The Influence of Dr. Haddon W. Robinson

on the Teaching of Homiletics

in North American Evangelical Seminaries

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By

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The Influence of Dr. Haddon W. Robinson on the Teaching of Homiletics
in North American Evangelical Seminaries

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I certify that I have read this manuscript and that, in my judgment, it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the men and women who keep a regular appointment to teach their students how to become more effective preachers. I also dedicate this dissertation to all of my former, current, and future students who have the potential to influence the world with their lives and their words.
Acknowledgments

I offer my deepest appreciation to all the people who helped me along this process. First, and foremost, I want to thank my wife, Ashley, who partnered with me through this four and a half year journey. She surrendered her evenings and weekends so I could attend classes and conduct research. I am thankful that our kids are too young to remember this voyage and will be sure to teach them someday about their mother’s amazing selflessness, strength, and sacrifice.

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Most importantly, I want to thank the greatest preacher of all, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The sentiments of his good friend and follower, Peter, resound in my heart and soul, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).
Abstract

Christian preaching began in the first century and continues today throughout countries around the world. Evangelical preachers regularly address congregations and usually speak about something regarding God from the Bible. But what exactly do they say and by what means do they say it? Exactly how did they learn to preach? Dr. Haddon W. Robinson committed most of his life to teaching people how to preach. Some have referred to him as the Dean of Evangelical Homiletics and others admit that evangelical homiletics professors around the world have been touched by his influence (Allen, 2011; Gibson, 2011). However, there has been no comprehensive study conducted on Robinson’s life and influence on the teaching of preaching. Through archival research and qualitative interviews, I concluded that Robinson has been one of the most influential teachers of preaching in North American evangelical seminaries. His influence went well-beyond his classroom due to the acceptance of his book Biblical Preaching, his faithfulness of investing in people, and his capacity to persuade colleagues at academic institutions. His ability to preach memorable sermons and deliver outstanding lectures only helped solidify his credibility as one of the most recognized and influential teachers of preaching throughout the 20th and early 21st century.

Keywords: Haddon Robinson; preaching; homiletics; teaching; education; andragogy; influential leadership
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH DESIGN

In the United States of America, thousands of pastors and preachers help lead Christian religious services and deliver sermons on a weekly basis. Each preacher is as different as the sermon preached. Throughout the world, men and women have committed themselves to the practice of preaching since the time of Christ, and continue to do so today. However, some may wonder, “Is preaching relevant?” The answer to this question can be addressed through various perspectives: theological, historical, cultural, practical usefulness, among other views. However, I will briefly address the issue of the relevancy of preaching through the lens of leadership.

It is impossible to explain all the reasons why people show up to a church service on a Sunday morning. Some people go based on routine because they have been attending for decades. Others are on a quest for a deeper meaning in their life. Some people go to church because their spouse or parents make them. Others show up because it is what their culture expects. Regardless of the reasons why people go to church, they are there week after week, month after month, and year after year. As a churchgoer myself, I have a good idea as to why I go to church, but I often wonder, “Why are they there?” Out of all the things people could be doing on a Sunday morning, such as fishing, sleeping, socializing with friends, among other doings, people make the decision to get out of bed and go to church.

For the most part, they sit quietly and patiently, often times waiting for someone to say something religious. Regardless, often times they keep returning. I believe
preaching is relevant today because of them, the people who make a conscious decision to gather together regularly and expect to hear a message about God.

A recent study measured by Lifeway Research and published in *Outreach* (2017) magazine states that all of the top 25 largest churches in the United States of America feature preaching as a focal point of their Sunday morning worship experience. It seems some people are not turned away by preaching, and perhaps are even attracted by it. This emphasis on preaching may seem surprising at first but it is likely that preaching has been relevant to Christianity for centuries.

Preaching historian Edwin C. Dargan (1968) writes, “Since Christianity became an active force in human affairs there has been upward and onward movement, and one mighty factor in that progress has been preaching” (p. 8). Forsyth (1907) noted the relevancy of preaching during the opening of his address at the Beecham Lectures at Yale University stating, “It is, perhaps, an overbold beginning, but I will venture to say that with its preaching Christianity stands and falls” (p. 5). It seems preaching has been, and continues to be, a prominent and persistent role in Christianity and the local church. By using his or her mere words, the preacher is able to lead a congregation to consider the usefulness of the words of the Bible.

Perhaps one of the reasons preaching is relevant today is because some view the words of the Bible as the closest they will come to hearing from God. Many Christians believe the Bible is God’s spoken word and when they read the Bible, or listen to the Bible being expounded upon in a sermon, they are hearing a word from the Lord. This seems to be the case for people like Dr. Al Mohler, President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Mohler (2013) insists, "the Bible
consistently and relentlessly claims to be nothing less than the perfect Word of the perfect God who breathed its very word” (p. 37). Others who hold similar views regarding the Bible most likely believe preaching is relevant today. To hear a preacher deliver a message from the Bible would be similar to hearing a message from God. Augustine, Calvin, Warfield, and other significant preachers throughout the history of the church are often quoted, “When the Bible speaks, God speaks” (Lawson, 2009). Therefore, preaching is essential for many Christians, but it can also be contentious.

Preachers who adhere to the authority of the Bible have a tremendous amount of responsibility. Preaching is not meant to be an exercise of presenting the preacher’s personal views or thoughts. Rather, the preacher is supposed to clearly and accurately present the thoughts of God as recorded in the Scriptures. Stowell (2010) writes about why he loves to preach from the Bible instead of emphasizing his own thoughts:

[The Lord’s] words are always compelling, relevant, and more importantly, always correct. Preaching is the one verbal exercise I can do with confidence. Only when I preach God’s Word can I be sure that my words are indisputably true, and, if acted upon, are as transforming as they are profound. (p. 71)

The necessary work of exegesis – understanding the true meaning of a passage of Scripture within its historical, grammatical, literary, and cultural context – is indispensable. Without a clear interpretation, the preacher is only guessing on the meaning of a passage which can lead to devastating consequences. Dr. Joseph Stowell (2010), current President of Cornerstone University recalls one of the many lessons he learned from his former preaching professor, Haddon Robinson, “When you are done preaching, if someone disagrees with you, your sermon should be so deeply rooted in the
text that you can tell them that their disagreement is with Scripture, not with you!” (p. 71). Many preachers, like Stowell and Robinson, believe preaching that is entrenched and grounded in the Bible is significantly relevant for today’s listeners because it has the ability to transform lives.

Ever since I was a teenager, I have also been fascinated with preaching. Some refer to preaching as homiletics. Homiletics is the art and practice of combining the principles of rhetoric with practical theology to communicate the doctrines and truths concerning God (Chisholm 1911, p. 644). One’s ability to stand, or sit, in front of others and hold the listeners’ attention and interests can be enthralling. This is one of the reasons I enjoy listening to sermons or speeches and am in a career of teaching others how to communicate successfully. I have often wondered, “What makes a good talk, great?” and, “How can my students become more effective preachers?”

Various homiletics professors have attempted to answer these questions during the past several decades, as well as other questions about preaching, by attempting to advance their theories of preaching within the field of homiletics. Several of those theories have received traction and have been accepted and taught in Bible colleges and seminaries around the world. As professors, they have the potential to influence future pastors and preachers in many ways. The material they teach, and the ideas they present to their students, have the possibility to impact people well beyond the classroom.

Seminary graduates often accept leadership positions in churches and non-profit organizations. As ministry leaders, one of the ways they are able to inspire and lead people is through their preaching. Their sermons may persuade listeners to think certain ways about God, their community, and the world. If sermons have the possibility to shape
the way people think, live, and serve, then how ministry leaders learned to preach, as well as who taught them, demands special attention. While there are numerous homiletics professors and preaching scholars who deserve consideration, in this study I will be exploring the influence of one former professor of preaching, Dr. Haddon W. Robinson (1931 – 2017).

In this chapter, I first examine the need and rationale of studying the influence of Haddon Robinson including an overview of my literature. Second, I explain the significance, purpose, and conceptual framework of this study. Then I suggest a methodology, methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis that will aid in completing my research. Finally, I address the limitations and delimitations regarding this study. To begin, it is important to clearly identify the need and rationale for this study.

**Statement of the Problem**

Haddon Robinson studied and taught homiletics nearly his entire life. He was devoted to teaching others how to develop and deliver expository messages. Throughout his career, he contributed to the field of homiletics through various venues: teaching in the classroom, numerous publications, a syndicated radio show, guest speaking at conferences and seminars, leading Doctor of Ministry programs, mentoring countless men and women, among other opportunities. Robinson’s extensive vocation over the last six decades has garnered him great respect and adoration from his former students and colleagues. However, there has not been a comprehensive study conducted on Robinson’s life and influence on the teaching of preaching.

Due to his decades teaching and guest lecturing, as well as his numerous publications, it is possible that hundreds of thousands of preachers learned how to preach
from him. In addition, several of his former students have gone on to teach preaching at seminaries and Bible colleges and have potentially influenced their students on how to preach. One can only speculate the enormous impact Robinson has made on the field of homiletics. His death in July 2017 has made this research timely and fitting to situate Robinson accurately within the history of homiletics. A need, therefore, arises to investigate who is Dr. Robinson, as well as how he influenced the education of evangelical preaching during the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

**Rationale**

As mentioned earlier, one’s ability to publically communicate and simultaneously hold the interest of a large group of people has fascinated me for nearly 20 years. In particular, there have been times in my life when my mind, body, and soul were stirred by listening to a sermon causing me to make significant life changes. For instance, the way, and the reason, I forgive my neighbor or treat my spouse and children has been considerably altered because of powerful sermons I have heard. I have listened to countless testimonies of this happening for many others as well. Since I firmly believe preaching has the ability to alter and change lives, I am currently pursuing a career in theological higher education in order to teach others how to communicate to congregations more effectively.

When I first read *Biblical Preaching: Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, by Haddon Robinson (2001), I began finding answers to some of my preaching questions. I devoured the book and learned an exorbitant amount about preaching. After positive experiences as a student in a few preaching classes at The Moody Bible Institute, I decided to continue my education and learn more about the art
and craft of preaching. Faced with the choice of where to pursue graduate studies, I immediately had the desire to study under Dr. Robinson at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary during, what would be, his final years of teaching. I soon realized that I was not the only one who ventured to the school to learn under Dr. Robinson.

As I grew in my knowledge and understanding of homiletics, the perceived impact of Dr. Robinson upon the field of homiletics over his lifespan intrigued me. When I began teaching homiletics at The Moody Bible Institute in Spokane, Washington, I used Dr. Robinson’s *Biblical Preaching* book as the core textbook for my introductory homiletics class. I consistently referred to his principles, examples, and words of wisdom to teach the next generation how to communicate God’s truths. I am now curious to hear other people’s experiences and insights on how they make meaning of his influence on the field of homiletics.

**Overview of Related Literature**

To begin to understand the influence of Haddon Robinson, it is important to identify what others in the field of preaching have already said about him and how he fits into the metanarrative of homiletics. This section is a brief overview of my Literature Review found in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 begins with a section describing the significance of studying Haddon Robinson and what other homileticians have commented about his life and career. I then attempt to situate Robinson within the history of preaching, in particular how he fits within the contemporary theories of homiletics. Since the main research question focuses on Robinson’s influence on the teaching of preaching in evangelical seminaries, I present a survey on andragogy and literature that focuses on the teaching of preaching. In the next section, I summarize the history of the teaching of
preaching, primarily focusing on seminaries and divinity schools within North America. I then highlight significant homiletical textbooks over the past 150 years, including several empirical studies that rank the top preaching books. The final section in Chapter 2 looks at keys to influential leadership, as well as influence within theological education. In this chapter, I will give a brief overview of each of these sections to introduce the reader to the related literature.

Robinson’s academic career consisted of teaching and leading at three seminaries over a span of 58 years. During that time, he published numerous articles, preached over 10,000 sermons, and wrote more than a dozen books, including his hallmark, preaching book, Biblical Preaching (Marquard, 2017). Throughout his lifetime, he received two honorary doctorates as well as several noteworthy awards. For instance, both of Baylor University’s comprehensive quantitative surveys in 1996 and in 2018 credited Robinson as one of the top 12 preachers in the English-speaking world, putting him on a list alongside renowned preachers like Billy Graham, Thomas Long, Chuck Swindoll, Andy Stanley, Barbra Brown Taylor, Tony Evans, and Tim Keller. In addition, Robinson has professorships, preaching awards, and a Center for Preaching named after him and in his honor.

His memorial service on September 7, 2017, drew hundreds of former students, friends, and colleagues. Five current and past presidents of North American theological institutions also came to pay their respects.¹ Shortly after his death, magazines, journals,

¹ Mark Bailey, President of Dallas Theological Seminary; Mark Young, President of Denver Seminary; Dennis Hollinger, President of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary; Barry Corey, President of Biola University; Duane Litfin, former President of Wheaton University.
seminaries, and numerous friends and former students released statements regarding Robinson’s life and legacy. For instance, Blomberg (2017) writes:

Countless graduates of [Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS), Denver Seminary, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS)] and other institutions reckon his influence and support as most formative for their ministries, as he stressed the need for expository preaching, and taught it in his internationally best-selling textbook on that topic. But he always stressed the equally important need for sermons to be relevant. Others will fill the gap left by his home going, but no one will fill his shoes. (Denver Seminary website, 2017, para 5)

Morgan (2017) writes, “Haddon Robinson was a mentor, guide, and friend. His investment in so many lives, mine included, will impact the world for generations to come” (Denver Seminary website, 2017, para 4).

In the 1960s, during his time teaching at Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS), Robinson advocated for racial integration. Dr. Tony Evans, a member of the first class of African American students who graduated from DTS states:

I am but a small part of the great cloud of witnesses that can testify to the eternal impact Dr. Haddon Robinson has made in keeping preachers like me from the sinful extremes of either boring people with the Word of God or exciting them with the words of men. (Shellnutt, 2017, para. 9)

These comments are simply a few of the hundreds expressed in the months following Robinson’s death. His awards, accolades, and resounding impact on people’s lives warrants a deeper study into his life and influence. However, before I begin researching
Robinson’s influence on the teaching of preaching, it is important to situate him within the context of both homiletics and the teaching of homiletics.

The preaching of Christ did not begin until the first century, but a foundation for homiletics can be found in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* Book I, II, and III. The Greeks developed a vocabulary for communication that is still in use today (Black, 1988). As the Greek empire spread, many of the conquered nations adopted the Greek culture. The Jewish religious leaders would eventually use the Greek’s philosophy and rhetoric terminology. Near the beginning of the first century, within the context of the Greek culture, Jesus and his disciples delivered the first Christian sermons as the early church began to flourish (Larsen, 1998; Wilson, 1992).

Throughout the history of the church, men and women preached sermons that shaped history (Latourette, 2007). For instance, preaching was at the center of the Protestant Reformation altering the history of Europe and, later, other continents (Edwards Jr., 2004; Kiessling, 1935, Lloyd-Jones, 1987; Wilson, 1992). Reformation preachers such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, and Huldrych Zwingli led revolts from their pulpits against the Catholic Church (Wilson, 1992). Shortly after these revolts, the training of ministry leaders led to the establishment of many universities and colleges including most of the early educational institutions in the American colonies (Edwards Jr., 2004; Wiersbe & Perry, 1994).

Protestant denominations in North America established Harvard University, the College of William and Mary, Yale University, and Princeton University, among many others to train men for ministry, among other professions and duties (Chamberlain, 1900; Gambrell, 1937; Geiger, 2014; Gibson, 2018; Peirce, 1833; Spotswood & Brock, 1885).
From their beginning, these theological institutions stressed the importance of preaching and offered preaching classes for their students (Winegarden, 1951). In due time, each of the early educational institutions in North America shifted their focus from training pastors to other professions (Gibson, 2018). This resulted in the formation and establishment of seminaries and Bible colleges to educate and equip men and women for Christian ministry.

The beginning stages of seminaries and Bible Colleges, along with the ease and accessibility of publication, made printing homiletical textbooks more frequent (Winegarden, 1951). One of the early and popular key textbooks on homiletics was A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons, by John Broadus (1874). Broadus’ textbook is foundational for the Traditional Homiletic, one of four homiletical theory paradigms in contemporary homiletical theory (Lake, 1997). Another three prominent homiletical paradigms are the Kerygmatic Homiletic, the New Homiletic, and the Postliberal Homiletic (Rose, 1997). Most homileticians who adhere to a Traditional Homiletic also refer to this homiletical theory as expository preaching.

There are at least four distinct approaches to the Traditional Homiletic used today: a Christocentric Homiletic (Chapell, 1994), a Theocentric Homiletic (Valentino, 2014), a Law/Gospel Homiletic (Wilson, 1988), and a Pericopal Theology Homiletic (Kuruvilla, 2013). These four paradigms, along with the four approaches to the Traditional Homiletic, help to overview the field of homiletics in which Robinson found himself throughout his career. As will be demonstrated, he would have most likely subscribed to a Theocentric Homiletic approach within the Traditional Homiletic theory.
The teaching of preaching has existed for centuries, but it was not until the 20th century that teachers of preaching formed official scholarly societies. There are currently two Protestant societies in North America populated primarily by those who teach preaching, the Academy of Homiletics and the Evangelical Homiletics Society. The subject of the teaching of preaching is not their sole purpose but is a component they strongly emphasize. In 2008, members of the Academy of Homiletics collaborated with the Catholic Association of Teachers of Homiletics to publish *Teaching Preaching as Christian Practice*, a book on teaching preaching methodology (Long & Tisdale, 2008). Scholars who associate with the Evangelical Homiletics Society, funded by the Lily Foundation, contributed to writing *On the Teaching of Preaching: The Use of Educational Theory and Christian Theology in Homiletics* (Gibson, 2019). This book aims at helping freshly minted teachers of preaching. I wrote a chapter of this book and dialogued frequently with the editor and other contributors regarding the teaching of preaching. Both books address the topic of teaching adult learners, also known as andragogy.

American educator Malcom Knowles’ (1968) publications on andragogy opened a new field for scholars. While pedagogy is the method and practice of teaching children, andragogy explores the various ways to teach adults. Knowles (1969) presents six assumptions, sometimes referred to as principles, regarding adult learning. Each assumption is considered foundational for educating adult learners. Knowles’ work propelled other scholars such as Cranton (2002), Cross (1981), Houle (1992), and Mezirow (1991, 1997, 2000) to analyze each principle and advance the field of adult

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2 The distinction between andragogy and pedagogy is not necessarily widely noted. I will expound upon the differences in Chapter 2.
learning. In Chapter 2, I will specifically focus on the works of Stephen Brookfield (1986, 1988, 2005) and David Kolb (2014) because elements of their educational theory closely relate to the practice of teaching preaching. Homiletics’ scholars have drawn from both of these authors when proposing insights to the homiletical field (Anderson, 2018; Lose, 2008). Since Robinson’s career as a professor focused on teaching adults how to preach, it is important to explore andragogy to make possible connections with Robinson’s effectiveness and teaching methodology.

Robinson’s homiletical textbook *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (1980, 2001, 2014) seems to be one of the main contributors to his influence. Robinson had the unique ability to merge various views on preaching, Biblical exegesis, and communication together into a ten-step sermon preparation process that emphasizes making the main idea of the Biblical text the main idea of the sermon. He claimed that the preacher must discover the main idea of the passage of Scripture through asking the subject question, “What is the author talking about?” and the complement answer, “What is the author saying about what he is talking about?” (Robinson, 2014). Through rigorous exegesis and answering these two questions, Robinson asserts the preacher can distinguish the main idea of a passage. The clarity in which the book is written and the ten-step process of determining and preaching the main idea of the Biblical text are just two reasons why Robinson’s textbook has been well-used by homileticians since the time of its conception (Brost, 2015; Chatfield, 1984; Diduit, 2010; Gibson, 2018; Kato, 2017). The impact of his book is one of the key indicators I researched in determining his influence on the teaching of preaching.
In the final section of the Literature Review, I explore the notion of influence and key factors, values, and skills of influential leaders. In researching Haddon Robinson, I sought to understand how he influenced the teaching of preaching, but in order to do so I needed to learn who, or what, influenced him, his homiletic, and his andragogy. Therefore, I explore the avenues in which faculty members are influenced by both their large and small networks, also known as ‘tribes’ and ‘territories’ (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Roxa & Martensson; 2010). Not only do networks influence professors, but theology also influences those who teach in seminaries (Cannell, 2006; Thelin, 2004). This is particularly important for homiletics professors (Bence, 1988). To demonstrate that homiletics professors are influenced by their context and that they have the ability to influence the field, I give examples of two former homiletics professors, Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878 – 1969) and Fred Benning Craddock (1928 – 2015).

**Significance of Study**

As mentioned above, Haddon Robinson received many awards and accolades for his contributions during nearly six decades of teaching preaching at three seminaries. His book, *Biblical Preaching*, now in its third edition, has sold over 300,000 copies and remains assigned in numerous seminary classrooms (McBride, 2018; Steele, 2004). This correlates to thousands of past and current preachers who were taught the fundamentals of preaching from Robinson’s methods and philosophy of preaching.

Some have contributed their praises and appreciation to his life’s works (Gibson, 2011; Willhite & Gibson, 2003), but no in-depth study of Robinson’s life and influence on the teaching of preaching has been written. With this study, I hope to enrich the field of homiletics by analyzing how Robinson contributed to the field of homiletics and
possibly altered the teaching of preaching in evangelical seminaries in North America. I hope current evangelical homileticians will appreciate the results of this research due to their positions of currently teaching in the wake of his influence. Future evangelical homileticians could also gain from this study because they may have a deeper understanding and more comprehensive view of the teaching of preaching and those who taught before them.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this hermeneutical and phenomenological study was to explore Haddon Robinson, his homiletic, and his andragogy to understand his influence on the teaching of homiletics in North American evangelical seminaries. Three main questions guided me through this study:

- Guiding Question (GQ) 1: Who is Haddon Robinson?
- Guiding Question (GQ) 2: How did Haddon Robinson formulate his approach to homiletics and andragogy for seminary students?
- Guiding Question (GQ) 3: How did Haddon Robinson influence the teaching of homiletics in North American evangelical seminaries?

**Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework is a visual aid that presents both the question that the researcher is asking and the method in which the study will be accomplished (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Figure 1 represents an image of my research as I sought to accomplish my purpose of determining Dr. Haddon Robinson’s influence on the teaching of preaching in North American evangelical seminaries. Beginning in the lower left-hand corner is the purpose of my research.
The rectangular shape above my purpose outlines my literature review. The review consists of a scholarly rationale for studying Haddon Robinson, a brief history of homiletical theory and contemporary approaches to preaching, an examination of educational theory within the teaching of preaching, a survey of the history of the teaching of preaching with an assessment of homiletical textbooks used in theological institutions, and finally an exploration of influence. This literature review aids in helping me properly situate Robinson within both the history of homiletical theory, as well as the history of the teaching of preaching. The oval shape in the upper right-hand corner represents a holistic biographical sketch of Robinson’s life based on archives, published and unpublished works, interviews, and people’s memories of him. Chapter 4 is a narrative biography of Robinson’s life as a person, preacher, professor, and influencer.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework.
The split, two-toned large arrow, which spans the width of the figure, represents the linear progression of the teaching of preaching throughout history. However, a break within the arrow represents Robinson’s entrance into the field. I was able to determine Robinson’s influence through conducting a phenomenological study by interviewing current and past evangelical homiletics scholars. My interviewees have either worked alongside Robinson or they represent an alternative homiletical theory within evangelical homiletics. The smaller, directional arrows help show the reader the progression I took and how one part of the dissertation affects another. After conducting and transcribing the interviews, I analyzed the data and interpreted the findings as signified by the rectangle on the lower right side of the figure. From the beginning, my aim has been to determine who Dr. Robinson was, how he formed his beliefs, and how he influenced the teaching of preaching in evangelical seminaries in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

**Methodology and Methods**

To accomplish my purpose of determining Haddon Robinson’s influence, I collected data from archives, read his published and unpublished works, and conducted qualitative research through interviewing five homileticians about their experiences with Robinson and how they make meaning of his influence. In this section of this introductory chapter, I give a rationale for the epistemological and methodological basis of this study, which are further described in Chapter 3. I then briefly describe the methods of data collection and the participants I interviewed. Finally, I explain how I analyzed the data.

**Methodology.** Before choosing the methodology of research, one must consider the epistemological approach that supports the argument for the study (Crotty, 2010;
Maynard, 1994). I adhere most closely to a post-positivistic epistemology because ontologically I believe that a single reality exists beyond myself. I believe the Triune God of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures best reveals this reality. This belief shapes my epistemology and how I make sense of reality. It informs why I believe objective, absolute truth can be researched and studied. In addition, a post-positivist epistemology aids in examining and proving laws and theories that govern the world.

Working from a post-positivist epistemology, I used a qualitative research design as a lens through which my research is measured. A qualitative study looks at the emphasis on the qualities of entities and their meanings (Babbie, 2016). Objects and units are examined, or measured, in terms of quality as opposed to studying matters by amount, intensity, or frequency (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I chose this approach because it allowed the interviewees to share their experiences more deeply and exhaustively than a quantitative survey would allow.

The qualitative methodologies providing grounding for my study include narrative biography, hermeneutics, and phenomenology. The narrative biography, through hermeneutical research, helped me to capture the life of Robinson and answer GQ 1. To answer the remaining guiding questions I used hermeneutics and a phenomenological methodology. The purpose of phenomenological research is to “investigate the meaning of the lived experience of people” to detect the essence of the phenomena (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Therefore, interviewing five diverse evangelical homileticians about Robinson and homiletics aided in exploring GQ 2 and GQ 3.

These methodological foundations to data collection are best for this project because I was able to explore the unexamined life of Robinson and make meaning as to
how he formulated his homiletical and educational theories. The data from the interviews of various homileticians allowed me to find themes and make meaning of Robinson’s influence on homiletics in evangelical seminaries.

As mentioned earlier, Chapter 4 of this dissertation is a narrative biography of Robinson’s life that helps ground the formulation of his homiletical and educational theories. Chapter 5 is the collected data and analysis from the qualitative study of research. Using this qualitative approach enabled me to discuss in Chapter 6 the intersection between Robinson’s life, contributions, and his influence of preaching from the perspective of those interviewed.

**Methods of collecting data.** To collect data for the narrative biography, I visited the archives at Dallas Theological Seminary and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Robinson began and ended his career as a faculty member at these institutions. I did not visit the archives of Denver Seminary for two reasons: 1) Financial and time constraints and 2) Robinson taught some preaching courses at this seminary, however his main responsibility was being the seminary’s president. While on location at Dallas Theological Seminary and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, I made copies of important documents and took pictures of his various plaques and awards. I received verbal permission from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary to access his personal archives and explore some of his personal collection of books. In addition, I collected his published and unpublished interviews, sermons, lectures, notes, and planners. As well, the recording of Robinson’s memorial service from September 7, 2017, which I attended, is available online, was useful and has valuable information and testimonies regarding his life from some of his closest friends and family.
To collect data for the phenomenological study, I interviewed five leading evangelical homiletics scholars from various homiletical approaches to evangelical preaching. I traveled to California, Illinois, and Texas and to conduct interviews at each of the participant’s office or home. This seemingly enabled the participants to speak freely and openly. The data collected included the recollections of each participants’ experience with Robinson as well as their personal reflections on how he influenced the field of homiletics. I captured direct quotes about their lived experiences as well as their perceptions on the past, present, and future of homiletics.

Participants. To get a comprehensive idea of Robinson and his influence, I selected to interview five participants from various backgrounds. All but one of the participants currently teaches homiletics at established evangelical seminaries in North America. Not only does each participant add a unique perspective from teaching in his or her region of the United States but there is also diversity in race, gender, age, homiletical approach, and educational theory.

Methods of data analysis. The data collected for this study consists of excerpts from archival documents, sermons, lectures, interview transcripts, and field notes from observations. After organizing the data, I used an open coding method to code the data into ideas or themes (Richards & Morse, 2013; Saldaña, 2015). To guide me through this process, I used an inductive approach to coding along with Creswell’s six steps to coding and analysis (Creswell, 2017; Mayring, 2000). The steps are: (1) Organize and prepare, (2) Read the data, (3) Coding, (4) Description, (5) Represent the data, and (6) Interpretation (Creswell, 2017). I deciphered key themes to help me fulfill my purpose to
examine the influence of Dr. Robinson. A detailed description on how I accomplished each of these steps, as well as my biases, is found in Chapter 3.

Limitations and Delimitations

It is important for every researcher to understand there are always limitations and delimitations with one’s research (Bloomberg, & Volpe, 2012). I realize that with this study, one major limitation was not being able to interview Robinson himself. However, he delivered several interviews before he died that I was able to access. Another limitation was only interviewing five homiletical scholars. In Chapter 3, I address my rationale for choosing the participants and discuss the possible structure of the interviews. I also highlight each participant’s relationship to Robinson and how his or her philosophy of homiletics aids in making this study more well-rounded.

Perhaps in the future, I will be able to interview more homiletical scholars, from a greater scope and adhering to more diverse homiletical theories. In addition, surveying former students, or their churches, to see if preachers are still using Robinson’s methods is a possibility for further research in the future. The delimitations of this study were chosen in light of potential future readers, preachers within the evangelical tradition of homiletics. Therefore, I chose to interview homiletics who are, or were, associated with evangelical seminaries as opposed to including people who teach in Bible Colleges, Liberal Arts Colleges, Catholic Seminaries, or some other form of homiletical training.

Summary

This study is timely because it comes shortly after Dr. Robinson’s death in July 2017. Dr. Robinson devoted his life to the field of homiletics and helping others improve their preaching. It was a pleasure to hear the experiences of some of his friends and
colleagues as they recounted times they had with him and how his approach to preaching possibly helped shaped the teaching of preaching in evangelical seminaries. I hope their stories and Robinson’s archives will be beneficial for future preachers and the field of homiletics.

Next, in Chapter 2, I build from Chapter 1 by giving more support to the significance of studying Haddon Robinson. I then situate Robinson within the context of the history of preaching and major homiletical movements. Since this study also consists of Robinson’s influence within higher education, I examine educational theories and how two academic societies, consisting of primarily homiletical professors, have benefited from educational theory. I also assess the variety of homiletical textbooks used in theological institutions over the past 150 years and the implications of Robinson’s textbook, *Biblical Preaching*. I conclude Chapter 2 with a survey on influential leadership within higher education.

Chapter 3 also builds from Chapter 1 as I present my epistemology, methodology, and methods guiding this study. I begin this chapter by describing an in-depth reason why I have chosen qualitative research for this study. I also discuss my personal epistemology and how it shapes my thinking. Next, I present the qualitative methodologies I used followed by the practical methods I implemented to collect and analyze my data. I conclude Chapter 3 by addressing issues of trustworthiness, biases, limitations, delimitations, and ethical issues regarding this study.

Chapter 4 is a narrative biography of Haddon Robinson’s life from birth to death, including examples of the ways many people remembered him. Chapter 5 consists of a description of the interviewees and their reflections on Robinson and his influence on the
teaching of preaching. Finally, Chapter 6 is a discussion and conclusion on all of the
findings, as well as suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this hermeneutical and phenomenological study is to explore Haddon Robinson, his homiletic, and his andragogy to determine his influence on the teaching of homiletics in North American evangelical seminaries. To situate Robinson within the context of theological education and the teaching of homiletics, a literature review is necessary. This review consists of a survey of major homiletical movements throughout the history of preaching, an examination of educational theory in the teaching of preaching, an assessment of homiletical textbooks used in theological schools, and a survey on influential leadership within higher education. The three main questions guiding this study are:

Guiding Question (GQ) 1: Who is Haddon Robinson?

Guiding Question (GQ) 2: How did Haddon Robinson formulate his approach to homiletics and andragogy for seminary students?

Guiding Question (GQ) 3: How did Haddon Robinson influence the teaching of homiletics in North American evangelical seminaries?

To begin this review of literature, it is essential to justify the significance of studying Haddon Robinson based on empirical findings related to his achievements as well as the recognition he receives from leading evangelical homiletics professors.

Part I: Literature on the Significance of Studying Haddon Robinson

The primary context of this study is the field of homiletics. Preaching can be a challenging terrain for quantitative studies due to sermons being an event in time, as well as the subjective nature of listening to and evaluating a sermon (Rietveld, 2013). In
addition, the scope of the preaching landscape is exhaustive and can leave many overwhelmed at the thought of trying to conduct analysis on one’s life and influence. Consequently, few research studies have been conducted to solidify Robinson’s influence or significance in this field. Nonetheless, when attempting to understand the significance Haddon Robinson made on the field of homiletics, one could start by examining the awards and accolades he received over his lifetime.

Throughout the 1995-1996 academic school year, Dr. Larry Lyon, professor of sociology at Baylor, Dr. Glenn Jonas, professor at Campbell University in North Carolina, and Milton Cunningham, director of denominational ministries at Baylor University began a research project to identify the most effective preachers in the English-speaking world (Frymire, 1996). Two sequential surveys were developed and used in the selection process. To define the qualities associated with effective preaching, a survey was mailed to homiletics professors in the United States. Lyon, Jonas, and Cunningham collected and categorized the results into seven broad categories: biblical/exegetical, relevance, preacher's persona, theological/orthodox, sermon structure, effective communication and delivery/style (Frymire, 1996). These categories were the basis of the second survey sent to more homiletics professors, in addition to editors of religious periodicals. The second survey requested participants to list preachers in the English-speaking world whom they felt exemplified the seven preaching qualities. The survey garnered 341 responses from a variety of Christian denominations and traditions. A total of 1,548 people were nominated as the most effective preachers in the English-speaking world.
After narrowing down the nominations, the research showed Haddon Robinson as one of the top 12 who received the ‘Baylor Great Preachers’ award (Frymire, 1996). Each recipient received an invitation to participate in a conference or preach on the Baylor campus during the 1996-97 academic year (Media Communications, 1996). This landmark, quantitative study has led to several biographies, significant studies, and research projects on many of the recipients. However, there have been no detailed biographies and minimal doctoral research on Dr. Robinson’s life, method of preaching, or influence. Hollifield’s (2002) doctoral dissertation examines the dynamic of pathos in expository preaching and gives special attention to the theory and practice of Robinson’s preaching. Lake’s (2003) doctoral dissertation evaluates Robinson’s homiletical method from an evangelical perspective. However, while these dissertations are informative regarding aspects of Robinson’s preaching, they do not comprehensively research his life, andragogy, and influence on the teaching of preaching.

The Baylor University award was one of many distinguished achievements Robinson received throughout his life. Christianity Today (2006) recognized Robinson in their top ten list of the “Most Influential Preachers from 1956-2006.” In 2008, Robinson was the first white preacher to receive the E. K. Bailey “Living Legend Award” for his contribution and impact on expository preaching (Baker, 2009). In 2010, Preaching magazine ranked Robinson seventh on their list of the 25 most influential preachers in the past 25 years (Duduit, 2010). Michael Milton, founder and President of the evangelistic outreach ministry, Faith for Living, stated, “Arguably the greatest preacher in North America, Dr. Robinson has influenced pulpits all over America” (Duduit, 2010). Professors from Truett Seminary at Baylor University conducted a second survey in
2017-2018 and Robinson was once again named one of the top 12 preachers in the English-speaking world. The various awards received by Robinson seem to be a clear indication that he was influential in the field of homiletics. However, only the Baylor surveys involved extensive data collection and research confirming this notion.

In addition to these prestigious awards, the leading voices in evangelical homiletics heralded Robinson as a prominent figure in their field. The September 2011 edition of the *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* was completely dedicated to Robinson in honor of his 80th birthday. Established homileticians across North America paid tribute to the “Dean of Evangelical Homiletics” (Gibson, 2011, p. 2). For instance, David Allen (2011), Dean of the School of Theology and Professor of Preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, noted, “Scarcely a homiletics professor in the entire evangelical world remains untouched by his influence. He casts a giant shadow” (p. 17). Kenton Anderson (2011), President of Northwest Baptist Seminary and Professor of Homiletics, commented about the influence of Robinson:

> No one has influenced evangelical homiletics more in the last 30 years than Haddon Robinson. Having taught in three of the most significant evangelical seminaries over several decades and after traveling to countless other schools around the world to serve as a conference and modular course teacher, it is hard to imagine anyone who has prepared a greater number of influential evangelical preachers and leaders. (p. 18)

Many homiletical scholars have seemingly gleaned from Robinson’s career as a preacher, professor, and seminary president.
Additional scholars reflected on the influence Robinson made through his personal life and character. Jerry Barlow (2011), former Dean of Graduate Studies and Professor of Preaching and Pastoral Work at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, did not know Robinson closely but observed his life from a distance and could not help but notice Robinson’s commitment to godly character:

Yet, if we acknowledge that Haddon W. Robinson is worthy of all of the many honors which have been bestowed upon him (and which will be given in the future), we must pay tribute to his steadfast and exemplary character, which has been seen through the years in his commitment to God’s Word and to Christ, both in public and in interpersonal interactions. (pp. 26-27)

Sid Buzzell (2011), who taught alongside Robinson in many of the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s Doctor of Ministry programs, observed Robinson’s life up close:

I won’t venture a guess at how many times I’ve heard students say—in one way or another—that as much as they appreciate how much they’ve learned about preaching from Haddon’s books and sessions, their deepest gratitude and highest respect for Haddon comes from what they learned by observing his life. (p. 35)

It is important to note that many more homileticians from a variety of theological institutions and churches contributed similar words of gratitude, appreciation, and respect to Haddon Robinson in the Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society.³ This vast

³ The following is a list of homileticians from various organizations who contributed an article for the 2011 Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society in honor of Haddon Robinson: Covenant Theological Seminary, College of Christian Studies at Anderson University, two faculty members from Talbot School of Theology, Lancaster Bible College Graduate School, two faculty members from Dallas Theological Seminary, Denver Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, two faculty members from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, two faculty from Moody Bible Institute, four faculty members from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, the Editor of PreachingToday.com, and two pastors of well-known churches (Gibson, 2011).
scope of homiletics professors and pastors demonstrates Robinson’s impact on preaching. However, while he has won many awards and his colleagues acknowledged his contributions and appreciated his life and work, no comprehensive research has been conducted placing Robinson’s influence within the history of preaching and/or indicating his influence on the teaching of preaching.

**Part II: History of Preachers and Preaching Movements**

In determining the influence Robinson made on the teaching of preaching, it is important to situate him properly among the context of preachers, professors, and homiletical movements that were present during his lifetime. Former Principal of New College London, Alfred Ernest Garvie (1920), emphasized the value and need to study the history of preaching:

> The best approach to any subject is by its history; if a science, we must learn all we can about previous discoveries; if an art, about previous methods. The Christian preacher will be better equipped for his task today, if he has some knowledge of how men have preached in former days. (p. 22)

Surveying the history of preaching and homiletical theories that have come, gone, and remain will help establish a foundation for this study and properly assess Robinson’s influence within the field of homiletics. Most surveys on the history of preaching begin with the ancient Greeks and Aristotle so that is where we shall commence.

**Aristotle to Recent Studies from Baylor University**

Many cultures in the history of the world produced great oratory, but the ancient Greeks developed a technical vocabulary regarding rhetoric that helped facilitate how it could be analyzed (Edwards, 1995). The concept of rhetoric resulted from a lack of
professional lawyers in Greece. Citizens were left to defend themselves in their court cases and some managed better than others did. During the fifth century B.C., instructional handbooks appeared teaching people how to use effective rhetoric techniques (Edwards, 1995). One could trace the foundation of homiletics to these simple handbooks.


Following Aristotle’s example, the Greeks continued to grow in their rhetorical influence. The Jewish religious leaders later adopted the Greeks’ common vocabulary and well-known styles for their homilies in the synagogues, although little is known as to when and where the earliest homilies were given (Black, 1988). Early evidence of Christian preaching in synagogues occurs in the New Testament from Jesus and his disciples (Luke 4:16-21; Acts 13:15-16 English Standard Version). Edwards (1995) describes these early synagogue homilies from Christians as, “the most distinctive characteristic of Christian preaching through the ages: the explication and application of biblical texts, an activity for which no provision was made in classical rhetoric” (p. 186).
While Aristotle laid the scholarly beginnings for the field of homiletics, Jesus and his disciples were the first to preach sermons concerning the death, burial, resurrection, and work of the Christ.

Numerous scholars debate on the number of various preaching genres and styles found being practiced by early Christians. For instance, Church historian Hughes Oliphant Old (1998a) observes five different preaching genres in the New Testament (expository preaching, evangelistic preaching, catechetical preaching, festal preaching, and prophetic preaching) and chronicles their development throughout the early church. Overlapping with several of Old’s genres is missionary preaching. There seems to be a consensus among scholars that missionary preaching can be found throughout the book of Acts (Edwards, 1995). As missionaries, the apostles Peter, Paul, and others traveled proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. The setting was not particularly important, rather persuading people about who Jesus was and what he did was their main objective. These early preachers could be found preaching in synagogues (Acts 17:1-13; 19:8), in the marketplace (Acts 17:15-32), on trial (Acts 25-27), and even in prisons (Acts 16:25-34).

Another type of preaching, often implemented in the synagogues and marketplaces, gave room for impromptu communication including questions and challenges from the listeners (Norrington, 1996; For example: Acts 18:6; Luke 4:28-30; Luke 13:14-17; Mt. 13:54-57). These types of sermons all followed a similar format. Each began with a reading or a reciting of prophecy about the coming Messiah from the Hebrew Bible. Proclamation of how Jesus fulfilled that prophecy followed. The preachers argued for the claim by reporting how they were witnesses of the prophecy’s fulfillment.
Finally, the preachers would call upon those listening to repent and believe (Edwards, 1995). As a result of the early Apostles’ preaching, people began meeting regularly to discuss the implications the gospel made on their worldview and livelihood.

By the end of the second century, Christian gatherings adopted the synagogues’ practice of weekly sermons and worship (White, 1993, p. 35). In his description of a church, Justin Martyr (trans. 1997), a second century Christian apologist, notes that preaching, among other activities, would take place as people gathered for worship:

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. (p. 45)

Following this pattern, the Christian Church began to grow during its infancy. Preaching played a significant role in this development as men, women, and children gathered regularly for worship (Latourette, 2007).

As the early Christian movement began to flourish, preaching evolved (Larsen, 1998; Wilson, 1992). Copies of the New Testament circulated around the Middle East, Africa, and Europe creating intrigue in people and conversions to Christianity. This new wave of Christians created more preachers and enabled them to begin honing their oral communication skills as they used the New Testament as their authoritative and central text (Latourette, 2007). Preachers in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire, like Origen (184-253), John Chrsostom (c. 349-407), and John of Antioch (429-441), as well as preachers in the West, like Tertullian (160-220), Cyprian (210-258), and Augustine of
Hippo (354-430) became well-known in their communities and often drew large crowds (Larsen, 1998; Wilson, 1992). Preaching heavily influenced the rise and strengthening of the Christian Church and the conversion of many in the Roman Empire from the time of Jesus until approximately 500 A.D.

Due to the barbarian invasion, the Roman Empire began to collapse in the early Middle Ages (500 – 1000). Since the preaching of the Western church was closely tied to the Roman culture, an era came when many preachers lacked the confidence to handle the Scriptures. They mostly relied on collections of patristic sermons resulting in only a limited amount of new sermons (Edwards, 1995, p. 195). Later on in the Middle Ages, many clergy abused their positions of authority by preaching to recruit valiant soldiers for harsh Crusade marches. Preachers and ministers manipulated and misapplied the Scriptures for the selling of indulgences to promote the raising of funds and collection of sponsors for Christian campaigns (Wilson, 1992, p. 69).

The centrality of the cross was of particular interest to preachers during the early Middle Ages. People used the image of the cross as memorabilia for church liturgy, military banners, and individual defense (Kienzle, 2009). For instance, preacher Rabanas Maurus (c. 780-856) composed a series of five elaborately illustrated poems entitled In Praise of the Holy Cross highlighting the importance of the cross. Maurus’ words, combined with the images of the cross would cause other preachers to argue that the cross could not be understood unless it was visible, thus rendering a widespread popularity of the image of the cross (Sears, 1989). For the next 200 years, the cross would remain the central icon of developing Christianity gatherings (Kienzle, 2009, p. 17).
After years of little significant growth for preaching, there came a great renewal during the 11th and 12th centuries. Preaching played a large role in this rejuvenation as one of the main media for the communication of spiritual growth and new ideas (Edwards, 1995; Latourette, 2007). Wilson (1992) lists several factors that helped contribute to the resurgence of preaching in the late Middle ages (1200 – 1500): increased urbanization including trade and commerce; the scholarly desire to hear the teaching of the church; the founding of universities in Bologna (1088), Oxford (1212), and Paris (1215) to train clergy; the rediscovery of classical thought; the appropriation of recent Jewish exegetical and philosophical thought; scholasticism in universities; and the distinction between theology and biblical studies. Wiersbe and Perry (1984) identify three additional reasons why preaching awoke during this period: orthodox clergy were responding to heresy; recruitment for the final Christian campaigns stimulated preaching; and more frequent use of the vernacular language.

The Order of Preachers (Dominicans) and the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans) spearheaded preaching during the early 1200s. These two groups of religious piety helped the act of preaching move out from the Church and into the streets and churchyards. Both Orders were devoted to evangelical preaching, meaning the spreading of the good news (in Greek, εὐαγγέλιον) (Old, 2008, p. 7; Wilson, 1992, p. 72). The Dominicans, more so than the Franciscans, were dedicated to combat heresy and zealously studied scholasticism. One of the most well-known Dominicans was Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). He and other Dominicans paved the way for preaching to become a unique discipline to be studied beginning in the central to late medieval period (Wilson, 1992). As larger groups gathered, due to urbanization, preaching became revitalized. Sermons
focused on the needs of the poor and unlearned. Thus, preachers began paying more
attention to their delivery methods, as well as emphasizing repentance and faith in Jesus
(Wiersbe & Perry, 1984).

Eventually, this epoch of energized preaching declined as the monastic orders
deteriorated in attractiveness and new members of the humble orders no longer possessed
their founders’ passion and spiritual enthusiasm. The study of homiletics did not decline
as sharply as the countryside preaching, but the public began feeling oppressed and
manipulated by the Church through the preachers’ mishandling and interpretation of
Scripture. Since the Bible was not written in the vernacular of the people, and many
people were not educated enough to read the Scriptures, the Church could use the
proclamation of the Bible and God as a stronghold. Protesters, such as the followers of
John Wycliffe (1330-1384), also known as the Lollards (McFarlane, 1953), the Hussites
in Bohemia (Partner, 1982), and numerous other dissenters in France and Italy (Villari,
1899) opposed the authorities of the Church. They began preaching the controversial
message that supreme authority rested in the Bible, which should be open and accessible
to all people (Hoppin, 1883, pp. 123-124), setting the stage for the Protestant
Reformation to take place in the 16th century.

The invention of the printing press has long been attributed to the spreading of
new ideas in Europe. Since the literate elite only comprised a small minority of the
population, preaching was one of the most efficient ways advocates of the Reformation
spoke to crowds (Ferry, 1990). Reformers like Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox,
Huldrych Zwingli, and many others led revolts from their pulpits advocating for the
Catholic Church to change (Wilson, 1992). These men commandeered the pulpits in
Europe with a message contrary to many of the teachings of the Catholic Church igniting a new era in preaching with the mission, “to faithfully preach the Word of God” (Kiessling, 1935, p. 146.)

To “faithfully preach the Word of God” had slight differences amongst the reformers. Luther (trans. 1967) described his preaching by saying, "In my preaching I take pains to treat a verse [of the Scriptures], to stick to it, and so to instruct the people that they can say, 'That's what the sermon was about'” (p. 160). Calvin’s preaching created a stir, as well, as he broke tradition of preaching from appointed passages of Scripture and preached consecutively through books of the Bible (Dragan, 1954). The impact on society varied amongst preachers, but overall preaching played a significant role in the Protestant Reformation (Old, 1998).

The Reformation appears to have changed preaching significantly, both in the understanding of the preaching event and in the theological content of the sermon (Fickenscher, 1994). Breaks from the traditions and teachings of the Catholic Church sparked Protestant denominations to emerge throughout Europe, across the Atlantic Ocean, and beyond. The convictions of the reformers eventually manifested in the confessions and catechisms of the Protestant church. Many of these principles still govern the way preaching is viewed today and continue to influence the theology of preaching taught to homiletic students. For instance, the Westminster Larger Catechism states, “the Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners” (Watts, 1750, para. Q. 155). The reformers believed that the act of preaching was a “means of grace” by

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4 Examples of confessions and catechisms include the Heidelberg Catechism, Westminster Larger Catechism, Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort.
which the church was nurtured. This promoted the practice of preaching to become a central role in the life of the church, and influenced how many modern-day Protestant denominations understand the centrality of homiletics within the church (Beach, 1999; Wilson, 2010). The reformers did not see preaching as just another small church practice. Rather, they elevated it to a status greater than most ordinances and sacraments (Communion and Baptism were seen as confirmations to the preaching of God’s word).

Puritans in North America led the next great wave of homileticians (Lloyd-Jones, 1987). The growth of churches in the New World sparked the formation of theological institutions in the colonies to supply the churches with educated preachers, as will be discussed later. Preaching became more abundant because of an increase in the size of denominations, number of churches planted, and amount of students being educated.

Preachers such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and Samuel Davis followed the 16th and 17th century Puritans, and were leaders during the First Great Awakening5 throughout the mid-1700s (Larsen, 1998). The Second Great Awakening was led by both male and female preachers such as Charles G. Finney, Lyman Beecher, Barton Stone, Peter Cartwright, James B. Finleythe, Harriet Livermore and Rebecca Miller (Brekus, 2009; Larsen, 1998). The end of the 1800s produced populous preachers such as evangelist Dwight L. Moody, Pastor Adonai J. Gordon, and Pastor Charles Haddon Spurgeon from the United Kingdom. Preachers like these men often traveled the circuit, preaching to packed crowds at conventions and churches (Larsen, 1998).

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5 The term, Great Awakening, is used to describe a time of Christian renewal. Revivals took place in churches and local gatherings that impacted Protestantism as individuals pledged themselves to rededicate their lives to individual holiness and dedication to God.
World Wars I and II, along with the Great Depression, significantly affected preaching during the first half of the 20th century in America. Preachers could not turn a blind eye from the events taking place around the world. Some preachers, like Harry Emerson Fosdick (1928, 1952), used the pulpit to administer pastoral care. Others, like Billy Sunday, Mordecai Ham, and Billy Graham used preaching to advocate for personal conversions to Jesus Christ throughout the 20th century.

The results of Baylor’s 1996 survey on the top preachers in the English speaking-world helps to frame preachers in the late 20th century and those who were significant during Robinson’s career. Several of the top 12 preachers in the survey either taught, or are still teaching, preaching at various Protestant seminaries across the nation and have been influential in shaping homiletics. The award winners come from different denominations and have particular approaches to preaching. For instance, Disciples of Christ preacher, Dr. Fred Craddock, who was the former Bandy Distinguished Professor of Preaching and New Testament, emeritus in the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, published extensively on preaching, including such works as *As One Without Authority* (1979) and *Preaching* (1985). These two works lay the foundation for his inductive approach and are forerunners of the New Homiletic, as will be discussed later. Presbyterian preacher, Dr. Thomas G. Long, the current Bandy Professor of Preaching at Candler School of Theology at Emory University, wrote *The Witness of Preaching* (1989). His book, among many other of his works, has been used widely in seminaries and preaching classrooms. In *The Witness of Preaching*, Long brings his readers through the development of a sermon from a comprehensive theological approach that leads his readers to stretch beyond themselves to grasp God’s presence while empathizing with the
sufferings of the world. The late Dr. John R. W. Stott, rector 
emeritus at All Souls Church in Langham Place, London, and former president of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, published his (1982) book on preaching, Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century. It also became a broadly used homiletics textbook in seminary classrooms. In his book, Stott intends for the sermon to connect the Biblical world to the world of the listeners. Many other of the recipients of Baylor’s Great Preachers’ award have also produced books on preaching used by students of homiletics over the past several decades.6

In 2017 and 2018, the Kyle Lake Center for Effective Preaching at Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary conducted a similar survey and identified the 12 most effective preachers of 2018. Four of the preachers recognized in 1996 were also awarded in 2018: Chuck Swindoll, Barbara Brown Taylor, Thomas Long, and Haddon Robinson. The researchers ceased counting votes for Robinson after his death in the summer of 2017, but he still received enough to land in the top 12. The research from Baylor over the last several decades contributes to Robinson’s familiarity and influence in the field of homiletics.

Tracing the major preaching movements and prominent preachers from Aristotle to Baylor University’s surveys is important because it demonstrates the vastness of the field of homiletics. It also reveals that homiletics has been a vital component in the development of Christianity throughout the past two millennia. Now that I have traced

6 Other homileticians from Baylor’s top twelve list to have written books specifically on preaching include the Rev. Lloyd Ogilvie (The Communicator’s Commentary, ed. 1982), Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor (The Preaching Life, 1993), Dr. Gardner C. Taylors (The Certain Sound of the Trumpet: Crafting a Sermon of Authority, 1994), and Rev. Walter J. Burghardt (Preaching: The Art and the Craft, 1987). Finally, Dr. William Willimon has written extensively on preaching (Peculiar Speech, 1992; The Intrusive Word, 1994; and A Guide to Preaching and Leading Worship, 1984).
the major movements in homiletics and prominent preachers from Aristotle to Baylor University’s surveys of top preachers in the English-speaking world, it is important to focus on contemporary homiletical theories.

Many books have been written on the history of preaching, but usually lend themselves to the history of preachers, or preaching movements, and not necessarily preaching theories (Brilioth, 1965; Dargan, 1968; Edwards Jr., 2004; Fant & Pinson, 1971; Holland, 1980; Horne, 1914; Jones, 1951; Larsen, 1998; Old, 1998a, 1998b; Osborn, 1999; Sweet, 1952; Turnbull, 1974; Webber, 1957; Wiersbe, 1976; Wiersbe & Perry, 1984; Wilson, 1992). While these texts may be valuable for understanding the history of preaching, it is important to look beyond the scope of well-known preachers to understand the distinct paradigms of homiletical theory that were present during Robinson’s teaching tenure as well as remain today.

**Four Homiletical Theory Paradigms**

Building off the 2,000-year history of preaching and the distinguished English-speaking preachers during the past several decades, contemporary homiletical literature reveals four current paradigms of homiletical theory. The Traditional Homiletic, the Kerygmatic Homiletic, the New Homiletic, and the Postliberal Homiletic are taught in seminaries around the world and practiced in churches on a weekly basis (Rose, 1997). It is important to describe these four approaches briefly, which at times overlap, to situate Robinson within the field of homiletical theory.

According to Lake (1997), those who practice the Traditional Homiletic approach to preaching have not altered this approach too far from its origins, which are rooted in the works of Augustine. At its core, the Traditional Homiletic gives a logical argument for an essential idea or ideas.

The first major component deals with how the form of the sermon is developed. The form rests on, “the assumption that the task of a sermon is to present to the hearers a clear elaboration of some important idea or thesis” (Long, 1995, p. 146). However, the era and cultural context alters the form of the message. The second major component derives the idea of the sermon from a correct interpretation of the Bible according to its historical, cultural, grammatical, and literary context (Adams, 1971; Baird, 1976; Baumann, 1972; Braga, 1981; Cox, 1976; Hoefler, 1978; Luccock, 1944). According to Rose (1995), these two characteristics exemplify the Traditional Homiletic as first introduced by John Broadus in his 1870 book, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*.

Jokingly, people refer to the Traditional Homiletic as a “cookie-cutter” sermon, or a “three points and a poem” sermon, but it can take on many shapes and forms. This homiletical theory typically displays the following characteristics: (1) Unity which connects each point around a focused idea; (2) Order and proportion which arranges the points logically and allots each one a fairly equal amount of time; and (3) Movement and climax are associated with the logical development of the sermon which is ultimately intended to make an impact upon the hearer (Long, 1995). When describing the structure of the Traditional Homiletic, Long (1995) writes,
Even though the traditional approach allowed for a multitude of variation, the constant that held them together was the notion of the sermon as an idea, or proposition, and sermon form as the expression of the internal structure of that idea. (p. 147)

Lake (2003) identifies that advocates of the Traditional Homiletic are mostly evangelical who believe the Bible is the inspired, infallible, and the authoritative Word of God, which is their foundation for preaching. Often, this homiletical theory refers to expository preaching and is significant for this study because Haddon Robinson, those interviewed during this research, as well as myself, fit best into this homiletical theory.

The kerygmatic homiletic. The Kerygmatic Homiletic theory seems to overlap with the Traditional Homiletic theory, and proponents of one may very well ascribe to some of the characteristics of the other. Nonetheless, there are key differences between the two. The term, kerygma, is Greek, and often used in the New Testament for “proclamation” or “preaching” (in the order of the New Testament books: Matthew 3:1, 12:41; Luke 4:18-19, 1:32; Romans 10:14, 16:25; 1 Corinthians 1:21, 2:4, 15:14; 2 Timothy 4:17; Titus 1:3). Regarding homiletics, the kerygma is, “the primitive and essential core of the gospel, the Word of God as an active presence in preaching, and the sermon as an event in which God speaks a saving word” (Rose, 1997, p. 72).

This theory began gathering followers during the mid-20th century as liberal scholars scrutinized the legitimacy of the New Testament Gospels. Out of these debates, C.H. Dodd (1936) and Rudolf Butlman (1960) decreed that the Gospels themselves where a unique genre that proclaimed the work, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Dodd contended that preaching ought to transmit the kerygma as opposed to “ethical
instruction” which was perceived to be the case of some in the Traditional Homiletic (Styler, 1999, pp. 304-305). Reid (1998) explains the major difference between the contemporary Kerygmatic Homiletic approach versus the Traditional Homiletic approach:

In the Kerygmatic approach, the preacher emphasizes the individual's ability to have an encounter with God in the context of a community of faith. The primary difference between Traditional preaching and Kerygmatic preaching is that the latter is concerned with identifying truth through the experience of facilitating an encounter with God and God's Word. (p. 169)

There are not as many advocates of this homiletical approach as the Traditional Homiletic but advocates of this homiletic desire the preacher to be the mouthpiece of God (Barth, trans. 1991; Markquart, 1985; Mitchell, 1979; Mounce, 1960). They believe the sermon is an event where God speaks and people are ushered into his presence.

**The new homiletic.** In response to the Traditional Homiletic’s view of Scripture and the Kerygmatic Homiletic’s assessment of the preacher being the messenger of God, a new homiletic was introduced in the mid-late 20th century. In 1971, Fred Craddock’s, *As One Without Authority: Essays on Inductive Preaching*, garnered interest from many preachers and teachers of preaching in Protestant Mainline denominations (Long, 1993). Others quickly followed Craddock’s lead.

During the 1950s and 1960s, citizens in the United States of America became increasingly skeptical towards institutional authority (Miner, 1971). Religious establishments and figures were not exempt from this scrutiny. Nor was the preacher’s sermon, which was viewed by some as too propositional and the Bible too authoritative
(Stott, 1982). This ignited a need for a novel way of preaching which many preachers in the Mainline Protestant traditions adopted.

Gibson (2005) contends the New Homiletic has its roots in the thinking of the New Hermeneutic theologians Gerhard Ebeling and Ernst Fuchs. Theologian Rudolf Bultmann and philosopher Martin Heidegger’s new understanding of hermeneutics heavily influenced Ebeling and Fuchs. According to Gibson, Bultmann and Heidegger influenced Ebling and Fuchs into believing that “language itself is an interpretation and therefore cannot be understood in reference to ancient texts as somehow embodying objective truth” (p. 19). Gibson also asserts that the works of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey greatly swayed Ebeling and Fuchs. Schleiermacher and Dilthey break from the old way of executing hermeneutics and introduce a new way of interpreting texts and language focusing on, “making understanding possible and deliberately initiating understanding in each individual case” (Ebeling, 1967, p. 15). Ebeling and Fuchs laid the foundations for Craddock (1971, 1985), Buttrick (1987), Lowry (2000), and others to introduce new ways of thinking about hermeneutics and homiletics.

As a result of the New Hermeneutic, the New Homiletic contrasts the Traditional Homiletic and shifts the attention of preaching from the authority of the preacher and Scripture to the listeners and their experiences and interpretations (Radford, 2005). It is a subtle shift from the Kerygmatic Homiletic in that the New Homiletic, “requires the preacher not to simply restate the text but to say it in a new way for a new situation because the language of the text can at times hide the meaning of the text” (Bender, 2005,
The focus of the New Homiletic centers on the listeners’ experiences and not necessarily the Scriptures or the kerygma.

This shift concentrates on the sermon being a “speech-event which discloses its meaning through its relationship to its context, to the faith, and to the listener and community” (Gibson, 2005, p. 21). Instead of the preacher explaining to the listeners the author’s original intended meaning of the text, as in the Traditional Homiletic, there is an intentional delay and, at times, an omission of the preacher’s exegetical interpretation and theological implications. As Randolph (1969) emphasized in his book The Renewal of Preaching: A New Homiletic Based on the New Hermeneutic, “Preaching is understood not as the packaging of a product but as the evocation of an event” (p. 19). This approach to preaching maintains that sermons ought to be structured according to the needs of the listeners, have smooth design which allow access to all who hear, and provide a variety of perspectives on the subject matter being discussed (Wilson, 2016).

Craddock and Randolph were not the only pioneers of this movement (Reid, Bullock & Fleer, 1998). Buttrick (1987) stresses the importance of moves and structures within the sermon in his award-winning book, Homiletic. Lowry (1980) builds off Craddock’s inductive preaching approach and describes the sermon as narrative art form in The Homiletical Plot. These teachers of preaching, along with Achtemeier (1981), Bartow (1997), Eslinger (1987), Jensen (1980), Steimle, Niedenthal and Rice (1991), Troeger (1990), and Waznak (1998) have played a huge part in developing and supporting the New Homiletic.

Rose (1997) identifies the New Homiletic as “Transformational Voices” and proclaims that there are a variety of claims within the New Homiletic that, “share
common convictions, emphases, and presuppositions” (p. 60). Eslinger (1987) and Lowry (1997) identify several different New Homiletic sermon types: the inductive sermon method, preaching as story, the narrative and sermonic plot, the transconscious African-American sermon, the phenomenological move sermon, and the conversational-episodal sermon. The mutual agreement amongst advocates of this theory is for the sermon to be no longer about points and propositions, but rather focus on the listener’s experience. The emphasis is on what the sermon does instead of what is said (Bullock, 1999; Campbell, 1995).

The New Homiletic has raised concerns from both evangelical and non-evangelical homileticians, primarily on the issue of authority. Radford (2005) writes, “The New Homiletic’s curtailing of authority outside of the listener has resulted in preaching that is more concerned to create an ‘experience of the gospel’ for the listener than it is with conveying biblical content” (p. 8). Inevitably, this shifts the authority of the sermon from the Scriptures to the listener. Radford continues:

When the listeners’ experiences become the source of the sermon’s content, on par with the Scripture itself, as well as the litmus test for the relevance of the sermon, the Word of God is surely to be drowned out by the chatter of those who claim to hear. (p. 14)

Nonetheless, in one way or another, this new preaching movement influenced many evangelicals and proponents of the Tradition Homiletic, such as Robinson. It has forced supporters of differing homiletical approaches to reexamine and rethink their own homiletical theory.
The postliberal homiletic. A fourth homiletical approach that is worth noting is the Postliberal Homiletic, which has many similarities with the New Homiletic. It does not receive the same following as the other approaches because it remains in its infancy. This approach to preaching draws from a postliberal theology ushered in by Lindbeck (1984), Frei (1974), and Placher (1997). Homileticians who ascribe to a postliberal homiletic are Campbell (1997), Hauerwas (1992), Lischer (1992), Pape (2013) and Shepherd Jr. (1998). A cultural-linguistic approach to preaching, which is foundational to this homiletical approach, stems from the core of postliberal theology (Lake, 1997).

Along with having a cultural-linguistic model shaped from a postliberal theology, another key concept to this approach of preaching is the emphasis on performance (Lischer, 1987, p. 90-92; Shepherd, 1998, p. 18-32). Advocates of this approach see the dire need to reach the culture using language to engage the congregation. Campbell (1997) writes, “In a time when the church is struggling with its identity within a secular society, this postliberal, cultural-linguistic model is a crucial one for the contemporary pulpit to take seriously” (p. 237). The supporters of this approach are well-intended, but the elimination of a cognitive thesis to the sermon may be disconcerting for those in other approaches, most likely including Robinson.

In summation, there have been many trends and figures over the past two millennia in the field of homiletics. More recently, four approaches to homiletical theory seem to rise to the surface: the Traditional Homiletic, the Kergmatic Homiletic, the New Homiletic, and the Postliberal Homiletic. Each approach has its focus and supporters from all corners of Protestantism. This was the contemporary scene Robinson found himself throughout his career. As a self-proclaimed evangelical, Robinson most likely fit
into the Traditional Homiletic approach. Therefore, it is important to unpack the four dominant views within the Traditional Homiletic to determine Robinson’s influence within the field of homiletics in evangelical seminaries.

**Four Views to the Traditional Homiletic**

Most evangelical homileticians ascribe to a Traditional Homiletic and often refer to this type of preaching as expository preaching. Evangelical homileticians may differ in the structure and emphasis of sermons, as explained below, but most would not adhere to a Kergmatic Homiletic, a New Homiletic, or a Postliberal Homiletic. Linguistically, expository preaching means to “expose people to the Word of God” (Danne, 1980, p. 52). Nonetheless, there seems to be multiple explanations and definitions of expository preaching (Figure 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Definitions and Explanations of Expository Preaching</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phillips Brooks</td>
<td>Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men. It has two essential elements, truth and personality. Neither of those can it spare and still be preaching. (1989, pp. 25-26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Mohler</td>
<td>Expository preaching is that mode of Christian preaching that takes as its central purpose the presentation and application of the text of the Bible. All other issues and concerns are subordinated to the central task of presenting the biblical text. (2008, p. 65.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Dever</td>
<td>Preaching which takes for the point of a sermon the point of a particular passage of Scripture. (2004, p. 40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Martin Lloyd-Jones</td>
<td>True expository preaching, is therefore, doctrinal preaching, it is preaching which addresses specific truths from God to man. (Ilian and Jones, 1990, p. 261)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John A. Broadus</td>
<td>An expository sermon is one which is occupied mainly with the exposition of Scripture. [Therefore] expository sermons may be defined as a sermon that draws its divisions and the exploration of those divisions from the text… In other words, the entire thought content comes from the Scripture. (1979, p. 59)</td>
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[Figure 2]
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Definitions and Explanations of Expository Preaching</th>
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<tr>
<td>John MacArthur</td>
<td>By expositionally, I mean 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 is the proclamation of the truth of God as mediated through the preacher. (1992, pp. 23-24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney Greidanus</td>
<td>Expository preaching, as its name implies, is to expose, to lay open, the meaning of the preaching text in its contexts. (1999, p. 231)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Stott</td>
<td>To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view. The expositor prizes open what appears to be closed, makes plain what is obscure, unravels what is knotted and unfolds what is tightly packed. (1982, pp. 125-126)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramesh Richards</td>
<td>Expository preaching is the contemporization of the central proposition of the biblical text that is derived from proper methods of interpretation and declared through effective means of communication to inform minds, to instruct hearts, and influence behavior toward godliness. (2001, p. 19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Shaddix</td>
<td>The process of laying open a biblical text in such a way that its original meaning - <em>God’s voice</em> - is brought to bear on the lives of contemporary listeners. (2003, p. 127)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryan Chapell</td>
<td>Expository preaching endeavors to discover and convey the precise meaning of the Word. Scripture rules over what expositors preach because they unfold what it says. The meaning of the passage is the message of the sermon. (1994, p. 23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abraham Kuruvilla</td>
<td>Biblical preaching, by a leader of the church, in a gathering of Christians for worship, is the communication of the thrust of a pericope of Scripture discerned by theological exegesis, and of its application to that specific body of believers, that they may be conformed to the image of Christ, for the glory of God—all in the power of the Holy Spirit. (2015, p. 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haddon Robinson</td>
<td>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 it to the hearers. (2001, p. 21)</td>
</tr>
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*Figure 2. Definitions and explanations of expository preaching.*

Even with an array of diverse opinions, there seems to be agreement within each explanation centering on the importance of using the Scriptures as the foundation for the
A Christocentric homiletic. Evangelicals give several nuances to a Christocentric Homiletic as well as various names (Gospel-centered preaching, Christ-centered preaching, and Historical-Redemptive preaching). Nonetheless, the consensus amongst all of these views is that preaching Christ is the central focus in every sermon (Adams, 1982; Chapell, 2006; Clowney, 2007; Duncan, 2007; Goldsworthy, 2000). Greidanus (1999) describes this approach to preaching as, “preaching sermons which authentically integrate the message of the text with the climax of God’s revelation in the person, work, and/or teaching of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament” (p. 10).

One of the premier books on Christocentric preaching is Bryan Chapell’s (1994), *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*. He (2006) draws heavily on Greidanus’ early writings helping him look at Scripture through a redemptive lens (p. 45). Chapell observed in his own preaching, as well as others, that moral instruction and societal reform were the major crises being addressed. He wondered if something else was missing in the sermon and wanted to alter this state of affairs. Therefore, he published his work to instruct well-intended preachers who may be unaware of their sermon’s consequences (Chapell, 2006, pp. 44-46). In the Preface to *Christ-Centered Preaching*, Chapell (1994) writes:
Evangelical preachers reacting to the secularization of both church and culture can mistakenly make moral instruction or societal reform the primary focus of their message…The Bible does not tell us how we can improve ourselves to gain God’s acceptance. Fundamentally and pervasively the Scriptures teach the inadequacy of any purely human effort to secure divine approval. We are entirely dependent upon the mercy of God to be what he desires and to do what he requires. Grace rules! (p. 12)

Chapell stresses that preaching from the Bible should not merely lead people to behavior modification but rather the primary focus of the message ought to be Jesus Christ. He adds, “However well intended and biblically rooted may be a sermon’s instruction, if the message does not incorporate the motivation and enablement inherent in a proper apprehension of the work of Christ, the preacher proclaims mere Pharisaism” (p. 12). These remarks hint at Chapell’s uneasiness with other expository preachers whose methods and theories only seem to offer propositions built around moralistic pragmatics. Chapell insists that the goal of preaching ought to be the communication of the redemption in Christ first, and then out of this transformation work, the change of one’s behavior may occur.

Like other evangelicals, Chapell (1994) agrees that the Scriptures carry authority and it is the preacher’s responsibility to communicate its truths. He writes, “Expository preaching endeavors to discover and convey the precise meaning of the Word. Scripture rules over what expositors preach because they unfold what it says. The meaning of the passage is the message of the sermon” (emphasis Chapell, 1994, p. 23). Chapell affirms that preaching should communicate one idea and, “all the features of the entire sermon
should support the concept that unifies the whole” (p. 36). This is somewhat similar to other homiletical theories, however, Chapell advocates for finding the Fallen Condition Focus (FCF) within the text that relates to the modern listener.

The Fallen Condition Focus is the “mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or for whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage” (Chapell, 1994, p. 42). The preacher’s task is to locate the human shortcoming, or fallen condition, in the text and help the modern listener identify with that condition. The FCF is not merely a condition rectified by better behavior but rather it requires the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ.

As mentioned above, many other evangelical preachers advocate for a version of Christocentric preaching through differing labels. For instance, Greidanus (2003) is a strong proponent of a Historical-Redemptive approach in which the preacher focuses solely on ways to connect every passage of Scripture to the overarching redemptive narrative of the Bible. In Keller’s (2016) Gospel-centered preaching approach, he stresses the importance of the sermon making the gospel message clear as it climaxes in Christ. He writes, “As we preach, we are to serve and love the truth of God’s Word and also to serve and love the people before us. We serve the Word by preaching the text clearly and preaching the gospel every time” (Keller, 2016, p. 23). Speaking from his preaching experience of over forty years, Keller implores his readers to “confine ourselves” to Jesus and “the story of this one individual never needs to become repetitious. It contains the whole history of the universe and of humankind alike and is the only resolution of the plotlines of every one of our lives” (p. 16). These three subtle, and often overlapping, varieties of the Christocentric Homiletic (Christ-centered preaching, Historical-
Redemptive preaching, and Gospel-centered preaching) have a strong following from many in the Reformed Protestant tradition and give evangelicals another unique approach to preaching.

**A theocentric homiletic.** Slightly different from a Christocentric Homiletic is a Theocentric Homiletic. A Theocentric Homiletic ascribes to make the Triune God the focal point of the sermon (Valentino, 2014). In his book, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, John Piper (1990) writes:

> The goal of preaching is the glory of God reflected in the glad submission of the human heart. And the supremacy of God in preaching is secured by this fact: The one who satisfies gets the glory; the one who gives the pleasure is treasure. (p. 31)

Piper concludes this goal by drawing on the works of the Puritan preacher, Jonathan Edwards, who devoted his life to preaching for the glory of God and would most likely identify with the Theocentric Homiletic although he does not mention this anywhere.

The establishment of the Theocentric Homiletic is unknown because one could possibly find its roots in the Old Testament prophets proclaiming the attributes and promises of God. Therefore, it is uncertain as to when and where the term originated. Recently the subject of theocentric preaching came to the forefront when Pastor Ken Langley presented a hotly debated paper at the 2008 annual meeting of the Evangelical Homiletics Society. His admittedly provocative title, “When Christ Replaces God at the Center of a Sermon” was “intended to get the attention” of his colleagues who advocate for Christ-centered preaching (Langley, 2008, p. 1). His main objective was to point out possible dangers that students and readers of Christocentric teachings might miss.
Langley (2008) states that he agrees with his Christocentric colleagues more than he disagrees but is cautious to put Christ “into every sermon” (p. 1). Langley writes, “I fear that putting Christ, rather than God at the center of preaching may lead to unintended consequences in theology, homiletics, and church life. It’s enough - it’s better - for biblical preachers to be theocentric” (p. 18). He also contends that the prophets preached about God, as did Jesus and the apostles, “which is reason enough to be God-centered in preaching” (p. 5). Langley stresses the importance of preaching for the glory of the triune God and not only about one person of the Godhead (p. 12).

Through an email exchange with Langley, he stated the premise of his view of Theocentric Preaching as:

Preaching should be God-centered because God is God-centered and wants us to be God-centered in everything we do. All God does he does for his glory, and all we do—eating, drinking, and certainly preaching—we do for his glory (1 Cor. 10:31). (K. Langley, personal communication, December, 8, 2017)

Theocentric preaching is nothing new for expository preaching, but rather, as demonstrated above, it has been highlighted as a response to Christocentric preaching which has received traction over the last several decades. This response is resulting in more publications with theocentric terminology. There seems to be a consensus from theocentric preachers that the sermon can take a variety of shapes and forms, but the underlying theme that the preacher will preach is the “plain” meaning of the text for the glory of God (Willhite, 2003, pp. 16-17).

A slight alternative within this approach is Text-Driven Preaching, used in some Southern Baptist pulpits and seminaries. Allen (2010) writes that, “Text-Driven
Preaching is the interpretation and communication of a biblical text in a sermon that represents the substance, structure, and the spirit of the text” (p. 101). Supporters of Text-Driven Preaching stress the importance of the text to guide the entire sermon process (Allen, 2010, p. 6). As a result, sermons will proclaim what God is saying through the text making this approach theocentric.

Advocates of Theocentric preaching are not averse to preaching Christ, but choose only to preach about Christ from the Scriptures when Jesus is clearly alluded to or mentioned. Instead, they are committed to making the main idea of that particular passage the central idea of the sermon. Robinson’s philosophy of biblical preaching seems to fall best into the Theocentric Homiletic approach as will be highlighted later.

A law/gospel homiletic. A Law/Gospel Homiletic approach to preaching overlaps with both a Theocentric Homiletic and a Christocentric Homiletic. One of the main contemporary advocates of this view is Paul Scott Wilson, Professor of Homiletics at Emmanuel College at the University of Toronto. In *Imagination of the Heart: New Understandings in Preaching*, Wilson (1988) discusses how a sermon can move from sin, judgement, and brokenness, to God’s grace and redemption. These underlying theological convictions of law and Gospel are foundational for his book titled, *The Four Pages of the Sermon* (1999). Wilson (1999) tasks each page, or part of the sermon, with a specific undertaking. The first page of the sermon, or the first quarter of the sermon, addresses the theological problem from the biblical text. The second page correlates the problem of the Bible to the problem within the world today. The third page articulates God’s grace and the good news from the Bible. Finally, the last section brings the divine grace of God into action. This sequence moves from the “trouble” in the text and the world, which could
also be referred to as the law, to the “grace” of God found in the Gospel. This method leads the preacher to point out how every text points to the fullness of the Gospel (Wilson, 1999).

Wilson continues to present the significant paradigm of law and Gospel in his 2004 book, *Preaching and Homiletical Theory*. While tracing the homiletical theory movements throughout the latter half of the 20th century, Wilson (2004) raises the important issues of law and Gospel. He makes the assertion that preaching the doctrines of regulation and grace were strong components in the Reformer’s preaching, but he suggests moving away from their rigid structure. Wilson (2016) again cries for the sermon to be about the Gospel, although slightly different from Christocentric preaching. In his book, *Setting Words on Fire*, he (2008) writes that all approaches:

…have their weaknesses, and it is clear now that having the Bible as a foundation is not necessarily the same thing as having God. Ostensibly, one can preach the Bible and not arrive at God’s word, one can preach God’s word and not arrive at the gospel, and one might even teach the gospel and still not proclaim it. (p. 3)

Wilson (2016) also expresses how one’s theology regarding the Gospel will give the preacher the passion, energy, and calling he or she desires.

**A pericopal theology homiletic.** One final approach worth mentioning comes from Dallas Theological Seminary’s Senior Research Professor of Preaching and Pastoral Ministries, Abraham Kuruvilla. In his book, *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching*, Kuruvilla (2013) examines the process the preacher takes when going from text to sermon. He believes the preacher must try to discern what the author is doing with what he is saying in a particular passage of Scripture. Kuruvilla calls
this pericopai theology in which each pericope\(^7\) has a specific theological claim. He (Kuruvilla, 2015) calls the theological assertion the *thrust* of the passage. This thrust “must be the interpretive goal that a preacher seeks from any text, and such thrusts must be the communicational goal a preacher accomplishes in any sermon” (2015, p. 10).

The need to find valid application from the ancient text shapes Kuruvilla’s (2015) approach to preaching. He writes, “Through the two millennia of the church age, this has been the gaping hole in every theory of preaching. A robust hermeneutic for making this move from text to audience has been lacking” (Kuruvilla, 2015, p. 6). He contests that even with the unique discourse that makes up the Bible, the text:

…mandates its own application in times and spaces distant from the circumstances of its writing. So if Scripture is to be employed in new locales of reading, the thrust of the text—what it is all about—must be recovered and communicated. This is the primary role of the preacher, the intermediary between God’s word and God’s people: to understand the thrust of the text, and to convey that thrust to listeners. (p. 9-10)

Kuruvilla draws on Ricoeur’s (1979) article, “Naming God,” in which Ricoeur refers to discovering the “world in front of the text” (p. 217). In other words, Kuruvilla (2013) seeks the discovery of what the biblical author is doing with what he is saying. Kuruvilla invites listeners to inhabit the other world and change their lives based on the Bible’s values and principles. He (2015) states, “One pericope at a time, the various aspects of Christian life, individual and corporate, are gradually being brought into alignment with

\(^7\) Kuruvilla uses the word “pericope” to mean a set of verses that consist of a complete unit of thought.
the will of God for the glory of God—God’s world is becoming reality. This is the goal of preaching” (pp. 13-14).

As the preacher exposits each pericope, listeners are given an idea of what it is to live in the world in front of the text and are presented with what it means to live in accordance with the will of God (Kuruvilla, 2013). Kuruvilla (2013) links this type of living as modeling the life of Christ, since Christ perfectly met all of God’s demands and lived without sin according to 2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15, and Hebrews 7:26. Kuruvilla (2015) has labeled this model of interpretation for preaching as *christiconic*, stating:

Preaching is for the transformation of lives, that the people of God may be conformed to the image of Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of Scripture, by the agency of the preacher. Week by week, sermon by sermon, pericope by pericope, habits are changed, dispositions are created, character is built, and the image of Christ is formed, until humans become fully and completely what humanity was meant by God to be. (p. 20)

He describes this move from text to sermon as pericopal theology because the preacher seeks to find the theological truth of the pericope of Scripture to be preached.

In 2015, Kuruvilla presented his philosophy of preaching to the Evangelical Homiletics Society as the annual conference’s keynote speaker. His colleague at Dallas Theological Seminary, Timothy Warren (2015), acknowledged Kuruvilla’s contribution to the homiletical field when writing to members of the society:

Evangelical homileticians have added little to the development of the preacher’s hermeneutical understanding and skill. For the most part we have been content to
repackage what has been said before rather than engage in advancing new theory. That is why a contribution like Kuruvilla’s *Privilege the Text!* is such a welcome addition to our homiletics libraries. He has grounded his development of “pericopal theology” in the academic arena of language theory. Such grounding helps to legitimize our homiletical theory and provides deeper, clarifying insights into what faithful preaching is and does…While some homileticians have made passing reference to what texts do (Adams, Craddock, Greidanus), they have not validated how it is that text’s do. (pp. 50-53)

The acceptance of a Pericopal Theology Homiletic remains to be seen since it is still in its infancy. Regardless, Kuruvilla has produced significant works that give evangelical homileticians another approach to consider when attempting to preach expository sermons.

As demonstrated, there have been four dominant contemporary homiletical theory paradigms: Traditional Homiletic, Kerygematic Homiletic, New Homiletic, and Postliberal Homiletic. Robinson, as well as many evangelical preachers, would likely find themselves ascribing to a Traditional Homiletic theory, often referred to as expository preaching since this practice aligns closest with their hermeneutic of the Bible and theological positions. Within expository preaching, there are multiple approaches to preaching and four were identified in this study: Christocentric, Theocentric, Law/Grace, and Pericopal Theology. While there is much overlap among these approaches, Robinson would have most likely identified with a Theocentric Homiletic approach to expository preaching.
Part III: Educational Theory

Now that I have situated Robinson within the history of preaching and the contemporary homiletical theory paradigms and approaches, it is important to turn attention to educational theory. My research not only focuses on preaching, but also concentrates on the intersection of homiletics and adult education. Therefore, a brief literature review on pragmatism and andragogy is needed followed by how they are connected to educational theories that could be used by preaching professors. I conclude this section by identifying ways homiletics professors have made efforts to advance the teaching of preaching in their field.

Pragmatism

Philosophy tends to ground the various educational theories used in teaching. For the purposes of this study, pragmatism can offer an important foundation to the work of teaching preaching to adult learners. Pragmatism abandons the traditional view that intellectual inquiry is for the sole purpose of ideas, beliefs, and thoughts to describe and understand reality. Instead, pragmatism, also called instrumentalism and experimentalism, is for the benefit of contributing to some problem solving objective or meaningful deed (James 1907/1995). The word pragmatism originates from the Greek word, πράγμα, meaning action or affair. Although coined by Charles Peirce in the early 1870s, his contemporary, William James, crystalized the term and set forth the ideas that made pragmatism known (Pomerleau, 1997).

After completing studies in medicine and establishing himself as a psychologist, James began contemplating the purpose of constructive application. He was stirred by the notion of how one makes a positive difference in the lives of other people (James, 1898).
He followed Peirce’s thoughts closely and built upon Peirce’s philosophical argument on the importance of “the principle of pragmatism” (James, 1898, p. 291). James believes that the exploration of truth must involve a particular experience and lead to a concrete action (James, 1989). In his address to the Philosophical Union at Berkeley, he states, the “whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and me, at definite instants of our life” (James, 1898, p. 292).

James (1907/1995) continued to build on the concept of the pragmatic method by grounding his questions in the practical and particular consequences. He writes, “The pragmatic method is primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes that otherwise might be interminable” (p. 18). Despite the numerous lectures and publications, James (1909/1997) consistently reminded listeners and readers that pragmatism was primarily about the application of the pragmatic method and the conception of what is meant by truth.

At its core, pragmatism is a philosophical movement that concludes a proposition is true if it works satisfactorily. In essence, a proposition’s meaning is found in the practical consequences of its action. Educators of specific crafts or skills, like preaching, could very easily adopt this philosophical concept.

James (1899/2015) also believed that teachers held the future of the United States of America in their hands because of their influence with students. Regarding the potential he saw in students, he (James, 1899/2015) wrote:

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8 James differed with Pierce primarily on the conception of truth. James argues that if a belief like religion or other types of mysticisms are useful, then to that individual, it is true. He is open to the possibility of moving outside the realm of the observed. However, Pierce feels differently in that he attributes truth to scientific investigation and empirical methods.
The earnestness which they at present show in striving to enlighten and strengthen themselves is an index of the nation’s probabilities of advance in all ideal directions. The outward organization of education which we have in our United States is perhaps, on the whole, the best organization that exists in any country. (p. 13)

James’ emphasis on the crucial role a teacher can play in the life of a student, in addition to the trajectory of a nation, is pertinent to this study since I will be looking at the influence Haddon Robinson has made on the teaching of preaching in evangelical seminaries in North America.

In addition to James, John Dewey is another well-known American pragmatist. Dewey grounded his educational philosophy in pragmatism in his classical works: My Pedagogic Creed (1897), The School and Society (1900), The Child and the Curriculum (1902), Democracy and Education (1916) and Experience and Education (1938). A fundamental theme in Dewey’s work was his unwavering view of the importance of democracy. One of the ways this common theme appears in Dewey’s work in education is the concept of a student excelling when he or she is able to interact with the curriculum and truly experience the learning process. Dewey (1959) insisted students are to be partakers in the educational experience and not merely recipients of information. He believed that the process and the goal of education should be the same, “to educate” (p. 27).

Dewey (1938) also stressed the importance of the teacher being a participant in the learning process instead of being a domineering force dictating the education. This philosophy of education was in stark contrast to the traditional educational theories of the
day, which emphasized direct instruction and lectures. Dewey (1959) believed that meaningful and impactful learning took place when the education process was guided, instead of ordered, by those more experienced and wiser, such as teachers. He (1959) also believed that teachers should, “select the influences which shall affect the child and to assist him (or her) in properly responding to these influences” (p. 24). The value of the teacher, Dewey (1959) believed, was in his or her ability to influence students because of a richer life experience and great wisdom as opposed to the wealth of knowledge on a particular subject.

Dewey recognized a conflict between authority and freedom. He believed the two could be reconciled if they were viewed in light of a collective knowledge expanded by the use of social inquiry (Gordon, 1998). Dewey (1946) wrote, “The need for authority is a constant need of man. For it is a need for principles that are both stable enough and flexible enough to give direction to the process of living in its vicissitudes and uncertainties” (p. 169). Like Pierce, Dewey believed using the method of scientific inquiry in the physical world aids in arriving at true knowledge throughout all areas of life. In his book, *John Dewey on Authority*, Diggins (1994) writes, “The classical notion of truth as the agreement of thought with things and with other thoughts seemed to Dewey not only untenable but a scandalous illusion” (p. 229). Instead, Dewey arrived at truth after hypotheses and predications arising from one’s experiences were tested, observed, and verified.

Another theme consistent throughout Dewey’s writings and teaching were the ideas of social reform. Dewey (1940/1969) believed that education was foundational for any democratic society. He was deeply concerned about the necessity of educating the
next generation and the progression of new ideas and systems as opposed to protecting the status-quo (1916/1997). For Dewey (1938/1997, 1959), education was some of the most important work of which any society could be part, and he often spoke of the consequences of a society who wasted its educational promise. The purpose of education, rather, was to inspire each student to reach his or her full potential to usher in social change and not merely the mastery of a set of skills (Dewey, 1897). Referring to the task of teaching, Dewey (1897) notes, "to prepare him for the future life means to give him command of himself; it means so to train him that he will have the full and ready use of all his capacities" (p. 80). Dewey’s hands-on approach to teaching and learning, also known as experiential education or progressivism, was groundbreaking during his time and has now been adopted by many, which sets him apart from other educational theorists (Cremin, 1961; Ravitch, 1983).

In comparison to Dewey’s philosophy of education, there are at least three other leading philosophies that are often implemented in classrooms around the world: perennialism, essentialism, and social reconstructionism (Apps, 1973). Each educational philosophy has a different perspective on the role of the student and teacher as well as the intended purpose of learning. Perennialism is the educational philosophy often found in classical schools and classrooms that rely on ancient works and the Socratic Method (Mosier, 1951). Essentialism closely relates to perennialism by focusing on the essential elements of education from historical and contemporary knowledge, however there is much more diversity in their methodology. The essentialists subscribe to the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic making students learn through required reading, memorization, repetition, listening to lectures, and passing examinations (Bagley, 1939).
Closely related to Dewey and progressivism is social reconstructionism. This fourth educational philosophy strives to bring about societal change (Brameld, 1956). Social reconstructionism encourages students to question and examine social inequalities (Freire, trans. 1972). A social reconstructionist’s classroom stimulates discussions on controversial issues and promotes views from multiple perspectives.

Amongst these educational theories, it seems many homileticians, knowingly or unknowingly, have adopted Dewey’s approach of experiential learning in regards to teaching preaching due to the students’ ability to learn a new skill through involvement and practice. It is also likely that Robinson’s approach to the teaching of preaching has underpinnings of Dewey’s pragmatic method to educational theory. However, since Dewey’s chief learners were children and Robinson educated adults, it is important to survey the literature on the theory and practice of adult education, also known as andragogy.

**Andragogy**

German educator, Alexander Kapp, was the first to use the term “andragogy” when describing elements of Plato’s education theory (Kapp, 1833). Kapp (1833) did little to develop his theory and merely described it as the practical necessity of the education of adults. For nearly a decade, the term was forgotten until a group of non-university German scholars led by Eugen Rosenstock, known as the *Hohenroder Bund*, began using it in their discussions on a new direction, *Neue Richtung*, in adult education (Rosenstock, 1924). The concept of andragogy emerged again in a few 1950s publications throughout Switzerland, Yugoslavia, the Netherlands and Germany. However, for nearly 100 years since its inception, a limited amount of scholars
recognized the term, as there were little to no formal training grounds for educating adults (Henschke, 2014; Reischmann, 2004). As a result, adult education could only be described as an, “unclear mixture of practice, commitment, ideologies, reflections, theories, by mostly local institutions and some academic involvement of individuals” (Reischmann, 2004, p. 3).

American educator Malcom Knowles (1968) reintroduced the term andragogy to the academic world in his short article, “Andragogy, Not Pedagogy.” Due to its confrontational title and cutting-edge insights, the article sparked interest from other educators. Shortly after, Knowles became popular throughout English-speaking countries as an expert in andragogy. Pratt (1998) writes, “within North America, no view of teaching adults is more widely known, or more enthusiastically embraced, than Knowles’ description of andragogy” (p. 13).

During the course of his life’s work, Knowles (1970, 1973, 1980, 2014) presented six assumptions, also known as principles, about adult learning. The following categorizes these assumptions. (1) The need to know: adults need to understand the benefits of learning something as well as the risks of not learning. (2) Self-concept: As adults mature, they are increasingly self-directed and responsible for their own learning as opposed to being dependent on others contingent on the context. (3) Experience: adult learners bring their diverse background experiences into the learning process while being careful to identify biases and presuppositions. (4) Readiness to learn: relevance and timeliness connects the learners’ context and current social roles. (5) Orientation to learning: focus is on task and problems rather than subjects. (6) Motivation to learn: there is a possibility of motivation being extrinsic, but it is best when adults have internal
incentives and genuine curiosity. Each of these assumptions is foundational to andragogy and propelled other scholars to continue to advance the field of adult learning.

Knowles’ research has led to the multiplication of several adult teaching theories and contributions. The amount of literature revolving around adult education is exhaustive and too comprehensive for this study. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I will highlight the educational theories of Stephen Brookfield and David Kolb. While neither of these scholars were preachers, or teachers of preaching, their works can be closely connected to the practice of teaching homiletics. Their work on educational theory and andragogy is grounded in pragmatism and give keen insight into how preaching is currently taught, as well as how Haddon Robinson approached the practice of teaching preaching.

Similar to Dewey, Brookfield (1986, 1988, 2005) is passionate about the acts of teaching and learning for the purposes of creating a healthy democracy. He envisions adults of widely differing classes and ethnic groups to interact with one another by exploring ideas, beliefs, and practices. He contends that adults learning from one another will likely create a society in which creativity, diversity, and the continuous re-creation of social structures are the accepted norms (Brookfield, 1986). This pragmatic outcome of adult learning theory has its roots in Dewey’s (1916) *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* and is foundational for Brookfield’s philosophy of adult learning (1986, 1988).

Even with the multifaceted and seemingly increasing literature on adult education, Brookfield (1986) notes several commonalties among the variety of adult learning efforts. He recognizes that those taught have attained the status of adulthood and have come
together, most likely in group settings, to engage in a purposeful exploration of a field of knowledge or set of skills. He also recognizes that each adult brings with him or her a collection of experiences, skills, and knowledge, which are valuable curricular resources.

In *Teaching Reflectively in Theological Contexts: Promises and Contradictions*, Brookfield and, theological education scholar, Mary Hess (2008), use their knowledge of adult learning as a foundation for teaching in theological contexts. The intended readers are ministry leaders and professors who are accustomed to the difficulties related with creating and maintaining high-functioning adult study group curriculum and adult learning environments. Although Brookfield acknowledges in this text that he does not ascribe to all the Christian beliefs and often appeals to those outside of theological contexts, he was surprised to find that the questions people have about teaching in seminary are questions, “familiar to all teachers of adults” (Brookfield, 2008, p. xiii).

The book accentuates the need for adult learners to be the focus of the educational environment. Brookfield and Hess (2008) emphasize that open and authentic teaching and learning require teachers and students to be transparent, reflective, and willing to enter into intentional dialogue with oneself and others. There is an undercurrent theme for adult learners to pursue authentic dialogue for the purposes of seeking truth, entering into conversational learning, and discovering practical answers. Brookfield also emphasizes critical thinking and reflection, which have roots in his 1987 book, *Developing Critical Thinkers: Challenging Adults to Explore Alternative Ways of Thinking and Acting*.

Brookfield (1987) seems to base his concept of critical thinking on a cognitive developmental stage that is similar to Perry (1970). For Brookfield and Perry, the critical thinker travels through phases of critical thinking and reflection beginning with
examining the assumptions that underlie one’s deepest convictions and source of authority. While important for the learning process, this is where Brookfield and evangelical Christians would perhaps be best to clarify terms. Brookfield (1987) writes:

We do not think that we (or anyone else) have the ultimate answer to life’s ambiguities and problems. But we do have confidence in knowing that those things in which we believe, and the actions we take arising out of these beliefs, spring from a process of careful analysis and testing against reality—in other words, from critical thinking. (p. 254)

Many adherents of the New Homiletic, and Postliberal Homiletic, may not struggle with adopting Brookfield’s perspective because of their emphasis on the mysteries of God and ambiguity of the Bible’s authority. However, since many evangelical Christians anchor their beliefs in the authority of the Scriptures, they would be hard-pressed to adopt a view denying the ability to obtain answers to life’s deepest questions. However, Brookfield’s educational philosophy is still very useful for evangelical Christians (Radcliffe, 1994). Brookfield’s contributions concerning critical thinking, along with his emphasis on the learning process to be full of honesty, vulnerability, and transparency for the purpose of accomplishing practical outcomes could be highly useful for a seminary’s homiletics professor.

David A. Kolb is another adult educational theorist who grounds his work in pragmatism. Using Dewey, Lewin, Piaget and Bruner as a foundation, Kolb (1984) defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 38). For Kolb, learning, and helping others learn, is a combination of a series of experiences that results in creating knowledge. Not only does
one create learning through his or her experiences, but Kolb also believes knowledge is individualized, that is, each person creates his or her own knowledge, as opposed to solely receiving knowledge from the outside. Kolb and Ronald E. Fry (1975) built off Lewin’s (1946) action research cycle of planning, action, and fact-finding and developed the Experiential Learning Model (ELM). Later, Kolb (1984) expounded on this learning model in his seminal book, *Experiential Learning*, and renamed it the Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC). Kolb’s ELC maps one’s learning progression and is foundational to his philosophy of education.

Kolb’s (1984) ELC, is a four-phase process in which the learner first attempts something concrete which creates a new experience or is a reinterpretation of an existing experience. After, and possibly during the experience, the learner moves to the second phase of the learning cycle and reflects or makes observations of the previous experience. Third, the observations made by the learner are integrated into a conceptual framework or other past experiences in the learner’s life. This helps the learner to draw implications for abstract action. Fourth, the implications for actions are tested and applied in active experimentation. The logic of the learning cycle is to move continually from one phase to another to create new experiences from which one can learn and improve. Ideally, the learner touches all of these phases at different times throughout the learning process.

A typical presentation of Kolb’s educational theory consists of the educational cycle revolving around an axis. The vertical line in the axis, also known as the perception continuum, points upward toward the concrete experience where the learner focuses on feeling and points downward toward the abstract conceptualization which focuses on the learner’s thinking. The horizontal line on the axis, also known as the processing
continuum, points directionally right toward the reflective observation where the learner is watching. This contrasts with the opposite side of the processing continuum toward the active experimentation where the learner is doing (Figure 3).

![Kolb's experiential learning theory diagram](image)

_Figure 3. Kolb’s experiential learning theory._

Out of each quadrant created by Kolb’s (1984) learning cycle and axis come four learning styles. Each student tends to gravitate towards one learning style over another. Kolb refers to the four different learning styles as diverging, assimilating, converging, and accommodating. Thus an individual, for example, who prefers group work is innovative, imaginative, and cares about diverse cultures will gravitate towards the diverging learning style, and eventually progresses through the rest of the cycle. This learning style is a combination of Concrete Experimentation and Reflective Observation.
The individual who learns best through doing his or her own research and prefers reason and logic to working in groups aligns closest with assimilating. This learning style is a combination of Abstract Conceptualization and Reflective Observation. The third learning style is converging. Here the learner prefers technical problems and enjoys the decision making process. He or she is an ideal problem solver although tends to work best alone. The converging learning style is a combination between Abstract Conceptualization and Active Experimentation. The final learning style in is accommodating. This learner is comfortable around people and uses intuition to solve problems. He or she most likely enjoys trial and error problem solving and is a combination of Concrete Experimentation and Active Experimentation.

Kolb’s (1984) contribution of the learning cycle, styles, and education through experimentation can closely relate to the task of the homiletics professor. As we will see, teaching preaching involves students to be activators of their education and to learn through the experience of preaching in front of others. Both Brookfield and Kolb base their understandings of adult education in pragmatism. Their theory of adult education has the potential to be beneficial for those who teach preaching and help in the discovery of how Robinson approached the task of teaching seminary students to preach.

**Efforts by Homiletics Professors to Advance the Teaching of Preaching**

The teaching of preaching in theological higher education has existed for centuries, as will be explained, but how do professors of preaching learn to teach? Historically, teachers of preaching had little to no educational background and taught because they were experienced as preachers (Gibson, 2018; Long & Tubbs, 2008). But does experience alone qualify them to teach preaching? Due to the increase in theological
educational institutions over the past two centuries, there has been a need to educate teachers of preaching on the methods and practices of adult education. One of the first recognized organizations to form and support professors of preaching was the Academy of Homiletics. Founded in 1965, the Academy of Homiletics’ primary purpose is to gather:

Professors and teachers of homiletics for the study of the place of preaching in theological education, for the discussion and sharing of ideas and methods, and for the fostering of scholarly research in this and other related areas and disciplines. (Constitution of the Academy of Homiletics, 1990, p. 1)

During the academy’s 25th anniversary conference, Thomas Long (1990) gave an address titled, “An Intellectual History of the Academy of Homiletics.” After surveying all the papers in the Academy’s twenty-five-year history, Long names pedagogy and the evaluation of sermons as two of the main foci of the Academy’s intellectual interest and research. He states that there have been advancements over the years in the teaching of preaching, but he recognizes there is also a “chronic embarrassment in homiletics regarding pedagogy” (1990, audio recording). He contends this is often due to homileticians being foggy on how to teach preaching and how students learn preaching the best. Even still, he proclaims there is some evidence that people are actually learning how to preach and the Academy of Homiletics plays a significant role in helping teachers of preaching.

Having a similar desire to advise the field of homiletics in education, yet with different theological beliefs, the Evangelical Homiletics Society was formed in 1997.
According to Article I of their By-Laws, the purpose of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is:

To provide religious ministries that will promote character development through focusing on encouraging excellence in preaching and the development of biblical preaching resources and services and to provide a forum for the identification, study, research, and modeling of biblical preaching. (1998, p. 1)

The society’s founding members originated from the Academy of Homiletics but separated in 1997 after observing misrepresentations of their evangelical beliefs. Over its 25-year history, one of the society’s foci has been on andragogy and the teaching of preaching. For instance, the theme of the 2003 Evangelical Homiletics Society conference was titled “Preparing Those Who Preach” and the 2006 conference was titled “Toward Excellence in Equipping Preachers: A Future Focus and a Backward Glance.”

In addition, homileticians have presented many papers throughout the society’s history and have published articles in the *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* focusing on the teaching of preaching.

When learning to teach, one could find many educational books focusing specifically on a given subject. For instance, many authors are dedicated to explaining how to teach geography, science, or finances. Unfortunately, only three books have been published in modern history, if ever, to assist teachers of preaching.

Eight teachers of preaching, all members of the Academy of Homiletics published *Learning Preaching* in 1989 after nearly three years of collaboration (Long & Tisdale, 2008). The book was one of the first of its kind to specifically address the teaching of preaching and how preaching can be learned (Wardlaw, 1989, iii). This groundbreaking
work emphasized how students learn but had minimal reference to educational theory, which left the reader with much to be desired (Stern, 1991, pp. 15-16).

Consequently, Long and Tisdale (2008) planned an updated publication because the task of teaching of preaching had evolved. They write:

Becoming a competent preacher is not simply a matter of drawing out and strengthening inner traits and gifts…but it is instead a matter of critical learning about traditions and patterns of thinking and acting that have been honed over the centuries of Christian preaching. (Long & Tisdale, 2008, pp. 4-5)

Therefore, the contributors of this new publication, *Teaching Preaching as Christian Practice* (2008) were members from the Academy of Homiletics and the Catholic Association of Teachers of Homiletics. They admittedly try to advance the seminal work of *Learning Preaching*. The premise of *Teaching Preaching as Christian Practice* revolves around persuading educators in the field of homiletics to move away from a teacher-centered and learner-centered andragogy toward a learning-centered methodology (emphasis Long & Tisdale, 2008, p. vii).

As the title of the book suggests, the writers propose the concept that preaching as practice ought to be the focus of homiletical teaching. A definition of practice is given and expounded upon throughout the book by the multiple authors. The contributors’ overall goal is to persuade readers of the idea that preaching is, “a practice that can be taught and learned firmly in view, to explore the learning-centered approach, and to examine pedagogical approaches that will introduce students to the practice of preaching and encourage a lifelong process of becoming effective practitioners” (Long & Tisdale, 2008, p. 16). Drawing from Dewey and Brookfield, several contributors to *Teaching*...
Preaching as Christian Practice focus on being learning-centered and practice-oriented (Long & Tisdale, 2008).

The third textbook written to aid teachers of preaching is Teaching Preachers: A Guide to Teaching Homiletics (2019). Under the leadership of Scott Gibson and funded by the Lily Foundation, members from the Evangelical Homiletics Society, including myself, contributed chapters. The intent was for the enhancement of the training of teachers of preaching by using insights from the field of pedagogy and andragogy. Nearly every contributor holds a degree in education and teaches preaching in a seminary or Bible college.

A key chapter connecting educational theories to the teaching of homiletics is, “Help from Educational Theorists for the Teaching of Preaching,” written by Vic Anderson. Anderson (2019) explores three questions that underscore the notion of teaching students in contrast to teaching homiletics: (1) What is learning?; (2) How does dialogue influence learning of homiletics?; and (3) How does the culture of education affect the teaching and learning of homiletics? Anderson affirms that teachers of preaching find themselves at the intersection of theory and practice.

Building from Kolb’s philosophy of education, Anderson (2018) writes that learning, as well as aiding in others’ learning, “is not fundamentally about a subject. It is a series of experiences that results in the creation of knowledge. [Kolb’s] definition invites consideration of the nature of knowledge itself and the nature of learning experiences” (p. 33). Anderson ultimately concludes that learning is linked to experience and preaching is best learned through adults experiencing and practicing preaching first-hand.
There are multiple ways to teach and learn preaching. Each seminary professor has his or her own style and technique. Regardless of one’s preference or approach to teach preaching, it would appear that Pierce and James’ work on pragmatism builds a foundation for most homiletics professors. In addition, Dewey’s work on experiential learning, and Brookfield and Kolb’s ideas on andragogy have most likely influenced the modern day practice of the teaching of preaching.

It is possible that Robinson’s influence on the teaching of preaching is connected to these previous works as well. However, the practice of teaching adult learners how to preach has existed for centuries in a variety of venues. It is valuable to survey the history of the teaching of preaching along with key homiletical textbooks to get a better understanding of where the teaching of preaching began, who taught adult students how to preach and how, as well as the significance of homiletical curriculum within theological higher education.

**Part IV: History of the Teaching of Preaching and Homiletical Textbooks**

Surveying the history of preaching andragogy will aid in recognizing the importance of homiletical education throughout the history of the church and higher education. It will also uncover the variety of places and ways preaching was taught. In addition, situating Robinson’s noteworthy textbook, *Biblical Preaching*, within the metanarrative and contemporary context of homiletical textbooks aids in understanding Robinson’s influence. Since Robinson taught at Protestant seminaries throughout his lifetime, I will be focusing on the formation of seminaries in North America and the early value of preaching in the curriculum. However, I will first begin with a survey of the
teaching of preaching from Augustine up until the establishment of educational institutions in the American colonies.

**History of Homiletics Taught from Augustine to the New World**

Although there are several patristic writings that pertain to aspects of preaching, the most complete work the early Church came to produce as a full-fledged homiletics textbook was Augustine’s (354-430) *On Christian Doctrine* (Augustine, 397; Edwards, 1995). The first medieval homiletics textbook to have a similar claim was *On the Training of the Clergy* (trans. 1844), by the German bishop, Rabanus Maurus (c. 780-856). In this one volume curriculum, Maurus wrote about basic biblical interpretation and rudimentary preaching tactics but did little to offer anything new. Edwards (1995) suggests Maurus’ work “reflects the age’s lack of confidence in the preacher’s ability to interpret the Word of God and add anything to the early church fathers” because it consists of long verbatim quotes from Augustine’s *On Christian Doctrine* (quoting him 78 times) (p. 196). Therefore, Maurus’ work gives little attention to homiletical theory but it demonstrates a need for helping clergy learn to preach (Wiersbe & Perry, 1984).

The first original medieval work on preaching was a product of the 11th and 12th century’s Renaissance (Edwards, 1995). Guibert of Nogent (1055-1124), a Benedictine monk and abbot, was a prolific author (Benton, 1970). In his Preface to his commentary on Genesis, he includes a treatise titled *A Book About the Way a Sermon Ought to Be Given* (de Nogent, trans. 1969). It begins with several reasons as to why people avoid the task of preaching and suggests sermons ought to “begin in prayer” and “be short” (Nogent, trans. 1969, p. 48). He emphasizes the importance of the preacher’s spiritual life
and intellectual preparation before giving thought to style. He also suggests the needs of
the listeners to be always on the preacher’s mind:

Let him think of those who must listen in silence to pompous inanities, and he
will realize that it is much better for them to hear a few things well presented than
a great many things from which they will retain almost nothing. Then he will not
delay making an end to one sermon so that, when he preaches another, his
audience will be eager rather than restful. (de Nogent, trans. 1969, p. 49)

The majority of his work, however, is on Scriptural interpretation rather than on
preaching itself (Edwards, 1995; Larsen, 1998). Shortly after de Nogent’s A Book About
the Way a Sermon Ought to Be Given, scholars began viewing preaching as an academic
discipline, as opposed to merely a Sunday practice.

One of the first people to move homiletics into an academic discipline was Alan
of Lille (c. 1128-1202). During the 12th century, often called the Age of Scholasticism,
medieval universities started emerging and Alan of Lille was one of the first students in
the schools of Paris and Chartres. He studied under Peter Abelard, Gilbert of Poitiers,
Thierry of Chartres, and other well-known teachers in the area. Alan of Lille stayed to
become a lecturer at Paris and later Montpellier before becoming a Cistercian monk
(Evans, 1983). He had a thirst for knowledge, was a highly competent eclectic preacher,
and wrote extensively over his lifetime in a number of fields including his pioneering
preaching manual called The Art of Preaching (Lille, trans. 1981). The Art of Preaching
begins with practical advice on recognizing the listeners and delivering engaging
sermons. The remainder of the treatise includes techniques to compose sermons on a
given topic, typically concentrating on one of the vices or virtues or the four different seasons of the liturgical year (Lille, trans. 1981).

Alan of Lille gives the Church its first academic definition of preaching:

“Preaching is open and public instruction in faith and behavior, whose purpose is the forming of men; it derives from the path of reason and from the fountainhead of authorities” (Lille, trans. 1981). He insisted that every sermon should be expository and develop from a theological authority, primarily the biblical text, and out of that specific text came a “theme” (Lille, trans. 1981). This was in contrast to others who would divide the text into components and develop each subdivision separately (Edwards, 1995).

Wiersbe and Perry (1984) claim that *The Art of Preaching* was, “the most important work in the theory of preaching since Augustine. The piece introduced the scholastic method and the more numerous treatise of the scholastic period” (p. 37). *The Art of Preaching* paved the way for others to write treatise and textbooks on homiletics.

As scholasticism grew, so did the number of works regarding the method for preparing and preaching sermons. These works are referred to as the “Arts of Preaching” (*Artes praedicandi*) (Edwards, 1995, p. 200). In addition to the production of more textbooks, universities sprang up across Europe. A total of 12 opened between 1409 and 1506. During this time, there was an artistic and literary revival that would help influence preaching during the Reformation in the 16th century (Wiersbe & Perry, 1994). However, as scholasticism matured and more universities launched, a multiplicity of Scriptural interpretations emerged and preaching suffered. Philip (1984) writes:

The influence of the scholastic theology of the universities, which from the beginning were clerical institutions, took over, and the combination of theology
and philosophy, and the application of Aristotelian logic to the interpretation of Scripture, with its speculation, analysis and ratiocination imposed an intolerable incubus upon preaching which virtually destroyed it as an effective means for communicating the gospel. (p. 300)

The teaching of preaching appeared to go in many different directions depending on the university’s stance on how to interpret Scripture: literal, typological, allegorical, and analogical (Blench, 1964; Tyndale, 1848). The issues of Scriptural interpretation were one of many catalysts leading to the Protestant Reformation.

Preaching became the avenue in which reformers communicated the messages of change and Protestant doctrine to the people. Wiersbe and Perry (1984) write, “The age of the Reformation brought the sharpest turning point in the historical development of Christian preaching” (p. 46). In addition to the reformers’ preaching, the printing press advanced the teaching of preaching. The novel invention made Bibles, sermons, and preaching textbooks more accessible. This flourishing time of preaching coincided with the ease of publishing homiletical texts.

Homileticians began to publish and distribute their sermons, sermon aid resources, as well as notes and treaties concerning their methods and philosophies of preaching. One of the most important books on the theory of preaching since Alan of Lille was Erasmus’ extensive work, *Ecclesiastes* in 1535 (Webber, 1957; Wiersbe & Perry, 1984). Published in Basel during the last year of Erasmus’ life, it has been declared, “the great watershed in the history of sacred rhetoric” (O’Malley, 1985, p. 1). One of the most significant works by any early Protestant scholar on homiletics was Andrew Hyperius’ (1553) *On the Making of Sacred Discourses* (Kreitzer, 2001; Wiersbe...
This scientific treatise on the theory of preaching would be one of the last of its kind for another century.

One of the early Puritans to help shape preaching in the Church of England, and eventually in the Americas, was William Perkins. Perkins (1609) valued the preaching of the Scriptures as the giving of the testimony of God Himself as described in the first preaching manual for the Church of England, *The Art of Preaching*. He insisted on four principles to guide one’s preaching: (1) Read directly from the Scriptures, (2) Give the sense and understanding of the Scripture, (3) Collect a few and profitable points of doctrine from the Scripture’s understanding, and (4) Apply the doctrines to the life and manner of the listeners in the language of the people. These principles helped guide the Church of England preachers during the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th century (Breward, 1969, pp. 331-49; Hill, 1969, p. 68).

In the 16th and 17th centuries, many Puritans fled Europe to start a fresh life in the American colonies. After nearly a decade of researching thousands of early Puritan sermon manuscripts, historian H. S. Stout (1986) attests that Biblical ideas and principles saturated all levels of Puritan society in the colonies forming, “cultural values, meanings, and a sense of corporate purpose” (p. 3). One of the first establishments in each new community was a church. Soon after came the need to train ministers for clerical duties in institutions for theological higher education.

**History of Homiletics Taught in the Colonies and in the United States of America**

During the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, colleges and seminaries emerged in the United Kingdom and the United States of America as part of a strategy by Christians, Catholic and Protestant, to equip men and women with the truths of God to spread the
good news of Jesus to the world (Gibson, 2019). Preachers were able to get formally trained because of the combination of institutions of higher education and the ubiquity of publishing. Exploring the history of when, where, and how homiletics was taught in the colonies, and later in the United States of America, is necessary in grasping the significance of the teaching of preaching in higher education as well as understanding the context of Robinson’s career as a homiletics professor.

The first college established in North America was Harvard College in 1636. The intent and mission of the school was to produce “gentlemen” to become either ministers for the church or leaders in the new world (Peirce, 1833). Faculty expected graduates to fulfill the proper interpretation and practice of Puritanism, which included “learning how to preach” (Winegarden, 1951, p. 4). Finding qualified leaders and teachers for the college proved to be a daunting task for the new school (Geiger, 2014). For instance, as the result of the shortage of qualified men, the first teacher and president, Henry Dunster, was appointed just three weeks after landing in North America after previously preaching and teaching in England (Geiger, 2014). From its inception, students at Harvard studied rhetoric at least one day a week during their education. During Harvard’s first 50 years, there were seldom more than 20 students in attendance at one time (Winegarden, 1951), with more than half of Harvard’s graduating students going into the ministry (Geiger, 2014). For nearly 60 years, Harvard was the only established academic institution in the colonies where one could go to study divinity and learn to preach.

In 1693, the second educational institution in the colonies was established. From its outset, the College of William and Mary was established so that:
The church of Virginia may be furnished with a seminary of ministers of the Gospel, and that the youth may be piously educated in good letters and manners, and that the Christian faith may be propagated amongst the Western Indians to the glory of Almighty God. (College of William and Mary, 1874, p. 17)

Modeled after its predecessor, Harvard College, the College of William and Mary also highly valued preaching. For instance, students, several of whom were Native Americans, were trained to be sent out to “preach and convert the Indians” as well as others who occupied the South (College of William and Mary, 1874, pp. 27-29). At its outset, two of the six professors at William and Mary taught in the school of theology, which included courses in homiletics (Spotswood & Brock, 1885).

Similar to Harvard and William and Mary, the Collegiate School in New Haven was founded in 1701 with the purpose of sending their graduates into ministry. It adopted a new name, Yale College, in 1720 after a wealthy English Anglican, Elihu Yale, made a large donation. After the philanthropic contribution, Yale College could afford a permanent home and a building for the living quarters of the students. The Reverend Timothy Cutler became the first resident orator and was considered one of the colony’s most effective preachers. Three-quarters of Yale’s graduates entered into the ministry before 1720 (Gieger, 2014). Early curriculum at Yale was for satisfactory training of a minister, but often students wanted further training and remained after graduation for special study in theology. The needs of these students led to the establishment of the Professorship of Divinity in 1755 and later two more professors were added which led to the beginning of Yale Divinity School in 1822 (Chamberlain, 1900, pp. 125-126).
These three colonial colleges were dedicated to training men for the ministry, other than for a few exceptions (Muzzey, 1927). They modeled their English college counterparts, which was to be expected, as many of those who were instrumental in the founding of these institutions received their education in England (Winegarden, 1951, pp. 6-9). However, the colonial schools differed in the sense that, unlike Oxford and Cambridge, where preaching was not valued and included in the curriculum, these schools gave preaching a prominent role in the curriculum and moved it into a distinct academic discipline (Gibson, 2019).

Between 1760 and 1790, the effects of the First Great Awakening in North America subsided and many lost interest in religion and the Church. Teaching students to preach lost its position as a principal objective for colleges and left aspiring ministers to discover other avenues to learn to preach (Gambrell, 1937). Cubberley (2005) ascribes this decline to several factors such as the frontier conditions, the rise of civil government, desire for increase in wealth, individualism, and effects of the American Revolution. Those in theological education felt repercussions of the societal movements. Muncy (1945) states that in 1795, when Timothy Dwight became president of Yale College, only two students would confess that they even “believed in God” (p. 78).

This decreased desire for training in ministry shifted the focus of several colleges to become universities, remove “divinity subjects” such as preaching from the core curriculum, and targeted educating men, and eventually women, for secular interests (Kelly, 1924, p. 24; Winegarden, 1951, pp. 15-18). However, the Second Great Awakening (1790-1850) sparked religious revival in America once again. This revival

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9 The Great Awakenings was a time of Christian renewal and revitalization.
during the beginning of the 19th century produced a renewed interest in Christianity as well as the need to establish fresh theological institutions for learning called seminaries and divinity schools.

Sweet (1937) contends that the creation of the first seminaries was a result of four principal influences: (1) new American independence from Great Britain, (2) inadequacies of old colonial colleges as a source for training ministers, (3) increased demand for ministers as a result of the great revivals sweeping the nations, (4) theological differences among denominations (p. 267). Protestantism was vibrant during the beginning years of the United States of America and the need for trained ministers was paramount. The training of ministers appears to have happened in one of three ways: attending a formal seminary, apprenticing under a seasoned minister, or combining seminary and apprenticeship. In seminary, students typically completed a three-year degree study of divinity. Main subjects dealt with the Bible, theology, and practical ministry skills such as preaching. Seminary instruction remains the major conduit for ministerial training during the last 150 years (Gibson, 2019).

The first theological seminary to have more than one member on the theological faculty in America was established by the Dutch Reformed church in October 1784, known today as New Brunswick Theological Seminary (Sweet, 1937). To train their denomination’s ministers, the Dutch Reformed Synod of New York, would send aspiring clergymen back to the Netherlands to pursue studies at the Dutch universities (Hageman, 1984). However, this strategy proved to be costly and time consuming so an institution that focused primarily on theological training was established. The Rev. John Henry
Livingstone was appointed the school’s Professor of Sacred Theology and Hermanus Myer was selected as Associate Professor in the Languages (Sweet, 1937).

New leadership at Harvard University during the early 1800s led to the establishment of the nation’s second seminary. The Hollis Professor of Divinity, David Tappan, died in 1803 and the president of the school, Joseph Willard, died just a year later. As a member of the board of overseers, the Bostonian pastor Jedidiah Morse insisted that the replacements be “orthodox, traditional men” (Balmer, 2001, p. 393). However, after unsuccessfully opposing the election of Henry Ware, an open supporter of Unitarianism, as the next occupant of the Hollis Professor of Divinity, Morse and other conservatives founded Andover Theological Seminary on September 28, 1808, (Dorrien, 2001).

The founders of Andover Theological Seminary collaborated with the Phillips Academy, a charter school for educating boys from grades nine to twelve, to form the new school. The founding fathers of Andover Theological Seminary adopted part of the Phillips Academy’s 1778 constitution stating:

And whereas many of the Students in this Seminary may be devoted to the sacred work of the gospel ministry – that the true and fundamental principles of the Christian Religion may be cultivated, established, and perpetuated in the Christ church, so far as this Institution may have influence, it shall be the duty of the Master…not only to instruct and establish them in the truth of Christianity, but also early and diligently to inculcate upon them the great and important doctrine…and duties of our Holy Christian Religion. (Andover Theological Seminary, 1909, p. iv)
Professors trained students for ministry inside and outside of the classroom. Areas of instruction were lectures and lessons on “Pulpit Eloquence” which consisted of the importance of oratory, the invention and disposition of topics, composition, dignity in style, pronunciation, gestures, rules of composing a sermon, and the adaptation of the principles and precepts of ancient rhetoric to the modern language. Training for ministry also included lessons on character, the respective beauties and excellences in thought and expression, and above all, “on the transcendent simplicity, beauty, and sublimity of the Sacred Writings” (Andover Theological Seminary, 1917, pp. 7-8). As one of the first seminaries in the world, Andover Theological Seminary was committed to preparing young men for ministry which included the study and teaching of preaching.

The first professor of Andover Theological Seminary was the ordained minister, Edward Dorr Griffin who taught the course “Pulpit Oratory” (Dargan, 1922, p. 215). Griffin studied divinity with Jonathan Edwards at Yale and then pastored two churches before arriving at Andover. After just a couple years of teaching, Griffin left to become the first official pastor of Park Street Church in Boston, Massachusetts (Rosell, 2009). After Griffin left Andover in 1811, the school selected Pastor Ebenzer Porter to be his replacement. Around this time, the seminary established the Bartlet Professorship of Sacred Rhetoric, after William Bartlet, a wealthy New England merchant who donated to the school’s beginnings. Porter became the first Bartlet Professor of Sacred Rhetoric and later became the seminary’s first official president in 1827. The Andover Theological Seminary academic catalogs from 1819 to 1830 stress the importance of learning to preach as students focused on sermon development and practiced preaching during their final year of study. Porter taught for twenty-three years and many recognize him as the
real beginner of homiletical instruction in theological seminaries in North America (Dragan, 1922; Wiersbe and Perry, 1984).

In 1819, Porter published a few small treatises on preaching which include *The Young Preacher’s Manual*. These works supplemented Porter’s lectures and many aspiring preachers used them as resources for their preaching ministry. In 1834, Porter published his own, lengthier, volume on homiletics from his lectures titled *Lectures on Homiletics and Preaching, and on Public Prayer, Together with Sermons and Letters*. In this work, Porter emphasizes every sermon to be evangelical; meaning at the heart of the sermon is the gospel message (Winegarden, 1951). In the opening words of his Preface, Porter (1834) writes:

In entering on my labors as Bartlet Professor of Sacred Rhetoric in this Seminary I found the office to be in some respects a new one in the business of theological instruction. After an examination of many books that have been written on Rhetoric in general and the comparatively few that have been written on Sacred Rhetoric, it became manifest that I must be called to traverse a field to a considerable extent untrodden by any predecessor. (p. iii)

The teaching of preaching continued to be an important part of the Andover curriculum even after Porter’s death in 1834. For instance, the school’s catalog in 1850 includes specific classes in “Homiletics” and “Sermonizing” (Kelly, 1924). From its inception, Andover Theological Seminary recognized the importance of preaching and was devoted to teaching homiletics, setting a precedent for other seminaries to follow.

The next major seminary established in the relatively new United States of America was Princeton Theological Seminary in 1812. The school’s founder and first
professor, Archibald Alexander, was selected by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church to be the Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology at Princeton Seminary (Selden, 1992). The following year, in 1813, Samuel Miller joined Alexander as Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Church Government. Both men were committed to the teaching of preaching, among other subjects, and attracted aspiring students and ministers to the seminary.

Alexander believed that a sermon was not a sermon, in the truest sense of the word, unless the distinctiveness and sacredness of the worship situation was realized (Garretson, 2005). He insisted that the sermon is the summation of the words, the delivery, the place, and the congregation. In addition, Alexander stimulated his young students to develop their own way of preaching and did not prescribe a particular method for sermon organization and delivery (Garretson, 2005). Whether the student chose to preach using an outline, a full manuscript, or through memorization, Alexander taught his students to find their own voice, develop their personal method, and do what was most comfortable for their individual abilities and personalities (Waugh, 2005). Alexander also believed that instruction took place inside and outside the classroom. His andragogy of theological education was to do life together with his students (Garretson, 2005). Not only did his students hear what he taught, “but they saw him living the way he taught them to live” (Waugh, 2005, p. 443).

Alexander taught students as they first arrived while Miller was mostly responsible for lecturing third year students. Together, for decades, Alexander and Miller taught and refined students’ preaching abilities (Moorhead, 2012). The two remained at
Princeton Theological Seminary for 37 years and were pillars for the Presbyterian Church as they maintained the denomination’s doctrines and trained men for the pastorate.

Harvard recovered from several faculty members and students leaving after the establishment of Andover Theological Seminary and created its own Divinity School in 1815. Their academic catalog records the requirements of Harvard’s students having to complete:

A religious service with preaching, in which one of the students officiates takes place twice a week, and is attended by the Professors and all the members of the school. Also once a week there is an exercise in extemporaneous preaching, in the presence of one of the Professors, by the students of the two upper classes in rotation. (Kelly, 1924, p. 65)

Henry Ware Jr. became the Professor of Pulpit Eloquence and Pastoral Care in 1830. A few years later, he published his helpful booklet *Hints on Extemporaneous Preaching* to aid his students in learning the practice of careful groundwork and unrestricted delivery by explaining the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach to preaching.

Following the examples of New Brunswick Theological Seminary (1784), Andover Theological Seminary (1808), Princeton Theological Seminary (1812), and Harvard Divinity School (1815), were a variety of Protestant denominations. They committed themselves to educating and training people for ministry and established their own theological institutions.¹⁰ These denominations included the following institutions listed in the order of their respective establishments: Congregational – Bangor

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¹⁰ For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to omit Catholic schools and seminaries due to their large scope and scale. Including them would expand my research too broadly and create possible philosophical, theological, and hermeneutical obstacles.
Theological Seminary (1816); Lutheran – Hartwick Seminary (1816); Presbyterian – Auburn Theological Seminary (1818); Episcopal – General Seminary (1818); Congregational - Yale Divinity School (1822); Episcopal – Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary (1823); Presbyterian – Union Seminary (1823); Baptist - Newton Theological Seminary (1824); German Reformed – Lancaster Theological Seminary (1825); Lutheran – Gettysburg Seminary (1826); conservative Congregational – Hartford Theological Seminary (1834); and New School Presbyterians – Union Theological Seminary (1836) (Kelly, 1924). Schools such as these were organized in protest against the liberal colleges and theological departments of the universities and placed an emphasis on knowing the Scriptures and learning to preach them (Winegarden, 1951, pp. 55-56). A variety of professorships and titles were given to those teaching homiletics, which confirms that from the first establishment of theological education in the United States, “homiletics served as one of the key components taught in the curriculum to strengthen a minister’s education” (Gibson, 2019, p. 4). Dargan (1922) notes that courses in homiletics became an, “established and indispensable part of the curriculum” in theological departments of colleges and seminaries for the next hundred years (p. 217).

After evaluating the catalogs of 161 theological institutions in North America in the early part of the twentieth century, Kelly (1924) describes seminaries as showing a strong emphasis on homiletics. Schools focused on categories such as the construction of sermons, the theory behind sermon making, sermon delivery, the history of preaching, and practicum that includes, “speaking before the class, class criticism and private criticism from the professor” (p. 136). For instance, in the Presbyterian tradition beginning in the late 1800s, the typical homiletics curriculum involved, “the learning of
Sacred Rhetoric’ or ‘Theory of Preaching,’ the studying and outlining of the English Bible, the learning of principles of elocution, and the practice of public speaking’” (McClure, 1990, p. 93). Another example comes from the Pacific Unitarian School for the Ministry catalog. From its beginning, the school considered homiletics as the subject of greatest practical importance studied in preparation for the ministry. There was a great need to fill the pulpits on the West Coast with ministers who could preach. Therefore, Pacific Unitarian School for the Ministry was established to insure the learning of approved methods and the forming of correct habits of sermonizing (Wilbur, 1912).

Regardless of the location and design, after evaluating all 161 theological institutions in the United States, Kelly (1924) concluded, “Whatever the type of seminary, under whatever auspices it is conducted, upon whatever academic grade the work is carried on, the seminary should first teach students. The emphasis has been on very largely subject-matter. Knowledge must be humanized” (emphasis Kelly, 1924, p. 219). Kelly’s summary of the andragogy of preaching in seminaries is similar to Anderson’s (2018) from “Help from Educational Theorists for the Teaching of Preaching.” Both conclude the importance of not merely teaching homiletics, but also the critical nature of teaching students. They emphasize students learning preaching experientially, either in the classroom or through other avenues.

Another avenue for young ministers to learn preaching and pastoral ministry was through apprenticeships from their preaching professors. This method can be traced back to Jesus and his apostles (1 Corinthians 1:12) and has continued throughout Church history to present day churches (Black, 2016). The apprenticeship model was the conventional practice during the colonial period (Gibson, 2019) as well as in “log cabin”
theological schools west of the Alleghenies during the 18th and early 19th centuries (Sweet, 1937). Sweet (1937) records that there were almost no Presbyterian ministers, at one time or another, who did not have young men training in his household.

Along with reading the occasional textbook, students learned to preach by observing their mentor. Performing and listening to their mentor’s sermons would be followed by discussions, feedback, and continual practice. On special occasions, the apprentice would have the opportunity to carry out pulpit supply to a neighboring congregation (Gibson, 2019). For example, Pastor Nathanael Emmons’ teaching on preaching included the following:

Emmons gave special advice on sermon construction, public speaking, parochial duties, and private conversation, making general recommendations as to subsequent independent readings. Apparently, he was particularly interested in, and gave special attention to, matters of style and delivery, vitally influencing methods of sermon construction in New England for half a century. (Gambrell, 1967, pp. 132-133)

Professors of preaching and local pastors understood the importance of apprenticeship and invested their time into the lives of their students. In addition to training provided by professors and pastors, students would also learn the theory and skill of preaching from homiletical textbooks.

**Key Textbooks Used in Seminary Classrooms**

Accessible publication enabled many in the field of homiletics to begin publishing works specifically on preaching. According to Levy (1945) a couple of the earliest English-authored preaching texts that had popular acceptance in both England and the
colonies were Perkins’ (1592) *The Art of Prophecy* and Bernard’s (1621) *The Faithful Shepherd*. Perkins’ book focused on the calling of the minister and the consideration of the congregation in the preparation of the sermon, while Bernard’s book was esteemed because of its emphasis on sermon construction.

One of the early American textbooks for ministerial education was Cotton Mather’s (1726/1789) *Dr. Cotton Mather’s Student and Preacher*. Another early textbook was Samuel Willard’s (1735) *Brief Directions to a Young Scholar Designing the Ministry for the Study of Divinity*. After Willard’s book, no homiletical textbooks were widely produced or shared for nearly 100 years. Sermon manuscripts and other theological works circulated from place to place, but the formation of the United States of America, war, shift from Puritan living, among other circumstances seemed to take precedence.

Eventually, in the 1800s, professors of preaching began publishing their lectures and notes on preaching. Some of the homiletical textbooks published were Ware Jr.’s (1824) *Hints on Extemporaneous Preaching*; Porter’s (1834) *Lectures on Homiletics and Preaching*; Ripley’s (1849) *Sacred Rhetoric*; Kidder’s (1864) *Treatise on Homiletics*; Alexander’s (1867) *Thoughts on Preaching*; and Shedd’s (1867) *Homiletics and Practical Theology*. However, despite the growing number of preaching books produced, it is challenging to determine which ones were the most widely used in seminaries prior to 1869 (Abernathy, 1943).

According to Kelly (1924), some of the earliest, widespread preaching textbooks that were used in seminaries after 1869 were: Broadus’ (1870), *Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*; Brooks’ (1877), *Lectures on Preaching*; Phelps’ (1881), *The Theory of
Preaching; Greer’s (1895), *Present-Day Preaching*; Kennard’s (1901), *Psychic Power of Preaching*; Pattison’s (1902), *The Making of a Sermon*; and Slattery’s (1910) *The Preacher and His Place*. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, hundreds of books on preaching were written, demonstrating the growth, importance, and legitimacy of the field of homiletics.

Yet, even with the increased publication of homiletical books from 1869 to the present day, there appears to be three texts that were widely accepted throughout the landscape of homiletics: John A. Broadus’ (1870) *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, H. Grady Davis’ (1958) *Design for Preaching*, and Haddon Robinson’s (1980) *Biblical Preaching*. Rose (1997) summarizes twentieth century homiletical theory by stating, “The story of homiletics claims that for roughly three quarters of the twentieth century there was general agreement about correct homiletical theory. Broadus represents the earlier state of the art and Davis the later” (p. 9). Both of these books were widely used by preachers and teachers of preaching and served key roles in the advancement of homiletics. However, during the 1970s, professors of preaching began to seek other homiletical textbooks for multiple reasons, as will be discussed, setting the stage for Robinson’s 1980 breakthrough book, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. First, I will examine the two major textbooks and their authors who preceded Robinson.

**John A. Broadus: On the preparation and delivery of sermons.** The American Baptist preacher, professor, and former president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, John A. Broadus, has been termed ”The Prince of Expositors” and has been influential in the teaching of preaching (Howington, 1959). Rose (1997) studied the
major homiletic theorists of the past 150 years and states that Broadus’ textbook, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*,\(^{11}\) has stood the test of time and, “defined preaching for the first half of the twentieth century” (p. 24). In its fourth edition, the book is still used in seminary classrooms today. In its first revision, Edwin Charles Dargan (1897), praised the book as “the most popular and widely-read textbook on homiletics in this country” (p. xvii). The second edition was revised by J. B. Weatherspoon (1944) in which he exclaims, “The book has been in constant and increasing use since its first appearance and after three quarters of a century remains the outstanding textbook of homiletics” (p. v). While the first two revisions remain close to the original, the third revision by Vernon L. Stanfield (1979) makes a few significant changes which have led some to believe the book has, “reduced its original thrust and value” (Stizinger, 1992). Even with differing opinions on the veracity of the editions, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* has been a dominant homiletical textbook in North American Bible colleges and seminaries since its inception largely in part to its combination of scholarship and common sense (Dargan, 1922, p. 233; Loscalzo, 1992, p. 53; Wardlaw, 1989, p. 245).

Broadus defines homiletics as, “the adaptation of rhetoric to the particular ends and demands of Christian preaching” (Broadus & Weatherspoon, 1944, p. 10). He regards preaching as sacred rhetoric through the blending of classical rhetoricians, such as Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, with the practice of expository preaching. Broadus

\(^{11}\) When Southern Baptist Theological Seminary reopened in 1875 after the American Civil War, Dr. John Broadus taught homiletics to only one student, who was blind. Broadus worked hard to make homiletics worthwhile and gave the lectures in a conversational style while covering all the main subjects concerning preaching. Those lectures were the origins of *On the Preparation of and Delivery of Sermons*, which would be published five years later (Broadus, 2014).
advocates for the foundation of the sermon to be the Bible. He also covers a variety of components of preaching such as the fundamentals of the sermon, the various classifications of sermons, the formal elements of the sermon and how they ought to function. He also includes elements of the preacher’s style, preparation, and delivery of sermons in the context of public worship.

The book’s comprehensive nature came at a pivotal moment in the history of Christianity in North America as churches and educational institutions were facing immense pressure from secular society and liberal theology. Bryan Chapell (1994) considers *On the Preparation of and Delivery of Sermons* to be "the seminal volume for the codification and popularization of the expository method as we now know it" (p. 129). Chapell continues, "The erosion of scriptural commitments that would soon sweep this culture after the initial publication of Broadus' work indicates how critical was the timing of his methodology and why it was so widely adopted by evangelicals" (p. 129). The book found its home in many evangelical theological instructions, in particular, the seminaries from the Southern Baptist Convention.

**H. Grady Davis: Design for preaching.** H. Grady Davis was the Professor of Functional Theology at the Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary and worked in various the Lutheran ministries from 1913-1927. He lectured extensively throughout his career at various denominational institutions. In 1969, Roanoke College awarded Davis with their Alumni Medal and recognized him with having:

…the ability to combine the artistry of words and the imagery of thought to inspire his students to become better preachers. His personal contact and his intimate concern, as well as his inquiring mind and sensitive heart, gave him the
fantastic ability to bridge the generation gap. In the art of homiletics, he
influenced whole generations of men that are now serving Lutheran congregations
throughout the country. (Roanoke Alumni Association, 2015, p. 1)

One of Davis’ major contributions to the field of homiletics was his 1958 textbook,
*Design for Preaching*. This book quickly became widely used by many who taught
preaching. Rose (1997) asserts, “Between 1958 and 1974 the earlier consensus that had
looked to Broadus to define the task of preaching had dissolved and a new consensus had
formed around Davis” (p. 9). Davis’ new ideas helped revolutionize sermon preparation.

Davis (1958) believed that when it comes to preparing a sermon, “content and
form are two inseparable elements of the same thing in the design of a good sermon” (p. vi). He believed Broadus relied too heavily on the methodological and formal structure of
sermon preparation. Making a subtle shift away from Broadus’ approach, Davis claimed
sermons cannot rely fully on the form or the method, nor should the sermon only explain
the text like an uninterrupted commentary of observations. Instead, to fix the overarching
problem of being effective as well as staying biblical, Davis urges his readers to be aware
of both the content and the form. He suggests weaving them together throughout the
sermon so they can support one another.

Throughout his book, Davis (1958) uses the running theme of a sermon being like
a tree with a goal to represent how a sermon is to be rooted in its foundation, the Bible.
He believes the Scriptures ought to give the sermon a strong, solid foundation in which it
can grow, similar to the roots of a tree giving support and stability. He asserts that a tree
can only produce that which comes from its roots and a sermon ought to have parts that
only come from its foundation (pp. 15-16). Finally, Davis contends that the sermon, like a
tree, must be a living organism that grows naturally as opposed to designed, planned, or organized. He advocates for the sermon to grow out of the Scriptures as opposed to using a sermonic mold for the construction of the sermon.\textsuperscript{12}

Davis (1958) forsakes the traditional terminology of structure and outline and advocates for “design” and “sketch” (pp. 21-22). He describes this process by finding the subject and predicate from the text. “A well-designed sermon,” Davis explains, “is the embodiment and extension of an important idea, of which the first element is a clearly defined subject and the second element is one or more significant things said, predicates, structural assertions concerning the subject” (p. 29). When preparing to preach on a Biblical text, Davis insists the preacher ask, “What is the man talking about? What is he saying about it?” as well as asking the questions, “What does he mean? Is it true? Do I believe it? So what? What difference does it make?” (p. 24). Davis stresses that, “The crucial question is not whether the sermon has a text attached to it, but whether the Scripture is the source of the sermon or not, whether the sermon says what the Scripture says or not,” (p. 47).

This novel way of preparing a sermon gave evangelical and mainline denominational homileticians an alternative to Broadus and the traditional approach to preaching. Davis’s work also paved the way for the beginning of new homiletical paradigms (Campbell, 1997, pp. 117-118; Lowry, 1997, p. 12; Niedenthal, 1995, pp. 97-98; Rose, 1997, p. 6; Wilson, 1995, pp. 199-204). Lake writes, “Davis anticipated and charted the course for many contemporary discussions on issues related to preaching, such as narrative, poetic language, creative form, movement of thought, and particularly

\textsuperscript{12} This is different from preachers who advocate for a specific method for each sermon regardless of the Biblical text. (For instance, see Kaiser, 1998; Koller, 1962.)
inductive preaching” (Lake, 2003, p. 23). Long (1995) notes that *Design for Preaching*, “was a bridge spanning the gap between the traditional approach to form and those developments yet to come” (p. 147). However, Rose (1997) writes, “The 1980s became an era in which homiletical scholarship tried at times to reclaim an earlier consensus and at other times to articulate a new position around which to rally a new consensus” (p. 10).

One of the books that garnered traction and adoption by evangelical homileticians was Haddon Robinson’s (1980) *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*.

**Haddon W. Robinson: Biblical preaching.** Haddon Robinson’s most notable publication is his 1980 book, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. Published through Baker Academic, *Biblical Preaching*, is currently in its third edition. Since its inception, the book has sold “well over 300,000 copies” and, according to the Vice President of Baker Academic, “shows no signs of letting up” (L. McBride, personal communication, January 11, 2018).

Two major components to Robinson’s philosophy of preaching explained in his book are: 1) The preacher must preach the Scriptures because of their authority, and 2) The preacher ought to make the main idea of a passage of Scripture the main idea of the sermon. This may seem like an obvious objective to many, but at the time of its publication, preaching a main point centered on the main idea of a passage of Scripture was a novel way of thinking about preaching. When writing about the need for expository preaching, Robinson (2014) says:

> Those in the pulpit face the pressing temptation to deliver some message other than that of the Scriptures – a political system, a theory of economics, a new
religious philosophy, old religious slogans, or a trend in psychology…yet when
they fail to preach the Scriptures, they abandon their authority…That is why most
modern preaching evokes little more than a wide yawn. God is not in it. (pp. 3-4)

One of Robinson’s unique skills was his ability to merge Biblical exegesis and
communication together into a ten-step sermon preparation process. In his first chapter,
he discusses the devaluation of preaching that has occurred in society. He then gives a
case for preaching, the need for expository preaching, and suggests a concise definition
of expository preaching:

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. (2014, p. 5)

He finishes the first chapter by systematically breaking down and explaining each
component of his definition of expository preaching.

The second chapter introduces the reader to Robinson’s concept of the “Big Idea.”
He claims that the preacher must discover the main idea of the passage of Scripture
through asking the subject question, “What is the author talking about?” and the
complement answer, “What is the author saying about what he is talking about?”
(Robinson, 2014, pp. 21-26). By combining the answers to these two questions, Robinson
asserts the preacher can distinguish the main idea of a passage. This is similar to Davis,
as Robinson (2014) acknowledges Davis’ influence in his Preface (p. x).

In chapters 3 through 6, Robinson (2014) expounds on his ten-step process,
beginning with choosing a passage of Scripture, exegetical study, formation of the
exegetical and homiletical idea, and the use of three questions to develop the idea (What does it mean? Is it true? So what, what difference does it make?). The need for and articulation of the sermon’s purpose is next, followed by the various shapes, or outlines, a sermon may take. Chapter 7 helps the reader understand how to use examples and illustrations, while in chapter 8, Robinson teaches the reader how to craft compelling introductions and conclusions that drive home the point.

In chapters 9 and 10, Robinson addresses issues of style, particularly word choice and delivery. The book concludes with a sample sermon and student exercises to help students learn throughout the reading. The clarity in which the book is written and the ten-step process of determining and preaching the main idea of the Biblical text are just a couple reasons why Robinson’s textbook has been well-used by both evangelical and mainline homileticians since the time of its conception (Walton, 2015).

From its outset, reviewers applauded Robinson’s Biblical Preaching (Fink, 1982). Hughes (1981) states that Robinson’s, “wide acquaintance with homiletical literature and pastoral writings is evident, not only from his well-argued thesis, but from the abundant illustrations and vignettes that will delight the homiletical heart” and would be helpful to homiletical teachers and pastors (p. 90). Engle (1981) praises the book for its graphic and pedagogical devices when referring to the inclusion of suggested exercises at the end of selected chapters. Engle states the exercises are an educational component, that “enhances the usefulness of this book as a classroom homiletics text. One can hope that seminarians will make wise use of Biblical Preaching in learning the art and science of expository preaching prior to occupying pulpits” (p. 112). Kromminga (1981) praises
Robinson’s work by stating, “Ministers of the Word, seminary students and other readers will doubtless find this work entertaining as well as instructive and helpful” (p. 288).

*Biblical Preaching* became a staple textbook in many seminary classrooms in North America, as well as other parts of the world. For instance, Professor Ralph Partlow (1989) writes in his review, “I have recently tested this [Robinson’s] methodology with two classes at Scott Theological College (Machakos, Kenya) and have been extremely encouraged with their positive assessment and approval as well as their marked progress in sermon preparation and delivery” (p. 67). Positive reviews added to the success of *Biblical Preaching* and helped Robinson make his mark on the teaching of preaching.

**Quantitative Studies on Textbooks Used in Seminary Classrooms**

When determining the significance of Haddon Robinson, and his textbook *Biblical Preaching*, it is important to note how it compares to other homiletical textbooks throughout recent history. Quantitative surveys can be helpful in accurately determining which textbooks are favored by homiletics professors. I utilize several of these surveys in determining the influence of Haddon Robinson’s noteworthy textbook, *Biblical Preaching*. For the purposes of this research, it is important to decipher which homiletical textbooks seminary professors preferred from approximately 1970 to 2018. In order to do this, I rely on six key surveys conducted between 1974 and 2017.\(^{13}\)

\(^{13}\) A survey was conducted in 1951, but I was unable to locate its results. When choosing books to review for his doctoral dissertation on surveying the history of homiletical education in the United States, Winegarden (1951) refers to an “An Annotated Bibliography” prepared by Robert White Kirkpatrick. The bibliography recorded the results of a questionnaire sent out by Dr. Kirkpatrick to 44 Protestant seminaries requesting them to indicate which books they considered the ten most outstanding books on homiletics, from the standpoint of their practical value to the present day minister (p. 58). This appears to be the earliest conducted quantitative survey on homiletical textbooks. Unfortunately, Winegarden did not post the results clearly and Kirkpatrick’s work was never published. Winegarden cites Kirkpatrick’s survey as a four-page mimeograph with no date.
In 1974, Dr. Donald Chatfield, Professor of Preaching and Worship at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois, conducted a research study to discover which homiletical textbooks were used by teachers of preaching who were associated with the Academy of Homiletics. The results of Chatfield’s survey were never published, but in a later publication, Chatfield (1984) eludes to his early survey and cites that in 1974, “over half of the respondents named H. Grady Davis's *Design for Preaching* as their textbook of choice” (p. 2). This appears to be the first time a quantitative survey was used in naming a favored homiletical textbook.

The earliest quantitative survey conducted on the use of homiletical textbooks used in seminary classrooms seems to be by Kent Hughes in 1983. In his doctoral dissertation, Hughes surveyed 137 members of the American Association of Theological Seminaries seeking to find the most-used homiletical texts. The following (Table 1) is a list of the author, title, and number of responses from those who completed the survey giving us one of the earliest comprehensive quantitative studies ever publically published.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, Title</th>
<th>Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Davis, H. G. (1958) <em>Design for Preaching</em></td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadus, J. (1979) <em>A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons</em></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackwood, A. (1948) <em>The Preparation of Sermons</em></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbey, M. (1963) <em>Preaching to the Contemporary Mind</em></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangster, W. (1952) <em>The Approach to Preaching</em></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baumann, J. D. (1972) <em>An Introduction to Contemporary Preaching</em></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haselden, K. (1963) <em>The Urgency of Preaching</em></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koller, C. (1962) <em>Expository Preaching Without Notes</em></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1.* Quantitative study of preaching textbooks according to Kent Hughes.
Hughes’ (1983) survey confirms Chatfield’s 1974 findings and helps to affirm that Davis’ *Design for Preaching* and Broadus’ *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* were two of the most widely used textbooks in seminary classrooms. However, the consensus around homiletical textbooks would dissipate, as Chatfield’s second survey in 1984 would soon discover.

Chatfield conducted a similar survey in 1984 to the one he did in 1974. He mailed a questionnaire to the 131 names on the Academy of Homiletics’ mailing list, which consisted of various Protestant denominations (mainline and “conservative”) as well as a Roman Catholic school. The two questions asked were, “What basic textbooks do you use, if any (rank in order of usage)?” and "What kind of book[s]—basic or advanced—would you most like to see published now?" (p. 1). Forty-six of the 61 respondents (67%) answered the first question (15 listed 4 books, 10 listed 3, 13 listed 2, and 8 listed 1) resulting in a final count of 115 books (Chatfield, 1984, p. 1). The following (Table 2) is a chart of all the authors and books, and that were mentioned more than twice in order from most mentions to the least amount of mentions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, Title</th>
<th>Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweazey, G. (1976) <em>Preaching the Good News</em></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buechner, F. (1977) <em>Telling the Truth</em></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis, H. G. (1958) <em>Design for Preaching</em></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craddock, F. (1979) <em>As One Without Authority</em></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keck, L. (1978) <em>The Bible in the Pulpit</em></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Quantitative study of preaching textbooks according to Donald Chatfield.*
Admittedly, Chatfield (1984) was surprised to find that no one book received more than seven mentions and, while Sweazey’s book received six first mentions and one second mention, no book or books emerged to be the overwhelming favorite (p. 1). As mentioned above, in Chatfield’s 1974 survey, as well as Hughes’ survey, *Design for Preaching* was the overwhelming favorite amongst those surveyed. However, just a few years later, that number had dwindled significantly. It appears the field may have desired a new voice and different book to fulfill its needs.

Chatfield (1984) attests the dramatic shift from Davis to the assortment of preaching textbooks to three significant differences among the respondents. First, Chatfield attributes this change to a difference in theological stances among educational institutions. Chatfield admits that seminaries that are more conservative are closer to a consensus by using books by Robinson, Stott, and Sweazy but teachers of preaching from other persuasions are still searching for a core book (p. 3). Second, there seems to be various teaching styles, methods, and approaches to teaching among homiletics professors (pp. 3-4). Finally, Chatfield suggests the lack of consensus may be so low because there is no book that exists which fulfills “the agreed-upon pedagogical needs” (p. 4). He reaches this conclusion based on the response to the second question, which inquires what type of book teachers of preaching would like. A variety of responses were given, but the two most frequent answers revolved around the need for a basic textbook for students in beginning courses and a book on biblical preaching (Chatfield, 1984, p. 4). Chatfield mentions that Robinson’s book, *Biblical Preaching*, as well as similar books, “do not strike the right note” for some in the Academy (p. 4). Chatfield does not clarify what he means by “right note” but perhaps he is speaking to the view one holds on the
interpretation and authority of the Bible and how the Scriptures are to be viewed and handled when preaching?

Over the next 26 years, writers published a variety of homiletical texts. Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate any survey occurring during this span which surveys homiletical textbooks used in classrooms. However, in 2010, during their 25th year of publishing, *Preaching* magazine announced the 25 most influential preaching books since the magazine’s inception. In their quest to find books that, “have shaped the thinking and teaching about preaching,” the compilers of the magazine surveyed readers, preaching professors and influencers (Duduit, 2010, para. 4). This ranking helps to identify some of the more recent and major texts in preaching, however, it does not survey books used specifically in classrooms by seminary professors. Here are the top 10 results in order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, Book</th>
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*Table 3. Quantitative study of preaching textbooks according to Preaching magazine.*

There are also several questions that remain unanswered regarding how the survey was conducted. For instance, the magazine does not explain the number of compilers of the survey, how they were chosen, who they represented, or votes cast for each book. Nonetheless, this survey is significant because even though it comes 26 years
after Chatfield’s survey, it demonstrates that Stott’s *Between Two Worlds* and, in particular, Robinson’s *Biblical Preaching* remained as top preaching books and the eras of Broadus and Davis had ceased. Editor of *Preaching* magazine, Michael Duduit (2010), writes:

*Biblical Preaching* stands apart from all the others in terms of recognition by those who study preaching—by far it received the most nominations from pastors and professors. The book was originally published in 1980, 30 years ago, but has dominated the classrooms of evangelical colleges and seminaries in the past 25 years. A revised second edition was published in 2001, guaranteeing that succeeding generations of young preachers would benefit from this outstanding introduction to the task of preparing and presenting biblical sermons. Robinson’s emphasis on “Big Idea” preaching has shaped the thinking of thousands of expository preachers and been the major influence on many of those who teach preaching in today’s classrooms. More than any other book of the past quarter century, *Biblical Preaching* has profoundly influenced a generation of evangelical preachers. (para. 5)

The next survey on homiletical textbooks that carries significance for my research was published in 2015. As a doctoral student, Troy Borst (2015) sought to study the preparation process of clergy across denominations and Christian traditions. He randomly selected 32 seminaries and higher educational institutions across three major Christian traditions as well as schools from 12 different American Christian denominations. He received 27 responses using phone interviews, emails, online information, and reviewing syllabi ending with finding 96 different texts were used to educate students in the area of
preaching. To narrow the list to 20 books, Borst decided a book had to cover two criteria. First, multiple theological institutions must use the book. Second, multiple denominations must use the book; however, exceptions were made for two books in the Orthodox Church because of their high frequency within that tradition.

Borst (2015) listed the top 20 books in alphabetical order, briefly describing each one, and gave random notes on where and how often each book was used. To rank them, I listed the texts (Table 4) by frequency of responses and included Borst’s brief notes. Borst concludes that schools use one to three basic types of textbooks when teaching students about preaching: practical, theoretical, and anthological. He suggests that preaching professors ought to cover all three types when educating their students and concludes that preaching is a practice in Christendom, which can be a point of unity amongst clergy (Borst, 2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, Book</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Notes from Borst</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long, T. (1989) <em>The Witness of Preaching</em></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Used across denominations as well as in the Orthodox Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapell, B. (1994) <em>Christ-Centered Preaching</em></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor, B. B. (1993) <em>The Preaching Life</em></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Used across denominations as well as in the Roman Catholic School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthurs, J. (2007) <em>Preaching with Variety</em></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Four institutions in four denominations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behr, J. (1997) <em>On the Apostolic Preaching</em></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Only used in Orthodox Church institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buechner, F. (1977) <em>Telling the Truth</em></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Three institutions in three denominations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craddock, F. (1979) <em>As One Without Authority</em></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craddock, F. (1985) <em>Preaching</em></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Used across denominations as well as in the Roman Catholic School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author, Book</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Notes from Borst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dabovich, S. (2008) <em>Preaching in the Orthodox Church</em></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Only used in Orthodox Church institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stott, J. (1982) <em>Between Two Worlds</em></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.* Quantitative study of preaching textbooks according to Troy Borst.

There appears to be flaws in Borst’s (2015) study and questions remain unanswered. For instance, what was the process used for choosing the schools at random, and from what pool were the schools drawn? Borst also does not specify which courses used the books and whether or not those courses were required for all students. There may have also been more than one preaching class at an institution, which could have swayed the data. One other major flaw, which questions the validity of the study, is the fact that he records that Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary was not one of the seminaries that uses Robinson’s *Biblical Preaching.* However, the preaching faculty at Gordon-Conwell has confirmed with me that the book was required for their introductory preaching class at the time. Despite study defects and lingering questions, the survey
findings demonstrate the use of multiple homiletical textbooks during this time, and Robinson’s appears frequently on the surveys.

One of the most comprehensive and thorough quantitative studies regarding homiletical textbooks used in seminaries was presented in 2017 at the annual conference of the Evangelical Homiletics Society in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Alex Kato (2017) sought to identify which preaching books professors at theological institutions within the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) assigned in their introductory preaching classes. Kato collected preaching course syllabi in two stages. First, he searched school websites and located freely available and current preaching syllabi from 83 theological institutions. Second, he contacted the preaching faculty at the remaining schools, requesting a copy of their preaching course syllabus and received an additional 40 more. From these 123 schools (of 278 total ATS institutions), he analyzed the syllabi for both (a) the required preaching course to earn a Masters of Divinity and (b) the introductory preaching course at institutions that do not require students to take preaching courses (2017). Here is a summary of the top ten books yielded by his data collection:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, Book</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>FTE</th>
<th>Primary Tradition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapell, B. (1994) <em>Christ-Centered Preaching</em></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2564</td>
<td>Evangelical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas, F. (1997) <em>They Like to Never Quit Praisin’ God</em></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1183</td>
<td>Mainline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5. Quantitative study of preaching textbooks according to Alex Kato.*
The data reveal that roughly 25% of the ATS schools surveyed use Long’s (1989) *The Witness of Preaching* and 15% are using Robinson’s (2014) *Biblical Preaching*.

Kato (2017) also calculated the Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) enrollment of students at each school and determined that some books, like Long’s (1989) *Witness of Preaching* and Taylor’s (1992) *The Preaching Life*, happened to be assigned at several schools but were not assigned to as many students as those in evangelical schools. Kato concluded that Robinson’s (2014) *Biblical Preaching* is assigned to almost the same number of students as Long’s (1989) *The Witness of Preaching* because of the larger average size of the evangelical schools (p. 89). Kato’s survey is significant because it was the first to consider the scope of the school and FTE enrollment of students in his findings.

In summary, these six surveys allow a few general observations. First, there was a consensus amongst homiletic professors around using H. Grady Davis’ *Design for Preaching* to teach preaching during the 1970s and early 1980s. Second, there does not appear to be a consensus amongst various Christian traditions and denominations regarding the use of another homiletical textbook since *Design for Preaching*. Finally, although homiletics professors have not reached a majority on which textbook to use in their classes since Davis, homiletics scholars consistently regard Robinson’s *Biblical Preaching* as a top preaching textbook over the past 35 years as it is the only book that appears on every survey.

Hughes (1983) survey indicates that in just a short time after its publication, *Biblical Preaching* was used by nearly 20% of homiletics scholars from theological institutions within the Association of Theological Schools. Robinson’s book was also one
of the four most mentioned books in Chatfield’s (1984) survey and was the leading book in Preaching (2010) magazine’s survey. Borst’s (2015) survey lists Robinson’s book as used at only a few seminaries but his research design draws several questions, as noted. Kato’s (2017) comprehensive survey of 123 ATS institutions reveals that Biblical Preaching is the most used homiletical textbook in evangelical schools.

It appears Robinson’s book is one of the main reasons many regard him influential in the field of homiletics. However, why his book is influential remains to be answered. Was it the manner in which it was written? The content? The time and context it was written? Was it due to good marketing? Was it because of Robinson’s reputation? This research and interviews with homiletics scholars, seek to answer these questions.

Influential Leadership in Theological Higher Education

There are a variety of professors and disciplines within higher education. No faculty members are alike, nor are any two disciplines. Not surprisingly, professors are constantly transforming and altering most academic disciplines with new findings and innovative ways of teaching. I begin this final section of the literature review with a recent study describing keys to influential leaders. This helps lay a foundation for possible ways influence is accomplished in higher education. I then examine literature that describes how others influence professors and how professors could possibly influence their discipline. Since my study is focusing on Haddon Robinson and evangelical seminaries, it is necessary to explore the role theology plays in influencing the curriculum. Finally, I give two examples of non-evangelical homileticians, who have been considered influential in the field of the teaching of preaching. This final component of the literature review is beneficial to this study because it aids in drawing accurate
conclusions after the data is collected on how Robinson formed his beliefs as a professor and how he influenced the teaching of preaching in evangelical seminaries in North America.

**Leadership theory and influence.** Influence and leadership are often times closely related. Scanlan (2006) states, “The simplest and perhaps best definition of leadership can be summed up in one word: influence. And when the leadership role is performed well, the definition can be expanded to two words: inspiring influence,” (p. 98). Mirsalimi and Hunter (2006) describe influential leadership as, “the type of leadership that relies on influence as opposed to coercion. It is this type of leadership that creates followers who want to follow as opposed to followers who believe they have to follow,” (p. 77). Wherever there is a leader, there is usually influence (Duncan & Warden, 1999). For instance, influence is found in multiple places such as the sports field, in the health care system, and in the classroom.

Haddon Robinson did most of his influencing as a preacher and seminary professor. He, along with other seminary educators, have the task of helping students not only to theorize about the changes they can potentially make in the world, but can influence students to become participators, activators, and religious leaders involved in the world’s events (Abbs, 2003). However, influence can be a challenging concept to measure. If Robinson influenced the field of homiletics, as many have claimed, how did he do so and what does his influencing look like?

According to Grenny, Patterson, Maxfield, McMillian, and Switzler (2013) there are three keys to influence that influential leaders do better than others. Their findings are a result of scouring through more than 17,000 articles and books, “to find scholars and
practitioners who have mastered various aspects of influence” (Grenny et al., 2013, p. 10). They then examined and interviewed the rare leaders who succeeded at influencing, “rapid, profound, and sustainable change,” (Grenny et al., 2013, p. 10). Second, they concentrate on vital behaviors that will aid in achieving their intended results.

The first key component to influence is focus and measure (Grenny et al., 2013). Leaders who influence are able to clearly articulate their goal and communicate it to the individuals they have been entrusted to lead (Hu & Liden, 2011; West et al., 2003). Grenny and co-authors (2013) insist having goals that are vague with little to no effective measuring tools rarely leads to influencing a culture. Instead, influential leaders are overtly clear about communicating the outcomes they want to accomplish, as well as how they are going to measure those outcomes.

The second key to influence they found is that influential leaders focus on two or three vital behaviors that produce the greatest amount of change (Grenny et al., 2013). To find these vital behaviors, Grenny and co-authors conclude that influential leaders implement the following search strategy: notice the obvious, look for crucial moments, learn from positive deviants, and spot culture busters. Using these search strategies, leaders can identify the behaviors that need to be changed in order for the necessary change to occur.

Finally, Grenny and co-authors (2013) conclude that the third key to influence is getting people to carry out the behavioral change through engaging in all six sources of influencing behavior. They adopt these sources from Grenny, Maxfield, and Shimberg’s (2008) previous study on having influence. In their earlier research, Grenny and co-authors (2008) conducted three separate studies interviewing 25 leaders about their
leading challenges, a larger sample of leaders to explore how they approach change initiatives, and finally surveyed over 1,000 individuals about personal habits they were struggling to change. Their results yielded the following six themes they identified as sources of personal, social, and structural influence categorized by both motivation and ability (See Figure 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Motivation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ability</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal</strong></td>
<td>1) Link to Mission and Values</td>
<td>2) Overinvest in Skill Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td>3) Harness Peer Pressure</td>
<td>4) Create Social Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structural</strong></td>
<td>5) Align Rewards and Assure Accountability</td>
<td>6) Change the Environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Figure 4.* Grenny, Maxfield, and Shimberg’s six sources of influencing behavior.

Engaging in all six of these sources of influence enhance the possibility of affecting change in organizations and in people’s personal life. Grenny and co-authors (2013) conclude influential leaders over determine change by building and maintaining six sources of influence that both inspire and empower the vital behaviors of those who follow.

In another study, Mirsalimi and Hunter (2006) suggest in their DBH Consulting Influential Leadership Model the various components of influential leadership. Along with knowledge and experience, Mirsalimi and Hunter maintain an influential leader must possess several values and develop skills to be effective at influencing. The four core values they present are authenticity, integrity, humility, and service. The five core skills are listening, reflecting, use of self (or mindfulness), dialogue, and modeling. These values and skills, along with the three key components to influential leaders and six sources of influencing behavior, may help in determining who or what influenced
Robinson’s andragogy and approach to preaching and point out several important ways and techniques Robinson used to influence the teaching of preaching.

**Influence within academic life.** As highlighted in the section on the history of the teaching of preaching, academic cultures and disciplines fluctuate over time. Becher and Towler (2001) believe the discipline to which professors belong and the particular group of people or department with whom they interact daily influences the academic life of a professor. In their book, *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Culture of Disciplines*, Beecher and Towler explore the diversity of academic lives on a global scale. They describe how a faculty member navigates through the various academic departments and disciplines, which they describe as tribes and territories. To completely comprehend what influences the teaching, learning, and assessment practices that encompass the academic life for specific professors and disciplines, Beecher and Towler insist one must investigate the influence of tradition, practices, and epistemological views of one’s tribes and territories. By determining how a faculty member is being influenced, and by whom, it is possible to understand how she or he influences the field or discipline.

Roxå, Mårtensson, and Alveteg (2011) believe the ideal situation for education is when faculty and teaching develop as an ongoing enterprise in an effort to discover improved ways to understand the subject and master the practice. This evolution of ideas and andragogy takes place when the faculty member is also evolving, growing, and exploring new avenues. Roxå, Mårtensson, and Alveteg investigate how socio-cultural issues, primarily within faculty departments, can support the development of teaching. Their perspective is similar to Becher and Trowler (2001) in that understanding the social
context of the professor plays a significant role in his or her development of teaching and influence in a specific discipline. This social context in higher education is also referred to as the culture of the faculty member (Billot & King, 2017; Jarvis, 2012). Within this culture, there are two basic networks that academic professors rely on to construct their perspective of teaching, learning, and influencing their discipline (Alvesson, 2002; Becher & Trowler, 2001; Roxå, Mårtensson, and Alveteg, 2011).

The first cultural network is broad. It consists of hundreds of voices from a variety of sources in which one can refer for guidance and provision. It is within this context that a faculty member can rely on history, tradition, and research (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Roxå, Mårtensson, & Alveteg, 2011). Often, a faculty member can refer back to the way he or she learned a subject, or the advice received from an author or study.

The second cultural network, though much smaller and personal, is referred to as a significant network (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Martensson, Olsson & Roxa, 2006; Roxå, Mårtensson, & Alveteg, 2011). This cultural network typically consists of no more than ten individuals who can be used for testing ideas, feedback on papers, clarifying language, and thinking through new concepts. Roxå, Mårtensson, and Alveteg (2011) believe that it is within this smaller cultural network that professors develop new ideas and theories, and are able to cultivate those thoughts until they are advanced enough for the larger network. Roxå and Martensson’s survey of 106 faculty members from various disciplines and institutions demonstrate that these smaller networks can be with people from the same department or discipline, but they may also come from selected individuals from another discipline or “in spaces without any connection to academia at
all” (p. 213). The significant networks allow for deep and meaningful conversations to develop that usually take place in private, like at the coffee machine or over lunch as opposed to scheduled meetings. Roxå, Mårtensson, and Alveteg’s (2011) research also showed that if the professor felt generally supported within his or her local cultural context, the more conversational partners he or she was likely to have. Understanding Haddon Robinson’s significant networks, both large and small, are useful in deciphering his growth and evolution as a professor. Discovering the key voices he listened to and dialogued with help determine how he developed over his academic career. Understanding these crucial networks aid in deciphering his level of influence on the discipline of homiletics.

It should be noted that Robinson’s level of influence on homiletics is unlikely correlated to the number of publications he produced. Studies show that publication output for almost any discipline is highly dependent on a few individuals (Abramo et al. 2012, 2013; Kyvik 1989, 1991; Larivie`re et al. 2010; Lotka, 1926; Ruiz-Castillo and Costas 2014). However, Piro, Rørstad, and Aksnes (2016) discovered that the overall impact of the most published professors is modest. The quantity of publications does not equate to influence. Instead, the quality of the publications makes a larger impact. Perhaps this is why Robinson was influential, even though he was not the most published author in his field.

**Theology’s role in the teaching of preaching and homiletical theory.** Another area that influences professors, particularly seminary professors, is theology. As discussed earlier, the theological beliefs of the early European settlers in North America played a significant role in the founding and formation of higher education in North
America. The theology of each institution’s leaders, including homiletics professors, influenced the way preaching was taught by faculty and learned by aspiring ministers (Thelin, 2004). As the school’s theological beliefs changed, so did their approach to preaching. Cannell (2006) traces four factors from the long history of higher education that has impacted the shift in theological education: (1) How institutionalism influenced the role of theology; (2) How academic rationalism has shaped perceptions of education and knowledge; (3) How professionalism has shaped theological education and the church; and (4) How the church and academy comprehend and nurture the longing to know God more. Cannell maintains these four factors frame a complex matrix that theological education must overcome. However, despite these obstacles, she believes that the study of theology presents alternative possibilities for leadership development with divinity schools and seminaries. These factors point to the connection between the shifting of an institution’s theology and the composition of the faculty.

Since faculty most often create curriculum, professors’ theological beliefs will likely influence their program of study (Elshtain, 2002). Alleman, Glanzer, and Guthrie’s (2016) empirical study of surveying 2,309 faculty at 48 institutions in the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities found that Christian professors integrate their theology and traditions into their course objectives and educational theories in several different ways. Their study demonstrates that theology influences professors across disciplines and denominations in the way they teach and formulate their curriculum. A more specific, in-depth study of theology influencing the teaching of preaching is Bence’s (1988) doctoral dissertation.
Bence (1988) compared the theologies of seven homileticians from the 20th century to evaluate his hypothesis that theology exerts a great influence on the teaching of preaching. After gathering fifty-five completed surveys from homiletics professors in Britain, he concluded that while institutional and denominational settings affect the teaching of preaching, one’s theology has an even greater influence. Bence noticed three areas where theology determined one’s teaching of preaching: 1) The source from which the preacher gets his or her content, 2) The basis from which the preacher should select content, and 3) Once the content is determined, the particular criteria that preachers should prepare their material for delivery. In this study, I demonstrate the importance of understanding Robinson’s theology to determine if, or how, his theology influenced his homiletic and andragogy.

Lake’s (2003) doctoral dissertation investigates Robinson’s theological methodology to discover how it affects his homiletical method found in *Biblical Preaching*. Lake focuses primarily on Robinson’s view of Scripture in the areas of revelation, inspiration, inerrancy, and authority. He also investigates Robinson’s hermeneutic and definition of expository preaching. Lake concludes that Robinson's expository methodology is a consistent foundation for his homiletical process, as is expressed in his view of Scripture, hermeneutics, and definition of expository preaching. Lake’s research is important because it helps to understand some of the theological underpinnings that help shaped his homiletic. How this affected his view on the teaching of preaching remains to be seen.

**Two key homiletics professors who influenced homiletics.** Previously in this chapter, I discussed the influential works of John Broadus and H. Grady Davis. Broadus
and Davis published two key textbooks that helped shape homiletics over the past 150 years. There have been others who have been influential in affecting how people think about preaching, for instance: Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878 – 1969) and Fred Benning Craddock (1928 – 2015). I have chosen these two individuals because there have been publications on their biographical lives and studies concerning the impact they have made on homiletics.

Fosdick was a pastor and professor of homiletics during the early 1900s in New York City. One of his seminal works was an article titled, “What Is The Matter with Preaching?” (Fosdick, July 1928). This piece was significant because it focused on the congregation’s expectations while listening to sermons. In his article, Fosdick questioned preachers who preach verse-by-verse expository sermons and insisted that expository preaching is dull and uninteresting (p. 136). Fosdick writes, “Only the preacher proceeds still upon the idea that folk come to church desperately anxious to discover what happened to the Jebusites. The result is that folk less and less come to church at all” (p. 137). He urges preachers to consider to whom they are speaking and calls for them to begin their sermon preparation with the listener instead of the biblical text.

Fosdick’s article gained traction because it was published in Harpers Magazine, a magazine targeting the public as its main readers, not preachers. After reading his article, congregations expected more from their pastors’ sermons than merely a biblical history lesson. This article, along with several other works from Fosdick (1921, 1924, 1956, 1971), helped establish him as a scholar and a leader of homiletics. Later on in Fosdick’s career, he looked at preaching as a large group counseling session, where he blended his
knowledge of psychology with the Bible (Fosdick, 1952). This was also a new trend for preachers in his day.

Robert Moat Miller, Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill published a biography on Harry Emerson Fosdick, solidifying Fosdick’s significance in homiletics. Miller (1985) looks at many of Fosdick’s sermons and traces several central themes of Fosdick’s adult life back to his upbringing, childhood, and young adult years. Miller also writes on the importance of Fosdick’s weekly Sunday evening sermon broadcast, “National Vespers.” One listener commented on the appeal of the broadcast because it, “lives where I live, it grapples with the thoughts and problems with which I must grapple, and it doesn't meet my doubts by scolding but by articulating my dilemma and showing me a more excellent way” (Macnab, 1986, p. 544). Miller is also able to draw on his background as an American historian to continually position Fosdick within the events going on in the world. He uses these events to draw connections between Fosdick’s life, preaching, and theology. Throughout his 50 years of ministry, as well as years in retirement, Fosdick walked hand-in-hand with American liberal Christianity.

Another pastor and teacher of preaching who has been influential for the teaching of preaching was Fred Craddock. Craddock’s main contribution to homiletics was his inductive approach to sermon delivery. In contrast to the Traditional Homiletic where a preacher usually states upfront what the sermon is about, the inductive approach builds tension throughout the sermon and does not state the major premise until the conclusion, or sometimes not at all (1971, 1978, 1985). As mentioned earlier, Craddock is a proponent of the New Homiletic and many have built off his theory of preaching to
advance the New Homiletic theory of preaching. Stern (2013) writes, “In homiletics, the impact seems to have been that there are fewer and fewer ‘grand theories’ of homiletics coming out such as those theories/methods developed during the era of the New Homiletic including works by Craddock, Lowry, Buttrick, Wilson, Rice, and others” (p. 71). These homiletics scholars, led by Craddock, helped to influence preaching, and the teaching of preaching for the latter half of the 20th century.

Similar to Fosdick, Craddock’s (1971, 1985) approach to preaching appears to be shaped by the listeners. Craddock (1985) writes, “What the listeners hear the text say in a fresh, appropriate, and indigenous way to them: that is the message of the sermon,” (p. 2). Craddock (1971) believes preachers often overlook the role of the listener in the sermon. Instead, the listener ought to be the focal point of the sermon and play a part in the sermon’s meaning. Craddock’s views on preaching has influenced proponents of the New Homiletic to create their sermons around their audience (Kim, 1999; Lee, 2003; Long & O'Day, 1993; Radford, 2003). Craddock’s death in 2015 triggered an outpouring of admiration by former students and colleagues (Blake, 2015). He was described by some as, “one of the most important homileticians in America for the last forty years” (Hanna, 2015) and his thoughts on preaching can be identified throughout many preaching textbooks today.

Fosdick and Craddock are just two examples of homiletics professors who had a significant influence on the teaching of preaching. Research has been done about their impact and biographies have been written about their lives. In this study, I am drawing upon literature from homiletics, andragogy, and influential leadership to determine Robinson’s influence on the teaching of preaching.
Summary

This literature review provides a foundation of scholarship on the rationale for studying and researching Haddon Robinson’s life, homiletic, andragogy, and influence on the teaching of preaching. I have situated him within the scope of the history of preaching from its origins to contemporary homiletical theory paradigms. Robinson fits most neatly into a Traditional Homiletic, also referred to as expository preaching, which has four leading approaches to evangelical preaching. Most likely, Robinson would ascribe to a Theocentric approach to expository preaching based on his hermeneutic and theory of preaching the Big Idea. I also provided a foundation of scholarship in educational theory and the practice of the teaching of preaching. I then surveyed the history of homiletics taught in North America along with the main preaching textbooks used. Using quantitative surveys, I determined that Robinson’s textbook, Biblical Preaching, has been one of the most widely used textbooks. Finally, I surveyed key components of leadership influence within theological higher education and gave examples of two homiletics professors who have influenced the teaching of preaching. The conclusions I drew from this literature review align with the research questions I have sought to answer. In the next chapter, I will explain further the epistemology, methodology, and methods I used to answer my guiding questions to determine who Haddon Robinson was, his approach to education, and the influence he made on the teaching of preaching.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The purpose of this hermeneutical and phenomenological study is to explore Haddon Robinson, his homiletic, and his andragogy to determine his influence on the teaching of homiletics in North American evangelical seminaries. To situate Dr. Robinson within the context of homiletical theory and the teaching of homiletics in the 20th and 21st centuries, a literature review was necessary consisting of a review of the history of preaching along with contemporary homiletical theories. Next in the literature review is a section regarding pragmatism, andragogy, and the different ways homileticians have tried to advance the teaching of preaching. Finally, the literature review includes an assessment of the teaching of preaching in theological educational institutions, quantitative data revealing foundational homiletical textbooks, and a section relating to the leadership component of the influence of professors within higher education. The main questions guiding me throughout this research have been:

Guiding Question (GQ) 1: Who is Haddon Robinson?

Guiding Question (GQ) 2: How did Haddon Robinson formulate his approach to homiletics and andragogy for seminary students?

Guiding Question (GQ) 3: How did Haddon Robinson influence the teaching of homiletics in North American evangelical seminaries?

To answer these questions and accomplish the overall purpose of this study, I collected and analyzed data from various sources. I researched Robinson’s life and works by collecting data from two institutions’ archives, his published and unpublished works, and analyzed interviews from Haddon Robinson conducted by others before his death.
Finally, I interviewed current homiletics, several who knew Robinson well, to collect more data about his life, teaching, and influence on the field of evangelical homiletics.

Two main sections frame this chapter: Methodology and Methods. The Methodology section begins with a discussion on the differences between quantitative and qualitative studies followed by a justification for choosing a qualitative research study to accomplish my purpose and answer the guiding questions. Next, I describe the epistemological assumptions and theoretical perspectives regarding my approach to truth and knowledge, which is the basis for my study. I then explain the methodological foundations of collecting data that position this research into distinct methodologies: narrative biography, hermeneutics, and phenomenology. In the second major section, Methods, I identify the methods for collecting the data and the procedure applied for analyzing and interpreting the various data that are collected. Finally, I conclude with the limitations, delimitations, and ethical considerations of this study.

Methodology

The core of social scientific research deals with people and their experiences (Putnam, 1983; Willis, 2007) as well as how others can understand their social life and make sense of its meaning (Babbie, 2016). When choosing how to conduct research, the researcher will most likely choose either a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods research design (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative and quantitative research are not to be viewed as contrasting designs, but rather two designs on opposite ends of a spectrum with the distinction essentially being between numerical and non-numeric data (Babbie, 2016). A mixed-methods research design lands somewhere in the middle of this continuum
because it attempts to incorporate elements from both qualitative and quantitative studies (Creswell, 2014).

Historically in social science research, quantitative studies dominated the field from the 19th century to the mid-20th century with a reliance on collecting data empirically through data collection tools (Creswell, 2008, 2014). However, qualitative research designs are being used more frequently during the latter half of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century through collecting data by observing a particular setting (Creswell, 2008, 2014). Within this Methodology section, I compare and contrast quantitative and qualitative research designs and justify why I have chosen to do a qualitative study. I then position this study in light of my epistemology and give the rationale for the specific qualitative methodologies I have chosen.

**Type of Study**

As mentioned above, two widely used approaches to research are quantitative and qualitative inquiries. Both can be extremely helpful in grasping a better understanding of a given phenomenon (Babbie, 2016). Researchers typically conduct quantitative studies deductively by using traditional scientific methods including, but not limited to, a hypothesis, methods of measurement, experimentation, collection of data, and analysis. These methods help to make the observations more explicit through quantification. Often, random samples of a people group generate the data to generalize the population. These random samples create data that can be easier to aggregate, compare, and summarize which opens the possibility for statistical analyses (Babbie, 2016). A researcher may then attempt to identify and explain the causal relationships between a variety of variables to confirm or disprove the theory or hypothesis and recommend a final course of action.
While there are several strengths to a quantitative inquiry, there are also weaknesses and/or challenges. For instance, a lack of in-depth exploration and/or detail of understanding may lead to varied conclusions (Babbie, 2013; Keyton, 2010). Another weakness may be the size of the population samples. It may become difficult for the researcher to conclude the comprehensive and detailed causation that produced the results of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Another challenge may be the scope of the study, which may take more time, money, and resources available (Creswell, 2014). Even though the study is important, it may not be achievable. The strengths and weaknesses of a quantitative study were taken into account when considering which research methodology to use for this study. However, I believe the scope, scale, and challenges of a quantitative study are too abundant for this study and my resources.

Even though researchers have conducted qualitative studies for decades, it is still in its early stages. Many have a difficulty of defining qualitative research because it cuts across many disciplines, fields, and subject matters, such as education, social work, communications, psychology, history, organizational studies, medical science, anthropology, and sociology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Keyton, 2015). Nonetheless, a qualitative study looks at the “emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured [if measured at all] in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 14). Creswell (2014) states that qualitative research is an approach for “exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4). A lengthier definition of qualitative research comes from Denzin and Lincoln (2005):
Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

(p. 3)

To study a given phenomenon, data collection is necessary; however, it will look differently than quantitative data.

Patton (2002) summarizes the three types of data collection in a qualitative study: (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews, (2) direct observations, and (3) accumulating written documents. While quantitative researchers typically use the scientific method to find numerical evidence to support or disprove their hypotheses, qualitative researchers attempt to use multiple methods, or triangulation, to achieve an exhaustive understanding of what they are studying. Patton (2015) notes that qualitative work requires researchers to go into the field to record data through interviews, observation, and analysis of artifacts and then draw conclusions from the data collected. The researcher is being the primary instrument of measurement (Yerace, 2017).

It appears a qualitative design, rather than a quantitative design or mixed methods inquiry, would enable me to fulfill my purpose and answer my guiding questions. Seeking to determine who Robinson was and his influence could prove challenging solely through empirical statistics. Rather, a qualitative study facilitates the use of multiple
methodologies and data collection methods to capture a complete and extensive depiction of Robinson’s life and influence. Therefore, I have chosen to do a comprehensive qualitative study on Haddon Robinson to accomplish my purpose of exploring his homiletic and his andragogy to understand his influence on the teaching of homiletics in North American evangelical seminaries. I intend on accomplishing this purpose by answering the guiding questions: *who* is Haddon Robinson, *how* did he form his homiletic and andragogy, and *how* did he influence the teaching of homiletics?

**Epistemology**

Although it is easy to jump immediately into a discussion of the methods used and data analysis, it is imperative to discuss the deep underpinnings of a researcher’s perception of knowledge. One’s epistemology is a foundation for understanding and explaining how “one knows what one knows” (Crotty, 2010, p. 3). Crotty (2010) makes the case that one’s epistemology informs one’s theoretical perspective, which influences one’s methodology guiding one’s method(s) of data collection. Therefore, it is vital that a researcher’s epistemology is clearly articulated.

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy dealing with the study of knowledge. Maynard (1994) explains that, “Epistemology is concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate” (p. 10). There are several epistemological positions identified in research texts. Epistemological divides can often come due to the distinctions between objectivism and subjectivism as well as positivism and constructionism. Crotty (2010) notes that both a quantitative study and/or qualitative study may be used while adhering to an epistemological position. Although he makes it
clear that only one epistemological position be observed while doing research, not both, because to do so would contradict one’s study (Crotty, 2010, p. 15). Therefore, I will explain the historical background of a post-positivistic epistemology, which is a deviation from positivism, and why I chose a post-positivistic epistemology for the foundation of this study as opposed to subjectivism or constructionism.

The French philosopher Auguste Comte (1855) coined the term positivism. He believed two stages dominated thinking in the world: a theological stage and a metaphysical stage (Comte, 1855). According to Comte, the theological stage dominated the world until 1300, and then followed a metaphysical stage over the next 500 years. Comte felt he was ushering in a third stage of history, in which science would reign supreme based on knowledge through the five senses (Comte, 1855). Therefore, he coined the term positivism, believing that through empirical research, scientific truths could be discovered and positively verified (Comte, 1855).

A post-positivist perspective varies from the traditional view of positivism by not adhering to a stringent cause and effect. Rather, a post-positivist approach recognizes that all cause and effect is a strong possibility but may or may not always occur with certainty (Creswell & Poth, 2017). While some quantitative research is accomplished through a post-positivism lens, there is also the possibility for qualitative research to be conducted with a post-positivist epistemology.

Ontologically I believe a single reality exists beyond ourselves, therefore I adhere to a post-positivism perspective. It is my belief that the triune God of the Hebrew Torah and Christian Bible best reveals this single reality. Isaiah the prophet records, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. ‘As
the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9, New International Version). From this passage of sacred literature, there seems to be a contrast between the thoughts and actions of God and those of human beings. I believe it is possible to adhere to a post-positivist epistemology and believe in absolute truths that come from a triune God but also allow truths to change because of the nature of the triune God.

A worldview of a monotheistic, triune God who has revealed himself through the original manuscripts of the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Old and New Testaments grounds my ontological beliefs. This helps to inform my epistemology of how reality is known. Objective and absolute truths come from God and are expounded through the corporate affirmations within the Christian tradition and creeds of which I hold to be true (Gundry & Cowan, 2010; Stott, 2003). Therefore, I believe in an objective, absolute truth that can be researched and studied. I also hold to a post-positivist epistemology that states laws, or theories, which govern the world, can be examined and proven. Other proponents of post-positivism are Popper (1959, 1963) and Kuhn (1962). Popper rejected the classic intuitivist views and believed he was reforming the scientific method when he proposed his view of empirical falsification. He believed that a theory can never be proven, but rather theories can be falsalism (Popper, 1959). Similarly, Khun (1962) believed that scientific fields undergo periodic modifications and these shifts uncover new ways of understanding. Neither of these men dealt directly with theology, but rather their works focused mainly on scientific discoveries.

Thus far, I have attempted to justify conducting a qualitative study over a quantitative study as well as explain the rationale of my post-positivistic epistemology.
Both are foundational to my methodologies and methods of data collection in attempting to answer my guiding questions as demonstrated in Figure 5. They sit at the top of Figure 5 because they are the basis for my research. Below my type of study and epistemology are my qualitative methodologies and methods. I will now explain the various qualitative methodologies I used in this study, followed by my methods for collecting data.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Type of Study</th>
<th>Qualitative Inquiry</th>
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<td><strong>Epistemology</strong></td>
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*Figure 5. Theoretical framework.*

**Qualitative Methodologies**

Within qualitative studies, there are several methodologies at the researcher’s disposal to answer one’s guiding question(s) (Creswell, 2014). Each methodology ultimately supports the method of data collection. In light of my guiding questions, I utilized the following qualitative methodologies: narrative biography, hermeneutics, and phenomenology.

**Narrative biography.** Throughout the ages, historians have tried to capture the various fields of human endeavor (Lugg, 2006). This academic discipline is typically known as historiography and has been vital in understanding the history of nations, cultures, empires, religions, and much more. Over time, the research interests of historiographers have evolved. A recent shift has occurred in the past century from traditional diplomatic, economic, and political history toward newer approaches of biographical study and social history (Haber, Kennedy, & Krasner, 1997).
Biographies typically focus on the study of a single life as explained in James Garraty’s (1957) groundbreaking book on writing biographies, *The Nature of Biography*. In his opening sentence, he attempts to define the term “biography” by stating, “Biography, to begin with a very simple definition, is the record of life” (p. 3). This succinct definition is a good place to start but, as Kridel (1998) writes, this definition fails to, “anticipate the complexity of issues, traditions, concerns and problems” biographers inevitably face (p. 8). Thus, because finding one agreed upon definition is rather daunting, I chose an unpretentious definition to guide this study: biography is the story of individuals, their actions—heroic or tragic—and the impact of their ideas (Wolpert, 2009).

Among the numerous forms of biographical research, three types are often most widely used: scholarly chronicle, critical study, and narrative biography (Oates, 1986, 1991). Each approach has its particular strengths, however, the researcher need not draw a fine line between approaches as each have aspects that may appear in the other (Kridel, 1998, p. 8). Techniques often cross as the research develops in congruence with the researcher’s own interpretive voice (Kridel, 1998). Perhaps one of the greatest attributes of biographical research is that there is often an intersection of paradigms and genres.

When writing a scholarly chronicle biography, the researcher does his or her best to remain objective and record meticulous facts and details about the biographical subject (Oates, 1986). This form of biographical research is often the most fundamental, and most common, because of its focus on informing the reader about the historical depiction of an individual life. Kridel (1998) adds, “The writing is detached, informative and comprehensive” (p. 9). A scholarly chronicle biography provides its readers with an
extensive amount of information after an expansive investigation of documents and materials in relation to the biographical subject (Oates, 1986). However, Backscheider (2001) reminds the researcher that, “At every step, biography is wonderful and terrible. Finding a single fact can take an hour, a month, years, or elude the seeker forever” (p. xvi). Nevertheless, the researcher records an incredible amount of facts and details from the person’s birth to death and articulates them while trying to remain objective.

The second approach Oates (1986) outlines is critical study, also known as intellectual biography. This genre abandons the need to write chronologically about the subject matter’s life while the researcher develops a narrative based on the subject matter’s beliefs or ideas (Kridel, 1998). Oates (1986) suggests the researcher, “analyzes his subject with appropriate detachment and skepticism, comparing his subject with similar lives in other eras, offering judgements about significance and consequence… perhaps dazzling the audience with his erudition and argumentative force” (p. x). The critical study style gives the researcher opportunities to rely on his or her own intellectual context and interpretation after self-reflective thoughtfulness and insight on the subject matter’s life and beliefs (Oates, 1986).

Oates’ (1986) third category is narrative biography. This style of a biography is a combination of the previous two. In this approach, the narrative biographer seeks to combine scholarly research and an analytical viewpoint all “within a narrative form” (Kridel, 1998, p. 10). There is no need for a comprehensive account of the subject matter’s entire life because facts are documented and interpretations are given but ultimately the biographer is telling the subject’s “life story” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, pp.
652-653). The biographer is at times objective, but also gives critical insights which Oates (1991) describes as bringing, “warmth of a life being lived” (p. 11).

A narrative biography method does not require a complete or comprehensive account of the subject’s life from birth to death. It is also not bound to discovering all the detailed facts of the subject, although the biographer strives to include many specific details (Josselson & Lieblich, 1993; Roberts, 2002). The main criterion of the narrative biography is for the biographer to acknowledge that the subject’s story is, “primarily defined by the subject in relation to the reader” (Kridel, 1998, p. 10). The author writes in hopes for the reader to grasp influential aspects and elements of the subject’s life. A description of formative events or experiences in the subject’s life may help the reader understand the subject more in-depth and with greater clarity.

I utilized this third category, narrative biography, as a qualitative methodology, to write a biography on Haddon Robinson, which can be found in Chapter 4. I specifically wrote about key components of Robinson’s life that may have been influential in shaping his approach to preaching and andragogy. I discuss his upbringing, education, family life, and first few years of church ministry, turning my attention to his professional careers at Dallas Theological Seminary, Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary (which is now known as Denver Seminary), and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The chapter concludes with excerpts of memories of Robinson’s life through the eyes of his former students, colleagues, friends, and family.

When choosing to write a biography, Cook (1998) stresses the importance of researching an individual that draws interest from the researcher. Throughout the biographical process, a relationship is born between the researcher and the person
studied. This bonding is helpful as the investigation and analysis continue because the growing connection between the researcher and individual can potentially energize the study and add a level of accountability to finish the work as accurately as possible (Cook, 1998). This has been true for me and my research on Haddon Robinson.

In addition to a developing relationship, it is imperative each biographer is consciously aware of his or her own voice and writing style. Often, the biographer’s voice is constantly being unearthed through the research and writing process. Banner (2009) writes, “given the long tradition among biographers of writing accessible prose, biography challenges the historian to produce lucid writing—not always the standard among academic scholars” (p. 581). Each researcher writes the biography through his or her unique voice, which is the invisible bridge between the reader and the researcher and between the researcher and the biographical subject (Backscheider, 2001). As a biographer diligently researches the subject matter’s life and interprets those findings, the biographer is continually examining his or her own interpretive voice and writing style. Biographies help to reveal a person’s life story and place that life story within its proper historical context.

When conducting a qualitative study, researching the comprehensive history of an individual can be beneficial for establishing a baseline, or background, before the interview processes begin (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Novick, 1988). For the purpose of this study, I have chosen to research Haddon Robinson and write a narrative biography to answer GQ 1: “Who is Haddon Robinson?” Vandiver (1983) writes,

Good biographies deal with the ways people faced living – tell how they met problems, how they coped with big and little crises, how they loved, competed,
did the things we all do daily – and hence these studies touch familiar chords in
readers. (p. 16)

Writing a narrative biography on Haddon Robinson hopefully will aid both my
understanding, as well as the reader’s understanding, of his life, contributions, and
influence. Grasping who Robinson was helped bring needed context to the interviewees’
responses.

Hermeneutics. Religious scholars with the primary purpose of interpreting and
exegesis are often used interchangeably but there is a distinction between the two.
Hermeneutics comes from the Greek word, ἑρμηνεύω, which means to translate or
interpret and refers to the interpretation of written, verbal, and non-verbal
communication. Exegesis, which is similar but slightly different, tends to focus primarily
on drawing out implications from the word and grammar of texts. It originates from the
Greek word, ἔξηγησις, which literally means, “to draw out” or “lead out.” When
conducting exegesis, the intent is to draw out the original meaning as intended by the
author (Mounce, 2003). Likewise, when doing hermeneutics, the researcher strives to
interpret the author’s original meaning as closely as possible (Duvall & Hays, 2012). A
clear and accurate understanding of the context in which something was stated is a key
component in doing accurate hermeneutics (Fee & Stuart, 2014; Palmer, 1969; Pratico &
Van Pelt, 2014).

More recently, the practice of hermeneutics has broadened to questions of general
interpretation (Grondin, 1994). Schleiermacher (1977) began practicing the art of
hermeneutics in reading biblical, classical, and legal texts but his later works laid the
foundation for others to bring their perspectives of hermeneutics into the secular social sciences (pp. 95-97). Dilthey, along with other German philosophers, were some one of the first scholars to use the practice of hermeneutics in the social science field (Dilthey & Jameson, 1972; Patton, 2002). However, over time, other scholars gave a slightly different nuance to the definition and practice of hermeneutics (Gallagher, 1992; Polkinghorne, 1983). For example, Heidegger (2008) understood hermeneutics to be the existential, phenomenological analysis of human existence and was concerned with how hermeneutics fit ontologically. Gadamer (1979), on the other hand, developed hermeneutics as a theory, heightening the possibility of understanding. According to Gadamer, the best definition for hermeneutics is to, “let what is alienated by the character of the written word or by the character of being distantiated by cultural or historical distances speak again. This is hermeneutics: to let what seems to be far and alienated speak again” (p. 83).

Scholars continue to give multiple nuances to the definitions of hermeneutics. Bleicher (1980) adds a more general explanation, “Hermeneutics can loosely be defined as the theory or philosophy of the interpretation of meaning” (p. 1). Habermas (1990) suggests a more precise definition, “Hermeneutics refers to an ‘ability’ we acquire to the extent to which we learn to ‘master’ a natural language: the art of understanding linguistically communicable meaning and to render it comprehensible in cases of distorted communication” (p. 245). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define hermeneutics as, “an approach to the analysis of texts that stresses how prior understandings and prejudices shape the interpretive process” (p. 27). Although, hermeneutics has a long and complex history in which the term is widely defined, the majority of definitions identify
the objective of hermeneutics as an understanding or interpretation, specifically relating to a text or language.

Some know the hermeneutical process as the hermeneutical cycle, whereby a researcher studies a text and understands it by referencing the context; the text in turn generates a deeper understanding of the context that leads to a more profound understanding of the text (Gadamer, 1960). Kvale (1987) suggests that, “In principle, such a hermeneutical explication of the text is an infinite process while it ends in practice when a sensible meaning, a coherent understanding, free of inner contradictions, has been reached” (p. 62). Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) explain, “Parts of the text are understood by reference to the whole, and the whole is understood in terms of its parts” (p. 34). Therefore, when practicing hermeneutics, the researcher is ultimately attempting to discover the most accurate understanding and interpretation of what was written or said within the proper context.

When interpreting a text, there seems to be a consensus among scholars that very little, if anything, may be interpreted apart from one’s presuppositions. Consequently, the researcher must come to terms with his or her own biases and assumptions. Kneller (1984) offers four principles for hermeneutic inquiry and analysis:

1. Understanding a human act or product, and hence all learning, is like interpreting a text.

2. All interpretation occurs within a tradition.

3. Interpretation involves opening myself to a text (or its analogue) and questioning it.

4. I must interpret a text in the light of my situation. (p. 68)
These principles aid researchers in establishing context and meaning for what people do and help to clarify the context and capture the perspective of the people or text being studied (Patton, 2002).

I have selected a hermeneutical research approach as one of my methodologies for this study because I will be analyzing published and unpublished works about or by Dr. Robinson, transcribed personal interviews others had with him, as well as transcribed personal interviews with others. Since Robinson is no longer living, a hermeneutical study of his published and unpublished materials will enable me to answer GQ 2 regarding who or what influenced his homiletic and andragogy. I will also use hermeneutics when analyzing the thoughts and perspectives of my interviewees, which will help answer GQ 3 concerning how Haddon Robinson influenced the teaching of preaching in evangelical North American seminaries.

**Phenomenology.** A phenomenological study seeks to describe the common meaning of various people’s phenomena, or lived experiences (Creswell, 2013; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). This qualitative methodology finds its beginnings in the philosophical works of Martin Heidegger (1962, 1982, 2008). Philosophers such as Descartes, Hume, Kant, Brentano, and James, as well as Hindu and Buddhist philosophers, have practiced phenomenology for centuries, but the term “phenomenology” came into fruition between the First and Second World Wars by Edmund Husserl (1970, 1973). His use of phenomenology was to understand the world’s social, economic, and political concerns better through human consciousness (Husserl, 1973, pp. 69-72). Husserl (2012) believed that all knowledge had its foundation in lived experiences. To find the core of an experience, Husserl (2012) writes that it was
necessary to “suspend all transcendences; if we take the experiences pure, in accordance with their own essential nature, then after all we have set down there opens up before us a field of eidetic knowledge” (p. 187).

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) state that the purpose of phenomenological research is to, “investigate the meaning of the lived experience of people and to identify the core essence of human experience or phenomena as described by the research participants” (p. 32). Husserl (1973) contends that to listen with a fresh perspective, the researcher attempts to suspend, or bracket, his or her own experience as much as possible. This concept is known as *epoche*, however, it is seldom achieved perfectly (Husserl, 1973). Heidegger (1962, 1982) differs from Husserl’s process and employs the notion of *dasein*, which situates a person in human existence. Heidegger (1962) believes that one can never approach an object of study without any presuppositions. He also advocates that objects cannot, and should not, be separated from their contexts (1982). However, this is often challenging since objects and people are situated within layers of context such as cultural, ethnic, socio-economic, circumstances, environment, among others.

Therefore, the goal of a phenomenologist is not to categorize or to simplify the phenomena into regulations. Rather, a phenomenologist focuses on the entirety of the lived experience or phenomena, primarily emotions, relationships, and culture (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). It is the lived experience that, “is the starting point and end point of phenomenological research” (van Manen, 1990, p. 36). Meaning is found by looking at the wholeness of a phenomenon while the researcher tries to suspend any assumptions and beliefs in relationship to the study. Identifying and putting aside as
many presuppositions as possible enhances the phenomenon being studied (Husserl, 1970).

When using phenomenology as a research methodology, the researcher selects a group of individuals and identifies a phenomenon they have experienced (van Manen, 1990, p. 163). Experiences are wide-ranging, for example, from insomnia, anger, grief, or even white-water rafting (Moustakas, 1994). As noted, I focused on the phenomenon of who is Haddon Robinson, his homiletic, and his significance on the teaching of preaching.

Data collection in phenomenology often involves interviews with individuals but can also include collecting sources of data such as poems, observations, documents, pamphlets, and more. The researcher seeks to interpret the meaning of the lived experiences (van Manen, 1990) and analyze those interpretations by reducing them to common threads and themes, ultimately producing descriptions of the overall essence of the phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The process follows systematic procedures that move from the narrow units of analysis, such as noteworthy comments, to broader themes or codes (Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological study is complete when the researcher can describe and discuss the essence of the experience for the participants by clearly articulating “what they have experienced” and “how” they experienced it (Creswell, 2017; Moustkas, 1994). The researcher tries to get a “grasp of the very nature of the thing,” (van Manen, 1990, p. 177). At its core, phenomenology is about reflecting upon one’s experience to gain some understanding of its underlying order, structure, and coherence. I will now explain more thoroughly the methods I used to collect data.
Since the phenomena I studied was Robinson and his influence, I asked open-ended questions to participants who are scholars in the field of homiletics. I strove to make meaning through their answers. Their participation, along with the other data that was collected, aided in the discovery of common themes regarding who Robinson was and understand the essence of Robinson’s influence.

Methods

A process for data collection that is clearly explained sets boundaries for the researcher. In addition, a clear, well-articulated method of data collection allows one to understand the research procedure and discern if it is achievable (Creswell, 2014). There are several ways to collect data in a qualitative study. The researcher chooses each method carefully with the intended purpose of answering the guiding question(s). Therefore, I decided to collect data through archives, unpublished and published works in addition to conducting interviews with five homiletical scholars. The data from the archival research and collection of works aided in answering GQ 1 (Who is Haddon Robinson?) and GQ 2 (How did Haddon Robinson formulate his approach to homiletics and the teaching of adult students?). The data from conducting interviews also aided in answering GQ 1 and GQ 2, as well as helped answer GQ 3 (How did Haddon Robinson influence the teaching of homiletics in North American evangelical seminaries?). Since Haddon Robinson is the focus of this research and all data collected revolve around him, it is important to include a brief description of him and his family in this section that I later expound upon in Chapter 4.
Dr. Haddon W. Robinson

As a boy growing up in the 1930s and 1940s near the Bronx, in New York City, Robinson associated himself with a gang. However, a committed Sunday School teacher made lessons exciting and saw potential in the boy. Because of his Sunday School teacher’s commitment and care, Robinson “surrendered his life to Jesus Christ” (Gibson, 2011). At sixteen, he enrolled at Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina. While studying, Robinson became more interested in preaching and spent many Friday evenings in the library reading published sermons and books about preaching. When he graduated, he received the top award given to a senior for preaching (Gibson, 2011) and looked to pursue further education before entering into full-time ministry as an evangelist.

In 1951, Robinson enrolled at Dallas Theological Seminary just a few weeks after marrying his college sweetheart Bonnie Vick. During his final year in seminary, he began his own preaching club and taught informal preaching classes with other students who were passionate about preaching and evangelism. A few years after completing his degree, the President of Dallas Theological Seminary, Dr. John Walvoord, invited Robinson to return to Dallas to teach their newly offered preaching classes (Walvoord, 1959). Robinson accepted and began formally teaching preaching in 1958.

After 19 years of teaching homiletics at Dallas Theological Seminary, Robinson became the third president of the Conservative Baptist Seminary, now known as Denver Seminary. In 1992, he resigned from his presidency to become the Harold John Ockenga Distinguished Professor of Preaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. There he taught homiletics for over 20 years, as well as
becoming the seminary’s president from 2007-2008 during challenging times for the seminary. He also co-hosted a syndicated radio program, published numerous articles, and wrote more than a dozen books including his seminal work *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (1980).

Throughout his lifetime, Robinson received many awards and accolades, but his greatest joy was his family. Despite his grueling schedule and demands for his time, his wife, daughter, and son always felt he put them first (Robinson Family, 2017).

**Gaining Access to Data Collection**

To collect data regarding Robinson’s life, I first requested special access to the archives at the two seminaries where Robinson was a full-time faculty member (Dallas Theological Seminary and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary).

**Family.** I first met Haddon Robinson’s wife, Bonnie, and their two children, Vicki Hitzges and Torrey Robinson, after Dr. Robinson’s memorial service at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts, on September 7, 2017. During my brief interactions with each of them, I mentioned I was beginning this dissertation and would be focusing on their husband/father’s influence. I informally asked permission to pursue this research and all three were supportive. Vicki Hitzges was extremely enthusiastic and encouraged me to reach out both to her brother and a publishing company, which I intended on doing, to help further my research.

**Archives.** As mentioned, Robinson was a full-time faculty member teaching preaching at Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS). I traveled to each of these institutions and searched their archives to gather information about his presence there as well as other documents surrounding the
curriculum in homiletics. I began by gaining access and permission to work alongside Lolana Thompson, archivist at DTS, and Dr. Scott Gibson, Director of the Haddon W. Robinson Center for Preaching at GCTS. I also asked for formal permission to use the various institutions’ archives in my study.

**Methods of Data Collection**

I collected my data through three primary methods: archival research, publications, and personal interviews. In this section, I discuss the benefits of each method and explain my systematic process for collecting the necessary data to complete this study.

**Archival research.** Archives exist to preserve significant materials. Libraries, museums, and specialized institutions typically hold archives and make the materials available for historical research (Schmidt, 2016). Archival types include college and university archives, corporate archives, government archives, historical societies, religious archives, and special collections, to name a few. Archives typically have restrictions and guidelines to help preserve the materials and protect them from theft (Schmidt, 2016). I was certain to adhere to the rules and guidelines at the various institutions where I conducted my archival research.

After receiving permission from the institution’s archivist, I spent two days at Dallas Theological Seminary to take digital photographs of any pertinent archival material. Taking digital photographs was much safer than scanning the documents because there was less handling of the archives, which prevents deterioration. Having digital copies also allows me to access the archives from my computer at any time. I spent many days, over the course of three separate visits, to Gordon-Conwell Theological
Seminary since some of Robinson’s personal belongings, along with many archives, reside at the Haddon W. Robinson Center for Preaching.

I needed an extensive amount of time at the GCTS campus because the archives were not organized or categorized in any manner. It was my intention to help catalogue those archives and systematically arrange them for the Center for Preaching so others may be able to come afterward and do further research on Dr. Robinson. The archives I collected included, but were not limited to: sermons in chapels, recorded interviews, syllabi, class notes, recorded lectures, correspondences, minutes from meetings, gifts and awards, personal books, memorabilia, photos, letters of appreciation, and more.

Organizing and categorizing the existing materials and documents is essential for a clean and clear analysis process. I organized my findings chronologically to help formulate Robinson’s narrative biography. These findings aided in writing a comprehensive, narrative biography to grasp a deeper understanding of Haddon Robinson.

**Published and unpublished works.** Along with his archives, I utilized Robinson’s published and unpublished works, such as books, articles, sermons, and interviews, to get an even clearer picture of who he was. I collected and purchased his books for review and hermeneutical analysis. I also used online databases to collect papers or articles he has written for publication. I scoured the internet for any sermons or lectures he presented at various institutions and churches and organized them in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

Reading his works and viewing his sermons and lectures aided in answering GQ 1 and GQ 2 regarding his life and approach to homiletical theory and andragogy. Using the
skills in hermeneutics I learned from studying the Bible at previous institutions, assisted tremendously in discovering major themes and deciphering key ideas, and helped establish a well-rounded picture of Robinson’s philosophy, his progression of thought over time, and his understanding of homiletics and teaching.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, shortly after his death, many people went to social media, blogs, or institutional websites to pay their condolences to Robinson. I found as many of these comments as possible and categorized them into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet using their direct quotes. These comments were helpful in answering GQ 1 and GQ 3 as they give a unique insight into people’s relationship with Robinson.

**Interviews.** Conducting interviews can take on many forms and strategies. The purpose statement and guiding questions of the study can help in determining what interview approach to take. Three of the most often-used interview approaches are structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Robson, 2011; Sayer, 1992). Structured interview approaches can help guarantee consistent comparability across participants, which may also be useful when comparing and contrasting various people’s experiences or settings (Maxwell, 2013). The interviewer typically asks questions the same way, in the same order, with minimal follow-up questions. This approach enables the researcher to identify key differences and discrepancies between the interviewees.

An alternative approach is semi-structured, which allows the researcher to focus on “a particular phenomenon” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 88). The researcher knows enough about the information, and/or phenomena, to develop questions that are detailed enough to guide the interview. The questions are arranged in a reasonably, logical manner to
cover the necessary scope of the research (Richards & Morse, 2013). The interviewer asks similar questions to each participant, although not necessarily in the same manner. Follow-up questions and probes asked by the interviewer can be beneficial to collect new data from the participant.

A third approach to interviewing is almost completely unstructured, also known as interactive interviews (Burgess, 1982, pp. 164-169). This does not mean that the researcher is unprepared and unplanned, but rather the researcher offers the participant an opportunity to share his or her story with minimal to no interruption. Asking a series of structured questions may prohibit the elicitation of the participant’s story and preemptively dictate what will be further discussed (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Richards & Morse, 2013). Instead, the interviewer is responsive and interested, helping to maintain “the flow of the conversation” as opposed to interrupting the interviewee’s train of thought (Richards & Morse, 2013, p. 127).

For the purpose of this research, I adopted a semi-structured approach to interviewing. Since my main objective is to understand Robinson and his influence, I do not think it is necessary to use a rigid, structured approach, which researchers often use for discovering differences in participants or settings. While the interviewees have contrasting homiletical theories, my purpose is not to emphasize discrepancies, but rather to understand the essence, or phenomenon, of Robinson. I did not use an unstructured interview approach because a narrative inquiry on the interviewee’s interactions with Robinson does not fulfill my purpose. Their stories and perspectives are likely beneficial, but I believe guided questions will aid in accomplishing my purpose. Therefore, I decided to use a semi-structured interview approach. I prepared questions on an Interview Guide,
but deviated from it when needed (see Appendix A). This process enabled me to unearth a deeper understanding of Robinson and his influence based on the experiences and expertise of my participants.

Kvale and Brinkman (2009) suggest seven stages of an interview inquiry that I adopted for my interviewing process. In the first stage, thematizing, the researcher formulates the purpose, conceptualization, and rationale for the investigation before the interviews take place. This stage answers “what” the study will be about and “why” it ought to be conducted. The goal of the second stage of the interview inquiry is to design the study. In this stage, I planned the procedures and techniques that answer “how” to conduct the interviews. Kvale and Brinkman recommend the researcher understand his or her role as an interviewer before conducting any interviews and suggest conducting pilot interviews. In this stage, the researcher also obtains the necessary knowledge of the subject as well as considers the moral implications of the research and all those participating. My literature review, narrative biography on Robinson, and pilot interviews with colleagues aided me in completing these three stages as I prepared for the semi-structured interviews with my participants.

During a doctoral qualitative research course at Gonzaga University, I was able to conduct two pilot semi-structured interviews on the subject of preaching and Haddon Robinson. The first pilot interview was approximately 15 minutes in length with Dr. Keith Krell, former pastor at Fourth Memorial Church in Spokane, Washington. The second pilot interview was approximately 30 minutes with Eric Dokken, pastor at Grace Community Church in Marblehead, Massachusetts. Before pastoring at Grace Community Church, Dokken pastored First Baptist Church in Manchester-By-The-Sea,
Massachusetts, where Haddon and Bonnie Robinson attended regularly. Before pastoring the Robinsons, Dokken studied under Robinson and later apprenticed with him at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. I did not use any information gained from these interviews in this study, however, I mention the interviews because that process helped prepare me for future interviews and shape my open-ended questions.

The researcher carries out the formal interviews during the third stage of the interview process. A good interviewer guides the interview and gives the participants enough space to present their own perspectives and have their own voice as opposed to dictating the participants’ responses (Richards & Morse, 2013). An Interview Guide, directed by the purpose and core research questions, helps the interviewer throughout the semi-structured interview (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). During the interviews, it is often beneficial for the researcher to be reflective and aware of the interpersonal connections with the participants (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Therefore, I brought an Interview Guide with my open-ended questions to the interview. Before moving to the remaining four stages suggested by Kvale and Brinkman (2009), I will explain how I have selected my participants and the process of gathering the interview data.

**Participant selection.** After attending Haddon Robinson’s Memorial Service on September 7, 2017, I witnessed a glimpse of the enormous impact of Robinson’s life and the positive impression he made on others. Selecting participants for this study was challenging because of how many people knew him well and could offer valuable insights. After talking with my dissertation chair, outside reader, and close colleagues, several factors informed this process resulting in a diverse group of participants. Such factors include, but are not limited to age, gender, relationship to Robinson, race,
institution, location, personal publications, homiletical theory, and notoriety within evangelical homiletics. In addition, after discussing my research and potential interviewees with colleagues from other institutions, several suggested I interview people who approach evangelical homiletics differently than Robinson. Figure 6 consists of each participant’s name, title, theological institution affiliation(s), relationship to Robinson, and evangelical homiletic approach:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Theological Institution</th>
<th>Relationship to Robinson</th>
<th>Approach to Evangelical Homiletics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Donald Sunukjian</td>
<td>Professor of Christian Ministry and Leadership; Chair, Department of Christian Ministry and Leadership</td>
<td>Talbot Theological Seminary at Biola University</td>
<td>Student at Dallas Theological Seminary and colleague at GCTS</td>
<td>Theocentric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Scott Gibson</td>
<td>Professor of Preaching, Holder of the David E. Garland Chair of Preaching, Director of the PhD Program in Preaching</td>
<td>Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University</td>
<td>Mentored by Robinson and colleague at GCTS</td>
<td>Theocentric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Alice Mathews</td>
<td>Lois W. Bennett Distinguished Professor Emerita of Educational and Women’s Ministries, Former Academic Dean</td>
<td>Denver Theological Seminary &amp; Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary</td>
<td>Administrative colleague; Radio show co-host</td>
<td>Theocentric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Bryan Chapell</td>
<td>Senior Pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>President Emeritus of Covenant Theological Seminary</td>
<td>Worked on several projects together</td>
<td>Christocentric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Abraham Kuruvilla</td>
<td>Senior Research Professor of Preaching and Pastoral Ministries</td>
<td>Dallas Theological Seminary</td>
<td>Acquaintance</td>
<td>Pericopal Theology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Interviewee participants.
I chose three participants who, like Robinson, would most likely ascribe to a Theocentric Homiletical approach (Dr. Don Sunukjian, Dr. Scott Gibson, Dr. Alice Matthews). I also selected two individuals with a different approach than the one Robinson would ascribe (Dr. Bryan Chapell – Christocentric Homiletic; Dr. Abraham Kuruvilla – Pericopal Theology Homiletic). My relationships with each individual aided in giving me access to them and benefited the interview process. It appeared to help them feel relaxed and comfortable during the interview process. I do not know anyone personally who ascribes to the Kergymatic Homiletic who would have been suitable for this research. However, out of the four evangelical homiletical approaches mentioned in chapter 2, the Kergymatic Homiletic seems to be the least used by evangelicals and rarely intersects with Robinson’s works.

**Process of gathering interview data.** The interviews consisted of a series of open-ended questions that revolve around my guiding questions. Based on the interviewees’ knowledge of the teaching of homiletics, along with their experiences with Robinson, I sought to determine how they made sense of his life, approach to preaching and teaching, and his influence on the homiletical field.

Each interview lasted between approximately one to two hours. I conducted the interviews at each of the participant’s work or home office. I chose this type of location because I did not want the interviewee to feel burdened or pressured to do the interview. For instance, if I asked them to travel, or if I met them at a mutual location such as an annual conference, they may have been distracted and felt as if I was taking advantage of their time. This could have potentially led to skewed answers and unhelpful conclusions. Second, I hoped the interviewee’s personal office allowed him or her to feel relaxed
enough to answer truthfully, but also with the intent on helping me learn similarly to their regular students. Finally, having their personal library in arm’s reach may have sparked a more precise answer. For instance, when asking a theoretically or historically-based preaching question, some of the interviewees used a book or notes nearby as a reference. During the year before the interviews took place, I had informal conversations with three of the participants (Sunukjian, Gibson, Matthews) at an annual conference and Dr. Robinson’s memorial service, regarding my research. Each said they would be more than willing to assist me in any way. During the last few years, I have built an acquaintanceship with Dr. Chapell and Dr. Kuruvilla, and I was pleased that they were willing to participate when I asked them.

After receiving approval from Gonzaga University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), I sent each participant an email, officially inviting him or her to participate. Shortly after, I arranged for dates and times to meet. A short time before I arrived for the interviews, I emailed each of the participants my open-ended interview questions and advised them that the semi-structured interview would allow for follow-up questions. I believe sending the questions in advance helped the participants anticipate the interview, recall experiences with Dr. Robinson, and reflect on the teaching of homiletics. I also spent quality time with most of the participants before and/or after the formal interview to update them on my research as well as discuss other elements of teaching homiletics.

During the summer and fall of 2018, I traveled to Dallas, Texas; Waco, Texas; La Mirada, California; Peoria, Illinois; and Chicago, Illinois, to conduct the interviews.

Entering into each interview session, I had a printed Informed Consent Form, an Interview Guide of open-ended questions, as well as pen and paper for taking notes. I
asked the participants to sign the Informed Consent form before the interview transpired as well as verbally confirm their consent at the conclusion of the interview. I used multiple audio recording devices to record the interviews. I transcribed the interviews into manuscripts shortly after each interview transpired which competed the fourth stage, transcription, suggested by Kvale and Brinkman (2009). However, weeks prior to traveling to Dallas, Texas, to interview Dr. Abraham Kuruvilla, he mentioned that he preferred the interview not to be recorded but would allow me to take notes and follow-up with email exchanges. We agreed and I interviewed him and had several email correspondences with him to clarify his thoughts and gather direct quotes.

Methods of Data Analysis

The fifth stage of an interview inquiry Kvale and Brinkman (2009) advocate is analyzing the transcribed interviews. After stage five comes verifying the findings of analysis for validity, reliability, and generalizability (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The findings are reported in the final stage while adhering to ethical agreements with all those involved (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). I will now go into detail explaining the process I used to accomplish each of these final stages.

The important work of data analysis and coding begins after the data are gathered. Strauss (1987) states, “Any researcher who wishes to become proficient at doing qualitative analysis must learn to code well and easily. The excellence of the research rests in large part on the excellence of the coding” (p. 27). Since this qualitative data consists of excerpts from documents, sermons, lectures, interview transcripts, and field notes from observations, I continually reflected on the data to analyze it and make meaningful inferences. According to Richards and Morse (2013), the goal of coding is to
organize the data from “unstructured and messy data to ideas and themes” about what is going on within the data (p. 149). Coding helps the researcher to simplify the numerous pages of transcripts and notes into manageable concepts and subjects. Analysis deals specifically with the ability to reduce and display the data so it clearly and accurately can be interpreted (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

I used the six steps laid out by Creswell (2017) which give a solid framework for conducting data analysis and interpretation. The steps are: (1) Organize and prepare, (2) Read the data, (3) Coding, (4) Description, (5) Represent the data and, (6) Interpretation. Using these steps, as well as an inductive approach to coding and categorizing the data (Mayring, 2000), elicited key themes which helped me fulfill my purpose of examining Dr. Robinson and his influence. I will now explain how I accomplished each of these six steps.

The first step in my data analysis was to organize and prepare the data. As previously mentioned I used Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to organize the data from the archives, published, and unpublished works. Immediately following each interview, I listened to the recording and added specific notes to the corresponding Interview Guide. I used different colored pens when writing on the Interview Guide so I was able to delineate between notes taken during the interviews and those recorded during my first listening. The reason for writing on the Interview Guide was to mark any initial thoughts that could lead to themes to be coded (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Once again, I then read the manuscripts while listening to the interviews a third time. While reading each interview, I wrote more notes on the Interview Guide. Similar, to other times when
writing on the Interview Guide, I tried to capture any observations, insights, or possible connections to the literature, data, or other interviews.

After completing step two of reading through the data and making observations, I read the notes from the Interview Guide and formulated major themes. During the third (coding) and fourth (description) step, several possible themes emerged. While using NVivo (version 10, 2014) software, I read the transcripts once again and categorized any data into the themes already identified. NVivo is designed to help, “facilitate thinking, linking, writing, modelling and graphing in ways that go beyond simple dependence on coding,” (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. xiv). Using this computer software, helped to discover patterns and connections I may have easily missed. This coding process is a tool for managing the data, building key concepts, asking probing questions of the text, and reexamining preconceived notions and assumptions (Bazeley, 2013).

The process I used for coding is also known as first and second cycle coding (Saldaña, 2009). First cycle coding assigns codes, or themes, to chunks of data, while second cycle coding expounds the work generated from the first cycle coding (Saldaña, 2009). This inductive coding approach ought to allow the codes to emerge progressively (Miller & Crabtree, 1999a) as opposed to starting with a list of codes and coding deductively (Miles et al., 2014). Throughout this hermeneutical process, I looked for significant statements regarding how the participants make meaning of the phenomena of Robinson’s life and influence. During the first cycle of coding, four themes emerged from the interviewees regarding the influence of Haddon Robinson: Robinsons as a person, as a preacher, as a professor, and influencer on the teaching of preaching. During
the second cycle of coding, one to three codes emerged out of each theme from the first cycle of coding. I will expound upon each of these themes in Chapter 5.

My fifth step is to represent the data, through significant statements, so it is manageable to read and interpret. NVivo (version 10, 2014) software aided me in categorizing specific themes from the transcribed interviews into matrix displays and network displays (Bazeley & Jackson, 2014). I also used a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to organize key themes and important statements from each participant so that it was easily readable.

The final step was to interpret the data (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The deciphered themes and clear displays of the data allowed me to make meaning from the multiple interviews. My epistemology of post-positivism hopefully grounded my interpretation as I attempted to interpret the truth of each participant’s answers. Coming from a post-positivist perspective, I sought the agreed upon realities of each participant regarding their interactions with Haddon Robinson, their beliefs regarding his homiletic, and their perceptions on how he was influential in the field of homiletics. Ascribing to a post-positivism epistemology informed my interpretation of the data and quest for truth, but does not necessarily guarantee I actually found all of the answers.

**Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify trustworthiness of a qualitative inquiry based on how well the interpretations of the data collected are transferable for the reader’s understanding. Their framework for trustworthiness includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I now address each of these criteria of trustworthiness in regards to my research.
Triangulating my data with multiple sources guided the credibility of this research. I continued to review relevant theories in homiletics, andragogy, and leadership in higher education. I also continued to use peer debriefing and interactions with homiletical scholars as other triangulation strategies. I believe these processes aided in giving this research strong credibility. The criterion of transferability is often achieved if the findings are considered relatively exchangeable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The context and participants of this study should provide other researchers to conduct similar studies regarding other homiletical scholars. The third criterion, dependability, seeks to be able to repeat the research project because the conceptual framework is clearly articulated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As demonstrated earlier, the conceptual framework details the logical progression for this study. Confirmability is the final criterion of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The ability to be objective is the focus of this criterion and it is important to be aware of any biases I may have. My experiences as an assistant professor of preaching at a Bible college and my personal connection to Robinson and some of the interviewees may have potentially informed and shaped my interpretations. Therefore, as an extension of Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) framework for trustworthiness, I will discuss my potential biases.

**Biases.** I am aware of my biases towards Christianity, evangelicalism, theological higher education, preaching, the participants, gender, ethnicity, and Dr. Robinson. Several of the participants in this study helped shaped my thinking as an educator and as a homiletician through my experiences with them as their student and colleague. Nevertheless, I still believe I was capable of conducting thorough research and contributed meaningful work to academia. I believe my close ties to the participants, Dr.
Robinson, and passion for the field of homiletics helped drive me to protect the participants in this study and invigorated me to do excellent work.

To limit my biases in analysis and interpretation, I have specifically chosen Dr. Keith Krell as an outside reader. Dr. Krell is a scholar in the field of homiletics and hermeneutics, formerly taught at a Bible college, and has been involved in a preaching ministry for over two decades. One of his two doctoral dissertations was at the intersection of homiletics and andragogy. His expertise in the field, along with diverse perspectives from other committee members, should be beneficial in producing work free from my major biases.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

Limitations expose the conditions that may weaken the study while delimitations clarify the study’s boundaries (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Qualitative studies are limited because they seldom produce empirical evidence similar to a quantitative study (Dukes, 1984). In addition, delimitations result from specific choices made by the researcher as opposed to limitations that flow from the characteristics of method and design (Simon & Goes, 2013). I acknowledge that this research, like other research, faces limitations and delimitations due to sample size, scope of study, availability, and resources. However, while a quantitative study may produce evidence on the number of people Robinson influenced, I deemed it necessary to conduct a qualitative study to determine the essence of Robinson’s life and influence.

A notable limitation with this study is only interviewing five people, all whom are evangelicals. Based on the responsive nature of hundreds of people following Robinson’s death, one could interview many more people. In addition, one could interview multiple
homileticians with alternative approaches to evangelical preaching, as well as homileticians from other homiletical theories. However, conducting more interviews would become more costly and prolong the research for many years.

A delimitation in this study was the choice to interview those who specifically teach preaching in evangelical seminaries. In addition, I selected five individuals with whom I have a relationship and access, knew Robinson, and/or could contribute by coming from a different evangelical homiletical perspective. I considered interviewing homileticians from non-evangelical traditions, but that seemed to raise more obstacles. Not only do I not have access, but also their theological, philosophical, and homiletical perspectives may inhibit the interviews from focusing on Robinson. However, perhaps that is a possibility for further research.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations arise in any research study. This includes consent from the participants, doing no harm, and the truthful sharing of the results (Babbie, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As relationships form between the researcher and the participants, van Manen (2014) suggests the researcher be mindful and sensitive to the interviewee(s), trying always to be aware not to cause any harm. Participants are to be well respected and safeguarded during and after the interview process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

The participants in this study graciously volunteered their time and knowledge to aid in contributing to the field of evangelical homiletics. I did not commit any ethical harm to the participants. To ensure the safety and protection of all the participants in this study, I put in place several safeguards.
To begin, all of the participants were aware of my research, and its goal, well in advance before I invited them to participate. Second, I requested a written consent form from the participants before every interview and confirmed afterwards. Finally, the participants’ interests and reputations were of utmost importance when making decisions regarding the reporting and distribution of data. I also submitted my research proposal and fulfilled the institutional IRB requirements immediately after receiving approval from my dissertation committee.

Summary

In summation, this study focuses on the life and influence Haddon Robinson made on the teaching of preaching in North American evangelical seminaries. Traveling to Dallas Theological Seminary in Dallas, Texas, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts, helped me to successfully complete archival research. This aided in writing a narrative biography about Robinson’s life. The biography also gave context to the themes for the interviews I conducted with those who either taught or are currently teaching preaching in North American seminaries. After transcribing and analyzing the interviews, I identified key themes from the participants as they tried to make meaning of Robinson’s life and influence. Haddon Robinson’s significant career in homiletics has placed him alongside other notable homileticians in the history of preaching and it is important for a study to be conducted documenting his influence.
CHAPTER IV

NARRATIVE BIOGRAPHY

Haddon Robinson did not set out to be a teacher of preaching. However, over the course of his lifetime, a multitude of people learned to preach from him. His former students have been preaching in churches for decades and many more learned to preach from his writings, especially his book, *Biblical Preaching*. Several of his students have gone on to teach preaching at evangelical seminaries and Bible colleges and have passed on the knowledge they gained to their students.

Though many have been impacted by him, not much is known about him. Robinson did not disclose much about his personal life to many, yet after deep exploration and research, I discovered there were times when he opened up and shared stories that deeply influenced him. One of Robinson’s (2012) favorite sayings was, “In life you make decisions, and your decisions make you.” This narrative biography about the life and person of Haddon Robinson highlights some of the major decisions he made throughout his lifetime that potentially influenced who Robinson was and how he formed his views on preaching and teaching.

The information regarding Robinson’s narrative biography has been collected through published works, archives, and interviews he has given. In addition, throughout the course of this research, I discovered unpublished, detailed interviews Robinson participated in with his former student and pastor, Erik Dokken. Dokken conducted two extremely comprehensive interviews in the late 2000s that focus on Robinson’s childhood, formation of his homiletical theory, and key influences.
Robinson’s longtime friend and colleague, Dr. Alice Mathews, also conducted a series of extensive, unpublished interviews between August 3, 2008, and August 23, 2009 that helped to inform this narrative biography. Mathews transcribed four conversations she had with Robinson as they had free time during their recordings for Discover the Word in Grand Rapids, Michigan. As Robinson recollected his upbringing and early years of schooling, Mathews would diligently transcribe his words onto her laptop. These interviews were tremendously helpful in discovering who was Haddon Robinson.

Throughout this narrative biography, I will be answering GQ 1, “Who is Haddon Robinson?” and GQ 2, “How did Haddon Robinson formulate his approach to homiletics and andragogy for seminary students?” I open this chapter by addressing Robinson’s background, to which he sometimes referred in sermons throughout his career. Several significant people emerge as being significant influencers and having profound effects on his life. I then trace Robinson’s career from a young seminary instructor to becoming a seasoned professor and seminary president. He worked at three prominent evangelical seminaries throughout his lifetime, and expanded his influence to more than just preaching. He faced issues such as segregation, wealth and gender inequality, the church, false allegations, the authority of the Bible, among other issues. In the final section of this chapter, I try to capture glimpses of how others saw him and made meaning of his life and influence through their responses upon hearing about his death.

During the early 2000s, Robinson (2009 April 29) reflected on his own life and influence:

Christianity Today just recently singled me out as one of the 25 preachers who had most formed evangelical thought in the last 50 years. When I first heard that,
I thought it was stupid. But I think in terms of people that I have taught and the influence they have had, that there may be some truth to that. But then the question is, if I have shaped preaching, what are the elements that have shaped me?

This narrative biography traces the life of Haddon Robinson from the streets of New York to the pulpits and lecterns of churches and seminaries around North America. Discovering more about his life and how he was impacted can give meaning to how he influenced the teaching of preaching.

**A Transformed Life: From Streets to Sermons**

Although Haddon Robinson grew up in New York, his story begins in Ireland. Haddon’s father, William Andrew Robinson, was born in 1888 and migrated to the United States of America from Annalong, Ireland, in 1911. After walking off the boat onto Ellis Island, the young man tried settling down in bustling cosmopolitan New York City. He witnessed racism up close while searching for employment as many stores displayed signs reading, “Irish need not apply.”

Eventually he found a job at a dry goods store, Drummonds. However, just a few years later, he found himself back upon a ship crossing the Atlantic Ocean as a soldier fighting in World War I. William Robinson received the Purple Heart after suffering a shrapnel wound to his right leg during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, which was one of a series of Allied attacks that eventually ended the war.

Haddon’s mother, Anna Clements, migrated to New York City from Kilkeel, Ireland, sometime around 1924. Her father converted to the Protestant faith of Christianity after hearing singing from outside a church one night on his way home drunk
from the bar (Robinson and Robinson, 2003). Mr. Clements became a lay preacher and Anna carried a similar faith as she worked in New York City as a governess attending to the children of a wealthy vice president of the First National Bank. Through mutual acquaintances, she met William Robinson and the two began a romantic relationship.

The two traveled back to Ireland in 1928 to be married surrounded by family and friends. The newlyweds later returned to Harlem, New York, to begin their lives together. On March 21, 1931, in the midst of the Great Depression, Anna gave birth to her one and only child at New York’s Nursing and Childs Hospital. She named her son Haddon William Robinson after his father, William, and the well-known, English preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Little did she know that her son would have a similar passion as the British minister for preaching and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The streets, not sermons, consumed a young Haddon Robinson during the early 1940s. He grew up in a section of Harlem, New York, called Mousetown. At the time, Reader’s Digest identified Mousetown as one of the toughest neighborhoods in the United States of America (Smith, 2017, para. 2). As a teenager, Robinson was either held up or beaten up almost every week (T. Robinson, 2017). Those were challenging days, not just for the people who lived in New York City, but anybody living during the Great Depression. Nevertheless, Robinson’s upbringing shaped who he was, how he preached, and what he thought about the teaching of preaching.

By the time Haddon reached the age of 10, his mother was admitted to a psychiatric ward due to, what was deemed at the time, a series of nervous breakdowns. The journey from Northern Ireland to New York, the struggles of the Great Depression, and the living conditions of the rough and dirty neighborhood of Mousetown was
seemingly too much for her to bear. Three years after admittance, Mrs. Robinson died. One can only speculate the effect this had on young Haddon and his faith in God. As an adult, he could only recall a few memories of his mother and rarely talked about her, even to his own children.

Haddon’s father was left to raise the young boy while working long hours for the Railway Express. Beginning when his mother was admitted to the hospital, and continuing after her death, Robinson’s Aunt Carrie, and older cousins Bob and Ernie Campell, looked out for the young boy. They became significant influences in his life. Robinson would spend most of the week by himself, since his father worked long hours; but he would visit his Aunt Carrie and cousins on the weekends. She would often send him home with leftover food so he would have meals throughout the week. As an adult, Robinson reflected on the sacrifices she made for him, “She was one of the strongest influences over my life because she was like a mother,” (Robinson, 2008 August 3).

Another woman who was influential in Robinson’s life was his fifth grade teacher, Miss O’Brien. She was one of the few adults who was kind to him and treated him as her own son. For instance, one day when riding his bike in the park, a group of boys pushed him over, and, as a result, he ended up with a severe cut on the left side of his mouth. He immediately went to the hospital, but the doctor rushed the stitching procedure leaving Robinson with a noticeable scar, which forced him to speak out of the side of his mouth. As most fifth graders would be, Robinson was self-conscious and embarrassed of his new scar and trait. However, one day after school, Miss O’Brien called Robinson (2008 August 6) aside and said:
You know I noticed something. Do you know Napoleon Bonaparte? He was just a little man. Did you know FDR had polio? The press didn't show that. I've noticed that all of the people who have been great have had something that marked them out as different. I noticed that you talk out of the side of your mouth. I think that's the mark of greatness.

Robinson (2008 August 6) remembers, “Right then I stopped covering my mouth with my hand. It changed me.” Her words of affirmation and encouragement gave Robinson confidence that remained throughout his lifetime.

When not getting into mischief, Robinson would also make money shining shoes on Broadway, working as a messenger for the Service Messenger Service, or even running a betting pool on the statistics of Major League Baseball players with his other eighth-grade buddies. He did whatever he could to survive. Like most kids his age, he also enjoyed listening, watching, and playing sports such as baseball, stickball, and basketball (Robinson, 2006). However, without a steady adult figure in his life, Robinson found acceptance through an association with a local gang (Gibson, 2011).

One night, his gang gathered to stir some trouble. When the police arrived at the scene, an officer approached Robinson and found an ice pick tucked away in his clothing. “What do you plan to do with this?” probed the officer. Robinson replied, “Chop ice” (Gibson, 2004). The officer kicked Robinson, sending him sprawling across the sidewalk. He gave him a stern warning to leave and made sure Robinson departed. Later that night, after Robinson had gone home, there was an all-out bloodbath between the two gangs. That night was a turning point for Robinson and he left the gang. He (2009 February 15) would often wonder, “…if that policeman was the hand of God on my life.”
One day he and his cousin Bob joined a basketball team at Broadway Presbyterian Church. As Robinson describes it, they then discovered that, “every silver-lining has a cloud because in order to play on the team, we had to attend Sunday School at least three Sundays a month” (Robinson, 2012 October 22). In Sunday School class, the young Robinson met someone else who would have a profound effect on him, the Sunday School teacher, Mr. John Mygatt.

Mr. Mygatt taught the boys in his class about the Bible, but also was the embodiment of grace. Robinson (2012 October 22), was captivated by Mr. Mygatt’s fun, game-like Bible lessons and admits, “I learned more facts, just facts in John Mygatt’s Sunday School class than I did at Seminary, or at Christian college, because that’s what it was, it was a contest of facts.” Along with learning about the Bible, Robinson was profoundly impressed by Mr. Mygatt’s willingness to show a genuine interest in the boys of his class. He admits that, as far as he can remember, Mr. Mygatt was the only person in the church who ever came to the Robinson apartment.

One memorable moment that exemplifies Mr. Mygatt’s mindfulness and generosity was when the Sunday School teacher noticed a crack in Robinson’s glasses and offered him the money he had been saving for a new suit. “Here’s a man willing to give up his suit in order to buy me some glasses,” Robinson (2012 October 22) recollects. “John was that kind of person. And so he had a great influence on me” (Robinson, 2012 October 22).

Another man who turned out to be influential for young Robinson was none other than his namesake, Charles Haddon Spurgeon. As his mother had hoped, the well-known, British minister effected her son’s life. As a young boy, Haddon was not into reading.
However, he got a copy of Spurgeon’s biography, *The Shadow of the Broad Brim*, along with other Spurgeon books, illustrations, and sermons and became an avid reader. Robinson (2006 March 6) admits that his thoughts regarding the church and preaching were first shaped and influenced by Spurgeon’s works and reputation.

Sometime in his early teens, Robinson says he, “crossed the line from non-faith to faith” (Robinson, 2012 October 22). He does not remember the exact moment or place, but was convicted by his sin and accepted the grace offered through Jesus Christ. Soon after, preaching quickly enamored him. He became fascinated with the guest preachers who came to New York City, as well as many others he heard on the radio or saw on television. One cold New York night in January, he went to hear a visiting preacher, Dr. Harry Ironside, the pastor of Moody Church from Chicago, Illinois. He returned home and penned in his journal, “Some people preach for an hour, and it seems like twenty minutes. Others preach for twenty minutes and it seems like an hour. I wonder what the difference is?” (Robinson, 2006 March 6). This was a profound moment in Robinson’s life and sparked a deep interest into the subject of preaching. He developed a hobby of becoming a fervent listener to preachers.

Decades later, Robinson (2006 December 4, 2012 October 22) still recalls the many preachers he heard on the radio or saw in person, for instance: Clarence McCartney from First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, Harry Emerson Fosdick from Riverside Church in New York, Donald Grey Barnhouse from Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Percy Crawford from Youth Worker of America, Charles Fuller from Old Fashioned Revival Hour, Fulton Sheen a Roman Catholic preacher, as well as many on the National Radio Pulpit. One of the main voices he listened to and was influenced by
was his pastor, John Hess McComb from Broadway Presbyterian Church in New York City, New York. Consistently listening and apply the sermons he heard changed Robinson’s life from a “latch-key kid” who associated with a gang to a follower of Jesus with an interest in preaching and evangelism (Gibson, 2004, p. 5).

Robinson picked up the art of preaching quickly, often practicing in front of his cat. “I had the most Christian cat in the community,” he said. If the cat scurried away, Robinson would use his deep preacher’s voice and condemn him (Ireland, 2017). At age 16, he joined a group of men from Broadway Presbyterian Church to minister at the local prison. Some of the men preached first and then it was Haddon’s turn. By the end of his sermon, approximately 20 prisoners came forward to receive the gospel message of Christ. Robinson assumed this was a typical response but one of the church members leaned over and told him, “Son, we’ve been preaching here for 25 years, and no one has ever come to Christ” (Ireland, 2017). He began wondering if the Lord wanted him to be an evangelist.

Robinson (2012 October 22) skipped the second half of his eighth grade and took a rapid class before entering into high school. Later, he took extra summer school classes in high school and, at 16, was able to graduate a year early. Shortly after graduating in 1947, he left the integrated neighborhoods of Harlem and joined his cousin Ernie, in the segregated halls of Bob Jones University in South Carolina.

There was a steep cultural learning curve for Robinson at Bob Jones University. Not only was the school located in the Deep South, but the school also enforced strict rules on the students, like a mandatory chaperon for couples who went on dates. The culture was a stark contrast to Robinson’s open life of independence in New York.
Nonetheless, Robinson was grateful for the manners he learned at Bob Jones University. However, he does remember the cultural clashes. One incident in particular was one of the most emotionally loaded moments of his life. During his history class, the professor presented the Ku Klux Klan as a positive voice in American life. Robinson (2009 February 15) states:

The professor was really a product of that culture. In the course of one of his lectures, a student in the class disagreed with his viewpoint. The professor's face grew red and he said to the young man, "Sir, would you let your sister date a Negro?" The young man, "Yes, sir, I have no control over who my sister dates."

Then the teacher asked, "Would you let your sister get engaged to a Negro?" The boy said, "Yes, sir, if she loved him and if he were a Christian." Then the professor put down his trump card and asked, "Would you let your sister marry him?" And the student replied, "Yes, sir, if he is a Christian and they felt that God had brought them together, I would not object to it." To which the professor said, "Take your books and leave this classroom."

As the student was moving out of the class, the professor said, "Where are you from?" I'm sure he expected an answer of Pittsburgh or New York, and the young man said, "I grew up in West Africa where my parents are missionaries, and I know black people who are Christians and every bit as good as you or better." It was the perfect squelch. It took great courage for that young man in that situation to say what he did. And it takes great courage for the current administration at Bob Jones to confess its racism in the past as sin.
The issue of race and courage would continue to appear throughout Robinson’s life, as his experience in undergraduate school made a lasting impression on him.

While at Bob Jones University, Robinson (2006 December 4) also began to deeply consider his calling to preach:

I’d been exposed to people who were pretty good preachers so, I think, I always thought I’d be a preacher. When I heard really good preachers who interested me, I’d think, “Ah, I could never do that.” And I’d give up on it. But when I went to Bob Jones I guess I thought about being a preacher.

Observation was Robinson’s main learning tool when discovering how to preach. He took note of the descriptive illustrations used by the traveling preachers to engage the student body.

One of the most influential moments during Robinson’s college years came when he was invited to a lunch with several guest preachers. He (2009 February 15) chuckles and says, “[I] felt as out of place as brown shoes with a tuxedo.” But during the luncheon, one of his favorite childhood preachers, Dr. Harry Ironside from the Moody Church in Chicago, IL, sat beside him and showed a genuine interest in Robinson’s life.

I have no idea of what Dr. Ironside preached on that week, but I've never forgotten the fact that he sat down with a 17 year old student and included him in when others sort of included him out. That was not part of the curriculum, you understand, but it taught me a great deal about the importance of relating to other people. (Robinson, 2009 February 15)

Not only did Robinson learn about preaching through observation, but he became a fervent reader on the subject of homiletics.
Along with studying history and the Bible during his college days, he would sacrifice many Friday nights in the library reading homiletical articles, sermons, and books on preaching by gospel preachers like John R. Rice, Dewitt Talmage, Billy Sunday, and Dwight L. Moody. Robinson cultivated a hunger for studying preaching and became somewhat obsessed with homiletics. He had a tendency to read with a book in one hand and a pencil and ruler in the other. Many of the books in his personal library are marked up with personal anecdotes or have large sections underlined. He (2006 December 4) admits that at the time he did not always grasp the concepts or homiletical theories, but nonetheless, his fascination with the practice of preaching grew as he soaked up as much knowledge about the subject as possible.

While home on summer leave in 1949, Robinson delivered his first paid sermon at the Jerry McAuley Rescue Mission in New York City. Following that experience were more opportunities to preach at churches and religious events. Robinson (2006 December 4) began receiving affirmation during those early years of preaching:

I preached at rescue missions. I remember preaching at the Bowry mission. It must have been my third year in college, and I gave an invitation.\(^{14}\) They had 15 or 20 men respond. I just took it for granted and then I discovered that they went for weeks and didn’t have anyone respond.

The responses of those who heard his preaching boosted his confidence and gave him a clearer direction to where he believed the Lord was leading him. However, the young preacher was still uncertain where to go or what to do after college.

\(^{14}\) An invitation is typically a component of a Christian sermon or service where the ministry leader invites the listeners to make a personal decision to believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.
Of one decision he was certain: asking his college sweetheart, Bonnie Beverly Vick, to marry him. Bonnie and Haddon began an on-again, off-again courtship during their time together at Bob Jones University. However, Bonnie broke it off with Haddon and became engaged to a young man from her home church in Oregon. Robinson (2009, February 15) reminiscences on that time:

One evening in my senior year I was up in the classroom building and I was praying, and I prayed, "Lord, if you have someone at Bob Jones that you want me to marry, you and I had better be working on it pretty soon." That evening when I came back to my room, there was a note on the door. It was from Bonnie. She said, "I have broken up with Dick and I wondered if it meant anything to you."

Having just prayed about getting a wife, that note took on immense significance.

It was almost like a communication from God.

After a few months dating exclusively, they became engaged during Haddon’s final semester. They set their wedding date for August, but were undecided on what to do after tying the knot.

Haddon’s tenacious studying habits and academic success at Bob Jones University earned him a scholarship offer from Princeton Theological Seminary. Haddon and Bonnie considered moving to New Jersey, where Haddon’s cousin Ernie was already studying, but plans changed one day after Haddon bumped into a recent graduate from Dallas Theological Seminary (Robinson, 2012 October 22). The graduate’s wife said something similar to, “What a wonderful experience to go to Dallas Seminary” (2012 October 22). Not long after that, Robinson recalls:
One night I was praying, reading the Bible—and I have no idea how this happened—but I said, Lord, if you want me to go to Dallas, I’ll go. Why I said that—I mean I wasn’t wrestling with Dallas, wasn’t wrestling with Princeton. And then there was a peace that came. And I don’t have those experiences very much.

Shortly after that experience, Haddon and Bonnie made the decision to attend Dallas Theological Seminary after their summer wedding.

The semester before graduating from Bob Jones University, Haddon won the highest honor the school bestows on ministerial students. Out of 1,200 sermons, Haddon won first place in the annual “Preacher Boy” contest for his sermon on John 3:16. Being true to his evangelistic passions, Robinson (1951) spoke of what it means to have a real belief in Jesus:

What then does it mean to believe? It does include the intellectual element, but that is not all. It is an act of personal trust in Christ, in His sacrifice for sin. It is not believing the Bible, it is not believing the Gospel, it is not believing in God—that is intellect. It is the casting of ourselves upon Him as the righteousness of God. We only believe we are prepared to live by that in which we put our trust.

Following Haddon’s graduation in 1951, the two traveled to Bonnie’s hometown in Albany, Oregon, to get married.

Their wedding was held on August 8, 1951, at the Vick family’s home church, First Baptist Church in Albany, Oregon. The wedding was officiated by Bonnie’s pastor, Reverend James W. Neely (“Miss Vick and Mr. Robinson Exchange Vows,” 1951). It was one of the largest weddings of the season in Albany as dozens of friends and families
from the community attended and were enthralled that Bonita Beverly Vick was marrying a preacher from the East coast (“Miss Vick Recent Bride,” 1951). The local newspapers made sure to cover all the details, including Bonnie’s, “ivory satin dress with net ruffles…satin-covered buttons and loops on the back,” and her mother’s full length “wedding veil of silk” (“Miss Vick Recent Bride,” 1951).

Reverend Neely personally connected with Robinson since he, too, was a preacher from the East coast having graduated from Philadelphia School of the Bible and Gordon College in Beverly Farms, Massachusetts (“Former Minister Here Receives Master’s,” 1963). Knowing that Robinson was a recent graduate from Bob Jones University and had won the top preaching award, Rev. Neely asked Robinson to preach at the Sunday evening evangelistic service, just days before Robinson’s wedding. Rarely in his early years did Robinson ever pass up an opportunity to preach, so he accepted the invitation (“News of Services,” 1951). The sermon title was, “The Lord’s Supper.” At this stage in his life, Robinson had two loves: Bonnie and proclaiming the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

Shortly after their wedding, the newlyweds moved to Dallas, Texas, after a honeymoon along the West coast (“Miss Vick and Mr. Robinson Exchange Vows,” 1951). While a student at Dallas Theological Seminary, Robinson’s passion for preaching and evangelism continued to grow despite the limited homiletics classes available. Similar to his time at Bob Jones University, there were few, if any, preaching classes available (Robinson, 2006 December 4). “You preached one sermon, or two sermons, but that was it. I guess the theory was if you knew it, you could get it across” (Robinson, 2012 October 22).
However, the Dallas Theological Seminary catalogs from 1952-1955 include three required homiletics courses and two electives: PT-551 Expository Preaching and PT-552 Public Speaking in the course of study. Dr. Elwood Evans taught or supervised each course which consisted of either instruction by the professor or preaching outside the classroom. Robinson may have missed these classes since they were not guaranteed to be offered every semester. In addition, the 1954-55 catalog states:

The aim of the Homiletics Department is to provide thorough training in the principles and practices of expository preaching. In addition to classroom sessions in theory, practice in sermon preparation and delivery is provided by preaching sessions before the Professor of Homiletics in regular class periods. The student’s sermon is recorded on modern sound recording equipment to enable him to evaluate his own work. Critique of sermon content and delivery is offered by both the professor and students.

Although there are records of Dallas Theological Seminary offering preaching courses at the time Robinson attended, an inconsistency in his life was that much of his learning was self-taught. Robinson was, in part, an experiential learner, that is, rather than learning primarily in the classroom, Robinson learned to preach by speaking at churches, youth rallies, and other venues in Dallas.

He actively led youth groups, directed the Dallas Youth for Christ organization, and even began teaching informal preaching classes with other seminary students (Robinson, 2006 December 4). In addition, he conducted an outreach radio program called “Treasure Chest,” which was aired in the United States, Central America, Europe, and received special commendation from the government of Liberia (“Assistant Pastor

Robinson graduated from Dallas Theological Seminary on May 10, 1955, with a desire to be a traveling preacher. Next to his yearbook picture, the occupation he chose to identify himself was: Evangelist (Robinson, 1958-1991). Ten days after graduation, Bonnie and their two-month old baby, Vicki Ann, flew to Albany, Oregon, to stay with Bonnie’s parents during most of the summer, while Robinson traveled and preached at evangelistic events around the southeast and the southwest (“Assistant Pastor Assumes Duties,” 1956; “Flying From Texas,” 1955; “N.Y. Pastor Evangelist,” 1955; “Revival Rites Begin,” 1955; Robinson, 2012 October 22). However, while preaching the circuit, providing for his young family lingered in his mind and he realized a more stable income was necessary (Robinson, 2012 October 22).

When he rejoined his wife and daughter in Oregon, Robinson preached at the First Baptist Church of Albany, the place he and Bonnie married (“Church Calendar,” 1955). However, earlier that year, Rev. Neely resigned from First Baptist Church of Albany and filled a pastorate position at the First Baptist Church in Medford, Oregon (“New Pastor,” 1955). Rev. Neely knew Robinson was a recent seminary graduate looking for ministry opportunities. After inviting Robinson to preach several times when he was out of town, Neely and the church in Medford, Oregon, offered the 25-year-old Robinson a full-time job as the assistant pastor overseeing the youth in early 1956. (“Assistant Pastor Assumes Duties,” 1956; “Guest Minister,” 1955). After his installation service, Robinson quickly
gave his attention to reaching the unsaved youth in the area through outreach events such as formal banquets and youth socials after football games (“First Baptists Set Reception,” 1956; “Formal Banquet,” 1956; “Youth Socials,” 1956). One of Robinson’s (2006, December 4) ideas was to invite teenagers from all over the city, including the opposing team’s students, to a gathering at the church:

We served cokes and did skits and we would pack the church. It was the thing to do after the game. But the people in the church had me stop it because some of the [youth] would be smoking in the restrooms and didn’t know how to behave. That was the first time I realized that if you are serious about reaching non-Christians you can’t ask them to behave as Christians.

Despite his own doubts on his effectiveness as a youth and community leader, he was named a finalist for the Medford Junior Chamber of Commerce Distinguished Service award in January of 1958 (Robinson, 2012 October 22; “Two Candidates for Service Award,” 1958).

For the majority of his life, Robinson referred to his ministry impact in Medford as a failure. He believed he was unqualified because he did not feel his strengths and gifts were the right fit and the group hardly grew in numbers. However, his perception of that time changed nearly 50 years later after he received a phone call from one of the young women who attended the youth gatherings while Robinson was on staff. She had kept in contact with many from the youth group and recently had a reunion with her former high school friends. As they reminisced on their days as teenagers, the influence of Haddon and Bonnie Robinson quickly became part of the conversation. “They talked about the thumbprint that we had put on their lives,” Robinson (2009 August 23) said. “It is
difficult to separate success and failure at the time something happens” (Robinson, 2009 August 23).

When Robinson was not focusing on reaching the youth in Medford, Oregon, approximately once a month, he was traveling North America to preach at evangelistic campaigns (“Pastor Returns,” 1956; “Plan Week of Service,” 1957; Robinson, 2012 October 22). Even though the church approved of Robinson’s travels, it became difficult to fulfill his ministerial duties. In addition, Bonnie gave birth to their son Torrey, putting even more demands on Robinson’s already busy schedule.

Robinson (2012 October 22) recalls that early in 1958 some people at the church, including the Chair of the Board of Deacons, became more and more dissatisfied with Rev. Neely. The Chair warned Robinson his future at the church may be in jeopardy too and advised him to think about going elsewhere. He heeded the Chair’s advice and began seeking other opportunities. Over a couple months, several churches asked him to be their pastor. Robinson did not know where to go but felt certain about leaving his ministerial position at First Baptist Church of Medford.

In early March 1958 after two years of ministry, he submitted his letter of resignation and became the Vice President of Gilman’s Dairy in Medford (“Haddon Robinson Resigns,” 1958; “Dinner Held,” 1958). At first glance, working at a dairy farm may seem like a drastic shift, but Robinson always had a lifelong affinity for helping people understand the teachings of God in every aspect of their life. People like the ones at Gilman’s Dairy were the everyday folks he was always trying to reach with his sermons:

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When I prepare [sermons], I imagine about eight people standing around my desk. One is my wife's mother, who is a true believer. In my mind, I also picture a friend who is a cynic, and sometimes I can hear him saying, "Oh, yeah, sure." I picture a business executive who thinks bottom line. I have in my mind a teenager, whom I can occasionally hear saying, "This is boring." I look at these folks in my mind and think, “What does this have to say to them?” (Robinson, 1997 October 1).

His time at the dairy farm influenced Robinson’s passion for people in the marketplace and helped shaped his preaching and future undertakings.

The position at the dairy farm also allowed him to travel and preach on the side. Shortly after becoming the Vice President, the Temple Baptist Church in Fullerton, California, asked Robinson to preach during a week of evangelistic meetings in early March, 1958. After preaching on Sunday, the Chair of the Pulpit Committee approached him and asked him to consider applying to become their next pastor (T. Robinson, 2017). Even though he had just started at the dairy farm, Robinson felt it was the Lord’s leading, so he preached his candidating sermon the following Sunday. A congregational vote was taken on Wednesday in which Robinson needed a 95% rate of approval. Being hired was looking promising since the Pulpit Committee and the Board of Deacons gave their full support for Robinson. The Chair of the Board called on Wednesday night and informed Robinson that he had lost by a single vote. Robinson (2012 October 22) recalls that both he and the Chair were shocked:

He was stunned, I was stunned, the Deacons were stunned. It really spun me because I was so sure that this [was] what God wanted us to do. In fact, they
called back later in the week and they said, “Look we’ve been talking to some of the people who voted against you, and they didn’t mean to vote against you. [The church] had had another candidate, and that candidate didn’t get in. It was kind of a protest. But a couple of them said, ‘If we knew our vote was going to keep him from coming, we wouldn’t have voted against him.’ Would you come back and do it again?” And I didn’t have the heart for it. I was so sure, and I was so wrong, and I wrestled with it.

Torrey Robinson (2017) shared the story at his father’s memorial service:

He was so disillusioned by it because he thought that ministry is what the Lord wanted, and certainly what the leaders of the church wanted. Shortly after, he returned to Medford and tried to make sense of it all and still wondered where God wanted him.

According to Torrey Robinson, those votes ended up being providential because it led his father down another career path (T. Robinson, 2017).

**A Dedicated Life: From a Small Town to the Big Idea**

Approximately two weeks after the Fullerton vote, he received a letter from Dr. John F. Walvoord, President of Dallas Theological Seminary, inquiring about the possibility of returning to Dallas Theological Seminary to teach part-time while earning another degree at a nearby University. President Walvoord (Robinson, H. W., 1958-1991, J. F. Walvoord to H. W. Robinson, March 20, 1958) writes:

Dear Haddon,

From time to time we get reports of your work and trust that the Lord is continuing to bless you in your ministry both in evangelism and in the church.
At the Seminary we are struggling with our largest enrollment in history and the problems of expanding our work. In this connection, the question has been raised whether you contemplate in the future undertaking the work of a teacher in an educational institution…Our situation is such that we do not need right now a full-time teacher in the area of practical theology and homiletics, but we could well use someone part time…At Dallas Seminary we are in need of help in teaching courses in speech and homiletics, and there are many kindred fields in which a qualified man might operate such as evangelism and radio ministry. We also need someone who can represent the Seminary in extending openings for practical work in this area. What would now be a part-time ministry would probably develop within two years into a full-time requirement. The fact is, we could probably use one with your gifts full time right now, but I would very much like to see you get at least a master’s degree before getting too involved…What I had in mind as a possibility therefore would be a position of faculty status, but on a half-time basis so that your graduate work could go on.

I have talked to both Professor [Howard] Hendricks and Dr. [J. Ellwood] Evans about this proposition, and they are quite enthusiastic that this approach is a practical one and would help us a great deal with our immediate need as well as holding promise for the future. I would greatly appreciate it if you would write us frankly what you are thinking along these lines in regard to your future, and what sort of a proposition in relation to Dallas Seminary would interest you.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

John F. Walvoord
It is difficult to imagine what the Robinsons were experiencing as they read Dr. Walvoord’s letter. The invitation was timely given their current situation. Speaking on behalf of his family and God’s sovereignty on their lives, Robinson (1958-1991, H. W. Robinson to J. F. Walvoord, March 31, 1958) responded a few days later:

Dear Dr. Walvoord,

In many ways your recent letter about teaching at Dallas Seminary was a thrilling surprise. In some ways, though, it seemed to be almost a natural thing in the light of the recent leading of the Lord in my life.

During the last few months several churches have written and asked if I would be interested in being their pastor; but in every instance, though the salary was quite high and the opportunity great, I did not feel that this was God’s will for my life. As of April 1, I have resigned as assistant pastor here at First Baptist Church of Medford because of doors that have opened in evangelistic work for full-time service. The work here at the church is going well, and I feel that I have learned a great deal; but we also felt that God was leading us to something else. Strangely enough, though we have been blessed in our evangelistic ministry, there has never been the deep satisfaction that this was God’s final purpose for us.

All of this is to say that I am very interested in your offer to teach at the Seminary while taking an advanced degree in speech...

Yours Because of Calvary,

Haddon Robinson
After further correspondence through at least eight letters with President Walvoord regarding compensation, moving expenses, continuing education, among other details, Robinson accepted the position (Robinson 1958-1991).

Throughout their communication with one another, several themes continually emerged regarding Robinson’s workload, continuing studies, and compensation. Woven all through their correspondence was the constant and consistent reliance on the Lord’s will. For instance, in one letter, Robinson (1958-1991, H. W. Robinson to J. F. Walvoord, March 31, 1958) communicates he wants to, “be very, very sure that this is the Lord’s will,” and, referring to his family, “We, too, shall be praying that the Lord will open or close doors according to His will in this important venture.” Walvoord (Robinson, H. W., 1958-1991, J. F. Walvoord to H. W. Robinson, April 28, 1958) would often respond similarly, “We trust the Lord will guide very definitely in regard to these important matters and that He will lead both of us to the right decision.” At the end of April 1958, Robinson officially accepted President Walvoord’s invitation to come to Dallas. “I feel that it would be in keeping with the leading of the Lord to come to Dallas in the fall,” confirmed Robinson (1958-1991, H. W. Robinson to J. F. Walvoord, April 30, 1958).

At age 27, Robinson began as a half-time Instructor of Pastoral Theology along with three other newly hired instructors: Dr. William A. BeVier as Instructor in Historical Theology, Dr. Fredric R. Howe as Instructor in Systematic Theology, and Dr. Bruce K. Waltke as Instructor in Semitics and Old Testament (“Resident Faculty Increases,” 1958). Waltke and Robinson connected instantly and became life-long friends. That fall, Dallas Theological Seminary reached an all-time high of seventeen faculty members.
Robinson’s monthly salary was $300 for each of the eight months of the academic year. This was a substantial pay cut, as he made nearly three times as much in Oregon at the dairy farm. Occasionally, the Robinson family did not have enough money to buy groceries, but they were convinced the Lord would provide. Through odd jobs like selling decorative gas lamps, and surprising monetary findings, the Robinson’s credit the Lord for providing even in the midst of scarcity. “God supplied for us when we felt that there was no place to turn but to Him” (Robinson, 2009 August 23).

Robinson worked part-time on the faculty during his first two years, teaching a few second-year sectional groups in preaching, the third-year preaching course, and an elective course in advanced speech. At the same time, he was earning a Master of Arts with a Major in Speech from Southern Methodist University. His master’s thesis, “A Historical Analysis of Sermons by Peter and Paul in the Acts of the Apostles” (Robinson, 1960) was altered into one of his trademark assignments that he used consistently in the classroom over the next fifty years.

After completing his master’s degree, the administration encouraged Robinson to earn a Ph.D. that would continue to help him teach homiletics at the graduate level. Since there were few, if any, Ph.D. programs in homiletics at the time, Robinson attended the University of Illinois, which had a strong communications department. To Robinson’s surprise, even though they did not offer any homiletics courses, his years at the University of Illinois became extremely influential in his formation of homiletical thought.

When Robinson arrived, the Registrar’s office asked him what he wanted to do in his future and he replied, “Teach preaching” (Robinson, 2012 October 22). He recalls:
They didn’t know what to do with me. They didn’t have anybody that wanted to teach preaching. I needed an advisor, and they sent me to a man by the name of Otto Dieter, who was a classics scholar. They thought, you know, the Bible and classics was all the same. So I went over to see him. He hung out at the classics library. The classics library at the University of Illinois looks like a classics library. They come in and spray cobwebs every so often. And I think Dr. Dieter—I know he had an office, but I’d never been in it, all the time I was there, I’d never been in it. He was always over in the library. He’s a chain smoker, he’d light the next cigarette from the last cigarette. There was always around him an aura of smoke. I went in and he said to me, “Well, what do you want?” I said, “Well, they sent me over. They thought maybe you could be my advisor.” “Why me?” “Well because I want to preach.” “Preach, huh. You believe you need the Holy Spirit to preach?” “Yes, I do” “You’re out of luck. He hasn’t been on this campus for fifty years.”

And then on the table, a long library table, there was a pulpit Bible. How it got there, I have no idea. I suspect it was never opened, but it was there. And he said to me finally, “Are you going to preach that?” I said, “Yeah, I think so, sir. That’s what I want to do.” He said, “I’ve read them all, Aristotle, Quintilian, Plato, read them all. You know how that book differs from those books?” (laughs) I said “You’ve obviously thought about it, tell me.” And he said, “That book’s alive.” He said, “I don’t know of anybody whose life was changed by studying those books but I do know some people whose lives were changed by studying that book.” And that was like a word of grace to me. It’s hard to describe, I mean,
here I was alone facing a kind of hard bitten German professor. And, anyhow, that was like God saying to me, “Robinson, you need the Holy Spirit and you need the Bible, don’t forget it.” So I spent the two years studying for my Ph.D., came back [to Dallas Theological Seminary] and another two years to write my thesis. (Robinson, 2012 October 22)

Robinson reiterated, “It's hard to put into words the profound effect that interview had on me. It was as though God was saying, ‘You need to be reminded of that in the studies here at the University’” (Robinson, 2009 August 23).

Dr. Dieter was significant in his field because he had found a diagram in literature from the Middle Ages that reinforced the concept that all speeches ought to be like trees. The speech ought to have a natural growth, a main trunk, with components that eventually branch out, as opposed to something forced or premeditated. This idea stuck in Robinson’s mind, and after later reading H. Grady Davis, he applied a similar concept to preaching (Robinson, Gibson, and Arthurs, 2009). Dieter and Robinson eventually became good friends. After Dieter died, members of his family who had turned from drugs and alcohol to Christ found the diagram, framed it, and mailed it to Robinson (See Figure 6).
Figure 6: The Arbor Picta, translated and reproduced by Otto Deiter.

In addition to studying under Dr. Dieter, Robinson admits he gleaned extensively from a course on oral interpretation of secular literature. Throughout the semester, the class would study popular works and research the context, flow of thought, and key words, among other literary elements. Robinson eventually equated it to what he had learned to do in seminary with the Bible. However, at the University of Illinois, all of the preliminary work was leading to the discovery of the idea of the passage.

One day, while the class was examining a complicated poem by E. E. Cummings, Robinson connected the interpretation and literary practices of dissecting a poem to the similar practice of exegeting a passage of Scripture. “We were looking for the basic concept, the idea of the poem. It suddenly dawned on me, good writers have some concept of what they’re trying to get across and where you have all this diversity you
have unity” (Robinson, 2009 April 29). He states, “And that was the beginning of it [the
development of “big idea” preaching]…that’s where it began” (Robinson, 2012, p. 9).
Admittedly:

In Greek class [in seminary] nobody had ever told me that we were looking for
the idea… I didn’t know what I was looking for so I didn’t know when I was
finished. It hit me that the poem like a play, like any piece of literature, like a
sermon, has one thing in common. It has an idea. (Robinson, 2006 March 6)

Robinson (2006 March 6) was convinced that, “the Bible is a book of ideas, great ideas,
that can revolutionize a person, and change their eternal destiny.”

When he returned to Dallas Theological Seminary, he began testing out his new
homiletical theory and it was well received by the students; however, some faculty
members were not as pleased (Robinson, 2012 October 22). A number of the faculty were
more dedicated to a verse-by-verse style of preaching which unpacks every word or
phrase in detail. However, Robinson was convinced that preachers ought to preach the
ideas of the Bible.

Robinson also began reading H. Grady Davis’ Design for Preaching after
returning from the University of Illinois. Davis’ concept of preaching was similar to what
Robinson had deduced from Dr. Deiter’s work. Both emphasize unity and the organic
growth of public communication. However, this was the first time Robinson noticed the
concepts applied to sermon preparation. He admits much of his thinking on preaching
comes from Davis’ work (Robinson, 1980, pp. 10-11).

Another piece of literature that influenced Robinson’s preaching was the
biography of the former Chaplain of the United States Senate, Peter Marshall. Catherine
Marshall, Peter Marshall’s wife, wrote *A Man Called Peter*, documenting the powerful story of how God used Peter Marshall’s life and preaching to influence thousands. After reading his biography, Robinson was impressed at the way Marshall could paint pictures with his words:

“I would like to preach like Peter Marshall,” Robinson once explained, “but I don’t know how to get an expository sermon into that mold. I found that the sermons that drew me where the sermons that turned my ear into an eye. I could see what he was saying.” (Robinson, 2009 April 29)

Robinson was faced with the dilemma of trying to preach like Marshall and still stay faithful to the Bible. On one occasion in his life, he openly wept due to his frustration and inability to merge the two. However, his struggle ultimately led to him realizing that, “If I was going to be a biblical preacher I not only had to be concerned about the message but I ought to look at the Bible for its method” (Robinson, 2009 April 29).

**A life of teaching preaching.** Robinson’s homiletical philosophy began to take shape, but he still struggled with how to teach homiletics. He had no formal training in education and therefore struggled with communicating his ideas to his students.

The fact that I had to teach students a skill also dominated my thinking. What’s interesting then (I don’t know whether it is now) if you look at homiletics courses they would have sections like “the spiritual life of the preacher” or “history of preaching.” And I was trying to put the three courses together and I had to fill it up with something. And I remember walking across campus one day and in my second year class, they don’t need me to tell them something, they need to do it and have interaction. And I think there are a lot of people who teach homiletics
who don’t know what to teach so they fill it with all kinds of interesting stuff that
doesn’t really help the students to preach. And it’s because I had to do that I
began to think differently. (Robinson, 2009 April 29)

Therefore, in his classrooms, Robinson began including the practice of preaching. He
remembers coming back from Illinois and thinking, “I was telling them, but I didn’t
involve them. It hit me, you’ve got to involve them” (Robinson, 2012, October 22). Even
though Robinson had little background in educational theory, he envisioned a classroom
where students learn through practicing their skills in front of one another and receiving
valuable feedback. He relied on his days as a student when he hosted and led an
unofficial preaching club and helped his classmates grow as preachers. Robinson was
able to gain influence as a homiletics professor by, what Grenny and co-authors (2013)
describe as: noticing the obvious, looking for crucial moments, learn from positive
deviants, and spotting “cultural busters” for change to occur (pp. 47-58).

Robinson also constructed some of his andragogy and educational ideas around
the lunch table with several colleagues from other departments like Bruce Waltke from
the Old Testament department, as well as Zane Hodges and Stan Tousaint from the New
Testament department. This appears to be one of Robinson’s significant cultural
networks, a concept described by Roxå, Mårtensson, and Alveteg (2011). Robinson and
his colleagues would often share about their disciplines, how they overlapped, and how
they could cross-departmentally work together. For instance, Dr. Zane taught a New
Testament class and assigned his students to write a sermon that Robinson would later
evaluate. Robinson admits that these practices not only helped the students, but it, “really
shaped my thinking about preaching and exegesis” (2006 December 4). Robinson and
others tried a plethora of various tactics to teach their students. They were not content relying on the status quo of teaching the way they were taught. Instead, they envisioned their students being partakers in the learning process, which is similar to Dewey and Kolb.

At some point in the middle of his career at Dallas Theological Seminary, Robinson had another epiphany on what was missing in his classrooms. He observed a stark contrast between the end of the year seniors’ chapel and the student sermons presented in class. During the last chapel service of the year, the graduating students led the packed chapel service in hilarious and imaginative ways. Students would imitate faculty, make comical observations about seminary life, and perform playful skits. Most found it entertaining as the students engaged people’s attention. The enthusiastic students in chapel then came to class and preached sermons that were somewhat drab and dull. Robinson (2009 April 29) recalls:

I remember thinking, “Now what is it that we have done to these young men that has caused them to lose the vitality of what went on in chapel? I think the answer to that was they held that the Bible was a sacred book and therefore you treated it in a different, sacred way. So when they thought of preaching a sermon, a certain form took place in their mind. When you took over in chapel, you could do anything you wanted. You were unrestricted. But when you say to someone, “You’ve got to preach a sermon,” there’s not only a religious side to it, but it almost has a structure to it. You know, a way of doing it. Sometimes even a voice. It occurred to me that if somehow we could just set the people free to use their imagination.
Robinson taught a homiletic that dealt with ideas and a style that engaged the imagination. He learned by listening to student sermons that preaching has to be engaging for the listener. Hence, why his own sermons were filled with illustrations and examples. He demanded it for himself, and expected it from his students. He taught that it was through imagination the preacher could turn the ear into an eye.

Sometime during the 1960s, Robinson became the Chair of the Practical Theology Department. Under his leadership, the department grew to become the largest department at Dallas Theological Seminary. This was another one of Robinson’s significant cultural networks that he had opportunities to influence. He had a knack for recruiting faculty and students to the department. As far as he could remember, there were never any points of contention and the group cared for one another and worked collaboratively together.

Robinson (2012 October 22) recollects:

I do remember that while I was Chairman of the department, Calvary Baptist Church in New York wanted me to be their pastor… I’d fly up every weekend to preach there, and [we] just clicked, and so [the] congregation met—not at my instigation—and they voted to invite me to come as their pastor. Boy, I had a problem with that, I just tossed and turned. I wanted to do it. I knew I’d fit, but then one day the fellows in the department came to my office as a group. (laughs) They said, “You can’t go. You invited us back. We’re back because of you. You can’t go.” And so, because I really do believe groups make better decisions than individuals, I didn’t go.
Robinson not only influenced homiletics and led the Practical Theology Department at Dallas Theological Seminary, but he also was a key influencer in changing the culture of racial injustice at the seminary.

The first few times Robinson became confrontational with President Walvoord was over whether or not to allow black students admittance to the seminary. As Robinson looked at the student body, all he saw were white faces staring back at him. He was troubled enough that he asked President Walvoord about the lack of diversity at the seminary:

I remember I asked Dr. Walvoord about that, and he said, “Well, there’s Jim Crow laws here. And you can’t put black students together with white students. And so we can’t do it.” And I said, “Sure we can, we just invite them in.” “No, the law would be against that.” And I remember saying, “That’s an immoral law, let’s break it.” (Robinson 2012 October 22)

Perhaps he was reminiscent of the courage of his classmate at Bob Jones University who stood up to his history professor. Nonetheless, during the late 1960s, the first African-American students were finally admitted to Dallas Theological Seminary which was a controversial decision for the faculty and administration, but not for Robinson.

When the school began enrolling African-American students, the news spread that Robinson was an advocate for minorities. Many black students gravitated towards him and the Practical Theology Department (Robinson, 2012 October 22). “I think they came because I grew up in Harlem” (Robinson, 2012 October 22). One of the first to come was Tony Evans who is now a well-known Christian pastor, speaker, author, and has a widely syndicated radio and television show which broadcasts across the United States. “I’ve
often thought if we had not accepted Tony because he was black, what a loss to the school and the cause of Christ” (Robinson, 2012 October 22).

Dr. Evans felt that much of his ministerial success was due to the education and mentorship he garnered from Robinson. Reflecting on Robinson’s influence on his life, Evans (Smith, 2017, para. 21) writes:

Dr. Robinson was more than just a great professor. He also became a personal mentor spending countless hours with me discussing life, family, and ministry. He both encouraged and challenged me to maximize my gifts and calling for the advancement of the gospel and promotion of racial reconciliation. I am but a small part of the great cloud of witnesses that can testify to the eternal impact Dr. Haddon Robinson has made in keeping preachers like me from the sinful extremes of either boring people with the Word of God or exciting them with the words of men.

Although Robinson was an advocate for integration at Dallas Theological Seminary (Robinson, H. W., 1958-1991, H. W. Robinson to J. F. Walvoord, June 2, 1969), he would admit one of his biggest regrets in life was not going to Selma, Alabama, to march for civil rights in 1965 (T. Robinson, 2017). However, it was not because of a lack of willingness. Robinson had every intention of going, but President Walvoord threatened Robinson and told him that if he went, he would lose his job (A. Mathews, October 2, 2018).

Since Robinson had a wife and two small children, he decided to stay in Dallas. That decision stuck with him for the rest of his life. Robinson did not deny his own depravity and continually sought the grace of God for his life and in how he treated
others. Shortly after black students began enrolling, President Walvoord anonymously supported several Christian Black organizations financially. Robinson was on the Board of one of those organizations and believes it was Walvoord’s way of, “atoning for his actions and thoughts as the president” (Robinson, 2012 October 22).

Robinson’s focus was never solely on the classroom. He was always thinking of ways to influence the community and spread the gospel message. While he may not have held the title of Evangelist, like his class yearbook stated, he never lost his passion for evangelism. Along with keeping a rigorous preaching schedule and speaking at churches around the United States, another group where he dedicated his services was the 4,000 men and women in the Christian Medical Society, known today as the Christian Medical and Dental Association.

The society is a national organization whose main purpose is “to provide resources, networking opportunities, education and a public voice for Christian healthcare professionals and students” (CMDA website). They continued to ask him to be their regular speaker and Bible teacher and later insisted Robinson co-lead the group as an Executive Director. Although President Walvoord was hesitant to allow one of his busiest faculty members to put more on his schedule, the society pleaded with Walvoord to allow Robinson to serve. Walvoord eventually agreed and Robinson helped lead the society from 1971-1979 (Robinson, H. W., 1958-1991, H. W. Robinson to J. F. Walvoord, September 16, 1968). Robinson (2012 October 22) recalls:

I spoke to them, and they changed me, I—my whole way of preaching today is different. Before I became a member of the Christian Medical Society, [when] I preached, I told them, “You need to know God!” you know… [but] preaching
today is far more conversational in its style. So when you’re preaching, you’re
talking with people, not at them. But that’s how I got involved. It was a
tremendously good experience for us and for our family.

Even though he was a seminary professor training future pastors, he never strayed too far
away from ministering to people in the community and was constantly going back and
forth between teaching in the seminary and preaching in church settings.

During Robinson’s 19th year of teaching at Dallas Theological Seminary, Robert
C. Frederich, the Chair of the Administrative Search Committee for the Presidency at
Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary (now Denver Seminary), pursued Robinson.
As Robinson contemplated the decision, he received overwhelming and somewhat
unexpected support from his colleagues and the administration. He (2012 October 22)
recalls:

When I was invited to become the president of Denver Seminary, one day we
were having a meeting I said, “Look, you guys, I got something I got to tell you.
The committee at Denver has asked me to be the president and I’m wrestling with
it, but I’m not sure it’s a good thing for me to do in light of what we’re doing
here.” For the next three days, one by one individually they came to see me and
said, “You ought to go. You ought to be the president.” And in the light of what
had happened with Calvary Baptist Church, I was both surprised and felt that was
God’s direction to go. But we had a good group, and I thank God for them.

He also felt the need to try something new, “Generally speaking, you are wise to consider
a change in whatever ministry you’re doing after a twenty-year period. I had come to the
place [at Dallas Theological Seminary] that there was not much of a challenge left.”
Smiling, he would go on to exaggerate, “I hadn’t had to walk on water in a long time” (Robinson, 2012 October 22). After going through the interviewing process and receiving counsel from President Walvoord, Robinson accepted the position as president of the Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary in Denver, Colorado, in 1979, at the age of 49 (Robinson, H. W., 1958-1991, R. C. Frederich to J. F. Walvoord, April 6, 1979).  

During his twelve-year tenure as president, Robinson had wins and losses while helping reshape and change the culture of the seminary. When he first arrived, it was evident to him that the seminary needed to change its revenue gathering strategy. Working closely together, he and his new Director of Public Relations, Alice Mathews, were able to institute key long-range initiatives to reach out to potential donors, serve the local community, and connect with the seminary’s alumni. Robinson’s relationship with Mathews proved to be fruitful for both, as they would work together in several different capacities over the next 33 years. They became a powerful duo even though partnering with a female leader was rare at the time in evangelical circles.

In the Christian sphere in which Robinson found himself, women were often marginalized. For instance, during Robinson’s tenure at Dallas Theological Seminary, very few, if any, women were on faculty, the administration, or even allowed to enroll. The culture across the country in Christian higher education was somewhat similar. However, like his views on segregation, Robinson recognized the God-given value, worth, and ability in all people. As president, he was in an authoritative position and tried to leverage his power for more women to serve in leadership roles in Christian higher education.

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16 For many years prior to Dr. Robinson’s arrival to Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary, his former pastor and co-worker, Rev. James W. Neely, served on the Board of Trustees. “Neelys Honored At Dinner Wednesday,” Medford Mail Tribune [Medford, OR] 29 April 1960: 6.
education and Christian ministries. In one instance, he put his reputation, and an enormous opportunity, on the line and demanded the inclusion of a female presence.

In 1989, the Radio Bible Class (RBC), now Our Daily Bread Ministries, contacted Robinson about becoming the new host head for the nationwide, radio broadcast. At the time, the show was an exclusively topical discussion format with an all-male line-up consisting of Herb VanderLugt, Jim Pittman, Ron Chadwick, and Mart DeHann as the regular teachers. Robinson was a consistent National Public Radio listener and was influenced by its discussion format. He wanted a similar structure with RBC. He liked the idea of teaching the Scriptures through conversation and believed a woman needed to be included. As Alice Mathews recalls:

The folks at RBC were fine with that, but then he [Robinson] insisted that a woman had to be part of the conversation. In 1990, that was a tough one, but because it was the only way RBC could get Haddon as lead teacher for the daily Bible-teaching program, I eventually joined the team and for 23 years we worked together developing the materials we would discuss on air. (A. Mathews, personal communication, September 28, 2018)

Robinson and Mathews divided the shows in half. Each person would do an equal amount of necessary research and then develop outlines for each program to help people understand the Bible and find direction for their lives. Over the course of their twenty-three years of working together at Radio Bible Class, along with DeHann, they produced over 6,000 15-minute discussion-based shows. Their broadcast aired 600 times daily to over two million listeners throughout North America and other English-speaking countries. Even though, at times, there were sharp disagreements between the two over
the interpretation of Scripture, Robinson recognized the importance of hearing others’ opinions and continually appreciated Mathews for being part of the team. He constantly poured into her life through encouraging her to publish and collaborate with him on other projects and administrative roles.

In addition to advocating for a greater female presence and voice at the seminary, Robinson also made internal changes as president. For instance, he guided the process in 1982 as the seminary changed its name to Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary.\(^{17}\) He also never shied away from his passion to teach preaching and the prominent place of homiletics within the curriculum. Therefore, by presidential decree, he implemented a six-credit course combing New Testament and homiletics. Perhaps gleaning on his experiences at Dallas Theological Seminary, and the many lunch-table conversations with colleagues, he piloted a class where a professor from the New Testament department would collaborate with Robinson, or another homiletician, and work on how to preach through a book of the Bible. This was a novel concept for the seminary and influenced the way faculty would teach preaching for years.

During Robinson’s first year as president, he published many of his lecture notes from Dallas Theological Seminary into what is now his well-known book, *Biblical Preaching*. From its outset, pastors, students, and teachers of preaching raved about his book (Engle, 1981; Fink, 1982; Hughes, 1981; Kromminga, 1981). At this point in his career, not only did he have the platform of the presidency, but he also had a successful publication. These elements, among others, helped him to be one of the few homileticians ever nominated and elected as president of the Evangelical Theological Society, one of

\(^{17}\) The school changed its name again in 1998 to Denver Seminary.
the largest theological groups in the world. During his presidential address to the society, he spoke on his passions: *The Theologian and The Evangelist* (Robinson, 1985).

Robinson’s career was thriving. He was getting a handle on how to be a good President; fundraising and enrollment were the strongest they had been years; he had completed his term as the president of the Evangelical Theological Society; and his book, *Biblical Preaching*, was finding success in seminary preaching courses around North America. However, this season would soon end and turn into the most challenging years of his life.

**A Tested Life: From Lawsuits to Legacy**

In the mid-1980s, two lawsuits were leveled against the seminary. Neither lawsuit dealt directly with Robinson, rather they both concerned a faulty member’s relationship with a student, but the lawyers were relentless in falsely naming the seminary and Robinson in the indictments. He was convinced he did nothing wrong but the legal process was arduous and stressful. Torrey Robinson shared at his father’s memorial service that the entire process devastated his dad. Bonnie recalls Haddon waking up in the middle of the night in cold sweats and having nightmares about the school or even memories of his Harlem days (T. Robinson, 2017). Haddon admitted that dealing with the lawsuits was the worst experience of his life (T. Robinson, 2017). Around 1990, the seminary and Robinson were exonerated, but the emotional damage had been done. “He looked like someone who had been through chemotherapy, but just hadn’t lost his hair. He was wiped” (T. Robinson, 2017). Robinson experienced up-close and personal the intense pressures a seminary president faces, so, at the age of 60, he decided it was time to move on to other endeavors.
Current president of Denver Seminary, Dr. Mark Young (Denver Seminary, 2017), notes, “Haddon Robinson set a course that has served Denver Seminary to this day. His vision to expand the impact of the Seminary beyond its original denominational affiliation allowed the school to diversify and grow significantly.” Shortly after Robinson had passed away, Denver Seminary (2017) posted this statement:

Dr. Robinson was recognized as one of the most gifted preachers and communicators in the country. Under his leadership Denver Seminary became one of the most financially and academically stable evangelical institutions in the United States. Among other significant endeavors during his presidency, our institution’s name changed to “Denver Seminary”, women were added to the teaching faculty and board of trustees, and the D.Min. Program was expanded significantly. His influence on Denver Seminary, our community, and the global Church was great.

His 12 years in Denver were some of the most rewarding years of his life, but they were also some of the most demanding and wearisome. He led the seminary’s growth in significant ways, but personally the work took its toll. In 1991, the administrators at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts, approached Robinson and, shortly after, offered him the Harold John Ockenga Distinguished Professor of Preaching position. He envisioned this as a new opportunity where he could once again focus on his love of teaching people how to preach.

Robinson was hired to the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary faculty in 1991 by President Robert C. Cooley and taught preaching alongside Dr. Gwyn Walters. However, this preaching tandem did not last long because Walters suddenly became
severely ill. In 1992, Robinson asked Scott M. Gibson, who was completing his doctorate and first year as an adjunct professor, to teach in Walter’s absence. As a mentor, Robinson took the younger Gibson under his wing. The following year, Walters died and Robinson advocated for Gibson to become a full-time Assistant Professor of Preaching and Ministry. Gibson accepted and worked alongside Robinson over the next 20 years. Under Robinson’s leadership, the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary faculty also added Dr. Jeffrey Arthurs to the faculty in 2002 expanding the seminary’s emphasis on the teaching of preaching.

While at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Robinson, along with Dr. Scott Gibson and Dr. Jeff Arthurs, continued to campaign for women preachers, had many female students in their classes, and helped them hone their preaching abilities. For instance, after receiving the top preaching scholarship from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Patricia Batten went overseas to complete a Masters of Theology with a concentration in Preaching. Batten later returned to co-teach classes with Robinson at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary where she continues to teach today. This was a monumental change from Robinson’s first days teaching at Dallas Theological Seminary when women were not able to enroll, to the end of his academic career, where he was co-teaching with a woman and helping other women become powerful communicators. When asked in a 2001 interview to name some of the positive trends and best things happening in preaching, he stated, among other trends, there was a greater emphasis on women preachers and in ministry. “I think that more and more people recognize the contribution that women make and can make and genuinely appreciate what they do. Twenty years ago that was not the case” (Robinson, 2001).
During his tenure at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Robinson published numerous books and articles, edited journals and magazines, contributed regularly for *Our Daily Bread* ministries, became the senior director of the Doctor of Ministry Program, served briefly as interim president and then as president, and continued a demanding speaking and conference schedule. It is estimated that Robinson delivered over 10,000 sermons throughout his career, often having speaking engagements booked two years in advance (Hollifield, 2002). For every one speaking engagement he accepted, he would need to turn down two others; Robinson’s desire to educate and equip men and women with the Bible never faded (Hollifield, 2002). However, though he worked in Christian higher education for the majority of his life, he held a sharp disdain for many of its practices:

> I think academia is a crock. So much of it is just stuff. Therefore, I really am not a big fan of theological education. And I know that that comes out of the fact when I was growing up there were teachers that I had, there were two of them who had a great effect on me. They taught well. And I discovered that the good teachers looked at education from the point of view of the students and I think that’s reflected in the way that I teach. A great weakness of my teaching is that I don’t care about the grades. I don’t care about assignments. I mean I care about them because I think they are important and I have to keep reminding myself that they are important to the students. (Robinson, 2009 April 29)

The results of this major inconsistency in Robinson’s life was perhaps a reason why students were attracted to his teachings. Similar to Dewey and Kolb, Robinson viewed the teaching and learning of preaching as experimental and hands-on. Students were
given opportunities to practice their preaching in class and Robinson had an eye, and an ear, for what he believed was good preaching and what components of the sermon needed to change. It was more organic than structured. Robinson had the unique ability to coach his students through a process.

**A life outside of the classroom.** Throughout his life, he constantly envisioned ways to expose churched and unchurched people with the teachings of the Bible. He particularly had an affinity for people in the workplace. “If I can get [people] to really read it [the Bible], to look at it, to hear it, to understand it, it has its own power to convince and to convict and to change people” (Robinson, 2001). This sentiment can be traced throughout Robinson’s career. Wherever he went, he was continually motivated to serve men and women in the marketplace. For instance, he preached to the professionals in Dallas, Texas, who associated with the Christian Medical Society, led Bible studies with businessmen in Denver, Colorado, and even shared the gospel to people he worked with at Gilman’s Dairy Farm in Medford, Oregon. After moving to New England, Robinson sought another way to bring the Bible to people beyond the churches or seminaries and into the marketplaces and offices.

In 2007, Robinson teamed up with colleagues from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, particularly William G. Messenger, and began brainstorming initiatives to resource men and women in the workplace so they may be, “equipped and committed for work as God intends” (About Section, para. 1). Together they founded the Theology of Work Project (TOW) which has now become the “deepest, largest, and most trusted source of biblical, theological, and pastoral material related to work,” (About Section, para. 2) offering Christians in the workplace devotionals, Bible commentary, and small
group material. In addition, TOW covers how Christian workers are to think Biblically about key topics surrounding the workplace such as calling and vocation, trust and deception, finances, ethics, equipping the church, among other issues. At the same time Robinson co-founded the TOW, the seminary was going through some major changes and would need to call upon Robinson’s extensive leadership.

On May 16, 2007, the president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Dr. James Emory White, resigned after less than a year of replacing Dr. Walt Kaiser. White, a resident of Charlotte, North Carolina, lived near a Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary satellite campus. An unforeseen family circumstance made it impossible for him to relocate to the main campus north of Boston as his contract required (Zylstra, 2007). This left the seminary in a bind without much time to search for a new president before the next academic year.

The Board of Trustees turned to Robinson because of his senior leadership experience as a former president. They asked if he would step in to calm the waters, ease tension amongst the faculty, and prepare the seminary for moving forward. At 76 years of age, Robinson accepted the challenging call and became interim president for a year (2007-2008). The Board of Trustees later appointed him as the seminary’s fifth president (2008-2009). He envisioned keeping his role as president for several years but the Board of Trustees continued their search for a new president and named Dr. Dennis Hollinger president in 2009. Some closest to Robinson say he took the decision to quickly hire a new president personally and felt it was a referendum on his performance. Robinson returned to his responsibilities as professor and senior director of the Doctor of Ministry program, but, as Gibson (2018) recalls, “He was never the same.”
The end of a life. At age 81, Robinson officially retired after 21 years at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary following the spring 2012 semester. Haddon and Bonnie moved permanently to their primary residence in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Not long after retiring, Haddon was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease though some believe they noticed the symptoms years earlier.

After a prolonged battle with the disease, Haddon William Robinson passed away on July 22, 2017. A memorial service to celebrate Haddon’s life took place on September 7, 2017, at 7:00 pm. at the chapel of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Hundreds of former students and friends shared their memories and condolences, including the current presidents of Dallas Theological Seminary, Denver Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Biola University in La Mirada, CA, and the former president of Wheaton College in Wheaton, IL.

As a preacher, Robinson spoke often about a person’s final destination. Perhaps his mother’s death at a young age kept the concept of the afterlife close to his mind. In 2000, when Robinson wrote a magazine article about Psalm 49,\(^\text{18}\) he denoted that death for some people is a grim shepherd. On the contrary, he writes, “For the believer in Jesus Christ, for the righteous person, we do not go out into death and into darkness, instead, we go home to God” (p. 115). Nearing the end of his life, Robinson believed he was ready to go to his eternal home (T. Robinson, 2017).

\(^{18}\) In Psalm 49, the psalmist compares the eternal state of the one who trusts in wealth with the one who trusts in God. The psalmist concludes that the one who trusts in earthly possessions will perish, but God will redeem those who believe in Him.
Remembering a Life of Influence

Immediately as word spread regarding Robinson’s death, hundreds turned to the internet to express their condolences and remembrances. The amount of responses and memories shared are too vast for this chapter to contain. Nonetheless, herein is a sampling of who Haddon Robinson was to many of his friends, former students, and colleagues.

The person. After his passing, many people remembered Robinson’s teaching and sermons, but they also paid their respects to him as a person and devout follower of Jesus Christ. Numerous accounts of Robinson’s generosity flooded discussion boards and web posts as people expressed their gratefulness. For instance, one of Robinson’s former Doctor of Ministry students, Steve Mathewson (July 2017), remembers:

This self-described ‘latchkey kid’ from a vicious, violent district in New York City taught us grace, godliness, and how to preach the Scriptures…When I had to miss my graduation ceremony at Gordon-Conwell due to a family member’s illness, Haddon called the day after to tell me how sorry he was and to inquire about my family member. By the end of the phone call, he agreed to fly to Montana—where I was pastoring at the time—to present me with my hood and diploma. This seems rather remarkable, but it was a rather typical act of kindness for Haddon. (para. 17)

Another person expressed his appreciation of Robinson’s kindness:

Four years after I finished the D.Min. program at GCTS our oldest boy passed away. Even though Dr. Robinson had temporarily assumed the presidency of the
seminary he still found time to write my wife and I an incredibly touching as well as encouraging note. (Anonymous, July 2017, Comment section, para. 18)

Dr. Scott Wenig (Denver Seminary, 2017), Haddon Robinson Chair of Biblical Preaching at Denver Seminary, remembers Robinson fondly, “His impact as preacher, professor, model, and mentor for hundreds of men and women spanned more than six decades and sealed a legacy of work for Christ’s Kingdom that will be felt for years to come” (para. 1). Another member from the Denver Seminary family, Elisa Morgan who is a current member of the Board of Trustees, reminisces:

Haddon Robinson was a mentor, guide, and friend. His investment in so many lives, mine included, will impact the world for generations to come. I especially benefitted from his communication coaching which undergirded my work in radio and on the platform as well as from his nudging me to say 'yes' to the opportunities God brought my way for Denver Seminary, MOPS International, and Discover the Word. He will be missed, but his legacy in many will continue on. (para. 4)

Current president of Asbury Seminary and former colleague of Robinson at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Dr. Timothy Tennent (July 2017) recalls:

The wonderful conversations, his wise counsel when I became President of Asbury, and his infectious sense of humor will also be with us. He may have given us the “big idea” but to us, He was the “big man” – the giant of the faith who helped us at every turn. He will be so missed! (Comment section, para. 15)

On many occasions, people commented on Robinson’s willingness to open his home, office, or lunch table to talk with students about preaching and life. Jonathan Boling
(October 2017) was a student in Dr. Robinson’s very last Doctor of Ministry course at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He recalls during the final class lecture, the students gathered around Robinson to pray and lay hands on him. He confesses:

   It was one of the great privileges of my life, second only to simply being in his class and soaking up his wisdom, humor and immense kindness. He told us that a man in his position (at that time) thought of two main concerns. The first was the question of whether or not he would end up alone. The other was whether or not he would be forgotten. (Comment section, para. 31)

Boling pledged, in every possible way, to do his feeble best not to let his professor’s life go unrecognized.

The preacher. Robinson’s influence extends beyond the classroom as a teacher. His sermons also deeply affected people. It appears one of the reasons people flocked to his classes and purchased his books were because they enjoyed listening to him preach. Douglas and Connie Hornok (July 2017) recall, “The first time my wife and I heard Dr. Robinson preach he spoke on the book of Ecclesiastes. The message was over an hour. My wife 45 years later still remembers it and says it was like 20 minutes!”

(Comment section, para. 26). Ron Wolfe (October 2017) appreciated Robinson’s preaching because it was so applicable. He reflects, “I am Kentucky country boy and was able to very easily relate to and connect with Haddon’s method of preaching and was so very blessed with his insight and straight forward preaching” (Comment section, para. 29). Robinson’s preaching legitimized and supported his homiletical theory and style. People would hear him preach, and be swayed to learn preaching from him.
Former Evangelical Homiletics President and current pastor, Ken Langley, had a similar experience. Langley was contemplating his next steps in life when he heard Robinson preach:

When I enrolled at Denver Seminary my intention was to go into Christian Education. But early in my second year I began to rethink that plan. Haddon Robinson had become the school’s president and had preached in chapel. I’d never heard preaching like that, and thought “I want to know how to do this.” I took every course I could from Haddon (three, I think), studying his book *Biblical Preaching* when it was still a sheaf of mimeographed pages. A love for preaching and fascination with homiletics grew in my heart; I’m a preacher today because of his model and teaching. (K. Langley, personal communication, October 22, 2018)

In addition to preaching weekly, Langley also teaches preaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School as an adjunct professor and uses *Biblical Preaching* as one of his textbooks.

The professor. Harold and Roma Brown had a special connection that went back decades. Roma Brown (July 2017) writes, “We are thankful for you, Bonnie and Haddon, as my Youth Director in Medford. Letting me babysit Vicki and Torrey was an honor. As one of Harold’s Professors at Seminary, Haddon gave us wise training and direction” (Comment section, para. 34). Another one of Robinson’s former students, David Bancroft (October 2017), writes, “Dr. Robinson was the man who marked my life more than any other man for preaching God’s Word while I was a student at Dallas Theological Seminary (class of 1970)” (Comment section, para. 32). Toronto pastor and former Doctor of Ministry student under Robinson, Darryl Dash (July 2017), reflected on his
blog, “I’m thankful that his legacy will live on, not only through his students but through those who benefit because he taught so many how to preach” (para. 8).

Like many, Kevin DeYoung (July 2017) remembers mostly Robinson’s style and instruction when giving feedback on student sermons:

The poor man, by virtue of his profession, had to sit through thousands of awful sermons. I’ll never forget the comment he made after my first mini-sermon in his class. Haddon was refreshingly frank in his evaluations. He wasn’t cruel, but he wasn’t overly sympathetic to our nerves or our fragile egos. I appreciated that about him. Toward the end of his on-the-spot, in-front-of-the-class evaluation, he said, “Kevin, that illustration you gave, well, it was better than nothing.” The class started laughing, but he wasn’t poking fun, just being candid. “No, I mean it,” he continued. “You knew that you needed something there, and what you came up with was better than nothing.” (para. 7)

Robinson became notorious for his feedback on sermons. Sometimes the critiques were encouraging and uplifting, while other times his comments were direct, to the point, and at times, harsh. Regardless of his tone or demeanor, Robinson was on a mission to effectively train men and women to faithfully preach the truths of the Bible:

The man practiced what he preached. Literally. His sermons in chapel were always stunning examples of construction, concision, and storytelling. I never completely embraced Haddon’s method, but there was no doubt he was a master at his craft. His lectures were as good as his sermons. During my college and seminary days I had some good lecturers and some bad lecturers. But no one lectured like Haddon. (DeYoung, July 2017, para. 5)
Students would often flock to Robinson’s classrooms, even later in his teaching career, in order to sit under his teaching.

It is challenging to record exactly how many students Robinson taught in the classroom throughout 58 years of teaching. If Robinson averaged teaching three courses a semester, with roughly 20 students enrolled in each course, then over his teaching career he would have personally taught approximately 7,000 – 10,000 students. However, his scope of teaching expands well beyond the classroom. Over 300,000 copies of *Biblical Preaching* have sold, in addition to thousands of copies of his other published works. He also traveled extensively to seminaries, Bible colleges, and divinity schools to guest lecture in other classrooms and campuses.

Dr. Craig Blomberg (July 2017) Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary summarizes Robinson’s influence:

Haddon Robinson was one of the outstanding preachers of the 20th century. He also left an indelible mark as professor at Dallas Seminary, president of Denver Seminary and professor and interim president at Gordon-Conwell. Countless graduates of these and other institutions reckon his influence and support as most formative for their ministries, as he stressed the need for expository preaching, and taught it in his internationally best-selling textbook on that topic. But he always stressed the equally important need for sermons to be relevant. Others will fill the gap left by his home-going, but no one will fill his shoes. (para. 5)

The number of people who learned to preach, or an aspect of preaching, from Robinson is nearly impossible to quantify, but the reaction to his life and death are strong indicators of his influence on preaching in the 20th and 21st century.
Dr. David Currie, director of the Doctor of Ministry program at Gordon-Conwell worked closely with Robinson from the early 2000s until Robinson’s retirement. After learning of Robinson’s passing, Currie (September 2017) shared:

As hundreds of Haddon’s D.Min. students would attest, the result has lit fires in the spirit of learners ever since, fulfilling his own favorite definition: “Education isn’t filling a pail with information; it’s lighting a fire in the spirit of a learner.” D.Min. programs around the world increasingly have adopted this cohort model that Haddon helped to pioneer, often consulting with Gordon-Conwell in the process. (para. 7)

Currie also commends Robinson for advancing the field of homiletics by challenging others to publish, “Through the EHS [Evangelical Homiletics Society] and in other venues, Haddon encouraged and challenged those of us interested in scholarship related to preaching to follow his lead in continuing to do research and writing to undergird our field with academic rigor” (para. 5).

These are just a few of the hundreds of expressions of what Haddon Robinson meant to people. Some who commented on blog posts or discussion boards knew Robinson closely, but many were former students, colleagues, or devoted listeners to Discover the Word from decades ago. Regardless of their relationship to Robinson, it is evident that he influenced the lives of many.

**Summary**

A few years before his passing, he was asked which doctrines of the faith influenced his life and homiletic. His answers were depravity, grace, and the centrality of the Word of God. When one looks at his life, these three doctrines clearly take precedent.
He learned depravity from experiences on the streets of Harlem, segregation in the south, cruelty and greed from false allegations, and the reality of the brevity of life. Still, throughout his life he witnessed grace. The grace of God in people like his first Sunday School teacher, his wife Bonnie and kids, his numerous colleagues like Bruce Walke, Alice Mathews, Scott Gibson, and many more. In addition, he was committed to the Word of God. The Bible was his anchor and the foundation for his life. He desperately wanted others to experience the truths he believed were found in the Scriptures. “If I can [simply] get people to sit under the teaching of the Word of God,” he explained, “You don’t have to argue with them that the Bible is inspired or inerrant. It will do its work. I really believe that. Down in my soul I believe that,” (2009 April 29). He was committed to the Bible from a young age in Mr. Mygatt’s Sunday School classes and remained committed to it throughout his studies, ministry, and career in academia. He spent his life trying to expose people to the Word of God and tried to equip hundreds of thousands of people to do the same. Who is Haddon Robinson? He was an influential person, preacher, and professor.
CHAPTER V

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR REFLECTIONS ON HADDON ROBINSON

Even though the participants reside in various places throughout the United States of America, I was able to meet face-to-face with each of them. Some participants had more time to offer than others, but all were extremely helpful in providing rich information concerning Dr. Robinson and the teaching of preaching. The participants’ experiences regarding preaching and Haddon Robinson were synthesized from data gathered from the following interactions: responses to an initial email request, an in-person interview that occurred at the participant’s home or campus, tours of their respective seminary, interactions with family members and colleagues, conversations during shared meals, the researcher’s field notes, and mobile phone and/or email correspondences. The following is a description of the participants and their reflections on the influence of Haddon W. Robinson.

I was well acquainted with Drs. Gibson and Sunukjian prior to the interviews as a result of working on several projects with both of them. Consequently, I spent more time with each of them than the other three participants as we were able to converse throughout the day(s) together. I was less familiar with Drs. Mathews, Chapell, and Kuruvilla. However, I had briefly met each of them prior to their interview at previous events or conferences. After interviewing all the participants, I now feel my relationship with each of them has grown significantly and the groundwork has been laid for further study, as will be discussed in Chapter 6.
Weeks before each interview took place, I emailed the participants a copy of the IRB Informed Consent Form and the Interview Guide so they would have a clear idea of what to expect. At the beginning of each interview, they read and signed the IRB Informed Consent Form. I then proceeded to further explain my research, its purpose, methodology, and assured them the interview was semi-structured with the flexibility to go in many different directions. While I had the Interview Guide in front of me, I gave them permission to express whatever they thought would be helpful and appropriate to the topic of homiletics and Haddon Robinson. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and two hours.

**Description of Participants**

This chapter begins by sharing a snapshot of each participant’s profile and my experiences with them during the interviews. I also highlight each participant’s view on the importance of preaching based on the data retrieved from their interviews. This information will help the reader become familiar with the participants and understand his or her interpretation of the significance and relevancy of preaching. In addition, comprehending each participant’s approach to preaching and the teaching of homiletics may assist the reader’s conception of the person of Haddon Robinson and his influence on the teaching of preaching in North American evangelical seminaries. I began each interview in a similar fashion. I asked each participant to describe who they are, what they do, and why they believe preaching matters.

**Dr. Don Sunukjian.** I interacted with Dr. Sunukjian several times prior to my dissertation work, but never knew he was an avid Ping-Pong player. However, after I interviewed him at his home office in southern California, I found myself playing Ping-
Pong with him on his back patio as the sun crept behind Brea Canyon. The ball went back and forth across the net. As I reflected on that experience, Don’s career of bouncing back and forth between the role of a pastor and a professor was much like the Ping-Pong ball. During the interview, Sunukjian shared his journey of wrestling with career decisions throughout his life. However, whether he was behind the pulpit or in front of a classroom, a constant passion for Don was preaching.

Don Sunukjian alternated between being a pastor and professor for more than 40 years. Over the past 20 years, he has taught preaching at the Talbot School of Theology at Biola University as the Professor of Christian Ministry and Leadership, in addition to being the Chair of the Department of Christian Ministry and Leadership. Growing up, Sunukjian never thought about being a preacher or a teacher. His family immigrated to southern California from Armenia when he was just a boy. In the 11th grade, Don hardly paid attention in his Sunday School class at the Church of the Open Door, but one day his teacher made a comment that he has yet to forget. His teacher remarked, “Some of you ought to think about going into full-time, Christian ministry.” For Don, he believed he was destined for a career in engineering, “it was the days of Sputnik after all,” he says. However, his Sunday School teacher’s comment loomed with him for some time.

Later that summer, he worked as a counselor/song leader at a Christian camp for junior high students. Counselors received free time on Saturday afternoons as the campers rotated in and out. Don used that time to think, pray, and plan his future as best he could. At the base of a particular tree, he sat and prayed:
“God, what do you want me to do? Should I pastor and become a preacher or should I become an engineer?” Just sitting under that tree over a period of a couple hours and talking, the scale shifted.

Don credits his Sunday School teacher and that tree, for helping him hear the Lord’s direction for his life. Jokingly he wondered why the campground did not put a plaque at that base of that tree like plaques for Billy Graham. I mentioned, “Well, maybe someday.” He assured me, “No, I think the tree burned down in a forest fire.” After a good belly-laugh from the both of us, he changed his tone and spoke with confidence, “From that moment, I never shifted.

One of the first questions I asked Dr. Sunukjian was why he thought preaching matters, particularly for today. He paused for roughly 10 seconds as he thought deeply about how to respond. He started his response four or five times, searching for the perfect combination of words, then answered boldly, “When somebody is preaching the Scriptures, preaching the Word of God, the [Holy] Spirit uses that word to actually change people's lives.” He then gave examples when people approached him weeks, or sometimes months, after they listened to him preach and told him about new decisions and changes they made based on what they heard in his sermon.

Listening to preaching as a teenager in high school was significant in Sunukjian’s life. He commented that during those years, he was able to see for the first time how the teachings of the Bible was important and transformative. He went on to say that preaching is important because it is how, “the Word of God has been disseminated for generations.” He continued, “It's an oral presentation of the written Word, and God uses
During his high school days, Don revealed, “something whispered inside me, ‘You too will do this someday for others, you'll be able.’”

Dr. Sunukjian is so convinced that preaching changes lives, an assignment in his introductory preaching course helps students realize this concept. One of the very first tasks Dr. Sunukjian assigns is a single-page reflection paper on a sermon that had:

…a great impact in your life, a single message which profoundly affected your life spiritually. Maybe it was the one that brought you to Christ, maybe it was the one that brought you from backsliding. Maybe it was the one that moved you in a new direction.

If students cannot think of a single sermon, he allows them to reflect on the ministry of a single speaker who has impacted them greatly. Dr. Sunukjian’s rationale for doing such an assignment is to persuade his students that in the manner in which someone’s sermon, or preaching, impacted them, they have the opportunity to do the same for others. He tells his students:

I want you to know, you're going to have that impact on somebody in the future, and you'll never know it. But by faith, what you have just done, others would somehow reflect about you in the future through the preaching that you're going to do.

This is Dr. Sunukjian’s way of helping his students come face-to-face with how preaching has made an impact on their lives, demonstrates the importance of the course, and why preaching matters.

**Dr. Scott Gibson.** I was able to meet up with Scott Gibson during a monumental transition in his life. He and his wife, Rhonda, recently relocated to Waco, Texas, from
Beverly, Massachusetts. I studied under Dr. Gibson at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts, and was able to get to know him and his wife relatively well. I had been in their home on many occasions but this time was obviously quite different.

They welcomed me into their new home, showed me around Waco, Texas, and gave me a tour of Truett Seminary on the campus of Baylor University. Scott recently accepted the position of Professor of Preaching, Holder of the David E. Garland Chair of Preaching, and founder and new Director of the Ph.D. Program in Preaching. A few months prior, Scott resigned from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary after 27 years of service. He held several positions and titles during that time-span including the following at the time of his resignation: Haddon W. Robinson Professor of Preaching and Ministry, Director of the Haddon W. Robinson Center for Preaching, Director of the A.J. Gordon Guild, and Director of the Th.M. in Preaching.

I sensed the transition from their close-knit community in historic Massachusetts to the plains of the Lone Star state was extremely challenging for both Scott and Rhonda. During my two day stay with them, we often conversed about past memories, experiences, and friends. Nonetheless, they both acknowledged that Truett Seminary was where the Lord wanted them for this season of their lives.

During the evening of the second day, after eating a large plate of local barbeque, Scott and I sat in a near empty room in his new house. Most of their furniture had yet to arrive, but that did not stop Scott from fully sharing his thoughts on preaching and memories of his mentor and friend, Haddon Robinson. One of the first questions I asked
him was, why he thought preaching matters and why it was so important to him. He answered confidently, without a shred of doubt in his voice:

Preaching matters because, for those of us who affirm the authority of Scripture, [it] says, “How can people hear without a preacher?” Preaching itself finds a peculiar and particular place in life, not just the life of the church, but in life, as it pierces into people's lives. So preaching itself is a tool used by God to reach men and women, boys and girls for Himself.

He went on to say that biblical preaching is the type of preaching that needs to be heard because of the gospel.

Dr. Gibson shared that preaching the gospel is important to him because of the affect the gospel has made in his own life:

The good news of Jesus Christ and the life-changing work that he did on the cross and through His resurrection has changed my life personally. It has then energized me to want to tell others about that changed life.

I wanted to know more about this life transformation, so I asked Scott about that specific experience and when he realized preaching became something special for him. He reminisced to a church music concert he attended as a youth. The pastor stood up after the concert and explained the details of the gospel. At that moment, Scott put his faith in God. Wanting to know more about the gospel and preaching, he continued to attend a church but listened to, “boring, and not necessarily all that engaging,” sermons.

However, at the age of sixteen, Scott attended a Baptist Association meeting and heard preaching unlike his home church. H. John VanderBeck spoke from the pulpit and “talked to us.” At that time, Scott thought to himself, “If I ever become a preacher, which
I had no intention at that time, I'd like to preach like him.” For Scott, the experience seemed like a conversation about the Bible and not the “hot, sweaty, shouting, type of preaching,” of previous occurrences.

Later on in life, when he heard Haddon Robinson preach in March 1991 at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s chapel service, he describes it like, “H. John VanderBeck on steroids.” That chapel service was a defining moment for Gibson. He recalled, “Here is somebody [Robinson] who understands what the biblical text says, but also understands how to get it across to the listeners in a conversational type of way.” As a result, Gibson became even more passionate and intrigued about preaching.

**Dr. Alice Mathews.** Hot tea and cookies awaited me at the Mathews’ home in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. She and her husband, Randy, recently transitioned from New England and moved in with her daughter and son-in-law. Moments after she greeted me at the door, Randy poked his head out of his study. He was certain we had met before and we shortly reminisced on the few times I bumped into him while I was a student at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The Mathews lived near the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary campus while Alice was the Academic Dean. She continues to serve as the Lois W. Bennett Distinguished Professor Emerita of Educational and Women’s Ministries.

Dr. Mathews and I soon made our way through the kitchen and into the living room. At the age of 88, Mathews is incredibly sharp with a memory that seemed to easily recall dates, names, and places with precision. She has the demeanor of everyone’s favorite grandmother and the active mind of a top-notch scholar. She currently still writes, publishes, and speaks at events and was thrilled to meet with me. I was ecstatic to
learn more about her and her experiences working continuously alongside Haddon Robinson for over 33 years.

Dr. Mathews began sharing stories and memories of Haddon Robinson even before I could activate my recording devices. Throughout our email correspondence, Alice responded with lengthy replies about her experiences with Robinson. It was becoming obvious to me that she knew a lot about Robinson: the good, the bad, and sometimes even the ugly.

Unlike the others in this study, Mathews does not identify herself as a teacher of preaching. While she knows a great deal about preaching, she never formally taught the practice. However, that has not prohibited her from contributing to the field of homiletics. “I never considered myself, in any way, a homiletician, but I was a female who could talk about it.” Not only could Alice talk about preaching, but she could write about it too.

One of her bestselling books, *Preaching that Speaks to Women*, was one of the top-rated preaching books in 2003. She does more teaching to groups or through radio broadcasts than preaching on Sunday mornings, but when asked why she thought preaching matters, she was unwavering in her belief that people have needs and it is necessary to present a clear understanding of who God is, who Jesus is, and how one can have a relationship with the Triune God. She shared:

If we believe that we're dealing with God's Word, with the truth of God's Word, a truth that people need, they need to hear it in some way, whether it is being taught or whether it's being preached. This is the eternal message of grace, that without which we cannot survive.
She then summed up her thoughts on the importance of preaching by saying, “Preaching has become an essential vehicle in communicating God's truth to large groups of people.”

**Dr. Bryan Chapell.** As I drove into the parking lot of the Grace Presbyterian Church in Peoria, Illinois, I was amazed at the enormous size of the building. The church was celebrating its 150th year of ministry and appeared to have no signs of slowing down. As I entered through the multiple sets of double doors, I eventually made way down a wide hallway, up the staircase, and buzzed the office area for my 1:00 o’clock meeting with Dr. Bryan Chapell. I was greeted by the Executive Administrative Assistant, Karen Frey, and she walked me back to Dr. Chapell’s personal library which had a large conference table in the middle of the room. As we waited for Bryan to get out of another meeting, she told me about the history of the church and Bryan’s busy schedule. She showed me Bryan’s large three-year calendar hanging on the wall in her office that has all of his upcoming speaking engagements. Even though he travels to preach and teach around the world, Chapell preaches most Sundays at Grace Presbyterian Church. Part of the agreement he made with the leaders of the church five years ago, before becoming the Senior Pastor, was to be able to continue his teaching and writing ministry while still providing preaching and leadership to the 30 person staff, numerous volunteers, and approximately 1,700 members of the church.

I was grateful Bryan Chapell was able to carve out a small portion of his busy schedule to meet with me. At exactly 1:00 o’clock, Bryan entered the room where Karen and I were talking. He mentioned I looked familiar and asked if we had met before. I revealed our paths crossed a couple times, which jogged his memory. Then, with a warm smile he welcomed me into his office, adjacent to his personal library. He wanted the
space to feel more comfortable, so I sat on the couch and he sat in one of the nearby wingback chairs.

Prior to pastoring at Grace Presbyterian Church, Dr. Chapell was a pastor at two churches and then spent 30 years at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. He served many roles at the seminary, such as Professor of Preaching, Dean of Faculty, President, and Chancellor. During his time at Covenant Theological Seminary, Dr. Chapell published many books, including his best-selling book, *Christ-Centered Preaching*. Bryan’s approach to preaching varies from Sunukjian, Gibson, Mathews, and Haddon Robinson. While these four would, most likely, ascribe to a Theocentric approach to preaching, Chapell practices a Christ-Centered approach, as explained in Chapter 2.

Dr. Chapell shared that his homiletic is formulated as a response to why he thinks preaching is relevant for today. When I asked him why he thought preaching matters, he paused, but then gave a well-articulated and robust response with direct quotes from reformers’ Martin Luther and John Calvin. Bryan believes that preaching the Word of God is the Word of God. He shared, “The transforming power of God is available in the church as the truth of the Word is preached.” However, he insisted that change, on its own, is not only why preaching matters. Bryan contends:

So what changes people? Well, greed, guilt, all kinds of things can change people temporarily, but the only thing that changes people eternally is the Word of God. The confessional language is the Holy Spirit working by and with the Word in people's hearts. So as we [preachers] are saying what the Word says, we are instruments of the Holy Spirit for eternal transformation.
Bryan did not always hold these convictions growing up. His views on preaching were developed later on during the first years in his pastorate.

The sermons Bryan heard as a boy and youth were rather zealous and oftentimes, allegorical, uninformed, and illogical. He admits that type of preaching did not have much effect on him. His father was a lay Baptist minister in a circuit of rural churches and Bryan was mostly moved by his father’s sincerity and love, rather than any preaching he heard. He never aspired to be a preacher; rather he was interested in either news broadcasting or law. However, he recognized that almost all of his choices were based on either how much money he could acquire or how well known he could make his name. He realized those were not the right priorities for someone who ascribed to be a Christian.

Still unsure of his future paths, he had a meaningful conversation during a Thanksgiving weekend with his friend’s dad who happened to be the President of Covenant Theological Seminary, Dr. Robert G. Rayburn. President Rayburn invited Chapell to study at the seminary on a scholarship for a year to see if he would be a good fit for the ministry. Unbeknownst to Chapell at the time, there was no scholarship; rather President Rayburn paid the tuition for Chapell’s first year. While studying how to preach, Bryan was able to exercise what he learned in the classroom in a small rural church. With thankfulness in his voice, he looked out his office window and reflected on that time:

Without my plan, without my intention, preaching the Word became something that was just absolutely wonderful to me. I loved it. It was the Lord’s path, not by my plan. But just by that Thanksgiving weekend, a man of God who paid for my education, at least the first year, and then an invitation to a little country church
where I got to “show off,” at least that’s what I thought I was doing, the Lord was using it to bring me in this path.

**Dr. Abraham Kuruvilla.** Dr. Kuruvilla sat across from me in a Dallas Theological Seminary classroom, kicked his feet onto a table, and we talked about preaching for over 45 minutes. We just finished a wonderful lunch at a local Pan Asian restaurant in Dallas, Texas, where we both shared about our summer, up-bringing, and passion for preaching. Even though we had many distinctions, we found ourselves having numerous commonalities and similar interests. I knew Dr. Kuruvilla for several years prior to our lunch, but this was the first time we were able to sit down together and converse about life, work, and homiletics.

After lunch, Abraham drove us back to Dallas Theological Seminary where he is the Senior Research Professor of Preaching and Pastoral Ministries. After giving me a quick tour of the campus, we chatted in one of the main preaching rooms where he teaches students to preach. The classroom was a fitting place to conduct an interview, talk about homiletics, and how preaching is taught. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Dr. Kuruvilla preferred the interview not to be recorded but was open to me taking diligent notes and was thorough in several email exchanges.

Kuruvilla was born in Kuwait but is ethnically Indian. He came to the United States of America as an international student. Before earning a doctorate in hermeneutics with an emphasis in preaching, Kuruvilla earned a doctorate in immunology, which he continues to practice today. We discussed how it is possible that a similar attention to detail Abraham uses when diagnosing a patient could be what he uses when he exegetes a passage of Scripture from the Bible. When I asked him what he enjoys most about
preaching, he responded, “Being an intermediary between God’s Word written for God’s people; being an instrument for life-change in God’s hands; enjoying the thrill of studying God’s ineffable word and discovering its authorial doings,” (A. Kuruvilla, personal communication, July 20, 2018).

It was obvious that Abraham loves thinking and talking about preaching. As noted in Chapter 2, Kuruvilla’s homiletic is different from Robinson and the other participants’ homiletic. Dr. Kuruvilla was concerned that since his approach differs from Robinson’s homiletic, he may not be helpful to this research. However, I assured him his insights about preaching, the teaching of preaching, and his views on Haddon Robinson will help make this research more robust and well-rounded.

He does agree with the other participants in the tremendous importance of making preaching relevant for the everyday person. When asked why he believed preaching is important, he responded, “I consider preaching the heart of pastoral ministry. I see preaching as THE PRIMARY use of Scripture in the body of Christ—the written agency for spiritual formation into Christlikeness of God’s people through preaching,” (A. Kuruvilla, personal communication, July 20, 2018).

**Reflections on Haddon W. Robinson**

As mentioned earlier, throughout the interviews, I was able to take diligent notes on my Interview Guide. I then transcribed the interviews, listened to the interviews repeatedly, and used data software for coding purposes. In this section, I highlight emergent themes and patterns to provide rich data that displays a deeper understanding and meaning regarding Haddon Robinson as a person, teacher, preacher, and influencer.
of the teaching of preaching. I use direct quotes from the participants as they interpret and make meaning of Robinson and his influence.

**Person.** Each of the participants knew Haddon Robinson personally, although some more than others. Scott Gibson and Alice Mathews were more familiar with Robinson than the other participants. They each had worked with him in many capacities, over several decades. Don Sunukjian had known Robinson the longest of the five participants, beginning as one of Robinson’s first students in his early years of teaching at Dallas Theological Seminary. Bryan Chapell worked on and off with Robinson since the mid-1990’s. Abraham Kuruvilla had a few interactions with Robinson over the years and has been able to observe Robinson’s life from a distance, as well as the continual impact Robinson had made while at Dallas Theological Seminary.

Several subjects emerged throughout the participants’ interpretations of Robinson the person, but the two major themes which surfaced were Robinson’s mentorship in their lives as well as him possessing dispositions of generosity and loyalty. It is worth noting that some of the participants also communicated that Robinson was “human” with imperfections. I will address each of these themes in further detail through the words of the participants and their perspectives of Haddon Robinson, the person.

**Early mentor and continuing friend.** Each participant recalled a first encounter with Robinson. Scott Gibson, Bryan Chapell, and Don Sunukjian could tell early on that Robinson was a person who invested in others. Scott easily recalled the first time he met Robinson. Their interaction occurred after Robinson preached at a Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary chapel service in the early 1990s. Scott was an adjunct faculty member and recalls the memorable encounter:
I remember going up and talking with him after the service and having a really enjoyable conversation with him. He was interested in the people with him when he spoke. He wasn't looking for somebody else to be interested in him or somebody more important. He was engaged with the person who was in front of him.

The first time Bryan met Robinson was during a group interview video-recording sponsored by Dr. John Koessler from The Moody Bible Institute. Bryan and Robinson, along with two others, were invited to share about their approaches to preaching. As a young homiletician, Bryan admits feeling a bit intimated and wanted to make sure his answers were polished. At the beginning of the recording, the producer asked the video participants to explain the emphasis of the preaching book they authored and their approach to preaching:

He [the producer] started with me and I can remember almost trying to memorize the Preface of my book, you know, that kind of stuff, just get it down succinct. And it's just kind of the classic young preacher error, you know, kind of like give them a machine gun with a furrowed brow (machine gun noises). “Now, Dr. Robinson, what's the main purpose of your book?” [the producer asked] And he just leans back, “Well…” and it was just this most conversational, grandfatherly, pastoral, shepherding thing. And I thought, why didn't I do that?

Bryan admits he did not have “a close relationship with Haddon,” but whenever their paths crossed at conferences or combined projects, Robinson always had a relaxed, wise demeanor and an interest into what Bryan was doing.
Chapell sensed Robinson’s impact on his life as more of an invested colleague, than as a mentor or close friend. Due to their differing approaches to homiletics, Bryan drew attention to the reality that, “people wanted to pit Haddon and me against one another. I'll just tell you, honestly, I don't like that, because I don't think we viewed each other that way.” Bryan specifically addressed how some compare Robinson’s Big Idea approach with his view regarding the Fallen Condition Focus within the text. However, Bryan went on to say that in a, “very important article,” that Robinson wrote in 1997, *The Heresy of Application*, he began to “talk about the depravity factor and the need of identifying the Redeemer [in the passage of Scripture]. It did not become a major theme of his, but bless his heart, it became an important support for me.” Bryan would often reference that article when people positioned Robinson’s views against his. He claims that while Robinson does not use the language of the Fallen Condition Focus, he tries to seek the depravity factor behind the text that requires God to work. Bryan believes this is identical to the emphasis of the Fallen Condition Focus and reiterated that, “it did not become a major emphasis of his, but it became a major support for me, for which I was very grateful.”

Don Sunukjian remembers Robinson helping him develop first as a young preacher, then as a pastor, and eventually as a seasoned professor. Don’s first year studying at Dallas Theological Seminary was Robinson’s second year as an instructor. Robinson’s courses consisted of the first half of the semester being lecture-based, and then students would preach during the second half of the semester. However, due to the

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19 Many interpret Robinson’s contribution of the Big Idea as seeking to discover the main idea of a passage of Scripture and making that idea the main idea of the sermon. Many believe that Bryan Chapell’s Christ-Centered Preaching also sought to discover the overarching idea; however, it is discovered within the text’s context of the fallen condition of humanity.
large class size, half of the class would be evaluated by Robinson and the other half evaluated by a Teaching Assistant. Don petitioned to be included in Robinson’s section because he was adamant about receiving feedback from Robinson himself instead of a Teaching Assistant. Robinson noticed a great deal of potential in Don as a preacher and not long afterwards, he became Robinson’s Teaching Assistant.

Ironically, Don began sitting in on Robinson’s lectures and then giving sermon feedback to students after listening to a section of the class preach. Unexpectedly, Robinson planted a seed in Don’s mind about the possibility of becoming a homiletics professor:

I'm sitting in Haddon’s office one day and out of the blue, he says, “Dallas Seminary is going to get larger.” Apparently, as a faculty member, he knew that expansion stuff was coming. “And we're going to need faculty and we'd like to bring you back someday to be on faculty.”

Robinson advised Don to complete his Doctor of Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary and do a second doctorate elsewhere to have a diverse educational background. Sunukjian admits that he was honored to be considered. At that time, there were just over a dozen full-time faculty:

Those of us [Teaching Assistants] who sat in the library, we used to watch them ascend the stairwell to a conference room, and it was like the gods ascending Mount Olympus, you know, (laughter) and the thought of being in that group was also something. But whatever it was, you know, we [Don and his wife] took time to make a decision, and felt this is what the Lord wanted.
Soon after his conversation with Robinson, Don and his family moved to southern California to complete a Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Following the completion of his doctorates from Dallas Theological Seminary and the University of California, Los Angeles, Robinson advised Sunukjian to get a few years of pastoral experience. At first, Don was put-off by this request because he felt as if Robinson was, “making the rules up as you go.” However, he soon discovered there was a faculty member at Dallas Theological Seminary who was skeptical of Robinson’s approach to preaching and would only value potential candidates who had full-time senior pastor experience. Since Robinson had minimal experience as a pastor, this other faculty member was critical towards Robinson. Therefore, Dr. Sunukjian believes that Robinson was really looking out for him and did not want him to go through the same type of negative treatment.

After a couple years pastoring at Scottsdale Bible Church, in Scottsdale, Arizona, Don was recruited by Robinson to teach alongside him at the seminary. However, Sunukjian declined and admits that, “God was doing good stuff in my life.” Robinson really wanted Dr. Sunukjian to come, so he created a non-renewable position so the full-time position was open every year. “So every year, he [Robinson] would ask, can you come? And every year I'd say no.” However, Robinson was persistent, confident Sunukjian was the right person, and saw a lot of potential in him. Don continues, “But then, after seven years, I got a phone call from Dr. Walvoord, the president.” With a slight change in his tone, Don remembers the words from the other end of the line, “It hasn't been publicly announced yet, but Haddon is going to be the president of Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary. This greatly aggravates our need for
homiletics. Could we please fly you out here to talk to you about that?” Dr. Sunukjian flew to Dallas and eventually accepted a teaching position at Dallas Theological Seminary most likely because of Robinson’s continual pursuit and endorsement. Even though Don would not teach alongside his former professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, he acknowledged that it was Robinson who recruited, prepared, and advocated for him throughout his early career.

Another example of a small gesture that helped in a big way was when Robinson footnoted Don’s doctoral dissertation in *Biblical Preaching*. Don says:

That was the first of many instances where it seemed to me he was taking special care to call attention to me to put me in front of people. It gave me esteem in the eyes of other people because of the ethos transference of Haddon. He would introduce me to his cohort as, “I don't know anybody who does it better than…” one year. Another year, “It's always good to see students of yours take it further than you've taken it.”

Throughout Dr. Sunukjian’s career, he continually attributed Robinson’s guidance and mentorship as extremely helpful and timely. Eventually they were able to teach alongside one another after Robinson invited Sunukjian to teach a Doctor of Ministry cohort at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

It seemed Don Sunukjian highly respected Robinson and was grateful to his former professor and mentor. Looking to his books on the shelves, Don referred to the recognition he gave Robinson in his Preface to his own book on preaching. “On the dedication page of my textbook, after the obligatory dedications to your wife and your children…the third one is to Haddon Robinson: early mentor and continuing friend.” Don
smiled and shared that Robinson inspires him to do the same for others who are entering into the field.

Alice Mathews also recalled how Robinson used his position as president of a seminary and well-known preacher, to mentor her. She admits that he helped push her to publish, advocated for her to co-host *Discover the Word* with him, and continued to invest in her life and career. Without his presence and guidance, she often wonders where she would have landed.

Scott Gibson appreciated the many lunches and holidays he spent with Robinson during their many years together at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. They would often talk about life, preaching, teaching, and marriage, among many other topics. When asked what comes to his mind when he hears Robinson’s name, he replied:

Well, for me, it's a friend, teacher, mentor, great preacher. He is one of the most recognized evangelical homiletics preachers that I have ever known. Absolutely skilled. Brilliant in what he did…He was an encourager. He was a people builder. If he saw that there was a way which he could help you, he would. And that's what he did for me all the years that we worked together. We were friends, even though he was old enough to be my father.

*Generous and loyal.* Another theme that emerges from the participants regarding their perception of the person of Haddon Robinson was that of his generosity and loyalty. Not every participant commented on these two dispositions but the detailed stories some participants shared seemed to indicate that Robinson may have possessed these traits.

“He was generous with his time, generous with his money,” recalls Scott Gibson. Two examples quickly came to his memory:
I remember when I first took my position at the seminary. I was a young professor and I needed to get a new car. I had a ‘junker’ of a car. I went in to see [Robinson] just to get some advice about getting a loan for a car because I didn't know. My father had died and I really didn't have anybody to get advice from. I went in and asked him about it. He said, “How much is the loan for?” I told him how much the money was, I think it was $5,000, or $8,000, I can't remember. He said, “Did you go to the bank?” I said, “Yes, I went to the bank.” “Well, what's the interest?” And I told him what the interest was, I think it was 9% or 8%. It is pretty high for a car loan in those days. He said, “That's high. I'll loan you the money.” I think it was like, 4%, or something like that. I said, “Really?!” “Oh, yeah, I'll get you the money. How soon do you need it?” I told him I needed it the next day. “I'll get it for you.” And I said, “What about putting together how I’m going to pay you back?” “You write up a contract and I'll sign it.” So that's what I did. I paid him off sooner, but it was a great help to me. It showed me his willingness, again, to take a risk on me and his generosity.

Then fast-forward several years later, and my 50th birthday we celebrated. We had a big gang of people there and all ‘the boys.’ And we went to Frank, who was the director of the dining services, to get the bill and he said, “It’s already been paid.” “What do you mean it’s already been paid?” He said, “Dr. Robinson paid for it.” I just could not get over it and those kinds of gestures. Scott recalls that these charitable acts were not just towards him, but also to many of the people in Robinson’s life.
Don Sunukjian also shared a memory of Robinson’s generosity. As mentioned earlier, Robinson would often invite Don to co-teach a Doctor of Ministry module class at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The invitation, alone, was a considerate gesture but Don viewed Robinson’s hospitality as going above and beyond:

I was honored that he asked. I would stay in his home. Bonnie always cooked meals that tasted good and looked beautiful and were healthy for you, always did. We would go early in the morning and stop at the athletic facility and he would do the machines, and I get bored on machines, so I brought my racket ball and I’d smash the racket against it. We would shower up and then we would go in.

Similar to Scott’s perspective, Don noticed the small details that Robinson exhibited which made their relationship all the more closer.

Sunukjian also referred to Robinson’s loyalty. He appreciated how Robinson kept pursing him to come and teach at Dallas Theological Seminary when he was pastoring. In addition, he appreciated how Robinson kept inviting him back to co-teach at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Alice Mathews also recognized Robinson’s loyalty. She simply mentioned, “He was a very loyal person. I would say that loyalty was one of his hallmarks.”

\textit{A shadow-side to Haddon W. Robinson.} A couple of the participants, who knew Robinson well, also mentioned that he was not without his weaknesses. “There was a Harlem-side to Haddon,” one participant shared. I do not believe this phrase was used to speak negatively of Robinson or Harlem, but rather my interpretation is the participant was emphasizing that Robinson’s rough upbringing in Mousetown, New York, as well as his association with a gang as a young teenager may occasionally influence his
personality and interactions with others. Based on the interviews, it seems at times Robinson may have been challenging to work with because of his inconsistencies with keeping the rules. For instance, Robinson would hold the line on some issues, but allow other issues to slide. Early on in their working relationship, Alice recalls, “I had worked with him for eight months. And I said, ‘I can't do this, I quit.’ He said, ‘No, you're not.’ Yeah, working with him was not easy.” She gave another example of a disagreement when working at Discover the Word:

We did not agree on so many things, points on what we were teaching. And he expected me to be okay with all of his, but he expected to challenge all of mine and it was not fun. And there were times when we had to stop work, because we were both so angry. We worked together well in one way, but we were constantly irritated with one another on another level. He was a big picture person and I was a detail person.

Despite his perceived inconsistencies and inflexibility, the participants seemingly cherished Robinson and were grateful for the opportunities to work alongside him. While Robinson may have been challenging to work with at times, his distinct upbringing may have resulted in a personality, preaching technique, and teaching style that was actually attractive, memorable, and influential.

**Preacher.** The participants in this research all acknowledged Robinson’s ability as a gifted preacher. Even if some disagreed with his philosophy and approach to preaching, they were nonetheless impressed with his seemingly clear and relevant sermons. When Robinson began teaching at Dallas Theological Seminary, Dr. Abraham Kuruvilla acknowledges, “Preaching was just a lecture, but Robinson said, ‘No, that
Gibson claims, “Certainly, Haddon Robinson was one who brought the Biblical texts to the listeners in such a way that engages them in a lively conversation about the Bible.” The participants greatly appreciated Robinson’s preaching style and all noted that he was an influential preacher.

**His sermons were masterful.** At an Evangelical Homiletics Conference, Don Sunukjian recalls Robinson being the plenary preacher. At this point in Dr. Sunukjian’s career, he had become an established homiletics professor and was an experienced sermon critic. He remembers thinking:

Okay, Haddon, get up there and show us how to do it. So he gets up there, and I'm going to, I'm going to analyze him, you know, parse out what he's doing. After two minutes, I was just captivated. And I thought, I forgot all about what I was doing and how I was professionally going to evaluate the thing. And I thought, I don't know how he does that. But that was his ability. He could draw you in so early on that you became absolutely absorbed in what he was saying and you forgot about how is he doing it? I think that, that was his skill.

Alice Mathews reiterated on several occasions that Robinson loved opportunities to preach to lay men and women. She believes that communicating to parishioners was always on the forefront of his mind. She expressed, “He wanted people to listen to the Word of God and he found that most preaching did not deal honestly with the text and did not really effect change in people's thinking.” Alice recognized that wanting to connect the Bible to the “everyday person” was a key component to Robinson’s preaching. “These were the two operative things for him. You could be Biblical but not be relevant and you could be relevant and not biblical, but you have to be both. This was
his grand passion when preaching.” She remembers some of his sermons and describes them as “masterful.”

When asked which of Robinson’s sermons they remember the most, the participants referenced a few that were notably significant in their lives: *Don’t Just Do Something...Sit There* (Luke 10:38-42), *The Businessman who Missed the Bottom Line* (Luke 12:13-34), *The Pharisee and the Tax Collector* (Luke 18:9-14), and *The Preacher* (the Book of Ecclesiastes). Another influential sermon that both Scott and Alice referenced is titled *The Church of God in Christ Chicken Restaurant*. They both commented that it was a highly controversial sermon because it was entirely done as a first-person fictional experience where Robinson hypothetically had lunch at a “church” that had turned into a chicken restaurant. It raised many questions for the listeners, “That's exactly what he wanted to do,” says Scott. When Robinson preached it in chapel at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Alice says, “I think most of the faculty were just shaking their heads. I don't think they got it.” It was memorable for Scott and Alice and demonstrates Robinson’s ability to be creative and think outside of the box with Biblical teachings.

The participants commented that not everyone may know, but Robinson’s preaching evolved throughout his career. Scott Gibson identified Robinson’s earlier sermons were louder, and incorporated bouts of flamboyant expressions. However, he says Robinson began to realize that preaching was more of a conversation. Scott believes Robinson was influenced by narrative, New Homiletics preachers like Fred Craddock and Eugene Lowry, as well as the listeners’ acceptance of more conversational, inductive
approaches to preaching. “If you listen to a number of his sermons from the nineties, they tend to be more inductively shaped than deductively shaped,” says Dr. Gibson.

Bryan Chapell also noticed a shift in Robinson’s preaching throughout the years. In addition to inductive models of preaching, Dr. Chapell also identified Robinson preaching first-person narratives and being more genre-sensitive to the Scriptures. Bryan attributes these shifts to being, “driven more by communication theory and a desire to be an effective communicator. This was not where his Dallas roots were, which was a literal exegesis of the text.” Bryan continues:

He very much moved more toward a controlling image view of preaching, you know, “What's the controlling thought, the central image, that central theme?”

And almost more of a, “What would you walk away with as the main emphasis of what the sermon would be about?”

Gibson confesses that sometimes Robinson did not even follow his own rules on how to preach. Perhaps that is why both his supporters and critics often enjoyed listening to him, while some were frustrated with his preaching. They never knew what to expect, but they knew his preaching was worth their attention and hearing.

Professor. The main element of this research is determining Robinson’s influence on the teaching of preaching. Thus far, I identified themes from the participants capturing main components of who Robinson was as a person. The participants also spoke very highly of Robinson’s preaching ability, even if they disagreed with his approach. Some participants even recalled memorable sermons he delivered. Another component I questioned the participants about was Robinson’s andragogy and influence as a teacher. I sought to unearth his possible strengths as a professor, how he taught and evaluated
student sermons, how students may have perceived him, and what were his possible weaknesses.

*This guy can teach me to preach!* Don Sunukjian was the only participant who was a former student under Robinson. He remembers the buzz, early on, surrounding Robinson’s incredible ability to teach preaching. As a student, Don was impressed by “the quality of his lectures, the precision in the way he put words together, and the way he could develop concepts and show we were building on something. I said to myself, ‘This guy can teach me to preach!’” Shortly after Don’s introductory preaching course, he enrolled in every course Robinson taught, including a Directed Study course. Sunukjian was committed to learning as much about preaching from Robinson as possible. As mentioned earlier, he admired his professor and eventually became his Teaching Assistant:

As a student, he invited my wife and I over to his house for dinner, and we played some cards or board game afterwards. And I was tickled to go over for dinner and play a board game. And now that I'm a professor, I’m thinking, that's pretty rare. It is unclear if Robinson did this often with other students throughout his career, but Don Sunukjian appreciated how Robinson cared for his students and was a teacher inside and outside of the classroom.

Even though Abraham Kuruvilla was never a student of Robinson, he currently has colleagues at Dallas Theological Seminary who were Robinson’s former students. He surmises the reason why Robinson’s lectures were effective was due to Robinson’s use of the Socratic Method and his aptitude to make preaching relevant. Abraham emphasized
Robinson’s ability to get students interested in preaching and forced them to think deeply about how their sermons would impact the listeners.

**Biblical Preaching was his andragogy.** The other participants recognized Robinson’s book, *Biblical Preaching*, as a key element to him as a teacher. All of the participants agreed that Robinson emphasized preaching the “Big Idea” of the text. The concept of the Big Idea is not new, but the participants all agreed that he popularized the language in the homiletical world. Scott acknowledged that, “the 10 steps in *Biblical Preaching* was really his andragogy.” The 10 steps center on the concept that the preacher ought to discover the main idea of a Biblical text and then preach that main idea, thus the Big Idea. According to homiletical textbooks at the time, this concept was not stressed. Robinson’s emphasis on this key component of public communication and connecting it to one’s hermeneutic of seeking the main idea of a passage was a fresh idea for preachers at the time. The success of his book complemented his teaching and preaching, which made his approach even more persuasive.

However, Dr. Gibson alludes to some inconsistencies in Robinson’s teaching. He believes that Robinson would try to explore new concepts and innovative ways of teaching. Sometimes they were effective, but other times they were not. Scott recalls, “[Robinson] used to tell me, ‘You teach my approach to preaching better than I teach it.’ That's what he always told me. I think part of it is because I'm methodical and I'm consistent.” Dr. Sunukjian adds Robinson was more of a “wordsmith and a big-picture-person.”

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20 Robinson claims that the there is one, overarching idea for each passage of Scripture. The preacher ought to discover the main idea of a passage and make that the main idea of his or her sermon, driving home its importance to the listeners. He describes this as preaching the Big Idea.
Chapell recognized that even though he and Robinson came from different theological underpinnings, they “both brought something to the table” as educators. Often times, he and Robinson would be invited to preaching conferences or academic lectures to do “joint teaching.” Bryan shared:

I want to say we became kind of partners in in the preaching world. Haddon’s was a much more accessible book, you know, kind of a basic structure book. And so, almost from the beginning, people would use Haddon to teach students basic structure, and then they would use me [Christ-Centered Preaching] to supplement that with a theology of preaching. That happened, that still happens. I mean, that's a very common kind of partnership.

The two had similar starting points and then different emphases. Robinson was more interested in communication theory, whereas Chapell was more interested in a redemptive understanding of the Bible. Together they traveled and taught and had mutual respect for one another’s approach. In a similar fashion that Robinson’s preaching style evolved, Bryan says that Robinson had an open demeanor to:

…move as he felt his model needed to move. He was not holding up some persona that had to be honored. He was more willing to say, “What will really make this Word helpful and effective for people?” So he was willing to examine some of his own approaches and do what he thought was best for the hearing of the Word.

Even though none of the participants mentioned educational theorists like Dewey, Brookfield, or Kolb by name, their comments would suggest that Robinson relied on teaching through experience and transparency for the goal of practical outcomes. He was
able to evolve with his students as an educator and learn together through trial and error. It is unclear whether or not Robinson was aware of his educational theory, but it seems to be rooted in developing knowledge and applied results.

**A muted contempt for academia.** Dr. Scott Gibson mentions that one of the inconsistencies in Robinson’s life is that he wanted to help people learn to preach, but was greatly impatient with theological education. Scott says that sometimes Robinson had a real disregard for some of, “the requirements of theological education. All he really wanted to do was help pastors. He really wanted to help preachers and if there were things that got in the way of that, he had no problem dismissing it.” Dr. Alice Mathews concurred, “He always had a muted contempt for academia.” So much so, that she believes some of the faculty noticed that resentment and it may have impacted the way they viewed him as a leader.

While his lectures may have been memorable, sometimes students may have wanted to forget his forthright sermon critiques. Robinson never administered exams and rarely had the patience for correcting papers. Scott says, he was a “minimalist,” and, “couldn't be bothered correcting papers.” Gibson continues, “He had been a president and understood to get something done, get it off your desk, and move forward.” Alice Mathews testifies to this sentiment that Robinson did not like dealing with papers. Don Sunukjian agreed that Robinson would write very few comments on papers and it was often challenging to read his remarks. Therefore, most of the feedback he gave students was oral, in front of the entire classroom, after a student preached.

After a student finished preaching, Robinson would stand at the front of the classroom and give his feedback. Dr. Gibson says, “He tended to grade sermons in the
moment and did not necessarily have a grid as to what made a good sermon. He could feel what a good sermon was, but if he was tired that day, or whatever, the feedback was mixed.” Scott attributed this inconsistency to a lack of educational theory in Robinson’s background. While Robinson used Mager’s Learning Objective framework in his book, *Biblical Preaching*, he did not use any structure or criteria in giving oral feedback. Instead, he was much more reactive to a student’s performance.

Sometimes, the participants noted, Robinson could tear right into students and blister them with his words, being destructive to their growth as a preacher. Gibson recalls several occasions that this happened, for instance:

I remember him saying to a student one time, “You certainly didn't hit that one out of the park.” Yeah, I don't know how a person, a student, could deal with learning from that? I don't know how well the student could understand how to improve from that?

Dr. Mathews also shared a similar harsh treatment towards a student. She considers it, her “typical” Haddon story:

He had a student at Gordon-Conwell who got a B- in the course. The student came in and challenged him, wanting an A. Haddon said, “Okay.” So he got out the grade book and changed it from a B- to an A. But as the student was walking out the door, he said, “But you're still a B- preacher.” He had a contempt for grades. He had a contempt for all of the academic rigmarole.

None of the participants seemed to believe that Robinson was a cruel person, but rather he was passionate about preaching and wanted to be brutally honest with his students. Perhaps even his rough upbringing played a part in his verbal feedback. Scott
summarized his thoughts on Robinson as a teacher by saying, “He wasn't really an educator in the sense of a methodical educator. He was simply, Haddon Robinson.”

**Influence on the teaching of preaching.** A significant question I asked each participant was, “How do you feel Haddon Robinson influenced the teaching of preaching in North American, evangelical seminaries?” The participants spoke at length about Robinson, their relationship with him, and their perception of how he influenced people, places, and the teaching of preaching. After coding their response to this question, as well as other times they mentioned his influence, three themes emerged: investing in people, changing his environment, and contributions to the field.

**Investing in people.** Throughout the interviews, the participants continually mentioned Robinson’s ability to impact them personally along with his genuine investment in people. They were each grateful for how he used his position and power to effectively help others. Each of the five core skills Mirsalimi and Hunter (2006) suggest influential leaders must possess appeared in Robinson’s interest towards others: listening, reflecting, use of self (or mindfulness), dialogue, and modeling. Scott says, “He took me under his wing,” and, “I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing now without his investment in me.” Bryan viewed Robinson as, “a pastor of preachers,” and Don’s career was heavily influenced by Robinson’s guidance and mentorship. On several occasions throughout the interview Don commented on Robinson’s influence on his life and, “career orientation.” Alice also shared stories of how Robinson made a profound impact on her life. Bryan summarizes Robinson’s influence on his life, as well as the lives of others, “He was just always kind of a pastor of preachers, if you will, willing to be a calm voice.” As mentioned in Chapter 4, these four were not the only people Robinson influenced.
Alice Mathews pointed out Robinson was an advocate for women and minorities. She says, “He was very intentional in promoting women and people of color. He was very intentional.” She went on to recall that:

When Vernon Grounds [former President at Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary] told him to get me for starting this new thing at Denver Seminary, there was never, I don’t think he ever entertained the idea that he should probably look for a man. And he was very intentional in in affirming people of color as well, and seeking them out where possible.

Mathews also mentioned that Robinson invested many hours mentoring her and other women, “to work on their public speaking.” Robinson was a promoter of female speakers and as his career progressed, so did his views on female teachers of homiletics. Alice notes, “I think he held [theologically] complementarian views, but that did not in any way interfere with the fact that he wanted to promote women.” She continued to spotlight Robinson’s contributions, “There was always this engagement, this involvement, and he did this, not just for me, he did this for all kinds of people. I mean, he took a really deep interest in helping all of us become better communicators.” As mentioned in Chapter 4, towards the end of his career, Robinson co-taught preaching classes with Dr. Patricia Batten who is now one of the first female homileticians to teach preaching at an evangelical seminary. Alice says, “He always started where people were, and he would just try to move them a bit… he was a learner, a lifelong learner. He was constantly pushing to learn things and listen to people.”

In addition to Robinson’s ability to be a prolific writer and speaker, Don Sunukjian identified another contribution Robinson made to the field of homiletics: his
ability to make supporters and followers of his approach to preaching. “He taught enough guys that went into schools, and even if he didn't originally teach the guys, he had enough impact on the guild that they started catching on.” Don continued that Robinson, “just sprinkled disciples, or people who bought into it,” and wanted to pass Big Idea preaching along to the next generation. He includes himself when he says, “We continued to write, and, you know, we're scattered abroad, at lots of different schools. So in that sense, yeah, he changed the map in terms of evangelical preaching.”

Mathews also commented on Robinson’s followers when she said, “I think there will be enough people who are passing it [Big Idea preaching] on now. His name may get lost somewhere along the line, but I don't think he ever expected that he would be known for the ages in this area.” According to the participants, Robinson was someone who could be trusted and excelled in cultivating the potential he noticed in others. He wanted to develop people and went to great lengths to help whenever there was a need.

Scott Gibson referred to a sermon Robinson would often preach called “Surprise!!!” In the sermon, Robinson makes the case that there will be many surprises in heaven. He particularly speaks about the contrast to what matters to humans and what matters to God. Robinson focuses on Matthew 25:40, “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’” (New International Version). Scott could not remember the exact words Robinson used in his sermon, but near the conclusion, Robinson imagines a hypothetical scenario where he is standing at the gate of heaven and the Lord asks him to get out his datebook. Robinson pictures going through his datebook with the Lord and learning that what matters most to God is how you invest in others. Scott believes that this sermon is a
snapshot of one of the ways he, and perhaps others, remember Robinson as an influencer. All the participants recognized that Robinson was committed to investing in others. An aspect of his influence was relational, which was demonstrated through the participants’ stories and ongoing evidence of others around the world who attribute an aspect of their view of preaching to Robinson.

*Changing the environment.* As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are a variety of social contexts within higher education. Beecher and Towler (2001) refer to some groups as tribes and territories. They insist on investigating the influence of tradition, practices, and epistemological views when trying to decipher how to influence the environment within higher education. Roxa and Martensson (2010) add that the ideal situation for education is when methods develop as an ongoing enterprise to improve ways to understand subjects and master the practice. It appears that wherever Robinson’s career took him, he influenced his tribe, culture, and the educational environment.

*Dallas Theological Seminary.* Drs. Sunukjian and Kuruvilla both spoke about Robinson’s influence and how he brought the concept of the Big Idea to Dallas Theological Seminary. Don Sunukjian recalls:

Our circles were not reading Grady Davis, whereas in his studies he had. So he had read, and he brought it into the evangelical world, gave it a popular, Big Idea kind of terminology, and convinced us that that's how the Scriptures ought to be taught. That they were conceptual ideas, theological statements to the pericopes. Up until that time, we were a rambling commentary.

Don went on to share that Robinson eventually convinced the other instructors in his department, as well as instructors of other departments, an innovative way to interpret
and preach the Bible by emphasizing the Big Idea. He remembers early on that Robinson was able to counsel the Greek professors, “to make their classes aim towards discovering the central truth of the text.” He was able to do this by co-teaching classes with members of differing departments. Abraham says that even though many departments at Dallas Theological Seminary do not follow Robinson’s teaching any more, including those who teach preaching, the counseling department still uses Robinson’s terminology of the Big Idea. Don summarizes Robinson’s influence on Dallas Theological Seminary as:

I think the reason for his influence was he brought ideas into our circles that we did not have, gave them catchy names, and did it so well, that we just said, I want to do that. It's not that it was original, but it was original to us. It was new to us and he was doing it better. We were being blessed and ministered to better than the rambling commentary kind of thing.

Robinson’s influence on theological institutions continued as he moved from Dallas to Denver to become the new president at Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary.

Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary. When he first arrived to the seminary in Denver, Alice Mathews remembers Robinson being struck with the reality of no longer having a position as a professor, but rather the responsibilities and pressures of being a seminary president. She expressed, “He was appalled by how loose the whole area was, financially.” She commented that in all her years of working in higher education, she was convinced the president of a seminary has two main responsibilities: firefighting and fundraising. “Haddon’s life was consumed by these two jobs. He immediately saw there was going to have to be a complete restructuring of everything financially. He immediately recognized he needed to go after money.” She remembers the start of her
time working with Robinson, which came just months after his appointment as the new
president, as very intense with several groundbreaking initiatives. “The very first day on
the job, in January 1981, he came into my empty office. And he sat down, and he said,
‘Now this is what we need to do. We're going to start…” and went on to list a number of
projects to raise money.

Not only did Robinson help the school financially, but he also influenced the
seminary’s teaching of preaching. Similarly to Dallas Theological Seminary, he began
co-teaching classes with members from the Bible department. This collaboration helped
to solidify Robinson’s initiative to help students find and preach the main idea of a
passage of Scripture. In conjunction with helping the faculty teach Big Idea principles,
his newly published book, *Biblical Preaching*, was being used and circulated around
other seminaries. The seminary sponsored other preaching resources like cassette tapes
and magazines. Midway through Robinson’s tenure as President, he also helped navigate
the school’s name change from Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary to Denver
Baptist Theological Seminary.\(^{21}\)

However, as mentioned earlier, the lawsuits pending against the seminary took
their toll on Robinson and his family. While it was not the main reason he decided to
leave, it was a life-altering experience. Mathews recalls the day when Robinson spoke to
the faculty and staff and alerted them to his upcoming departure:

> We came up to a certain point and he said, it's time for me to leave. And he said to
> the faculty, “I know what we need to do, but I don't know how to take us there. So
> it's time for me to leave so that somebody else can take us where we need to go.”

\(^{21}\) The school later changed its name to Denver Seminary in 1998.
That was the kind of, just humble person he was. To say, it's time for me to go, because I've taken you as far as I can.

Even though Robinson was leaving Denver Seminary, he was not, by any means, finished influencing the teaching of homiletics and changing another theological institution.

*Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.* A few of the participants mentioned the environment at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary was his most challenging task of all due to the faculty’s diverse academic background. Many faculty members held advanced degrees from Ivy League or top-tier European Universities which was different from the seminaries in Dallas and Denver. Therefore, even though Robinson was highly educated himself and was the former president of a seminary, some of the faculty at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary questioned his biblical and homiletical knowledge. Alice says, “When Haddon left Denver, where preaching was highly appreciated, and went to Gordon-Conwell, he felt the disdain of the faculty. It took probably five or six years before some of them really began to recognize his value.” Alice went on to explain how she observed the culture at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary being significantly different from the other theological seminaries where Robinson was previously:

He had been highly respected at Dallas and then at Denver, and then he had gone to a school [GCTS] where everything having to do with ministry skills training was not worthy. He knew better, but he was there, and it was painful for him. I mean, they discovered that he knew the Bible and that he could interact with them at their level. Not everybody bought into the Big Idea, I would say. Pretty much
everybody bought into it at Dallas and at Denver, but at Gordon-Conwell there was this counter-balancing teaching by others.

Even with some members of the faculty outwardly opposing Robinson’s approach to the interpretation of the Bible and homiletics, he persevered.

Similar to the places he had been before, he chose collaboration over division. Scott Gibson recalls that Robinson was brought to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary by the leadership so that he could work together with the faculty from other departments and bring everyone together:

The administration wanted him to build a bridge between the Biblical Division and the way in which the Biblical folks did exegesis, and then the Homiletics [faculty]. Before that, there was really not a bridge. But after he came, and the Biblical folks realized he was serious about the Biblical text, and we were serious about Biblical text, there was much more of a mutual appreciation for each other. I have to say, that when I left Gordon-Conwell, my colleague, Doug Stewart [faculty member in the Biblical Division] gave a tribute to me, that was one of the most heartwarming and appreciative things that I've heard about me, and the commitment to the Scriptures, this and that. And I think it's, in many ways, a reflection on Haddon’s own influence on me as a teacher of preaching.

According to Scott’s testimony, it seems Robinson was able to influence not only his tribe but his territory of other colleagues.

In addition to Robinson working across departments at the various institutions, he also attracted students to seminary. Young, aspiring preachers, as well as seasoned ministers, wanted to study under him which was a consistent theme wherever he went.
His textbook, *Biblical Preaching*, his other works, and notoriety in the evangelical world as a preacher and homiletician attracted students from all over the world to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Denver Seminary, and Dallas Theological Seminary. Reminiscing on his time teaching beside Robinson, Scott Gibson says students, “wanted to be with a legend because his name was iconic, his presence was iconic, the things that he had to say were iconic, unusual things that you'd want to write down…There will never be another Haddon Robinson.”

**Contributions to the field.** As documented throughout this research, Robinson’s book, *Biblical Preaching*, was a well-known book in evangelical circles that helped Robinson become distinguished and respected amongst evangelical homileticians and Bible scholars. Robinson’s emphasis on preaching the Big Idea of the text seemed to resonate with many. Bryan Chapell agrees and says, “I think what almost anybody knows about him is the Big Idea terminology.” All the other participants agreed that one of the main reasons Robinson was so influential on the teaching of preaching was because of the success of his book and his continual contributions to the field of homiletics. Chapell comments, “I think the title of his book became his influence, *Biblical Preaching*. I think he was a standard for people to understand the importance of, and how to do Biblical preaching.” Gibson says the book, “was a fresh approach to evangelical homiletics. It was a clearly developed approach to communicating a sermon. That hadn't been around.” He acknowledges that there were other preaching books:

…but they weren't as well developed as his. Then of course, what helped, was his reputation as a preacher. So his preaching reflected his ten stages and people
heard him and said, “I want to preach like that,” or, “I want my students to preach like that, we'll use his book.”

Scott went on to explain that Robinson was invited to speak at many seminaries and Bible Colleges, in which many of those speaking engagements were lectures from his book and class.

Dr. Gibson also believes that Robinson’s influence has been marked by the many theological institutions that use his book, or at least adopt, “his approach to preaching, which is rooted in biblical text. This has had an impact on how preaching is taught.” Dr. Sunukjian shared a similar sentiment towards Robinson’s timely contribution and ability to communicate effectively. He says, “Haddon was obviously one of the early influencers. Between his popularizing skill and the fact that we were being ministered to, and he was the lone voice out there, boy, everybody just kind of gravitated toward it.”

One of the questions that lingers in Dr. Gibson’s mind is whether or not homiletics professors entirely understand Robinson’s philosophy of preaching. After reading publications from some of Robinson’s former students, Gibson is concerned that they do not fully grasp all of Robinson’s concepts. When referring to Robinson’s legacy he comments, “Go to Singapore, you go to Korea, you go to these different places his name is there. But whether or not they practice Big Idea, central idea preaching is a whole other question.”

One final area that is worth noting regarding Robinson’s contributions was only mentioned by Dr. Alice Mathews. She was adamant about Robinson’s influence on the common church-goer. She says, “He wanted to impact the church. He wanted the church
to be what the church was called to be, in terms of communicating the Scriptures clearly.” When I asked how she thought Robinson did that, she commented:

I think that it's entirely possible that Haddon’s legacy is greater through the

*Theology of Work Project* than it is in what he has done in teaching preaching in

seminaries. He was concerned about all of the people who six days out of seven

have to live out the Christian life, the Christian faith in a very challenging place.

And these are the people he cared about. This was what he was about!

Mathews added that Robinson was, “just, unique. He was unique. He had a vision that

not everybody shared. But he was constantly being courted by all kinds of people who

wanted to hire him, you know, churches and schools and whatnot.” According to Alice,

Robinson made a huge impact on her life, as well as those around him. She says, “I am

not the person I was when I started working with him, back in 1980, 81. I mean,

obviously, he puts his thumbprint on everybody.”

Contrary to the other participants, Dr. Kuruvilla sees some of Robinson’s

influences as hindering to preaching in the 21st century. In an article titled, *Time to Kill

the Big Idea? A Fresh Look at Preaching*, Kuruvilla (2018) shares his apprehension with

the Big Idea approach to preaching. He states that his concern stems from the

assumptions, “that behind every text is an essential truth that can be reduced and

expressed in propositional form as a Big Idea (distilling the text), and that that Big Idea is

what is to be preached to listeners (preaching the distillate).” Kuruvilla offers another

approach to preaching by looking instead to the theological focus of the text, challenges

his readers to rethink how to preach, and suggests it is time to change methods away from

Robinson’s influence of the Big Idea. However, whether or not people will abandon the
Big Idea and change their approach to preaching remains to be seen and only time can tell.

Summary

All the participants have great respect for Robinson. They acknowledge that he was an extremely gifted communicator and revered preacher. His ability to preach effectively strengthened his propensity to educate in the classroom and lecture halls where he spoke. He seemed willing to evolve his andragogy or homiletic when necessary all the while never losing his passion for preaching.

The participants also recognized his genuine care for others. He was willing to bring many people along with him on his journey and at times, even pushed them into the spotlight as he stepped into the backdrop. He advocated for female preachers, female administrators, racial minorities, and was influential in institutional collaboration by co-teaching with scholars from other departments. The participants recognized his impact on their lives as well as his influence on the field of homiletics through his book, *Biblical Preaching*. In the final chapter, I will discuss and conclude Robinson’s life and the participants’ reflections on Robinson as a person, preacher, teacher, and influencer.
CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

During the past two millennia, men and women have regularly stood among religious gatherings and preached sermons. This practice continues today. More recently, some preachers learn to preach in the context of academic training. From the early establishments of higher education in the United States of America, the teaching of preaching was included in the curriculum. Currently, the subject of homiletics is generally taught in Christian religious institutions, such as seminaries or Bible colleges, as well as practiced in the local church. This dissertation contributes to the limited amount of literature about one of the most recognized teachers of preaching among evangelical homileticians, Dr. Haddon W. Robinson. I hope that by exploring his influence, I may further the capability to teach preaching for other educators of homiletics, provide a better understanding of the field of homiletics, and highlight how one person’s ideas influenced an academic guild.

Haddon Robinson was a teacher of preaching for nearly 60 years and is known in evangelical circles for preaching sermons centered on a Big Idea. The purpose of this hermeneutical and phenomenological study was to explore Robinson’s life, his homiletic, and his andragogy to understand his influence on the teaching of homiletics in North American evangelical seminaries. Three guiding questions aided the progression of this research. The data collected came primarily from archival research and interviews with five recognized homileticians. The data in the archives included numerous interviews given by Haddon Robinson during the last two decades of his life, as well as several of his correspondences with others and personal documents. The archives aided in piecing
together a biography on Robinson’s life, career, and formation of his approach to preaching and teaching. Data collected from the interviewees gave insight into their perspectives on the importance of preaching, how they made meaning of Robinson, and their perceptions on his influence on the teaching of preaching.

Discussion of Significant Findings

In this section, I articulate how the findings fulfill this research’s purpose. I do so by discussing the significant findings of each guiding question. The biography of Haddon Robinson, combined with the lived experiences and meaning making of the interviewees, provide insight into the following discussion. The data collected sheds light on Robinson’s life, career, relationships, and influence.

Guiding question 1. The first guiding question was: Who is Haddon Robinson?

The essence of this question centers on the personal and public life of the former preacher and teacher of preaching, Dr. Haddon W. Robinson. While an all-inclusive representation of his life will never fully be complete, I believe the findings were sufficient to recognize Robinson as a committed, yet sometimes challenging person.

Robinson’s difficult upbringing in Mousetown, New York, coupled with the death of his mother at an early age and being raised by a hard-working father, seems to have impacted his personality and perspective on the world. At times, he appears to be a rule-breaker but mainly in order to help others. He possessed an ability to talk straight with colleagues, students, and friends while still offering them love, grace, and affection. He was committed to his work, probably like his father, and would have most likely kept working if not for being diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease at the age of 82.
It seems Robinson was deeply committed to people and his religious beliefs. His experiences as a boy also influenced his future relationships with friends, students, and with God. He maintained several close relationships throughout his lifetime, including his relationship with his wife Bonnie for over 66 years. It also seems obvious that Robinson was deeply committed to the Triune God of the Christian religion. He was dedicated to the Bible and was committed to preaching and teaching others how to preach.

At times, Robinson was easy to work with and many people followed his leading. However, at other times, he was unwilling to waver from his beliefs or ideas. This made him sometimes challenging to work with and a difficult leader to follow. Nonetheless, his default often seemed to fall towards extending grace to others because of the grace he believed he received through Jesus Christ.

Guiding question 2. The second guiding question was: How did Haddon Robinson formulate his approach to homiletics and andragogy for seminary students? Since the purpose of this research is to explore Robinson’s influence on the teaching of preaching, it is significant to understand who or what shaped Robinson’s thinking and practice of homiletics and andragogy. Based on his personal interviews and the data collected through interviewing participants, it appears a few key moments in his life shaped his approach to teaching and preaching.

A significant person who influenced Robinson’s andragogy was his Sunday School teacher, John Mygatt. Robinson (2012 October 22) would often say that Mr. Mygatt’s fun, game-like Bible lessons taught him more facts about the Bible than he would learn at Bible College or seminary. It appears that Mr. Mygatt’s lessons were engaging because they were practical, competitive, and experiential. This pragmatic and
hands-on approach to learning seemed to carry over into Robinson’s own teaching as a youth director and eventually as a teacher of preaching at seminary.

Since the days of learning from Mr. Mygatt, Robinson appeared to be committed to reading and learning from the Bible. He seemingly believed in the Bible’s authority at a young age and never wavered from those core beliefs as his views on the Bible continued to solidify while studying at Bob Jones University and Dallas Theological Seminary. However, while the Bible became the foundation of his homiletic, the communication component of his homiletic was not formed until many years later.

A noteworthy, influential moment in Robinson’s development of his homiletical approach came at the University of Illinois while working on his Ph.D. in Communications. During an exercise in a literature class, Robinson became convinced that the proper way to study literature, including the Bible, was to discover the overarching, main idea of the passage. This principle was rarely taught or applied when studying or preaching the Scriptures during his prior studies. He later went on to read H. Grady Davis’ *Design for Preaching*, which addresses a similar issue of deriving a main idea from a passage of Scripture. It seems that Robinson’s Ph.D. studies with Otto Deiter, along with reading Davis’ work, helped formulate the essence of Robinson’s homiletical approach. He then tested this approach in the classroom and it seemed to resonate with students.

**Guiding question 3.** The third guiding question progressing this research was: *How did Haddon Robinson influence the teaching of homiletics in North American evangelical seminaries?* This question rests at the core of the research’s purpose. Prior to my research, it appeared that Robinson was an influencer of the teaching of homiletics in
North American evangelical seminaries, but there was no concrete data to support this claim. However, there seemed to be enough anecdotal evidence from his accomplishments and awards to merit a deeper exploration. The results of my research determines that Robinson has indeed influenced the teaching of preaching in North American evangelical seminaries in three significant ways: through his teaching, his published works, and his mentoring.

Despite his lack of background in educational theory, Robinson’s lectures and classroom exercises were not only well received, but for the most part of his career were sought after by students. In addition, he attracted both male and female, black and white students to his classes, which was countercultural to many other evangelical professors and seminaries. His creative expressions like, “A mist in the pulpit creates a fog in the pew,” or “A sermon should be a bullet and not buckshot,” made his lectures engaging and compelling for many. It appeared that his classes were usually full, and in some cases, students attended the seminary specifically to learn from him. Over the course of his teaching career, it is estimated that between 7,000 – 10,000 students enrolled in at least one of his classes. It is difficult to determine how many of those students are continuing to preach and use the principles they learned from Robinson, but there are few, if any, other evangelical homiletics professors who have personally taught as many students as Robinson.

Robinson was able to continue his reach and influence through his publications and speaking engagements. As mentioned throughout this research, *Biblical Preaching* has sold over 300,000 copies, was consistently acknowledged as a top preaching book by homileticians, and continues to be used in numerous seminary and Bible college
classrooms throughout the world. Robinson’s messages at conferences, churches, and events helped him to reiterate and implement the principles used in his award-winning book. By using language, such as “the Big Idea,” the book seemingly became helpful for beginning preachers to learn the basics of preaching and more experienced preachers to sharpen their preaching skills.

One final area that is worth discussing is Robinson’s influence on others who previously taught or currently teach preaching. Throughout his life, it seems Robinson invested in the next generation of teachers of preaching and helped open many doors for them to have opportunities to preach or teach homiletics. Robinson’s value of relationships and having a positive influence on others also added to his influence on the teaching of preaching. He was able to make many disciples of his approach to preaching through his generosity, mentorship, and loyalty. Many of those followers went on to preach in ministry contexts or teach preaching in seminaries. A few of those people were interviewed for this research, but several more have learned from Robinson and became teachers of preaching. As a result of Robinson’s encouragement and guidance, it appears many evangelical homiletics professors have been influenced by him.

Conclusions

This research centered on Haddon W. Robinson and his influence on the teaching of preaching in North American evangelical seminaries. The data collected helped position Robinson within the context of homiletical approaches and the history of the teaching of preaching in North America. After studying communications at the University of Illinois and reading H. Grady Davis’ *Design for Preaching*, among other publications on homiletics, Robinson developed his “Big Idea” homiletical philosophy.
He was then able to creatively, and persuasively, bring his communication concept to evangelical institutions and communities and influence others on how he believed preaching could be taught. Even though my research unearthed some of Robinson’s influence and how that influence came into being, there were several limitations hindering this study.

**Limitations of study.** Exploring one’s influence on a field, such as homiletics, can be challenging. I believe there are two major limitations to this study: the number of participants and length of engagement in the field, and the ability to explore Robinson’s extensive career in detail with limited archival data available.

**Number of participants and length of engagement.** During the beginning stages of this research I chose five participants to be interviewed based on their contributions to homiletics, approach to preaching, relationship with Robinson, gender, ethnicity, age, institutional affiliation, and accessibility. The aim was to interview people who could give multiple perspectives regarding Robinson’s life, homiletic, andragogy, and influence. The individuals interviewed were able to supply rich and helpful data, but only interviewing five people perhaps limited the amount of data that could have been collected. Throughout Robinson’s career, it became obvious he worked with many people in a variety of locations. The interviewees recommended other possible participants I could also interview in order to learn more about Robinson and his influence for further research. In addition to the limited number of participants interviewed, the length of engagement with each individual could have been increased to possibly collect more data. An extended period of time, as well as a second, or possibly third, interview may have allowed even more data to be collected.
Inability to explore Robinson’s lengthy career in detail. Another limitation to this study was the inability to capture the totality of Robinson’s life and career with greater detail. His interactions with homiletics spanned over six decades and it was challenging to focus on one aspect of his life. As a result of trying to cover Robinson’s entire life, I was only able to explore a few noteworthy aspects at each of the seminaries where Robinson was employed. At times, there seemed to be an endless amount of directions one could go regarding Robinson’s career as a preacher and teacher, but to accomplish my purpose and discover answers to my three guiding questions, I limited my research to what I deemed as key and significant findings.

Drs. Gibson, Mathews, and Sunukjian mentioned Robinson did not keep many paper copies or archival documents. The Robinson Archives at Dallas Theological Seminary and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary were somewhat limited and disorganized. As a result, it was challenging to get a complete scope on who Robinson was as a person and colleague from those archives. The combination of Robinson’s passivity towards documentations and, in particular, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s absence of a full-time archivist, perhaps limited the scope of this research. Thankfully, I was able to make copies of most of the archival material at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary months before a seminary student worker mistakenly threw them away.

Implications of practice for current and future homiletics teachers. The findings from this research hold several implications for current homiletics teachers, as well as those who will be entering the guild. In this section, I offer suggestions that I hope may help others more clearly grasp an aspect of the context and recent history of the
teaching of preaching. The suggestions also highlight ways to become a more effective influencer and teacher of homiletics. First, homileticians should acknowledge the significance of learning from others outside of evangelical circles. Second, it is important for homiletics teachers to publish their ideas and practices of preaching. Third, there is tremendous value of investing and mentoring others.

**Significance of learning from others outside of evangelical homiletics.** Much of Robinson’s homiletic, including his contribution of the “Big Idea” language, was shaped from his education at the University of Illinois and from his readings of other homileticians, such as H. Grady Davis. Robinson was a continual learner and an avid reader of communication and preaching theories. It may be beneficial to the field of homiletics for those who teach preaching to learn from others outside of evangelical homiletics. Learning from scholars in other theological spaces and disciplines may trigger breakthrough concepts and ideas that can be implemented in preaching or curriculum on preaching. For instance, homiletics professors may find revolutionary ideas from experts in the disciples of communication, theology, education, leadership, or ancient literature, among others.

**Importance of publishing.** When Robinson published his thoughts on preaching, he scaled his influence from only those who heard his lectures to thousands who wanted to learn more about preaching. In addition, he assisted other homiletics professors with criteria and a formula to teach preaching. Those who teach preaching, or will teach preaching, have the potential to influence many others by publishing their thoughts and ideas. Publishing enables homileticians to learn from one another and collaborate for more effective preaching and teaching practices. Places to begin publishing would be *The
Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society and The Journal of the Academy of Homiletics as well as popular magazines among pastors and preachers like Preaching and Preaching Today.

**Value of mentoring others.** Robinson was purposeful in seeing potential in young homileticians and helped them to advance their careers. His mentorship and friendship to several men and women continue to influence the field of homiletics even after his death. It would benefit current and future homiletics professors to also invest in young homileticians so the field can continue to strengthen and grow. Passing the knowledge and wisdom of homiletics from one generation to the next will aid in the continuation and sharpening of the discipline. It is also worth noting that Robinson not only mentored people who are considered in the majority, but also mentored minorities in evangelical homiletics like black preachers and female preachers. He modeled for current and future homileticians the importance of highlighting diverse cultures, opinions, and voices.

**Suggestions**

Exploring Haddon Robinson’s life and influence, along with interviewing active homiletics professors from across the United States, was an eye-opening and learning experience. If a researcher were to do similar research in the future, here are a couple recommendations that may assist him or her to gather more data and better analysis.

First, I recommend interviewing participants face-to-face; however, a second or third interview via technology might be helpful in gathering more data at a deeper level. If I were to do this research again, I would set up a supplemental interview approximately a week or two after the face-to-face interview to ask additional questions and clarify previous responses. Second, one might consider utilizing more of Robinson’s sermons to
analyze for additional themes. Although I listened to dozens of his sermons repeatedly throughout the research process, I recommend including them in the data to discover more about him and his approach to preaching.

**Areas for further research.** The Robinson archives, publications, and interviews provided rich and meaningful data in answering the guiding questions. In addition, this research becomes the most expansive exploration on the person of Haddon Robinson. Nonetheless, additional areas were identified for possible further research.

Due to time and financial constraints, I was unable to visit the archives at Denver Seminary. It may be beneficial for future researchers to explore Robinson’s impact on the school outside of the teaching of preaching. In addition, further research could be done exploring Robinson’s explicit influence at each of his previous theological institutions. Discovering his impact is also beneficial for each educational institution’s history.

To discover Robinson’s life in greater detail, further research can be conducted by interviewing his family, specifically his daughter and son. Both children spoke at their father’s memorial service and seemingly adored their dad. It appears he influenced both of their careers, as his daughter is a motivational speaker and his son is a pastor/preacher at a church in New York. Their insights into who he was may lead to new findings that help get a more complete picture of Robinson and his influence.

Along with Robinson’s family, many more homileticians could be interviewed to collect more data. Further research could be conducted by interviewing past colleagues and administrators who worked with him. His former students who are currently pastors could also be interviewed or surveyed to determine if they still practice Big Idea preaching. In addition, parishioners who did not know Robinson could be interviewed or
surveyed to see if their pastor implements Robinson’s principles and preaching philosophy in his or her sermons.

One of Robinson’s main reasons for influence was due to the success of his textbook, *Biblical Preaching*. Further research could trace other textbooks during a similar time to determine why Robinson’s book was specifically unique. In addition, continually surveying preaching professors regarding the most influential preaching books may continue to shed light on Robinson’s continued relevance within the field.

**Final Reflections**

I began teaching preaching to undergraduate students during the fall of 2011. While I enjoyed studying the subject, I never envisioned myself teaching others the art and craft of preparing and preaching sermons. During the first year of teaching, I felt an enormous responsibility to effectively prepare my students to preach messages that were biblical, engaging, and relevant. I returned to the books and notes from my education and none were more helpful than Robinson’s, *Biblical Preaching*. Like many homiletics professors before me, I used it as a main textbook and taught the 10 steps laid out in the book. As best as I could tell, students were learning the basics of preaching which helped prepare some of them for their future careers in ministry.

Midway through my Ph.D. program, I had a meaningful conversation with Dr. Josh Armstrong during a session break at a leadership symposium. After I mentioned my passions, interests, and struggle of discovering a dissertation topic, he recommended I research the influence of a single preacher or homiletician. It was a light bulb moment for me, because I quickly connected his works to what I was experiencing in my classrooms. As I looked deeper into what had been written on Robinson, I discovered that many
people credited him with being a monumental figure within evangelical homiletics, but very little research was done supporting or unpacking their claims. I was compelled to learn more about him and why he was seemingly influential. Here are some of my final reflections on the entire process of researching Haddon Robinson and his influence.

First, listening to people make meaning of their passions and relationships with others is significant. The opportunity to engage with current homileticians on their views of preaching, teaching, and Haddon Robinson was a privilege. I was enlightened by their thoughts and encouraged by their words. Their narratives and experiences was a wealth of information I will draw upon throughout my life.

Second, Robinson made several crucial decisions throughout his life, and those decisions made a great impact on him as well as those around him. A saying Robinson often repeated was, “In life you make decisions, and your decisions make you.” As I reflect on my own life and ponder the many decisions I face in my future, I will remember his words of wisdom. Life is full of decisions and those decisions can shape or alter one’s life, as well as the lives of others.

Robinson’s career and influence was centered on the premise to preach the Big Idea. It is possible one could say that the Big Idea for Robinson’s life was to preach the Big Idea. Throughout his career, he taught about sermon delivery, application, illustrations, and more, but he usually emphasized preaching the Big Idea. Therefore, my final reflection from this research is to have a Big Idea for life. The world often offers individuals many paths, people, and projects to get involved with, but sometimes getting overly involved can stretch one’s life too thin. There is beauty in simplicity. As I reflect
on this research, Robinson’s life, and his teachings, my challenge is to find the Big Idea for my life and to keep it the Big Idea. I am on that quest and I hope you are on one too.
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Resident faculty increases to 17 members with addition of four instructors this fall.


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Wilbur, E. M. (1914). *The Pacific Unitarian school for the ministry, Berkeley, California: A record of ten years' work 1904-1914*. Berkeley, CA: Publisher

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

Name Location Date Start Time End Time

- Please state who you are and what you do?
- Why do you think preaching matters?
- What do you enjoy most about preaching? about teaching preaching?
- When you teach preaching, what are the main components you stress and hope your students walk away with by the end of their studies?
- Who is Haddon Robinson to you? What comes to your mind when you hear the name Haddon Robinson?
  - Follow up with clarification. Why does that come to your mind first?
- How do you think Robinson’s homiletic is different or similar to your homiletic?
- How did you formulate your approach to preaching and the teaching of preaching?
- Do you use any aspects of Robinson’s philosophy of preaching in your classroom? If not, why? If yes, which ones and why? How important are those aspects to one’s overall understanding of teaching preaching?
- As a professor of preaching, how do you think Haddon Robinson has influenced, specifically, the teaching of preaching over the past fifty years?
- Has Haddon Robinson influenced you? In what way?
- What will you always remember about Haddon Robinson? Why? Are there any other memories about Haddon Robinson that you believe are helpful for this study?
- What are the limitations to Robinson’s contributions?
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Project: The Influence of Dr. Haddon W. Robinson on the Teaching of Preaching in North American Evangelical Seminaries

Principal Investigator: Chris Rappazini, PhD Candidate, chrisrappazini@gmail.com, 850-225-7611, Gonzaga University

Other Investigators: None

Advisor or Sponsor Information: Dr. JoAnn Babour, PhD Dissertation Chair, Gonzaga University

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this hermeneutical and phenomenological study is to explore Haddon Robinson, his homiletic, and his andragogy to understand his influence on the teaching of homiletics in North American evangelical seminaries.

Five (5) people will take part in this research.

PROCEDURES

Each interview will take place at the interviewees home, office, or an alternative place of their choosing. The interviews will consist of a series of open-ended questions that revolve around my guiding questions. I will have an interview guide but will at times deviate from it when needed. The interview will be recorded, transcribed, and analyzed.

TIME TO PARTICIPATE

If you agree to be in this study, the interview will last between one (1) to two (2) hours.

DISCOMFORTS AND RISKS

There are no known risks associated with this research. It is the researcher’s prerogative to not harm any participants in this study and to create a safe and trusting environment.
POTENTIAL BENEFITS
1) Potential benefits to the participant:

There are no known potential benefits to the participants other than the satisfaction of helping the researcher in this endeavor.

2) Potential benefits to others:

Future readers of this study will benefit from their wisdom and contribution to the history of the teaching of preaching.

COSTS FOR PARTICIPATION
Costs: None

Treatment and compensation for injury: None

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION
You will not be paid for being in this research study.

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY
Your research records that are reviewed, stored, and analyzed will be kept in a secured area in and will be stored on the researcher’s laptop and external hard drive. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

We will keep your participation in this research study confidential to the extent we are able. However, it is possible that the Gonzaga Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) may inspect and copy research records.

STUDY WITHDRAWAL
If you choose to participate, you are free to withdraw your permission for the use and sharing of your information at any time. You must do this in writing. Write to Chris Rappazini and let him know that you are withdrawing from the research study. His email address is chrisrappazini@gmail.com

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
You do not have to participate in this research. If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop at any time. If you decide not to participate or if you decide to stop taking part in the research at a later date, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS
You have the right to ask any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, complaints or concerns or believe you may have developed an injury related to this research, contact Chris Rappazini at (850) 225-7611.

For more information about participation in a research study and about the Institutional Review Board (IRB), a group of people who review the research to protect your rights, please contact the Gonzaga IRB at IRB@gonzaga.edu.

**SIGNATURE AND CONSENT/PERMISSION TO BE IN THE RESEARCH**

Your signature below means that you have received this information, have asked the questions you currently have about the research and those questions have been answered. You will receive a copy of the signed and dated form to keep for future reference.

By signing this consent form, you indicate that you are voluntarily choosing to take part in this research.

___________________________  __________  __________________________
Signature of Subject          Date              Printed Name

___________________________  __________  __________________________
Signature of Principal Investigator Date              Printed Name

Your signature below means that you have explained the research to the subject and have answered any questions he/she has about the research.