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**Sermon Feedback as Facework:
Task and Identity Goals in Mentoring Homiletical Theologians**

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Abstract: *The problem of in-class sermon feedback has vexed the teaching and learning of preaching for some time. For too long, however, the problem has been understood in more or less personal terms insofar as it tries to facilitate an environment where task mastery becomes psychologically feasible for students in a stressful feedback situation. This article argues that the problem of sermon feedback is actually more complex in that it is also tied to privilege, power dynamics, and the multiple identities of the pluralistic classroom and cultural identities in churches. The use of facework theory in communication studies offers an alternative by placing task mastery in relation to the tending to identities in the room. Here the work of Jeff Kerssen-Griep et al. posits a compelling vision for dealing with an analogous face-threatening situation of speech feedback in the college classroom that includes both positive (belonging, competency) and negative (autonomy) facework and thus locates task mastery in relation to tending to identities in a more self-reflective manner. In the process, a more mentoring-type relation between teacher and student is envisioned, one that might even build on Dale Andrews' notion of apprenticeship in preaching education. The article concludes with homiletical-theological reflections about the relationship of face/Face and promise in reflecting on gospel in the task of teaching and learning preaching.*

Introduction: Sermon Feedback, Privilege, and the Promise of Facework

The preaching classroom can be a fraught context for teaching and learning. Nowhere is this felt more deeply than in the occasion for receiving and giving sermon feedback in class. Students worry that feedback on their work may cause them to question their own sense of vocation or dismiss their cultural identity and that of their communities of faith. Yet as difficult as sermon feedback can be, it is just as hard to imagine a ministry student who does not want to do well in preaching class. Teachers of preaching want to see students benefit and grow in their learning, which means offering both support and accountability in any sermon feedback process. As difficult as sermon feedback seems to teachers, it is hard to imagine a preaching teacher who does not want students as adult learners to become more self-assured preachers of gospel.

The difficulty about feedback in the preaching classroom is only compounded by issues of power. Although ministry students over the last several years have become more and more diverse, teachers of preaching still skew disproportionately white, male, and cisgender. As the beneficiaries of cultural privilege, we (and here I specifically mean people like me) do not often possess sufficient skill in cultural competency, an ability to deal with people effectively across cultural frames. This lack becomes all the more pronounced when the teaching of preaching moves back and forth across diverse practices and theological norms, which sometimes leads teachers of privilege to lift a merely proximate practice to ultimate theological status in the name of task-related goals. By itself, this struggle might be only a temporary problem, since classes

generally last just one semester! That said, teachers embodying varying degrees of privilege will want to account for how well an attention to excellence in the preaching classroom promotes actual excellence in practice—especially given diverse preachers in diverse communities of faith. That may well be why the particular skill of cultural competence is more and more valued by potential employers and their accrediting bodies as well.

The purpose of this paper is to jumpstart a dialogue about the impact of the sermon feedback process on pedagogical homiletical theology.¹ This form of homiletical theology is concerned with how preachers in the classroom develop and improve capacities as preachers of gospel. The theoretical tool that helps to reframe the sermon feedback process comes from an intercultural communication theory that has begun to impact the subfield of instructional communication as it pertains to the college speech classroom: facework theory. In the form we will describe below, facework theory provides a frame for reconciling task-related and *identity-related* learning goals. After situating our question about sermon feedback within a brief history of homiletical education, we will unpack elements of facework theory which in turn invite me to revise my own commitments to homiletical theology in connection to the practice of preaching in the classroom. Along the way, I will consider how mentorship may provide a more useful frame, perhaps even for persons of privilege, for thinking about the teaching of preaching in intercultural contexts in which both preaching tasks and preaching identities matter.

Sermon Feedback: Recent Trends and Developments

The problem of in-class sermon feedback has troubled homiletical educators for some time. G. Robert Jacks, in his desire to set up useful criteria for using principles of speech communication in critique of reading scripture in church, set a helpful frame for thinking through some of the interpersonal difficulties of dealing with feedback. He proposed the “critique sandwich” as a means of negotiating the problem. The practice involved bracketing critical feedback with words of support and encouragement from someone familiar with Jacks’ speech communication criteria. Applied for our purposes to the preaching classroom, with every critique uttered student preachers would also hear specific references to strengths in their work. Jacks’ concern is educational—desiring that readers of scripture not be too overwhelmed with critique that they cannot hear it or deal with it interpersonally. Jack’s learning insight was to make critique palatable by situating it within student strengths. The theological norm was essentially rooted in a theocentric desire to situate the task in grace, Spirit, and ministry: “What we’re after is growth. Growth in grace, growth in the Spirit, growth in wisdom, growth in trusting and obeying, and above all growth every day and every moment in surrendering ourselves to the Lord who can use our lives to His eternal glory.”² Again, applied to the preaching classroom, critique and feedback should be practiced within an interpersonal relationship committed to wider ends. It represents a psychologically aware, theologically-grounded approach to learning and improving the *task*.

¹ The term comes from Charles Bartow, “Homiletical (Theological) Criticism,” in *The New Interpreter’s Handbook of Preaching* (Paul Scott Wilson, ed., Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), 154. For a brief description of how such educational concerns relate to homiletical theology generally see David Schnasa Jacobsen, ed., *Homiletical Theology: Preaching as Doing Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015), 9.

² G. Robert Jacks, *Getting the Word Across: Speech Communication for Pastors and Lay Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 226.

In his chapter on “Methods of Assessment” in *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice*, Daniel E. Harris follows a similar concern with the personal well-being of the student being assessed. A guiding principle for Harris is that sermon feedback should be about the sermon, and not about the person. He envisions ways of guiding in-class feedback so that each member of the class contributes, the sermon remains the focus, observations are clearly grounded in explicit examples, and feedback is balanced in terms of positive and negative items.³ This does flesh out some of the concerns expressed in Jacks, but more importantly it also situates in-class feedback within a wider plan of assessment that includes private feedback from the instructor and congregational feedback in conjunction with evaluation forms. While these various approaches to feedback take us beyond our in-class educational focus here, they do exemplify Harris’ concern that a preacher’s person be respected and that students learn to become good self-critics by understanding what others perceive “through their eyes.”⁴

In his article “No Preacher Left Behind,” André Resner both acknowledges the anxiety of the relationship of task and person in-class sermon feedback and accentuates it.⁵ Resner worries that the great hinge between affirmation and critique can prove to be a violent one. He points out that after an affirmation or two, the word “but” signals a comment, especially from a teaching authority, that all but wipes out the affirmation that might be heard in the sandwiched feedback pairing. His article places emphasis instead on reframing in-class sermon feedback *as* theological reflection for learning preaching. In response to Tom Long’s call for an “identifiable core of actions” for excellence in preaching⁶ and linking one of those specifically to David Lose’s concern for a theological “telos for preaching” in the gospel,⁷ Resner seeks to transform in-class sermon feedback into a kind of practical-theological reflection loop. In fact, he envisions a full course to encourage such reflection that precedes the introductory course in preaching. This prior course would read historical and contemporary sermons and learn to reflect on them theologically *in conversation*, picking up standards of excellence and naming the “telos” along the way. Students having taken this course, Resner argues, would then already be busy building down the kind of anxiety that plagues in-class sermon feedback when the intro course is the first occasion students have to develop such skills.

Resner’s vision is compelling in that it seeks to resolve the split between task-oriented and person-centered problems by reframing in-class sermon feedback as a kind of conversational theological reflection. What Resner’s approach does not treat directly, however, has to do with the negotiation of task and person within a theological perspective, but also *between* them. In her chapter in *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice*, Barbara Lundblad seeks to resituate the task/person tension in terms of questions around theological (and practical) *difference*.⁸ Lundblad includes in the ambit of her concern not just in-class sermon feedback, but the introductory course as a whole, in which “the teacher’s role is to help create a space for honoring differences, for giving and receiving criticism, for taking risks. This respectful environment needs to be fostered in every part of the class from the beginning, not only when giving feedback to

³ Daniel E. Harris, “Methods of Assessment,” in *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice* (Thomas G. Long and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, eds.; Louisville: WJK, 2008), 194.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁵ André Resner, “No Preacher Left Behind: A New Prerequisite for the Introductory Course,” in *Teaching Theology and Religion* 13:4 (October 2010), 339-49.

⁶ Tom Long, “A New Focus for Teaching Preaching,” in *Teaching Preaching*, 15.

⁷ David Lose, “Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice,” in *Teaching Preaching*, 52.

⁸ Barbara Lundblad, “Designing the Introductory Course in Preaching,” in *Teaching Preaching*, 207-22.

sermons.”⁹ Her guidelines for engaging the feedback process in class are not all that different from Jacks and Harris.¹⁰ The difference, for Lundblad, is facilitating an environment that goes beyond the task/person tension to see the theological differences around dealing with tasks of preaching and diverse communities of learning. This discernment of difference is grounded in a way of doing theological (and exegetical and practical) reflection through the entirety of the course.

Most recently, Jared Alcántara names a similar learning dynamic in his take on in-class sermon feedback in *Crossover Preaching*. He argues that by creating a “360-degree feedback loop,” a preaching class can develop twin skills that are at once theological and intercultural.¹¹ His vision begins with student preachers posing questions, after which the teacher as facilitator allows classmates to join in questions and reflection from their varying cultural perspectives, and then ending up with the student preacher at the end.¹² Alcántara argues that the process democratizes while it enables deeper theological and intercultural reflection. In doing so, however, he also succeeds in reframing our initial learning problem.

Perhaps now we can argue that the in-class sermon feedback moment is fraught not only because of the tension between task mastery and personal psychology, as we have so long framed the issue. With a specific focus on theology in relation to difference and the intercultural context of the preaching classroom, the presenting problem can now be redefined: how do we deal with the in-class tensions of doing homiletical-theological work and difference in connection with the task of preaching and *identities* in the classroom?¹³ For further thought on this, we turn to the field of instructional communication and facework theory.

⁹ Ibid., 210.

¹⁰ Ibid., 220.

¹¹ Jared Alcántara, *Crossover Preaching: Intercultural-Improvisational Homiletics in Conversation with Gardner C. Taylor* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 273-75. For more on preaching and cultural competence generally, see Matthew Kim’s book, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).

¹² Jerusha Neal argues that the genius of Alcántara’s approach is that it deals specifically with the shifting roles of the student preacher. The kind of vulnerability faced in the role of preacher needs to be coordinated with the unique vulnerability in the role of student receiving in-class feedback. For Neal, Alcántara’s 360-degree vision helps to foreground the preacher’s own questions and concerns in the feedback process, thus respecting both the identity *and* the role of the student preacher. Email correspondence with Prof. Neal from August, 20, 2018. It may be that careful consideration of task and identity in the diverse preaching classroom will also need to contend with the roles being adopted in the learning context of the preaching classroom—especially insofar as it names a key element in the power dynamic.

¹³ Marianne Gaarden in her new book, *The Third Room of Preaching* (Westminster Monograph Series; Louisville: WJKP, 2017) offers thoughtful help in dealing with the sermon feedback process in a way that uses careful empirical study and culminates in a thoroughgoing learner-centered approach. While such an approach has much merit and offers helpful, concrete ideas about the sermon feedback process (see the Appendix of Gaarden’s book), the risk is that the homiletical-theological task itself becomes a matter of purely learner-centered personal preference, of “like or dislike” as Gaarden herself puts it, a problem which hegemonic, exclusively teacher-centered approaches that rush to judgment themselves also perpetuate, albeit from a position of power. The goal with pedagogical homiletical theology, to my mind, is to hold to elements of offering at least some critical feedback of use to students as preachers. However, this needs to be done in ways consistent with face needs, ways that honor growth in the task of preaching and different identities in the room, which are themselves a matter of critical theological work, and not solely personal preference.

Facework Theory and Instructional Communication in Feedback Intervention Situations

We begin by defining terms and grounding them in the seminal work of Erving Goffman on social interaction. Face in Goffman's work refers to a person's preferred and presented self-image that emerges in interaction with others; facework describes self and others' efforts at communication (or other forms of action) that either sustain or re-establish face.¹⁴ A sense of the meaning of Goffman's terminology comes through ordinary language, where we describe doing certain things as "saving face" or even "in your face." In early attempts to describe facework in communication, Tae-Seop Lim and John Bowers distinguished between two kinds of positive facework and one kind of negative facework.¹⁵ Negative facework for Lim and Bowers was concerned with preserving autonomy. Positive facework, by contrast, took two forms: a concern for inclusion *and* esteem/respect.¹⁶ The result is that Lim and Bowers focus interactively on two types of positive face and one type of negative face: fellowship face (expressed through solidarity), competence face (approbation), and autonomy face (tact). The roles of these types of face are conditioned by three relational elements: intimacy, power distance, and rights.¹⁷

What might this look like in a classroom? In Lim and Bowers' view what is at stake is far more than task mastery. A class in which teaching and learning take place is also a place for negotiating identity(ies) by means of face. A teacher who baldly tells a student what to do impacts negative face by calling into question that preacher's autonomy. The way in which the teacher does so may affect positive face either by compromising the student's fellowship with others (inadvertently threatening belonging) or critiquing their competence (by not offering approbation). In a teaching and learning environment like a *preaching* class, where both support/praise and critique are offered concerning sermons, it becomes important for teachers (as well as classmates) to do that task-related work on preaching cognizant of the identities in the room. Thus, the point is far more than offering balanced "critique sandwiches." Instead, the issue is to attend to identity while doing the work of task mastery in the most effective way possible: to engage communicational tools that attend to solidarity (for fellowship), approbation (for competence), as well as to tact (for autonomy/respect).¹⁸ In fact, in a complex context of task learning and identities, it becomes important to do facework to enable the kind of connected, agential, and autonomous action that preaching as a homiletical-theological practice actually is.

¹⁴ Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-face Behavior* (Garden City, NY: Anchor & Doubleday, 1967).

¹⁵ The distinction between positive and negative facework goes back to Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson's politeness theory in "Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena," in *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction* (E. Goody, ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 56-289. They posited only one type each of positive and negative facework, concerned with inclusion and respect, respectively.

¹⁶ Tae-Seop Lim and John Waite Bowers, "Facework, Solidarity, Approbation, and Tact" in *Human Communication Research* 17: 3 (March 1991), 415-450.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 420.

¹⁸ An interesting possibility for this might be found in a more descriptive preliminary approach to sermon feedback. Jerusha Neal mentions that her experience of Sally Brown's classroom feedback began with a careful, extended description of the preacher's work that preceded any attempt to weigh in on the preacher's efforts. Neal experienced this as an important way for preachers to feel as though they had been "seen" in the classroom, email correspondence from August 20, 2018. I would argue that such a being "seen" may be important as well as an honoring of the identity or facework needs of autonomy/respect.

What might this look like more concretely? Imagine a preaching classroom where sermons are being evaluated.¹⁹ A student preacher, an instructor, and classmates are present when a student preaches and the evaluation time ensues. A teacher who wishes to ensure the possibility of a real pedagogical homiletical-theological moment needs to do far more than simply transfer information. Too often, especially where critical evaluation is proffered, the face threat in the classroom becomes just too great, as Resner names so well above. How might facework theory help? By attending first to “negative” facework, an instructor and classmates would need to be allied in focusing on the autonomy of the preacher as a homiletical theologian as they give feedback. This would entail offering feedback that honors the ability of the learner to engage in acts of discernment going forward. The question of offering critical feedback cannot be mere conformity to a hegemonic norm, but rather a matter-of-fact way of engaging multiple options or avenues of learning for a student to consider. Discernment and respect for the choices students exercise as theologians of the Word is key, to my mind, to enable such autonomy of face to be honored. Similar issues hold for how positive facework might shape the sermon feedback moment. Teachers of preaching can be attentive to the importance of “fellowship/belonging” in the room, as well as the agency of the learner. These could be enhanced, for example, by structuring the feedback moment as not something just “undergone,” but also inviting preachers themselves into the constructive task being envisioned in the classroom in a dialogical process that is critical, pluralistic, and respectful of different possibilities. The goal for helping homiletical theologians pedagogically is to find a space in between where critical theological reflection always matters and identities are always honored.

The work of communication studies scholar Jeff Kerssen-Griep et al. gives us a limited, useful analogue for the preaching classroom that uses in-class sermon feedback.²⁰ Kerssen-Griep’s work in particular is focused on the use of facework in the context of interpersonal, instructional communication. You might imagine its value in reflecting on the kind of “feedback interventions” that happen analogously in a college speech class. Kerssen-Griep uses facework theory because of its importance for dealing with both task mastery and identity negotiation in the classroom. Using a social-science approach, he also does empirical study to evaluate elements of facework theory for impacting motivation in instructional contexts.²¹ Ideally, a good learning environment in which teachers are attentive to both task mastery and face will promote student autonomy, fellowship, and agency as a support to student learning. While in practice

¹⁹ The question of how intercultural communication theory might impact homiletical pedagogy concretely will be the focus of a new HTP consultation scheduled for early 2019 and funded by the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning: “Exploring Intercultural Instructional Communication for Homiletical Pedagogy: Facework Theory, Cultural Competence, and ‘Peering Behind the Curtain’” (Amy McLaughlin-Sheasby and David Schnasa Jacobsen, co-directors). The object of this consultation will be to probe its value in practice in a more sustained fashion.

²⁰ A helpful video summary of Kerssen-Griep’s work in facework theory and instructional communication is available here: https://uportland.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/Dr.+Jeff+Kerssen-Griep/0_7k7htob2 accessed August 15, 2018. The limits of the theory, of course, are bounded by the unique elements of the relationship of theology and identity to the preaching classroom. Any analogue contains elements of similarity and dissimilarity within it and will require of homiletical theologians a suitably differentiated approach to the task in the preaching classroom in particular.

²¹ Here communication studies scholarship draws in particular on social science literature around motivation and learning: see P. R. Pintrich, “A Motivational Science Perspective on the Role of Student Motivation in Learning and Teaching Contexts,” *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95 (2003), 667-686; and R. M. Ryan and E. L. Deci, “Self-determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-being,” *American Psychologist*, 55 (2000), 68-78.

other variables enter into the equation and condition the relative value of different kinds of facework, the empirical testing of the theory provides further guidance for our own classroom practice.

In some of his early work, Kerssen-Griep, together with co-researchers Jon Hess and April Trees, focused on the particular importance of solidarity (for fellowship face needs) and tact (for autonomy/respect face needs) for developing a good motivational environment for students.²² In a more recent article, the same research team considered how the mitigation of “face threat” in an in-class feedback intervention shaped positively those students’ sense of relationship not only with classmates, but also the teacher, for whom a more supportive learning environment enabled something more like a mentor rather than “parent” or “cop”—relationships which helped them to accept guidance around task mastery.²³ In the same team’s most recent work, they investigated how teachers can shape environments to enhance the credibility of teachers in helping students grow in task mastery; here, preventive and mitigating facework in speech evaluations helped to mitigate threats posed by in-class feedback interventions.²⁴

The upshot of facework theory, as borrowed from intercultural communication, is its value for rethinking the relationship of task mastery and the negotiation of identities in the classroom.²⁵ With attention especially to solidarity and tact in our evaluation work, with a desire to see our teaching roles shaped more and more by mentoring models, and in the hope that attending to facework will actually enhance teaching as well as learners’ task mastery, we can envision a different way of doing in-class sermon feedback that is much more of a win/win than a mere trade-off between competing goals. What remains is an integration of this theory of interpersonal communication for instruction into the contexts of intercultural and homiletical-theological work.

Revising In-Class Practice and Mentoring Culturally Competent Preachers of Gospel

Kerssen-Griep essentially borrows a theory of intercultural communication and applies it to the more interpersonal, instructional context. Nothing here implies that Kerssen-Griep cannot explore *more* than the individual relationship of teacher and student with respect to task mastery and identity negotiation. The unspoken step means acknowledging that a classroom consists of *multiple* identities which in a given in-class feedback setting are being negotiated. I mentioned in the beginning that the task of learning cultural competency falls first on those whose privilege until now has buffered them from having to learn the skill sets that others with less power use with more or less facility all the time. I aim in this article to loosen the hold of privilege in homiletical education sufficiently to set a different kind of in-class sermon evaluation (and identity negotiation) in motion.

Lundblad’s work in *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice* gets us part way there. You will recall that her attending to theological difference goes a long way to set up structural

²² J. Kerssen-Griep, J. A. Hess, and A. R. Trees, “Sustaining the Desire to Learn: Dimensions of Perceived Instructional Facework Related to Student Involvement and Motivation to Learn. *Western Journal of Communication*, 67 (2003), 357-381.

²³ J. Kerssen-Griep, A. R. Trees, and J. A. Hess, “Attentive Facework during Instructional Feedback: Key to Perceiving Mentorship and an Optimal Learning Environment. *Communication Education*, 57 (2008), 312-332.

²⁴ A. R. Trees, J. Kerssen-Griep, and J. A. Hess, “Earning Influence by Communicating Respect: Facework’s Contributions to Effective Instructional Feedback” in *Communication Education*, 58 (2009), 397-416.

²⁵ For further reading in intercultural communication theory, see William B. Gudykunst, ed., *Theorizing about Intercultural Communication* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005), esp. chapters 4, 9, and 10.

features in the educational setting that set a tone for a more fruitful growth in something like cultural competence. Dale Andrews was likewise well known for developing a case for appreciating the role of apprenticeship in African American preaching traditions that is helping to transform homiletical teaching and learning into a more carefully “allied” form of education different from mere friendship or even facilitation, but also something quite a bit more relational than the traditional delivery models of white mainline theological education.²⁶ Similarly, Marianne Gaarden in her book *The Third Room of Preaching* envisions a qualitatively different kind of relationship between teachers and learners in the preaching moment. She views the teacher as a kind of personal mentor or guide who facilitates the internal learning processes of the student.²⁷ What differs with Kerssen-Griep’s offering of facework is the opportunity to *thematize* the possibility of difference and identity in the moment of “feedback intervention” that is in-class sermon evaluation. It is actually only implicit in the way Kerssen-Griep uses his theory, but it may be just the thing that privileged teachers particularly need to align task-oriented goals in preaching with a multifaceted, pluralistic identity negotiation in the twenty-first century homiletics classroom.

Promise and Face: Toward a Pedagogical Homiletical Theology of the Gospel

The key goal with this essay on homiletical teaching and learning, however, is not merely to adopt the best theory-laden practices of college speech classes. Something about the homiletical-theological task of articulating the gospel itself should stand rightly at the center of our necessarily theological reflections. For this reason, I wish to develop facework theory in light of a *theology of face and promise*.

The language of promise, its content, character, and shape have already exercised a signal influence on homiletical theologies of the gospel.²⁸ Homileticians as varied as Sally Brown, James Kay, Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm, David Lose, Olin Moyd, Christine Smith, and myself have placed promise at the center of their work. Others like Sunggu Yang, Kenyatta Gilbert, Paul Scott Wilson, and Ruthanna Hooke have made significant contributions to the conversation on promise as part of the 2016 Consultation on Homiletical Theology.²⁹ Promise as a basic starting point of reflecting on the gospel in context already has significant reach in the field.

In this case, however, we are aiming to bring promise into conversation with the “face” of facework. The notion of face is hardly foreign to other homiletical-theological reflections. The generative work of John McClure placed face at the center of a kind of a postmodern, theo-ethical vision for preaching drawing on the philosophical work on the “face of the other” in the writings of Emmanuel Levinas.³⁰ For McClure it is the face of the other that interrupts forms of

²⁶ Dale Andrews, “Teaching Black Preaching: Encounter and Re-encounter,” in *The African American Pulpit* (Fall, 2006), 8-12, and “Teaching Black Preaching: Homiletic Instruction as ‘Pre-Encounter,’” *The African American Pulpit* (Winter, 2006-07), 22-26. Andrews’ reflections have powerful implications for sermon feedback in the homiletics classroom.

²⁷ Gaarden, *Third Room*, 129-30.

²⁸ For more on these, see David Schnasa Jacobsen, “The Promise of Promise: Retrospect and Prospect of a Homiletical Theology,” in *Homiletic* 38:2 (2013), 3-16.

²⁹ David Schnasa Jacobsen, ed., *Toward a Homiletical Theology of Promise* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018).

³⁰ John McClure, *Otherwise Preaching: A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2001). Here he is drawing especially on Levinas’ work in *Otherwise Than Being*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981) and *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

homiletical discourse that tend toward a totalizing sameness that occludes difference. The face is thus an interruptive move toward embracing alterity.

My desire is to see how the face of “facework” might also offer a theoretical means for dealing with otherness, here chiefly in the homiletics classroom, but in its specific engagement with promise in all of its theological richness. Could it be that the preaching classroom, like preaching itself, is a place where gospel promise is named and enacted among both faces and the Face? In speech act theory promise is understood as “self-involving.” Its eventful action is tied up with the promiser who utters it as a pledge of what is being given. A promise doesn’t so much have an external referent (like most denotative language), but it does have a self-involved Speaker, a Face, if you will. At the same time, a homiletical theology of the gospel as promise is, with respect to a theology of preaching, both a human and divine act as a carrying out of what philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff calls the “double agency” of a promissory speech act with split locution and illocution.³¹ Thus preaching as a human utterance joins the aforementioned “Face” to the faces of the diverse people gathered to hear promise spoken. At this moment, the promise is self-involving as locution: “other” involving as an illocution. This itself shapes the context in which promise is uttered; it helps make it a homiletical-theological moment of gospel-in-context.³² Promise emerges as gospel-in-context in relation to the faces of others in the midst of divine self-involvement in the Face.

One other thing, however, adds theological depth to the educational issue we have surfaced by means of facework theory above: the importance of promise to understanding the telos of both preaching and learning preaching. Promise as “gospel-in-context” is not merely about invoking a flattened language of divine presence in relation to human faces. The nature of the promise itself presses beyond ontology to what philosopher Richard Kearney calls onto-eschatology: a kind of traversing presence common to epiphany and transfiguration. Here, says Kearney, divine self-disclosure is beyond the actual ontology of “I am who I am” and the endlessly deferred eschatology of “I will be who I will be,” but the possibilizing disclosure of “I am who I will be,” a traversing impingement of the future on the present.³³ For the preaching classroom this is no less important! The teaching and learning of preaching takes place within a possibilizing onto-eschatological horizon that teaches and learns preaching with a view toward a kind of transformation that does more than save face, but risks face and vulnerability in the face of others and the Other. In other words, facework itself is a kind of educational prolepsis of the gospel of promise. It is thus intercultural not only in the classroom but with respect to its ultimate transformational telos.

The educational result is more than culturally competent students, but preachers of a culturally competent gospel which itself places that work in the context of divine Face and human faces. In this sense, it helps form and enlist homiletical theologians going forward.

³¹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³² This notion of the gospel-in-context is important not only in the aforementioned *Toward a Homiletical Theology of Promise*, but its companion volume in the same series, *Theologies of the Gospel in Context: The Crux of Homiletical Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017).

³³ Richard Kearney, *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 20–38.

Conclusion

No doubt, along the way toward promise a more mentored vision of homiletical education that includes both task-mastery *and* identity negotiation will also renew a homiletical theology of promise itself. The center of homiletical theology—whether in its pedagogical, professional, or academic forms—is, after all, a working theology of gospel in conversation with texts and situations and contexts. However, a culturally differentiated context for learning, even at the point of in-class sermon evaluation, will naturally set in motion new articulations and practices of attending interculturally that will only complement the invention-oriented models offered by Alcántara and Kim’s groundbreaking efforts to further intercultural and culturally intelligent preaching.³⁴ The use of facework theory as an *intercultural communication theory* in conversation with homiletical education might then not only help us preach the divinely self-involving gospel of promise, but to learn together in class once again just how to listen for it in the very faces of others and with a view toward God’s unfolding transformation.

³⁴ Matthew Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017). Kim’s book is actually more concerned with integrating cultural competency into homiletical invention.

New Approaches for Old Testament Preaching

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Abstract: *Despite numerous developments within homiletics over the last several decades, those who preach the Old Testament often find themselves caught in a 19th century historical-Christological binary. This article analyzes five Old Testament sermons drawn from contemporary homiletic works as potential approaches for freeing the preacher from such a binary. While each sermon presents a distinct option for Old Testament preaching, all five share a common interest in challenging hermeneutics of power, re-envisioning Christology, and portraying the Old Testament as a word that speaks today. These three foci help shape an alternative and constructive approach for the development and evaluation of Old Testament sermons today.*

Recently I had the opportunity to take and teach “Preaching the Old Testament” in significantly different settings—the first as a graduate student at a large mainline seminary in the Southeastern United States, and the second as a visiting instructor at a German theological school. In both locations I was surprised to discover that the students seemed to share a working hermeneutic assumption: preaching the Old Testament demands either the preaching of Christ or a focus on the historical background of the text. What is striking here is not that those who have begun to reflect on the practices of preaching in the church and in introductory courses were somehow unaware of homiletical developments after the 19th century. Rather, what is surprising is that *despite* some homiletical education and reflection, two of the dominant choices from that era—namely allegorical Christology and historical criticism—continue to shape the creative space of inchoate practitioners of preaching. This suggests that homileticians may need to dedicate more time and attention to the subject of preaching the Old Testament. And, further, we would do well to lift up some new approaches that better stretch students beyond the historical/Christological binary.

In speaking of new approaches I am not referring to chronological location. While most of the sermons examined in this article come from the last decade, the roots of these approaches date back to well before the 19th century.¹ They are not new within the hermeneutic/homiletic realm of possibility. Rather, they are new in the sense that except for Walter Brueggemann, all the scholars examined in this article are not typically recognized as contributing to the American conversation about OT homiletics. While there are many fine insights from books written explicitly about preaching the Old Testament,² what has been neglected is attention to the way works dedicated to other homiletical foci can inform the preaching of the Old Testament.

* This article is an edited version of the paper I presented at the 2017 Academy of Homiletics. I am grateful for the encouragement and constructive feedback from the Hermeneutics working group.

¹ e.g. Brueggemann locates his approach in the Old Testament itself, Campbell inverts a form that dates to at least the patristic age, Turman employs a homiletic from the earliest known slave preaching, Deeg draws on rabbinic Jewish hermeneutics, and Kim locates the roots of her approach in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shamanism.

² c.f. Rein Bos, *We Have Heard that God is With You: Preaching the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008); Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Preaching from the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox,

This article analyzes sermons from five such foci: preaching as testimony (Walter Brueggemann), cultural-linguistic and “holy fools” preaching (Charles Campbell), womanist preaching (Eboni Marshall Turman), dialogical preaching (Alexander Deeg), and Asian American preaching (Eunjoo Kim). This list is suggestive. Many more approaches could and should be analyzed for the insights they offer for preaching the Old Testament. These approaches were selected because they demonstrate a distinct form, theology, and OT presentation that corresponds to their respective homiletical foci. I have labeled these approaches to preaching the Old Testament: Christological-Allusion, Inverted Typology, Scriptural Mash-up, Intertextual Dialogue, and Transcontextual Spiral.

Christological Allusion—Walter Brueggemann, “Power for Life Flown in By a Bird”³

While Walter Brueggemann is perhaps the most obvious source for an Old Testament homiletic, his approach to preaching the Old Testament in this sermon deserves more attention than it has been given. Here Brueggemann recounts the story and surrounding context of Elijah reviving the son of the widow of Zarephath. He also narrates this biblical account within the purview of Ash Wednesday, noting that the day is the beginning of Lent—a season leading to Easter.⁴ Brueggemann connects this progression to the scriptural progression where Elijah spends a season fed by ravens before raising the widow’s son. Because Elijah is free of the “royal junk food,” he is able to receive from God “energy and courage and freedom and authority”—in short, “power to transform life.”⁵ So, too, Christians in Lent seek “another diet, another nourishment, another loyalty,” as we long for the life-transforming gift of God.⁶

What makes this sermon deserving of attention is the way Brueggemann homiletically demonstrates elements from his *Theology of the Old Testament* (1997) and *Finally Comes the Poet* (1989). First, Brueggemann invites the congregation to reflect on *one* piece of Israel’s core testimony.⁷ The goal of this kind of OT preaching is not to say everything about scripture or to announce all of the good news that could be mentioned. Rather, the goal is to describe the text in specific, detailed, honest, and evocative terms. Often Brueggemann’s sermon accomplishes this task via intentional anachronism. The drought in Israel is an ancient “energy crisis”; the widow’s son functions as a sort of “welfare system.”⁸ The prophet comes as an “uncredentialed” minister⁹

1989); Ron Allen & John Holbert, *Holy Root, Holy Branches: Christian Preaching from the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995); Fleming Rutledge, *And God spoke to Abraham: Preaching from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011); Patrick Miller, *Stewards of the Mysteries of God: Preaching the Old Testament—and the New* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013); Ellen Davis, *Wondrous Depth: Preaching the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005) and *Preaching the Luminous Word: Biblical Sermons and Homiletical Essays* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

³ Walter Brueggemann, “Power for Life Flown in By a Bird (1 Kgs 17:17-24),” in *The Threat of Life: Sermons on Pain, Power, and Weakness* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 41–46. This text is based on a sermon Brueggemann preached on Ash Wednesday at Columbia Theological Seminary Chapel.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁷ Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997). I classify 1 Kings 17 as core testimony rather than counter, unsolicited, or embodied testimony. However, Brueggemann includes a note of counter testimony in his sermon when he refers to Elijah’s accusation against God in 1 Kings 17:20 (Brueggemann, “Power for Life,” 43).

⁸ Brueggemann, “Power for Life,” 42.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

to serve and to offer an alternative to a dysfunctional regime.¹⁰ Far from simply equating Israel in 1 Kings 17 with Georgia in the late 20th century, Brueggemann's approach invites the congregation to imagine living in Elijah's world, and then to envision Elijah and Elijah's God living in our own world. As Anna Carter Florence explains, Brueggemann's kind of testimony invites us to "hear" the biblical text, "welcome it and host it in our lives and bodies."¹¹

Second, Brueggemann's articulation of the good news evokes insights from *Finally Comes the Poet*. In that book, he argues that poetry's power is a "shattering, evocative speech that breaks fixed conclusions and presses us always toward new, dangerous, imaginative possibilities."¹² This poetic speech is prophetic. Those who know Brueggemann's work would not be surprised that in this sermon he challenges the powers of the world as unjust, inept, and corrupting. Such powers cannot enact life; they cannot do what God can do.

But it is precisely at the moment of articulating God's alternative world that Brueggemann's sermon surprises. Here he interrupts the dominant *religious* conclusion. Never once does Brueggemann mention Christ. The good news is not populated with "Jesus," though Mark 5:35-43 was read in the worship service. Instead, Brueggemann follows the language of the text, speaking about "God" and "Yahweh." This move is not the result of the overly-attenuated gaze of a Hebrew Bible scholar, nor is this a mere theological oversight. Brueggemann is concerned, as he states in *Finally Comes the Poet*, that the "gospel is too readily heard and taken for granted, as though it contained no unsettling news and no unwelcome threat."¹³ He is concerned, as he states in his sermon, with the way "we are all seduced, domesticated, and bought off" religiously.¹⁴ So, in a religious context where every scripture finds (too facilely) its end in the Gospels and where every question is answered (too banally) with Jesus, Brueggemann keeps "Jesus" out of the manuscript.

This is not to say that he keeps Jesus out of the sermon. The occasion is Ash Wednesday, and, as Brueggemann acknowledges, that day points already to Easter. Furthermore, though Christ is not named, Brueggemann consistently alludes to the Christ story. The widow, he says, had "one thing, her beloved son."¹⁵ And, Brueggemann calls this dead-now-living son a "new birthed boy."¹⁶ The good news he proclaims is that "God holds the power for life."¹⁷ And this gospel, Brueggemann announces, comes as "new news...carried by a human agent."¹⁸

The combined effect of Brueggemann's poetic use of omission and allusion is that Christ appears as a sort of elephant in the room. Christ is never acknowledged but glaringly present. Brueggemann's poetic/prophetic voice "evokes new possibility in the listening assembly."¹⁹ In essence, Brueggemann assumes that each Christian listener will make a sermonic turn to Jesus in their own minds. He seeks to unsettle the listener's gospel assumptions by forcing his congregation to read what God has done in Jesus through this account of what God did in Elijah. In so doing, Brueggemann offers a deep look into the text and a fresh hearing for the good news.

¹⁰ Ibid., 44.

¹¹ Anna Carter Florence, *Preaching as Testimony* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 76.

¹² Walter Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 6.

¹³ Ibid., 1.

¹⁴ Brueggemann, "Power for Life," 45.

¹⁵ Ibid., 42.

¹⁶ Ibid., 44.

¹⁷ Ibid., 43.

¹⁸ Ibid., 44.

¹⁹ Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet*, 4.

Inverted Typology—Charles Campbell, *Societas Homiletica* Sermon²⁰

Charles Campbell reflects in his sermon on a verse where God rouses the prophet Isaiah: “Morning by morning he awakens—wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught.”²¹ Campbell describes Isaiah’s experience, initially ignoring source and redaction criticism to portray a long and turbulent life of prophetic preaching. This he compares with Martin Luther King, Jr.’s experience of growing “bone tired.” Campbell further connects Isaiah (and MLK) with the prophetic weariness shared by others during the *Societas* meeting as they wrestled with immigration, climate change, and the injustices of global economic systems. Then, as now, “God calls: ‘Wake up! Wake up! I have a word for you today.’ And some days it’s affirmation, and some days it’s provocation, some days it’s migration, and other days it’s anticipation. Always a specific word for a specific time and a specific place—*this day*.”²² However, Campbell acknowledges that this word is rarely accepted easily. Even the good news of “Second Isaiah”²³ and of Jesus is rejected as unsettling.

At this point one might expect the preacher to lean in to the turn to Christ. For instance, in *Preaching Jesus* Campbell argues that the cultural-linguistic world of the Old Testament is connected to the Church through the story of Jesus.²⁴ Furthermore, Campbell appears to envision this connection as unidirectional: “[I]n typological preaching the move is from the story of Israel through Jesus Christ to the Church.”²⁵ Perhaps playing on exceptions from his earlier work, Campbell employs this unidirectional, typological homiletic in the first two-thirds of his sermon.

But then he changes tack. Campbell concludes his sermon by inverting the typological connection as he seeks to empower the congregation to continue their work against the powers.²⁶ Thus, while Jesus is *one of several* justifications for the weary prophet type in Campbell’s sermon, Isaiah is the *fulfillment* of the type. Inverted typology recognizes, first, that an obsessive Christo-telic focus can miss—or at least minimize—the most natural connection that a congregation might have with scripture. In this case it is Isaiah, Campbell proclaims, who is the model for “all of us who take up the preaching office.”²⁷ Isaiah, when faced with the challenges of prophetic ministry, does not give into our temptations to either “roll over and go back to sleep,” or trudge forward “for another dreary day of preaching.” Nor does Isaiah take on the mantle of the suffering savior. Instead, he “meditates. He prays”:

The Lord helps me, therefore I have not been disgraced; The Lord helps me, therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know I shall not be put to shame; the one who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my

²⁰ Charles Campbell, “Isaiah 50:4-9a,” *Societas Homiletica*, Stellenbosch, South Africa, March 16, 2016. This sermon will be available through a forthcoming *Societas* Papers publication. My citations are drawn from the manuscript for publication.

²¹ Isa 50:4b (NRSV).

²² Campbell, “Isaiah 50:4-9a.”

²³ Note Campbell’s use of source and redaction criticism here.

²⁴ Campbell, *Preaching Jesus: New Directions for Homiletics in Hans Frei’s Postliberal Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006) 254-5.

²⁵ Campbell, *Preaching Jesus*, 254.

²⁶ Campbell preaches: “Our persistent and unmanageable God keeps on *interrupting*, keeps on *unsettling*, keeps on *waking us up* to preach another day” (“Isaiah 50:4-9a,” emphasis added). Compare these highlighted verbs with Campbell’s counsel for confronting the powers in *The Word Before the Powers: An Ethic of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

²⁷ Campbell “Isaiah 50:4-9a.”

adversaries? Let them confront me. It is the Lord who helps me; Who will declare me guilty? Amen.²⁸

Campbell's use of Isaiah's prayer points to a second function of inverted typology. It demonstrates to the congregation that the Old Testament is, in itself, a significant part of the Christian cultural-linguistic world. In *Preaching Fools*, Campbell and Johan Cilliers assert, "Whenever we are tempted to settle down into secure, rigid identities, the preaching fool holds up the murky, fragmented mirror before our eyes to remind us that we are always on the way."²⁹ Here Campbell lifts up Isaiah as a holy fool, praying while on the way. Without rejecting Israel, requiring Christ, resorting to individualistic pietism, or otherwise rigidly securing the text, Campbell shows that *Isaiah's* words are worth emulating. And, by twice enacting the prophet's rhetoric near the end of his sermon, Campbell seeks to form his hearers in this culture and language of prayer so that today's prophetic preachers may be empowered like Isaiah to get out of bed, take a deep breath, tend their wounds, and go out to preach another day.³⁰

Scriptural Mash-up—Eboni Marshall Turman, "Hagar's Tears"³¹

Eboni Turman invites the congregation into Hagar's story, moving from the heat of a North Carolina summer to the heat of the desert of Beer-Sheba. Turman locates Hagar in this desert—a slave facing gender, ethnic, and economic bias. She is a "poor woman of African descent."³² Here Turman embodies, homiletically, womanist theology and critique.³³ Abraham, the "slaver," yet also the man chosen by God, has sent Hagar and Ishmael away, per Sarah's request. About this act, Turman observes, "Sometimes even God's people are wrong—dead wrong—especially when it comes to race."³⁴

But in the midst of this wrong Turman looks for God's intervention. She recounts a litany of moments where, despite human brokenness, "God had a plan." So, Abraham was wrong, but God worked something good anyway. David was a rapist, but God led him to pray, "Create in me a clean heart." The widow at Zarephath did not have cake, but God had a plan. Esther was scared for her life, but she confronted the king. Mary "came up out of the ghetto," but we know what good can come out of Nazareth. Jesus lived and died on that "old rugged cross...but I love that old cross where the dearest and best for a world of lost sinners was slain."³⁵ This Old

²⁸ This is Campbell's rephrasing of Isa 50:7-9a.

²⁹ Charles Campbell and Johann Cilliers, *Preaching Fools: The Gospel as a Rhetoric of Folly* (Waco, TX: Baylor 2012), 169.

³⁰ These last lines are taken from the closing paragraph of "Isaiah 50:4-9a."

³¹ Sermon on Gen 21:8-21, preached at Duke chapel on June 22, 2014, <https://youtu.be/RPy-c1aLTN0?t=36m38s>, accessed 8/24/2017.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ See Eboni Marshall Turman, *Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, the Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). As Turman preaches, one recognizes that Hagar and Ishmael are problematic bodies for Abraham and Sarah. They are also problematic bodies for the Church—bodies that especially challenge an uncritical white, male, cisgendered theology.

³⁴ Turman, "Hagar's Tears."

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Testament, New Testament, and Christian cultural mash-up³⁶ is meant to punctuate the point: “God can take our worst and turn it into God’s best.”³⁷

Here the gospel—the good news—is found in many distinct iterations and locations. Gennifer Brooks argues in *Good News Preaching* that “The good news preacher willingly delves into *all of scripture* to unearth the enlivening, sustaining presence of God in the past, connects it with the present lives of the people, and presents it as future promise and hope.”³⁸ What Turman proclaims is a past, present, and future (non-linear) mash-up. She shows how God enacts God’s contingency plan for what “man means for evil.”³⁹ Near the close of her sermon, Turman further announces transformative good news of God’s intervention, referring in quick succession to Isaiah, Amos, Matthew, Isaiah, Langston Hughes, a Psalm, John, and African slave women singing “Wade in the Water.”⁴⁰

It is perhaps no coincidence that a mash-up of good news ends with a spiritual. Allen Callahan notes that spirituals frequently present a hermeneutic that merges Old Testament and New Testament. “In the old Negro spirituals,” he writes, “the New does not supersede the Old. The two Testaments, Old and New, are correlated to each other. . . . Both bear witness—eternally, equally valid witness—to what God has done and is doing in the world.”⁴¹ Furthermore, spirituals—like the mash-up sections of Turman’s sermon—present a lyrical, impressionistic experience of hope in the face of death. As Luke Powery argues in his work on the spirituals, “This kind of preaching—like singing—doesn’t merely explain something; it does something.”⁴² Thus, by use of scriptural mash-up, Turman embodies an Old Testament text as God’s ongoing, hopeful, good news for her North Carolina congregation and, especially, for the Hagers of today.

Intertextual Dialogue—Alexander Deeg, “O du fröhliche...”⁴³

German homiletician Alexander Deeg focuses much of his research on what Christians can learn from Jewish hermeneutics.⁴⁴ He is a key contributor to the Jewish-Christian dialogue

³⁶ My use of this term is drawn from John McClure, who argues that “theological invention is a matter of stylistically layering four central authorities (tracks): Scripture, culture, theology, and reason,” (*Mashup Religion: Pop Music and Theological Invention* (Waco, TX: Baylor, 2011), 9). While Turman follows this layering in her sermon, I refer to her mash-up as “scriptural” as a way to draw focus upon the inter-testamental hermeneutic of this approach.

³⁷ Turman, “Hagar’s Tears.”

³⁸ Brooks, *Good News Preaching* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2009), 112, emphasis added. While Brooks does not envision a preacher drawing upon multiple texts in one sermon, her emphasis on finding good news in all of scripture—rather than in limited portions—provides a theological and homiletic grounding for Turman’s mash-up.

³⁹ Turman, “Hagar’s Tears.”

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Allen Callahan, *The Talking Book* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 189. As an example, Callahan cites the spiritual, “O Mary Don’t You Weep,” where the Old Testament actually bears witness to the New Testament: “O, Mary, don’t you weep, don’t you mourn; *Pharaoh’s army got drowned*” (190).

⁴² *Dem Dry Bones: Preaching, Death, and Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 102.

⁴³ Alexander Deeg, “O du fröhliche... oder: Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt, dass er es auch 2016 Weihnachten werden lässt” (John 3:16–21). Preached December 24, 2016 in Nikolaikirche, Leipzig, Germany, <https://gottesdienst.theol.uni-leipzig.de/predigten/>, accessed August 28, 2017.

⁴⁴ For examples of his English language work, see “Word Workers: The Rabbinate and the Protestant Pastoral Office in Dialogue” in *Rabbi – Pastor – Priest: Their Roles and Profiles Through the Ages. Studia Judaica 64* (edited by Walter Homolka and Heinz-Günther Schöttler, 303–326. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2013), and especially, “Imagination and Meticulousness: Haggadah and Halakhah in Judaism and Christian Preaching,” *Homiletic Vol 34, No. 1, 2009*. Deeg is also a co-editor for the International Journal of Homiletics (<http://ijhomiletics.org>).

group KLAK, which inspired the working group for the revised lectionary in Germany to increase Old Testament readings by 100 percent for the 2018 revision.⁴⁵ While Deeg largely writes about preaching the Old Testament, his Christmas Eve sermon, examined below, draws on John 3:16-21. This sermon was selected for two reasons. First, Deeg's homiletic—and indeed each homiletic featured in this article—is not merely Old Testament homiletics. Rather they are homiletics that also impact and interpret the New Testament. Second, this particular Deeg sermon frames the Johannine gospel reading with the story of Hanukkah (c.f. 2 Mac 10:1-8). In so doing, the sermon highlights important elements of Deeg's OT homiletic.

Deeg begins his sermon by commenting on how challenging it is in 2016 to sing the old hymn, "O du fröhliche." With the tragic events in Aleppo, Cairo, Nice, and Berlin, and with the rise of post-factual reality-denying ("postfaktische Realitätsverweigerung") that enabled Brexit and Donald Trump, it is difficult to sing, "O, you happy ones..."⁴⁶ And yet, people of God are called time and again recount "The history of the love of God, his irrational, radical love."⁴⁷ Scriptures like John 3:16-21 and feasts like Christmas invite us to seek the light. They remind us, "God so loved the world that [God] does not leave us in our world... God interferes."⁴⁸ At the same time, Christmas and John 3 highlight a human bent to "skotophilia," a love of darkness.⁴⁹

Where Deeg's sermon becomes interesting for OT homiletics is when he introduces a new interlocutor to the hymn/John/Christmas conversation. Here Deeg refers to Hanukkah as a way of disrupting his congregation's assumptions.⁵⁰ Deeg draws attention to the *Jewish* presence in Leipzig, in Christian liturgy, and in celebrations of light.⁵¹ In his article on worship and Israel's presence, Deeg argues that the liturgist/preacher should not ignore Jewish texts or treat them with synchronic reductions that replace "Israel" with "Church."⁵² Rather, he presents a homiletic that seeks to orchestrate an encounter open to Israel's presence,⁵³ allowing and even encouraging it to be a disturbance to Christian theological assumptions.⁵⁴ In his sermon, Deeg emphasizes that in 2016, the Weihnachtsfest and the jüdische Chanukka-Fest begin on the same day.⁵⁵ Christians are not the only, nor even the first, to celebrate God's gift of light. Neither are

⁴⁵ See the Konferenz Landeskirchlicher Arbeitskreise Christen und Juden (KLAK), <http://www.perikopenmodell.de/index.html>, accessed August 28, 2017. Note: Deeg is also a member of the lectionary revision working group.

⁴⁶ Deeg "O du fröhliche" 1. All translations are my own.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁰ While one could imagine a Christian preacher speaking about light and illustrating the point by referring to Hanukkah, or including the festival in a mash-up of "light" passages beginning with Genesis, Deeg intends for Hanukkah to interrupt the congregations expectations. In a lecture at the University of Copenhagen, Deeg asserts that "What matters [for preaching] is the disruption which teaches a new way of perceiving, the introduction [to scripture] which leads us into the words, metaphors and stories of the Bible, and the staging of that intertextuality which transcends and changes our world" ("Disruption, Initiation, and Staging: The Theological Challenge of Christian Preaching," Paper presented at the University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark, October 5, 2011, 15).

⁵¹ Deeg, "Gottesdienst in Israels Gegenwart—Liturgie als intertextuelles Phänomen," *Liturgisches Jahrbuch*, 54 (2004): 34-52. As he seeks to show in much of his work, Christian awareness of Jewish presence is not only a post-Shoah responsibility but also a recognition of theological and liturgical reality. Christian liturgy has Jewish roots and heritage (40).

⁵² Ibid., 44.

⁵³ Ibid., 50.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 52.

⁵⁵ Deeg, "O du fröhliche," 2.

Christians the first to grapple with trying times. Jews struggled nearly 200 years before Christ with the greed and destruction of Antiochus IV.

These observations lead Deeg to rewrite John 3:16: “God so loved the world that he gave a new beginning and brought back the light in politically confusing times. Ultimately, chances are bad for darkness and evil. Ultimately, it has long since been lost in the face of the love story of God.”⁵⁶ Notice here that Deeg reframes Christmas as one part of God’s Hanukkah light intervention. Notice also that the “only begotten Son” has been disturbed from its location in the verse. This is not a rejection of the Messiah but an attempt to unsettle Christian messianic assumptions. As Deeg argues elsewhere,

To assert the fulfillment of Messianic promise in the face of the unsolved world can only be done if the message of the Old Testament is allegorized and spiritualized—or if the Old Testament is completely disposed of, and it is no longer significantly recognized as the Christian canon. Conversely, the Jewish “no” to the Christian confession of the Messiah is in the overflow of the promise and thus becomes the basis of a renewed and common hope for and work in this world.... At the same time, Christians are placed on the side of Israel.⁵⁷

Deeg’s goal here is to complicate the congregation’s ideas of messianic *fulfillment*—and at Christmas no less! However, he intends no scrooge-like Christological “humbug.” Rather, he wants to lead the congregation to commit to join with Jews in an ongoing politically-acting, messiah-awaiting movement, not beholden to a progress project but open to God’s surprising interruption of time.⁵⁸ Deeg punctuates this point at the end of his sermon with references to “today” and to the “future” where the *postfaktische* world will be interrupted by God’s “pre-factual reality,” and “We will live in light and the truth.”⁵⁹

Transcontextual Spiral—Eunjoo Mary Kim, “Surprise, Surprise, Within and Beyond the Church”⁶⁰

Before analyzing Eunjoo Mary Kim’s sermon, a few words need to be said about her homiletic. In *Preaching the Presence of God*, Kim set about “dismantling the imperialism of Western Homiletics.”⁶¹ As such, she critiques Barth’s homiletic as Christologically reductive,⁶² and proposes a focus upon Asian American preaching that is spiritual, holistic, consensus-building, and Trinitarian in its language. The sermonic form she suggests is an inductive spiral

⁵⁶ In German: “Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt, dass er in politisch verwirrenden Zeiten einen neuen Anfang schenkte und das Licht zurückbrachte. Letztlich stehen die Chancen schlecht für die Finsternis und das Böse. Letztlich hat es längst verloren angesichts der Liebesgeschichte Gottes” (Deeg, “O du fröhliche,” 3).

⁵⁷ Deeg, “Die Kirche und das Alte Testament oder: Die Hebräische Bibel zwischen Lust, Last und Leidenschaft,” *Evangelische Theologie* 77.2 (April 2017): 132-145, 142. My translation.

⁵⁸ c.f. Deeg’s seven theses about messianic preaching in “Messianisch predigen: Ein Nachwort,” Pages lix-lxviii in *Predigtmeditationen im christlich-jüdischen Kontext* (Wernsbach: Studium in Israel, 2016), lxvi-lxviii.

⁵⁹ Deeg, “O du fröhliche,” 3.

⁶⁰ A sermon on Gen 11:1-9 and Rom 12:1-8 in *Preaching in an Age of Globalization* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 131–139.

⁶¹ Kim, *Preaching the Presence of God: A Homiletic from an Asian American Perspective*. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999), 5.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 87.

that moves around and around a subject until it reaches the central point.⁶³ In *Preaching in an Age of Globalization*, Kim compares her approach to preaching to earlier projects on contextual theology (for instance, Tisdale's *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*). Without denying the importance of engaging the local context, though qualifying that there is no longer any local that has not been touched by "powerful outside forces,"⁶⁴ Kim asserts that preachers should focus upon the "interwovenness of the context between the local and the global."⁶⁵ Her "transcontextual" approach "demands that the preacher read and interpret the text with others from various social points of reference."⁶⁶ Kim offers here a homiletic that (1) invites listeners to become agents of change,⁶⁷ (2) is "sensitive to power dynamics among different readers,"⁶⁸ and (3) leads hearers to share others' suffering and pain while envisioning a common future.⁶⁹ With this understanding of preaching, it is easy to see how Kim's approach can shape an OT homiletic.

Kim begins her sermon with a nod to the diversity and unity of the Trinity as seen in scripture: Genesis 11:1-9 is read by a three-voice ensemble and Romans 12:1-8 by a single voice. From here Kim circles around events in Korea, the United States, the Old Testament, and the New Testament. Her central point is that God desires diversity and wants to free the world from controlling homogeneity, which often is accompanied by horrible consequences: "ethnic genocide, racial cleansing, and divisions within religious communities."⁷⁰ In Korea, Kim notes her surprise that the country has become more multiracial and multicultural. At the same time, many churches have become gripped by a fear of diversity.⁷¹ In Babel, people thought it good to build a tower to protect "their homogeneity in race and language," but "God was not so happy about the people's desire to be a unified group."⁷² In Romans, Paul—"the apostle of Christian diversity"—seems to understand the story of the tower of Babel as good news of God's grace. Drawing upon the body metaphor, he announces that God in Jesus has destroyed "the controlling power of the tower of Babel," and created a diverse community linked with and dependent upon the Spirit's *charismata*.⁷³ Here all three persons of the Trinity are shown dancing to the same salvific tune: "Jesus Christ threatens our traditional identities, which are dependent on race, nationality, and social and economic status";⁷⁴ "the Spirit of God...[has] empowered us to envision 'a different world' for the present and the future";⁷⁵ and the work of God from Babel to today sets a world held captive by homogeneity free to celebrate God's jubilee.⁷⁶ So now, despite fears in Korea and in the United States, Kim narrates that many churches are practicing a

⁶³ Ibid., 123.

⁶⁴ Kim, *Preaching in an Age of Globalization* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 41.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 66.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 64.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 80.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 109.

⁷⁰ Kim, "Surprise, Surprise" in *Preaching in an Age of Globalization* 136.

⁷¹ Ibid., 134.

⁷² Ibid., 135.

⁷³ Ibid., 136.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 137.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 139.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 139.

ministry of diversity.⁷⁷ Then she invites the congregation to share their own witness to God's work, recounting their "surprising stories within and beyond the church!"⁷⁸

The above example of Kim's transcontextual spiral offers important insights for preaching the Old Testament. With her approach, Hebrew texts become another context, an *other*, who pushes us out of our racial, linguistic, and theological homogeneity. At the same time, the Old Testament is a text about "our God"—the Three-in-One who works through time and Testaments for the deliverance of the world. By joining in God's *perichoretic* dance, swinging from local to national to global, from New Testament to Old Testament to religious tradition, and from past to present to future, Kim empowers her hearers to live and act in step with the God who in all times and places is the creator, redeemer and sustainer.

Theological Conclusions

As the above survey has attempted to show, each of the five sermons offers a distinct approach to preaching the Old Testament that is not beholden to a historical/Christological binary. This survey is meant to be suggestive. It is meant to spur further research into numerous—perhaps even better—approaches to preaching the Old Testament.

At the same time, these five sermons offer some guidelines for evaluating which OT homiletics to include in such research. Specifically, each of the five preachers challenge hermeneutics of power, re-envision Christology, and portray the "Old" Testament as a word that speaks today. Such interests, I contend, are not coincidental but central to effective Christian proclamation of the Old Testament today.

First, each homiletician challenges hermeneutics of power. Brueggemann critiques empire and questions the real "life" power of the ruling class. Campbell seeks to encourage those who speak against the slow violence of climate change, the mistreatment of immigrants, and the injustices of the global economy. Turman confronts patriarchal and religious systems that exploit people of other races, genders, and economic statuses. Deeg grapples with the church's anti-Semitic legacy and the world's post-factual nationalism. Kim confronts destructive homogeneity and fear of diversity. What all five homileticians demonstrate is that the Old Testament is most readily and perhaps best proclaimed today by attending to the dynamics of righteousness (*tzedakah*) and justice (*mishpat*) in the text, reading with and for the marginalized other. For this reason alone, I suggest that further insights into OT preaching might best be found in the homiletic work of people experiencing marginalization.

Second, each homiletician re-envision Christology. In his Ash Wednesday sermon Brueggemann never names, but only alludes to, Christ. Campbell inverts typology from Christ to Isaiah. Turman mashes up accounts of God, Jesus, and the Spirit. Deeg rewrites John 3:16 to interrupt messianic expectations and include an awareness of Jewish presence. Kim focuses on explicitly Trinitarian articulations of God's good work in the world. These examples suggest that preaching the Old Testament well today requires one to wrestle with how best to articulate the presence of God. This is not to suggest that Christo-centric Barthian or Christo-telic evangelical approaches be scrapped entirely. Rather, they should be queried for their implicit, intended, and unintended biases. At the very least, they should be contextualized by experimental and traditional Trinitarian articulations of God.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 137.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 139.

Finally, each of the five homileticians surveyed demonstrates that preaching the Old Testament well today requires one to portray the “Old” Testament as a word that actually speaks *today*. Brueggemann uses intentional anachronism to connect our world and Elijah’s world. Campbell leads his congregation to pray Isaiah’s prayer as their own. Turman breaks the linearity of time, demonstrating a God who continually speaks a liberating word. Deeg invites his hearers to look for God’s light breaking into the darkness of political chaos “*Heute*.” Kim shows that God’s work in Babel *is* God’s work in Romans *is* God’s work in our globalized world today. For each of these preachers “Old” is merely a potential adjective for the Testament, like “First” or “Hebrew.” In their preaching, the Testament is no relic of the past or figment for allegorical manipulation. Rather, the Old Testament is a living word that God speaks in and through *today*.

The shared interest of these sermons also offers the homiletician three helpful handles for evaluating Old Testament preaching. For instance, one might ask of students preaching the Old Testament in an introductory course:

How does this sermon address dynamics of power?

How does this sermon articulate the presence of God?

How does this sermon present the text as a word that speaks today?

Such questions might not only spur constructive feedback, but they might help students discover creative alternatives to the 19th century binary of Christology or historical criticism (without necessarily nullifying either possibility).⁷⁹ Such questions might even lead to a more constructive, diverse, and theologically rich Old Testament homiletic.

⁷⁹ I am grateful to Lance Pape for helping me see this point more clearly.

Annette Brownlee. *Preaching Jesus Christ Today: Six Questions for Moving from Scripture to Sermon*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. 185 pages. \$22.99.

Annette Brownlee is chaplain, professor of pastoral theology, and director of field education at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto. She has extensive experience in parish work, as well. It is out of these shared experiences that she writes this current volume. Brownlee views preaching Jesus Christ as a “theological practice” (x). She organizes her work around six questions involved in developing the sermon, which are designed to help the preacher “look attentively at Scripture and understand how to interpret the text and preach what she sees” (7).

The first question, “What do I see?” calls the preacher to a purposeful, thoughtful reading of the text. This attentive reading of the Scripture looks at the details that the text offers to understand what they mean for the preacher. Brownlee encourages the minister to study difficult texts because “The art of attentive reading the strange, sometime difficult words of Scripture is similar to the ability to love our neighbor across the chasm of difference and offense” (22).

The second question, “Whom do I see?” urges the preacher to find where Jesus Christ is in the text. The preacher moves from witnessing the text to testifying to what has been seen. Brownlee emphasizes that while not every sermon is to be about Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ is the revealed Word of God and the preacher seeks how that Word applies to the church. This reading of Scripture theologically requires reading the text with a disciplined imagination, which is a developed skill (46).

The third question, “What is Christ’s word to me?” seeks God’s word for one’s self. Brownlee notes how the monotony of weekly sermon preparation, among the other duties of ministry, can lead one not to be attentive to the text. The attentive reading of the text requires the reader to see what the text is doing in her life and how it offers both grace and judgement. This positions the preacher as confessor.

The fourth question, “What is Christ’s word to us?” addresses the church in a particular context. It moves the preacher from confessor to theologian as it asks what Christ is saying to the congregation. The dual action of grace in judgment moves from “me” to a corporate “us.” Brownlee call this a “communal hermeneutic” in which “we listen, interpret, and respond together” (75).

The fifth question, “What is Christ’s word about us?” asks how the text addresses the brokenness of the church’s life. Just as the text affects the preacher’s life, it also has effects on the lives of those in the congregation. Brownlee sees this as a shared identity that is not to be coercive or manipulative. Christ’s word to us, she says, is “a reminder that preaching is about discerning the body—our own mortality, our ungodliness, Christ’s marred and glorious body, and our shared yet difficult life in just this body” (100).

The final question, “What does it look like?” speaks to the development of the sermon for delivery. She addresses the use of stories in the sermon, emphasizing their need to be connected to the sermon: “Stories can witness to the Christ revealed in Scripture, as recognized and responded to by the people in the story” (122).

Brownlee includes a chapter that guides the reader through these six questions in actual sermon preparation. She concludes her book by emphasizing that love is the “hermeneutical criterion” for developing the sermon, the love ultimately found in Jesus Christ.

Brownlee offers a well-written guide to the preparation of a sermon. She provides ample examples and illustrations on this journey. On one level some may think that this work is just another take on sermon preparation. However, what the author offers is a renewed call to being

attentive to scripture in the research and development of the sermon. This in and of itself merits its importance for both the student and the seasoned minister.

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Courtney G. Goto. *Taking on Practical Theology: The Idolization of Context and the Hope for Community*. Boston: Brill, 2018. 292 pages. \$61.

In critical reflection on practical theology's complicated history and position within the academy, some practical theologians have recently addressed intellectual and practical dilemmas within the field in *Conundrums in Practical Theology* (2016). One of the contributors to *Conundrums*, Courtney T. Goto, admirably continues *taking on* this demanding task in her new book, *Taking on Practical Theology: The Idolization of Context and the Hope for Community*. Goto identifies and explores another central "conundrum" in the discipline: the idolization of context, namely how practical theologians approach context in their own practice, research, and teaching.

By "taking on" the field, Goto intends to do two particular tasks: first, to challenge "what is taken for granted in the very way we 'do' practical theology," and, second, to reflect on "what is problematic and implicit in producing practical theological knowledge" (1). The primary concern of this project came from the recognition that practical theologians, those influenced predominantly by white North American, Western European, and Protestant perspectives, have often used the term "context" superficially, which Goto names the "idolization of context." In other words, theologians tend to idolize context by "taking as normative their own cultural, theological, gendered, and/or disciplinary frame of reference, all the while believing they are being helpful and even attentive to 'context'" (5). One striking example can be found in a seminary classroom, where the course readings predominantly represent "a male, Eurocentric, heterosexual point of view," and an instructor fails to recognize how the syllabus reflects and privileges only his own context (5).

After a sharp and provocative introduction, Goto explores how knowledge has been produced in the field, which offers a theoretical background for an analysis of "idolization of context" in Part I (chapters 1-2). Goto describes this process by drawing on the notion of paradigm from Thomas Kuhn, which unveils how a specific paradigm could suppress "the minoritized," and damages "the integrity of the community as whole" (45). In response, Goto challenges those in the field to exercise "prophetic tactics" as a community to reform knowledge production. By creatively merging Walter Brueggemann's idea of "prophetic imagination" and Rey Chow's notion of "tactic," Goto demonstrates how prophetic imagination opens up the possibility for practical theologians to be tactical, which means to be "an insider and an outsider to multiple groups in order to challenge oppression" (59).

In Part II (chapters 3-6), Goto inspects the paradigm in the research methods of practical theology by addressing the idolization of context in the notable research of several practical theologians, in critical conversation with her own ethnographic case study of Filipino American Catholic community in Florida. According to this careful examination, what these practical theologians failed to employ is a critical intersubjective approach that enables "all participants in the research process [to] practice critical awareness of themselves, others, and other interaction as they discern 'context'" (97). Goto proposes a critical intersubjective approach as an appropriate tool for practical theologians to use in empowering, facilitating, and collaborating with members of faith communities to reflect theologically about their own situations in research process.

Last but not least, Part III (chapters 7-9) focuses on thinking about how to develop habits of "identifying and revising idols" in teaching (193), so that instructors and students may become co-researchers and colleagues in a community that beautifully embodies "the prophetic tradition

that is essential to practical theology” (189). In the closing chapter, Goto earnestly invites her readers to enter and co-create “a critical intersubjective space,” where the author and readers can examine the nature of their differences and engage in richer work on issues of privilege and oppression in doing practical theological endeavors.

Goto’s weighty work will be difficult reading for people outside the field because all chapters assume a level of knowledge that non-experts do not have. But this might be the same for practical theologians in the field who may feel destabilized even acknowledging “the pervasiveness of the idolization of context.” The act of “taking on” is not an easy task. As Goto reminds us throughout the book, it requires “courage, vulnerability, and perseverance” (2). I believe that’s what makes Goto’s particular contribution commendable for taking on practical theology with courage, self-reflexivity, and even professional risk. It truly demonstrates the author’s and her allies’ hope and commitment to create a more ethical and loving practical theology community.

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Vasileios Marinis. *Death and the Afterlife in Byzantium: The Fate of the Soul in Theology, Liturgy, and Art*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017. 202 pages. \$105.

Religious belief and practice are messy—they can vary widely across communities and time, and they are not always consistent with doctrine. While a student of church history might acquire the (false) impression that there was a single dominant or representative belief at a given time, history—as usual—is more complicated. *Death and the Afterlife in Byzantium: The Fate of the Soul in Theology, Liturgy, and Art* demonstrates that there were in fact many simultaneous discourses (as reflected in the plural titles of the book’s two parts: “Theologies” and “Liturgies”).

In *Death and the Afterlife in Byzantium*, Vasileios Marinis sets out to investigate what the Byzantines believed happened after death. More specifically, Marinis focuses on the phenomena of provisional judgment (as opposed to, say, the Last Judgment) and the “intermediate state,” that is “the period from death to the Last Judgment” (1). Although the book does address precedents in Jewish literature and the early Christian texts, it largely focuses on Byzantine Christianity during the ninth century through the fifteenth century. It is intended primarily for a specialist audience—namely, graduate students and scholars of Byzantine art and theology; however, Marinis’ clear prose may make this book accessible for a wider readership. As he notes, “the fate of the soul after death is still for many a topic of momentous consequence” (133).

Illustrated with thirty-eight figures, the book is organized into two parts. The first, “Theologies,” traces motifs related to the intermediate state from the Jewish apocrypha that influenced early Christian conceptions to increasingly systematic and detailed articulations in the Middle Byzantine period, which then culminated in the unique context of the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1445)—an attempt at reconciliation between the Latin and Greek churches. Marinis’ sources include saints’ lives, theological treatises, apocryphal texts, frescoes, mosaics, and manuscript illustrations. Of his visual sources, Marinis rightly notes, “they are not mere illustrations of the written word. Rather, they interpret and comment on the text’s meaning, and often they impart subtle theological points that require a serious engagement from the viewer” (5, see also 72-3). Every artistic rendering, no matter how simple, involves a process of editing: “A composition involves a process of inclusion and omission; what is depicted and what is left out is of great significance” (49).

The second half of the book, titled “Liturgies,” investigates expressions of provisional judgment and the intermediate period in funeral and commemorative rites, prayers for the dying, and the remembrance of the dead at the Divine Liturgy. Here Marinis notes that these sources, which emphasize Christ’s role as judge, vary greatly from nonliturgical sources because liturgies have a special function and draw primarily on biblical texts (83-4). The prayers for the dying and the rite of unction are distinct from other liturgies because of their emphasis on intercessory prayer. (The book concludes with an appendix of the original Greek and Marinis’ translation of the *Kanon eis Psychorragounta*, the prayers for the dying.) After chapter four, “Visualizing the Afterlife,” of Part I, chapter eight, “Two Exceptional Services,” is the book’s other image-focused chapter. Its visual material consists of illustrations of the *Kanon eis Psychorragounta*, found in a late-twelfth to early-thirteenth century manuscript of monastic hours, and in fresco cycles found in a thirteenth-century chapel at Chilandar Monastery at Mount Athos and the fourteenth-century exonarthex of St. Sophia, Ohrid. Marinis demonstrates that these images do not merely illustrate the *kanon*, but “represent conscious choices intended to elucidate and enhance the message of the hymns” (122).

Marinis manages to accomplish a lot in 202 pages. In addition to its contribution as a study of Byzantine beliefs about the intermediate state, *Death and the Afterlife in Byzantium* is an excellent model for interdisciplinary study, which successfully exhibits the benefit—and even necessity—of seeking theological meaning in a variety of textual and visual sources.

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Fenggang Yang, Joy Tong and Allan H. Anderson, eds. *Global Chinese Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity*. Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, Vol. XXII. Leiden: Brill, 2017. 373 pages. \$57.

Global Chinese Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity is a rich collection of chapters that touch important dimensions of the intersection between one of the largest Christian movements, Pentecostalism, and one of the largest nations, China, and its cultures. It is important to note that the book describes the rich diversity in Chinese cultures and the way these particular expressions have embraced and express Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity. It is a fascinating reminder that in 1949 there were not even one million Pentecostal Christians in China. At the time of the writing of this book, the number is estimated to be around 80 million.

This book consists of four different sections. The first section deals with foundational issues so that novices to Pentecostalism or people unfamiliar with Chinese culture may interact with the topic intelligently. The book progresses in its theological and cultural complexity to examine mainstream Pentecostal issues in Chinese culture. The third section works through Chinese churches that are more charismatic in nature and where Pentecostal is an adjective describing affinities to Pentecostal-like practices. The fourth section deals with more marginal charismatic churches and with more of the Chinese diaspora, including Malaysia and Singapore.

Overall, these chapters work through the commonalities and differences between the different Chinese churches, such as Pentecostal Truths, Popular Gospel Truth, Patriotic Pentecostals, and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. The chapters also labor through the interaction of culture and Pentecostal or charismatic Christianity. One particular chapter that caught my interest was related to interreligious dialogue where the author described the interaction between Confucianism and the Pentecostal church (118-136). This chapter reveals how Pentecostalism may appeal to local culture in order to construct a sustainable order inside the church (135). Pentecostalism and culture interweave and evolve dialectically (136).

One of the strengths of this book is that it seeks to debunk stereotypes of Pentecostal Christianity in China. Immediately the reader is confronted with the reality that much of Chinese Pentecostalism has developed independently from the Western world. Furthermore, it calls for a renewed look at these expressions, giving the Chinese churches necessary space to talk about themselves from their own contexts. For example, in the beginning the reader is challenged with the name that Pentecostalism gives itself in China, which differs from a Western notion of Pentecostalism (17). The churches in this study are diverse and more “Pentecostal-like” than remaining true to a classic Western Pentecostal definition.

Despite its uniqueness, Chinese Pentecostalism has many commonalities with the rise of Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America (41). Pentecostal Christianity is an easily adaptable religion that travels and takes on characteristics of its current location (59). As it settled into its new home within China, the Pentecostal movement initiated a new form of Chinese Christianity. This form grew and expanded into a stream of diverse expressions in China and beyond through the Chinese diaspora.

Another important dimension of this book is the social presence of Pentecostals in China. For many reasons, missionaries empowered local leaders. They launched missions among the poor, provided education for women, and reached out to remote villages. In doing so, they challenged social, gender, economic, and geographical boundaries, but “also exemplified what a revival Christian should be concerned about—not personal prosperity and health, but the downtrodden millions who bore physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering” (87).

The editors have done good work in exposing the reader to Pentecostal and charismatic expressions of Christianity in Chinese cultures. It must be said that this diaspora is so large it would be impossible to record all the different expressions of Chinese culture and Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity. Nonetheless, the reader gets a good sense of how these interact in different places of the globe.

This particular book is of interest to theologians, historians, and people interested in Chinese cultures and Pentecostalism as a whole. It is a good book to use in a contextual theology course or as an introduction to Pentecostalism.

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Maurice Elliott and Patrick McGlinchey, eds. *Perspectives on Preaching: A Witness of the Irish Church*. Dublin: Church of Ireland Publishing, 2017. 244 pages. £10.00/€11.00.

As the title implies, this collection seeks to present a “uniquely contextualised” Irish perspective on preaching (8). Three essays appear under the category of “Preaching Scripture.” “What Does Scripture Say About Preaching?” by Ferran Glenfield, offers a general overview of preaching in the Old and New Testaments as paradigmatic for ministry today. “Emotion and Encounter in the Witness of Israel’s Prophetic Poets,” by Katie M. Heffelfinger, documents the emotively evocative character of prophetic language in Jeremiah, Hosea, Amos, and Joel, making a plea for more experientially oriented modes of discourse: “preachers...should seek to lead their congregations into encounters with the God who speaks in and through the text” (44). On the subject of “Narrative Preaching,” Robin Stockitt identifies six narrative principles in Ezekiel’s story of the valley of dry bones (Intention, Origin, Sequencing, Omissions, Inclusions, and Emphasis). Citing Ricoeur, this essay mostly concerns narrative analysis rather than homiletical theory or practice in particular.

Commencing the section on “Denominational Charisms,” Maurice Elliott reflects “On the *Book of Common Prayer* and the Task of Preaching.” Elliott opposes inductive and subjectivist tendencies in the “New Homiletic,” as represented by “Craddock, Childers and Long” (66–67), whose work is not directly cited. Rather, “Anglican preaching is intended to encourage those who listen in accordance with the gospel message and the theological intention of the Prayer Book” (69). The essay thus accords the *Book of Common Prayer* a regulatory function equivalent to that of Scripture itself. In “Preaching and Celebrating, Word and Sacrament: Inseparable Signs of the Church,” Patrick Comerford explores the balance of word and sacrament within Anglicanism, then reviews the entire sweep of church history to countermand any “false dichotomy” (83) between the two. Adopting the opposite perspective, Trevor Morrow (former moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland) addresses “Preaching in the Reformed Tradition.” Reciting Reformation formularies “in which the preacher is the mouthpiece of God” (95), he names Scripture, Christology, use of the vernacular, and anointing of the Holy Spirit as “key elements” in this tradition (102–103). “The Task of Preaching: A Methodist Perspective,” by Brian Fletcher, reviews John Wesley’s preaching ministry (particularly in Ireland), then discusses factors that contributed to his effectiveness: anointing, reliance on Scripture, breadth of learning, simplicity of style, and sustained attention to nurturing converts. Insisting that “Preaching is at the heart of the Catholic experience” (“The Roman Catholic Experience,” 129), Shane Crombie chronicles the shift in theological emphasis between the First and Second Vatican Councils and recounts the history of Catholic preaching missions in Ireland. His exposition of the *Homiletic Directory* (2014) notes the centrality of preaching based on “the Word of God” within contemporary Catholicism.

The final four essays are designated “Preaching to the Culture.” In “The Business of Preaching and the World of Literature,” Richard Clarke (Anglican Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland) argues for “imaginative and creative use of language” as an act of resistance to “a culture where words have become denuded of all resonance and subtlety” (161). Barry Forde describes the challenges of “Preaching in a University Context.” He finds resources for addressing religious and cultural pluralism in the pluriformity of the biblical witness, and relates how his own ministry encompasses a variety of strategies for outreach within the university community. Harold Miller contends that “preaching is a priestly kind of exercise...surely the highest possible calling this side of eternity” (“The Preacher: The Person

and the Passion,” 177). He discusses “passion” within “evangelistic,” “expository,” “inspirational,” and “meditative” forms of preaching, advocating diversity of homiletical styles so as to accommodate differences of personality and learning style. Patrick McGlinchey’s “Preaching to the De-Churched and the Unchurched in Contemporary Ireland” is the only essay that consistently addresses cultural concerns. McGlinchey follows Tim Keller (who follows Jonathan Edwards) in proposing that preaching “affectionately,” “imaginatively,” and “Christologically” (202–205) is required to engage “Felt Needs and the Postmodern Imagination” (the title of the final section [205–10]). McGlinchey also provides a “Conclusion,” summarizing common themes, areas of obvious disagreement (“Apparent Dissonance”), and topics for further exploration.

This volume offers an intriguing glimpse into various debates and concerns within “the Irish church.” Nine of the twelve essays are by Anglicans and only one by a Roman Catholic; just one is by a woman. Although Heffelfinger, Stockitt, Crombie, and McGlinchey are notable exceptions, the majority of contributors appear to plot a course independent of recent homiletical discussion elsewhere. Accordingly, this collection will primarily be of interest to those already familiar with the contemporary Irish and/or UK scene.

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Marianne Gaarden. *The Third Room of Preaching: The Sermon, the Listener, and the Creation of Meaning*. The Westminster Homiletics Monograph Series (published in digital format). Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018. 158 pages. \$16.50.

As the first volume published in the Westminster Homiletics Monograph Series (in partnership with Christian Theological Seminary and endorsed by the Academy of Homiletics), *The Third Room of Preaching* offers a bold and substantive contribution to the field of homiletics in general and collaborative preaching in particular. True to the purposes of the Series in promoting critical scholarship and conversations about preaching, Danish homiletician Marianne Gaarden's empirical study of sermon listeners and preachers focuses on how listeners interact with and create meaning when hearing sermons. Her work is based on qualitative interviews with preachers and listeners in five Danish churches, and challenges the "transfer model" that has dominated much of European and North American homiletics (i.e., assuming that the kerygma may be extracted from the biblical text and transferred by the preacher into the consciousness of the listeners), replacing it with "an understanding of the sermon as an interactive event, generating meaning in the consciousness of the listener in the dynamic interplay between preacher and listener" (47).

Gaarden outlines the contributions of empirical studies of sermon listeners in both northern European and North American contexts (chapter 1) and critiques homiletical models that assume preachers are able to regulate how listeners create meaning in dialogue with the sermon (including proponents of the New Homiletic). Appreciative of collaborative models that respect the "otherness" of sermon listeners (e.g., those developed by John S. McClure, Ronald J. Allen, O. Wesley Allen, Jr.), Gaarden similarly rejects a hegemonic understanding of sermon listeners (chapter 2). However, she challenges the notion that preachers may bridge the gap between themselves and listeners by gaining closer proximity or familiarity with them in their local, embodied existence (58). Instead, her study reveals that new meanings and understandings emerge for listeners during the moment of worship or afterward, suggesting that a Third Room is entered during the preaching moment where the listener's own experiences are met with the words of the preacher, creating a surplus of meaning in the creative interplay of listener and sermon.

In chapter 3, Gaarden presents the five main results of her analysis of the listener interviews: (1) the significance of the preacher's ethos (especially his/her authenticity and attitude), (2) the reciprocal relationship between the preacher and the listener (i.e., preaching as a relationally defined interaction with listeners inspired by the preacher and the preacher dependent upon the listeners' attention), (3) the different dialogical interactions between listeners and the sermon itself (i.e., between the words of the preacher and the internal dialogue of the listener, as some listeners were *confirmed* and some were *moved* by the preacher's words; with listeners employing associative, critical, and contemplative interactions with the preacher's words), (4) the importance of each listener's situated starting point (i.e., the listener's life situation and experiences encountered anew within the context of public worship), and (5) the sermon as an intersubjective production of meaning (i.e., listeners relating fragments of the preacher's words to their own experiences, resulting in new insights and meaning-making). According to Gaarden, "The encounter between the listeners' inner experience and the preacher's outer words facilitates... *the Third Room of Preaching*, in which the listeners in an internal dialogue create a surplus of meaning that was previously not present in either the preacher's intent or the listener's frame of reference" (107).

Among the most significant contributions of Gaarden's work is her adaptation of the social constructionist theory of Barnett Pearce, who views communication as a meaning-making process that develops through the relational connection among people—never done in isolation but always and necessarily coordinated in the way we manage our meanings with other people (93). Of theological and spiritual significance is Gaarden's assertion that "something more is at work" in the preaching moment beyond the rational and semantic meaning-making we associate with sermons "which may move the focus from words to spirit" (69). Her brief allusion to "an immanent experience of transcendence" in chapter 4 is not developed or explored beyond suggesting that the preacher serves as a "tool" (not the carpenter) in working with God to construct the Third Room of Preaching. A brief appendix suggests a shift from "sermon formation" to "preacher formation" in homiletical teaching to encourage students to reflect upon their own practices without judgment or critique. Questions of human and divine agency linger throughout the closing pages of Gaarden's work and we are left to ponder what the preacher should focus upon beyond seeking "clarity" (111) and "presenting whole, unified sermons" (115) as s/he prepares to preach. Although we may wonder what the process of sermon preparation and sharing may entail in light of Gaarden's findings, her book suggests areas of fruitful inquiry and the promise of further theological, spiritual, homiletical research to come.

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David Schnasa Jacobsen, ed. *Theologies of the Gospel in Context: The Crux of Homiletical Theology*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017. 176 pages. \$23.

If the gospel does not exist in a vacuum, but is always the gospel *to* someone or *in* a particular context, how might this inform the theological task of preaching? This is the question at the heart of this most recent collection of essays from the third consultation of the Homiletical Theology Project. In this volume, a collection of diverse homileticians address this question and others as they articulate visions of preaching that “names gospel” while “honoring the otherness of texts, the uniqueness of situations, and the particularities of context” (1). Written with both preachers and homileticians in mind, these essays endeavor to take seriously the notion that “the gospel emerges differently in contexts over time and cannot be reduced to a fixed formula” (2).

An introductory essay by David Schnasa Jacobsen supplies the reader with a framework for understanding the aims of the collection, defining key terms, and making important distinctions between contexts and situations. The rest of the essays take on the collection’s governing question, thinking through what the gospel is and how one might proclaim it within a particular context or situation. In chapter 1, André Resner demonstrates how homiletical theology is the conversation that arises between the preacher’s “working gospel” and their context. In chapter 2, Debra Mumford explores the prosperity gospel as it has operated in American history and the rise of the Black middle class. In doing so, Mumford asks preachers to consider how they might proclaim hope within the complexity that is our current capitalist system. In chapter 3, Sarah Travis considers how the gospel of reconciliation might arise in a postcolonial context as quite different parties attempt to relate to one another. Chapter 4 follows a similar theme, as Yohan Go considers what the gospel might mean in light of a Korean context, one with a history of colonization and political turmoil. Chapter 5 turns to questions of trauma, as Joni Sancken reflects on the potential of Holy Saturday as a means for preaching in the context of trauma and human suffering. In the concluding chapter, Jacobsen reflects on how the gospel, understood as promise, might speak a word to the context of the now-disestablished white mainline church.

It would be unfair to the individual essays to try evaluating them in such a short review. Yet there are themes that stretch across the individual works that deserve mention. Primarily, one finds excellent examples of how one might think through a context and situation theologically. These authors do not merely affirm whatever is present in the culture as “gospel,” but also do the hard work of naming where the gospel might “speak against” certain features of a context. This may alleviate the fear of those who often see such calls for “interactions” between gospel and culture as thinly veiled attempts to baptize whatever the culture is already doing. As a result, one finds here works of practical theology in the best sense. This collection also has implications for the working preacher. These essays call for proclamation of the gospel with specificity into the “nitty-gritty” particulars of context. Preachers who take this seriously can no longer leave their “gospel speech” at the level of abstract categories or theological jargon, but will press at every turn to become more specific and concrete about the appearance of gospel in their midst. Were preachers to heed these words, the sermons I routinely hear would dramatically improve.

However, I was also left with questions. One notices a “slippage” with how terms are used across this work as a whole, with the term “gospel” a prime example. The introduction provides an explanation of the term, but reading through the essays revealed a “working disagreement” as to how one should define “gospel.” For example, in one essay the term “gospel” becomes a stand-in for “working theology.” Another essay takes a more traditional

approach and defines “gospel” as the content of Christian preaching, including the death and resurrection of Jesus. These differences raise the question of what the gospel actually is, how we understand it, and whether “articulating” it in context is an act of creation or discovery. However, this is a sign of the beginning of an important conversation within homiletical theology, rather than its end.

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Phillis-Isabella Sheppard, Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm, Ronald J. Allen, eds. *Preaching Prophetic Care: Building Bridges to Justice, Essays in Honor of Dale P. Andrews*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Papers, 2018. 340 pages. \$39.99.

In 2017, we mourned the untimely death of the Rev. Dr. Dale P. Andrews. As his colleagues learned of his illness, they set to the task of gathering essays for a *festschrift* in honor of his work as a homiletician, theologian, teacher, minister, and social justice activist. His legacy of prophetic care and bridge-building was quickly preserved and reseeded into this collection by scholars and practitioners who understood the importance of his work. The twenty-seven chapters are gathered into six parts: preaching and practical theology; the pastoral and prophetic in preaching; prophetic care, preaching, and the wider community; learning to preach in the mode of prophetic care; particular topics; and sermons that embody prophetic care.

Andrews advocated for preaching what he called “prophetic care”—a way of understanding prophetic preaching as an *expression of pastoral care*. Rather than seeing the two aspects of ministry in contrast or even opposition to each other, Andrews saw pastoral care and prophetic proclamation as inextricably fused. When pastors care for their people, they call out sin (especially systemic sin) for the way it harms individuals, families, communities, the nation, and the planet. And when preachers are prophetic, it springs from their deep and empathetic—even suffering—love for God’s people. All of this is done in the spirit of *bridge-building*—seeking ways to span the seemingly uncrossable polarizations between people of different political orientations, religions, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, physical/mental abilities, and socioeconomic strata.

Each of the authors in this volume explains how the pastoral and prophetic are both interdependent and arising from each other. Prophetic care means that the dual callings of confronting sin while also extending loving concern are complementary, interconnected, and interrelated. As Ted Smith describes it:

In the dialectic Andrews envisions, neither the prophetic nor the pastoral disappears into the other. And neither approach must compromise its deepest commitments. Rather, dialogue elucidates the prophetic dimensions already present in the best pastoral practice. And dialogue pushes prophetic theology toward practice in ways that help it fulfill its own telos of making change in the real world. The two approaches remain distinct, even as they require one another for fulfillment (38-9).

Robert London Smith points out that Andrews’ bridging methodology sprang from his endeavor to cross the chasm between black theology (academics) and black folk religion by articulating a “black practical theology.” Yet the lessons and insights he drew from the lives and experiences of black churches and communities are a gift for the whole church. For example, David Schnasa Jacobsen’s essay explores how the white mainline church can create “communities of solidarity” that move past their privileged obliviousness that enables them to turn a blind eye to suffering. Likewise, Amy Steele’s essay highlights the necessary juxtaposition and fusion of divine wrath with divine love, noting that “for Andrews, social justice preaching necessitates an unrelenting love for the other at its core, a core that is always reaching and seeking the others” (240). In other words, for preachers tempted to settle for a more milquetoast version of proclamation that leaves out “the wrath of God’s love,” Andrews’ work is a necessary

corrective. The essays in this book demonstrate how to apply that corrective to different aspects of preaching and ministry.

Andrews' work also inspires creative pedagogy, as seen, for example, in L. Susan Bond's essay, "Building Bridges: Pedagogical Reflections on a Black Lives Matter Resistance Hermeneutic for Preaching," where she describes the art project she assigns for students to help them connect the Jesus Movement and the Black Lives Matter movement and its history. Similarly, the sermons by Luke Powery and Anna Carter Florence show how we can homiletically build "bridges between people rather than the construction of walls on existential borders" (289). In Florence's sermon on Jesus's bridge-building with the woman at the well in the Gospel of John, she articulates both the longing and vision for the church to fulfill its potential in our fractured world: "Wouldn't it be incredible if the church could step up and model what real on-the-border, crossing-the-border, long conversation looks like—if *we* could teach the world to choose a well over a wall?" (293).

Yet, as Ron Allen notes in his essay, not all bridges work, and despite our best efforts some structures will collapse, or at least need repair or restructuring. Allen's chapter includes a section addressing the reality of "bridge failure" and offers sage advice for how to respond, reassess, and rebuild. He also reminds us that while preachers cannot take responsibility for how listeners receive and react to a prophetic sermon, we *are* responsible for "framing the sermon in such a way as to minimize unnecessary interference between the speaking and the hearing, and to offer as clearly as possible optimum opportunities for recognizing the value of embracing a pastoral approach to life and for suggesting initial steps on that journey" (57).

This collection of essays will serve both seasoned preachers as well as those just entering the field. The current fractured state of our body politic seems poised to be our reality for at least a generation, making Andrews' work—and the scholars who've practiced and reflected on his legacy in these chapters—all the more timely and vital for the church. In fact, the church should be one place that actively seeks to build bridges, since the ministry of Jesus embodied bridge-building and prophetic care. As Gennifer Brooks describes it:

True pastoral, prophetic preaching brings into consciousness the word of God for the whole people of God. It is the task of the preacher to build those bridges through offering the proclamation of the good news of God's active presence in the lives of people. It is a pastoral task that bridges the divides that separate and disenfranchises some even from their God-given access to the free grace of God (67).

Indeed, raising up the vision of justice, hope, forgiveness, and reconciliation that is given by the prophets and Jesus Christ is one way to elevate the conversation above the partisan fray. Inspired by Dale Andrews, *Preaching Prophetic Care* offers the church a robust, multi-faceted resource for this holy work of our time.

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Hyveth Williams. *Nothing but the Best: A Guide to Preaching Powerful Sermons*. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2018. 262 pages. \$19.99.

In her timely book, *Nothing but the Best*, Hyveth Williams (*homiletics professor at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University*), draws on the expertise of homiletical giants such as Richard Lischer, Haddon Robinson, Thomas Long, Leonora Tisdale and others to weave together a theoretical, methodical, and practical guide for great preaching. After documenting her personal philosophy of preaching and lamenting the dearth of great preaching, Williams underscores the all-important point that great preaching is born out of a solid theological foundation for preaching. For her, preaching that is biblical must adhere to three principles: (1) hermeneutics, (2) sound exegesis of the text, congregation, preaching situation and the preacher, and (3) authority. The author climaxes the section with a succinct overview of prophetic preaching and is quick to point out that “prophetic preaching is a form of proclamation distinct from preaching biblical prophecy” (46).

The second part of the book, captioned “Methodology,” discusses the different techniques and principles that should characterize great preaching. In chapter 4, Williams addresses the disconnect that exists between the preachers’ world and that of their listeners. It is admirable that she not only highlights the factors to be blamed for this discrepancy, such as bad hermeneutics and poor rhetorical skills, but also provides some credible solutions. The recommended solutions include sound exegesis, quality time for sermon preparation, employing the Aristotelian styles of rhetoric, and a love for language. Chapter 5 provides a summary of different types of sermons, such as expository, textual, topical narrative, prophetic, Black or African American, biographical, liturgical, redemptive-historical, illuminative, conversational or relational, system-sensitive, deductive, and inductive. Williams also examines different sermon delivery styles and underscores the salient point that “no matter how great the content of a sermon, without clear vocal communication or expression, the delivery will be dismal” (96). She concludes this section of the book with an analysis of the literary genres of the Bible and the best practices to observe when using them in sermons. Her exploration covers the genres of the psalms, parables, epistles and narratives.

In the third part of the book, entitled “Praxis,” Williams laments the “tremendous paradigm shift in worship style and content as music, drama, praise dancing, and video presentations usurped the centrality of preaching” (126). In reestablishing the primacy of preaching in the life of the church, the author advocates that the content of worship should achieve “a biblical balance in which preaching is the lamp to the worshippers’ feet” (134). In chapter 8, Williams tackles the devaluation of the spiritual gifts of women, especially as it relates to the ministry of preaching. One cannot help noticing that rather than spending most of her time recounting the negative treatments meted out to female preachers, she focuses mainly on equipping her fellow women preachers with practical strategies that will greatly enhance their preaching abilities. She summarizes her arguments by calling for a greater spirit of collaboration between preachers of either gender. Chapter 9 reminds preachers that although the cultural shifts and diverse generations warrant a change in the approach to preaching, it is important that preachers remain biblical and relational when preaching to the contemporary mind. In chapter 10, Williams encourage preachers to ensure their sermons cater to the needs of all their congregants and not just a select group. Stories should be incorporated in sermons to connect with children, and technology and mass media should be utilized to convey the gospel to those who are outside the walls of the church. Chapter 11 rounds out this section with its focus on

examples of different sermon illustrations and how to use them effectively to consistently preach nothing but the best (181).

In the final section of this volume, Williams provides her readers with full-length manuscripts of some of the different types of sermons she discusses in the book. The sample sermons include prophetic, expository, textual, and topical styles.

This masterpiece on preaching will prove beneficial to all who desire to improve their preaching prowess. The experienced preacher will be reminded of the best practices of preaching and how to hone their preaching skills. On the other hand, the inexperienced preacher will learn how to avoid the common pitfalls of preaching, and how to prepare and effectively preach biblically sound and practical sermons. Furthermore, Williams' book is a wonderful resource for present and future female preachers.

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James H. Cone. *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Book, 2011. 202 pages. \$25.

At first, the cross and the lynching tree may not seem related to each other; they are separated by two thousand years and different socio-political contexts. Although both of these reflect death, the cross has been interpreted as the message of hope and salvation in Christianity and the lynching tree as the symbol of racism and injustice. While many preachers and theologians have missed the link between them, James Cone creatively brings them together because he believes “the cross placed alongside the lynching tree can help us to see Jesus in America in a new light, and thereby empower people who claim to follow him to take a stand against white supremacy and every kind of injustice” (xix). Although the cross seems to lose its significance these days, Cone attempts to place it on the center of Christianity in America because it theologically reflects much black suffering today.

In the first chapter, “Nobody Knows De Trouble I See,” Cone describes how lynching came to be pervasive in North America as a means to keep the country white, especially after the Civil War. Although black people could not actively protest for their dignity and rights, Cone argues that blues music enabled them to affirm their humanity and religion to find hope in God (18). In the second chapter, “The Terrible Beauty of the Cross,” Cone critically engages Reinhold Niebuhr for his silence on black suffering and lynching in his theology of the cross. Although Niebuhr grounds his ethics and theology on “realism: facts of experience,” Cone believes that he lacks empathy for the black experience, which leads to his conservatism regarding white supremacy and racism (48).

In the third chapter, “Bearing the Cross and Staring Down the Lynching Tree,” Cone reflects on Martin Luther King, Jr. who, unlike Niebuhr, interprets the cross through black suffering. Although the cross invokes humiliation, fear, and death, King sees it as “a source of strength and courage, the ultimate expression of God’s love for humanity” (85). In the fourth chapter, “The Recrucified Christ in Black Literary Imagination,” Cone argues that while preachers and theologians were silent about lynching, it was writers, poets, and artists who expressed the reality of black suffering through works on lynching. In the final chapter, “O Mary, Don’t You Weep,” Cone argues that black women have actively confronted lynching and racism, sustained by the cross that offers hope and resistance.

While this book is about the cross and black suffering in lynching, Cone notices that they are not such popular topics for feminist, womanist, and some progressive theologians (92). He especially distances himself from Delores Williams, who argues that there is no such a thing as redemptive suffering since it perpetuates the sacrifices of black women as somehow glorious and necessary. Therefore, Williams claims that Jesus “came to show redemption through a perfect ministerial vision of righting relationship” (149). Cone rejects her rejection of the cross because it is the “burden we must bear in order to attain freedom” (151). It is interesting that while Cone criticizes Niebuhr for failing to integrate black suffering into his theology, he seems to make the same mistake by approaching black women’s suffering in a paternalistic voice.

Nevertheless, as his last published book before his death in 2018, Cone’s work still penetrates the minds and hearts of many readers as we witness the resurgence of white supremacy in the march of neo-Nazis and white supremacists in Charlottesville, VA, in 2017, the killings of black people by police, the mass incarceration of black men, and, worst of all, the silence of many Christians and churches about racial injustice and black suffering. For homileticians and preachers, the cross and lynching tree that portray death and despair also

threaten their jobs, privileges, and security. Jesus said, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). If we are following Christ, are we also willing to follow him to the cross where we take the suffering of others as our own, even if it means persecution and death? Cone challenges us with his final words, “Humanity’s salvation is available *only* through our solidarity with the crucified people in our midst” (160).

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Kenyatta R. Gilbert, *Exodus Preaching: Crafting Sermons about Justice and Hope*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2018. 135 pages. \$14.79.

This is a remarkable book. It aims to equip prophetic preachers in profound and practical ways with deep theological reflection and concrete practical strategies. Kenyatta Gilbert, professor of homiletics at Howard Divinity School, skillfully integrates key aspects of prophetic preaching within African American preaching traditions, and presents, in the process, a unified vision of its humanizing, contextual-theological task in what he calls the four prophetic characteristics of unmasking, hope, naming, and beauty. Gilbert succeeds in helping prophetic preachers embrace the prophetic task in a way that is theologically faithful and ethically engaged.

The introduction does more than name the book's purview; it serves as a summons to the many voices and many places where Exodus preaching is happening, and precisely as a practice that is "rooted in and emanating from God." This summons is an indication of the book's breadth in Exodus preaching practice; sermons and sermon excerpts from many established and up-and-coming preachers are woven into the work along with a clear theological claim about God's central role. As the book begins to unfold its argument, the very sequencing of chapters helps to serve the aforementioned integrating purpose. Chapter 1 both defines Exodus preaching and sets out the four-fold criteria by which it can be assessed in practice: unmasking evil, remaining hopeful amidst communal despair, connecting the sermon to just acts through naming reality, and maintaining an impulse for beauty in language. These criteria become important both for developing and reflecting on strategies, as well as analyzing actual sermons. In this sense chapter 1 is actually programmatic. Chapters 2-5 then follow by focusing on each of the criteria: chapter 2 deals with unmasking evil, chapter 3 with communal despair, chapter 4 with naming reality, and chapter 5 with inventive speech. Along the way, each chapter articulates concrete strategies, proposes potential roadblocks or issues of concern (shaded and identified as "thorns and thistles"), and offers exercises at the end for further reflection and action. Chapter 6 concludes by then carrying Gilbert's Exodus vision forward into his thinking about preaching Jesus Christ, who is both savior and teacher. Theologically, it is important to note that Jesus is integrally related with Exodus preaching, which Gilbert links explicitly to the important narrative in Luke 4. We cannot preach such justice and hope without Jesus—and Gilbert sets out a four-fold process, built on his earlier writing in *The Journey and Promise of African American Preaching*, and shows how it plays out comprehensively in an analysis of one of his own compelling sermons.

Naturally, I found myself disagreeing at a couple of points on matters of theology and strategy. That is only to be expected. At the same time, I found myself marveling all the more at Gilbert's ability to hold homiletical practice and theology together in this ground-breaking book. In other words, what is most compelling and most original about Gilbert's book on Exodus preaching is not just the subject matter, but the careful and engaged homiletical integration all the way through. There is the strangeness and otherness of God and God's purposes, yes! There is furthermore the prophetic commitment to placing ethical engagement at the heart of the task of such preaching, of course! At the same time, there is a willingness to probe and think out strategies, craft, and the very art and beauty of preaching at the service of the same. Gilbert's book is no doubt rich for the practitioner. The sermon examples from Walton, Warnock, Wesley are powerful. This book is, perhaps, even richer for the classroom. Teachers and students will

find Gilbert's book a uniquely suitable text, especially in these times of rampant and blatant injustice, to work together in hearing what Exodus preaching might sound like today. In its theology, crafting, and art they will likewise discern far more than just another preaching text: they will hear a summons to go and do likewise.

David Schnasa Jacobsen, Boston University School of Theology, Boston MA

John S. McClure. *Speaking Together and with God: Liturgy and Communicative Ethics*. Lanham, MD: Fortress Academic, 2018. 252 pages. \$95.

John S. McClure's new book, *Speaking Together and with God* is a fascinating, revolutionary work. Not only does he revisit his previous works but also expands their scope by engaging what he understands as two distinct but inextricably related areas, liturgy and communicative ethics, for his trajectory of *liturgical public theology*. This project is based on several assumptions which can be summarized as follows: liturgical practice in the religious sphere in its broadest sense is a form of social interaction which openly and freely *cross-migrates* to/from discursive practice in the public sphere because there is no firm wall in-between, and can thus "enrich difficult conversations about moral issues within the public sphere" (xv). McClure argues for liturgical practices to support genuinely *communicative* (understanding-oriented), rather than strategic (success-oriented) or instrumental (ends-oriented) forms of reason and action. Therefore this book explores how these liturgical practices contribute to shaping sincere, multiperspectival, empathic, and truth-seeking *conversations* regarding moral norms that are communicative in nature. While retaining the author's emphasis on Emmanuel Levinas's *interhuman* ethics of care in the religious sphere explicated in *Other-wise Preaching* (2001), the current volume shifts its focus to Jürgen Habermas's *intersubjective*, discursive ethic based on communicative reason/action to achieve *justice* by addressing the needs and concerns of "many concrete others" in the public sphere, or what Habermas calls the *lifeworld* (xvii).

In chapter 1, McClure begins his discussion on the migration of practices. He first identifies its key elements in the lifeworld as a framework of his book: these include Habermas's concept of the ideal speech situation and its four validity claims (truthfulness, moral rightness, truth, and aesthetics). He then adds the key elements in the religious sphere (imagination, singularity, ambiguity, and so forth) as texture added to the framework (1-5). He also argues that it is necessary to study the liturgical practices not only to correct/enhance Habermas's four validity claims, but also to imagine how they will function in the public sphere as redemptive ciphers (signs) of liberation and justice. In the following chapters, the author deals extensively with each practice—confession, intercession, and preaching—respectively. McClure unearths each one's various forms in the religious sphere and its strategically interpreted and migrated forms in the public sphere, and then identifies the communicative ciphers of redemption through relevant case studies.

For the *truthful* validity claim of sincerity, chapter 2 engages with various *confessional* practices for the sake of participants. Such practices involve exclusion to secure the safety and protection of all participants, epistemic humility to overcome any self-deception, and lamentation or testimony to further restore and nurture participants so that they can grow into human subjects capable of contributing to "deeper, more universal forms of relationship and communicative action" in and beyond the community (54).

Chapter 3 explicates the *morally right* validity claim of identity, which requires one's ability to transcend one's own context to achieve mutual understanding. In other words, the author asserts that *intercessory* practices invite all participants to take another person's perspective (e.g. mutual role-taking of empathy, care, compassion, and petition), and advocate for the inclusion of any missing, relevant voices for the conversation (63-64). McClure argues for intercessory practices as unifying, co-orienting with, and petitioning for the Other (divine and human), to be employed in ways of advocating persistently, pursuing normative rightness of society, and turning enemies into mere adversaries.

The last chapter addresses the *aesthetic* validity claim of intersubjective authenticity and the *true* validity claim of rational justification. McClure asserts that they are central to *homiletical* practices (and artifacts) of creative, moral insight/consensus-seeking processes to answer the question of what *rings true* in the public sphere and *why* it does. McClure avers that the practices create biblical dissensus, disrupting a previous moral consensus in the lifeworld, and authenticate a new emerging moral insight with various modes of homiletical elucidation illuminating human experience. Moreover, they provide forms of ideological, theological framing that can justify and translate moral insights/norms into the language and categories of our worldviews and invent messages to apply them to complex situations.

This book is groundbreaking in many ways, but three unique contributions are to be named specifically. First, for our context where religious communities do not have much to contribute to the public sphere because it is increasingly dominated by pluralism and relativism, McClure explores the possibility of achieving consensus around moral issues with the migration of liturgical practices into the public sphere. Second, the term migration paired with Habermasian notions of communicative action and intersubjectivity disrupts/deconstructs the sharp divide between the intra-/inter-ecclesial realm and the extra-ecclesial realm, inviting many homileticians to rethink their role in the changing context. Indeed, McClure sets an excellent example of how we can broaden our scope and engage in a multilayered dialogue with other disciplines in and beyond the religious sphere by focusing specifically on liturgical practices. Third, while the book may be dense and challenging, it offers the prospect of a fruitful reading. The solid structure offered by Habermas's four validity claims, the detailed explanation of many difficult concepts, and the book's glossary enable readers to fully understand its core arguments and to participate in further conversation.

There are also a couple of issues to be noted. First, while McClure's differentiation of the personal/interhuman (of the religious sphere) and the intersubjective (of the public sphere) is helpful for this project, it could sound too schematic and/or unrealistic to make chapters 2 and 3 so sharply distinct. In reality, the differentiation in itself is always made differently and changeable according to each subject's socially-constructed makeup and intersubjective engagement of the moment. Second, as Habermas's procedural, constructivist stance still provides the dominant framing for McClure's work, some homileticians may wonder if McClure's fascinating vision is broad enough to include the genuinely contingent and indeterminate elements in both spheres.

Despite these minor issues, I highly recommend this book not only to homileticians and scholars but also to pastors and religious leaders who desire to connect in meaningful ways to the moral issues in the public sphere. McClure's book will be a very useful guide on how they can contribute to the binding and bonding of democratic society.

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John L. Thomas, Jr. *Voices in the Wilderness: Why Black Preaching Still Matters*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018. 196 pages. \$26.

Drawing from the deep wells within the black religious experience, John L. Thomas, Jr., in this inaugural work, uses the metaphor of wilderness as he follows the contours of the historical landscape that formed and influenced what we know as black preaching. Using the dialectical method “which interprets the church as juxtaposed within polar opposite tensions” (9), Thomas wanders through various historical time periods, holding past and present in dialogue as he charts a new and more enduring path forward for black preaching. *Voice in the Wilderness* contains nine chapters, some of which include personal anecdotes and sermonic excerpts from *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present* by Martha Simmons and Frank A. Thomas, which adds moments of black church/preaching practicality to an otherwise scholarly endeavor.

The journey begins with a fundamental question, listed as the title of his first chapter, “What Makes Black Preaching Black?” (19). Responding to the question, Thomas list several characteristics that identify black preaching. He notes that black preaching is that which takes place in the context of the African American struggle to exist. It is preaching focused on the needs, experiences, and histories of African Americans. It is also preaching that privileges those shared experiences. Additionally, Thomas writes, black preaching is relational; it is an event that shares the embedded knowledge of the community. It involves introducing new information, confirming the older narrative, and offering redactions when needed (19-22). A critical aspect of black preaching is the black hermeneutic, a unique method of biblical interpretation that takes the experiences of the people and the authority of Scripture seriously (26).

Chapters 2 and 3 examine the context and theology of black preaching, emphasizing the complexity of and therefore the required attentiveness to context (39-50), and the centrality of Jesus’ suffering as a core theological resource (58). Chapters 4 and 5 survey the shaping mechanisms of the wilderness. These pivotal chapters provide in-depth examination of several wilderness loci, namely the wilderness of slavery and emancipation, the slave preacher, the great migration, black radicalism, the urban plantation, and the sociological shifts complementing them. Chapter 6 identifies four theological streams that Thomas suggests flow through black sermons: the traditionalist, which privileges Scripture while focused on repentance; the spiritualist, which emphasizes God’s power through the movement of the Holy Spirit; here-and-now, which views God as a co-laborer and is also focused on self-reliance; and radical-prophetic, often viewed as a threat to the status quo due to its call and demand for change in unjust practices. In chapters 7 and 8, Thomas highlights exemplars of wilderness preaching, providing concrete examples of not only their sermons, but more importantly the effects of their wilderness shaping. The exemplars are Martin Luther King, Jr. Malcolm X, Jesse Jackson, Sojourner Truth, Prathia Hall, and Shirley Caesar.

Thomas concludes the book just as he began, and asks, “Where should we be headed?” (171). He asks the question in light of what Dr. William Barber calls the Third Reconstruction context (179). In doing so, Thomas challenges black preaching to remain faithful even as the environment in which the church exists continues to shift. Thomas further challenges black preaching to take more of a leadership role beyond its ecclesial confines. This can only be done if preachers are actively reading the moral compass of the current conditions.

This book brings together past and present as it looks to the future. On the one hand, it is an insightful and scholarly history of black preaching. On the other, it is a desk reference for

preachers and pastors. Written in an easy-to-read yet academic style, *Voices in the Wilderness* extends the conversations on black preaching begun by Henry Mitchell, Cleophus LaRue, Teresa Fry Brown, Kenyatta Gilbert, Paula McGee and others. Not only does Thomas extend the dialogue, but he adds a different level of depth and nuance through the use of the wilderness motif, a motif that brings the book to life. This book is required reading for both the academy and the pew. It is a much needed bridge between the two.

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Natalie Carnes. *Image and Presence: A Christological Reflection on Iconoclasm and Iconophilia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018. 233 pages. \$20.

In *Image and Presence: A Christological Reflection on Iconoclasm and Iconophilia*, Natalie Carnes presents a theoretical foundation of images that complicates the stereotypical binary of iconophilia, the love of images, and iconoclasm, the destruction of images. Carnes reflects on Christian images of Christ, examining the varied ways in which Christ is made present through images. Her agenda is twofold. She is concerned with the ways in which destructive acts related to images can be a source of interreligious and ecumenical division, and she argues that images can unify us if we identify universal iconophilic and iconoclastic dimensions at play when images are encountered and when varied understandings of images are negotiated.

Each chapter of *Image and Presence* is focused on a particular image of God with some functioning as a unique representative of a broader genre of image. In chapter 1, Carnes reflects on Lorenzo di Credi's *Madonna and the Nursing Christ Child* as a representation of *Maria lactans* images. She argues that the suckling Christ child reveals an image of God fully incarnate amidst human desire yet working to draw human beings toward divine desires for the ordering of the world. Chapter 2 contains a reflection on Fra Angelico's *Annunciation of Cortona* as an image of the visibility and invisibility of God who is present yet transcendent. In chapter 3, Matthias Grünewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece* is representative of crucifixes and grounds a reflection on the iconoclasm of Christ, which she defines as "his breaking of brokenness" (119). Vladislav Andrejev's *Icon of the Myrrh-bearing Women* serves to introduce a reflection on the visibility and invisibility of God, examining how "the visible is being transfigured by the invisible" (151). In chapter 5, Nicolas Poussin's *The Adoration of the Golden Calf* provides an image of those who fail to wait for God's divine presence. Here Carnes argues that faithfulness to God demands an "iconoclasm of fidelity" (154). Here she partially retrieves language of iconoclasm as necessary in order for the faithful to be continually transformed into the image of God.

Carnes engages images of Christ from the East and the West, and she also engages contemporary images such as Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ*, *El Cristo Negro* of Esquipulas, and Mark Duke's *Our Lady of Ferguson*. She utilizes these images as she reveals how iconoclasm—and iconophilia—are at the heart of Christianity in the very person of Christ. She writes, "Iconoclasm needs iconophilia. And iconophilia, too, needs iconoclasm" (182). In retrieving iconoclasm as integral to Christology and the faithful Christian life, Carnes guides the reader to examine the complexity of our engagement with images in a manner that is parallel to the complexity of our encounter with Christ, the visible Image of God. This perspective emerges out of her conviction that the negotiation and encounter of images within and without the Church can serve as a means of both unification across the binary of "iconoclast" versus "iconophile" and recognition of shared human appreciation for images and the imaged.

While this book speaks to theory of image, spirituality, and Christology, it is also evocative from a liturgical and homiletical perspective. Carnes's work brushes up explicitly and implicitly with sacramental theory, particularly as it relates to the relationship of images to human encounter of God's presence. She directly engages the relationship between images and the Eucharist, and she reflects throughout upon the human experience of the arriving, abiding, rived, and rivening presence of God through the matter of this world, e.g. the person of Christ and images.

From a homiletical perspective, Carnes's work can be read with awareness and concern for how we must conceptualize and proclaim the image-laden, imaged, and imaginative Word of God even as it functions in relationship to other ecclesial and secular images. Might the role of Christian preaching be interpreted in relationship to iconoclasm and iconophilia? Might the preacher—in both iconoclastic traditions and iconophilic traditions—be simultaneously called to pastorally curate images through which persons can experience the divine and to disrupt or even destroy images that restrict participants' experience of the divine?

This book is an academic monograph that may not suit casual reading. While the total page count is 233 pages without the end materials, the work is 187 pages in length.

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Adam Hearlson. *The Holy No: Worship as a Subversive Act*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018. 184 pages. \$24.

“Eschatological imagination occurs in flashes” that cultivate the “artful practice of disruptive perception,” “here and there, in history and in contemporary contexts, in biblical stories, in liturgies, in visual art, and in narratives of people” (7, 167), write Andrea Bieler and Luise Shottroff in *The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread and Resurrection* (Fortress Press, 2007). Adam Hearlson’s *The Holy No: Worship as a Subversive Act* collects or curates such flashes or “holy fires” within Christian worship, inviting readers to the “slow, quiet, and hidden” ways that liturgical power in and through liturgy is itself an act of worship. Hearlson focuses on a range of liturgical practices as sparks to cultivate the search for subversion in other liturgical forms. Worship critiques present world power as worshippers challenge the reproductions of power that liturgies and liturgical hierarchies promote.

Engaging biblical texts, artists, theologians, and philosophers, Hearlson traces particular subversive genres into liturgical contexts across different time periods in order to frame salient examples of resistance to “the normal” within Christian worship: the powers of indirect speech in farewell sermons and glossolalia (chapter 2), the holy absurdity of disruptive characters in festivals (chapter 3), practices of radical hospitality during communion (chapter 4), music that bends, resists, and transforms white Western time and space (chapter 5), and the apocalyptic dreams of liturgical artists (chapter 6). Grasping the liturgical significance of such practices requires an understanding of the church itself as a relational, mobile, and provisional response to a God who promises to subvert the powers of this world, Hearlson argues.

The book explicitly challenges “the privileged,” which Hearlson identifies as “my people,” engages “the boundary-dwellers” who identify with both the powerful and the weak, and affirms the theological integrity of “the needy.” At the end of his book, however, Hearlson turns directly to “the subversive worship leader,” whose task is “to expose the world as deeply complex and diverse, while still trying to make unified sense of such complexity” (151). Indeed this book encouraged me, a worship leader and teacher of liturgy, to reconsider the categories and critical lenses through which I guide congregations and students through Christian worship.

To curate differently requires accountability regarding the names and categories we use. In a chapter exploring examples of subversive hospitality, Hearlson grapples with the misleading term “the homeless” to name people who gather for worship in the public space of Boston Common. He argues that subverting hierarchies in worship compels a new “social grammar,” such that “production of a new vocabulary is an opportunity to expose the limitations and assumptions of the social grammar of the world” (99). Such an argument raises questions about the categories with which Hearlson navigates subversion as a relationship between “the powerful” and “the weak.” The latter obscures the cultures and powers of communities and persons whose subversions are celebrated in the text. It hides the complex markers of identity that shape the possibilities for subversion. While the stories of subversion raise some analysis of identity markers, the book could have benefited from further analysis of the reluctance, refusal, or obliviousness of those in positions of liturgical power to name or recognize these practices as worship, as well as the perspectives of those who participate in acts of liturgical subversion.

While the variety of narratives engaged in each chapter and throughout the book perform an example of the “eclectic” curation of worship practices that the book recommends, this rapid tour of very different kinds of subversion is dizzying at times. Hearlson may have intended such experiences of disorientation to subvert his readers’ desires for a liturgical manual. At the same

time, a focus on subversion of power as worship begs further study of the complex power relations embedded within the communities and contexts from which Hearlson draws examples of subversion. Bearing witness to the work of people who say “no” to current arrangements of liturgical power must also mean a “yes and” by those in positions of ecclesial power to study the obvious and subtle ways that racism, ableism, sexism, heterosexism, colonialism, nationalism, ecclesial chauvinism, and other blasphemies shroud the logics of oppression in Christian worship. In the book’s concluding words, “there is much work to be done” (168).

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Christopher B. James. *Church Planting in Post-Christian Soil: Theology and Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. 368 pages. \$34.95.

Forecasts of church decline coupled with the rise of the “nones” and the “spiritual, but not religious” are commonplace as concerned pastors, leaders, and parishioners lament the future of U.S. Christianity. However, practical theologian Christopher B. James offers a glimpse of ecclesial hope and rebirth in the midst of such funereal predictions. A revised and expanded version of his doctoral dissertation at Boston University, *Church Planting in Post-Christian Soil: Theology and Practice* is a mixed-method, qualitative and practical ecclesiological analysis of Seattle new church-starts founded since January 1, 2001 and active through 2014 (243). Based on compelling research that the city of Seattle functions as a religio-cultural trend-setter for the rest of the United States, James argues that the ecclesiological insights and practices of Seattle new church-starts helpfully predict what will spring forth across the United States. As such, he finds it critical to look within these communities of faith to mine them for their ecclesiological contributions—practical and theological—as well as to offer constructive proposals going forward.

The largest component of the data gathered is the 44-question “New Seattle Churches Survey,” of which he received 57 completed surveys out of the 105 churches identified (246). Found in appendix B, it addresses everything from women in ministry to self-reported church descriptions to estimated average sermon length. James supplemented the survey data with pastoral interviews, participant-observer field notes, church newsletters, and social media posts. Sociologists of religion and others who work at the nexus of religious studies, theology, and qualitative methods will be particularly interested in all of the appendices, which outline his research methodology, the survey instrument, and the pastoral interview questions.

The structure of James’ book is clear, compelling, and evinces a familiarity to those engaged with the work of Richard Osmer. Chapters 1 and 2 establish the descriptive dimension of the project. The first chapter situates Seattle as a trend-setting city in the context of an increasingly secular United States. The second chapter describes the churches involved in the study, including key “currents” and “patterns” discovered by the survey instrument. For example, nearly half of the churches indicate that Holy Communion is part of their worship “very often or always,” even though only 4 percent of respondents are in “classically sacramental traditions” (42). Chapter 3 functions as a literature review of various ecclesiological typologies, which segues smoothly into the fourth chapter where James develops his own “practical ecclesiologies” based on the qualitative research—the interpretive task. The strength of this book is that rather than working from established ecclesiological models in which to situate his data, James lets the data serve a leading role. His four models are as follows: Church as Great Commission Team, Church as Household of the Spirit, Church as New Community, and Church as Neighborhood Incarnation. James discusses understandings of identity, mission, and spirituality within each of these models.

Moving from interpretation to evaluation, in his fifth chapter James asks “what should be happening.” He takes each of the four models and analyzes them through the lens of missional theology with Lesslie Newbigin serving as his primary interlocuter. James argues for using a missiological lens because of its popularity for new church developers. While the “Neighborhood Incarnation” model was deemed the most missional of the four, James contends that each have their strengths and weaknesses. Chapter 6 moves into the constructive and pragmatic dimension of the project, in which James focuses on renewed *practice* rather than

doctrine. The chapter's concrete proposals are especially helpful for pastoral practitioners. For example, James elucidates wisdom given to "Household of the Spirit" churches. According to James, many of these churches are characterized by personal intimacy with God, and he proposes that worship leaders explore ways of "heightening worshipers' consciousness of fellow worshipers" (199). The final chapter offers ecclesiological metaphors that need further development, with suggested trajectories for both theologians and practitioners.

With the broad scope of the project and its methodological innovation, scholars of multiple disciplines will find this work helpful, including, but not limited to practical theology, sociology of religion, homiletics, liturgical studies, and missiology. Practitioners will likely be drawn toward the latter chapters in which James makes his practical constructive proposals. Overall, this book is well-conceived and executed. It deserves careful attention for classrooms, churches, and theological libraries.

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Richard W. Voelz. *Tending the Tree of Life: Preaching and Worship through Reproductive Loss and Adoption*. Gonzalez, FL: Energion Publications, 2018. 123 pages. \$13.

Pastoral care in Christian congregations is laced with conundrums, especially when it connects with preaching and worship. In the context of a service, do we speak or offer silent presence? Does a particular need for care within the congregation warrant public solidarity and comfort? Or does the family's need for privacy cause us to avoid the subject in preaching and worship altogether? Writing primarily to pastors, preachers, and worship planners (with the tacit assumption that one person fills all three roles), *Tending the Tree of Life* by Richard Voelz offers a tender gift, liturgical support, and homiletical solidarity for and with congregants grieving the cycles of reproductive loss or navigating the harrowing process of adoption.

Voelz understands these conundrums of care on account of his pastoral and personal experiences. He writes passionately to “improve the conditions of, and provide resources for, preaching and worship as congregational experiences as they relate to reproductive loss and adoption” (7). He hopes that pastors will rethink their decision to keep silent about or avoid altogether any engagement with these family issues in the course of preaching and worship. Perhaps lack of knowledge or resources makes silence and avoidance more preferable. *Tending the Tree of Life* provides ample engagement and resources, with an explicit interest in offering healing and wholeness.

Voelz's interdisciplinary scholarship intersects with biblical studies, homiletics, pastoral care, theology, and sociology that focuses specifically on issues of infertility and adoption. If specialists in any of these fields find Voelz's treatment wanting, it is because these disciplines are engaged for specific practical means rather than for deep disciplinary discourse. The book is aptly located in this series of guides to practical ministry for the ongoing needs of clergy in parish ministry.

Two of the book's primary assumptions are that the time and space within which worship happens are formative, and that preaching and worship are meant to address the whole person and a wide variety of human experiences (22-23). Based upon these assumptions the author spotlights harmful practices in both preaching and worship. He lists biblical texts and narratives, as well as images or metaphors of God, that are frequently used with good intention yet prove damaging to those dealing with the emotional trauma of reproductive loss. He calls out language that hurts and theologies that inflict harm or create confusion.

Preachers will find helpful alternative perspectives on particular “texts of terror”—ways of engaging a hermeneutic of the wounded, and prophetic or disruptive homiletical methodologies that challenge dominant, harmful theological views. Clergy will also discover new and more helpful language for addressing these areas of congregational vulnerability. Worship planners will find suggested liturgies and rituals that reach out to and stand in solidarity with persons caught in the unfortunate matrix of reproductive loss and adoption. Ultimately, Voelz achieves what he set out to do with this volume—to help pastors and worship leaders break the silence and avoid avoidance around reproductive loss and adoption, as well as offer new perspectives and suggest helpful resources as a way forward.

Yet *Tending the Tree of Life* may not be helpful for everyone. Although adoptees are included in the conversation, they are not given the scope of attention Voelz gives to adoptive parents. Anecdotes from the author's own experience ground the claims here. Stories curated from adoptee and birth parent perspectives would have rounded out the book and balanced questions such as, “What does it mean to prepare ourselves for a loss, knowing that the loss will

be a blessing to others?” (106). For families preparing for the loss embedded in an adoption plan, that kind of question might better be addressed in hindsight than foresight. Additionally, while the author rightly calls out the “adoption chic” mentality and the “commodification of children,” these are issues more pertinent to primarily white and/or middle-class persons who have the wherewithal to seek corrective medical help for reproductive issues, and to afford adoption (112). Clergy who deal with congregations of minoritized social standing will not find here the kinds of existential issues faced by families of color who deal with reproductive loss and an adoption system marked by specific racial biases. That being said, readers within the author’s social location will likely find the book a valuable, compassionate, and enlightening resource.

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Lauren F. Winner. *The Dangers of Christian Practice: On Wayward Gifts, Characteristic Damage, and Sin*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018. 240 pages. \$28.

In *The Dangers of Christian Practice: On Wayward Gifts, Characteristic Damage, and Sin*, Lauren F. Winner displays how humans can deform Christian acts of devotion. It follows titles such as *Invisible Weapons: Liturgy and the Making of Crusade Ideology* (2017), by M. Cecilia Gaposchkin.

Winner focuses upon Eucharist, prayer, and baptism. At the Eucharist, Christians consume a Jewish body and are not always transformed into people of peace, but of bloodshed (36). The meal suggests supersession and exclusion. It has also fueled Christian violence against Jewish flesh. Winner recounts how a rumor that Jews threw a pebble at a monstrance carrying the host became another spark to ignite the killing of hundreds of Jews in Prague on Easter 1389.

Prayer can become duplicitous, asking from God the reduction of one evil while deepening another (86). Winner points to the petition and confession from slave-owning widow Keziah Goodwyn Hopkins Brevard: “Negroes are as deceitful & lying as any people can well be—Lord give me better feelings towards them.” Petition risks requesting the wrong thing in attempts to sound right: “(Forgive me, for unkind thoughts & have mercy on me!)” (57-59). Confession may seek mercy to excuse prejudice. Brevard’s prayers fail to discern the good and instead desire what God opposes (93).

Baptism threatens to “extract” the baptized from their “local” (aspects of identity such as social location, language, history, and family) and “superinscribes, rather than erases, particularities, and superinscribes them in a way that they are still legible” (97). Put another way, baptism redefines kinship and reinvents lineage in ways that threaten to dilute who we are in God. Winner raises godparentage as one example of how family becomes destabilized and embraced. Actual parents do not serve as godparents, yet godparents extend the family of the baptized. Christening parties display another contrasting side of how baptism disorients identity. The pageantry of Christening absorbs the theological profundity of joining the family of Christ with ornate domestic celebrations of new life in earthly family trees.

To be clear, Winner does not dismiss the practices of Eucharist, prayer, and baptism. Though the Eucharist can feed anti-Semitism, she sees the fractured state and corrupt history of the Eucharist disclosing the reality of encountering Jesus; even Judas received. For Winner, repentance ought to follow confession and attend to redress, even when such redress seems impossible. Facing that impossibility, Christians can lament how the gifts of God become deformed, and recognize that ultimately only God can save. Even the “flowers and food and baubles” of Christening function like an “unofficial ‘sacramental,’” hallowing the material as signs of God’s invisible welcome and grace (132).

The book closes with an appendix entitled “*Depristinating Practices*.” It reiterates Winner’s central argument that the study of Christian practices must take seriously how Christian practices “carry with them their own deformations” (180). Moving through figures such as Ted Smith, Craig Dykstra, Stanley Hauerwas (the book is dedicated to Hauerwas), George Lindbeck, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, Wendy Farley, Sarah Coakley, and others, it reads somewhat like a curiously placed literature review. Yet the appendix helps situate the principal conversation partners. It also distinguishes Winner’s contribution.

One footnote challenging the claims from William Cavanaugh’s *Torture and Eucharist* (1998) and his interpretation of Eucharistic gathering as an organization of bodies for transformative social resistance and hospitality is especially penetrating (186, #32). Winner sees

the Eucharistic arranging of bodies as also including measures of self-protection against Jews. I will not go into further detail because it's worth a direct look. But her rebuttal there makes the book, or at least that note and the chapter to which it belongs, required reading for advanced scholars of liturgy.

The Dangers of Christian Practice also deserves inclusion in many syllabi of Christian worship, liturgics, and practical theology. By showing selected dangers too often taught and shared as infallible, it will deepen the integrity of any researcher, teacher, leader, or devotee of Christian worship.

Other aspects of her argumentation, however, seem curious. Does a diary constitute an anthology of prayer? Was a more fundamental paradox of baptism overlooked, i.e. how the origins of baptism began with the consecration of imperfect human hands (Mk. 1:7; Matt. 3:14-15)? White-against-black and Judeo-Christian paradigms of race and ethnicity are normative in the volume. Of course, Winner cannot cover every possible transgression. But an extra historical example or two might suffice to indicate how widely the dangers of Christian practices travel across cultures.

Furthermore, there's something psychologically probing about the prose style in *The Dangers of Christian Practice*. The introduction begins in a meandering way that seems to investigate Winner's own difficulties with Christian worship without saying as much. As the book develops, it is as if Winner is searching and attending to personal repair, too. Of what, I won't venture to guess. Maybe it will surface more clearly in a novel to which she alludes as a project of hers (142). Winner is already a celebrated author. I wonder if the novel whispered in the current book might make more of an underdeveloped but provocative connection with which Winner teases the reader: a loose insight that the title of Henry James' *The Golden Bowl* (1904) appears to magnify the wisdom of Ecclesiastes 12—"before the silver cord is snapped, and the golden bowl is broken" (163). Interestingly, and not mentioned by Winner, Qoheleth prefaces that line with an imperative, "Remember your creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come, and the years draw near when you will say, 'I have no pleasure in them,'" and the passage ends, "Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher; all is vanity." *The Dangers of Christian Practice* awakes from that kind of anamnesis.

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