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Editorial

We, the co-editors of the *International Journal of Homiletics* along with the entire Editorial Board, are glad to present the third volume of our journal – containing six articles and a "Homiletical Squib" written by scholars from the United States, Korea, and South Africa.

In 2017 Protestant churches all over the world remembered and celebrated "500 years of Reformation." The first two articles in this journal offer a *homiletical* rereading of Martin Luther and John Calvin, two of the most important Reformers of the 16th century. Both articles show how fruitful it can be to reread homiletical traditions in order to find responses to today's questions about political preaching and preaching in the context of the life realities of refugees. *Timothy Andrew Leitzke* analyzes the ambiguity in Luther's positions towards political questions in his time and is well aware of the history of interpretation and misinterpretation of Luther's words in the centuries to come. By working through Luther's theology of Trinity, Leitzke develops a theologically grounded way of preaching politically in a Lutheran tradition. *Andrew Thomson Scales* shows the hermeneutical, societal and political background of Geneva in 1550 – a city in which almost half of the population (!) were refugees and the social tensions were immense. Calvin discovers the "plain sense" of the words of the prophet Micah in order to address Micah's words to the people of Geneva and to his diverse congregation directly. Scales argues that for Calvin, "God becomes *prochain*, the neighbor, and the decision to love the neighbor is a recognition that one cannot love God without treating others with justice and equity." At the same time, Scales' article highlights Calvin's covenantal theology and argues for what this theology may mean in discussions about preaching the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible.

The two following articles work on the theology of preaching in very different contexts. *David Schnasa Jacobsen* offers insights from the *Homiletical Theology Project* at Boston University School of Theology. The basic claim of this project is that "theology" is not something which is "applied" by the preacher, but is the inevitable "habitus" (disposition) of a preacher which dialogues critically and reflectively with texts, contexts and situations in the process of sermon preparation and preaching. Jacobsen writes: "Preaching is *doing* theology, for preachers and homileticians are specifically doing *contextual* theology of the gospel in relation to a text and/or situation." *Young Hyun Choi* analyzes the situation of the Protestant churches in Korea. He stresses the importance of preaching in these churches and describes the basic problem of an incorrect and deceptive theology, which he sees as the basis of too much Korean preaching. Instead of continuing this problematic theological path, he suggests rereading the tradition of apophatic theology (=negative

theology) in the works of Evagrius Ponticus. The reform of the Korean Protestant Church and of its preaching must begin with a reform of its theology. We are very glad to present this article in its Korean original version and in Peace Lee's (Duke, NC) translation.

Andrew Wymer, USA, presents a rather provocative article on preaching as "anti-fascist resistance." After carefully defining the terms *fascism* and *anti-fascism* he elaborates on a *homiletical anti-fascist minimum* and writes: "As I define it, the homiletical anti-fascist minimum is active resistance to palingenetic, populist, ultra-nationalism, and, in the particular context of the USA, active resistance to white supremacy." Wymer's own context is the United States in the time of Donald Trump's presidency, but his article, which questions the issue of "violence" in preaching in many aspects, is surely a valuable contribution to preaching in many contexts around the world.

Robert O'Lynn, also from the USA, asks fundamental questions on the relevance and result of preaching and is especially interested in the transformative dimension of preaching. Does preaching really transform the listeners/the congregation? His definition is as follows: "*Preaching is transformative when it is scripturally grounded, theologically informed, and culturally relevant.*"

Volume 3 of *IJH* closes with a "Homiletical Squib" written by *Johan Cilliers* from South Africa. Cilliers stresses the importance of *time* for preaching. The very same sermons can be terribly wrong or completely right – and it may not be a question of content, nor a question of space and congregation, but a question of time. *Timing grace* is Cilliers' phrase for the chance and mystery of preaching.

In August 2018 the 13th International Conference of Societas Homiletica took place at Duke University in the USA. The theme "Fearing God in a Fear-Filled World? Homiletical Explorations" proved to be extremely rich for homiletical discussions in an international context. We will present a selection of keynotes and papers in a *Supplementum Series* of our Journal soon – and are already looking forward to the next meeting of Societas Homiletica, which will take place in Budapest, Hungary, from July 24 to 29, 2020. In the meantime, we wish you a fruitful time reading the articles of this volume and invite you to submit your articles as well as reactions to the present articles to the editors.

On Behalf of the Editorial Board,

Alexander Deeg, University of Leipzig
Marlene Ringgaard Lorensen, University of Copenhagen
Co-Editors of *IJH*

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Luther's Trinitarian Homiletic as a Path to Preaching Social Justice

Timothy Leitzke

Abstract

How can we preach on current political and social issues without simply adding Christ's name to a political philosophy? More precisely, how can those who claim the heritage of Luther and the early Reformation do this? Luther withdrew from advocacy for the poor around 1525, and central parts of his theology (and the tradition that bears his name) emerged only after this withdrawal. This article argues that Luther's theology of preaching, which conceived of proclamation as part of the Trinitarian economy, provides a doctrinally sound method for preaching on matters of social justice. After establishing the early Luther's record on advocacy founded in the commandment to love neighbor and assessing reasons for Luther's about face on poor relief in 1525, the article examines Luther's understanding of preaching as "perichoretic," part of the movement of the Trinity. As such, preaching joins in God's mission to move people to acts of love of neighbor, sometimes acts that constitute great personal or material risk.

"As long as he doesn't preach politics from the pulpit!" That was the condition a Congregation Council member laid down for calling me as their pastor. While the ELCA parish I serve embraces social action, those sentiments were not entirely unknown within the fabric of congregational life, and probably would have prevailed at most mainline Christian congregations. Reasons vary, and I am not here to assess them all. I am interested in preaching that is faithful to Jesus' life, and to the call Jesus issues to us. In 2017, churches the world over marked the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, and acknowledged that since the Reformation is felt in every corner of Christianity we all have at least a little to do with Luther and his theology. As that anniversary recedes into the background, a fair question is, "What now?" Contrary to Luther's late-in-life assertion, Christ has a *lot* to do with politics and social justice. Must the Church today leave Luther behind in order to preach faithfully on contemporary political matters?

This is not an idle question. A draft of this essay took shape the same day that a group of interfaith clergy was arrested at the US Senate Office Building for protesting a bill that would cut taxes for the rich and corporations, while giving the poor little and eventually taking that little away.

That is political theology in action outside of worship. Can we talk about it in the pulpit? Can I preach it, being faithful to my understanding of Christ as Luther describes it? Luther's doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, reduced to its simplest form in De Lamar Jensen, states, "The church is necessary to comfort and strengthen believers; the state is to protect, supervise, and discipline them."[1] In such a worldview, the preacher must preach the gospel, and trust that the listener will act properly within the state. Experience argues this may be the best option: the most famous engagement with politics by the heirs of Luther's theology was in support of the Third Reich.[2] Nazis now march in American streets and political discourse has begun treating fascism as merely "right-leaning" political philosophy. Given Lutherans' legacy, the question may not merely be "can we" preach politics, but also "is it a good idea?"

In this essay, I will argue that Martin Luther's trinitarian homiletical theory provides an avenue for preaching on matters of current political importance. We need not merely thank Luther for starting the Reformation, then jettison him; his theology provides a strong doctrinal grounding for preaching on social justice. He does not, however, offer a clearly articulated template for such preaching. Luther cannot be treated in a vacuum; his work always responds to something in his life, and his interpreter must be aware of this. Thus, the essay begins with a description of the early Luther's work for social justice. Nonetheless, this is an essay, and I need to keep the scope manageable. The central point of this is Luther on preaching. Luther argues that preaching is a trinitarian act. After explaining what he means by that, I will explore what he thinks happens to believers when they hear preaching. This necessitates discussions of Luther's doctrine of ubiquity (how the God preached is really present in the world), and Luther's concept of suffering for the sake of one's neighbor. While these two concepts are rich and much can be said about them, I will keep the discussion centered on preaching. I will argue that Luther's trinitarian homiletic provides a path for preaching on political matters and sets conditions for what that can be.

1. Luther With and Against the Poor

It is commonplace among Luther and Reformation scholars to divide Luther's life into three periods. The demarcations differ, but usually involve a young Luther (from the start of his teaching career until roughly 1521 and his confrontation with Charles V), a Luther in mid-career (ca. 1521–1531, encompassing his confrontations with other reformers), and a later Luther (up to the end of Luther's life, and including his more shameful writings). By nearly any chronology, it is the young Luther who deals with matters of social justice most clearly.

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[1] *De Lamar Jensen*, Reformation Europe. Age of Reform and Revolution, Lexington, MA ²1992, 73.

[2] On the 455th anniversary of Luther's birth, the Lutheran bishop of Thuringia, Martin Sasse, joyfully celebrated Kristallnacht: "On November 10, 1938, on Luther's birthday, the synagogues are burning in Germany"; cf. James Carroll, Constantine's Sword. The Church and the Jews, New York 2001, 428.

1.1 The Young Luther on Social Justice

The young Luther became something of a folk hero for his attention to the poor. Poverty was one of the driving forces of the early Reformation. While precise figures were not kept and estimates are necessary, something on the order of 50 to 65 percent of the German population in 1517 lived day to day, and perhaps a quarter of the whole population was "chronically underfed."[3] Luther's early writings emerged in this situation. His *95 Theses* declared that it was better to give to the poor than to buy indulgences, and better for the poor to use their money on necessities than on indulgences.[4] Having gained the spotlight, Luther called for comprehensive poor relief. In *To the Christian Nobility* Luther decried the rampant begging in Germany. The problem was twofold: the grinding poverty caused by the general economy was compounded by mendicant orders that lived by begging. Luther branded these as "vagabonds and evil rogues," and calculated that the average city was "laid under tribute" by one or another order sixty times a year.[5] Luther addressed the "Christian Nobility" of Germany, writing, "nobody ought to go begging among Christians. It would even be a very simple matter to make a law to the effect that every city should look after its own poor, if only we had the courage and intention to do so."[6]

Luther also attacked money lenders. Luther doesn't conclude *To the Christian Nobility* without taking a shot at the bankers, writing, "We must put a bit in the mouth of the Fuggers and similar companies."[7] On the matter of usury Luther combined two dense sermons – known, cleverly, as the "Short" and "Long" sermons on usury – and with some additions, published in 1524 the pamphlet *Trade and Usury*. It contained such radical claims as lending at interest is permitted, as long as the lender also lends to the poor from whom the lender will never receive (or require) repayment.[8]

Luther pressed the issue of social justice within the Church and university with *The Freedom of a Christian*, written in Latin and published in November of 1520. After arguing that human inner nature, or the soul, cannot be changed by works but must be changed by Christ, Luther focuses on

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[3] Poverty figures are from *Catharina Lis* and *Hugo Soly*, Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-Industrial Europe, Atlantic Highlands 1979, 53–96. The figure on nutrition is from *Lee Wandel*, Social Welfare, in: Hans Hillerbrand (ed.), The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation, New York 1996, 4:77. Both references are in *Samuel Torvend*. Luther and the Hungry Poor. Gathered Fragments, Minneapolis 2008, 17.

[4] So, Thesis 43: "Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better deed than he who buys indulgences." And Thesis 45: "Christians are to be taught that he who sees a needy man and passes him by, yet gives money for indulgences, does not buy papal indulgences but God's wrath." And Thesis 46: "Christians are to be taught that, unless they have more than they need, they must reserve enough for their family needs and by no means squander it on indulgences" (LW 31:29).

[5] LW 44:190. Luther does not cite any sources or methods on this.

[6] LW 44:189.

[7] LW 44:213.

[8] "What He wants is that we should lend not only to friends, to the rich, and to those we like, who can repay us […] but that we lend also to those who are unable or unwilling to repay us, such as the needy and our enemies" (LW 45:291).

what the changed person does. Chiefly, she whose inner nature has been justified performs works of love for her neighbor.

> Although a Christian is thus free from all works, he ought in this liberty to empty himself, take upon himself the form of a servant, be made in the likeness of men, be found in human form, and to serve, help, and in every way deal with his neighbor as he sees that God through Christ has dealt and still deals with him.[9]

Lest there be confusion regarding what Luther means by "deal with his neighbor," Luther writes that a Christian ought to think: I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable, and salutary to my neighbor," and that a Christian, "does not distinguish between friends and enemies or anticipate their thankfulness or unthankfulness, but he most freely and most willingly spends himself and all that he has, whether he wastes all on the thankless or whether he gains a reward."[10] Christian Freedom is to be enjoyed as the freedom for costly love of neighbor.

As late as 1523, Luther was trying to help the city of Leisnig implement a parish structure for poor relief, trades education, general education, etc. The Elector of Saxony asked Luther to help enact the restructuring of parish finances now that parishes were calling their own pastors. The leaders of Leisnig parish wrote a "Fraternal Agreement on the Common Chest of the Entire Assembly at Leisnig." Luther endorsed the agreement, wrote a preface to it, and caused it to be published no later than July 6, 1523.[11] The agreement itself, not from Luther's hand, lays out comprehensive poor relief within the city, including the election of directors, definitions of who was genuinely poor (i.e. not a mendicant, professional beggar), and so on. In the preface, Luther anticipates those who will argue that such poor relief will be abused: "We have to expect that greed will creep in here and there. So what?"[12] Poor relief is not simply a pet cause of Luther's. It has theological and biblical roots. In that very "Preface," Luther indicated attention to social welfare was inherent in the practice of the earliest church. Samuel Torvend notes Luther's use of Acts 2:44f., commenting, "Next to the sharing of bread was set the sharing of all things commonly held."[13]

Then, the Peasants War happened.

1.2 The Peasants War

After the War, Luther ceased with the calls for comprehensive poor relief, the chief social justice issue of his day. Why? Arguments that he was a "conservative" reformer fail to account for his

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[9] LW 31:366.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Cf. LW 45:167.
[12] LW 45:173.
[13] *Torvend* (note 3), 106.

radical work.[14] Arguments that Luther was concerned for the inner person only fail to account for his focus on society.[15] However it is undeniable that Luther later in life said "Christ has nothing to do with politics," and that following the Peasants War he "allowed himself to be understood" as repudiating the relevance of the Gospel in public matters.[16] To understand why the Luther who wrote such radical tracts as a young man would deny Christ's involvement in politics, one must understand the War.

Luther had his role in the Peasants' War thrust upon him. In 1524 and 1525, peasant revolts broke out, centered in Swabia, Franconia, and Thuringia. While each group had its own aims and demands, the document known as the *Twelve Articles* became the most prominent articulation of the peasant position. In it the peasants requested power to appoint their own pastors, tithes to be handled by parishes, freedom from their condition of economic slavery, the right to hunt for game and to cut wood for fuel, freedom from forced labor and forced service to a noble beyond that already required by law, fairer rents, a return to German law (as opposed to new, Roman law), the return of common property seized by nobles, and an end to the "death tax" (a fee paid to a lord upon the death of a tenant). Finally, they offered to submit to correction if their demands could be shown to be in disagreement with the Word of God.[17] The peasants' leaders later appended a "list of acceptable judges" of theological matters, which included Luther and his right hand man, Philip Melanchthon.[18]

Luther had to respond. He received the *Twelve Articles* sometime in April of 1525, and took seriously the peasants' offer to submit to theological correction. By this time, the peasants had burned castles and monasteries in Thuringia, and Luther encountered hecklers on his preaching tour. Towns were surrendering to the peasant army, and atrocities were being reported to Luther. Luther prepared a long tract, the first half of which was an "Admonition to Peace," addressed to the peasants of Swabia, the second half of which was addressed to the "Other, Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants." His publishers broke this into two, separate tracts published days

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[14] For example, *De Lamar Jensen* says of Luther, "He was not ready for an all-out reform of both church and society at large"; cf. note 1, 70. One can only hold this position by determining that Luther's proposals were not meant literally, or by leaving unspoken the claim that when push came to shove, Luther could not go through with his own reforms (and I can't comment on what an author could have said). As *Lindberg* argues, "'radical' in its fundamental sense of going to the roots (radix) equally applies to Luther's conviction that Scripture alone is the norm of Christian faith"; cf. *Carter Lindberg*. The European Reformations, Malden (MA) ²2010, 12.

[15] Indeed, his shameful On the Jews and Their Lies, a comprehensive program for destroying a people because of their religion, was written in 1543. If Christ had nothing to do with politics, an angry Luther still did.

[16] Both quotes come from *Hans J. Hillerbrand*, 'Christ Has Nothing to do with Politics:' Martin Luther and the Societal Order, in: Seminary Ridge Review (13:2), Spring 2011, 9–24. The Luther quote, Hillerbrand translates from *Walther Kohler*, Dogmengeschichte als Geschichte des Christlichen Selbstbewusstseins. Das Zeitalter der Reformation, Zurich 1951, 64.

[17] Cf. LW 46:8–16.

[18] *Lindberg* (note 14), 156.

apart in early May 1525, and omitted the word "Other" from the title of the latter half. Thus, in fairness to Luther, it appeared that he had suddenly changed his mind when in fact he did not. [19]

In the *Admonition to Peace. A Reply to the Twelve Articles of the Peasants of Swabia*. Luther attempts to mediate the dispute, writing to the princes and lords, "we have no one on earth to thank for this disastrous rebellion, except you princes and lords;"[20] and to the peasants, that their mob mentality threatens to replace the lords' injustice with another.[21] Luther admonishes both peasants and lords, "Scripture and history are against you."[22] In *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants*, Luther judges the peasants guilty of three sins: deliberate violation of oaths to their lords, rebellion, and blasphemy (they call themselves Christians yet act this way). Luther urges the lords to pray to God, and then take up the sword. In terms disturbing to read today, Luther assures anyone killed fighting on the side of the rulers that they will die true martyrs, and assures the princes that the truly merciful action in this situation is the swift killing of the peasants.[23]

In late June or early July, Luther tried to explain his position in *An Open Letter on the Harsh Book Against the Peasants*. In it, Luther speaks of Two Kingdoms and the failure of the peasants to distinguish between them, as well as the way in which the "temporal sword" is in fact merciful.[24] There was no avoiding or wiggling out of the fact that Luther never really deviated from his initial claim on the matter, addressed to the starving peasants: "No matter how right you are, it is not right for a Christian to appeal to law, or to fight, but rather to suffer wrong and endure evil; and there is no other way."[25] Considering Luther's repeated appeals to the nobles of Germany on other matters, this statement was not kindly received.

All the complexity of the situation aside, there is one basic reason Luther supported the princes: *he* needed them. Luther, facing difficult odds in the Church, had asked the state for help in carrying out his reforms. The state and Luther were now in this together.[26] Hans Hillerbrand writes,

> Luther realized as early as January 1522 that reform – defined as the public establishment of the new forms of worship together with the dis-establishment of Catholic institutions, such as monasteries—would not succeed against the will of the political authorities.

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[19] Ibid., 158.
[20] LW 46:19.
[21] LW 46:23–37.
[22] LW 46:41.
[23] LW 46:49–55.
[24] LW 46:63–85.
[25] LW 46:31.
[26] As *Roland Bainton* noted, "Luther never dreamed that he was subordinating the Church to the state […]. Luther's concern was always that the faith be unimpeded. […] If the prince would render assistance, let it be accepted. If he interfered, then let him be disobeyed"; *Roland H. Bainton*, Here I Stand. A Life of Martin Luther, New York 1995, 245.

Accordingly, he gave priority to a concept of reform which had reformers and government proceed hand in hand […].[27]

In other words, Luther realized that he had cast his lot with the princes, upon whom he depended for his reforms. The Peasants' War threatened Luther's protectors. Luther could side with the peasants only by turning against the Elector who had challenged the Emperor on his behalf. Luther stuck with his Elector. I think this is the best explanation for how Luther could be so deeply concerned for the plight of the peasants prior to 1525, and then side with the princes and largely cease with comprehensive calls for poor relief after 1525.

2. What to do with Luther

I am Lutheran. I claim Luther's heritage, for better or for worse. Considering Luther's about face on caring for the vulnerable, why not just jettison Luther? Or, if not all of Luther, at least jettison the later Luther who has backtracked on justice? First, if nothing else, Luther provides a case study on how social justice preaching can get us into trouble, and how such a towering figure can be a cowering figure given the right circumstances. That is not, however, reason enough to retain his later works. Thus, secondly, Luther did important work later in his career. Luther's doctrine of ubiquity – or "real presence" – is what distinguishes "Lutheran" theology from other strands of the Reformation. Luther in middle and late career also developed his approach to the Trinity in a way that can be helpful today. These two doctrines, Trinity and Ubiquity, also provide a path to preaching on social justice. Moreover, they provide a path to such preaching that is rooted in doctrine and can potentially withstand the charge that it is simply attaching Christ to a political project.

2.1 The Trinity

Luther was Trinitarian. Pekka Karkkainen's essay, "Trinity," reminds us not to be surprised by this.[28] Karkkainen walks the reader through Luther's early comments on Lombard and Augustine, and his rejection of Scotus' claim that "the enjoyment of one Trinitarian person without the enjoyment of another is not contradictory"[29] before assessing developments according to the usual mid-career (ca 1521–31) and late career (1531–1546) divisions. Karkkainen argues that throughout Luther's works, he always assumes the Trinity. Karkkainen writes,

The Knowledge of God comes about in a Trinitarian form from the outset, first through the work of creation attributed to the Father, then through redemption attributed to the Son. Both of these are received through the gifts of the indwelling Spirit, who makes the

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[27] *Hillerbrand* (note 16), 18.
[28] *Pekka Karkkainen*, "Trinity" in Engaging Luther. A (New) Theological Assessment. Ed. Olii-Pekka Vaino, Eugene (OR) 2010.
[29] Ibid., 102.

work of the Trinity a reality *for us* through faith and incites us to love, which is the fulfillment of the law.[30]

The Trinity is not tacked on as an afterthought, but is rather a crucial piece of Luther's thought through which he directly undergirds his practical theology, in this case, his preaching.

Luther describes a developed doctrine of the Trinity in his commentary on John 14–16. This work exists in English translation as Volume 24 of the American, *Luther's Works*, entitled *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John*. As is often the case with the American Edition, the title is misleading. They are not sermons. Sometime after March 14, 1537 Luther began preaching on St. John, apparently in a timeframe roughly congruent to the Easter Season. Casper Cruciger took notes on what Luther said, removing all indications of where sermons began or ended. The result was a "sermonic commentary," which was published in three volumes in 1538 and 1539.[31] They aren't sermons anymore; the finished book is a commentary. Luther called this commentary, "the best book I have written."[32] Luther in late career says here what he wants known about the concepts in these rich chapters.

The heart of the matter is John 16:13, "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. For He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak."[33] Luther says that "here Christ makes the Holy Spirit a preacher."[34] Luther sees this preaching commission as having to do with the "Enthusiasts," reformers who believed they possessed and spoke a revelation of the Holy Spirit apart from Christ. According to Luther, here in John 16:13 Christ assures us that the Holy Spirit preaches only the Word, or *Logos*. "Christ sets bounds for the message of the Holy Spirit Himself. He is not to preach anything new or anything else than Christ and His Word. Thus we have a sure guide and touchstone for judging the false spirits."[35] In other words, if preaching contradicts Christ then the preaching cannot come from the Holy Spirit because the Spirit only speaks Christ and Christ promises us that right here in John 16:13. We are to judge a sermon by its adherence to Christ.

How does the Holy Spirit preach? Luther argues that in John 16:13–14 Jesus proves that the Holy Spirit is a true Being, a Person distinct from the Father and Son. The logic is simple. "If He [the Spirit] is to come […] to be sent or to proceed, also to hear and to speak, He must, of course, be something."[36] He cannot be the Father because the Father does not come and is not sent. Nor

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[30] Ibid., 106.
[31] Jaroslav Pelikan, in: LW 24:ix.x.
[32] LW 21:x.
[33] The translation is that of LW 24.
[34] LW 24:362.
[35] LW 24:363.
[36] LW 24:364.

can he be the Son, because the Son *already* came and is preparing to return (and is telling us about someone else who is about to come). Luther asks that we consider the natural flow of conversation. Scripture calls Jesus a Word which the Father speaks with and in himself. "Thus," Luther reasons, "there are two distinct Persons: He who speaks and the Word that is spoken, that is, the Father and the Son."[37] This is not much of a conversation, however, as you simply have speaker and word spoken. That wouldn't happen (apparently) with God. "It stands to reason that there must also be a listener where a speaker and a word are found. But all this speaking, being spoken, and listening takes place within the divine nature and also remains there […]."[38] Therefore, as all three persons are coeternal and coequal, "the Holy Spirit is the Listener from eternity." Thus, in just a few pages, Luther lays out the developed concept of the Trinity in the preaching act. The Father speaks the Son to the Spirit, who preaches Christ to people through proclamation. Preaching falls into perichoresis, the "dance of Trinity."

2.2 Ubiquity

Who is the Christ preached by the Spirit? To answer that, we turn to Luther's doctrine of ubiquity. Briefly stated, the doctrine of ubiquity says that Christ is everywhere, but only of any value to humans (as the Gospel) when he is bound to the Word and Sacraments. As with most of Luther's theological positions, ubiquity developed in response to current events. Luther in mid-career faced two major controversies. I already mentioned the "Enthusiasts" who believed that they now had the Spirit, who could speak freely through them in new ways. From the opposite direction, Luther faced Zwingli and his circle, who argued that Christ had ascended to the right hand of the Father and thus was not bodily present anywhere. The easiest response to either challenge was for Luther to side with the other, to fight the Enthusiasts by joining Zwingli or vice versa, but doing so would cause Luther to abandon much of his teaching.

Instead, Luther secured the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and opposed the Third person of the Trinity to both opponents. Prior to the controversies, Luther had held that the Holy Spirit took the written Word of God – within which Christ is merely an idea or example – and turned it into a Christ who is present, literally as the words of proclamation.[39] In the early Luther, Scripture is divided into letter and spirit, Law and Gospel. The Word as Letter is law: it places us alone in the world and demands that we act as it instructs. When preached, however, the Word becomes the promise of God because the Holy Spirit makes the Word Christ's saving presence among us.[40]

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[37] LW 24:364
[38] LW 24:364f.
[39] *Regin Prenter*, Spiritus Creator. Luther's Concept of the Holy Spirit (Tr. John M. Jensen), Philadelphia 1953, 108.
[40] Ibid., 114f. and 122.

In response to the Enthusiast claim to have the Spirit, Luther argued that the Spirit not only made the law into gospel, but also preached the law. One can read the law without having the Spirit. Such a reading is in the law's "First Use," and therefore does not work knowledge of sin. The law in its "Second Use," working knowledge of sin, is the proclamation of the Holy Spirit.[41]The Holy Spirit, Luther says, is present either naked in her majesty or clothed in her gifts. When preaching the second use of the law, the Holy Spirit is unveiled as the power of the law. When preaching the Gospel, the Holy Spirit is enveloped in her gifts, herself a gift to the faithful.[42] The Enthusiasts, Luther said, failed to see the Spirit clothed in her visible gifts – especially the Word and Sacraments – and therefore only had in their possession the God who judged them.[43] Rather than downplay the work of the Spirit, Luther had played up her responsibilities.

Luther undertook a similar path in using the Son to fend off Zwingli, amplifying the divinity of the man Jesus and declaring him present in two senses. Luther responded to Zwingli in his *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper* (1528). Luther cites the work of Occam and Biel, and their claim that there are three modes of being present in a particular place: the local, the definitive, and the repletive. Something is present *locally* when the space and object correspond exactly. (E.g. there are 20 oz of coffee in my cup, present locally.) Something is present *definitively* when the object or body is palpably in one place and is not measurable according to the dimensions of the place where it is. (Luther cites the expression "the devil is present in this house" and "the devil is present in this city" – clearly, the devil is not measurable or spread thinner when he moves beyond a house into the whole city.) Something is present *repletively* when it is simultaneously present in all places, in its wholeness yet without being measured. This mode of existence belongs to God alone.[44] This philosophical framework gave Luther a vocabulary for describing the real presence of Christ in communion.[45]

That philosophical framework was also available to Luther in discussions of the incarnation not proximately related to the Eucharistic Controversy. As Marc Lienhard writes, "The humanity must have its part in this omnipresence, for God cannot be separated from the man Jesus […]."[46] Lienhard does not use the phrase *hypostatic union*, but that is what he means. "To admit that God can be in any place independent of the man Jesus would be, according to Luther, fundamentally to

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[41] Ibid., 215.
[42] Ibid., 216.
[43] Ibid., 254–266.
[44] "… Scripture irresistibly forces us to believe that Christ's body does not have to be present in a given place circumscriptively [i.e. 'locally'] or corporeally, occupying and filling space in proportion to its size. For it was in the stone at the grave, but not in that circumscribed mode; similarly in the closed door, as they cannot deny. If it could be present there without space and place proportionate to its size, my friend, why can't it also be in the bread without space and room proportionate to its size?" (LW 37:215f.).
[45] LW 37:216f.
[46] *Marc Lienhard*, Luther. Witness to Jesus Christ (Tr. Edwin H. Robertson), Minneapolis 1982, 226.

put in question the incarnation itself and the revelation of God hidden in the humanity."[47] Consider Luther's words on the matter:

> Here you must take your stand and say that wherever Christ is according to his divinity, he is there as a natural, divine person and he is also naturally and personally there […]. But if he is present naturally and personally wherever he is, he must then be man there, too, since he is not two separate persons but a single person. […] [I]f you can say, 'Here is God,' then you must also say, 'Christ the man is present too.'
>
> And if you could show me one place where God is and not the man, then the person is already divided and I could at once say truthfully, 'Here is God who is not man and has never become man.' But no God like that for me![48]

Christ *has to be* everywhere, because Christ is God, and God is everywhere and God is revealed in Christ alone. Just as the Spirit may be present in one of two ways, so may Christ. Christ has a "General Presence" such that he is everywhere, but we cannot comprehend him in this way. We see Christ only in his "Personal Presence," in which "Christ freely binds himself to a particular place by the Word."[49] Christ is "useful" to us as the Gospel only when bound to the Word.

The Holy Spirit solved Luther's problem. If the Holy Spirit is she who makes Christ useful and present to us as the Word, then the Spirit's work has defeated both Zwingli and the Enthusiasts. In one fell swoop, Luther deals with both positions. For, the Spirit who makes Christ present as the Word and thus defeats Zwingli is the clothed Spirit, the gift, whom the Enthusiasts do not have. Luther's doctrine of the ubiquity deals with both controversies. The Enthusiasts cannot claim to have the Spirit as gift, because the Spirit as gift preaches Christ who does all the justifying work for us. Zwingli cannot defend the claim that the Son is not really present at Holy Communion, because the Spirit testifies to his presence in the Word.

Ubiquity would define Luther over against the rest of the Reformation, and it still does. Martin Brecht writes, "The unity of protestantism was destroyed by this problem [the Eucharistic controversy] and could not be restored."[50] However, Ubiquity was for Luther a consequence of taking seriously the doctrine of the Trinity. The persons of the godhead were God. When Luther says, "Wherever you place God for me, you must also place the humanity for me," he was arguing from the position of Chalcedon.[51] The Spirit preached law and gospel, making the Son present; the

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[47] Ibid.
[48] LW 37:218.
[49] *Lienhard* (note 46), 237.
[50] *Martin Brecht*, Martin Luther. Shaping and Defining the Reformation 1521–1532 (Tr. James L. Schaaf), Minneapolis 1990, 293.
[51] LW 37:219.

Son did not show up without the Spirit preaching him. Luther did not consider this some newfangled theological innovation; it was the logical consequence of God being triune.

3. The Holy Possession of the Cross

Thus far, the conversation has existed in the arcane world of the theology classroom (or the closest drinking establishment thereunto). The goal I stated in the introduction was to get Luther the preacher into the political arena again. Despite the later Luther's claim that Christ has nothing to do with politics, that same Luther also argued for a Christ who was simultaneously the Second Person of the Trinity in ongoing perichoretic dance, AND present in Word and Sacrament in the real lives of real people. If preaching is to be both faithful and have something to do with politics, then the Word and Sacrament must have something to do with politics. Is the preached God open to politics? In asking this question, we stay with Luther's "best book," the John Commentary. If the Spirit who preaches is pointing us to political action and Luther mentions it here, we can assume he means it, even in his later years.

Luther opens the door to politics by returning to a theme of his early work: love of neighbor. Luther comments on John 14:21 (*He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me.*):

> This is precisely what we have always taught and still teach, namely, that where there is faith, the works of love must follow. I mean the good and genuine works, like those of the apostles and preachers who preached fearlessly and faithfully, as well as the readiness of others to hear God's Word and to adhere to it with their life and goods.[52]

The presence of Christ via the Holy Spirit's preaching is supposed to result in "genuine" works, works that actually help people, and not simply in giving to mendicants. The beneficiary of your faith is to be your neighbor. I do not presume to have the key to all of Luther in my hand as I write this. It strikes me that the issue with Lutheran preaching on social justice—i.e. love of neighbor—may boil down to the infamous question, "But who is my neighbor?" Luther after the Peasants War stopped his calls for wholesale social reform, and focused instead on the personal struggle to remain faithful. But did he reject preaching useful work on the neighbor's behalf?

On the contrary, the Christian was to save her neighbor from an evil world. Luther describes the world as a place where "everyone relies on his mammon or on his prince against his neighbor", but the proper arrangement is supposed to be reliance on Christ against the devil.[53] The neighbor should not occupy the devil's place in our thinking. Rather, "as long as you sojourn here on earth, you must lead a fine, moral life, practice obedience, and perform works of love toward your

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[52] LW 24:147.
[53] LW 24:19f.

neighbor."[54] We have, again, the classic Luther's understanding of faith and works: "in order to obtain mercy before God and eternal life we must first have only this Christ through faith; and then we must also do good works and demonstrate our love."[55] If Luther provides little in specific detail, he provides a wide scope – works of love for neighbor could take many forms. In comments on John 15:13–16, Luther sounds like his younger self: "You are not asked to sacrifice life and limb for [your neighbor], as Christ did for you. 'But,' says Christ, 'I am only commanding you to prove your faith by serving and helping your neighbor, *by promoting his welfare*, by showing him fidelity and love."[56] The emphasis is mine, lest the phrase be overlooked. While not exactly the essay *On Usury*, it is a call to love neighbor by promoting the neighbor's welfare.

Welfare is not merely spiritual well-being. Luther expects the Christian to offer material aid, and to do so as part of Christ's battle against the devil.

> [The Christian] must reverse the order of the world, realize that he receives all that is necessary for salvation from above, and then proceed to dispense this to his neighbor here below. For we have received such an ample supply of good from God, both eternal and temporal, that we can easily help our neighbor.[57]

Neither is this simply giving the neighbor some of our surplus. Temporal assistance to the point of great personal risk is the mark of a Christian. "When a person is willing to risk life, goods, and honor for Christ's sake, is eager to bring all to the faith, serves his neighbor faithfully, treats him justly as a brother – then you have a sure sign that such a person is a sincere and believing Christian."[58] Serious material aid is a basic part of Christian living. This is not a faith that stays locked up inside the person without engaging the world.

This neighbor-loving faith comes via the Holy Spirit. It is ongoing spirit work, part of the perichoresis Luther describes elsewhere in the book.

> When I am baptized or converted by the Gospel, the Holy Spirit is present. He takes me as clay and makes of me a new creature, which is endowed with a different mind, heart, and thoughts, that is, with a true knowledge of God and a sincere trust in His grace. […] My holiness, righteousness, and purity do not stem from me, nor do they depend on me. They come solely from Christ.[59]

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[54] LW 24:41.
[55] LW 24:52.
[56] LW 24:250.
[57] LW 24:261.
[58] LW 24:263.
[59] LW 24:226.

Here we see again the same pattern as in preaching: the Holy Spirit imparts to the believer Christ and the faith to trust him. The Christian thereby knows all that she has from Christ. "Thus Christ and the Christian become one loaf and one body, so that the Christian can bear good fruit […]. The hands with which [the Christian] toils and serves his neighbor are the hands and members of Christ, who, as He says here [John 15:5] is in him; and he is in Christ."[60]

We see in the later Luther a developed concept of perichoresis in which the Father speaks the Son to the Holy Spirit, who speaks the Son to humans, and thereby causes the human to grow into Christ and Christ into the human. This believer is now the "hands and members" of Christ who can and must provide for her neighbor's welfare at great personal cost. Preaching lies in this perichoretic dance. Preaching is how the Spirit gets from Godhead to listener. There is, then, a path to preaching social justice even in the later Luther. It lies through the Trinity. Luther's retreat from his strong position on social justice may tempt us to jettison Luther, certainly from mid-1525 onward. Doing that, however, would cost us Luther's own trinitarian homiletic which provides a doctrinal basis for preaching social justice. Were we to jettison Luther completely, we would be throwing out this baby with the bathwater. Luther does not claim a comprehensive call to political action originating within the Godhead. He *does* say that Christ made present by the preaching of the Holy Spirit changes people to act as Christ would. Such actions are not futile; they should change the world. As Scott Hendrix writes, "Luther believed the human will first had to be turned around by the Spirit and then held on the path of faith and love."[61] The sermon's place in the dance of Trinity can lead the faithful to dance the Trinity in the streets, or in the halls of power.

Considerations Going Forward

Does that open Pandora's Box? At the same time American Christians are being arrested for protesting the treatment of the poor, other American Christians are advocating for legislation that would allow them to launder money for political candidates. Is that where I want to take Luther? A homiletic wholly informed by political considerations is no more faithful to Luther than is a homiletic that eschews the political. Luther offers a nuanced view that may prove helpful in today's climate.

Luther provided a groundwork for preaching on political matters. He does not overtly state that a pastor should preach on political matters. But political preaching is possible because of Luther's trinitarian homiletic: the Spirit will preach, and give us Christ, and we will love our neighbors and look out for their welfare. A homiletic that wants to be faithful to Luther *can* preach on political matters. One will not find a ready-made blueprint for this in Luther. In other words, if

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[60] Ibid.
[61] *Scott Hendrix*, Recultivating the Vineyard. The Reformation Agendas of Christianization, Louisville 2004, 66.

I, as a preacher, want to get from "supplying temporal good to my neighbor" to a specific proclamation regarding a contemporary issue, I have to do that work myself. I can do it, though, without leaving the tradition.

Luther's trinitarian homiletic provides important clues for what faithful proclamation can and cannot be. For Luther is adamant, in the John commentary and everywhere else, that faithful proclamation preaches Christ who is both crucified and risen.

Preaching Christ crucified, I cannot preach false hope or triumphalism, as so many do, say, at every change of presidential administration. Suffering is a part of being Christian. Preaching on a political matter must speak of the suffering Christ endures for the sake of loving neighbor, and the suffering we as Christians are expected to endure on behalf of *helping* our neighbors.

Preaching Christ risen, I preach grace. Christ is the sermon I preach, and if he is going to be present in my sermon it will be through the Spirit as love, grace, and forgiveness. Any *Luther*-an sermon that calls people to political action will emphasize Christ and his limitless love. It will underscore that all who hear the proclamation receive Christ freely, and on account of Christ receive all that is good, and that no recalcitrant public, no stubborn refusal of the world to believe this, can snatch Christ away from the faithful.

Finally, the sermon's goal is love of neighbor, not reliance on any power *against* the neighbor. The goal is that the church serve. There can be no personal target, no life to ruin as part of a political program. For preaching is the work of the Spirit. As Luther summarizes:

> First, He will convince and assure their hearts that they have a compassionate God; secondly, He will enable them to help others by their supplication. The result of the first is that they are reconciled to God and have all they need for themselves. Then, when they have this, they will become gods and will be saviors of the world by their supplication. Through the spirit of compassion they themselves become children of God; and then, as children of God, they will mediate between God and their neighbor, and will serve others and help them attain this estate too.[62]

Preaching may lead the faithful to take to the streets; its goal is that even the tyrant in the fortress tower will come down and join the dance of the Trinity.

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[62] LW 24:87.

Justice and Equity

Calvin's 1550 Sermon on Micah 2:1[1]

Andrew Thompson Scales

Abstract

This paper examines a new English translation of John Calvin's sermon on Micah 2:1 by the author, and it explores the sermon's themes of justice and equity within Calvin's historical context of Geneva in 1550. An exploration of homiletical influences on the sermon includes consideration of Calvin's development of "plain sense" preaching. "Plain sense" preaching in Calvin's writing denotes a rhetorical and exegetical style that draws upon his careful study of John Chrysostom's sermons, and his attempt in his French-language 1541 Institutes *to relate covenant theology to preaching of Old Testament texts. The judgments of the prophet Micah demand the same repentance from ancient Israel, sixteenth-century Geneva, and even contemporary hearers. The paper concludes with reflection on how Calvin's "plain sense" preaching speaks to matters of justice with respect to mistreatment of immigrants and refugees in a contemporary North American context.*

Introduction

John Calvin preached through the book of Micah in late 1550 amid intense civic crises in Geneva. Plagues, threats of warfare with neighbors, and riots had threatened the order of the city throughout the 1540s. Evangelical refugees from France strained Geneva's resources for poor relief, and local political factions debated the enfranchisement of these new resident aliens.[2] The Company of Pastors, comprised predominantly of French evangelical refugees, rivaled the authority of local governing bodies as its ministers increasingly exerted control over Geneva's social mores and

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[1] This paper examines a new English translation of Calvin's sermon on Micah 2:1. The bibliographical information for the French text of Calvin's sermon is included below, and I will refer to my English translation of the text in footnotes as Jean Calvin, Sermon on Micah 2:1, Scales Translation. References will be made to the paragraph sections of the manuscript in the appendix, not the page number of the Supplementa Calviniana [A.S.]

Jean Calvin, Du lundi 24ᵉ Jour de Novembre 1550, in: Supplementa Calviniana: Sermons sur le Livre de Michée, vol. 5, ed. Jean Daniel Benoît, Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany 1964, 36–44.

[2] *William G. Naphy*, Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation, Louisville (KY) 2003, 137f.

public worship.[3] On a Monday morning in November 1550 – in a city riven by divisions of rich and poor, exile and citizen – Calvin called his congregation to repentance with the words of Micah 2:1, arguing that God's demands for "justice and equity"[4] applied to their own lives and relationships.

Calvin's sermons on Micah are robust examples of his commitment to preaching Scripture in a "plain sense" that (1) exposits and instructs listeners in the context of Micah's circumstances, and (2) proclaims the text as God's Word speaking to the immediate concerns of his Genevan congregation. Calvin's appreciation for preaching the "plain sense" of Scripture matured during his exile in Strasbourg from 1538–1541, when he wrote a treatise on John Chrysostom's merits as an exegete. Calvin abandoned his project of translating Chrysostom's sermons into French, but he includes similar themes in a chapter about exegesis of the Old and New Testaments in his 1541 French edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Calvin's "plain sense" style is a rhetorical commitment to making the ancient texts of the Old Testament come alive in contemporary context. As Calvin explains the meaning of Micah 2:1, he also speaks in the voice of Micah to contemporary Genevans, so that they might also hear and practicably obey God's demand for justice and equity. He does not hold back his condemnation of wealthy and powerful listeners, or anyone who would amass wealth to the detriment of a neighbor. God's demands for justice and God's promises of redemption speak from God's Word to ancient Israel through the contemporary preacher to anyone who has ears to hear.

This paper begins with an orientation to Calvin's attitudes on "plain sense" exegesis and preaching in his writings on Chrysostom and the *1541 Institutes*. What follows is a brief summary of the troubled circumstances of Geneva at the time Calvin preached on Micah. The paper then examines the theological themes and rhetorical devices of his sermon on Micah 2:1. I have translated the sermon manuscript from French, and so quotations of the sermon in English are my own. The conclusion offers some reflections on how Calvin's preaching might speak to modern pastors who take up contemporary crises of justice and inequality in their own preaching ministries. With Calvin's words in mind that "nothing is lacking for us to have abundance of every good,"[5] let us begin!

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[3] Ibid, 84–86.
[4] *Calvin*, Sermon on Micah 2:1, Scales Translation, §35b.
[5] *John Calvin*, Institutes of the Christian Religion: 1541 French Edition, trans. Elsie Anne McKee, Grand Rapids (MI) 2009, 390.

1. An Examination of Calvin's Earlier Writings on Exegesis and the Old Testament

1.1 Calvin's preface to a French edition of Chrysostom's homilies

Calvin lived in Strasbourg for three years after his expulsion from Geneva as a young, French, evangelical preacher. During that time, he began and quickly abandoned an ambitious project to translate Chrysostom's sermons from Greek into French. All that remains of his efforts is the fragment of a prefatory essay on the merits of studying Chrysostom as an exegete and pastor of the Early Church. Translator W. Ian P. Hazlett suggests a date between 1538 and 1540 as the most probable period for authorship of the text.[6]

As a devoted student of John Chrysostom, Calvin considered the revival of exegetical preaching an indispensable tenet of Reformed theology and worship. Calvin expressed considerable admiration for Chrysostom's ability to blend his rhetorical brilliance with attention to the ordinary listener in the congregation. Young Calvin writes, "[Chrysostom] plainly adjusts both [his] approach and language as if he had the instruction of the common people in mind. This being the case, anyone maintaining that he ought to be kept in seclusion among the academics has got it wrong, seeing that he did go out of his way to cultivate a popular appeal."[7] This proposed study of an ancient urban bishop – who preached exegetical sermons that also demanded action on behalf of the poor during famines and riots – reveals Calvin's interest for practical application as a preaching pastor with special concern for poor and marginalized people.[8]

Calvin admired that Chrysostom's sermons eschewed allegory, and instead offered an interpretation of Scripture that was intelligible for all his listeners. His enthusiasm for Chrysostom's preaching was so great that he wrote, "There is no one after Chrysostom who comes closer to the plain sense of Scripture."[9] Calvin expounds further on his appreciation for a literal, rather than metaphorical, reading of Old Testament texts in his French edition of the *Institutes* from 1541. The value of a plain reading of the Old Testament is connected to Calvin's understanding of God's covenant between Israel and God's covenant with the Early Church being the same promise of salvation in Christ.

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[6] *W. Ian P. Hazlett*, Calvin's Latin Preface to His Proposed French Edition of Chrysostom's Homilies. Translation and Commentary, in: James Kirk (ed.), Humanism and Reform. The Church in Europe, England, and Scotland, 1400–1643, Cambridge (MA) 1991, 132.

[7] Ibid, 142.

[8] For further reading on Chrysostom's evocative representations of the poor in his sermons, see *Peter Brown*, Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity. Towards a Christian Empire, Madison (WI) 1992, especially 91ff.

[9] *Hazlett* (note 6), 145.

1.2 The 1541 Institutes and Calvin's hermeneutic for the Old and New Testaments

The continuity of God's promises from Ancient Israel through the New Testament shaped Calvin's understanding of how pastors should read and preach the books of the Old Testament. In his 1541 edition of the *Institutes* in French, Calvin presented three "articles" of how a student of the Bible should understand the relationship and "unity" of the covenant:

> First, that the Lord did not offer the Jews an earthly happiness or wealth as a goal to which they should aspire, but He adopted them into hope of immortality and revealed and testified this adoption to them by visions as well as by His law and prophets. Secondly, the covenant by which they were joined together with God was not founded on their merits but only on His mercy. Thirdly, they had and knew Christ as mediator by whom they were joined together with God and were made participants of his promises.[10]

God's covenant with Israel is the same covenant that the apostles shared because of Jesus Christ's mediation. The Old Testament, as Scripture that testifies to the same covenant, possesses an equal dignity and value as the New Testament for practical application in preaching. The pastor can preach about God's warnings and blessings in the Old Testament without a need for metaphorical interpretations or allegories about the inward spiritual journey. Sermons about Old Testament texts could speak to quotidian concerns of congregations with the plain sense that one might receive the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels, or Paul's admonishments to the churches of Galatia or Corinth.

The words of the prophets offer more than poetic expressions about God or inspiration for allegory. A plain reading and preaching of their witness offers opportunities for practical application and spiritual edification just as much for Calvin and his congregation as it did for the people of Judah. Calvin explains that the prophets' words were meant both for the listener's earthly or practical context, as well as the cultivation of life with God:

> Only I will exhort my readers to remember to use the key which I gave them to make the opening: that is, whenever the prophets speak of the blessedness of the faithful [of which there appears scarcely a small shadow in this world], let them return to this distinction: that the prophets gave earthly benefits as a figure or image of God's goodness to demonstrate it better, but at the same time by this picture they wanted to raise the people's hearts up above the earth and the elements of this world and this corruptible age, and to lead them to meditate on and practice for the happiness of the spiritual life.[11]

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[10] *Calvin* (note 5), 386.
[11] Ibid, 400.

The blessings and benefits of this life teach the believer something about God. How someone responds to these blessings is a manner of practice that prepares and equips people for spiritual growth. This is not the same as allegory, in which images or symbols signify a greater spiritual truth; the blessings themselves are "the figure or image of God's goodness" that give believers a glimpse of the fullness of God's grace. God's blessings offer people an opportunity to practice the Christian life amid a "corruptible age."[12]

The chapter of the *1541 Institutes* named "Of the Similarities and Differences between the Old and New Testaments" and his treatment of patristic writers in his *Preface on Chrysostom* show that Calvin devoted considerable effort to preaching and developing theology from the Old Testament. His commitment to *lectio continua* evokes the ancient exegetes whom he names in his *Preface* on Chrysostom. He describes the exegetical preacher Cyril as "an outstanding exegete, and someone who among the Greeks can be rated second to Chrysostom."[13] On the other hand,

> What Jerome wrote on the Old Testament has deservedly very little reputation among scholars. For he is almost completely bogged down in allegories, by which he distorts Scripture with too much license. [His] commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew and on two Epistles of Paul are tolerable, except that they savour of a man not sufficiently experienced in church affairs.[14]

During his sojourn in Strasbourg, Calvin reflected on the necessity of rigorous exegetical scholarship and considerable attention to the "church affairs" in which the pastor engaged every day. The young, French theologian in exile articulated profound concern about communication of the plain sense of God's Word to the ordinary people of his time. When Calvin returned to Geneva from Strasbourg, his preaching career developed into a nearly all-consuming passion. The crises in Geneva related to the influx of refugees offer us insight into the contemporary concerns of Calvin's preaching between his return to Geneva in 1541 until the delivery of his Micah sermons in 1550.

2. Conflicts Concerning the Refugee Crisis in Geneva, 1541–1550

Calvin left Geneva in 1538 because of his disagreements with the city's policy of appeasement toward their threatening neighbor Berne. While he lived in Strasbourg, a party known as the Guillermins, opponents of the Berne-supporting *Articulants*, came into power in 1541, and Calvin

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[12] Ibid.

[13] *Hazlett* (note 6), 144.

[14] Ibid, 145.

was invited to return. He took up the task of composing a constitution for Geneva as a republic, and he organized a Company of Pastors made up predominantly of French refugees.[15]

Persecution of evangelical Christians sent thousands of refugees from France to Geneva for safety. Church historian William G. Naphy writes that the resources of the city hospital strained to the breaking point because of the constant influx of destitute travelers. The city began expelling foreigners in 1540 in an attempt to alleviate the overwhelming stress on the local economy and eleemosynary institutions. Records from 1539 show that the town of 12,000 citizens assisted 10,657 poor foreigners at the city hospital that year.[16]

Most foreigners who arrived in Geneva lived in cramped slums, but the economic competition of refugee artisans and nobles further contributed to tensions with native Genevans.[17] By 1550, political parties were fighting among one another about limitations on enfranchisement for resident aliens as members of the bourgeois.[18] The economic and political debates about citizenship and expulsion that swirled around Calvin's sermons on Micah would determine the fate of thousands of refugees in his city.

Reformation history scholar Elsie McKee's new book, *The Pastoral Ministry and Worship in Calvin's Geneva*, offers exhaustive details and close readings of Calvin's sermons, particularly instances in which he addresses the congregation directly. She offers some well-informed inferences about the listeners in Calvin's congregation as he preached in the 1540s and 1550s. In an analysis of Calvin's sermons on 1 Corinthians from 1555, McKee writes:

> Not only the learned but the illiterate were in the preacher's view. In expounding 1 Cor. 2:12 from the pulpit, Calvin says that when it comes to matters of the kingdom of God 'poor simple people who have never been to school' compare favorably with the highly educated who think they know everything. This acknowledgment of the uneducated is naturally lacking from the commentary, which is addressed to scholars, but it is evidence that the preacher is conscious that many of his hearers fall into the category of "simple people."[19]

McKee also names the "increasing numbers of refugees" who fled to Geneva during Calvin's years in ministry there.[20] Among the religious refugees, some were poor and uneducated, but others also were French nobles and artisans. The plain style in Geneva may have been an attempt to preach

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[15] *William G. Naphy*, Calvin's Geneva, in: Donald K. McKim (ed.), The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin, New York (NY) 2004, 28–30.

[16] *Naphy* (note 2), Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation, 122.

[17] Ibid, 125.

[18] Ibid, 137f.

[19] *Elsie McKee*, The Pastoral Ministry and Worship in Calvin's Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland 2016, 524.

[20] Ibid., 523.

effectively to as many listeners as possible: noble and common, rich and poor, citizen and foreigner. This understanding of a diverse congregation will help us make sense of Calvin's rhetorical choices, especially when he addresses his listeners in the voice of the prophet Micah, and even in the voice of God.

3. A Brief Document History of the Micah 2:1 Sermon and Translation Notes

French and English immigrants in the city of Geneva formed *la compagnie des étrangers* in 1549 to preserve Calvin's sermons by shorthand transcription.[21] T.H.L. Parker writes that only about six or seven of Calvin's sermons were copied down between 1541–1549 (i.e, the period before the *compagnie* hired a secretary to take down his sermons in shorthand).[22] The sermons on Micah from late 1550 through 1551 are some of the earliest recorded sermons that reveal Calvin's scope of preaching on a whole book of the Bible by means of *lectio continua.* The French transcript of the appended translation comes from the *Supplementa Calviniana: Sermons sur le Livre de Michée*, and it was edited by Jean Daniel Benoît in 1964.[23]

Calvin preached extemporaneously, and the sermons that we have were taken down and arranged later by experts from a document composed in shorthand writing.[24] The grammatical arrangement comes to us from his transcribers, editors, and publishers. I have taken some liberty to reduce some phrases into shorter sentences. Calvin's language is also full of colorful diction like *"or," "eh," "voilà," "donc,"* etc. I have preserved some of these words to reflect Calvin's conversational style, and yet I have refrained from including every emphatic phrase to keep the translation from sagging under so many interjections.

4. Comment on Calvin's Sermon on Micah 2:1 (Monday, November 24, 1550)

Micah 2:1 (translated from the transcript): "A curse against those who think vain things, and did evil upon their beds. They did this in the light of morning because their hand is strong. They desired possessions and seized them, they took houses, they did violence to men in their homes, to their persons and their inheritance."

Introduction: God demands obedience to the two commandments of the New Testament, which summarize the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament

Calvin begins his sermon on Micah 2:1 by explaining the continuity of God's expectations for the people of the Old and New Testaments. He names two categories of sin in Ancient Judah: disobedience to God with idolatry, and crimes against neighbors. What God asks of his people is

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[21] *Thomas H. L. Parker*, Calvin's Preaching, Louisville (KY) 1992, 65.
[22] Ibid, 60.
[23] *Calvin* (note 1), 36–44.
[24] *Parker* (note 21), 66.

clear in the two tables of the ancient law and the commandments of Jesus Christ: "in the first place, that we render him honor that belongs to him, and then that we live in good equity and justice with our neighbors" (34a).[25] No one has any excuse, for the people of the Old Testament knew what God required of them because "… our Lord told in ten sentences all that concerns holiness and justice" (34a).

The same obligation to justice and equity that God demanded of Israel remains for the people who know the New Testament. The vocation of the Christian is to keep "that natural equity of which our Lord Jesus Christ speaks, when he says that we may only do to another that which we would want someone else to do to us" (34a). Neglect of God's good teaching has led to two kinds of distortion among both peoples: superstition in worship that turns people away from God, and wicked government that turns people against one another. The covenant by which God binds the people to God's self, as well as the sins that plague the people, are in some manner the same for the people of Judah, the hearers of the New Testament, and the inhabitants of Calvin's Geneva. Calvin establishes from the beginning that Micah's judgments are not only for ancient Judah: the continuity of the covenant through Christ makes the prophet's words relevant as the Word of God in 1550.

"Evil upon their beds": It is unnatural to reject sleep in order to plot evil

The first part of the sermon serves as an organizing preface to an exegetical exposition of each phrase in the three sentences from Micah 2:1. What follows is an abrupt shift to the text at hand: Calvin denounces scheming at night as unnatural and against God's ordering of Creation. The wickedness of humankind must be very great, if we ignore something as simple and necessary as sleep in order to plot against one's neighbors: "Ought we think as though we should harm our neighbor so much that we never sleep night or day? Should we think that at no point this is contrary to the commandments of God?" (34b). God has ordained sleep for all creatures, and yet we choose to behave more viciously than a ferocious beast.

Furthermore, sleep is not only something that gives us respite from our evil works; sleep restores us so that we might do good works, spare our neighbors the anger of exhaustion, and grant us rest from our labors:

> In summary, when there is a question about us going to bed, if we want to have God present in our sleep, then we pray to him that he do us the grace of resting in good conscience, and that also the body relieve us from all work, and that it cleanse us of all bad affections, and of concerns that we give ourselves meaninglessly (35a).

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[25] *Calvin*, Sermon on Micah 2:1, Scales Translation, 34a.

Rest is a gift from God that helps us live the kind of life that God expects of us. Calvin has examined the problem of devising evil at night from a few creative facets that explain why sleep matters: plotting at night is against the natural order of sleep at night, work in the day; sleep restores us to the ability to do good and maintain a good temper; and the rejection of sleep rejects the promises of the "spiritual rest" that God has in store for those who trust in him (35a).

"Their hand is strong": The great possess greater capacity to do evil

Although Calvin in certain places during his sermon acknowledges that Micah's words are for all the people of Judah, he argues in this section of the sermon that the prophet's message is directed primarily toward the strong and powerful. All are capable of sinning against God and neighbor, and yet powerful persons are capable of so much more than the weak and downtrodden: "And, in fact, one sees this regularly, not that the great possess greater malice than others, but that they have their hands free, in contrast to the weak who do not have the means to do evil …" (35a).

The prophetic judgments against the leaders of Judah become a stinging criticism of powerful citizens in Geneva. Calvin represents himself as the prophet; he expands the message of Scripture while pretending to be Micah in order to further explain and interpret the passage:

> You who should do justice and equity to each one, who hold the scepter of justice in your hand, you are like brigands, and you do not cease in devising evil against those whom you should defend; the power which God has given you must be converted to an altogether different use, so that you would not suffer even one to be afflicted unjustly, that you would study to maintain the rights of the good. And instead of this, you only think of malice on your beds, and since you have the hands free, you set them to carry out that which you thought up previously (35b).

Although Calvin does not name particular persons or groups from Geneva in this sermon, he has turned the prophet's words about justice toward his contemporary listeners by making the prophet's words a direct address to his own congregation. Who might have been the poor and weak persons in contemporary Geneva? Who could fit the mold of "brigands" who abuse their authority to carry out injustices in the city? I suggest it is not improbable that Calvin had local notables in mind, perhaps even seated listeners who wished to expel religious refugees, town leaders who sought to limit enfranchisement.

"Robbing goods and inheritances": greed as an insatiable lack of trust in God's providence

The sermon continues with an extended exposition on the sin of greed. Calvin glosses Paul's remarks in 2 Timothy when he says that "greed is the root of all evil" and "Saint Paul means that there's no evil greater than that of greed. For after a person has devoted himself to this insatiable

covetousness, it stands that he falls to one vice after the other, such that there is never an end nor an amount that will bring him to the limit of his wickedness" (35b–36a). Calvin takes pains to affirm that our possessions are good blessings from God, and that "selling and buying is a part of life that belongs to human society" (36a). The problem, however, does not rest with the systems of commerce or the objects that are owned themselves. The capacity for sin resides in every human being who is not content with what God has given him or her, and thus seeks fulfillment in insatiable acquisitiveness of property and goods.

By contrast, Calvin offers a short monologue of how each person should be disposed toward God. He uses colloquial language as he says, "Ah well, God gave me this thing here, I shall live on it. If it is a little, I shall have to make do with it, and if he makes it multiply by his grace, then I shall be content with it. If it is a lot, then I must take care so as to be able to help my neighbors" (36b). The purpose of having these possessions is so that human beings can express gratitude for God's providence, and so that one may serve one's neighbors with one's blessings. The purpose is not to pursue gain so that one does not need to rely upon God daily. Instead, he cites 1 Peter, albeit without quotation, that one ought to bring concerns to God and trust "that he grants us everything we need abundantly" (36b).

The sins that human beings commit towards others in this sermon are exclusively related to wealth and power. Calvin likens the sins of Ancient Judah to his own community: "We see today that there are not only the greedy, but also the usurious, and those who take on every side by illicit means and by wicked dealings, those who rejoice greatly in this world. What will happen if we live in simplicity and righteousness?" (37a).

Later in the sermon, Calvin quotes Isaiah 5 in which the prophet pronounces woe on those who join house to house, and speaks directly to his listeners with rhetorical questions: "Do you want to chase off your neighbors, as though this world here has been made only for you? And there is such covetousness in each one that, if they could, they would willingly shut the Sun up in their chests and closets" (38a). The selfishness that plagues the hearts of Genevan townsfolk not only destroys their own lives, but it also deprives their neighbors from enjoying good things.

Calvin confronts this selfishness against neighbors with a fascinating theological turn with his use of the word *prochain* as an adjective to connote "near," and as a substantive noun that connotes "neighbor." Whereas modern French distinguishes between the adjective *prochain* (near) and the noun *voisin* (neighbor), Calvin uses *prochain* for both meanings. God demands that human beings practice justice and equity toward *neighbors*, God vows to draw *near* in order to make it so, and Calvin uses the word *prochain* in both senses. Calvin's sermon begins to blend these meanings, so that God not only draws *near* to humankind amid injustice, but Calvin suggests in this ambiguity

that God is also a *neighbor*. Calvin plays with the word in the following two excerpts as he warns the congregation that God sees and will address their greed:

> It is the right time for us to learn to be humble under God's strong hand, so that he will not punish us in his wrath, so that he will not curse us. How will this be so? When we live in equity and justice with our *neighbors* [*prochains*, emphasis added], according to the point I have already touched upon (39b).

A few sentences later, Calvin begins to describe God as *prochain* to the listeners in his congregation, building on an ambiguity that God is both *near* and *neighbor* with the same word:

> When we have inscribed this word on our hearts—even while everyone thinks that God is far away—we consider him as being present, and we know that he sees not only what we do, but what we think as well. In this matter we are not like the unfaithful; instead we conclude, "Here is the God who declares that he is *near* [*prochain*, emphasis added] us."

> Now if we consider him to be *near* [*prochain*], we will be able to trust in him truly, for he has said that he is near to those who call upon him in truth. … Since he has reprimanded us in this passage, God declares that he is *near* [*prochain*]. It is as if he were to say, "I must show myself as *near* [*prochain*] to human beings, because it seems to them that I am never able to reach them, nor to catch up with them" (39b).

I suggest that Calvin's use of the same word *prochain* offers a deep theological claim beyond the distinctions between adjectival and nominal parts of speech: God decides to become the neighbor to humankind. God becomes the neighbor in Jesus Christ, and the contemporary Genevan listeners discover God's presence in the faces of their neighbors. Obedience to the commandment to love one's neighbor with justice and equity is likewise a fulfillment of the commandment to love God above the idols of wealth and power.

Conclusion of the sermon on Micah 2:1: The Lord is near

The last movement of the sermon is a short treatment of Micah 2:3: God will bring judgment on the people of Judah for their wickedness. He shifts between the Old Testament and Geneva – placing himself in the mindset of someone in his contemporary context – imagining the thoughts of a person in the pew responding to the curses brought by the prophets Micah and Isaiah. Calvin builds a sustained argument in which God addresses the congregation directly with the phrase, "I, myself," as God's promise to judge and rebuke those who do evil, both in the ancient world and his town of refugees, merchants, and old families.

The wealthy and powerful should not act as though no one sees their greed or mistreatment of others: God is just as near to that morning's congregation as God was to the people of Judah.

Near the end of the transcript, Calvin says, "And the prophet considers those who extort and do violence to others, who have no fear of anyone, who have it good in this world, to be the people whom God has declared his mortal enemies, especially those who have amassed goods by illicit means and wicked dealings. All such persons who have put one over their neighbors, they will be subjected to this sentence, this warning from the prophet" (40b). The prophet's warning from thousands of years ago has become a living judgment in Calvin's day.

The sermon concludes on an odd note, namely that Calvin does not call the wicked to repent, but rather exhorts the congregation to wait patiently for the judgment of the Lord. He does not seem to preach to a mixed audience of extortionists and the victims of their greed. The sermon appears to be addressed to a twofold audience in much of its content: those who extort and take advantage of the neighbor, and those who must endure until the day of God's redemption (perhaps Calvin perceives both characteristics in conflict within individual persons). And yet, the final words of the sermon, which function as something between a concluding exhortation and a prayer to God, ask for God to "reform us," so that "we would walk in justice and equity towards our neighbors …" (41a).

5. Reflection on the Sermon on Micah 2:1

How does Calvin perceive the members of his congregation in light of the prophet Micah's words? This sermon on Micah 2:1 was written and preached by a refugee (Calvin); to a congregation comprised, at least in part, of refugees (the worshiping congregation); and transcribed and published by refugees (*la compagnie des étrangers*). We noted earlier in this paper that there was an unprecedented redistribution of property in the late 1540s in Geneva due to the sale of ecclesial properties and the liquidation of estates from political families who fled.[26] *La compagnie des étrangers* that sponsored the transcription of his sermons was an association of religious refugees, some of whom must have been poor or disenfranchised in their new city.

Calvin focuses on matters of justice and equity between human beings, especially between neighbors. Is Calvin affirming the desires and opinions of his congregation by railing against the rich citizens who snap up property? How do Calvin's words matter to listeners who have left everything – their homes, their families, their occupations – to settle in a new country as poor resident aliens? With whom does Calvin sympathize when he says, "Today each person shuts his eyes when it comes to a question of acting with equity and justice toward one's neighbors, and on the contrary one says, 'It does not matter, it means little to me what comes, as long as I get mine'" (39a)?

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[26] *Naphy* (note 2), 133.

Calvin has appropriated two insights from his homiletical role model, John Chrysostom, for his preaching style as a pastor to all members of Genevan society. Exegesis and explication of the text demand preeminent attention, but the pastor must do this in service to addressing concerns of the worshiping congregation. In this sermon on Micah 2:1, Calvin appears to preach on behalf of the poor and destitute in Geneva, while he spares no one who seeks to profit from the great economic shifts in the city at the expense of the neighbor's impoverishment. Calvin preaches with conviction that the words of the Old and New Testaments together will instruct believers in how they may follow the two commandments to love God above all idols, and to love one's neighbor with justice and equity.

6. Considerations for Preaching Today

The 1550 sermons on Micah reveal the distinctive style of Calvin's project to reform preaching. Micah's ancient judgments and warnings speak through Calvin's sermon to address contemporary crises of injustice and inequality in Geneva. The proper response to prophetic words of judgment is obedience to God's two commandments: to live generously toward one another, and to live thankfully toward God. The sermon demands that individual listeners change their behavior in order to make life in the city possible for some of its most vulnerable inhabitants: refrain from selfishness, stop devising acquisitive schemes, repent of greed, accept simplicity for oneself so that others might have enough. These demands remain valid and true preparation for life with God throughout the covenant promises of the Old Testament, the New Testament, sixteenth-century Geneva, and today.

With this appreciation for the continuity of God's covenant grace and demand for justice, we can exegete Calvin's preaching context, and imagine how it might offer insights to preachers and homileticians today. Calvin was a refugee, and he was preaching to a mixed congregation comprised significantly of fellow refugees. Many of his listeners were dispossessed, struggling to survive in a city that, despite its xenophobia, remained one of the few places of welcome for evangelical Christians in the early sixteenth century.

We also have no shortage of stories about our collective cruelty toward immigrants and strangers: many have been arrested and indefinitely detained with no criminal record other than entering the country as undocumented immigrants. This year, *The New Yorker* published an investigative report by Sarah Stillman titled, "The Mothers Being Deported by Trump." This project tells the stories of women, mostly from Central and South America, who have children and no criminal record, but nonetheless have been in and out of prison or detention centers since President Trump took office. Stillman describes the harrowing story of Alejandra Ruiz, a mother

who has lived in the United States since she was two years old, but now faces deportation and separation from her children:

> In detention, Ruiz barely ate – the food, mainly bread and beans, looked bad and smelled worse. Officers gave her fibre packets and pills, but she refused to take them. She spent time in the center's law library, researching her rights. Talking to her kids on the phone was excruciating. When they spoke at all, it was mostly sobs. Her twelve-year-old daughter was especially distraught.[27]

What would the prophet Micah, or the pastor Calvin, or even God say to listeners in the United States about the commandment to love these mothers with justice and equity? Something powerful comes through Calvin's framing of Micah's words under Christ's two great commandments: God becomes *prochain*, the neighbor, and the decision to love the neighbor is a recognition that one cannot love God without treating others with justice and equity.

In twenty-first century America, ordinary people continue to flee their home countries because of war, persecution, or need. When we call ourselves Christians, we must also hear Micah's words of judgment as a condemnation of our selfishness, as well as a call to repentance in the hope that God will reform us. Preaching a "plain sense" of prophetic justice and equity demands that we, also, as preachers and congregations, should ask ourselves how we may commit to actions that demonstrate love of God and our neighbors. Calvin was asking questions that we should ask at a time like this, forceful questions that demand that we examine ourselves carefully: "Do you want to chase off your neighbors, as though this world here has been made only for you?" (38a). If the answer is no, then preaching a "plain sense" of God's prophetic word for today may do much good.

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[27] *Sarah Stillman*, The Mothers Being Deported by Trump, in: The New Yorker (July 22, 2017) http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-mothers-being-deported-by-trump (Accessed August 9, 2018).

The Practice of Homiletical Theology in a Confessional Mode:

An Interim Report on the Homiletical Theology Project[1]

David Schnasa Jacobsen

Abstract

Preachers rightly fret about getting from text to sermon, but their commission is to go preach the gospel. While homiletical theology generally is focused on seeing preaching as a theological task focused on the "gospel in context," confessional homiletical theology, as a particular type, considers preaching to be a theological enterprise centered on the gospel and brought into critical dialogue with texts, contexts, and situations. Consistent with the position of André Resner, who argues preachers start this dialogue from a "working gospel," this article explores how this confessional, working gospel as theological habitus then dialogues critically with texts, contexts and situations reflectively and critically so the gospel might be heard for the life of the church and for the sake of the world that God so loves.

Two decades ago, theologian Edward Farley wrote a provocative piece in *Theology Today* in which he critiqued the field of homiletics for being unduly preoccupied with what he called "the bridge paradigm."[2] Farley's trenchant critique pushed back against the notion that preaching was simply a matter of bridging the gospel found in pericopes of ancient Biblical texts and then mediated through an act of rhetorical skill to the present. Unless one is willing to argue that the gospel, the good news, was equally distributed in every conceivable pericope or nugget of Biblical text, the bridge paradigm ran the risk of failing to understand the truly theological task that preaching is. Farley shook the footings of the bridge paradigm and invited homiletics to see itself as more than

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[1] This article was originally presented as a paper at a special session of the Christian Scholars' Conference on June 7, 2017 at Lipscomb University in Nashville (TN) and was revised for the North American Academy of Homiletics meeting in Dallas on December 9, 2017 to engage colleagues in the field. Although much of the Homiletical Theology Project (http://www.bu.edu/homiletical-theology-project) and its first two consultations at the Academy of Homiletics was initially devoted to mapping the different ways homiletical theology was already being conceived (see vols. 1 and 2 in the series "The Promise of Homiletical Theology" with Cascade Books, 2015), with this progress report I wish to identify what are the emerging, central features of the kind of confessional homiletical theology I am advocating. The footnotes along the way will help illumine the ways that my conversations with colleagues have shaped my sense of what homiletical theology might look like.

[2] *Ed Farley*, Preaching the Bible and Preaching the Gospel, in: Theology Today 51:1 (April 1994), 90–103.

rhetorical engineering, but a truly theological discipline. This is, broadly conceived, the goal of the Homiletical Theology Project – to place the theological task more squarely in the middle of the practice of preaching and in the field of homiletics.

Yet what seemed breathtakingly new to many North American theoreticians may not seem quite so novel to practitioners. While the notion that the practice of preaching bridges between ancient text and modern hearers is fairly widespread, in practice preachers are all too aware that preaching is more than applying the results of Biblical exegesis. As a theological act, preaching is not solely a place where theological method is practiced (though it is that), it is also a place where a *habitus* of theological wisdom is formed and exercised. As Ron Allen notes, preachers already preach gospel with many Biblical texts in the canon which themselves are representative of multiple theological voices or trajectories.[3] Whether it is Paul and James, or Mark and John, preaching requires preachers be able to sort through and relate the plural theological views within the canon itself. When preaching turns to situational moments where the gospel must be articulated (9/11, Katrina, and other crises), preacherly theological wisdom about the gospel also comes into the picture.[4] In those moments, preachers as theologians of the Word live out their calling by naming the gospel – the gospel both nourished by the gift of the scriptures and yet tested ever anew in moments great and small over time. In practice, preaching requires that preachers have a *habitus*, some theological core wisdom about gospel that helps them do their task.[5]

In this way, I am actually building on another part of Farley's work. In his book *Theologia*, Farley argues that theology is more than the kind of science as discipline, or *scientia,* with which we might be familiar in the modern university. Long before this, theology is *habitus,* a kind of existential disposition of the believer concerning the things of salvation.[6] Farley does not wish to embrace *habitus* as a kind of romantic move toward disposition alone, apart from the more modern understanding of theology as *scientia* or discipline, but to see them in deep relation. My view is that

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[3] *Ronald Allen*, Preaching is Believing. The Sermon as Theological Reflection, Louisville 2002.

[4] *David Schnasa Jacobsen/Robert Kelly*, Kairos Preaching. Speaking Gospel to the Situation, Minneapolis 2009. This matter of gospel and situation is even further developed with respect to the traumatic context of wounds in Gospel as Transfiguring Promise, in: David Schnasa Jacobsen (Ed.), Theologies of the Gospel in Context, Eugene (OR) 2017, 141.

[5] Both Michael Pasquarello and Alyce McKenzie named early on the significance of practical wisdom lying at the center of an emerging homiletical theology. Pasquarello argues for a formed wisdom-like virtue in Sacred Rhetoric. Preaching as a Theological and Pastoral Practice in the Church, Grand Rapids 2005, 1, and elaborates on this in his article, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. On Becoming a Homiletic Theologian, in: David Schnasa Jacobsen (Ed.), Homiletical Theology. Preaching as Doing Theology, Eugene (OR) 2015, 103f. For a more interactive, inductive vision of homiletical theology as practical wisdom, see in the same volume *Alyce McKenzie*, The Company of Sages. Homiletical Theology as a Sapiential Hermeneutic, 87–102. In this latter sense, *Wes Allen* and *Ronald Allen* argue for a kinship of her inductive model to their conversational one in The Sermon Without End, Nashville 2015.

[6] *Edward Farley*, Theologia. The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education, Philadelphia 1983, 51.54. The word *scientia* also has currency in the age of theology/*habitus*, however it begins to take on a more methodological sense with the rise of what Farley calls theology/discipline.

both *habitus* and *scientia* are necessary moments in the way homiletical theologians discern gospel as they preach with respect to diverse Biblical texts and troubling situations.

This article, therefore, attempts to bring to the surface the dynamic that inheres in the process of exercising the preacher's theological *habitus* in the activity of discerning gospel for the practice of preaching. Preachers rightly fret about getting from text to sermon, but underlying this concern is their commission to go preach the *gospel*. In doing so, I start the process of theological work with a provisional confession of the gospel, i.e., what I call confessional homiletical theology. Confessional homiletical theologians think about preaching as a theological enterprise beginning provisionally with gospel and brought into critical dialogue with texts, contexts, and situations.[7] André Resner has given this provisional, confessional move a name: "working gospel."[8] This article explores this confessional, working gospel as a kind of disposition (*habitus*) that dialogues critically with texts, contexts and situations reflectively (*scientia*) so that the gospel might be heard for the life of the church and for the sake of the world that God so loves. In doing so, it hopes to trace the outlines of a kind of homiletical-theological method in what I call a confessional-correlational mode.

1. Gospel 101

Some will be concerned that a practical-theological emphasis on gospel will be equivalent to superficial sermons full of cheap grace. The problem here, though, is not with the gospel, but with our too simplistic way of conceiving it. It may be a bit frustrating to realize, but the gospel is not just one thing: grace, Christ, Christ and him crucified, etc. Simplistic definitions truncate the gospel and lead us away from mystery. Paul says that the apostles are to be viewed as "stewards of the mysteries" (1Cor 4:1). This truth invites us to reflection, but more specifically to sober and humble reflection about the gospel itself.

This complexity around the gospel is at least as old as parts of the New Testament. In chapter 1:1–15 of Mark's Gospel, the writer uses the word for gospel (*euangelion*) more than once in the first few verses alone. The first use of the term is surprisingly brief. It is in the title verse of 1:1, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ [Son of God]." Such a statement is true, of course, but even

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[7] This critical relationship between gospel and text/tradition is found also in *Luke Powery*'s contributions, especially in Nobody Knows the Trouble I See, in: David Schnasa Jacobsen (Ed.), Homiletical Theology in Action. The Unfinished Theological Task of Preaching, Eugene (OR) 2015, 85–107. To my mind a confessional view of homiletical theology begins with some sense of gospel, but also brings it into critical relationship with texts and traditions, in Powery's case with respect to bodies and the Bible. Something similar is implied with *Ron Allen*'s willingness to link homiletical theology to a kind of re-discovery across theological families; cf. id., Preaching as Spark for Discovery in Theology, in: Homiletical Theology, 129–152.

[8] *André Resner*'s notion of "working gospel" first appeared in an insightful article; cf. id., Reading the Bible for Preaching the Gospel, in: Collected Papers of the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Academy of Homiletics, 223. Most recently, Resner elaborates on his notion of working gospel in: Do You See this Woman? A Little Exercise in Homiletical Theology, in: Theologies of the Gospel in Context (note 4), 19–24.

Mark refuses to stay there. Fourteen verses later he has Jesus come and preach the "gospel of God," which consists in believing and repenting in light of the good news of God's reign (1:14f.). Since *euangelion* is used in both places, gospel and gospel, the best way is to hold both in dialogue. The gospel *is* Jesus Christ (1:1), yet it is also the kingdom to which Jesus points, the gospel not just of himself, but of God (1:14f.). Mark invites us to reflect on this all through the Gospel that bears his name. The good news is played out again and again in terms of Jesus' identity – no doubt. Yet the gospel of God is precisely that to which Jesus himself points: a *basileia* gospel that includes healing, feeding, exorcising as evidence of God's coming reign. Even in Mark, probably committed to writing around 70 CE, talk of the gospel is not just simple talk, but an invitation to theological mystery. The gospel is Jesus Christ, yet ultimately points to God's royal action right here and right now.

The problem, of course, is that preachers and homileticians sometimes hunker down in the language of mystery when the going gets tough. Mystery ought not be a term to use for sloppy or inadequate thinking. We are, after all, to love God with our whole mind along with our hearts, souls, and strength. Rather, mystery is a term used in a unique way in the apocalyptic matrix in which early Christianity arises to name resurrection. Mystery is something *not yet fully revealed*. We believe not because we know it all, nor because it all can be named. We name gospel, rather, in bits and pieces using our best theological reflections because some day God's purposes will be fully revealed. Paul puts it nicely in the KJV: "for now we see through a glass darkly, but then, face to face" (1Cor 13:12). Mystery invites our faithful probing and theological brooding, but is done always with profound humility this side of heaven.

Martin Luther understood something about this need for humility in discernment. We usually think of Luther's understanding of the gospel in terms of his Lutheran paradoxes as if they were a mere dualism: grace vs. works, law vs. gospel. We remember how, in a kind of evangelical theological exuberance, Luther moves freely across the canon to make his point. Luther calls James an "epistle of straw" because of the Biblical author's inadequate Christology. As for Revelation, Luther wonders, who is to say that the center of the gospel can be found there at all? Many of us remember that Luther did see the center of the gospel in his own unique reading of Paul: that we are saved by grace through faith. This gospel center becomes something of a critical principle for reading and preaching other parts of the New Testament. We may also recall now that much contemporary scholarship has called Luther's reading of Paul into question.[9] But it certainly cannot be said that Luther had no appreciation for the gospel's *mystery* – that is, that the theological task of discerning the gospel was something easy to do. Luther apparently said that whoever could

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[9] Cf. *Krister Stendahl*, Paul Among Jews and Gentiles, Philadelphia 1975.

properly distinguish between law and gospel should wear his own doctor's hat.[10] In our age, discerning gospel is and will be a challenge to any theologian. It is in this deeper sense that gospel is mystery indeed.

Perhaps this is why contemporary theologian Edward Farley describes gospel the way that he does. The first thing to note is that Farley himself never puts a "the" in front of gospel. It is without a definite article, for gospel is not one thing, no simple thing, but ever new in every time and place:

> Gospel is not a thing to be defined. It is not a doctrine, a delimited objective content. The summaries in Acts and in Paul of what is proclaimed, the formulas of the kerygma, attest to this. Phrases like the kingdom of God, Jesus as Lord, Christ crucified do have content, but that content is not simply a quantity of information. To proclaim means to bring to bear a certain past event on the present in such a way as to open the future. Since the present is always specific and situational, the way that the past, the event of Christ, is brought to bear so as to elicit hope will never be captured in some timeless phrase, some ideality of language. Preaching the good tidings is a new task whenever and wherever it takes place.[11]

Gospel *invites us* to just such careful, contextual reflection as a way of opening to the new thing God is doing. It is not that the gospel is some Freudian ink blot, but rather it is a kind of structured reflection for the here and now in light of God's unfolding purposes – something that only you as a local preacher can do by virtue of the faith to which you bear witness.[12]

This is why it is so important to think of the preacher as something other than the mere exegetical/rhetorical engineer who bridges by means of some delivery mechanism for every atomized pericope in the scriptures. The preacher does not try to manage the Word. The preacher does not merely apply the Word. The preacher also does not get out of the way just because the Word is from scripture and so bears no responsibility for its getting a hearing. Rather, the preacher is a *theologian* of the Word. She or he stands up in front of God and everybody and wrestles with what the scriptures say, in all their diversity (for one, because the scriptures themselves embody various theologies and do not agree!). There is no way of doing so apart from a careful act of

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[10] Although this saying is widely noted, it may well be apocryphal. I have found thus far that Luther does describe the *difficult necessity* of discerning law and gospel. Luther argues in Table Talk #1234 that only God in the Holy Spirit truly knows how to distinguish law and gospel, it is no human capacity and one that he himself is far from understanding in T. Tappert (trans. and ed.), Luther's Works (hereafter LW) vol. 54, Philadelphia 1967, 127, and likewise in his sermon on Gal 3:23–29 in B. Mayes (ed.), LW Sermons IV, St. Louis 2016, 67.

[11] *Farley* (note 2)*,* 101.

[12] *John McClure* points out that the referential function of preaching Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is itself a form of "soft heresy," which, in the normative frame of Christian liturgy, can function as "passing theories" that can be grasped with reference to the historical witness of Christian faith. Both the referential innovation and communicative-liturgical structure that grounds it are important; cf. Preaching as Soft Heresy. Liturgy and the Communicative Dimension of Homiletical Theology, in: Jacobsen (Ed.) (note 5), 64-71.

theological reflection on the gospel. This is what makes preachers residential theologians of the gospel wherever they are. That is why the Homiletical Theology Project is committed to the idea that preaching is not just the place where theology is "applied," it is where theology is done.[13] Preaching is *doing* theology, for preachers and homileticians specifically doing *contextual* theology of the gospel in relation to a text and/or situation.

Many of us in North America have not conceived of the relationship of theology to preaching that way. We may well have presupposed that preaching is where theology is applied, as if we merely derived theology in our sermons from an extant, authoritative deposit of tradition. We might think we need first to go to the dogmatic tradition or the systematicians, and only then turn to our hearers and apply theology for them. One apocryphal saying on the topic argues that "Theology exists to make preaching as difficult as it needs to be." Having sat through a few theology classes, preachers may well find that statement true, but it does not yet capture the fullness of the relationship of preaching and theology in practice. Karl Barth may have come a bit closer when he said "All theology is sermon preparation."[14] Preachers likely know from experience that theological depth matters whether preachers name the presence of God in a hospital room, at the barricades, or in the chancel next to a coffin. Cultural chirpiness will not suffice – so theology does, as Barth points out, *prepare* us to go into the breach to name God. David Buttrick, however, turned Barth on his head in a way that I think comes even closer to the truth. Buttrick suggests in his Foreword to Barth's *Homiletics* that all sermon preparation is actually theology.[15] Preaching is therefore theological from beginning to end: from first contextual inklings, to disruptive situations, through wrestling with the scriptures and doctrinal tradition, before the listening assembly ecclesial or otherwise, and yes, into the world. For preachers, this is *all* theology.

This notion that all sermon preparation is theology is so in part because we understand that theology does not issue from some primordial, immoveable starting point either. In *Places of Redemption*, feminist practical theologian Mary McClintock Fulkerson makes the case that theology begins with a wound.[16] There is much in the Christian tradition that is unfinished, unresolved, and a struggle.[17] Acknowledging the wound is more than honest; however, it focuses the theological mind. We approach Biblical texts and situations acknowledging wounds. McClintock Fulkerson

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[13] The argument in the section below recapitulates work I have done in the series The Promise of Homiletical Theology (vols. 1 and 2) and earlier in connection with a lecture in a Boston University School of Theology DMin course called "Situational Preaching for Transformation" (Spring 2016).

[14] *Karl Barth*, Homiletics, Louisville 1991, 17.

[15] *David Buttrick*, "Foreword," in ibid., 10.

[16] *Mary McClintock Fulkerson*, Places of Redemption. Theology for a Worldly Church, Oxford 2007, 12ff.

[17] This realization about the unfinished, wounded, and unresolved nature of theology shows up implicitly in Luke Powery's work, ibid., but also more extensively in the most recent volume with the contributions from *Joni Sancken, Sarah Travis, Yohan Go* and myself in Theologies of the Gospel in Context (note 4), 65–155. Although the theologies of the gospel vary, its character as response to a wound/trauma is key.

does not stand alone in the claim that theology is not a dis-interested enterprise. Luther's theological breakthrough concerning the doctrine of justification by grace through faith as the center of the gospel takes place during his own struggle to find a gracious God, that is, in *Anfechtung*. A liberation theologian like Gustavo Gutierrez points to the reality of injustice and oppression that drives him to theological reflection on the gospel as both "annunciation" and "denunciation" in the liberation struggle.[18]

In practice, however, this preacherly talk about theology does not mean that the pulpit is now the place for the five-dollar words learned in a school of theology either. Preaching cannot be the place where pulpiteers aim to be obtuse with phrases like hypostatic union, *perichoresis*, or even *homoousios*. Preaching in practice and in context is doing theology within earshot of real hearers, which means that we work with theological clarity, but also poetic, metaphorical, imagistic, and narrative ability. Preachers will also need to bring theologies in the pew into conversation with the theological claims we are make in sermons. Rhetorician Chaim Perelman points out that some disciplines, say mathematics and philosophy, construct their claims with a kind of universal interlocutor in mind.[19] This is not true to preaching! The practice of preaching entails real (and hardly universal) hearers who are already operating from various theological and broader cultural understandings. This means that preachers have an intrinsically hermeneutical theological task: that is, how to bring multiple theological and cultural understandings into conversation.

Given the unique task of preaching, it may be more accurate to expand on the nature of this hermeneutical notion. In my view, preachers have both a theo-rhetorical (an obligation to name our own claims clearly) and theo-conversational (an obligation to engage other theologies openly and with charity) task in practice. As an example, preachers might reflect on the surprising claims and discursive back and forth between the mysterious and unrecognized risen-crucified Jesus with his two disciples getting out of town to Emmaus in disappointment in Luke 24:13–35. Jesus clearly reminds his struggling disciples of scripture and tradition to help make sense of what happened in Jerusalem last Friday, but he also *converses* with them. Furthermore, Jesus does this to such a degree that, when the disciples' eyes are "opened" and they ultimately recognize Jesus in the breaking of bread in the gathering darkness, they confess that the conversation with Jesus on the road before had made their hearts burn. Jesus could be said to have theo-rhetorical and theo-conversational aims. Theo-rhetorically, Jesus attempts to persuade his disappointed, unrecognizing disciples. Theo-conversationally, he dialogues with them in the midst of praxis and wounds. In fact, the word to converse or dialogue in Luke 24:14 is *homiloun* – the same Greek word from which we derive

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[18] *Gustavo Gutierrez*, A Theology of Liberation, Maryknoll (NY) 1973.
[19] *Chaim Perelman*, The Realm of Rhetoric, Notre Dame 1982, xiv.17.

homiletics. In the midst of struggle in an unbearable situation, in the context, and in the scriptures themselves, Jesus engages his disappointed, scared disciples as a contextual theologian of the gospel.

To be fair, homiletical theologians also need to be careful to remember that Luke knows contextual preaching can go awry. In Luke 4 Jesus preaches in his hometown synagogue in Nazareth. After quoting Isaiah's "The Lord has anointed me …," Jesus' home-town sermon comes totally off the rails. The hearers in Nazareth are not ready for Jesus' contextualization of their hard-heartedness in contrast to Sidonian widows in the days of Elisha. In fact, they aim after the sermon to throw him headlong over a nearby cliff (Luke 4:28f.). For those of us who have preached and failed, or fear preaching and failing, it is something of a consolation. It is also a reminder of the limits of what preaching as a theological act can actually do!

Such a limit to our efforts may be good to remember as practitioners reflect on this contextual-theological task of preaching gospel. God is God; we are not. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, which means that a confessional homiletical theologian needs to respect the mystery and otherness of God in any theo-rhetorical or theo-conversational enterprise. The theological work that preachers do to name gospel in relation to Biblical texts and situations is itself fraught with difficulty and ultimately bounded by mystery.

Nonetheless, this same theological mystery *beckons* preachers as theologians to speak yet again. Mysteries are not merely things we don't *know*; they are things *being revealed*. The language of mystery in the New Testament is, more often than not, eschatological language. Recall Paul's words yet again: "for now we know in part, but then, face to face." We preach gospel between now and then as mystery being disclosed.

The idea is not a new one for theologically tasked preachers. Luther speaks carefully about distinguishing between God hidden and God revealed, God preached and not preached.[20] On the one hand, preaching as a theological act requires great theological modesty and care. Human beings cannot speak definitively of God, let alone exhaustively. On the other hand, Luther notes that his focus on a theological center in the gospel, does offer some sense of God revealed and God preached. Luther's own take on the scriptures was to focus on "*was Christum treibet*," that which "drives Christ." Christ's own cross gives us pause to assume that we can trust what we see, yet Christ himself is God's disclosure of God's goodness toward us.[21] Therefore, in the midst of

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[20] Lutheran theologian *Gerhard Forde* discusses the impact of this notion in his book Theology is for Proclamation, Minneapolis 1990, 15–17.
[21] *Oswald Bayer*, Martin Luther's Theology. A Contemporary Interpretation (trans. Thomas H. Trapp), Grand Rapids (MI) 2008, 11.

struggle, we clutch the promise, we hold to what we do know of the crucified, risen One.[22] A confessional homiletical theology of the gospel realizes that preaching works with fragments and pieces in the midst of mystery. And yet, preaching can still hold a jagged shard of glass to the light, and gospel still emerges in the brokenness. Such theological preaching cannot dispel mystery (how could it?), but it does offer habitable space for life and discipleship, pointing even now to God's new creation.

2. Preaching Gospel and Theological Method: Texts, Situations, and Gospel

Now we turn to explore what such a confessional homiletical theology of the gospel might look like in practice. I begin with an assumption: texts, a theology of the gospel, and situations all belong to the moment of contextual preaching. Rather than set up a dichotomy of textual preaching and situational (or even topical) preaching, I view them along a single continuum. In my own practice, most preaching begins with a scripture text which offers not only subject matter but sometimes also structural features (say a narrative shape, an image/metaphor, or perhaps a rhetorical argument) that impact the sermon. Of course, no close reading of an ancient text is done apart from our contemporary context. In light of this, I argue that in those sermons that start with a Biblical text, something of a present "situation" becomes that "in light of which" preachers preach.[23] In the middle stands a working theology of the gospel as a kind of theological mediation. With the text in the foreground and the situation in the background, such sermons look like this in terms of theological method:

Exegetical/Textual Sermons:

>   Situation

>   Gospel

>   Biblical Text

By contrast, sermons that are shaped and impacted primarily by a situation call forth a kind of reflection on the gospel in praxis for which a Biblical text functions within a theo-rhetorical and theo-conversational structure. In sermons, say after 9/11 or whenever the church faces what David Buttrick calls a decision or limit moment,[24] the theological task foregrounds the situation while the Biblical text functions more in the background in a gospel mediation:

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[22] *Joshua Miller*, Hanging by a Promise. The Hidden God in the Theology of Oswald Bayer, Eugene (OR) 2015, 22.

[23] The language of "in light of which" actually comes from Farley's *critique* of situations viewed as the realm of application in the bridge paradigm, *Farley* (note 2), 92. The contrast in my continuum pictured above is that the gospel is still mediating "that which is preached," even when the text or a situation is the "starting point." Cf. *Jacobsen/Kelly* (note 4).

[24] The language of decision and limit moments comes from *Buttrick*'s treatment of preaching in the mode of praxis in his book Homiletic. Moves and Structures, Philadelphia 1987, 408–411.

Situational Sermons:

    Biblical Text

    Gospel

    Situation

The point is not to make a rigid, dualistic sermon typology, but to recognize the impact on the theological task of preaching when either a text or a situation is the *starting point* within a kind of homiletical-theological method around the gospel. In "situations," preachers often are faced with moments that put them on their heels and where the scriptures' impact is sometimes more indirect than direct. Yet what this interactivity reveals, is fundamentally a critical-correlational view of a confessional, homiletical theology of the gospel. Working gospel as *habitus* of the preacher is a starting point between the recognizable tradition and memory embodied in the scriptures and the claims of situations, what Farley calls their corruption and uncovered redemption in gospel,[25] in all their novelty. In the process of doing such theological reflection, sometimes the situation is "redescribed," that is, understood in a new light, and sometimes the theoretical sources of recognizability of the Christian faith are revised or understood anew. The outcome of such a process is itself an ever-changing, more critically reflective understanding of gospel as mediation. In such moments, a theology of gospel does not solely remain a matter of *habitus*, but becomes ever articulated anew in what Farley calls *scientia* or critical theological reflection. The dynamic makes more sense when we locate this working theological method for preaching in context. For this, we turn to the work on theology in relation to social practices in Kathryn Tanner's *Theories of Culture.*

3. An Analogous Dynamic in Theology and Culture: Kathryn Tanner

Tanner pushes back strongly against notions of culture and identity that leave them both static and monolithic and incline theologians to believe that a study of cultural practices can lead to a univocal understanding of theology. Over against modernist conceptions of culture that assume culture is a bounded whole, Tanner argues for a postmodern understanding that views culture as dynamic and identity as a constant renegotiation. In chapter 4 of her landmark work, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology*, Tanner shows how such a different view of cultural theory impacts the theological task – and precisely in a kind of practical mode. For Tanner, theology is a set of social practices related both to the academy and everyday life. These two sets of social practices, however, though focused on church practices nonetheless result in certain, unique material products and operations related to them. The social practices of academic theology are defined by the genres of

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[25] *Farley* (note 2), 102.

papers, protocols of presentations, and material products like books and articles. Social practices of everyday theology, however, are not identical even if they are just as theological. Their close relationship to everyday life does not necessarily result in the same kinds of theoretical questions relative to practice precisely because of the relative demands of everyday life itself. In light of Farley's claim that *theologia* is more than *scientia* in the modern sense, but also *habitus* in the lives of believers, I would like to place these two sets of social practices in a dynamic relationship—and one, in fact, fraught with ever-renegotiated features of identity. What keeps cultural formation and identity dynamic in each of these cultures is not just their interaction with each other (academy vs. church), but the demands of their own practices in context.

In its dynamic relation to everyday theology, academic theology is cognizant of its theoretical revisions and pluralities and as needed "mediates" these to assembled communities of practice through institutions like seminaries and certifying bodies. As a tactical matter, a homiletical theologian of the gospel who is also involved in the dialogical, hermeneutical practice that is preaching leverages these differences as theories revise practices and practices revise theories. Others in everyday culture may have similar knowledge bases (e.g., the seeker layperson or the curious parishioner), but the preacher is put in the fraught position of being aware of both life forms of theology, both communities, their different social practices and their overlapping interests.

Yet at the same time, the homiletical theologian does theology not just in proximity to local practices and in their service (Tanner gives the example of situational needs for working through a temporary impasse of practice), but also in relation to what I might call "iconic theories" (understood as traditional sources of theology that make them "recognizable" as sources): repeated readings of scripture by means of the iconic appearance of the Bible in worship, ritualized action and words encoded in liturgy as an icon of memory/tradition, iconic objects like the ambo/table/font that both focus and disrupt that gathered assembly in their stipulated address (you) and action (hear, eat, pass through waters), which possibilize revision, occasionally of both theories (theological icons as sources) and practices. In other words, the theories and practices of academic culture overlap with (but are not reducible to) the theories and practices of everyday culture precisely in the work of a homiletical theology of the gospel. Both external cultural products and internal sources of iconic meaning push back against everyday understandings and therefore call forth revision of both theory and practice. What is unique about the church, however, is that the theory of this cultural work is represented by icons of presence in worship: in the Bible read in the sanctuary, in sacred ritual, and in the very architecture of worship centered on Word and Sacraments.

What might such interactivity in theory and practice look like? In an ELCA congregation in suburban Boston, a slight, retired elementary teacher born and raised conservative Missouri Synod comes up most Sundays to help serve Eucharist. The sanctuary in which she does this practice is marked by classic features of North American Protestant architecture: split marble chancel with elevated pulpit and a large Bible on the lectern, a massive marble altar/table raised in the middle all under a tall cross suspended against the back wall. When this retired teacher comes up to help serve Eucharist, however, she knows she needs to help prepare the space to help the congregation receive the elements. Most weeks, she places her two forearms across the top of the Bible lectern and pushes back on it so it slides away from the edge of the marble chancel. She pushes back on Word to make room for Sacrament and people receiving promise in bread and wine.

My claim is that a homiletical theology of the gospel is precisely where analogous theological difference and struggle is negotiated in practice all the time. Preachers as theologians do their work not just in practice alone but in the presence of the iconic theories (scripture, memory, ritual, symbols) that at once support and question the gospel they name. Preachers may begin such a dialogical, hermeneutical process with a "working gospel" or *habitus* that takes up the dialogue, but the theological work that they do accomplishes more than revising practice in the face of some impasse, it also impacts the theories iconically present in the worship moment itself, including a revision of gospel more in the form of *scientia*. If everyday culture has its own theology, practices and material products, the relationship is such that the interactivity of theories and practices happens at an intersection of the homiletical theologian of the gospel who has explored theology as a practice in the culture of academic theology as well. This is the two-fold engine of its mutual critical-correlational work: the double push back of another "cultural" theology and the internal push back of theoretical icons that dialogue productively with practices and contexts.

Conclusion

All this is to say that the homiletical theologian is involved in a task much more complex and interactive than mere application. It may begin with the *habitus* of the preacher, a kind of working gospel that helps form the conversation with texts or situations, but it also engages this practice in the very presence of the iconic theories that make the dialogue recognizable and locatable within the tradition: Bible on an Ambo, a Table with Bread and Wine, and a watery Font – at the very least. Because a dialogue is set into motion, however, preaching does not remain there. The unfinished tradition and grounding iconic theories do more than give answers, they prompt questions which open up the dialogue to ever wider truth claims even beyond the immediate horizon of the worshipping congregation. This very reflection calls forth deeper work on the part of the preacher, whose *habitus* or working gospel is now pushed toward a kind of critical reflection

in an articulated gospel, a *scientia* more in the sense of discipline, that captures the full breadth of what *theologia* is: a disposition in dialogue with a critically aware form of theological reflection in connection with texts and situations in the very presence of the theoretical icons of the tradition and addressed ultimately to this particular, gathered people of God.

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Falling and Rising

Korean Protestant Preaching and the Possibility of Apophatic Theology

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Translated by Peace Lee

Abstract

This article proposes that the Korean Protestant Church, which has lost its dynamism and is declining, needs a theological reformation. Greatly influenced by Puritan theology, Korean Protestantism has deteriorated into a largely individualistic and consumerist faith. Its credibility has collapsed as it pursued power and turned away from the other. This article identifies Evagrius' negative theology as a promising theological corrective for the Korean Protestant church. Evagrius' mystical theology remains largely unknown but his ethical and devotional moral vision provides a viable model for the Korean Protestant Church, which stands at a crossroad today.

All that Falls Has Wings

In the novel *All that Falls Has Wings,*[1] Moon-Yeol Lee, a nationally renowned South Korean writer explores themes of power and wealth, tracing the arc of a couple whose winged pursuit for power results in fatality. The Korean Protestant Church is crashing like the couple in the novel. It may have surged high with wings once, but it is now falling fast. At its peak, 20–25% of South Korean population identified as Christians, but in the last two decades, the numbers have plummeted repeatedly. More sobering is that Protestantism's credibility is at a record low compared to other religions and denominations; a sharp decline of membership among underage population is also noted.[2] The prevailing discourse of crisis and panic has overwhelmed Korean Protestantism in the last decade, with church members as well as ministers disoriented and directionless.

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[1] *Mun-Yeol Lee*, 추락하는 것은 날개가 있다 (All that falls has wings), Seoul 1989. The author borrowed this novel's name from *Ingeborg Bachmann*, who was an Austrian poet. Bachmann borrows her motive from Greek Myths.

[2] *Hyeok-Ryul Kwon*, 교계 포커스 13: 신뢰의 위기, 한국교회는 어떻게 극복할 것인가? (Focus on Denomination 13: Crisis of Credibility, How Will the Korean Church Overcome?), in: 기독교 사상 675 (Christian Thought 675) (2015).

Multiple analyses of the crisis have been undertaken from diverse perspectives, but what's clear is that the Korean Protestant church, far from being a beacon of hope, has failed to perform even the basic function of providing ministerial care to the world. Although South Korea has emerged from the utter ruins of the Korean War to become the world's 10th largest economy (according to GDP) in just 60 years, its suicide rate is the highest among OECD countries, which reveals a dark shadow of crushed and depleted souls amid the glow of success.[3] What has the church, which has long presented itself as an advocate of the people, been doing during this time? Henceforth, how and with whom will the Korean Protestant Church rise? And what is the ultimate purpose of rising? What theology shall furnish the ground for its preaching?

1. A Power-Driven Church

From its very inception in the 19th century, the Korean Protestant Church served as an escape route for a people who faced severe political and economic adversity. Following its founding in 1885 by Presbyterian and Methodist missionaries, the church helped pave the way for civilizing efforts through the building of schools and hospitals. When Korea was forcibly occupied by Japanese imperialists the church, which was also under threat, preached Exodus and the prophetic texts, rising as the center of resistance and as a refuge from imperialist powers. When Korea was liberated, only to be thrown into a catastrophic war, the church remained standing. In the era of postwar reconstruction, economic growth mirrored church growth. And in no time, faith was equated to material abundance and prosperity was legitimized by the church. This is the history of the Korean Protestant Church as most view it. But an overview of the Korean Protestant Church's history told from a crisis discourse tells a more brutal tale.

Many view moral corruption of church leaders as the main reason for the Korean Protestant Church's downturn. But moral corruption should be viewed as a symptom, not its cause. Sinful and criminal behaviors of church leaders stem from greater forces and principalities of power. A macroscopic analysis of Korean society, one that enlarges the scope beyond individual actors, is necessary for a more accurate understanding. One must consider the larger forces of patriotism, democratization, and capitalism – in particular – as well as how all three interacted with Korean Protestantism. The Korean Protestant Church gained momentum by aligning itself with these forces, but now these movements and their secular world-views threaten to overwhelm and wipe

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[3] It is the criteria according to the OECD report (2014). Available online: http://www.oecd.org/korea/OECD-SocietyAtaGlance2014-Highlights-Korea.pdf (accessed: 9 August 2018).

out what is distinctively Christian about the church.[4] The cause for the current predicament of a church that has turned its back to society can be traced to a church that has deserted its call by way of an indiscriminate pursuit of secular values, which has resulted in the privatization of faith and disregard for community. When the history of the Korean Protestant Church is viewed from this perspective, one cannot shake the suspicion that perhaps the church was corrupt from the very start, greedily seeking power and domination.

While Catholicism was viewed as a foreign power and thus rejected from the very start of its missionary efforts, Protestantism, with its establishment of schools and hospitals, was received as a "civilizing mission" and became equated with political and economic power.[5] More than the material aspect of power was emphasized; Protestantism was perceived as more spiritually powerful than folk religion, and it was this faith, one indivisible with power that was evangelized.[6] Protestantism was associated with power, perceived as a stronger institution than Japanese imperialism, celebrated as a mightier force that fought and vanquished communism, and enthusiastically received as an affluent religion that could solve poverty and hunger.[7]

Perhaps the church's pursuit of power was ineluctable given the systemic backdrop of widespread poverty and socio-economic oppression, but this decision has set the church on an inexorable path that continues to the present. Koreans trusted the Protestant Church when it struggled for and alongside the weak and the oppressed. But when the church was aligned with the powers and church leaders colluded with politicians for political strength and material prosperity, Koreans looked to other denominations like Roman Catholicism or turned to other faiths. Seen from this perspective, the Korean Protestant Church's reach for power was its downfall.

Retracing the story of church's intoxication with power and strength reveals the unmasked face of the Korean Protestant Church. At the risk of generalization, it is not difficult to see that the church has become consumed with satisfying its greed. Greed sets the stage for the exercise of power and the pursuit of power always results in violence. As Walter Brueggemann points out, the pursuit of power and greed are inextricably linked. For the sake of having more, human beings are degraded into commodities to be owned; and it is this mentality that explains the abuse of power

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[4] *Seong-Kuk Jo*, 한국교회 위축현상의 거시적 원인 분석과 대응적 교육방안 모색 (Macroscopic perspective on the decline of Korean churches and a search for responsive educational strategies), in: 복음과 교육 11 (Gospel And Education 11) (2012), 15–17.

[5] *Kyeong-Duk Jo*, 기독교 담론의 근대서사화 과정 연구 (The study of narrativisation of modernity in Christian discourse), 고려대학교 대학원 (Korea University), 2011, 2, 11f.

[6] Ibid., 39.

[7] Hyeong-Muk Choi, 욕망과 배제의 구조로서의 기독교적 가치 (Christian values as structure of the desire and exclusion), in: 시대와 민중신학 7 (The time and Minjung theology 7) (2002).

and the violence of church pastors. The church becomes preoccupied with material success. Under such circumstances, religion becomes a vassal of prevailing power structures, treated merely as a tool to maintain the status quo. An empire satiated with power becomes numb to its rampant exercise of violence.[8] The cycle of greed, power, oppression, and resulting spiritual and material death seen under Solomonic reign is being played out in the present in South Korea.

The Korean Protestant Church's vision and practice have been co-opted by secular materialism, revealing its hollow faith in this crisis; yet, this situation is far from new. The source of its corruption runs so deep since it traces all the way back to the very founding of the church. But before retracing the current of history anew, an overview of social and religious factors that contributed to the revival of Korean Protestantism is necessary.

Behind the dramatic rise of Korean Protestantism are a host of factors such as revival meetings, dawn prayer services, impassioned sermons, church work, and an imported hierarchical model of leadership and church organization that dovetailed smoothly with existing Confucian power structures that emphasized top-down authority. The practices that helped launch this church are the *Kibok*[9] sermon, emotionally charged revival and worship services, emphasis on spiritual gifts, and an authoritarian leadership style that is often mistaken as the pastor's charisma. These practices helped fuel the church's growth even as they caused the church to depart from the core values of Christianity. Within a corrupt structure, pastors shirked their moral responsibilities and engaged in various criminal activities to fill their greed only to be despised by a disillusioned public. Such is the state of a church that has regressed to local church-ism, an outgrowth of individualism;[10] a church unrecognizable from its earlier state as a community that served the marginalized and preached messages of justice, peace, and love.

2. What Lies on the Underside of Progress

While there remain healthy congregations in Korean Protestantism, there must be a concerted and proactive effort to prevent the church from further ghettoization and degeneration. If the church wants to restore its credibility and to become God's instrument, it must recognize that it is at a

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[8] Cf. *Walter Brueggemann*/김기철 역(tr. by Ki-Cheol Kim), 예언자적 상상력 (The Prophetic Imagination), 서울 (Seoul) 2009, 78–90; *Walter Brueggemann*/주승중 소을순 역 (tr. by Seung-Jung Joo, Eul-Sun So), 설교자는 시인이 되어야 한다 (Finally comes the poet), 서울Seoul 2007; *Walter Brueggemann*/박규태 역 (tr. by Kyu-Tae Park), 안식일은 저항이다 (Sabbath as Resistance), 서울 Seoul 2015; *John F. Kavanaugh*, Following Christ in a Consumer Society, Maryknoll (NY) 2006, 51–56.

[9] Kibok is comparable to prosperity gospel, but has distinctive characteristics of shamanism.

[10] Local churchism is an attitude that focuses on one's church over against larger denomination or Christian culture. It could be understood as church individualism.

critical juncture. And it needs to overcome the following phenomena that commonly plague it: fundamentalism, emotionalism, consumerism, and individualism. These phenomena interplay and interact and manifest most commonly through what I call *Kibokism*, a strong tendency found in Korean Christianity. What was preached during the dramatic rise of Korean Protestant Church was *Kibokism*, which coalesced as a synergistic effect between indigenous Shamanism and the imported Puritanical faith.

Although many find fault with Max Weber's thesis connecting the rise of capitalism with the Protestant spirit, it is resoundingly true in the case of South Korea. [11] Puritanism influenced early North American missionaries in Korea who regarded drinking and gambling as immoral.

Christianity thus came to be identified in South Korea as a civilizing and potent religion practiced by a group of people who abstained from smoking and drinking and who observed Sunday worship. Soon it was behavior, one's works, which was prioritized. Moreover, the church's theology has been influenced by mysticism towards excess emotionalism that has roots in Korean shamanism,[12] which gives further rise to individualistic faith.

All the while, early Korean Protestants who led the modernization efforts of Korea later lost their influence, as they were unable to shape the country's political and economic directions. Although the church was instrumental in freeing the country from military dictatorship, the church shifted from the political and became solely concerned with the individual.[13] This privatization of faith only deepened the already conservative nature of faith that was implanted by missionaries. The Korean Protestant Church has become an engorged denomination swollen with power, leaving no room for liberation theology.

Consumerism and individualization are not recent developments that emerged after or in tandem with country's rapid modernization; their roots can be traced to the very beginning of missionary efforts in Korea. Missionaries who came to Korea brought with them modernization and individualism. Koreans who did not convert to Christianity criticized Christians for being individualistic and flying against the larger cultural ethos of collectivity; they likened the church as a group of selfish individuals who were exclusive and indifferent to non-Christians. [14] Missionaries

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[11] *Dong-Min Jang*, 한국의 근대화와 한국장로교회: 회고와 전망 (The Modernization of Korea and the Korean Presbyterian Church: Retrospect and Prospect), in: 장로교회와 신학 9 (Presbyterian Church and Theology 9) (2012), 206f.

[12] Korean shamanism emphasizes ecstatic experiences and individual feelings which undermine rational discourse and collectivity of church.

[13] Ibid., 220-221.

[14] *Duk-Ju Lee*, 한국 초대교회사에 나타난 오류와 한계 (Error and limits in the early Korean Christianity), in: 기독교 사상 49 (Christian thoughts 49), no. 12 (2005), 226f.

not only brought their middle-class consumerism, which fueled material greed in the onlookers, but they also engaged in economic activities, blurring yet again the line between faith and profit.[15] Theologically, the missionaries emphasized reason and doctrines; the early missionaries' rationalistic dogmatism continues to hold sway in the largely conservative Korean Protestant church. In sum, a capitalist ethos that encourages profit, and seeks (and colludes with) worldly power has prevailed to the present moment, leaving the church increasingly insular, discriminative, and detached.

In the face of such crisis, Korean theologians have consistently called for a reformation in the Protestant church. There are those who advocate for a maintenance approach who want to work within the prevailing system; they value the prevailing theology and the evangelical pietism that was brought over by Puritan missionaries.[16] There are also those who call for the churches to respond to the challenges of secularization and postmodernism. They demand that the church shed its insular fundamentalism, adopt a more open Christian worldview and remain in active engagement with the world. [17]

Many alternatives have been proposed as correctives to the current predicament but what they all have in common is their emphasis that the reformation of Korean Protestant church must come from preaching. Given the widespread corruption of mainstream Protestant leaders today, preaching has to lead the way. This is so because preaching provides a "way of *resistance* to the powers," an "alternative to violent domination," even if the violence is found within the church.[18] And in the Korean Protestant Church, sermons have always played a formative role, both in the growth of the church and in the present church context. Generally, pastors preach six sermons in a given week not including the homilies offered in pastoral visits.

A reformation in preaching is crucial at this critical juncture but reforming preaching should not be understood as reforming the sermon, i.e. tinkering with the sermonic form. Rather, the primary concern is in questioning the predominant theology that undergirds present preaching. There is very little space for different theologies in the Korean Protestant Church and the entrenched theological mood restricts the pastors to go beyond what is clear and established.

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[15] Cf. *Dae-Young Ryu*, Understanding Early American Missionaries in Korea (1884–1910): Capitalist Middle-Class Values and Weber's Thesis, in: Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions 113 (2001), 93–117.

[16] Cf. *Jae-Kyeong Yoo*, 영국 청교도 영성의 한국교회의 수용 가능성에 대한 연구 (The study on the possibility of accommodation of British Puritanical spirituality by Korean churches), in: 신학과 실천 48 (Theology and Praxis 48) (2016).

[17] *Sung-Guk Jo* (note 4), 23–25.

[18] *Charles L. Campbell*, The Word before the Powers: An Ethic of Preaching, 1st ed. Louisville, Ky. 2002, 76–78.

What is most needed in the Korean Protestant Church today is an interrogation of privatized faith by attending to spiritual theology's teachings. As is the case in the West, there is a heightened interest in spirituality among those who have left the church.[19] Many who are disillusioned by materialism are taking a renewed interest in ultimate concerns and asking questions; the church can respond to them by its rich tradition of spiritual theology. [20] Although spiritual theology has been widely utilized, the Korean Protestant church has largely neglected the teachings of apophatic theology.

This article, which draws on apophatic theology in relation to preaching, may be the first of its kind in South Korea. Interest in this theology has been cemented only in the past few years, and apophatic theological texts are just beginning to be translated here. In this nascent stage, it is noteworthy that there is less of the knee-jerk opposition than one might expect. Even among the Protestants, there is more openness and curiosity regarding apophatic theology. Indeed, given the urgent need for the church to give up its individualism and embrace inclusiveness and unity, a turn towards apophatic theology is apt.

In the following section, features and implications of apophatic theology will be introduced; and detailed theoretical explanations and criticisms brought forth from differing denominations will be eschewed for the purpose of charting the possibilities that are opened up by Evagrius' apophatic theology.

3. The Possibility of Apophatic Theology: Towards Evagrius' Theology

The reform of the Korean Protestant Church must begin with a reform of its theology. Apophatic theology (or negative theology) is often understood as the counterpoint to kataphatic theology (or descriptive theology) and its formulation can be traced back to the early church. Kataphatic theology dominates Western Christian tradition with its rational and positivist foundation that has resulted in systematization and conceptualization of faith. Apophatic theology does not hold the belief that God can be defined or known through reason. Apophatic theology can be traced to Platonism and it offers up a *via negativa*, an alternative path to natural theology or theology of revelation. Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita believed that humans could not know or express God's essence through human speculation. The Cappadocian fathers formulated core affirmations of apophatic theology and they have profoundly influenced the Eastern Orthodox Church. In the

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[19] Cf. 정재영, 종교 세속화의 한 측면으로서 소속 없는 신앙인들에 대한 연구, in: 신학과 실천 39 (2014).

[20] Cf. *Jae-Kyeong Yoo*, 왜 이시대에 기독교 영성인가? (Why Discuss Spirituality Now?), in: 신학과 목회 35 (Theology and Ministry 35) (2011).

West, Aquinas and Eckhart became bearers of apophatic thought. According to Matthew Fox, traces of apophatic theology are all but lost in the Western church, including its Protestant church. The via negativa has attenuated into asceticism in Roman Catholicism and to an overemphasis on sin and atonement in Protestantism.[21] Apophatic theology is often equated with the third and last part in the three-way process of soul (purgation – illumination – union) and spirituality or mystical theology is understood as union with Christ.

In the current context of secular materialism where the "I" has become the center, apophatic theology loosens the "I" into a wider vista and understanding through its particularly humane and open vision.[22] Apophatic theology remains foreign to the majority of those who are not part of the Eastern Orthodox Church. When the church faced a crisis in its identity under large-scale secularization in 4th century, the desert fathers and mothers formulated apophatic theology as a response to the encroaching secularization of the church. Hence this theology is particularly appropriate for the Korean Protestant Church's context.

Among the many church fathers who laid the foundation for apophatic theology, particular attention will be given to Evagrius Ponticus (345–399). Evagrius was a foundational thinker of spiritual theology who has had a profound impact in Western literary and cultural tradition; his theology offers rich resources in terms of inspiration and model for the Korean Protestant Church.[23] The main movements of his theology are as follows.

3.1 The Three-Phase Way of the Soul

Through his writings, Evagrius offers a concrete roadmap of the spiritual life. He shows how the ascetic way of *praktike*, *physike* and *theologia* could help one overcome evil thoughts and live with perfect purity of heart. Through *praktike* or ascetic practice, the soul can be liberated from passions and empowered to cultivate virtues. This way of the soul begins in faith and is paved by battling one's appetites. The *physike* is the second stage when one contemplates created things, which

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[21] *Matthew Fox*/황종렬 역 (tr. by Jong-Ryeol Hwang), 원복 (Original Blessing), 칠곡군 (Chilgok-Gun) 2011, 138f. The influence of apophatic theology can be found over the length and breadth of the intellectual history, including philosophy. This article offers general overview and does not offer a detailed analysis of apophatic theology's influence on Protestantism or Catholicism.

[22] 차광호, 포스트모던에서의 부정신학, in: 가톨릭신학 3 (2003), 55.

[23] Evagrius who was born in Pontus became the pupil of Basilius, Gregorius of Nazianzus, Gregorius Nyssenus after entering the clergy of Cappadocia. He practiced asceticism for the rest of his life in the deep desert of Kellia. Cf. *Evagrius Ponticus*/남성현 역(tr. by Sunghyun Nam), 폰투스의 에바그리오스 실천학 (Evagrius Ponticus Praktikos), trans., Antoine Guillaumont, Claire Guillaumont, and Gabriel Bunge. 서울 (Seoul) 2015, 20–27; *Andrew Louth*/배성옥 역(tr. by Sungok Bae). 서양 신비사상의 기원 (The Origins of Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys), 칠곡군 (Chilgok-Gun) 2001, 153–155.

prepares one to contemplate the Creator.[24] The final stage of spiritual life is *theologia*, wherein one receives knowledge (*gnosis*) of God and is brought to true contemplation of God.[25] The one who has previously clung to the flesh is liberated; having overcome one's passions, one is united and able to forge a living relationship with God.

3.2 The Tripartite Soul

To better understand Evagrius' teaching regarding the soul, the soul and its conception of three corresponding parts must be understood. The first part is the *nous*, synonymous with *pneuma* and in a state of angelic purity before the fall. The second is *epithymia,* the human desire or appetite. The third is *thymos,* the passion, which influences the *epithymia* and the *nous*. Because humans are dominated by *epithymia* and *thymos,* which inhibit proper knowledge, humans have to undertake the three-phase way that begins with *praktike* to overcome the passions of *epithymia* and *thymos*.[26] Evagrius' classifications differ from Plato's conception as Plato conceives of *thymos* to be dominated by reason while Evagrius posits the necessity of both *thymos* and *epithemia* to be brought under control.[27] Evagrius argues thus because rage stirs when desires are unmet. Our desires or appetite should be reoriented towards God and *thymos* or passions should be channeled towards battling with evil that prevents us from desiring God.[28]

3.3 Roadblocks to the Way of Eternity: The Eight Evil Thoughts (*logismoi*)

In the battle with the devil, evil thoughts prevent one from entering into contemplation and silence. Evagrius identified eight of these false thoughts—gluttony, lust, avarice, anger, dejection, acedia, vainglory, and pride. These eight evils are forerunners of the Seven Deadly Sins in the Western tradition.[29] Each of these is threatening because it can disrupt and cause one to abandon the spiritual way. Gluttony and lust can lead one to crave sensual pleasure and give up on ascetic life.

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[24] *Evagrius Ponticus*/허성석 역, 그노스티코스. 서울 2016, 81. 본문 49장.

[25] *Evagrius Ponticus* (note 23); Louth/배성옥 역 (tr. by Sung-Ok Bae), 서양 신비사상의 기원 (The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys), 156–161.

[26] *Evagrius Ponticus* (note 23), 35–37.

[27] *Leslie Stevenson/David L. Haberman*/박중서 역, 인간의 본성에 관한 10가지 이론 (Ten Theories of Human Nature). 4th ed. 서울 2006, 146f.

[28] Cf. *Sung-Hyun Nam*, 플라톤의 영혼의 삼분법과 에바그리오스의 영성신학 (The Tripartite Division of the Soul of Plato and a Spiritual Theology of Evagrius), in: 장신논단 48 (Korea Presbyterian Journal of Theology 48), no. 2 (2016); *Sung-Hyun Nam*, 폰투스의 에바그리오스의 영성 테라피 (A Spiritual Therapy of Evagrius of Pontus – The Tripartite Division of the Soul and Its Treatment), in: 서양고대사연구 43 (Journal for the promotion of classical studies 43) (2015); *Jae-Kyeong Yoo*, 영적 성장의 관점에서 본 에바그리우스의 인간 이해 (The Spiritual Understanding of Human Beings According to Evagrius of Pontus), in: 한국기독교신학논총 79 (Korea Journal of Christian Studies 79), no. 1 (2012).

[29] *Sung-Hyun Nam* (note 28), 67.

Avarice poisons all manner of relationships. The root of all of these evils is self-conceit (*philatuia*), an ingrown affection that has a "strong tendency toward the self." Evagrius warns that rage and unrest ensue when the self's appetites are not satisfied.[30]

3.4 Apatheia *as the Purpose of Asceticism*

The end goal of *Praktike* is *apatheia*, literally "passionlessness," or freedom from passions. Although it is a pure state of mind, it does not mean that one is freed from sin. As Evagrius notes, "The attainment of freedom from passion does not [necessarily mean] one is already truly praying: it is possible to have simple thoughts, but be taken up with their stories, and thus still be far from God."[31] Even so, *apatheia* is essential to the true contemplation of God. Human striving can only go so far in true prayer, contemplation can only be attained with God's intervention: "The Holy Spirit, out of compassion for our weakness, comes to us even when we are impure. And if only He finds our intellect truly praying to Him, He enters it and puts to flight the whole array of thoughts and ideas circling within it, and He arouses it to a longing for spiritual prayer."[32]

4. Apophatic Theology and Its Implications

Exposing the Korean Protestant Church's corruption and crisis may just be the first step towards reform. However, paying attention to Evagrius, who himself weathered powerful storms of secularization, may yield deeper insights to the current predicament as well as possible solutions.

The implications of Evagrius' theology for the Korean Protestant Church for its ministry and preaching are as follows.

4.1 Apophatic as Corrective

Application of Evagrius' theology offers a corrective that can redress the pernicious trends that have taken hold in the Korean Protestant Church. What follows are key correctives from the standpoint of apophatic theology to some of the major problems that plague the church today.

Rejection of desire: The most pertinent aspect of Evagrius' theology for the Korean Protestant Church is his analysis and challenge of reorienting our desire. Desires call forth rage. Moderation of desire may be praised as it leads to diligence but there is no justification for any desire that can be given, however moderate, when the question of ultimate purpose is asked. As Evagrius teaches, all worldly desires stem from evil. And since this desire can never be quenched, it leads to division.

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[30] *Louth*/배성옥 역(tr .by Sung-Ok Bae), 서양 신비사상의 기원 (The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys), 159-160; *Evagrius Ponticus* (note 23), 46–49, 86ff.

[31] *Evagrius Ponticus*/전경미 이재길 역 (tr. by Kyeung-Mi Jeong, Jae-Kil Lee), 에바그리우스의 기도와 묵상 (Ad monachos), 서울 (Seoul) 2011, 24.

[32] Ibid, 26.

The devil promotes desire in us because it prevents us from seeing God. Evagrius' analysis and emphasis of human emotions was revolutionary for his time. His proposal that the passions must first be tamed before any spiritual or physical undertaking remains especially relevant for the present-day church that also suffers from dualism of spirit and flesh.

The crisis of Korean society lies in being trapped in an endless loop of desire-rage-violence-death. The preaching in the Korean Protestant church must expose and envision a way out of this deadly cycle. A hermeneutic that questions the normalization of desire is necessary for a proclamation that unmasks desire's deadliness for faith and community. Although existing theologies of the Sabbath can take on this role,[33] Evagrius' theology is distinctive for calling for its practice every moment of everyday.

Transcending reason-centered faith: Reason-centered faith conflates faith with rational understanding of God's grace; it mistakes salvation with human effort, with having cognitive and intellectual understanding of the Bible. Such a view also distorts the belief that salvation is God's prerogative by rendering unnecessary all human works of faith. Such reason-centered faith has led to a vitiation of works, of practices of faith that are demanded throughout the New Testament. Hence Sundays have been severed from non-church days, and religious life disconnected from everyday life.

One of the roots of reason-centered faith can be traced back to Puritanism. Puritans opted for the kataphatic as opposed to the apophatic and as a result have emphasized Bible-reading and meditation of creeds. And as it was with the Puritans, the Korean Protestant church also brought forth numerous preachers, and it was preaching that was prioritized and privileged. In contrast to apophatic theology that calls for emptying out and silence, preachers sought to fill themselves with intellectual convictions and believed that God could be defined and known through exercise of reason.[34]

This hunger for clear and defined truths can also be explained historically. Under the trauma of Japanese occupation that made life precarious, the search for clear truth was a matter of life and death. But now that survival has been secured, deeper questions of values and meanings must be asked and put in to practice. Here practice, which contrasts reason and intellect, entails more than just an execution of Biblical teaching. We should examine that which lies beyond and makes practice possible, what drives practice forward. Spiritual theology teaches that spiritual practices

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[33] *Walter Brueggemann*/박규태 역 (note 8).

[34] Cf. *Jae-Kyeong Yoo* (note 16), 377–380.

enable the transformation of understanding of the mind towards an awakening of the heart (*kardia*).[35]

Theological analysis of rage: Koreans demonstrate the contradiction of both outwardly expressing yet inwardly repressing anger. *Hwa-byong,* caused by the festering of anger, is a common illness unique to Koreans.[36] Despite the ubiquity of rage, a disregard exists for the anger of others. Hence Koreans are in need of emotional and mental caregiving. Evagrius thought *epithymia* that gives rise to anger must be treated, but urgent care was reserved for rage that result from failures of desire. Such rage goes beyond the basic emotion of anger to also include resentment that stems from feeling uncared for and arrogance that rises from feeling disrespected. The devil uses *epithymia* and leads one to attack another. Evagrius' perspective here is very different from Plato who perceives *epithymia* positively for enabling the soul's ascension.[37] Evagrius saw the aim of *praktike* as the disappearance of *epithymia*'s stirrings. Healing comes from purification of the soul and is made possible through Christ who makes possible *praktike*.[38] Christ is the minister of the soul. Real inroads can be made when we practice Evagrius' precept that we should not take our anger out on the object of our anger, but instead on the devil that exploits and further inflames our anger. Evagrius asserts that *epithymia* can be utilized to drive out evil thoughts.[39] Our anger is not quelled by taking it out on others. That only leads to greater violence and vengeance. It is when *ephythmia* is directed towards evil that evil may be incapacitated.

Individual suffering has deepened as competition has become more entrenched in Korean society. As people are increasingly neglected, rage has swelled and life has become unendurable. This suffering cannot be reduced or treated merely as a psychological matter since it destroys relationships and unmakes communities. Thus the preacher must remain actively engaged in exposing and resisting such powers through preaching.

Correcting what has been misused and exploited: mysticism

In Korean Protestantism, mysticism denotes supernatural experiences or phenomena. Speaking in tongues, faith healings, ecstatic experiences, and visions are commonly accepted forms of mysticism. Mysticism at its base is related to primitive and elementary religious sentiments inherent

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[35] 김수천, 4세기의 이집트 수도자 마카리우스와 에바그리우스의 영성사상 고찰, in: 신학과 실천 19, no. 1 (2009), 252f.
[36] Hwa-byung symptom is a kind of sickness caused by pent-up anger. It literally means rage sickness in English. According to Lin, its manifestations include both physiological and psychological symptoms. Cf. *K. M. Lin*, Hwa-Byung: a Korean culture-bound syndrome? American Journal of Psychiatry 140, no. 1 (1973), 105–107.
[37] Cf. *Sung-Hyun Nam* (note 28).
[38] Evagrius Ponticus (note 23), 49–51.
[39] Ibid., 143. Chapter 24.

in humans. The problem lies in an unhealthy or imbalanced pursuit of mysticism. There are too many cases where mystical experiences are absolutized and made the primary end of religion. Korean Protestant preachers have been criticized for overemphasizing mystical experiences and for taking on shamanic role that mediates the spirit world while preaching. Apophatic theology teaches instead that the proper end of mysticism is union with God, which reduces ecstatic experiences to a means to that supreme objective; furthermore, the cross of Christ remains the core mystery of mysticism in the apophatic tradition.[40] Thus all believers are able and invited to experience mysticism through Christ. The preacher faces the critical task of promoting and encouraging proper theological reflection and application of mysticism that is centered on Christ.

Magnification of love: Apophatic theology teaches that love, as related to the mystery of Christ, does not have a personal object but is instead directed towards the ultimate being. The corrupted human loves what they lust after within its narrow confines but God loves all, loving even that which is worthless. Mysticism leads to desiring God's extravagant love. Humans confine their love to the realm of the personal. The self-absorption that characterizes narcissism has become an emblem of modern society's misshapen desire. Evagrius, however, does not dismiss the physical; there is a positive element to the love of flesh. The soul reaches a state of peace through the body. But it is not the body's beauty that is the requisite for soul's peace. It is in the discipline of the body that peace is attained, enabling pure prayer that leads to true contemplation of God.[41]

4.2 Apophatic theology as affirmation

Evagrius' apophatic theology serves to affirm what the Korean Protestant Church has already been practicing.

Interest in the Trinity: The doctrine of Trinity is chiefly regarded as foundational in Christian theology. The Korean Protestant Church, however, has failed to emphasize its importance and neglected to study either the doctrine's intricacies or its implications. In apophatic theology, the doctrine of the Trinity is concerned with soteriology. God's self-revelation is manifest "in the mystery of incarnation caused by the Spirit in the person of Christ." [42] The mystery of the Trinity is too great for rational understanding and resists intellectual mastery. Our explanations run the risk of becoming reductionist and wrong. The doctrine cannot be understood through human

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[40] *Louis Bouyer*/정대식 역 (tr. by Dae-Sik Jeong), 영성 생활 입문 (Introduction la vie spirituelle), 서울 (Seoul) 1992, 396f.411f.

[41] *Sung-Hyun Nam* (note 28), 85–87.

[42] *Seung-Ryong Kwak*, 부정신학 (Apophatic Theology), in: 가톨릭 신학과 사상 (Catholic Theology and Thoughts), no. 66 (2010), 120f.

reason but it can be experienced in God's presence that sustains all individual and communal life and is active in the church.

The primacy of relationship: The bonds of relationship in the Korean Protestant Church are strong as they have been shaped and defined by a larger culture of Confucianism which privileges collectivity. However strong these bonds are, these relationship networks are narrowly confined and very restrictive. Individualism was present in the very beginning of missionary efforts and although the church has been shaped by a cultural tradition that privileges collectivity, the collectivity that was privileged was a family-based network, resulting in the privileging of individual churches against the denomination or larger communities. As the church categorized and excluded others in pursuit of its selfish desires, the church turned increasingly inward and spiraled into an individualistic faith.

Theology is an interpretation of human life in relation to God,[43] and apophatic theology's confession that we cannot know or express God results not in an abandonment of the pursuit of God but a greater desire to know and express God. Instead of formulating God as an impersonal and absolute being who is wholly indifferent to us, apophatic theology preaches a relational God who seeks intimacy with us.[44] This makes way for new possibilities. Preaching is proclaiming our connection to this God. Preaching is proclaiming that God's way lies in solidarity and in the overcoming of individualism. Preaching is proclaiming the Spirit who moves in and through community, undoing individualism.

With a view to practical application, Evagrius observed that meek and humble minds maintain relationships with others. Meekness is attained with the emptying of hate, humility when we are not attached to anything and see ourselves as we are.[45] Conflict with others can be minimized when we see others in light of and through our relationship with God.

Resisting foolishness and injustice: Anger seems a natural response when we encounter unfairness or injustice. Evagrius, however, argues that anger is never the right response to our neighbors:

When you pray suitably, you will come up against matters of the sort that make you to imagine it would be completely justifiable to use indignation [*thumos*]. But there is no such thing as justifiable indignation against your neighbor. If you investigate [this], you will

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[43] Cf. *Rowan Williams*, On Christian Theology, Oxford 2000, vii.

[44] *Kwang-Ho Cha*, 포스트모던에서의 부정신학 (Apophatic theology in postmodernity), 76f.

[45] Cf. *Vladimir Lossky*/박노양 역 (tr. by No-Yang Park), 동방교회 신비신학에 대하여 (Sur la théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient), 서울 (Seoul) 2003; *Evagrius Ponticus*/전경미 이재길 역 (tr. by Kyeung-Mi Jeong, Jae-Kil Lee), 에바그리우스의 기도와 묵상 (Ad monachos), Chapters 19, 31, 33, 34, 35, 61.

discover that it is possible for the matter to be settled fairly without indignation. Employ every possible means to avoid exploding in indignation.[46]

Evagrius categorically rejected indignation. How then are we to resist indignation that holds us captive this very moment? Evagrius responded that we should fight the devil behind our anger. Evagrius himself would perform all manner of strange actions to overcome and resist evil thoughts. Evagrius once stood naked by the well during wintertime until his body was frozen to overcome lust. He let his body be infested with ticks for forty days because he was pestered by blasphemous thoughts.[47] As bizarre as some of his acts were, they recall the strange symbolic actions performed by Old Testament prophets and recall the figure of the fool who sees the ways in which the powers have become corrupt and is unafraid to mock and draw attention to their corruption.[48] Such acts flow from a self that is liberated from the fear of death and grip of self-preservation; these acts create cracks in the system of demonic power.

In Korea, one can locate similar actions that were performed by Buddhist monks.[49] Evagrius writes from a Christian perspective and offers the purpose and goal of such actions. There is a long tradition of spiritual practice that has its roots in apophatic theology's emphasis on *kenosis* and self-humiliation and this tradition is seen in the lineage of "sacred fools" or "fools for Christ" in Russia from the 13th to 15th centuries. These saints made themselves vulnerable to insult and humiliation as they challenged and provoked their communities; their presence have significantly shaped Russian spirituality.[50]

To suffer insults and humiliation is to refuse violence. Jesus was opposed to violence in the face of violence. Jesus never once retaliated in violence. As Charles Campbell and Johan Cilliers write, Jesus himself played the fool, ridiculing the destructiveness and senselessness of violence.[51] The more the Korean Protestant Church follows its clenched fist, the further it strays from Jesus' teaching. Preachers must proclaim apophatic theology's teachings of *kenotic* folly and the foolishness of the cross.

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[46] *Evagrius Ponticus* (note 45), 15; http://www.ldysinger.com/Evagrius/03_Prayer/00a_start.htm [accessed August 9, 2018].

[47] *Sung-Jun Heo*, 사막에서 길을 묻다 (Asking the way on the desert), 서울 (Seoul) 2008, 54–56.

[48] Cf. *Charles L. Campbell/Johan H. Cillers*/김대진 역 (tr. by Dae-Jin Kim), 하나님의 어릿광대 (Preaching Fools), 서울 (Seoul) 2014.

[49] 문화권에 따라서 자기 비움과 같은 개념은 쉽게 받아들이기 어려울 수도 있다. 그러나 한국의 경우는 자기 비움의 수도 전통이 이미 유사한 형태로 지속되었다. Cf. ibid, 48f.

[50] 곽승룡, (도스토예프스키의)비움과 충만의 그리스도. 서울 1998, 72f..

[51] Campbell/Cillers (note 48), 270f.

On ascetic practices such as prayer and fasting: Ascetic practices of prayer and fasting are key practices in the Korean church. For corporate prayer, the Korean Protestant church tends towards *tongsung-kido*[52] rather than written prayers; for individuals, prayer is strongly emphasized as a key spiritual practice. Fasting is also conventional in the Korean Protestant church, to the point where forty-day fasts are regularly undertaken regardless of liturgical season or existence of prayer requests.

Evagrius can be helpful in affirming what is already being practiced while calling us to remember the purpose and motivation of our ascetic practices. If the Korean Protestant church takes ascetic practices of prayer, temperance, and fasting as ends in themselves, then it has failed to properly embody Christian tradition. Prayer should be directed towards relationship with God, for the peace that follows the emptying of one's soul. Evagrius emphasized the primacy of prayer when he said that prayer is the most important practice, coming before abstinence, work, and silence. Prayer is the door to the self, a way of depending on God. We must pray ceaselessly as prayer paves our spiritual journey towards God.[53]

4.3 Apophatic Theology as Indigenous Theology

Apophatic theology may be perceived as an example of minor theology that differs significantly from the dominant theology. However, given that the apophatic tradition has historically helped shape mainstream theology and practice from its origins in the early church, it cannot be considered wholly foreign. In the case of Korea, apophatic theology shares continuities with Korea's indigenous religious tradition and larger cultural ethos.

Bible-centrism: Bible-centrism in the Korean Protestant church is more than just an outgrowth of Reformed theology, but an effect of Confucian and Buddhist culture that prizes sacred texts. Toddlers are given bible verses to memorize and daily scripture reading is a common faith practice. Among elderly believers, the hand copying of Scripture is not uncommon. Evagrius regarded the meditation and memorization of the Bible as specific tools within spiritual discipline. In *Antirrheticus,* Evagrius argues for the recitation of corresponding Bible verses to combat specific temptations or evil thoughts. He also considered Bible reading as essential to the practice of prayer. Evagrius argued that at the heart of mystical theology is prayer, and prayer is possible when one's

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[52] In Tongsungkido, individuals pray out loud. This prayer can be done privately or corporately. Tongsung Prayer is often called Korean prayer.

[53] *Jun-Ki Jeong,* 사막교부 에바그리우스 폰티쿠스의 <수도사에게> 연구 (The Study on 'To a monk' of Evagrius), in: 光神論壇 19 (The Journal of Kwangshin 19) (2010), 201–203.

mind is purified, which reading the Bible makes possible. The Bible verses bear fruit through meditation and secure one's salvation. [54]

It is not the case in Protestant Korea that believers have gone so far off track theologically as to treat the words of the Bible to be magical or enchanted. Even so, we must sound the alarm and guard against memorization of Scripture as an end in itself or equated with one's faith.

Continuities: Evagrius' emphasis on ascetic practices and prayer may appear similar in form with the existing spiritual practices of Buddhist and Taoist traditions in Korea. Even the language of emptying out echoes that of other religions in Korea. These continuities may provoke criticism and resistance against the introduction of apophatic theology to Korean Protestantism. But these continuities may also serve to smooth transition when adopting apophaticism.

Similarities can be observed between Korean affective culture and apophatic theology. Both tend towards obliqueness and opacity; the same can be said about Korean language and culture. Koreans never call on their fathers by their names. Positive emotions are often expressed negatively. The state of utter happiness is often rendered, "I'm dying from happiness." Negative phrases and formulations are used to express strong feelings.[55]

Difference are seen when Christian identity is maintained alongside indigenous religious formations. There were Korean spiritualists who developed their own apophatic theologies rooted in indigenous faith traditions, Dasuk Young-Mo Ryu being a key figure (1890–1981). Scholars are studying Ryu's theology as he constructed a systematic theology by way of apophaticism. He was regarded as an eccentric for his distinctive lifestyle; some regarded him as a saint. He came of faith at the age of 15 and was deeply affected by Tolstoy and a series of spiritual experiences he underwent. He fasted by having one daily meal and practiced celibacy in his marriage; [56] he lived each day as his last as he regarded nocturnal sleeping as dying and so received each new morning as new life. Ryu denied substance to "self" and maintained that the absolute being of God was emptiness. He believed that human beings were ultimately spiritual beings whose home is heaven, calling for people to transcend the material world instead of being bound by it. While it is

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[54] Cf. *Evagrius Ponticus*/허성석 역 (tr. by Sung-Suk Heo), 안티레티코스 (Antirrheticus), 칠곡군 (Chilgok-Gun) 2014; *Anselm Grün*/김영철 역 (tr. by Yeung-Cheol Kim), 내 영혼의 치유제 (Die Spirituelle Hausapotheke), 칠곡군 (Chilgok-Gun) 2014. In Grün's book he easily explains antirrheticus of Evagrius with today's language.
[55] *Seung-Ryong Kwak* (note 42), 139.
[56] *Young-Mo Ryu*'s penname Dasuk means 'eating one meal per day at evening'.

impossible to summarize his entire theology here, it is clear that apophatic theology marked his thought and practice.[57]

This paper examined the ways in which apophatic theology may be applied to the Korean Protestant Church as a corrective for healing as well as an affirmation of its features. Moreover, apophatic theology can soothe more than individual troubles as it has the potential to provide healing and relief of societal, political, and economic woes. Despite the urgent need for reunification between the two Koreas, the prospect of reconciliation and forgiveness seems ever more distant. If we follow Evagrius' teaching and preach that South Korea must first forgive and embrace North Korea without any judgment, we would be mocked as fools who do not know the ways of the world. And yet, that is what the Gospel demands, that is what the Gospel preaches.

Furthermore, to listen to the teachings of apophatic theology is to embrace ecumenism. Apophatic theology was deemed heretical and neglected from the very beginning of Korean Christianity. In Western Christianity also, it was often actively suppressed or neglected. The Western tradition has been theologically shaped by the apophatic tradition, but has failed to practice its vision; perhaps Korean Protestantism will not fare any better. If the Gospel is essentially self-emptying and marked by openness and hospitality towards the other, then it would be a mistake to dismiss the mystical theology of Evagrius, who has been a longstanding witness to the truth of the Gospel.

Conclusion

Rising spells falling. The Korean Protestant Church has shed its distinctive Christian identity by adopting an individualistic and consumerist faith; it has become engorged and satiated as it wildly pursued its desires for riches and power. And so, it is quickly falling. But what falls still has wings; is rising, then, impossible? Jesus, emptying himself, was crucified. The more Jesus emptied himself, the higher he was hung, and more people were saved through seeing him (Num 21:9). For the Korean Protestant Church to become a witness of salvation, it must fall even more. Only by falling can it return (rise) to God.

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[57] Cf. *Yeong-Mo Yoo/Yeong-Ho Park*, 다석 류영모의 기독교 사상 (Christian Thought of Dasuk Young-Mo Ryu), 서울 (Seoul) 1995; *Yang-Mo Jeong* et al., 하루를 일생처럼 (Live life like it ends today), 서울 (Seoul) 2011; *Yeong-Ho Park*, 다석 류영모의 생애와 사상 (Dasuk Young-Mo Ryu's Life and Thought), 서울 (Seoul) 1996; id., **多夕 柳永模**의 생각과 믿음 (Dasuk Young-Mo Ryu's thinking and belief), 서울 (Seoul) 1995; *Yun-Ju Choi*, 다석 류영모의 '생명의 영성'에 관한 연구 (The study on 'spirituality of life' of Dasuk Young-Mo Ryu), 성공회대학교 신학전문 대학원 (Sungkonghoe University), 2007.

And as we fall, we must not give up on the possibilities of apophatic theology. As Evagrius teaches, our desire should be for God and our *epithymia* directed towards fighting against evil. We must enter into *apatheia* by overcoming evil thoughts through the practice of prayer and scripture reading. When we practice this in our daily lives, the death that awaits us in the cycle of desire-rage-violence will be transformed into life. Kataphatic theology remains all too familiar and predominant. Apophatic theology may tame our rage against others and bring forth forgiveness and reconciliation. Mysticism fueled by excess emotionalism and sealed hearts will be opened to the cross of Christ and towards others. Walter Brueggemann points out that preaching must dismantle narcissism and apathy towards others by resisting desires for busyness.[58] As we continue to resist in our living and preaching, we will expose the devil's tricks for what they are. We may become unpopular and be called fools by the powerful. Our influence may continue to diminish, as individualism grows stronger. But we do well to remember Evagrius's teaching that we are already renewed; we have already won against evil and conflicts as we meditate on the Bible and pray every moment. And when we preach as such, a power and strength not our own will build and restore communities, preaching salvation for all. All that rises has wings.

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[58] Cf. *Brueggemann* (note 8).

하강과 상승: 한국개신교설교의 전망과 부정신학의 가능성

Young Hyun Choi

초록

성장의 활력을 잃고 쇠퇴하는 한국개신교회에 필요한 것은 신학의 전환이다. 한국개신교회는 신학적으로는 청교도신학의 영향을 크게 받았지만 그 기저에는 개인주의적이고 소비주의적인 성향이 강했다. 욕망을 추구해서 힘을 지향하고, 타자를 배척한 결과 신뢰도는 크게 추락했다. 한국개신교의 갱생의 방안 중 에바그리오스의 부정신학적인 요소를 도입해서 욕망과 분노를 억제하고 평정을 추구하며 관계를 회복하고 이성중심에서 실천중심 교회로 전환하는 것과 이를 위한 설교가 필요하다. 에바그리오스의 신비신학은 한국개신교회에 생소하지만 전환기에 적합한 도덕적 신앙적 대안이다.

추락하는 것은 날개가 있다

"추락하는 것은 날개가 있다."[1] 한국을 대표하는 소설가 중 한명인 이문열은 이 제목의 소설에서 권력 혹은 부, 그리고 원초적인 사랑을 갈구하는 남녀가 세속적인 욕망의 날개를 달고 상승을 추구하다 죽음으로 결말을 맺는 과정을 그리고 있다. 한국개신교회가 이 소설의 주인공처럼 추락하고 있다. 기실 날개를 달았기에 상승했지만 끝없이 추락하고 있다. 한때 신도수가 전인구 대비 20-25%에 달한다고 홍보했던 기억이 생생한데 지난 20년간 개신교인의 숫자는 추락을 거듭했다. 더욱 암울한 것은 개신교에 대한 신뢰도가 다른 종교 혹은 교파에 비해 최하 수준으로 하락했다는 점과 더불어 청년층 이하 학생들의 숫자가 급감하고 있다는 것이다.[2] 10년 이상 급격하게 대두된 한국개신교회 위기담론의 결과, 목회자도 남은 교인도 그만 길을 잃었다. 교세의 회복에 대한 희망도 함께 추락하고 있다.

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[1] *이문열*, 추락하는 것은 날개가 있다. 서울 1989. 작가는 오스트리아의 시인 바하만(Ingeborg Bachmann)의 시에서 이 소설의 제목을 차용했는데 바하만은 다시 이카로스의 추락이라는 그리스 신화에서 모티브를 가져왔다고 한다.

[2] *권혁률*, [교계 포커스(13)] 신뢰의 위기, 한국교회는 어떻게 극복할 것인가, in: 基督教 思想 675, no. - (2015).

위기에 대한 다각도의 분석이 시도되고 있지만 개신교회가 한국인들에게 희망이 되기는커녕 치유와 위로의 기능마저 하지 못하고 있는 것은 분명하다. 한국은 지난 60여년간 전쟁의 폐허에서 세계경제규모 11위(GDP기준)에 달할 정도로 성장했지만 OECD국가 중 자살률이 가장 높다는 현실은 한국인들이 성장의 그늘에서 상처받았고 지쳐있음을 보여준다.[3] 이 지경이 되도록 주류종교를 표방했던 한국개신교회는 무엇을 한 것인가? 향후 한국의 개신교회는 어떻게, 또 누구와 함께 상승을 꿈꿀 수 있겠는가? 그리고 그 상승의 끝에 있어야 할 궁극적인 목적 혹은 가치는 무엇이 되어야 하겠는가? 설교는 어떤 신학에 근거해야 하는가?

1. 힘을 추구하는 교회

한국개신교회는 19세기 무렵 도래할 때부터 정치적으로 또 경제적으로 난관에 봉착한 한국인들에게 탈출구의 역할을 했다. 1885년 이후 장로교회와 감리교회의 선교사들을 필두로 교회가 세워진 이래 교회는 학교와 병원을 세우며 문명화에 앞장섰다. 일본제국주의가 강제 병점한 이후 교회는 일본의 방해에도 불구하고 출애굽기와 예언서들을 설교하면서 저항의 구심점이 되었고 제국주의의 피난처 역할을 했다. 해방과 함께 1950년 시작된 전쟁의 와중에서도 교회는 와해되지 않았다. 전쟁 후 한국사회가 재건될 때 경제성장과 교회의 성장은 맥을 같이 했다. 신앙은 물질적인 축복으로 여겨졌고 번영이 정당화되었다. 이것이 다수가 인식하고 있는 '일반적인' 한국개신교회의 역사이다. 그러나 위기담론에서 바라본 한국교회의 비판은 이보다 가혹하다.

교회 위축의 일차적인 원인으로 교회 지도자들의 도덕적인 부패를 들고는 한다. 그러나 그것은 나타난 현상이지 구체적인 원인은 아니다. 목회자의 범죄행위는 더욱 큰 욕망과 힘의 구조에서 파생된다. 한국개신교회 지도자들이 흔히 예로 드는 유럽교회의 쇠퇴가 지도자들의 타락에만 그 원인이 있지 않은 것처럼 한국사회의 거시적인 측면을 고려해야 정당한 분석이 가능하다. 한국의 교회 밖의 변화요소는 크게 민족주의, 민주주의, 자본주의의 확대인데 한국개신교회는 때때로 이들과 영합하며 성장했지만 이제는 이들이 기독교세계관을 거부하는 철저한 세속적세계관으로 작동하며 반기독교적인 영향을 행사하고 있다.[4] 개신교회가 이런 사회의 기초적인 요인들로부터 소외된 원인을 교회가 본연의 가치가 아닌 세속적인 가치들을

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[3] 2014년 경제협력개발기구(OECD) 보고서 기준. 2016년 8월 3일 접속: http://www.oecd.org/korea/OECD-SocietyAtaGlance2014-Highlights-Korea.pdf

[4] *조성국*, 한국교회 위축현상의 거시적 원인 분석과 대응적 교육방안 모색, in: *복음과 교육* 11 (2012), 15–17.

맹목적으로 추구하고 신앙을 개인화하며 사회라는 더 큰 공동체를 외면한 데서 찾을 수 있다. 이런 관점에서 한국의 개신교회를 다시 돌아보면 주류의 교회들이 처음부터 힘과 성공을 추구했다는 의구심을 떨칠 수가 없다.

구체적으로 선교 초기부터 가톨릭은 외세라는 인식으로 배척하려는 경향이 강했던 반면에 개신교는 학교와 병원을 필두로 하는 "문명선교 (civilizing mission)"의 형태로 들어오면서 정치적, 경제적 힘과 동일시되었다.[5] 힘은 단순히 물질적인 우위에서만 강조되지 않았다. 영적으로도 토속 종교보다 우월한 것으로 인식되면서 세속적인 가치와 신앙이 혼재되어 전파되었다.[6] 일제라는 힘에 맞설 수 있는 더 힘이 센 종교, 공산주의와 싸워서 이길 수 있는 강력한 종교, 가난과 배고픔을 해결할 수 있는 부유한 종교로 개신교는 인식이 되었다.[7]

이와 같은 힘의 추구는 사회, 경제적인 억압과 빈곤의 구조를 생각할 때 불가피한 선택이었을 수는 있지만 오늘에 이르기까지 힘을 추구하는 관성을 남기게 된 것이 문제이다. 이것이 한국개신교회의 추락의 원인이 된 것이 분명하다. 그리고 힘과 권력에 취하게 된 과정을 생각해 보면 한국개신교의 신앙의 민낯이 그대로 드러나게 된다. 일반화의 위험에도 무릅쓰고 신앙의 양태들을 분석해보면 욕망의 충족이 일차적인 동기가 된 것임을 어렵지 않게 볼 수 있다. 욕망은 힘을 행사하기 위한 전제조건이 된다. 그리고 힘을 추구하면 폭력은 예정된 결과이다. 브루그만이 지적한대로 욕망의 충족과 힘의 추구는 불가분리의 관계에 있다. 더 많이 소유하기 위해서 사람까지 소유의 대상으로 전락시킨다. 교회 안 목회자들의 폭력의 원인이 여기에서 비롯되었다. 주된 관심사는 먹고 사는 경제적인 것에 집중이 된다. 그리고 그런 상황 아래에서 종교는 경제에 종속이 되고 단지 사회를 유지하기 위한 수단으로 취급된다. 힘의 정점에 다다른 제국은 폭력을 행사하는 데에 무감각해진다.[8] 솔로몬 왕 치하에서 있었던 이 소유와 힘, 그리고 폭력의 순환이 가져오는 영적이면서 동시에 실제적이기도 한 죽음이 한국땅에도 재현되고 있다.

물질이 종교와 정신을 앞서가고 도덕마저 삼켜버린 현상이 오늘 한국개신교회의 위기의 단초를 제공했지만 그것은 어제오늘의 일이 아니다. 그 연원은 선교 초기에

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[5] *조경덕*, 기독교 담론의 근대서사화 과정 연구. 고려대학교 대학원, 2011, 2, 11f.

[6] Ibid., 39.

[7] *최형묵*, 욕망과 배제의 구조로서의 기독교적 가치, in: 시대와 민중신학 7, (2002).

[8] cf. *Walter Brueggemann*/ *김기철 역*, 예언자적 상상력. 서울 2009, 78–90; *Walter Brueggemann*/ *주승중 소을순 역*, 설교자는 시인이 되어야 한다. 서울 2007; *Walter Brueggemann*/ *박규태 역*, 안식일은 저항이다. 서울 2015; *John F. Kavanaugh*, Following Christ in a Consumer Society. Maryknoll (NY) 2006, 51–56.

이를 정도로 매우 깊다. 그 역사적인 흐름을 되짚어보기 전에 한국개신교의 부흥을 가져온 신앙적인 요소들이 어떠했는가를 먼저 살펴보는 것이 필요하다.

한국의 개신교회가 급격하게 성장하게 된 데에는 새벽기도, 설교의 강조, 봉사, 사경회(부흥회), 유교의 영향을 받은 목사의 높은 권위와 장로직제 등이 동력이 되었다고 할 수 있다. 그리고 이러한 목회의 실천적인 측면이 가능하게 된 이유로는 기복주의적인 설교, 감정을 고양시키는 부흥회 혹은 예배, 신비주의적인 은사의 강조, 목회자의 카리스마로 착각되는 독선적인 권위 등을 들 수 있다. 이런 요인들이 교회의 성장은 이끌었지만 위의 문제들이 반복될수록 하나님의 절대적 사랑, 용서, 평화, 화해, 궁극적인 가치에 대한 희구 등 기독교 신앙의 핵심가치와는 멀어지게 되었다. 그릇된 권위구조 안에서 목회자들은 마땅히 행해야 할 도덕적 책임을 외면하고 욕망을 채우려고 하다 각종 범죄 행위로 사람들의 질타를 받게 되었다. 더 이상 선교 초기처럼 상처받은 사람들을 보듬고 정의와 평화, 사랑을 외치기 보다 개교회 중심적인 목회로 퇴행한 결과이다.

2. 성장의 그늘: 과제

여전히 많은 교회가 건전한 목회를 감당하고 있지만 더 이상 폐쇄되고 게토화된 집단으로 퇴행하는 것을 적극적으로 막아야 할 때가 되었다. 그래서 존재 자체로 세상을 치유하는 하나님의 기관으로 교회가 신뢰를 회복하기 위해서 지금을 "전환기"로 인식하는 것이 필요하다. 전환기에 극복해야 할 과제로는 앞의 목회 현장에서 드러나는 현상들에 드러난 근본주의, 신비주의, 소비주의, 개인주의 등을 들 수 있다. 근본주의, 신비주의, 소비주의, 개인주의 등은 복합적으로 작용하는데 그 대표적인 분출구는 기복주의고, 기복주의는 신앙과 밀접한 관계를 맺고 있다. 개신교회의 성장 동력이었던 기복주의적인 설교 등이 가능하게 된 원인을 분석해 보면 먼저 흔히들 지적하는 샤머니즘의 영향 이외에도 청교도적인 신앙과 윤리가 더해져서 상승 작용을 했음을 알게 된다. 막스 베버(Max Weber)가 주장한 자본주의와 청교도 윤리에 대한 이론은 비판의 여지가 많지만 한국의 경우 상당부분 설득력이 있게 적용이 된다.[9] 선교초기 한국을 찾은 선교사들은 청교도의 영향을 받은 북미권에서 온 경우가 많았고 술과 노름과 같은 행위들은 죄악으로 취급되었다. 앞서 언급한 문명화론과 더불어 기독교를 힘의 종교로 인식하게 했고, 청교도 윤리를 특징짓는 금연과 금주, 주일성수 등이 신앙의 척도로 여겨지게 될 정도로 자리를 잡았다. 그러나 청교도

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[9] *장동민*, 한국의 근대화와 한국장로교회: 회고와 전망, in: 장로교회와 신학 9 (2012), 206f.

금욕주의는 그것만 잘 지키면 좋은 신앙이라는 환원주의의 늪에 빠졌고 주기적인 기도와 성경공부 등도 행위 자체를 중요시 여기게 되었다. 이와 함께 토착 종교의 영향을 받은 불건전한 신비주의가 교회의 신학을 압도하여 개인의 신앙에 영향을 미치고 있다.

한편 근대화를 이끌었던 초기개신교인들은 그러나 세속화 과정에서 점차 정치와 경제 분야에 있어서 영향력을 잃고 만다. 군사독재에서 벗어나면서 교회는 공적인 영역에 관심을 두지 않고 신앙을 사적인 영역으로 제한하게 되었다.[10] 신앙의 사사화(privatization)는 선교초기부터 전수된 보수적인 신앙을 더욱 가속화했다. 개신교회를 이끄는 대형교단 안에서 진보적인 신학은 자리를 잃게 되었다.

소비주의와 개인주의화 역시 근대화 이후 최근에 발달된 것이 아니라 선교사들과 함께 초기부터 영향력을 행사했다. 선교사들은 이미 근대적인 의미의 개인주의가 내재된 상태로 한국을 찾았고 교회는 교리적인 이유 때문에 교회 밖의 공동체와 어울리지 못해서 개인주의 집단으로 취급을 받았다.[11] 중산층의 소비문화를 선교지에 그대로 가져온 선교사들의 영향으로 소비주의가 한국인의 욕망을 부추기게 되었고 경제활동까지 벌이는 일도 잦았다.[12] 신학적으로는 근대 이후 보수주의가 강조하는 교리 중심, 이성 중심적인 사고가 지속되었다. 결국 욕망을 부추기고 힘을 추구하며 정치와 결탁하는 관계는 오늘에 이르기까지 확대되었고 교회는 점차 내부를 향하면서 배타적이고 폐쇄적이 되었다.

이런 전환기적 과제에 대해서 한국의 신학자들은 지속적으로 개혁을 요구하고 있다. 그중 개혁신학적 관점에서 보수(repair)하자는 견해가 우선 눈에 뜨인다. 청교도 신학을 필두로 하는 기존의 신학과 영성도 가치가 있기 때문에 고쳐서 나가면 된다는 것이다.[13] 세속화 혹은 포스트모더니즘의 요구에 교회가 응답하자는 견해도 있다. 보수주의 진영에서 제기하는 핵심은 근본주의의 폐해를 극복한 보다 개방적인 기독교세계관 운동 등을 통해 교회가 사회에 침투하고 호흡해야 한다는 것이다.[14]

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[10] Ibid., 220f.

[11] *이덕주*, 한국초대교회사에 나타난 오류와 한계, in: 기독교사상 49, no. 12 (2005), 226f.

[12] Cf. *Dae Young Ryu*, Understanding Early American Missionaries in Korea (1884–1910): Capitalist Middle-Class Values and the Weber Thesis, in: Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions 113, (2001).

[13] Cf. *유재경*, 영국 청교도 영성의 한국교회의 수용 가능성에 대한 연구, in: 신학과 실천 48, (2016); *Stanley J. Grenz/ 김운용 역*, 포스트모더니즘의 이해. 서울 2010.

[14] *조성국*, 한국교회 위축현상의 거시적 원인 분석과 대응적 교육방안 모색, 23–25.

여러 가지 대안들이 나름대로 의미가 있지만 공통적인 것 한가지는 한국개신교회의 개혁이 설교에서 와야 한다는 점이다. 주류의 개신교 지도자들이 부정적인 모순을 확대하는 상황에서 개혁은 설교에서 가져올 수밖에 없게 된다. 폭력이 내부적인 것이든 외부로부터 온 것이든 그 대안은 설교에서 오기 때문이다.[15] 특히 한국개신교회의 성장에 있어서 또 지금의 목회 현장에 있어서 설교의 역할은 매우 크다. 일반적으로 설교자들은 일주일에 6번 정도 교회 안에서 설교를 하고 주중에 일어나는 목회활동이나 심방에서도 짧은 설교가 빠지지 않는다.

전환기의 과제는 그래서 설교를 개혁하는 것이 되어야 마땅한데 전환기 한국개신교회의 설교의 과제는 일차적으로 설교의 형태를 바꾸는 것과 같은 설교 자체에 있지 않다. 이제까지 당연하게 설교를 지배하고 있던 신학을 어떻게 바꿀 수 있는가가 일차적인 관심의 대상이 되어야 한다. 한국의 개신교회 안에서는 다양한 신학이 들어설 여지가 굉장히 좁다. 목회자의 신학적 방향을 지배하는 것은 '선명하고 확신이 있는' 신학이기 때문이다. 그래서 이제까지 지배적이던 신학을 재건하려는 시도보다 어쩌면 현재 한국개신교회의 상황에, 또 한국사회의 상황에 가장 적합한 신학의 모델을 찾는 것이 바람직하다고 하겠다.

오늘의 한국개신교회에 가장 필요한 것은 개인적인 신앙의 점검, 다시 말해 영성신학의 가르침에 귀를 기울이는 것이다. 이미 서구사회를 필두로 불기 시작한 영성에 대한 관심은 개신교회를 떠난 한국의 개신교인들 사이에서도 동일하게 고조되고 있다.[16] 물질주의에 지친 현대인들이 궁극적인 가치에 다시금 관심을 가지고 자기 안의 문제에 해답을 추구할 때 기독교 전통에서 이들의 관심에 응답할 수 있는 것이 바로 영성신학이다.[17] 기존의 개신교신학도 나름대로 이런 관심들에 대한 해답을 제시했지만 부정신학 (negative theology) 은 한국개신교계에서 그다지 언급이 되지 못했다. 설교와 관련해서 부정신학을 언급하는 것은 본고가 처음일 것인데 부정신학에 대한 관심이 개신교계 안에서 고조된 것이 불과 몇 년 되지 않기 때문이다. 부정신학은 이제 막 텍스트들이 번역이 되는 단계인데 이전과 달라진 점이 있다면 개신교 안에서도 부정신학에 대해서 무조건 배타적으로 비판하는 사람만 있지 않고 긍정적으로 보려는 사람들이 늘어가고 있다는 점이다. 개인주의의 모순을 극복하고 통합을 추구하는 것에 대한 가치가 증대되는 지금이 부정신학의 면모를 확인해야 하는 때라고 할 수 있다.

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[15] *Charles L. Campbell*, The Word before the Powers: An Ethic of Preaching. 1st ed. Louisville, Ky. 2002, 76–78.

[16] Cf. **정재영**, 종교 세속화의 한 측면으로서 소속 없는 신앙인들에 대한 연구, in: 신학과 실천 39 (2014).

[17] Cf. *유재경*, 왜 이시대에 기독교 영성인가?, in: 신학과 목회 35 (2011).

아래에서는 부정신학의 함의와 가능성을 다루려고 하는데 자세한 이론적인 설명이나 각 교파의 입장에서 제기되는 신학적인 비판은 생략하고 적용 가능성 위주로 논의하고자 한다.

3. 부정신학의 가능성: 에바그리오스를 중심으로

한국개신교회의 전환은 신학의 전환에서 시작되어야 한다. 부정신학 (theologia negativa, apophatic theology) 은 긍정신학 (kataphatic theology) 과 대비되는 신학으로 알려져 있는데 그 기원은 초기교회에 닿아있다. 긍정신학은 서방기독교를 지배하고 있는 신학으로 이성에 근거해서 신앙을 개념화하고 체계화했다. 부정신학은 이런 방법으로는 신에 대해서 정의할 수도 없고 알 수도 없다고 주장한다. 신이 스스로를 드러낸다는 '계시신학'과 '자연신학'의 길과는 다른 부정의 길 (via negativa) 을 따르는 부정신학은 그 기원을 플라톤에게서 찾을 수 있다. 위-디오니시우스 (Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita) 는 신의 초월성에 대해서 숙고한 결과 인간의 사유로는 신의 본질을 알 수도, 표현할 수도 없다고 봤다. 이 부정신학의 핵심적인 요소들은 갑바도기아 교부들에게서 정립되면서 동방 비잔틴 신학에 영향을 줬다. 서방에서는 아퀴나스와 에크하르트를 거쳐 계승되었다. 폭스 (Matthew Fox) 에 의하면 서방교회에서 부정신학의 흔적을 찾기가 쉽지 않고 개신교에서도 상황은 마찬가지라도 한다. 부정의 길 대신 로마가톨릭에서는 금욕주의가, 개신교에서는 죄에 대한 묵상과 속죄론이 강조가 되었다.[18]정화-조명-연합의 과정을 거쳐 그리스도와 연합하는 것을 마지막 단계로 보는 이 운동은 영성 (spirituality) 혹은 신비신학 (theologia mystica) 으로 알려지기도 했다.

부정신학에 주목하는 이유는 일차적으로 '내'가 중심이 되는 포스트모던 상황에서 인간 자체에 대한 이해를 가져올 수 있는 보다 세심한 신학이 필요기 때문이다.[19] 부정신학은 동방정교회를 제외한 각 기독교 교파에서 아직은 생소한 신학이다. 그러나 초기교회 이래로 박해와 같은 고통이 있은 다음에 정작 교회를 혼란하게 만든 것은 세속화였음을 고려해야 한다. 부정신학은 4세기 사막으로 나간 교부들을 통해서 일찍이 이런 세속화를 극복하는 신학으로 정립이 된 것이기에 오늘의 한국 상황에도 적합하다.

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[18] *Matthew Fox/ 황종렬 역*, 원복. 칠곡군 2001, 138f. 부정신학의 영향력은 철학을 포함한 사상사에 전반에서 찾아볼 수 있다. 그러나 본고의 성격상 개신교 안의 경건주의 운동을 포함한 영성신학의 양상이나 로마가톨릭 안의 부정신학의 흔적 등에 관해서는 세밀하게 다루지 않는다.

[19] *차광호*, 포스트모던에서의 부정신학, in: 가톨릭신학 3 (2003), 55.

가파도기아에서 이 신학의 기초를 놓은 교부들 중 에바그리오스 (Evagrius Ponticus, 345–399) 를 주목할 필요가 있다. 그는 초대로부터 중세로 이어지는 영성신학의 기초를 놓은 사람 중 한 명으로 서양의 문학과 문화에 지대한 영향을 미쳤는데 그의 방법론은 한국개신교회에 접목할만한 풍부한 영감과 실천의 방법을 제시한다.[20] 그의 신학의 특징들을 간략하게 살펴보면 다음과 같다.

세 단계 영혼의 길

특별히 에바그리오스는 자신의 저서를 통해 영적인 삶을 사는 구체적인 방법을 제시했다. 그는 윤리학 (ethike), 자연학 (physike), 형이상학 (enoptike) 대신 실천학 (praktike), 자연학 (physike), 신학 (theologia) 을 사용해서 금욕적인 삶이 어떻게 내면의 악한 생각들을 제어하는지, 절대 평정의 세계에 도달하는지를 보여줬다. 실천학에서 영혼은 덕을 쌓아 감정에서 해방된 상태에 들어간다. 이 길은 믿음으로 시작되고 내면의 욕망적 부분 (desiring part) 과 싸운다. 자연학은 피조세계를 통해서 하나님을 바라보는 단계이다.[21] 신학의 단계에서는 하나님에 관한 지식 (gnosis) 을 얻어 하나님 자신을 참되게 관상할 수 있다.[22]   결국 인간은 육체에 집착하는 단계를 벗어나서 감정을 다스리고 하나님과의 살아있는 관계를 형성할 수 있게 된다.

영혼의 삼분법

에바그리오스의 신학의 특징 중 하나인 영혼에 대한 분석을 제대로 알기 위해서는 영혼에 대한 세 가지 분류를 이해해야 한다. 첫 번째는 지성 (nous) 으로 영(혼) (pneuma) 와 동일어이며 타락 이전의 순수한 상태이다. 두 번째는 욕처 (epithymia) 이다. 인간의 욕망을 의미한다. 세 번째는 화처 (thymos) 이다. 욕처를 제어하며 영적인 것과 연결시켜주는 기능을 한다. 욕처와 화처는 비이성적인 부분으로 진정한 깨달음을 얻는 것을 막기 때문에 '실천학'을 통해서 극복해야 한다.[23] 그의 분류는 플라톤에서 왔는데 차이점은 격정(화처)을 대하는 태도이다.[24] 플라톤은 격정(화처)이 이성의 통제를

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[20] 본도(폰투스)에서 태어난 에바그리오스는 가파도기아의 성직자가 되어 대 바실리웃, 나지안주스의 그레고리오스, 니사의 그레고리오스 등 세명의 교부들의 제자가 되어 4세기 삼위일체 신학을 이어받는다. 깊은 사막인 켈리아로 가서 여생을 보내면서 타협 없이 엄격한 수덕을 실천했다. CF. *Evagrius Ponticus*/ *남성현 역*, (폰투스의 에바그리오스) 실천학. trans., Antoine Guillaumont, Claire Guillaumont, and Gabriel Bunge 서울 2015, 20-27; *Andrew Louth*/ *배성옥 역*, 서양 신비사상의 기원. 칠곡군 2001, 153–155.

[21] *Evagrius Ponticus*/ *허성석 역*, 그노스티코스. 서울 2016, 81. 본문 49장.

[22] Cf. *Evagrius Ponticus*/ *남성현 역*, (폰투스의 에바그리오스) 실천학; *Louth*/ *배성옥 역*, 서양 신비사상의 기원, 156-161.

[23] *Evagrius Ponticus*/ *남성현 역*, (폰투스의 에바그리오스) 실천학, 35-37.

[24] *Leslie Stevenson, David L. Haberman*/ *박중서 역*, 인간의 본성에 관한 10가지 이론(Ten Theories of Human Nature). 4th ed. 서울 2006, 146f.

받는다고 했지만 에바그리오스는 화처가 욕처(욕망)만큼이나 통제를 받아야 할 대상으로 이해한다. 욕망이 실패하면 그때부터 분노가 일어나기 때문이다. 결국 우리의 욕망은 하나님을 향한 욕망으로 귀결되어야 하며, 화처는 이를 방해하는 마귀와 싸우는 역할을 해야 한다.[25]

구원의 길에서 만나는 장애물: 팔사념 (logismoi)

영혼을 뒤흔드는 마귀와 대적하는 과정에서 침묵과 고요 속에 들어가지 못하게 방해하는 것들이 사념이다. 망상 혹은 잡념이라고도 하는데 에바그리오스는 대식, 간음, 탐욕, 비탄, 분노, 나태, 허영, 오만이라는 여덟가지를 꼽았고 이것이 후에 서양에서 일곱 가지 죄의 선례가 되었다.[26] 이 각각은 마음을 어지럽혀서 수련을 포기하게 하기 때문에 위험하다. 탐식은 건강을 염려해서 고된 수도 생활에 염증을 느끼게 한다. 재물을 사랑하는 것은 대인관계를 포함해서 다양한 관계를 옭아 맨다. 이런 모든 동요의 뿌리는 '자기만족'(philatia) 으로 자아에 대한 "경향성이 짙은 사랑"이다. 이 자아를 만족시키지 못하면 동요와 분노가 일어난다고 강조했다.[27]

수덕의 목적인 평정(aphatheia)

실천학이 추구하는 최고의 상태는 평정(아파테이아, aphatheia)으로 정욕에서 자유로운 상태이다. 마음의 순수한 상태로 일컬어지기도 하는 이 개념은 아직 죄로부터 풀려난 것을 말하지는 않는다. "'동요 없는 초연한 상태,' 즉 '아파테이아'에 이미 도달한 사람이라고 해서 언제나 진실하게 기도하는 것은 아니다. 왜냐하면 어떤 사람은 단순한 사고에 갇혀 있어서 그것이 제공하는 정보로 인해 산만해지거나 결국 하나님으로부터 멀어질 수 있기 때문이다."(55장)[28] 그러나 하나님에 대한 참된 관상을 위해서는 반드시 필요한 단계이다. 여기에서 인간의 노력으로 참된 기도를 드릴 수 있는 여지는 차단된다. 오직 하나님의 간섭에 의해서만 관상이라는 목적에 도달할 수 있다. "성령은 우리의 연약함에 대한 연민으로 우리가 정결하지 않을 때라도 우리 안에 머무신다. 만약 그분이 진리에 대한 사랑 안에서 기도하는 영혼을 발견하길

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[25] Cf. *남성현*, 플라톤의 영혼의 삼분법과 에바그리오스의 영성신학, in: 장신논단 48, no. 2 (2016); *남성현*, 폰투스의 에바그리오스의 영성 테라피, in: 서양고대사연구 43, no. - (2015); *유재경*, 영적 성장의 관점에 본 에바그리우스의 인간 이해, in: 한국기독교신학논총 79, no. 1 (2012).

[26] 이 일곱 가지 죽음에 이르는 죄는 이후 서양문학과 인간학의 중요한 모티브를 제공했고 중세 로마가톨릭신학 역시 이 죄들과의 관계에서 주요 신학을 발전시켰다. *남성현*, 폰투스의 에바그리오스의 영성 테라피, 67.

[27] *Louth*/ *배성옥 역*, 서양 신비사상의 기원, 159-160; *Evagrius Ponticus*/ *남성현 역*, (폰투스의 에바그리오스) 실천학, 46–49, 86ff.

[28] *Evagrius Ponticus*/ *전경미 이재길 역*, 에바그리우스의 기도와 묵상. 서울 2011, 24.

원하신다면, 그분은 그 영에 들어오셔서 … 영적인 기도를 하고자 하는 열망이 일어나도록 끊임없이 촉구하실 것이다."(62장)[29]

4. 부정신학의 시사점

한국개신교회의 문제점과 모순은 그것을 드러내는 것만으로도 해결의 단초가 될 수도 있다. 그러나 오늘과 똑같은 구도로 세속화라는 거센 파도 앞에서 사막으로 나갔던 에바그리오스와 같은 선구자의 고민을 귀담아 듣는다면 보다 가시적으로 문제를 드러내고 답을 찾을 수 있을 것이다. 에바그리오스의 신학과 방법론을 한국개신교회의 목회와 설교에 적용할 수 있는 구체적인 내용은 아래와 같다.

4.1 갱신으로서의 부정신학

부정신학의 방법들은 한국의 개신교회에 잘못 뿌리내린 신앙의 양태들에 대해서 교정의 모범을 제공한다. 아래는 이제까지의 논지에 따라 들 수 있는 대표적인 몇몇 문제와 그에 대한 부정신학적인 해법들이다.

욕망의 거부: 가장 먼저 언급할만한 것은 욕망에 대해서 분석하고 그것이 기독교 신앙과 어떤 관계를 맺어야 하는지를 제시했기 때문에 한국개신교회에 유용하다는 점이다. 욕망은 화를 불러일으킨다. 적당한 욕망이 근면한 생활을 가져온다고 후한 점수를 줄 수도 있지만 무엇을 위한 근면한 생활인가를 물을 때 부적절한 욕망의 정당성은 사라진다. 게다가 에바그리오스의 관점에 따르면 세상의 욕망으로 이끄는 것은 마귀이다. 그리고 이 욕망은 충족되지 않기에 이 욕망 때문에 서로 다투게 된다. 마귀가 이렇게 우리를 준동하는 이유는 하나님을 바로 바라보지 못하게 하기 위함이다. 에바그리오스가 인간의 감정에 주목한 것은 당시로서는 획기적인 일이었다. 마치 지금의 교회와도 같이 이원론적으로 영과 육의 대립에만 관심이 있던 시기에 감정의 차원이 정돈되어야 이성이든 육신이든 나아갈 방향을 정할 수 있음을 적절하게 제시했다.

한국사회의 구조적인 모순은 '욕망-분노-폭력-죽음'의 고리로 이어진다. 한국개신교회의 설교는 이 고리를 수면 위로 드러나게 해야 하고 그것을 끊는 데에 기여해야 한다. 설교를 통해 욕망을 당연한 것으로 여기지 않게 하고 욕망을 따라 사는 것이 것이 신앙과 유리될 수 있음을 보게 하는 해석학적인 작업이 필요하다. 기존의 안식일에 대한 신학이 이런 기능을 일부분 담당했었던 것은 사실이다.[30] 그러나

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[29] Ibid., 26.

[30] Cf. *Brueggemann*/ *박규태 역*, 안식일은 저항이다.

에바그리오스의 끊어내는 실천은 일주일 단위가 아니라 매순간 지속되는 것이 특징이다.

지성 중심의 신앙의 전환: 이성 중심적인 신앙은 은혜를 깨닫는 것으로 충분하게 여기게 만들었고 성경에 대해서도 지식적으로 이해하는 것으로 구원의 단계에 접어들었다고 오해하게 했다. 구원이 하나님으로부터 온다는 신학은 인간적인 노력에 대해서 철저하게 거부할 것을 요구했다. 많은 개신교인들은 신약성경에도 분명하게 제시되는 실천의 측면에 대해서 평가절하했다. 그래서 교회 안의 삶은 월요일부터 토요일까지의 일상과 유리되어 온 것이 사실이다. 이 지성 중심주의의 뿌리는 청교도에서도 찾아볼 수 있다. 청교도들은 전통적으로 긍정의 방법 (kataphatic way) 와 부정의 방법 (apophatic way) 중 긍정의 방법을 추구했고, 그 결과 성경 읽기와 묵상 등을 강조하게 되었다. 많은 설교가들이 배출되었고 설교 사역이 최고로 가치 있는 사역으로 여겨졌다. 비워내고 끊어내는 부정신학의 방법과 달리 이성적인 확신을 추구했고 지성으로 하나님을 만날 수 있다고 봤다.[31] 명쾌하게 진리를 일깨워주는 종교의 필요성은 역사와도 관련이 있다. 일본의 강점 이후 불확실한 현실을 극복할 확실하고 명쾌한 진리를 추구하는 것은 생존의 문제였을 것이다. 그러나 먹고 사는 문제가 해결된 지금 다시 더욱 본질적인 가치가 무엇인지 찾아야 하고 그것은 실천의 영역에서 찾을 수 있다.

이때 이성적인 깨달음과 대비되는 실천은 성경의 가르침에 대한 직접적인 수행만을 의미하지 않는다. 그것 너머에 있는 실천을 추동하는 동기에 관련된 것을 먼저 살펴야 한다는 것이다. 영성신학은 마음의 중심이 무엇을 깨닫는 단계에서 마음(kardia) 자체로 옮겨져야 하고 수련의 방법을 통해서 가능하다고 본다.[32]

화에 대한 신학적 해석: 한국인은 분노를 직접적으로 표출하는 데에 익숙한 동시에 내면에 감추기도 하는 복합적인 양상을 보인다. 분노가 내재되어 생기는 '화병' (Hwa-byung symtoms) 이라는 한국인만의 마음의 병을 가지고 있을 정도이다. 반면 타인의 분노에 무관심하기도 해서 심리적인 돌봄이 모두에게 필요하다. 에바그리오스는 욕망이 쌓이는 욕처도 치료해야 하지만 욕망의 실패가 초래하는 분노는 더욱 치료가 필요하다고 봤다. 이때 화는 단순한 감정적인 분노이기도 하지만 인정받지 못해서 생기는 섭섭한 마음, 존중받지 못해서 생기는 교만한 마음까지를 포괄한다. 따라서

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[31] *유재경*, 영국 청교도 영성의 한국교회의 수용 가능성에 대한 연구, 377–380.

[32] *김수천*, 4세기의 이집트 수도자 마카리우스와 에바그리우스의 영성사상 고찰, in: 신학과 실천 19, no. 1 (2009), 252f.

마귀는 이 화처를 이용해서 타인을 공격하게 만든다. 플라톤이 화처가 영혼의 상승을 가져오는 원인이라고 긍정적으로 본 것과의 차이가 바로 여기에서 드러난다.[33] 에바그리오스는 이 화처에 대한 동요를 사라지게 하는 것을 실천학의 목표로 봤다. 이 영혼을 정화하는 것이 회복이고 이것은 실천학을 사용하시는 그리스도를 통해서 가능하다. 그리스도는 "영혼의 의사"이다.[34] 보다 실제적인 적용은 분노가 쌓일 때 그것을 대상이 되는 사람에게 풀지 말고 애초에 이 분노를 기획하고 이용하는 마귀에게 풀라고 한 에바그리오스의 가르침을 알 때 이룰 수 있다. 결국 화처를 통해서 마귀를 내쫓을 수 있게 된다고 한다.[35] 내 안의 분노는 대상 없이 마구 표출한다고 가라앉지 않는다. 더욱 큰 폭력과 복수를 가져온다. 결국 그 시작인 마귀에게 화를 내는 것이 화처를 제대로 사용하는 것이고 마귀의 능력을 무력화시키는 방법이다.

한국사회의 경쟁이 심화될수록 개인이 받는 고통은 커진다. 인정받지 못해서 울분이 쌓이고 사는 것이 버거워 진다. 고통의 기저에 흐르는 정신적인 것은 단지 마음의 일에 그치지 않는다. 심리적인 것으로 치부할 수 없는 실제적으로 사람을 파괴시키고 관계를 끊어버리는 힘이기 때문에 설교자가 적극적으로 대처해야 할 부분이다.

착취의 수단으로 오용된 신비주의의 재발견: 한국개신교회에서 신비는 초자연적인 경험이나 현상을 의미한다. 방언, 신유, 입신, 환상을 보는 것 등이 대표적이다. 본디 신비는 인간에 내재된 근원적인 종교성과 연관이 된다. 문제는 불건전한 신비주의이다. 신비한 어떤 경험을 절대적인 것으로 여기면서 그것만을 추구하게 될 때 이를 이용하는 사례가 끊이지 않았다. 목회적으로도 신비한 현상의 경험을 조장하거나 설교자마저 무당과 같이 영적인 매개의 역할을 하는 것이 아닌지 비판의 대상이 되기도 한다. 신비주의에서 이러한 주술적인 부분을 제거하고 황홀경이 아닌 하나님과의 연합을 목적으로 하는 것, 그리고 그리스도의 십자가를 신비의 핵심으로 여기는 것이 부정신학이 강조하는 신비신학이다.[36] 따라서 모든 신자는 그리스도로 말미암는 신비체험을 할 수 있고 해야 한다. 이때 설교의 과제는 올바른 신비에 대한 신학적인 이해 가운데 계시된 말씀이 접촉점으로 기능하도록 제시하고 독려하는 것이다.

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[33] Cf. *남성현*, 플라톤의 영혼의 삼분법과 에바그리오스의 영성신학.

[34] *Evagrius Ponticus*/ *남성현 역*, (폰투스의 에바그리오스) 실천학, 49ff.

[35] Ibid., 143. 본문 24장.

[36] *Louis Bouyer*/ *정대식 역*, 영성 생활 입문. 서울 1992, 396f, 411f.

사랑의 확대: 앞의 신비와 연관해서 부정신학은 사랑이 개인적인 것이 아닌 궁극적인 존재를 향한 것임을 깨닫게 한다. 타락한 인간은 자신의 범주에서 욕망하는 것을 사랑하지만 하나님은 모든 존재를, 그리고 전혀 무가치한 것까지도 사랑하신다. 신비는 이런 하나님의 사랑을 욕망하는 것이다. 우리는 사랑을 개인적인 감정의 영역으로 제한하고는 한다. 특별히 자기 자신의 육체에 대한 사랑인 나르시시즘은 현대사회의 그릇된 욕망의 대명사가 되고 있다. 에바그리오스에게 있어서 이런 육체의 사랑은 긍정적인 요소가 있다. 몸을 수단으로 해서 영혼이 평안의 상태에 이르기 때문이다. 이것은 신체의 아름다움이 영혼의 평안의 전제조건임을 말하지 않는다. 오히려 몸의 절제를 통해서 영혼의 평안에 이르고 바로 그 상태에서 깨끗한 기도로 하나님을 보게 됨을 의미한다.[37]

4.2 보완으로서의 부정신학

에바그리오스와 부정신학은 한국개신교회가 이미 실천하고 있는 영역의 것들을 보완하는 데에도 유효하다.

삼위일체에 대한 관심: 삼위일체는 기독교가 초기부터 매우 귀중하게 생각한 교리이다. 그런데 한국개신교회에서는 그 중요성에 대한 강조도, 풍성한 신학적인 의미에 대한 해석과 적용도 찾기가 쉽지 않다. 부정신학에서 삼위일체 교리는 구원경륜과 연결이 된다. 자신을 드러내시는 하나님의 계시는 "성령으로 인한 육화의 신비와 그리스도의 인격 안에서 충만하게 일어난다."[38] 삼위일체를 교리로 이해하기에는 건너야 할 간극이 크다. 삼위일체에 대한 설명은 오해의 소지를 줄여줄 뿐이다. 그래서 언어로 이해할 수 없고 교회 안에서 활동하시고 개인의 삶과 공동체를 지탱하시는 하나님으로 알 수 있을 뿐이다.

관계의 중요성: 한국개신교는 동양적인 사고방식에 따라 매우 끈끈한 인간관계로 얽혀있는 것이 특징이다. 그러나 그 범위가 매우 좁고 제한적이다. 선교 초기부터 개인주의가 강하게 작용했고 동양적 사고 방식에 따라서 공동체를 중요하게는 여기기는 하지만 자기 가족 중심의 편협한 공동체에 집중한 결과 한국의 개신교회는 교단보다 개교회를 중요하게 여기게 되었다. 신학적으로도 나의 욕망을 위해 타자를 구분하고 배척하며 점차 내면화된 신앙은 다시 개인주의화를 가속했다. 이때 신학이

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[37] *남성현*, 플라톤의 영혼의 삼분법과 에바그리오스의 영성신학, 85–87.

[38] *곽승룡*, 부정신학, in: 가톨릭 신학과 사상, no. 66 (2010), 120f.

하나님과의 관계 안에서 인간의 삶을 해석하는 것으로 정의가 됨을 기억한다면[39] 부정신학이 하나님에 대해서 표현할 수 없다고 하는 것이 신과의 관계를 포기하는 것이 아니라 오히려 더 잘 알고 설명하려는 갈망인 것임을 깨닫게 된다. 게다가 하나님을 우리와 아무 상관이 없는 비인격적이고 절대적인 존재가 아닌 분으로 표현한다는 것은 우리와 관계를 맺기 원하시는 하나님을 하나님 되게 하는 작업이기도 하다.[40] 설교는 우리가 이런 하나님과 연결되어 있음을 선포하는 것이다. 과도한 개인주의가 갖는 모순을 극복하고 서로가 연대하는 것이 참 하나님의 방법임을 알리는 것이다. 공동체 안에서 일하시는 성령님을 선포해서 개인주의를 극복하는 것이다.

실천의 관점에서 볼 때 에바그리오스의 관찰에 따르면 온유하고 겸손한 마음이 타인과의 관계를 공고히 할 수 있다. 온유한 마음은 타인에 대한 증오를 비울 때, 겸손한 마음은 그 무엇에도 집착하지 않으며 있는 모습 그대로의 자신을 볼 때 가능하다.[41] 사람을 외적인 요소가 아니라 하나님과의 관계 속에서 보기 때문에 타인과의 관계에서 갈등은 해소된다.

어리석음 그리고 불의에 대한 저항: 옳지 않은 일을 접했을 때 분노하는 것은 당연한 것처럼 보인다. 그러나 에바그리오스는 이웃에 대한 당연한 분노는 가능하지 않다고 한다.

> "당신이 기도할 때, 그저 오로지 분노에만 호소하듯이 생각되는 것들이 생겨날 것이다. 그러나 당신의 이웃을 거스르는 정당한 분노와 같은 것은 절대 있을 수가 없다. 만약 당신이 진정으로 추구한다면, 당신은 어떤 분노함도 없이 그 문제를 적절하게 해결할 수 있다는 것을 발견할 것이다. 그러므로 분노의 폭발을 피하기 위하여 모든 방법을 이용하라."(기도론, 24장)[42]

그에게는 분노라는 범주 자체가 용인되지 않았다. 그러면 눈앞의 악에 대해서는 어떻게 해야 한다는 말인가? 에바그리오스는 화의 마귀와 싸우라고 한다. 모든 종류의 악한 생각들과 싸우기 위해서 그는 기이한 행적을 일삼기도 했다. 한겨울에 내면의 욕정을 이기기 위해서 즉시 벌거벗은 채로 온몸이 추위에 얼도록 우물가에서 밤을 지새기도 했다. 언젠가는 불경한 악령이 자신을 괴롭히자 40일간 벌레가 몸에 들끓게 하기도

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[39] Cf. *Rowan Williams*, On Christian Theology. Oxford, UK ; 2000, vii.

[40] *차광호*, 포스트모던에서의 부정신학, 76f.

[41] Cf. *Vladimir Lossky/ 박노양 역*, 동방교회의 신비신학에 대하여. 서울 2003; *Evagrius Ponticus/ 전경미 이재길 역*, 에바그리우스의 기도와 묵상. "수도사들에 대한 권면" 19, 31, 33, 34, 35, 61장

[42] *Evagrius Ponticus/ 전경미 이재길 역*, 에바그리우스의 기도와 묵상, 15.

했다.[43] 이런 모습은 구약의 예언자들의 상징행위나 불의와 타협하는 세상의 인습과 불의의 세계를 두려워하지 않고 관조하며 우스꽝스럽게 만드는 어릿광대의 모습과 맥을 같이 한다고 할 수 있다.[44] 스스로를 돌보지 않는 행위를 통해 공고한 마귀의 권세에 균열을 가져오는 행위이다.

한국에도 불교와 같은 전통 종교에서 이런 수도승들의 모습을 어렵지 않게 찾을 수 있다.[45] 에바그리오스는 이러한 행위의 기원과 목적이 기독교적인 관점에서 어떠해야 하는지를 잘 보여준다. 실제로 부정신학에서 비롯된 자기를 비우고 모욕을 감수하는 영성은 러시아에서 '성스러운 바보' 혹은 '그리스도를 위한 바보'로 13세기에서 14세기에 걸쳐 등장했다. 이들은 모욕에 스스로를 노출시키려는 것처럼 행동했고 러시아 영성의 특징적인 하나의 흐름을 형성하게 된다.[46]

스스로 모욕당하는 것은 폭력에 대한 거부를 의미한다. 폭력에 대해서 폭력적으로 대하는 것은 예수님이 반대하는 저항이다. 그분은 단 한번도 폭력으로 폭력을 대하지 않으셨다.[47] 캠벨 (Charles Campbell)이 말하는 어릿광대의 우스꽝스러운 모습들로 악을 대하고 그 파괴적인 면과 폭력성을 드러냈을 뿐이다. 한국의 개신교가 힘의 논리를 쫓으려고 하면 할수록 폭력에 대한 예수님의 이런 가르침을 따르기가 어려워진다. 한국의 설교자들은 부정신학이 말하는 십자가의 어리석음에 의지해서 텅빈 어리석음을 전해야 한다.

기도와 금욕 등 수행에 관하여: 기도와 금식과 같은 금욕의 실천은 한국교회의 특징을 이루고 있다. 공동기도와 같이 기도문에 의한 기도보다는 개별적이고 때로는 소리를 내는 통성기도를 선호하는 경향이 강하고 하루 일과 중 개인의 기도 시간을 확보하는 것을 매우 중요한 신앙의 실천으로 가르친다. 금식은 어떤 특별한 필요에 의해서 40일 동안 금식하면서 기도하는 것이 그다지 특별하지 않을 정도로 한국의 개신교회를 대표하는 금욕 수행 중 하나라 할 수 있다. 에바그리오스는 이런 기도와 금욕의 실천이 어떤 의도에서 시작되어야 하고 무엇을 지향해야 하는지를 보여준다. 만약 한국의 개신교회가 기도와 금주, 금연, 금식과 같은 금욕을 그 자체로 목적으로

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[43] *허성준*, 사막에서 길을 묻다. 서울 2008, 54–56.

[44] Cf. *Charles L. Campbell, Johan H. Cilliers*/ *김대진 역*, 하나님의 어릿광대. 서울 2014.

[45] 문화권에 따라서 자기 비움과 같은 개념은 쉽게 받아들이기 어려울 수도 있다. 그러나 한국의 경우는 자기 비움의 수도 전통이 이미 유사한 형태로 지속되었다. Cf. Ibid., 48f.

[46] *곽승룡*, (도스토예프스키의)비움과 충만의 그리스도. 서울 1998, 72f.

[47] *Campbell et al.*, 하나님의 어릿광대, 270f.

삼는다면 이는 바른 기독교 전통에 서 있다고 하기 어렵다. 기도는 하나님과의 교재하는 기도가 되어야 하고 영혼을 비우며 평온의 상태로 가기 위한 기도가 되어야 한다. 특히 에바그리오스는 기도가 금욕과 노동, 침묵 등 그 어느 것보다 우선적인 것이라고 강조했다. 기도는 자아를 만나는 문이고 하나님의 자비에 의지하는 방법이다. 그래서 항상 기도해야 하는 것이고 하나님을 향한 영적인 여정을 의미한다.[48]

4.3 토착신학으로서의 부정신학

부정신학에 대해서 또 하나의 외래신학에 불과하다고 치부할 수 있다. 그러나 그 기원에서부터 지금의 기독교의 신학과 실천을 형성했다고 할 수 있기 때문에 오늘의 한국개신교회에 전혀 이질적이라고 하기는 어렵다. 나아가 한국의 토착종교나 대중의 정서와도 일맥상통하는 부분이 있다.

성경 중심: 성경책에 대한 개신교의 애착은 남다른데 개혁교회의 신학적인 영향도 있겠지만 경전을 중요하게 여기는 유교문화의 영향도 무시할 수 없을 것이다. 어려서부터 성경 구절들을 외우며 매일 QT(quiet time)를 통해서 성경을 묵상하는 것이 대표적인 신앙 훈련으로 인식되고 있다. 장년층 사이에서는 성경을 그대로 필사하는 것도 종종 목격이 된다. 에바그리오스는 이런 말씀의 묵상과 암송을 보다 구체적인 영성신학의 일부로 생각했다. 자신의 저서 <안티레티코스>를 통해서 하나의 유혹이나 마귀의 준동이 있을 때마다 대응되는 성경 구절을 암송해서 그것을 물리칠 수 있도록 했다. 또 성경 독서는 기도에도 필수적이다. 앞서 살펴본 바와 같이 신비신학의 핵심은 기도에 있는데 기도는 정신이 순수할 때 가능하고 그런 순수한 정신은 성경 독서를 통해서 가능해진다. 이 짧은 성경 구절은 묵상을 통해서 열매를 맺고 결국 개인적인 구원의 역사를 이루게 된다.[49]

한국개신교회에서 성경에 대한 신학적인 강조 차원을 넘어서 성경의 말씀 자체를 주술과 같은 영적인 차원으로 받아들이는 경우는 많지 않다. 그러나 여전히 맹목적으로 성경을 암송하고 그것으로 신앙의 공적을 삼으려는 의도는 경계해야 한다.

한국적인 정서 친화력: 에바그리오스가 강조한 금욕의 실천이나 기도의 방법 등은 그 외형적인 모습만 놓고 보면 한국의 불교나 도교와 같은 종교에서 어렵지 않게 볼

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[48] 정준기, 사막교부 에바그리우스 폰티쿠스의 <수도사에게> 연구, in: 光神論壇 19 (2010), 201–203.

[49] Cf. *Evagrius Ponticus*/ 허성석 역, 안티레티코스. 칠곡군 2014; *Anselm Grün*/ 김영철 역, 내 영혼의 치유제. 칠곡군 2014. 그륀은 에바그리우스의 안티레티코스를 오늘의 언어로 풀어서 책을 펴냈다.

수 있는 모습들이다. 심지어 비움 등을 말하는 용어까지 유사하다.[50] 이런 면 때문에 한국의 개신교에 부정신학을 접목할 때 비판이 예상되는 것도 사실이다. 그러나 동시에 이런 유사성은 오히려 거부감을 덜어줄 가능성도 있다. 부정의 방법은 한국인의 정서와 비슷한 부분이 많다. 다른 사람 앞에서 스스로를 드러내지 않고 감추는 경향이 강하다. 문화나 언어적인 측면에서도 유사성이 나타난다. 한국인은 아버지의 이름을 부르지 않는다. 또 마음이 즐거울 때도 부정적인 표현을 사용한다. 최고조의 기쁨도 "~해서 죽겠다."고 한다. 이를 통해서 자신의 마음을 더욱 강렬하게 표현한다.[51]

조금 다른 경우는 토착적인 종교와 사상의 영향은 받았지만 기독교의 정체성을 잃지 않은 경우이다. 보다 구체적으로 한국의 토착적이면서 부정신학적인 신학과 신앙을 전개한 영성가들이 있었는데 그 중 대표적인 인물이 다석 류영모(1890~1981) 선생이다. 그는 부정신학의 방법을 통해서 자신만의 기독교의 신학 체계를 세운 사람으로 활발한 연구의 대상이 되고 있다. 그는 사는 방법이 남과 달라 괴짜로 불리기도 했고 성자라 추앙되기도 했다. 15살 때부터 신앙을 접한 그는 톨스토이의 영향을 받은 이래 몇 가지 사건을 통해서 신앙의 새로운 차원을 경험한다. 금욕적 생활을 위해서 하루에 한끼만 먹고, 부인과는 오누이 지간으로 살기를 결행했으며 저녁에 잠드는 것을 죽는 것과 같이 여겨서 매일 저녁에 죽고 아침에 사는 하루하루를 인생의 마지막 날로 여기며 살았다. 류영모는 '나'라는 것은 실체가 없고 절대존재인 하나님은 비어있다고 봤다. 인간은 하늘을 그리워하며 살게 되어 있다고 했으며 물질세계에 얽매이지 말고 초월할 것을 강조했다. 그의 다양한 생각을 이 자리에서 다 정리할 수는 없지만 부정신학의 흔적을 그의 신앙과 사상에서 찾는 것은 그리 어렵지 않다.[52]

이상과 같이 부정신학이 한국개신교에 갱신과 보완, 그리고 친화적인 면으로 각각 적용될 수 있는 가능성을 살펴봤다. 이외에도 부정신학은 개인간의 갈등 해소뿐만 아니라 사회의 갈등, 나아가 정치, 경제적인 갈등을 해소하는 데에도 기여할 여지가 있다. 비근한 예로 북한과 대치하고 있는 상황에서 한국인에게 가장 절실한 것은

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[50] 기독교를 불교, 도교, 유교 등의 전통 고등종교와 비교하는 연구는 상당히 오랜 시간 동안 진행이 되어서 나름대로 연구 결과들이 축적되었다.

[51] *곽승룡*, 부정신학, 139.

[52] Cf. *유영모/ 박영호*, 다석 류영모의 기독교 사상. 서울 1995; *정양모 et al.*, 하루를 일생처럼. 서울 2011; *박영호*, 다석 류영모의 생애와 사상. 서울 1996; *박영호*, 多夕 柳永模의 생각과 믿음. 서울 1995; *최윤주*, 다석 류영모의 '생명의 영성' 에 관한 연구. 성공회대학교 신학전문대학원, 2007.

통일인데 서로를 향한 용서와 화해가 요원한 것이 현실이다. 이런 상황에서 먼저 남한의 기독교인들이 에바그리오스의 가르침대로 모든 판단을 그치고 용서하고 포용해야 한다고 주장하면 세상 물정을 모르는 어리석은 사람이라는 비난을 받게 될 것이 분명하다. 그러나 그것이 복음대로 판단하는 것이고, 복음대로 설교하는 것이 될 것이다.

아울러 부정신학에 귀를 기울이는 것에는 에큐메니칼 정신을 실천한다는 의미도 있다. 부정신학 자체는 초기부터 이단시되는 경우가 많았다. 서방교회에서 역사적으로 억압되고 소외된 신학이었다. 그래서 신학 자체만을 놓고 보면 서방에서는 그 정신만 기저에 흘렀는데 똑같은 상황이 한국의 개신교 안에서도 일어날 확률이 높다. 복음의 본질이 개방이고 자기를 비움이라면, 그래서 이웃을 환대하는 것이라면 초기부터 신앙의 진리를 담고 있는 에바그리오스의 신비신학을 무조건 외면할 정당한 이유는 찾기 어려울 것이다.

나가며

상승은 추락을 예견하게 한다. 기독교의 정체성을 상실하고 개인주의적이며 소비주의적인 신앙을 확대한 한국의 개신교회는 이제 욕망과 성공주의로 불린 무거운 몸 때문에 가라앉고 있다. 추락하는 것에는 여전히 날개가 있는데 상승은 불가능한 것인가? 예수님은 자기의 존재 자체를 비우시면서 십자가에 달리셨다. 자기를 비우면 비울수록 높이 달려서 많은 사람들이 목격하고 구원을 얻게 되었다(민 21:9). 한국개신교회도 구원의 빛을 비추기 위하여서 오히려 더욱 추락해야 한다. 그렇게 해야 하나님으로 말미암아 아버지께로 돌아갈(상승) 수 있다.

이 과정에서 있어야 할 것은 부정신학의 가능성을 포기하지 않는 것이다. 에바그리오스가 실천학에서 제시한대로 우리의 욕망은 하나님을 향하게 해야 하고 화처는 마귀와 싸워야 한다. 다양한 망상을 기도와 성경 말씀으로 끊어내고 평정의 상태에 들어가야 한다. 개인의 영역에서 이런 수행을 했을 때 욕망–분노–폭력의 연쇄작용 끝에 우리를 기다리던 죽음을 생명으로 바꿀 수 있게 된다. 아직 긍정신학의 영향이 강하고 익숙하지만 부정신학의 가르침은 타인을 향하던 분노를 거두게 하고 용서와 화해를 가져오게 할 것이다. 오용된 신비주의와 폐쇄적인 사랑은 그리스도의 십자가와 이웃을 향해 개방될 것이다. 브루그만의 지적처럼 배타주의와 자폐성을 분주한 욕망을 끊어냄으로 극복하는 것이 설교의 우선적인 과제일 것이다.[53] 이런

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[53] Cf. *Brueggemann*/ *박규태 역*, 안식일은 저항이다.

우리의 신앙과 설교는 거침이 없어서 마귀의 계략을 폭력적이지 않은 방법으로 드러낼 것이다. 또 세상이 보기에는 어리석은 방법으로 과감하게 선포할 것이다. 개인의 내면에 대한 강조로 인해서 설교자의 역할은 어쩌면 축소될지도 모르겠다. 그러나 에바그리오스의 제안대로 하나님의 말씀으로 끊임없이 묵상하며 기도하는 이들을 이미 매일매일 갈등의 순간마다 마귀와의 싸움에서 승리를 경험한 새로운 그리스도인들임을 잊지 말아야 한다. 그들을 향한 선포는 예전과 다른 힘과 능력으로 공동체의 연대를 이끄는 설교가 될 것이고 모두를 살리는 설교가 될 것이다. 상승하는 것에는 날개가 있다.

Punching Nazis?

Preaching as Anti-Fascist Resistance[1]

Andrew Wymer

Abstract

In this essay I examine contours of fascism and anti-fascism through which we must interpret the current political climate in the USA. I suggest that anti-fascist preaching is a necessary response to fascism and proto-fascism, and I press for more aggressive, illiberal homiletical responses in the age of Trump. In order to meet a minimal definition of homiletical anti-fascist resistance, as I define it, preachers and homileticians need to actively, explicitly preach and lead in ways that intentionally render churches dangerous places for racist, fascist or proto-fascist expression – and perhaps simultaneously render them havens for those who are the targets of racism, fascism and proto-fascism. If Christian preaching had been intentionally and explicitly anti-racist and anti-fascist throughout the past century, the present political situation in which we find ourselves and the scars of fascism which haunt our country and the world might look much differently today.[2]

On the evening of Friday, August 11, Richard Spencer, leader of the self-styled "alt-right," a far-right, neo-fascist movement espousing nationalism and white supremacy, along with over two hundred followers, mostly young white males, many from middle-class upbringings, decided to kick-off the following day's widely publicized white nationalist rally by marching through the University of Virginia's campus carrying TIKI® Torches and shouting racist and anti-Semitic slogans such as, "You will not replace us," and, "Jews will not replace us."[3] As images spread across social and traditional media, a significant number of counter-protestors mobilized in response. On the following day, Saturday, August 12, white nationalists clashed with these counter-protestors,

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[1] Here I am indebted to a conversation with my colleague, *Chris Baker*, who characterized my argument using these rather pithy and direct words, "punching Nazis."

[2] This essay was originally presented in the Word and Worship seminar of the North American Academy of Liturgy on January 10, 2018 in Vancouver, British Columbia.

[3] I initially define fascism deploying political theorist *Roger Griffin*'s „fascist minimum" in which fascism is an illiberal, revolutionary ideology or mass movement characterized by palingenetic, populist ultra-nationalism. I also must note that here and throughout the essay I will employ "neo-fascist" as simply a reference to contemporary, post-WWII fascists who I may also simply refer to as fascists. Cf. White Nationalists March on University of Virginia, in: The New York Times, August 11, 2017.

among whom were clergy, Black Lives Matter protestors, student activists, and self-styled antifa protestors who attempted to shut down the rally. As law enforcement officials refused to intervene, brutal clashes between the white nationalists and counter-protestors ensued, leaving many persons seriously injured and one counter-protestor dead – killed by a neo-Nazi sympathizer.

One of the counter-protestors was Cornel West, a prominent philosopher, activist and social critic. In a later media interview he recounted a moment on that Saturday when twenty clergy, who were singing "This little light of mine," were left unprotected by law enforcement at a crucial moment when white supremacists directly threatened their physical safety. West stated that if not for the sudden appearance of three hundred to three hundred and fifty "anti-fascist" protestors the clergy would have been "crushed like cockroaches."[4] He credited the antifascists, who were willing to physically defend the clergy, with saving their lives.[5] He described the encounter:

> The white supremacy was so intense. I've never seen that kind of hatred in my life. We stood there, and nine units went by, and looking right in our eyes. And they're cussing me out, and so forth and so on. They're lucky I didn't lose my holy ghost, to tell you the truth, because I wanted to start swinging myself. I'm a Christian, but not a pacifist, you know […]. And the beautiful thing is the fightback. It was a beautiful thing to see all the people coming back […].[6]

West's account vividly recounts two approaches to resisting neo-fascists, those who punched the Nazis – what West calls "fightback" – and those who resisted while employing nonviolent strategies.[7]

I am deploying West's account as the starting point of this essay for several reasons. 1) The scene that West describes is not an isolated incident. Clashes between white-nationalist fascists and anti-fascist counter-protestors have occurred with a high degree of frequency since the election of President Donald J. Trump. 2) The encounter between the counter-protestors and the white-nationalist fascists in Charlottesville is an example of two distinct approaches to anti-fascist resistance, and West's story implicitly reveals the dilemmas embedded in each. On one hand, an unwillingness to punch Nazis – e.g. white-nationalist neo-fascists who admire or express nostalgia for the former National Socialist party – on the part of anti-fascist protestors can possibly lead to grave injury and a failure to effectively disrupt white nationalist rallies. On the other hand, a

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[4] Cf. https://www.democracynow.org/2017/8/14/cornel_west_rev_toni_blackmon_clergy: *Cornel West* and *Rev. Traci Blackmon*, Clergy in Charlottesville Were Trapped by Torch-Wielding Nazis. Democracy Now!; August 14, 2017 [accessed on December 22, 2017].

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] I am using "Nazi" here as an abbreviation of "neo-Nazi" and stand-in for post-WWII white-nationalist, neo-fascists who express nostalgia for Nazi Germany.

willingness to punch Nazis runs contrary to both widely-held ethics and social sensibilities, emphasizing compliance and non-violence.[8] 3) West's account raises to consciousness an unspoken but significant ethical question: "Should we punch Nazis or not?" I will employ this question as a theme throughout this constructive essay on preaching as anti-fascist resistance, because it solidly frames the conversation within the boundaries of anti-fascism. By framing this essay around the theme of "punching Nazis" it is not necessarily my goal to get all Christian preachers to engage in physical confrontation of white nationalists – though an anti-fascist homiletic cannot exclude this possibility. However, I am suggesting that all Christian preachers need to, at the very minimum, be engaged in active homiletical resistance to fascism and proto-fascism that at the very least packs a significant punch. In doing so, I am attempting to position this anti-fascist homiletic in a manner that is not easily co-opted into mealy-mouthed, white, liberal complacency while our black, brown and Jewish brothers and sisters are threatened with increasingly emboldened white-nationalist fascism.

The primary research question guiding this essay is: what are the basic contours necessary for preaching to function as anti-fascist resistance in the Trump era? In order to address this primary question, I will critically engage sources in fascism theory and anti-fascism, identifying initial contours of fascism and anti-fascism. From this initial analysis of fascism and anti-fascism, I will identify the minimum contours of anti-fascist preaching.

This task is not without numerous potential pitfalls and challenges. The terms "fascism" and "fascist" have, on the popular level, lost a specificity of meaning. For some time, the term has been used loosely as a catch-all pejorative by politicians and pundits on the left; however, recently pundits on the right have also begun to deploy the term as a means of discrediting their more politically progressive opponents – e.g. Rush Limbaugh's popularization of "feminazi." In order to avoid the potential pitfall, I intentionally ground this work in a limited survey of fascism studies which provides foundation for robust analysis moving beyond pejoratives.

I am writing this essay primarily to mainline Christians, who are, whether they are conscious of it or not, deeply formed in and committed to Western liberalism, not just politically, economically, and socially but also religiously.[9] Each and every one of us approaches the topic of fascism with vested social, political, and economic interests related to the liberal status quo and its accompanying disparities which fascism and proto-fascism exploit. This represents a significant

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[8] Here I must note that I am suspicious of the widely held "non-violence" of many privileged persons in our country which is too often more accurately interpreted as inactive neutrality.

[9] As I employ the term "liberal" or "liberalism," unless otherwise indicated could be used interchangeably with "neo-liberal" or "neo-liberalism." Unless otherwise indicated I am referring to philosophical and economic liberalism as opposed to theological liberalism.

challenge to my anti-fascist effort on several levels. Western liberalism and its accompanying political, economic, and social crises are always the sites out of which fascism emerges and without which fascism could not exist. By implication, the degree to which our religiosity – and for the sake of this article, our preaching – is informed by and beholden to philosophical and economic liberalism – and their embedded contradictions – is the degree to which our religiosity and preaching themselves function as part and parcel of the liberal status quo to which fascism reacts. The challenge I face here is to prompt my readers to not only identify fascism and proto-fascism but to identify how they are connected economically, politically, and socially to the systemic crises which fascist or proto-fascist ideologies, movements or regimes exploit.

To state this explicitly, anti-fascism requires that we not only condemn fascism but also the liberal status quo from which it emerges. In this sense, my constructive work will only be effective to the degree that it prompts and equips liberal Christian preachers to work both to overcome the serial ineptitude of liberalism in halting the rise of fascism through active resistance and to be more critically-engaged liberals who offer up alternative revolutionary visions for the reformation of economic and social liberalism. This is a significant challenge, because I am suggesting that preachers must actively work against the current social and political order and must do so in ways that the current social and political order actively conditions them to avoid.

1. Contours of Fascism

Academic discourse surrounding the definition of "fascism" has been controversial and heavily debated.[10] The term "fascism" is an anglicization of the Italian term *fascismo* emerging during the rise of Mussolini's *Partito Fascista Rivoluzionario* (Fascist Revolutionary Party) and its successor, the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* (National Fascist Party). While in our contemporary consciousness Italian fascism pales in notoriety compared to its close chronological and geographical neighbor, the *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (German Workers Party) and its successor, the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (National Socialist German Workers Party or Nazi Party) led by Adolph Hitler, Hitler's rise to power and subsequent regime was not widely or formally identified as "fascist" until Ernst Nolte's book, *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche* (*Fascism in Its Epoch*), was published in 1963.[11]

In this work, Nolte defined fascism as an ideological reaction against modernity, including liberalism, capitalism, the *bourgeois*, and communism in an innovative way that more clearly distinguished Nazi Germany from the Soviet Union and more closely related it to Mussolini's "*fascista*." Nolte's book was pivotal for fascism studies, because he was the first to attempt to define

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[10] Here I employ quotation marks to indicate that I am examining "fascism" as a term.

[11] „Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche" was translated into English in 1966 as "The Three Faces of Fascism". Cf. *Ernst Nolte*, Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche, Darmstadt 1990, and id., Three Faces of Fascism. Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism, Virginia 1970.

fascism, or what he called "generic fascism," in an exhaustive manner that connected several different political ideologies and mass movements under the shared label of fascism.[12] This contribution of a generic theory of fascism profoundly shaped late-twentieth century discourse in fascism studies particularly by expanding the phenomenon of fascism beyond Mussolini's regime and suggesting that multiple manifestations of fascist regimes could be grappled with simultaneously.

Emerging out of the new analytical possibilities opened by Nolte's generic fascism was the allure of the potential identification of a universal definition or identification of universal dimensions of fascism. A notable example is Roger Griffin's work in *The Nature of Fascism*, in which Griffin suggested that all fascisms have shared characteristics which he identifies as "the fascist minimum." He defined the fascist minimum as a "political ideology" that is a "palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism."[13]

The first primary contour of fascism emerging out of Griffin's definition is *palingenesis*, the concept of rebirth, renewal or recreation. This rebirth and the revolutionary process which it entails is what Griffin calls the "mythic core" of fascism. Instead of a mythic core related to a highly-developed philosophy capable of sustaining a regime over a sustained period of time, at the heart of fascism is the rallying cry of palingenesis. This is to say that rebirth is perhaps, in some sense, the extent of the philosophy of fascism. However, this leads to critical problems around the sustainability of fascisms. By emphasizing the revolutionary struggle for rebirth against corruption and decay on the part of heroic elites, fascisms constantly require enemies, real or imagined, against which they can direct their revolutionary fervor. Constant rebirth and the revolutionary struggle which it represents is simply not politically, economically, or socially sustainable.[14]

The second primary contour is that of *populism*, any system or agent that claims to be in support of ordinary folk and which relies upon those ordinary people for their support. Griffin defines populism, "as a generic term for political forces, which, even if led by small elite cadres or self-appointed 'vanguards', in practice or in principle (and not merely for show) depend on 'people power' as the basis of their legitimacy."[15] Populism tends to be a bottom-up, groundswell approach to politics reliant upon the mass power of ordinary folk but susceptible to exploitation by elites who have agendas that might actually be detrimental to ordinary folk.

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[12] Here by "universal" I am characterizing his work as a comprehensive definition that can be applied across fascisms.
[13] *Roger Griffin*, The Nature of Fascism, London 2016, 51.
[14] Within the contemporary context of the USA, this is evocative of Trump's slogan of "Make America great again!" and "Drain the swamp" which have not translated well into governing agendas.
[15] *Griffin* (note 13), 36f.

Though carefully disguised in the guise of populism, elitism is at the core of fascist ideology. The notion of rebirth and ultra-nationalism are both implicitly elitist. In being reborn out of decay and corruption, fascist mythology necessarily suggests that the nation becomes superior to that which it left behind and those other nations surrounding it, and ultra-nationalism implicitly invokes an international elitism necessary to support calls for domination of the world order. Griffin notes how fascisms typically have both a "paramilitary elite" and "the leader figure."[16] These elites provide the hero figures necessary for fascist mythology, staff the political hierarchy of fascism, and support the potentially totalitarian leader at the center of the mythology.

The third primary contour from Griffin's fascist minimum is that of *ultra-nationalism*. Nationalism here is understood in the same sense as patriotism. However, this is distinct from ultra-nationalism. Griffin defines ultra-nationalism as, "forms of nationalism which 'go beyond', and hence reject, anything compatible with liberal institutions or with the tradition of the Enlightenment humanism which underpins them."[17] This is to say that ultra-nationalism emphasizes supremacy and domination. The practical manifestation of ultra-nationalism if allowed to seize power is the creation and assertion of a world order in which many nations are dominated by or viewed as inferior to a single nation or an elite circle of nations. Ultra-nationalism has often been, but is not necessarily, combined in some fascisms with strong emphasis upon militarism, the means by which not only is revolutionary rebirth made possible but also by which a new world order can be asserted.

In addition to the threefold dimensions of Griffin's fascist minimum, I must name an additional potential characteristic of fascisms as it relates to the primary contours identified above.[18] This is the problem of fascist racism.[19] While popular images of the Nazi-organized Holocaust might suggest that all fascisms are racist, some have not been so overtly racist. This is to say that racism is not a minimum dimension of fascism; however, when racism is combined with fascism the effects can be horrendous. Griffin suggests that the degree to which a particular fascism is racist is largely dependent on pre-existing cultural dynamics. He writes, "The virulence and object of fascist racism will depend on contingent factors, especially the prior existence of a tradition of xenophobic obsessions and racial persecution which the movement can incorporate as an integral part of its palingenetic vision and as an instrument of mass mobilization."[20]

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[16] Ibid., 42.

[17] Ibid., 37.

[18] In doing so, I am not suggesting that these potential characteristics are my contribution of an innovative supplemented fascist minimum.

[19] This is not meant to imply that liberal racism is not a problem.

[20] *Griffin* (note 13), 48. Numerous scholars agree that fascism is a symptom of liberalism, a philosophy promoting freedom and individualism. Western liberalism has been accompanied by economic emphasis upon the individual manifested in *laissez faire* economics. Fascisms tap into popular resentment of liberalism and its tendency to privilege

2. Contours of Anti-fascism

The same challenges that arise in the defining of fascism arise in the defining of anti-fascism. The term "anti-fascism" was also created by Mussolini's *Fascista* political party for those who opposed it, and the term is, in a specific sense, specific to Italian politics in the early twentieth century. However, as identification and analysis of fascism has developed to acknowledge the challenge of fascisms, so too, the potential meanings of "anti-fascism" have broadened, allowing for anti-fascisms.

As anti-fascisms emerged throughout the twentieth century, across Europe and North America, in direct response to neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groups each particular manifestation of anti-fascism has been uniquely shaped by its political and cultural locale.[21] As such, the ideological commitments and resistance tactics employed have been diverse. In *Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook,* Mark Bray describes two poles representing the variety of possible anti-fascist tactics, writing, "Some antifa focus on destroying fascist organizing, others focus on building popular community power and inoculating society to fascism through promoting their leftist political vision."[22] This ideological and tactical diversity is further complicated, because there are both self-identifying anti-fascist groups and activist groups which engage in anti-fascist activity without the name or perhaps even without recognizing that their activism is directly or indirectly anti-fascist.

In order to speak of anti-fascisms in a generic sense, I am arguing for an *anti-fascist minimum* paralleling Griffin's fascist minimum. As I define it, the anti-fascist minimum is active resistance to palingenetic, populist ultra-nationalism. This minimum allows for ideological and tactical diversity, and it also illustrates how anti-fascism is necessarily closely related to the fascism which it opposes. Fascism is a revolutionary ideology which must become a mass movement in order to successfully form a regime. Anti-fascism also presupposes ideological commitments – albeit potentially varied and contrary to those of fascism – which, in order to successfully prohibit the formation of a fascist regime, must also garner popular support in order to be effective.[23]

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the *bourgeois* and upper class while harming the working class, persons of non-dominant races, and the poor. Exploiting these conditions, fascisms emphasize revolutionary rebirth, a concept to which frustrated working class and poor persons will be susceptible, gain widespread populist support and may even successfully seize power. Herein lies a deceit of fascism. While relying upon populism in order to gain power, scholars widely agree that the populist efforts of fascism misdirect from its core elitist nature. Having gained power through populism, fascism shifts into totalitarianism, dictatorial, top-down political systems which require strict obedience.

Racism is connected to two of the primary contours, rebirth and ultra-nationalism. In the process of rebirth, those who are deemed racially – or perhaps using other demographic factors – inferior become the enemy to be expelled or destroyed, providing continued energy for the revolutionary process. Fascist racism can also be expressed internationally in the ways that countries of one dominant ethnicity and culture relate to other countries of another dominant ethnicity and culture.

[21] An example in the USA is the Anti-Racist Action Network (ARA).

[22] *Mark Bray*, Antifa. The Anti-Fascist Handbook, Brooklyn 2017, xvi.

[23] Many anti-fascists are Marxist or anarchist.

Each manifestation of anti-fascism may take on additional characteristics depending on the nature of the fascism which they are resisting. In the context of the United States of America in which fascism is deeply rooted in the horrific legacy of white supremacy, a context-specific anti-fascist minimum—referring to any anti-fascist effort within the context of the USA—is that anti-fascism in this context is active resistance to palingenetic, populist ultra-nationalism and its manifestation in white supremacy. Bray identifies resistance to white supremacy as the defining strategic goal of which anti-fascist efforts in the USA are a part, writing, "For this reason, it is vital to understand anti-fascism as a solitary component of a larger legacy of resistance to white supremacy in all its forms."[24]

A crucial point for the liberal reader to understand is that anti-fascism is no less revolutionary than fascism. It necessarily envisions a radically different way of being in the world apart from the status quo of Western liberalism complete with its embedded political, economic, and social disparities. While defining the negative characteristics of resistance to fascism well, the inherently negative term, "anti-fascism," is a poor representation of the positive, revolutionary dimensions of anti-fascism that are necessary to eliminate not just fascism but also its political, economic, and social causes in Western liberalism through which death has been systematized, rendered less visible, and spread out over time.[25] This is to say that anti-fascists focus not only on resisting fascism but on positively presenting more viable and just social, political, and economic alternatives. Bray writes:

> Most of the anti-fascists I interviewed also spend a great deal of their time on other forms of politics (e.g. labor organizing, squatting, environmental activism, antiwar mobilization, or migrant solidarity work). In fact, the vast majority would rather devote their time to these productive activities than to have to risk their safety and well-being to confront dangerous neo-Nazis and white supremacists.[26]

Bray's engagement with anti-fascists reveals two important characteristics of anti-fascism: 1) Anti-fascism can be expressed in direct resistance to fascism, and 2) anti-fascism must exist alongside revolutionary work offering up viable alternatives to fascism and the status quo of Western liberalism. Renton implies that the problem with fascism is not its radical nature; rather, we need radical answers that employ the ideals of liberalism in a truly just manner. He writes, "The only way to break workers and small owners from fascism is through demonstrating the appeal of a different radical answer to the question of what has to be done."[27] Ultimately, any response to fascism or proto-

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[24] *Bray* (note 22), xvi.
[25] Here I am thinking of *Foucault*'s notion of "biopower" and *Rob Nixon*'s notion of "slow violence."
[26] *Bray* (note 22), xvi.
[27] *Dave Renton*, Fascism: Theory and Practice, *London* 2015, 111. This is evocative of philosopher *Slavoj Žižek*'s argument that *Hitler* was not truly revolutionary.

fascism will be ineffective and ultimately fail to address the causes of fascism if it does not present a suitably revolutionary alternative.

Like fascism, anti-fascism is also a somewhat illiberal revolutionary movement; however, unlike fascism, anti-fascism's illiberal dimensions can reflect a genuine effort to live up to the ideals of liberalism.[28] This is the third characteristic of anti-fascism, which I wish to highlight. It pushes against the liberal notion – and perhaps conceit – of free speech. As people who believe that fascism represents a terrifying danger to democracy, anti-fascists believe that fascism should not be allowed to be publicly promoted. When fascist and proto-fascist persons inevitably strive for and gain political standing or civic office within right-wing politics, what Alexander Ross labels the "fascist creep," it is the goal of some anti-fascists to remove their platform to speak and ability to organize. Bray states the reasoning behind the removal of a public platform, writing, "After Auschwitz and Treblinka, anti-fascists committed themselves to fighting to the death the ability of organized Nazis to say anything."[29]

The "no platforming" characteristic of anti-fascism is crucial.[30] One of the revolutionary tactics of fascism, which anti-fascism seeks to disrupt, is the historical use of mass rallies to solidify popular support. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler described the power of these rallies in giving individual working class persons confidence in voicing their fascist beliefs upon joining thousands of others at a rally who held the same beliefs, and Hitler also observed that the only way the Nazi revolution could have been thwarted was if opposing parties had disrupted their early rallies.[31] It is important to note that anti-fascists are not opposed either to the right to speak freely or to the right to freely assemble. Rather, no platforming efforts are an attempt to live into and preserve the ideals of free speech and freedom to assemble.

Fascism and proto-fascism are not just expressed in instances of mass rallies during which nostalgia for the Nazi party is expressed. Fascism and proto-fascism are operative in the mundane dimensions of our lives. Bray compares what he calls "organized anti-fascism," with "everyday anti-fascism" noting the importance of each. In offering up the notion of everyday anti-fascism, Bray is attempting to counteract what I call the overt or covert *micro-fascisms* that we encounter as we go through our lives. He describes these, writing:

> Everyday fascists are the ardent Trump supporters who "tell it like it is" by actively trying
> to dismantle the taboos against oppression that the movements of feminism, black

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[28] I say "can" here, because some anti-fascists are anarchist.

[29] *Bray* (note 22), xv.

[30] Ibid., 26.

[31] Cf. *Adolf Hitler*, Mein Kampf, Munich ²1927, 530, and id., Die Reden Hitlers am Reichsparteitag 1933, München 1934, 41.

liberation, queer liberation, and others have given actual blood, sweat, and tears to establish as admittedly shoddy, and far too easily manipulatable, bulwarks against outright fascism.[32]

As Bray describes everyday fascism, active resistance to fascism is not simply expressed in physical brutality against large groups of white supremacists; an anti-fascist commitment to actively resist fascism must be manifested relationally and publicly day-in and day-out. Even those who have an anti-fascist commitment but who are not part of an anti-fascist organization can take part in this type of anti-fascism. Bray describes this daily resistance:

> Any time someone takes action against transphobic, racist bigots – from calling them out, to boycotting their business, to shaming them for their oppressive beliefs, to ending a friendship unless someone shapes up – they are putting an anti-fascist outlook into practice that contributes to a broader everyday anti-fascism that pushes back the tide against the alt-right, Trump, and his loyal supporters. Our goal should be that in twenty years those who voted for Trump are too uncomfortable to share that fact in public. We may not always be able to change someone's beliefs, but we sure as hell can make it politically, socially, economically, and sometimes physically costly to articulate them.[33]

Bray's notion of rendering everyday fascism "costly" can be applied universally to fascism. A strategy – not a tactic – of anti-fascism is to render fascism in all of its forms too costly not only on the personal level, but also to render it too costly on the organized, national level. Only when a person or organization is in the process of rendering fascism costly can they be truly labeled anti-fascist.

A fourth characteristic of anti-fascism in the USA is anti-racism. In much the same sense that Bray understands the strategy of rendering fascism too costly, so too anti-racism must be a dimension of anti-fascist efforts – this does not minimize resistance to other dimensions of fascism. At the heart of fascism is elitism, and at the heart of fascism in the USA is, among other elitisms, a racial elitism connected to the long and brutal history of white supremacy in the USA. Within the context of anti-immigrant racism, Renton argues that we cannot simply tell folk that "racism is bad;" rather, we must "respond by showing that unemployment is the product of a capitalist crisis, not immigration. The solution to unemployment is not to get rid of the immigrants but to get rid of the economic system which produces misery."[34] Any progressive political, economic, and social alternatives to fascist or proto-fascist efforts in the USA must incorporate anti-racism.[35] Renton

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[32] *Bray* (note 22), 204.
[33] Ibid., 206.
[34] *Renton* (note 27), 112.
[35] It is important to observe that 1 in 10 *Bernie Sanders* voters ended up voting for *Trump*.

also suggests that anti-fascist efforts against racism must reach out into rural, white locales.[36] As Renton describes it, racism is a "gateway drug" to fascism. He writes:

> Exposure and education are the bread-and-butter tasks of anti-fascism, but these need to be properly understood. Fascism only becomes a threat when it gains an ideological hold over numbers of people. Moreover, most fascist organizations do not spread a public message of classical Nazism; such ideas exist at the core, but for the inner circle only. Publicly, fascists pose as nationalists or racists – therefore, anti-fascists should not simply expose fascism for what it truly is, they must also spread a broader message of anti-racism. When so doing, anti-fascists should also recognize that there are many features of our society which encourage racism to flourish.[37]

Addressing racism is a key component of anti-fascism, and anti-racism must be interpreted in the same sense as anti-fascism's imposition of a cost. We are only truly anti-racist when we are rendering racism costly to those who engage in racist behavior.

A final characteristic which has not always been well-implemented within anti-fascist movements is the need for self-critique. In her essay, "Women and Antifascism," Isabelle Richet illustrates how women have played a large role in anti-fascist resistance but are marginalized in subsequent narratives. She argues that anti-fascist groups' narratives of themselves were shaped by embedded sexism, emphasizing the role of the males while deemphasizing or ignoring the role of the females. In addition, she notes how anti-fascist narratives tend to emphasize the fighters while minimizing or ignoring those who resisted fascism in ways that did not employ direct, physical brutality. I introduce Richet's argument here as a way of emphasizing that anti-fascism is not necessarily inherently moral nor are anti-fascisms necessarily above reflecting the sins of the liberal culture out of which they emerge. In anti-fascist resistance, anti-fascists still must account for the liberalism embedded within them complete with its economic, political, and social disparities, which are often drawn along the lines of gender, class, race, or culture. Christians who identify as anti-fascists – both protestants and Evangelicals – must account both for the sins of liberalism and for the roots of fascism which are embedded within our religious traditions in the taboos – e.g. heteronormativity, nationalism, racism, and sexism to name a few – upon which fascism feeds.

3. Preaching As Anti-Fascist Resistance

Anti-fascist Christian preaching within the context of the Trump era is any preaching that actively resists palingenetic, populist ultra-nationalism and its white supremacist manifestations. To put this

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[36] *Renton* (note 27), 112.
[37] Ibid., 111.

more bluntly, anti-fascist Christian preaching in the Trump era is preaching that homiletically "punches Nazis," rendering fascism ecclesially – and hopefully by implication economically, socially, and politically – costly. In defining anti-fascist preaching as such, I am also implying that Christian preaching which does not pack a punch directed toward fascism is either a) fascist or proto-fascist "Christian" preaching or b) "Christian" preaching that has acquiesced to the political, economic, and social – i.e. the white, male, heteronormative – status quo of liberalism.

In lifting up this anti-fascist theme for Christian preaching I am intentionally attempting to provoke Christian preachers' sensibilities regarding what constitutes "violence" and how that relates to Christian preaching.[38] Within the context of anti-black racism in the USA, I argue in *The Violence of Preaching: A Homiletical Ethic of Revolutionary Violence* that too often what is perceived as "non-violent," white Christian preaching is silent on issues of racism.[39] While this silence may be interpreted as neutrality, silent, white Christian preaching is actually perpetrating a subtle, indirect racialized violence. I argue that for privileged persons within the context of anti-black racism – an unjust symptom of liberalism, preaching can never be separated from the realities of violence and is never truly "non-violent." I raise this example, because I am suggesting that in the context of fascism, even in silence against fascism, preaching that is perceived to be neutral is still actually caught up in the violence of fascism by not actively resisting it.

Fascism and proto-fascism present us with an opportunity to reflect both on the ways in which violence is irrevocably imposed upon us by political, economic, and social systems and on the ways in which we must consciously or subconsciously determine which and whose violence with which we are willing to live. When confronted with fascism or proto-fascism, we simultaneously have violence imposed upon us – either the violence of fascism, liberalism, or resistance, and we are faced with choices about how we will negotiate that violence through compliance or resistance, each of which have violent implications. I argue that in the case of fascism, we cannot separate ourselves – or our preaching – from violence – either the violence imposed upon us or the ways in which we negotiate fascism.[40]

4. An Anti-fascist Christology

The person and ministry of Jesus has frequently served as the foundation for constructive revolutionary Christian theologies and homiletics such as those contributed by liberation theology. This approach has also been employed in constructive revolutionary homiletics such as *The Word*

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[38] I place violence in quotation marks to indicate a suspicion of the term.
[39] Cf. *Andrew Wymer*, The Violence of Preaching: A Homiletical Ethic of Revolutionary Violence (Ph.D. dissertation), Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary 2016.
[40] As my colleague *Chris Baker* observes, "We all have dirt on our hands. We just have to choose what dirt we can live with."

Before the Powers by Charles Campbell in which Campbell argues for a homiletical ethic of non-violent resistance by appealing to a non-violent Jesus. With this in mind, I would be remiss in constructing a revolutionary homiletic not to engage the person and ministry of Jesus. However, to ground this particular constructive homiletic on an engagement with Jesus and anti-fascism represents a potential anachronism.

Jesus was certainly not an anti-fascist, and Jesus preceded fascism and liberalism by well over a millennium. Since I am deeply formed by this theological tradition of looking to Jesus, I will trace a very basic Christology engaging the person and ministry of Jesus with the contours of fascism: palingenetic, populist, ultra-nationalism. I will not claim that Jesus was an anti-fascist; however, I will argue that Jesus cannot be responsibly interpreted as a fascist – though there are "Christo-fascist" sects of Christianity. I will also argue that Jesus' response to the powers of his day provides an example of how we must resist the powers of today.[41]

It could be argued that there are palingenetic dimensions in the biblical accounts of Jesus' emphasis upon the coming Kingdom of God, in which God will reign over the whole world in a revolutionary new way. In Acts 1:6–8, immediately before the Ascension, the disciples ask Jesus what can be interpreted as a palingenetic question, saying, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" However, Jesus responds by redirecting them away from palingenesis, saying, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."[42] I argue that this redirection is emblematic of a divergence between possible palingenetic dimensions of the Kingdom in biblical accounts of Jesus and fascist palingenesis. Unlike fascism which emphasizes the rebirth process without a comprehensive plan for continued governance, Jesus' treatment of the Kingdom emphasizes the establishment of a sustainable and comprehensive future. Also, the bringing about of the reign of God is one that is forward-looking and not at what Griffin would call the "mythic core" of Jesus' message.[43]

Previously, I defined populism as any system or agent that claims to be in support of ordinary folk and which relies upon those ordinary people for their support. There are certainly dimensions of Jesus, the revolutionary, that could be considered populist. He was an ordinary person who stood in solidarity with and organized other ordinary people, including the poor and the socially marginalized. However, Jesus is not a populist in the same sense as the term is employed in regard

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[41] I use this imagery here in a way that evokes the work of *Charles Campbell* and *Walter Wink.*
[42] All Scripture passages are taken from The Holy Bible. New Revised Standard Version, Nashville 1989.
[43] Cf. *Griffin* (note 13).

to fascism. First, Jesus did not rely upon ordinary people for his authority or legitimacy. When Jesus invokes authority he consistently sources that authority in God or ancient scriptures. Second, in John 6:15, Jesus intentionally thwarts a popular effort to install him as a civic authority, a clear effort to undermine the misguided popular swell of support which he experienced. Third, Jesus' popular support was only temporary. It dissipated and even turned into popular animosity as is illustrated by the pardoning of Barabbas at the behest of the crowd. The contrast between the populism of fascism and Jesus' populist dimensions is even clearer when the elitist deception of fascist populism is considered. Fascisms exploit populism and then proceed to undermine the power of the populace and assert a totalitarian state. This certainly cannot be said of Jesus.

The Gospels recount for us Jesus telling stories that can be interpreted as intentionally undermining Jewish ethnic and religious tribalism. These include the parable of the Good Samaritan and the healing of the centurion's servant. In the parable of the Good Samaritan and the account of the healing of the centurion's servant, Jesus lifts up religious and ethnic rivals of the Jewish people as heroic figures and exemplars of faith. Other, slightly unclear clues can be taken from additional passages such as the Great Commission when Jesus instructs his disciples to go to all nations or, on the negative side, when Jesus (Matthew 15) tells the Canaanite woman that he has only come for the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." He later changes his mind and heals her. While it is difficult to judge Jesus' relationship to nationalism, my reading of Jesus suggests that he held views and took actions regarding the tribalism of certain sects within first century Judaism that can in no way be adequately construed as parallel to contemporary fascist ultra-nationalism.

Following *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* by Obery Hendricks, I interpret Jesus as a revolutionary figure committed to resisting oppressive powers and working for a new way of ordering society.[44] The Gospels indicate that Jesus stood against both the external evil of the occupying Roman empire and the internal evil of corrupt religious authorities. I argue that a Christological interpretation of Jesus today can safely offer up a vision of a Christ figure that resists social evils and provides a resource in efforts to revolutionize society. While I am not suggesting that Jesus was an anti-fascist, I am suggesting that the Christ figure can be understood as a resource for anti-fascism. However, I am hesitant to do so. This hesitancy emerges not from an unwillingness to suggest that Christ is a potential resource for anti-fascism, but from concern that such a suggestion could minimize how such a reading of Christ necessitates that Christ also be an anti-liberal. If Christ is not also intentionally read as an anti-liberal, then a reading of Christ as anti-fascist may potentially be done against the backdrop of

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[44] *Obery M. Hendricks*, The Politics of Jesus. Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of the Teachings of Jesus and How They Have Been Corrupted, New York 2006.

a liberal reading of Christ. If a liberal reading of Christ is the foundation upon which we read Christ as anti-fascist, then an anti-fascist reading of Christ may be functioning to maintain the liberal economic, political, and social status quo. Such a reading is unacceptable to me. A reading of Christ can only be an anti-fascist resource to the degree that the same reading of Christ is also a resource for the critique of the source of fascism in liberalism.[45]

Even with an interpretation of Jesus as a revolutionary and Christ as an anti-fascist, I will be the first to admit that the Gospels do not recount for us the tales of a Jesus who punched the oppressor. However, Hendricks, who supports non-violent tactics but holds a hybrid position on violence – suggests that Jesus made the choice to employ what we now might call non-violent tactics out of an awareness of the danger that direct physical confrontation would present to himself and his people.[46] For Jesus, the use of what we now call non-violent tactics may have been a matter of life and death. For those of us with multiple layers of social privileges, our choices of tactics may be more numerous than those who are less privileged. For those of us with privilege, we may not tactically choose to physically punch a Nazi, but, if we are not, we must be finding ways to "punch Nazis," to render being a fascist or proto-fascist exceedingly costly. As the anti-fascists described by Cornel West, we need to be on the front lines in all areas of resistance, using our privilege in ways that benefit and protect those around us.

5. Contours of Anti-fascist Preaching

In addition to Griffin's *fascist minimum* and my earlier contribution of an *anti-fascist minimum* paralleling Griffin's fascist minimum, I am suggesting that there is a *homiletical anti-fascist minimum*. As I define it, the homiletical anti-fascist minimum is active resistance to palingenetic, populist, ultra-nationalism, and, in the particular context of the USA, active resistance to white supremacy. This is the bare minimum of what is necessary in order for preaching to be considered anti-fascist.

An anti-fascist homiletic suggests that fascism or proto-fascism does not belong in the pulpit or the pew in addition to the public sphere, and if fascism or proto-fascism are identified in the pulpit, the pew, or the public sphere, an anti-fascist Christian preacher will use their preaching – and possibly other tactics – to actively disrupt fascism or proto-fascism. Employing Bray's terminology, anti-fascist preaching will render fascism and proto-fascism ecclesially costly. In the context of an anti-fascist homiletic, the "no platforming" dimension of anti-fascism can be supplemented by adding a "no pulpit-ing," a "no altar-ing," or a "no sanctuary-ing" of fascism. An anti-fascist homiletic suggests that fascism and proto-fascism and their manifestations in white

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[45] By "anti-liberal" I do not mean to imply that, like fascism, liberalism cannot be rendered more just and more effectively live into its ideals.

[46] *Hendricks* (note 44), 177.

supremacy have absolutely no place in the Church, and the Church's task is to make sure that such ideologies and movements have an ecclesial cost that renders them prohibitive.

Anti-fascist preaching, at least in the USA, must also necessarily be anti-racist preaching. Here anti-racism moves beyond simply "not racist" to aggressive resistance and disruption of racism both in the Church and in the broader culture. Anti-racist preaching renders racism ecclesially costly and leaves no question that racism is unacceptable in the Church and the world. Anti-racist preaching must be combined with anti-racist worship, which is celebrated in a manner that is wary of the ways in which our European liturgical traditions too often carry the residue of white supremacy, white normativity, and anti-semitism. In addition, anti-fascist preaching will preemptively address the other "taboos" which fascism often exploits including gender – e.g. queerness and transgender – and sexuality – e.g. lesbian, gay, and bisexual sexuality.

Earlier in this essay I noted how anti-fascism, like the fascism it opposes, must appeal to and mobilize large groups of people in order to successfully disrupt fascism. Anti-fascist preaching, if it is to effectively resist and disrupt fascism, must also mobilize and reach large groups of people. The militancy of anti-fascist preaching is only directed toward fascists and proto-fascists. In order to educate and mobilize, anti-fascist preaching must reach across barriers to those who perhaps were part of the initial populist groundswell, but who have become disillusioned. In the context of the USA, anti-fascist preaching is particularly needed in locations where white supremacy, fascism, and proto-fascism are mainstream and attractive responses to economic crises.

Anti-fascist preaching must also be revolutionary in nature. That is, it must offer up alternatives to fascism and proto-fascism that address economic, political, and social disparities that fascism and proto-fascism exploit. While these visions will be theological in nature, they must also be combined with political, economic, and social solutions. While William Barber II and other organizers have not labelled the Poor People's Campaign as anti-fascist, it is effectively functioning as an anti-fascist organization by calling out white supremacy and offering up an alternative vision for society.[47]

Anti-fascist preaching presses the field of homiletics in an illiberal direction with which some homileticians may not be comfortable. Little work has been done on how to respond to the Trump era in preaching due to its chronological immediacy; however, Wes Allen published a hasty and brief homiletical response to Trump's election immediately after the election. In it he attempts to tread a fine line between prophetic witness and loving those across the political aisle. For Allen, a determining issue is one of the possibility of conversion. He writes:

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[47] Cf. https://poorpeoplescampaign.org.

> Being pastoral prophets means we must, in our sermons, not only give our hearers room to grow in the direction we hope, but also room to disagree with us, even when we think such disagreement is rooted in selfishness, bigotry, or hatred. In a postmodern world, if we preach a progressive ethic with the sense that "God said, I believe it, and that settles it for me, hearers" we most want to convert will reject anything we have to say.[48]

Allen's response is one that embraces a homiletical liberalism related to philosophical liberalism emphasizing individualism, free speech, and freedom of religion – at least for some. He emphasizes the need to love persons no matter what they believe, and that love promotes a certain degree of tolerance toward their beliefs. Allen also warns against speaking too authoritatively about politics in the age of Trump, which reveals his position of social privilege. He writes:

> Our sermons need to invite conversation about difficult topics instead of trying to put the punctuation on the end of those conversations. We need to open up congregational space for honest conversation in the place of divisive debate in which someone wins and someone loses. Conversation as a postmodern form of communication, values diversity and reciprocity without saying, "Anything goes." A pastor who desires to hear what a congregant who disagrees with him has to say in order to appreciate the person and where she is coming from will be able to speak to and be heard by that person in ways a nonpastoral prophet never will.[49]

While I appreciate the difficult realities addressed by Allen's perspective, it reveals a high degree of social privilege. The notion that political compromise or political conversations that do not end with clarity about justice and injustice can be situations in which no one "loses" is unrealistic, even dangerous. Political compromise, agreements to disagree, and political inaction among the socially privileged have consistently harmed LGBTQ persons, immigrants, black and brown persons, and the poor, and in the context of fascism and proto-fascism in the USA, this risk is further heightened.

Allen's engagement with preaching in the Trump era is just one example of how preaching and preachers have struggled with determining how to engage with fascism and proto-fascism. In "Protests from the Pulpit: The Confessing Church and the Sermons of World War II," William Skiles suggests that Christian preaching in Nazi Germany was not nearly as oppositional as we might hope. Skiles analyzed over two hundred and fifty sermons, and found that only twelve percent were explicitly critical of or opposed to the Nazi state.[50] He observes that none of the

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[48] *Wesley Allen*, Preaching in the Age of Trump, St. Louis 2017, 27.

[49] Ibid.

[50] *William S. Skiles*, Protests from the Pulpit: Confessing Church and the Sermons of World War II. Sermon Studies 1.1 (2017), 1–23; cf. *http://mds.marshall.edu/sermonstudies/vol1/iss1/1*

sermons he reviewed offered "a sustained attack on the Nazi state, National Socialism, or the regime's policies;" "calls for Germans to sabotage or otherwise fight against the police state;" or "call[s] for organized and united action against the state."[51] The picture Skiles paints of preaching in Nazi Germany is that of preachers living in a totalitarian, fascist regime who were primarily focused on maintaining their independence from the Nazi state rather than organizing resistance to that state.

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[51] Ibid., 21f.

Developing a Transformative Theology for Preaching

Robert O'Lynn

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to put forward a new paradigm for understanding the preaching event and what the overall purpose of preaching should be in a post-Christian context. It will first examine traditional sermon structures that facilitate preaching as a "performed event." This then segues into discussing the author's understanding of the functions of preaching (Instruction/Reflection/Application/Transformation), offering summaries of sample sermons for each function. The article concludes with an argument for why a new definition of preaching is needed, seeing preaching as a momentary encounter that leads to spiritual transformation over time.

The church cannot exist without preaching. This is the unconscious reason why professionals and parishioners alike are often critical of the craft. God can exist and does exist without good preaching and in spite of bad preaching. However the church cannot (cf. Rom. 10:14–17). In short, the church cannot be the church without preaching. And preaching cannot be preaching without God.

1. Preaching as Performed Event

In order to clearly articulate the proposed theological schema that this essay envisions, we must first begin by clearly defining terms. In the colloquial language of today's ecclesiastical structure, little difference is seen between "preaching" and "sermon." In many cases, they have become interchangeable terms, descriptors of the same action or same function. However, at a simple linguistic level, these two terms are quite different. "Preach" is a verb ("to preach"), an action that is carried out by one trained to perform that action ("preacher"). A "sermon" is a noun, an object – the "thing" of the grammatical trinity of person, place or thing – that can be manipulated for a purpose. While a preacher (also a noun) preaches, can preach, has preached, or is preaching, he or she uses a sermon (message, lesson, homily or talk) to accomplish this task. However, the term

"sermon" does not share an equal cognate.[1] While one can "sermonize," this term is pejorative, and is therefore inadequate for our discussion except to serve as a warning against inappropriate or ineffective implementation of the use of the sermon in preaching. While the sermon is the object used to implement preaching, it is *not* the goal of preaching. Spiritual transformation is the goal of preaching (Ps 1; Rom 12:1–3; 2Tim 3:10–17; Heb 4:1–13). Instruction in doctrine, as vital as this is in a theologically illiterate culture, falls short of the mark unless those listening are challenged to do something with what they have heard.[2]

However, if we believe that simple behavioral change is the goal of preaching, then we replace the sermon with the therapy session. While a sermon provides us with the momentary encounter with God, transformation does not occur through a momentary encounter. Genuine spiritual transformation occurs through the consistent practice of preaching. As Sangster wrote, "Preaching is a constant agent of the divine power by which the greatest miracle God ever works is wrought and wrought again. God uses it *to change lives*."[3] Implicit in Sangster's comments is the continual process through which one must go in order to be spiritually transformed. Here, therapeutic language can serve of some value.[4] Recovery does not occur in a single session. It can take years for a recovering addict to actually experience a sense of healing, although any recovering addict will affirm that they are never completely free of his or her disease/addiction. The same is true for the spiritual seeker. It is through the consistent hearing of preaching, the consistent participation in the sacraments, and the consistent practice of spiritual disciplines that we discover spiritual healing (transformation). Richard Lischer notes that God "forms a community of faith over time" through the act of "*preaching*, as opposed to individual sermons."[5] Therefore, transformation is an on-going process.

However, even using the terms "transformative" or "transformational" to describe the goal of preaching is problematic. On one hand, as has already been mentioned, is the misunderstanding that the preaching event serves as a group therapy session. In this vein, preaching focuses on fixing marital problems and breaking gambling addictions. As David Buttrick warned, therapeutic preaching has a tendency to "limit theological meaning" as we focus on the purely physical

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[1] While a delightful author, *Calvin Miller* was not completely successful in coining a new homiletic term. In his fable The Sermon-Maker, Miller only uses this term in a triumphant fashion at the end of the story. Instead of developing the "sermon-maker" as an identity to aspire to, he employs a more traditional vocabulary; see The Sermon-Maker. Tales of a Transformed Preacher, Grand Rapids 2003.

[2] *Bill Easum*, Preaching for Transformation, www.religiousproductnews.com/articles/ 2010-September/In-Every-Issue/Preaching-for-Transformation.htm; accessed 27 November 2013.

[3] *W. E. Sangster*, The Craft of the Sermon, London 1954, 16.

[4] For helpful treatments of this difficult approach to preaching, see *Thomas G. Long*, Therapeutic Preaching: Three Views, in: Princeton Seminary Bulletin 68, no. 3 (1976), 80–93; and *Neil Pembroke*, Theocentric Therapeutic Preaching. A Sample Sermon with Commentary, in: Practical Theology 5, December 2012, 237–258.

[5] *Richard Lischer*, A Theology of Preaching. The Dynamics of the Gospel, rev. ed., Eugene (OR) 2001, 85.

problems that we face rather than seeing them as components of God's redemptive scheme.[6] As helpful as this sort of preaching can be, it is, at its core, anthropocentric. On the other hand is the misunderstanding that the preaching event serves as a rally call to social activism. In this vein, preaching focuses on establishing church-based soup kitchens and erasing exclusivist labels through the development of a public theology. However, as Victor Anderson warns, public theology has a tendency to remain as only "public discourse" and fails to bring about any legitimate social change.[7] This sort of preaching can also be helpful, yet it also falls into the anthropocentric trap. In either case, continued exposure to either type of preaching fails to bring about transformation (cf. 1Cor 3:1–3; Heb 5:11–14). What is needed, then, is a theological structure that is rooted in the metanarrative of Scripture rather than in pet passages or imposed systems of eisegesis.

2. Theological Structures for Preaching

Preaching is a communication *process*. This means that both the individual sermon and the continual action of preaching have starting points and stopping points. This also means that communication can be affected by factors such as content, structure, mechanics and culture. Of these, the factor that most distinguishes static communication from dynamic communication is structure. Two points of clarification are in order: First, in regards to content, this essay holds firm to the doctrine that "the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword" and that "it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12). Therefore, a fundamental belief of this essay is that something will happen to someone every time scripture is proclaimed. Second, how that change impacts the hearer will be effected by how the message is delivered. It is possible that the hearers are simply not ready or are unable to hear the word (cf. Mark 4:15). Still, the preacher has been called to speak the word to those who give ear. Therefore, the preacher must take care to preach in such a way as to provide the best hearing possible for the message.

Traditionally, according to Wilson, preachers saw theology and structure as separate issues.[8] Sermons were commonly designed in a mechanical fashion according to whether the sermon was topical or textual. The purpose of preaching was either to explain the meaning of a text or to define the limits of a doctrine; knowledge was often substituted for relationship. Many preachers,

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[6] *David Buttrick*, A Fearful Pulpit, a Wayward Land, in: Mike Graves (ed.), What's the Matter with Preaching Today?, Louisville 2004, 41.

[7] *Victor Anderson*, The Search for Public Theology in the United States, in: Thomas G. Long/Edward Farley (eds.), Preaching as Theological Task: Word, Gospel, Scripture. In Honor of David Buttrick, Louisville 1996, 19f.

[8] *Paul Scott Wilson*, Preaching and Homiletical Theory, Preaching and Its Partners Series, St. Louis 2004), 73f.; see a more fleshed-out argument in *Robert Stephen Reid*, The Four Voices of Preaching. Connecting Purpose and Identity behind the Pulpit, Grand Rapids (MI) 2006, 38–52.

however, found this disconnected approach to preaching lacking as they wrestle with how to structure sermons in order to bring about the transformation that Paul extolled in Rom 12.

The structure that many have turned to over the centuries in an effort to bridge the chasm between the ancient text and the modern world is the Law/Gospel paradigm, which is commonly (if not incorrectly) associated with Martin Luther.[9] Although Milton Crum attempted to reconfigure this structure as Complication-Resolution,[10] the damage had already been done. In this theological structure, the point of preaching was to move people away from the law towards the cross, forgetting the words of Paul that we would not know grace *without* the law (Rom 7:7–8:17).

A second theological structure that has become popular in the last couple of decades is that of Trouble and Grace. In an attempt to revise the Law/Gospel paradigm, Paul Scott Wilson coined this particular wording. Realizing Luther's misinterpretation, Wilson argues that trouble (law) leads to grace (gospel) and that grace (gospel) has no strength without trouble (law).[11] In Wilson's structure, these two elements are theological poles that humanity finds itself tethered between. Trouble has been a present companion since Eden, just as grace has been with us since God offered the first redemptive sacrifice following the sin of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21). What keeps the tension from overwhelming humanity is hope, the acceptance that God will someday overcome the powers of evil and restore those who have clung to God's merciful hand during times of trial. The problem with this structure is that it can be misunderstood as a type of triumphant theology, a sort of liberation theology that promises that all things will work out for *our* good rather than realizing that "in all things God works for good" (Rom 8:28).[12]

A third structure, while not necessarily developed for homiletics, is Walter Brueggemann's cycle of Orientation, Disorientation and New Orientation in the Psalms.[13] This theological structure is the most promising for this discussion, given its focus on faith as a progressional movement. In the orientation stage, things are going well for the person of faith. The economy is good, the kids are behaving, health is stable, and there is food in the pantry. However, in the disorientation stage, something in the equation malfunctions and things fall out of sync. The economy takes a downturn, the kids become juvenile delinquents, an unsettling diagnosis is made, and the pantry is bare. The person of faith, the person who once felt quite secure in her faith in God, now finds herself bowed low before the altar begging for release and restoration. This prayer is not a spiritual "hail Mary" but a prayer voiced from one who has a deep, intimate relationship

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[9] Ibid., 75.

[10] *Milton J. Crum*, Manual on Preaching. A New Process of Sermon Development, Valley Forge 1977, 71–86.

[11] *Paul Scott Wilson*, The Practice of Preaching, rev. ed., Nashville 2007, 64f.

[12] See the critiques of Wilson's paradigm in *O. Wesley Allen*, Determining the Form. Elements of Preaching series, Minneapolis 2008, 51; *Eugene L. Lowry*, The Sermon. Dancing on the Edge of Mystery, Nashville 1997, 78; and especially *Thomas G. Long*, The Witness of Preaching, Louisville ²2005, 128–131.

[13] *Walter Brueggemann*, The Message of the Psalms. A Theological Commentary, Minneapolis 1984, 19–21.

with God. She knows she can bare her soul before her Creator. As a result, in the new orientation stage restoration comes. The economy stabilizes, the kids find intervention, health somewhat recovers, and the pantry is filled with bargain brands. Is the situation perfect? Certainly not. However, faith, as Brueggemann understands it, does not require perfection (cf. Hab 3:17–19; Phil 4:10–14);[14] faith requires recovery and stability. The prayers in the Psalter were not prayed during times of a bull market. They were prayed in lean years; yet they were prayed with the faith that things would improve. Initially, this appears to be a suitable theological structure for transformative preaching. The problem, however, is that new orientation is not sustainable. There is always the possibility of returning to a previous theological orientation, one that bellows along with the poet who proudly stated that "I shall never be moved" (Ps 30:6). Additionally, this structure has primarily been employed as a method for understanding the theological message of Psalms and not as a way of conceptualizing a homiletic structure.[15]

3. Theological Functions of Preaching

Each person who stands to deliver a sermon to a congregation does so with some type of purpose. This purpose serves as the sieve for the sermon development process, guiding the preacher through the various stages of crafting the eventual sermon. Often this purpose reflects the preacher's practical theology, that lens that he or she uses to read and interpret Scripture in order to discern how to live as a Christian. For example, Tom Long has argued that there are four primary theological functions of preaching – herald, pastor, storyteller and witness.[16] For Long, however, the functions of herald, pastor and storyteller are insufficient functions of preaching. Therefore, the witness is the preferred biblical function of preaching, in that the preacher attempts to proclaim the full message of the Gospel without any of the sermonic "stumbling blocks" that Tillich warned us about (i.e., the preacher's own communication style or the use of connectors that are irrelevant to the congregation).[17] It is more theological in nature and it finds its authority in Peter and John's response to the Jewish council when asked about their preaching: "Whether it is right in God's sight to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19f.). The preacher simply stands before the congregation

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[14] My thanks to *Dave Bland*, my dissertation chair at the Harding School of Theology, for first guiding me to these passages.

[15] For example, *Barbara Brown Taylor* notes that she uses the orientation, disorientation, and new orientation (she refers to as "reorientation" as *Fred Craddock* did in a 1983 lecture when he appropriated *Brueggemann's* cycle as a method for preaching) cycle when developing her sermon "Bothering God" from Luke 18:1–8; Bothering God, in: Jana Childers (ed.), Birthing the Sermon. Women Preachers on the Creative Process, St. Louis 2001, 153–169. The sermon originally appeared in Home By Another Way, Lanham (MD) 1999, 199–205. *Peter K. Stevenson* and *Stephen I. Wright* provide an evaluation of Taylor's sermon and its effective use of the orientation-disorientation-new orientation schema in Preaching the Atonement, Louisville 2009, 32–34.
Additionally, *André Resner* has re-imagined the orientation-disorientation-new orientation cycle as a method of Christian proclamation: incarnation (orientation), crucifixion (disorientation), resurrection (new orientation); see Preacher and Cross. Person and Message in Theology and Rhetoric, Grand Rapids/Cambridge 1999, 110–118.

[16] *Long* (note 12), 23–47.

[17] *Paul Tillich*, Theology of Culture, Oxford/New York 1959, 213f.

and delivers the message that she or he believes God has compelled her or him to give.[18] However, as profound and influential as Long's theory has been, it does not provide the grammar of transformation that this essay seeks. Therefore, a second paradigm with a more integrated grammar was sought out.

A second example of a theological paradigm for preaching has been provided by Robert Stephen Reid in *The Four Voices of Preaching*.[19] His "four voices" paradigm is extremely useful for our discussion because it embraces four identities for preaching rather than limiting identities down to one as Long does. The immediate value in Reid's model is that, unlike Long's model, these "voices" are not homiletic structures; they are identities that preachers embody to give their sermons a theological motif or hermeneutical lens. Reid makes this claim:

> Sermon form does not create a voice. Rather, it is an individual's cultural assumptions about the nature of language and the nature of authority that provide the center of gravity that places one or another voice behind the wheel that brings a sermon to a successful destination.[20]

Reid argues that each of these "voices" has a legitimate place in preaching and the Christian theological system. As helpful as Reid's theological model is, there is one aspect that we must take issue with – it is not an integrated whole. Like Long's model, each "voice" is a separate component that can be understood individually from the other three voices. In order for preaching to be truly transformative, we must discover a model that is integrated and process-oriented. Therefore, to develop a model for preaching that is transformative and provides a continual structure that guides the process of transformative preaching that was described above, the following integrative model is proposed: Instruction; Reflection; Application; Transformation.[21]

4. Instruction

This function focuses on teaching the content of Scripture, on teaching the "what" aspect of the Christian faith. Teaching matters of faith has always been important to God. God commanded the people of Israel to make teaching matters of faith a central component of their domestic culture (Deut 6:4–8). Parents and priests were to take every opportunity available to teach the meaning of

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[18] *Long* (note 12), 22.
[19] *Reid* (note 8), 22–26.
[20] Ibid., 202.
[21] Although this integrative model is an original paradigm as described in this essay, there are other similar paradigms that influenced the development of the "transformative homiletic." For these, see *Ronald J. Allen*, The Teaching Sermon, Nashville 1999; *David J. Lose*, Confessing Jesus Christ. Preaching in a Postmodern World, Grand Rapids/Cambridge 2003, 189–232; and *Haddon W. Robinson*, Biblical Preaching. The Development and Delivery of Expository MessagesGrand Rapids ²2001, 126.
Additionally, *David Helm* has recently released a volume that seems to espouse a similar approach to preaching as the one developed here. However, on closer inspection, it was discovered that Helm's view of transformation and how it occurs is radically divergent from the one developed here; see, Expositional Preaching. How We Speak God's Word Today, 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches Series, Wheaton (IL) 2014.

God's word so that the nation would grow in faith and obedience. The community of faith, in order to be a gleaming beacon of righteousness to a dark world, must understand certain fundamental teachings about God, how we relate to God, how God relates to the world, and how we relate to the world (1Tim 4:11–16). As Ronald Allen states, "In the Bible, God is the great teacher. God reveals the divine will to bless the world, as well as those things in humankind and nature that will both facilitate and frustrate blessing."[22] Thus, the Instruction component seeks to interpret the meaning of our sacred texts. This function seeks to answer the question of "What does the text say?" Preaching, in the words of Chapell, is about using "scriptural truth to convert souls and change lives."[23] In short, the Instruction function of preaching seeks to begin the transformative process by explaining the possible meaning of the text (what does the text say?).

An example of the Instruction function is found in the preaching of Bruce McLarty, now president of Harding University.[24] In a guest sermon, McLarty assisted in the fiftieth anniversary of a congregation by preaching about the future from 2 Timothy.[25] He opened by sharing a story of an Anglican congregation facing a lawsuit where the local bishop brokered a mediation session with those suing the congregation with "a book, a table, a bottle of wine and a loaf of bread." As McLarty transitioned to his message, he stated that this is what it means to be the church, and he then enumerated four lessons from his text (2Tim 4). Each point was rooted within the text and explained within the original context. Each point was presented in McLarty's matter-of-fact style, a style that believes deeply in the simple teachings of Scripture and the universal application of those teachings to today's context. In short, as he stated in his second point, "It's all there. All we need to know is in Scripture. It's all there!"

5. Reflection

This function focuses on thinking about the meaning of Scripture, on thinking about the "why" of the Christian faith. Simply studying Scripture and learning what it says is not enough for spiritual transformation. As noted above, reading Scripture and hearing sermons is simply spiritual milk. In order for transformation to eventually occur, we must challenge our values, attitudes and assumptions about our lives and how we line up against what God is calling us to become (Mic 6:6–8). Studying the cultural or linguistic background of a text can be helpful, yet its helpfulness

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[22] *Allen* (note 21), 13f.

[23] *Bryan Chapell*, Christ-Centered Preaching. Redeeming the Expository Sermon, Grand Rapids ²2005, 27.

[24] Each of the preachers examined in this section were selected because they are ministers from the Churches of Christ, have attained advanced degrees, and represent a particular preaching style and theological lens that promotes the diversity that once identified the Stone-Campbell Movement, the Christian tradition of the author. *Bruce McLarty* received his Doctor of Ministry from Ashland Theological Seminary and represents traditional Restorationist theology; *David Fleer* received a Ph.D. in Rhetoric and represents the growing minority of postliberal theologians in the Stone-Campbell Movement; and *Jeff Garrett* (Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology) represents the trending movement towards a more inclusive, Evangelical theology.

[25] *Bruce McLarty*, "Waterview 50th Anniversary PM Worship," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfKELwTIJeE; accessed 4 August 2018.

becomes null if we do not "think about these things" and how they help us grow in the image of Christ (Phil 4:8). Charles Campbell argues for an "ethic" of preaching that goes beyond simple study and "takes more seriously the enormity of the principalities and powers."[26] For Campbell, the action of preaching does not bring about transformation (a term Campbell is uncomfortable with) any more than starting a bath makes one clean. To Campbell, spiritual transformation, or responsive discipleship that demonstrates resistance to oppressive powers, occurs not when the text is discussed (as in the Instruction function) but when the implications of the text are contemplated by the listener (what does the text mean?).[27]

An example of the Reflection function is found in the preaching of David Fleer, a professor of preaching at Lipscomb University. In a sermon from Mic 6, Fleer created a courtroom scene in which a contemporary churchgoer finds himself standing before God awaiting judgment.[28] "How do you plead?" is the ringing chorus of the sermon as the man is asked about his treatment of those who are oppressed by society and who he has failed to help. The sermon, while strongly grounded in Mic 6, only hints at the textual origin. Instead, Fleer presented the sermon from the man's point of view. Those who cry out to God for justice are aligned against the man. For example, there are the Molly Maids who clean his house for minimum wage. Fleer concluded the sermon by calling the congregation to find themselves in the man's position. For Fleer, discovering the meaning of Mic 6 is not found in wading through an exegetical essay but in answering the question "How do you plead?"

6. Application

This function focuses on integrating the claims of Scripture, on implementing the "how" of the Christian faith. This function looks at Instruction and Reflection and asks if there is not something else that can be done. This function is the practical element, the "rubber meets the road" aspect of the learning and development process. Here, in order for transformation to occur, we must not only "treasure [God's] word in [our hearts]", "meditate on [God's] precepts" and "delight in [God's] statutes" (Ps 119:11–16), we must "Do [our] best to present [ourselves] to God as one approved by him" (2Tim 2:15) as one who is "equipped for every good work" (2Tim 3:17). In a recent interview, Rick Warren summed up the Application function well when he said, "The purpose of the Bible is not for doctrine, not for reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness. […] The bottom line is life change […]. If you are not having life change, you are not preaching."[29]

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[26] *Charles L. Campbell*, The Word Before the Powers. An Ethic of Preaching, Louisville/London 2002), 89, n. 2.

[27] Ibid., 141–153.

[28] The author has heard this sermon on more than one occasion, however there is no video of this sermon available; please see *David Fleer*, In Micah's Courtroom (Micah 6:1–8), in: David Fleer/Dave Bland (eds.) Preaching the Eighth Century Prophets, Rochester College Lectures on Preaching 5, Abilene (TX), 2004), 235–246.

[29] *Michael Duduit*, Purpose-Driven Preaching. An Interview with Rick Warren, www.preaching.com/resources/

In the Application function, transformation does not occur unless the teachings of Scripture are expressed in contemporary language with contemporary meaning. Ramesh Richard has developed one of the better paradigms for understanding the Application function in preaching with his application "arenas" and "avenues."[30] For Richard, the application should not simply be tacked on to the end of the sermon, but should answer the question of what we will do as a result of hearing this sermon. Richard sees five arenas where transformation occurs – five areas where we ask ourselves what kind of person God wants us to become (personal life; home life; work or study life; church life; community life). Transformation occurs when we discover not only what the text says and what the text means, but how the text impacts us in these various "arenas" of our lives (what does the text do?).

An example of the Application function is found in the preaching of Jeff Garrett, the minister for the Norway Avenue Church of Christ in Huntington, West Virginia, and a counseling professor at Marshall University. In a sermon from his series that parallels the highly-popular *The Story*[31] series from Max Lucado and Randy Frazee, Garrett focused on the story of David and Bathsheba by opening with the question, "If the walls of your house could speak, what would they say?" He described modern-day scenes of family conflict, such as abandonment or verbal abuse, as a way of setting up his text of 2Sam 11f. Similar to that of the Instruction function, Garrett walked through the text, noting significant cultural and historical markers that help hearers understand what is going on. Unlike the Instruction function, however, Garrett interspersed reflective questions and observations to help the hearers see how this passage can help them be more faithful in their own lives.[32] For example, he noted the response that David received from one of his servants when he asked for the identity of the woman bathing of the rooftop across the street by saying that God often sends us last-minute messages that warn us from venturing into spiritual danger. By identifying this woman as "the wife of Uriah the Hittite" (11:3), Garrett argued that the servant was warning David about the adultery that was in his heart. He followed this up by challenging the notion that we should not feed our lusts in order to control them, arguing that they flare out of control when we feed them. As he came to the conclusion of his sermon, Garrett focused on God forgiving David yet still holding David accountable for his sins. He turned this on the crowd saying that God will still hold us accountable for our actions, yet the grace that we receive from God is worth the pain we endure.

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articles/11565775; accessed 15 November 2013.
[30] *Ramesh Richard*, Scripture Sculpture. A Do-It-Yourself Manual for Biblical Preaching, Grand Rapids 1995, 118–121.
[31] *Max Lucado/Randy Frazee*, The Story. The Bible as One Continuing Story of God and His People, Grand Rapids 2011.
[32] *Jeff Garrett*, The Trials of a King, www.norwayave.org/about/sermons/the-trials-of-a-king/; accessed 1 December 2013.

7. Transformation

This function focuses on integrating Instruction, Reflection and Application into a holistic theological structure, on implementing the "to what extent" of the Christian faith. This function looks at the other three functions and asks how they can be melded into one collective unit so that the message can be given its best hearing. While each of the three above functions implements a little of the other two, they each focus primarily on one particular theological component. In the Transformative function, each of the three other functions informs the other two: Instruction informs Reflection and Application; Reflection contemplates Instruction and Application; Application employs Instruction and Reflection. Transformative preaching (and, therefore, spiritual transformation) occurs when all three functions are consistently integrated in the practice of preaching. There may be times to focus more on doctrinal content, theological reflection or practical application. However these emphases must always work in cooperation, not competition with one another.

As an example of this function of preaching, I employed this function in a series of sermons from Colossians. For the series, each sermon was structured to facilitate the three "movements" of the transformative process. Each sermon began with a simple introduction to provide context to the individual sermon within the larger preaching event. This was followed by a reading and interpretation of the text (Instruction/What does the text say?). Next, the original message of the text was examined and proposed as a proclamation for the community (Reflection/What does the text mean?). Then, the proclamation was voiced in contemporary language in order to challenge the congregation to embrace the call to missional action (Application/What does the text do?). Finally, each sermon returned to the text in a submissive fashion and to accept that this is not just an ancient text but that it is our text, our message to the world (Transformation/What is the text doing?). The objective of the series was not only to study the letter of Colossians or to reflect only the doctrine of Christ present in the letter but to discern how this letter speaks as mightily today as it did in its original context. As we see below, recognizing these various theological functions not as separate functions but parts of an integrated whole will propel towards its transformative goal as we realize the spiritual power that a unified sermon can contain.

8. Preaching as Momentary Encounter

We transition now from discussing the action of preaching to discuss the object of preaching – the sermon. As was mentioned above, the sermon is not the focus of preaching. Transformation is the focus of preaching. Yet, the sermon is one conduit through which God channels the power for spiritual transformation. It is in the moment of delivering the sermon that the congregation is confronted with the "deep [that] calls to deep" (Ps 42:7) so that they are compelled to ask, "what

shall we do" (Acts 2:37)? The sermon, then, is the moment in time that allows the congregation an opportunity to enter into God's presence and dialogue with God.

9. Another Definition?

With this discussion, one may wonder if this essay seeks to offer another definition for preaching. To answer simply, yes. This essay does attempt to offer a new definition of preaching. However, it does not seek to replace other definitions, merely add to the ample amount of valuable and useful definitions. For all of the preaching that is available in Scripture, there is no one singular definition. Successful preaching seems to be defined as presenting God's word for those who would give ear, regardless of the style. For as the prophet Isaiah reminds us,

> For as the rain and snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it (55:10f.).

Therefore, the following definition of a transformative sermon comes not to replace but to seek further discussion.

There are two passages in Scripture that talk about the ministry of proclamation that have always intrigued me. They draw my attention because they discuss the mystery that is at the heart of preaching and of the Christian faith. The first text, which is sandwiched by Jesus' "Parable of the Soils," is Mark 4:10–12. Jesus is approached by some of his disciples and is asked why he teaches in parables. His answer, which is parabolic as well, rings of discovery. Only those who are willing to search for God will find God.[33] Those without open hearts and minds to faith will turn up their noses to the life-giving message of God.

The second passage is found in 2Cor 4:3–6. As Paul is describing his apostolic ministry, he says that those who do not accept the message of God do so because they are blind to matters of faith. He goes on to say those who have accepted grace have done so because they have been enlightened to the truth through the proclaiming of the Gospel.[34] The mystery then, it would seem, lies not only in the message itself, but in that instance between the message leaving the mouth of the one speaking and penetrating the ear of the one listening. Whether one accepts or rejects the

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[33] *Allen Black*, Mark (College Press NIV Commentary), Joplin (MO) 1995, 90f.; *Larry W. Hurtado*, Mark (NIBC New Testament Series 2), Peabody (MA) 1989, 72–74.

[34] *Paul Barnett*, The Second Epistles to the Corinthians (NICNT 8), Grand Rapids/Cambridge 1997, 215ff.; *Ralph P. Martin*, 2 Corinthians (WBC 40), Waco 1986, 78–80.

message of God depends on how the mystery is heard and received, both by the one proclaiming it and by the one listening.[35]

With these two thoughts in mind, I have developed the following definition for what makes preaching transformative. Based on this understanding of the mystery and the "hiddenness" of Scripture, transformative preaching is defined in this way:

Preaching is transformative when it is scripturally grounded, theologically informed, and culturally relevant.

In order to integrate this definition, its components must be unpacked.

First, *preaching is transformative when it is scripturally grounded*. This means that the content of preaching is found in Scripture. In 2Tim 4:1f., the aged apostle comes to his protégé and charges him to "preach the word." Knowing the background of a text is important, and being informed about what other scholars have said about it is crucial to true biblical interpretation. But if our proclamation is filled more with what biblical scholars have said, then it amounts to nothing more than a lecture. When we speak for God, our words should be those of Scripture, not of our favorite authors.

Second, *preaching is transformative when it is theologically informed*. This means that preaching looks to do more than impart knowledge, but to enlighten those who give ear to the ways and will of God. It seeks to instruct us about our life of faith and about what we are to believe. Again in 2Tim 4, the apostle cautions the young preacher about the possibility that some "will not endure sound doctrine," turning to "myths" because they want "their ears tickled" (4:3f.). Preaching must do more than offer a surface treatment of the text; it much reach deep inside the text and pull forth those teachings on faith, theology and spiritual growth that are contained within. Preaching must challenge those who give ear to reflect deeply and seriously about their faith.

Third, *preaching is transformative when it is culturally relevant*. This means that preaching looks to speak to the present culture in creative and engaging ways. In Acts 17, Paul stands before a group of Athenian scholars and proclaims the eternal truth by citing not Old Testament poets and prophets, but Greek poets and prophets. He uses points of contact that would bridge his timeless message with the contemporary context in which he found himself (e.g., 17:26 and 28). Thus, our preaching must be done in a similar fashion. We must look to connect God's message with today's world, which can only be done by being a student of culture. It must be done creatively, just as

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[35] *Andrew Purves*, Reconstructing Pastoral Theology. A Christological Foundation, Louisville/London 2004, 159f.

Jesus was creative in his use of parables and Paul in his use of sermon forms. Only in this way can we effectively handle the Word of truth and proclaim that message fresh each week.

In the end, however, preaching is about restoring people to God and recreating the people of God. In 2Cor 5:17–21, Paul talks about the ministry of reconciliation that we have received from God. As ministers of grace, we are to strive daily in this task of restoring people to their relationship with God and with one another. Regardless of how our preaching is done, it is to always be focused on the task of reconciliation. For it is in this vein that we find power for proclamation and God's power being unleashed once again on the world.

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Squib: Timing Grace

Johan Cilliers

Preaching is, inter alia, about what to say to whom, when. It is about the art of connecting the gospel (what) to the audience (whom), at a specific moment in time (when). This is true of all preaching, but, I will contend: it is particularly true of what could be called prophetical preaching. False prophecy could have a good content, and even sound like the gospel (what); it could be seemingly addressed to the relevant people (whom) … but it misses out on the time, i.e. on the timing (when). Therefore false prophecy often sounds sound, even popular … but it is still false. The "right" content, delivered to the "right" people, but it does not fit into the "right" time. False prophecy might be correct, but it is still wrong; as a matter of fact, it can be *so* correct, that it is *so* wrong …

Or, the other possibility is that wrong timing (when) may also affect, indeed pervert either the what or the whom, or both. More often than not, wrong timing needs and creates its own message (what), and constructs its own audience (whom). The what, whom, and when in preaching need to be in sync, but perhaps timing is the most important *homiletical synchroniser*. It is, after all, about *syn-chronos*; about timing (or: tying) truth together with, and to, the addressees of this truth. Or, in other words: the gospel (what) is always intended for somebody (whom); always now (when).

For me, timing is linked (in sync with) grace. Grace has its own time, and indeed timing. It cannot be scheduled, manipulated, or choreographed – homiletically, or otherwise. Grace happens – therefore it is called *grace*. In terms of (biblical) temporality, grace could also be called *Kairos*. Theologically speaking, *Kairos* indicates a fullness of time; a specific time in which God's intentions with this world is fulfilled. The Christ-event signifies the ultimate *Kairos*, as the Timing of an Event that embodies all of God's revelation.

Timing grace presupposes discernment, indeed: to know what to say to whom, when. It entails reading and interpreting the time(s) right, expecting the advent of an event within a specific moment in time. Timely preachers know and acknowledge the *Kairos* when it comes. More than that: these preachers help to kindle the *Kairos*. Herein lies the brilliance of the wisdom of preaching

– even though others might deem it to be foolishness.[1] Perhaps the brilliance of such a form of preaching could be called *wise foolishness*. This stands in stark contrast to what Karl Barth had to say about the "brilliance" of unwise foolishness:

> Foolish people are always either too early or too late. They sleep when they should be awake, and are awake when they should sleep. They remain silent when they should speak and speak when it would be better to remain silent. They laugh when they should cry and cry when they should be comforted and could have laughed. They work when they must pray and pray when only work could make the difference. They consider everything at the wrong time; say everything to the wrong people; do everything in the wrong direction; always choose the complicated but irrelevant things, while the simple but crucial are required. Herein lies the brilliance of foolishness.[2]

Brilliant, but unwise fools miss the point (of time); bypass the *Kairos* of event. But, when this happens, time loses its fluidity and becomes solidified. Time then does not become a space for the event of the gospel, but rather an enclave that should safeguard the eternity of our own convictions and agendas. What preachers need, indeed, could be called a *theology of the event*, to borrow a phrase from John Caputo.[3] Timing opens up a new experience; leads to a new event. The gospel – and preaching of it – is more of an event of truth than an explanation of truth; more of an experience of truth than an exposition of it (although explanation and exposition surely have their place). The gospel and preaching thereof should never be monumentalized, or "pillarised" as Eward Postma describes it.[4] Once the gospel and preaching are changed into safe and secure certainties, or institutionalized enclosures or enclaves of the "truth," and no longer understood and experienced as event, it becomes time (!) for timely, prophetic preachers to step in.

It becomes time for the timing of grace …

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[1] Cf. *Charles Campbell/Johan Cilliers*, Preaching Fools. The Gospel as a Rhetoric of Folly, Waco (TX) 2012, 38ff.

[2] *Karl Barth*, Church Dogmatics IV, 2, edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Edinburgh 1958, 413.

[3] *John D. Caputo*, The Weakness of God. A Theology of the Event, Bloomington and Indianapolis (IN) 2006, 1–20.

[4] *Eward Postma*, Dilettant, pilgrim, nar: De positie van C. W. Mönnich in cultuur en theologie, in: Jaarboek voor liturgie-onderzoek 24 (2008), 239–247, 247.