

**HOMILETIC JOURNAL**  
**Vol 44, No 2 (2019)**

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**Unfinished and Unfolding Tasks of Preaching: Interdisciplinary, Intercultural, and Interreligious Approaches in the Postcolonial Context of Migration**

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***Abstract:** Addressing the preacher's need to identify their social locations as a preacher, this article explores three critical approaches for homiletics in the postcolonial context of migration: interdisciplinary, intercultural, and interreligious. The interdisciplinary approach to homiletics was sought in the New Homiletic movement but has yet to be fully pursued. Continued dialogue with other disciplines is urgent in a context where complicated postcolonial realities must be addressed. The intercultural issues of preaching are equally important in this context. This paper, therefore, sketches the changing ecclesial landscape where a monolingual homogeneous white congregation and preacher are no longer a norm. How can preaching reflect multivocality and prevent linguistic minority members from being tokenized? The power imbalance embedded in the language of the preacher needs consideration. The interreligious approach has only recently appeared on the horizon of homiletical thought, challenging the Christian-supremacist positions and interpretative practices. Overcoming Christian-centrism, the article argues, can happen once the fear of the other, the fear of difference, and the fear of mixing are acknowledged in the preaching event. Interreligious reality is unfolding and inevitable as a marker of our postcolonial migration context. It potentially ushers in an exciting opportunity for the study of Christian preaching, if we are willing to embrace it.*

**Self-Locating: Touchstone for Preaching**

Naming where one came from or where one stands is important. Self-locating helps scholars of homiletics claim a perspective and outline the scope of their interests while also identifying the limits of their research. As Christine Smith reminds us, preachers should consciously know how “their social locations influence their biblical hermeneutics, their theological thinking, their pastoral sensitivities, and their homiletical methodologies.”<sup>1</sup> The changing landscapes of migration are a critical contemporary context of preaching. Yohan Go, David Jacobsen, and Duse Lee argue that this emerging context urges preachers to study and examine “not only how and what to preach but also where and therefore with whom to preach.”<sup>2</sup> Preachers and those who study preaching are, then, challenged to self-locate within this context. Paying attention to their identity formation in its complexities and fluidities is not a luxury or an auxiliary but a necessity in preaching practice and the study of preaching today.

*Locating Myself in the Migrant Context*

For this author, the job of self-location in the context of global migration suggests itself readily. I grew up in South Korea and moved to Canada in the 1990s. I left South Korea, my

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<sup>1</sup> Christine Smith, ed., *Preaching Justice: Ethnic and Cultural Perspectives* (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1998), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Yohan Go, David Schnasa Jacobsen, and Duse Lee, “Making New Spaces in Between: A Post-Reflective Essay Weaving Postcolonial Threads into North American Homiletics,” *Homiletic* 40:1 (2015): 56.

place of birth, in a definitive way. I only hold a Canadian passport as South Korean law generally does not permit dual citizenship. I am a migrant. If I dig deeper, I clearly see that I have been impacted by my parents' migration as well. My parents were born in North Korea and escaped to the South during the Korean War (1950-1953). Their forced migration connects them and me to the global phenomenon that has reached unprecedented scale in the twenty-first century. This migrant identity informs everything I do. What I bring and contribute to the scholarship of homiletics is intricately connected to my migration experience. I contend, however, that migration is not my reality alone or the reality of a minority in North American society. Migration is something that affects us all, to a greater degree today than ever before. Those who are living in the same place they were born can still locate themselves relative to migrants and the phenomenon of migration. Migration is, therefore, a valid and urgent locus of theological reflection, as many theologians and scholars of religions have argued.<sup>3</sup> Migration is a lens through which to see a web of relevant, complicated, and interconnecting realities.

The scholarship of homiletics has some catching up to do in this regard. In this field there have been scholarly treatments of many aspects of human identity: gender, disability, ethnicity, culture, and class. Yet the migration issue has barely surfaced in the area of homiletics. It does not appear among the 144 key terms in preaching, for example.<sup>4</sup> There is a helpful, albeit small, handful of books that deal with migrant realities in light of biblical, ethnic, cross-cultural, and postmodern perspectives.<sup>5</sup> None of these, however, explicitly and comprehensively addresses migration as a source for doing homiletical theology, or considers it as a hermeneutical method by which various preaching tasks could be carried out. Even my own work featuring biblical figures as migrants is only a small step.<sup>6</sup> Migration is a reality unfolding before the eyes of preachers and homileticians—a reality that deserves far more attention.

### **The Current Postcolonial Reality**

Postcolonial reality is inseparably related to and in many cases a cause of migration. The postcolonial era began in 1946 when India gained independence from British imperial power. This achievement was followed by many more colonized countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, which also gained political independence from European colonial powers (British, French, Spanish, Dutch, or German) imposed in the nineteenth century. Most colonized countries on these three continents gained their political independence in the 1960s.<sup>7</sup> Many struggled thereafter with internal conflict and political instability. My homeland of Korea went to war (1950-1953) after independence from the Japanese Empire. The hardship of war and conflict often led people to leave their homes. The result was a massive flux of migration from many of these colonized countries to Europe and European settler countries such as Australia, the United

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<sup>3</sup> Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy, eds., *Religion, Migration and Identity: Methodological and Theological Explorations* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Susanna Synder, Joshua Ralston, and Agnes Brazal, eds., *Church in an Age of Global Migration: A Moving Body* (New York: Palgrave, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> John M. McClure, *Preaching Words: 144 Key Terms in Homiletics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> In chronological order, for example, Walter Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home: Preaching among Exiles* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), Christian Smith, ed., *Preaching Justice: Ethnic and Cultural Perspectives* (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1998), James R. Nieman and Thomas G. Rogers, *Preaching to Every Pew: Cross-Cultural Strategies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), Ronald Allen, *Preaching and the Other: Studies of Postmodern Insights* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> HyeRan Kim-Cragg and Eunyoung Choi, *The Encounters: Retelling the Bible from Migration and Intercultural Perspectives* (Daejeon: Daegangan, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 2.

States, and Canada. The ongoing problems of violence, poverty, corruption, and economic and political instability in these formerly colonized countries must be viewed as a part of the colonial legacy, the aftermath of a brutal and oppressive history of colonialism. Thus so-called migration “problems,” as Western governments often want to call them, which are actually a host of immigration and refugee issues, are also postcolonial realities in which all colonizers are implicated and within which all must find ways to negotiate and coexist.

The very etymology of the terms Asia, Africa, and America were given by Europeans. Asia and Africa are words derived from European languages as a product of ancient imperialism. America was named after the Italian Amerigo Vespucci in the fifteenth century. These names, as markers of places in various part of the world, embed the colonial history.

In short, the twenty-first century is indelibly marked by European colonialism. Even if we wanted to we could not go back to a pre-colonial world. We cannot completely know or trace what it was like before the conquests, though we may know our past fragmentally. That is why we cannot preach the full gospel to the world unless we understand the powers and principalities of colonialism as one of the major causes of displacement in twenty-first century migration.

### *The Problem of Representation in Preaching*

Preaching as a communicative event inevitably represents reality in a certain way. In preaching we represent others—others in the Bible, others in society—and we do so from our own limited and biased perspectives.<sup>8</sup> As migration is a reality in the postcolonial context, migrants are often labelled as victim or villain, or hero/heroines.<sup>9</sup> Othering happens when names, categories, and descriptions are applied to us before we even become aware that it is happening. Categories can thereby become a part of us before we begin to make them our own or to correct and resist them.<sup>10</sup>

An autobiographical experience may help to clarify how this othering happens. When I first arrived in Canada, right away I felt conscious that I was no longer the norm in the way I had been in Korea. At every turn, people made me aware of my difference where I once had been the same as everyone else. I would often hear the comment, “Oh, you are from Asia.” There was nothing malicious about this comment. And yet it was unsettling because I never thought of myself as Asian while I lived in Korea. The stereotype of being Asian had already been put on and the name Asian was applied before I began to make it my own or before I could respond to that label with a different label.

In preaching, this imposition of names and categories is a challenge from which we cannot escape, and our postcolonial reality makes it incredibly tricky. That is what editors of essays presented in a consultation on postcolonial theology and preaching have argued; they write, “Postcolonial theology offers new vistas for thinking about the language and images we use in preaching as acts of representation, the ways we construe ourselves and our hearers in

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<sup>8</sup> Pablo Jiménez, “Toward a Postcolonial Homiletic,” in *Hispanic Christian Thought at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Alvin Padilla, Roberto Goizueta, and Eldin Villafaña (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 159–167.

<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.united-church.ca/blogs/round-table/what-stake-celebrating-asian-heritage-month>; HyeRan Kim-Cragg, “A Postcolonial Portrait of Migrants: Vulnerable and Resistance,” *Practical Matters* Vol 11 (2018): x–xxx, [practicalmattersjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Kim-Cragg-A-Postcolonial-Portrait-of-Migrants.pdf](http://practicalmattersjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Kim-Cragg-A-Postcolonial-Portrait-of-Migrants.pdf);

HyeRan Kim-Cragg, “Between and Beyond Asian-ness: A Voice of a Postcolonial Hybrid Korean-Canadian in the Diaspora,” in *What Young Asian Theologians Are Thinking: the CSCA Christianity in Southeast Asia Series No 7*, ed. Leow Theng Huat (Singapore, Trinity Theological College, 2014), 90–102.

<sup>10</sup> Judith Butler, “Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance,” in *Vulnerability in Resistance*, ed., Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay (Durham, Duke University Press, 2016), 24.

their contexts, and the kinds of sinful realities and hopeful visions we might name in the intercultural, postcolonial reality that we live in.”<sup>11</sup> For many who find themselves minoritized in the postcolonial context of migration, “sinful realities” clearly include the phenomenon of othering.

You don’t have to be a recent migrant, however, to feel othered in a dehumanizing way. If we are from rural places in an urban-centered world, if we are queer in the heteronormative world, if we are racialized in the white dominant world, if we are women in a male-centered world, if we are disabled in the ableist world, if we speak another language in an English normative world, if we practice more than one religion or a religion other than Christianity in a Christian-centered world, we know what it is like to be categorized, spoken for and misrepresented. The list goes on. And the list of othered experiences may not represent some of us because we fit the norm quite well, but wrestle with our power and privilege nonetheless as we seek to make a difference in this highly polarized, exclusive, and violent world. Confronting this reality and untangling it is an unfinished business of postcolonial society, and an unfolding task in preaching as we seek to proclaim the gospel in ways that build a sense of belonging rather than prejudice.

The emerging tasks of homiletics lie in addressing these new and not-so-new realities, including but not limited to migration and postcolonial struggles. The following is a modest attempt to address these realities in homiletics by embracing interdisciplinary, intercultural, and interreligious approaches as unfinished and unfolding agendas for preaching from postcolonial perspectives. One might have noticed that these approaches share the prefix “inter.” This is more than a personal fetish. It is rooted in an insight gleaned from Asian linguistic background. East Asian calligraphy represents “inter” as “間.” This Chinese character is pronounced “*gan*” in Korean, and “*ma*” in Japanese.<sup>12</sup> Many East Asian words are hieroglyphics, a kind of picture writing. “Inter” combines two picture words, the gate or door, “門,” and the sun, “日.” “Inter,” therefore, literally refers to the light of the sun that comes through an open door or may be the crack in a door. As the sun comes through the crack in the door, so, too, the space between people and their perspectives illuminates. In my way of thinking, therefore, interdisciplinary, intercultural, and interreligious approaches can shed light on homiletical tasks. Or, as the famous Canadian poet, the late Leonard Cohen, drawing upon the wisdom of his Jewish tradition, once put it, “There is a crack, a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.”

### **The Interdisciplinary Approach to Homiletics: Unfinished Business**

The need to self-locate within the context of postcolonial migration meshes with the need for an interdisciplinary approach. Homiletics that seeks an interdisciplinary approach may benefit from the postcolonial perspective because, as Joyce Ann Mercer concludes, interdisciplinarity “disrupts static identities” and “creates small moments of scholarly coherence akin to other complex identity positionings.”<sup>13</sup> The disruptive nature of interdisciplinary scholarship finds a kindred spirit in postcolonial hermeneutics when such key postcolonial

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<sup>11</sup> Yohan Go, David Schnasa Jacobsen, and Duse Lee, “Introduction to the Essays of the Consultation on Preaching and Postcolonial Theology,” *Homiletic*, 40:1 (2015): 5.

<sup>12</sup> HyeRan Kim-Cragg, Joanne Doi, “Intercultural Threads of Hybridity and Threshold Spaces of Learning,” *Religious Education*, 107:3 (May-June: 2012): 268, 262–275.

<sup>13</sup> Joyce Ann Mercer, “Interdisciplinarity as a Practical Theological Conundrum,” in *Conundrums in Practical Theology*, ed. Joyce Ann Mercer and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 184.

concepts as “unhomeliness”<sup>14</sup> reflect the scholarly dislocation of interdisciplinary work.<sup>15</sup> The interdisciplinary approach to homiletics requires a crossing over into other fields of study, despite feeling unhomely, in order to be responsive to today’s postcolonial migration contexts. The postcolonial migration reality is so massive and so complex that homileticians must rely on and work with scholars and activists from all corners of the world and across disciplines. This kind of scholarship is showcased, for instance, in the edited volume *Religion and Migration: Negotiating Sites of Hospitality, Resistance, and Vulnerability*.<sup>16</sup> This example of interdisciplinary learning with the gesture of humility and curiosity is an exciting and innovative model for scholarship in preaching.

I intentionally chose an interdisciplinary approach to homiletics as “unfinished” business because I acknowledge that preaching as a multifaceted academic discipline has reached out to other areas of research. Fred Craddock, for example, appreciated Eugene Lowry’s interdisciplinary effort of using philosophy, psychology, and drama. He writes, “Preaching, like other areas of thought and practice, cannot survive by breathing in its own face.”<sup>17</sup> That is what contributors to *Performance in Preaching* also called for: an interdisciplinary approach that takes performance, speech theory, and embodiment in preaching seriously.<sup>18</sup>

The interdisciplinary approach to biblical studies that reflects postcolonial and migration realities has yielded some surprising results. Ten years ago, in the book *They Were All Together in One Place?*, racially and ethnically aware scholars from the United States proposed “minority biblical criticism,” and argued for an “interdisciplinary turn.”<sup>19</sup> Inspired by this work, Canadian scholars have recently published *Reading In Between*, questioning once again the compartmentalization of academic disciplines as if they exist as detached, unrelated fields of study.<sup>20</sup> They instead show how the intertwined nature of interdisciplinary academic work is essential to empower minoritized communities of faith in the postcolonial world of migration.

The current work groups in the Academy of Homiletics are a prime example of promoting interdisciplinary methods, wherein preaching theoretically and practically converses with biblical studies, culture, ethics, pedagogy, performance, sociology, and technology. The journal *Homiletic* book review section also supports an interdisciplinary approach, as it includes various disciplines such as worship, biblical studies, practical theology, and systematic theology. It is common for scholars of preaching to teach Hebrew Bible or Christian scriptures and vice versa. Many professors around the world hold teaching and research positions that include both worship and preaching. Both the 2018 Religious Education Association annual conference and

<sup>14</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, “The World and the Home,” in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives*, ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 445.

<sup>15</sup> Catherine Manathunga, “Post-Colonial Perspectives on Interdisciplinary Identities,” in *Academic Research and Researchers*, ed. Angela Brew and Lisa Lucas (Maidenhead: McGraw Hill Education, 2009), 133-145.

<sup>16</sup> Andrea Bieler, Isolde Karle, HyeRan Kim-Cragg, and Ilona Nord, eds., *Migration and Religion: Negotiating Sites of Hospitality, Resistance, and Vulnerability* (Leipzig: EVA, 2019) where I grappled with the issue of home and hospitality in relation to preaching. See “Home, Hospitality, and Preaching: A Need for the Homiletical Engagement of Migration,” 233-245.

<sup>17</sup> Fred Craddock, “Foreword,” in Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), x.

<sup>18</sup> Jana Childers and Clay Schmit, eds., *Performance in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 14.

<sup>19</sup> Randall Bailey, Tat-Siong Benny Liew, Fernando F. Segovia, eds., *They Were All Together In One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 27, 28, 35.

<sup>20</sup> Nestor Medina, Alison Hari-Singh and HyeRan Kim-Cragg, eds., *Reading In Between: How Minoritized Cultural Communities Interpret the Bible in Canada* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2019).



the 2019 Academy of Homiletics annual conference addressed themes aimed at unmasking and moving beyond whiteness as a normative category of identity.<sup>21</sup> Both guilds are currently engaged in interdisciplinary reflection on race and ethnicity.

Notwithstanding all these fruitful attempts, healthy accomplishments, and meaningful crossings, the dominant pattern of homiletics, as with other disciplines in academia, is still operating with a largely siloed mindset, compartmentalized and hierarchal.<sup>22</sup> For instance, as I argued in my book *Story and Song: A Postcolonial Interplay between Christian Education and Worship*, Christians in Protestant traditions have, in the name of *Sola Fide*, *Sola Scriptura*, overemphasized the proclamation of the Word as if nothing else happens or matters in worship.<sup>23</sup> In many Protestant churches, preaching dominates the worship service. This norm also happens to be adult-centered. What child wants to listen to a preacher talk for, in some cases, over forty minutes? One may wonder why the fields of preaching and Christian education do not find obvious partnership in terms of faculty positions in the way that Bible-and-preaching and worship-and-preaching have traditionally done. Could it be that preaching is still traditionally understood as something for adults, and Christian education as only for children? We know this understanding is exclusionary. Yet adult-centered, clergy-centered, solo preaching is still the norm.

The dominant pattern of adult-centered preaching has persisted because until recently preachers had not paid sufficient attention to the importance of the congregation, including children, as active participants in sermon-making and delivery. Some headway, however, is being made. Through interdisciplinary engagement within homiletics begun many decades ago, congregations as active participants in the preaching event are being studied. The term “New Homiletic,” coined by David James Randolph who spoke at the first Academy of Homiletics in 1965, stressed this issue by addressing the concrete situation of the hearers.<sup>24</sup> The New Homiletic movement sought to challenge detached, expository, topical sermonizing and clergy-centered, sovereign preaching. This challenge shocked many preachers who believed what people in the pew were thinking or feeling was less important than the transcendent word of God. This movement made a crack in the fortress of clericalism in preaching. It is laudable that advocates of the New Homiletic movement were interdisciplinary. They found inspiration in linguistic philosophy and literature including narrative theory. Cultural studies also contributed to homiletics’ deeper appreciation of orality as a source of knowledge and critique of the dominant printed culture in the West.<sup>25</sup> The New Homiletic was not totally “new,” however, even in the 1960s. At Riverside Church in New York in the 1920s, Harry Emerson Fosdick had emphasized that the sermon should address the needs of the congregation.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See <https://religiouseducation.net/rea2018/> (accessed May 16 2019); <http://www.homiletics.org/2019-meeting-schedule> (accessed October 31, 2019). The 2018 Religious Education Association theme was “Beyond White Normativity,” and the 2019 Academy of Homiletics theme was “Unmasking Whiteness.”

<sup>22</sup> Mercer, “Interdisciplinarity as a Practical Theological Conundrum,” 163–189.

<sup>23</sup> HyeRan Kim-Cragg, *Story and Song: A Postcolonial Interplay between Christian Education and Worship* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 2.

<sup>24</sup> O. Wesley Allen, Jr., “The Pillars of the New Homiletic,” in *The Renewed Homiletic*, ed. O. Wesley Allen Jr. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 7.

<sup>25</sup> Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (New York: Methuen, 1982).

<sup>26</sup> Harry Emerson Fosdick, “What Is the Matter with Preaching?,” *Harper’s Magazine* (July 1928), cited in Allen Jr., “The Pillars of the New Homiletic,” 3.

Despite persistent and steady scholarly efforts for almost 100 years, there is much still to be done.<sup>27</sup> Gerrit Immink lamented in 2004 that scholars of homiletics seemed to be arguing the same thing as if no progress had been made.<sup>28</sup> The fortress of solo clergy-centered and adult-centered preaching has not yet tumbled down. Thus there is an urgency about the change from clergy-centered and adult-centered preaching to genuinely participatory preaching. This change calls for postcolonial perspectives because postcolonial optics view preaching as “a communal task of an entire faith community,” and preaching authority thus needs to be “shared with members of the community”<sup>29</sup>— especially overlooked and marginalized members, including children. Postcolonial perspectives promote the dynamic interaction between a preacher and a congregation as a part of identity formation and negotiation.

While being critical of the fortress mentality, there is no need to dismiss or downplay the unique role of the designated preacher. Whereas the involvement of the congregation is important in the sermon preparation and delivery as well as afterwards, preachers can develop an embodied delivery which makes full use of their position as the minister of the word within a completely participatory practice of preaching. It is time to get on with the unfinished business of *fully* developing an interdisciplinary approach to preaching as a shared, not a sovereign, responsibility, attending to and empowering congregations that include children. Performance theory, religious education scholarship, and other disciplines could inform ways to engage people in their diversities and differences in preaching.

### **Preaching and the Intercultural Approach: Unfinished and Unfolding Tasks**

I now want to focus attention on a related problem and suggest another approach to homiletics: an intercultural approach. The crucial issue here is the power-laden aspect of language vis-à-vis the intercultural context. I mainly focus on differences in modes of communication and language within and among different cultures. By culture, broadly speaking, I mean a group’s way of living, speaking, thinking, and behaving in the world.<sup>30</sup> In short, culture is defined as a shared social reality that is expressed and embedded in beliefs, attitudes, and practices inevitably mediated by languages.<sup>31</sup> That is why language is one of the most integral and critical intercultural issues.

Biblical translation and application in preaching is a profound intercultural issue. An intercultural approach to preaching does not use language to refer only to biblical stories of the ancient past. Preachers choose a particular language to speak of the present, as well. Depending on the choice of language, preachers may bestow knowledge and instruct and inspire hearers. But the preacher’s language may sometimes distort meanings and mislead people. In shaping the

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<sup>27</sup> E.g., in chronological order, Reuel Howe, *Partners in Preaching: Clergy and Laity in Dialogue* (New York: Seabury: 1967); Fred Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (St. Louis: Chalice, 1971); John McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit: Where Leadership and Preaching Meet* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995); Leonora Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997); Lucy Rose, *Sharing the Word* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997); Lucy Hogan and Robert Reid, *Connecting with the Congregation: Rhetoric and the Art of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999); Joseph Jeter and Ronald Allen, *One Gospel, Many Ears: Preaching for Different Listeners in the Congregations* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2002).

<sup>28</sup> F. G. Immink, “Homiletics: The Current Debate,” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 8 (2004): 89–121.

<sup>29</sup> Go, Jacobsen, and Lee, “Introduction to the Essays of the Consultation on Preaching and Postcolonial Theology”: 6.

<sup>30</sup> Matthew D. Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 10.

<sup>31</sup> Mark J. Cartledge and David Cheetham, eds., *Intercultural Theology: Approaches and Themes* (London: SCM, 2011), 2.

present and directing the future, the language of the preacher also carries the baggage of the past lost in translation. For example, David Buttrick raised the inadequacy of the translation of *basileia* from Greek to English as “kingdom of God.”<sup>32</sup> He noted others suggest *kin-dom* as a more adequate translation, making a case where language itself needs “to be remade in other images.”<sup>33</sup> Languages, including such scriptural concepts as *basileia*, are “infinitely translatable,”<sup>34</sup> yet contain constraints, tensions, and ambiguities.<sup>35</sup> As far as biblical translation is concerned, an intercultural approach focusing on language is an unfinished agenda for preaching.

At the same time, intercultural approaches to language accentuate the dangers preachers encounter when referring to an individual or group different from ourselves. It is possible to misrepresent, silence, or even do violence through our language. As Edward Farley argued, the preacher constantly needs to be on guard, lest “in and through language, we render the other marginal, invisible, or such an absolute threat that anything we do to that other is justified.”<sup>36</sup> The problem of representation is directly related to the problem of language because language as a cultural phenomenon may contain the toxic patterns of naming, labeling, and othering people. In the case of people with disabilities, Kathy Black rightly warns of the danger of the metaphorical approach to preaching using the religious vocabulary of deafness, blindness, and paralysis, which is often equated with sin or viewed as entirely negative traits.<sup>37</sup> Teresa Fry Brown urges preachers to develop a “justice thesaurus” in order to create a vocabulary that avoids stigmatizing those who have disabilities or are disabled by society.<sup>38</sup> In this regard, an intercultural awareness of the ways that language functions (often harmfully) across and between cultural groups is an essential consideration that requires further attention in homiletics.

Another intercultural issue is the hegemony of so-called “native” languages in homiletics. It is hard to appreciate how a given language may be associated with power unless you step out of it. This is the lesson I learned when I first left my home country, stepping outside of my Korean language bubble and into an English one. I learned not only what it was like to be a linguistic minority but also to recognize my privilege back home. In Korea, I took the normativity of both the Korean language and my accent for granted. Those from the north or southwest of Korea, far from the capital Seoul, are discriminated against in Korea based on their accent. My privilege was almost completely hidden from my consciousness and only surfaced when I left home and crossed the Pacific Ocean to find another home.

Looking at the wide range of brilliant homileticians and scholars of preaching who have written ground-breaking books in English, there are only a handful who can fully understand what it is like to approach an English pulpit as someone for whom English is not their first language. There are even fewer books available that address this critical issue translated into a

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<sup>32</sup> David Buttrick, *Preaching the New and the Now* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 4–24.

<sup>33</sup> Salman Rushdie, “The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance” *The Times* July 3, 1982, 8.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Troeger, *Ten Strategies for Preaching in a Multi-Media Culture* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 16–17.

<sup>35</sup> HyeRan Kim-Cragg and Don Schweitzer, *The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture in the United Church of Canada* (Daejeon: Daeggangan: 2016); Mary Ann Beavis and HyeRan Kim-Cragg, *What Does the Bible Say? A Critical Conversation with Popular Culture* (Eugene: Cascade, 2017).

<sup>36</sup> Edward Farley, “Toward a New Paradigm for Preaching,” in *Preaching as a Theological Task: World, Gospel, Scripture, In honor of David Buttrick*, ed. Thomas Long and Edward Farley (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 167.

<sup>37</sup> Kathy Black, *A Healing Homiletic: Preaching and Disability* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 54–56.

<sup>38</sup> Teresa Fry Brown, “The Use of Language” in *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice*, ed. Thomas Long and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 110.

language other than English. “In which language should we preach? How can we develop resources for the Caribbean as a whole, when language barriers divide us?”<sup>39</sup> Pablo A. Jiménez asks these questions as a burning issue, reflecting a postcolonial reality of the Caribbean where many distinct dialects are spoken, yet translated materials are hard to come by. Language has historically signaled the colonial power (British and English) within the Caribbean colonial history and context, and most parts of the world. The lack of attention to the intercultural power dynamic embedded in the language of the preacher means there is insufficient academic consideration of the issues in multilingual, non-Anglo, and racialized congregations in North America, and across the globe.

Issues that have to do with the power of language are inseparably related to other minoritized issues. That is why the United Church of Canada’s decision at the General Council 2006 to become an intercultural church included a commitment to intentionally disclose power differentials and unmask violence committed against cultural and linguistic minority communities, including but not limited to Aboriginal (Indigenous), francophone, deaf, and racialized members of the church.<sup>40</sup> The language of preaching, whether naming God or using allegorical/literal/analogical/moral/inclusive/expansive/metaphoric/language, spoken or signed, points to the core of personal and corporate identity.<sup>41</sup> Preaching has to do with the formation and the transformation of Christian identity.<sup>42</sup> If language is not merely a tool to describe a past or current reality but is also a means to create a future reality, *whose* language is represented and respected in preaching shapes the church and the world in which we want to live.

Homiletics in the twenty-first century, an era marked by the postcolonial context of migration, must address linguistic power dynamics as an intercultural issue. It is no longer safe to assume that a preacher’s first language is the same as those in the congregation. In many mainline Protestant and Catholic churches, the number of preachers who have come from other countries is increasing. This is another sign of the impact of migration in the ecclesial landscape around the globe. Thus, equipping preachers and people with intercultural linguistic sensitivity and competence to move beyond Anglo-centrism is an area of unfolding work for homiletics.

While we have a long way to go, a well has already been dug and we can drink of its water thanks to the pioneering work of our elders who lived through and in postcolonial migration contexts. Two come to mind from my Korean and Canadian contexts. One is the late Rev. Dr. Sangchul Lee, a former moderator of the United Church of Canada (1988–1990) and the chancellor of Victoria University at the University of Toronto (1992–1998). His life is a salient example of colonialism and migration. Lee was born to refugee parents in Siberia, and his family was forced to leave and flee their home to Japanese-controlled Manchuria in 1931 when he was seven years old. Threatened with imprisonment by communists suspicious of his Christian commitments, he fled again to South Korea. Years later, after a time studying in Canada, Lee was called to a congregation in Vancouver—not to a Korean congregation, but to an English-Japanese one. In 1966, the year after he started, Koreans began to immigrate to Canada in large numbers and a group began to form around his leadership in the same church. “By 1966,” he recalls in his memoir, “I had unintentionally become a trilingual pastor. On Sunday

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<sup>39</sup> Pablo A. Jiménez, “If You Just Close Your Eyes: Postcolonial Perspectives on Preaching from the Caribbean” *Homiletic* 40:1 (2015): 28.

<sup>40</sup> HyeRan Kim-Cragg and Don Schweitzer eds., *An Introduction to The United Church of Canada* (Daejeon: Daeganggan, 2013), 79.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Scott Wilson, *God Sense: Reading the Bible for Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001).

<sup>42</sup> Tubbs Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*, 29.

mornings I preached in English, in the afternoons in Korean, and in the evenings in Japanese. Nor could I simply repeat the same sermon for each group. Each of the three was a distinct community, not only in language, but in its problems, understandings and level of spiritual maturity.”<sup>43</sup> Sang Chul Lee is exemplary on many levels. For starters, he shows how preachers are called to cross cultural, national, and linguistic borders in this post-colonial era. Second, he demonstrates that multilingualism is a quality that is in need in this context. Third, he shows that preaching is not a matter of directly translating one single message, but needs to take into account cultural contexts and meanings and social locations as well, attending to the context of the hearers’ lived experiences.

A second example is the Rev. Dr. Kay Cho, who was the first Korean woman ordained in the United Church of Canada, and is to this day the only woman to serve a Korean-speaking United Church congregation. Cho is also another person heavily impacted by colonialism and migration. She was born in North Korea, lived through Japanese colonization, escaped during the Korean War, settled in South Korea, and emigrated to Canada, where she married a person living in Canada. In an interview for a qualitative research project about the experiences of racialized, ordained women preachers of the United Church of Canada, she shared this story: “After a few years of serving an English-speaking congregation, one day a parishioner came to me after the service. ‘I could hear everything you said. Your English has improved a lot,’ they told me. So I answered, ‘Thank you for the compliment. I think your hearing seems to have improved, too.’”<sup>44</sup> Cho was pointing out that it was not only a matter of her working on English pronunciation, but of the congregation working on their listening skills. As my research indicates, the church as a whole, including the preacher, has a lot of work to do to open their ears to hear people whose first language is not English or who speak with a different accent. And this ear-opening has as much to do with an attitude towards those who are different as it does an acclimatization to a different accent. This listening and speaking dynamic embedded in power-laden language is the heartbeat of intercultural preaching.

The stories offered by these two Korean Canadian elders shed light on the roles that language plays in preaching in a postcolonial intercultural migration context. Kwok Pui-Lan captures this well:

If the aim of postcolonial preaching is to create a multivocal and dialogical faith community committed to justice, we have to attend to the issue of language in intercultural contexts. In urban global cities, it is increasingly common to have church members speaking different mother tongues and immigrants struggling with English or another colonial language. Many of them live in bicultural and bilingual worlds, speak the dominant language with an accent, and must negotiate and translate constantly between hybrid contexts.<sup>45</sup>

Pui-Lan’s observation poses a question: how can preaching reflect multivocality and prevent linguistic minority members from being tokenized? Whether you are a preacher or a congregant, your language (mother tongue) ought to be acknowledged and reflected in worship. For preaching to promote abundant life as its goal, it needs to rely on the Spirit of Pentecost, the

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<sup>43</sup> Sang-Chul Lee and Erich Weingartner, *The Wanderer: The Autobiography of a United Church Moderator* (Winfield: Wood Lake Books, 1989), 96.

<sup>44</sup> HyeRan Kim-Cragg, “Sharing the Feast and Hearing Complex Calling: A Study of Racialized Ordained Women Ministers of The United Church of Canada,” report submitted to the McGeachy Senior Scholarship Committee, 2011, <https://unitedchurchfoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/Sharing-the-Feast-and-Hearing-Complex-Calling-HyeRan-Kim-Cragg.pdf> (accessed May 16, 2019).

<sup>45</sup> Kwok Pui-lan, “Postcolonial Preaching in Intercultural Contexts,” *Homiletic* 40:1 (2015): 18.

myriad tongues of fire that have descended on our congregations, blessing us with the gift of intercultural communication in multiple languages. The future of preaching is not monolith but polyglot.<sup>46</sup>

To conclude what we have discussed thus far, among the three approaches suggested as emerging tasks of homiletics, an interdisciplinary approach has been identified as the one with a long history of extensive engagement and yet remains as an unfinished task. The intercultural approach is the one that has been employed by many, but insufficiently. Giving particular attention to non-Anglo languages and the power embedded in language as intercultural issues of preaching need to be discussed more vigorously as an unfolding task of homiletics. The last approach suggested here, the interreligious, is probably the one that is still newly beginning to unfold, but is doing so rapidly. We turn to this next.

### **Preaching and the Interreligious Approach: An Unfolding Task**

Interdisciplinary and intercultural approaches are inevitably interwoven. My musings on the East Asian etymology of the prefix “間” (inter) above, cannot be fully understood without an appreciation of Buddhist religious philosophies out of which East Asian words and concepts such as “間” evolved. Homiletics is on the cusp of some important interreligious insights. An interreligious approach to Christian preaching, like migration, is an understudied and unfolding area to explore. In my recent book *Interdependence: A Postcolonial Feminist Practical Theology*, I called for a move in Christian scholarship and practice beyond Christian-centrism.<sup>47</sup> The landscape of Christianity is changing. In many Western countries Christians are sharing the stage with a growing number of practitioners of non-Christian religions. As a matter of fact, Christianity has never been the dominant religion in most regions of the world, and with the end of colonialism no longer holds a privileged place globally. However, this does not mean that the sun of Christendom has completely set. Its twilight legacy lingers. Indeed, I suspect the current rise of far-right and fascist politics around the world has something to do with the legacy of Christendom, and by extension with colonial practices of Christian preaching. Can it be pure coincidence that countries that have elected far-right populist leaders in recent elections including the United States, Philippines, Poland, and Brazil, are predominantly Christian? Preachers must ask self-critically what the roles of preaching are in this politically dangerous reality. These violent political developments call on us to discern whether our preaching has been faithfully practicing “nonviolent resistance” to the dominant powers, as Charles Campbell called for.<sup>48</sup> Otherwise, it may have been held captive, coopted by that power.

One major reason why Christianity remains Christian-centric, without fully appreciating other religions or embracing religious pluralism, is because Christians are fearful and ignorant of religious hybridity. Many Christians are still obsessed with its purity, clinging to a theological singularity. Even creating the category of religion, John Thatamanil notes, leads to the creation of singular identities, which in turn “generates the idea that religions are neatly separated by clearly demarcated and impermeable borders.”<sup>49</sup> In this narrow framework of understanding

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<sup>46</sup> HyeRan Kim-Cragg, “Probing the Pulpit: Postcolonial Feminist Perspectives,” *Liturgy* 34:2 (2019): 22-30.

<sup>47</sup> HyeRan Kim-Cragg, *Interdependence: A Postcolonial Feminist Practical Theology* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2018), 81–105.

<sup>48</sup> Charles Campbell, *The Word Before the Powers: An Ethic of Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

<sup>49</sup> John Thatamanil, “Comparative Theology after Religion,” in *Planetary Love: Spivak, Postcolonialism, and Theology*, ed. Stephen Moore and Mayra Rivera (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 243.

religion, being interreligious or hybrid means being “impure” for many practitioners of Christianity, a threat to the orthodox faith. This logic of singularity and purity has resulted in violence against followers of other religions including Indigenous spiritualities.

However, have Christian traditions and practices ever been completely singular and pure? They have not, according to Laurel Schneider, as long as these traditions and practices are grounded in the theology where God in Jesus “pursues incarnation in terms of bodies, the messy variability of bodies.”<sup>50</sup> Christian theology as incarnational and trinitarian is plural rather than singular, and messy rather than tidy. Embodiment is bound to have to deal with shifting multiplicities because bodies are many and they change. Various bodies are different. Yet, as Cláudio Carvalhaes critiques, churches as ecclesial bodies generally opt for normative uniformity.<sup>51</sup> It is understandable to be anxious about dealing with multiplicity and difference, encountering people and practices that are different from our own. There is undeniably a risk involved in the new and foreign, as it may confuse our identity. But it is also possible to understand difference as “a relation, a differential relation of embodiment,” as Catherine Keller suggests.<sup>52</sup> If we know that we do not need to give up our own particular religious tradition in order to embrace other traditions, as preachers we may be able to ease our community’s fear and anxiety by articulating fluid and hybrid religious identities that are multiple, multiply-configured, and lived out.

That is what is happening in many faith communities in North America. As I recently described,<sup>53</sup> several congregations in Canada have received couples where one partner is of another faith, Jewish or Hindu, for example. In my travels I have met pastors who serve congregations composed of many families and couples of mixed religious traditions in the United States. To them, choosing one religion over the other religion is not an ideal option, as it would result in the loss or suppression of their identities. But these pastors and their faith communities have come to recognize their religious hybrid identities as a gift rather than a threat.

What could preaching look like in such interreligious, religiously-hybrid contexts? These contexts probably do not reflect the contexts of the majority of our congregations today, and they might never do so. However, they may reflect the context of more congregations than we imagine. Therefore, seasoned preachers, preachers in training, and teachers of preaching will find it increasingly important to engage with these religiously-hybrid interreligious contexts rather than dismiss or ignore them.

While we have a long way to go, the work of exploring an interreligious approach to preaching has begun. Hans Malmström and David Jacobsen have introduced a sermon focusing on John 5:31-47 preached by Francis X. Clooney, a Jesuit priest and a leading authority on Hinduism. Clooney offered a self-critique of Christian anti-Semitism embedded in the Gospel of John by making a reference of Shankara’s critique of the Brahmans in a Hindu scripture. The examination of his sermon is an interreligious homiletical move. Biblical exegesis in this sermon was influenced by interreligious hermeneutics which promotes conversational preaching and interfaith dialogue.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Laurel Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1–2.

<sup>51</sup> Cláudio Carvalhaes, “Liturgy and Postcolonialism: An Introduction,” in *Liturgy in Postcolonial Perspectives: Only One is Holy*, ed. Claudio Carvalhaes (New York: Palgrave, 2015), 4.

<sup>52</sup> Catherine Keller, “The Flesh of God,” in *Theology that Matters: Ecology, Economy and God*, ed. Darby Kathleen Ray (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 101.

<sup>53</sup> HyeRan Kim-Cragg, “Baptism as Crossing beyond Belonging” in *Liturgy in Postcolonial Perspectives*, 201–11.

<sup>54</sup> Hans Malmström and David Schnasa Jacobsen, “Preaching as Internal Interreligious Dialogue: A Harvard Case Study,” *Homiletic* 42: 2 (2017): 15–33.

Another example is found in Eunjoo Mary Kim's examination of the story of a widow's son who was raised from death by Jesus in Luke 7:11-17, in light of the Buddhist story of *Kisa Gotami*.<sup>55</sup> Seeking to go beyond the limitations of an intertextual approach to Christian scriptures, she searches for a partner text found in Buddhism and found one in the *Pali Canon*. Delineating similarities and differences between the two stories, Kim argues how this interreligious reading deepens theological wisdom about suffering and salvation. In this intertextual interreligious endeavor, Kim advises not to assume the superiority of Christian scripture but rather to commit to a mutually beneficial reading in tension with humility and creativity.

Let me share my own baby-step examples of an interreligious approach to homiletics in terms of biblical interpretation, translation, and the performative practice of preaching. The first example came from teaching a course where Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian (Catholic, Evangelical, and Protestant) students were learning together. In one session, we studied the story of Hagar in both Genesis and Galatians, based on my co-authored book *The Encounters: Retelling the Bible from Migration and Intercultural Perspectives*.<sup>56</sup> Most Christian students offered a negative view of Hagar and were inclined to see her from Paul's perspective as an allegory of slavery vs. freedom. A Muslim student, however, shared his understanding of Hagar as someone who is revered in the Islamic faith, citing the Quran. The well she found in the wilderness is marked and remembered in the *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca, by millions of Muslims every year, he said. A Buddhist student who had never heard of the story noticed Hagar's name for God as "the one who sees" (Gen 16:13). She connected it to the Buddhist bodhisattva, *Guan In*, a divine figure whose name literally means "the one who sees the sound (of suffering)."

My second example comes from a student I supervised whose graduate study research was on the Cree translation of Methodist hymnody.<sup>57</sup> Erin McIntyre demonstrated in her thesis that Indigenous translators had an ability to incorporate their spiritualities and theology into the hymns they translated. For example, in the English version of a hymn that extols the blessings of God that flow to "saints" but not "sinners," the Cree translation has blessing flowing to "all," contesting an exclusive view of salvation. A former moderator of the United Church of Canada and Cree elder Stan McKay claims that the missionaries had to depend on the Indigenous people to find the right words to preach, including key biblical terms such as sin and salvation. It is possible they were doing more than literally translating what they heard, but were making room for Indigenous interpretations and understandings, however subversive, at the preaching event.<sup>58</sup>

Finally, for an example of interreligious sensitivity in the delivery in preaching, we need to look no further than the Gospels themselves. In Matthew, Jesus is portrayed in a Jewish posture, teaching while seated on a mountain (5:1). When the story of the same sermon is told by Luke to a Greek audience, Jesus is presented as one who preaches while standing in a level place (6:17). We do not know how Jesus preached, but we do know that preaching from an elevated pulpit does not have to be the norm. An interreligious approach informs us that different preaching postures may convey important messages. In Indigenous traditions the elder speaks to

<sup>55</sup> Eunjoo Mary Kim, *Christian Preaching and Worship in Multicultural Contexts* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2017), 71–77.

<sup>56</sup> Kim-Cragg and Choi, *The Encounters*. See chapter 1.

<sup>57</sup> Erin McIntyre, "United Church of Canada Cree Hymnody in Translation: A Theological Locus of Hybridity," Master Sacred Theology Thesis (Saskatoon Theological Union, Saskatoon, 2018).

<sup>58</sup> Stan McKay and Janet Silman, *The First Nations: A Canadian Experience of the Gospel-Culture Encounter* (Geneva: WCC, 1995), 42.



people gathered around in a circle. In Buddhist temples monks deliver a sermon seated cross-legged in front of their followers. Perhaps we as scholars charting a future of homiletics are invited to imagine and explore what it is like to preach while sitting in a circle, or while cross-legged in a posture of meditation. How would such posture communicate the message differently? How do our bodies inform, form, and transform our view, our interreligious sensitivity, even our own content of Christian preaching?

### **Conclusion**

I have identified three unfinished and unfolding tasks of homiletics that are required in the postcolonial migration contexts of the twenty-first century. In doing so I have woven three “inter” related and complimentary approaches. Interdisciplinary, intercultural, and interreligious approaches seek to uphold the importance of solid scriptural exegesis and robust, embodied delivery in preaching while at the same time intentionally enhancing the roles of the people in the pew as active participants in sermon preparation and the preaching event. If we take these approaches seriously, the result will be more faithful and just attention to the people in the pew who are minorities due to age in the case of children, language in the case of non-Anglo speaking people, and religion in the case of families who represent more than one faith tradition. God is present today, actively working in a world marked by postcolonial migration, and compelling us to engage more vigorously in interdisciplinary work while probing intercultural language issues and embracing interreligious realities. In so doing, there is promise that we may make some sense of complicated life situations, interacting with each other and making meaning for our world as the Good News is proclaimed.

**I Wish We Could Fast Forward It:  
Negotiating the Practice of Preaching**

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**Abstract:** *Though recent decades in empirical homiletics have significantly contributed to the understanding of what happens in preaching from the listener's point of view, empirical homiletics needs to do another turn and ask: What do listeners do with preaching? This article introduces children into empirical homiletics as a new group of listeners, and by a thick description of preaching as a practice. Children seldom become full participants in the practice of preaching, mainly because they do not understand what preaching is, they struggle to follow the rules, and they have different ends for the practice than the preachers. One implication for homiletics is that if preaching is considered a practice, it can also be taught. This might help children more easily become participants in the practice of preaching.*

## 1. Introduction

Though several homileticians talk of “the practice of preaching,” few account for what they mean by “practice” or how this practice can be explained and understood. However, there are some exceptions. Homileticians Thomas Long and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale have argued for practice as the best organizational concept to describe preaching.<sup>1</sup> Although their book is an important work on how preaching can be understood as practice, it is directed at understanding the practice of preachers and how preaching can be taught to ministry students. Danish homiletician Marlene Ringgaard Lorensen also argues for a practice-oriented and dialogical approach to preaching. She claims that such an approach needs to shift from analyzing texts to looking at preaching as situated acts, or practice.<sup>2</sup> I agree that practice is an excellent organizational concept for describing preaching; however, I argue that consideration of the preacher is not enough to understand preaching as a practice. To arrive at a more detailed description of what the practice of preaching is, one also has to include the active listening<sup>3</sup> and interpreting task performed by the listeners.

With this article, I aim to contribute to the empirical vein of homiletics. The field of homiletics has seen a turn toward listener-oriented research.<sup>4</sup> This turn has primarily included adult listeners.<sup>5</sup> In other fields, child-centered research—research on children and with

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas G. Long and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice: A New Approach to Homiletical Pedagogy* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008). I disagree with some components of how they view practice, which I will return to in the discussion.

<sup>2</sup> Marlene Ringgaard Lorensen, *Dialogical Preaching: Bakhtin, Otherness and Homiletics* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 36.

<sup>3</sup> The notion of listening as an activity is informed by M.M. Bakhtin's theories on dialogue. See M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986), 68-70.

<sup>4</sup> See David Rietveld's overview of phenomenological preaching, in David Rietveld, “A Survey of the Phenomenological Research of Listening to Preaching,” *Homiletic* 38, no. 2 (2013).

<sup>5</sup> With the exception of the research group that I have been a part of in Norway, (“Preaching for Young and Old,” book forthcoming), and another Norwegian study where they have studied confirmands' responses to worship services, including preaching (Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen, *Gudstjenester Med Konfirmanter: En Praktisk-Teologisk Dybdstudie Med Teoretisk Bredde*, vol. 12, Prismet Bok (Oslo: IKO-forl., 2017)).

children—has had a boom in the last 30 years.<sup>6</sup> Within the theological world, the fields of religious education and theology of childhood have led the way. Religious education produces a lot of relevant research on how children learn and reflect on their religiosity.<sup>7</sup> Theology of childhood has made a substantial contribution on the more systematic theological side, arguing for seeing children as believers, not believers to be.<sup>8</sup> In the narrower field of practical theology, Joyce Ann Mercer and Bonnie Miller-McLemore have written about children.<sup>9</sup> They both advocate a theology that takes children seriously and that includes children’s perspectives and faith in theological work and congregations. Mercer promotes a feminist approach to a theology of childhood.<sup>10</sup> The contributions of Mercer and Miller-McLemore are a valuable starting point for including children and their experiences as an essential field of study in practical theology.

Nevertheless, within the field of theology most of these books and articles are still adults advocating on behalf of children without actually talking with children. Though the subject of children and preaching is sometimes touched upon or reflected on in these works, there is little research done on this subject within the field of homiletics.<sup>11</sup> There is some more or less research-based work done on the topic of children’s sermons. In the 1980s and 1990s in the United States, there was a debate about whether children’s sermons were a good idea or not.<sup>12</sup> Those who argue in favor of them often use developmental psychological or educational arguments to support why children need adjusted sermons,<sup>13</sup> or make theological arguments that

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<sup>6</sup> For a good overview of the research history of the field of children and religion, see the introduction in Susan B. Ridgely, *The Study of Children in Religions: A Methods Handbook* (New York: New York University Press, 2011). In psychology of religion, see Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> A few examples are Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen and fakultet Universitetet i Oslo Teologisk, “Religiøs Læring I Sosiale Praksiser: En Etnografisk Studie Av Mediering, Identifisering Og Forhandlingsprosesser I Den Norske Kirkes Trosopplæring” (Det teologiske fakultet, Universitetet i Oslo, 2014); Morten Holmqvist and menighetsfakultet Det Teologiske, “Learning Religion in Confirmation: Mediating the Material Logics of Religion: An Ethnographic Case Study of Religious Learning in Confirmation within the Church of Norway” (Department of Religion and Education, MF Norwegian School of Theology, 2015); Jennifer Beste, “Children Speak: Catholic Second Graders’ Agency and Experiences in the Sacrament of Reconciliation,” *Sociology of Religion* 72, no. 3 (2011).

<sup>8</sup> In Norway one of the nestors of theology of childhood was Dagny Kuhl. Other important figures are Sturla Sagberg, Sturla Stålsett, Odd Kjetil Sæbø (no relation to the author of this article) and Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen. Internationally, Friedrich Schweitzer in Germany and Marcia Bunge and Robert Orsi in the United States have played important roles in the field of theology of childhood/the study of children in religions. See Friedrich Schweitzer, “Religion in Childhood and Adolescence: How Should It Be Studied? A Critical Review of Problems and Challenges in Methodology and Research,” *Journal of Empirical Theology* 27, no. 1 (2014); Friedrich Schweitzer, Birgitte Thyssen, and Eberhard Harbsmeier, *Barnets Ret Til Religion* (Frederiksberg: Aros, 2006); Marcia J. Bunge, *The Child in Christian Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001); Marcia J. Bunge, ed., *The Child in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Joyce Mercer, *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005); Bonnie J Miller-McLemore, “Children and Religion in the Public Square: Too Dangerous and Too Safe, Too Difficult and Too Silly,” *The Journal of Religion* 86, no. 3 (2006); Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore and Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Let the Children Come: Reimagining Childhood from a Christian Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Mercer, *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood*.

<sup>11</sup> There are a several books in the genre of “how to preach to children.” It would have been interesting to do research on what such books say about preaching and children, but this has not been the subject of this article. In this overview I have chosen to only include peer-reviewed articles or books.

<sup>12</sup> One of the most striking examples I found is this small discussion piece: Sheldon Tostengard and Michael Rogness, “Children’s Sermons,” *Word & World* 10, no. 1 (1990) (not peer-reviewed).

<sup>13</sup> Ronald H, Cram, “Children and the Language of Preaching,” *Journal for Preachers* 17, no. 3 (1994).

argue the necessity of including all in worship.<sup>14</sup> The few I found who write from a homiletical viewpoint either argue against children's sermons,<sup>15</sup> or say that there is a need for children's sermons but strongly argue that they should remain in "the sermon genre" and not become entertainment.<sup>16</sup> Others refuse to take a side in the discussion, but rather argue that since children's sermons have become normalized and are here to stay the challenge is to develop the best possible practice of doing them.<sup>17</sup> This debate shows that homileticians to a certain degree have been interested in the theme of children and preaching, but that this has not resulted in any substantial research on the topic.

In this article, the empirical material comes from Christian education events (CE events) and worship services aimed at children in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway. The Church of Norway does not have a tradition of children's sermons. There is a tradition of Sunday School, but in the worship services that I have studied there is just one preaching event, and this is meant to be for everyone present: children, youth, adults, and the elderly. Even so, I believe the findings in this article also have value for churches that have children's sermons.<sup>18</sup>

### ***1.1 New Turn in Empirical Homiletics?***

I have interviewed children about their experience with and responses to preaching, thus including the perspective of another group of listeners into the listener-oriented vein of homiletics. The turn to interviewing listeners has provided the field of homiletics with valuable insight on what listeners hear when listening to preaching.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, I believe that there is time to do yet another turn and ask the question: *What do listeners do with preaching events?*

I will explore what listeners do with the preaching events by using Theodore Schatzki's definition of practice as an analytical tool, looking at how the children are able to participate in the shared understanding, rules, and teleoaffective structures of the practice of preaching. In the end, I will discuss the implications of the findings for the field of homiletics.

## **2. Background, Material, and Method**

First, I offer some information about Christian education in the Church of Norway and the two events that are the material of this article. The Plan for Christian Education is a nationwide reform of the Church of Norway's work among children and youth that was set in motion in 2009. It requires every congregation to have a plan for systematic and continuous Christian education for all baptized members between the ages of 0-18.<sup>20</sup> *Tower-agents* is an event for children ages 8-9, where the children are invited to be detectives/agents in the church and explore the church. The event spans a few hours on a Saturday and ends with a worship service on Sunday in which the children participate. This event takes place sometime during

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<sup>14</sup> Wilbert M. Van Dyk, "Preach the Word! To Children," *Calvin Theological Journal* 32, no. 2 (1997): 432; Anna Carter Florence, "A Prodigal Preaching Story and Bored-to-Death Youth," *Theology Today* 64, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>15</sup> Paul R. Raabe, "Children's Sermons and Luther's Small Catechism," *Concordia Journal* 15, no. 2 (1989).

<sup>16</sup> Van Dyk, "Preach the Word! To Children," 438-43; Robert T. Carlson, Jr., "Sacred Speech and Children: The Relationship of the Children's Sermon and Liturgy," *Journal for Preachers* 23, no. 4 (2000) (not peer-reviewed).

<sup>17</sup> James Nieman, "Three Thuds, Four D's, and a Rubik's Cube of Children's Sermons," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 22, no. 4 (1995).

<sup>18</sup> It would also be interesting to look at how children experience preaching in regular worship services. As far as I know there is no recent research done on this.

<sup>19</sup> Marianne Gaarden, *The Third Room of Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017); Ronald Allen et al., *Listening to Listeners: Homiletical Case Studies* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> <https://kirken.no/nb-NO/church-of-norway/resources/plan-for-christian-education/>, accessed 09/11/17.

spring. *Wide Awake* is an event for children ages 10-12. The children are invited to a sleepover at the church at which they celebrate the church's new year. This event usually takes place on the first Sunday of Advent, and it spans from Saturday afternoon/evening through the worship service on Sunday. This worship service is the main worship service of the congregation. The invitations to the events go out to all children in the relevant age groups who have been baptized in the Church of Norway. However, it is possible to bring friends that have no connection to any church/religion or are members of other churches or religions.

My material consists of field notes of participatory observation of three Christian education events (CE events)—one *Tower-Agent* and two *Wide Awake* events in three different congregations (St. Nicholas, St. Mary, and St. Emmanuel<sup>21</sup>)—and semi-structured interviews with children who attended the happenings, as well as the adult leaders. Most of the children usually do not attend church on Sundays. However, when asked if they attended church often, the children expressed that they believed they did—because they went every time something special happened, like a wedding, baptism, funeral, or when they were invited to a happening like this. Such an utterance is quite typical of members in a Folk Church.<sup>22</sup> Though the Church of Norway is no longer a state church, the members of the church to a large degree reflect those who live in the area. Many of these members attend church mostly when “something special” happens.<sup>23</sup> As Grace Davie has pointed out, in the Scandinavian Folk Churches it seems like people are “belonging without believing.”<sup>24</sup>

I also have video recordings of the Sunday worship service. These video recordings have been used to view the worship services and as a backup of my field notes. The children were interviewed in groups using a focus group approach.<sup>25</sup> The reason for interviewing the children in groups was a hope that the asymmetry of an adult interviewing a child would decrease with a group of children and one adult.<sup>26</sup> I completed six focus group interviews with three to five

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<sup>21</sup> All names of congregations and persons are anonymized.

<sup>22</sup> For a good introduction to the Scandinavian Folk Churches, see Kirsten Donskov Felter, Ninna Edgardh, and Tron Fagermoen, “The Scandinavian Ecclesial Context,” in *What Really Matters: Scandinavian Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018).

<sup>23</sup> Joel Halldorf, Fredrik Wenell, and Stanley Hauerwas, *Between the State and the Eucharist: Free Church Theology in Conversation with William T. Cavanaugh* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 8; Fredrik Saxegaard and menighetsfakultet Det Teologiske, “Realizing Church: Parish Pastors as Contributors to Leadership in Congregations” (MF Norwegian School of Theology, 2017), 16; Grace Davie, “Belief and Unbelief: Two Sides of a Coin,” *Approaching Religion* 2, no. 1 (2012).

<sup>24</sup> I do believe that there should be a “necessarily” introduced into that sentence—Scandinavians are belonging without *necessarily* believing. Nonetheless, the phrase captures something of what makes the Scandinavian Folk Churches special (Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 18).

<sup>25</sup> Focus groups can be done in various ways depending on discipline. Some have a more stringent method than others. I have used a loose methodology leaning on David Morgan, who defines focus groups as, “A research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher” (David Morgan, “Focus Groups,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 22 (1996): 130).

<sup>26</sup> See Samantha Punch, “Research with Children: The Same or Different from Research with Adults?” *Childhood* 9, no. 3 (2002): 325; Ridgely, *The Study of Children in Religions: A Methods Handbook*, 7; Priscilla Alderson, “Children’s Rights in Research About Religion and Spirituality,” in *The Study of Children in Religions: A Methods Handbook*, ed. Susan B. Ridgely (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 52-53. The choice was also based on practicalities such as time and recommendations after experiences from the project, “Preaching for Young and Old,” where they found group interviews with children to be more rewarding than individual interviews.

children in each group. Also, I had one semi-structured interview with one girl alone.<sup>27</sup> The adults were mainly interviewed individually using semi-structured interviews. I conducted six interviews with pastors and adult volunteers.<sup>28</sup> The children were interviewed right after the worship service was finished. The children in St. Mary and St. Emmanuel are between 10 and 12 years old, and the children in St. Nicholas are between 7 and 9 years old.<sup>29</sup>

### **2.1 What Counts as Preaching in this Article?**

Going into the fieldwork, I had the presumption that preaching is more than what happens in the worship service on Sunday. My thought was that everything that happens during the CE event would affect how the children listen and create meaning from the preaching event on Sunday. There are several presumptions in this. I presumed that the most important preaching was happening in the worship service, that the children listened to preaching, that they created meaning from what they heard, and that they connected what happened in the CE event on Saturday with what happened in the worship service on Sunday. These presumptions were visible in the questions I asked during the interviews. As shown in the analysis, most of my assumptions were wrong, and I had to revise and reject many of them.

In this article, I employ a broad understanding of preaching. The reason for this is empirical. The preachers' self-understanding is that what they do at these happenings is mainly preaching. In "preaching" they include the activities and all "talking in between." In the interviews with the children, it is sometimes difficult to discern which preaching event they are talking about. The different preaching events seem to blend into one box labeled "preaching." The understanding of what counts as preaching that emerges from the empirical material is fluid. Therefore I had to make some boundaries and select what to categorize as preaching for this article. In the concept of preaching, I have included all instances during the CE events when an adult is speaking to the children about the Bible, the church, or faith, where the goal was that the children should experience these instances as relevant for their lives and faith. This means that there are some parts of the event I have categorized as *not* preaching that my informants would have classified as preaching. It also means that some of what I have categorized as preaching is "talking in between" or is closely connected with an activity, in addition to scheduled preaching events.

As I said, I analyze these preaching events by employing concepts from Theodore Schatzki's practice theory. Before we come to the analysis, I offer a short introduction to the main concepts I use.

### **3. Practice Theory**

There is not one coherent "practice theory." There are different versions and each has a particular focus. Practice theoretician Davide Nicolini claims that practice theoretical approaches have five distinctive traits. First, practice theoretical approaches emphasize that there is productive and reproductive work behind all the durable features of our world. Second, it demands that we rethink the role of agents and individuals. Third, equaling mind and body, it

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<sup>27</sup> This girl could not be found when it was time for the interviews. However, she was waiting outside when we had finished and insisted on being interviewed. The rest of the children who had attended the CE event had gone home, so I interviewed her alone.

<sup>28</sup> With the exception of one adult interview that was a group of three (for practical reasons).

<sup>29</sup> In the field work, I experienced that though the CE events were aimed at certain age groups, the congregations operated with somewhat flexible boundaries as to who is allowed to attend, so the youngest children interviewed were 7 years old.

puts at the forefront the importance of the body and objects in social matters. Fourth, a practice theoretical approach contributes to shedding new light on epistemology and discourse. Finally, through all the things mentioned above it also reaffirms the centrality of interests and power in everything we do.<sup>30</sup>

### **3.1 What is Practice?**

I have chosen Schatzki as my main theorist because I believe his definition of practice as an analytical tool helps open up the inner workings of practices. Schatzki defines practice as a “set of doings and sayings that is organized by a pool of understandings, a set of rules and something I call a ‘teleoaffective structure.’”<sup>31</sup> Nicolini places Schatzki within the vein of practice theory that draws on heritage from Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Theorists in this vein of practice theory focus on intelligibility—that people most of the time do what makes sense for them to do and say. Schatzki underlines that to do what makes sense to you to do is not the same as always acting rationally. Practical intelligibility is determined by orientations toward ends (teleology) and by how things matter (affectivity), and both of these things can divert someone from doing what is rational.<sup>32</sup> However, a practice theoretician will not find this sense in the mind of the practitioner; the sense is always shown in practice.<sup>33</sup>

### **3.2 Clarification of Concepts**

I will use the concepts of understandings, rules, and teleoaffective structures (ends and how things matter) as analytical tools in the analysis. After clarifying concepts, I define the practice of preaching using Schatzki’s terms. To operationalize the concepts, I develop questions based on the concepts that I used in the analysis. These are presented at the end of this section.

#### **3.2.1 Understandings**

By “understandings,” Schatzki does not mean some sort of intuition that other prominent practice theorists seem to use to explain much of human behavior. He argues against both Bourdieu’s concept that actors develop a “sense for the game,” and Giddens’ notion that it is practical consciousness that determines routine acts. Schatzki deems both of these problematic and says that they fail to explain why we do what we do, or why we do anything at all; it just demonstrates that we do it. He aims for a thicker description of practice to explain why we do

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<sup>30</sup> Davide Nicolini, *Practice Theory, Work, and Organization: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 6.

<sup>31</sup> Theodore R. Schatzki, “Practice Mind-Ed Orders,” in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Karin Knorr Cetina (New York: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-48.

<sup>33</sup> This means that the mind is not given priority over the body. Yet this equaling motion does not necessarily stop with the mind and the body; some practice theoreticians believe that non-human objects have agency (Nicolini, *Practice Theory, Work, and Organization: An Introduction*, 162-63). Nicolini places Bruno Latour on one end of the scale, but points out that Latour might protest being labelled a practice theoretician. Latour equalizes human and non-human actors in social practice and gives non-human objects agency. In Latour’s version of practice theory, an object can exert direct impact on human action (Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 63-86). Schatzki, though recognizing the importance of materiality, claims that only humans carry out practice. He does not believe that materials exert direct impact on human action; they are not equal. See also Sonia Hazard, “The Material Turn in the Study of Religion,” 4, no. 1 (2013); Theodore R. Schatzki, “Materiality and the Social Life,” *Nature and Culture* 5, no. 2 (2010).

what we do or how we know what to do. He claims that actions are better explained as *knowing how to x*, or which doings or sayings constitute doing *x* in a situation.<sup>34</sup>

### 3.2.2 Rules

When Schatzki speaks of rules, he means things practitioners are supposed to observe when they are participating in a specific practice. By looking at rules, it is possible to see what makes sense for practitioners to do because what people do often says something about how they understand the rules of a practice—and which rules they want to avoid following.<sup>35</sup>

### 3.2.3 Teleoaffective structure

The third concept consists of two things: ends (telos) and how things matter (affectivity). Schatzki argues that what makes sense for people to do substantially depends on what matters to them and how things matter to them.<sup>36</sup> There is a normative component to the teleoaffective structure. In a practice, not every end is acceptable or correct. The same goes for the different tasks, beliefs, and emotions of the practice.

### 3.3.3 Preaching as practice in practice theoretical terms

A preaching event is made up of several components. Most homileticians would agree that the following components are part of a preaching event: the preacher reads a biblical text, interprets it, and then proclaims this interpretation to the congregation. The congregation's task is to listen and interpret.<sup>37</sup> In this interaction, God is also an active participant in the preacher's preparations, in the act of preaching, and in the act of listening.<sup>38</sup> Using practice theoretical language, one can say that this is the *knowing how to x* of the practice. The rules differ according to context, but most of the time they involve sitting still and listening attentively and quietly. The

<sup>34</sup> Schatzki, "Practice Mind-Ed Orders," 49-51.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 51-52.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>37</sup> This description of the components of preaching is informed by searching for definitions of preaching in several influential homiletical books. I have supplied this selection from books that have been used in homiletic teaching at MF. This is by no means a complete review of definitions from field of homiletics but is a sample to show that across different ways of approaching preaching many agree what constitute its components. See Fred Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1979), 33; David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (London: SCM Press, 1987), 11-13; Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 11-29; Halvor Nordhaug, *-Så Mitt Hus Kan Bli Fullt: En Bok Om Prekenen* (Oslo: Luther, 2000); John S. McClure, *Other-Wise Preaching: A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001), 9-10; Charles L. Campbell, *The Word before the Powers: An Ethic of Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 68-70; Jana Childers, *Purposes of Preaching* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004); James Henry Harris, *The Word Made Plain: The Power and Promise of Preaching* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), ix; Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 15-18; Robert Stephen Reid, *Slow of Speech and Unclean Lips: Contemporary Images of Preaching Identity* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 1-5; Bo Larsson, *Recept Eller Replik? Om Predikans Teologi Och Praktik* (Stockholm: Verbum, 1998), 10; Carina Sundberg, "Här Är Rymlig Plats: Predikoteologier I En Komplex Verklighet: Theologies of Preaching in a Complex Reality" (2008); Lorensen, *Dialogical Preaching*, 68-94; Marianne Gaarden, *Prædikenen Som Det Tredje Rum* (Fredriksberg: Forlaget Anis, 2015), 9; Olav Skjevesland, *Broen over 2000 År: Bidrag Til Prekenlæren*, Teologi I Dag (Oslo: Luther, 1981), 34-62; Gustaf Wingren, *The Living Word: A Theological Study of Preaching and the Church*, Predikan (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 13; Mary Catherine Hilkert, *Naming Grace: Preaching and the Sacramental Imagination* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 48.

<sup>38</sup> In this article, God as an actor in the practice is not at the forefront since the children do not address God as an actor in the way they talk about preaching.



teleoaffective structure of the practice of preaching is that the listeners should find meaning and relevance for their own lives and faith in the preaching event.

### 3.4 Analytical Questions

In the analysis, I will explore what kind of understanding, or *knowing how to x*, one needs to have to participate as a listener in the practice of preaching. This can be reformulated into the question: *What do you need to know to carry out the listening and interpreting (x) part of the practice of preaching?*

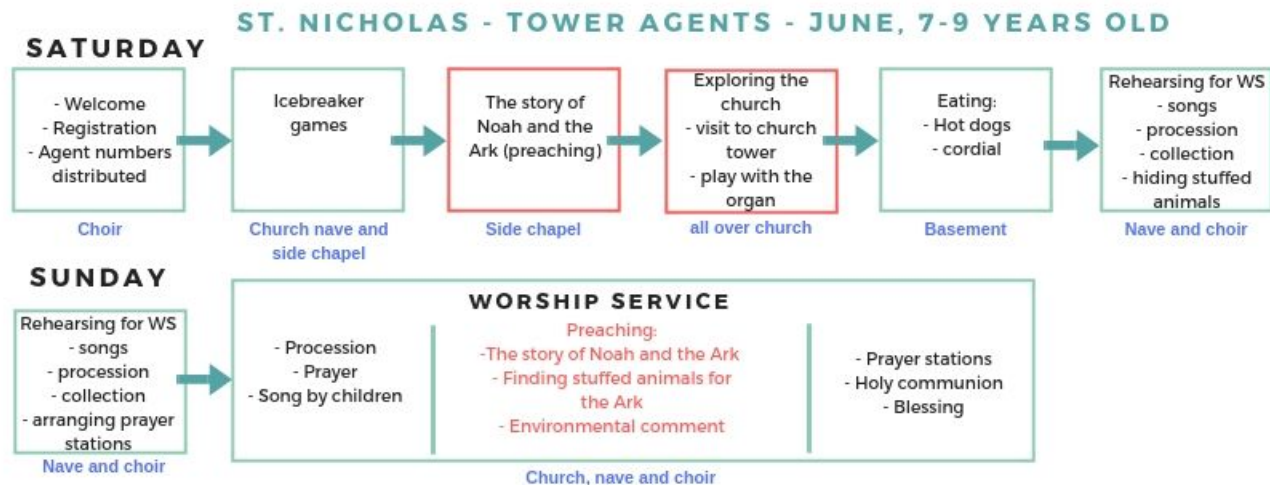
Because the practice of preaching does not have any written rules, I have tried to extract some by looking at my field notes and sayings about preaching from interviews with children and adult leaders. The questions that guided my analysis were: *Which rules does the practice of listening to preaching contain? Which rules are observed (or not) and how are these rules understood?*

Lastly, I looked at which teleoaffective structures children and adults expressed in the interviews, asking: *Which ends do the different participants of the practice have, and are they correct or acceptable according to the understanding of preaching gleaned from the homiletical definitions? What do the listeners do to reach their ends? How do things matter to the listeners?*

## 4. Preaching Events

Below I describe different congregations and central preaching moments. I have made a timeline of the event for each congregation while describing some preaching events in a closer manner. The preaching events described are those I perceived to be the central or primary preaching events of the CE event. Preaching events are marked with red boxes or letters.

### 4.1 Flannelgraph and the Noah story in the St. Nicholas Congregation

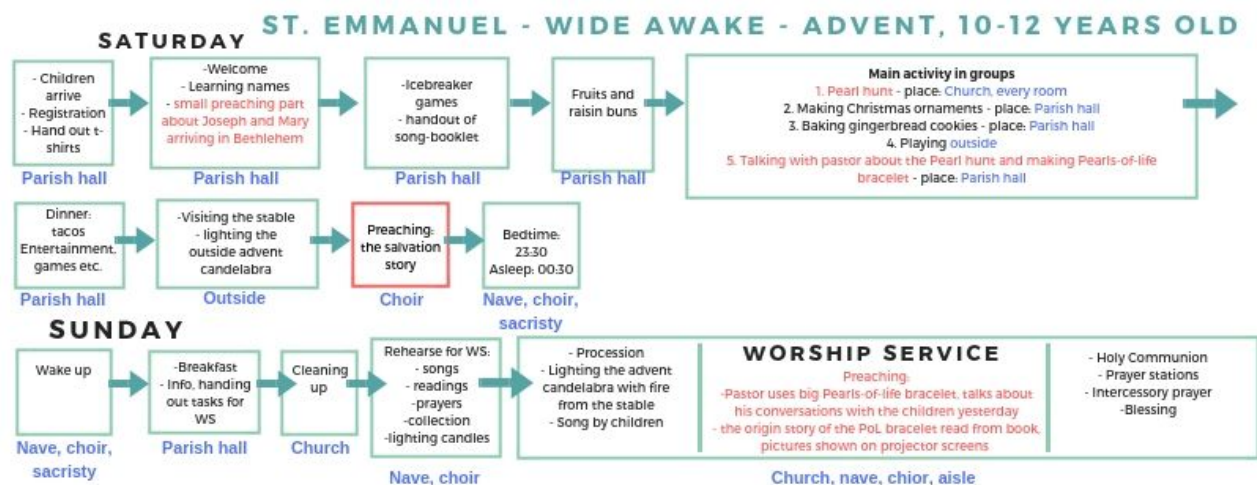


At St. Nicholas the main preaching event on Saturday starts with the catechist, Nicole, stating that she is going to tell the children the story of Noah's Ark. Nicole uses the flannelgraph while she is telling the story. She asks the children which animals Noah needed to bring into the ark. Nicole says that they are allowed to come up to the flannelgraph one at the time to find an animal and put it onto the flannelgraph. Soon everyone is inside the ark, and Nicole removes all the trees and all the land from the flannelgraph. She continues her story but is interrupted by one

of the children who say, “But all the other humans died.” This statement sparks a conversation about evil that revolves around the question of whether it is okay to kill people who are evil or if they instead should be taught to be good.

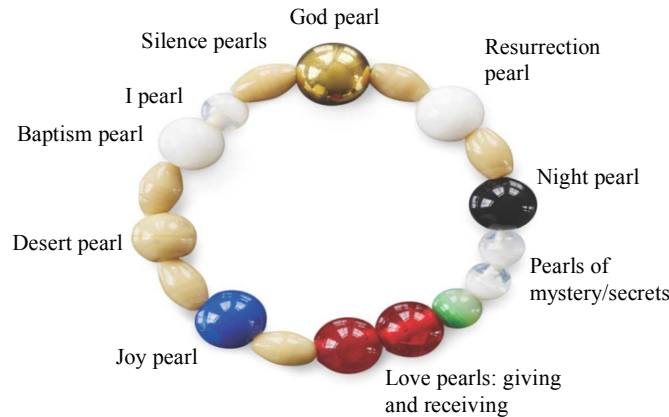
In the worship service on Sunday morning, Nicole tells the same story during the preaching event. This time, however, it is without the interjections and questions of the children. The children are activated once during the preaching event when they roam around the church trying to find all the stuffed animals they have hidden in the room the day before. The stuffed animals represent the animals in the ark. At more than one point during the preaching event children sat with their hands raised, trying to ask questions or answer rhetorical questions posed by Nicole. They were ignored.

#### 4.2 Pearls-of-Life Bracelets in the St. Emmanuel Congregation



At St. Emmanuel, the children were divided into groups of approximately five or six in each group. One group at the time was sent into the church. The church was filled with different stations, one for each pearl in *the Pearls of Life bracelet* (from now on *PoL bracelet*).<sup>39</sup>

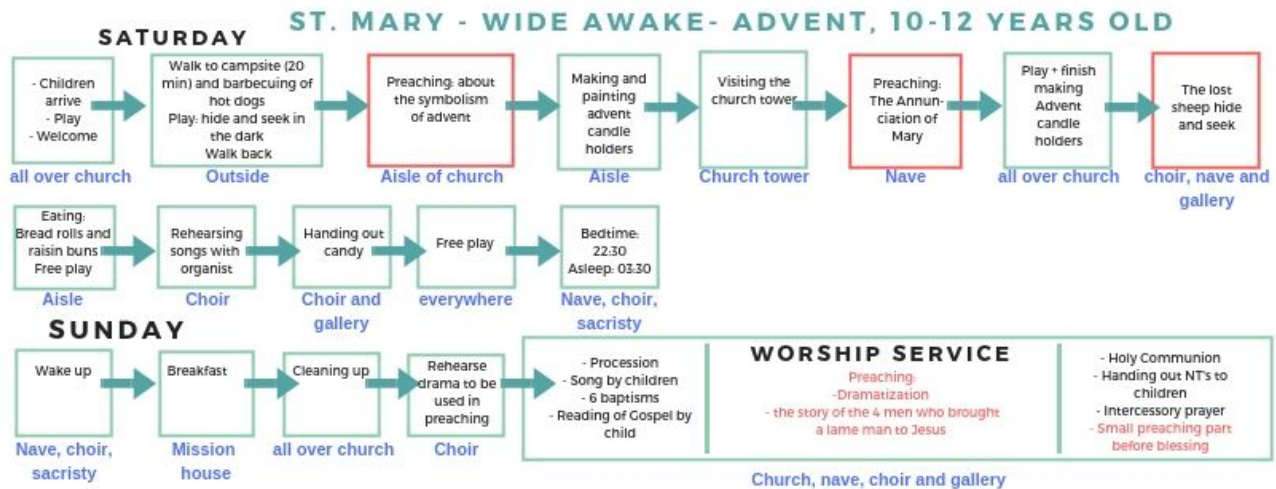
<sup>39</sup> The Pearls of Life bracelet (*Kristuskranen*) is a bracelet that functions as a kind of rosary. It emerges from an idea by the Swedish bishop Martin Lønnebo. There is an app available for iOS that explains the bracelet in English <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/fralsarkransen/id441215781?mt=8#>, accessed 08/11/17.



At each station there is a pearl, some information about that pearl, a verse from the Bible or a poem, and often something the children can do. At the end of each station, they receive the pearl from that station. The children stay quiet except for when they ask questions about the pearls. At the post of the baptism pearl, they ask several questions such as, “What about those who are not baptized? Do they get a baptism pearl?” “Does God care about those who are not baptized?” “Can someone who’s not baptized be here at this event?” The leader, Eva, answers some of their questions, but not all of them. Sometimes she says that she does not know, or that they are asking good and important questions; other times she asks them back, “What do you think?” After the group finishes at the church, they walk over to the parish hall. They now have all the pearls to make a bracelet. In one of the rooms, the pastor, Eric, waits. He has the rubber band needed to complete the bracelet, and a prototype so that the pearls are put on in the correct order. While they finish making the bracelets, Eric asks the children about the experience they have had in the church. He talks with them about which pearl they liked the most, or remembered the best, and why they liked or remembered that pearl.

In the worship service on Sunday morning, Eric opens the preaching event by showing a large version of the PoL bracelet to the congregation and telling them about what the children have been doing the day before. When he describes how he talked with the children about which pearl they remembered, he quotes himself saying, “Which pearl did you remember and why?” The hands of the children sitting in the pews shoot into the air. Eric looks a bit startled but turns to the children and lets them answer the question. He repeats this a couple of times. Then the preaching event continues with the reading of a children’s book that tells the origin story of the PoL bracelet. Eva reads the story while pictures from the book are projected onto the wall of the church.

### 4.3 Advent Candelabras and the Story of when Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man in the St. Mary Congregation



At St. Mary, one activity on Saturday evening was to make Advent candelabras. The pastor, Mark, gathered all the children attending around some tables placed in the aisle of the church. He opens by talking about the color purple and asks the children if they know which colors one needs to mix to get purple. They say, “Blue and red.” Mark replies, “Yes, blue and red. Do you know what those colors symbolize?” Several children say that blue is a symbol of heaven, and he replies that they are correct. Then he asks, “What is red then?” Some say blood. One of the boys says, “Satan.” Mark answers him in a light and amused tone, “No, Jesus came so that we did not have to worry about that guy.” Then he answers his own question: “Blue and red, heaven and earth that meet when Jesus comes to us.” After this preaching event they are allowed to start painting. They have blue, yellow, green, black, grey, and glitter paint. However, no red paint. Mark does not seem stressed by this and tells the children to start painting. Then he disappears to try to find some red paint. He is unsuccessful. This results in some green and blue, but a lot of greyish or brownish advent candelabras. The candelabras are set out to dry and not mentioned again until the end of church coffee when the church educator, Marlon, has to remind the children to take them with them before they leave.<sup>40</sup>

The Sunday worship service has a different theme. The text Mark uses in the preaching event is the story about the four men who carried a paralyzed man to Jesus and lowered him through the roof.<sup>41</sup> Some of the boys who attended the event dramatize the story. Mark then goes on to talk about friendship, sin, and Christmas for about 10 minutes.

## 5. Analysis

### 5.1 Understanding: knowing how to x

*Knowing how to x* in the practice of preaching involves a series of tasks. The preacher reads a biblical text, interprets it, and then proclaims this interpretation to the congregation. The

<sup>40</sup> In the interview with the adults, the pastor (and preacher) says that they plan on sending out a text message with some information about Advent and a suggestion for a psalm to sing.

<sup>41</sup> Mark 2:1-11 or Luke 5:17-26.

congregation's task in the practice is to listen and interpret. Several of the children show that they do not necessarily *know how to x* in their part (listening and interpreting) of the practice of preaching. In general, it seems like the children manage the first task but struggle with the second. When I asked questions about what they remembered from the worship service in general or the preaching events in particular, they often could answer. When I tried to prod deeper and asked for the relevance and significance of the preaching event for them, many struggled.

**Interviewer:** I was wondering, is anything that Mark has said, today or yesterday... that you think, like, you recognize it from your own lives? Is anything of what he says important to you?

**Michael:** Is this a sort of a camp?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Michael:** I have been to camp several times.

**Interviewer:** Okay, mmm...

**Michael:** At NN.

**Interviewer:** But I was wondering, does it happen when Mark talks to you about God and Jesus that you go, "Oh, this was interesting?"

**Michael:** We used to have like these Bible gatherings at camp.

**Interviewer:** Okay, are they different from these?

**Michael:** What?

**Interviewer:** Are they different from the ones here, or are they similar?

**Michael:** Not so very different.

**Interviewer:** Ok, so what do you think of such gatherings then?

**Michael:** (quietly)... I don't know what to say...<sup>42</sup>

Michael had been part of another similar practice and tried to use the understanding of that practice to understand the one he was participating in now. Schatzki argues that sometimes practices might overlap and that this could affect what makes sense for people to do in a situation. Another practice can break into the practice you are currently doing and change how that practice is organized, and thus what makes sense for you to do.<sup>43</sup> Michael says that what he calls the "Bible gatherings" at camp and the preaching events that he has experienced at church are "not that different," but he does not know how he feels about them. He is negotiating between the two different practices, the practice of preaching in the event that he has just attended, and the "Bible gatherings" he previously attended at camp. When I try to turn the interview back to my line of questioning and the relevance of preaching for him, Michael continues to talk about the "Bible gatherings" at camp. When I continue to search for an interpretation process, he is not able to answer me. Some would argue that this is because Michael is too young to verbalize such abstract and difficult interpretation processes. Such an argument is problematic. If this is the case, and yet the end of the preaching event is to have the listeners interpret the preaching event in a way that is relevant to their lives, one is basically arguing that children are too young to listen to preaching. In addition to this, theologian Tobias

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<sup>42</sup> The theoretical framework of practice theory was not part of my original theoretical framework before the interviews. Had I held the interviews again I would have tried to focus more on what the children did with the preaching events, and asked for that.

<sup>43</sup> Schatzki, "Practice Mind-Ed Orders," 53.

Faix argues that youth do have the ability to express their faith and beliefs. They just do it with other words than adult researchers would use.<sup>44</sup> What is more, some of the other children did *know how to x*.

Already it is easy to see how I operated with a different understanding of the practice of preaching than many of the children did. Even though it was not my intention, I was under the impression that Michael and I had the same understanding of what doing *x* was as a listener in the practice of preaching. I continuously searched for Michael's interpretative process, believing that *x* in this situation was to listen and interpret. Michael, however, was trying to figure out what this thing, preaching, was by comparing it to something he already knew.

Another example from St. Nicholas shows a different version of negotiation. Nina, Neil, and Nigel can retell the words of the preacher. In the sense of transference of knowledge as parroting what has been said, they had learned a lot.<sup>45</sup> However, when I ask for their interpretative process, they struggled.

**Interviewer:** If you were to tell me what Nicole talked about when she talked alone, what did she say?

**Nina:** She talked about those people, with Noah and all that...

**Neil:** She talked about how God wanted to destroy the world.

**Nina:** And she had only found two girls, but then she found the rest.

**Interviewer:** She found some more today, yes. And she said something about God destroying the world?

**Nina:** Yes, there was something she did not say today. The thing about that they had to bring 14 sheep because they had to slaughter some.

**Interviewer:** Yes, right... What did you think about while she talked about Noah and the animals?

**Nina:** I don't know.

**Interviewer:** Nothing? What did you think of?

**Nina:** No...

**Interviewer:** Nothing? Did you pay attention?

**Nina:** YES! I tried to like...

**Interviewer:** Was there a point where you thought that what she talked about was something that could have been about you and your lives? (silence)

Was that a weird question?

**Nigel:** Hmm?

**Interviewer:** It looked like it was an odd question (laughing). You have a very skeptical look.

As with Michael, my line of questioning presupposes that Nina, Neil, and Nigel have the same understanding of preaching as I do. Like Michael, Nina manages the first task of the twofold task of the listener in the practice of preaching. She has listened or tried to listen. Yet she

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<sup>44</sup> T. Faix, "Semantics of Faith: Methodology and Results Regarding Young People's Ability to Speak about their Beliefs," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 27, no. 1 (2014).

<sup>45</sup> Gaarden, *Prædikenen Som Det Tredje Rum*, 21; Morten Holmqvist and Geir Afdal, "Modes of Learning and the Making of Religion: The Norwegian and Finnish Curricula for Confirmation," *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 28 (2015), 4.

does not know what to do with the things she has heard. I will return to this interview because I changed my line of questioning and then got very different answers from Nina.

Nigel, on the other hand, thinks the question is weird. He does not voice the same struggle as Nina; his reaction is mostly conveyed through body language. In his response, it is also evident that our understanding of what is going on in the practice of preaching is not the same. When asked whether the preaching event had anything to do with his life he says “Hmm?” followed by a grimace that I interpreted as meaning that my question to him was odd. During the rest of the interview, Nigel states that what he liked the most about the worship service in general was to walk in the procession at the start and to carry the Bible while doing so. When asked about how he liked the story of Noah and the ark, he replies that it was fun and exciting, holding two thumbs in the air. Nigel has no answer as to why it was exciting. He is also unequivocal in his opinion that the preaching event would have been even more boring if Nicole had not used the flannelgraph. In other words, Nigel also exhibits that he understands part of the practice of preaching. He has listened and he likes the biblical story. Just as with Michael and Nina, it is the interpretative task of the practice that is unknown.

Some of the children did *know how to x*. When asked about what she thought about during the preaching event on Sunday morning, Emily from the St. Emmanuel congregation answers:

**Emily:** Well, I thought about that blue pearl, the happiness one.

**Interviewer:** The blue?

**Emily:** Because I don't like to think about sad things and things like that.

**Interviewer:** Why did you... what did you think about when you thought about that blue pearl? Did you have something to be happy about?

**Emily:** ...Well, there has been some stuff going on in my family, stuff that I have not liked.

**Interviewer:** Mmm, oh, ok...

**Emily:** But now it seems like it's going to turn out to be fine... and then I am happy, yes.

Here we can see Emily both listening and interpreting. She listens to Eric and Eva and then uses the blue pearl to think about the stuff that has been going on in her family. Emily is interpreting what she hears in the preaching event and applying it to her own life, making the preaching event relevant to her. In other words, she *knows how to x*. Emily was not the only child in St. Emmanuel who did this. Several say that during the preaching event they thought of their bracelet and then something to do with their lives, and in the video you see at least one boy looking intently at his bracelet while Eric talks. This stands out from the two other congregations.

## 5.2 Rules

We have already established that the practice of preaching is an interpretative practice and that it is supposed to further relevance or meaning for the listener. However, to get to that end, there are rules to follow. The children I have interviewed clearly understood that there were some rules connected to the practice of preaching. They can be formulated like this:

- When listening to preaching, you need to sit still in the pew and (look like you) listen.
- When listening to preaching, you should not talk with others in the pew.

- In the worship service, you should let the preacher talk uninterrupted. Those preaching events are not usually a place for questions.
- If the preaching event takes place outside the worship service, other rules apply.
- When listening to preaching, you should not fall asleep.

Michael from St. Mary is of special interest with regards to rules.

**Interviewer:** What are you thinking of? During the preaching events?

**Michael:** Oh, I am looking forward to it being finished...

**Interviewer:** (laughing) That's what you're doing... Are you happy or sad when the pastor speaks?

**Michael:** I am happy that I found Snorlax, Pikachu, and Onix!

**Interviewer:** Did you do that during the preaching event?

**Michael:** (satisfied) Hmmm...

The concept of rule following in practice theory is mostly taken from Ludwig Wittgenstein. Rule following can sound like something out of a rationalist paradigm, though following the Wittgensteinian tradition it is not. Wittgenstein argued against the notion of rules as some structure that is predetermined and waits for us outside of ourselves. According to him, there is nothing preexisting structure “out there” to guide us. He also claimed that when we follow a rule, we follow it blindly. By this, he meant that although there may be some interpretation process in motion when we follow a rule, in the end we just act. This does not mean that we always follow the rule correctly (according to the shared understanding of the practice). What it means to follow a rule correctly (the normative aspect) is decided by consensus among different rule followers. All this sounds straightforward, but there is a problem. Is there any distinction between genuinely following a rule and just happening to behave like you follow the rule? David Bloor, interpreting Wittgenstein, claims that there is. He suggests that what Wittgenstein meant by rule following was the genuine following of rules—that you follow the rule because you know it is a rule and you are aware of what you do.<sup>46</sup>

Michael expresses a deep wish for all the preaching events he participates in to finish quickly. Nevertheless, he obeys the rules—he sits still and looks like he listens. However, Michael is not really listening; he spends the preaching event playing Pokémon Go,<sup>47</sup> which is obeying the rules but not obeying them at the same time, or not genuinely following the rule. This can be explained as another manifestation of the lack of shared understanding Michael brings to the practice of preaching.

One of the interviews in St. Nicholas portrays a different version of rule following: not following the rule of listening to the preaching at all:

**Interviewer:** When Nicole was talking, was there ever a time where you thought “Oh, I can think about the same sometimes.” Or, “I can relate to that?”

**Nora:** No...

(they talk over each other, and there are a lot of noise)

**Interviewer:** Why could you not relate? Was it because it was about something that

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<sup>46</sup> David Bloor, “Wittgenstein and the Priority of Practice,” in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. K. Knorr-Cetina, Theodore R. Schatzki, and Eike von Savigny (London: Routledge, 2001), 96-97.

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.pokemongo.com/en-us/>, accessed December 20, 2018.



happened so long ago?

**Nathanael:** It was because I could not be bothered to listen.

**Interviewer:** Why not?

**Nathanael:** Because... blah, blah, blah, blah.

**Interviewer:** It was boring?

**Nathanael:** YES!

**Nora:** I wish we could fast forward it...

**Interviewer:** Was it THAT boring?

**Nathanael:** Yes!! I will never go to church again...

Nathanael seems to be in direct opposition to the rules. He could not be bothered to listen at all. However, when I conferred with my field notes, all the children sat still in the pew and did not talk to each other for most of the preaching event. Nathanael did follow the rules, but at the same time not. Although it seemed like he was listening, he was in fact not listening but being bored. Elsewhere in the interviews, Nathanael sticks to his story of the preaching event being “blah, blah, blah.” Nathanael is not the only one from the interviews who deems sitting still and listening quietly to the preaching event as boring or “blah, blah, blah.” Even though the examples are two boys, this is not a gendered issue. At St. Nicholas, Nora and Nadine feel the same way, and at St. Mary, Megan also says that she never listens to what the preacher is saying. Both at St. Emmanuel and St. Mary, the children also express that following the rules of sitting still in the pews, being quiet, and listening to what the different adults say is difficult and boring. This is one of the strongest patterns in the material across all four congregations.

In the sense of genuinely following the rules, the children seldom do so except the rule of being quiet. They do not protest against the rule of being quiet. Maybe this is because they are used to being told to be quiet when adults are speaking, or because the space of the church invites quietness. The rules that are difficult to follow, both genuinely and not, are to sit still and to listen. These rules the children have different ways of circumventing while still appearing to follow the rules.

### 5.3 Ends

The church staff has explicit and implicit ends they hope the children will achieve. However, within the church staff there are multiple and sometimes competing ends. From the interviews with the church staff and adult volunteers, I have formulated these ends:

| <b>Teaching</b>                               | <b>Preaching</b>   |
|---|--|
| To teach the children about being a Christian | To have all the activities of the event underline what they say when they preach   |
| To develop faith                              | To help the children reflect on their lives, faith, place in the world, and relationship with God                              |
| To pass on the love of biblical stories       | That what they (the preachers) say and do should have an impact on the children and hopefully make a difference in their lives |
|   | To link the biblical texts and the world today, make it relevant   |
|   | To point to Jesus  |

If we compare the ends of the adults with the end of the synthesized definition of preaching I established earlier, we see that they are close to each other. I presented the end of the synthesized definitions of preaching to be “that the listeners are to use the preacher’s words as a way of interpreting their own life, faith, and the society around them.” The adults seem to share the understanding and goals of the practice of preaching. They have usually had one or more meetings before the CE events to discuss what to do during them and to “get everyone on the same page.” All this means that most of the time the leaders have developed an additional understanding of what the CE events mean and what they should mean for the children. They have agreed on the ends. Still, the ends are not entirely in unison. The ends of teaching children about being Christian, passing on the love of biblical stories, and developing faith have a somewhat different tone than the rest. These ends aim at a more didactic understanding. Some of the pastors were occupied with what they perceived as a lessening of Christian education in Norwegian schools and wanted very much to remedy this through these CE events. The adults thus have two main ends that compete with each other during the preaching events.

The children’s ends spread out more than the adults. Some children do share the end of learning more about being a Christian, and some want to learn something new. Nevertheless, most of the ends are different from those of the adults:

| <b>Learning (teaching)</b>   | <b>Reflecting (preaching)</b>                  | <b>Escaping</b>   |
|--|--|---|
| To learn more about being a Christian                                      | To stop thinking about “bad thoughts/feelings” | That the preaching event should be as short as possible (it is always too long) |
| To learn something new   |  | To get away with doing something else other than listening                      |
| To show their parents what they have learned, made and done the day before |  |   |

The ends I have labeled “escaping” are not “correct” or “acceptable” according to the shared understanding of the practice. However, this is the most common end—the notion that preaching is boring and long strongly pops up in the ends of the children. There are far more children talking about wanting the preaching event to be as short as possible than children who are stating that they want to learn about being a Christian.

One of the ends I find most instructive is the one stating that the goal of the preaching event is to show their parents what they have learned, made, and done the day before:

**Interviewer:** But, ehh... when the pastor preached, or when Kevin and Katrine preached...

**Emily:** Mmmm...

**Interviewer:** What was it about?

**Erica:** Was it not about the bracelet?

**Interviewer:** Mmm...

**Erica:** About what the different pearls were.

**Interviewer:** How did you like it? To sit and listen to that?

**Emily:** Well, it was like, we went through all that yesterday... so it was a bit like we were showing the others that were not there yesterday what we had learned.

**Interviewer:** So you thought the preaching was not to you, but to the others, those who were not present yesterday?

**Emily:** Yes.

Even though Emily did *know how to x*—listening to the preaching and connecting it to reflections of her own life—this was not her end. One could argue that though Emily does the practice accurately, she still does not entirely share the understanding and teleoaffective structure of the practice.

In order to reach the end of making time pass more quickly or at least in a less boring way, the children deploy different strategies. Michael from St. Mary plays Pokémon Go. Max, also from St. Mary, suggests that his time could have been spent in a better way, like playing hide-and-seek. Most common is simply to not listen. At St. Emmanuel, where none of the children say that the preaching event is boring, and where several of them state that their ends are to learn and to learn more about being a Christian, they use the bracelet as a means of making sense of the preaching event. This leads us to affectivity: how things matter.

#### 5.4 Affectivity

Part of the teleoaffective structure is also how things matter. What is it that makes things matter to us?

##### a) Materiality

The preachers are not naïve; they know that the children do not always pay attention to what they say. They try to remedy this by being funnier, including drama, including materiality in different ways (like the flannelgraph, bracelets, Advent candelabras), or asking questions. This sometimes “works”; nevertheless, the children mostly find preaching boring. At St. Emmanuel, the PoL bracelet is used by the children to listen and interpret the different preaching events. The children are in no small degree helped to take part in the shared understanding of what the PoL bracelet means and how it can be used. This is done by first introducing the children to each pearl, then talking with them about which pearl they remembered best and why, and by using the bracelet actively in the worship service. The children are told that the pearls have names and functions, like the pearl of joy, but they are not told what kind of joy to associate with the pearl. There is an open room where the children can go in and appropriate the different pearls and fill them with their own intentions.

Homileticians Lorensen, Gaarden, Campbell, and Cilliers have pointed to the theories of M.M. Bakhtin as fruitful for homiletics.<sup>48</sup> Bakhtin argues that when we speak we face two choices: to speak monologically or dialogically. This choice between a monological or dialogical approach is ever present, not just in everyday conversations but also in various forms of complex language genres where the dialogue is indirect, like in preaching events.<sup>49</sup> Bakhtin claims that words always belong to someone; they are never neutral. We have to appropriate the other’s words and make them our own; to do this, we need to populate the words with our own

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<sup>48</sup> Charles L. Campbell and Johan H. Cilliers, *Preaching Fools: The Gospel as a Rhetoric of Folly* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012); Gaarden, *The Third Room of Preaching*; Lorensen, *Dialogical Preaching*.

<sup>49</sup> Lorensen, *Dialogical Preaching*.

intention.<sup>50</sup> I claim that this theory also can be used as a means of describing how materiality matters in preaching events. At St. Emmanuel, the PoL bracelet is used dialogically; in this way, the bracelet becomes an introduction to the listeners' task in the practice of preaching.

In St. Nicholas, both the flannelgraph and searching for the stuffed animals makes the preaching event in the worship service more bearable. The children say that listening to preaching events without the flannelgraph is much more boring. However, the use of the flannelgraph and searching for the stuffed animals do not have the same effect on the children at St. Nicholas as the PoL bracelet has at St. Emmanuel. The children do not mention the dramatization or the making of Advent candelabras at St. Mary. They do mention many of the other activities. They talk about being outside (the first activity), playing sheep and shepherd hide-and-seek (an activity mentioned as "special"), being allowed to see and touch the church bells (an activity mentioned as "very fun"). In St. Mary and St. Nicholas, to a much larger degree the children are left without any open space for their appropriation. The materiality is used as a distraction, entertainment, or to prop up the words of the preacher.<sup>51</sup> Therefore the materiality remains unused by the children, and the potential that the different materiality has to help the children become part of the shared understanding of the practice of preaching also remains unused.

#### **b) Affective spaces**

One of the most striking things in the interviews is how many of the children say they think about death, severe illness, and family issues when they listen to preaching, even though I never perceived these themes to be the main subject in the preaching events. My hunch is that these themes and emotions are activated by being in church. Andrew Reckwitz argues that social theory has lost sight of space when discussing social matters. He argues for including what he names affective spaces. He states that "Affections can, of course, occur between subjects and single objects... But they can also emerge and are in fact much more likely to emerge within comprehensive three-dimensional settings comprising extensive arrangements of artifacts within which human bodies move."<sup>52</sup> Reckwitz argues that spaces need to be appropriated by those using them to form affects. The appropriation always brings forth the user's past experiences and different implicit social and cultural backgrounds.<sup>53</sup>

We return to Nina. When I ask how she felt during the preaching, her answers change:

**Interviewer:** Did you feel anything? Were you sad, happy, or bored or something?

**Nina:** I thought some thoughts that I don't like.

**Interviewer:** Oh, would you like to tell me what kind of thoughts they were?

**Nina:** Okay! That on the third of April Mom died.

**Interviewer:** Did she? Mm...

**Nina:** It was in 2007, so it was not...

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<sup>50</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, Michael Holquist, and Caryl Emerson, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, vol. 1, Voprosy Literaturny I Estetiki (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 293-94.

<sup>51</sup> Bakhtin uses the concepts of architecture and scaffolding to explain this. I examine this more fully in a forthcoming anthology chapter, "Preaching at the Threshold," where I discuss how materiality, Bible texts, and dramatizations are used in two preaching events employing Bakhtin's concepts of scaffolding and architecture, and of dialogical or monological.

<sup>52</sup> Andreas Reckwitz, "Affective Spaces: A Praxeological Outlook," *The Journal of Theory and Practice* 16, no. 2 (2012): 253.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

**Interviewer:** So that was what you were thinking about? Mmm... And how does that make you feel, thinking about that?

**Nina:** A bit sad.

**Interviewer:** Yes... and Mom, is that your grandmother or...?

**Nina:** No, my great-grandmother. She died at the hospital.

**Interviewer:** Did you go to the church afterward?

**Nina:** Yes, not this one, but the other one.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Nina:** But you know that woman who...

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Nina:** She was the one who talked at Mom's funeral.

The woman Nina is talking about is the pastor in St. Nicholas, Natalie. Natalie was present but did not preach at all during the CE event or in the worship service. It seems like it is enough for Nina to meet Natalie and see her in the church to start thinking about her great-grandmother's funeral. The fact that she has met the pastor before affects how preaching matters to Nina. This could have been classified under the pastor's ethos.<sup>54</sup> However, I believe that for Nina, it is not the ethos of Natalie that is important. Natalie is more like an artifact in the affective space of church. To Nina, it does not matter that she is now in a different church than the one the funeral was in; it matters that what she sees and experiences classifies under the affective space of church.

At St. Mary, I overheard some children talking about the creation of God:

**Interviewer:** So yesterday I heard you talking about who it was that created God. I think you were there? Weren't you?

**Michael:** Yes (laughs)... well, it's like this: the one who created God is air. Or God created air and air created God.

**Interviewer:** Ah... is this something you often talk about?

**Michael and Max:** No, no, no!!

**Interviewer:** Or do you just talk about it when you're at church?

**Michael:** This was the first time!

**Interviewer:** Was it the first time? But do you talk more about such things when you're at church than when you are at other places?

**Both:** Yes!

**Interviewer:** Does this happen when it is just you children talking to each other and not when the pastor is talking?

**Michael:** Yes...

Being in church also makes children talk to each other about different topics than they usually do. These two boys do not often talk to each other about how God came into being. However, being at church provides a space where they can discuss such subjects. When the

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<sup>54</sup> I agree with the many homiletical contributions who highlight the role of the preacher's ethos. However, in this particular case I believe that it was not Natalie's ethos but rather the affective space of church that affected Nina's preaching event.

children appropriate the affective space of the church, their affects seem to orient towards existential issues. These sometimes seem to speak louder than the preacher.

## 6. Discussion

In the introduction I argued that homiletics needs to do another turn, not just asking how listeners listen to preaching but what they do with preaching. Through analyzing interviews with children by using a practice theoretical approach, we have seen that these children do many different things with preaching. They listen, or not. They struggle to interpret preaching. They play Pokémon Go. They think about existential questions. In the discussion, I want to address what these findings imply for homiletics. There may also be implications for how preachers might revise their preaching practice; however this article does not have a prescriptive aim, and as such this will not be salient in the discussion.

### 6.1. Homiletical Definitions Take Too Much Listener Interaction for Granted

The most salient discovery in the analysis is that children are not a part of the understanding of the practice, and do not know what to do with preaching. This is particularly visible in the lack of a process to hand down what *knowing how to x* is for the practice of preaching. Most of the time, it is simply presupposed that everyone who listens to preaching knows what to do with it. In this regard, my empirical findings contradict the work of Theo Pleizier, who claims that something religious always happens in the act of listening to preaching.<sup>55</sup> Theologically, I do not disagree with him. However, for the majority of the children their ends point to preaching functioning as learning or escape. And, as I have argued before, the children are capable of expressing religious experiences and feelings.<sup>56</sup> They also do this during the interviews. There are several instances where the children talk about something they have done during these CE events as “special” or “very interesting,” or when they show that they are clearly moved by something but cannot put it into words. However, these experiences and instances are seldom related to the preaching event.

The turn to listeners has already started a discussion where the pastor is not taken for granted as the main actor in preaching and it is no longer taken for granted that what the pastor says is what is heard by the listeners.<sup>57</sup> However, the analysis of the children’s responses through a practice theoretical lens shows that we cannot even take for granted that listeners listen or know how to listen. We also cannot take for granted that they know the rules of the practice of preaching, or that they have the same ends as preachers for preaching.

Through this analysis, I have shown that children and adults have diverging ends for the practice of preaching. In other words, preachers cannot take for granted that they have the same ends as the listeners (for those who preach every Sunday, this might be stating the obvious). The children’s main end is to make the preaching event pass as quickly as possible, while the adults want the preaching events to help the children reflect on their lives and faith, and they want to teach the children the basics of Christianity.

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<sup>55</sup> Theo Pleizier, *Religious Involvement in Hearing Sermons: A Grounded Theory Study in Empirical Theology and Homiletics* (Delft: Eburon Academic Publishers, 2010).

<sup>56</sup> Faix, “Semantics of Faith: Methodology and Results Regarding Young People’s Ability to Speak about their Beliefs.”

<sup>57</sup> See Hans Austnaberg, *Improving Preaching by Listening to Listeners: Sunday Service Preaching in the Malagasy Lutheran Church* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2012); Gaarden, *The Third Room of Preaching*; Allen, et. al., *Listening to Listeners: Homiletical Case Studies*; Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*.

The difference in ends highlights something that I claim to be a central problem with preaching to children. The fusion of preaching and teaching, of wanting the preaching events to be both informative and transformative, is confusing. The children, therefore, seem to revert into a practice they know, teaching. Preaching thus becomes mainly information that they can learn from, and not something that is relevant to them and can affect their lives.<sup>58</sup> I believe that the competing ends make it more difficult for children to participate in the practice of preaching. It is simply difficult to understand which practice they are asked to participate in. Several children then choose to regard preaching as similar to a practice they already know, teaching, and relate to preaching like it is teaching. Others, like Michael, struggle to negotiate how preaching is related to the practice of “Bible gatherings” that he already knows. Either way, most of the children end up not participating in the practice the adult preacher wants them to participate in.

### **6.2 If Preaching is a Practice, it can be Taught**

Many practical theologians subscribe to the notion of practice as *phronesis*, or practical wisdom.<sup>59</sup> This notion is especially in practical theological literature from the United States.<sup>60</sup> In this vein, practical wisdom is imparted through learning from experienced practitioners over time. Additionally, practical theological definitions of practice often presuppose that those who take part in a practice do it with a specific motivation and direction. Christian practices are seen to be done “in response to and in the light of God as known in Jesus Christ.”<sup>61</sup> Most of the children I have interviewed do not participate in the practice as a deliberate response to God. Mostly, they do what they do because they are told to do it. That does not mean that they do not enjoy it or cannot have religious experiences when doing it, but it does mean that, at least in the Norwegian context, the motivation underlying practical theological definitions of practice cannot be presupposed.<sup>62</sup>

In the analysis, I have shown that most children do listen, but do not know how to interpret what they are hearing or understand that this is what they are supposed to do. A few children show that they do *know how to x*, mainly at St. Emmanuel. It does not seem like merely doing the practice is enough for the children to participate in the practice. Although they have several experienced practitioners they can learn from, the learning does not occur. Interestingly, the children do seem to have a certain grasp of the rules they perceive to be in place for the practice of preaching. However, in the interviews they reveal that they are not always genuinely following the rules. Maybe the outward following of rules can be attributed to the children watching experienced practitioners and following suit. Yet it is difficult to see someone’s interpretation process. In other words, for the children to learn how to genuinely follow the rules,

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<sup>58</sup> The terms “information” and “transformation” are inspired by Bruno Latour, “‘Thou Shall Not Freeze-Frame,’ or How Not to Misunderstand the Science and Religion Debate,” in *Science, Religion, and the Human Experience*, ed. James D. Proctor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). By saying this, I do not claim that preaching should never contain information (or *logos* as it is often named in the homiletical literature), or that teaching is just information and never transformation.

<sup>59</sup> See Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra, *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008); Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

<sup>60</sup> Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

<sup>61</sup> Volf and Bass, *Practicing Theology*, 3.

<sup>62</sup> For a detailed and interesting discussion of the differences between a Lutheran and an U.S. approach to practice within theology (focusing especially on Dykstra, Bass, and Dean) see Bård Eirik Hallesby Norheim, *Practicing Baptism: Christian Practices and the Presence of Christ* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014).

it is not enough for them to observe expert practitioners. As David Bloor argues, to genuinely follow a rule you need to know that you are following a rule.<sup>63</sup> The rules of the practice of preaching are not explicit but implicit. By not taking the rules of the practice of preaching for granted but making them more explicit, it might make it easier to understand why these are part of this practice and why they should be followed.

The CE events that the children attended are discrete events that occur once a year.<sup>64</sup> Both the notion of practice as *phronesis* and other practice theories argue that mastering a practice or becoming a practitioner takes time.<sup>65</sup> Because the CE events are not continuous, the U.S. contributions are not wholly compatible with helping Norwegian theologians describe and understand such practices. Looking at the *phronesis* approach to practice did highlight how discrete the CE events in the Church of Norway are, and the need for a different or additional understanding of practice. Attending one CE event every year (maybe), in addition to going to church whenever “something special happens” is clearly not enough immersion and time for the children to be socialized into the practice of preaching. This is especially interesting because the Plan for Christian Education in the Church of Norway highlights that one of the main goals of CE is to socialize children into the community of the church. The plan advocates for a combination of discrete events, and activities that have a long time-span.<sup>66</sup> However, out of the four congregations I visited, only one mentioned a non-discrete activity. Thus for the children I have interviewed, the primary source(s) of socialization into the congregation are the individual CE events. So, if the children do not learn from experiencing expert practitioners over time, do they have a chance of learning the practice at all?

Since preaching is not recognized as a practice in a practice theoretical way, it is not taught by church staff and churchgoers. The adult leaders are aware that the children might not know or understand other parts of the worship service, like walking in a procession, reading aloud, praying aloud, or singing in a choir. They rehearse these aspects of the worship service with the children. The children are given specific instruction or rules. However, they do not receive any instruction on what to do during the preaching events. In *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice*, James Nieman argues that looking at preaching as a practice is helpful when teaching pastors how to preach.<sup>67</sup> I argue for an extension of this argument. By viewing preaching as a practice, it becomes possible not only to teach pastors how to preach but also to teach listeners what to do when listening to preaching. Especially in the Norwegian context of

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<sup>63</sup> See the discussion of rules in this article under subheading: 5.2 Rules.

<sup>64</sup> In some places there are other activities that are continuous, like at St. Mary where the pastor had started a group for some of the boys.

<sup>65</sup> “Mastery of a practice cannot be gained from books or other inanimate sources, but can sometimes, though not always, be gained by prolonged social interaction with members of the culture that embeds the practice” (Karin Knorr Cetina et al., *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 107).

<sup>66</sup> The Church Council, The Church of Norway, “Plan for Christian Education ‘God Gives – We Share,’” (2010). The Norwegian theologian Knut Tveitereid discusses whether the concepts of discrete/continuous and wide/deep need to be dichotomies in the CE events in the Church of Norway. My findings support his claim that even though these dichotomies were never intended to occur, they do occur in the practice field and that future CE events would benefit from exploring if it is possible to create events that are both discrete *and* deep or continuous *and* capture a wide audience (Kristin Graff-Kallevåg and Tone Stangeland Kaufman, *Byggekløss-Spiritualitet?: En Studie Av Spiritualitet I Den Norske Kirkes Trosopplæring*, vol. 13, Institutt for Kristen Oppseding (Oslo: IKO-forl., 2018), 205).

<sup>67</sup> James Nieman, “Why the Idea of Practice Matters,” in Long and Tisdale, *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice*, 19.



discrete CE events, teaching the practice of preaching may help children more quickly become full and active participants.

In the above, I claim that children have not become members of the practice and that they are not taught how to listen to preaching. Following this argument, one could expect that the children did not learn anything, did not listen genuinely and did not interpret at all. However, this is not the case. In all three congregations, some genuine listening and interpretation took place.

### **6.3. The Transcendence of Affectivity**

Though children are mostly not part of the shared understanding, struggle to genuinely follow the rules, and have diverging ends from the adults and the definition of the practice of preaching, these difficulties are sometimes overcome. This happens through materiality and affective spaces.

The analysis of materiality shows that introducing materiality into the preaching event is not a quick fix if the aim is to further the children's ability to listen and interpret preaching. The question is how the preacher uses materiality. Even though all the congregations deliberately use materiality with the intent of making the preaching event easier to listen to and more relevant to the children, it is only at St. Emmanuel that the materiality has this function. This calls for a different approach as to how to use materiality when preaching to children. Some of the preachers expressed a "gadget fatigue": they knew they had to figure out some symbol to bring or make a drama when preaching to children. Others loved preaching to children because of the possibility these preaching events offered for using their creativity. Either way, when preaching to children all the preachers expressed the need to do something other than what they usually do. This way of thinking probably originates from learning that children cannot process abstract thoughts like adults can, which is true. However, this can unfortunately result in preachers putting too much confidence in the materiality and forgetting that words and materials need to work together. The children in these interviews also show that they reflect on complex and existential issues. The way the *PoL bracelet* is used at St. Emmanuel shows that it is possible to be both concrete and existential.

In this analysis, I also argued that the space of the church room mattered to children. They viewed the church as a different place where you do other things than you usually do and talk about other subjects than you usually talk about. When appropriating the space of church, children make it existential and special. The affective space of the church is determined not by the walls of the church, but the feeling of being at church. Church, therefore, equals a place where "special things happen," and is closely tied to life and death rituals and experiences for children. This means that simply being in church does something to these children. This is a powerful tool and invites reflections on power relations and how to use the affective space of the church. It means that adult volunteers and church staff need to cultivate opportunities for existential conversations that open up when the children enter the affective space of church, but also that adults do not abuse this trust. Another aspect is that all the adult volunteers and the pastors wanted the children to feel at home at church, and to a certain extent downplayed the "churchiness" of church. This might be the wrong strategy. Though the children play, run, and sleep at the church, they still do not view the church as home. If the church is home, the affective space of the church that the children experienced could disappear. This does not mean that I believe that the children should not sleep at church, but that church staff and volunteers have to acknowledge that the space they are in is different.

## **7. Conclusion**

Through this article, I have argued for a new turn in the field of homiletics: a turn towards treating preaching as a practice that does not stop with the tasks of the preacher, but also includes examining what listeners do with preaching. By analyzing the empirical material from fieldwork done at CE events in the Church of Norway, I have shown that the children I have interviewed struggle to participate in the practice of preaching. The reasons why they struggle are that they mostly do not *know how to x* (listen and interpret), that they do not know all the rules of the practice, and that most of the time they have different ends for the practice than they should have. However, I also underlined that there are instances where the struggle is overcome. This happens through the use of materiality, and the church as affective space. In the discussion, I argued that to view preaching as a practice has some consequences. First, the analysis shows that we cannot take for granted that listeners listen, interpret, and reflect when they listen to preaching. They might do entirely different things, like playing Pokémon Go. Second, if preaching is viewed as a practice, it can be taught—not just to preachers, but also to listeners. However, I believe that if homileticians and preachers acknowledge these consequences and start reflecting on how to tackle them, it can lead to exciting new possibilities for the field of homiletics and the practice of preaching at large.

Yung Suk Kim. *Preaching the New Testament Again: Faith, Freedom, and Transformation*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019. 110 pages. \$16.

In *Preaching The New Testament Again*, Yung Suk Kim invites readers to rethink traditional interpretations of three themes integral to the New Testament—faith, freedom, and transformation. Kim urges contemporary proclaimers to interpret these themes anew and to engage broader meanings for preaching in contemporary contexts. The book is organized into three discussion chapters, titled faith, freedom, and transformation, respectively. In each chapter, Kim examines historical views of the concepts, and offers incisive interpretive options with which to view faith, freedom, and transformation. Each chapter includes suggestions on how readers may move from exegetical inquiry to concrete sermons that address faith, freedom, and transformation in light of current social conditions.

New Testament readers are led to understand faith as that which “involves the whole being of who we are as we contemplate how to live in this hostile world” (10). In addition to faith as it relates to one’s soul salvation, readers are invited to survey more closely God’s faithfulness, Jesus’s faithfulness, and Christian faithfulness. Kim shows how faith stories from the Gospels portray God as faithful. For instance, Mark’s faithful God is a God of justice, while Luke’s faithful God is one of unconditional love. Rather than faith in Jesus, the writing turns attention to the faith of Jesus, as evidenced, for example, in his baptism, his social action, and his prayer of distress at Gethsemane (19). Kim argues that Jesus’ willingness to proceed to death is a faith decision. The third discussion of faith centers on varying aspects of faith in the lives of Christian believers, that is, faith as trust, faith as participation, faith as knowledge, faith as assurance, and faith as works. Kim concludes that “faith is an active or dynamic word that propels Christian participation” (30). Faith, writes Kim, seeks freedom (38).

Freedom is explored as freedom from (enslaving conditions), freedom for (building community), and freedom in (God or Christ) (39). Again, an analysis of the Gospels yields the ways in which the very concept of freedom connotes a need to be released or set free from something or someone. Mark’s writings urge freedom from fear, the fear that permeated Markan communities who chose to follow Jesus. Matthean freedom is from hypocrisy, namely, the hypocrisy of excluding Gentiles from the house of God. As a case in point, Kim argues that even Jesus changed his mind about the Gentiles after his encounter with a persistent woman in Matthew 15 (42). The Pauline letters promote freedom from the law and/of sin, and submission to the law of God. The purpose of this freedom is to build loving communities, communities of solidarity that are rooted how Jesus lived. Paradoxically, Christian freedom is found in God and bound by the character of God and activity of God in the world. Good preaching on freedom explores the range of ways freedom may be interpreted in the scriptures.

Concerning transformation, Kim refutes simplistic views, suggesting rather that transformation is a holistic concept that involves a constant change of human life (75). Jesus, Kim asserts, was transformed in his baptism, in his prayer life, and in his understanding of his own ministry. After baptism, writes Kim, “he had a stronger motivation to serve the oppressed and marginalized” (77). Similarly, the author shows how New Testament individuals and communities changed in response to personal and social issues. Matthew’s Gospel “transforms the view of the law into the spirit of integrity, seeking God’s impartial love for all” (80). Kim gives considerable attention to Paul’s dramatic transformation and life thereafter. He portrays Paul as one who shifts his belief in a Davidic Messiah to a Crucified Messiah. Kim’s insistence

of Paul's universalism and egalitarianism is prevalent throughout the text. The Deutero-Pauline writings suggest transformation as a change of knowledge, particularly about God or Jesus.

Readers may most appreciate Kim's exegetical dexterity that yields New Testament insights on faith, freedom, and transformation—a gift to preachers wrestling to excavate new meanings for this age! Each chapter offers a wealth of interpretive possibilities for the given concepts, options that inspire still more alternatives to energize the preaching imagination. Kim's turn to New Testament preaching that addresses social ills—such as immigration, racism, and marginalization of particular people groups—is refreshing, if the homiletical bridge is not consistently evident. Preachers may refer to this book as an accessible compact resource for re-reading the New Testament, particularly the Gospels, in preparation for preaching that is faithful, offers freedom, and invites transformation.

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Mitzi J. Smith. *Womanist Sass and Talk Back: Social (In)justice, Intersectionality, and Biblical Interpretation*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018. 151 pages. \$19.

For the womanist, rigorous biblical hermeneutics and lived experience are not mutually exclusive. Scripture detached from the immediate issues of life is merely an abstract, philosophical exercise—a disembodied cauldron of words. *Womanist Sass and Talk Back: Social (In)justice, Intersectionality, and Biblical Interpretation* expertly engages the study of scripture “from the ground up,” and exposes structural sin. It is an interlocking treatise for and a critique of biblical hermeneutics and the upliftment of people of color in the fight for social justice and systemic change. In this riveting text, Mitzi J. Smith seeks to “prioritize the oppressions and injustices that daily threaten and take the lives of the most vulnerable and to demonstrate other ways of reading [scripture]” (1-2). Smith calls theologians, homileticians, and pastoral/spiritual caregivers to refuse to “turn a blind eye to biases and violence in our sacred (con)texts” (3). Black, brown, and yellow bodies are the foci around which scripture is made palpable—these bodies are the sacred (con)texts. Through the lens of intersectionality and inter(con)textual perspectives, Smith privileges the “voices, traditions, and artifacts of African American women (and their communities)” (2).

*Womanist Sass* is divided into seven narratives that are framed in and contextualized by current social dilemmas. Smith situates the writing as a “personally therapeutic” project during a time in which society is barraged by violent videos of unarmed black people being killed when confronted by police officers. It is therefore necessary for theologians not to dismiss the effects of posttraumatic stress in the work of critical biblical interpretation and its connection to “social injustice” and “oppressive ideologies” (4). Without sacrificing the material needs of humanity for an overly spiritualized interpretation of biblical (con)texts, Smith underscores the basic necessities of life, e.g. water, food, and safety, as the center of God’s concern.

Chapter 2 begins the deconstruction of problematic interpretations of scripture and modern day tropes that continue to denigrate marginalized citizens, particularly in the case of the water crisis in the city of Detroit. Smith demythologizes normalized biblical discourse on the woman at the well, which is steeped in stereotypes which she defines as “the force of ambivalence” (23). This ambivalence mars the human rights of the citizens of Detroit. Chapter 3 parallels the narrative of the Syrophenician woman with the piercing case of Sandra Bland. These two women of “sass” stand against the powers of their time, where “sass” is a powerful demonstration of agency. Directly confronting Jesus’s problematic reticence, Smith painstakingly dissects his words and actions during this encounter with the Syrophenician woman.

In Chapter 4, Smith offers a nuanced study on the narratives of the Ethiopian eunuch and Apollos of Alexandria in the book of Acts—which, according to Smith, have been largely unattended by scholars. The experiences of these men of African descent signal the tenuous geopolitical placement of Ethiopia and Egypt in scripture and the tendency to fetishize that which is unfamiliar. Through these particular experiences, Smith also provides insight on pedagogical and epistemological diversity that is fertile ground for liberation.

Chapter 5 excises the troubling parable of the ten bridesmaids in Matthew 25 through the lens of systemic oppression. Here, Smith makes the important distinction between acts of social justice and systemic change. Tangentially, chapter 6 critically assesses Elisha’s confrontation with a group of young boys and its connection to police brutality and the normalization of

violence sanctioned by God's agents. In the concluding chapter, Smith continues to draw deeply from womanist and feminist thought in her discourse of the apocryphal text of Susanna. Patriarchy, sexual violence, and class feature prominently in Susanna's distressing experience, and continue to do so in the lives of women today, asserts Smith.

The fundamental question that remains after reading *Womanist Sass* is, are the scriptures salvageable? This sacred book is at times morally ambiguous on issues such as slavery, violence against women, and racism. However disconcerting, these inconvenient truths of the Bible demand attention from the adherents who purport to love its tenets. Through critical textual analysis, examining the world behind the text, and parallels with present day societal frustrations and the heartbreak of marginalized people, Smith challenges students and instructors, practical theologians and theo-social activists, to read against the text in order to cull deeper truths that reveal the heart of the "Goddess-God who loves justice" (2).

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August E. Grant, Amanda F. C. Sturgill, Chiung Hwang Chen, and Daniel A. Stout, eds. *Religion Online: How Digital Technology is Changing the Way We Worship and Pray*. 2 volumes. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2019. 624 pages. \$164.

Digital technology has the power to diminish and to expand. While it shrinks the global world in immediacy, it also broadens our own by showing us our small place within a network of seemingly infinite connection and possibility. This double volume captures that dynamic as it examines how technology, from the printing press to artificial intelligence, has shaped the religious ethos of both institutions and individuals. Focusing on current digital media, the editors have worked to create a resource that they describe as expansive and inclusive, with the caveat that it is not comprehensive. They aim to give clear examples with enough detail to contribute a wider snapshot of how communication technologies are influencing religious practices.

The seventeen chapters of the first volume are not based in any one tradition, but together look at religious life shaped by the digital landscape. Chapters focus on different social media platforms, website information and design, digital ritual, and the religiosity of fandom. They commonly show the dynamic and shifting relationship that institutions and adherents have with digital technology. Many contributors include the stipulation “at the time of writing,” which reflects the temporal nature of this project. They pull stories and data from an information landscape that becomes immediately dated, but points to a larger wave of digital influence within belief and practice. While some individual chapters do take root in a particular faith tradition, they produce content that is relatable and applicable to other belief systems. One does not have to be a Catholic priest to understand the dynamics clergy face when navigating an online presence that balances their calling with social connections, as is described in chapter 8. The basic guidelines for website accessibility are not just for the Reformed Judaism congregations examined in chapter 9.

Ultimately, this volume sparks imagination for the many questions that technology poses in our religious lives. It challenges readers to consider the ways we delineate between souled and non-souled beings and the roles taken in our lives by artificial intelligence. These pages highlight the problems associated with the sheer amount of data that is presented to believers. Chapter 6 specifically addresses the ethics of big data in religious practice and how the velocity, volume, and variety of information has created another level of weaponization of religious discourse. This first volume also insinuates a new level of identity that an offline world rarely offered. While no chapter directly addresses the idea of multiple religious belonging, several examine how institutional religious life needs to coexist with the heterogeneous individual practices that digital culture offers. This applies to traditional religious practices as well as those that come with the cultural religiosity of belonging to groups like Deadheads (chapter 16) and Lady Gaga’s Little Monsters (chapter 17).

Volume II is organized completely differently, beginning with faith traditions rather than a particular online technology. Each chapter looks at how different faith traditions have utilized digital technology to share their beliefs, shape their public image, nurture their communities, and maintain their organization. The chapters break down into these categories: one on Buddhism, seven on Christianity (Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant, evangelical Protestant, Mormon, Amish and Anabaptist, Seventh-day Adventist, and Eastern Orthodox), two on Hinduism, one on Islam, one on Jainism, three on Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform), and two on New Religious Movements (including Scientology and New Age). The editors determined the number

of chapters based on numbers of religious adherents and their digital usage. They also noted that while they initially included more chapters on Islam, they found that digital applications were more uniform in Islam than for other religions. These chapters reveal wide similarities in institutional relationship with digital media, despite different faith claims, practices, and beliefs. Every tradition wrestles with the constant new realities that an ever-evolving technological world presents.

Volume II echoes the first as it illustrates how the themes of digital implementation are valuable but also marked by skepticism. Many faith traditions take at least some advantage of the benefits digital technology offers. Increased online presence enables organizations to disseminate information, evangelize seekers, and edify believers. The internet offers a point of access to faith material and to fellow believers that might not be available offline, which is particularly important for diaspora believers. These connections, especially with the advent of social media, have empowered adherents to contribute to faith conversations, both local and global, in ways not possible before. However, while some embrace the greater egalitarian nature of online dialogue, the collapse of hierarchy also produces skepticism and even fear for many faith institutions. How can a common faith message be maintained (or controlled) amid the multivocal contributions of its adherents? For many bodies of believers, the new digital reality means navigating their message in a landscape that they largely do not trust.

The reality of technology in our lives requires some level of digital engagement, and *Religion Online* awakens us to the excitement of its presence and potential in our religious lives. However, it also highlights a central question: Can an online experience truly be equal to offline faith participation? Is Snapchat's pilgrimage to Mecca as effective as walking the steps themselves? Can lighting a virtual candle on a computer screen create the same moment experienced within a sanctuary? Moreover, do believers have digital literacy to navigate the 24-hour news cycle of unverified information? These volumes will challenge readers of this journal in particular to consider how the homiletic event fits in with the constant messaging that digital technology contributes to the lives of believers. Reading its pages, one can't help but wonder how homiletics both participates in and struggles against the noise of information generated in our social digital age.

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Anna Rebecca Solevåg. *Negotiating the Disabled Body: Representations of Disability in Early Christian Texts*. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018. 191 pages. \$29.95.

In many cultures, people project what they consider to be the “perfect body” and enforce this notion on others to adore and imitate. This perfect body is presented as young, able, light-skinned, and athletic. While many would find it difficult to fit such an ideal, one group of people falls short more obviously than others—people with disabilities. While disabled bodies often appear to challenge or even pose a threat to prevailing religious and social concepts of normalcy, Solevåg argues that “insights from this interdisciplinary field can be helpful for understanding more fully how the disabled body is negotiated in early Christian texts” (1). Through her research, she attempts to show how discourse on disability is closely connected with other discourses on otherness, and ideas concerning beauty, gender, race, class, and sexual renunciation (3). Disability, therefore, works as a representation that often reflects the power displayed in hierarchies and structures of discrimination.

From chapter 2 to chapter 7, Solevåg introduces theories of disability that have been used to analyze cases of disabled bodies, which are selected from early Christian texts, including the apocrypha: narrative prosthesis, illness as metaphor, disability and the male gaze, stigma and the normate, monster theory, and crip theory. Three key points emerge from Solevåg’s biblical and historical research. First, disabled bodies are often utilized for their usefulness in presenting a problem in a literary narrative (narrative prosthesis). They not only disappear once the problem is solved but also serve only to highlight the divinity of Jesus as the ultimate healer. For example, when Jesus and his disciples encounter a man born blind in John 9, they ask, “Rabbi, who sinned?” Solevåg argues that disability, therefore, is employed as the “crutch that the narrative needs in order to show that God is great” (52).

Second, a disabled body is often probed for its moral traits, moving from the outer to the inner. In John 5:1-15, Jesus meets a paralyzed man at Bethesda pool who has been lying there for thirty-eight years. When Jesus asks him, “Do you want to be made well?” the man seems neither enthusiastic for healing nor grateful about being healed. While many commentators have criticized him for his passive attitude, Solevåg points out that such an interpretation is based on an ableist assumption that people want to be healed medically from their disability (64). Similarly, Judas, who betrayed Jesus, is presented as a monster by Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia, who connects Judas’s hideous features of swollen body, eye, and genitals with his moral character. Solevåg asserts that when one is described as a disabled, monster, or “other,” that person is often feminized and presented as lacking self-restraint, seeking overindulgence, and being sexually immoral.

Third, a disabled body is closely associated with gender, class, and ethnicity. In chapter 4, Solevåg discusses how women in the Acts of Peter are not only healed temporarily but also intentionally *unhealed*, as in the case of Peter’s daughter, in order to avoid sexual defilement. In the vision of Marcellus, the demon character is shown as female, Ethiopian, and poor. Solevåg quotes Garland-Thompson who has argued that, “Female, disabled, and dark bodies are supposed to be dependent, incomplete, vulnerable, and incompetent bodies” (91). For the purpose of homiletics, it is remarkable to observe that in many pulpits preachers who are female, dark-skinned, or foreign are likewise considered “disabled,” because their pitch, accent, or bodily figure do not match the traditional view of a preacher—white, male, athletic.

Homileticians and preachers would find Solevåg's research helpful in identifying the complexity of presentations of disabled characters in early Christian texts. For example, in contrast to the popular notion that disabled persons are poor, the paralyzed man in Mark 2:1-12 might not be poor in terms of his social status but a person of means who moves with the aid of four slaves. Solevåg's study is also insightful in negotiating the identity of a preacher who is considered to be "disabled" due to race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, or sexual orientation. It would be helpful to reflect how the disabled characters such as the Syrophenician woman, Paul, and the Ethiopian eunuch overturned the structures of discrimination and ableism by claiming rights, boasting in weakness, and being included in the family of God.

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Rebecca F. Spurrier. *The Disabled Church: Human Difference and the Art of Communal Worship*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2019. 272 pages. \$30.

In our current cultural moment that feels rife with division, it is refreshing to read a thoughtful and hopeful book about a community navigating and embracing difference. Rebecca Spurrier's ethnographic research offers the reader a vision of the "disabled church"—a church home to people with psychiatric disability, mental illness, or mental difference alongside other able-bodied/minded congregants. As stated in the introduction, "The central argument of this book is that Christian liturgy embodies consensual, nonviolent relationships that rehearse a Christian response to an encounter with the beauty of divine love, which makes possible belonging to a community through and across difference" (3). In short, the author explores what or who makes a gathering church.

In the introductory material, Spurrier provides a framework for the project by defining terms, introducing theological aesthetic(s) and disability studies, and describing methodology. The chapter also includes history and insight into the congregation of study, Sacred Family. Chapters 1 through 5 artfully weave together theory, theology, and practice. Chapters are organized according to the movement of the liturgy in this particular congregation: gathering, weaving, disrupting, naming, sending.

Chapter 1 invites the reader to "loiter with intent" at the liturgical centers of Sacred Family. Spurrier describes the community's access and relationship to church spaces such as the garden, smoking circle, and art studios, concluding that the spaces connected to the sanctuary are "the lifeblood of its work and imagination" (37). The liturgy of Sacred Family unfolds throughout the week as people of difference gather to eat, play, and worship. Chapter 2 pays particular attention to the types of engagement between participants of Sacred Family: arts of gesture and touch, arts of silence and imagination, and arts of jokes and laughter. The liturgy at Sacred Family is shaped by relationships, one person next to another, and traditional practices next to improvised art forms. Chapter 3 tells how time and disruption mark the liturgy of Sacred Family. Chapter 4 wrestles with questions of naming: How does the church name relationships and struggle? What are the gifts or challenges of being named? Chapter 5 turns the reader's attention to a broader context, naming the difficulty of being sent out to love and serve a world that does not love and serve many of the congregants.

Spurrier builds each of these chapters around stories, interviews, and observations of Sacred Family. This ethnographic work is done with a great deal of care, and the writing draws the reader into the community. Spurrier also engages with theologians and disability scholars in a way that adds to her argument without overwhelming or intruding upon the central narrative—the people and liturgy of Sacred Family. The book concludes with a chapter on beauty, borders, and consent. The reader comes back to the question, "Whom do we need in order to have church that assumes difference at its heart?" This time Spurrier posits an answer: "At the heart of any Christian liturgy are people whom we would not otherwise choose to surround us and a fragile system of human communication by which we consent to or dissent from the relationships that are a given of any religious ritual" (210).

Spurrier achieves her stated purpose, arguing for and demonstrating how Sacred Family embodies a community of difference in which people participate consensually, encounter God, and feel a sense of belonging. Spurrier also challenges the reader to think about what constitutes church or liturgy through her thick description of the "weeklong liturgy" of Sacred Family.

Many church communities find themselves in a time of transition and challenge. We need books like this that de-center or trouble our notions of liturgy and offer a life-giving vision of what church can be—a place to gather, a place to play and work, a place to name each other and our circumstances, and a place that sends us out into the world knowing we are loved and we belong.

This book is written in a way that will appeal to a variety of audiences including liturgical theologians and disability scholars. While the introduction and conclusion may be difficult for lay readers or seminary students, the heart of the book is engaging and accessible without sacrificing depth and intellectual integrity. The story of the church is artfully told, the theological and theoretical reflection is insightful and generous while still offering a critique of church or liturgy as we know and practice it.

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Jeffrey D. Arthurs. *Preaching as Reminding: Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness*. Downers-Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. 167 pages. \$16.07.

God's calling and a sense of commitment drive preachers to proclaim God's word. However, this regular proclamation of the word of God brings preachers the burden and pressure of avoiding monotonous content. In the digital age, preachers are expected to use more digital/technological tools to help hearers engage in the sermon content or to help sermons be more accessible. However, Jeffrey Arthurs, professor of preaching and communication at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, proves to preachers that they should be "God's remembrancers" (4). In other words, Arthurs wants preachers to be reminders.

Jeffrey Arthurs traces biblical and theological worlds to explore the meaning of remembering and forgetting, and in chapters 1 and 2 proves their prominence. He then asserts that preachers are also the Lord's remembrancers, providing more examples from the biblical texts in chapter 3. Chapter 1 describes the essence and action of God and what God has done for the human being (25). Chapter 2 continues the topic of remembering and forgetting and discusses it from the perspectives of neuroscience, media, and psychology. Arthurs shows readers how brains work and how media shapes our perception and attention; however, the human being is cursed with the problem of forgetting God. Therefore, Arthurs points out that the primary task of the preacher is to remind hearers what God has done and what God's people have experienced in order to evoke in hearers their original passion and love of God, and then lead hearers to action (58).

In chapters 4 to 7, Arthurs provides four rhetorical elements to aid the preacher's task of reminding: style, story, delivery, and ceremony and symbol. Style means the use of language, and is important because it helps preachers capture the hearers' attention by processing information through people's concrete experience. Story aids preachers in illustrating reality with biblical and theological accuracy within the pastoral mind. Delivery pertains to issues of verbal and nonverbal communication, like a person's voice and gesture. Finally, ceremony and symbol are contained in Christian worship and help contemporary hearers reconnect to God's action with God's people, and to evoke hearers' emotion and imagination in the present.

Arthurs states that a task of preachers is to remind hearers and bring hearers from the old story of the past to our story in the present. Although the ideas that Arthurs provides in this book are not new concepts, it is valuable to reconsider the importance of oral communication and the necessity of proclaiming God's story and historical events day by day or week by week using better rhetorical strategies. Arthurs makes a powerful case about human beings forgetting, and thoughtfully asserts that preaching is an act of helping people to remember.

As helpful as I found *Preaching as Reminding*, I have three concerns. First, *Preaching as Reminding* applies different disciplines to interpret the requirement of reminding. However, disciplines should not only help us find problems, but help us solve them. For instance, Arthurs mentions the problem that technology has caused for hearing. Yet at the same time, technological tools could create more sacred elements in different forms that help hearers access and remember theological and historical events through different senses. Technology is not such a negative subject in our faith. Second, is "not remembering" forgetting? Arthurs thinks "the opposite of remembering is forgetting" and explains that "forgetting is parallel to forsaking and rejecting" (18). Then Arthurs uses examples from scripture that describe how the people of Israel forget the Lord, and adds his conclusion that "God does not forget his children, but he does forget their sins

(24).” However, there are several passages in the Bible that indicate that God forgives our sins, like Isaiah 43:25 and Hebrews 10:14-18. Theologically, God’s “not remembering” is not what we usually think of as forgetfulness. If we know that God is omniscient and knows all things, God cannot forget in the sense that a human does. Third, in the context of some Asian countries, do the ideas of remembrance of God’s works and the preacher’s work of reminding limit the mission of preaching or the mission of the church? In a country where the Christian community is only 5 percent of the whole population, it is not easy for a preacher to share the memory of Christianity with non-Christians in that context.

Notwithstanding the potentially problematic arguments mentioned above, the book proves itself useful both for field preachers and seminary students who learn current communicative-strategic approaches to preaching. Jeffrey Arthurs’s claims are grounded and thought-provoking, and his book gives the preacher practical approaches for worship and pastoral care. I highly recommend seminarians and preachers to read this helpful reference for their future work on preaching.

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Franz A. Foltz and Frederick A. Foltz. *Faith, Hope, and Love in the Technological Society*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018. 200 pages. \$25.

In *Faith, Hope and Love in the Technological Society*, Frederick and Franz Foltz examine how modern technology has influenced our understanding of faith, hope, and love, three words that express the virtues and experience of Christianity. As a Lutheran pastor and technology professor, respectively, this father and son team bring together their knowledge of technological theories and theology.

The authors argue that attitudes about technology have shifted over the century, from encouraging appeal to discerning its limitations. They use Jacques Ellul's theory of *technique*, which is often used in critiques of technology. *Technique* is "the totality of methods" that creates an artificial world disconnected from community, nature, place, and time (10, 12). As the authors indicate, *technique* falsely deceives us into thinking that technology has the capacity to solve all of humanity's problems. Christianity has also been influenced by the technological society and *technique*. For instance, televangelists formulate and teach their own religious techniques to obtain health, happiness, and prosperity.

In addition, words have lost their sense of meaning in this electronic age. As Henry Frankfurt indicates, "bullshit" has become a technique for obtaining what a writer or speaker wants, irrespective of truth. Hollow, "plastic" words can be disconnected from their context and actual meaning (54-55). I found the authors' analysis of the denigration of words to be provocative, particularly considering current American politics.

Interestingly, the authors identify the difference between interactivity and interaction. They claim that digital communication and participation is not interaction, but an inferior interactivity, whereby a person communicates with a machine or with another person through a digital device. The authors assert that technology encourages "anonymity, immediacy, and individuality," which are opposed to the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love.

At the heart of their argument, the authors assert that faith and trust are mediated today through technology, such as the use of baggage screenings. Digital systems are "more reliable" than trusting in people (89), particularly boarding an aircraft. However, our faith in God is foundational and intrinsically linked to every facet of humanity. The authors criticize that technological advancements do not incite hope for humanity, but a trickle-down theory and an opportunity for financial gain for the rich. Yet Christian hope is found in God's vision of a community that is peaceful, just, and loving, which exemplifies how people can be truly human. In a technological society, love, friendship, and charity have been reduced to a commodity that can be measured, regulated, and professionalized. However, Christian love encompasses "unconditional care, sacrifice, and forgiveness" (142), and it is the means by which the beloved community is formed.

Within the limitations of this volume, I believe that the authors achieved their stated purpose and assessment. I found the authors' critique of technology to be insightful and provocative; however, their assessment of technology's capacity was inadequate. For example, the authors reject the ability of technology for virtual worship and for vulnerable, rich communication. I question if the authors' perspective is more indicative of their own generational and personal perspectives rather than the actual limitation of technology itself. As they acknowledge, their younger family members challenge their perspective. Individual experiences of technology are subjective and can vary greatly from person to person. Rich,

vulnerable conversation between two people can occur through a digital device, particularly if that is the only means of communication. I do not believe we should disregard digital forms of church, as they are an enriching resource for those who cannot attend in person due to illness, disability, or location. Furthermore, while televangelist and religious television supported their argument of *technique*, the authors did not discuss the countless local church pastors who broadcast their sermons on social media.

Amid the technological and religious genre, this book is similar to Charles Fensham's *Emerging from the Dark Age Ahead* (Novalis, 2008); however, it offers an updated argument of *technique* considering current American politics. In contrast to the authors' perspectives, Deanne Thompson's [The Virtual Body of Christ In A Suffering World](#) (Abingdon, 2016) makes a theological case for virtual presence and meaningful digital connection.

The present book would be a helpful resource for scholars and students interested in the intersections between Christianity and technology, particularly those who are seeking a critique. Perhaps, in our highly dependent digital culture, this resource could be beneficial to all people who want to be more aware of their use of digital devices.

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David Lyle Jeffrey. *In the Beauty of Holiness: Art and the Bible in Western Culture*. Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2017. 448 pages. \$49.

In *In the Beauty of Holiness: Art and the Bible in Western Culture*, David Lyle Jeffrey makes significant contributions to an interdisciplinary dialogue between art, the Bible and aesthetics. The author's concern about how art is related to theology is shown through the book's focus on Christian art inspired by biblical narratives. Yet this book is not merely a history of Christian art; it illuminates a fundamental theological and spiritual trajectory for visual art in the West. Jeffrey examines how artists and their biblical imaginations guide viewers to receive all beauty as a gift from the Giver. Our experiences of beauty in forms of gratitude that give back to the Source are themselves beautiful. Jeffrey argues that this "giving beauty back" to God—beauty's self and beauty's Giver—has created some of the most beautiful art in Western culture.

Jeffrey provides clear examples of the historical development of frescos in the thirteenth century. These examples support his argument that beauty and holiness witnessed in the artworks contribute to the service of worship and life of devotion. In discussing the wall paintings of Giotto and Fra Angelico, and the stylistic evolution from two-dimensional depiction to a more naturalistic form of representation, Jeffrey recognizes this shift as not merely a technical experimentation, but much deeper. Jeffrey shows the readers that one cannot understand well the realistic depiction of the biblical paintings of this period except by reference to the cultural impact upon the spirituality of lay Christians.

This book has two parts. In his first part, Jeffrey focuses on examining ideas of beauty in the arts and how they relate to worship before 1500, drawing materials from ancient Hebrew scriptures, Augustine, and Aquinas. Using sources from modern philosophers of art such as Schleiermacher and Kant in his second part, "Art and Bible after 1500," Jeffrey articulates the gradual dislocation of the ideal beauty reviewed in the first part of the book. The author leads the readers to examine a clear divorce of beauty from transcendence seen through post-Reformation, modern and contemporary art works. The discussion about how modern art becomes a substitute for religion illuminates the diverse approaches through which some contemporary artists are weaving their faith perspectives into their art. The way Jeffrey considers the recovery of the beauty of holiness proves to be fundamentally transformative in works of modern artists of religion. The artist's engagement with the Christian story as giving beauty back to God is a central concern in Jeffrey's book. This raises the question of how we as viewers respond to the art of beauty and divine.

As a lecturer teaching art courses in seminary setting, I found that Jeffrey's *In the Beauty of Holiness* successfully offers a clear educational methodology in his account of Christian art by drawing from multiple resources—the Bible, literature, philosophy, and theology—that constitute human life in the world. I found Jeffrey's argument convincing and his structure coherent, as well. The 146 illustrations of masterpieces of the West can be a valuable resource for those studying both religious and secular art. However, the selection of masterpieces of art has its limitations. A reader with art background would desire to see more works of indirect biblical subject matter analyzed. Jeffrey's book also offers many new insights to theological and biblical scholars by using art and literature as texts that can complement further research.

Overall, Jeffrey's *In the Beauty of Holiness* serves as a ground-breaking exercise in studying artistic creativity as instructive for the Bible and spirituality. Jeffrey's account of art

gives rich characterization as to how much research on theology and the arts—research which should be open to history and multiple meanings inspired by the Holy Spirit—is still to be done.

Suchi Lin, Taiwan Graduate School of Theology, Taipei, Taiwan

Walter Brueggemann. *Preaching from the Old Testament*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019. 196 pages. \$13.82.

This volume serves as the inaugural book in a new series entitled *Working Preacher Books*. Walter Brueggemann looks at larger units of material that represent genres from the Old Testament including Torah, Prophets, Psalms, and Wisdom. He explores these genres as texts without imposing systematic categories on them, and primarily with the preacher in mind.

The book contains five chapters. Chapter 1 is “Preaching from the Torah: Genesis.” To help the preacher, Brueggemann reads Genesis in light of Israel’s time under the Persian empire, an empire that was concerned with absorbing Jewish identity into its culture. Torah was the counter to that imperial effort. Brueggemann helps preachers see a contemporary analogy in the market ideology of our culture. Genesis 3–11 is about “distorted desires” upon which a consumer economy depends (18). This distorted desire leads to all kinds of violence. God’s community, however, is called to resist the imperial culture of the time. Therefore, God calls the community to serve as “carriers of blessing,” a theme developed in Genesis 12–50 (29). Ironically, the blessing is carried by some of the most dysfunctional families around. God, however, has always used the lowly, the weak, and the dysfunctional to carry forth the blessing.

In chapter 2, “Preaching from the Torah: The Tale of Moses,” Brueggemann identifies a series of events that work together to interrupt the “totalic” empire of Pharaoh. These interruptions include: 1) the midwives’ nonviolent interruption (Exod 1); 2) Moses’s violent interruption (Exod 2); 3) the outcry of the slave community to evoke Yahweh to action (Exod 2:23–25); 4) Yahweh confronting Moses at the burning bush (Exod 3:7–9); and 5) the mobilization of the slave community “to act out divine resolve” (50).

In chapter 3 Brueggemann turns attention to “Preaching from the Prophets.” He emphasizes that preachers are not cast in the role of a prophet when they preach from this genre. Rather, “when we face a prophetic text, we face a *text*, not a *role*” (71). Preachers are interpreters of texts, not imitators of prophets (71). Brueggemann identifies a theme that these prophetic texts stress. It is that the controlling regimes work at silencing dissenting voices in order to continue maintaining control. But prophetic voices break that silence in order to reveal injustices. Brueggemann identifies four dimensions of prophetic utterances that serve as guidelines for what preachers do today. First, prophets and preachers are deeply rooted in the exodus-Sinai narrative and the ten counter rules to Pharaoh’s agenda. Second, they are motivated by a “deep sense of personal urgency,” a moral urgency (80). Third, preachers engage in “acute social analysis.” They identify the systemic greed and the injustices it produces. Fourth, preachers, like the prophets, are word managers, poets. Prophetic preaching does not need to be confrontational. Rather it invites individuals into a new reality.

Chapter 4 turns to “Preaching from the Psalms.” Brueggemann identifies the emotional extremity of the psalms from the laments to the praises. Praise psalms overflow with self-abandoning gratitude. Laments protest the hurts, the isolation, and the suffering. These emotions fall in between two poles in our culture. On the one hand is the therapeutic culture which is a “tell all” culture: no discipline or restraint to process the hurt. On the other hand, the technology culture is all about control, total restraint, and denial (113). This is the dysfunctional bipolar culture in which we live.

The emotional extremity in the psalms gives preachers the obligation to proclaim to faith communities the need to take “responsibility for one’s extremity and at the same time entrusting

that extremity to the community in a way that does not withhold one's self from the neighbor" (114). Brueggemann continues, "Any particular psalm is an exercise in extremity, but it is before God, it is in a stylized, disciplined way to which attention must be paid, and it is in a framed, shaped tradition" (117). That is, it is shaped by a community that puts them alongside other psalms, which sang and prayed and taught them.

With chapter 5, "Preaching from the Wisdom Traditions," Brueggemann offers imaginative insights for preaching from Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. Proverbs emphasizes the significance of ordinary life. It "aims at character formation for the community of faith" that goes contrary to the dominant culture (152). He suggests Job is organized around the movement from orientation to disorientation and to new orientation. Or, as one of his students suggested, around the sequence of the Wizard of Oz: Kansas (Job 1–2), Oz (Job 3–41), and Kansas (Job 42).

Brueggemann describes the community to whom Qoheleth writes as a "world-weary" community. In the face of exhaustion, perplexity, and weariness, Brueggemann suggest that Qoheleth still believes the community has fundamental responsibilities. Preachers today are to proclaim these responsibilities to fatigued and confused congregants: we still have moral responsibility, thus the battery of better-than sayings; we still can be joyful, thus the appeal to enjoy food, drink, work, and family; and we still fear God and keep God's commandments.

As Brueggemann works his way through each of the genres, he consistently shows how the events and ideas in the text parallel the tasks and responsibilities of the preacher. He points out how the narrative or the text parallels current scenarios, events, and issues. This volume is a rich resource for preachers. It is also a valuable resource for those who are interested in teaching students how to preach from Old Testament texts.

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Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica, eds. *Preaching Romans: Four Perspectives*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019. 191 pages. \$14.63.

The editors of this book provide a sketch of four major interpretive perspectives on Paul's letter to the Romans. Each perspective is written by "a leading proponent of that approach" (xi). The traditional or Lutheran perspective is presented in chapter 1 by Stephen Westerholm. He maintains that this view contains the foundational truths that remain indisputably Pauline. These include: 1) all humans are sinful; 2) no human is righteous based on works; 3) through Christ God provides atonement for sins; 4) by grace God makes righteous those who have faith in Christ.

Scot McKnight represents the second interpretive school in chapter 2, the new perspective. Three "Rs" summarize the new perspective: reaction, renewal, and reformulation (22). Reaction refers to past Christian scholarship that viewed Judaism as a works righteousness religion. The new perspective returns to the roots of Judaism and redefines it not as a works-based religion but as a grace-based religion. This is followed by a renewed understanding of Judaism which maintains that God's grace saves but believers are called to obedience based on the law. Finally, Paul's theology is reformulated on the basis of the renewal. This reformulation ultimately leads to the new perspective which in a nutshell is "the unity of the church and the inclusion of all" (26). For Paul the problem is the relationship between the weak and the strong in Romans 12–16. The church, then, becomes God's agent of reconciliation in a divided world.

The third perspective is presented in chapter 3. Douglas Campbell describes the apocalyptic perspective which focuses on the issue of epistemology and asks the question, how do we know God? Here Campbell refutes foundationalism, which claims that we can know God through human history and culture. This leads to what he calls a "sacred nation theology" which in the past gave rise to National Socialism. In contrast, we know God through Christ. And how do we know Christ is the truth? Campbell says we must not look forward but *retrospectively* at the human predicament and the reason Jesus came. That is what Paul reveals to us in Romans 5–8. Jesus's death and resurrection is God's response to the human predicament. When we participate in Christ's death and resurrection our behavior is transformed and we come into relationship with God and others.

Michael Gorman, in chapter 4, presents the final perspective, the participationist perspective. He says, "To be in Christ is to *participate* in the life of the crucified but resurrected Lord" (59). The phrases "into," "in," and "with" Christ express a fundamental aspect of Pauline theology. It involves participating in Jesus's faithfulness. Gorman translates *pistis Christou* as "the faithfulness of Christ" (e.g. 3:26, 68). By "virtue of the incarnation and the work of the Spirit, we can become like Christ" (61). This is transformative participation. Gorman maintains that the participationist view is not competing with the apocalyptic or reformational perspectives but instead is "*complementing* them" (60).

The second half of the book contains twelve sermons, with each of the four perspectives represented by three sermons. Included are sermons by Fleming Rutledge, William Willimon, Scot McKnight, and Richard Hays. The sermons appear to be preached to specific audiences, even though those audiences are not usually identified.

One of the difficulties with the sermons is that it is not always easy to identify how they align with the particular perspective they represent. To include a prefatory note with each sermon to highlight its unique features would help readers. The editors do acknowledge that there are

overlapping ideas between the four perspectives. They emphasize that no one of them is the right way. Rather they act “as an interpretive kaleidoscope” (169). Thus, the sermons naturally interact with more than one perspective. Another way of helping to distinguish the sermons would have been to place the three representative sermons immediately following the interpretive perspective rather than putting all twelve of them in the second half of the book.

This book is written for preachers and is intended to help them navigate the interpretive and often murky waters surrounding the book of Romans. The four perspectives provide succinct descriptions that introduce preachers to the basic tenets of each one and how to move forward in preaching Romans. The sermons are insightful, creative, and stimulate further ideas for preaching the message of Romans. I highly recommend this book to preachers as well as homileticians who teach classes that deal with preaching biblical texts.

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Leah D. Schade. *Preaching in the Purple Zone: Ministry in the Red-Blue Divide*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing, 2019. 241 pages. \$25.

Leah D. Schade's new book, *Preaching in the Purple Zone*, joins other recent homiletical publications that address the challenges preachers face amid social division and polarization. Schade's desire is to offer preachers encouragement and tools to take on controversial issues in potentially charged contexts, such as in so-called "purple" churches split along red vs. blue political lines. Her "Purple Zone" approach reiterates the importance of Christians speaking together about difficult issues, and offers ways do so.

Schade begins with research into how preachers approach prophetic preaching, especially during "this divisive time in our nation's history" (14). In a 2017 survey she conducted, Schade found that nearly a quarter of Protestant clergy rarely or never preach on controversial justice issues or had trepidation about doing so (20), not least because preachers fear their hearers' responses. But many also feel a call to preach "prophetically" despite their fears, and Schade closes chapter 1 with a call to the church to reclaim its prophetic voice through the community. In chapter 2, Schade assesses the relationship between politics and church life and argues for a revised understanding of politics as "a process by which to understand who we are and how we will treat each other" (38). Reflecting on Jesus's engagement with issues of public concern, Schade reiterates the biblical basis for faithfully addressing justice issues through dialogue. In chapter 3, Schade provides an overview of prophetic preaching and movements in homiletic theory toward conversational preaching (within which she places Purple Zone preaching). She then outlines five "paths" of prophetic preaching in the Purple Zone (chapter 4), including rooting the sermon in biblical principles of justice and dialogical ethics, raising awareness of justice issues important to faith, naming concrete action steps, and sustaining conversation over time. Schade also suggests a "dialogical lens" for biblical exegesis in order to focus on how conversation takes place within scripture itself. Chapter 5 prepares the preacher for the sermon-dialogue-sermon process and suggests how to select appropriate topics. The next chapters describe the sermon-dialogue-sermon method, beginning with a Prophetic Invitation to Dialogue sermon (chapter 6) in which the preacher advocates for dialogue about difficult issues and invites the congregation to participate in dialogue on a particular topic, which the sermon also introduces. The "dialogue" portion of the method (chapter 7) takes place separate from and after the initial sermon, and is a chance for congregational participants to engage in the "deliberate dialogue" process together. The deliberate dialogue experience, which is centered on the topic introduced in the initial sermon, then informs, shapes, and inspires the follow-up sermon, the Communal Prophetic Proclamation (chapter 8). Chapters 9 and 10 are case studies on the sermon-dialogue-sermon method, and chapter 11 offers insights for future thinking and research.

A major strength of Schade's book is its qualitative research, from an in-depth survey of preachers' experiences with controversial sermons through multiple real-life examples and case studies of her method. Schade does not shy away from the complexities of what she proposes, and offers honest assessments of the pitfalls and possibilities. She also boldly takes on the challenge of interweaving prophetic preaching's emphasis on justice with efforts to build bridges among people who disagree. As Schade writes, "In our severely divided political climate, simply issuing the invitation to dialogue is itself a prophetic act" (86). Her argument for the importance of conversational preaching and deliberate dialogue in the specific moments when congregations are most divided helps reimagine what constitutes the "prophetic" in situations of polarization.

This impulse is a critical addition to larger discussions of prophetic preaching and its intersection with conversational or collaborative models, but it is also the source of some amount of confusion in Schade’s text. It is unclear, for instance, how the results of the deliberative dialogue become a “communal prophetic proclamation” if participants remain divided as to what constitutes justice. Is a sermon prophetic because it reflects multiple perspectives in dialogue, or does being prophetic require movement together toward particular expressions of justice? Likewise, while the Bible does include diverse voices in dialogue, many scriptures are strongly polemical and do not lend themselves to “seeing both sides.” How might a “dialogical lens” help assess which voices in scripture should be lifted up? Or is awareness that there are multiple voices what is most important? Throughout Schade’s book, such tensions remain somewhat unresolved and at times paradoxical—but all of this demonstrates the complexity of the task of prophetic preaching in divisive times. Schade is asking critically important questions, and her method offers a useful, hands-on approach for pastors struggling to respond to conflict-averse and “purple” congregations.

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John Caputo. *Cross and Cosmos: A Theology of Difficult Glory*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019. 287 pages. \$30.60.

Over the last few years, philosopher John Caputo has sought to bring together his interest in Derridean deconstruction and what he calls radical theology—a theology that lets go of the grandiose ontological claims of confessional theology for something strangely weak: a God who does not exist, but insists; a God not of being, but perhaps...of possibility. For a confessional Christian like me who has not given up on theology as a constructive task, the language of deconstruction is challenging enough. Yet in this volume Caputo goes all of that one better. He places at the center of his deconstructive, radical theology his own unique take on Luther's theology of the cross from the Heidelberg Disputation (1518).

Why better? In my view, the deconstructive impulse is not new to theology, but pushes already and everywhere in the Christian tradition itself. Theology is always already troubling itself, I would argue. Caputo rightly pursues a theology of the cross in the selfsame spirit. In doing so, however, he pushes a beyond the recognizable claims of the tradition. Caputo sees himself as taking Luther quite a bit farther than Luther. By the end of the book, he even adds a thesis or two to Luther's Heidelberg Disputations, where the cantankerous German first articulates his theology of the cross against theologians of "glory." More importantly, however, Caputo crosses over the gap between the orders of creation and the orders of redemption in classic Lutheran theology to truly reconcile God to all things in relating cross to cosmos.

The cross part of this should not be surprising. Caputo is aware of the powerful dialogue that James Cone pursued with the tradition of the theology of the cross through his landmark book, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. A theology of the cross refuses to call the bad good and the good, bad—but instead calls a thing what it really is. There is in the working out of this tradition, in all its jagged forms, a desire to be sure not to call God what God is not—a kind of aniconic view of the cross. Here Caputo rightly links this theological move to what Tillich does in the Protestant Principle—it pushes back and guards the Godness of God. The "more" that Caputo does, however, is to keep pursuing that negation through the very conception of God itself, beyond being and actuality to possibility itself. God, for Caputo, is that which happens under the name, that which stirs within the very events that disrupt our ontological conceptions and our fixed views of the cosmos. And there, with that last piece, Caputo crosses over into a wholly other conversation: an understanding of the cosmos itself. Here Caputo draws on the work of physicists to press far beyond the ontologies of metaphysics. Christian neo-Platonism is his real opponent here, and Caputo will not rest until his radical theology also accounts for what physicists puzzle over: the ultimate destruction of an ever-expanding universe that eventually will go out, disappear, as if nothing ever existed. In Caputo's eyes, however, this fragility of the cosmos in relation to a theology of the cross is a thing of theopoetic beauty and gift. By God, it even leads to doxology (278)!

My little review cannot do Caputo's book justice, but perhaps it will have. I would note as a fellow traveler in a theology of the cross that Caputo neglects some of what really makes Luther tick. At one point, Caputo throws up his hands that Luther sees a theology of the cross as both negation and a means to hold on to the aspects of God Luther otherwise understands as hidden, *absconditus*, as it were (142-43). But what Caputo argues is an utter nonsensical contradiction that he wishes to pursue to the end is better understood in light of Luther's conception of the means of grace. Luther was a pastoral theologian (not a systematician) and his

radical critiques of reason and revelation need to be understood in connection with Word and Sacrament—not as perfect, but good enough for the disorienting ongoing struggle that is *Anfechtung*. Caputo should take heart—Luther is (possibly) even more modest in scope than he imagined.

Caputo has a lover's quarrel with theology and continues to push theology to be ever truer to itself. His vision is indeed radical, bracing, but also hopeful in a most fragile sense possible. Warning: preachers and homileticians alike will have to work hard to wrest a blessing from this strange, nightly visitor to the realm of theology. But it will be worth it. Caputo embodies some of theology's deepest impulses, especially those who view the cross as more than a cipher for atonement theology but allow us all to press beyond mere economic exchanges of atonement to the mysterious revelation of God in both cross and cosmos.

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Joseph Evans. *Reconciliation and Reparation: Preaching Economic Justice*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2018. 160 pages. \$18.99.

The Rev. Dr. Joseph Evans is Dean of the Morehouse School of Religion. In this current volume, he continues his project on the Du Boisian prophetic hermeneutic and its role in biblical interpretation and preaching. *Reconciliation and Reparation* continues themes familiar to those schooled in Pan-African intellectual resources, particularly the Négritude Movement and Marxist diasporic political philosophy.

In the most general terms, Evans attempts to locate contemporary African American preaching in this Pan-African political stream by means of the Du Boisian construct of double consciousness, or “two-ness.” His thesis is simple: “Effective twenty-first century preaching is prophetic when it addresses closing the income and wealth gap” (4).

One of the primary obstacles to this task is the precise double-consciousness (both American and Negro) that thwarts the embrace of an overarching narrative that places African American preachers in the meta-narrative of global liberation efforts and movements. The overarching Eurocentric meta-narrative of cultural progress is almost constantly at odds with the liberation narrative of Pan-Africanism. “The Du Boisian meta-narrative...is rooted in the black subject and is informed by an aesthetic that describes form and function that give shape to other perspectives” (16).

The book is organized in two main sections. “Part 1: Foundations” is devoted to defining the Du Boisian prophetic tradition, connecting that double-consciousness to the Poor People’s Campaign and economic issues, and then nesting the American civil rights struggle within the Pan-African liberation struggle and narrative. Evans hints at a discussion of the theological meaning of reconciliation in this section, starting to tease out the significance of the bookkeeping metaphor that requires a balancing or reckoning.

For students of African American and Pan-African history, this section sings with the work of Molefi Kete Asante, Wyatt Tee Walker, Henry Louis Gates, E. Franklin Frazier, and C. Eric Lincoln; “For too long the Eurocentric narrative has reinforced the obscure notion that people of African descent do not deserve economic equality” (28). The purpose of these chapters is to provide for an intellectual conversion to a radicalized consciousness. The black struggle is the source of the Du Boisian narrative: “Black power is an autonomous alternative to Eurocentrism” (33).

The last part of this section surveys the Pan-African global context with special attention to Alan Boesak and the Accra Confession of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The struggle, asserts Evans, is a shared struggle with other populations of color: “This condition is global, reinforced by Eurocentrism and its Eurocentric narrative, the catalyst of neo-liberalism. Therefore, a different narrative must emerge, a narrative that we have come to know as a pan-African liberation narrative” (55).

“Part 2: Preaching for Economic Justice,” is further divided into the liberation/reparation themes in both testaments. Evans examines the theological notion of reconciliation as a specifically economic matter, starting with an extended quotation from King’s “I Have a Dream” speech which uses banking metaphors of “cash a check” and a defaulted “promissory note.” The author asserts throughout that King’s use of banking metaphors and his paradigm shift toward labor and work supports a call for economic justice. The strongest parts of this section for

preachers are the extended discussion of Exod 12:38 in which the Israelites “plundered the Egyptians” and reframing the dominant biblical narrative as resistance against the Empire.

The final discussions of Thomas Jefferson as a case study/thought experiment in reconciliation and reparation were less compelling. Some will not agree with Evans that Christian conversion and a belief in miracles is necessary for human transcendence that leads to transformation. The imaginary deathbed scene (surrounded by his free children and his slave children) is brilliant, though.

While Ta-Nehisi Coates’s work is mentioned, it is not figural. Bernie Sanders hovers at the margins. There aren’t many women or much room for gender analysis, and this writer kept hoping for a discussion of Angela Davis’s classic *Women, Race & Class*.

Ultimately, this is a powerful book for those dedicated to global racial justice. Evans does heavy lifting to bring so many different voices together to bear on the timely topic. You’ll cheer, take notes, and make reading lists.

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Carol Tomlin. *Preach It! Understanding African Caribbean Preaching*. London: SCM Press Norwich, 2019. 201 pages. \$17.99.

In *Preach It*, Carol Tomlin utilizes her experience and academic expertise to describe African Caribbean preaching in Britain. The work continues Tomlin's research in Pentecostal beliefs and practices, with special attention to homiletics. Tomlin argues that African Caribbean preaching contains a mixture of African and North American Pentecostal influences. She maintains that African diaspora Pentecostal Christians share common traditions and practices throughout the world, even as her focus is on Britain.

The book is divided into two parts based on her central frame. She says, "the study of preaching has two dimensions: the linguistics which centres [sic] on areas such as lexis, phonology, syntax and semantics, and the stylistic which outlines the ways in which these different elements are combined to create a variety of effects" (7). Throughout the work, Tomlin demonstrates how these two parts are intimately related to theology and context. The use and structure of language(s) in preaching is central to Tomlin's description and analysis. Part I explores the complex backgrounds of African Caribbean Pentecostal preaching in Britain, especially its history and use of languages. Chapter 1 provides an outline of African spirituality and Pentecostalism. The preservation of African spirituality's combination of the sacred and the secular through slavery partially explains the predilection of preaching in African Caribbean Pentecostalism. The second chapter continues tracing the movement of Pentecostalism from Los Angeles, the Caribbean, and finally Britain. Brief theological descriptions of particular Pentecostal movements in Britain help contextualize preaching and other practices in the liturgical settings. The third chapter describes "code-switching," where preachers use different forms of English and/or Creole within the same sermon. Tomlin exposes colonial, cultural, theological, and generational implications of the use of language in preaching. The final chapter of the first part focuses on ten principles of Pentecostal preaching, such as a preference for deduction over induction.

Part two describes the tools used by Pentecostal preaching that relate to style. Chapter 5 discusses the centrality of orality in the Pentecostal movement. Readers will recognize many elements discussed in black homiletics texts, such as improvisation, call and response, creativity, and narrativity; however, the Pentecostal lens offers fresh perspectives. Call and response is the major topic of the sixth chapter where Tomlin notes how they function throughout the whole service. The chapter helpfully describes different types and functions of call and response, revealing their complexity. She identifies repetition as a central aspect of Pentecostal preaching and the service in chapter 7. Her conclusion reiterates her thesis, that "elements of African retentions are reflected in the homiletic practices" of Pentecostal preaching (140). Tomlin draws from the works of many black homiletics who have made similar arguments, but her analysis is distinct in its focus on the African Caribbean Pentecostal context in Britain. The appendix includes sermon notes taken to the pulpit by a preacher and a transcript of the same sermon as it was preached. Tomlin uses the frames and tools from the work to analyze the message. This conclusion was particularly helpful as a synthesis of *Preach It* and as a glimpse into Pentecostal preaching.

Tomlin helpfully names the rise of global Pentecostalism as a need for further study of the preaching practices of the charismatic movement. Students and scholars of preaching are given an excellent introduction to African Caribbean Pentecostal preaching in *Preach It*. While

Tomlin focuses on Britain, the descriptive work and theological analysis extend beyond the immediate context. The impressive scope of the work gives the reader a wide view that considers some of the complexities of Pentecostal preaching. At the same time, the introductory nature of the work reveals the need for continued scholarship on the topic. Tomlin's descriptive work is compelling, but I wanted elements that are more constructive as well.

One of the strengths of *Preach It* is Tomlin's clarity when she connects a description of Pentecostal preaching practices with homiletical theory. She often draws from the North American homiletical literature, and the New Homiletic in particular, as a way of explaining the characteristics and methods of Pentecostal preaching. Those looking for a connection between the Pentecostal practices of preaching and homiletical theory should find this work instructive. The work is accessible to readers in the United States or those around the world. The book could serve well in a class on global or contextual models of preaching, and I recommend it to anyone seeking to learn about Pentecostal preaching.

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Sunggu Yang. *King's Speech: Preaching Reconciliation in a World of Violence and Chasm*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019. 101 pp. \$17.00

Sunggu Yang has written a splendid study of the theology operative in the sermons of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., which will handsomely reward preachers of all stripes who read it. Dr. Yang is assistant professor of Christian ministries at the College of Christian Studies at Portland Seminary, George Fox University, and has written on various aspects of homiletics.

Yang's slim volume accomplishes his goal in four chapters. The first and longest (5-37) reviews the sources from which Dr. King drew to create his distinct theology. Yang briefly surveys King's black church liberation motif that suffused the hearers' lives, worship, and preaching practices, and scriptural interpretive tools like allegory and typology. A second influence was theological: King's home church's emphasis on an all-powerful God and ethical concern for social oppressions, black theologies of liberation and reconciliation, his college and seminary formation, the Boston Personalism that he learned at Boston University, and then the theologies of both Tillich and Barth. A final formative influence on King's preaching was, according to Yang, the violent reality of American society in which he lived. King noted both the social violence and the spiritual violence it impressed upon victims and perpetrators. In particular, Gandhi's nonviolent *satyagraha* ("soul force") powerfully affected King's theological development, as did Walter Rauschenbusch's emphasis on the relevance of the gospel for the whole person in her/his social and economic conditions. Yang does a fine job marshaling an extensive cast of characters and their positions, building the case for King's creative synthesis of their ideas in his preaching. Strangely missing in action in Yang's story, though, are two figures that were also formative influences on King: Reinhold Niebuhr and Howard Thurman, whose contribution to King's development was particularly significant (Yang does provide a suggestive footnote on Thurman, which leaves one wanting more).

The second chapter is the beating heart of the book, explicating King's theology revealed through his sermons. For King, God is revealed in both nature and human history, takes the initiative to transform this violent reality, and is sublimely personal toward beloved human creations, with power to effect the redemption of even enemies. King's sermons reveal the stamp of his Boston Personalist studies, for they posit the innate worth of every human being—even oppressors. Directly as a result, if one claims to be empowered by this all-powerful God, "any form of violence must be denied and resisted" (42). Jesus is the "most tangible" example for us of the personal loving God, who "practices social justice and liberates his people from oppression and violence" (44). Further, God's universal love shown in Jesus can transform not only the lives of individuals, but also entire societies. How? For King, evil was the socio-economic and political situation that will finally be defeated in human history by the "powerful, inexorable forces of good" (44–45). The vision that drove King was his particular version of the Reign of God, the "beloved community," through which God resists the world's evil with our cooperation. King's preaching celebrated God's victory over evil, and also the universal reconciliation of God and humans, and oppressed with oppressor. Thus King, Yang claims, is best viewed as a prophetic mediator who stood in the midst of a conflicted people and proclaimed God's reconciliation.

Yang's third chapter explores the display of King's theology in one particular sermon, "The Death of Evil upon the Seashore." King's sermon, he demonstrates, attempts to free *both* oppressed and oppressor through an "exorcism" of the cosmic evil operating in both society at

large, and the evil actions of individual oppressors; God thus effecting universal—and nonviolent—reconciliation.

In a brief final chapter, Yang suggests ways contemporary preachers might apply King's theology and methods to the present world in which preachers and their hearers unveil and deny the cultural ethos of violence, and participate in God's transforming work here on earth. The preacher thus takes on a new mediating role in which the sermon is both a pastoral message to the total person, and necessarily socially prophetic. Yang offers a concluding sermon as one example of a contemporary appropriation of King's theological insights.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. exemplified and influenced African American preaching. Yang's exposition of the theological heart of King's preaching is rich fare for contemporary homilists.

Robert R. Howard, Gilbert, AZ



Amos Yong. *The Kerygmatic Spirit: Apostolic Preaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018. 243 pages. \$50.

In *The Kerygmatic Spirit*, Amos Yong, a leading Pentecostal theologian, makes a valuable contribution toward a theology of preaching grounded in the events of Pentecost. Building on his previous work, *The Hermeneutical Spirit*, the book illustrates how the interpretive principles that shape Yong's reading of Luke–Acts are embodied in his preaching of the kerygma or apostolic gospel. To this end, the edited volume features fifteen of Yong's transcribed sermons. Most sermons have helpful audio or video links. The book also includes theological reflections on Yong's preaching by Pentecostal scholars Josh P.S. Samuel, Tony Richie, and Yong himself. *The Kerygmatic Spirit* will be appreciated by preachers, homileticians, and theologians of all backgrounds interested in theologically-rich preaching that has ethical import for the twenty-first century.

The book begins with an introduction by Samuel that situates Yong's preaching within North American classical Pentecostalism. A select assessment of his preaching is offered using the categories of Spirit-baptism, the anointing, supernaturalism and the altar call, extemporaneous preaching, call and response, and passion and intellect. While clearly rooted in the Pentecostal tradition as a preacher and scholar, Yong challenges the boundaries of "typical" Pentecostal theological reflection. Drawing on a "Lukan imagination or Acts hermeneutic," he seeks to demonstrate a holistic understanding of the Spirit's work (25).

For example, in a sermon based on Acts 1:6–8 entitled "The Lukan Commission: The Spirit, Im/migration, and the De-Construction of Empire," Yong speaks of Christianity as a religion of migration birthed through Jesus's outpouring of the Spirit. Bringing together issues of eschatology and ethics, he states that in our globalized world the Spirit forms a new people called the church to "bear witness to another world," a world that honors ethnic identities and challenges the homogeneity of empire (58). In a different sermon entitled "Saved from Shame and Stigma: Shortness of Stature and the Gospel in a Disabled World," Yong proffers what he calls a "shortist reading" of the story of Zacchaeus recorded in Luke 19:1–10 (81). For him, the gospel of Jesus reorients how we see ourselves and others in a world of discrimination toward people with disabilities. In yet another sermon, entitled "God's Servant among the Nations" based on Matthew 12:15–21, Yong explores the political dimensions of Jesus's Messianic identity and mission. He concludes that Jesus is Messianic in that he is "anointed of the Spirit" to bring God's healing, reconciliation, and justice into the world (127). Other sermons relate the expansive work of the Spirit to the life of the mind, prayer, creativity and the arts, and hospitality.

In the epilogue, Yong articulates what he calls "a normative pentecostal" theology of preaching (195). For him, apostolic preaching is not simply to be explored in the pages of scripture but is to be embodied in contemporary experience. He surmises, "Spirit-filled kerygmatic preaching connects the apostolic message about Jesus, the reign of God, and the God of Israel to contemporary hearts, minds, and lives" (201). And, since the Spirit knows no borders, Yong claims apostolic preaching should occur in ecclesial, social/global, and academic environments. Tony Richie, in the afterword, suggests Yong's example of theologically-informed preaching is instructive for pastors and scholars. An appendix of Yong's sermons from 1999–2018 concludes the book.

*The Kerygmatic Spirit* outlines a holistic theology of preaching with ethical significance for the twenty-first century. Even more, given Yong's Asian-American (Malaysian) heritage, the

reflections come from an underrepresented voice in theology and homiletics. Yong's sermons evince the breadth and depth of the Spirit's work in the world today, and they present a strong case for theology as "a rich reservoir" for preaching (208). One limitation of the book is that the editors primarily focus on how Yong's preaching translates theology into an "accessible format" for others, rather than considering his preaching as a theological enterprise itself (2). In other words, the volume might have explicitly explored Yong's sermons as an example of preaching as a way of doing theology constructively. This exploration would have been enriched through drawing on the work of David Jacobsen's Homiletical Theology Project.

*The Kerygmatic Spirit* will be of interest to a wide audience, Pentecostal or otherwise. Preachers and homileticsians will find Yong's book offers an example of how a robust theology of the Spirit can enrich and inform their sermonizing. Biblical scholars and theologians will be challenged by the claim that theology is for preaching.

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Judith Casselberry. *The Labor of Faith: Gender and Power in Black Apostolic Pentecostalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017. 213 pages. \$25.95.

*The Labor of Faith: Gender and Power in Black Apostolic Pentecostalism* offers the reader a look into the world of Black Pentecostalism through various forms of women's labor as described by Judith Casselberry. In the book, Casselberry specifically examines the labor of the women of the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc. (COOLJC) in Harlem, New York. The historical lens, combined with Casselberry's compelling narratives from interacting with the women of COOLJC, provide critical insight into women's ways of working and worship within the context of Black Pentecostal faith. By centering the voices and practices of Black women, Casselberry offers the reader insight into different forms of leadership and the ways that power is wielded beyond and within the hierarchical institutional structures. Each chapter posits a different type of labor that women engage in within Black Apostolic Pentecostalism, specifically at COOLJC.

Chapter 1, "Instruments of Faith," shows the variety of reactions and perspectives around the death of a beloved sister in the community, Louise Franklin. This chapter engages questions about proclaimed faith versus practiced, and highlights religious labor as a practice of the women. Casselberry notes that while all of the women found a role and a way to labor through and within their grief, their theological ideas were different. As these women held community through grief, however, this labor was not without questions as they tried to reconcile the death of their beloved with their belief in concepts such as healing.

Chapter 2, "Church Building," reconsiders history through the labor of the wives of the men who are considered founding fathers of the church. Through the work of Reva Cook, Ethel Mae Bonner, and Carrie Lawson, the reader sees clearly that the "founding" was influenced by far more than the men who have historically received the credit. Black women's church labor was critical to the development and advancement of the COOLJC and the church at large.

Chapter 3, "Church Sustaining," discusses three women's auxiliaries of the church. Casselberry mines tension within these groups that simultaneously support and subvert the gender constructions that create boundaries for where women can labor in the church. Similarly, Chapter 4, "Women's Work," discusses the emotional labor of women within these systems. Women must navigate gendered boundaries within and beyond the church that often differ from each other. This type of labor requires maneuvering multiple systems of positionality.

In Chapter 5, "Harvesting Souls for Christ," Casselberry discusses the work of the altar workers through the lens of intimate labor. She observed the altar as a place where women primarily lead and maintain the practices, such as assisting individuals who are moving towards conversion, leading prayer, and attending to those that have been "slain in the Spirit." Casselberry considers these practices through the narratives of three generations of altar workers to see how the work is passed down and maintained. In the final chapter, "The Beauty of Holiness," the reader is introduced to what Casselberry calls "aesthetic labor." This labor involves maintaining a collective ideal of "holiness" standards of appearance, how they conflict across generations, and yet are in many ways maintained with continuity throughout time.

In conclusion, *The Labor of Faith* invites the reader to move deeply into the world of Black Apostolic Pentecostalism with the labor of the women of COOLJC as their guide. The book provokes the reader to think both theologically and practically about the different types of labor Casselberry considers. The survey structure of the book allows for a breadth of ideas to be

discussed. Yet each chapter's topics still warrant more focused attention. For example, as a homiletician, I would have appreciated more work discussing the gendered nature of speaking power and the rhetoric of the women operating in the spaces of "teaching" versus men "preaching" as mentioned in chapter 2. Nevertheless, Casselberry's use of historical narrative, interesting concepts of labor, and the testimony of living witnesses make this an enjoyable and thought-provoking read. This book will benefit those considering the gendered domains of power within religion and religious organizations, and anyone interested in rituals and faith practices, specifically within Black Pentecostal faith, as well as those who want to center voices that have often been on the margins in scholarship.

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Joris Geldhof. *Liturgy and Secularism: Beyond the Divide*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press Academic, 2018. 158 pages. \$29.95.

In *Liturgy and Secularism: Beyond the Divide*, Joris Geldhof examines the relationship between Western Christian liturgy and secularism in conversation with Western philosophical, theological, and ecclesial sources, sketching a liturgical diptych in which the reader's gaze repeatedly shifts between the concepts of "the liturgy in the world" and "the world in the liturgy." The author's primary goals are to: 1) examine the relationship between the liturgy and secular culture; 2) widen our understanding of the nature of the liturgy; and 3) to do so in an interdisciplinary and ecumenical manner that contributes to ongoing liturgical discourse. In keeping with the structure of a diptych, throughout the work Geldhof intentionally holds in tandem what he argues are the too frequently opposed concepts of liturgy and secular culture, and he presents a non-oppositional vision of liturgy and secularism in which liturgy and secular culture are distinct yet interconnected.

The first section, "Positioning the Liturgy in the World," examines the socio-cultural, political, and ideological secular context of the liturgy. In the first chapter, Geldhof lays out a theoretical foundation for engaging modernity and secularism, and he attempts to defuse perceived tensions between liturgy, modernity, and secularization. This is accomplished through a brief construction of a topography and chronography of liturgy that upsets an epistemological approach to liturgy. Here, Geldhof attempts to shift our gaze from the epistemological to the soteriological, a theme that he unfolds throughout book. This is accompanied by a shift away from the epistemological question of "What is the liturgy?" to the topographic question, "Where is the liturgy?" and the chronographic question, "When is the liturgy?" (13). He uses this soteriological emphasis to briefly examine the relationships between church and world, heaven and earth, cult and culture, and religion and politics. The second chapter examines the relationship between religion, ideology, and politics. He proposes that the liturgy is susceptible to ideology and has the potential to de-ideologize problematic secular discourse. In the third chapter, Geldhof examines the relationship between the sacred and the profane, reframing the conversation around salvation, reflecting his sustained soteriological emphasis. By reframing liturgy as holy and soteriological, Geldhof attempts to avoid language of the sacred which he argues inaccurately divides liturgy and secularism.

The second section, "Positioning the World in the Liturgy," examines the world through the lens of the liturgy, arguing that liturgy has something to contribute to secular culture. In the fourth chapter, he engages Schmemmann's and Congar's interpretations of secularism and argues that the eschatological dimensions of the liturgy result in the liturgy "inviting, embracing, and including" the world "in the grand sanctifying dynamic which is rooted in God's revelation and redemption" (95). The fifth chapter engages key voices from the twentieth-century European liturgical movement in order to support Geldhof's claims and to show that the European liturgical movement's theology promoted liturgical solidarity with the world. The sixth chapter casts a liturgical vision in light of the decline in attendance at the Mass, and it ends with key suggestions for liturgical faithfulness.

The conclusion reiterates Geldhof's argument, "In other words, there is a severe incommensurability between liturgy and secularism, which is why it is so important that Christians in the West, but by extension everywhere, get beyond the divide between both. The divide between liturgy and secularism is a construction of secularist thinking not supported by a

thorough reflection about the liturgy itself” (149). He ends with a call for future work, “...liturgical theologians, incited by “an exuberant enthusiasm for the supernatural life,” are invited to develop a veritable metaphysics: not just an explanatory sacramental ontology, but an exploratory, profoundly soteriological, eschatological, and doxological Christian realism” (152).

The author’s primary goals, which were previously listed, can quite reasonably be said to have been achieved. The book is a bricolage of sorts comprised of both previously published essays and new content, and its primary conversation partners are scholarly. That being said, the sixth chapter and the conclusion provide brief but winsome practical suggestions for the liturgy that might have broader appeal to laity, clergy, and seminary students. Sources are predominantly limited to European and Euro-American voices. In pressing against a dominant European and Euro-American epistemological perspective focused on knowing and cognition, Geldhof’s pursuit of a more holistic soteriological perspective may be enhanced with engagement of non-Western sources and perspectives within non-Western liturgical movements, i.e. non-European and non-Euro-American.

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Ari Y. Kelman. *Shout to the Lord: Making Worship Music in Evangelical America*. New York: NYU Press, 2018. \$30.

How does worship become music? In *Shout to the Lord: Making Worship Music in Evangelical America*, Ari Y. Kelman pursues this question by specifically asking how the production and creation of songs for worship in Christian evangelical congregations enables musical participants “to transcend the ritual [of music] itself” (xiv). To put it another way, how does the music of worship become a medium for something much greater than it is? Kelman teaches at Stanford University, and he is also a leader of worship music, and formerly a high school educator of music, in synagogues and a Jewish private school. His self-identification as Jewish distinguishes him from other authors in the study of “contemporary worship” music culture, such as Monique Ingalls’ *Singing the Congregation: How Contemporary Worship Music Forms Evangelical Community* (Oxford, 2018), Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth’s *Lovin’ On Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship* (Abingdon, 2017), and Randall J. Stephens’ *The Devil’s Music: How Christians Inspired, Condemned, and Embraced Rock n’ Roll* (Harvard, 2018). Yet his self-admitted focus upon mostly white evangelical praise music places his work well within the aforementioned genre of scholarship.

Kelman organizes his examination in chapters that separately focus upon “discourse,” “songwriting,” “worship leading,” and the “music industry” (14). Summing up the overall approach of his project, Kelman writes, “*Shout to the Lord* denaturalizes both the sensational and practical qualities of the music, and reveals the human concerns that make worship music possible” (14). Perhaps what stands out most about Kelman’s appreciation of Christian worship music and critical investigation of how it facilitates worship that transcends its musicality is his attention to the commercialization and capitalization of worship music as an industry (150-152). He astutely notes how congregational singing reinforced the commercialization of Christian music (143). Yet also fascinating is Kelman’s genealogy of how CCLI (Christian Copyright Leasing International) transformed worship music as a commercially viable product through licensing and copyright related primarily to congregational uses. With its close management of legalities around artist attribution and compensation as well as revenue streams tied to various entities of the Christian worship music industry, CCLI also developed a sense for what music was popular and profitable, thereby having the unforeseen effect of acquiring a position of influence into what kinds of worship music ended up being produced (144-150).

Kelman distinguishes commercial Christian music that makes its way into the regular rotation of songs in local congregations from Christian sacred music that may top the Christian Contemporary Music [CCM] charts, or even have crossover appeal into larger markets, and yet not adapt well to use within services. In that sense, Kelman is curious about the pedagogic power of Christian song, and how customs of worshipping God can be learned through practices such as songs (42-43). His attention to how worshippers become inculcated into particular worship customs through song resonates with findings in sociological work of multiracial congregations, such as the work of Gerardo Marti and his *Worship Across the Racial Divide: Religious Music and the Multiracial Congregation* (Oxford UP, 2012). There, Marti finds that even diverse congregations of varied racial and ethnic identities can adopt common worship and learn liturgical routines in music that is of a homogenous style.

Students of sacred music, contemporary worship music, and Christian popular music will find Kelman informative reading. The title warrants inclusion, for example, in bibliographies for

doctoral students studying in those fields and others related to them. Teachers of worship will find Kelman's text to be a strong complement to the titles chosen for courses exploring the development and practices of Christian contemporary music, the question of what constitutes Christian sacred music, the humanist dimensions of such music making, and the promise and limits of topologizing Christian music more according to genre and style than theological imagination.

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Jin Hwan Lee. *The Lord's Supper in Corinth in the Context of Greco-Roman Private Associations*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2018. 239 pages. \$110.

How particular readings of particular moments of scripture become ubiquitous is quite a mystery. In *The Lord's Supper in Corinth in the Context of Greco-Roman Private Associations*, Jin Hwan Lee gives a considerable gift to preachers by calling into question how particular readers read Paul's description of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11. The story, as it might be told by a pastor hoping to give his congregants some historical context, goes like this: the food for the Lord's Supper banquet was provided by the wealthier members of the congregation, but, due to their work obligations, the poorer members of the church arrived late to this banquet. The wealthy members, however, had already eaten and drunk their fill, leaving themselves inebriated and their poorer brothers and sisters still hungry. Paul chastises them for this behavior, and encourages them to show deference to one another regardless of socioeconomic status.

Lee's book provides a helpful critique of this retelling and, while the insights gained from his sociohistorical analysis will mostly be of interest to New Testament scholars, there is quite a bit of material that will be of great interest to ministers. To wit, Lee's first chapter is an investigation of banquet practices in the ancient world and their connection to dining practices in the New Testament. Lee contends that the Last Supper, both its original institution and its consequent ritual form in Corinth, would have shared several features common to Greco-Roman dining practices, particularly the structure of a shared meal (Greek: *deipnon*) followed by a sharing of wine (*sumposion*) (18). Chapter 2 provides the reader a deeper analysis of a particularly relevant type of Greco-Roman banquet—the banquets of private associations. While the Greco-Roman world was rife with a variety of “official associations,” associations reserved for the elite and promoted by the state, Lee's interest is in private associations as the eventual home for the mostly non-elite social group of the early Church. Lee is clear to note that he is not claiming that the early Church was itself a private association (55), only that the controversy at Corinth might be illumined by examining the banqueting practices of the most similar sort of group, whose norms and mores the Christ group at Corinth were likely to imitate.

A critical result of Lee's study of private associations is the lack of “patronage banquets,” i.e. banquets in which the wealthier members of an association would provide the food for the non-elite members of the group. Even the funds for the food came from a common fund (70), casting a great deal of doubt on the popular reading cited above. Key also in his analysis are two points: first, while it was common practice to levy fines on association members for misconduct, it is striking that there is little evidence that *late arrival* to a banquet was ever fined. Second, private associations practiced a variety of methods for distributing the food at common meals, but very little evidence exists to suggest that the allotment of food disproportionately favored the elite, nor is there evidence to suggest that the distribution was expected to be entirely equal. In the third chapter, Lee applies these historical datapoints to the particular conflict at Corinth. He advances a non-temporal reading of the schism, arguing that the conflict had nothing to do with the arrival time of the members of the community but rather with the *seating arrangements* at the meal. Given the paucity of evidence that late arrival was a banqueting faux pas and that disproportionate food distribution was never much of a problem within private associations, Lee argues that the schism in the Corinthian congregation, therefore, had to be over poorer members, newly elected to a form of leadership in the Church, taking up seats of power that would, in a typical association banquet, go to members of wealth and power. Thus, the wealthier members

“practiced the Lord’s Supper as if it was their own private banquet,” taking the seats to which they were accustomed, making group solidarity all but impossible (143).

Readers will find this book a helpful guide to recent trends in New Testament scholarship on Paul’s account of the Lord’s Supper and a startling reinterpretation of a passage vital for sacramental theology.

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