

# Schleiermacher as preacher: A contemporary South African perspective

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**Dates:**

Received: 16 May 2019

Accepted: 01 Aug. 2019

Published: 30 Oct. 2019

**How to cite this article:**

Laubscher, M., 2019, 'Schleiermacher as preacher: A contemporary South African perspective', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75(4), a5555. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i4.5555>

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South African homiletics is in a crisis and it has – contrary to our expectation – nothing to do with either the presence or the influence of the great 19th-century theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher. In fact, this article shows that his absence stretches even deeper and wider than is often assumed. What makes this state in scholarship even more strange and remarkable is that the practice of preaching played an immense and crucial role in Schleiermacher's own life and theology. By coming to know how this famous theologian as a preacher embodied the blending of different voices – preacher, church, Scripture and the Triune God – into the mystery of the one living voice of the gospel that speaks to us in the preaching event, this article tries to show why it is necessary and relevant to engage with Schleiermacher as a preacher who primarily thought about himself as a servant of the Word. Reading one of his sermons on sermons may stimulate theological thought beyond the borders and confinements of discipline and context.

**Keywords:** Schleiermacher; Theology; Preaching; Homiletics; South Africa.

## Introducing Schleiermacher to South African homiletics

In most of the circles within Reformed theology and churches in South Africa, preaching is often described as being in some kind of state of emergency. There are numerous examples to cite in this regard. Bethel Müller (2011:338), in what was probably one of his last academic writings, mentions that they (Coenie Burger, Dirkie Smit and himself) started in the mid-1970s with the influential and well-read series *Woord teen die Lig*, because they experienced such an emergency in preaching back then. Tellingly, however, is that he thinks that, despite their influence and good work done in and through this series, we are again there (or probably still) there! This line of thought also resonates very strongly in the work of Johan Cilliers (cf. 1994, 1996, 2000, 2006, 2010:72; Laubscher & Cilliers 2018:8) when he continues to comment on not only the similarity between the *volks* preaching in the Dutch Reformed Church during the years of apartheid (1960–1980) and the current state of preaching but also how much of the moralism and pietism back then is still present in the kind of religious activism heard in many sermons nowadays. This is similar to the recently voiced critique against a reductionist approach to prophetic preaching as mere sociopolitical commentary on the events of the day, contradicting in the process much of the heart of what preaching, especially prophetic preaching, – if we need to name it like this – is all about (cf. Laubscher 2017).

Part of this latent crisis concerning the state of Reformed preaching has also to do with the state of Reformed worship in this context. An important work that tried to address the need for renewal in this tradition and context is *Ontdekkings in erediens* (cf. Wepener & Van der Merwe 2009). In one of the first essays, Coenie Burger (2009:16–17) mentions that many of the problems we are experiencing concerning the state of liturgical renewal and quality of worship in our churches have to do with our low concern with and expectation of the service itself. We do not think 'anything odd will happen in this hour of utterance' (Brueggemann 2010:4), or in the words of Annie Dillard (1982:40), '[d]oes anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blindly invoke?' A deep-seated irony, however, is also present in *Ontdekkings in die erediens* because it argues for a rediscovery of the worship service without a clear focus on preaching itself. The Reformed tradition in South Africa is indeed in need of such rediscovery of worship's roots in general and the broadening of their liturgical imagination (cf. Cilliers 1998:60–90, 2012). However, to argue that case without a clear antenna for preaching itself illustrates perhaps how real and deep our actual crisis in preaching is. Among the 16 different chapters pertaining to the renewal of a worship tradition in this context, there is in the outline and structure of the book and argument strangely enough no reference to preaching's role and presence in all of this. Either we do not need to rediscover preaching, because we 'have it already' (which is, in itself, very revealing and

**Note:** Engaging Schleiermacher today: South African perspectives, sub-edited by Rian Venter (University of the Free State).

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problematic), or we have, in fact, given up hope and belief that preaching can renew our worship. In short, we have a crisis concerning the state of preaching (and worship!) in many of (at least) the Reformed churches in South Africa, and this has nothing to do with either the presence or the influence of Schleiermacher's theology or preaching in our history!

The story concerning Schleiermacher's 'presence' in South African homiletics of the past few decades is thus not too long and complicated. I could find only one article (Pieterse 2005) in which Schleiermacher is discussed, and then only as a subsection among a few others (such as Barth; always Barth!) and then with typical neo-orthodox interpretations and clichés (of which there is a great deal in secondary literature; but, importantly, not all!). The state of South African homiletical scholarship is not unique in this regard, because there is hardly anything (cf. Wilson 2018:152, 189) or anything at all in classic and emerging English textbooks of the last few decades of which I am aware that somehow recognise and/or engage with Schleiermacher (cf. among others, Brown & Powery 2016; Brownlee 2018; Buttrick 1987; Cilliers 2004; Craddock 2010; Long 2005; Long & Tubbs Tisdale 2008; and Travis 2014, to name a few). Most of them do not deal too much with theologians, and if they do, it is usually with 20th-century giants such as Barth, Van Ruler, Tillich and Moltmann. If their interest in theologians goes back earlier, then it is predominantly with Reformers such as Luther and Calvin (cf. Cilliers 2004, who is fond of referencing both, but especially Luther). In a sense, this is not strange, because even in Edward's large and comprehensive work, *A History of Preaching*, there is (almost) nothing on Schleiermacher's influence as a preacher, theologian or scholar. Fortunately, there is an exception or two in the English literature concerning the importance of Schleiermacher's theology for preaching – or rather, better put, Schleiermacher's sermons and preaching *for* (his) theology – to be discussed shortly.

For now, by way of introduction, we should be compelled not to settle for this state of affairs, and try to address this gap in knowledge in our preaching by introducing a significant theologian such as Schleiermacher who may not only help us with more (of his) theology in our preaching but also how we can continue to preach in order to deepen our theology and academic knowledge. Interestingly enough, most of the clues and motivation found in proposing this comes from the circles of some eminent Barth scholars such as Bruce L. McCormack and Paul T. Nimmo. McCormack (2015) makes a significant and revealing comment in this regard:

To those of us who are inclined to think it is important to know Karl Barth, I would say: yes, it is important to know Karl Barth. But it is also important to know what Barth knew. And if you are going to know what Barth knew, then you must begin, as he did, with Schleiermacher. Those who condemn Schleiermacher out of hand do not carry in themselves the spirit of Karl Barth. And what they offer on the level of dogmatic theology is but the outward shell of Barth's teaching, a formalization which has little or no life. May God save us from ever becoming 'Barthians' in this sense! (p. 179)

It is neither surprising nor new to find crucial insights such as these in McCormack's work. Elsewhere and earlier, McCormack (2008:64) argued convincingly in an important article with a revealing title, 'What has Basel to do with Berlin? Continuities in the theologies of Barth and Schleiermacher', that Barth was, in fact, turning against a form of Schleiermacherianism (those of Troeltsch and Wobberman) rather than against Schleiermacher himself. According to McCormack, Barth is a more genuine heir of Schleiermacher than was Troeltsch; of course, not of consciousness, but of being critical (both claiming that we as human beings cannot lay hold on God), and that dogmatics is done within and for the church (meaning always done within communion) (McCormack 2008:81).

In short, there is more than enough reason to suggest that we introduce Schleiermacher as an important theological resource to address some of the current crises experienced within our study of homiletics and the practice of preaching in South Africa at present. It is no innocent remark or coincidence that Schleiermacher saw himself primarily as a preacher, as a *servant of the Word* (De Vries 1987).

## On Schleiermacher's preaching life

In a short, but very insightful, introduction to a collection of Schleiermacher's sermons, Dawn De Vries shares numerous important biographical details concerning his preaching life. What makes it extremely interesting and revealing is to note what is emphasised, constructed and shared, as well as ignored, left out or just assumed. If preaching consists of the blending of four voices (Cilliers 2004:32), then this short introduction to the preaching life of Schleiermacher shares a great deal about the voice of the *preacher* and the voice of the *context and/or church*. From the biographical introduction and details, however, we hear interestingly enough not a great deal about the voice of *God* and the *Bible*. Though in itself it may sound problematic, we must caution against too hastily jumping to a conclusion. Is the real test not listening to the actual sermon? Of course, but just as there are certain things we can only hear in the sermon, so too there are certain things we can only hear and discover within the biographical details of a preaching life.

Firstly, on the voice of the preacher, which is the last of the four voices in Cilliers' theory, it is unsurprisingly quite upfront and significant in the story of Schleiermacher as preacher. Theodore Vial (2013), for instance, starts his study on Schleiermacher with a reference to an important comment Wilhelm Dilthey made in his biography on Schleiermacher, namely, that:

[T]he philosophy of Kant can be completely understood without close attention to his person and his life; Schleiermacher's significance, his world-view, and his work requires a biographical presentation for a fundamental understanding. (p. 4)

For our purposes, it is most fascinating to know that Schleiermacher never wrote out a sermon beforehand, not

because of laziness, lack of preparation or even fear, but as a matter of principle (De Vries 1987:3). Schleiermacher's concern was with the power of the moment and the fullness of heart. He perfected this approach to the point of finality, whereby he was able to preach without even writing out the introduction. Schleiermacher states: 'I cannot begin to write out a sermon before I have thought it through fully down to the minutest details' (De Vries 1987:4). In fact, when his father asked for some of his sermons, he was slightly embarrassed to say that he had no text to show but also assured his father that he worked much harder on these sermons than those of his earlier years when he used to send his sermons to his father.

To understand this impulse for preaching even better, Vial (2013:16) mentions that, although Schleiermacher was unhappy during his stay in Stolp, thinking the wider world had forgotten him, he still hesitated to accept a position to join the faculty at the University of Würzburg because 'he did not want to take a position that did not include preaching responsibilities', and when he eventually went to Berlin, King Friedrich Wilhelm III created a position for him in the Theology Faculty at the University of Halle 'and combined this position with the post of University preacher'.

There are numerous things of note in this specific impulse and methodology of Schleiermacher, but at least for now, it raises the most pressing question: So, if he increasingly succeeded in not writing out his sermons in advance, how will we read his sermons? How is it then possible that almost a third of Schleiermacher's theological legacy or writings consists of his sermons? According to De Vries (1987:5), the answer is easy; he wrote the sermon out after the service or some listeners transcribed it afterwards and, with his final editing and permission, it was published. There are also numerous sermons that have been published without his permission, posthumously, I assume. In short, for now at least, it is important to note *where*, *what* and *who* the actual sermon for Schleiermacher was, namely, not the words on a piece of paper, or the manuscript in front of the preacher, but rather, as we would say nowadays, the performance and embodiment of the Word event.

This reminds us of a good line in Thomas Long's (2005:225) chapter on 'From desk to pulpit' that says, '[a] "written sermon" is a contradiction in terms'. According to Long, a sermon is, by definition, a spoken event.

The rhetoric of the one differs remarkably from the other. Schleiermacher's thought, in this instance, not only helps us understand this better but also deepens and contributes to the shift from mere delivery of the sermon to actual performance and embodiment of the Word. Jana Childers (2008:213–215) wrote an excellent introduction on the chapter dealing specifically with the subject of 'the preacher' in the *New Interpreters Handbook of Preaching*, and then explicitly explains this profound shift that occurred in homiletics during the latter part of the 20th century to think more in

terms of 'performance' than mere 'delivery' of the sermon. In comparison to the older and classic textbooks (cf. Craddock 2010:213–222), this shift in language (and actual performance) is well reflected in more recent textbooks (cf. Brown & Powery 2016:183–207).

Secondly, in terms of the context, he also felt right from the start the need to tailor his preaching to the capacity of his listeners (De Vries 1987:2). The urge to preach and to be 'a servant of the Word' was not only confirmed by Schleiermacher's urge, because as Vial (2013:23) correctly indicated, the reason why 20 000 Berliners turned out for his funeral was because of the affection these listeners drew from Schleiermacher's preaching. Thus, it is not surprising that his most widely used texts in his lifetime were the hymnal he edited and his published sermons. This also tells remarkably of a man who could freely move between various contexts. For instance, at the time when he wrote *On Religion* and being among the intellectual elite and despisers of the church in Berlin, he also preached to his parish, which mostly consisted of poor and less educated people (De Vries 1987:2). Schleiermacher moved easily between these two worlds. I sense that it was especially his appreciation for the particulars of the context in front of him – or to phrase it even better, the context of which he felt truly being part of, which resulted in viewing those who gathered as not in need of conversion, but, with the preacher (himself included), as belonging to the society of the pious (De Vries 1987:6).

This recalls what has almost become classic in the way in which Thomas Long starts his influential textbook on preaching by referring to the question of finding the right entrance to the pulpit. Long (2005:1–3) refers to the work of Moltmann in capturing this move 'from pew to pulpit', but he could also easily have drawn from Schleiermacher's thought in this regard. When Long mentions that '[r]egardless of where the worship leaders emerge physically and architecturally, theologically they come from *within* the community of faith and not to it from the outside', then the greatest theologian of the 19th century could indeed strengthen his argument even further. The same goes for Cilliers (2004:130ff) who draws from Luther in explaining to students the constituting role of the congregation in preaching, and especially on how important it is that concurrence with the congregation occurs in the process of preparing a sermon. In short, from Schleiermacher's theology and practice of preaching, we also learn what others taught before and after him.

The office of the preacher belongs to and came from the congregation. The preacher is the congregation's representative and will, therefore, always use language in terms of the life they share as believers. As De Vries (1987:10) helpfully indicates in this regard, Schleiermacher is adamant that preachers should be free to use non-theological language, in other words, as servants of the Word, free not to burden their sermons with technical terms and jargon for their listeners.

In summary, from these few biographical details, under two of the four essential rubrics of basic preaching theory, we sense a very particular order and place that preaching as such holds in Schleiermacher's life and theology. In terms of how he heard and read the Bible and moreover heard and voiced the voice of God, we need to proceed to one of his numerous sermons. Even Barth (1982:3–134) saw how important his sermons were for his theology. Barth may have been obsessed with Schleiermacher and wrong in certain regards, with some tedious readings, for instance, from these Schleiermacher sermons, realising it only too late. At least he got it right in 1923/1924 by starting to read Schleiermacher's sermons as the heart of his theology. This is what we need to do now.

## Reading anew one of Schleiermacher's sermons

The sermon chosen is probably not the most famous, controversial or influential of Schleiermacher's sermons but surely the most relevant and interesting one for our purposes. Although Vial (2013:20) opines that Schleiermacher's well-known 'Sermon at Nathanael's grave' is unbearably moving and 'an accessible point of entry to some key aspects of his theology', the suggestion is rather that, if we are truly interested in learning from Schleiermacher *as preacher*, sharing this impulse and urge *to preach in order for theology to follow*, discovering rather how he is *more in than out of line* with the Reformed tradition, then we should read what Dawn De Vries (1987:18) calls Schleiermacher's 'sermon about sermons'. This sermon on Luke (2:41–49), entitled 'Christ in the temple', is one of the 15 sermons collected by De Vries, profoundly longer in comparison to some of the others, as well as from his later sermons, in other words not prior to 1829.

Schleiermacher (1987:117) starts the sermon, as he starts most of his sermons in this collection, with 'Dear friends in Christ!' In the introduction, he makes much of the fact that this is the last narrative from the Redeemer's childhood and youth. In a telling sentence, he states: '[W]e cannot picture to ourselves the later picture period unless the earlier preceded' (Schleiermacher 1987:117). He says this because he wants to stress that 'God ordained that he should be like us in that his spiritual powers developed only gradually' (Schleiermacher 1987:118). Just as Jesus longed to be in his Father's house, so too 'we in our churches are prompted to do so by the same longing that grasped the Redeemer in the halls of the temple back then' (Schleiermacher 1987:118). His longing is our 'constant need', 'useful for our whole life' (Schleiermacher 1987:118). Schleiermacher differentiates between two ideas, namely, our longing for where Jesus 'lingered with great enthusiasm' and our longing to engage in questions and answers as Jesus did (Schleiermacher 1987:118).

Concerning the first (Jesus' longing to sit there in the temple, so much so that he even misses his parents' departure), Schleiermacher immediately contrasts this kind of behaviour

with those who abandon or disregard the Christian gatherings (Schleiermacher 1987:119). He puts it bluntly to 'those who think they can achieve the same goal better and more surely ... [well] they should see themselves mirrored in our Redeemer's example' (Schleiermacher 1987:119). If anyone had the right to do so, then surely it was Jesus, but he did not! He says: '[H]e too felt subject to the general law ... the human soul attains them only through communication and stimulation in fellowship with others' (Schleiermacher 1987:119). The Redeemer himself was subject to this, how could any of us try to evade it? (Schleiermacher 1987:120). In fact: 'All perfect development of Christian doctrine, all insight into the correct form of Christian life originated, for the most part, in these our Christian gatherings ...' (Schleiermacher 1987:120).

A few pages on, in a beautiful paragraph, we hear (Schleiermacher 1987):

Faith comes from preaching (Rm 10:17) ... preaching is not silent reading, not individual contemplation, not the tedious and the strained clinging of the eyes to the written letter. It is, rather, the moving power of living speech. This is the original form of the divine Word; the written letter is only a substitute, inadequate in itself, for living speech ... And as the Word made flesh, the Redeemer of the word was not a writer, but one who moved human beings with his living speech ... Who, then, could read scripture and not be forced to admit that the written letter constantly needs to be refreshed by living speech and is merely a more or less weak expression of it? (pp. 122–123)

He works this point endlessly, addressing it from various sides (Schleiermacher 1987):

Thus may we all regard it an important and holy calling to be where the Redeemer was so eager and happy to be: the place where, through lively communication and common reflection on God's Word, his spirit would be nourished and enriched. (p. 124)

Schleiermacher brings this first section to a close when he radicalises the point even further, namely, that we should not fail to notice the identity of the people at whose feet Jesus sat as an attentive listener (1987:124). Jesus, knowing already who these teachers were (Schleiermacher 1987):

[H]ad so little regarded his presence there as something in itself fruitless and indifferent that he did not even seize the most natural opportunity to leave when he could have been among the first of his parents' traveling companions. (p. 125)

In summary (Schleiermacher 1987):

The beauty of Christ's church consists in the fact that, in the fellowship of believers, all these colours are harmoniously united, all the diverse human views and representation of the one salvation gently flow together. (p. 127)

Concerning the second remark (Jesus not only content to sit there, but actively partaking by asking and answering questions), Schleiermacher starts by asking: 'But what is the

essence of devoting oneself to questioning and answering?’ (1987:127). He answers his question a few pages on with (Schleiermacher 1987):

We must bear in mind that even Christ would not have spoken against the Pharisees so harshly and with such assurance, if he had not come to know them as nearly as possible through questions and answers. (p. 129)

The value of excellence in speech, which was so important for Schleiermacher, is even now in this point relativised with a new twist towards the end: ‘[T]his skill never so captivated and overwhelmed him that he was struck dumb by it and forgot his questioning and answering’ (Schleiermacher 1987:132). Furthermore (Schleiermacher 1987):

[S]peech is indispensable, because only through it do we make ourselves clear, and only through proper use of speech does our common public worship become a reasonable service ... Eloquence should not glitter for its own sake in the church. (p. 133)

Schleiermacher (1987) elaborates on this a great deal and then qualifies the ‘eloquence’ of the spoken word by the living and speaking Word itself:

If someone lets himself become so captivated by eloquence that he neglects completely the substance of the Word, he would be better off hearing a sermon from an unadorned speaker, so that perhaps he would hear the truth. (p. 133)

He concludes the sermon – of almost 20 pages – with an utter service to the Word (Schleiermacher 1987):

Our true need is always this: that the understanding of God’s inexhaustible Word be increasingly opened to us ... If we think that we cannot satisfy this need in a place where the beauty and outward ornamentation of speech is missing, then we are valuing something else, something less important, and not the one thing necessary. (p. 134)

Stated differently, we should not be so captivated by these outward excellences that we forget to go more deeply into the meaning of speech that seeks to expound God’s Word to us, and grow in wisdom as we grow older, just like our Redeemer did. In summary (Schleiermacher 1987):

Everything I have said at our text’s instigation rests on the fact that all blessings in our gatherings proceed from the power of God’s Word, but also that this power is bound quite essentially to the fellowship of believers. (p. 134)

And as a postscript to the sermon, he states (Schleiermacher 1987):

[A]llow me to add just one more thing ... it is not only the hearers who are stimulated and edified, but also the one who speaks ... we preachers are also awakened and grasped by the power of fellowship ... we received a renewed and refreshed impression of your longing for the Word of God.... (p. 134)

United in the common life of the church, longing for the fellowship, listening to the Word, with questioning and answering, the preacher and the hearers will grow together,

as did the boy Jesus, in wisdom and grace before God and men (Schleiermacher 1987:135).

What a beautiful sermon and entry point into Schleiermacher’s theology.

## Discerning Schleiermacher’s theology of preaching

It is interesting to note, in the above-summarised sermon, how much of what we encountered under the biographical details is not only confirmed in and through this sermon but also put into a particular perspective with some significant qualifications. The importance of the church, especially the worship service with the gathering of the believers and the act of preaching, comes so much to the fore that there can be no doubt as to the ecclesial and devotional character of his work. In recent years, commentators have considerably stressed and underlined both these ideas (McCormack 2008:80; Nimmo 2016:ix). We still need to briefly mention a word or two about the way in which Schleiermacher deals with listening to the voice of the Scripture, and thus also inevitably about how God is present and speaking in worship and preaching.

In terms of the doctrine of Scripture in this sermon, it is clear that Scripture is not the foundation for faith in Schleiermacher’s theology (Nimmo 2015:72). The authority of Scripture is rather the result, fruit and consequence of faith. That Scripture contains any normative status that presupposes clearly the reality of faith in this sermon (and his theology). Without faith – and even the presence of the faithful – there can be no actual ascription to the authority of Scripture. In fact, as Nimmo (2015:73) argues, there is for Schleiermacher, ‘a consequent rejection of any dichotomy between theology based on Scripture and a theology based on experience’.

An insightful distinction in this regard, upon which Nimmo (2015:78–79) further elaborates, is between the *mystical, magical and empirical* depictions of Scripture, of which the last two are rejected. An ‘empirical’ view would be in the sense that Scripture is regarded as a moral handbook for teaching merely ethical perfection and should be rejected. The ‘magical’ view, on the other hand, would hold that Scripture is in itself a divine means and guarantee of redemption; this should also be rejected, as redemption could function independently of the founding and functioning of the community and its devotional life. Moving to what the ‘mystical’ view of Scripture would entail, we hear the following: Scripture is not the Word of God *per se*, but rather a *witness* to Jesus Christ. Proceeding with McCormack (2008) and Nimmo’s (2015) readings, the continuity, in this instance, between Barth and Schleiermacher is striking. The idea that Scripture is limited to the function of witness parallels Schleiermacher’s understanding of God as the Other, as the feeling of absolute

dependence would mean that God is in no way a *given* to us. Scripture is *witness*, meaning (Nimmo 2015):

It is not in itself the presence of God or God's Word: but it is the text of a community, to the proclamation of which the community is both passively and actively drawn. (p. 80)

Still, as we came to know, Scripture has a real theological and chronological primacy in Schleiermacher's thought, but only as a means and vehicle pointing beyond itself without ever being that end automatically. Thus, the importance and even mystery in preaching's witness as it is called to point away from itself to the witness of both the written and incarnated Word.

Closely related to the above is the crucial question as to how the voice of Christ is present, re-presented and/or mediated in and through the preaching event of the church. DeVries (1996) has done some helpful work in this regard. Although Richard Muller (1997:153–157) was critical and dismissive of her argument on the sacramental nature of Reformed preaching with Schleiermacher as heir in this regard, other critics such as McCormack (1998:482–485) appreciate and endorse her argument. In light of the above sermon, it appears that DeVries' (1996) basic argument is unto something and in the right direction when she states:

While the 'christomorphic' [Niebuhr] character of Schleiermacher's theology has been generally recognized, few interpreters have gone the next step to acknowledge that Schleiermacher's Christology has its source in the proclamation of Christ ... The preacher's words 'embody' the Word; that is, preaching becomes the continuing locus for the ongoing redemptive work of Christ. (p. 9)

This by no means resolves the matter completely, nor does it intend to be the last and final word spoken on Schleiermacher's theology of preaching, but at least it urges us to rethink whether we can truly learn from Schleiermacher as we respond to the crisis within our South African study and practice of preaching.

## Continuing with Schleiermacher's significance for homiletics in South Africa

In Schleiermacher, we surely find a theologian, and a theological resource, that is perhaps more *in* than *out* of line with tradition before and after him. His presence in our context and tradition is perhaps not so much a question for theology and academy as such, but rather, interestingly enough, for preachers and the church. In fact, Schleiermacher's significance for us is how he can help us prevent these two worlds of preaching and theology, homiletics and doctrine, practical theology and systematic theology, not to become estranged from each other. In this instance, the sweet irony towards the plea for continuance with Schleiermacher is that an influential and complicated theologian such as Schleiermacher (at first) may not, in fact, want to make us better (academic) theologians, but it is the preachers who constantly check and see whether our

theology is still in line with our theological work performed in and through the preaching event of the church. As a second-order activity, theology surely needs to follow and be informed from the first-order work conducted in the (theological) act of being a preacher. David Lose (2008) formulates this well:

From Martin Luther to Oscar Romero, theologians have discovered that their sermons do not simply or even primarily reflect their theology, but that their theology often must catch up with their experiences of preaching and parish ministry so as to describe what they have learned and preached in the pulpit. (p. 488)

To this we can surely add – especially in current South African homiletics – the name of the great 19th-century theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher, a preacher who was as theologian *a servant of the Word*.

## Acknowledgements

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

## Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

## Author's contributions

M.L. is the sole author of this research article.

## Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for a research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

## Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

## Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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