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Boundaries of Belonging: The Necessity of a Global Homiletic Conversation

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Abstract: *This article reflects on the challenges and importance of extended, global homiletic conversations. Drawing on my experience as a Westerner teaching preaching in the Pacific, the article asserts the necessity of global homiletic conversation as a guard against hegemonic preaching practices and as a productive agent of cultural destabilization. This is particularly true when defining the contours of postcolonial preaching. By moving preaching into postures of Spirit-dependence similar to Mary's dependence on the Spirit in Luke's gospel, global homiletic conversation can facilitate sacramental performances of embodied relation between preachers, their changing communities, and Christ.*

On the north coast of the largest of Fiji's islands, the village of Naiserelagi sits on a hill-top perch. A Catholic church stands at the summit, surrounded by brightly painted, tin houses. Driving the narrow, dirt road to the summit is harrowing, but tourists do it nearly every day because of the mural inside St. Xavier's sanctuary. The *Black Christ* triptych was painted in 1963 by Jean Charlot, a French artist, and it fills the wall behind St. Xavier's altar [Figure 1]. It shows a dark-skinned Jesus on the cross, draped in a traditional Fijian masi cloth. On his left are indigenous—or iTaukei—Fijians bringing gifts of honor: Pacific plants and mats, and a tanoa bowl used for the ceremonial drinking of kava [Figure 2]. More provocatively, on his right are Indo-Fijians bringing gifts associated with Indian culture, a culture brought to the island when Indian laborers were imported by the British to work the sugarcane fields during the island's colonial period [Figure 3]. The working conditions of these indentured laborers, or *girmitiya*, amounted to little more than slavery. Many had no option but to make Fiji their home. Today, Indo-Fijians make up 35 percent of the Fijian population, most of them Hindu or Muslim. The *Black Christ* mural is a representation of a multicultural, multi-religious paradise—a picture that mirrors Pope John Paul II's memorable phrase turned tourist slogan: "Fiji: the way the world should be."[1] One year after the Pope's 1986 visit, the first of four coups ripped apart this fragile political ecosystem, with boundaries drawn along ethnic and religious lines. The Indo-Fijian population had grown, and indigenous Christians feared the loss of their political power and the legal protection of their lands. Calls for a Christian state coincided with Indian families being driven from their homes. The last coup, in 2006, used the threat of ethnic unrest as an excuse for a military takeover, and though the current government draws heavily on the language of secularism and democracy, this language is often used to control and silence dissent on both sides of the ethnic divide.[2] All this to say, beneath the welcoming smiles of Fijians, there are walls of distrust. Despite the slow, steady progress of grass-roots peace organizations, indigenous Fijians can feel that their status as first peoples and their way of life are at risk, and Indo-Fijians can feel like second-class citizens in a country in which they have lived for

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[1] Sam Howe Verhovek, "Ethnic Crisis in Fiji Threatens a South Seas Eden," *New York Times*, June 7, 2000, accessed April 11, 2017, http://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/07/world/ethnic-crisis-in-fiji-threatens-a-south-seas-eden.html.

[2] Matt Tomlinson and Debra McDougall, "Christian Politics in Oceania," in *Christian Politics in Oceania*, ed. Tomlinson and McDougall, (New York: Berghahn, 2013), 15.

generations. Particularly within the indigenous Methodist church, a church that I have come to know and serve over the past three years as a theological educator and mission partner, there is a deep suspicion of difference.

In her thesis, "Painting Paradise for a Post-Colonial Pacific," Caroline Klarr notes that St. Xavier's guest book is filled with the names of foreign tourists, but very few locals. It seems there are superstitions, particularly among the Indians and Fijian Methodists who live in this northern region, around this artistic ode to diversity and enculturation.[3] What are the intentions of this Black Jesus painted by a foreigner? At minimum, there seems to be something missing in the picture's rounded forms and placid faces. Where is the grit and pain of past 30 years? Where are the questions about the future and the all-important question about land? It is a picture, perhaps, of what the West would love to believe possible about this island and about the world: diversity without cost. Even the crucified Christ is serene. It is a picture of *belonging* without *boundaries,* and yet, as most any Pacific Islander will tell you, boundaries—particularly the boundaries around land, identity and community—are important. Jione Havea notes that for Pacific people, "borders are homes." Despite their contradictions and their potential for abuse, "borders are necessary. They are places where people feel they belong."[4]

***Boundaries* of Belonging**

For those who living far away from home, boundaries and belonging become personal things. So, I will speak personally for a moment. I did not drive to the northern side of the island to see the *Black Christ.* I drove there to see his mother. I had done my doctoral research on the pneumatology of performance, drawing on Mary's Spirit-inspired labor in Luke's nativity texts as a conversation partner. The altar transept of St. Xavier's had a less well-known Charlot mural depicting the Annunciation, and I was curious. Commentators have suggested that Charlot's painting of Mary tries to depict Fiji's amalgam of cultural influences, as well as the diversity in his own cultural background [Figure 4]. Her skin is lighter in tone than her crucified son, and her hair is an auburn hue. She wears a pink dress, perhaps in homage to the Virgin of Guadalupe, to whom Charlot was particularly devoted.[5] Most strikingly, Mary weaves a traditional Fijian mat, the skilled art of an *iTaukei* woman. Charlot's Mary stands on shifting borders of national, cultural, and ethnic identity. Or maybe, she floats above them—belonging to all, but not bounded by any.

My eyes weren't drawn to the pink dress, nor to the mat she wove. Instead, I noticed her eyes. They were painted blank – creamy almonds in an upturned face. There were no pupils, color, or expression [Figure 5]. And I found myself asking, Protestant that I am, *what do those expressionless eyes signify*? Are they some kind of Catholic code for spiritual insight, some symbol of removed-from-the world purity? Did they represent a kind of divine vision beyond the sight of ordinary mortals? There was a part of me that envied this unbound Mary, able to transcend so many cultural spaces. She seemed at ease weaving her Fijian mat, sporting her Mexican pink, tossing back her auburn hair. This was a woman interculturally competent in the extreme—but I worried about those eyes. What had this transcendence cost her? What had she lost? Where was the angle of her perspective? Where was her finite, particular gaze? In her role

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[3] Caroline Klarr, "Painting Paradise for a Post-Colonial Pacific: The Frescos of Jean Charlot," (PhD dissertation, Florida State University, 2002), 170-71.

[4] Jione Havea, "Engaging Readings from Oceania," in *Bible, Borders, Belonging(s),* ed. Jione Havea, Elaine Wainwright, and David Neville (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 7.

[5] Klarr, 159.

of cultural virtuoso, embodying the diversity of shifting traditions, she seemed to have lost her boundaries.

Perhaps those blank eyes reveal a secret that Charlot painted into his mural in spite of himself—a secret he did not have words to name. Without boundaries, Mary becomes blind. In losing herself and the particularity of her limits, she loses her ability to see. And here the personal becomes political again, because in Charlot's vision of a post-colonial paradise, there is a link between this loss of personal particularity and the loss of political vision. Mary's eyes are a reminder that idealizing the boundaries of the one leads to an idealizing of the boundaries of the other. They remind us that idealizing and ignoring are two sides of the same coin.

This is not a new insight for Catholic and Protestant feminists who have made repeated critiques of Mariological traditions that divinize the embodied limits of the Madonna.[6] Such theologies not only blind us to Mary's human particularity, they create universal norms for femininity and blind us to diverse, ordinary women who do not fit her ideal. Susan Griffin reflects on her experience of motherhood this way: "All around me floated archetypal mothers, Italian Madonnas…while my own experience waited blind and dumb—unspoken."[7] For those who debate the meaning and worth of Mary in the Christian tradition, this is not new ground. But it is less familiar ground for those whose concern is the meaning and worth of the preacher.

My area of homiletic research circles around the subject of performance, a topic I find theologically and ethically critical. The embodied event of a preacher's performance in the pulpit is, in many quarters of Protestant tradition, a place of sacramental encounter. In Calvin's thinking "it is a settled principle" that the sermon has the same office as the sacraments: "to offer and set forth Christ to us, and in him the treasures of heavenly grace."[8] The sermon is a place where the community and individual are reconfigured by the Spirit within the boundaries of Christ's body. It is a place where the boundary between heaven and earth, time and place, and text and context become thin. But for all its mystery and transcendent potential, the performance of a preacher in the pulpit is dangerous. It can paint a paradise that does not exist. In its request that a preacher embody a text or tradition or communal dialect, it can ignore the boundaries of a preacher's particular gaze, the angle of her perspective, her *limited* vision. It can idealize—or ignore—the boundaries of *her* body, and in so doing, it can make her blind. She may, for example, find herself saying "all lives matter," instead of "black lives matter." She may find herself fearing borders of difference in the world, borders that she has fought hard to dissolve in her own presentation of herself. Alternatively, she may engage difference in the manner of *Eat, Pray, Love,*[9] where the transcending of personal boundaries takes precedence over genuine embodied relationships with people who are tired of being painted into Western murals of self-realization.[10] She may even set up her own unbound, interculturally-competent Self as a norm.

In 2015, *Homiletic* devoted the majority of its issue to the question of postcolonial preaching. I wholeheartedly applaud the insights shared. Growing out of the work of theorists like Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, as well as the insights of biblical scholars like Fernando

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[6] See, for example, Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York: Continuum, 2003).

[7] Susan Griffin, "Feminism and Motherhood," in *Mother Reader: Essential Writings on Motherhood* (New York: Seven Stories, 2001), 35.

[8] Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 953.

[9] Elizabeth Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

[10] Sandip Roy, "The New Colonialism of *Eat, Pray, Love," Salon.com*, accessed April 3, 2017, http://www.salon.com/2010/08/14/i_me_myself/.

Segovia, a postcolonial homiletic attends to the ways that colonial ghosts linger in our pulpits. In particular, it points to the ways that homiletics has privileged American or Eurocentric practices and forms. At its core is the belief that, in the words of the issue's editorial Introduction, "Identities are not fixed self-possessions…they are realized precisely in relationships marked by intercultural interactions."[11] Words like "hybridity" or "third-space" mark this discourse, even as their meanings are contested, attempting to break down colonial dichotomies and essentialisms.[12] It is work that I find invigorating and particularly necessary in North American churches like the one I attended before leaving for the Pacific. In that New Jersey congregation, nine native languages were represented on a Sunday. It was a context crying out for a postcolonial attentiveness to hybridity!

But the past three years of working with pastors in the Methodist Church of Fiji has taught me a different perspective. This dialogical, hybrid-loving, fluid-identity language is deeply discomfiting at Davuilevu Theological College, the heavily *iTaukei* seminary that called me to teach preaching. Furthermore, it would be patronizing to dismiss this resistance as solely colonial indoctrination. These are indigenous Christians who are seeing the borders of their church diminished by flashy, well-financed denominations headquartered in the US. They are seeing their culture dissolved by rapid globalization and the literal borders of their shorelines disappearing from rising tides. Their deductive, authoritarian 3-point sermon style has roots, certainly, in missionary training from fifty years back. It also, however, has roots in the *vakaturaga* ethic – the chiefly ethic that grounds traditional understandings of role and right behavior.[13] It has roots that predate the 1835 missionary arrival. It is not only that Fijian Methodists fear the loss of boundaries because they fear change, it is also that boundaries around role, identity and appropriate behavior are deeply rooted aspects of a culture that prizes communal unity and order. "If a Fijian is nothing else," a student says to me, "he is well-mannered."

There is, therefore, something about this postcolonial conversation that gives me pause. It seems too convenient that something called "postcolonial" would be an idea comfortably familiar to me, and yet cause such fear and sorrow for many of my Davuilevu colleagues. That lovely, multi-ethnic creativity, that fluid, third-space where new possibilities emerge – it sounds like an idealized home I would make for myself. But Fiji is not my home. There are boundaries to my belonging.

The subject of this article is the necessity of a global homiletic conversation. **First and foremost, such conversation is necessary because, without it, even the best attempts to balance the scale of homiletic privilege will prioritize Western practices and forms all over again, by whatever name.** Postcolonial preaching in Fiji will look different than it looks in Latin America or Asia, and it will certainly look different than it looks in North America. Having

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[11] Yohan Go, David Schnasa Jacobsen and Duse Lee, "Introduction to the Essays of the Consultation on Preaching and Postcolonialism," *Homiletic* 40 v.1(2015): 3, accessed April 3, 2017, DOI: 10.15695/hmltc.v40i1.4116 .

[12] Homi Bhabha defines hybridity as the "problematic of colonial representation…so that the other 'denied' knowledge enters the dominant discourse and estranges the basis of its authority," in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 162. Jeffrey Staley wonders if a more "radical challenge" to colonial hybridity is required in his discussion of clothing in Mark's gospel and the semiotics of clothing in 19th century Protestant mission work, "'Clothed in Her Right Mind': Mark 5:1-20 and Postcolonial Discourse," in *Voices from the Margin, 3rd ed.,* ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006), 326.

[13] Unaisi Nabobo-Baba notes the extended use of monologues related in monotone, didactic fashion, as one important learning practice of traditional *iTaukei* culture, in *Knowing and Learning: An Indigenous Fijian Approach* (Suva: University of the South Pacific Press, 2006), 119-120.

eyes to understand these differences is no easy task. A North American homiletician spent a summer in Africa and was shocked at the imperative tone and moralism in the sermons he heard, qualities the preachers themselves attributed to missionary training from decades prior. He noted the lack of narrative form, despite the importance of storytelling in African oral traditions. He worried about the absence of liberation theology and theological nuance. And yet, he found an African church full to overflowing. What had his preliminary assessment missed?[14] And how do we move from these preliminary assessments to the difficult work of extended, relational conversation? Such conversations are the disorienting work of years, but I assert that they are worth the effort. They teach us again the grace and challenge of being bounded creatures, reminding us of the limits of our vision. In so doing, these conversations can teach us how to see.

Boundaries of *Belonging*

A young man named Jone, a 17-year old altar boy from St. Xavier's, approached me in the sanctuary that day to answer my questions. I'd read something about an outdoor grotto devoted to the Virgin Mary on the church grounds and asked if we could visit it. His face lit up. "It's on the way to my school! I stop there twice a day to pray."

It was a longer distance than I expected, a mile or more from the cathedral. An overgrown path winds through taro fields and makes use of a wooden board to cross a stream. But finally, Mary appears [Figure 6]. She is perched in a stone alcove, protecting the valley, looking for all the world like plaster-of-paris lawn statuary. Her eyes have been painted to look to heaven, but above her head, wasps' nests have clustered in the arc of the alcove. I'm tempted to say they were bees, which would be somehow more romantic and Marian—but these were wasps. As a result, Mary looked less concerned with heaven and more concerned about those swarming insects above her head [Figure 7]. "Don't worry," Jone smiled. "No one ever gets stung."

This Mary was bounded on every side. She was bolted to the Fijian land, and even in her difference she played her role. She did what was expected. One might think she was out of place, but only if one had no appreciation for the Fijian performances of piety that claimed her. This blond Madonna had been made part of the landscape of the Naiserelagi people. She was Jone's Lady, regardless of the color of her hair. Her commitment to stand guard over his family had won his heart. She wasn't trying to be anything she wasn't. She wasn't cool or edgy or forward thinking. She stood solid and unchanging, or at least she seemed to. And no one was stung – until someone was.

Cyclone Winston was one of the worst recorded cyclones in the Southern Hemisphere. Six months after it hit Fiji, I revisited that grotto. The grounds were unkempt. The grass was dry, and downed trees blocked the trail. Mary herself seemed stranded. From where she stood, she had a view of Naiserelagi hill and all those brightly painted tin homes around St. Xavier's church. Except now, the village was gone. The trees that shaded the village were gone. A 12-year-old boy hit by debris as he ran to the church—a boy who I'm sure Jone knew—was gone. The earth beneath her feet had changed, and she didn't seem to know how to respond. She seemed very alone.

[14] Ronald J. Allen is cautious and respectful in his analysis, making clear the limited and "soft" nature of his data and sharing his observations with his African colleagues for feedback. He himself highlights the challenges of global homiletic analysis and the need for further, in-depth conversation. "African Homiletics: A Soft Report," *Homiletic* 16 v. 1 (1991): 5-9.

This, finally, is the problem with boundaries, for all of their importance. This is the catch-22. Even in our need for them, bounded traditions and practices have their own dangers. They can bolt one in place, as time rushes by. They can secure a preacher to her context, but then when context changes, one is left feeling displaced and unsure. Boundaries can become rigid and dead, what Gayatri Spivak calls a "performative" rather than a "performance": the product of something over and done, rather than the process of something becoming.[15] As such, boundaries can be abused, not only in their exclusion of those without power, but also in their preservation of agendas that inform the status quo. Fijian historians will testify that it was the British government who restricted Indians from visiting *iTaukei* villages in order "protect" the boundaries of culture, a preservation that served the Crown's larger economic and political agenda.[16]

Naiserelagi, then, has one transcendent Mary and one Mary bolted to the earth. Somewhere in the difference between these two lies the challenge facing contemporary Fijian Methodist pastors. How does one honor boundaries of difference in a way that keeps those boundaries alive and connected to the outside world? How does one keep the boundaries of identity, land, and community vulnerable to change, without allowing for their erasure? How does one keep the boundaries of embodied practices and embodied histories and embodied culture vibrant and bright without letting those same boundaries isolate the church from the next generation, from the outsider, and from the very land that is changing under its feet?

Many Fijian preachers do their best to embody the Marian protector, to ward off wasps with fervent prayer, to do what is expected of them by their communities, to stand solid and unchanging in the face of rapid globalization and make sure no one gets stung. They do their best to hold tight to the boundary they know and understand, the "performative" boundary, rather than a boundary "performed." But in the process, some are recognizing the loss of a boundary's greatest blessing: the blessing of relationship. To treat boundaries as rigid and unchanging is to ignore the blessing of belonging in the world—a blessing first taught to us by boundaries themselves. Reflecting on her experience of pregnancy, Iris Marion Young draws on the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty to argue that our bodies are the first boundaries we know, and while they separate us, they connect us as well. They are the places where we touch, and they bear witness to those connections.[17]

And this is the second reason why a global homiletic conversation is so vital. It not only reminds us of our limits. It reminds us that we are connected. Such conversation does more than show us of the boundaries of our belonging. It shows us that belonging is found on the edges of our boundaries. Tongan theologian Winston Halapua, describes it as the paradox at the heart of *moana* theology, i.e. ocean theology. The ocean marks the border and boundary of Pacific nations, but it also serves as bridge. It serves as the medium of connection and the vehicle of contact. It allows for vulnerability to the outside world, even as it provides shape and structure

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[15] Gayatri Spivak, "A Borderless World," lecture at The University of Arizona, accessed April 3, 2017, https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=E3LYRYR_-XA.

[16] Sashi Kiran, "For Peace Which is True," *Fiji Times,* September 29, 2016, accessed March 17, 2017, http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=372628. See also, Colin Clarke, Ceri Peach and Steven Vertovec, "Introduction: Themes in the Study of the South Asian Diaspora," in *South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 10.

[17] See Iris Marion Young's discussion of transcendence and immanence in relation to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, "Pregnant Embodiment," in *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 49.

to the land itself.[18] Extended conversation across cultural difference reminds us that the boundaries of interpretive communities were not meant to quarantine us. They were not, in the words of Kristine Culp discussing the boundaries of the church, meant to "deny vulnerability or escape ambiguity." They were meant to be places of "conversion, repentance, empowerment and healing" because boundaries are places where "real and ongoing change" is possible.[19]

Performances of Sacramental Encounter

This understanding of boundaries as a performance of real and ongoing change is not just a postmodern invention. It was core to the theological anthropology of the Reformers. In the thought of the early Reformation, the material body of a believer or congregation was not an essence unto itself, but a lived performance of faith, empowered by the Spirit of God. Julie Canlis names the "relational ontology" at the center of Protestant thought.[20] For Calvin and Luther in particular, "being" was not a static noun to which a predicate was added. The self was defined in lived relation with Christ, which means that human existence was limited, dependent and relational. It was bounded by borders which belonged in time.

This understanding of humans as having relational borders had profound implications for Protestant approaches of sacramental performance. Thomas Davis charts Martin Luther's movement from the Catholic understanding of the sacrament as an *opus operatum* (literally, "a work done") to an understanding grounded in performance and time. This new understanding of the sacrament was an *opus operantis,* "a work being done, in process, in which one is intimately involved."[21] At issue was a shift away from a localized, guaranteed, sacramental Presence to a sacramental understanding grounded in event and relation. Gayatri Spivak might say that it was a move from the "performative" to "performance." The difference, of course, is that for Luther, the performance included Divine actors and necessitated Divine intervention. The Reformers had a strangely contemporary appreciation for the difficulty of honoring boundaries of belonging. One did not find those points of genuine embodied contact through natural means. When dealing with preaching or the sacramental elements in particular, it was the Holy Spirit that made such relationality possible – both between human and divine and within the community itself.

And this, perhaps, is the most important reason why a global homiletic conversation matters. It cuts to the theological core of what can seem an ethical impossibility. Engaging boundaries of difference is fraught with challenge. There are dangerous shoals and rip-tides in these ocean waters. To stand in this "liminal" space, to use the language of Charles Campbell and Johan Cilliers,[22] is to try to balance preservation with vulnerability, silence with speech, and the value of the particular against the danger of the provincial. It does not simply use difference as a backdrop to bring one's own tradition into clearer relief, as if Others were a mirror through which we might better see ourselves. It risks relationship and change, and there is no guarantee that we'll get it right.

I do not advocate for global homiletic conversation in order to collect exotic preaching

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[18] Winston Halapua, *Waves of God's Embrace: Sacred Perspectives from the Ocean* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008).

[19] Kristine A. Culp, *Vulnerability and Glory: A Theological Account* (Louisville: WJK, 2010), 103.

[20] Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010), 72.

[21] Thomas J. Davis, *This Is My Body: The Presence of Christ in Reformation Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 22.

[22] Charles Campbell and Johan Cilliers, *Preaching Fools: The Gospel as a Rhetoric of Folly* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 37.

practices, like Western tourists in a handicraft market. I certainly do not advocate for global conversation to arrive at some univocal, transcendent form, or even to reaffirm the distinctives of our particular interpretive communities. I advocate for a global homiletic conversation because it destabilizes our boundaries, even as it reminds us of their necessity. It reminds us that we are borders performing, with each other and with God. It reminds us that we are limited, dependent and relational beings. ***And in so doing, global homiletic conversation rearticulates our need for a profound theology of the Holy Spirit every time we speak about sermonic performance.*** When Catholic feminist Elizabeth Johnson discusses her concerns about various Mariological traditions in her context, she is not only worried about the ethical consequences of regulating women's bodies and behaviors based on a Marian ideal. For her, letting Mary be particular and human is more than an ethical issue. It is a theological issue. She notes that in traditions that idealize the Mother of Christ, the mediating, empowering, intercessory work of the Spirit is outsourced to Mary.[23] Pneumatology suffers because Mary has no need of the Spirit. She stands in for Christ in his absence or loses herself in his presence. And yet, in Luke's gospel, Mary does neither of these things. When the overshadowing of the Spirit brings Mary into embodied relation with Christ, she does not disappear—but the borders of her body *are* changed.

When one recognizes that one is limited *and* vulnerable, which is finally the beating heart of what performance in the world (and pulpit) is all about, one faces the question of trust. Where do we place it? Given these limits and vulnerabilities, in what can we put our confidence? Each generation of preachers comes up with its own answer to this question, or perhaps more accurately, they come up with two. The first is the answer preachers speak aloud—the answer that usually points to Jesus. But the more telling answer is the one they reveal in their practice. This may include rhetorical prowess, hermeneutic norms, pastoral purity, narrative form, or cultural expertise. The specific skill changes across time and place. What stays the same, however, is the hope that if preachers do this one thing right, all will be well. In the messy practices of preaching, we hunt for sacramental guarantees, rather than sacramental understandings grounded in event, relation and a Spirit we cannot control. And who could blame us? There is so much at stake when a preacher stands in the pulpit. The wasps circle. The storms gather. We want proof that we have done this thing that God has asked of us. We want proof that we can transcend our limits, or at least cover over our vulnerabilities.

There comes a day, however, when preachers discover that they can be neither of Naiserelagi's Marys. We can't transcend boundaries of culture and context with unnatural insight, and we can't protect congregations from the wasps and storms of change. When that day of realization comes, preachers can do one of several things. We can walk away from our callings, feeling as if we have failed. More dangerously, we can begin to wear a mask, hiding that failure from the world and pretending to be more than we are. Or, we can do something different. We can claim the truth that our calling has never required the transcending of the world or its preservation. This isn't our job, just as it wasn't Mary's. Our calling requires risky performances of sacramental encounter, relating to the world and to God from the vulnerable, destabilized stance of one standing, fully human, in the Spirit's shadow. Through that Spirit, at the boundaries of human flesh, word and community, preachers find a belonging in the body of Christ.

The Labor of Relationship

Feminist philosophers like Helen Buss have asked why pregnancy is not used more

[23] Johnson, 80.

frequently as a metaphorical resource for the relational activity of self-making, with "concepts of barrier, connection and conduit combined."[24] Faafetai Aiava, a Samoan theologian living in diaspora, uses the Samoan word for womb and embrace, *alofa,* to ask a similar question. Is there something about pregnancy that provides a "relational" reference point for identity formation?[25] Does it give us a way to talk about boundaries and belonging together? Pregnancy is a broad metaphor, and it is dangerous to deal with it in the abstract. I wonder, however, what pregnancy meant for Mary. What did that embodied relation with a Savior, brought about by the Spirit, ask of her? The angel told Mary that she would "conceive," "bear" and "name" a living Word (Luke 1:31). What kind of dependence did that take? What kind of commitment to hospitality? What kind of daily courage? To my mind, those are the sorts of things asked of preachers.

They are also, I suggest, things asked of 21st century teachers of preaching who would reject Western homiletic hegemony. It would be comforting for me to summarize my three years of teaching preaching in the Pacific with bullet points of lessons learned or to stabilize the boundaries of my experience as a consumable product. But for all the points of cultural connection in my years of Fijian instruction, there were as many points of dislocation and disorientation. There were moments of warm recognition and joyful discovery, such as one student's suggestion that the "Lowry Loop" could be best imaged in the Fijian context as a dive for sea cucumbers. There were moments of deep hermeneutical insight, informed by the multivalent meanings of a Fijian *ibe*, or mat. But there were also markedly different understandings of a gendered body, different understandings of divine sovereignty in relation to the problem of climate change, and profoundly different levels of trust in the values of secular democracy. After three years, my conclusion is very like the conclusion of the homiletician reflecting on his African sabbatical: the conversation is just beginning. There is so much I do not see. But to my mind, this is the work of 21st century homiletics.

The concrete question of "how" is part of that work and deserves prolonged attention. In the short space of this essay, I offer only scraps gleaned from several years of daily chapel and communal living with future Fijian pastors. Here is what I know: the work will take time—much more than is convenient—and it will risk lived relationship. It will be guided less by an attempt to create a "shared vision" of the homiletic discipline's future and more by an attempt to create a vision of its "shared future."[26] As such, it will risk the authority of well-worn categories and tropes. It will require a willingness to be repeatedly wrong. That's what makes it hard.

But the labor is worth the effort. It is ethically imperative if we are committed to respectful and honest engagement with our world-wide family of faith. More than this, the labor is theologically revelatory. Global homiletic conversation testifies to our provisionality. It reminds us that boundaries of tradition or text or preacherly persuasion will never be worthy of our trust, but Someone is. In her book, *Bewilderments: Reflections on the Book of Numbers,* Jewish author Avivah Zornberg notes, "When God behaves in ways we do not understand, one

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[24] Helen M. Buss, "Antigone, Psyche, and the Ethics of Female Selfhood," in *Paul Ricoeur and Contemporary Moral Thought*, eds. William Schweiker, John Wall, and David Hall (New York: Routledge, 2002), 76.

[25] Faafetai Aiava, "From 'in-between' to 'in-both': Dehyphenating Diasporic Theology from a Relational Perspective," (paper presented to the Relational Hermeneutics Conference, Pacific Theological College, Suva, June, 2016).

[26] Thanks to David Hooker, who draws on the work of Byron Bland for this formulation. "Transforming Community," *JustPeace,* May 5, 2016, accessed March 23, 2018, https://justpeaceumc.org/transforming-community/.

effect is to make him real in his very opacity."[27] At the limits of our understanding, preachers find One who is not ours for the taking—a Spirit-mediated gift, unbound by sermon text, impassioned delivery, or communal norm. But thanks be to God, this Someone is revealed *in* and *through* those shifting boundaries. Sarah Coakley says it like this: "Revelation—even the face of the incarnate Christ—has always required discernment, an epistemic transformation" brought about by a "tangle of practices" and a "radical dispossession to the Spirit."[28] *Revelation, in other words, is a gift that is pneumatologically mediated through faith-filled work.* The difficult, vulnerable, transformative boundaries of global difference invite us to the labor.

[27] Avivah Zornberg, *Bewilderments: Reflections on the Book of Numbers*, (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2015), 167.
[28] Sarah Coakley, "The Identity of the Risen Jesus: Finding Jesus Christ in the Poor" in *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage*, eds. Beverly Gaventa and Richard Hays (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 308.

Appendix:

All photographs taken by the author at Naiserelagi parish, Fiji, December, 2014.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

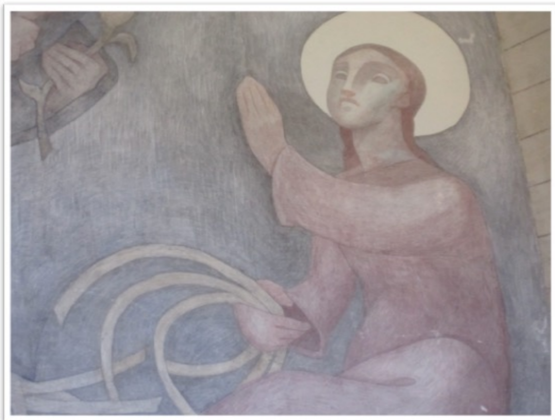

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

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Kate Bruce and James Harrison. *Wrestling with the Word: Preaching Tricky Texts*. London: SPCK, 2016. 160 pages. $18.00.

In this volume, edited and written "for those who preach and those who hear preachers," Kate Bruce and Jamie Harrison offer "advice on the shape and structure of sermons, and how to navigate the stormy waters of tricky texts" (xv-xvi). Working inductively, the authors provide a series of sermons on "tricky" texts and then mine them for strategies for dealing with such texts. This book endeavors to serve as a resource for those preachers unsure what to do with the many difficult passages within Scripture.

The first part of the book offers its theological foundations. Chapter 1 considers objections to the importance of preaching: issues of authoritarianism in the pulpit, pastoral ineffectiveness, preaching is a poor means of teaching, etc. In addressing these issues, the author provides a rationale as to why something like the contemporary sermon should continue to exist. Chapter 2 turns from addressing preaching's critics to providing a theological foundation for the practice itself. According to the author, preaching is an incarnational and context-sensitive act of proclamation in which God continues God's activity of speaking. Furthermore, such preaching takes place in a "dynamic interaction with the scriptural texts, allowing the Bible to challenge and reshape our agenda" (19). This gives Scripture a "normative and essential role in preaching," thereby establishing the need to consider what the preacher should do with "difficult" passages given Scripture's normative, "over-against" role.

With this theology of preaching in hand, the remainder of the book explores various categories of "tricky" texts: texts that depict events beyond human experience, recount human violence, illustrate misused power, seem strange to the modern reader, and challenge our assumptions and perspectives. With each of these categories, the authors provide a series of sermons based on such a text. At the conclusion of the section, the authors identify the various homiletical strategies the preachers use and offer them as guides for how one might wrestle with similar passages in their own preaching. The various "homiletical strategies" at the end of each section range from using humor and references to popular culture in the sermon to how one might move between the biblical text and contemporary experience. The insights gleaned from the various sermons contain practical and suggestions for how to weave the text into the sermon.

The volume concludes with two more sermons and an essay by David Day in which he explores the debate over "the application emphasis." While he desires to avoid debates over hermeneutics, Day still argues preaching that seeks to change the lives of its hearers will maintain an emphasis on "application" that results in the sermon preaching a present-tense word that speaks relevantly to lived experience, instead of merely a history lesson. This ensures "the thrust of the sermon is carried forward into action" (144).

Reading this book, I was struck most by what it did not do. The authors state their view of Scripture as one in which the biblical text is a normative witness that stands "over and against" human experience. After this, they never seriously raise the "hermeneutical question" for the remainder of the book. Yet it is this hermeneutical question (and its theological and pastoral implications) that lies at the center of how one should preach these texts—the texts are "tricky" precisely because of the hermeneutical and theological questions they raise. While one can appreciate the suggestions at the end of each section, one is right to ask if they are truly able to address the unique theological and hermeneutical challenges these texts pose—is "using humor" really sufficient for troubling texts? This results in perhaps the most "tricky" category of biblical texts being left unexamined—passages in which God is the one who perpetrates and

sanctions violence. One wonders if this category is left out because the authors did not have room to include it, or if their approach could not provide a way to speak about them without calling their hermeneutical stance into question. Simply put, because the authors only speak to sermon shape and structure, too much of the book stays at the level of tips and tricks while avoiding the hermeneutical and theological issues involved in dealing with these kinds of texts—how we read them, what we do with their theological claims, and whether we still affirm them as Scripture. Because the authors avoid these questions and their homiletical implications, one wonders how helpful this book actually is for preaching these difficult texts.

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Benjamin H. Walton. *Preaching Old Testament Narratives*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2016. 255 pages. $18.99.

As a pastor and an Old Testament professor I have often heard the comments, “The Old Testament is hard to understand,” or “I do not enjoy the Old Testament because it seems foreign to the New Testament and Christian practice.” Such comments are frustrating because I enjoy studying the Old Testament and see it as dynamic and applicable for today. Benjamin H. Walton offers an introduction to preaching from the Old Testament stories in his book, *Preaching Old Testament Narratives.* His stated goal is to offer a resource that will be useful for preaching from Old Testament narratives and seeks to offer both interpretation and practical skills to enhance preaching from those narratives (19). He divides his book into two sections: 1.) Discover the Message; 2.) Deliver the Message.

In the first part of his book, Walton lays out a hermeneutic for developing Old Testament narratives for peaching. He notes that one of the most neglected areas of preparation is the understanding of genre (31). He advocates for distinguishing complete units of thought (CUT) that have a natural beginning and ending when studying narratives. He continues by comparing Old Testament narratives with New Testament epistles. In narratives, the CUT tends to be one or two chapters, while the epistles are normally one or two paragraphs. Old Testament narratives also are more descriptive, while epistles are prescriptive. Walton notes that Old Testament narratives’ emphasis on retelling an event often leads to few explicit theological principles, thus affecting the application of the narrative (35-36).

In studying Old Testament narratives, Walton recommends to first develop an understanding of the Original Theological Message (OTM) by seeking to recognize the original author’s intent. Once the OTM is identified one can formulate a Take Home Truth (THT), an appropriate application of the OTM to the current life situation. Walton holds that the OTM and the THT help to better understand the original intent of the passage and help to aid in the coherence of the sermon.

Common mistakes in preaching Old Testament narratives tend to manipulate the text instead of developing the narrative. Walton provides a step by step process for analyzing the narrative. First is to identify the CUT, and should include the complete plot of the narrative and have a natural beginning and ending. The next step is to identify the theological and historical context of the narrative as it may have pertained to the original audience. Third is the study of the literary qualities of the text including narration, word usage, and plot development. Fourth is the naming of the OTM, followed by the constructing the THT. Walton illustrates this method in Chapter 3 by taking the reader through the process of studying 2 Samuel 11-12.

In part 2 of the book, Walton addresses the development of a sermon using an Old Testament narrative. The unit primarily follows classic steps in the development and delivery of the sermon. However, he does make specific reference to how this applies to the preaching of Old Testament narrative. He also offers four appendices at the end of the book giving additional suggestions, including developing sermon ideas for 2 Samuel 11-12 and Genesis 11:1-9. The final appendix provides a storyline for the Old Testament.

Walton addresses preaching Old Testament narratives is his book, covering both how to study Old Testament narratives and how to develop sermons based on Old Testament narratives. His text provides a good introduction to the subject. However, further research into the subject is recommended since he only gives a cursory review of narrative and narrative structure. Still, the author provides a systematic way to identify and study narrative to gain both an understanding of

its original intent and its application to society today. The second unit, Delivering the Message, while applied specifically to Old Testament narratives, provides a good primer for the overall development and delivery of a sermon.

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Karoline Lewis. *She: Five Keys to Unlock the Power of Women in Ministry.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2016. 195 pages. $16.54.

Preaching while female is a prophetic and precarious act: prophetic, because stepping into the pulpit as a female speaks truth to entrenched patriarchal power in the church; precarious, because this act brings scrutiny, sometimes hostility, and always the accumulation of two thousand years of sexism to bear on her. How each female preacher navigates this position is shaped by how she understands her authority and voice, her theology, her style of leadership, her gender and sense of self, as well as her own body and sexuality. Karoline Lewis' book, *She: Five Keys to Unlock the Power of Women in Ministry*, is a must-have manual for equipping not just female preachers but all women who answer God's call to ministry. From clergy to youth leaders, deacons, teachers, board members and denominational heads—women who lead in the church will find this book helpful for understanding the realities they must confront, and sage guidance for claiming their vocation in the face of those realities.

Each chapter of *She* examines a different "key" that opens frank discussions about issues women in ministry must deal with, as well as options, strategies, and approaches for traversing this territory. At the end of each chapter is a list of questions and/or exercises for discussion and reflection, and resources for further reading. The book would work well for women's clergy study groups, seminary courses or student discussion groups, and one-on-one spiritual direction or peer-to-peer mentoring.

One of the most poignant features is the inclusion of quotes and poems, some by Lewis' students. Their words capture the breathtaking depths of feeling and lived experience of women who have wrestled with birthing their emerging selves in the midst of a church that is unwelcoming at worst and ambivalent at best about their presence in leadership. Lewis' very act of writing this book models the importance of her own words: "Make clear decisions as to what you are going to do and say both about the Bible and about God when it comes to women in ministry" (3). As a biblical scholar and homiletician, Lewis knows what she stands for and what is at stake. Her approach to this book is one of invitation and conversation rather than complaining and combativeness.

Lewis is fearless in her approach to uncomfortable questions that women may be hesitant to ask themselves, let alone discuss with others, like: How can I feel comfortable in my own body when every aspect of my clothing, curves, voice, hair, make-up, and even shoes are subjected to scrutiny? How do I feel about my weight, my sexuality, and the changes my body undergoes as it ages—especially in the context of ministry? These are questions male ministers are rarely forced to ask, and may lead some to wonder, "Why do we need to talk about our bodies so much as women in ministry?" Lewis' blunt answer is: "Because everyone else does and everyone else will" (60). Thus, it is better to get ahead of the external talk by having prayerful internal conversations about these challenges, as well as discussions with trusted female colleagues and mentors.

Through her own experiences and those of her students, Lewis has dealt with nearly every scenario women face in ministry. Especially helpful is the "glossary of sexism" in Chapter 4 that explains important terms and gives language to describe what women in ministry experience. And while she is sympathetic to the double standards and biases women must deal with, she does not wallow in the unfairness. Instead, she accepts it as reality, urges prudence and discretion, and assures us that the very act of being our authentic selves as servants of God will help to bring about the changes the church needs. She encourages women in ministry to be in

solidarity with each other, while also realizing that "each woman has to be responsible for her own successes and failures in ministry" (55).

Lewis' skill as a teacher of preaching shines throughout the book, especially in the particularities of vulnerability, embodiment, and voice. While such considerations are certainly applicable to male and female preachers alike, they take on added layers of complexity for women in the pulpit. Not only are their own positions in leadership in the balance, but also those of other female leaders as well. Lewis sees tremendous opportunity to lift up not just future female pastors but all women when a minister utters her truth, inhabits her role with authenticity, and proclaims the God who empowers women and men alike.

For Lewis, a theology of hospitality will enable the church to welcome women's gifts. But hospitality cannot be a one-sided transaction. "It is not just about letting people in, but imagining how you must change as a result. It is anticipation that you will be changed in this encounter, in this relationship" (179). In this way, *She* reveals one of the keys for the *church* to unlock its own power, which is to embrace the change that comes with allowing women full access to all leadership positions, and nurturing their gifts for those roles.

Leah D. Schade, Lexington Theological Seminary, Lexington, KY

John Tucker, ed. *Text Messages: Preaching God's Word in a Smartphone World*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017. 242 pages. $32.

The first thing you need to know about this collection of essays on preaching is that its title is deceiving. This is not predominately a conversation about new tips and tricks for preaching in a "smartphone world." If you were looking for homileticians to engage the smartphone world in novel ways of preaching, look elsewhere.

Nonetheless, *Text Messages* is an interesting collection of essays on many facets of preaching and the preaching life. It emerged mostly from papers presented at a conference hosted by Carey School of Preaching at Carey Baptist College in Auckland, New Zealand. Tucker organized the chapters around Paul Windsor's essay "What is Preaching?" Preaching emerges from five players: Text (Part I), Society (Part II), Listener (Part III), Preacher (Part IV), and Christ (Part V).

In the field of homiletics, many essays are in the family tree of post-liberal theories and the importance of placing the text in center stage in order for preaching to be revived. One can very much hear the concern of Charles Campbell's "new directions for homiletics" in *Preaching Jesus* emerge in our era of smartphone technologies and sound byte proclamation. This is especially the voice of the editor, John Tucker, whose essays (almost) bookend the collection. Tucker sets the context of the book as a moment of "crisis in preaching" (Tucker, xvi). This crisis is caused by the social media technologies, notably the abundance of "noise" these platforms create (202). Geoff New names one related crisis in the Internet. With scriptures being "immediately and conveniently" on screens rather than heard, we now have dulled our capacity to hear the Living Word speak to us (49). Should you have a hard copy of this book in hand, you see the crisis firsthand on the front cover: we have allowed out smartphones to have a higher place in our lives than the printed scripture.

Tucker and others do note co-conspirators to preaching's crisis besides technology per se, including the challenge of busyness in the church today. Talking with preachers, Tucker observed that many feel preaching has been pushed to the margins of their ministry in order for other responsibilities to take center stage. The image for the pastor becomes that of "CEO" (202). Authors also name the push to celebrity style preaching wherein delivery trumps theological content.

Some of the most compelling essays in the collection center on what practices are necessary for longevity as a preacher. These authors offer practices to counter the busyness and distraction put onto preachers today. Contributors Lynne M. Baab and Philip Halstead offer concrete postures and practices for preachers to reclaim Sabbath and the capacity to listen for God rather than rushing to find a word to speak into the noise that surrounds us.

Will Willimon closes out the collection with an essay on the Holy Spirit's role in preaching (interestingly submerged in the subheading of Christ rather than its own category). While the essays begin predominately in the world of text, Willimon ultimately reminds us of the disruptive nature of the Holy Spirit who is ultimately in control of our preaching (or should be). "I would like to testify to a spiritual gift that Paul fails to mention in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10," Willimon asserts, "perhaps because it was so obvious to him personally—*disruption*" (233).

While many contributors highlighted the age of distraction in which we live, less was said about this great disruption taking place in this time of technological innovation—including in the church—and the possibilities for preaching and church organization waiting to emerge from the chaos the church seems to swim in. One exception is Marc Radar's essay "Looking

Backward to Look Forward." Closing his very brief sketch of the history of preaching and how culture impacts the practice, Radar concludes: "I am convinced that the history books of the future will include descriptions of preachers from the mid-twenty-first century whose preaching was effective because it was typical of the times and places they ministered" (99). Darrell W. Johnson names this reality as well in his essay "The Transforming Power of Text." "Regardless of the form of communication, Jesus Christ will make sure people hear, receive and be fed by his word" (22). And since Johnson, Rader, and others do not lift up examples of such preachers and practices in this collection, the lingering question planted for the reader is not only "Will we join them?" (99) but how can we join them?

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Gerald C. Liu. *Music and the Generosity of God.* Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. 140 pages. $70.

With *Music and the Generosity of God*, Gerald Liu has given us a gift. In what might initially strike readers as an obscure, scholarly defense of the theological significance of avant-garde musical expression, Liu zooms out by homing in on the minute particulars of the creative process of the likes of John Cage and elaborating beautifully on what the witness of such artists might mean for the way we see the world. "God gives apocalyptically" (13), Liu insists. And before his argument is through, he'll have you mulling over the sounds—*all* the sounds—of our relentlessly given world as potential bearers of apocalypse, too.

Liu's edifying deep dive into the thinkers and experiences that formed Cage's intuition years before the appearance of *4′33″* offers an inspiring counterpoint to the derisive dismissal of his art as a kind of stunt beneath our interest at best and a nihilistic assault on theology at worst. Cage, it turns out, studied Greek and Hebrew as a young man in Los Angeles and even aspired to follow in his grandfather's footsteps as a Methodist Episcopal minster but was dissuaded by his parents. Liu's account convincingly demonstrates that the alleged divide between the secular and the sacred (or even art and ministry) never successfully imposed itself on Cage's understanding of his own vocation.

We are made privy to the interactions of a hodgepodge cast of contemplatives (Merce Cunningham, F.O. Matthiesen, & Irwin Shaw, to name a few) who recognized the isolation of the arts from the unwieldy abstractions of religion, politics, and science as a sign of the human estrangement at the root of social catastrophe. We find Cage meaningfully situated within this community of sacred insight and mutual enrichment drawing inspiration from one another through lectures, performances, exhibits, and written correspondence but also through being called together in Poughkeepsie by Vassar College undergraduate women for a conference in 1948. It was here that Cage encountered the Lithuanian artist, Ben Shahn, a close collaborator of Diego Rivera and Walker Evans and other visionaries of everyday apocalypse. Shahn's portrait, "Silent Music," which features a gaggle of empty chairs and music stands, appears to have conjured out of Cage his own musings on the music that comes out of silence. As he put it at the conference, "Each one of us must now look to himself," and music, like any art, is an "integrating occupation" that guides us toward "that final tranquility" (29) within which we can more righteously perceive ourselves. Liu describes the insight thusly: "Music is everywhere sounds are" (17).

Four years later, *4′33″* would debut at a benefit concert in the Catskill Mountains. Liu beautifully recounts the sacred opening that followed the performer David Tudor's starting of a stopwatch while seated at a piano on a stage of an outdoor amphitheater. The sounds of wildlife, rustling leaves, raindrops, and confused human murmurings. In that space of time in which everyone within earshot was invited to follow Cage's cue to look to themselves and tune in to the din of the given world, Liu asserts that a performative breakthrough occurred in which the distinction between music and the given sounds of human contexts was overcome.

The apocalyptic receptivity Liu urges upon us is, we come to realize, deeply in sync with the belief Cage exhibits in *4′33″*. As Cage asserts, "Something like faith must take over in order that we live affirmatively in the totality that we do live in" (54). As a lyrical theologian, Liu follows Cage's lead by refusing to police, as a theological interlocutor like Jeremy Begbie appears to do, what sounds can be said to serve as God's revelation. This is commendable, but

some readers will wonder what criteria he imagines we'd be right to apply as we seek to discern the what and the why of the sonic ubiquity he insists is apocalyptic.

But too fastidious an ear is inconsistent with Liu's own conversion to "the strange and sensationalized faith" (vii) he received upon praying a scripted prayer as an 11-year-old child beholding a tract after a concert by a band called "Truth" in Mississippi. By circling back to a somewhat random encounter with what could be derisively viewed as a form of propaganda, Liu reads his own life through the conviction that "we are made perfect by what happens to us rather than by what we do" (128), a theological assertion I believe Cage would find completely delightful.

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Clive Pearson, ed. *Imagining a Way: Exploring Reformed Practical Theology and Ethics.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017. 372 pages. $40.

Imagining a Way is a collection of essays exploring the ways Reformed theology and the Reformed tradition might address pressing contemporary ecclesial and social challenges in varying contexts around the world. This collection is a product of a conference hosted by Princeton's Center of Theological Inquiry in April 2004 in Stellenbosch, South Africa. As the final conference of three convened under the title *Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity*, the organizers from CTI asked scholars to reflect on the question: "Does being Reformed mean doing practical theology and ethics in a distinctive and sometimes different way?" (39).

One of the great strengths of the book is its global and multi-disciplinary perspective. Due to the international nature of the conference, the contributing authors come from all over the world, including South Africa, the United States, South Korea, Switzerland, India, Germany, and Australia. These scholars speak with unique voices out of their primary disciplines in practical theology, systematic theology, Christian ethics, homiletics, and liturgy, and each offers their insights as to how Reformed theology might respond to questions of race, economics, ecclesial decline, worship, communal ethics, justice, globalization, pastoral care, and technology.

The international origin and variety of disciplinary perspectives presents both a gift and challenge for the richness and cohesiveness of the book. There is a great depth to the conversation due to the broad and multifaceted perspectives on Reformed theology, ecclesiology, and context. However, such breadth also presents a challenge in defining what is intended by "Reformed theology/tradition" and the presenting problems of varying contexts.

Editor Clive Pearson seeks to bridge these gaps and offer a guiding hermeneutic in his opening essay of "Welcome." Pearson first notes the importance of attentiveness to the author's location, adopting theologian Hugh Kerr's positioning question: "Where are you from?" Second, Pearson seeks to draw the circle wide in offering a broad view of what it means to be "Reformed." Adapting Charles Taylor's concept of the "social imaginary," Pearson advocates for a "Reformed imaginary" which "draws upon the past for the sake of establishing a principled framework…in order to understand and interpret the present for the sake of the future" (35). This Reformed imaginary shares assumptions about the sovereignty of God, the costly love of neighbor, the reality of sin, the need for God's grace, and the centrality of Scripture.

Many of the contributing scholars engage this Reformed imaginary by looking to the Reformed tradition to address contemporary ecclesial and social issues. For example, Hmar Vanlalauva looks to Calvin's theology of the knowledge and sovereignty of God in order to rethink how mainline Christians might relate to a religiously pluralistic context, particularly as encountered in India. Cameron Murchison rereads Calvin's theology of creation and calling in order to offer a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between Reformed theology and capitalism. Finally, Jana Childers utilizes the Reformed tradition and Calvin (whose "model seems uncannily timely") to argue for preaching in this "age of the Holy Spirit" marked by restlessness and searching that is focused on careful interpretation of Scripture, embodied practice, and a focus on God (233-234).

Despite looking to the Reformed tradition as a source of help and hope for contemporary issues being considered by ethicists and practical theologians, these essays are not a mere glorification of the Reformed tradition and Reformed theology. There is a clear-eyed view of the failures and complexities of the Reformed tradition. As Susan E. Davies articulates in her essay, "Justice Healing," "The Reformed tradition has much blood and agony on its hands including the

theological travesties of apartheid and Manifest Destiny…[the Reformed tradition] need[s] to be broken open by the voices and theological insights of those on the margins of our churches and our societies" (96). Attention to the complexity of the Reformed legacy is especially prominent in essays from South African scholars as they wrestle with the Dutch Reformed Church's support of apartheid. Dirk Smit considers whether more or less Reformed theology would have made a difference in South Africa, while Denise M. Ackerman traces how Beyers Naudé's Reformed convictions led him to stand against the DRC.

Just as the book draws from a breadth of scholars, so, too, the book will be interesting and helpful for a broad variety of scholars, students, and ecclesial practitioners including ethicists, practical theologians, systematic theologians, and those who find themselves in conversation with ideas housed in the Reformed tradition. *Imagining a Way* succeeds in its goal to open wide an imaginative, multi-faceted, interdisciplinary, and global conversation about the contributions, challenges, and legacy of Reformed tradition and theology.

Kimberly Wagner, Emory University, Atlanta, GA

Nancy Lammers Gross. *Women's Voices and the Practice of Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. 182. $20.

I am grateful in my life to have heard many good female preachers. However, I have also heard powerful messages from women who seemed unable to fully embody the strength and presence of what they proclaimed. When women are disconnected from their physical bodies, they are less able to authentically testify to the truth of the gospel. Nancy Lammers Gross' work, *Women's Voices and the Practice of Preaching*, seeks to help readers understand the nuances of embodied preaching. She is the Arthur Sarell Rudd Associate Professor of Speech Communication in Ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary, which provides the background research for this book. Her premise is set out in the introduction, stating that her book "...addresses the tendency for women—even women of strong call, conviction, and gifts—to apologize with their bodies and their physical voices for presuming to preach or lead in worship, or for simply occupying pulpit or chapel space" (xviii). Gross understands that not every woman struggles with embodiment for the same reasons, but she does not want homileticians to neglect this practice for their female students.

An early definition the author lays out is that of Voice and a voice. The "Voice" is a woman's interpretive perspective, her prophetic view. The "voice" of a woman is her actual voice and presence behind a pulpit. Though it is true that sometimes a woman's Voice can affect her voice, this book focuses on the latter, discussing the problems many women face regarding their own embodiment. If the voice is a full body instrument, then women must first be reconnected to their bodies before they can truly use their voice (xviii). By emphasizing an understanding of the incarnation, Gross invites women to reclaim their own voice through a better understanding of creation.

Gross uses the story of Miriam, who appears four times in the Old Testament, as her example of an embodied woman who claimed her voice and was used by God. In her story, Miriam's voice and presence are the instruments of salvation for Israel. The next section tells stories of women who struggled to use their voices. Some stories are in their own words, others in Gross', but all have a powerful and representative quality. These women speak from different spheres of experience but each one struggles with embodiment. One woman, Sarah, in the portion where she gives her story, tells of her teenage years when she "didn't want her body at all" (27). Many women can understand the desire to be anywhere except for their own body simply because women's bodies are problematic for society.

Following this, Gross discusses the disconnection between women and their bodies. She speaks of why women lose their voice. Culture plays a role, as do trauma and abuse, all connected to the desire to avoid embodiment. Additionally, because women must pay for their presence in the world by having feminine voices and a demure presence, it is difficult to remain self-possessed. "So why do women disconnect from their bodies? Because it is precisely *women's bodies* that make women wrong" (48, emphasis added). Gross addresses the unrealistic overcommercialization of women's bodies and how imposing a cultural expectation on women's bodies leads to dissatisfaction and overwhelmingly negative understandings of their own bodies. This discussion alone is worth the price of the book.

If the first section of the book emphasizes the theological and experiential, then the final section of the book is practical. The last few chapters provide breathing exercises to learn full-belly breathing necessary for clear and loud voices. To help women understand their own voices, the author also gives an exercise of speaking aloud different emotional intonations using the

story of Mary, Martha, and Jesus after Lazarus' death. The book finishes with a sermon developed from this close reading process, helping readers see the practice of embodied preaching.

Gross does an extraordinary job of lifting up women's voices, empowering them by reconnecting them to their bodies and providing methods to help a more effective expression of the gospel. This book matters because it unites the experience of women, breaks the bonds of fears of embodiment, and allows the full voice of God to speak from a woman's body. By speaking to both the theological and the practical, those who wish to understand the experience of women or personally develop a better preaching practice would benefit from this book. *Women's Voices* provides a path forward for all those seeking to preach embodied.

Cana Moore, Harding School of Theology, Memphis, TN

Lynn Japinga. *Preaching the Women of the Old Testament: Who They Were and Why They Matter*. Louisville: WJKP, 2017. 221 pages. $17.

Lynn Japinga, professor of religion at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, introduces readers to a treasure trove of well-known and little-known women in the Old Testament. The book contains forty chapters, each between three and six pages in length, and each devoted to a woman or a pair of women.

For each chapter and character, Japinga provides the story's location in the Bible and whether it is in the lectionary, followed by a fresh retelling of the story and suggestions for preaching. The stories are organized in canonical sequence beginning with Genesis (Eve) and ending with Hosea (Gomer). She advocates not using these stories as moral lessons but rather as stories that "focus on discerning God's action" (5).

Japinga often gives examples of how the interpretation of these stories have promoted misogyny and then offers a counter interpretation. Frequently, she cites misogynous interpretations from the church fathers, for example: Tertullian (7–8), Calvin (16, 21, 31, 36, 40, 41, 49, 55), Jerome (36), and some medieval commentators (36). She quotes Martin Luther as saying, "women are rather weak in nature" (21, 31, 40–41). It seems, however, her favorite and more recent go-to misogyny is Abraham Kuyper's 1936 commentary. Referring to him almost two dozen times, she quotes Kuyper as saying, for example, that women rose to power only when no men were qualified, as in the case of Huldah (163). About the women in Jesus' lineage (Tamar, Ruth, Rahab, and Bathsheba), Kuyper concludes that they are an "abhorrent degradation" (42). The author also references Kuyper's argument that when women become corrupt, they can be worse sinners than men (147).

Japinga does mention more contemporary scholars like Carol Lakey Hess who portrays Miriam as a jealous woman (55). She also quotes Walter Brueggemann who speaks of no need to criticize Rebecca because she really didn't know what she was doing (26). Japinga finds this a misogynous statement that gives Rebecca no credit for being an intelligent woman (26). Phyllis Trible is one of the few anti-misogynists quoted and affirmed.

One of the strengths of this volume is Japinga's acknowledgement of the complexities of these stories. She deals honestly with flaws as well as strengths of these characters. Regarding Lot's two daughters and the incest in the cave, Japinga concludes, "Contemporary readers are not called to imitate them, but to see that new life can grow out of despair and destruction. God took that dysfunctional family and made their descendant, Ruth the Moabite, an ancestor of Jesus. The future was born in that cave" (23). She challenges reader to think how women define spirituality differently from men based on their experience of childbearing: less an image of wrestling with God and more in the desire for love and relationship (32–33).

Japinga offers insightful and creative ways of preaching these stories. She suggests the story of Sarah and Hagar be used as an opportunity to address the three religions that spring from them: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (17–18). She connects contemporary issues raised by these stories such as date rape (37–38) and fertility issues, as in the case of Rachel and Leah (32). With the story of Tamar, she offers important perspectives on physical and verbal abuse and the church's responsibility to victims (132–135).

There are a few minor issues I have with the volume. First, Japinga began by lamenting the paltry number of sermons on biblical women by contemporary preachers like Craddock, Gnomes, and Rutledge. I'm not sure this is a fair assessment. For one, both Craddock (e.g. *Collected Sermons*, 2011) and Rutledge (e.g., *And God Spoke to Abraham*, 2011) preach

primarily biblical texts and not biblical characters. My quick perusal of their books showed they also had very few sermons on biblical men. For another, as I look through fifty sermons preached by Ellen Davis in *Preaching the Luminous Word* (2016), I find the same scenario. The same could be said of the sermons by Elizabeth Achetemeier and Alyce McKenzie. These scholars and preachers are known more for preaching texts than characters.

Second, even though most of the stories are interpreted thoughtfully and fairly, the interpretation of the woman of strength in Proverbs 31 is questionable. Japinga sees this text as promoting "superwomen" (183). She maintains that this portrayal is really the image of God and not a woman, concluding that readers must not see this woman "as a role model but as an image of God who is the ultimate provider" (183). I beg to differ with her on this, and so does Ellen Davis who sees this woman as an ordinary hardworking farmer (see *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 2009, 147–154).

Finally, no book could cover the entire waterfront of women in the Old Testament. It would be important, however, in a book like this to tell the story of the Shulammite woman in the Song of Songs. With all the examples of abuse Japinga addresses, here is an example of a woman equal to a man and a man who loves and honors the woman. There is mutual respect for one another, they constantly affirm each another, and they are committed to one another.

Japinga presents a thoughtful, creative, and challenging resource. I especially enjoyed the way she retold these stories, adding touches of humor along the way, and reminding me of their complexity and richness. For preachers, this is an extremely valuable resource that will provoke thoughtful reflection and fill a gap in the content of their preaching. For those who teach preaching, this book provides a great opportunity for discussion on long neglected characters and on critical issues facing our churches and our culture. Japinga is to be commended for what she has contributed.

Dave Bland, Harding School of Theology, Memphis, TN

Matthew Kim. *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017. 288 pages. $15.40.

One of the best pieces of preaching advice I received in seminary was that great preaching begins in the counseling office. It hearkened back to the therapeutic preaching of Harry Emerson Fosdick. The point was not that the preacher would use thinly veiled counseling encounters from the week as illustrations in the sermon, but rather when the preacher is preparing the sermon, she imagines her parishioners sitting with her, around the desk, struggling together with the meaning and application of the text. For many preachers in years gone by, the faces imagined around the desk during sermon preparation were homogeneous, as were the cultural issues they brought to the text. Overwhelmingly in churches today this is no longer true.

In his book, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence*, Matthew Kim addresses the difficulties arising from the fact that the faces the preacher imagines around the office during sermon preparation are diverse and bring unique cultural realities to the preparation of the sermon. Matthew's desire is "to prepare twenty-first century preachers for the realities of congregational diversity in North America and beyond" (xiv). He does this by addressing both the theory of cultural intelligence in Chapters 1 through 4 and the practice of cultural intelligence in Chapters 5 through 9.

After providing in Chapter 1 a heartfelt argument for the necessity of cultural intelligence in preaching due to the growing diversity within congregations, Kim provides a template for cross-cultural hermeneutics and homiletics in Chapter 2; this template guides the rest of the book. The template is laid out in three stages, and each stage is a mnemonic further laying out its steps:

- Stage 1 (Follow your HABIT): Kim's commitment to traditional evangelical theology is seen most clearly in this stage. His method falls within the evangelical tradition of Haddon Robinson, Bryan Chapel, Scott Gibson, and others. Therefore, following your HABIT involves exploring:
  - **H**istorical, Grammatical, and Literary context
  - **A**uthor's Cultural Context
  - **B**ig Idea of the Text
  - **I**nterpret in Your Context
  - **T**heological Presuppositions

- Stage 2 (Build the BRIDGE): In this stage, Kim, following the legacy of John Stott's *Between Two Worlds*, provides some practical steps to understand the cultures of the congregation. This enables the preacher to practice a double listening, hearing the words of Scripture but also hearing the questions, concerns, and convictions raised by the multiple cultures represented in the congregation, enabling the preacher to build a BRIDGE with the congregation:
  - **B**eliefs
  - **R**ituals
  - **I**dols
  - **D**reams
  - **G**od
  - **E**xperiences

- Stage 3 (Speak their DIALECT): In the final stage, Kim argues for the intentional practice of the preacher to develop a "commonness" with the congregation. Just because the preacher speaks the same language as the congregation does not mean that she will be heard; she must be intentional about speaking the same DIALECT through careful consideration of:
    - **D**elivery
    - **I**llustrations
    - **A**pplication
    - **L**anguage
    - **E**mbrace
    - **C**ontent
    - **T**rust

Chapters 3, "Hermeneutics and Cultural Intelligence," and 4, "Exegeting the Preacher," round out the section on the theory of cultural intelligence. The third chapter once again reveals Kim's commitments to evangelical hermeneutics and homiletics. For those who do not share his convictions, however, there is much within these chapters regarding the importance of cultural sensitivity and the importance of self-examination in the preaching task.

The final five chapters provide some practical application of the template as we approach denominational divides (Chapter 5), ethnic diversity (Chapter 6), differences between genders (Chapter 7), unique geographical concerns (Chapter 8), and sensitivity to other religions (Chapter 9). Each chapter addresses these unique cultural concerns by applying the HABIT, the BRIDGE, and the DIALECT laid out in Chapter 2.

Matthew is clearly a sensitive and intelligent practitioner of preaching as well as an excellent writer. His book lays out an almost clinical approach to developing cultural intelligence for the preacher. This clinical approach, I believe, is both the greatest strength and weakness of the book. The approach is clear, systematic, and comprehensive. At times it seems, however, to be addressing a matter of the heart by addressing the workings of the mind. That being said, the book makes a significant contribution to the field of preaching, and what is lacking in developing cultural sensitivity is certainly made up for in addressing cultural intelligence, which is the stated aim of the book. Regardless of one's theological convictions, evangelical or otherwise, the book has much to commend itself to preachers from all traditions who want to take seriously the diverse cultures in their congregations and the diverse faces imagined around the desk during sermon preparation.

Kerry L. Bender, London School of Theology

John McTavish, ed. *Preacher: David H. C. Read's Sermons at Madison Ave. Presbyterian Church.* Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2017. 289 pages. $28.

This volume proves that sermons, and books of sermons, can be theologically substantive, as well as inspiring for congregants and instructive for preachers. David Read was preacher and pastor at Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City, 1956–1989. The editor who selected these sermons is a pastor who knows well the challenge of weekly preaching, and who benefited from a summer school seminar for preachers led by Read at Princeton and from his sermon subscription series.

The book consists of 41 sermons by Read, all but one never published before, plus a brief biographical introduction, and, in the epilogue, a list of Read's numerous publications and reviews of twelve of these. The editor introduces each sermon with a half page comment, often making connections between Read's time and ours. Also included are two of the delightful Christmas fantasy tales which Read offered regularly on the Sunday before Christmas: "The Old, Old Man and the Baby," and "The Poodle in the Stable: A Christmas Tale for All Ages." These are highlights of Read's remarkable literary imagination.

We learn briefly of Read's early life in Scotland, as a student at the University of Edinburgh, as pastor, university chaplain, then as World War II military chaplain, captured and held for five years as prisoner of war in Germany. He spent most of his ministry in New York City. Because the editor knew Read personally, he is able to paint us a picture of a charming and lovable character.

The sermons published here are masterpieces of eloquence and theological insight, organized in seven chapters corresponding to the seasons of the church year: Creation, Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, plus, in the epilogue, one last sermon: "Virginia Woolf Meets Charlie Brown." We also find specific sermons for special occasions like Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. This selection exhibits a well-rounded program of preaching: doctrinal, ethical, apologetic, and personal, always well-grounded in careful exegesis.

What theological stance informed Read's preaching? Having done post-graduate work at Montpellier, France, under the Barthian Pierre Maury, he regarded Karl Barth as the most important theologian of his time, but he "never became a slavish Barthian" (4). He also learned from Rahner, Kung, Baillie, Niebuhr, Tillich, Bonhoeffer and others. These sermons illustrate how preaching can be informed by a neo-orthodox theology, together with an acute sense of contextuality.

Read clearly distinguishes between a properly evangelical theology and a fundamentalist one, and a number of these sermons can be described as "doctrinal," e.g., "The Organ and the Vacuum Cleaner: A Note on Creationism." His awareness of contemporary science is evident in the sermon, "The Gospel in the Galaxies: What Message for Mars?" Concerning the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, we find a fine sermon on "The Christ we Admire: The Christ we Worship;" for Easter, an unapologetic but intelligent *apologia:* "Easter Day: Resurrection! Why I Believe."

But we also find here insightful comment on the affairs of his day, always biblically and christologically based. We can observe his skilled use of the hermeneutical circle, showing how ancient texts can throw light upon our own time and circumstances while reading them with our own questions and contexts in mind. He shows how we can preach prophetically and politically without being narrowly partisan. For example, "Am I a Racist?" is a highly sensitive, nuanced exploration of racism in America. At a time when concerns about pollution of the environment

were only just beginning to surface, Read found grounds in scripture to address these concerns in two of the sermons presented here: "Advent Parables: The Case of the Troublesome Tenants," and "Amok in Eden: Ecology for Christians." The editor, in his introductory comment, indicates the urgent relevance of this for our own time, forty years later.

What about personal faith and spiritual life? A pastoral minister must address this too and Read seems to have done it superbly well. In the season of Epiphany, we find "A Life with Prayer in It," and "The Psalm on the Avenue," expounding the twenty-third Psalm; and "Pentecost Sunday: Alive Inside."

These sermons do such a good job of theological exposition that, as a professor of theology, I can imagine assigning some of them as supplementary to explicit systematic texts. The book is certainly to be recommended to ministers, and to professors and students of homiletics.

Harold Wells, Emmanuel College, Toronto, ON

F. Russell Mitman. *Preaching Adverbially*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. 184 pages. $26.53.

Preaching, according to Russell Mitman, is not performed as an isolated act by a single person. Rather preaching is a dynamic activity performed by the whole faith community. It is embedded in the liturgical act and together they create an interactive whole. Mitman wants to shift the popular adjectival focus on preaching to an adverbial focus. He criticizes the adjectival language used to describe preaching such as "biblical preaching," "evangelistic preaching," "contextual preaching," etc. Instead Mitman probes how preaching adverbially changes the act of preaching. The book consists of eleven chapters that describe preaching adverbially. These include: Preaching Biblically, Liturgically, Sacramentally, Evangelically, Contextually, Invitationally, Metaphorically, Multisensorily, Engagingly, Doxologically, and Eschatologically.

In the chapter on Preaching Biblically, Mitman raises the question of whether a sermon without a biblical text is a sermon. He uses this question as an opportunity to distinguish between biblical preaching and preaching biblically. When biblical texts engage the sermon, one is preaching biblically. When the sermon engages the biblical text, one is involved in biblical preaching. For Mitman, then, as an adjective biblical preaching involves "jacking up a sermon and running a text under it," to use a more popular saying. In contrast, as an adverb, preaching biblically focuses the action on the biblical text which then drives the sermon.

In light of his emphasis on the biblical text, Mitman sticks quite closely to the lectionary schedule and unapologetically confesses, "I am an unrepentant lectionary preacher" (22). As a result, he would seem to oppose the adverbial phrase, "preaching theologically" and Edward Farley's paradigm shift to preaching gospel rather than preaching text.

Describing Preaching Evangelically, Mitman demonstrates little tolerance for evangelical preachers, evangelistic preaching, evangelizing, and evangelists. He maintains they are all associated with the process of getting people to repent, convert, and be baptized. He identifies them with coercive techniques, military conquests, mind control, and fundamentalism (46-48). He wants to take the word back. To preach evangelically is to preach the gospel, to proclaim good news "through the translucent lens of a scriptural text what God is doing *now*" (49).

The chapter on Preaching Contextually describes sermons that engage the context of the hearers. He acknowledges the increasing number of "nones," especially those who are SBNR (Spiritual But Not Religious, 72). He argues that we do not preach popular issues or problem solving or felt needs sermons, but we preach gospeling. It is not that preachers ignore what is going on in the culture, but culture does not dictate what we preach. The SBNR crowd eventually discovers that being SBNR is not enough. In that light, Mitman quotes a 1963 *Time* article about Karl Barth: "he advised young theologians 'to take your Bible and take your newspaper and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible'" (64). Though it is debated whether Barth actually said this, Mitman's point is that the Bible, not the newspaper, drives the conversation. He concludes that we preach "what God is saying now in the context of an assembly who live and move and have their being in a particular time and place" (75).

When it comes to the adverbial phrase Preaching Invitationally, Mitman once again takes issue with using the adjectival phrase "invitational preaching." Invitational preaching is more the language of church growth people (78). Such preaching involves strategies designed to numerically grow churches. It appeals to those who have "dismissed" religion and relies on emotion and experience-based religion (78-79). Mitman makes a powerful statement that counters the invitational approach: "There is a crying need for a new Christian apologetic that invites these dismissers into the sacred mystery that lies beyond their own experience and

personal needs" (80). Because of secularization, entertainment overkill, and commercialization, people are led to view Christianity as irrelevant and even demonic (81).

In spite of this, Mitman is convinced that there are some who do discover that the gods of culture have let them down. Preaching invitationally "invites people into a mystery greater than themselves; preaching invitationally is enticing the assembly into the Word of God and into what God is doing *now*" (82). Along those same lines, in a later chapter Mitman concludes that worship in a postmodern world "must aim for enchantment and not entertainment" (170). Younger generations are looking for "a mystery greater than themselves" (170).

In spite of arguing that he is not splitting hairs over distinguishing between adjectival and adverbial preaching (78), it is sometimes hard to differentiate between the two. Occasionally Mitman tries to make the distinction more pronounced by creating a caricature of adjectival preaching. Despite that, Mitman provides insightful and challenging perspectives on preaching as he treats it holistically, liturgically, and adverbially.

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Paula L. McGee. *Brand® New Theology: The Wal-Martization of T.D. Jakes and the New Black Church.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017. 221 pages. $18.87.

Within the pages of four short chapters, Dr. Paula McGee displays the marketing objective, branding initiatives, constructive identity, ideological ethos, and reconstructed gospel that have become the religious product the New Black Church is selling. Focusing on Bishop T.D. Jakes and the Potter's House Ministries, McGee explores the operation and impact of this new theology on the Black Church and the African American community. Visualizing Jakes through the lens of Sam Walton, McGee "argues that his success with the Woman Thou Art Loosed brand and the Potter's House is a vivid example of the Wal-Martization of African American Religion" (3).

Chapter one is a historical primer for understanding the Black Church and the New Black Church. McGee offers this disclaimer: "The terminology of Black Church and even New Black Church is no longer adequate for the more nuanced discussion of African American religion and theology" (33). Opting to bypass the "definitional dilemma," McGee focuses on models of ministry instead. She explores how the communities understand and define their Christian identity, which she views as foundational for understanding both the Black Church and New Black Church (35).

McGee then delves deeply into the waters of prosperity theology or theologies of prosperity (57). Born in the 1980s and 1990s, New Black Church preachers emerged during a cultural sea change (82). Riding the waves of an economic upturn, a rising Black middle class, and a swelling Black population that understood little about the suffering and segregation of their ancestors, "Black preachers responded to the change by transforming deeply rooted symbols from both American secular culture and African American religious culture" (82-84). Utilizing a "this world" liberation theology in familiar African American folk idioms, prosperity preachers constructed "contextual theologies to satisfy the needs of their target audience and the millions of consumers" (61). Prosperity preachers, or theologians of prosperity, McGee says, are "those who interpret Scripture and use rituals such as seed-faith giving and positive confession to create theologies that justify their personal economic empires. They also believe and affirm that it is God's will and a believer's right to obtain prosperity or health and wealth" (180).

Chapter three contains a biographical sketch of Bishop T.D. Jakes. Called to ministry at an early age and raised in an Apostolic church, Jakes organized his first church in 1979 (117). However, he relocated several times because of increased membership. During this time he received an idea from God for a women's Bible class (117). The Bible class material became the book *Woman Thou Art Loosed*, as well as a conference, a play, and a music CD. Jakes writes, "God gave me the ability to take the idea and package it to reach a much larger audience than it would have reached if it had remained just a Bible class" (117). These early life experiences find their way into the stories he preaches to his congregation to justify the prosperity gospel and his personal economic wealth.

Jakes is described as a preacher, pastor, businessman, CEO, writer, playwright, and movie producer. While true, the difficulty is in distinguishing where one feature begins and one ends (108-109). Theologically, Jakes views God "as acting just like a CEO at the helm of a multinational corporation" (124). Christologically, Jakes argues that the atonement provides the believer with access to the blessings of God.

McGee concludes her book with a detailed exposition on the Woman Thou Art Loosed brand. Society has historically held an oppressive view of Black Americans. Jakes, however,

focusing on Black women, positioned himself as someone who understood their plight. He wrote a counternarrative from the Scriptures that offered respectability and spoke health and wholeness to them (149), but which also developed into a media empire where everything has a price, even a VIP seat at the conferences. Blurring lines between sacred and secular in his theology mirrored a blurring of lines between ministry and entertainment.

Bishop T.D. Jakes is a central figure in Black American life and religion, and his prominence is an indicator of the shift occurring in the Black Church. In a society ever more individualistic and focused on capitalism, such churches are extremely attractive. However, McGee, relying on the observations of Peter Drucker, writes, “No one raised the question of whether treating people as consumers was problematic for the overall Christian understanding of making disciples, and whether this fit with each church’s identity within the universal church—what Christians theologically identify as the Body of Christ” (24). More specifically, “What are the ramifications when the Great Commission of making disciples becomes making consumers?” (25). These questions warrant our wrestling as we seek to understand the New Black Church and its prosperity theology. McGee’s book is timely and necessary.

Jackie Blue, Boston University School of Theology, Boston, MA

Jacob D. Myers. *Preaching Must Die!: Troubling Homiletical Theology.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018. 220 pages. $24.

Jacob D. Myers, an assistant professor at Columbia Theological Seminary, presents a thought-provoking but somewhat troubling book—perhaps the title itself for some homileticians, the book's density for others. Myers is hoping to "change the game" in the guild of homiletics, which he understands as moving in the direction of developing homiletical theologies (xiv-1). The issue for Myers is twofold: first, the central features of preaching are not simply theological but deeply *philosophical* (2). Second, preaching and homiletics mostly paired with theology and rhetoric are always in a troubling/tensional relationship (3). Myers seeks to "think through the possibility of subverting homiletics *through* preaching" and to "(re)orient homiletics *as* trouble for preaching" by philosophically (mostly feminist and poststructuralist) interrogating the homiletically-established constitutive elements of preaching: *language*, the *preacher*, *scripture*, and *God* (4).

Why must preaching die? Indicating that homiletics has strived to keep preaching alive to ensure its own survival (7-12), the author argues that a certain death/deconstruction is always already at work within homiletics and preaching: troubling them from within, attending to otherness, and pointing toward an alternative way (14-15). Myers asserts that homiletics must help preaching die a good death in order for preaching to meet its Maker, God. For this aim, he tries to submit homiletical theologies to the deconstruction already at work within them.

In chapter one, he examines *language* with a deconstructive lens, inviting readers to use already troubled language to trouble preaching. How is language troubled? According to Myers, language constituted by a socio-symbolic structure of power relations is not neutral but arbitrary and value-laden, producing different meanings and ways of thinking (29-30). It is therefore crucial to embrace the sheer reality of language as trouble in our preaching to disturb thought from within, allowing that which has been occluded and silenced by language to be seen and heard (40-41). Specifically, he suggests that deconstruction unveils the constructed reality of language, power, and history by attending to the mutually interconnected social, economic, cultural, political, and intellectual factors playing across time and space (43-50). A preacher must open to and welcome the other beyond sexual, racial and ethnic binaries (51).

In the second chapter, Myers deals with the *preacher's* selfhood (rather than identity), describing how one opens to and welcomes the other by crossing over the other side of identity. After explaining that selfhood/individuality is, like thought, constructed from language out of identity and difference, sameness and otherness, (58) Myers asserts that a preacher's selfhood should be deconstructed; "There is no 'I' preacher" (60) because identities are not fixed in the socio-political location, but are troubled, floating and transient (62). He further insists that preachers' selfhood as a singular, unified subject is to decrease so that modes of identity increase, along with a deep sensitivity to the intersectional and diachronic complexities of identity (66, 71). Then, "how… may the preacher participate in the trouble always already at work with/in their identity?" (79). Myers claims a preacher should embrace the death of one's selfhood by risking the self on behalf of the other—that is, listening to/for the other and identifying with the world (81-86). To preach is to die for those whom we love (91).

Chapter three begins with Myer's lament on the economic (masculine) appropriation and consumption of *scripture* in various *teloi* of homiletical theologies: "Scripture is in trouble for preaching because of how it is valuated and regulated by homiletical theologies" (120). While acknowledging their inextricability from a certain economy, he presents a feminine economy of

scripture, designated as a homiletic *echognomic*, drawing on a feminist philosopher, Hélène Cixous, who suggests "the paradoxical logic of an economy without reserve" (135). The core argument is that a preacher should approach scripture being mindful of one's own changing, spatio-temporal configuration with the foci of gift, hospitality, democracy, justice and friendship rather than with those of economy, rationality and logic (136-7).

The last chapter directly confronts homiletical theologies by engaging *God* in/as trouble. Labeling contemporary homiletics as a homiletic of God's presence (147), Myers resists its privileging of speech over writing and rebuts its preoccupation with sameness, presence, and life, along with its fear of otherness, absence, and death (148-158). He argues that preaching paired with homiletical theologies is itself the death of God because it necessarily places conditions on God, restricting God's fullness (160). Drawing on John Caputo, Myers offers a radical homiletics that haunts every homiletic by substituting theology and rhetoric with *theopoetics* and opening a discursive space for the im/possibility of encountering God (162). Moreover, Myers insists that because God always already troubles/haunts preaching and every homiletical ontology, they must be exposed to the radical o/Other irreducible to sameness (164-174).

I found this book groundbreaking in many ways, including two specific contributions. First, the author invites the guild to rethink the relatively neglected fact that preaching and homiletics have always been influenced by diverse philosophies, which necessitates a more active engagement with them. I appreciate that the author explicates multiple philosophical concepts, and his suggestions from feminist and poststructuralist perspectives are necessary and timely for our context. Second, in deconstructing four elements of preaching, Myers points to many resources, old and new—gesturing toward many junior scholars whose fine works are unnoticed in our homiletical discourse—to engage more fruitful future dialogue.

This book has several issues, however. First, its uneven structure (Ch. 2 and Ch. 4) can be dense and difficult to follow, and it includes scattered and sometimes excessive philosophical explications, redundancies that undermine the flow, and philosophical depth. Second, while I understand Myers' overall concept (differentiating his radical homiletics from other homiletical theologies), I do not fully agree with the sometimes too strong binaries by which he characterizes contemporary homileticians. Many will be puzzled by Myers' caricature of homileticians as operating in a certain economy of scripture (Ch. 3) and his differentiation from them, because his echognomic of scripture is not free from that economy. Additionally, other homileticians do not completely lack his echognomic elements (such as gift, hospitality, democracy, justice, and friendship). The author tends to evaluate homileticians to fit into his pre-established categories, which I think must be under deconstructive erasure. Third, while Myer's troubling of homiletical theology and rhetoric (Ch. 1 and Ch. 4) invites some homileticians to actively employ the notion of ambience and uncertainty with "bold humility" in their homiletical models (188), others, unlike his characterization, are already struggling with deconstructive trouble in their own ways.

Despite these issues, I recommend this book to any homileticians and students who are ready to join the homiletical journey of deconstruction toward many in-between spaces, grappling with issues around language, the preacher, scripture, and God. I hope this deconstructive voice will continue to check preaching and homiletics in a more constructive way.

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Shelly Rambo. *Resurrecting Wounds: Living in the Afterlife of Trauma.* Waco: Baylor University Press, 2017. 188 pages. $29.95.

Since her 2010 release of *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*, Shelly Rambo's work has quickly become central to trauma theology. In this her second book, Rambo exceeds expectations with a masterful and surprisingly daring venture to reconsider theologies of resurrection in the "afterlife" or "ongoingness" of trauma.

Rambo's book is divided into four chapters that function almost as isolated essays in trauma, but are held together by the running thread of a retelling of the story of Thomas and the wounds of Jesus in John 20. She begins the book with a stirring introduction that features stories of zombies, and her foundational claims about trauma. Along the way, Rambo presents the bold impulse of the book, which is "to rethink the trajectory of the major plotline of the Christian story and to revisit its central assumptions: that life triumphs over death, and that resurrection hope points to the future" (8). In this mission, Rambo sets out to reexamine these central assumptions through the lenses of trauma and suffering.

In the first chapter, Rambo leaps right into the fray as she challenges John Calvin's interpretations of Thomas and the wounds of Jesus. In the midst of this argument, she draws out some key components that inform the remainder of the book. Most importantly, she notes that by erasing the wounds of Christ after the resurrection in prominent Christian interpretations, and by minimizing or reproving Thomas's physical encounter with these wounds, Christians promote the "other-worldliness" of resurrection. In this other-worldly vision of resurrection, Christians lose the possibility that "resurrection could speak in the meantime, in the in-between spaces of human life" (36).

In the following chapter, Rambo launches the reader into an unexpected narrative; in fact, readers may wonder how they jumped from John Calvin to the story of Macrina (and accompanying feminist challenges in resurrection theologies). Yet the story of Thomas is woven throughout, creating continuity between the chapters. With palpable rootedness in human experience and poetic command, Rambo retells the remarkable death narrative of the fourth-century abbess and canonized saint, Macrina. Her miraculous story is at once enchanting, tragic, and illuminating, and serves to supply a counter-resurrection narrative—one that resists the patrilineal snares of traditional resurrection theologies—and demonstrate the healing power of resurrected wounds.

From here, Rambo departs from Macrina and emerges in chapter 3 in the "age of Ferguson," where she explores traumas of racism in the United States. The chapter opens with meditations from Wendell Berry's *The Hidden Wound*, and explores today's racism as a historical wound that has been intentionally kept out of sight. Rambo echoes Berry when she describes the religion of white Christianity as a soothing bandage intended to hide deep and unseemly historical wounds. Under the bandage of white Christianity is the festering, untended wound of racism. In order for Christians to truthfully speak of healing or resurrection in the age of Ferguson, white Christians must look at the wounds. In the surfacing of wounds, they become the locus of honesty and of bold truth-telling, which resists white narratival manipulations.

In the final chapter, Rambo enters yet another context of trauma: the ongoing wounds of war veterans. Here Rambo continues to elaborate the hiddenness of wounds. She explores the incongruence of soldiers' lived traumatic experiences with the narrative that is spun in American society. The soldiers' wounds are hidden in America's choice to reach for the war hero trope instead of the real bodies that are returning home, to work, to their communities, and to their

families. Throughout much of the chapter, Rambo tells stories of a veterans' group in Ohio called Warriors Journey Home, and she describes how they gather "at the site of wounds to tell difficult truths" (114).

Rambo's book concludes with the overarching claim that resurrection cannot be limited to the delineation of the natural and supernatural, the heavenly and earthly; resurrection is not located at the end of a timeline, arriving sequentially after life and death. Resurrection happens on the ground and it happens in the midst of wounds. While her thesis is striking and even a bit subversive, readers may have a difficult time returning to orthodox views of resurrection after spending time among the narratives of the wounded in this book.

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James K. A. Smith. *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology.* Volume 3 of Cultural Liturgies. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017. 233 pages. $29.95.

This book is the third in a three-volume series that deals with liturgy's role in forming the desires of Reformed evangelical communities of faith and practice in the context of contemporary secular culture. It differs from the first two books in that its desire to shape the church as a kind of *polis* is less countercultural than before. This is represented in part by the book's subtitle. Although Smith has always been concerned with the church's loves and desires being shaped by a secular and consumeristic culture, he does not wish to advocate for a church that functions like a gated community. His concern in the subtitle, "reforming public theology," is about defining the terms of engagement in the public square, but consistent with a Reformed, evangelical viewpoint steeped in contemporary philosophy, Kuyperian Reformed theology, and even a little Augustine for good measure.

Smith's argument begins by framing the book as a whole. He wants to argue for a liturgical politics in relation to a reforming public theology. Chapter 1 takes a step back to look at how the "rites" and what we worship in democracy already shape us. Here, Smith also draws from Augustine's notion of the two cities from the *City of God*. Liturgy is already shaping us culturally in both worldly and ecclesial contexts. In chapter 2 Smith considers the church as *polis*, though here the emphasis shifts a bit from his earlier writing. Even as Smith remains in this volume centered on the liturgical formation of desire and its relationship to the Reign of God and Jesus as King, he wants to note that this "liturgical irruption" is both in and *for* the world. Chapter 3 looks back at how the church has already impacted the liberal culture we are in. Smith calls them "craters of the gospel," seeing the landscape as shaped in part by a Christian culture secularized beyond recognition in a late modern context. Liberal democracy, in other words, may well be secular, but it is, viewed historically, theologically inflected. Chapter 4 then becomes an opportunity for Smith to reflect on the unique set of opportunities and problems posed by pluralism in liberal democracy for developing a reforming public theology in an evangelical mode. Chapter 5 then turns to consider the limits of natural law thinking and a contrast of such notions with divine providence. A reforming public theology would, of course, need to reconsider the relationship of nature and grace generally. The final chapter, which represents Smith's most honest and powerful reflections, deals with the problem of how liturgically formed desires can nonetheless go awry. If liturgy does form a church as *polis* that is nonetheless in and for the world, there is not guarantee that liturgy succeeds in doing so. Somehow a reforming public theology committed to the formation of ecclesial desires and loves needs to account for the liturgy's *failure* to form in the empirical life of the church. Smith then calls the church to embrace these contradictions and struggles as it looks for public rules for the road that maintain a kind of received identity, even as it considers its life in the world as occasionally "quixotic."

One of the most engaging features of the book is the way Smith employs a kind of cultural criticism throughout. The book is replete with literary and cinematic examples, stories, and images that capture both the competing ways desire is formed in the two cities as well as the paradoxical possibilities for collaboration and betrayal in a pluralistic context. For me as a homileticial theologian, it is especially interesting to read as Smith seeks to help his readers experience the vision he holds out "theo-poetically" in this volume. There are moments where the cultural allusions tend to be a bit ham-fisted (e.g., his use of the movie "Hidden Figures") but many of the illustrations are quite powerful—especially the reference to the liturgical de-formation represented by the *Godfather* movie referenced in the final chapter. This engaging

cultural criticism alone would be helpful for homileticans and preachers who wish to develop an imaginative vocabulary for thinking about life at the intersection of cultures and in the conflict of desires.

Those of us for whom secular culture is not necessarily a bogeyman will not find much comfort in Smith's book. At the same time, a more tempered reading of Augustine's two cities in this third volume opens up, ironically, the possibility of an intra-confessional dialogue around public theology for evangelicals, liberals, postliberals, and postcolonial theologians who struggle with many of the same issues: the relationship of gospel and culture, the role and shape of identity, and the asymmetrical realities of conversation and engagement in a post-secular context. I don't agree with Smith's book, but I recommend it highly.

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Pete Ward. *Liquid Ecclesiology: The Gospel and the Church*. Boston: Brill, 2017. 220 pages. $57.

In this book, Pete Ward, a professorial fellow at Durham University, articulates what he calls "Liquid Ecclesiology" through an empirically-oriented theological investigation of the lived expression of the church. He argues that the theological imagination of the church has been centered on the "Solid Church," which arises from the understanding of the church as "a gathering in one place, at one time, with the purpose of performing a shared ritual" (10). By attending to the growing fluidity in society and culture, Ward contends the necessity of shifting the focus in the theological discussion of the church from solidity to fluidity because "fluidity is a characteristic of both divine being and of human culture" (10).

This book comprises three parts with ten chapters. In part 1, Ward lays a theological basis for a Liquid Ecclesiology upon a theology of gospel and church. Chapter 1 explores the nature and manner of the divine presence, which is a theological rationale of the presence of Christ in and through the imperfect cultural expression of the church. The church and the gospel have their being in the presence of Christ, but at the same time they are expressions in cultural forms, which are always partial and imperfect to convey the fullness of the divine presence. What makes possible the presence of Christ in cultural forms of expression is God's impassioned love, which is characterized by *kenosis*. This love of God shapes the presence of Christ in the church and the world through self-emptying and humiliation. In chapter 2, Ward explicates his understanding of the gospel as paradox. The paradox of the gospel is that the gospel is Jesus Christ, but it is also the message the church is called to proclaim. The communicative form of the gospel has to be always articulated in and through cultural expression, while always remaining provisional (57). This paradox of the gospel acknowledges the fluid nature of the lived expression of the church and opposes the simplistic view of the gospel as fixed doctrinal propositions. Chapter 3 sets out a theoretical framework to examine the cultural and material forms that make up the life of the church. The expression of the Church and the gospel always assumes cultural and material forms. Ecclesial forms of expression as a part of cultural flow are always fluid and changing. To see the presence of Christ that comes in fluid cultural forms, one must pay attention to the lived expression of the gospel in the life of the church (80). Chapter 4 investigates the content of the gospel as message. Because of the diversity of cultural expression of the gospel, the content of the gospel cannot be understood as certain fixed doctrinal propositions. The author employs the concept of "the grand narrative as an approximate frame of reference" that works as a guide for the expression of the gospel and to discern whether a cultural expression of the gospel is appropriate or not (92).

Part 2 examines a case study of the lived expression of the gospel in the evangelical and charismatic churches. Chapter 5 traces the origin of the understanding of the gospel as a series of short doctrinal expressions. To be effective in sharing the gospel with young people, Christian communities simplify the expression of the gospel as fixed doctrinal truth, and this enables the church to accommodate surrounding culture for effective communication of the gospel. Chapter 6 explores how an effort to connect with the cultural context of young people has generated a highly personal and subjective form of Christian faith. Chapter 7 examines the worship songs and shows how "the objective gospel is replaced and repositioned with a subjective narrative of encounter with God" (153). Chapter 8 is an evaluation of the case study in which the author delineates unintended negative consequences of the church's effort to express the faith in the contemporary cultural context for evangelism. Those consequences are "widespread amnesia

about the Gospel" (174); the split between the objective doctrine of the gospel and the personalized theology of everyday worship (177); the marginalization of the gospel in the life of the church (179); and the loss of the significant elements of Christian narrative due to the highly abbreviated form of the gospel (179).

Part 3 deals with the issue of normativity in "Liquid Ecclesiology." In chapter 9, the author proposes his understanding of normativity as discernment of the presence of Christ. His understanding of discernment is not a detached observation with a disinterested judgment. Rather, discernment is the practice of abiding in Christ. It is seeing Jesus Christ in the paradox of the life of the Church through contemplation and reflection on the revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture and the contemporary lived expression of the church. Through the practice of abiding in Christ, the Christian community can make a judgment on its ecclesial life and the lived expression of the Church, and thus it is able to correct and generate new forms of ecclesial life. Chapter 10 examines how disciplined attention to the lived expression of the Church can contribute to the ongoing renewals of the Church. The author provides a plan for theological education as an example.

As the term "Liquid Ecclesiology" implies, Ward does not provide a clear-cut definition of what the Church is in terms of a theological essence. Rather, he offers a comprehensive theological framework to observe and evaluate fluid understandings of the Church that are embedded in the lived expression of the Church in ecclesial practices. By attending to lived expression, Ward articulates a unique approach to ecclesiology that moves beyond theological and empirical reductionism. One critique for Ward is his simplistic understanding of culture. Ward seems to assume that culture is a neutral medium with which the Christian community makes the cultural expression of the church. However, the change of culture often presupposes power struggles and conflicts between groups. Without attending to this aspect of culture, the expression of the church can only reflect the voice of the dominant group in the society and thus unintentionally contribute to silencing the voice of the marginalized.

This book enriches theological discussion on the church in educational settings. It is also helpful for preachers who are called to struggle with the mystery of Christ's presence in the Church and the world. This book invites preachers to abide in Christ as they continue to discern and name the gospel with imperfect cultural expression.

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M. Cecilia Gaposchkin. *Invisible Weapons: Liturgy and the Making of Crusade Ideology.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2017. 376 pages. $69.95.

The word liturgy originally described service for the people of the *polis.* As the Septuagint came into formation, *leitourgia* was rendered as cultic or devotional service to God (Giorgio Agamben, *The Omnibus Homo Sacer,* Stanford UP, 956). In *Invisible Weapons: Liturgy and the Making of Crusade Ideology,* M. Cecilia Gaposchkin delineates another evolution in the use of the term. For Gaposchkin, liturgy includes sacred practices that make crusading a sacramental act. Gaposchkin limits what she calls liturgy to "the formal and ritualized prayer of the [Roman Catholic] Church, which includes the Eucharistic service (the Mass), the Divine Office (the *opus dei*), and a host of other public rites, including processions, blessings, and other formal prayers performed during the Middle Ages (mostly) in Latin" (5). But more expansively, liturgy is, for Gaposchkin, both text and action.

In particular, she examines how Christian rituals and supplications endow the movement of crusading as holy. On one hand, liturgy transforms warfare sparked by particular people during a particular time (initiated by European Christians against Muslims, and some Jews, of the Levant from the 11th to the 15th centuries) into violence of eschatological aspirations. On the other hand, the crusades end up fashioning the prayers of local parishes that represent "the Church." Liturgy ends up reflecting crusade ideologies. Liturgy shapes crusading, and is reshaped by it. The scandalous relationship between Catholic piety and violence anchors her argument, and Gaposchkin writes *Invisible Weapons* as a devotional history of the crusades.

Gaposchkin delivers her argument not only with historical exactitude and ingenuity, but also with the care of a seasoned educator. The intricacies by which she builds her claims are probably most useful for medieval researchers. For example, in addition to the pioneering lines of interpretation that show how crusading became central to the congregational expression of Christian faith and how the prayers of the faithful became words of institution for holy war, medievalists will find illuminating two appendices that offer extra details such as "The Liturgy of the 15 July Commemoration and Comparative Development of the Clamor" (263, 289). The latter is a timeline that builds upon the study of crusade liturgies from Amon Linder's *Raising Arms* (Brepols, 2003). A third appendix provides a "Timeline of Nonliturgical Evidence for Liturgical Supplications," or a list of "evidence" from "churches, letters, and other sources [excluding liturgical manuscripts]" requesting or prescribing "liturgical services to be said for crusades or crusaders" (309). For readers who may have more interest than expertise in liturgical history, those for whom a source like *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Heirosolimitanorum,* aka *Gesta Francorum,* aka *Gesta,* does not roll off the tongue, Gaposchkin begins her book with two essays that prime readers immediately following the introduction. The first essay reviews the "main events" and "principal sources" of the crusades to the Levant, which ground her argument (16). The second introduces liturgical books and liturgical terminology germane to her assertions. She is careful to qualify that the essays are only intended to orient the reader and should not be taken as exhaustive historical summaries or encapsulations of historical claims. However a reader engages those beginning essays, they and the nuanced scholarship and narratives that follow warrant attention from any who seek to understand how Christian practices of faith, and perhaps even practices of faith in general, can motivate centuries-long warfare in the name of God, and how the genealogy of Christian liturgy includes traces of holy war. That kind of correlation and that unfortunate fact amount to much more than a marker of past belief.

Crusaders saw their prayers and the battles consecrated by them as building the future kingdom of God.

In that regard, Gaposchkin's text offers a rich historical counterpoint to watershed titles like Catherine Pickstock's *After Writing* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), William Cavanaugh's *Torture and Eucharist* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1998), and others in the generation following them that have positioned liturgical celebration as a kind of antidote to political violence and social upheaval. Gaposchkin's work stands at the top of crusade studies. Her work will strengthen the syllabi of seminars dedicated to liturgical history, especially of the medieval and crusading periods, and associated reading lists for doctoral students. Yet I also see points of connection between *Invisible Weapons* and a think piece such as Bruce Lincoln's *Holy Terrors* (University of Chicago, 2006). Maybe Gaposchkin's preliminary essays can dialogue with Lincoln's title, where he conveys how the actions of the September 11 attackers constituted a form of deep religious conviction.

For teachers of worship and preaching who recognize the importance of challenging their students to think critically about the efficaciousness of liturgy, its relationship to historical and exponential violence in Christ's name, and what that might entail for interpretation, response, and perhaps even prevention with regard to pious violence today, I recommend *Invisible Weapons.*

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Albert Gerhards and Benedikt Kranemann, translated by Linda M. Maloney. *Introduction to the Study of Liturgy*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, A Pueblo Book, 2017. 400 pages. $44.95.

The modest title of this book may mislead the reader. "Introduction" is an understatement; a better description would be a "foundational text" for the field of liturgical studies. This ascription was offered first by contemporary German colleagues, and now, thanks to Linda Maloney's deft translation, is seconded by English-speaking liturgical scholars. The breadth of this book is best rendered in the authors' introduction: "The forms of faith expression that are the object of scholarly interest include the whole spectrum of linguistic and nonlinguistic liturgical sign-actions throughout history and in the present, in various confessions and cultures" (xiii).

The book's primary reading audience will be those charged with the task of teaching liturgics in academic settings, particularly those interested in historical developments and new patterns of interpretation. The extensive bibliography and the concise definitions of terms such as liturgical theology and ritual make this a valuable textbook. The inclusion of the cultural and human sciences in practical-theological liturgics is welcomed as part of the lived human experience. The goal of this interdisciplinarity of linguistics, sociology, semiotics, and psychoanalytic considerations of worship as an action-field is to reflect on tradition "transmitted experiences" and situational "empirically perceivable and describable experiences" for the sake of the continuing reformation of worship (71). Since the pastoral practice of liturgy holds a central place, this book also belongs in the hands of a pastor/scholar of a worshiping community.

The authors are quick to point to the "confessional limitations" of a Roman Catholic German perspective, and their citations favor contemporary German liturgical scholars, yet their work serves as a witness to the ecumenical liturgical life that is shared in many faith communities. The range of their attention can be seen in this partial listing: Christology, liturgical space, church music, the dimension of memory in worship, theological structures of Jewish-Christian methods of prayer. Of note for *Homiletic* readers is the material on the role of scripture in worship: "The liturgy recalls the biblical history of salvation, but not as something in the past; it does not read the text simply as an ancient and venerable record. Rather, the proclamation of the word in its many forms is subject to the demand that what is proclaimed from Scripture has a present-day character and is bound up with the hope of a future consummation" (249).

The book opens with the notion of liturgy as the history of an idea and moves to the recovery of its ritual dimensions in the post-Vatican II context of faith communities. The clarity of this history of the developments of the study of liturgy can also illuminate current shifts in seminary curriculum and faculty positions. The narrative sketch of the Roman Liturgy could easily serve as a teaching model for other traditions to locate their own story in the flow. It is also helpful in overcoming an inclination to misappropriate Jewish/Christian origins or overlook significant contributions of the medieval church in the formation of the Reformation.

One case in point is the account of the two Benedictines, Paolo Giustiniani and Vincenzo Quirini, authors of *Libellus ad Leonem X,* 1513. Their primary goal was Christian education of the congregation. To achieve this would require better preaching, and that requires better biblical and theological training for clergy. One solution: Pope Leo X should open the Vatican libraries to all believers, and have the scriptures translated into the vernacular. Liturgy would then become a force of moral reform and ethical life expressed as doxology. "The idea of modernity

that speaks throughout the *Libellus* lies in the discovery of the significance of the word, behind the phonetic and syntactical structures of language" (132).

It is the theology of the liturgy that works as a lodestone, drawing the separate elements toward the book's center. Liturgy as assembly in the presence of God is one of the critical principles that can be traced from the early church to its recovered significance in Vatican II and beyond. The anthropological perspective is outlined; this is a gathering of humans for particular purposes, with distinct purposes, forms, and the use of established symbols and actions (170). Theology is partnered with anthropology in this analysis. But God is the "gatherer" and Christ is both agent and subject of the transformative encounter: "The liturgical assembly neither exists for itself nor is concentrated on itself; it is directed to God, who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ" (175).

The section on pneumatology begins with a confession. Western theology suffers from a long-term failure to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit in liturgy, the work of the people. The authors offer a corrective: "And yet prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit is one of the elementary aspects of every liturgy: pneumatology is an essential foundation of liturgical theology" (204). This theological consideration of liturgy as Spirit-event leads to an examination of the practice of doxology, epiclesis, invocation, anointing, and the laying on of hands. The congregational "Amen" is seen as the people's affirmation of the epiclesis, perhaps better recorded as "Yes!!" to the priest's calling on the Holy Spirit (207). The theological attention they pay to the significance of sign-actions such as the laying on of hands can be read in the following: "This can on the one hand indicate the transfer of power; on the other hand, both anthropologically and theologically, it can indicate care, protection, healing, and encouragement but also taking possession or identification" (210). Here then is a sign-act that effectively communicates both the Holy and the human.

To conclude, this is a too-brief introduction to *Introduction to the Study of Liturgy* that ends with an invitation: take up and read.

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Vera White and Charles Wiley. *New Worshiping Communities: A Theological Exploration*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2018. 108 pages. $20.

In 2012, the Presbyterian Church (USA) launched 1001 New Worshiping Communities (NWC), an initiative to launch often untraditional Christian communities within the denomination. In this new book, Vera White and Charles Wiley—the Coordinators of NWC and the Office of Theology and Worship in the PC(USA), respectively—reflect on the initiative's six years in dialogue with a wide array of practitioners and theologians.

NWCs are an intriguing line of study because they are currently reaching a demographic so often missing in traditional mainline services: a younger, more diverse group of people with little to no experience with churches (93-6). Further, NWCs call into question several of the basic assumptions many hold about how a church starts, what a church is, and how a church should live out its mission in the modern world. Beginning by dropping the label "church" with its often-problematic institutional baggage, many NWCs diverge from traditional concepts of church in several key ways. Over half of NWCs meet in a non-church setting, with 21% meeting in homes, 27% meeting in coffee shops or bars, and 8% meeting outdoors (94); many are led by people who do not hold traditional denominational credentials and are not seminary-trained; and they often include people who may share little to none of the theological commitments of traditional Christian doctrine, let alone the particularities of Reformed theology.

While the book deftly explores these questions over a wide range of theological topics—discipleship, evangelism, mission, accountability, and sustainability—what is of particular interest for readers of *Homiletic* are the middle chapters exploring new forms of worship and preaching within NWCs. Unlike previous church plants that often began with the "launch" of a worship service in a distinct church building, NWCs often start with relationships or mission and only later form a distinct worshiping community that may look quite different from traditional services of Word and Sacrament in other PC(USA) churches. This raises a series of important questions for these new communities of faith and their supporting denominations to grapple with. For example, what does it mean for the study of homiletics if, as the book argues, "The Word needs to be proclaimed, but preaching is not the only way to proclaim the Word" (52)? In NWCs, the service of the Word might involve people discussing a passage around a breakfast table or responding to the Word with art projects rather than a hymn. How does this change how we understand the formative power of the service of the Word and the traditional role of the pastor-as-preacher?

More generally, how central is worship to communities of faith? If these communities start with mission or relationship, shouldn't these be considered the central mark of the church? Rather than simply answering the question, the book highlights two divergent views from theologians Darrell Guder and Edwin van Driel. Guder argues that "every dimension…of Christian worship…must necessarily relate to the missional vocation of the church" (41-2), while van Driel cautions that such a view can make worship "instrumental to mission" rather than an end in and of itself (43-44). While the book leans toward van Driel's view (it is New *Worshiping* Communities after all), this conversation highlights one of the great strengths of this study: it does not give a one-size-fits-all answer for all churches everywhere, but rather calls communities of faith to grapple with these thorny questions in their particular contexts.

As is often the case, the strengths of the book often lead to corresponding weaknesses. While the number of theological and pastoral interlocutors helps raise a diversity of perspectives, it occasionally feels disjointed—though this might model the multiplicity of voices and

perspectives present in NWCs. Also, while the book's commitment to the PC(USA) and Reformed theology gives the study its necessary context, it might limit its applicability for those of other traditions. Yet, with suitable theological translation, the reflections will no doubt be helpful for other faith traditions that are struggling with many of the same basic questions.

New Worshiping Communities is a valuable resource for denominations, academics, and pastors as they start new faith communities that seek to maintain a healthy dialectic between honoring the core traditions of the Christian faith that have been handed down through the ages while also ensuring that this tradition speaks in new ways to particular contexts in contemporary cultures.

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