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Table of Contents

Articles

Catholic Women in Homiletical Leadership: A Discussion of the Current State of Catholic Women Trained in Homiletics 3
Karla J. Bellinger

An Interreligious Funeral for a Taiwanese Centenarian and the Mystery of Useless Suffering18
Gerald C. Liu

Reviews

Bible

Aaron Chalmers, *Interpreting the Prophets: Reading, Understanding and Preaching from the Worlds of the Prophets* 27
Debra J. Mumford

Eric Eve, *Behind the Gospels: Understanding the Oral Tradition* 29
J. B. Blue

Media/Contemporary Culture

Emily Askew and O. Wesley Allen, *Beyond Heterosexism in the Pulpit* 31
Karyn L. Wiseman

Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor, *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture (Engaging Culture)* 33
Sunggu Yang

Daniella Zsupan-Jerome, *Connected Toward Communion: The Church and Social Communication in the Digital Age* 35
Michael D. Royster

Practical Theology

Dale P. Andrews and Robert London Smith Jr., eds., *Black Practical Theology* 37
Kenyatta R. Gilbert

Ken J. Walden, *Practical Theology for Church Diversity: A Guide for Clergy and Congregations* 39
Eunjoo Mary Kim

Preaching

Fred B. Craddock, *The Collected Sermons of Fred B. Craddock*
Fred B. Craddock, Dale Goldsmith and Joy V. Goldsmith, *Speaking of Dying: Recovering the Church's Voice in the Face of Death* 41
Dave Bland

Gregory Heille, *The Preaching of Pope Francis* 44
Lucy Lind Hogan

David Schnasa Jacobsen, ed., *Homiletical Theology: Preaching as Doing Theology* 46
James F. Kay

Theology

Ronald J. Allen & O. Wesley Allen Jr., *The Sermon without End: A Conversational Approach to Preaching* 48
Duse Lee

Christine Helmer, *Theology and the End of Doctrine* 50
David Schnasa Jacobsen

Leah D. Schade, *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology, and the Pulpit* 52
Michael D. Royster

Ronald F. Thiemann., *The Humble Sublime: Secularity and the Politics of Belief* 54
David Schnasa Jacobsen

Worship

Kimberly Bracken Long & David Maxwell, eds., *Inclusive Marriage Services: A Wedding Sourcebook* 56
Chris Jorgensen

David Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in American History* ... 58
Gerald C. Liu

Jeanette S. Jouili., *Pious Practice and Secular Constraints: Women in the Islamic Revival in France and Germany* 60
Nam Joong Kim

Mark A. Miller, *Roll Down, Justice! Sacred Songs and Social Justice* 62
Vicki I. Flippin

**Catholic Women in Homiletical Leadership:
A Discussion of the Current State of Catholic Women Trained in Homiletics**

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***Abstract:** Prior to the establishment of the DMin degree at Aquinas Institute in 1996, there was no terminal degree in preaching from a Catholic institution of higher learning. Since that time, eighteen Catholic women have obtained doctorates in preaching. In November of 2014, the author surveyed that population to ask: Who are these women who are prepared for leadership in homiletics? What is their current situation? And what are their hopes, frustrations, and dreams? This essay summarizes the responses to those questions in order to open the discussion about Catholic women in homiletic leadership.*

The workshop presenter suggested to the priests and the deacons at the preaching conference, “Ask your people, not to rate you from 1 to 5, but ‘What touched you in the homily? What was the message that you heard?’” She went on to talk about the Holy Spirit as the Maker of meaning, especially through the surprising ideas that listeners take away from the homily.

Another presenter had the room full of priests and deacons laughing about the preacher’s credibility with teenagers in our anti-authoritarian world “Who says?” kind of world. She then talked about the authenticity of the homilist and how to connect with young people in today’s wired world.

A third speaker shared how youngsters delight in learning new big words, like “Emmanuel.” She then spoke of the wonder of the small child and how a preacher at a Catholic school Mass could preach of beauty in a way that evokes reverence in a six-year-old.

Who are these Catholic women who are taking a leadership role in the homiletics world? Is this a new thing? And if so, what is the current status of women in homiletic leadership?

Throughout the history of the Catholic Church, women have contributed to the preaching of the gospel. In the last twenty years, in the United States, a new role has arisen within the world of preaching: the training of Catholic women to teach homiletics and to take a leadership role in the homiletics field. This is a trend about which little is known. Who are these women who are prepared for leadership in homiletics? What is their current situation? And what are their hopes, frustrations, and dreams? This study begins to investigate those questions; it is designed to be a first step in opening the discussion about Catholic women in homiletic leadership.

Catholic women preach (as broadly defined) within the institutional Roman Catholic world in many ways—through retreats, workshops, catechetical sessions, and more. So where to find the population of women to query about homiletical leadership? This study draws from two populations: 1) those who have a Doctor of Ministry in Preaching degree (DMin) and 2) those who are concerned enough with the teaching of homiletics to be a 2014 member of the Catholic Association of Teachers of Homiletics (CATH). A population of twenty-seven women fit those two categories.

A questionnaire with twelve open-ended questions was sent to these women in November of 2014.¹ Four women were not found or their emails were returned; four responded that they would fill it out later and had not done so by the publication of this paper; two were too busy; and two were unwilling to respond. The number of completed responses was fourteen, for a

¹ See the appendix for the questions of the survey.

return rate of 52%. Of these fourteen, six were religious sisters and eight were lay women; one had an MA in theology, one had an MDiv, eleven had a DMin in preaching and one had a DMin in another discipline.

History and Demographics

Prior to 1996, there was no terminal degree in preaching from a Catholic institution of higher learning. Those professors who taught homiletics in seminaries did so without formal advanced Catholics homiletics training. Catholic women involved in homiletics leadership obtained a (at the time, rare) degree in theology, commonly the MDiv; others sought homiletics instruction at Protestant institutions. For example, Joan Delaplaine, OP, MDiv, helped to found homiletics education at Aquinas Institute. Patricia Hughes Baumer, MDiv, formed Partners in Preaching to promote lay preaching. These women were active in homiletic leadership well before the doctorate in preaching degree was established.²

Since 1996, eighteen Catholic women have received a Doctor of Ministry in Preaching degree.³ Eight of these are religious sisters. Ten are laywomen. The graduation dates range from 1996 to 2014. In the early days of homiletic leadership education, religious sisters predominated (see figure one). There was a sizable gap in the number of graduates between 2004 and 2011, with only two women receiving degrees in that time period. Since 2011, there has been a clear shift toward graduates who are lay women, almost all of whom are married and have children.

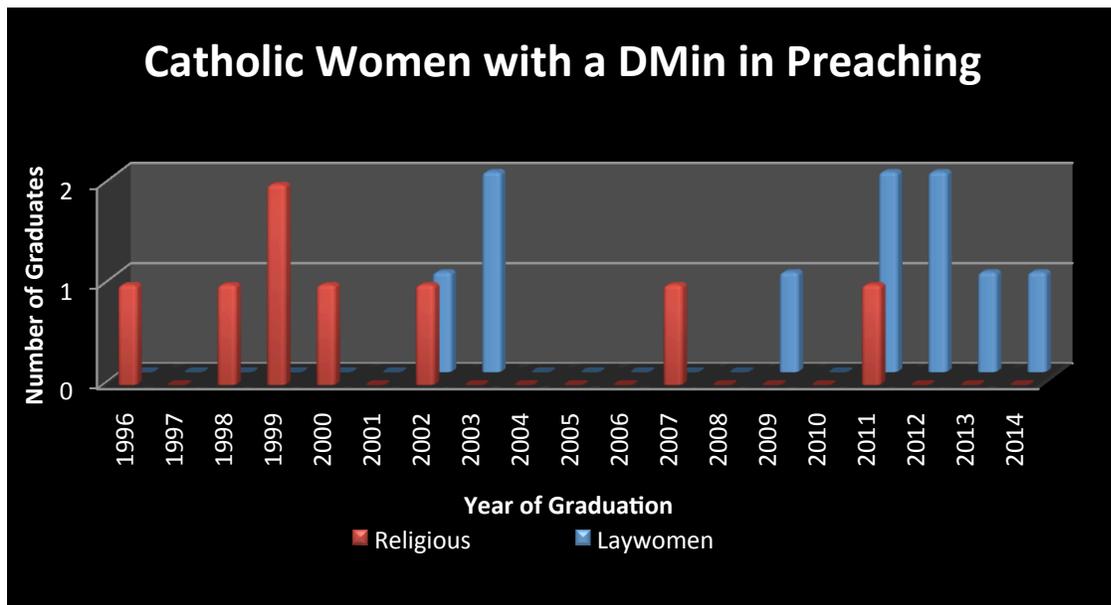


Figure 1 - Catholic women with a DMin in Preaching degree, by year of graduation

² The DMin is a practical, hands-on degree; there is no Catholic PhD in preaching. This means, as an unintended side effect, that women who are not permitted to teach in Catholic seminaries, are also largely shut out of Protestant seminaries and other university teaching positions that require a PhD.

³ Seventeen of these graduated from Aquinas Institute of Theology in Saint Louis, MO; one graduated from a Protestant seminary. There may be other female Catholic DMin graduates of Protestant institutions who are not members of CATH and thus were not found and included in this study. Eleven out of the potential eighteen, or sixty-one percent (61%), of the women known to have doctorates in preaching responded to the survey.

Women's Roles in Homiletic Leadership

What are these homiletically educated Catholic women doing with their training in homiletics? Out of the fourteen survey respondents, none of these women has a full-time paid position in homiletics. Nine are doing something homiletical on a part-time basis with various clergy populations: one directs a preaching program that combines with the leadership of a non-homiletical program to be a full-time position; one teaches seminarians as an adjunct professor; five teach in diaconal preaching programs with varying levels of responsibility; three focus on the ongoing education of clergy or work in other homiletical capacities. Homiletical involvement is creative: these women seek out ways to influence homiletics even without a full-time income in the field. Three do consulting and/or work as independent contractors. Five have written books and/or articles about preaching; two books have been published this year (2014). Four are on the "speaking circuit." Three others do not work with homiletics leadership at all. Two are retired.⁴

Current Roles in Homiletic Leadership

Full-time in homiletics – 0
Part-time in homiletics – 9
 Directing DMin students (1)
 Teaching seminarians (1)
 Teaching deacons (5)
 Ongoing formation/other (3)
Consulting/independent contractor – 3
Write books, articles – 5
On the "Speaking circuit" – 4
No involvement, not retired – 3
Retired – 2

What do these women do when/if they are not involved in homiletic leadership? Three are parish directors of religious education (DRE) or lay pastoral associates. Three have diocesan leadership positions—two of these have responsibilities that include the formation of deacons and/or lay people. Two are involved in spiritual direction and three minister on retreat teams. One teaches full-time at a university in another discipline.

Where do these women see themselves making an impact in the field of homiletics? Those who teach in some capacity see that teaching as a source of influence:

- My main influence is in the teaching I do.
- Teach permanent deacons. What you teach and what they are able to grasp, will be taken in some format to the ambo.
- Helping with teaching future deacons.
- In this archdiocese, women do not teach in the seminary division, therefore we do not teach seminarians.
- Part of the homiletic team at the seminary; we have made an impact on the quality of preaching in our parishes throughout the diocese due to the ordinandi that we have sent forth.

Writing and speaking about preaching is a place where these women have made a difference—preaching conferences, journal articles, and books are sources for their voices to be heard:

- writing for Ed Foley's upcoming book on preaching
- do conference speaking where a good number of priests and deacons are present
- published six articles last year, a book this year
- still do some work with an older book on preaching

⁴ Many serve in more than one of these roles, thus the numbers do not add up to fourteen responses.

Some see the personal relationships formed with clergy as effecting preaching improvement, especially through personal coaching or mentoring:

- I see an opportunity in coaching or supervision of deacons or priests.
- Evaluating and training missionary speakers
- Private coaching of preachers and advising small groups of clergy
- Mentoring seminarians
- Mentoring doctoral students/candidates

Women’s Roles as Preachers

When preaching is defined more broadly than giving a homily at a Sunday liturgy, where does this talented group of women preach? Ten of them do retreats, workshops, convocations, and/or missions: they “model effective speaking through other venues.” Where do they find these “gigs”? One respondent says, “Women are not ‘allowed’ to preach, so, any opportunities usually are created by word of mouth and connections.” In their words, here are some of their venues for preaching:

- Days of Recollection to various groups, especially during the Seasons of Advent and Lent
- Retreats for women/parish councils
- Training lectors/proclaimers
- Just did a diocesan lay convocation, about to be the keynoter at a deacon convocation
- Preached retreats each year throughout the USA and Canada
- In faith formations sessions, at retreat days, and at funeral vigils
- I have occasionally preached at Morning Prayer for the [lay] formation program.

Place where you preach (as broadly defined)

Retreats, missions, workshops – 10
Home parish, Sunday Eucharist – 1
Parish events/bible studies/formation sessions – 3
Motherhouse/retirement center – 4
Online at word.op.org – 4
Conference presentations – 3
Everyday life – 1
Nowhere – 2

Three lend their voices to parish events, bible studies, and formation sessions. One preaches liturgically on a monthly basis in her home parish with her bishop’s permission. Four preach at their motherhouse or retirement center: “community jubilees... and at evening prayer when invited to do so.”

Three women speak of giving conference presentations: I am “on the speaking circuit at present. I do workshops / retreats / key note talks for a variety of different dioceses and religious congregations.” Four women preach online at the Dominican preaching site, www.word.op.org.

Have these opportunities differed in the past? One woman said that the prospect to work in homiletics has been “like a reversed trumpet”— many, many opportunities had been open to her at first and they have now narrowed to almost none. She finds that where there was once much enthusiasm for Catholic preaching formation, in the past fifteen years, it has declined to very little. Three of the women surveyed had been employed in full-time homiletics positions in the past. Two had been “promoters of preaching” for their religious order. Four others described a formerly more robust picture of their part-time homiletics work. Recent graduates and lay women (from figure one, the two run in close parallel) describe the greatest challenges in the opportunities to use their homiletical education.

Occasions for the practice of preaching have also changed. Lay preaching flourished in the 1990's in many dioceses:

- In the past, I preached at least once a month on Sundays.
- Preached at weekday communion services weekly.
- I used to enjoy it very much—we had lay preachers at Mass once/month. That has pretty much shut down, except for two parishes where a lay preacher gives a homily before Mass and the presider recaps that briefly (though supply preachers don't always get the memo).

During their doctoral coursework, some women practiced preaching:

- Several years ago I had the opportunity to preach to my local congregation once a month when I was preparing for my doctorate. After receiving the doctorate it lasted for about another year at which time I was reported to the Archbishop by someone in the congregation. The pastor was reminded of Canon Law rules by the Archbishop and he no longer felt comfortable allowing me to preach. The pastor had been ordained only two years.
- I used to do a homily at the “word and communion” services in the Catholic school where I taught. Then the bishop decreed that only deacons and priests can preside at communion services, so that was shut down.

In the mid-2000's, possibilities for lay preaching began to diminish. For those deeply involved in the training of lay ministers, this has been discouraging. When asked about her preaching leadership, one woman says that opportunities are “None. Tired. Getting out of it.” Two women are not finding occasions to preach. Another said, “I am used to much more experience. I feel stifled now.” Today, in late 2014, lay preaching at the Sunday Eucharist is largely a brief and past memory in the U.S. Catholic experience.

Several women focused on the broader sense of preaching in everyday life. They have found meaning in the relationships that they nurture:

- Initially, I may have thought of preaching as speaking specifically from the ambo; certainly my knowledge and my thoughts have changed. While that is a part of it, how one lives their life is for me a big part of preaching.
- My family is my joy. Preaching is my joy. Loving God and loving others is my joy.

Additionally, the witness of one's life and the unique experiences of women provide a source for preaching:

- I preach wherever I am. Preaching rarely needs words. Preaching is also the way one lives his or her life.
- To give the feminine perspective on the Word—refreshing, creative, merciful.
- Post-abortion ministry to incarcerated women holds preaching potential for me and for influencing the field of homiletics. Male clergy do not really want to preach on pregnancy, birth and abortion and this area offers unique opportunities for women to find their preaching voices and change lives.
- Some of the best preaching happens away from the ambo.

The Joys and Frustrations of Homiletically Trained Catholic Women

When asked about both the joys and the frustrations of being a homiletically trained woman in the Catholic Church, these women had much to say. This is the first time that some of them have had a venue through which to voice their experiences. One said, “I have found that a Catholic woman in homiletics can sometimes be in a very lonely place because the numbers are few.” As the responses have been categorized, it is apparent that these women have much in common; since they are so spread out geographically and by graduation cohort,⁵ rarely do they have an opportunity to discuss these experiences together.

Two joys surfaced most consistently: 1) touching the lives of others and; 2) the sense of fulfilling a call to share the gospel. Joy comes from the making a difference in someone’s life and the responsiveness of audiences:

- One joy has been when a member of the assembly says that he or she saw the scriptures, or the world, or his or her own life differently. The God of scripture is still with us in the living text of our lives.
- ...the thought that maybe there’s some young woman or girl in the assembly thinking, ‘Hey, she’s doing that... I could do that, too... and I’d like to,’ and that there’s some young man or boy who doesn’t think that anything out of the ordinary is happening.
- I am filled with joy when the fruit of my prayer, reflection on the word and crafting a homily, all comes together and touches the hearts of those listening.
- I love the idea of “something to talk about in the car on the way home,” and I hope to pose the right kinds of questions that give all of us every chance to keep the conversation going.
- This kind of work really has been a great joy to me. I get to meet lots and lots of people and touch their lives and have them touch mine, even if just for a brief moment. But I begin to discover a wonderful network of spirit-filled people that are all over the country—indeed, world.
- The responsiveness of audiences (harder online to get feedback), the joy of someone’s life being impacted for the better.
- People’s response is also a source of joy for me as I recognize God’s Spirit at work through me and them.
- [I take pleasure in] the joy of someone’s life being impacted for the better.
- The “aha!” moments.

The second most common joy came from a sense of fulfilling a call, from loving to preach the gospel, wherever and whenever that preaching occurs:

- When I have preached at Morning Prayer, I have enjoyed sharing the message and encouraging the formation participants.
- Writing reflections, and giving presentations on various topics.
- ... considering how many obstacles women in preaching face, that some of us are

⁵ Note from figure 1, how spread out are the DMin graduation rates. In the recent model of preaching DMin education, women in the same cohort have seen each other (intensively) twice per year. The earlier residential DMin programs afforded a greater degree of interaction. Neither model assures post-graduation communication and interaction. The overwhelming majority of these women’s doctoral classmates have been male Roman Catholic clergy, occasionally interspersed with a few female Protestant ministers.

- out there preaching.
- I am most “myself” when preparing to preach and preaching.

As mentioned earlier, joys also come from personal and family relationships, teaching deacons and seminarians, and using the homiletical education to be an effective speaker in diverse situations.

Frustrations are also a part of the experience of many Catholic women trained in homiletics. Disrespect and the lack of opportunities were the two frustrations most frequently mentioned. This can lead to “a sense of sadness. Not bitter, but sad.” Some responded that “Frustrations abound!” and “My frustrations are many, too many to list.” Again, the emotion of sadness was expressed: “Numerous. Sad to see the doors closing for women. A valuable voice.”

When the responses were categorized, the greatest frustration for these trained and talented women was disrespect. Disrespect and dismissiveness came from many quarters:

- Disrespect is probably #1. It is difficult to count the number of people including clergy making remarks, i.e., “You may have a doctorate in preaching, but you can’t preach, you’re not allowed.”
- The push-back from clergy – “who do *you* think that *you are* that *you* can teach us anything about preaching?”
- Disrespect of reputation when you are out of the box in their eyes.
- An undertone of dismissiveness in the attitude of clergy – they are cordial to your face, but then make disparaging comments about you, to each other, behind your back.
- Not being acceptable as a potential hiree for a position in homiletics in many Catholic institutions.
- It frustrates me when I meet young men who dismiss women as unable to preach. But I am in a space now where I tend not to interact much with those young men and so they don’t bug me much.
- One frustration is convincing leadership (ordained and non-ordained) that women can offer credible pastoral preaching. There seems to be minimal respect for the knowledge, skill, credentials, experience and commitment of women as preachers.
- I notice a different set of standards and expectations when I do preach. For example, the community where I preached my reflections for the DMin requirements had a so-so preacher in my well-informed opinion. He needed more feedback than I did. But the community thought he was great because they see the collar and because he has an on-going relationship with them as a person of authority in that community. When I preached, the community saw it as fulfilling an assignment rather than fulfilling a vocation to preach.
- Recently, I was privy to a conversation with Bishops to hear what they felt were the issues in their Diocese with preaching. None of them had a word to say about hearing from women. This leads me to believe it is not on their list of concerns.
- I believe women do not support other women. I observe that, generally, women still need the approval of men in my opinion. And in the church, men “allow” women to preach.
- Well, for one thing when our diocese was looking for someone to present on homiletics for the priest convocation, the head of hiring said, “I know you’re capable, but I don’t think it would go over. You know...”

The second frustration that arose most commonly from the responses of these women was the lack of opportunities to use their gifts and experiences as women. The assumption may be that they would all complain about not being able to preach at Eucharistic celebrations. While this did come up in response to this question, it was not the only source of frustration. Opportunities to give feedback were sought. The silencing of the female experience was also felt as painful:

- The voices and experiences of women strengthen the church—find a way for those silent voices to be heard.
- Being trained, having 15 years of experience under my belt, teaching homiletics, and yet not having a regular venue/format.
- Not being allowed to preach at Eucharistic celebrations ordinarily.
- I do get frustrated when I see terribly poor preaching in Mass and it frustrates me not to be able to say something substantive in those situations.
- The greatest frustration is that I am able to teach those preparing for ordination but am not able to preach as freely as they are able.
- My own personal “impostor syndrome”... given I don’t preach often or regularly, when I do, I sometimes doubt my own vocation. I know I shouldn’t do this, but I do.
- My frustration is that it seems like only the women are speaking up for a chance to preach. Why isn’t the whole body of Christ asking to hear from the whole body of Christ?
- Finding a regular pulpit. Really I suppose, finding a community that affirms my vocation to preach. Right now for me, it’s the [] motherhouse.
- It is difficult to improve when you don’t have regular access to a pulpit.
- Lack of opportunity, letters of protest to the bishop, lack of institutional standing...don’t get me started. I get discouraged that even though I preach regularly, that preaching doesn’t exist in the context of any institutional recognition, and that it takes place by the permission of a long line of men. Don’t get me wrong—I’m GRATEFUL for that support and for the courage and forward thinking that it takes to provide that support. I’m just sad that it’s necessary.
- My frustration is heightened when I hear homilies that do not offer deep nourishment or challenge or cause one to experience God in a variety of ways and I know of several women who can do that.

A few women were so busy that they didn’t have time for frustration or have processed those frustrations:

- I realize this is going to sound odd, but I have very few.... Mostly that it is because I’ve given up trying to look for opportunities to preach during Mass, and simply respond to invitations that do come my way. I am not at all against those who struggle to create opportunities—indeed, I am grateful for their efforts and do think that there is a real place for struggle within the church. I just have stopped doing it myself, because I am so busy as it is with what I *can* do, that I don’t have the time/energy to try to create more opportunities.
- I don’t really have time to be angry; it is not part of my call right now.
- I am working really hard to do whatever I can to improve Catholic preaching; I have had frustrations in the past and I am sure that I will have them in the future,

but at this moment, I am so focused on what I am doing, that frustration has to take a back seat for now.

Advice for a Catholic Woman Considering Furthering Her Education in Homiletics

Knowing what they know and experiencing what they have experienced in the field of Catholic homiletics, what advice would these women give to another woman who is considering furthering her homiletical education? This particular question created the greatest volume of ink of all of the questions in the survey. The advice closely paralleled the experienced joys and the frustrations mentioned earlier. Quite a few women said “Yes!” and “Go for it!”:

- I would say to her “follow your dream.” I would say, “Do not allow anyone to take away your joy.” I would also tell her that many people will try to discourage her because of the circumstances of the church, but preaching is not just speaking to the congregation on Sunday morning; rather, it is a way of life.
- I would greatly encourage her to do so and then to take every opportunity that comes her way to preach, even in churches of other denominations.
- I use what I learned in the field of homiletics every day of my life, in ways that have nothing to do with Sunday Eucharistic preaching.
- And really, if a call has been placed on your heart, do you have any other option than to follow it?
- If you are called to preach, the Lord will open a door. Be ready. Study. Listen to good preaching and look for opportunities outside of the Eucharistic liturgy to offer the gifts you have for this ministry.
- Be brave. Be honest. Be creative. Be prepared to work very hard!

A few women would discourage another from the following the path that she had taken:

- Become Protestant. No really.
- Do not assume you will be using the education and formation in the field of homiletics ~ in fact, you may become frustrated.

Other women responded with a qualified “maybe”; they suggested that a woman think very carefully about her goals in pursuing graduate work in homiletics:

- Do it for yourself; don’t expect it to become your career or you set yourself up for disappointment.
- Well, it will be a somewhat difficult field to break into if you are hoping to be able to do it as a career, i.e. earn a decent salary doing it. However, if money is unattached to your consideration—there are truckloads of opportunities to use what you learn in terms of public speaking and teaching in the Catholic tradition. The number of parishes and small Christian communities who are looking for good speakers/retreat offerings on any given topic are endless. I have to turn down far more than I say “yes” to.
- She needs to create environments in which to preach because of the rarity of preaching at Sunday liturgies in a parish. There are other possibilities, but often those possibilities may not be looked upon as preaching. For example, I consider song as preaching, and reflections I give on retreats or on days of reflection to be a form of preaching.

- To prepare yourself for a future that God is planning for the Church? In my own thinking, I knew that God was calling me to preach in the Church. My only obligation was to prepare myself the best I could for that call, not to actually succeed at that call. I figure that when I reach the pearly gates, God will say “Did you do the best that you could with the gifts that you were given?” and I want to say “yes”.
- Be prepared to prepare for a ministry that may be exercised only in the distant future.
- Think carefully and vocationally. I would not advise any woman to choose homiletics as a career path, but only for the joy of learning more about it and because God is calling her.
- Understand the [stained-]glass ceiling is in place. Possibly she won’t be the one to break it but she will bump it and pave the way for others to do the same.

Areas for Growth and Hopes for the Future

What is the future of women in homiletical leadership? Where are there areas for growth? One woman felt that there is a change in the air: “With greater shared-leadership under Pope Francis, there may be much greater input from women at all levels.” Another woman looked at this question from a historical point of view:

Well, I guess you could say that the potential for growth is everywhere, given how restricted, regulated, and rejected our presence can be. And I make that comment knowing, especially after a conversation with Joan Delaplane several years ago, how far even the concept of women preachers has come. As more women enter the field and the people of God become accustomed to hearing the scriptures interpreted by both women and men, my hope would be that we could simply think of homilists (and I’m using that term deliberately)—not women or men preachers, the way we think of doctors, not “women doctors” or “men doctors.” I think that [those] whom God calls to vocation, the Church rejects to its detriment and to the detriment of the people of God.

In the current Church climate, seminary positions in homiletics are closed to non-ordained applicants. Those women who have recently applied to available Catholic seminary positions have been rejected because they are not male clergy, even though their qualifications may be markedly higher than those who are ultimately selected for the position. Among those women in preaching who are trained to teach homiletics, there was some hope expressed about other institutions:

- If the seminaries are not open to women, how about the universities? Hope that university preaching/witness/evangelization programs can grow to support women who can teach how to preach the gospel—through homiletics and in everyday life.
- Women can teach when the institution does not require an ordained instructor!
- Academia has provided rich opportunities for women to create opportunities to preach and teach and evangelize so we need to continue to support one another there.

Simmering beneath the surface is a hope that their voices may one day be heard:

- I think women have the potential to bring the homily to a new place. There are so many lived experiences quite frankly that mostly white single males do not bring to the table. One of the primary reasons I wanted to impact homiletics as an African American woman was to understand how “my” story fit into the realm of the Scriptures. I did not hear that on Sunday morning. Rarely do I hear it still. If I allow myself to think about the rules of Canon Law, I am not permitted to even tell my story at least on Sunday morning. Jesus never said, Love God, and judge others or Love God, silence the rest. Where is that found in the Scriptures? My hope is that women will soon be able to offer their gifts and talents to the fullest for the benefit of God’s kingdom.
- This [the preaching of women] should never be viewed as a threat to the pastor; the pastor is responsible for all ministries (music, Eucharistic ministers, lectors, etc.), and this could include the homily (although if I were pastor, I’d have a hard time giving my preaching spot to any one---including the deacon!)
- I would say time’s a wasting....we are trained and ready....what are you so afraid of? I would say the faithful deserve better preaching in diverse voices.
- With the married permanent deacons who preach, many of them depend on their wives to give them feedback, critique and ideas. I am aware of this through the deacons and deacon formation students with whom I work.
- I hope the ecclesial powers start looking for women to preach. That they realize they need all the voices in the choir, so to speak.

A second hope is that someday there will be institutional change, whether in Canon Law, in changes in ordination requirements, and/or in being given faculties to preach. It may not be an expectation, but it is a hope:

- If we can become deacons, or the position of pastoral associate opens the privilege up to women.
- Give the women who are prepared opportunities to preach even at the Eucharist.
- Theoretically potential areas for growth should be where lay ministers are, given the majority of them are women. It is my hope that trained, lay preachers can regularly preach the homily.
- I see growth in the Catholic Church when they loosen up the Canon Law. That is my hope and my dream.
- For women to be allowed to preach at the Sunday liturgy—for the good of the Church.
- I would draw attention to the fact that it is the Holy Spirit who gives charisms; preaching is a charism. Ordination does not make a preacher. I would ask the church to call forth men and women to serve in the church according to his or her God-given charisms.

In the midst of institutional push-back, the creativity of these women shows itself in their hopes for the future of preaching. Many feel called to preach the Word of God; they believe that they can make an impact in non-traditional and non-Eucharistic ways. They suggest that growth will come as homiletically-trained women take every opportunity that comes their way:

- I hope that by taking advantage of opportunities to preach more, people will realize the gift that is offered and create more possibilities for it.

- I think that opportunities to preach during Mass are limited for the time being, but I have visited places where there are parish life coordinators who preach on a somewhat regular basis during SCAP services. Definitely lots of opportunities for women in prisons, retreat centers, conferences, Advent/Lent prayer services, RCIA, nursing homes, school settings, campus ministry, Catholic health care gatherings, etc... My hopes would be that we just start doing it in a variety of places and stop waiting to be asked to do it specifically in Mass.
- As someone teaching deacon candidates, I believe that I have a direct influence!
- Potential for women in non-traditional areas—consulting, retreats, workshops.
- Women need to take every possible opportunity for preaching—and invent a few!
- We need to hear women in order to come to wholeness as a body! In this day and age it is unbelievable that as a church we do not allow women to preach or to be ordained. Our whole image of God is skewed by this as well.
- [Women] bring a unique and refreshing, deep and creative perspective. They should be included on a regular basis.
- The Church is lacking when women’s voices are missing from the pulpit. Women preachers add a dimension, an understanding, missing in our present situation. Inclusion of women would only enrich the Church.
- Consider re-defining homiletics as preaching in a variety of settings, not just the Eucharistic liturgy.
- Outside of the mainstream, we can be creative in finding venues of influence.
- Additionally, I believe that my own preaching (OK, I *hope* that my own preaching!) influences the field both present and future.
- I continue to encourage our Dominican sisters to preach as well as our Dominican associates, both women and men. I urge preaching at prayer services, retreats, etc. because these possibilities are available to all who have the gift for preaching.
- We need to talk about the authority to preach, honoring the vocation of preaching as emerging from our baptism not ordination, and about lay preachers supporting lay preachers. We need to create our own opportunities to preach.
- Preaching online is a new pulpit completely opened to us women.

Interest in Coming Together

Being so spread apart, how much conversation is going on among women trained in homiletics? Would they be interested in further conversation with other women in the field? Currently, some of the respondents have no other homiletically trained women to converse with but would be interested in that type of conversation:

- Not much lately, but I have been in the past—and I miss it.
- Minimally. Yes, I would be interested. Post-DMin, I miss the dialogue, the learning, the support, the community, feedback etc., etc.
- Rarely. Yes.
- No. Yes, definitely!

Conversation among groups of women trained in homiletics occurs primarily through CATH meetings, the Academy of Homiletics, and the Notre Dame summer preaching conferences. Other than those venues, conversations tend to be one-on-one, among those who have continued

to stay in touch as friends, or with others in a religious community or work setting. Some women are satisfied with these relationships and are not interested in engaging in a wider conversation:

- Only privately. Good enough.
- I was at one time [in conversation]; I was a member of the Academy of Homiletics, of CATH, and of various Dominican women's groups. Because of other congregational responsibilities, I have stepped back from that.
- Not right now. (*not clear if that is an answer to the first question or the second or both*)
- I am not in conversation per se with other women in homiletics, but I do have the opportunity to engage with women who are quite capable in this area even though they do not have the formal training.
- Right now I am not directly involved with women trained in homiletics. I don't think I would be interested in conversing for myself, however, I would welcome resources and ideas for the women in the lay ecclesial ministry track of the diocesan common formation program.

In the middle are those who have some conversation already going on and might ponder further conversation on a conditional basis, depending on what that conversation entailed:

- Yes, some. Maybe, maybe not.
- Yes... Possibly interested in other women but I'd rather the conversation be inclusive.
- I am in contact with other women who've been trained in homiletics and have the gift of running into them on a somewhat regular basis at conferences and what not. I don't think I could add another regular gathering in my life right now, but I would continue to enjoy conversing with women in this field!

From the ambivalence of the responses, there does not appear to be a clear mandate for "The National Association of Catholic Women in Homiletic Leadership" to be up and running any time soon, but further conversation may be warranted. Support, encouragement, and camaraderie can strengthen these women in their ministries.

What Other Questions Need to Be Asked?

This survey focused on Catholic women who are trained to be leaders in homiletics: those invested enough in the teaching of homiletics to be members of CATH and/or those who have doctoral degrees in preaching. When asked if there was anything else that needed to be asked, the topic "women in homiletics" engendered questions about the broader population of Catholic women who themselves "preach," as well as inquiries into sources of authority to preach. These suggested research questions would broaden the study of "Catholic women in homiletics" further:

- What other populations of women should we be looking at? How broadly are we defining "preaching" and who is authorized to do it?
- I suppose the big question, one to which I have no answer, is: *Should women be seeking access to the [Catholic homiletics] field, or is the field itself irremediably damaged?* The surface-level questions—and they're important—are easier to ask and easier to mobilize people for, but under each of these is a profound question

about what the people of God really need and how we are to participate in God's saving, self-giving love for the cosmos.

- Ask about “the difference in funding of programs in homiletics between clergy and the laity.”
- Why not ask the church community what they need?

Conclusions

Women trained in homiletic leadership are a recent phenomenon in the Catholic Church. Their numbers are small. Many work part-time in homiletical leadership, creating opportunities wherever and whenever they can. These are talented women who have much to offer; it is as an entire cadre of star quarterbacks sit on the sidelines. The field of Catholic homiletics needs all the help that it can get—even Pope Francis says that clergy and laypeople suffer through homilies: “The laity from having to listen to them and the clergy from having to preach them!”⁶ As lifelong listeners of homilies, women trained in homiletics have a unique perspective to share on how to improve preaching in the Catholic Church.

What can be done to help? Since most opportunities come through personal contact or word of mouth, those who are in positions of authority can open doors to create places for women to use their gifts and their training for the service of the Catholic Church. How? From the words of women themselves, their first desire is to be respected for the education and talents that they have. Secondly, recommending/engaging them as speakers, unlocking occasions for employment/teaching, and providing venues for writing are meaningful ways for these female voices to be heard. The women can also continue (or improve) their support of each other, both by conversation and by mentoring those who come after them.

What is to come? One respondent gave this piece of advice to Catholic women in homiletic leadership: “Be brave. Be patient. Be hopeful.” Only God knows what the future holds.

⁶ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* #135.

Appendix

Survey Questionnaire

Catholic Women in Homiletics *Opening the Conversation*

Please answer as completely as you are able by filling in this Word document and then reattach it to the original email. All responses will be kept confidential.



- 1) What is your educational level in homiletics? Year of completion?
- 2) What is your current position? Full-time? Part-time? A homiletics position – yes or no?
- 3) Please list relevant positions that you have held in the past. Was it a homiletics position – yes or no?
- 4) What do you see as your current opportunities to influence the field of homiletics? Sunday homilists?
- 5) Where do you currently preach (as broadly defined)? What are your joys?
- 6) If your answer to (5) has been different in the past, how has that differed?
- 7) Where do you see potential areas for growth for women to impact homiletics? What are your hopes?
- 8) What frustrations do you/have you had as a Catholic woman in homiletics?
- 9) What advice would you give to a woman who was considering furthering her education in homiletics?
- 10) Are you in conversation with other women trained in homiletics? Would you be interested in conversing with other women in homiletics?
- 11) What other questions do we need to ask so that we best portray a well-rounded picture of the situation of women in homiletics?
- 12) If you could say more to the Church about women in preaching, what would you add? Anything else?

An Interreligious Funeral For a Taiwanese Centenarian and the Mystery of Useless Suffering

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***Abstract:** Interreligious ritual and Christian preaching within it often devolve into generic theological expression. Liturgical attempts to share hospitality, unity-in-difference, and love of God end up clouding the distinctive and illuminating features of neighboring religious traditions and shrouding Christian particularity. Yet even when efforts falter to convey the love of God and neighbor with theological clarity, identifiable holiness that outshines human ingenuity can still pierce through the most opaque of prayers, ritual, and homiletic practices. In the essay below, the author engages Tom Long, Don Seaman, and John McClure, with focus upon the Levinasian idea of “useless suffering,” to explore how messianic healing became believable in the difficulties and insufficiencies of his Asian American Buddhist grandfather’s funeral and plausible for other contexts of mourning more tragic and profound.*

A California Case Study

In March, 2010, my mother called with the news of my grandfather’s passing as I made my way to the baggage claim after returning from week-long visit to his hospital bedside on the West Coast. He had burned himself while drawing a bath and died only a few weeks after due to heart failure. Born in China, and later a small-business owner in Taiwan, he spent the last 35 years of his life in San Jose, California, within blocks of his children and their families. Fluent in both Taiwanese Hokkien and Mandarin Chinese, his English phrases consisted of “Hello,” “Bye Bye” and “Thank you.” He died at the age of 100.

After returning to my apartment, I reserved a flight for the following day, and began researching Taiwanese funerary rites. I had little time before my morning departure. Books and articles barely helped. Against all of my academic inclinations, YouTube videos of Taiwanese funeral proceedings did. I discovered that Taiwanese funerals begin with a 7-day viewing period of the body. The memorializing can extend to sets of 7-day cycles lasting as long as 49 days. Mourners and attending monks traditionally dress in white. Oblations include eating, percussive music and singing, as well as spoken words delivered in honor of the deceased.¹ The footage of strangers became video tutorials and surprising visual points of departure for crafting some kind of service that balanced varying cultural interests.² And I had to act fast.

In less than forty-eight hours, I would as a United Methodist Elder preside at my culturally Buddhist grandfather’s funeral service in an evangelical reformed sanctuary recommended by the Carmelite hospice that cared for him. The plan of action would require what Thomas G. Long describes as “bold” “pastoral improvisation” as found in his reflections upon the intricacies of a Hmong Christian funeral service for Nhia Her Lo at First Covenant

¹ For example video resources for Taiwanese funerary rites, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KR-dkyO05pE> and <http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~dmgildow/1.2.html>, accessed September 15, 2014.

² For a more complete and yet also concise description of the complexities involved in planning a funeral service for a Taiwanese immigrant with Christian and Buddhist family members, see Carolyn Chen, *Getting Saved in America: Taiwanese Immigration and Religious Experience* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 88–89.

Church of St. Paul, Minnesota.³ In Long's account, the Lo family is active in their congregation. Yet because my family had no direct connection to the church where the funeral would be held and my grandfather was not Christian, deciding how to improvise became an especially delicate matter. Celebrating my grandfather's life within the promise of Christian resurrection seemed a risky endeavor. The liturgical goods of United Methodism had clear limitations as potential comfort for my grieving Protestant, Buddhist and agnostic relatives and friends of the family. How would I lead the service with theological integrity in the midst of so many cultural and religious variables?

Without time or expertise to recreate or approximate a traditional Taiwanese funeral experience, I decided to go with what I knew and also to make the most of my last minute liturgical guesswork by improvising very modestly. I based the order of worship upon the United Methodist 'Service of Death and Resurrection' and British Methodist funeral liturgy from my time of pastoral service in the United Kingdom.⁴ Within those liturgical parameters, I structured the service in two parts.

The first part (recited in English)—“The Word of Grace,” “Greeting,” and “Prayer”—marked my identity as an Asian American and Christian presider and rooted the occasion in the promises of Christianity. Part two introduced Buddhist elements by lacing selections from the Amithabha Sutra and the Heart Sutra with a reading from Psalm 23, a canticle based upon Revelation 21. A eulogy then followed from my Uncle Paul. The service concluded with a benediction and a video of sung prayers based upon the Sutras from a monastery in Taiwan (unlisted below). With the exception of the canticle from Revelation, the elements in part two occurred in both English and Mandarin Chinese to honor the different fluencies of my grandfather and the gathered assembly. The video displayed a visual bridge to religiosity in Taiwan from our liturgical occasion in California. I also delivered a brief homily just before my Uncle Paul spoke and extemporaneous words of transition throughout the service (also unlisted).

An Asian American Interreligious Funerary Rite

The Word of Grace

Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, yet shall they live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I hold the keys of hell and death. Because I live, you shall live also.

Greeting

Family and Friends, we have gathered here to praise God and to witness to our faith as we celebrate the life of Huann-Ching Chien

We come together in grief, acknowledging our human loss.

May God grant us grace, that in pain we may find comfort, in sorrow hope, in death resurrection.

³ Thomas G. Long, *Accompany Them With Singing*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013), 153. Nhia R. Lo died at the age of 93 and was an admired leader of the Hmong community in St. Paul.

⁴ Methodist Conference (U.K.), *The Methodist Worship Book* (Peterborough, England: Methodist Publishing House, 1999), 448-60. And The United Methodist Church (U.S.A.), *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House 1989), 870-75.

Prayer

Eternal God, we praise you for the great company of all those who have finished their course in faith and now rest from their labor.

We praise you for those dear to us whom we name in our hearts before you.

Especially we praise you for Huann-Ching Chien, whom you have graciously received into your presence.

To all of these, grant your peace.

Let perpetual light shine upon them; and help us to believe that your presence has lead us through our years, and bring us at last with them into the joy of your home not made with hands but eternal in the heavens. Amen.

Reading from 阿彌陀經 “The Amitabha Sutra”

舍利弗，彼土何故名為極樂？其國眾生，無有眾苦，但受諸，故名極樂。

Now, what do you think, Sariputra: Why is that world called the “Land of Bliss”? Sariputra, physical and mental pain are unknown to the living beings that inhabit the world called the “Land of Bliss”; on the contrary, they only experience conditions of boundless happiness. This is why that world is called the “Land of Bliss.”

Scripture (Psalm 23)

¹〔大衛的詩。〕耶和華是我的牧者，我必不至缺乏。²他使我躺臥在青草地上、領我在可安歇的水邊。³他使我的靈魂甦醒、為自己的名引導我走義路。⁴我雖然行過死蔭的幽谷、也不怕遭害，因為你與我同在，你的杖、你的竿、都安慰我。⁵在我敵人面前、你為我擺設筵席，你用油膏了我的頭、使我的福杯滿溢。⁶我一生一世必有恩惠慈愛隨著我，我且要住在耶和華的殿中、直到永遠。

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside still waters, he restoreth my soul.

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;

Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (KJV)

Canticle based upon Revelation 21

God shall wipe away all our tears,
And there shall be no more death.

Mourning, crying, and pain shall cease,
For all former things will pass away.

We shall hear One speak from the throne:
“Behold, I make all things new.
I am Alpha and Omega,
The beginning and the end.”

Our Lord testifies to these things:
“Behold, I am coming soon.”
The grace of the Lord is with us.
Amen. Come, The Spirit says, Come.

A Celebration of Huann-Ching Chien

Paul Chien

Reading from 心經 “The Heart Sutra”

No ignorance and also no extinction of it,
and so forth until no old age and death
and also no extinction of them.

No suffering, no origination,
no stopping, no path, no cognition,
also no attainment with nothing to attain.
The Bodhisattva depends on Prajna Paramita
and the mind is no hindrance;
without any hindrance no fears exist.
Far apart from every perverted view one dwells in Nirvana.

無無明亦無無明尽
乃至無老死亦無老死尽
無苦集滅道
無智亦無得
以無所得故
菩提薩埵依般若波羅蜜多故

心無罣礙

無罣礙故無有恐怖
遠離一切顛倒無想
究竟涅槃

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge
and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Committal follows at the final resting place.

A Reflection Upon Service Hopes

Examining the order of worship, a reader may wonder why I attempted to connect such differing religious and cultural views in the first place. An exclusively United Methodist funerary rite would have glossed over cultural complexities and amounted to theological inhospitality. Inventing a new order of worship without any denominational reference would have obscured my orders and belief in Christianity. Weaving together Methodist liturgical structure with East Asian elements seemed more promising. The resulting pattern of worship risked ritual incoherence and even transgression to serve the context and situation with respect to Christian conviction and connection to the myriad of beliefs espoused by the deceased and assembly.

Long sheds retrospective light here:

Throughout their history, Christians have always done what every other social group has done; figure things out for themselves and construct death practices out of rock from nearby quarries. When someone dies, Christians, like all other humans, look around at the immediate environment and ask: What do we have to do? What seems fitting to do? What do we believe we are summoned to do?⁵

When Long identifies the task of Christian funeral planning with the care of the dead undertaken by every other social group, he expresses a shared vulnerability that is also present in interfaith and interreligious funerary rites. Death unifies human differences and its finality can call us to live into those differences with a shared sense of faith. In a West Coast funeral for my Taiwanese and Buddhist centenarian grandfather, the liturgical blending facilitated a funeral idiomatic for the occasion and characteristic of Christian beliefs. It also grew out of a shared vulnerability that I want to describe as a theodical disquietude.

Don Seeman's "Otherwise than Meaning"

In Don Seeman's "Otherwise than Meaning: On the Generosity of Ritual," Seeman broadly describes theodicy as the "production of ordered meaning in response to catastrophe" and he questions the benefit of understanding ritual as a theodical exercise, one that derives or generates meaning from human suffering.⁶ He points to Clifford Geertz in "Religion as a Cultural System" from *The Interpretation of Cultures* and Max Weber in *Sociology of Religion* as intellectually responsible for wide association of religious experience with theodicy (endeavoring to make sense out of suffering). According to Seeman, Geertz positions ritual practice (which includes liturgical acts and preaching) as meaning-making exercise. Ritual practices operate as "embodied symbol systems." They have a hermeneutic quality to them as they cohere "the world lived and imagined" according to religious belief in order to make suffering more bearable.⁷ Thus, a funeral makes suffering sufferable.

Seeman acknowledges that Weber's account of religious practices differs from Geertz.

⁵ Long, *Accompany Them With Singing*, 8.

⁶ Don Seeman, "Otherwise than Meaning: On the Generosity of Ritual" in Don Handelman and Galina Lindquist, *Ritual in Its Own Right: Exploring the Dynamics of Transformation*, Pbk. ed. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 55.

⁷ Seeman quotes from Segal (1999). *Ibid.*, 70.

Yet like Geertz, Weber understands the purpose of ritual practices as providing orientation toward the expression of meaning. For Seeman, Weber sees ritual practice as a concrete representation of an interior analytic, as a sign of a believer's "inner reality."⁸ Ritual practices provide a set of actions through which participants can gauge salvation with regard to level of involvement and thereby give unintelligible interruptions of life – like death and the suffering that surrounds it – “systematic and coherent meaning” in the world. Ritual practices justify suffering.

Reading Seeman homiletically, it becomes perceptible how Weberian and Geertzian understandings of ritual influence authors like Long. In the introduction of *Accompany Them With Singing: The Christian Funeral*, Long writes, “The purpose of a Christian funeral is to enact the human obligation to care for the dead in such a way that we retell the story of baptism, and if we look hard, we can still see the contours of this understanding of the funeral singing out beneath the confusion of what funerals have become.”⁹ A Christian funeral is obliged to punctuate the narrative of baptism in order to generate theological meaning and coherence out of death. Long continues, “While death may feel and look like the world coming apart and life dissolving into meaninglessness, through the lens of the funeral ritual we can see it for what it truly is: a saint moving through the troubled waters into the promised land, a follower of Jesus traveling his same road, from death to resurrection life.”¹⁰ Funerals quell the sting of death because they articulate for the deceased and living that God has promised eternal life.

Indeed my grandfather's funeral also began by announcing the promise of resurrection. If cast in a Weberian light the ceremony's start attempts to make sense of the occasion. The service culminated with Sutra readings and a screening of evening prayers from Taiwanese cenobites designed to untangle worldly anxiety and move listeners to unshakeable peace. Those additions articulate modes of thought intended to make suffering sufferable if examined according to a Geertzian lens. But was there more happening than theodical response?

For Seeman, the answer is “Yes.” He sees suffering as too profound to find resolution in ritual practices intending to generate meaning out of suffering or to make suffering bearable. Departing from Weber and Geertz, Seeman looks to Levinas, who understands suffering as “useless.” Suffering – like the grieving and unanswered questions of my grandfather's funeral – evades categories of meaning. Suffering therefore requires more from ritual than a preoccupation with meaning. Ritual practices must recognize the otherness and alterity of pain as an unexplainable and unjustifiable given. Suffering is simply there. Attention to suffering's inexplicable thereness necessitates an approach to ritual practices as opportunities for collective compassion and healing that puts suffering to an end.

Kalonymos Shapira's Preaching

Seeman adopts Levinas for a framework to challenge the metaphysical biases of anthropology, specifically with relation to social scientific understandings of theodicy. Yet instead of focusing strictly upon the theory of Levinas, he illustrates his argument by introducing

⁸ Ibid., 58. Here, Seeman also points out the parallel between the arguments regarding ritual espoused in Weber's *The Sociology of Religion* and the Weber's claims about capitalism and its connection to religion in *The Protestant Ethic*.

⁹ Long, *Accompany Them With Singing*, xv.

¹⁰ Ibid., 102.

the Holocaust Ghetto writings of Rabbi Kalonymos Shapira (1889-1943), a contemporary of Levinas (1906-1995) who at one time led the largest Talmudic Academy for Hasidism in Warsaw. Shapira also studied with Husserl and Heidegger and maintained a lifelong friendship with Maurice Blanchot. Following the invasion of Poland in 1939 Shapira lost his only son, his daughter-in-law, his brother's wife (visiting from Palestine at the time) and eventually his mother (from "a broken heart" or complications due to grief). In the face of such unbearable and inexplicable suffering Shapira continued to write "a volume of sermons" weekly in the Warsaw ghetto until his deportation and death in 1943.

An especially trenchant homily Seeman analyzes from Shapira points to the biblical character of Sarah as defying the suggestion that insufferable suffering bears meaning and is bearable. Shapira laments:

It is also possible to suggest that Sarah herself, in taking Isaac's binding so much to heart that her soul expired, did so for the good of Israel. In order to show God that an Israelite cannot be made to suffer beyond measure, and that even a person who remains alive after his affliction, through God's mercy, must still lose portions of his vitality, his mind and spirit. What difference does it make to me if I suffer a full or a partial death?

Shapira's message about ambivalence toward death as derived from the sacrifice of Sarah carries undertones of losing his mother, who notably, was also named Sarah. Seeman also sees in Shapira's claim a protest against extreme suffering as intelligible and endurable.

Shapira is a preacher who shows that ritual responses must transcend conceptual meaning and release hopes of making suffering sufferable. For Seeman, Shapira's unrelenting composition of sermons, sharing food in *tish*, and studying *Torah* even while in captivity continue without regard for reasons and out of more than resolve. For Seeman, Shapira upholds those rituals through the exercise of radical human agency in the midst of human frailty and for the sake of radical fidelity to the community, even when his fortitude seems meaningless or destined for slaughter. In his ritual practices Shapira cares for others despite unbearable suffering and imminent death. His selfless actions transcend theodical understandings that associate ritual practice with meaning-making, and expose them as underestimating the uselessness of suffering and inherently "self-absorbed."

Indeed, an inter-human dimension drives Shapira's religious outlook and practice, but that is not all. In a June 27, 1942 *derashah*, Shapira writes, "For this reason everything a Jewish person says or does is, at the level of his inner soul, directed to God. For his soul knows that there is nothing beside Him, that all is divinity; so whatever the soul does or says is directed to him." Foundationally, what elevates Shapira's homiletic thinking above metaphysical logic – boiling ultimate meaning down to ontological questions of being – or anthropological reduction – reducing his consistency of ritual practice to theodicy – is not simply the community, but also confrontation with the Divine. In that way Shapira's actions manifest a mysterious faithfulness harmonious with the deeper theological concern inspiring Long's understanding of Christian funerary rites, even though Shapira's ritualizing does not "retell" the story of faith Long understands as primary within and particular to Christian funerals. The theological efficacy of Shapira's homiletic and ritual acts also challenges the traditional Weberian and Geertzian categories critiqued by Seeman. It cannot be dismissed as a different permutation of meaning-based understanding. Nor can it be subtracted from the Levinasian approach Seeman recommends instead.

An Eschatological Consideration

In *Otherwise Preaching*, John McClure innovates a homiletic based upon the humility and force of a Levinasian ethic for the Other. “Otherwise” preachers become “self-suspicious” and revolt against the tyranny of ego by submitting to “ego-martyrdom.”¹¹ Erasing the self, “otherwise” preachers listen for the theological and cultural wisdom of others and enable the voices of others to speak toward the mysteries and insights of the Infinite. What I want to suggest in closing is that in an interreligious occasion like my grandfather’s funeral, divine giving took place beyond our comprehension.

Of course a theodical pressure admittedly guided rushed efforts to strike a balance between Protestant commitments and limited knowledge of Taiwanese and Buddhist funerary rites. Therefore, the funeral service of my grandfather was no exception to Weberian and Geertzian concerns. A Levinasian inter-human responsibility, however, appeared in our unspoken pact to participate in imperfect ritual practice and commit to caring for one another no matter what transpired.

Furthermore, another generosity spilled over our compassion, efforts, and the ritual practices provided. As we listened, spoke, ritualized, and watched together out of respect, reverence, and confusion, the collective response to useless suffering was taken up into tides beyond coherence, meaning, and radical mutual responsibility. We experienced more than the charity of mutual support while the multicultural demands of the circumstances exceeded the ceremonial reach of the actual service. Our powerlessness and inability to produce precisely the right kind of funeral observance, the disorientation and insufficiency of our plural experience, gave way to an inexhaustible benevolence that made up for our liturgical misgivings.

I call that benevolent source and end God. Long elegantly describes the one I mean as “one in history in time,” a Christ whom we recognize and who bears mortal wounds that become transfigured in glory and who still approaches us along an eternal horizon that we can recognize but not fully understand.¹² The uselessness of suffering may outmaneuver meaning and resilience. Nevertheless, the multicultural mourners of my grandfather’s funeral and I ended up in rituals that made clearer the intervention of the divine. The inexplicable thereness of useless suffering confounded us into actions bearing witness to the mysterious presence of an incomprehensible God.

The details of my grandfather’s funeral and Shapira’s remarkable devotion offer limited guidance for those with questions about how to lead faithful interreligious worship with theological integrity or reckon with useless suffering with ritualization strong enough to endure. Lean upon your sense of Christian calling and ecclesial identity, but do not fear including the wisdom, language, and customs from other traditions. In fact, welcome them with trust that even in a foggy pattern of worship, the light of the Holy Spirit can flicker and even shine. Consider YouTube (!) as a liturgical resource because sometimes circumstances do not allow for exhaustive research. Sometimes (and perhaps more often than not) the literature does not convey what seeing a ritual in action can. Realize the limits of making sense out of suffering and seeking meaning to articulate when unintelligible suffering determines the very reality in which our rituals occur.

When we are vexed by the irreconcilable differences living within our own Christian and

¹¹ John McClure, *Otherwise Preaching*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 81–152.

¹² Long, *Accompany Them with Singing*, 45.

cultural identities or overwhelmed by the kaleidoscopic dimensions of human diversity that intensify the world in which we live and die with incalculable complexity, we need more from ritual and preaching than what we can possibly devise. When we kill out of irreconcilable differences, religious, cultural, and otherwise, when we pervert ritual practices to such an extent that they produce useless suffering rather than confront it and defy not only comprehension but any kind of good, like the barbaric shooting, beheading, and bombing of innocents in neighborhoods at home and abroad, then I pray to God that healing arrives in (spite of) our insufficient attempts to address unimaginable evil and unending grief. Even when interreligious ceremony devolves into barbaric propaganda or brings a violent past back to the future, it is believable that the absurd and dangerous world our loved ones entrust us with is nevertheless approached by the one by whose wounds we are healed.

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Aaron Chalmers. *Interpreting the Prophets: Reading, Understanding and Preaching from the Worlds of the Prophets*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015. 173 pages. \$20.

Aaron Chalmers is a biblical scholar determined to help preachers interpret the prophetic books with depth integrity. To accomplish his goal he organizes the text into logical, easy-to-understand chapters that provide readers with knowledge that will help them in their task. Chalmers begins the book by comparing and contrasting definitions of prophets in our contemporary contexts with definitions of prophets in the biblical world. By making this distinction, he sets the tone for the rest of the work. Throughout the book he continually highlights the importance of context for all biblical interpretation but especially for the unique compositions known as prophetic books. For our world, the word prophet is used to designate someone who predicts the future, is a social reformer, or is a herald. In the world of the Hebrew Bible, prophets were: members of the divine council (place filled with the presence of God and inhabited by supernatural creatures), called by God, communicators of the word of God, intercessors on behalf of the people, and sentinels. Having defined “prophet,” he then moves in the second chapter to help readers understand the complexities of the biblical world of the prophets. For example, he explains why the practice of deportation was used by both the Assyrians and the Babylonians: It separated the conquered people from their homelands, provided ready-made labor forces for the conquerors as they built new cities and rebuilt ruined ones, replenished armies that may have suffered losses during the war, and provided the empire with skilled laborers such as farmers to help cultivate undeveloped regions of their territories. He provides historical time lines of the rise and reign of various kings of the Northern and Southern kingdoms that parallel time lines of the rise and fall of the empires that conquered or otherwise impacted them. He provides archaeological insights such as the centrality and significance of the masonry construction of Hezekiah’s altar at Beer-sheba.

In the third chapter Chalmers highlights the significance of Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion for understanding the theology of the prophets. It was at Sinai that God began God’s work and relationship with the people of Israel. The Covenant is made up of stipulations, blessings, and curses that serve as the foundation of the relationship between the people and Yahweh. It is the stipulations, blessings, and curses of the Covenant to which the prophets are repeatedly referring when they proclaim God’s words to the people. Zion theology includes beliefs about Jerusalem and the Temple, Yahweh, and David and the Davidic dynasty. In chapter four, Chalmers highlights the rhetorical structures, rhetorical devices, and strategies used in the prophetic books. For example, the writer includes three essential elements of the prophecy of judgment: indictment (the reason for the situation/problem that demands judgment); message speech (this will often begin with “thus says the Lord” to indicate divine origins); and announcement of judgment (details of the judgment forthcoming). The prophetic vision reports are another device that the writers used. They consist of a question-and-answer dialogue between Yahweh and the prophets; the dramatic word vision that depicts a scene in heaven that foretells a future event on earth that the prophet will announce; the revelatory-mystery vision in which an angelic interpreter speaks to the prophet about symbolic imagery the prophets sees. Rhetorical devices Chalmers features include parallelism, metaphor, similes, and hyperbole.

In the fifth chapter he distinguishes between apocalyptic and prophetic. Prophetic literature is concerned about the work of God within history. Apocalyptic literature is focused on the climactic acts in which God will engage to end history. In the sixth and final chapter, the

author provides preachers with guidelines on how to preach the prophetic books. Some of the advice Chalmers conveys includes: Choose texts carefully so that they communicate the central themes of the books, use analogies that accurately relay similarities between the ancient world and our contemporary time, focus on the theology of the texts so that the message highlights what God is doing, select prophetic messages that best meet the needs of particular congregations, and avoid typological and promise-fulfillment approaches to preaching prophetic texts.

Using this resource, pastors and preachers will be able to preach sermons that address the needs of their congregations. In turn, they will enable their congregants to better understand and appreciate the complex contexts of the prophets and the prophetic texts.

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Eric Eve. *Behind the Gospels: Understanding the Oral Tradition*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014. 224 pages. \$29.

From the beginning the dualistic aim of this insightful survey text is clear: to present its readers with alternative models for studying the oral tradition behind the Gospels while simultaneously challenging the dominance of form criticism. Form criticism is defined as “the study of the history of individual units of (oral) tradition, based on the assumption that there is a discoverable link between their form and their social setting.” Although the dominant method of study for the last century, Eric Eve argues it has several flaws. These flaws, reflected in the work of Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann, both key figures in form criticism, are primarily viewed as belief in: the anonymous handing on of the tradition; the notion that the Evangelists were mere collectors and editors of individual units of oral tradition; oral tradition was primarily transmitted through preaching, exhortation, and disputes with outsiders; the form of the individual unit of oral tradition relates to a sociological setting; and there is no significant difference between oral and written media in the synoptic tradition.

Utilizing the Gospel of Mark as a point of reference, Eve introduces readers to more recent approaches to the study of oral tradition. Beginning with the Rabbinic Model, Birger Gerhardsson’s thesis critiques form criticism’s assumption regarding the anonymous collection of individual units of oral tradition as well as the mode in which it was transmitted. Gerhardsson views the handing on of oral tradition as a tightly controlled process analogous to Jewish memorization teaching practices, rather than anonymously collecting scattered individual units. Using Jesus’ teaching the disciples, and Paul, as examples to support his theory, Gerhardsson claims oral transmission was not only deliberate, but also carried out only by those in authority with no “primary” format for transmission. Extending his position further, he determined the tightly controlled process continued in the same manner after Jesus’ death.

Following the Rabbinic Model, Eve highlights the Media Contrast model of Werner Kelber (chapter 4), which challenges form criticism’s position on fixed form (preaching, exhortation, and disputes with outsiders) and the lack of distinction between forms of media. Additionally, this approach critiques Gerhardsson’s memorization theory. Viewing oral transmission as a “process of social identification and preventative censorship,” Kelber states: “Oral composition and transmission is constrained by audience response and social situation in a way that writing is not.” Therefore, oral transmission “preserves whatever it deems essential while abandoning or transforming that which no longer meets social approval.” This process of preventive censorship and social identification emphasizes the fluidity of the oral tradition over and against a fixed form or stock content.

Between these two poles stands a third approach. Kenneth Bailey, using his own personal experiences as a missionary and teacher, bases his theory on the concept of “*haflat samar*,” (party of preservation) where the community gathers, tells stories, then passes them on in an effort to form/maintain communal identity. Called the Informal Controlled Oral Tradition (Anecdotal Approach), this theory views the process of handing on the tradition as one akin to communal storytelling. As indicated in the title, there is both an informal and a controlled aspect to this theory. Accordingly, stories (parables, historical renderings, key events, etc.) related to the identity are tightly controlled while others (jokes, casual news, tragedies, etc.) are not.

Following the Anecdotal Approach, Eve dedicates two full chapters detailing both social memory theory and the psychology of memory that collectively form the Memory Approach.

Relying on wisdom from a range of theorists, Eve makes clear that, if tradition survives, it does so because it is remembered.

The final approach Eve proposes is the Eyewitness Model by Samuel Byrskog and Richard Bauckham. This approach shifts from the “how” to the “who”; the eyewitness. The eyewitness is the person who sees and then testifies about what s/he saw. Therefore, a critical concept regarding the eyewitness is autopsy. Autopsy is a visual means to gather information about a certain object.

Overall this text has much to offer and goes a long way in providing a means for understanding the complexity of the oral tradition. The initial appeal of this text, due to the detailed discussion on form criticism, is to the academy. With skillful precision, Eve gets behind form criticism in order to highlight its origins by giving voice to its major architects. In doing so, he also highlights its flaws, which is the point of the text. *Behind the Gospels* is an insightful book whose detailed scholarship has lasting potential.

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Emily Askew and O. Wesley Allen. *Beyond Heterosexism in the Pulpit*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015. 162 pages. \$19.

When I am looking for books to address preaching both for my personal use and for the classroom, finding ones that are practical and offer sample sermons is a must. When I first saw *Beyond Heterosexism in the Pulpit*, I was intrigued by the title, then by the authors, both of whom I know personally, and next by the practical nature of the structure and flow. This book does not disappoint in the category of practical application for preaching social issues today. Each chapter includes a sample sermon that allows the reader to see the theory and insights of the writings put into practice in a realistic and helpful manner. But the other issue that led me to this text was the seismic shift that has occurred culturally in the movement for equal rights for LGBTQ persons in the U.S. This text is a helpful resource for preachers wanting to address these cultural shifts.

Emily Askew and O. Wesley Allen have written a book that is constructed around the framework of liturgical occasions when preachers might be afforded the opportunity to address heterosexism from the pulpit. These three occasions include: preaching on a weekly basis, preaching in response to a gay rights issue or when an act of bias or prejudice against LGBTQ persons has occurred, and preaching during rites or rituals performed for an LGBTQ person or couple (5). This framework is utilized for the primary chapters in the book. Chapters 1 and 2 deal with the human and church issues related to conversing on the issue of heterosexism. Chapter 3 addresses the ways that preachers might address the topic in light of specific issues that have occurred in their community or in the world related to prejudice. And chapters 4 and 5 specifically address weddings and funerals for LGBTQ persons. This structure relates to the author's assertion that these are opportunities for confronting heterosexism and it is insightful.

Starting from the point of anthropology is helpful. Christians live into the concept of the *Imago Dei*, but have weighted the "rational, spiritual natures (from God) over against our physical natures (from animals)" (17–18). This has led to a dualism that permeates our culture on a number of levels. In conversations about heterosexism, the physical nature of our being has to be honored. However, as the authors help the reader understand, the dualism or body/spirit-mind coupled with the elevation of heterosexism as normative behavior and the discomfort in honoring the sexuality of persons has led to heterosexism.

Askew and Allen then turn to looking at the nature of the church. Living up to the role of being the people of God summoned into a community, "called by God to celebrate, embody, and proclaim the good news" is a vital task (48). However, as people who are sinful and fail to live up to that call, it is clear that the church, the ecclesia, often fails to be who they are called to be (48). The church must live in the tension of being called to be what it often is incapable of living up to. Being attentive to this reality and working for unity that honors diversity is a task that the church should embrace. A church that honors the body and the spirit-mind of their community members moves into a wholeness of honoring all expressions of homosexual persons in their midst, not just tolerating the idea of their presence in the congregation (54–57). The author's discussion of this topic is well done.

Chapter 3 begins the author's three-part framework by addressing the ways preachers can engage the topic of heterosexism by looking at the opportunity to preach in the midst of or reaction to gay rights events and/or instances of prejudice or discrimination targeted at the LGBTQ community. They begin with a look at the civil rights issues and how those who call for equal rights often do so because of the economic rights, the right to dignity, and family rights.

But beyond these issues is how and where the church will be present with and minister to the needs of gay and lesbian persons. These opportunities for ministry include: weddings, church membership, and leadership in communities of faith (84–91). Moving to homiletical strategies next is one of the strengths of this book. Naming both the struggles of the LGBTQ community and the victories in a longitudinal manner will keep the *imago dei* of LGBTQ persons at the forefront of the community on a regular basis (92–93). And providing a sample sermon using these strategies means the reader can see the ways to employ this part of the framework in concrete ways.

Chapters 4 and 5 bring the reader opportunities to address potential issues of heterosexism in wedding, union, and funeral settings. One of the challenges of writing any book is that times change quickly and this book suffers from that to some degree. The chapter about marriage and unions is out of date due to the dramatic decision by the Supreme Court in June of 2015 for marriage equality. However, the advice for preaching is still relevant.

The chapter related to funerals and memorial services explains the potential complications faced by LGBTQ persons with complex family and relationship dynamics in these moments of grief and loss. For all persons, funerals serve three purposes: to care for the deceased, to comfort the bereaved, and to proclaim the good news of Jesus in the midst of death (117–119). Both chapters again conclude with sample sermons that move the reader into a place of more concrete understanding of the subject matter.

The authors also include a glossary of terms so that the reader who might be less familiar with some of the terminology used in the book and around issues of sexuality will be able to become more familiar with the language necessary to confront heterosexism in the pulpit. One part of this is to address the reality that language has great power to either affirm or demean. Words that one person might hear as positive, another might hear as belittling and demeaning. The authors hope for pastors to utilize this section so that they are prepared for conversations around sexual orientation and gender identity in a more constructive manner (137).

I believe that this book is a very helpful resource for preachers who want to educate themselves about the inherent issues related to heterosexism in the pulpit. The authors provide advice to move beyond heterosexism in positive and affirming ways. Any preacher can gain much from reading this book. I highly recommend it.

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Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor. *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture (Engaging Culture)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013. 352 pages. \$19.35.

A quick yet alarming question will serve well as a good entry point for this review: “How many times throughout the week have you listened to pop music, gone to movies, watched television, read advertisements on the roadside billboards, thought about what to wear, and seen celebrities on various magazines at the grocery pay counters?” Our answers to this prolonged question may vary depending on each. But, when we are asked another parallel question, we may find it relatively easy to answer in unison, “How many times have you opened the Bible throughout the week and read it, a verse at least?” I do not ask these two questions simply for a rhetorical purpose, but to show the sheer reality of our everyday life. Each day and throughout the year, most of us spend a considerable (or more) amount of time on listening, watching, reading, practicing, and thinking about pop culture than we do on anything related to our faith and church. Here comes another important question. What if the pop cultural surroundings pertain to significant spiritual or religious impacts and ramifications that to a great extent mold the style and content of our Christian faith? If so, how? And also if so, what should be the critical response of the people of faith? The two authors, Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor, both theologically trained pop cultural gurus, embark on a fascinating task of providing an answer to that “what if and if so” question.

Their foundational premise is threefold: 1) pop culture itself is spiritual (or contains and demonstrates spiritual truths); 2) pop culture’s (Christian) spirituality and its lessons are highly compatible with those of the conventional Christian Church; and 3) pop culture is more influential and widespread than the church today when it comes to the spiritual formation of the people’s minds. For Detweiler and Taylor, the current situation is both good news and bad news. The bad news is that the people, whether Christians or not, have lost their interest in the traditional Church and its spiritual life because of the church’s irrelevance to real-life situations. The good news is that the people still have a *strong interest in spiritual life* and pop culture has satisfied their spiritual needs with its own media, such as advertising, celebrities, music, movies, television, fashion, sports, and art. Detweiler and Taylor would not say that pop cultural spirituality and its specific lessons are good enough to fully satisfy the spiritual needs of people today or that the conventional Christian Church has no room in the 21st century. Nor would they say that the spirituality diffused by pop culture is always positive for human souls. Indeed, they “cunningly” expose the degrading spiritual impacts of pop culture (yet, at the same time they ask and answer, “Is what the church teaches and imposes always sound and positive?” Nope.). What they want to achieve at the end, however, is considering pop culture the very locus of God’s revelation for today and interpreting and applying that Divine revelation for the sake of the people in and out of the church walls. They specifically urge Christians not to overlook the spiritual content and influence of pop culture out of their ignorance and narrow-minded obsession with the Church’s past or “This Is What We Have Always Done.”

The book is well-written with a vast amount of helpful information on each cultural medium and acute theological insights on pop cultural phenomena. Also, several illustrative materials at various points in the book are indispensable. Yet, the concluding chapter is a bit off track. Some content is redundant, repeating what has been said previously, and the practical theological applications of pop cultural spirituality sound somewhat limited. Overall, the book is highly recommended for any theological and/or homiletic classes engaged in the critical conversation and possible synthesis between pop cultural spirituality and that of the Christian

Church. I also recommend this book for seminary students of any age group who are considering creative and artistic ministry at the local congregation. The book will serve as a great resource.

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Daniella Zsupan-Jerome. *Connected Toward Communion: The Church and Social Communication in the Digital Age*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014. 156 pages. \$17.95.

The proliferation of digit media has contributed towards a broad cultural shift that has impacted the church. Zsupan-Jerome's intention for writing *Connected Toward Communion* entails demonstrating how digital technology and all of its accompanying conflicts actually functions as a means for community building as intended with Christ's mission, passion, death, and resurrection. In six concise chapters, the author builds on the scholarship of Meredith Gould in terms media literacy as an essential requisite for the expansion of the Gospel. Early in the text, the author addresses four pillars of priestly formation, which include: human formation, spiritual formation, intellectual formation, and pastoral formation with the new digital media outlets having a significant role to play in each. "Teaching as dispensing content no longer dominates; the digital media offer access to information at an unprecedented scale" (16). As a result the classroom, lectern, and pulpit have lost its collective monopoly on education. Zsupan-Jerome references documents such as the *Inter Mirifica* and the *Communio et Progressio* as ecclesiastical themes which provide the general message of the role of the media as a theologically sanctioned and mandated means to support the Church in its evangelistic mission.

At the brink of the dawn of postmodernity, the second Vatican Council addressed the significance of communication with respect to the trajectory of the Church in light of new advances and challenges in the digital age. "With the advent of digital media, social communication has shifted away from sheer instrumentality towards a culture marked by an increasingly participatory experience" (74). In chapter four entitled "Twenty Years Later," the author describes postmodernism as a response to the brokenness of mainstream culture and its accompanying values. Technological has been a contributing factor towards society reaching a stage in history where it must accept the reality of cultural pluralism while attempting to find innovative ways to regain the loss sense of optimism in which modernism had implicitly promised.

The book directly addresses a mission oriented Roman Catholic clergy and lay leadership audience in a Western industrialized setting. However, *Connected Toward Communion* contains equally relevant information regarding the mass media as an emerging institution that has permeated through nearly every fabric of society including the church across ecumenical lines. Zsupan-Jerome integrates ecclesiology with mass communications as a means to demonstrate that innovative advances in media technology contribute towards the perfecting of the Church's evangelistic mission. The author raises the issue of "post-humanism" as the potential for technology to break the barriers of human finitude (55). However, a more balanced approach towards such a topic would include a discussion about the potential unintended consequences that can result if humanity fails to adequately manage and contain such advancements. As a product of the age of advanced technology, electronic gadgets paradoxically provide an easy means for individuals to hide their faces and avoid intimacy. Furthermore, the author acknowledges that among the greatest dysfunctions of new forms of mass media include discussion board hate speech, and cyberbullying. Such actions contribute to increased social isolation while undermining the dignity of humanity.

The author accomplishes the difficult goal of drawing the connection between communication and communion. Beyond the two words having a common etymology, one of the purposes of the sacrament of communion entails an invitation of fragmented parts of the community to the whole of the Body of Christ. "In the Eucharistic encounter, word and

sacrament communicate Christ's presence, inviting us into a communal encounter to physically receive as sacrament that which has been proclaimed as word" (109). Not only does the Eucharist function as a means of communication, but it also exemplifies the celebration of Christ as the ultimate communicator.

Although the text stresses the importance that media presence has for both priestly formation and integrating remote communities into one greater universal network, the book could further benefit from a discussion of alternatives to digital media because a significant portion of the world's population lacks access to modern technology. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, the U.S. digital divide results in exclusion of approximately fifteen percent of the population from relative access to the internet (58). Due to the wider digital divide on a global level, the book could have further addressed the strengths and the needs for church communities in least industrialized nations where authentic communal relationships exist despite relative technological deficiencies. Nevertheless *Connected Toward Communion* serves as a cutting-edge ministerial resource for meeting the needs of the Twenty-first century.

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Dale P. Andrews and Robert London Smith Jr., eds. *Black Practical Theology*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015. 350 pages. \$49.95.

More than a decade ago co-editor and homiletics scholar Dale P. Andrews argued that a chasm exists between Black theology and Black Church folk traditions, and that this estrangement is caused, in large part, by the inducement of American individualism on black churches, which undermines the communal spirit and genuine identity of black Christians. Andrews, evidently burdened by his early claim, not only demonstrates with the arrival of *Black Practical Theology* his unyielding commitment to tacking down further justification for his indictment, but in teaming up with U.K. pastor-research scholar Robert London Smith Jr., he makes good on an implied pledge in this fresh proposal.

Black Practical Theology comprehensively graphs the contours of black practical theology, offering readers eighteen essays that explore an exhaustive range of generative topics involving the most pressing exigencies within what Smith conceptually labels the “black thematic universe,” which shapes the religious life world of contemporary African Americans and Pan-Africans (8-9). Flowing from an integrative methodological map grounded in hearer-response criticism, Andrews and Smith enlist project contributors from three distinct communities: 1. black theology scholars who work within the constructive, biblical, and ethics disciplines; 2. practical theology scholars who work within its customary disciplines (homiletics, pastoral care, Christian education, and spirituality); and 3. pastoral and parachurch ministry leaders serving black congregations and communities.

Organized into six contributor sections: black youth, intergenerational relations, and ageism; education, class, and poverty; gender, sexual orientation, and race; globalism, immigration, and diasporan communities; health care, HIV/AIDS, and poverty; and, mass incarceration, capital punishment, and the justice system, authors enter into what the book’s editors term a “trialogical” exchange (13). Around these categorized issues authors become collaborative partners, with ministry leaders offering intramural affirmations or criticisms to their partners’ observations. The book’s unifier is each author’s investigative inquiry into grouped themes shaping black consciousness and modes of ecclesial practice. Even if alien to their customary writing rhythms, because black practical theology pays debts to interpretation and construction, each essayist was charged to offer practical suggestions for transforming inherited practices and oral and cultural traditions (6). For example, in section four, Catholic practical theology scholar Phillis Sheppard, a self-identified middle-aged, lovingly partnered black lesbian, mother of three clergywoman (100); womanist systematic theologian Diana L. Hayes; and Covenant Baptist (UCC) of Washington, DC co-pastors Dennis and Christine Wiley, address agency and actions of black church praxis through gender, sexual orientation, and race analysis. For Sheppard a black practical theology involves uncovering spiritually maiming practices that replicate cultural violence. She asks, “What in black religion legitimizes theological, social, personal, or interpersonal violence (98)?” For Hayes theological interpretation as a practical theology calls for a retrieval of themes of liberation (black theology) but also of survival and quality of life (womanist theology). With this end in mind “the process of reconnecting our theology to our praxis in ways that are healing and holy for all” is authentically jumpstarted (123). The Wiley’s offer up the idea that Christians cannot say they are baptized into the “body of Christ” and “in fellowship” with God while at the same time be “out of fellowship” with other Christians. An accurate understanding of fellowship is critical because the Church cannot exist in the absence of fellowship. No issue has been more divisive within the human family, and within

the Black Church, they note, than the issue of homosexuality (144). Though the seldom helpful terms “progressive” and “conservative” pepper their prose, their essay is rich in thoughtful critique and practical suggestions for helping black churches to think critically about ecclesial arrangements that frustrate *koinonia* and mute Black Christian voices on other social issues.

Madipoane Masenya’s essay is a must read for preachers daring to announce the universal call of the Christian faith within multi-ethnic, generationally and educationally diverse settings. Accessing sermons that are preached in English only, she writes, may unwittingly work against the gospel’s intent of drawing listeners into divine encounter (73-74). Willie James Jennings’ Christologically-informed disruptive critique and suggested strategies for resisting “the emergence, growth, and expansion of a Eurocentric aesthetic regime that narrates . . . the beautiful, the intelligent, and noble around white bodies” is masterfully insightful (163). Jeremiah Wright’s pastoral response to Anthony Reddie’s call for “participative black theology” admonishes pastor-scholars to bridge theoretical Black theology and “praxiological” black theology by putting “black theology in a cup that ordinary folk can recognize” (85). Following Michael Battle’s and Raphael Warnock’s essays on spiritual and physical incarceration, fittingly, *Black Practical Theology* signals its symbolic “Amen” in homiletical fashion. In her sermon titled “A Savior for People with a Record,” biblical scholar and prisoner reentry advocate Madeline McClenney defends one central idea: “the average black Christian could not see Christ in the average felon” (281).

In terms of length, research rigor, and writing quality, not all essays are created equal in this volume, which is invariably the case with most edited collections. And for a practical theologian empiricist wanting hard statistics to support authorial claims, this reader should know they are slight. Inevitably, the burden of any text bearing the label practical theology is to demonstrate concretely how might such a proposal help shape theology’s future toward more fully embodying the normative purposes of the Christian faith. This is why such texts can never stop at observation-analysis or deconstruction. To be practically useful to Christian practitioners they must undertake the risky pragmatic task of daring to answer the question, “Now what?” Every once in a while a work comes along that causes me to say, “Would’ve been nice to have this as a grad student!” For scholars and pastors interested in a book that helpfully indexes and interprets the most critical issues impacting global Christianity in general and contemporary black churches and communities in particular today, this is that work.

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Ken J. Walden. *Practical Theology for Church Diversity: A Guide for Clergy and Congregations*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015. 132 pages. \$18.

This book is a useful resource for clergy and lay leaders of the church who are interested in “cross-cultural pastoral ministry” (xiii). The author, an African American Methodist pastor who has been appointed to serve racially different churches, reflects on his own experience of cross-racial and multicultural ministry and offers the reader valuable advice and practical ideas for the cross-cultural ministry. As Vergel L. Lattimore III describes in the Forward, this book is indeed “a practical training manual for cross-racial ministry readiness, planning, exploration, delivery, and evaluation” (ix).

In the Introduction, the author states, regarding his methodology, that “[f]ollowing the tradition of practical theology, this book identifies a specific problem, explores major contributing factors of the problem, and then offers some solutions to the problem” (xii). The six chapters identify and explore the problem of church diversity from multifaceted angles and provide pragmatic suggestions and helpful resources to solve the problem, based on the author’s hands-on experience of cross-racial and multicultural ministry.

Chapter One analyzes the contemporary ministerial context in relation to the history of racial diversity in the United States and challenges clergy and church leaders to have a “big picture of church diversity” (11). Chapter Two provides pastors and congregations with practical guidelines for preparation for the multicultural ministry. Based on his experience of cross-cultural pastoral ministry, the author offers a list of questions for them to consider, as well as two reading lists for them to use as resources. Chapter Three emphasizes the significance of “the welcome introduction between the clergy person and the church community for cross-racial pastoral ministry” (42) and offers useful tips with a reading list for preparation for the event. Chapter Four focuses on how the church can work in partnership with diverse ethnic groups within and beyond the church and provides ideas for intra-church, inter-church, and global-church collaborations along with reading lists. Chapter Five explores some challenges to cross-racial and multicultural ministry in relation to pastoral images and perception, the crisis of congregational identity and territorial conflict, and pastoral leadership. The last chapter includes practical strategies and useful resources to deal with the challenges explored in the previous chapter.

Although the author does not pin down his own definition of practical theology, the book implies that, for him, practical theology means “a pragmatic approach”(xii) to issues emerging from the church ministry in order to help clergy and lay leaders improve their skills and strategies for church leadership. While this concept of practical theology, as an area of applied theology, is pertinent to many theologians and practitioners, it is significant to pay attention to the fact that contemporary discourse on practical theology in academia is much more complex. One of the major concerns of practical theology is how to provide profound theological and biblical reflection on the issue, through which the problem can be critically evaluated and be solved. The author, however, uses a two-step procedure—critical analysis of the problem through interdisciplinary studies and solution of the problem based on his personal experience of cross-cultural pastoral ministry. In this process, theological and biblical reflection or “the normative task,” to use Richard Osmer’s term,¹ was not sufficiently executed. In other words, while the author analyzes the issue of church diversity through historical and cultural studies, he

¹ Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 129-173.

does not engage in theological reflection at a deeper level. His personal experience of cross-cultural ministry, which is a tremendously useful resource to help other pastors and congregations, also needs to be interpreted from a certain theological and biblical perspective. One of the possible areas to include the normative task more seriously in the book may be the section of “Biblical Context/Understanding” in Chapter Two. It can be extended into a deeper theological conversation in order to provide a theological and biblical foundation for dealing with the issue of church diversity.

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Fred B. Craddock. *The Collected Sermons of Fred B. Craddock*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011. 305 pages. \$23.98.

Fred B. Craddock, Dale Goldsmith, and Joy V. Goldsmith. *Speaking of Dying: Recovering the Church's Voice in the Face of Death*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2012. 220 pages. \$17.58.

On March 6, 2015 Fred Craddock passed away leaving an indelible mark on the world of preaching. He had written numerous books and commentaries and contributed many articles to a variety of journals. The one book that most set him apart in the field of homiletics was his 1971 volume, *As One Without Authority*. This review is a way of expressing a small token of appreciation for his contribution to those who teach homiletics and to those who preach. I review two fairly recent volumes he produced or helped to produce, one of them a collection of sermons and the other an aid to assist preachers in the task of ministering to the dying.

The Collected Sermons volume contains fifty-two sermons plus three eulogies. Reading these sermons, for me, was like taking a pleasant trip down memory lane. Many of the stories, images, phrases, and rhetorical strategies I have heard before and are permanently etched in my mind. Yet I never tire of hearing them. They inspire me to be a better preacher and teacher.

I first discovered the work of Craddock in the early 1980s while preaching fulltime for a church in Oregon. In trying to responsibly meet the weekly challenges of preaching, I was desperate for help. I turned to *As One Without Authority* and liked what I read but still did not know how to craft that kind of sermon. So I started collecting tapes of his sermons and over the next decade or so listened to close to 200. I learned from them and they challenged me. Reading the sermons in this book made me realize how much Craddock's sermons influenced my preaching.

Craddock organizes his sermons according to the biblical texts they address. The first nine sermons are based on Old Testament texts. Twenty-six come from the Gospels, six from the book of Acts, and the remaining eleven from the Epistles. The transcriptions of the sermons include Craddock's delightful introductory comments to his audience demonstrating his keen awareness of the people to whom he was speaking.

In the introduction to the book Craddock reminds the reader "that these sermons were prepared to be heard not read" (xii). He explains, "you are reading speaking" (xii). Of the fifty-five sermons, only one was in manuscript form before it was preached. Ten of the fifty-five were included in previous works, four from the collection found in *The Cherry Log Sermons* volume (2001), four from the revised edition of *As One Without Authority* (2001), and the remaining two from two other sources.

The sermons reveal the classic preaching style of Craddock with humor, delightful surprises, new insights into the text, crisp refreshing images, and powerful personal stories. As Craddock says in the introduction, there is a "surplus of meaning lurking in every good sermon as in every biblical text" (xiv). These sermons not only reveal Craddock's rich understanding of Scripture, they also reveal, as Barbara Brown Taylor observes in the foreword, "someone who noticed a lot about ordinary human life on earth" (ix). His keen observations about routine events in life populate his sermons as he describes conversations, meal times, family activities, friendships, and life transitions.

In addition to all of these qualities is his ability to use language and craft words into memorable phrases and images like "concrete clouds" and "soft scoops of grace." Phrases that pepper the landscape of the sermons that just naturally flow from his mouth include some of the

following: “The final work of grace is to make one gracious” or “anyone who can’t remember past his or her own birth is an orphan” or a line extracted from a poem by Emily Dickinson “we’re sweeping up the heart and putting love away.” One of my favorites is “there is no way to modulate the human voice to make a whine acceptable to God.”

The sermons contain no dates, places, or details. Taylor in the foreword argues that this is a positive quality, “it means the reader of this volume is not in charge. You are a guest here, not a host” (vii). While I do believe such a posture releases imposed constraints on the sermons, at the same time identifying special times and occasions for some of the sermons can aid in an even deeper appreciation and understanding of them. Some of the occasions are fairly obvious. The sermon entitled “Familiar Questions, Strange Answers on Luke 13:1–9, appears to be preached shortly after the terrorist attack on 9/11 (165–169). It is a powerful sermon that calls for restraint, repentance, and an acknowledgment of God’s patience with us. If I didn’t know that context, the sermon would not have had the effect on me it did. The three eulogies at the end of the book are given a specific context. Without knowing that, these sermons would also have had less impact. I believe that would be true as well of a few of the other sermons whose contexts are not identified or at least not obvious.

These fifty-two sermons represent some of the best of Fred Craddock and I assume represent a year’s worth of preaching though obviously delivered over a couple of decades or more. As those who read and listen to Craddock’s sermons already know, there are many more. The classic sermon, of course, from Romans 16, “When the Roll is Called Down Yonder,” brooks no rivals. Just a few of my other favorites that I have not seen in printed form include, “The Embrace of Necessity” (Philippians 1:19–26), “Why Aren’t There More Exits in Church?” (Hebrews 6:1–12), “Would You Live in a Place Where There Were No Churches?” (Revelation 21:22–27), and “When Clouds Return After the Rain” (Ecclesiastes 12:2). It simply demonstrates the depth of wisdom and gifts Craddock possessed.

The death of Janet Goldsmith, a pastor, beloved sister, daughter, and student inspired a book of a different kind, *Speaking of Dying*. She was a former student of Craddock’s who died of cancer in 2002 at the age of thirty-four. This book was written out of the context of a church that did not know how to minister to her as its pastor during the final days of her life. It created an exigency in the minds of these writers to alert pastors to the unspoken problem of ministering to the dying and better preparing them to meet the challenges of the occasion. The book initially surveys ten churches in Southern and Midwestern states whose pastors had died and how these churches handled or rather mishandled their end of life days. The opening chapter recounts “the dramatic stories of ten dying pastors whose end-of-life days were lived out not only ‘on the job’ but also in the grip of terminal illnesses lived in full view of their death-denying congregations” (xviii). The results are abysmally disappointing (11). Not only were the pastors unsupported but the churches as a result also suffered (13). The common denominator among all ten churches “was a failure to communicate honestly and substantively within a context provided by the Christian tradition” (17).

Chapters One and Two lay out the problem of churches who may live by faith but when it comes to the process of dying fall far short. Basically what the authors found churches doing was outsourcing the final stages of life to other care professionals. Chapters Three through Six cover various theological perspectives and resources that preachers can call on to assist them in bringing about a more healthy and faithful response to the dying process. These include developing a theology of dying, pastoral guidelines for speaking to those dying, and preaching on death and dying. Chapter Seven offers testimonies from ten individuals throughout the history

of the church who faced death with courage, faith, and graciousness (e.g., Ignatius, Thomas a Kempis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, etc.). This chapter serves as a counter to the ten churches earlier described who were unfaithful in their responsibility to the dying. The final chapter, Chapter Eight, provides a framework for practicing strategies for end-of-life issues within the church——“A Good Dying” as they title the chapter.

Chapter Six, “Preaching on Death and Dying” is where Craddock’s fingerprint is most evident. He offers suggestions to preachers for effective ways of preaching on death and end-of-life issues. His suggestions are grounded primarily in New Testament texts except for a brief mention of the power of the lament psalms. The suggestions include the following: assume your congregation wants to hear about death; think through your own theology of death; steep your words in Scripture; and lead in lament. Typical of Craddock’s biblical insights, after probing Jesus’ perspective on death from the Gospel of Luke, he makes the following observation: “Luke apparently believed eulogies should precede rather than follow death” (136). He follows this up by giving several examples of this practice from Luke.

Reading *Speaking of Dying* and then reading the three eulogies at the end of *The Collected Sermons* volume provide a small window into Craddock’s theology and approach to end of life matters. What stands out in these sermons is the highly metaphoric language used. In the eulogy delivered after the death of his brother, he personifies the quality of doxology. Doxology becomes a living and breathing entity that carries the freight of his message. In the eulogy to a young girl, the image used is the “Angel of the Chosen” who God uses to identify very special people on earth to raise very special children. And Craddock writes the final eulogy in the form of a poem. As we grieve the loss of this great man who has had such a tremendous impact on all of us, we say to each other with the same words he used to comfort others, “we are sweeping up the heart and putting love away.”

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Gregory Heille, OP. *The Preaching of Pope Francis*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015. 84 pages. \$12.95.

Gregory Heille, OP provides his readers with a brief, thoughtful introduction to the principle themes, textures, and tone of Pope Francis's preaching. While that is the primary stated goal of the work, the secondary purpose of the author is to invite pastors and preachers to appreciate, whether for the first time, or once again that "The authentic preaching life is a labor of love and a lifelong commitment" (xi). To fulfill this important aim he points to a preacher who lives this love and lifelong commitment, Pope Francis.

While many of this journal's readers may be most familiar with Pope Francis as "rock star" drawing crowds by the tens of thousands, Heille would like to move beyond the grandstand and into the pulpit.

Since his election people have spoken of Francis as the "pope of surprises." They have pointed to and explored "The Francis Factor." Who is this pope who lives in the Vatican dormitory rather than palace? Who is driven to visit presidents in a small Fiat? Heille would suggest that one way to understand Francis is by his "smell." John Paul II and Benedict, Francis's successors, processed the odor of the classroom and library. As philosophers and theologians, they came to their papacies as academics. Francis, on the other hand came with the smell of the subways he rode to work in Buenos Aires. In his first chrism Mass the new pope Francis began to give his priests and the larger church an idea of how he understood the ministry, "This I ask you: be shepherds, with the '[odor] of the sheep,' make it real, as shepherds among your flock, fishers of men" (11). Make it real—this is also, according to Heille, Francis's understanding of preaching.

Heille points out in the opening chapter that Pope Francis preaches daily. The opening chapter is dedicated to a discussion of the preaching life and the continuity of daily preaching. In the opening chapter Heille also introduces a significant third theme prominent in the preaching of Francis and therefore prominent in the volume. Echoing Cicero and Augustine, Francis wishes all, lay and ordained, to know that we are through our baptisms missionary disciples and evangelists.

According to Heille's analysis, Francis's pastoral preaching style primarily consists of sermons seven to eight minutes in length. He moves directly from one of the daily scripture passages, "paint[s] a mental picture of Jesus, and ask[s] questions that engage a dialogue with the lives of ordinary parishioners" (8). The preaching demonstrated by Francis is preaching understood to be conversation, listening, and dialogue.

Francis teaches and preaches that "Faith is passed on, we might say, by contact, from one person to another, just as one candle is lighted from another" (16). With that understanding, Heille, in the second chapter examines the way the church is called to reflective practice. The preacher and congregation that are seeking to be missionary disciples must "see-judge-act". And this will be a "*graced and messy dialogue with experience*" (22).

Heille also reviews for his readers the 1982 document on preaching, "*Fulfilled in your Hearing: the Homily in the Sunday Assembly*, prepared by the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops as an effort to incorporate the teachings of Vatican II. The document lifts up the image of the preacher as the one " 'called to point to the signs of God's presence in the lives of his people' " (36). Heille argues that while he has no evidence that Pope Francis had read the document, "he proves himself consistently to be aligned with its priorities and insights" (37). In one of the Pope's first documents, *Evangelii Gaudium*, there is an extensive examination of

preaching. The homily, according to Francis, is “ ‘the touchstone for judging the pastor’s closeness and ability to communicate to his people . . . a mother’s conversation’ ” (39).

Heille closes this examination of Francis’s preaching with a deep and thoughtful examination of his own understanding of preaching and the preaching life. It is his testimony of how he came to believe that central to the priesthood must be “a lifelong commitment . . . practice, . . . labor of love” to the preaching vocation (65). And he explores this because he has found in Pope Francis one who lives, confirms, and encourages that vocation. Whatever one’s location in the Body of Christ, the preacher will be equally encouraged by this examination of Pope Francis.

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David Schnasa Jacobsen, ed. *Homiletical Theology: Preaching as Doing Theology*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015. 186 pages. \$23.

This collection of nine essays includes three by its editor, David Schnasa Jacobsen, with one providing an introductory “Background to Homiletical Theology,” and the other two joining those of John S. McClure and Luke A. Powery in offering respective “Constructive Visions.” Two essays, one by Alyce M. McKenzie and the other by Michael Pasquarello III, discuss “Homiletical Theology as Practical Wisdom.” Two further essays on “Homiletical Theology and Method,” one by Ronald J. Allen and the other by Teresa Stricklen Eisenlohr, conclude this first volume of a projected series on “The Promise of Homiletical Theology.” Professor Jacobsen is Director of the Homiletical Theology Project at Boston University School of Theology. The other contributors participated with him in a 2013 Consultation on Homiletical Theology hosted by the Academy of Homiletics, whose members and their students are this book’s most likely audience.

Debates about what defines “homiletical theology” are acknowledged as integral to this fledgling field, perhaps necessarily so to the degree it aspires both to academic acceptability and practical utility. For this reason, Jacobsen’s tracing the use of the term is helpful, stretching from Johannes Quenstedt in 17th-century Lutheran dogmatics to more recent appropriations following David Buttrick’s redeployment of the term in 1987. Jacobsen shows how divergent definitions and approaches depend on whether the modes of reflection are “dogmatic,” “practical-theological,” or “constructive.”

If for his part Jacobsen prefers a homiletical theology that is “both practical and constructive theology by virtue of reflecting on the gospel in connection to the hearers” (39), McClure places the emphasis primarily on its “constructive” task as a “theology of communication” rooted in the Liturgy of the Word, but not confined to it (70). He brings forward philosophically articulated communication theories, such as those of Roland Barthes, Paul Ricoeur, and Walter Benjamin to illumine how preaching transforms elements of human communication to “make them adequate to the larger theological task of human–divine communication” (56).

By contrast, Powery advocates a “Pentecostalization of Homiletical Theology.” By lifting up Acts 2:1-13 for close reading, Powery’s essay elides into a sermon on the dogmatic priority of divine agency in human proclamation, the divine giftedness of pneumatic speech, and the Spirit as incarnational provider of an understandable word in a particular culture or context. He concludes by calling for the correlative responses of invocatory prayer as essential for preaching, of cultural embodiment in preaching, and of “hospitable conversation that is inclusive of many tongues” (82).

McKenzie, who has spent much of her academic career exploring the homiletical possibilities in Wisdom traditions, proposes “Homiletical Theology as a Sapiential Hermeneutic.” With Jacobsen, she accents its “practical and constructive” tasks, since “homiletical theology is the exercise of practical wisdom” (88). Thus, the emphasis is on the priority of prudential reasoning, generatively modeled by a preacher-sage, but reciprocally embodied by the community as a whole in faithfully confronting life’s moral complexities.

As practical wisdom, Pasquarello finds the orienting literature of homiletical theology not in the sagacious sayings and poetry of the Bible, but in its “foundational narratives” culminating in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is these privileged narratives that are humanly rehearsed and divinely actualized within the liturgical assembly. That this traditional

Reformation construal can lead to practical wisdom, Pasquarello finds illustrated in the anti-Nazi witness of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He argues that Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology, identifying the visible church as the sociological embodiment of Jesus Christ today, identifies the context of preaching and the impulse for mission over against cultural co-optations.

The collection concludes with discussions of method. Allen identifies homiletical theology as intentional reflection at every stage in the spiral movement of sermonic construction, so that preaching is an interpretive work of the reflective and self-reflective theological practitioner in dialogue with the experience and theology of the congregation. Similarly, Stricklen Eisenlohr declares, "*Most simply, homiletic [sic] theology is a way of thinking theologically through the preparation of any given sermon*" (160). The difference is that Allen's spiral movement embraces not only sermonic *preparation*, but also "the moment of preaching" itself and "the congregation's response to the sermon afterward" (136). Thus, Allen's feedback loop potentially engenders and constructively tilts toward fresh theological discoveries.

In the compass of this brief review it is difficult to summarize fairly or assess responsibly the various, perhaps incommensurate, viewpoints coexisting in this volume. Those who think theology matters for preaching and preaching matters for theology can take heart by the attempts found in this volume to map their complex interplay. Likewise, those who remain puzzled or unpersuaded by the project as such can take note that there is apparently more to come.

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Ronald J. Allen and O. Wesley Allen Jr. *The Sermon without End: A Conversational Approach to Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2015. 155 pages. \$29.99.

Postmodernity is mostly characterized as the *end* of modernity and homogeneity. What preachers in postmodernity may find even more difficult is that the previously taken-for-granted understanding of truth, practice and experience, and the ethical values of Christianity are being vastly challenged, relativized and/or multiplied. In light of this postmodern context, Ronald J. Allen and O. Wesley Allen Jr. present their breath-taking book *The Sermon without End*. Viewed in its entirety, the book is structured based on this guiding question: “How shall the church and its preachers respond to the changing cultural contexts of postmodernity?” (12)

While acknowledging that the underlying question is the dialectical tension between church(es) and culture(s), the authors reintroduce the historically important, but almost forgotten notion of *apologetics* in homiletical discourse to describe how the church engages culture. For the postmodern context, they propose a *postapologetic* homiletical approach, “seeking critical reciprocity between the many and varied voices in, around, and outside of the church” (xiii).

Chapter one deals with the three broad approaches to apologetics that have dominated modernity: evangelicalism, liberalism, and postliberalism. The authors argue that, though they seem to be sharply differentiated from each other, they still can be brought under the umbrella notion of apologetics in that they are in inseparable relation to it either by accepting or rejecting it. Thus, each section comprises of description of the characteristics of each neighborhood, followed by description and critical reflection on apologetics in each pulpit in modernity.

Chapter two develops the understanding that the modernistic apologetic approach is gradually losing its contextuality. Thus, it is necessary to be substituted with something that reflects postmodern reality, namely a postapologetic, conversational approach to theology and preaching. While granting that each neighborhood is moving in the same direction, Ron Allen and Wes Allen assert that they all stop short of a fully conversational approach. Indeed, theirs is a deeply theological and homiletical endeavor to bring about *reciprocal conversation* of commendation and critique of Christian faith and postmodern pluralism by engaging the categories of and sources for making meaning.

Chapter three brings postapologetic preaching as conversation into closer focus. Exploring the qualities of authentic postapologetic conversation, the authors name the qualities of authentic conversational preaching in terms of its purposes and ethics. Conversational sermons must “contribute to postmodern individuals’ and communities’ approaches to *making meaning* in a pluralistic setting by offering a *tentative* interpretation of, experience of, and response to God’s character, purposes, and good news” (102). The authors also suggest that conversational preachers must be attentive to valuing the *reciprocity* and *asymmetry* inherent in the conversational sermonic act (104).

The last chapter of this book offers practical advice for preparing and embodying a conversational sermon along with a case study. The authors do not provide a completely new method of sermon preparation. Rather, they name *listening* for mutual conversation and transformation as the most important qualities of a preacher. Still, there are two main differences in the preparation of a conversational sermon. First, the preacher does not assume that a biblical text (or texts) will control the sermon. Second, the preacher should be open to other voices than scripture and tradition, which challenge and expand our making meaning of God, world and self.

This book deserves to be widely applauded. It provides a post-apologetic lens to illuminate the history of various modern homiletical discourses even as it envisions a

postmodern one. A conversational homiletic based on mutually critical, correlational models of theological method in the tradition of Tracy and Williamson is extremely appealing to homileticians and preachers who find themselves swimming in the sea of postmodernity. The authors' writing style is easy to read and understand. Their bibliography on the conversational school in chapter three will enable those who learn more about conversational preaching to pursue their own study.

Of course, there are a couple critical questions to be raised. First, postliberal homileticians probably question whether the postapologetic lens can even be applicable to them. As Schleiermacher indicates in his *Brief Outline of Theology as a Field of Study*, there are two different type of church directions (including discourses), which are apologetic-outward and polemic-inward. Taking this understanding seriously, postliberals may rebut the conversational approach as it is too much focused on apologetic-outward move, lacking in a polemic-inward move and thus weakening the identity of church. Second, some people may resist the authors' optimistic view of conversation, which can sometimes happen on many *radically* different levels, angles, and ways in a certain context. Though this model takes subjectivity, particularity, and diversity seriously, the question of whether they can be fully and contextually considered remains.

Despite these questions, I strongly recommend this book for homileticians, preachers, and lay people alike. Numerous insightful suggestions for conversational preaching will benefit those both in academy and parish to engage in mutual conversation and transformation beyond their own boundaries in this postmodern era. Teachers of preaching will also find this book's breadth and depth extremely valuable to help students understand three different, but sometimes overlapping neighborhoods, and thus motivate them to develop their own contextual theology of preaching.

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Christine Helmer. *Theology and the End of Doctrine*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014. 196 pages. \$27.24.

Christine Helmer of Northwestern University has written a fascinating work on the place of doctrine in theology and religious studies. The result is a fascinating read that names the “end” of doctrine in a two-fold sense: the end of a certain, authoritative understanding of doctrine and the “end” that is doctrine’s purpose relative to its divine referent.

The first sense of doctrine’s ending is embodied in the development, in reaction to Schleiermacher, which sees theology as non-referential and focused on authorizing a kind of ecclesial identity. The goal with Helmer’s portrayal is not, however, to succumb to the old anti-Schleiermacher reading that relegates his theological work to “culture” or “experience,” but acknowledges that doctrine itself is experience- and culture-bound by virtue of the fact that it is socially constructed. Ironically, Helmer points out, Barth himself is *comfortable* with the social construction of doctrine, in that every doctrinal formulation becomes subject to the judgment of the eternal Word of God. In this way, Helmer suggests that this “end” of theology as a discourse of the absolutely grounded is something that we can all live with, given the sordid history of dogmatic authoritarianism. The end of doctrine is near.

And yet, long live doctrine! Also, in Barth, we see a desire to set a new “end” for doctrine, an end in the sense of telos or reference. Theology is not merely some reducible science divisible by culture or politics or any other human project without remainder. Theology is about God. And it is this strange “reality” that gives doctrine some ongoing life and value, not as authoritative propositions, but precisely in our attempt to think theologically through culture and experience in relation to God. Here, Schleiermacher, now re-read beyond the flattened reading of Brunner (and perhaps Barth), offers help. This is all the more necessary since it is precisely the issue of reference that is bracketed in the late-twentieth-century theological model offered by Lindbeck’s use of Geertz’s notion of culture with a view toward understanding doctrine as a type of cultural grammar, possessing “sense,” but not tested by external “reference.”

In a creative ending Helmer draws conclusions for a theological discourse that has relegated doctrine to “rules” for perpetuating the church’s unique cultural identity and a religious-studies discourse that cannot but help reduce the phenomenon of “religion” to its cultural, political, or psychological cognates. Helmer envisions both fields as reanimated by moving past the end of doctrine in the authoritative sense and the end or purpose of doctrine is “...divinity and its manifold relations to the created world. It has to do with the living reality of God.” This involves, for Helmer, the task of predication, which multiplies theology’s meaning across new frames of reference in different historical moments. Doctrine has an end, for Helmer, which goes beyond totalizing unities and reaches instead for critical reflection on the language of divinity itself.

In my view, this book is significant for homiletical theology in important ways. Homiletics often loses its theological nerve. By that, I do not mean that theology is absent from what we do, but rather that we find ourselves at an analogous impasse: somewhere between a vitiated theology that can no longer speak theologically beyond the re-inscription of culture, or politics or power and a view of theology cut off from a world of reference in the name of faithful language of the church’s cultural grammar. Theology is and should be risky business. Helmer does us the favor of taking this difficult theological conversation further—somewhere beyond to the end of doctrine, which may actually be the beginning of theology naming something new.

For my part, I will be recommending this book to homiletics doctoral students—even

though, Helmer's book is at points a challenging read. However, the focus of her argument belongs in any M.Div. class where a theology of the gospel for this time and place, in this context/situation, still needs to be spoken. If the end of doctrine is the relinquishment of an authoritative discourse that overwrites culture, experience, and culture, then let it end. But if, as Helmer points out, the end of doctrine is the reality of God in and through context and experience, and not merely a re-inscribing of an epistemic privilege, then bring it on. In this respect, Helmer's book may just help homiletics scholars and emerging preachers alike to learn to name God into the world again.

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Leah D. Schade. *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology, and the Pulpit*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2015. 208 pages. \$23.99.

Creation-Crisis Preaching draws from ecofeminist theology and homiletic theory to provide an assessment of the urgency for the need for repentance from collective guilt of “ecological sin” and to embrace the Earth and its most vulnerable human and non-human creation alike with a renewed sense of reverence. In seven chapters plus an introduction, Schade makes a strong connection between human rights, civil liberties, and the moral obligation to safeguard the Earth’s existence. The text provides a theologically informed redirection of conventional narratives about the environment by addressing topics ranging from the expansion of nuclear weapons, “anthropogenic climate change,” and economic injustices as contrary to Biblical mandates.

The book addresses the problematic aspects of nicely packaged, emotionally manipulative rhetoric that intends to control ideas and information in support of hegemonic structures as agents of environmental discrimination. For example, sociologist Robert D. Bullard’s findings indicate that “government and business elites in the United States have targeted black communities for polluting industries, municipal landfills, and toxic-waste dumps, even while these enterprises are touted as job-creators for these impoverished communities” (20). Furthermore, job-creation talk ignores problems associated with systemic wage disparities, health risks, and broad forms of habitat destruction. Solvents and other forms of industrial waste affect air, ground water, and soil--each essential for life for all creatures.

Schade devotes the book to the art and discipline of crisis preaching to “help listeners find common ground for communicating about how we may proclaim God’s word of justice, hope, reconciliation, and healing for the Earth’s community, inclusive of humanity” (35). A significant portion of the book presents ecofeminism at the heart of moral resolution for humankind and essential for human survival. Early in the book, Schade presents three major branches of radical ecology: deep ecologists, social ecologists, and ecofeminist ecologists who are committed to dismantling patriarchal values, exploitive tendencies, and authoritarianism such that humanity will love and respect nature as self. Throughout the text, the author stresses that human creatures have a high level of interconnectivity with nature while abandoning nature with limited appreciation for the intrinsic value of all of creation. Such disregard for the Earth functions as an extension of sexism and hostile intergroup relations. The author could have placed more emphasis on the elements of Western society that deny the existence of an ecological crisis. An essential part of the social gospel entails raising consciousness among the masses with regards to humanity’s relationship with nature, the state of the Earth, and a call to direct action.

The book’s primary audience includes clergy, practical theologians with an emphasis in homiletics, activists, and scholars of social movements and peace studies. All should find the book equally beneficial. The timeliness of *Creation-Crisis Preaching* rests in its moral appeal to expand one’s definition of neighbor beyond the human creature, with preaching functioning as a viable means to that end. Schade provides the reader with the following three approaches to preaching within the context of crisis: consciousness-raising, call for action, and transformation on the individual and cultural levels. Furthermore, the author urges preachers to use parables in order to invite critical thinking while utilizing intuitive faculties with regards to such moral issues. A helpful feature of the text includes the exposure of common rhetorical strategies that promote inactivity through subliminal scare tactics and the discouragement of change. The

author provides sample sermons designed to create enough outrage to provoke action and progressive social movements. It would have been helpful for the author to mention the role propaganda plays in a politically charged and polarized context that ultimately impacts the church. Although environmentalism transcends liberal and conservative ideals, its subjection to the ebb and flow of partisan politics has further functioned as a means for promoting indifference to the Earth as a fragile entity. *Creation-Crisis Preaching* challenges the audience's assumptions about the boundaries of moral consideration.

The author critiques misogyny as producing values that transfer from oppression against women to nature. Throughout the book, Shade demonstrates how preaching can instill positive associations with the natural world and women through the mindful use of metaphors and images. Beyond the book's theme of ecojustice, it provides a useful guide for bridging the gap between the rhetoric of preaching and the response of direct action among individuals and groups. Ultimately, preaching aims to bring action into fruition. Attitudinal readjustments, personal conviction, and acceptance of a new revelation function as the first steps towards an active response.

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Ronald F. Thiemann. *The Humble Sublime: Secularity and the Politics of Belief*. London: I. B. Taurus, 2014. 255 pages. \$90.

The Humble Sublime is an extraordinary book. Its title refers to a writing practice, one celebrated by Auerbach in his *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Thiemann links the humble sublime to what he calls “sacramental realism,” a mode of representation in language that refuses ultimately to split *signum* and *res*. He then argues that its own view manages to hold on to the notion that God’s revelation is precisely in, with and under the ordinary--a uniquely Lutheran view of sacramental theology lies underneath. Its power, however, comes from joining it to the writing practice of the humble sublime, thus revealing how this particular way of thinking about reality and representation underlies Western literary practice. In Thiemann’s careful handling, Luther’s sacramental theology perdures as a kind of culturally engaged theo-poetic that, in the end, can through the witnesses of figures like Anna Akhmatova, Langston Hughes, George Orwell, and Albert Camus (the subjects of chapters 2-5 respectively) who themselves lived in dark times, inform even public theology and political life. In a striking way, Thiemann’s book passes through the author’s own “dark times.” While completing the book, Dr. Thiemann is struggling with pancreatic cancer, which ultimately took his life in 2012. While this aspect of autobiography is not often thematized in the book, it pokes through, at points, in revealing and poignant ways. And in this way, this extraordinary book succeeds by becoming mysteriously ordinary even in the face of death.

In many respects, the foil for this book is the philosopher Charles Taylor in *Sources of the Self* (1989) and *A Secular Age* (2007). Early on, Thiemann unpacks elements of Taylor’s important works and the way he portrays the rise of modernity. Taylor argues that modernity has shifted away from a kind of enchanted world of the medieval system of seven sacraments, which conceived of the human self as “porous” to external supernatural forces. Instead, modernity shifts toward a secular world marked by disenchantment and a human self “buffered” and operating in a more “immanent frame.” Of course, modern “disenchantment” hardly describes the vibrant religious context of what we often now call a “postsecular age.” Taylor’s work is much more nuanced than such a secularization sledgehammer. For Taylor, secularization is not about “subtracting” God or the sacred, but rather understanding reality in a way that does not necessarily *require* God. What strikes Taylor is that in the medieval world, reality is so oriented to the supernatural that it can be conceived in no other way. Late modernity, by contrast, is a context where it is *plausible* to understand reality in an immanent frame, even apart from God.

Thiemann worries that Taylor’s notion of disenchantment rules out the possibility of an ordinary sacramental theology that embraces the “in, with, and under” reality where revelation happens *sub contrario*. Thiemann rightly sees Luther in continuity with some key elements of the catholic understanding of sacraments. At the same time, Luther’s shift of focus to the external word of Christ’s promise/command in connection the sign participates in this same, classic Protestant, disenchanting change. Luther’s understanding of real presence is tied uniquely to the external word that makes it possible for him to revise the Eucharistic prayer in terms of Testament. I wondered at points whether Taylor actually was the proper foil for this part of Thiemann’s argument. The affirmation of the ordinary is a powerful driver of the Reformation legacy on the changing cultural scene. One might argue that this particular Reformation shift under the influence of disenchantment explains precisely how the beautiful ambiguities of “sacramental realism” hold such mysterious power in literature and philosophy long after the sacramental universe of medieval Catholicism, like its emerging Protestant counterparts,

undergoes disenchantment in modern and Enlightenment forms.

The mysterious yet ordinary Emmaus feast that is *The Humble Sublime* is particularly sumptuous in the chapters on Akhmatova, Hughes, Orwell, Camus, and in part, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. These chapters are rich and worth reading for homileticians and preachers alike. A careful read of Akhmatova and Langston Hughes in particular will yield great insight for preachers and teachers of preaching who share in a recurring theo-poetic task. The “humble sublime,” as it appears in their writing practice, and in wonderful works of visual art described throughout the book, can aid the field of homiletics and the practice of preaching to rediscover how sacramental realism might shape more deeply a language of preaching that struggles with naming divine presence in ways that can bear the weight of truth in dark times. I recommend this book highly.

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Kimberly Bracken Long and David Maxwell, eds. *Inclusive Marriage Services: A Wedding Sourcebook*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2015. 211 pages. \$22.

It is unusual indeed for a wedding sourcebook to begin with the words, “Marriage is not for everybody” (xiii). This startling introduction is perhaps an appropriate sign to the reader that the volume seeks to engage the complex and changing realities of marriage and family life for 21st –century Christians in the United States. In response, the contributors offer resources and guidance for pastors and couples seeking to design inclusive marriage services that also affirm and echo the language of traditional Christian marriage rites.

Part 1 of the volume contains four original inclusive marriage liturgies. Inclusive here is broadly defined, extending beyond the predictable gender neutral language required for same-gender first-time marriages to acknowledgment of the diversity of relationships that precede the decision to enter into Christian marriage. The contributors include liturgies for partners who have been in relationship for many years, who already have children together, who are blending families with children from previous relationships, who have been married outside of the church, or in which one partner is not Christian. Still, many of the resources are appropriate for first-time opposite gender weddings, especially for those couples seeking language and images that reject gender essentialism in terms of expectations for the partners in a marriage. These feminist commitments extend to almost exclusively non-gendered language for God in the liturgies as well. Besides the newly written liturgies, the editors also compile five additional inclusive services from English-speaking denominations around the world including the United Church of Christ, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Church of Canada, the Uniting Network of Australia, and the Church of Scotland.

In Part 2 of the sourcebook, additional liturgical material, hymns, and prayers for particular marriage-related occasions are offered. The additional liturgical material presents each part of the service separately (e.g. Greeting, Call to Worship, Vows, Communion Liturgy) so that the pastor or couple could design a service by selecting each of these items separately. This section includes some new material as well as the parts lifted from the previously presented full liturgies. This offers maximum flexibility and creativity in terms of worship design for a pastor and presents a unique pastoral opportunity to encourage couples to engage in theological and personal reflection together as they discuss which pieces are most appropriate to their religious commitments and relationship. One weakness of this section is that it lacks notation regarding from which full liturgy each piece was taken.

The volume aids in hymn selection for a marriage service by including four hymns with original lyrics set to traditional tunes, and an essay on “Music at Weddings” which suggests classic hymns. Other “Practical Concerns” addressed in the essays in Part 3 include interfaith weddings, same-gender weddings, couples with children, wedding symbols, wedding processions, scripture suggestions, sermon ideas, and the relationship between the sacraments and marriage rites. One general concern about the essays is that they are neither signed nor footnoted. It would have been helpful to know if the insights shared were from the academic work of the contributors, their pastoral experience, or both. But the lack of attribution or citation made this impossible to discern. That said, the essay on including children seemed particularly insightful about the appropriate participation of children of varying ages and sensitive to the complexity of including children who may not be supportive of their parent’s new relationship. Similarly, the essay on same-gender weddings carefully addresses pastoral concerns of weddings as an opportunity for wounds related to rejection by church and family to be reopened but also a

chance to offer both healing and grace. The essay however lacks sensitivity to bisexual identity by using language about same-gender couples interchangeably with “gay and lesbian couples” (191). The volume in general also fails to seriously consider transgender or gender-queer people in its liturgies or essays, which exacerbates a false binary of same-sex weddings in which the participants are cis-gender and gay/lesbian, versus opposite-gender weddings in which the participants are cis-gender and straight. While this oversight does not undermine the usefulness of this volume, acknowledgment of the complexity of the sexual orientation and gender identity of those who offer themselves in marriage is necessary in order to fulfill the stated desire of the editors, that “one day this book will become obsolete, and all marriage rites will be fully inclusive” (xvi).

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David A. Hollinger. *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015. 228 pages. \$22.95.

In *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History*, University of California, Berkeley, Emeritus historian David A. Hollinger provides a collection of essays that show how “liberalizing Protestants” “became great organizers, institution builders, and social reformers, searching for ways to enact what they understood to be Christian ideals” in the civic arena. The 2013 volume is new in paperback for 2015. The title of the book comes from Acts 2:1-11, which recounts how “devout Jews of every nation” begin speaking one another’s languages “with cloven tongues.” Hollinger uses the passage as a metaphor for exploring how the faithful reconstitute their identities after recognizing the revelatory dynamism of human multiculturalism. The preface and chapter 2 capture central arguments of the volume and offer advanced students in worship a sophisticated look at the cultural evolution of mainline Protestantism in the United States.

For Hollinger, liberalizing Protestants also adapt by learning to digest modern epistemologies; a focal point in his writing is scientific discovery as resources to move into post-Protestant modes of thinking and being. They produce an “intellectual gospel,” that “dispensed altogether with” faith in Christ but perpetuated through an “ethic of science” morals and values “learned within a Christian milieu” (82-102). Without oversimplifying the modern rivalry between the scientific community and committed Christians for cultural capital in the early twentieth century, Hollinger suggests how science became a kind of religious calling unto itself, in addition to the protestant acceptance of scientific discovery.

Subsequent essays characterize William James as modeling a scientific calling. James’s searches for God did not result in faith but protestant liberalization. Hollinger’s narration of James could help students taking worship courses to fulfill requirements see other fruits of theological inquiry, even ones detached from the faith they once knew.

After Cloven Tongues of Fire also includes fine-grained analyses about how the discovery or investigation of a tacit religious identity like Jewishness can illuminate fields of inquiry or bring new dimensions to a figure’s train of thought. Consider two examples from Hollinger. First, he suggests how understudied and unarticulated Jewish identities in research about feminism need to be made explicit because that knowledge is vital for having the whole story. If Jewish women were a majority and central presence within leadership of feminist movements in the United States, why isn’t feminism associated with Jewish identity in the same way that social reforms with respect to race are associated with Protestantism (146)? Here, his questioning also entails more than meets the eye. It reconsiders “identity politics” to think about how to attribute ideas and actions to particular peoples without confining them to any population. Second, Hollinger also pulls from his own intellectual autobiography to recall how Frederic Wakeman disclosed that Hollinger’s mentor, Joseph R. Levenson anchored works like *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy* in a deep profound concern about “communal Jewry in North Atlantic West” (164). Identities figure into scholarship in a myriad of latent and indirect but powerful ways. Instructors looking for a nuanced and challenging investigation of how human identity influences scholarship will find Hollinger’s assertions provocative and his questions and recommendations bold and necessary.

The concluding essays of Hollinger’s volume reminisce about his formation as a historian and the generational serendipity he experienced in finishing a doctorate when jobs were plentiful. Another piece reflects upon a three-year Lilly Endowment consultation addressing concerns

about the rising secularity in university education. Hollinger summarizes the proceedings and responds to unnamed (but clearly remembered) interlocutors who questioned his secular position that Christianity has enjoyed ample reach within U.S. higher education. His final article “pushes” religious liberals to debate within their religious communities for the sake of creating public discourse about religious ideas that has more “cognitive plausibility” (199). It also encourages critical engagement with religious ideas in general rather than choosing to avoid them. Hollinger promotes as an alternative attending to democratic etiquette that checks sectarian ways of entering into conversation that may dismantle robust and charitable cultural conversation and learning. An epilogue closes *After Cloven Tongues of Fire*. It meditates upon the cultural savvy of Richard Niebuhr to curate elements from protestant Christianity to resource thoughts for actions faithful to the urgencies of his time. Though the cohesion between essays is not always apparent, researchers and teachers of worship will find in *After Cloven Tongues of Fire* guiding lights for understanding how U.S. Christianity divided into associations “evangelical” and “ecumenical” and how the latter worked for change on earth as in heaven.

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Jeanette S. Jouili. *Pious Practice and Secular Constraints: Women in the Islamic Revival in France and Germany*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015. 272 pages. \$23.46.

Pious Practice and Secular Constraints: Women in the Islamic Revival in France and Germany by Jeanette S. Jouili presents reflections of realistic experiences, voices, and aspirations of the author's Muslim interlocutors, gathered during the years of her fieldwork in the conservative Islamic revival circles and movement, found in French and German societies from 2008 through 2011. Her text also expertly interweaves various professional reflections of Islamic and European thinkers, as well as North American contemporary scholars (21).

This volume consists of seven chapters. In Chapter 1 (1–26), as her book title describes, Jouili, portrays how pious European Muslims, living in European public spheres, have been historically, educationally, and socially discriminated against as ‘a problem-space (13, 95)’ on grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief/practices. She especially exposes the visible as well as invisible discrimination and struggles young Muslim women, born and raised in Europe, are concretely facing. These situations continue to prevail, even though there have been equal treatment policies for women in Europe, regardless of religion or belief, disability, race or ethnicity, age, gender, or sexual orientation.

In Chapter 2 (27–56), on the basis of the experiences of those she interviewed in the classes and gatherings she attended, Jouili tries to provide an accurate account of how pious young European Muslim women in their everyday lives, study and learn about authentic Islamic knowledge, including orthodox Islamic norms and practices, as a cognitive activity, and Islamic faith, as an affective-oriented activity. Of additional importance, she discusses the functions of the Islamic communal centers. Thereby, she compares this kind of educational process in a positive way with the integrated pedagogical patterns of Aristotelian ethics and ethical *praxis*. Through this kind of learning process, Islamic women learn and practice self-transformation, self-cultivation, and self-governance as a form of continuous self-discipline, as an important element of the process of pious practices in their daily lives. As a result of her research, she points out that by focusing on the study of Islamic knowledge and faith cannot be merely limited to the dimension of individuals. Rather, it is connected with the “well-being of the Muslim community, *umma*” (49–51) as a whole.

However, Jouili observes that it is never easy for young Muslim women “to [freely] practice Islamic norms and ethical requirements in their own everyday life, especially in the hostile or sometimes violent context of contact with the non-Muslim Other” (55). Even orthodox Muslim women's pious practices used to be underestimated as unintelligible, unthinkable, suspicious, and undesirable in terms of lifestyles and practices through the mainstream discourse within the non-Muslim environment. In this regard, in Chapters 3 and 4, similarly, Jouili chronicles and focuses on various struggles, obstacles, dilemmas, and complications facing young Muslim women, as pious revival practitioners, as they attempted to put orthodox Islamic ethical and pious self-cultivation into practice in their mundane life. Likewise, within the non-Muslim and secular public sphere, for instance, they encountered consistent resistance as they attempted to honor their ritual practices such as the daily punctual exercise of the five ritual prayers, in the workplace, *salat*, and their choice to wear the veil, the *hijab*, in public areas. Jouili also introduces how Islamic women, individually and collectively, confidently identify themselves as *Muslims* (*persons living a God-pleasing life*, 100), a reflection of their dignity, self-worth, and self-realization of being Muslim women, while criticizing public discourses on gender issues and Islam.

In Chapters 5-6 (121–186), Jouili investigates the importance of education as having a divine purpose, *telos*, among Islamic women and introduces how they negotiate and compromise their pious practices in public spheres, but are never hampered by outside constraints. In Chapter 7 (187–199), she articulates how Islamic women, surviving as a religious and racialized minority in both countries, especially since 9/11, strive to retain and revitalize their Islamic virtues and practices within the heart of the mainstream society. Thereby, she finally evaluates and concludes European-born Muslim women, as active and critical agents, not only accept their own religious and pious practices as life itself in its unique Islamic way, but, as pious ethical European citizens, they also strive to embody and pursue “the common good and social justice (199) as social commitment/actions to *being with*, not to *being*” (20) through their own particular religious ethics while desiring co-existence with other persons within a pluralist European society.

For those whose research and interests are closely related to the subjects of Islam and anti-Muslim violence in Western Europe, secularism, multiculturalism, pluralism, gender issues, and various situations of violence against Muslim women in France and Germany, in particular, what might be the alternative solution to living together with civility and in harmony in a pluralist society or world, in the aftermath of Paris terror attacks of November 13, 2015? Jeanette S. Jouili’s recently published study, based on the research of her Ph.D. dissertation, is thoroughly well written and presents timely ethnographic research and discursive resources for a better understanding of those issues.

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Mark A. Miller. *Roll Down, Justice! Sacred Songs and Social Justice*. Dallas, TX: Choristers Guild, 2015. 108 pages. \$39.95.

This fall, pianos and voices around the sacred music world have the opportunity to meet the words and melodies of Mark A. Miller's long-awaited compilation of "23 songs for congregational, solo, or ensemble use in worship." *Roll Down, Justice!* is a book of mostly new music by one of the most resonant modern authors of justice-seeking sacred music.

The spiral-bound compilation contains three major features. The first half offers Miller's 23 pieces arranged for piano and voice. The second half contains simplified (single melody line), bulletin-sized arrangements for congregational use. Finally, the purchase includes a demo CD featuring piano and a single female voice. With the exception of a few previously licensed pieces (e.g. "What Does the Lord Require of You?" and "Welcome"), all of the congregational arrangements are free to be copied for congregational use without license. The multiple formats in the book and the limited licensing restrictions make the music extremely accessible to all worship planners and participants.

Most pieces offer Miller's signature arrangements which feature original poetry and scripture set to memorable melodies. These are interwoven with significant, mood-setting piano accompaniments. A few of the vocal lines split into harmony for added effect, and three pieces are written for SATB ("What Does the Lord Require of You?," "Make Me an Instrument of Peace," and the earth justice song, "I Am Your Mother"). One song ("Come Out!") comes with no accompaniment as a hauntingly simple melody with revolutionary lyrics to be sung with the subversive tempo marking "Slowly, like a field song." Congregations, choirs, or soloists could sing all of the pieces, but their variety cries out for use by innovative Christian and interfaith worship leaders and social activists as more than just traditional hymns or anthems. For example, several of the shorter songs beg to be added to the protest songs of the millennial generation, including "Give God All the Praise" and "Journey Isn't Over" with its burning lyrics: "From Seneca Falls, from Selma, to Stonewall, we've come a long way, but the journey isn't over!"

As is the case with any profound music, Miller and his lyricists draw from the significant experiences of their times and lives, using the depth of personal emotion to resonate with universal experiences. Several of the most moving pieces in the collection have come out of tragedies that occurred in recent years.

Two years ago, Miller, a lifelong Methodist, watched United Methodist minister, Rev. Frank Schaefer, lose his clergy credentials after a church trial found him guilty for conducting the wedding of his gay son. The heartbreaking and sobering moment inspired Miller to create "Child of God," which moves from a slow and repetitive mantra for Queer and other oppressed people ("You are a child of God") toward the bold and triumphant proclamation from Romans 8 that there is nothing that can "separate you from the truth that you're someone, you are family, you are meant to be a child . . . of God!"

A year after Schaefer's trial, many, including Miller, were horrified when a Staten Island grand jury voted not to indict the white police officer who killed Eric Garner, an unarmed black father of six, who repeatedly cried out before his death, "I can't breathe!" Coinciding with the liturgical season of Advent, the decision drove Miller to write the waiting song, "How Long?" Here, he quotes the lamenting psalmist, Sam Cooke's 1964 civil rights song "A Change is Gonna Come", and Garner's own last words. As an Advent song, it brilliantly balances the season's often-shallow holiday cheer with the hard reality of the world's brokenness into which we call Christ's presence.

Finally, this past summer, our nation was devastated when a white supremacist killed nine at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston. When family members of the victims spoke of forgiveness and love at the shooter's bond hearing, they sparked a national dialogue about faithful and moral responses to evil and tragedy. They also inspired writer Lindy Thompson to send words of poetry to Miller. The result was "I Choose Love," which makes the mournful yet resolute affirmation of faith: "In the midst of pain, sorrow falling down like rain, I await the sun again, I choose love."

In the end, Miller achieves his goal of offering accessible, meaningful, and varied new works to the socially conscious repertoire of sacred music. In *Roll Down, Justice!* our communities of faith and social action are now blessed with 23 more tools for relevant and forward moving worship.

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