

# Inculturation Expository Preaching as a Paradigm for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christian Ministry in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** The 21<sup>st</sup> Christian ministry is bombarded with myriads of challenges. This is a century that has a lot of issues which the word of God must address. Unfortunately, the 21<sup>st</sup> century church in Nigeria is faced with superficial, shallow and lopsided messages resulting in spiritual dwarfism of members. Even though there is geometrical growth of church, there is no corresponding growth in moral rectitude. The society is filled with nominal Christians who at the experience of least temptation from the devil fall into defeat. Expository messages that would result in producing strong believers are scarce on most pulpits. There is the need for a paradigm shift from traditional topical preaching for more in-depth expository preaching. Expository preaching needs to be inculturated in order to minister to the needs of Nigerians. The inculturation expository preaching is the preaching that addresses the socio-cultural factors of the Nigerians without compromising the revealed biblical truth. The work employed historical method to execute its thesis. It examined the meaning of inculturation expository preaching, the interplay of hermeneutics and exegesis, assumptions expositor work with in inculturation expository preaching, characteristics of inculturation expository preaching, qualities of inculturation expository preaching, four kinds of expository preaching, benefits of inculturation expository preaching, interplay of expository preaching and socio-cultural factor, practical guidelines for inculturation expository preaching and summary, conclusion and recommendations.

**Keywords:** culture, inculturation, expository, preaching, 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian ministry, paradigm, Nigeria.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian ministry is faced with myriads of challenges. In the contemporary church, correct biblical preaching should be such that will meet the spiritual needs/requirements of the entire populace. Biblical preaching's authenticity is significantly tarnished by today's preachers. In Nigeria today, the communicators of God's word are being more concerned with personal relevance than God's revelation. It should be noted that unmistakably the Scripture requires a proclamation of the Word focusing on God's will and mankind's obligation to obey. With believers wholly committed to God's Word, the expository method commends itself as preaching that is true to the Bible. This method presupposes an exegetical process to extract the God-intended meaning of Scripture and an explanation of that meaning in a contemporary understandable way. The biblical essence and apostolic spirit of expository preaching needs to be recaptured as the trained ministers or preachers of the Word are fully committed to "preaching the Word" today. The message must reflect and take into consideration the socio-cultural contexts of the hearers.

It suffices to know that the Scripture is originally written in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic by different writers who represented a variety of cultures differ from the contemporary time. The preacher and interpreter of the word must endeavour to bridge the gulf created with the cultural elements of the contemporary time. Culture plays significant role in interpreting the scripture. God's revelation of word came within the cultural milieu of its writers and original audiences. It is therefore incumbent upon the interpreter of the word today in Nigeria to enter into "a cross-cultural communication of the Bible with the people"<sup>1</sup> in order to effectively unfold the word, that is, the message of the Bible.

The goal of Christian preaching is nothing less than showcasing the glory of God in the Christlikeness of his people. The dominant source of Christian understanding of God and His requirements and instructions for life is the Bible; it may be deemed necessary and obvious that expository preaching should essentially be life applied. The biblical basis for expository preaching can be found in many places in the Bible. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is perhaps the most important, for it states that all Scripture is God-breathed, which means that the Bible is actually God's words. The phrase breathed out is also a link to the Holy Spirit. This shows a link between the work of God's Spirit, and the work of God's Word. This verse also goes on to explain that Scripture when applied and obeyed is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. The implication of this is that the Bible is not theoretical, but practical in its application. Finally, it states that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. This has been claimed to show the sufficiency of scripture. This point toward that the Scripture is all that a Christian needs to understand his/her faith and how to live his/her life. Any form of preaching that ignores that intended purpose and design of God falls short of the divine plan. This can be expressed in another way, of what significance or does it matter that one possesses an inerrant text without dealing with the basic phenomena of communication, examples, words, sentences, grammar, morphology, syntax, etc.? In case one fails to clarify all of these, then why bother oneself preaching it? All of these must be put into consideration in attempting to engage in inculturation expository preaching.

It is in this view that Walter Kaiser pointedly analyses the current anaemic state of the church, which is due to the inadequate flock-feeding being rendered because of the absence of expository preaching. It is no secret that the contemporary Church is not at all in a good state of health in many places of the world. She has been languishing because she has been fed with "junk food." The church is being fed with all kinds of artificial preservatives and all sorts of unnatural substitutes that are inadequate to keep them spiritually healthy. As a result, theological and Biblical malnutrition has afflicted the very generation that has taken giant steps to make sure its physical health is not damaged by using foods or products that are hazardous or otherwise harmful to their physical bodies. Simultaneously, there is a worldwide spiritual famine resulting from the meagre presence of any genuine interpretation and publication of the Word of God. The prophecy of Amos (8:11) immediately comes into the mind and consequently, the society continues to run wild and this goes almost unabated in most quarters of the Church.<sup>2</sup> The church seems not to be winning the battle of soul winning-cum-sustainability resulting in church members' continuous living a riotous wild living. There seems virtually to be no difference between the lifestyle of church people and non-church members. The church is not shining as light in order to dispel the gross darkness covering the world and sweetening the bitterness being experienced by the people of the world. The antidote to these menace is sound biblical exposure of the Word of God as inculturation expository preaching exemplified.

The cure for the contemporary blunder in the area of preaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian ministry in Nigeria, especially when it comes to the issue of the message/sermon being affective is inculturation expository preaching. The mandate given to the preacher is very germane and crystal clear. Inculturation expository preaching is a term and technique that refers to the proclamation of the content of the Bible as it appears in the text, which stands in putting into consideration the socio-cultural context of the hearers, an emphasis on application to the hearers. This expository method of preaching is favoured among those who believe that the Bible is the very inerrant word of God and thus worthy of being presented in its purest essence, rather than modifying the message to match the characteristics of the audience (see 2 Tim. 4:3). Inculturation expository preaching is the declarative genre in which inerrancy finds its logical expression and that in which the church has its life and power. This can be stated simply, inerrancy demands exposition as the only method of preaching that preserves the purity of Scripture and accomplishes the purpose for which God gave His Word to mankind meeting their needs by putting their socio-cultural context into consideration.

Preaching appears in the Bible as a relaying of what God has said about Himself and His doings. It is about men in relation to Him, plus a pressing of His commands, promises, warnings, and assurances, with a view to winning the hearer or hearers ... to a positive response.<sup>3</sup> The only logical response to inerrant Scripture, then, is to preach it expositional. By *expositional*, it means preaching in such a way that the meaning of the Bible passage is presented *entirely* and *exactly* as it was intended by God. Expository preaching, therefore, is the proclamation of the truth of God's word as mediated through the preacher.

## 2. DEFINING INCULTURATION EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Preaching can be divided into three types: topical, textual, and expositional. Topical messages usually combine a series of Bible verses that loosely connect with a theme. Textual preaching uses a short text or passage that generally serves as a gateway into whatever subject the preacher chooses to address. Neither the topical nor the textual method represents a serious effort to interpret, understand, explain, or apply God's truth in the context of the Scripture(s) used.

Haddon W. Robinson quipped that expository preaching carries the best force of divine authority. It has in its backing the power of the living God. He defined expository preaching as "Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers."<sup>4</sup>

Expositional preaching focuses predominantly on the text(s) under consideration along with its (their) context(s).<sup>5</sup> Exposition normally concentrates on a single text of Scripture, but it is sometimes not oblivious of possible thematic/theological consideration. Also, it puts into consideration a historical/biographical discourse to be expositional in nature. An exposition preaching may treat any length of passage. One way to clarify expository preaching is to identify what it is not:<sup>6</sup>

1. Expository preaching is not running a commentary from word to word and verse to verse without unity, outline, and pervasive drive. This is in sharp contrast to muddling up the passage as it is being experienced among some preachers especially those who are not trained but preached each time from Genesis to Revelation.
2. Expository preaching is not making rambling, incoherent, inconsequential comments and offhand remarks about a passage without a background of thorough exegesis done in a logical order. It is not about being eloquent as some motivational speakers do.
3. Expository preaching is not a mass of disconnected, disjointed suggestions and inferences based on the superficial meaning of a passage. It is not running a commentary that cannot be sustained by an in-depth-and-in breadth study of the text.
4. Expository preaching cannot be a pure exegesis, no matter how scholarly it is presented, sounded or seemed, if it lacks a theme, thesis, outline and development.
5. Expository preaching is not a mere structural outline of a passage with a few supporting comments, but without supporting with other rhetorical and sermonic elements.
6. Expository preaching is not a topical oration using scattered parts of the passage, but omitting discussion of other equally important parts.
7. Expository preaching is not a conglomeration or chopped-up collection of grammatical findings and quotations from commentaries without a recourse into fusing the same into a smooth, flowing, interesting, and compelling message.
8. Expository preaching is not a Sunday School-lesson type of discussion that has an outline of the contents, informality, and fervency, but lacks sermonic structure and rhetorical ingredients. This is because expository preaching goes beyond the Sunday School-lesson type of discussion.
9. Expository preaching is not a Bible reading that links a number of scattered passages that are treated as a common theme for Bible reading fails to handle any of the passages in question or treatment in a thorough, grammatical, and contextual manner.
10. Expository preaching is not an ordinary devotional or prayer meeting talk that combines running commentary, rambling remarks, disconnected suggestions, and personal reactions into a semi-inspirational discussion, but lacks the benefit of the basic exegetical-contextual study and persuasive elements. Expository preaching goes beyond all these.

It is important to consider the English word group "expose, exposition, expositor, expository." According to Webster, an exposition is a discourse to convey information or explain what is difficult to understand.<sup>7</sup> Expository preaching requires that an expositor must be someone who applies and explains the Scripture by laying open the text to public view in order to set forth its meaning, takes time to explain the difficult portion of the scripture in order to understand, and make appropriate application.

Wayne McDill says the word exposition is from the Latin, *expositio*, meaning "a setting forth, narration, or display."<sup>8</sup> Applying this to preaching, the word has come to mean the setting forth of the biblical passage and giving proper explanation of the message of the biblical text. In expository preaching the sermon is designed to communicate what the text says to the original recipients and including its meaning for the contemporary audience.

Inculturation expository preaching is the exposition, or comprehensive explanation, of the Scripture within the sociocultural milieu of the people. That is, inculturation expository preaching presents the meaning and intent of a biblical text, providing commentary and examples to make the passage clear and understandable within the sociocultural milieu of the target audience. The word *exposition* is related to the word *expose* - the expository preacher's goal is simply to expose the meaning of the Bible, verse by verse. In other words, inculturation expository preaching is more or less contextualised exposition of the scripture without compromising the revealed biblical truth.

Inculturation expository preaching takes care of what may be feared as a result of eloquent presentation that normal expository preaching may portend or present. Grant R. Osborne observed that people may go away impressed by the depth of learning demonstrated and their lives remaining untouched with ordinary expository preaching.<sup>9</sup> The relevance of inculturation expository preaching is seen when the socio-cultural context is adequately considered.

As a method, inculturation expository preaching differs from topical preaching and textual preaching. To prepare a topical sermon, the preacher starts with a topic and then finds a relevant passage in the Bible that addresses that topic. For example, for the chosen topic of "Laziness," the preacher might refer to Proverbs 15:19 and 18:9 and touch on Romans 12:11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:10. It suffices to note that none of the passages is studied in depth; instead, each is used to support the theme in consideration.

In a textual sermon, the preacher uses a particular text to make his/her point without examining the original intent of that text. For example, it is possible to use Isaiah 66:7-13 to preach on motherhood. It should be noted that motherhood is only peripheral in that text, which is a mere illustration of the motherhood's theme. The passage is about the restoration of Israel during the Millennial Kingdom. This should be glaringly noted in both topical and textual sermons, the Bible passage being used is a support material for the chosen topic. However, in expository sermons, the Bible passage is the topic while the support materials are used to explain and clarify it.

To prepare an expository sermon, the preacher starts with a passage of Scripture and then studies the grammar, the context, and the historical setting of that passage in order to understand the author's intent. In other words, the expositor is also an exegete - one who analyses the text carefully and objectively. Once the preacher understands the meaning of the passage, he then crafts a sermon to explain and apply it, which result in expository preaching.

The spirit of expository preaching is exemplified in Nehemiah 8:8 - and they read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading. Paul in his valedictory sermon to the Ephesian's elders quipped: "Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God" (Acts 20:26-27, NIV).

A particular example is also seen in Jesus' expounding of Isaiah 61:1-2 in the synagogue (see Luke 4:16-22). He later gave a thematic exposition of Himself to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:27, 32, 44-47). Philip in Acts 8:27-35 expounded Isaiah 53:7-8 for the Ethiopian eunuch. Stephen preached a historical/biographical expository sermon to the Jews before he was stoned (Acts 7:2-53).

### 3. THE INTERPLAY OF HERMENEUTICS AND EXEGESIS

The need for accurate interpretation calls for an interaction between hermeneutics and exegesis. These are two interrelated terms that have different meanings. Hermeneutics is the art and science of the correct interpretation of the Bible. Hermeneutics as a science enunciates principles, investigates the laws of thought and language, and classifies its facts and results. More so, as a science, it is guided by set of principles or laws. As an art, it teaches what application these principles should have, and establishes their soundness by showing their practical value in the elucidation of the more difficult aspects of interpretation. The art of hermeneutics thus cultivates and establishes a valid procedure of interpretation. Science is governed by set of rules and laws, and what are called 'scientific laws' and 'laws of nature' are really divine laws created by the Governor and Sustainer of the universe - the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a special application of the general science of linguistics and meaning. It seeks to formulate those particular rules which pertain to the special factors connected with the Bible. Hermeneutics is a science in that it can determine certain principles for discovering the meaning of a document, and in that these principles are not a mere list of rules but bear organic connection to each other. It is also an art because principles or rules can never be applied mechanically but involves the skill (*techn*) of the interpreter.<sup>10</sup>

It is necessary that exegesis must flow from a proper hermeneutic. The duo has a symbiotic relationship, Bernard Ramm observes that hermeneutics, stands in the same relationship to exegesis that a rule-book stands to a game. The rule-book is written in terms of reflection, analysis, and experience. The game is played by concrete actualization of the rules. The rules are not the game, and the game is meaningless without the rules. Hermeneutics proper is not exegesis, but exegesis is applied hermeneutics.<sup>11</sup> Exegesis can now be defined as the skilful application of sound hermeneutical principles to the Biblical text in the original language with a view to understanding and declaring the author's intended meaning both to the immediate and subsequent audiences. In tandem, hermeneutics and exegesis focus on the Biblical text to determine what it said and what it meant originally.<sup>12</sup> Thus, exegesis in its broadest sense will include the various disciplines of literary criticism, historical studies, grammatical exegesis, historical theology, biblical theology and systematic theology. Proper exegesis will tell the student what the text says and what the text means, guiding him/her to make a proper personal application of it. Interpretation of Scripture is the cornerstone not only of the entire sermon preparation process, but also of the preacher's life as he/she cannot sermonize in vacuum. The preacher draws from his/her presupposition pool, which is all-involving, all-encompassing, all-embracing and all-inclusive.

#### **4. ASSUMPTIONS EXPOSITOR WORK WITH IN INCULTURATION EXPOSITORY PREACHING**

A sermon is limited by the text that is in the consideration. Every word from the pulpit should amplify, elaborate on, or illustrate the text in consideration. This is with a view towards clarity. The primary function of a sermon is to present the text. While inculturation exposition is not the only valid mode of preaching, it is the best for teaching the plain sense of the Bible, especially bringing application within the cultural milieu of the target audience. Expositors usually approach Scripture with these assumptions:

1. The Bible is God's Word. Since every word of God is pure and true (Psalm 12:6; 19:9; 119:140), it follows then that every word deserves proper and adequate examination and understanding bearing in mind the necessity of consideration of the issue of contextualisation, that is, due consideration of the sociocultural milieu of the target audience.
2. Men and women need divine wisdom in order to gain proper understanding of the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:12-16), which can be done with reference to the sociocultural milieu of the target audience.
3. The preacher is subject to the text, not the other way around. Scripture is the authority, and its message must be presented honestly, apart from personal bias. However, it should be borne in mind that the passage must be people applied. Hence, the need to interpret within the sociocultural context of the target audience.
4. The preacher's job is to clarify the text and call for a corresponding response from his hearers. Inculturation expository preaching should meet the need of the people and not to galvanize people's emotion, sentimental or do showmanship but must be people needs meeting compliant.

An expositor cares little if his/her audience says, "What a great sermon!" or "What an entertaining speaker!" What he/she truly wants the listeners to say is, "Now I know what that passage means," or "I better understand who God is and what He requires of me."<sup>13</sup>

#### **5. CHARACTERISTICS OF INCULTURATION EXPOSITORY PREACHING**

Inculturation expository preaching is essential in the life of the church and should be the normative way in which sermons should be preached in the 21<sup>st</sup> century African Christian church. Authentic inculturation expository preaching is marked by three distinct characteristics: authority, reverence, and centrality.

1. Inculturation expository preaching is authoritative because it stands upon the very authority of the Bible as the word of God even though it puts into the consideration the sociocultural milieu of the people.
2. Such preaching requires and reinforces a sense of reverent expectation on the part of God's people as their felt needs are considered.
3. Finally, inculturation expository preaching demands the central place in Christian worship and is to be respected as the event through which the living God speaks to his people as it sets to consider their felt needs and should lead into the transformation of lives.

### Qualities of Inculturation Expository Preaching<sup>14</sup>

Here are seven qualities of authentic expository preaching gleaned from definitions of various writers through the generations that can be borrowed and applied to inculturation expository preaching. These are:

1. In inculturation expository preaching the preacher's first aim is to discover the text writer's original intended theological meaning - The preachers tend to search the Bible for a sermon. A program of inculturation expository preaching calls for the preacher to aim for a clear understanding of the text writer's meaning. Only out of that theological message can he/she properly preach an inculturation expository sermon that will be people's applied.
2. Inculturation expository preaching is that in which the preacher seeks to let the text speak again through the sermon with the same theological message considering the sociocultural factors of the target audience - God had intentionally declared the original message. This is the same message that he now wants to be preached again. This universal and timeless message clothed in the historical garb of the original writing is the message the preacher is to declare to the contemporary audience. He/she interprets that same truth from the text to his/her target audience putting into consideration their sociocultural factors.
3. The preacher of inculturation expository sermons discovers the meaning of the text through a careful exegetical analysis of the text in all its particulars - The expository preacher comes to the text like a detective or adventurer of precious treasure. He studies it for every clue to the meaning. The clues in the text are the words of the text writer. It is well known what he/she intended to say by what he wrote, but the details can easily be overlooked to the casual observer. The expositor will then look carefully at every detail for what it originally indicates about the writer's message.
4. Inculturation expository preaching calls for careful consideration of the contexts in which the text was originally written and apply it to the target audience - Interpreting a text calls for a serious look at the literary context, the chapters and verses before and after the text, as well as the other writing of the author and the entire canon. Beyond the historical context of the original writing, including the local culture, politics, economic conditions, and other such factors. The original setting of the text should not only shapes the message but takes part in it.
5. An inculturation expository sermon must be organized with due consideration of the structure and genre of the selected passage - Basically the text writer's treatment of his/her subject sets the pattern for the preacher's sermon structure. The type of literature the text represents should affect the preacher's sermon design as well. When preaching a narrative text, it is well to always tell the story even though much more story telling should be done. The purpose of exhortative texts and teaching texts should be reflected in the purpose of the sermon.
6. The inculturation expository preacher should seek to influence the audience through the use of common rhetorical elements for persuasion - By definition a sermon is a persuasive speech. The preacher's aim is to persuade the audience with the truth of his/her message and what they should do about it. Persuasion is normally done by explaining, illustrating, arguing, and applying. These elements provide a balance for supporting material for sermon ideas and allow the preacher to expose the text meaning for the contemporary audience considering the target audience's sociocultural factors.
7. Inculturation expository preaching aims for a response of faith and obedience to the biblical truth on the part of the audience - The overarching aim of preaching is to call for a faith response in the hearer. The text writers believed what they wrote and communicated it in order that others might believe and obey. The preacher keeps this faith aim in mind from the first look at the text to the final design of his/her sermon. The sermon should be God-centred, Christocentric and people applied in order to point the hearer to the trustworthy object of faith.

### Four Kinds of Expository Preaching:

Ed Stetzer propounded and expounded these four kinds of expository preaching. There are many different kinds of expositional preaching. The four most common are: verse-by-verse, thematic, narrative, and topical.<sup>15</sup>

#### Verse-by-verse preaching:

Verse-by-verse preaching is the systematic reading and explanation of a biblical text. It involves a unified book of Scripture and its piece-by-piece analysis.

#### Thematic expository (or doctrinal) preaching:

Thematic preaching is an excellent form for preaching Bible doctrine. The speaker focuses on different or everyday topics by expounding a specific biblical text. The pastor can focus on Bible sayings on any relevant subject by a careful study and exposition of relevant biblical passages.

Thematic expository preaching generally appears in a sermon series over several weeks and introduces many Scriptures focused on the same theme. Thematic messages may include as many as 10 or 12 Scripture passages in each sermon. Since the Bible tends to provide teachings on themes dispersed through different books, this form of preaching is a good way to preach the “whole counsel of God” as Paul exemplified in Acts 20:27. This method is a good way of introducing new converts or unschooled unbelievers to general themes and patterns that appear throughout the Bible.

#### **Narrative expository preaching:**

Narrative preaching presents the biblical text in the form of story and follows that story to completion. A narrative sermon functions as a lengthy illustration that uses a biblical text as its beginning and end.

When using this form, the speaker shares a story from the gospel such as that found in the account of Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4). In telling the story, the preacher asks the listener to join in the narrative. As a result, the listener sees the fullness of Jesus’ words and teachings. This type of expository preaching can be highly effective in postmodern culture,<sup>16</sup> which has rejected most of the traditional approaches.

Narrative preaching will grow more popular in the coming years. This is good news as long as the narratives remain consistent with biblical texts. Jesus demonstrated the value of narrative preaching by his use of parables.

#### **Topical expository preaching:**

Of the four forms of exposition, this is the form that is least recommended. Its weakness grows out of the limits of time and the speaker's inability to include enough biblical text about the topic in one sermon. Although this is discouraged, it is, however, helpful at times.

Topical exposition generally revolves around one passage, centring on one theme. It is topical because it is usually a single message on a single subject. It is expository because it uses the biblical text as its source.

Most preachers use this form on special occasions such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Easter, but topical preaching does not provide adequate time to address the whole counsel of God as other methods do. Topical preaching limits opportunities for presenting proper understandings of the context as opposed to verse-by-verse preaching. In addition, the topical approach does not offer the opportunity to use the graphic and powerful images of narrative preaching. The church planter will probably use topical exposition, but it should be used sparingly.

#### **Benefits of Inculturation Expository Preaching<sup>17</sup>**

Expository preaching should aim at taking the sacred text, explain what it means, tie it to other scriptures so people can see the whole a little better, and apply it to life so that it bites but at the same time heals, instructs, and edifies.

Some use the category “expository preaching” for all preaching that is faithful to Scripture. It is expedient to distinguish expository preaching from topical preaching; textual preaching, and others, for the expository sermon must be controlled by a Scripture text or texts. Expository preaching emerges directly and demonstrably from a passage or passages of Scripture.

There are a number of reasons why expository preaching deserves to be the primary method of proclamation though the lazy/*lassie faire* preachers try as much as possible to dodge its application.

1. *It is the method that stays within the ambit of the scripture and least likely to stray from Scripture.* If one is preaching on what the Bible says about self-esteem, for example, undoubtedly one can find some useful insights. But even when one says entirely true things, there is the likelihood to abstract them from the Bible’s central story line. Expository preaching keeps a preacher to the main thing.
2. *It teaches people how to read their Bibles.* Especially if a long passage is being preached, expository preaching teaches people how to think through a passage, how to understand and apply God's Word to their lives.
3. *It exudes confidence in the preacher and authorizes the sermon.* If a preacher is faithful to the text, there is certainty that the message is God's message. Regardless of what is going on in the church - whether it is growing or whether people like the preacher – there must be assurance of proclaiming God's truth from the side of the preacher.
4. *It meets the need for relevance without letting the clamour for relevance dictate the message.* All true preaching is properly applied. That is of extraordinary importance in the contemporary generation. But expository preaching keeps the eternal central to the discussion.

5. *It forces the preacher to handle the tough questions.* A preacher after working through text after text, and will soon hit passages on divorce, on homosexuality, on women in ministry, and he/she will have to deal with those texts.

6. *It enables the preacher to expound systematically the whole counsel of God.* John Calvin in the last 15 years of his life; worked on and expounded Genesis, Deuteronomy, Judges, Job, some psalms, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, the major and minor prophets, the Gospels in a harmony, Acts, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and the pastoral epistles. Preachers are to preach the whole counsel of God, they must teach the whole Bible. Other sermonic structures have their merits, but none offers the congregations more, week after week, than careful, faithful exposition of the Word of God.

## 6. INTERPLAY OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING AND SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS

There is the need to contextualize the biblical messages within the socio-cultural milieu of the people. This is to enable the passage to speak to and meet the needs of the people today. The socio-economic-cultural factor of the intended or targeted audience must be put into serious consideration if the passage is to speak to the contemporary audience and meet their felt needs. It is in lieu of this that the expository preaching must interpret the passage in the context of the socio-cultural milieu of the people without compromising the original meaning of the passage. Hence, the meeting point of expository preaching and sociocultural factors is in essence the inculturation expository preaching.

It should be borne in mind that there exists a cultural gap between the original recipients of the texts and the contemporary time. In fact, the cultural contexts of original audience and the biblical writers vastly differ from the 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigerian Christian church. Culture is the ways and means by which people carry on and probably maintain their existence. The Webster dictionary defines culture broadly as “the integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes the thought, speech, action, and artefacts, the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group.”<sup>18</sup> This cultural gap manifesting in material culture, social culture, linguistic gap, historic gap, geographical gap and tools. Material culture comprises of these features – housing, cooking utensils, food, clothing, agricultural tools, weapons, transportation’s means, art forms, and religious items.<sup>19</sup> Social culture is about ways things are done and manner in which people relate to each other. The way in which people live informs how they make their living, where they lived geographically; the way they worship, recreate, make clothing, farm and cook. The manner of interaction informs family customs, economic practices, civil laws, legal procedures, military/defence tactics and social groupings.<sup>20</sup> There must be a great interplay of expository preaching and socio-cultural contexts for it to make indelible mark upon the lives of the hearers. If the cultural context of the original audience is well understood, this couple with the vast understanding of the socio-cultural milieu of the people, then there would be complete transformation of life.

Socio-cultural factors are the larger scale forces within cultures and societies. These are the factors that affect the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of the members of a given community. Such factors include: attitudes, cross cultural difference, cultural deprivation, identity, culture change, discrimination, ethnic identity, values, family structure, child-rearing practices, community, faith, religion, gender and so on.<sup>21</sup>

Paramount in the inculturation expository preaching is the issue of contextualization. This is a term first coined in a document prepared in 1972 by the directors of the Theological Education Fund. Bruce Nicholls defines contextualization as “the translation of the unchanging content of the gospel of the kingdom into verbal form meaningful to the peoples in their cultures and within their particular existential situations.”<sup>22</sup> No matter how the preacher tries to contextualize, one must be fair to the text, interpret it the way “it was intended by the (original) author (writer) must sit in judgment on our perspectives and our conclusions that we have drawn from the text.”<sup>23</sup>

Inculturation expository preaching takes into consideration the issue of cross-cultural angle. It is in lieu of this that Kaiser (Jr.) three horizons will be considered. These are:

First horizon: the culture of the Bible

Second horizon: the culture of the interpreter

Third horizon: the culture of the receptor.<sup>24</sup>

All of these different shades of cultural horizons must be well balanced and none should be made normative for the others. This will help in no small way to bridge the cultural gulf created by long span of time between the original recipients and the contemporary audience.



## 7. PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR INCULTURATION EXPOSITORY PREACHING

The following practical guidelines can be employed to prosecute interpretation from the cultural dimensions the Bible, interpreter and receptor. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.,<sup>25</sup> offers the following guidelines in handling cultural issues that may be inherent in inculturation expository preaching that may be inherent in inculturation expository preaching. These are:

1. Observe the reason why a command, custom, or historical example is given in the text.
2. In some cases, modify the cultural forms but retain the content.
3. Refuse practices that were integral parts of the surrounding pagan culture.
4. Retain practices that are grounded in the nature of God.
5. Notice when the circumstances alter the application of a law or principle.

Inculturation expository preaching must lead to the transformation of life where the hearers' situations and conditions are addressed through true exposition of the biblical text. The biblical texts must be able to address the felt needs of the hearers for it to be affective and transformative. Irrespective of the listeners' situations, the inculturation expository preaching must be God focused, Christ centred and people applied.

## 8. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, the following minimal elements identify expository preaching:

1. The message finds its sole source and authority in Scripture.<sup>26</sup>
2. The message is extracted from Scripture through careful exegesis.
3. The message preparation correctly interprets Scripture in its normal sense and its context.
4. The message clearly explains the original God-intended meaning of Scripture.
5. The message applies the Scriptural meaning for today.

It is important that the preachers of the Word must daily soak themselves in the Scriptures. They must not just study, as through a microscope, the linguistic minutiae of a few verses, but take their telescope and scan through the wide expanses of God's Word. They must assimilate its grand theme of divine sovereignty in the redemption and salvation history of mankind. "It is blessed," wrote C. H. Spurgeon, "to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last, you come to talk in Scriptural language, and your spirit is flavoured with the words of the Lord, so that your blood is Bibline and the very essence of the Bible flows from you."<sup>27</sup>

The doctrine of the inerrancy of the scriptures demands an exegetical process and an expository proclamation. Only the exegetical process preserves God's Word entirely, guarding the treasure of revelation and declaring its meaning exactly as He intended it to be proclaimed (See 1 Tim. 6:20, 21 and 2 Tim. 2:15.). Expository preaching is the result of the exegetical process. Thus, inculturation expository preaching is the essential link between inerrancy of the scripture and the proclamation that needs to be done within the socio-cultural milieu of the target audience in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian ministry.

Inculturation expository preaching is mandated to preserve the purity of God's originally given inerrant Word and to proclaim the whole counsel of God's redemptive truth within the socio-cultural milieu of the people of faith in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian ministry. The Department of Religious Studies in the Universities and the Seminary curriculum must reflect the central truth of the inerrant Bible, sound hermeneutical principles, exegesis and preaching that reflect faculty's commitment to produce faithful expositors of the Word of God in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian ministry.

It is convenient to come to a logical conclusion by joining voice with R. B. Kuiper who strongly asserts that: Exposition of Scripture, exposition worthy of its name, is of the very essence of preaching. It follows that it is a serious error to recommend expository preaching as one of several legitimate methods. Nor is it at all satisfactory, after the manner of many conservatives, to extol the expository method as the best. All preaching must be expository. Only expository preaching can be Scriptural.<sup>28</sup> This is true especially when expository preaching is done within the sociocultural context of the end receiver, that is, the target audience.

It is, therefore, strongly recommended that the preachers of the Word must make the words and wordings of the Bible to become incarnational in them. They must spare and spend time to study the Bible with adequate preparation knowing fully well that it takes a lot of preparation to achieve even if it's a little. It is important to know that the Scripture is for all ages, tribes, races, people groups, genders and all situations. Thus, it is incumbent on the preachers of the Word to sermonize within the socio-cultural milieu of the people. Preaching and teaching of the Word must be God focused, Christocentric and people applied. It is in this context that the needs of the contemporary church can be met and the 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian ministry be relevant. Hence, all must embrace inculturation expository preaching in order to breach the imbalance and gap being experienced in the life of the members in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian ministry. Messages will then meet people's needs as they would be able to understand the scripture as their sociocultural factors are put into consideration.

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#### END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Obeying the Word: the Cultural Use of the Bible," in *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*. Eds. Walter C. Kaiser and Moises Silva. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: ZondervanPublishingHouse, 1994), 173.
- <sup>2</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books House, 1981), 7-8.
- <sup>3</sup> James I. Packer, "Preaching As Biblical Interpretation," in *Inerrancy And Common Sense*. Ed. Roger R. Nicole and J. Ramsey Michaels. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books House, 1980), 189.
- <sup>4</sup> Haddon W. Robinson. *Expository Preaching: Principles & Practice*. (Nottingham: InterVarsityPress, 2007), 21.
- <sup>5</sup> Horton Davies, "Expository Preaching: Charles Hadden Spurgeon," *Foundations*: 66, (Jan 1963) 14, calls exposition "contextual preaching" to distinguish it from the textual and topical types.
- <sup>6</sup> These ten suggestions are derived from Faris D. Whitesell, *Power in Expository Preaching* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Revell, 1963), vii-viii.
- <sup>7</sup> *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1988), 438.
- <sup>8</sup> Wayne McDill, "Seven Qualities of Expository Preaching." December 27, 2016. <http://www.lifeway.com/pastors/2014/01/08/seven-qualities-of-expository-preaching/>
- <sup>9</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 12.
- <sup>10</sup> Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books House, 1970), 11.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid. See also Jerry Vines and David Allen, "Hermeneutics, Exegesis and Proclamation," *Criswell Theological Review* 1/2 (Spring 1987): 309-34.
- <sup>12</sup> This definition has been adapted from John D. Grassmick, *Principles and Practice of Greek Exegesis*. (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1974), 7.
- <sup>13</sup> "What is Expository Preaching." January 3, 2017. <https://www.gotquestions.org/expository-preaching.html>
- <sup>14</sup> Wayne McDill. "Seven Qualities of Expository Preaching." December 27, 2016. <http://www.lifeway.com/pastors/2014/01/08/seven-qualities-of-expository-preaching/>
- <sup>15</sup> Ed Stetzer, "Four Kinds of Expository Preaching." December 27, 2016. <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/Four-kinds-of-expositional-preaching>.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> "Benefits of Expository Preaching." December 27, 2016. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/6-reasons-not-to-abandon-expository-preaching>
- <sup>18</sup> *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster Inc., 2002), 151.
- <sup>19</sup> It would be impossible to properly interpret Jeremiah 2:13 without a proper understanding of what 'cistern' represented in that cultural context.

<sup>20</sup> Kevin J. Conner and Ken Malmin, *Interpreting the Scripture*. (Portland, Oregon: City Christian Publishing, 1983), 45-46.

<sup>21</sup> “Sociocultural factors” June 28, 2018. <https://www.google.com.ng/search?q=socio+cultural+factor+meaning&oeq=socio+cultural+factor+&aqs=chrome.5.69i57j69i59j69i60l2j0l2.19463j1j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>.

<sup>22</sup> Bruce Nicholls, “Theological Education and Evangelization,” in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas. (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 647.

<sup>23</sup> Kaiser, Jr., 177.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 178-179.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 185-188.

<sup>26</sup> R. B. Kuiper, “Scriptural Preaching,” in *The Infallible Word*, 3rd Rev. ed. Ed. Paul Wooley. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967), 253.

<sup>27</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans, 1961), 30-31.

<sup>28</sup> Kuiper, 253.