3 due is one month after last course session.</p>
--	--	---

Sermon evaluation form

Date: _____ Title: _____

Name, last name: _____

Thank you for your willingness to fill this evaluation form. By evaluating today's sermon you will give a good opportunity to improve your pastor. **Your evaluation is confidential.**

Please, evaluate a sermon according these 8 categories. As you put a mark, please write down your remarks.

1 = Excellent; 2 = Good; 3 = Average; 4 = Poor;

1. Biblical	<i>It is clear that the sermon was based on Scripture.</i>
1 2 3 4 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
What was passage of Scripture? _____	
Have you heard a Biblical idea?	
2. Clear	<i>The sermon had a main thought and it was easy to follow it.</i>
1 2 3 4 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Write down a main thought in a such way as you understood it:	
3. Inspirational	<i>The preacher was inspired and he caught me to listen to the sermon.</i>
1 2 3 4 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Comments:	
4. Authentic	<i>The preacher was speaking from his heart and his Christian conviction.</i>
1 2 3 4 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Comments:	
5. Pastoral	<i>The preacher demonstrated pastoral sensitivity.</i>
1 2 3 4 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Comments:	

6. Contextual				<i>The sermon was practical and matched my life challenges.</i>
1	2	3	4	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Comments:				
7. Redeeming				<i>The sermon communicated the Good News of the Gospel.</i>
1	2	3	4	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Was there a hope in this message, have you heard Good News?				
8. Changing life				<i>The sermon encouraged and strengthened my faith and desire to life in obedience to God's will.</i>
1	2	3	4	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Was there one thing, which inspired you or invited you to make a life changing decision?				

More comments (if there are):

(Sermon evaluation form was developed in consultation with Dr. Thomas Boone and his evaluation form during a Doctoral Directed Study course: “Principles and Practices of Expository Preaching: Lessons for the Lithuanian Context” (DMIN 8513) taken January – April 2015)

Bibliography

Books

- Achtemeier, Elisabeth. *Preaching Hard Texts of the Old Testament*. Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendricson Publishers, 1998.
- Barclay, Williams. *The Gospel of John, vol 1., The Daily Study Bible*. Edinburg, The Saint Andrew Press, 1985.
- Bauckham, Richard. *Bible and Mission*. Grand Rapids, Peternoster Press, Baker Academic, 2003.
- Baumann, Daniel J. *An Introduction to Contemporary Preaching*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978.
- Beasley-Murray, George R. *John. Word Biblical Commentary*. Waco, Texas, Word Books, 1987.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1963.
- Bosh, David J. *Transforming Mission*. New York, Maryknoll, Orbis books, 2005.
- Brant, Jo-Anna A. *John*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Academic, 2011.
- Bruce, F.F. *Hard Sayings of Jesus*. Downers Grove, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 1983.
- Bruckner, James K. *The International Biblical Commentary. Exodus*. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *The Word Militant*. Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2007.
- _____. *Like Fire in the Bones*. Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2006.
- _____. *The Practice of Prophetic Imagination*. Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2012.
- _____. *Finally Comes the Poet*. Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1989.
- Childs, Brevard S. *Exodus*. London, SCM Press LTD, 1991.
- Cole, Alan. *Exodus*. Downers Grove, Il, Inter-Varsity Press, 1973.
- Davis, Earl. C. *Life in the Spirit*, Layman's Library of Christian Doctrine. Nashville, Tennessee, Broadman Press, 1986.
- Douglas, D. J. *The New Bible Dictionary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967.
- Durham, John I. *Word Biblical Commentary. Exodus*. Waco, Texas, Word Books, 1987.
- English, Donald. *The Message of Mark*. Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1992.
- Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Books, 2003.
- Estep, William R. *The Anabaptist Story*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975.

- Evans, Craig A. *Jesus and His World, the Archaeological Evidence*. Louisville, Kentucky, Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.
- Flick, Uwe. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London, Sage publications, 2006.
- Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New Brunswick and London, Aldine Transaction, 2016.
- Gonzalez, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity*. Volume 2. HarperSanFrancisco, 1985.
- Greiser, David B. and Michael A. King, eds. *Anabaptist Preaching*. Telford, Pennsylvania, Cascadia Publishing House, 2003.
- Hamilton, Victor R. *Handbook on the Pentateuch*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1996.
- Hartley, John E. *Genesis, New International Biblical Commentary*. Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendricson Publishers, 2008.
- Hartshorn, Leo. *Interpretation and preaching as communal and dialogical practices*, Lewiston-Queenston-Lampeter, The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006.
- Hauerwas, Stanley. *Where Resident Aliens Live*. Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1996.
- Huey, F.B.Jr. *The New American Commentary, Jeremiah, Lamentations*. Nashville, Tennessee, Broadman Press, 1993.
- Hyatt, J.R. *The New Century Bible Commentary. Exodus*. London, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1983.
- Hybells, Bill. *Courageous Leadership*. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Zondervan.2002.
- Jeschke, Marlin. *Believers Baptism for Children of the Church*. Scottdale, Pennsylvania, Herald Press, 1983.
- Jones, Keith. *A Believing Church*. Great Britain, GEM Publishing Company, 1998.
- Kaiser, Walter C.Jr.. *Toward an Old Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1991.
- Kasdorf, Hans. *It's Sunrise in World Mission*. Pacific Printing Press Fresno, CA, 1984.
- Keener, Craig S. *The Gospel of John, Vol. I*. Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers, 2010.
- _____. *The Gospel of John, Volume II*. Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers, 2003.
- Kidner, Derek. *The Bible Speaks Today. The Message of Jeremiah*. Downer's Grove, Illinois, Inter Varsity Press, 1999.
- Kirk, J. Andrew. *What is Mission?* Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2000.
- Klassen, Sarrah. *Lithuania Christian College, A Work in Progress*. Altona, Manitoba, Friesens Corporation History Book Division, 2001.

- Krabill James R. and David W. Shenk. *Jesus Matters*. Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, Herald Press, 2009.
- Kropf, Marlene. *Preparing Sunday Dinner: A Collaborative Approach to Worship and Preaching*. Scottsdale, PA, Herald Press, 2005. Kindle Edition.
- Kuen, Alfred. *Tarnystės Bažnyčioje*. Lietuvos Krikščioniškas Fondas, 2005.
- Lapp, John A. and Arnold Snyder, eds., *Testing Faith and Tradition*. Intercourse, PA, Good Books, 2000.
- Larson, Craig. *Inspirational Preaching*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012.
- LaSor, William Sanford. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Rapids, Michigan, 1996.
- Latūžis, Albertas. *Po jo sparnais*, Eglė, Klaipėda, 2009.
- Lederach, Paul M. *A Third Way*. Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, Herald Press, 1980.
- Longman III, Tremper. *New International Biblical Commentary. Jeremiah, Lamentations*. Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendricson Publishers, 2009.
- Martens, Elmer A. *God's Design*. Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Book House, 1990.
- Martens, Elmer A. and Peter J. Klassen, eds., *Knowing and Living your Faith, A Study of the Confession of Faith*. Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, Kindred Productions, 2008.
- McHugh, John F. *John 1-4*. New York, T&T Clark International, 2009.
- Miller, Calvin. *Spirit, Word, and Story*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Books, 1996.
- _____. *The Empowered Communicator*. Nashville, Tennessee, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994.
- _____. *Preaching*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Books, 2006.
- Milne, Bruce. *The Bible Speaks Today. The Message of John*. London, Inter-Varsity Press, 2000.
- Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John. The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans Publishing, 1995)
- Murray, Stuart. *Naked Anabaptist*. Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, Herald Press, 2010.
- _____. *Post-Christendom*. Great Britain, Glasgow, Paternoster Press, 2004.
- Murray, Stuart and Sian. *Multi-Voiced Church*, Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2012.
- Nelson, Gary V. *Borderland Churches*. St. Louis, Missouri, Chalice Press, 2008.
- Olson, Roger E. & Christopher A. Hall, *The Trinity*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002.
- Packer, J.I. *Concise Theology*. Wheaton, Illinois, Tyndaly House Publishers, 1993.
- Peskett, Howard & Vinoth Ramachandrea. *The Message of Mission*. Downers Grove, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press, 2009.

- Redekop, Benjamin W. and Calvin W. Redekop, eds., *Power, Authority and Anabaptist Tradition*. Baltimore, USA, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.
- Smith, Gordon T. *The Voice of Jesus*. Downers Grove, Illinois, IVP Books, 2003.
- Sanders, J. Oswald. *The Holy Spirit and His Gifts*. London, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1970.
- Stott, John W. *The Cross of Christ*. Downers Grove, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 1986.
- Snyder, Arnold. *Following in the Footsteps of Christ*. Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 2004.
- _____. *Anabaptist History and Theology*. Kitchener, ON, Pandora Press, 1995.
- Sensing, Tim. *Qualitative Research, A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*. Wipf & Stock, an Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011.
- Sider, Ronald J. *Christ and Violence*. Eugene OR, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001.
- Simons, Menno. *The Complete Works of Menno Simons, Volume I*. Grand Rapids, Christian Classics Ethereal Library.
- Shenk, David W. and Linford Stutzman. *Practicing Truth*. Scottdale, Pennsylvania, Herald Press, 1999.
- Shenk, Wilbert R. *Anabaptism and Mission*. Kitchener, Ontario, Herald Press, 1984.
- Tasker, R.V.G. *John. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.
- Tenney, Merrill G. *John: The Gospel of Belief*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans Publishing, 1997.
- Tizon, Al. *Transformation after Lausanne: Radical Evangelical Mission in Global-Local Perspective*. Wiph and Stock, 2008.
- Toews, John A. *A History of Mennonite Brethren Church: Pilgrims and Pioneers*. Hillsboro, Kansas, Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1975.
- Vibert, Simon. *Excellence in Preaching*. Downers Grove, InterVarsity, 2011.
- Volf, Miroslav. *Exclusion & Embrace*. Nashville, Abingdom Press, 1996.
- Ward, Wayne E. *The Holy Spirit, Layman's Libraray of Christian Doctrine*. Nashville, Tennessee, Broadman Press, 1987.
- Wenger, C. *The Family of Faith*. Scottdale, PA, Herald Press, 1981.
- Wiens, Victor. *The Church in Mission*. Winnipeg, Kindred Productions, MB, 2015.
- Wilkinson, Bruce and Kenneth Boa, eds. *Talk through the Old Testament* (Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983.
- Wright, Christopher J.H. *The Mission of God*. Nottingham, England Ineter-Varsity Press, 2011.
- Yoder, John Howard. *The Politics of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994.

_____. *The Priestly Kingdom*. Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 2001.

Articles

- Becker, Palmer. "What is an Anabaptist Christian?" Revised edition. *Missio Dei*, Number 18.
- Bender, Harold. "Anabaptist Vision".
- Dintaman, Stephen F. "The Spiritual Poverty of Anabaptist Vision". *Mennonite Brethren Herald* /6, 1993 March 5.
- Hayyahad, Serek. "Rule of the Community," *Manual of Discipline*.
- Ray Harms-Wiebe, journal "Renewing Identity Mission", eds. Abe J. Dueck, Bruce L. Guenther, and Doug Heidebrecht. Winnipeg, MB, Kindred Productions, 2011.
- Sargent, Benjamin. "Biblical Hermeneutics and the Zurich Reformation", *Evangelical Quarterly* 86.4. 2014.
- Stallman, Bob. "Exodus and Work." *Theology of Work Project*, December 18, 2012.
- Thiesen, Arden. "Didaskalia", Fall 2003.
- Troetschel, Bruce. "Lithuania's Home-Grown Christian Denomination", International Community of Mennonite Brethren, *National Churches*.

Web pages

- Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. <http://gameo.org>, accessed 25-07-2016
- International Community of Mennonite Brethren. <http://www.icomb.org>, accessed 25-04-2016
- Marxists Internet Archive. <https://www.marxists.org>, accessed 25-04-2017
- The Gospel Coalition blog. <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org>, accessed 12-05-2017
- Preaching, Leading the Church, Proclaiming the Word. <https://www.preaching.com>, accessed 25-05-2017.
- Donatas Glodenis, Svarbiausių religinių krypčių Lietuvoje statistika: 1999 duomenys. <https://religija.lt/straipsniai/tyrimai-analize-nuomones/svarbiausiu-religiniu-krypciu-lietuvoje-statistika-1999-m-duomenys>, accessed 2018-01-13
- The Sermon. <http://www.thesermon.co.uk>, accessed 08-05-2017
- Theology of work project. <http://www.theologyofwork.org>, accessed 15-05-2017