



# THE OPTICS OF HOMILETICS: PREACHING AS REFRAMING OF PERSPECTIVE

Johan Cilliers  
February 2012

*The optics of homiletics:  
Preaching as reframing of perspective*

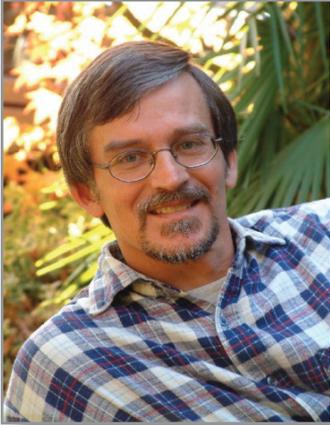
Inaugural lecture delivered on 21 February 2012

Prof Johan Cilliers  
Department of Practical Theology and Missiology  
Faculty of Theology

Editor: SU Language Centre  
Design: Heloise Davis  
Printing: rsamprinters@gmail.com

ISBN: 978-0-7972-1346-3

Copyright © Stellenbosch University Language Centre



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Johan Cilliers was born in Luanshya, Zambia (1954); matriculated in De Aar (1972), and received his theological training at the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University, as well as the Karl Rupprecht University in Heidelberg, Germany. He has obtained the following degrees: DTh Theology, Stellenbosch University (SU) 1982; Licentiate in Theology, SU 1979 (cum laude); MTh Theology, SU 1979 (cum laude); BTh Theology, SU 1978 (cum laude), and BA Philosophy and Greek, SU 1975 (cum laude). After having served as minister in two Dutch Reformed congregations (in Durban and Stellenbosch), he was appointed as senior lecturer at the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University, and is currently professor of Homiletics and Liturgy at this institution.

He is head of the Department of Practical Theology and Missiology at the Faculty; president of the Society for Practical Theology in South Africa, as well as vice-president of the Societas Homiletica (the international society for Homiletics). He has delivered guest lectures at the University of Umea, Sweden, as well as the Humboldt University, Germany, and has written nine academic books, inter alia on preaching, liturgy and aesthetics. He has co-authored two books with international scholars, respectively on the foolishness of preaching (with American author Charles Campbell) and worshipping in the so-called 'Network Society' (with Dutch author Marcel Barnard). He has published more than 60 academic articles in accredited journals, and authored 23 popular religious books, for which he has received numerous awards from the Christian Booksellers Association of Southern Africa (CBSA).

He has received the Rector's Award for Excellence in Teaching (2003), the Best Lecturer Award from the Golden Key International Society and SU's Academic Affairs Council (2008), as well as the Rector's Award for Excellence in Research (2010). As researcher, he holds a National Research Foundation (NRF) rating and has received grants from the Harry Oppenheimer Memorial Trust as well as the SU Research Committee. He is fond of languages (speaks German and studies French among others) and enjoys dabbling in art.<sup>1</sup> He is married to Elna, and is the (very proud) father of twins, Jacques and Karen.



# THE OPTICS OF HOMILETICS: PREACHING AS REFRAMING OF PERSPECTIVE

## INTRODUCTION: THE ART OF THE EYE

Preaching is – among others – about perceiving; it is about saying something after having seen something; it is about voicing a vision. Numerous homileticians have pointed out this link between preaching and perception. My Swiss mentor and *Doktorvater*, Rudolf Bohren, never tired of saying that preachers should not only be all ears, especially not only all mouths, but rather all eyes.<sup>2</sup> My South African mentor and *Doktorvater*, Bethel Müller, also taught me that, as preachers, we must continue viewing life through the looking glass of the biblical text – a homiletical version of *Alice in Wonderland*, as it were.<sup>3</sup>

Homiletics without optics is unthinkable: To preach is to see – and to invite others to see.<sup>4</sup> It calls for a change of perception; a rebirth of the senses, and, in particular, a conversion of the eyes.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, it is analogous to faith, which is to see the Invisible, or, in the words of Martin Luther, to see that which you do not see and not to see that which you do see.<sup>6</sup> Faith – preaching – is to look deeper and to see further; to obtain in-sight; to have vision.

Preaching is about the formation (and the re-formation) or shifting of perspective.<sup>7</sup> David Buttrick, in his massive work *Homiletic*, draws heavily on the centrality of perception and perspective in preaching, using the metaphors of the lens of the camera and the frames in a movie.<sup>8</sup> For him, preaching entails the art to perceive meticulously that which is in a particular frame, but also to move on to the next frame in an aesthetic and timely manner. Preaching does not imply the freezing of frames, but rather the flow of vision; not a declaration of eternal ‘standpoints’, but directions along a route.<sup>9</sup>

One could say the art of preaching is about the discernment of ‘signs of transcendence’ or epiphanies of a deeper dimension, even in the small things of life.<sup>10</sup> Nobody articulates this better than Paivio, speaking on behalf of all observers: “But please, let me have plenty of detail. That’s what counts in our business, tiny little details, like you had a broken shoelace on your left shoe, or a fly settled on the rim of your glass at lunch, or the man you were talking to had a broken front tooth.”<sup>11</sup> Our own poet Sheila Cussons once put it as follows: “Whether it is something sublime or a puddle of milk on

the table, to you, it may be an image of something much more complicated.”<sup>12</sup>

The Reformer John Calvin often spoke about the knowledge of faith as a way of perceiving. For him, knowledge entailed more than just superficially taking note of the state of affairs around you, but was rather an attentive perception of life (he used the French word *l’entendement*).<sup>13</sup> In this regard, Calvin, in imitation of the Apostle Paul,<sup>14</sup> was fond of using the metaphor of a mirror.<sup>15</sup> To Calvin, this suggested a perception of God, albeit indirect and vague, that would otherwise have remained unknown – a perception that, like a mirror in direct sunlight, would often shock, captivate attention and create fascination.<sup>16</sup>

From a homiletical perspective, one could say that the preacher holds up a mirror, reminding us that God *can* in fact be perceived in this world, though in indirect and often shocking ways – even if it is through the reflections of a murky mirror.<sup>17</sup> Standing on the threshold between God’s new creation and the old age of the world, preachers help us perceive the former within the latter. Charles Campbell, the highly regarded American homiletician, speaks about a “bifocal vision” that not only perceives the powers of the old age, but especially also the signs of the new amidst the old.<sup>18</sup>

On the one hand, preachers hold up a mirror that honestly and relentlessly unmask the old age – an activity that obviously does not endear them to everyone. However, the preacher’s task does not conclude here, or else this perspective on life would have been a fairly tragic one. So, on the other hand, the preacher also holds up a mirror that reflects an alternative reality, namely God’s new creation, in ways that often reverse our ‘normal’ perceptions, like mirrors do. Preachers, murky mirrors in hand, thus sharpen our *bifocal vision*, which enables us to perceive the light of the in-breaking new creation amidst the darkness of the old.<sup>19</sup>

It is important to understand that our perspectives on God, and therefore on life as well, can easily become restricted and restrained. We are often blinded, or, at least, we become short-sighted. Our God images need to be constantly re-visited in order to be re-visioned. This is true not only on an individual level, but also in terms of our tendency towards shared blindness and group myopia. A painful reminder of this would be the

ideology of apartheid, which, for instance, excelled in structured short-sightedness, if not structured blindness – and the organised and structured remorselessness consequently suffered by some sectors of the church.<sup>20</sup> Everything was seen in black and white.<sup>21</sup>

Preaching can play an important role in adding colour to our perspective; in opening up vistas never seen before; in painting rainbows before our eyes. This art of the eye, or re-visioning of reality, could also be called the *reframing* of perspective. Reframing is about revisiting the existing – the old and the past – as articulated in the prefix ‘re-’. However, seen through a theological lens, reframing comprises much more than mere repetition (*repetitio*) of, for instance, ecclesial tradition or a mere imitation (*imitatio*) of biblical truths; rather, it refers to change that in fact creates new ‘realities’. It is both *re* and *creatio* at the same time – in the strongest sense of both concepts.<sup>22</sup> It is real *change*, but of the *existing*.

The theory of *reframing* was originally developed within the context of a philosophically based theory of change, which was consequently adapted by psychologists and neurological-change theorists.<sup>23</sup> One of the objectives of reframing was to “create new alternative behaviors”.<sup>24</sup> Reframing changes meaning, and changed meaning results in behavioural change.<sup>25</sup> Donald Capps, who introduced the concept of reframing to theological thought, speaks about the difference between a first-order and a second-order change, and maintains that the former occurs within a given system (although the system as such remains unchanged), while the latter transforms the system itself.<sup>26</sup> First-order change is “more of the same”, and offers solutions that, in themselves, become or, at least, add to the problem.<sup>27</sup> It indeed entails *repetition* of what is known within a system; perhaps even impressive or sensational repetition, but still merely *repetition*.<sup>28</sup>

Second-order change, on the contrary, refers to fundamental transformation, although it does not normally occur spontaneously, because the frame in which we live is strongly woven. This frame does not change easily and can keep you prisoner. As a matter of fact, it is almost impossible to break free from it.<sup>29</sup> For this change of perspective, or change of frame, to take place, one needs the art of reframing, namely “to change the conceptual and/or emotional setting or viewpoint in relation to which a situation is experienced and to place it in another frame which fits the ‘facts’ of the same concrete situation equally well or even better, and thereby changes its entire meaning”.<sup>30</sup> According to my understanding of the concept, this implies a *theological reconfiguration of the existing* in such a way that something distinctly new is born, but never without the existing.

It entails, among others, the art of doing and saying the same things in (sometimes completely) different ways; of using the existing to say and do the new by means of *juxta position*.<sup>31</sup>

The frame – or paradigm – through which reality is viewed is indeed of the utmost importance. We could even assume that this frame mediates meaning (or the viewer’s understanding thereof). It could therefore also reveal the theology (or lack thereof) that lies behind a church and preacher’s ways of perceiving. The frame both evokes and replicates the structure of the theology that has given birth to it, and, in the process, also reveals the basic anthropology underlying it. In a nutshell: The frame through and within which we observe reality both reveals and forms our images of God and humanity. Preaching has everything to do with this framing, and reframing, of our perspectives.

## REFRAMING WITHIN THE PERSPECTIVES OF FOOLISHNESS AND WISDOM

There are of course many images of, and perspectives on, God. God has many faces.<sup>32</sup> I am convinced that the presupposition on which all of these multifaceted images and perspectives are based can be traced back to the notion of *paradox*, i.e. God’s presence in this world and his *sub contrario* revelations (revelation in contradictions). In the words of Hendrikus Berkhof: “He can be present in his world only as a stranger, the suffering servant, the crucified one. The concept of paradox is suitable here: God is present contrary to (*para*) the appearance (*doxa*) of the opposite.”<sup>33</sup> This point of departure is crucial for the basic structure of preaching, and, in my opinion, forms the *leitmotiv* of all preaching that intends to reframe perspective.

We often, if not always, find God’s presence in this world – the ‘signs of transcendence’ and epiphanies of a deeper dimension, even in the small things of life – surprising and even shocking: It contradicts our understandings and images of who God is or should be.<sup>34</sup> Even from the beginning, the message of the gospel contradicted our expectations. In fact, many thought – and still do – that such a strange gospel, in which the defencelessness of the cross instead of a conventional, powerful God is central, could indeed be described as absurd and ludicrous, and become a stumbling block and irritation to many as a result.<sup>35</sup>

Many homileticians have traced the roots of Paul’s description of the foolishness of preaching back to his

letters to the Corinthians, for example when he states: “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God... For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the *foolishness of our proclamation*, to save those who believe.”<sup>36</sup> Later on, Paul says in the same vein: “I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, as though sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to mortals. We have become *fools for the sake of Christ*...”<sup>37</sup>

With pronouncements like these, Paul in fact deconstructs (reframes) some basic notions of his time, especially in terms of (God’s) power and wisdom. While the Jews were looking for signs – which, in their tradition, often meant a direct and clear revelation of God, or the actions of powerful people who could perform wonders and conjure up signs – the Greeks were yearning for wisdom, i.e. the power to discern and lead the way without wavering. Greek wisdom stemmed from the philosophical and theoretical reflection on the origin and destination of humanity. It entailed the ability to explain the visible and invisible influences on life, history and society. Wisdom was understood as a form of power; knowledge, in a sense, equalled power.<sup>38</sup>

The cross, on the other hand, is about a strange form of powerlessness, which both Jews and Greeks would have deemed foolishness. This is the real scandal (*skandalon*) of the cross: Christ, the Crucified, is the radically ‘weak’ One, and, consequently, those who follow him must and will necessarily be weak – at least in the eyes of those who seek power and wisdom.<sup>39</sup> Such an idea could not be entertained by the theological, philosophical, political or cultural imagination of Paul’s time. It was a shocking, blasphemous paradox.<sup>40</sup> In short, it was foolishness. In fact, according to some exegetists, the translated term ‘foolishness’ is still too mild. Instead, it was “madness”.<sup>41</sup> Some have even called the madness of the cross a crude and vulgar joke; a macabre expression of “gallows humor”.<sup>42</sup> Others refer to it as a “parodic exaltation” – indeed, the cross “was designed to mimic, parody, and puncture the pretensions of insubordinate transgressors by displaying a deliberately horrible mirror of their self-elevation”.<sup>43</sup>

The foolishness of the cross does not mean that it is unintelligible, or that it requires or presupposes the sacrificing of intellectual reflection (*sacrificium intellectus*). It is rather a different, inverted and reframed form of power and wisdom. The foolishness of God (*to mōron tou theou*) indicates the way in which God is revealed in Christ – as powerless. That is why Paul often speaks

about Christ’s followers in terms of paradoxes: ‘We should become foolish, in order to become wise, and when we are weak, we are strong.’<sup>44</sup> Indeed, these are the hallmarks of the preacher as fool; as moron for Christ: foolishness and powerlessness – which really point to wisdom and power of a different, paradoxical order.<sup>45</sup>

This radical deconstruction and reframing of power and wisdom have fundamental implications on a variety of levels. Of specific importance to us is the impact on *preaching*. Preaching presupposes (and mediates) certain *God images*. However, preaching is hardly comprehensible without its connection to the *church*, and the church, in turn, should not be thought of as standing separate from *society*. Here, the presupposition is that preaching, being an activity embedded in the church, could have a transformative impact on society in the sense that it contributes to the construction, or deconstruction, of certain God images. Unfortunately, though, it could also lead to certain fixed God images, as in the apartheid era.

The radical deconstruction and reframing advocated by Paul have fundamental theological, homiletical, ecclesiological and societal consequences – especially as far as our notion of ‘power’ is concerned. Preaching, being the *foolishness of inverted power*, could indeed be instrumental for a church wishing to deconstruct and reframe existing God images so as to convey new meaning within a society that finds itself *in transit* – a society that often misunderstands and misappropriates power.<sup>46</sup>

## REFRAMING: VISITING A (SEEMINGLY UNLIKELY) COLLABORATOR

Not unlike preaching, art too is about perceiving; art too conveys something – albeit in a unique manner – after having seen something; it too voices a vision. If it is good, art too, perhaps even primarily, is about *reframing*. It offers new insights into reality; a new take on things. Often, art challenges our conventional perspectives, and shocks the status quo of our individual or societal blindness. It invokes us to look again or to change our viewpoint (the coordinates from which we perceive). It questions the validity of the mirrors that we use to view life.

Therefore, ‘reframing’ is not alien to the world of art. Perhaps, reframing could even be called a ‘gentle’ or unobtrusive art rather than a science – although it is obviously not unscientific in nature.<sup>47</sup> As a matter of fact, one could say that reframing is principally an aesthetic concept: It is no coincidence that artworks are normally

framed, and, as we shall point out, indeed sometimes also *bring about reframing*. In any case, (good) art always seems to reframe life, or certain dimensions thereof.<sup>48</sup>

We now turn to three examples of aesthetic reframing. The concept of reframing is open to a rich variety of interpretations – therefore, the following may only serve to whet the appetite. It is important to note that even though these examples represent different nuances of reframing, they also overlap in the sense that they transform the objects that they are dealing with, without completely discarding them. It remains *re-creatio*; existing material that is ‘reframed’. Here follows the first example:

### Reframing as renaming



Here, Marcel Duchamp's (in)famous artwork entitled *Fountain* (1917) could serve as an example.<sup>49</sup> The work simply consists of a porcelain urinal taken out of its customary setting and placed in a new and unfamiliar one, namely an art gallery. Duchamp submitted *Fountain* under the pseudonym “R. Mutt” as a type of prank, but also as a critique on some of the most basic conventions of (avant-garde) art. The organisers of the exhibition were furious: Was the artist equating modern art with a toilet? *Fountain* was promptly removed from the exhibition, and mysteriously ‘disappeared’ thereafter. It was simply too scandalous for the art establishment of the time.

With this artwork, Duchamp introduced the concept of the ‘ready-made’ or ‘found object’ to the art world, and, in so doing, challenged the traditional

preconceptions of what art is or should be in typical Dadaistic fashion.<sup>50</sup> It is important to note that Duchamp *did not alter the form of the art object* besides adding a date and fictitious name on the side and, significantly, turning the object upside down – like the reflection of certain mirrors would do. However, he took it out of its customary setting (or frame), placed it within a new one, and, again quite meaningfully, renamed it. The urinal now becomes a fountain. Through this act of reframing, which includes renaming, the object is given a new identity. It becomes a new ‘reality’.

Duchamp defended the artwork against charges that it was mere plagiarism or a plain piece of plumbing. According to him, the question was not whether “Mr Mutt” had created the fountain with his own hands or not; what was important was that he had in fact *chosen* this object; that he had taken it as an ordinary article of life and placed it so that its normal significance disappeared under the new title and viewpoint, and thus gave it new meaning.

This artwork exemplifies that nothing is ‘real’ in itself, and that everything could at best be described as *adioforon* (something without value as such, until evaluated – admittedly within and therefore bound to the evaluator’s own psychological, cultural and social frameworks). This is what Dadaism *inter alia* tried to achieve: to challenge the art world with its set beliefs about (the depiction of) reality.<sup>51</sup> Dadaism protested against the snobbery and traditionalism of the art establishment, and warned against a narcotic stupor within aesthetics. As such, it represented a type of *anti-art*, for the sake of art.<sup>52</sup>

Duchamp’s artwork illustrates the fact that renaming can in fact *create* (new) reality. In this case, a urinal is given a new name, and ‘becomes’ a fountain! Could one venture to say that it might have affected the way in which viewers thereafter looked at and evaluated both urinals and fountains?

One of the ways in which reframing could take place through renaming is of course by means of language – a mode of reframing that is obviously important for preaching. Preaching is about *voicing* a vision, but also the creation of a vision through a voice (and words). Not only does the vision create the words; the words also create the vision. Therefore, preaching is not only to say something after having seen something (Someone); it is also about seeing something after having said something. As a matter of fact, preaching is about *the interplay of eyes and ears*, if not all the senses.<sup>53</sup>

But, one may ask, where do we find such visionary and (en)visioning words for preaching? As already indicated, preaching is *inter alia* about discerning signs

of transcendence in everyday life. This means, on the one hand, that the preacher should be sensitive for, and observant of, life. Preachers should be able to discern the religious dimensions of people's experiences in space and time.<sup>54</sup> Experiences, those of a religious nature too, occur in space and time. However, the space and time within which these experiences take place are always particular spaces and particular times.<sup>55</sup> This means that preachers will have to linger, and even dwell, in the spaces and times of those to whom they intend to preach if they are to connect to these people's particular (religious) experiences.

In the imagery of Duchamp and the Dadaists: Preachers will continuously have to take account of everyday 'ready-made' or 'found objects'; they will have to keep on re-visiting life. It does not end here, though: Preachers are called to *discern* precisely these everyday experiences as religious experiences, and to interpret them as such to those who listen to their preaching. The preacher's task is *inter alia* to reframe such experiences so as to enable people to recognise these seemingly mundane experiences as experiences packed with profound meaning. Experiences must be renamed, for which purpose the preacher needs the language of experience.<sup>56</sup> An important way to rename experiences is to share your own experiences with others – this also prevents preachers from speaking in an abstract, foreign manner. Instead, preachers are *inter alia* called to continue to seek words that describe experiences that describe life. In fact, this is an inevitable and continuous homiletic process: both finding and creating appropriate language of experience. In short: Language of experience may serve as tool for the reframing of perspective.<sup>57</sup>

Still, however, the preacher's task does not end here. Theologically speaking, preaching is more than merely connecting to or even clarifying experiences. The focus on the hearer – whom Bohren calls "homiletics' beloved child, being born out of a massive adaptation to society" – may not become exclusive.<sup>58</sup> Experiences could also be wrong, even destructive. Therefore, they need to be interpreted, but, often, also directed and, indeed, transformed. In Duchamp's imagery: The picture must be turned upside down and renamed.

For this, the preacher needs a specific perspective; a particular frame, lens or mirror within and through which life can be viewed, namely that of Scripture. Looking at life's experiences through this lens, alternatives become discernible: That which we have deemed to be wise could in fact be foolish, and vice versa. That which has been invisible to the human eye comes into focus through this lens. Through this lens, we learn "to

picture, portray, receive and practice the world in ways other than it appears to be at first glance when seen through a dominant, habitual, unexamined lens".<sup>59</sup>

It is not by chance that John Calvin called this lens through which we must look the *spectacles of Scripture*.<sup>60</sup> Regarding Calvin's vision on (and through) Scripture, Garret Green writes as follows: "... [T]he scriptures are not something we look *at* but rather look *through*, lenses that refocus what we see into an intelligible pattern."<sup>61</sup> He goes on: "[I]ts images permit us to see a dimension of depth in the world that is not otherwise apparent."<sup>62</sup>

Through the spectacles of Scripture, reality is reframed and renamed. There are many instances of renaming in the Bible itself. It starts out with the Genesis narrative, where creation (sun, moon, stars) is named and, in this way, renamed as God's (and not the gods') property. In so doing, reality is 'created' as *God's* reality. Even human beings receive the gift of (re) naming the animals, thereby 'creating' reality within the cosmos.<sup>63</sup> Ultimately, we too are renamed through the Christ event: We are now called Christians.<sup>64</sup> One could say our lives have been turned upside down through the reframing and renaming of our identity.

Preaching that similarly renames reality as reality *coram deo* could indeed be called *Namenrede*,<sup>65</sup> as Bohren also argued. *Namenrede* entails speaking *about* the Name(s) of God, or rather speaking *out* (i.e. discerning) the multi-coloured presences of God within all the realms of our realities – from the broken shoelace on your left shoe to the puddle of milk on the table.

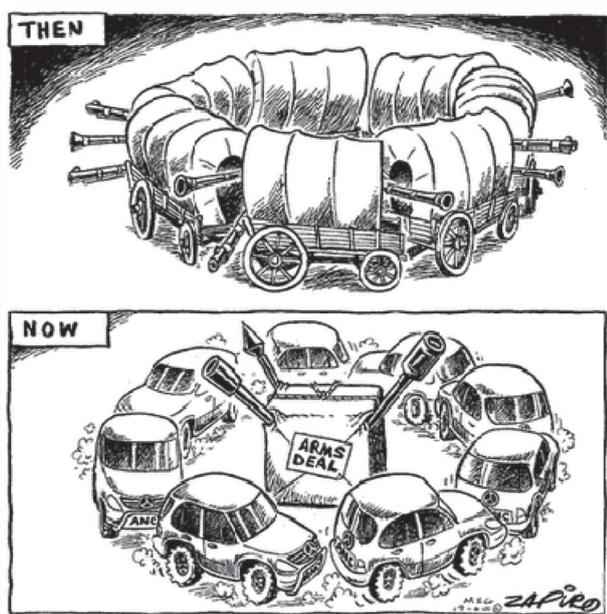
This brings us to the second example of aesthetic reframing.

### Reframing as re-configuration

Sometimes, the way in which reframing turns worlds upside down must take on a more radical, perhaps even offensive and disruptive form.<sup>66</sup> Sometimes, the frame within which we are fixed is so firmly cast in concrete that drastic measures for re-configuration are needed. Therefore, when we speak about re-visiting reality ('reality as is'; 'ready-made'), we must hasten to underline once more: This does not mean simply 'more of the same' or a romanticised re-visiting or re-memorialising of the past. Reframing is not equal to mere repetition or re-gurgitation. On the contrary, reframing implies dynamic processes such as re-naming ('re-labelling'), re-visioning, re-aligning and re-imagining.<sup>67</sup> Instead of 'more of the same', reframing entails alternatives, even paradoxes, that challenge the existing to attain new meaning, thereby evoking behavioural change.<sup>68</sup>

Reframing is not a harmless event. It can in fact be quite disruptive and disturbing. No-one understands this better than the award-winning, internationally known South African cartoonist Zapiro. He calls his specific reframing genre “offensive cartooning”.<sup>69</sup>

Zapiro has been challenging the political (and other) powers that be in South Africa for many years, and has played an important and unique role in revealing the true face of apartheid through his often shocking cartoons.<sup>70</sup> Ironically, President Jacob Zuma sued Zapiro in the post-apartheid era for cartoons that had criticised him (Zuma).<sup>71</sup> In one of his cartoons, Zapiro uses the metaphor of circled wagons to depict a response to a perceived threat. This must be seen against the backdrop of criticism levelled at the governing party of South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC), for allegedly having committed corruption in the now-infamous arms deal with German and British companies. At that stage, the ANC had rallied together in rejecting all those allegations and resisting a call for an independent judicial inquiry.<sup>72</sup> With the following cartoon, Zapiro parodies the government’s ‘circling of the wagons’ in response to the accusations surrounding the arms scandal.<sup>73</sup>



In his cartoon, Zapiro compares the ANC government’s actions to those of the Voortrekkers at Blood River. Now, though, the circle is not formed by wagons but by cars.<sup>74</sup> The stinging irony of the cartoon is inescapable: Zapiro suggests that the very same liberation movement that fought against all that the Voortrekkers’ circled wagons represented is repeating history now that they occupy the seats of power. It is hard to imagine a more

incisive critique. In fact, Zapiro *duplicates* the basic structure of the original, but does so in a manner that radically *re configures* it at the same time.

This is reframing at its best!

From a homiletical perspective, it is important to understand that the Bible is also filled with language and images that reframe reality – often also in disturbing and disruptive ways. Biblical texts serve as lenses, mirrors and spectacles that offer perspectives on God’s many faces and acts – perspectives, however, that do not always tie in with our views and expectations of who God is or should be. The Bible is not a harmless book that neatly serves the domestication of society; instead, it is a book that leads to the fundamental reframing of our perspectives. This often follows a specific pattern.

Firstly, there is a moment of *orientation*, when you recognise something familiar, something ‘ready-made’, in the image. This is followed by the phase of *disorientation* (not necessarily sequentially; mostly simultaneously), when the image questions your notion of reality, thereby disrupting and overturning it. This is the way in which many biblical images and language structures work: For instance, a familiar metaphor suddenly becomes strange and challenging, all of a sudden subverting the status quo – like a small piece of yeast emerging as an inexorable kingdom.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, Scriptural images often are counter-images; images that give us such an ‘imaginative shock’ that it presents to us the dissimilar yet liberating ‘like’ of the kingdom.<sup>76</sup>

This shock is indeed liberating, for, after the disorientation, a phase of *re-orientation* normally follows. Now, the image opens up new possibilities and worlds for us; it functions as a world-creating power. Many of the language structures of the Bible reveal this pattern, for instance through the use of parody, paradox, irony, metaphor, indirect speech, ridicule, and so forth – all forms of language that somehow turn our realities upside-down and dance on the head of so-called logic.<sup>77</sup> Biblical texts often serve as counter-testimonies to, or cross-examinations of, our ‘non-negotiable’ core beliefs. Often, they reveal sides or images of God that hardly fit in with our conventional theological and homiletical language. The art of preaching as reframing does not only include speaking the language of everyday experience, but also articulating this strange language of the Bible as *verbum alienum*. In fact, the dialogue or interaction between these two forms of discourse is what could be called *preaching*.

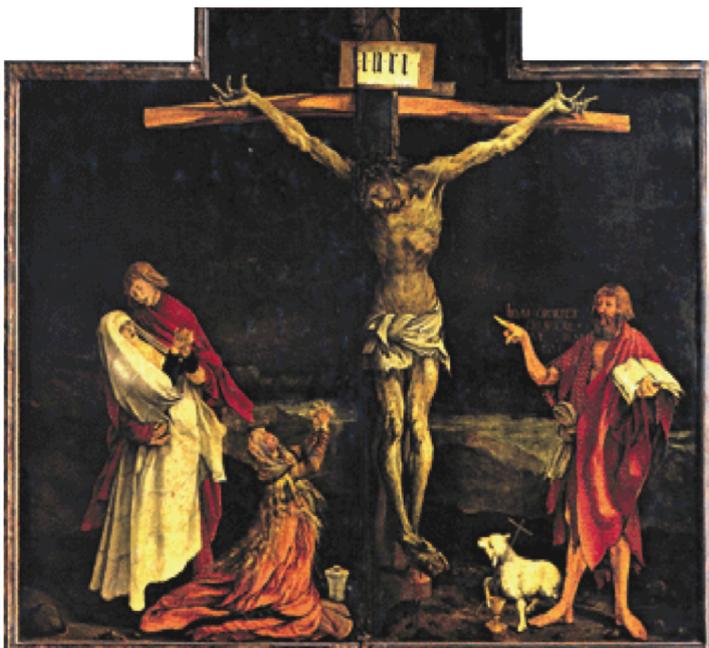
As already suggested, however, this language of preaching does not attempt to disrupt and disturb for the sake of disruption and disturbance only. It rather

aims to bring about re-orientation. Such re-orientation is brought about by re-imagination, which constitutes the third example of aesthetic reframing.

#### Reframing as re-imagination

Preaching has been called the art of re-imagination.<sup>78</sup> Reframing includes re-imagination. An exceptionally striking example of this – as a matter of fact, one of the most classic forms of reframing – is to be found in the era of the Reformation. It could indeed be said that the Reformation was not only about the rediscovery of the Word of the gospel, but also of the importance of imagination, and re-imagination.<sup>79</sup>

Martin Luther along with others probably helped to create the atmosphere (or was it the other way around?) for a number of Northern German artists to create momentous works during the transition between the Gothic and Renaissance eras – for example Lucas Cranach, Albrecht Dürer, and, particularly, Matthias Grünewald (1470–1528), who left us one of the most moving works from the Reformist era. His famous depiction of Christ's crucifixion,<sup>80</sup> completed two years after Luther nailed his statements to the church door in Wittenberg, represents a dramatic paradigm shift in which Christ is no longer surrounded by a sentimental halo; his suffering is no longer aesthetically softened – on the contrary. Here, we no longer see the athletic and heroic Christ of the Renaissance, but rather a body that symbolises the most extreme disfiguration and degradation possible of one human being by other human beings. The entire image has been re-imagined – away from a scene of serenity towards the crude reality of the cross.



In this depiction, the crown of thorns and Christ's hair are intertwined, interlaced – because, in this moment, Christ is His suffering. Broken, mutilated, Godforsaken He hangs there. His arms have been stretched out of proportion. His hands are distorted, as if in a physical cry that simultaneously seems (sounds) like a desperate lament before, but also a complete surrender to, God. His feet have been battered out of shape, depicting the Gothic view on suffering and mortality in all its extremity. The Crucified's lips are purple, like those of one who has suffocated. The macabre body tilts forward, under the heavy burden of sin, to such an extent that even the wooden cross buckles. His body is blue-grey and swollen, showing the grisly details of the lashing and suffering on the cross. The deep background colours are sharply contrasted with the figures in the foreground – a characteristic use of light and darkness, a technique known as *chiaroscuro*.<sup>81</sup>

To the left, on her knees, Mary Magdalene wrings her hands together in prayer. Next to her is a jar of fragrant oil. Mary, Mother of Jesus, recoils from the gruesome body and the horror of death, supported by the disciple John – another significant re-imagining away from the traditional tranquillity of a Mother of God scene. On the right, John the Baptist, with a significantly large forefinger, proclaims: There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. In front is a lamb with a cross and a chalice at its feet – a symbol of the victory of this Lamb; paradox of all paradoxes.

What makes this classic work even more impressive is that it was painted to hang in a convent hospital in Isenheim – a hospital that specialised in skin diseases such as asergotism.<sup>82</sup> In this context, the details on the skin of the Crucified would have offered an inescapable point of identification and, thus, comfort.<sup>83</sup> Through this strange, *anti-aestheticised aesthetic*, the gospel is mediated.<sup>84</sup> Indeed – paradox of all paradoxes!

It is a well-known fact that, for more than 50 years, this painting of Grünewald hung above the desk of none other than Karl Barth, who made more than 50 references to it in several of his primary writings. He even called it a “visual aid” to his life's work.<sup>85</sup> As for the Baptist's prominent index finger, Barth says: “Could anyone point away from himself more impressively and completely?”<sup>86</sup> This depiction indeed expresses what Stanley Hauerwas called “looking in the right direction!”<sup>87</sup>

This masterpiece represents a form of re-imagination of the gospel – against the sentimen-

talist tide of the time – that has since re-created meaning and re-stimulated behavioural change for many who had seen it. As such, it also illustrates the core task of preaching, namely the *continuous re-imagination of the gospel against domesticated images of Christ*.

## CONCLUSION

Although preaching as reframing can sometimes be disruptive and disturbing, even weird, unexpected and paradoxical, it remains a ‘gentle’, unobtrusive art. Reframing does not intend bringing about change as a type of ‘hostile take-over’ by means of force or manipulation. Normally, homiletical reframing does not force the ‘signs’ of God’s immanence upon people. After all, God’s footsteps (*vestigia dei*) in this world are not the thunderous stomping of a giant. On the contrary, God’s footsteps are easily overlooked and not heard. Homiletical reframing helps us to hear these footsteps and see these signs, and point towards God’s (fragile, crucified) presence in the frames of our realities – like John the Baptist’s index finger.<sup>88</sup>

Obviously, this type of preaching is a serious matter that often stems from as well as evokes lament. However, lament and laughter are two sides of the same coin; both form part of the ‘foolishness’ of preaching that turns wisdom upside down.<sup>89</sup> Likewise, reframing, being “the

very lifeblood of wise-fool ministry”, is often playful and humorous, accompanied by liberating laughter.<sup>90</sup> It calls for the humour of hope. In the words of Donald Capps: “Lightness of touch and the releasing power of laughter are essential to the art of reframing. Otherwise, the art degenerates into a weapon which manipulates and mocks the very ones it means to help, and dehumanizes those who use it. Reframing is not for angry prophets, but for prophets who know the releasing power of laughter. Reframing is for prophets who are wise enough to know that God can get along perfectly well without them, and fool enough to believe that God would never try to go it alone.”<sup>91</sup>

Preaching as reframing perceives and renames; it disrupts and disturbs. However, it also points towards new realities and new possibilities. It constantly challenges our fixed images of God; it reminds us that our experiences of God, our theologies and preaching on God, are but the beginning, and that our deepest dogmas and finest formulations are but stuttering on the profoundest mystery that is *God*. It aids us in looking in and through the reframing mirror – the looking glass – of the biblical text, knowing full well that God’s revelation is simultaneously God’s concealment, and God’s concealment simultaneously God’s revelation.<sup>92</sup> It reminds us that our frames are not structures of steel, but penlines and brushstrokes.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 The artwork on the front cover is one of his own works entitled *Interior of the Cross: Introspective Reflection* (2009). It is on display in the foyer of the chapel of the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University. The artwork consists of a wooden box with a painted window at the back, revealing a tranquil African scene, as well as a real window at the front, inviting the viewer to look into the interior. Light falling through the window at the back is painted on the floor of the interior. At the same time, though, natural light falls through the front window into the interior, creating subtle shadows of a cross. This is due to the crossbars of the front window, but also depends on the position of the viewer standing in front of the artwork. Therefore, the viewer sees the 'interior of the cross' from two sides, as it were: the painted window at the back as well as the front window. At first glance, the window frames seem to be just that – ordinary window frames. Yet, closer scrutiny reveals that they have been taken out of their ordinary setting, without the *form having been altered dramatically*. Rather, subtle 'clues' or 'signs' are introduced that 'reframe' the window frames to acquire new identity and meaning – the shadow of a crucified figure on the inside (hanging from the 'cross' of the window as part of the shadow falling on the floor), as well as the curtain tie-backs made of thorn branches. Something quite 'ordinary' is reframed in terms of the Christ event. Life – including the suffering of life as embodied in the crucifixion – is now viewed in the light of the resurrection – which literally shines through both windows! The curtain to the holiest inner sanctuary has been pulled away through the suffering of Christ (his crown of thorns). These 'signs', as seen in the light of the crucifixion, *re-signify* life as holy. The 'interior of the cross' now glows in the light of the resurrection, and life is re-dignified through these subtle clues or footsteps of God (*vestigiae dei*) in our reality. The viewer's vision is challenged; the work implores you: 'Look again, look deeper, look anew.' Life between the front and rear windows (the 'interior of the cross') actually bathes in the light of the resurrection, and the viewer is given a new perspective through the lens, and in the light, of this radical 'reframing-through-resurrection'.
- 2 According to Bohren, our senses are actually connected much more closely than we can ever imagine: For instance, we also 'see' with our ears, and 'hear' with our eyes. On this interaction of the senses, this "engen Verknüpfung von Hören und Sehen", he says: "Was ich höre, stelle ich mir vor, und das heisst doch, dass ich auch mit den Augen höre." [Rudolf Bohren, *Predigtlehre* (München: Kaiser, 1980), 268.]
- 3 Bethel Müller states: "Naturally, all biblical texts are lenses through which we can look at the world, especially imaginatively, at the future. After all, the imagination is the ability to see, to see better, to see further, to see differently, to see the Invisible... Texts are adventures (with Alice!) 'in wonderland'... A hermeneutic of amazement is a hermeneutic that looks into, and then through, the multidimensional lenses of the text, thereby opening creative new interpretations of the text." [Bethel Müller, "Liturgical and homiletical revisioning to generate hope for a just society", *Divine Justice – Human Justice*, eds J.S. Dreyer & J.A. van der Ven (Pretoria: HSRC, 2002), 209.]
- 4 Tom Long, the American practical theologian, talks about a *double* vision: looking back through the lens of the text, and, through the same lens, looking forward towards the congregation, acting as eyewitness to the great acts of God. [Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 2nd ed (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 18–51; cf also Johan Cilliers, *The Living voice of the Gospel. Revisiting the basic principles of preaching* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2004), 64.]
- 5 In Rudolf Bohren's words: "Wir brauchen... eine Wende der Wahrnehmung, und diese Wende muss eine Wiedergeburt sein." [Rudolf Bohren, *Vom Heiligen Geist. 5 Betrachtungen* (München: Kaiser, 1981), 73.]
- 6 In his commentary on Hebrews 11:27, Luther states: "Haec enim est fidei natura... videre, quod non videt, et non videre quod videt." [Martin Luther, *Weimarer Ausgabe (WA)* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883), 57/3, 188.]
- 7 Charles Campbell & Stan Saunders, *The Word on the Street. Performing the Scriptures in the Urban Context* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2000), 30.
- 8 David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1987).
- 9 In regard to liturgy, Stanley Hauerwas says: "In worship, we are busy looking in the right direction." [S.Hauerwas & W.H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville Abingdon, 1989), 95.]
- 10 [Birgit Weyel, "Predigt und Alltagskunst. Wilhelm Genazino und der poetische Blick auf das Leben", *Religion – Ästhetik – Medien. Band 2. Ästhetik und Religion. Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zur Identität und Differenz von ästhetischer und religiöser Erfahrung*, eds Gräb, W.;

Hermann, J.; Kulbarsch, L.; Metelmann, J. & Weyel, B. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 209–211; Peter Berger, *Redeeming Laughter. The Comic Dimension of Human Experience* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 205.] The concept ‘see’ is of course used in a variety of nuances in the Bible, and has also been interpreted differently in the course of church history. In Scripture, it sometimes takes the form of a vision, with a concomitant ecstatic condition, especially in the Old-Testament prophets (cf Isa 1; Ezek 12, etc). However, in the New Testament too, it always leads to a new revelation of the truth (underlined by hearing ‘inaudible’ words), and a new awareness of God’s presence (cf Ac 9 and 16). The distinction between these visions and dreams is fluid, and they usually deal with immediate situations (cf Ac 12) as well as the prospect of what may still be in the distant future yet impending (cf especially Daniel and Revelation). Naturally, in the Gospels, it also attains the meaning of the disciples’ biological vision of Jesus during His earthly performance as well as after His resurrection. Many of the stories of His appearance report: “I have seen the Lord!” (Jh 20:18). Especially John uses the concept ‘see’ deliberately in constructing his gospel, and mostly in an ambiguous way: There is more to see than what you perceive at first glance; more than just bread or water or light, for example. Everything has a deeper dimension and meaning. In virtually every chapter of his gospel, John demonstrates that *to look* is not always *to see*. Therefore, the way in which you ‘see’ could mean either redemption or judgment (cf 9:35–41). This applies especially to the way in which you look at Jesus. To all appearances, Jesus of Nazareth resembles an ordinary human being. But look again! The disciples saw Him with their (biological) eyes, and yet saw more. They saw His glory; His glory as the Father’s only Son – full of grace and truth (1:14; cf also 1 Jh 1:1–4). They saw His ‘inglorious glory’. Especially in the latter sense, I use the concept ‘see’ as ‘seeing-against-the-ostensible’; as seeing, although you see a contradiction; as seeing God in the paradoxical; as being convinced of the things we cannot see (now, with our biological eyes) (Heb 11:1). Of course, it is also something other than a mystical union with God, as often maintained by mysticism. Instead, it deals with God who reveals Himself in a unique way, so that we can acquire a new vision of our place before God and in our world. This does not exclude the experience of faith attested to throughout the Bible: the ‘not-seeing’ of God; the wrestling with His silence and absence; the sigh: “My God, my God, why have You deserted me?” (Ps 22:2; Hab 1:13;

Ps 42:2; Mk 15:34, etc). Sometimes, believers also go through a desert and winter experience, when everything in and around them entirely contradicts the good news of Immanuel, of God with us. At such times – not only in the lives of individual believers, but also in the history of the church or a specific church – they experience God to be distant; to have forgotten His people, looking the other way (cf Ps 13:1–3), or even worse, they feel that it was the Lord Himself who caused their misery (cf the refrain ‘You have ... You allow ... You disown ... Your wrath lies upon me...’ in Ps 88, e.g.). Exactly therefore, it is called a *vision of faith*, and is not meant in a superficial or simplistic sense.

- 11 A. Paivio & D. Foth, “Imaginal and verbal mediation and noun concreteness in paired-associate learning: The illusive interaction”, *Journal of verbal learning and verbal behavior*, 9 (1971):442.
- 12 Sheila Cussons in an interview with *Volksblad*, 21 August 1979.
- 13 [Gerrit W. Neven, “De Kwintessens van Calvijn”, *Het calvinistisch ongemak: Calvijn als erflater en provocator van het Nederlandse protestantisme*, eds Rinse Reeling Brouwer, Bert de Leede & Klaas Spronk (Kampen: Kok, 2009), 80.] The French word *l’entendement* could also be translated as ‘comprehension’, ‘intelligence’, ‘discernment’, ‘appreciation’ and ‘judgment’.
- 14 1 Corinthians 13:12.
- 15 The metaphor of the mirror was of course well known and beloved among the philosophers and authors of the time – reminiscent of the way in which Paul uses it to suggest the preliminary nature of our knowledge in this dispensation (1 Corinthians 13:12). The mirrors of antiquity revealed, but also concealed; they could offer only a dim reflection of reality.
- 16 [Neven, “De Kwintessens van Calvijn”, 80, 81.] According to Calvin, the metaphor of the mirror could be linked to certain places, facts, experiences and histories that function as mirrors of God, inviting us to get a glimpse of God’s acts, albeit indirect and incomplete. In other words, for Calvin, the mirror represents the palette of earthly media through which the multi-coloured knowledge of God can be reflected in order to create as well as nourish our faith. [Cf also Cornelius van der Kooi, *Als in een Spiegel. God kennen volgens Calvijn en Barth* (Kampen: Kok, 2002), 22, 23.]
- 17 1 Corinthians 13:12.

- 18 Charles Campbell & Johan Cilliers, *Preaching Fools. The Gospel as a Rhetoric of Folly* (Baylor University Press, forthcoming), n.p.
- 19 Campbell & Cilliers, *Preaching Fools*, n.p.
- 20 The frame within which reality (God and humanity) was placed and viewed was that of an *enclave mentality*. [Cf. Johan Cilliers & Ian Nell, “‘Within the enclave’: Profiling South African social and religious developments since 1994”, *Verbum et Ecclesia* 32/1 (2011):1–7.] People were indoctrinated (structurally blinded) to see no further than their own (nationalistic, cultural, religious and, especially, ethnic) horizons. The frame formed by this ideology obstructed any view of alternatives – the only view that ‘we’ could have of ‘them’ was that of ‘us’ against the ‘enemy’. Identity (‘we’; ‘us’) was formed based on ethnic categories. [Johan Cilliers, *God for us? An analysis and evaluation of Dutch Reformed preaching during the Apartheid years* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2006), 63–76.]
- 21 Writing about ‘black and white’, Mary Douglas states the following: “Seeing things in black and white is definitely a limitation. When you miss the colour, you miss the nuance, the 3D effect is softened, and facial expression is less vivid. We know this from black and white photography and old black and white cinema. I am using this title to talk about certain forms of social organisation that promote anger. This limited vision divides the world into two kinds: on one side ourselves, our fellow members, our friends; and on the other side, all the rest, outsiders. In the extreme case, insiders are saints and outsiders shunned as sinners. Inside is white; outside is black. In extreme cases it makes a world of saints and sinners. A wall of virtue keeps the two apart, the saints refuse to have anything to do with the outsiders. There can be no negotiation and the word ‘compromise’ means betrayal.” [Mary Douglas, “Seeing Everything in Black and White”, accessed on 24 August 2011, <http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/semiotics/cyber/douglas2.pdf>, p 2.]
- 22 It is interesting to note that someone like Jürgen Moltmann regards the prefix ‘re-’ as ironic, even negative. [Jürgen Moltmann, *Geloof in de toekomst* (Utrecht: Ambo, 1969), 32–33.] According to him, movements such as the renaissance and the reformation, as well as concepts like revolution, revival, renewal and restoration, all re(!)veal a longing for a (golden) past, which, in itself, implies a cyclical understanding of history. It represents change while ‘dreaming backwards’. He rather opts to embrace the completely new reality (*novum*) instead of the old (re). This prompts the question: Should we not rather speak of *provolution*, etc, and, in this sense, also of ‘*proframing*’? I do not believe we necessarily have to choose between ‘re-’ and ‘pro-’: Both form part of the art of reframing, as it is understood in this address. However, ‘re-’ may and should never denote a succumbing to first-order, i.e. superficial, change.
- 23 Donald Capps, *Reframing. A new method in Pastoral Care* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 3; cf also P. Watzlawick, J.H. Weakland & R. Fisch, 1974. *Change. Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Solution* (New York/London: WW Norton, 1974), 1–12.
- 24 R. Bandler & J. Grinder, 1979. *Frogs into Princes. Neuro Linguistic Programming*, ed J.O. Stevens (Moab, Utah: Real People Press, 1979), 160.
- 25 Capps, *Reframing*, 10.
- 26 Capps, *Reframing*, 12.
- 27 Watzlawick et al, *Change*, 31.
- 28 First-order change could be described metaphorically as events taking place *within* a dream – the structure or space within which the dream takes place remains the dream itself. Second-order change, on the other hand, takes place when the dreamer wakes up to a *different* state of consciousness, a *different* structure and space. It represents a shift in approach so that action is now focused on the proposed method of change, before addressing the problem itself. [Watzlawick et al, *Change*, 11.] Capps describes it as follows: “Reframing challenges the assumption that the solution being employed *is* the solution, or *would be* the solution if only it could be performed better.” [Capps, *Reframing*, 18.]
- 29 Second-order change does not normally take place automatically. It is rather “... introduced from the outside and therefore is not something familiar or something understandable in terms of the vicissitudes of first-order change, hence its puzzling, seemingly capricious nature”. [Watzlawick et al, *Change*, 24.] First-order change appears to be the normal (‘common-sense’) way of going about things, while second-order change often seems weird, unexpected and paradoxical. Therefore, second-order change is often preceded by states of confusion, shock and uncertainty – by being *in limbo* (liminality).
- 30 [Capps, *Reframing*, 12; Watzlawick et al, *Change*, 95.] Bandler and Grinder – the first scholars to link the notion of reframing to their thesis of “neuro linguistic programming” – offer an extended definition of

reframing. It is helpful to refer back to their original description of this concept: “Reframing is a specific way of contacting the portion or part – for lack of a better word – of the person that is causing a certain behavior to occur, or that is preventing a certain other behavior from occurring. We do this so that we can find out what the secondary gain of the behavior is, and take care of that as an integral part of the process of inducing a change in that area of behavior... Reframing is a way of getting to say ‘Hey, how else can I do this?’ In a way it’s the ultimate criticism of a human being, saying ‘Stop and think about your behavior, and think about it in the following way: Do something new; what you’re doing doesn’t work! Tell yourself a story, and then come up with three other ways of telling the story, and suddenly you have differences in your behavior.” [Bandler & Grinder, *Frogs into Princes*, 138, 183.]

- 31 G.W. Lathrop, *Holy Things. A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 33.
- 32 Jaap Durand, *The Many faces of God: Highways and byways on the route towards an orthodox image of God in the history of Christianity from the first to the seventeenth century* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2007), 4.
- 33 Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 54.
- 34 Weyel, “Predigt und Alltagskunst”, 209–211; Berger, *Redeeming Laughter*, 205.
- 35 Cilliers, *The Living voice of the Gospel*, 3–4.
- 36 I Corinthians 1:18, 21. For instance, cf Albrecht Grözinger, *Homiletik. Lehrbuch Praktische Theologie. Band 2* (Munich: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2008), 96; Cilliers, *The Living voice of the Gospel*, 3–5.
- 37 I Corinthians 4:9–10.
- 38 J. Goetzmann, “Wisdom, Folly, Philosophy”, *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol 3, ed C. Brown (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1978), 1023–1026.
- 39 It is quite clear that the Christ event was the decisive liturgical principle of both orientation and re-orientation of the early Christians, culminating in the resurrection of Christ. In this regard, Elna Mouton says: “... [I]t is particularly in the radical and overwhelming experience of the resurrection power of Jesus as the crucified messiah that the origins of Christianity and the New Testament writings have to be sought.” [Elna Mouton, “Transmitting Hope in the New Testament”, *Preaching as a Language of Hope*.

*Studia Homiletica* 6, ed Cas Vos, Lucy L. Hogan & Johan H. Cilliers (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2007), 75.] Because of the paradox of the resurrection (a crucified being who is resurrected), there was an urgent need for re-interpretation, and the early Christians’ worship gatherings particularly became spaces for re-interpretation, re-appropriation and re-configuration of the existing symbols and traditions. The need for re-interpretation was urgent, as, amidst a culture based on wisdom, honour and power, Paul proclaimed the crucified Christ. Theologically, it was unimaginable for the Messiah to be crucified. Philosophically, it was unthinkable that the divine could hang on a cross in the flesh. Politically, it was inconceivable that the Messiah would liberate Israel from the very empire that crucified Him. Culturally, it was impossible for one shamed on the cross to be honoured as the Christ. Messiah-Cross. These were incommensurable realities. For a further discussion of these issues, see Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross*, trans John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 1–10.

- 40 L.L. Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ: A Study of I Corinthians 1–4 in the Comic-Philosophic Tradition*, *Early Christianity in Context* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 23.
- 41 Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 1–10.
- 42 Welborn, *Fool of Christ*, 2.
- 43 Joel Marcus, “Crucifixion as Parodic Exaltation” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125, no 1 (2006): 78.
- 44 I Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 12:10; Goetzmann, “Wisdom, Folly, Philosophy”, 1026.
- 45 The Greek term *mōria*, from which the word ‘moron’ was derived, is a far more demeaning term than mere ‘folly’. *Mōria* indicated the attitude and behaviour of a particular social type, namely the lower class, who apparently exhibited a weak and deficient intellect, often combined with grotesque physical disabilities. [Cf Welborn, *Fool of Christ*, 1–2.]
- 46 It remains a sad fact of history that the church, and perhaps especially the church, also suffers from a tendency to fall prey to ideologies of power, which Keshgegian describes as *kyriarchy* (“which means the multiple and complex systemic grading of dominations, subordinations, and power arrangements”). [Flora Keshgegian, *Redeeming Memories. A Theology of Healing and Transformation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 27.] The church, reckoning with the ‘power’ of God, often tends to mistake itself (structures, officials, theology) as the final and indisputable knowledge, if

not as God Himself. The church often positions itself in a dominating and controlling position within the networks and grading of those who have power, as opposed to those deemed to be without power. It often marginalises people instead of siding with the marginalised. The foolishness of the gospel offends us deeply, especially if we have grown accustomed to phrases like the omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence of God. Perhaps notions like these, or at least our understanding of them, are indeed still antiquated influences of male fantasies about power, or remnants of a philosophical construction that created a metaphysical God who has been sterilised against all that is human and thus vulnerable. [Cf Günther Schiwy, *Abschied vom allmächtigen Gott* (Munich: Kösel, 1995), 19,48.]

47 Cf Watzlawick et al, *Change*, 92.

48 The fundamental structural similarities between art and theology, and specifically liturgy and preaching, have been pointed out many times. For a discussion in this regard, see Johan Cilliers, *Binne die kring-dans van die kuns. Die betekenis van estetika vir die gereformeerde liturgie* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2007), 55–78. Liturgy and preaching are, or could be, expressions of a faith in search of images (*fides quaerens imaginem*), i.e. an imaginative theology. These expressions of theology could indeed be called ‘imaginative deciphering’ or *Sinndeutung*. [Cf Wilhelm Gräb, *Religion als Deutung des Lebens. Perspektiven einer Praktischen Theologie gelebter Religion* (Munich: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006), 29; Wilhelm Gräb, *Sinnfragen. Transformationen des Religiösen in der modernen Kultur* (Munich: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006), 205.] This act of *indicating and creating meaning* is also often called aesthetic reason or aesthetic hermeneutics. [Cf Johan Cilliers, “The Beauty of Imagined Meaning: Profiling Practical-Theological Aesthetics”, *Praktiese Teologie in Suid-Afrika*, 24/1 (2009):32–47; Daniël Louw, “Creative hope and imagination in a Practical Theology of aesthetic (artistic) reason”, *Creativity, imagination and criticism: the expressive dimension in Practical Theology*, 4th International Academy of Practical Theology, Quebec International Conference, Canada, 14–20 May 1999, eds Paul Ballard & Pam Couture (Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 2002), 91–104; S.van Erp, “Fides quaerens imaginem. Estheticaals fundamentele teologie: geloof op zoek naar beelden”, *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 43, (2003):15–39.] In a sense, reframing is fundamentally about this aesthetic (imaginative) re-creation of meaning. When we pursue the notion of preaching as reframing, therefore, it seems appropriate to take cognisance of

the aesthetic dimension of reframing.

49 Source: www.installationart.net

50 Cf B.C.V. Adam & S.S. Cleave, *The Art Book* (London: Phaidon, 1996), 142.

51 Perhaps we could say that the reframing advocated by Dadaism consists of three stages: The first is the position of status quo (*stasis*); the second is the questioning of this position, or alienation from that which we thought we knew (*anti-stasis*), and the third the possibility of re-evaluation and, ultimately, reconfiguration of the original position, in other words a new position that surpasses the original (*meta-stasis*; cf Adam & Cleave, *The Art Book*, 506). I am not propagating that all preachers should become Dadaists, though. Of course, there were also flaws and excesses in this movement. It seemed to be strong in the area of *anti-stasis*, without really offering a *meta-stasis* or, at best, an embryonic form thereof. However, the Dadaists, more than anyone else, understood the notion of, and need for, reframing. In this sense, they represent valuable homiletical collaborators.

52 Bohren, *Predigtlehre*, 60.

53 In this regard, please see Ola Sigurdson’s comments: “As we all know, in the Christian church, different senses have been regarded as the theologically most noble sense during different historical periods: vision in Orthodox Christianity, audition in Protestantism. But this hierarchy needs to be critically studied, since one could suspect that some of the theoretical accounts might be quite different from the established practices in the same historical period. But this is not the only reason for a theology of the senses. As theology often has realized in passing, our senses are ways of relating towards each other and towards God, and as there are different manners of looking, listening, touching and so on, there is need of a more systematic investigation into the theological and/or philosophical implications of the different way of sensing.” [Ola Sigurdson, “How to Speak of the Body? Embodiment between Phenomenology and Theology”, *Studia Theologica: Nordic Journal of Theology* 62, no 1 (2008):41.]

54 In order to find language of experience, the preacher needs to listen to (the experiences of) the congregation. Since the 1970s, there has been a strong movement in homiletics towards a ‘hearer-friendly’ approach, with people like Craddock advocating an inductive method that seeks to unlock the experiences of the congregation in such a manner that preaching is indeed meaningful to them. [F.B. Craddock, *As One*

- without Authority (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 25.] Ernst Lange spoke about the “homiletical situation”, in which the hearer must become the actual theme of the sermon if preaching is to make any difference. [Ernst Lange, *Predigen als Beruf* (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1976), 34.] Since Craddock and Lange, many homileticians like Lowry, Buttrick, Hilker and others have pleaded for a form of preaching that in fact connects to congregants’ experiences of life. [Eugene Lowry, 1980. *The homiletical plot: The sermon as narrative art form* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980), 76; Buttrick, *Homiletic*, 294; M.C. Hilker, *Naming Grace. Preaching and the sacramental Imagination* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 55.]
- 55 Albrecht Grözinger, “The Way of Experience. Preaching as Shaping Experience in a World of Conflict”, *Studia Homiletica* 5, ed A. Grözinger & K.H. Soon (Singapore: Gospel Works, 2005), 1.
- 56 Grözinger, “The Way of Experience”, 2.
- 57 This reframing of perspective is movingly portrayed in the classic *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, in which the reader views the world through the clear, childlike eyes of the little protagonist, Scout. In the final scene, she looks through new eyes at the familiar neighbourhood in which she grew up. She suddenly ‘sees’ the town in seasonal flashes, with images of summer, autumn, winter and spring following each other in her mind’s eye like frames in a film. In the book’s core sentence, she declares: “I turned to go home. Streetlights winked down the street all the way to town. I had never seen our neighborhood from this angle.” [Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1960), 285.]
- 58 Bohren, *Predigtlehre*, 444.
- 59 Walter Brueggemann, *The Bible and Postmodern Imagination – texts under negotiation* (London: SCM Press, 1993), 13.
- 60 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed John T. McNeill, trans Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1,6:1.
- 61 Garret Green, *Imagining God: Theology and the Religious Imagination* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 107.
- 62 Green, *Imagining God*, 107.
- 63 Cf Genesis 2:18–19.
- 64 Cf Acts 11:26. Within the theory of change, this affirmation of the other’s (new) worth, i.e. granted dignity, is known as ‘the Bellac Ploy’. Here, change does not only indicate *affirmation*, but also the creation of dignity. [Cf Watzlawick et al, *Change*, 131–133.]
- 65 Cf Bohren, *Predigtlehre*, 89–108.
- 66 According to some exponents of the theory of change, it is only possible to achieve reframing and, therefore, second-order change through interruption from the ‘outside’. [Cf Watzlawick et al, *Change*, 92.] Some theorists like Bandler and Grinder take as point of departure people’s inherent ability to change their mindsets themselves. [Bandler & Grinder, *Frogs into Princes*, 138, 183.] Theologically speaking, I prefer the notion that a change of mind (or frame) can only be initiated from the outside. Paradigms (basic structures) can only be changed through, and together with, the ‘other’. Theologically speaking, Christ (the Other) always comes to us together with the ‘other’. A rather pertinent example of ‘reframing through the Other and, therefore, the other’ can be seen in Peter’s vision, in which even the ‘unholy animals’ are sanctified through the Christ event (cf Acts 10:1–48). Peter’s paradigm (frame) is reframed by the so-called other, but actually by the Other – resulting in true behavioural change. This is indeed second-order change ‘from the outside’.
- 67 Cf Capps, *Reframing*, 4.
- 68 A classic biblical example of this would be the way in which King Solomon ‘reframes’ the situation when two women approach him with the dilemma of a dead baby (1 Kings 3:16–27). His drastic command, namely to cut the infant in two, ironically imparts new meaning to the life (and future) of the baby, and leads to a dramatic change in attitude in the two women. In fact, the Bible teems with incidents that could be called reframing, for instance the parables told by Jesus, and the way in which he interprets the Torah in the Sermon on the Mount (cf Matthew 5–7). These incidents of reframing imply deep and drastic re-configuration, and not a cosmetic, ‘first-order’ reshuffling of truths.
- 69 His own description of his work is worth noting: “In my work I simply ask: *what if?* During the apartheid era, cartoonists kept on using methods like hyperbole, parody, [revealing of] stereotypes, ridiculing, etc., to ask the question: *what if* things could be different? *What if* we tried an alternative? In the process they contributed to the education and mobilization of the public, but also aided them in making sense of changing realities as well as the challenges of transition. And this *what if?* should not, in fact dare not, fall silent in post-apartheid South Africa.” [“Defending the Jester’s Space: Pushing the Limits of Political Cartooning” Symposium.

- Quoted from verbatim notes taken by Johan Cilliers.]
- 70 As an anti-apartheid activist during the 1980s, he designed posters and pamphlets for the United Democratic Front (UDF), and was arrested a number of times.
- 71 [“Political Cartoons from South Africa,” *The World*, 13 January 2011, accessed 31 July 2011, <http://www.theworld.org/2011/01/political-cartoons-from-south-africa/>.] In this article, Zapiro compares his role as a political cartoonist to that of a court jester, who has the “kind of license to really be irreverent, to bite”.
- 72 In fact, President Zuma launched an independent judicial inquiry only recently (September 2011) – long after the cartoon had first been published.
- 73 Jonathan Shapiro (Zapiro), “Then and Now”, *Richard Hainebach, Zapiro Rights, for Jonathan Shapiro*.] The image was originally printed in the *Mail & Guardian* on 19 April 2001. [Quoted from Campbell & Cilliers, *Preaching Fools*, chapter 6, n.p.]
- 74 Rumour has it that many high-ranking ANC officials and ministers derived financial ‘benefit’ from the transaction, and either bought luxurious cars or received them as ‘gifts’.
- 75 Matthew 13:33.
- 76 E.R. Riegert, *Imaginative Shock. Preaching and Metaphor* (Burlington: Trinity Press, 1990), 72–74; Walter Brueggemann, *The Bible and Postmodern Imagination – texts under negotiation* (London: SCM Press, 1993), 15.
- 77 An adequate account of the use of these language structures in preaching is not possible within the confines of this address. For a detailed description, see Campbell & Cilliers, *Preaching Fools*, chapter 8.
- 78 W.Brueggemann, “Preaching as re-imagination”, *Theology Today* 52, (1995):313–329.
- 79 According to Luther, images especially have the ability to remind us of the unique reality of Golgotha. The cross constantly appears in the mind’s eye, as it were. An image of the crucified Christ (*crucifix*) is intended “zum ansehen, zum zeugnis, zum gedechtnis, zum zeichen”. [A-M Wachters-van der Grinten, *Gij zult u geen gesneden beeld maken... Het beeldverbod in jodendom, christendom en islam* (Kampen: Kok, 1996), 126.] When you hear the name ‘Christ’, Luther says, you see a crucified person as you would see your own face reflected in water: “Warum sollts sunde sein, wenn ichs inn augen habe?” Therefore, although images are not necessary from a religious point of view, they are useful as signs of remembrance and hope. [Martin Luther, *Invokavitpredigten 1522, Weimarer Ausgabe (WA)* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883), 10, 3, 26.]
- 80 Source: [www.ibiblio.org](http://www.ibiblio.org)
- 81 For more examples, see Johan Cilliers, *Dancing with Deity. Re-imagining the Beauty of Worship* (Wellington: Bybelmedia, forthcoming), n.p.
- 82 This artwork is currently kept in Colmar.
- 83 Andrée Hayum, *The Isenheim Altarpiece: God’s Medicine and the Painter’s Vision* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 27–28.
- 84 One could indeed say that the Reformation, and Luther in particular, played a fundamental role, along with the Italian Renaissance painters, in the *desacralisation of images* and the possibility of understanding and utilising images as something useful. The theological criticism expressed by the Wittenberg Reformation was aimed at images that turned into *idols*, not images that could be used as *symbols*.
- 85 Jürgen Fangmeier & Heinrich Stoevesandt, *Karl Barth Letters 1961–1968* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 315.
- 86 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, I/1*, trans B.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 112.
- 87 Hauerwas & Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 95.
- 88 This is what Joseph did in his description of the events that took him out of his father’s house and brought him to Egypt. After having been re-united with his brothers, he tells them: “I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not be upset or blame yourselves because you sold me here. It was really God who sent me ahead of you to save people’s lives.” Here, reframing can be seen in the remarkable theological re-interpretation and renaming of the events: “It was really God...” [Genesis 45:4,5.]
- 89 Compare chapter 6 of Campbell & Cilliers, *Preaching Fools*.
- 90 Capps, *Reframing*, 169; Alastair Campbell, *Rediscovering Pastoral Care* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1986), 47–64.
- 91 Capps, *Reframing*, 180.
- 92 Cf I Corinthians 13:12.

