

HOMILETIC JOURNAL
Vol 47, No 2, (2022)

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Hidden in Plain Sight: Reclaiming the Witness and Wisdom of Black Contemplative Preachers

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Abstract: *In recent decades, scholars have challenged monolithic characterizations of African American or Black preaching. Still, an essentialist image of Black preaching is perpetuated in many contexts. This article contributes to a broader understanding of the diversity of Black preaching through exploring what Martha Simmons and Frank Thomas in their pioneering anthology *Preaching with Sacred Fire* call Black contemplative preaching. Unfortunately, though key aspects of Black contemplative preaching can be seen in the life and speech of prominent Black preachers, it may be one of the most overlooked streams of preaching inside and outside of Black church contexts. This lack of awareness and acknowledgment of the Black contemplative preaching stream seems to suggest that it is a mode of proclamation that, like other contemplative practices in the Black church, is hidden in plain sight. Thus, this article aims to increase the visibility of the witness and wisdom of Black contemplative preachers.*

INTRODUCTION²

Throughout the world, homiletical classrooms, houses of worship, and literary and cultural productions have perpetuated what Lisa Thompson has called the “ghostly image” of the Black preacher.³ This stereotypical image of the Black preacher tends to be a particular masculine performance of proclamation characterized by rhetorical prowess, extroversion, and ecstatic celebration.⁴ Of course, this image does reflect characteristics of some streams of Black preaching. Indeed, at its best, it reflects a rich folk heritage—a heritage that I respect, appreciate, and, at times, reflect in my own preaching.⁵ Still, the dominance of this essentialist image of

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² This article is a revision and expansion of a presentation titled “Howard Thurman and the Black Contemplative Preaching Stream” given in a co-sponsored session of the Black Theology Unit and Theology of Martin Luther King Jr. Unit at the online American Academy of Religion conference in 2020.

³ Lisa L. Thompson, *Ingenuity: Preaching as an Outsider* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2018), 28-32.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 28-32. Thompson builds on the work of Alisha L. Jones, “Are All the Choir Directors Gay? Black Men’s Sexuality and Identity in Gospel Performance” in *Issues in African American Music: Power, Gender, Race, and Representation*, ed. Portia K. Maultsby and Mellonee V. Burnim (New York: Routledge, 2017), 216-235. See also Jones’s more recent work *Flaming?: The Peculiar Theopolitics of Fire and Desire in Black Male Gospel Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

⁵ For classic works that offer an exploration of Black folk preaching, see James Weldon Johnson, *God’s Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (New York: Penguin, [1927] 2008); Gerald L. Davis, *I Got the Word in Me and I can Sing It, You Know: A Study of the Performed African-American Sermon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985); Jon Michael Spencer, *Sacred Symphony: The Chanted Sermon of the Black Preacher* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 1987); Bruce A. Rosenberg, *Can These Bones Live?: The Art of the American Folk Preacher, Revised Edition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); and Henry Mitchell, *Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990). It is worth noting that homiletician O.C. Edwards helped to popularize the distinction between the Black folk and intellectual preaching streams. Drawing on William E. Montgomery’s discussion of “elite” and “folk” Black worship traditions in *Under their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African-American Church in the South, 1865-1900* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), Edwards articulated what he described as the “learned” and “folk” streams of African American preaching. See Edwards, *A History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 531-553. See also Frank A. Thomas, *Introduction to*

Black proclamation all too often eclipses other valid and valuable streams in the broader river of Black proclamation. It seems, as literary scholar Kevin Quashie notes, that Black culture is perpetually characterized as dramatic and expressive, and there is no serious attention given to its “quiet” or contemplative dimensions.⁶ As a result, the breadth and depth of Black humanity is circumscribed by a racialized vision of “proper” Black performance.⁷ Many would-be Black religious leaders experience immense pressure to suppress their unique voice to conform to popular expectations. And congregations of all backgrounds miss out on the insight and perspective that comes from learning from a wider spectrum of approaches to Black preaching. Clearly, there is a need to affirm a more diverse array of Black preaching practices.

Thus, this article gives special attention to what Martha Simmons and Frank Thomas in their pioneering anthology *Preaching with Sacred Fire* call Black contemplative preaching, a meditative mode of preaching that wedds mystical and theological insights to promote spiritual and social transformation.⁸ Unfortunately, though key aspects of Black contemplative preaching can be seen in the life and speech of some prominent Black preachers of the past, such as Gardner C. Taylor, Pauli Murray, and Bishop Barbara Harris, it may be one of the most overlooked streams of preaching inside and outside of Black church contexts today. This lack of awareness and acknowledgment of the Black contemplative preaching stream seems to suggest that it is a mode of proclamation that, like other contemplative practices in the Black church, is “hidden in plain sight.”⁹

This article begins with some of the roots of Black contemplative preaching and delineates its three distinctives. The second section considers Howard Thurman as one of the clearest representatives of Black contemplative preaching in the twentieth century. The third section explores contemporary Black contemplative preachers. I highlight sermons from two

the Practice of African American Preaching (Nashville: Abingdon, 2016), 14-15. Of course, there is much overlap between the streams and the terminology used to describe them is not without its problems.

⁶ Kevin Quashie, *The Sovereignty of Quiet: Beyond Resistance in Black Culture* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 3. Quashie utilizes the notion of “quiet” to call for a more capacious understanding of African American identity and culture. While no attention is given to preaching, he explores the quiet dimensions of art, poetry, novels, and more.

⁷ Unfortunately, in this article, I will not be able to give explicit attention to the politics of performance/aesthetics that surround Black contemplative preaching. However, future work should attend to this important area of study in conversation with Richard Iton’s *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics and Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) as well as Amy E. Steele’s “Howard Thurman and the Roots of a Black Mystical Aesthetic,” *Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men* vol 9, no. 1-2 (Autumn 2021): 183-210. I am especially interested in the ways that Black contemplative preaching disrupts the popular images of Black identity and performance that are often naturally associated with a Black aesthetic. I am indebted to Kyle Brooks for making me aware of Iton’s work and its relevance for my project and Dr. Lisa Thompson for the reference to Steele’s article.

⁸ The actual term used by Simmons and Thomas is contemplative preaching, but I qualify their term with “Black” given they are focused on how such preaching manifest among ministers shaped by African American cultural contexts. For me, Black contemplative preaching is similar yet distinct from contemplative preaching embodied by preachers of other cultural backgrounds, but space does not permit me to explore this here. Martha Simmons and Frank Thomas, eds., *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton), 491-492. A groundbreaking unpublished paper that explores contemplative preaching in the Black church is James Earl Massey’s “Contemplative Preaching.” I am indebted to Dr. Frank Thomas for graciously making the paper available to me for my research. Massey originally wrote it for publication in *Preaching with Sacred Fire*. Only a portion appears in the book. I build upon the work of Simmons, Thomas, and Massey.

⁹ Barbara A. Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church, Second Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 75.

particular preachers: Kelly Brown Douglas and Frank Thomas. The article concludes with three ways that the wisdom of Black contemplative preachers can enrich the teaching and practice of preaching today.

THE ROOTS AND DISTINCTIVES OF BLACK CONTEMPLATIVE PREACHING

The Black church is known for many things, but contemplation is not one of them.¹⁰ In *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church*, Barbara Holmes aims to change this fact. Her groundbreaking work argues that Black contemplation consists of a constellation of holistic, personal, and communal practices that can be traced back to the spirituality of West African religious traditions, the often-forgotten African desert mothers and fathers, and the prayerful gazing upon God that emerged among Blacks on ships during the Middle Passage (Maafa), auction blocks, and hush arbors of American slavery. For Holmes, unlike Eurocentric contemplation, Black contemplation entails collective and individual practices that may or may not be accompanied by silence and stillness as they foster attentiveness to the living God.¹¹ In this sense, she challenges the notion that contemplation is a privilege reserved for those who have the luxury of extended times of retreat in solitude. For her, contemplation is learning to attend to God amid the complex and often challenging realities of everyday life. Moreover, with James Noel, Holmes contends that practices of contemplation in the Black church are not easily divorced from the pursuit of social justice and transformation.¹² In this article, building on Holmes's work, I focus particularly on the practice of Black contemplative preaching. I argue that Black contemplative preaching has at least five key historical and cultural precursors. These include an African traditional worldview, African orality, African monasticism, the tradition of African and European mystic preachers, and the emergence of the Black church. Unfortunately, space does not permit me to explore all these precursors.¹³

However, I would like to note how Black contemplative preaching emerges from the broader history of preaching in the Black church. Specifically, it is critical to state that there is a history of early African American preachers who have reflected a contemplative orientation in at least some of their life, thought, and/or preaching. I briefly note three early African American preachers. One of the earliest Black preachers who demonstrates a contemplative dimension in his preaching is Lemuel Haynes (1753-1833), a bi-cultural Congregationalist minister and early

¹⁰ There is much debate surrounding the term "the Black church." Some scholars question whether there is such a thing as "the Black church." However, following Stacey Floyd-Thomas and others, I use this term to refer to "those churches whose life and cultural sensibilities have reflected, historically and traditionally, a connection to the larger African American community." This includes independent Black churches, churches inside and outside of historically Black denominations and movements, and multiethnic churches whose leadership and cultural identity is African American. For more on this definition see, Stacey Floyd-Thomas and others, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), xiii-xxiv. While all the preachers that I focus on in this article are African Americans, many are preachers who engage in ministry inside and outside of predominantly Black church contexts. Still, their African ancestry along with their formation in Black ecclesial environments were critical for their sense of identity and practice of preaching.

¹¹ Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable*, 17-21. Drawing on Charles Long, Holmes is careful to note that there is a speech that emerges from the enforced silences that have come as a result of European colonization. She surmises that in African contexts "an ontological silence can occupy the heart of cacophony" in the midst of celebratory worship, 21. For Long's intriguing meditations on silence, see Charles H. Long, *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion* (Aurora, CO: The Davies Group, 1995), 61-70.

¹² Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable*, 111, 114. See James A. Noel, "Contemplation and Social Action in African-American Spirituality," *Church & Society*, 83, no. 2 (Nov-Dec 1992): 55-67.

¹³ I give some attention to these in "Contemplation, Proclamation, and Social Transformation: Reclaiming the Homiletical Theology of Black Contemplative Preaching," (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2021), 33-53.

advocate for human liberty. This is evident in Haynes's sermon entitled "The Presence of God" that called his listeners to live with reverence before the ubiquity of the divine presence.¹⁴ A second example is found in Richard Allen (1760-1831), the founder of the AME Church and one-time Quaker affiliate.¹⁵ Allen's profound prayers on the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love in his autobiography reveal a deep contemplative spirituality that fueled his proclamation and fight against racial and economic oppression.¹⁶ One final early Black preacher who reflects a contemplative orientation is Rebecca Cox Jackson (1795-1871), a Shaker eldress and mystic.¹⁷ Though there are no extant sermons of Jackson available, her autobiographical writings explore her personal mystical experiences that contributed to her pioneering ministry of proclamation and activism in a patriarchal context. While none of these preachers should be reduced to the label of contemplative preacher, I would argue that at least some of their life and ministry reflect traits of the Black contemplative preaching stream.

In light of this history,¹⁸ I propose the following definition of Black contemplative preaching: *Black contemplative preaching is sermonic discourse that (1) emerges from a habitus or disposition of prayer, (2) employs a mystical hermeneutical lens, and (3) embodies a meditative homiletical style in order to lead listeners into an inner divine encounter that contributes to the outer flourishing of African Americans and all creation.* My definition highlights three distinctives of Black contemplative preaching. First, I proffer that Black contemplative preaching emerges from a disposition or habitus of prayer.¹⁹ Almost all Black preaching emerges from prayer, but Black contemplative preaching flows from a contemplative way of life that is cultivated through stillness, introspection, and various forms of meditation alongside more expressive African embodied spiritual practices. Given that the habitus of prayer is integrally connected to the contemplative life of the preacher, it is not always easily discernible in the sermon itself. Nevertheless, it can be glimpsed. As rhetorical scholar Edwin

¹⁴ Haynes is introduced as a representative of the Black contemplative preaching stream in Simmons and Thomas, *Preaching with Sacred Fire*, 56. See "The Presence of the Lord" in Richard Newman, ed., *Black Preacher to White America: The Collected Writings of Lemuel Haynes, 1774-1833* (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1990), 143-147.

¹⁵ I first heard Allen mentioned as a contemplative preacher in Dr. Teresa Fry Brown's 2019 address at the Academy of Homiletics on "challenging homiletical myopia." While Allen was exposed to the contemplative spiritual practices of the Quakers during his time with the Free African Society that he founded, he eventually departed from Quaker affiliation because it did not fully suit his liturgical inclinations.

¹⁶ See Richard Allen, *The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen* (N.p.: Hanse, [1793] 2020), 29-32.

¹⁷ James Earl Massey makes a reference to Rebecca Jackson as part of the contemplative stream of Black preaching. See Massey, "Contemplative Preaching," 10. See Rebecca Jackson, *Gifts of Power: The Writings of Rebecca Jackson, Black Visionary, Shaker Eldress* ed. Jean McMahon Humez (Boston: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1981). See also Joy Bostic's treatment of Jackson's mystical activism in *African American Female Mysticism: Nineteenth-Century Religious Activism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 95-117.

¹⁸ The definition and distinctives that follow emerge from an in-depth study of the roots of Black contemplative preaching. See Clark, "Contemplation, Proclamation, and Social Transformation," chapter one.

¹⁹ I draw this phrase from James Keating, "Contemplative Homiletics: Being Carried into Reality" *Nova et Vetera* 17 No. 1 (2019): 5. Keating does not offer a clear definition of the term. In *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* trans. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), Aristotle uses the term *hexis* (later translated into Latin as *habitus* by Aquinas) as he develops his understanding of moral virtue. According to Loïc Wacquant, for Aristotle, it is "an acquired yet entrenched state of moral character that orients our feelings and desires, and thence our conduct." See Loïc Wacquant, "A Concise Genealogy and Anatomy of Habitus" in *The Oxford Handbook of Pierre Bourdieu*, eds. Thomas Medvetz and Jeffrey J. Sallaz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 528. I use the term habitus of prayer to reference the cultivation of a contemplative way of being and seeing that is attentive to God and God's world.

Black notes, there are “tokens of the author” that can be observed in a speech or sermon.²⁰ As such, a preacher’s habitus of prayer can be glimpsed in an opening or closing sermonic prayer, a personal story or illustration, or in sermonic content related to prayer or spirituality in general.²¹

Second, Black contemplative preaching employs a mystical hermeneutical lens. At its most basic level, a mystical hermeneutic is not about the venerable tradition of seeking the *sensus plenior* (or fuller meaning) of texts²² nor is it simply about ecstatic mystical experiences, but rather it refers to reading and interpreting Scripture and other texts with a bias toward an emancipatory encounter with God.²³ Of course, all Black preaching is committed to seeking to encounter the living God in Scripture. However, the mystical hermeneutic of Black contemplative preaching is further characterized by three things that set it apart: a focus on certain biblical texts and/or themes related to divine encounter (especially in the Psalms and Gospels), incorporation of varied sources of spiritual wisdom and guidance to nurture interiority (such as ancestral wisdom, philosophy, poetry, hymns), and an inclusive vision for cultivating a life-giving and liberating relationship with God, self, neighbor, and creation.²⁴

Third and finally, the most obvious distinctive of Black contemplative preaching is its meditative homiletical style. It almost never involves whooping.²⁵ In this sense, Black contemplative preaching often appears to lack what Frank Thomas calls the most characteristic

²⁰ This is to say that glimpses of the character of the preacher can be revealed through close analysis of a sermon. Something of the person of the preacher is unavoidably manifested in the sermon itself. Edwin Black, “The Second Persona” in *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader*, 2nd ed., eds. Mark J. Porrovecchio and Celeste Michelle Condit (New York: The Guilford Press, 2016), 296. For Black, the fact that discourses can reveal the character of their author is indicative of an implied author or first persona. Second persona, for him, refers to the implied auditor of a discourse. Other personas could also be named. See Phillip Wander, “The Third Persona: An Ideological Turn in Rhetorical Theory” in *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader*, 2nd ed., 303-319; Dana L. Cloud, “The Null Persona: Race and the Rhetoric of Silence in the Uprising of ’34” in *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader*, 2nd ed., 320-340; Charles E. Morris III, “Pink Herring & Fourth Persona: J. Edgar Hoover’s Sex Crime Panic” in *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader*, 2nd ed.; and Andre Johnson, “The Prophetic Persona of James Cone and the Rhetorical Theology of Black Theology,” *Black Theology* 8, no. 3 (2010): 266-285.

²¹ In other work, I have delineated a theo-rhetorical framework to explore the habitus of prayer and the other distinctives of Black contemplative preaching. Within this framework, I use autobiography, biographies, interviews, and other sources to discern a preacher’s habitus of prayer. I do not have space to elaborate on this framework here. See Clark, “Contemplation, Proclamation, and Social Transformation.”

²² Origen (184-253 CE) was one of the first Christian theologians to propose a systematic way to read Scripture for its multiple senses with his three-fold allegorical method. See Origen, *On First Principles: A Reader’s Edition*, trans. John Behr (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

²³ For a helpful articulation of the importance of encounter for a mystical hermeneutic, see Celia Kourie, “Reading Scripture through a Mystical Lens,” *Acta Theologica* 31, no. 15 (2011): 132-153. Kourie states: “A mystical hermeneutic of scripture is one in which a direct experience of God, or Ultimate Reality, or the One is the end result” (141). Future research should relate the mystical hermeneutic of Black contemplative preachers to Barbara Holmes’s intriguing notion of “griosh,” a contemplative reading of Scripture informed by the tradition of the African storyteller or griot and the practice of Jewish midrash. See Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable*, 95.

²⁴ I sense there may be a kind of womanist impulse in much—though not all—Black contemplative preaching. For example, I am thinking of how Delores Williams’s survival and quality of life ethic resonates with Black contemplative preaching’s concern for life-giving encounters with God in the midst of structures and systems that remain oppressive. See Delores Williams, *Sister in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk, Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2013). I explore this more in “Contemplation, Proclamation, and Social Transformation,” 125, 174-212.

²⁵ In *Introduction to the Practice of African American Preaching*, Frank Thomas defines whooping as a “rhetorical practice, traditionally at the end of the sermon, in which the preacher sings or chants in rhythmic cadence in the vernacular of call and response that raises the emotional intensity and impact of the sermon,” 15.

feature of Black preaching—a celebratory, uplifting sermon close.²⁶ However, it may be that Black contemplative preaching does not completely lack a celebratory dimension, but it simply transposes celebration into a different modality than is commonly expected. Cleophus LaRue reminds us that there are many forms of celebration in Black preaching, including meditative, contemplative expressions.²⁷ In other words, Black contemplative preaching often reflects a blending of “folk” and “intellectual” streams of Black preaching.²⁸

To be sure, the definition of Black contemplative preaching that I have articulated is fluid—not the least because I am speaking of something as slippery as contemplation.²⁹ And, of course, all labels have their limits. Nevertheless, I argue that while the three distinctives of Black contemplative preaching—a habitus of prayer, a mystical hermeneutic, and a meditative homiletical style—partially appear in other expressions of Black preaching, together they reflect the unique Black contemplative preaching stream.

HOWARD THURMAN AS BLACK CONTEMPLATIVE PREACHER

One of the earliest and clearest practitioners of Black contemplative preaching in the twentieth century was Howard Washington Thurman (1899-1981). Thurman was a pioneering African American mystic, theologian, and pastor who lived during tumultuous times of war, racism, and segregation. In the midst of the various personal and social crises he faced, he started one of the first interracial churches in the United States—The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, worked as the Dean of Chapel at Boston University and Howard University, and served as the Director of Religious Life at Morehouse College and Spelman College.³⁰ In *Preaching with Sacred Fire*, Martha Simmons and Frank Thomas describe Thurman as one of the most notable exemplars of the understudied Black contemplative preaching stream.³¹ I wholeheartedly agree. This complements the work of Luther Smith, the dean of Thurman studies, whose pioneering work *Howard Thurman: The Mystic as Prophet* argued that Thurman’s “primary identity was that of mystic.”³² Of course, it is important to note that Thurman never explicitly described himself as a contemplative preacher. Moreover, he was resistant to labeling his religious experience.³³ Nevertheless, I would suggest that his life and ministry witness profoundly to the distinctives of Black contemplative preaching. In what follows, I briefly

²⁶ Frank Thomas, *They Like to Never Quit Praisin’ God*, Revised and Updated (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2013).

²⁷ Cleophus J. LaRue, *Rethinking Celebration: From Rhetoric to Praise in African American Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016), 52.

²⁸ See Thomas, *Introduction to the Practice of African American Preaching*, 14-15. See also Wallace D. Best’s discussion of “the mixed-type sermon” that emerged in Chicago during the migration era in *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915-1952* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 94-100. I am indebted to Kyle Brooks for the reference to Best’s work.

²⁹ I am grateful to Dr. Donyelle McCray for this helpful point.

³⁰ Space does not permit an overview of Thurman’s life. However, for a recent well-researched, concise account of Thurman’s life, see Paul Harvey, *Howard Thurman and the Disinherited: A Religious Biography* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2020). The most extensive biography of Thurman is Peter Eisenstadt’s recent work *Against the Hounds of Hell: A Life of Howard Thurman* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2021). Of course, the best place to learn about Thurman’s life is his autobiography, Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1979).

³¹ Simmons and Thomas, *Preaching with Sacred Fire*, 492.

³² Luther Smith, *Howard Thurman: The Mystic as Prophet*, 3rd ed., (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United, 2007), 15.

³³ See *Mysticism and Social Action: Lawrence Lecture and Discussions with Dr Howard Thurman* (International Association for Religious Freedom, 2015, Kindle ed.), location 358.

highlight some of the ways these distinctives were revealed in Thurman's practice of preaching.³⁴

Habitus of Prayer

Reflecting the religious worldview of his African ancestors, for Thurman, all of life was sacred.³⁵ Thus, his habitus or disposition of prayer was not segmented into one part of life. Rather, prayer was a way of being in the world. Thurman once stated that "[w]hen a man prays he is not merely performing an act, he is *being* something."³⁶ In other words, for Thurman, prayer is cultivating a way of being out of which a preaching ministry should emerge. Indeed, he once told an audience in a lecture on preaching that "the sermon is the distillation of the thinking, reading, observation, brooding, and meditation of the preacher."³⁷ Contemplation is the context for proclamation.

Thurman's sermons often called others to develop a habitus of prayer. For example, he was known for offering readings of meditations and prayers before his sermons. "Their primary purpose," Thurman said, "is to aid the listeners in bringing their minds into focus upon some searching insight and to make available the centered spirits."³⁸ Sometimes these meditations were excerpts from books, poems, and prayers that Thurman found valuable in his personal and ministerial life but they were also, at times, from Thurman's own private musings before the presence of God. Thurman's sermon content also focused on encouraging a life of prayerful attentiveness to God and God's world. In his sermon entitled "The Mood to Linger," reflecting on his experience of becoming alert to previous unknown sounds while walking at night, Thurman states: "There are things of which you cannot become aware, things you cannot sense until at last all of the surface of confusion and chaos and noise of your life is somehow quieted. And it is then that your ears pick up sounds that come from the deeper regions of your life."³⁹ For Thurman, stillness was crucial to cultivating a prayerful attentiveness to God and God's world.

Many people were deeply impacted through hearing Thurman preach. As one student reportedly said, "Some men talk about God, which is of value if it inspires devotion to him. But, when Howard Thurman speaks, you somehow experience God. He seems to take God with him;

³⁴ I have given in-depth attention to how these distinctives are present in Thurman's life, thought, and formation as a preacher. See Clark, "Contemplation, Proclamation, and Social Transformation," 91-113. For the most extensive study of Thurman's preaching that I am aware of, see Patrick Clayborn, "A Homiletic of Spirituality: An Analysis of Howard Thurman's Theory and Praxis of Preaching" (PhD diss., Drew University, 2009). For a succinct study of Thurman's preaching, see Patrick Clayborn, "Preaching as an Act of Spirit: The Homiletical Theory of Howard Thurman" *Homiletic* 35, no. 1 (2010): 3-16.

³⁵ Patrick Clayborn also recognizes the African religious and philosophical roots of Thurman's emphasis on the indivisibility of life. See Clayborn, "A Homiletic of Spirituality," 108.

³⁶ Howard Thurman, *The Centering Moment* (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United, 1969), 11, author's italics. Though I prefer gender-inclusive language and realize its absence is deeply offensive for many, I have not altered Thurman's usage in this article recognizing he was a product of his place and time.

³⁷ Howard Thurman, "Worship and Word: A View of the Liberal Congregation and Its Sermons" in *The Papers of Howard Washington Thurman, Volume 4: The Soundless Passion of a Single Mind, June 1949-December 1962* ed. Walter Earl Fluker (Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 2017), 331.

³⁸ Howard Thurman, *The Growing Edge* (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United, 1956), ix.

³⁹ Howard Thurman, *Sermons on the Parables* ed. David B. Gowler and Kipton E. Jensen (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2018), 122.

or rather, he seems propelled by God.”⁴⁰ Thurman was one who did not just say prayers but he lived prayer.

Mystical Hermeneutic

The second distinctive of Black contemplative preaching that is seen in Thurman is a mystical hermeneutic. For example, some of his sermons encouraged the contemplation of spiritual exemplars and mystics in history as seen in his sermon series entitled “Men Who’ve Walked with God,” which explored the spiritual wisdom of figures such as Buddha, St. Francis, and Meister Eckhart.⁴¹ Given Thurman’s wide learning, his sermons were also populated with references from literature, philosophy, personal stories, poetry, and poignant observations from everyday life and nature.⁴² Of course, at times, Thurman specifically addressed matters of prayer and contemplation. This is seen, for example, in his sermons “Prayer and Silence,” “Prayer and Pressure,” and others.⁴³ However, to cite Mozella Mitchell, even when Thurman is not explicitly speaking of prayer and divine encounter, he is almost always seeking to encourage “closer communion with God and with all of life.”⁴⁴

Thurman’s mystical hermeneutic united spirituality and social engagement.⁴⁵ Indeed, Thurman’s life-long pursuit was “the search for common ground,” that is, the search for community.⁴⁶ As Gary Dorrien writes, Thurman’s “sermons expounded a mystical vision of spiritual unity and an ethical-spiritual commitment to nonviolence, urging that all forms of violence, oppression, and prejudice offend against the divine good.”⁴⁷ Thurman’s mystical hermeneutic also led him to engage the more-than-human creation in his sermons. A few months after the first Earth Day in 1970, Thurman preached a sermon entitled “Jesus and the Natural Order.”⁴⁸ His words are worth quoting at length: “In our power over nature, and in our radical unremembering of the fact that we are a part of nature, we feel that we can ab-use nature....But

⁴⁰ Mary Jenness, *Twelve Negro Americans* (New York: Friendship, 1936), 153.

⁴¹ See Howard Thurman, *The Way of the Mystics, Walking with God: The Sermon Series of Howard Thurman, Volume 2*, eds. Peter Eisenstadt and Walter Earl Fluker (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2021).

⁴² James Earl Massey, “Thurman’s Preaching: Substance and Style,” in Henry J. Young, ed., *God and Human Freedom: A Festschrift in Honor of Howard Thurman* (Richmond: Friends United Press, 1983), 112. See, for example, the range of references in his sermons included in Howard Thurman, *The Growing Edge* (Richmond: Friends United, 1956).

⁴³ See, for example, Thurman, *The Growing Edge*, 29-53 and Thurman, *Sermons on the Parables*, 116-123.

⁴⁴ Mitchell’s words emerge in the context of her intriguing exploration of Thurman as a shaman, particularly in relationship to his view of conversion. Mozella G. Mitchell, *Spiritual Dynamics of Howard Thurman’s Theology* (Bristol: Wyndham Hall, 1985), 90.

⁴⁵ For a thorough study of how Thurman saw mysticism and social transformation as inseparable, see Alton B. Pollard, *Mysticism and Social Change: The Social Witness of Howard Thurman* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992).

⁴⁶ See Howard Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground: An Inquiry into the Basis of Man’s Experience of Community* (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United, 1971). See also Walter E. Fluker, *They Looked for a City: A Comparative Analysis of the Ideal of Community in the Thought of Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1989), 3-77.

⁴⁷ Gary Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Black Social Gospel* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 169.

⁴⁸ Howard Thurman, “What Shall I Do with My Life?: The Natural Order,” Howard Thurman Virtual Listening Room, Howard Gottlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University, <http://archives.bu.edu/web/howard-thurman/virtual-listening-room/detail?id=358566>. Thurman introduces the sermon’s title as “Jesus and the Natural Order or The Great Delusion.” It is important to assert that Thurman demonstrated environmental concern as part of his spirituality early on. See Howard Thurman, “Man and the World of Nature,” *The Papers of Howard Washington Thurman, Volume 2: Christian, Who Calls Me Christian?, April 1936-August 1943* ed. Walter Earl Fluker (Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 101-106.

in truth we are of the essence of the ebb and flow of the heartbeat of nature, so that we cannot do violence to nature without there being an echo of agony moving through all the corridors of the spirit, of the mind, of the psyche that makes for derangement of all kinds which will increase as the ravaging continues.”⁴⁹

Here we see Thurman calls for a new way of relating to a creation groaning in travail. Or, in the words of Douglas Christie, we might say he evinces “a contemplative ecological vision” in his sermon, that is, a vision that calls for a different way of seeing and being that supports creation’s flourishing.⁵⁰ Thurman’s mystical hermeneutic, then, was not one that was disengaged from the world. His contemplation of Scripture and other sources was a means of nourishing the spirits of listeners that they might foster a life-giving and liberating relationship with God, self, others, and all creation.

Meditative Homiletical Style

The final distinctive of Black contemplative preaching that I would like to consider is Thurman’s meditative homiletical style. Thurman was not a whooper. His sermons were more meditative and reflective than ecstatic or extroverted. Among other reasons, he learned early on to merge head and heart from the examples around him. Recalling the sermons he heard growing up, he said: “The preachers in my church were not “whoopers”....At the core of their preaching was solid religious instruction and guidance which augmented rather than diminished the emotional intensity of their words.”⁵¹ Their example impacted him.

Later in life, he deepened his meditative approach through insights he learned from other teachers. Echoing his homiletics instructor, Thurman opined that a “preacher is never under obligation to preach a great sermon, but he is always under obligation to wrestle with a great idea.”⁵² In other words, for Thurman, the sermon was an opportunity to contemplate a glorious insight or idea like a diamond from a variety of angles.⁵³ This was often facilitated through Thurman’s skillful use of silence. The late Evans Crawford argued that Thurman was a master of using “the sermon pause” to cultivate a shared silence.⁵⁴ For Thurman, this was not a technique or trick. Rather, it flowed from the prayerful disposition that he had cultivated over time. For, as Thurman once stated, “God speaks loudest in silence.”⁵⁵

Along with his penchant for silence, Thurman was known for his exaggerated gestures, energy, and animation. His proclamation was one of controlled passion. It was through this that

⁴⁹ Thurman, “What Shall I Do with My Life?”

⁵⁰ Douglas Christie, *The Blue Sapphire of the Mind: Notes for a Contemplative Ecology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 51. For further reflection on Thurman’s understanding of spirituality and nature, see Timothy Robinson, “He Talked to Trees!: ‘Thinking Differently’ About Nature with Howard Thurman,” *Spiritus* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2021): 1-19.

⁵¹ Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 17.

⁵² Thurman, *The Growing Edge*, x.

⁵³ Dorothy Henderson, *Biographical Sketches of Six Humanitarians Whose Lives Have Been for the Greater Glory* (New York: Exposition Press, 1958), 163, quoted in James Earl Massey, “Thurman’s Preaching Substance and Style,” in Henry J. Young, ed., *God and Human Freedom: A Festschrift in Honor of Howard Thurman* (Richmond: Friends United Press, 1983), 120.

⁵⁴ Evans Crawford with Thomas Troeger, *The Hum: Call and Response in African American Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 25-35.

⁵⁵ Howard Thurman, “Dilemmas of the Religious Professional,” Hester Lectures III, Side A, (Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, CA, February 11, 1971). Transcript from The Howard Thurman Digital Archive, Pitts Theology Library at Emory University, Atlanta, GA, accessed October 18 2021, <https://thurman.pitts.emory.edu/items/show/258>.

he led his listeners to an emancipatory encounter with the living God. This is perhaps best seen in the testimony of Francis Hall, a noted Quaker author. Reflecting back on the impact of Thurman's preaching on his life in his younger years while attending a conference, Hall reports: "He had held me entranced each day by his deeply meditative style of speaking. You felt the creative spirit at work; indeed it was the Spirit of Christ that was speaking through him... Toward the end of his sharing he once more spoke... and suddenly the words were no longer transmitted by Howard Thurman. They were the living words of Christ and they sank deep into my being, where they exploded and infused me and gripped me."⁵⁶

Ultimately, Thurman's contemplative preaching was not about Thurman. He was a channel through whom the Spirit worked in a particular way to bear witness to the living God. Thurman's habitus of prayer, mystical hermeneutic, and meditative homiletical style all reflect his insistence on leading people to an inner encounter with the divine that they might be transformed to contribute to the outward flourishing of African Americans and all creation. For, as Thurman himself stated, "The core of my preaching has always concerned itself with the development of the inner resources needed for the creation of a friendly world of friendly men."⁵⁷ Thus, he is a profound example of the witness and wisdom of Black contemplative preaching.

BLACK CONTEMPLATIVE PREACHERS TODAY

While Howard Thurman is one of the most notable practitioners of the Black contemplative preaching stream in the twentieth century, there are numerous other preachers today who continue in this tradition. Some of these include Jay Williams, Ineda Adesanya, James Forbes, Willie Jennings, Veronica Goines, William Lamar IV, Luke Powery, Kelly Brown Douglas, and Frank Thomas. To be clear, I am not suggesting that all these preachers describe themselves as contemplative preachers—although Thomas has explicitly done so.⁵⁸ Nor do I contend that they follow Thurman's particular embodiment of contemplative preaching or that all of their sermons are contemplative. However, I would suggest that in different ways *at least some* of their sermons reflect the distinctives of Black contemplative preaching.

To further increase the visibility of Black contemplative preaching today, let me briefly highlight sermons from two of these preachers: Kelly Brown Douglas and Frank Thomas.⁵⁹ The Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas is an ordained Episcopal priest, inaugural Dean of the Episcopal Divinity School at Union Seminary, and Canon Theologian at the Washington National

⁵⁶ Francis B. Hall, *Practical Spirituality: Selected Writings of Francis B. Hall*, eds. Howard Alexander, Wilmer Cooper, and James Newby (Dublin: Pinit, 1984), 13, quoted in Pollard, *Mysticism and Social Change*, 96-97.

⁵⁷ Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, 160.

⁵⁸ Even if some of these preachers would self-identify with aspects of contemplative preaching (and I believe some do) the reality is that almost no preacher's approach to preaching can be *fully* captured by any single label. Individuals are much too complex, and the practice and context of preaching is too varied. (I am indebted to Luke Powery for this point.) For example, while Thomas is well-known for his contributions to celebratory preaching and identifies as a narrative preacher, he has also stated that he sees himself as a contemplative preacher. See "A Conversation with Rev. Dr. Frank A. Thomas hosted by Dr. Gina M. Stewart," Frank Thomas, December 4, 2019, YouTube Video, 1:00:15, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCYkICE-Ick&t=1692s>. Thomas's discussion of his preaching style begins at the 9:15 mark.

⁵⁹ Space does not permit a more in-depth engagement with the various themes of their sermons and how the distinctives of Black contemplative preaching appear in them. Here I aim to simply illuminate some contemporary exemplars. For a slightly deeper engagement with these representatives, see Clark, "Contemplation, Proclamation, and Social Transformation," 222-226, 229-232.

Cathedral.⁶⁰ On Christ the King Sunday in November 2020, during a worship service at the Washington National Cathedral, Douglas preached a moving meditative sermon about how the Christ who breaks into history invites us to partner with him in pursuing justice through the story of our lives.⁶¹ Amid all the polarization surrounding the aftermath of the recent presidential election, Douglas drew on the story of the last judgment in Matthew 25:31-46 as well as various contemporary and personal stories to paint a beautiful vision of the kind of radical and expansive inclusion and justice that is at the heart of God. However, she contended that if the story of our life is to be one that promotes the justice of God, then, above all it must be one marked by devotion to prayer. She states: “Of all of the images that run through my mind when I think of Jesus, the one that always stands out to me the most is that of Jesus going off to a lonely place to pray. The Jesus that is Christ the King, invites us to write a story with our lives that is marked by prayer... for it is through prayer that we can actually reach beyond ourselves to the mystery that is God’s transforming power.”⁶² Douglas ends her reflective sermon calling for her audience to participate with God in pursuing justice through the story of their lives.

A second notable contemporary Black contemplative preacher is the Rev. Dr. Frank A. Thomas. Thomas is the Nettie Sweeney and Hugh Th. Miller Professor of Homiletics and Director of the Ph.D. program in African American Preaching and Sacred Rhetoric at Christian Theological Seminary (CTS) in Indianapolis and a past president of the Academy of Homiletics. An example of Thomas’s contemplative proclamation is a message entitled “Why ‘Not?’”⁶³ that was preached virtually on January 27, 2021 to Phillips Theological Seminary on the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa Race Riots, a tumultuous time in which Black businesses and other properties were destroyed due to white supremacist violence. Drawing on Hebrews 11, Thomas considers why some of the faithful people of God seem to be “conquered bodies and destroyed lives” that did not receive the fulfillment of God’s promise in their lifetime.⁶⁴ This leads him to consider the injustice that led to the destroyed lives of Martin Luther King Jr., Medgar Evers, Emmett Till, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Breonna Taylor, and others. In the face of such injustice, he concludes that it is “the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus that gives us power and authority.”⁶⁵ For him, “even though it looks like conquered bodies and destroyed lives,” this is ultimately not what the people of God “are looking at.”⁶⁶ In other words, his celebrative yet contemplative sermon reframes our perspective through calling us to contemplate the hope of Christ’s resurrection—not as a way of dismissing injustice and evil but rather as a way to deepen our strength to address injustice and evil.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I sought to increase the visibility of the witness and wisdom of Black contemplative preachers. Of course, there are many important issues that I have not been able to explore, such as (1) the extent to which Black contemplative preaching reflects a quest for a kind of Eurocentric homiletical respectability, (2) the relationship between Black contemplative

⁶⁰ For example, see Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas’s sermon at Washington National Cathedral, November 22, 2020, YouTube video, 18:57, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8p-y-Zeg1LY&t=37s>.

⁶¹ Douglas, “Sunday Sermon.”

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Frank Thomas, “Why ‘Not?’” Hebrews 11:13 Dr. Frank A. Thomas,” Frank Thomas, January 27, 2021, YouTube video, 30:27, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQGKw8MX5J8&t=627s>.

⁶⁴ Thomas, “Why ‘Not?’”

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

preaching and what Kenyatta Gilbert calls the trivocal nature of Black preaching,⁶⁷ and (3) the degree to which the meditative nature of Black contemplative preaching may reinforce the social silencing of Black women.⁶⁸ These and other topics are critical for future research. However, I would like to conclude by gesturing at some of the wisdom that Black contemplative preachers offer for the teaching and practice of preaching today. Firstly, Black contemplative preaching reminds us that there are many different preaching voices and styles within any cultural group. Just as there is no singular white, Asian American, or Latinx preaching style, there is no singular Black preaching style. While appreciating the wisdom and insight of the prevalent practice of ecstatic, celebratory Black preaching in the past and present, the reclamation of the Black contemplative preaching stream helps to honor the multiplicity of expressions of Black agency, creativity, and personhood. Through introducing students to the Black contemplative preaching stream, teachers of preaching can help students find their own unique voice rather than feeling forced to fit any given cultural or gendered stereotype. Or, to put it in the words of Howard Thurman, they can help preachers of all backgrounds to “follow the grain in [their] own wood.”⁶⁹

Secondly, Black contemplative preaching can help preachers to reclaim Augustine’s insistence that the preacher “be a pray-er before being a speaker.”⁷⁰ This is especially urgent because, as Luke Powery has noted, prayer is often tangential in homiletical classrooms despite its importance in the life of preaching.⁷¹ In a culture full of noise and distractions, prayer as a way of being and seeing is desperately needed no matter a preacher’s background. Attention to the lived practices of Black contemplative preachers may serve as a helpful resource in this endeavor.

Lastly, Black contemplative preaching challenges proclaimers of the gospel to hold in tension lament and hope, pain and beauty, loss, and longing. This is especially urgent in the contemporary moment with our myriad national and global crises. While other forms of proclamation hold lament and hope in tension, Black contemplative preaching seems to naturally do this well because it reflects a non-dual mindset due to its mystical hermeneutic. As such, in an age of superficiality, it can serve as a resource to expand the homiletical imagination of preachers of diverse backgrounds. To echo Howard Thurman, Black contemplative preaching can remind teachers and students of preaching that we are not called to preach “great sermons” but rather to wrestle with glorious truths in ways that are faithful to both the full story of Scripture and the full story of the human experience.⁷²

⁶⁷ Kenyatta Gilbert, *The Journey and Promise of African American Preaching* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 10-15.

⁶⁸ I am indebted to Dr. Eboni Marshall Turman for raising this last issue in a response to my paper during a session at the American Academy for Religion in 2020.

⁶⁹ Gilbert, *The Journey and Promise*, 19. I have been unable to find the original source for this popular quote.

⁷⁰ Augustine, *Teaching Christianity (De Doctrina Christiana)*, in *The Works of Augustine: A Translation for the Twenty-First Century*, trans. John E. Rotelle, O.S.A., ed. Edmund Hill, O.P. (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City, 1996), 4.15.32.

⁷¹ Sally A. Brown and Luke A. Powery, *Ways of the Word: Learning to Preach for Your Time and Place* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 53-54.

⁷² Thurman, *The Growing Edge*, x.

A Call for Practicing Hospitality Based on Lament in Preaching For a Wounded Community

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Abstract: *Covid-19 has caused countless losses and has resulted in the global community having to face threats of hatred, distancing, and intersectional injustice. In this struggle, the wounds, from disproportionate job loss to racially-based violence, have not been equal for everyone. The experiences of Covid-19 have left scars on communities and now the challenge for faith communities and preachers is how to rebuild communities into settings where we all can live well together with our shared experiences of woundedness. This study argues that our commitment needs not only to rebuild social, political, and economic systems, but also to consider how to deal with accumulated wounds within communities. In this sense, hospitality plays an essential role in the vision of community reconstruction. Concurrently, lament works as a force that can initiate and maintain hospitality. Finally, we consider how the practice of lament-based hospitality can be practiced in sermons.*

Key Words: Hospitality, Lament, Covid-19, Jael (Judges 4:17-24), Preaching

Challenges for a Wounded Community

Covid-19 has brought countless losses impacting every corner of our lives. Even more, Covid-19 was not experienced similarly by everyone. Those who were economically disadvantaged as well as racial minorities disproportionately bore the weight of discriminatory treatment and negligence, including those living in areas with poor sanitation and limited health care.¹ According to UN Women (The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women), Covid-19 has resulted in an additional 47 million women and girls living in extreme poverty and 50% of women have experienced violence directly and indirectly since the pandemic began.² From disproportionate job loss to heightened gender and race-based violence, the marginalized have experienced specific health, economic, and social impacts that must be addressed through policy interventions.³ Although the wounded communities affected by various losses may have started to rebuild social, political, and economic systems, these efforts also face the challenge of dealing carefully with relational wounds between community members in ways that *empower and protect all of us*, especially paying attention to those who have suffered from the violent acts of hatred and isolation.⁴

Xenophobia, discrimination, and indirect/direct violence have increased worldwide, starting with a phobia of Chinese persons as Covid was first reported in the city of Wuhan, China

¹ Namsoon Kang, *Dating Derrida: I Mourn, Therefore I Am* (Paju: Planet B, 2022), 135.

² Júlia Ledur, "COVID-19 is Affecting Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Other People of Color the Most," last modified March 7, 2021, <https://covidtracking.com/race>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "COVID-19: Rebuilding for Resilience," UN Women, accessed November 5, 2022, https://www.unwomen.org/en/hq-complex-page/covid-19-rebuilding-for-resilience?gclid=CjwKCAjwyaWZBhBGEiwACslQo4IzkqpuRbtL1daz55kA6wYjUEcI2QeXJwvRdGBqsoCaeFDxCv5N9RoCuOAAvD_BwE.

in 2019.⁵ Discrimination has been reported against people of East Asian and Southeast Asian appearance. Research has also reported that the association of this epidemic with certain social groups may have been politically motivated in the United States to encourage suspicion against immigrants, exhibiting a wide range of xenophobic attitudes and behaviors.⁶ Online hate speech and physical hate crimes against religious groups have also increased as gatherings of religious communities have been accused of spreading the virus.⁷ The communities to be reconstructed need to pursue the creation of a new form of neighborhood and community with those whose lives have been harmed through indifference, loneliness, inequality, discrimination, hidden unhappiness, and animosity.⁸

This paper argues that hospitality is essential to rebuilding wounded communities because when hospitality is withheld, the communities may experience inhumane levels of alienation.⁹ Also, the power of hospitality can contribute to healing the social fabric of injustice and division.¹⁰ To practice hospitality amid the wounds of relationships between people in local communities and larger communities, members need to practice mutually empathic responses to the wounds they have experienced. Shared lament can provide a sense of mutual connection as people recognize and practice hospitality that embraces lament. This is because lament makes people tell and listen to the honest responses of persons who are suffering, revealing their wounds, and leading people to participate in others' suffering. It is not an end in and of itself; however, lament allows space for hope in all its complexities, including lament that is voiced in preaching.

Call for Hospitality

In that period of disruption of ordinary life and the loss of precious things, many people have created boundaries of safety, dividing communities into groups of “us” and “them.” These divisions have exacerbated a fear of “otherness” that has been increasingly expressed in society. “Difference” has been socially constructed in relation to race, gender, class, disability, age, etc., and “other” or “otherness” has been treated as a topic for theological discourse and a subject of ethical practice. Scholars have discovered that socially vulnerable groups are “being othered.”¹¹ Hearing the experiences of non-mainstream and unrecognized voices has become a shared struggle to resist, influence, and transform mainstream narratives.¹²

1. An Ethical Approach to Hospitality

⁵ Human Rights Watch, “Covid-19 Fueling Anti-Asian Racism and Xenophobia Worldwide,” May 12, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/12/covid-19-fueling-anti-asian-racism-and-xenophobia-worldwide>.

⁶ Tyler T. Reny & Matt A. Barreto, “Xenophobia in the Time of Pandemic: Othering, Anti-Asian Attitudes, and COVID-19,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 10, no. 2 (2022): 213, 225.

⁷ Katya Andrusz, “Countering religious hatred is critical to restore COVID-worn democracy and security, says OSCE human rights head.” *The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, 20 August, 2021, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/495850>.

⁸ Philip Sheldrake, *The Spiritual City: Theology, Spirituality, and the Urban* (Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 3.

⁹ N. Lynne Westfield, *Dear Sisters: A Womanist Practice of Hospitality* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2001), 55–56.

¹⁰ Letty M. Russell, *Just Hospitality: God's Welcome in a World of Difference* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 1.

¹¹ Sarah Ahmed, *Strange Encounter: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 55–60.

¹² Rebecca S. Chopp, “Theorizing Feminist Theology,” in *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity, Tradition, and Norms*, eds. Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 226.

Hospitality toward strangers was a command given to the Israelites in the Bible (Exod. 22:21; 23:9; Deut. 10:19; 24:19; Ezek. 22:7, 29). Hospitality was valued as a moral obligation, given that everyone experiences being a stranger in one circumstance or another. These days, however, not everyone is equally invited to the place of hospitality. In the North American context, for example, immigrants are often invited without speaking power in relation to the realities of social oppression. Furthermore, migrants have frequently remained strangers even after being initially welcomed.¹³ Although the United States has seen an explosion of immigrants since the 1990s—in numbers that approached 44.9 million in 2019—immigrants are deprived of social power for various reasons, such as language, visa status, economic situation, education, etc.¹⁴ Due to the international situation, refugees come to the West through the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). Refugees have been forced to leave their homes to escape persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations, but in their new homes they are again exposed to differentiation, distancing, and hatred in relation to difficulties related to language, status, and anxiety.¹⁵ While awareness of the “stranger” can be used as a tool to address the need for hospitality and to understand the other, it can also be used for reasons of demotion, exclusion, silence, or repression.¹⁶ “Other” has also been used to suggest inferiority in comparison with mainstream society.¹⁷ Despite efforts to make discriminatory communities more inclusive, the hospitality frame has often set boundaries for strangers or created a host-guest dichotomy.

Thomas Reynolds ponders the dangers of sharing basic vulnerabilities in an exchange ethic based on the recognition of the host-guest relationship.¹⁸ He criticizes the one-sided, top-down approach that stems from the abundance of giving because of patriarchally implementing the host-guest dichotomy.¹⁹ Reynolds calls attention to four versions of insecure hospitality²⁰: 1) a level at which one is willing to put up with others without taking any risks; 2) a way that denies the agency and freedom of others, from a high position and without consent, one can draw others into hospitality and take the initiative as a host; 3) a way to reach out to the marginalized and invite others inside to share the affluence, but only if the host retains the initiative and the guest follows the host's way will the guest be included in the invitation; and 4) a means of producing strangers by itself. Reynolds considers these cases as hermeneutic violence in which the stranger is already determined by the sovereign subject, the family or the communal state.²¹

¹³ Hanbyul Park, “Welcoming Beyond Recognizing: The Significance of Encounter in Understanding Christian Hospitality in the Multicultural Context,” *Asian American Theological Forum* 6, no 2 (2019).

¹⁴ Jeanne Batalova, Mary Hanna, and Christopher Levesque, “Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States,” *Migration Policy Institute*, updated February 11, 2021.

https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states?gclid=Cj0KQCQjw1ouKBhC5ARIsAHXNMI9s7cSe0oAFJ38HCsY0uj6jUVUrXWAtJO5Gm2GH7CmjUkIV937gOnsaAiAqEALw_wcB.

¹⁵ Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Graham Hill, *Healing Our Broken Humanity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Books, 2018), 117.

¹⁶ Letty M. Russell, 31.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Thomas E. Reynolds, “Beyond Hospitality? Unsettling Theology and Migration in Canada,” in *Migration and Religion: Negotiating Sites of Hospitality, Resistance, and Vulnerability*, eds. Andrea Bieler et al. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2019), 115.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 115-16.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

In recent ethical discourses, attempts have been made to overcome the power risk and dichotomy in the host-guest relationship. Letty Russell identifies hospitality as a Christian tradition of how to move toward interdependence without destroying others.²² Russell believes that hospitality is a two-way street of reciprocal ministry where we swap roles and learn most from people who are different than ourselves or whom we think of as others.²³ She has shifted the thinking from a dualistic hermeneutics of distancing away from the other with “the language of otherness” to thinking of “a hermeneutics of hospitality” in response to the fact that the marginalized and excluded are often labeled “others” and are alienated.²⁴ Facing the challenges of a world where experiences of discrimination and suffering are often rooted in contempt for others, Russell argues that a feminist hermeneutics of hospitality can make it clear that no one is an “other” in God's sight.²⁵ In this regard, Russell argues that the capacity for hospitality involves the ability to overcome injustice and division within the fabric of society.²⁶

Postcolonial feminist interpretation has laid the foundation for ‘host-guest’ to be viewed as “Partnership” or “Cohost and Coguest.” The host-guest paradigm distinguishes between *I* and *another-I* in a dichotomous way.²⁷ It is to give *I* the exclusive right to be treated in a position of superiority, and to make others the object of treatment in a position of inferiority.²⁸ Choi Hee An argues that the disintegration of both the host and the guest is necessary to break free from the isolation of *me* and *others* and become part of each other.²⁹ She envisions radical hospitality of belonging to each other by become cohost and coguest, extending the other/other's existence to being one of us.³⁰ Therefore, an ethical approach shows that understandings of hospitality can vary but can also pursue how to live together well, especially by being hypersensitive to the marginalized.

2. Restricted Narratives and Hospitality

Just as Emilie Townes argues that a narrative (of a white) cannot be seen as including the whole of black formation because one understanding of the Christian narrative alone is not enough to contain the complexity of race, gender and class oppression, various narratives that have been muted and ignored need to be heard.³¹ According to C. Melissa Snarr, Townes’s concept of a socially resilient self is socially constructed and not completely determined by the history of an oppressive system but emerges from lament that will lead to the oracle of salvation.³² In the Hebrew Bible, lament is used as a counter testimony, as a confession of faith by the Israelites within the core testimony, and as a means of overcoming social crises and gaining resilience. Although lament consisted of complaining about God's faithfulness and expressing the reality of human pain, it was another expression of faith that eagerly awaited God's salvation. From this point of view, the Bible shows that most circumstances of human life

²² Russell, 42–43.

²³ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁷ Choi Hee An, *A Postcolonial Self: Korean Immigrant Theology and Church* (New York: Suny Press, 2015), 140.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 141.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ C. Melissa Snarr, *Social Selves and Political Reforms: Five Visions in Contemporary Christian Ethics* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2007), 111.

³² *Ibid.*, 112.

including suffering are being told in the language of faith. Therefore, listening to the narratives that have been silenced within a wounded community is an important way of practicing lament.

Hospitality can begin when a community has an openness that is not closed by anyone's standards. It may escape from the epistemic violence and oppression that occurs when the community forces upon everyone a dominant narrative, creating instead a community in which all people can feel that they belong, and accept many fragmented and diverse experiences through a deep sense of solidarity in Christ. As Rieger claims, listening to the other opens up new ways to hear the divine other.³³

Listening to each other's different perspectives not only allows us to discern differences in multiple points of view but also discover shared feelings.³⁴ Rifkin strongly argues that “narrative is critical to transforming empathic distress to empathic engagement.”³⁵ Listening to diverse narratives teaches us the importance of justifying others' right to have their own “reality.” Respect for others and new forms of mindfulness about others' singular histories and idiosyncrasies trigger more empathic responses.³⁶ In this challenge, the self is not removed, but redefined through relationships with others.³⁷ The challenge is about acknowledging the experience, acknowledging the need for help, and feeling deeply about one's life with others and sharing the depths of those feelings. It stems from a deep sense of community and responsibility to each other, not from narcissism or self-pity.³⁸ Hospitality offers a place for free expression where who you are and where every point of view matters. Ultimately, a community is “not to merely *make a place* for hospitality, but looks to see how, as a host, her hospitality *makes a place*.”³⁹

Lament for Hospitality

The theological task of making hospitality possible is not to identify a dominant experience and follow its lead but to connect the different pieces of experiences and to develop a radical vision of hospitality by retrieving experiences from invisibility.⁴⁰ Experience is not monolithic and needs to be reconfirmed and reconstructed in a community that is intentionally open to the excluded.⁴¹ In a wounded community, lament as a wounded word of sufferers is needed to heal traumas and wounds from the violence of isolation and hatred and to start a shared dialogue.⁴² To be heard, lament in the faith community is the beginning of a conversation about wounds, acceptance of wounds, and an effort to heal wounds while raising fierce questions

³³ Joerg Rieger, *God and the Excluded: Visions and Blind Spots in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 109.

³⁴ Jeremy Rifkin, *The Empathic Civilization: The Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis* (New York: J.P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2009), 186.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.* 181.

³⁷ Rieger, 107.

³⁸ Emilie M. Townes, “Just Awaiting and Aweeping: Grief, Lament, and Hope as We Face the End of Life,” in *Faith, Health, and Healing in African American Life*, eds. Stephanie Y. Mitchem and Emilie M. Townes (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2008), 89.

³⁹ Arthur M. Sutherland, *I Was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 52.

⁴⁰ Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993), 12.

⁴¹ Rieger, 104.

⁴² Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truth: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 183.

to God, illuminating individuals' and communities' wounds and the wounds of the world, and responding to the invitation to life. Lament does not stop at dealing with personal suffering but calls for a movement toward justice that uncovers historical trauma and the narrative that provokes it.⁴³ "Without the practice of public lament, collective work for justice is blocked, paralyzed, unable to begin."⁴⁴ Lament serves as a starting point and a force to continue the conversation for pursuing the theological task of hospitality in a wounded community.⁴⁵

1. The Healing Power of Lament

The first condition of healing is seeing and speaking of pain.⁴⁶ However, healing requires "a hearing" along with restoration of the voice of the one who suffers because personal restoration cannot be separated from the restoration of life in the community. Robert Schreiter says that social suffering and its reconciliation need to be accepted by others before any movement can begin.⁴⁷ Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah also argue that when a community accepts the uncomfortable truths about trauma within it, it is guided to the healing power of lament.⁴⁸ June Dickie proposes lament as a healing way to help the reconnection with future life taking place through the experience of solidarity within the community.⁴⁹ Through lament, a hospitable community contributes to fostering healing by respecting and listening to the life experiences of all, including those who are marginalized, by giving them the assurance that the voices of suffering will be heard and accepted.⁵⁰ "Healing...is likely to come socially (as the lamenter's isolation and sense of shame is removed). Moreover, there is also the possibility of spiritual healing of being given a new vision of one's past and present as one brings one's pain to God."⁵¹ In particular, practicing lament as a ritual in a faith community can be a community healing process by showing that our suffering is God's suffering and that our sorrow is a part of God's sorrow, and experiencing the hospitality of Christ who welcomes us just as we are, including our wounds.⁵² Lament is not the end, but a way to create space to open opportunities for hope and healing in all their complexity.⁵³

2. An Attitude of Lament

According to Jacques Derrida's concept of mourning, when a loved one dies, we internalize that person's image or ideal and make it a part of us. When this work is completed, the object we love is absent, leaving only our memories. The memory of complete loss of otherness is what Derrida calls "possible mourning." However, Derrida presents the concept of

⁴³ Ibid., 186.

⁴⁴ Kathleen M. O'Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 128.

⁴⁵ Eliana Ah Rum Ku, "Preaching Lament as Transitional Space from Suffering to Hope: A Study on the Need for Communal Lament," PhD Diss., (Emmanuel College and the University of Toronto, 2022), 3.

⁴⁶ O'Connor, *Lamentations*, 95.

⁴⁷ Robert Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992), 72-73.

⁴⁸ Charles and Rah, *Unsettling Truth*, 190.

⁴⁹ June F. Dickie, "Lament as a Contributor to the Healing of Trauma: An Application of Poetry in the Form of Biblical Lament," *Pastoral Psychol* 68 (2019): 146.

⁵⁰ Philippe Denis, "Storytelling and Healing," in *A Journey Towards Healing: Stories of People with Multiple Woundedness in Kwazulu-Natal*, eds. P. Denis, S. Houser, and R. Ntsimane (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2011), 11.

⁵¹ Dickie, "Lament as a Contributor to the Healing of Trauma," 154.

⁵² Kirk-Duggan, "Lament as Womanist Healing," 154.

⁵³ Ibid.

“impossible mourning” that has a “tender rejection” for continuing to communicate and interact with the memory of the other while maintaining the other's otherness. And where faithful interiorization bears the other and con-stitutes him in me (in us), at once living and dead.... an aborted interiorization is at the same time a respect for the other as other, a sort of tender rejection, a movement of renunciation which leaves the other alone, out-side, over there, in his death, outside of us.⁵⁴

Derrida's mourning—in the decision to accept and not to accept others—provides important insight into dealing with the wounded community. Even if members of a community have been through the same history or suffered the same pain, individual members may not dare to accept others' pain as their own in order to respect the interpretation and experience of pain that varies depending on each other's personal life position, social location, and perspective. At the same time, to hear the diverse voices of others from different perspectives and backgrounds, people hold the voices and pains of others in their hearts. This double-bind lament creates an opportunity for individuals in a community to enter into caring and sincerely hospitable conversations.

3. Lament as a Way of Living Together

Namsoon Kang attaches great importance to Derrida's declaration of “I mourn therefore I am,” which adds the dimension of “being together” to the Cartesian understanding of humans as *cogito, ergo sum* (“I think therefore I am”), as thinking subjects. This is because Derrida's declaration opens up a dimension of understanding that man is not only a subject of thought, but also “the subject[s] of co-existence.”⁵⁵ This connection is more about looking at the dark and painful parts of human beings rather than the romantic parts. Lament as a way of participating in this existential pain is a reflection of what each person can do in the context of living. Kang, according to Derrida's understanding of mourning, mentions that living in a multi-layered sense means not only expressing grief but also living in ways that bear the responsibility of others' lives.⁵⁶ Derrida's “I mourn therefore I am” means that mourning not only begins as soon as relationships with others is formed, but it also means that mourning begins with the beginning of life.⁵⁷ Living together is inseparable from compassion, which means “suffering together,” and lament which reveals the pain of loss. Mourning is not a nostalgia for a lost being but a constant and fundamental form of our lives.⁵⁸

The notion of lament as a way of living together is well revealed in African American experience. African American women's understanding of hospitality shows that lament is an effort by which the excluded are respected for their language and identity and give each other their places rather than being controlled by power. It has to do with acknowledging each other's vulnerabilities, listening carefully to each other's brokenness, and seeking a respectful and loving relationship. N. Lynne Westfield understands the concept of hospitality as a basic practice of resilience for African American women who have been excluded from society.⁵⁹ Black women

⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Memories for Paul de Man* (New York: Columbia UP, 1989), 35.

⁵⁵ Namsoon Kang, “Between Sincere Lament and Dangerous Lament,” accessed November 5, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/kangnamsoon?fref=nf>.

⁵⁶ Kang, *Dating Derrida*, 28.

⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Points...: Interviews, 1974-1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 321.

⁵⁸ Michael Nass, “When It Comes to Mourning,” In *Jacques Derrida Key Concepts*, ed. Claire Colebrook (New York: Routledge, 2014), 113.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

do not deny problems in their lives, but neither do they let their despair shape their lives. Black women have created places to speak with their rejected, distorted, denounced, and denied wounded voices.⁶⁰ As an example, Westfield introduces a concealed gathering. This gathering was a place to speak out and lament the forbidden truth in front of white and black men. For African American women and their gathering, to pursue resilience, hospitality includes lament as an act of liberty and a gesture of resistance.⁶¹ Lament secures this place and eventually invites women to participate in each other's mourning. In the cultural and religious experience of suffering, lament is "a requisite act in the moving toward prayer for restoration—for relationships, the faith community, and self."⁶² In addition, because lament opens a transformed view of the world and the self, it allows a new way of looking at the individual self in a beautiful, complex, and positive way without the unification of an individual and the group.⁶³

In this regard, lament has the power to open up one's own story and open space to listen to others. Lament is a way of being loved and respected and a way of walking together while accepting others' experiences and histories as they are. Since lament has been used as a way of expressing and respecting one's own thoughts, inter-confession, and mutual inspiration, it not only creates a space for hospitality to sprout, but also encourages the energy to keep it going. Thus, dare I say that *lament itself can be a form of hospitality as well as the precondition for hospitality in relation to the discourse of the excluded.*

Preaching with Lament to Encourage Hospitality

Although experiences and voices within a community may be varied, transitory, and imperfectly expressed, considering hospitality in relation to the diversity and singularity of each preacher may contribute to consideration of the role of preaching as a response to the brokenness, hatred, distancing, and differentiating that are prevalent in the world. Preaching that embraces lament in a wounded community may open the way for further insight into how to build a community while embracing 'difference.' This is because those who provide hospitality can be a key to healing hatred and isolation as they embrace the context of 'difference.'

In homiletics, hospitality is a relatively underdeveloped subject, especially as a practice for dealing with those who have been excluded from discourses on gender, race, class, politics, economics, religion, and power. Scholars such as Christine Smith, Lucy Rose, John McClure, Ronald Allen, James R. Nieman, Thomas G. Rogers, Eunjoo Mary Kim, and HyeRan Kim-Cragg have tried to listen to the excluded and to respect their life experiences. These scholars have made efforts toward valuing the instability of the preacher's authority to meet the marginalized within the main discourse of a sermon.⁶⁴ Some discourses related to hospitality in

⁶⁰ Ibid., 96.

⁶¹ Ibid., 40.

⁶² Ibid., 139.

⁶³ Martha R. Fowlkes, "The Morality of Loss—The Social Construction of Mourning and Melancholia," *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 27 (1991): 529.

⁶⁴ Christine M. Smith, *Preaching as Weeping, Confession, and Resistance: Radical Responses to Radical Evil* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992); Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997); Ronald Allen, *Preaching and the Other: Studies of Postmodern Insight* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2014); John McClure, *Other-Wise Preaching: A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001); John McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit: Where Leadership & Preaching Meet* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995); James R. Nieman and Thomas G. Rogers, *Preaching to Every Pew: Cross-Cultural Strategies* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001); Eunjoo Mary Kim, *Preaching in an Age of Globalization* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010); HyeRan Kim-

homiletics have been linked to ethical notions and social justice, contributing to an appreciation for diverse and ethically challenging sermons. Nonetheless, the hatred, distancing, and differentiating we face today call for a more multifaceted study of hospitality in preaching, including a diversity of hermeneutic eyes on the Bible and understanding the diverse images of God. By bringing diverse voices that have been ignored or marginalized into a pulpit as an expression of the gospel, a hermeneutic of lament can open the way to practicing hospitality for interpreting and reading biblical texts in diverse ways.

1. A Hermeneutic of Lament for Hospitality

A hermeneutic of lament is interested in bringing the voices that have been muted into sermons as they, too, contribute to the language of faith, hoping to foster a common dialogue with voices that have previously been raised or have started to emerge through fervent expression, testimony, and the protests raised by those voices. Lament involves exposing not only personal suffering, but also social trauma and the hidden narratives that cause it. Radical imagination can reveal the violence and fear experienced by the excluded.⁶⁵ The eyes of lament may work as “the necessary barb acting against the temptation to minimize or ignore repressive and destructive violence.”⁶⁶ The narratives of suffering from diverse sources of oppression keep a community open and permeable to the emotional experiences associated with the suffering of others.⁶⁷ Eventually, exposure to the laments of a wide range of voices contributes to forming hospitality in a wounded community.

The narrative of Jael (Judges 4:17-24) has been controversial. Jael is the wife of Heber, the Kenite, and she is the one who killed Sisera, the commander, when King Jabin's army invaded Israel. Jael sometimes is viewed as a woman violating the tradition of hospitality by deceiving her guest.⁶⁸ Although interpretations of this text have been concerned with whether Sisera is sexually engaged (cf. 5:27), and Jael's violence has been read in a variety of ways, examinations of this text from Jael's point of view are rare.⁶⁹ If we look at the text and enter into lament for Jael, we can feel the woman's fear, intimidation, and the urgency of her situation. These do not justify her act of murder but stir thoughts about the unjust demands that many women and powerless people may face today and their anxiety about what they have gone through.

As the story unfolds, Sisera, who had lost the war and fled, comes to Jael's tent because there was a treaty between her master, Jabin, king of Canaan, and Heber, the husband of Jael. (4:17) Sisera considered Jael's tent to be a safe place where he would be treated with hospitality. Jael gives Sisera a blanket under which to hide and Sisera asks for water and for her to report

Cragg, “Home, Hospitality, and Preaching” in *Religion and Migration: Negotiating Hospitality, Agency and Vulnerability*, eds. Andrea Bieler, et al. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2019).

⁶⁵ Eliana Ah-Rum Ku, “Lament as Resistance and Rage: An Asian Woman Immigrant’s Reading of Psalm 137 in the Light of Anti-Asian Hate Crimes of North America,” *Asian American Theological Forum* 8, no. 1 (2021): 11.

⁶⁶ Erich Zenger, *A God of Vengeance? Understanding the Psalms of Divine Wrath* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 75.

⁶⁷ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 244.

⁶⁸ Abraham Kuruvilla, *Judges: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 74. Refer to Note #20.

⁶⁹ Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., “What Went on in Jael’s Tent? The Collocation *בשמייכהו תכסהו* in Judges 4,18,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 24, no. 1 (2010): 143–144; Colleen M. Conway, *Sex and Slaughter in the Tent of Jael: A Cultural History of a Biblical Story* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2.

untruthfully that there is no one hiding in her tent. Then suddenly, she kills Sisera. If we read this text only through Sisera's eyes, then Jael is a deceiver, traitor, and murderer, and God is the one who uses this woman. However, if we look at this text from Jael's eyes, we can see that Sisera is killed for his own fault and that Jael was enduring fear, urgency, and shame in the situation inside the tent: 1) In the patriarchal culture of that time, Sisera should not have gone to the tent of Jael, but rather to the tent of Heber. It was a problem for a grown man who is trained in military command as a general to visit a tent where a married woman was living. In fact, this can still be a problem today. 2) Sisera twice asks Jael for a favor, which is a direct violation of the law of hospitality. Since the laws of hospitality in the ancient Near East were closely linked to honor, a guest should not ask the host for anything. Asking for something suggests that the host has not done their best and that the guest is uncomfortable.⁷⁰ Jael provided two favors—gave him a drink and lied for him—and Sisera dishonored Jael and her house. 3) Asking the host to lie was not only an act of dishonor, but it also reflects a tacit acknowledgement that Sisera could endanger Jael and her house. In other words, Sisera had informed Jael through his requests that entering Jael's tent was a reason that Jael and her house could be attacked by others.⁷¹ Therefore, Sisera was seriously attacking the honor of Jael and her house, including the honor of Heber, and thus threatening the safety of his hosts.

In this situation, Jael must have felt fear, conflict, threat, anxiety, and shame. The threat that Jael would have felt would be doubled if the commander of the army, who at the time regarded women as loot, came to the tent where women were alone (cf. 5:30). Although it was not intentional to go to Jael's tent instead of Heber's tent, it can be thought of as an habitual action of those who make violence and power their chosen way of life. Those in power who easily show off their power often do not hesitate to commit evil as a way of controlling the underdog; they don't care how much the powerless suffer because of their actions. Intentionally or not, Sisera breaks all the laws of hospitality and acts rudely to a woman who was powerless by the standards of her time and culture. Thus, Jael's actions are those of a woman acting to protect herself and her house against Sisera's evil and injustices. Jael has a sensibility to evil. Her story makes us reflect on the potential for misunderstanding, isolation, and scapegoating imposed on marginalized and neglected voices when patriarchal understandings and practices of hospitality are imposed on others. This perspective of lament on behalf of Jael allows for rethinking her fear, anxiety, and shame. It does not assert that God uses any means for the sake of God's own ends but that God uses a person who has a sensitivity to evil and acts for justice. Ultimately, the evil man perishes because of his own evil. This perception of hospitality welcomes the stories of various people in language that is akin to the gospel. It shares and suffers alongside the lives, experiences, beliefs, pains, and doubts of various people. Thus, hospitality with lament envisions that all the narratives of those who on their own are hurt by being unheard are important. It is a way of having dialectically constant interrelationships with other narratives by encouraging and engaging participants in action.

2. Lament as Hypersensitivity to the Marginalized for Hospitality

Having sensitivity to experiences is not just about attaching importance to experience, it is about taking into account the diversity of experiences and listening in a new way to the voices that have been excluded and silenced. Alice Walker argues that experiences of pain and

⁷⁰ Victor H. Matthews, *Judges and Ruth, New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 73.

⁷¹ Han Joon Shin, "One Who Concludes," preached at Toronto Korean Presbyterian Church, July 12, 2020.

oppression can be a resource for a liberated vision and spiritual growth and that the voices of “poor colored women” can make a difference.⁷² This is done from a sincere engagement in the “difference” that begins with listening seriously to the experiences of others. Lucy Rose suggests conversational preaching. Conversational sermons enjoy partnership in conversation and hospitality with the dining table community.⁷³ Building on the strong bonds, trust, and security of communities of faith, she stresses the importance of continuing dialogue with other members of the community of faith and with the marginalized, the broken, the silent and the shunned.⁷⁴ In her sermons she emphasized personal engagement, including participation in the testimony of the voices of those who have been excluded and silenced.⁷⁵ Rose says that when personal experiences are acknowledged and encouraged, worshipers begin to risk hearing and articulating the echoes and even memories of abuse and pain deep within their hearts.⁷⁶

Despite recognizing that the center of hospitality is God and that partnerships are essential, preachers may too easily become attached to power when acting as a host and speaking on behalf of subjects in the conversation. For example, preachers may have a great influence on those whose experiences will be included or whose voices will be allowed to join the conversation. Sometimes for preachers the pain of the excluded can result in an uncomfortable and complex discourse. This can make it tempting to consider these experiences exclusively, or to ignore, or bypass them. It is also not easy for the participants who have trauma to open up their suffering in public. Moreover, it is important to recognize that even a well-meaning attempt for community solidarity can lead to taming and exclusion.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, participation in the dialogue is a task for the excluded to find their own subjectivity out of the dominant voice’s control, an opportunity for other participants to critically examine their egos and listen to and respond to their partners, and an opportunity for preachers to have an encounter with the excluded in the conversation of preaching in a way that does not deny the importance of individual selves and the experiences of the excluded. Participants of the conversation, including the preacher, need to accept their limitations of not being able to fully understand others, signaling that individuals’ thoughts and feelings are important and will be considered important.⁷⁸ Also, it needs to be borne in mind that the way in which the experience of any particular person is considered within an ethical subject may not be determined by the preacher.⁷⁹ As McClure says, it is also necessary to remind preachers that alternative directions of thinking may exist, even if they need to limit the scope of their preaching.⁸⁰ This attitude on the part of the interlocutors is an important basis for continuing to listen to and to tell the truth.

It is clearly difficult and complex to consistently include the excluded in sermons. However, preachers need to be encouraged by themselves not to give up on this struggle because “glimpses of truth occur where they are least expected, where one’s own relativity is acknowledged in the midst of brokenness, in the lives of actual communities.”⁸¹

⁷² Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 187.

⁷³ Rose, 121.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁷⁷ Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 111.

⁷⁸ McClure, *Ethical Approaches to Preaching*, 92.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 115.

Being Called to Continuous Struggle for Hospitality

Practicing hospitality in preaching needs to be based on community consensus. It is not enough for an individual preacher to draw the experiences of the excluded into the dialogue of the sermon. This is because the voices of the excluded who are unilaterally heard without community awareness and consent remain as guests according to the power structure, making it difficult for them to have agency. Conversely, rather than unconditionally giving priority to only the voices of the excluded or forming a dominant voice with the excluded, all sermon participants can participate in the dynamics of dialogue while respecting each other with partnership based on co-hostship and co-guestship. By reflecting together and critically analyzing their experiences of difference and encouraging biblical and theological discussions related to a particular topic, the entire community can contribute to community healing and well-being.⁸²

The World Council of Churches equates the extent to which the church practices radical hospitality to the marginalized of society with evidence of its commitment to embodying the values of God's rule (Isa 58:6).⁸³ This commitment does not limit itself to liberating others who are oppressed, but rather liberating oneself from the imaginary isolation of an already orthodox or mainstream view.⁸⁴ The community listens to each other's fears, losses, hopes, needs, and anger through lament in preaching, in order to develop individuals' self-understanding, to acknowledge the worldview of their community partners, to acknowledge their power, and to acknowledge their powerlessness. It is to invite acknowledgment of the full humanity of their partners. It goes beyond egocentric needs and desires and opens up the potential to respect and care for others and the world.⁸⁵ Therefore, faith communities and their preachers have a responsibility to recognize and participate in spaces where we can all experience living 'together' without compromising the existential value of 'I.' Through this challenging and arduous process, preachers and congregations give up being self-centered and open themselves up to partners for true-hearted hospitality. Where the hearts and eyes of preachers are focused on hospitality in times of hatred and distancing, hospitality makes a place for a wounded community to rebuild itself into a deeper, more interconnected community.

⁸² Russell, *Just Hospitality*, 32.

⁸³ Jooseop Keum ed., *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), 18, no. 47.

⁸⁴ Rieger, *God and the Excluded*, 121.

⁸⁵ Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007) 282.

Review Article Related to Pedagogy for Teachers of Homiletics

Best Practices in Education: Standards Based Grading
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One of the academic freedoms afforded educators is assigning student grades. We have autonomy in our pedagogical approaches and assessment measures. Many educators implement grading systems inherited from the early twentieth century. According to educator Joe Feldman, the grading systems we have inherited were designed for, “tracking students to situate them for specific roles in the economic hierarchy...to replicate the existing social and racial hierarchy, and to provide ‘scientific’ justification for doing so.”¹ Considering these origins, it shouldn’t surprise anyone that prominent, “traditional” grading practices, as they are implemented in our contemporary context, disproportionately harm vulnerable students: students of color, students from low-income families, students with disabilities, students whose first language is not English.

In *Grading For Equity: What It Is, Why It Matters, and How It Can Transform Schools and Classrooms*, Feldman lays out a compelling case for Standards Based Grading. The aim of the book is to lay out a theoretical and practical design for grading practices that are accurate, resistant to internal bias, and reliant on intrinsic motivation. Feldman describes five sets of practices: practices that are accurate and mathematically sound; practices that value knowledge, not environment or behavior; practices that support hope and a growth mindset; practices that lift the veil on how to succeed; practices that build ‘soft skills’ and motivate students without grading them.²

What does this look like? The practice of Standards Based grading advocated by Feldman uses a four-point scale rather than a 100-point scale. A 100-point scale suggests that a professor could distinguish student performance with a significant degree of specificity but, can a teacher of preaching distinguish the difference between a sermon earning an 85% and a sermon earning an 88%? Studies have shown that reducing the options for grading leads to less variability and more reliability. Another compelling reason to use an alternative scale, the 0-100 scale is oriented toward failure. Feldman writes, “Our scale allocates sixty of its 100 numbers (0-59) to the failure scale while only forty numbers (61-100) are allocated to passing What does this say to our students about learning and achievement?”³

Standards Based grading is based on summative analysis using pre-determined measures of success rather than student behavior or performance. Often, this looks like a rubric for graded assignments. In Feldman’s system, there are no homework grades, participation points, or assessments of effort. Students are not penalized for late work and are allowed opportunities to re-do assignments or re-take tests. Feldman supports the use of these practices with numerous studies on measures of student motivation and outcomes. Grading in this way aims to eliminate internal-bias and environmental factors. A student who turns things in late because they work 2 jobs and have family responsibilities can earn the same grade as a single student whose only responsibility is school.

¹ Joe Feldman, *Grading for Equity* (Corwin Press, 2018), 21.

² *Ibid.*, 10-11.

³ *Ibid.*, 80.

Grading for Equity is geared toward primary and secondary education but many of the theories and practices are applicable to higher education. Feldman invites the teacher of preaching to think about why and how they assess student work, challenges presumptions about student motivation and success, and offers practical suggestions for new ways forward. As the academy continues to consider systemic racism and ways to de-colonize preaching and teaching, a look at how we grade may be in order. This book effectively resources those wishing to think about best practices in education and experiment with new ways of doing things.

Brent A. Strawn. *Honest to God Preaching: Talking Sin, Suffering, and Violence*. Working Preacher Books. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2021. 232 pages. \$19.99.

Preaching from the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (hereafter HB/OT) presents significant challenges to the contemporary preacher. The complexity of the original language used, the strangeness of the cultural customs, and the ambiguity of the geographic locations are just some of the foundational issues that present themselves at the beginning of the exegetical process of the sermon development process. While necessary to be faithful to the biblical text, many who willingly (or unwillingly, depending on whether they follow the lectionary) preach from the HB/OT often stop short of moving beyond the exegetical, failing to move to the theological except where it may support a particular Christological or political agenda. However, the HB/OT is a deeply rich theological text that can certainly stand on its own two feet (and has for hundreds of years) and presents a beautifully woven story of God interacting with humanity. It is not a perfect story, to be sure. It is a story full of sin, suffering, and violence—themes today’s preacher must carefully yet honestly address. The problem is that these themes are so foreign to contemporary Christian listeners, many often steeped in flannel graph renditions of biblical stories, that speaking on these themes presents a contradictory rather than complimentary view of God and the scriptures that speak of God.

This is the concern that Brent Strawn addresses in this more recent addition to the ever-growing catalogue of books produced by Working Preacher through their publishing arrangement with Fortress Press, books that are intended to offer a more practical take on preaching. At its printing, Strawn’s book marked the third publication in the series that focuses on the HB/OT. The first two books in the series were by Walter Brueggemann. The first book provided a general overview on preaching from the HB/OT and included samplings of some of Brueggemann’s “greatest hits” from his prolific career in preaching, teaching, and writing. The second book focused on the theme of restoration in Jeremiah, something of a new endeavor for Brueggemann. Strawn’s book functions similarly to the first book from Brueggemann, in that it focuses on the HB/OT *en masse*, it also functions similarly to the second book from Brueggemann, in that it focuses on specific themes proclaimed in the biblical text.

The emphasis in Strawn’s argument is that we, as people of faith, are “only as sick as your secrets” (3). While Christian readers often read the HB/OT with skepticism or contempt, Strawn argues that the Hebrew people demonstrate theological honesty by recounting their secrets for all to see. Moses openly disobeys God. David openly organizes a murder. Solomon is an open womanizer and heretic. Job and Qohelet openly question God’s goodness and sovereignty. And these are just the stories that are commonly known. The HB/OT is full of honest examples of sin, suffering and violence, Strawn argues, something that Christian readers would be wise to take note of. Contemporary Christians face themes of sin, suffering, and violence, and the HB/OT offers us a plethora of texts from which to address these themes today. Each theme receives a chapter-long treatment, and the final chapter offers a homiletic for preaching these themes based on Qohelet’s witness. Aside from specific sermon examples, little is lacking from this rich exploration of the HB/OT. It provides a wonderful conversation on how to honestly preach from the Hebrew Bible.

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Andre E. Johnson. *No Future in This Country: The Prophetic Pessimism of Bishop Henry McNeal Turner*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2020. 204 pages. \$27.00

In *No Future in This Country*, Andre E. Johnson, a scholar in rhetoric and media studies, critically analyzes and reflects on Bishop Henry Turner's rhetorical response to historical events, especially from 1896 to 1915. Johnson focuses on what he calls Turner's prophetic rhetoric, "grounded in the lament tradition of prophecy" (18) that addressed and resisted the inhumane conditions of his people in the U.S. Johnson shows how Turner's rhetoric changed from optimistic to pessimistic, as his effort for equality and freedom for blacks was repeatedly met with the resistance, ignorance, and violence from his racist country. Johnson calls such a rhetoric "pessimistic prophecy," whose main function is "to speak out on behalf of others and to chronicle their pain and suffering" (16).

There are six chapters. In the first chapter, "Turner and the *Plessy* Decision," Johnson discusses the *Plessy* Decision in 1892 that led Turner to denounce the Supreme Court for nullifying the citizenship of blacks in America. While others encouraged the public to calm down and patiently wait for a better understanding of the court's decision, Turner publicly criticized the court as an "abominable conclave of negro hating demons" (39). In the second chapter, "The Making of a Black Rhetorical Theologian," the author examines what he calls Turner's "rhetorical theology," which was rooted in the context of his audience and intended to lead to a practice for change. In a society in which the black identity was denied by the white, Turner rejected a God who was white and instead insisted that God is black.

In the third chapter, "Turner and the Creation of an Antiwar Protester," Johnson discusses how Turner's rhetoric changed over the course of his engagement with several wars, including the Civil War and the Spanish-American War. Turner joined the Civil War as the first African American chaplain, hoping that the contribution of the black community would bolster Lincoln's promise of freedom for slaves. However, in witnessing the systematic racism that refused to liberate his people fully, he later condemned any further involvement of the black community in another war. Then in the fourth chapter, "Turner and the Presidential Election of 1900," the author describes Turner's criticism of the Republican Party and their presidential candidate, William McKinley, for continuing to ignore the lynching, oppression, and disfranchisement of African Americans.

In the fifth chapter, "Turner and the Rhetoric of Emigration," Johnson examines how Turner used his rhetoric to empower black dignity and ensure black people's survival by encouraging emigration to Africa. In realizing that there was no future in which blacks could improve their human rights in the U.S., Turner believed that the only cure for the black condition in America was to move to Africa, where they could establish their own government and law. In the last chapter, "Turner and the Damning of America," Johnson discusses how Turner's rhetoric caused conflict not just with whites but also blacks who leaned more on optimism, as Turner criticized the flag and refused to sing *America* until his country became what it praised itself to be— a "sweet land of liberty" (159).

Deeply rooted in the reality of black suffering and oppression in the U.S., Turner's rhetoric was pessimistic in that he could not envision any different future for the black community in his country. For him, emigration to Africa or any other country was a way to empower blacks to determine their own future by escaping the unjust land and entering the promised land. Although Turner's fervent work for emigration did not lead to the result he expected, Johnson argues that Turner's rhetoric still helped to produce "some of the earliest

notions of Black self-esteem, identity, and personhood” (145). Although Turner did not see the promised land himself, his prophetic rhetoric sowed the seeds for that of Malcolm X, the Black Power movement, and even Martin Luther King Jr. in his later years (176).

While Johnson bemoans that there has been a lack of scholarly effort to study the African American prophetic tradition more thoroughly, one could argue that he could expand his sociological conversation to include some works by homileticians, such as Dale P. Andrews, who has already discussed the black prophetic tradition as grounded in the black sufferings of slavery, lynching, and racism and how it shapes black prophetic consciousness for the work of justice and transformation. In our society driven by xenophobia today, nevertheless, Turner’s life and prophetic rhetoric could inspire preachers to dare to lament the sins and brokenness of our unjust world, to proclaim the radical love of God who has created us all in God’s image, and to prophesy God’s liberation of the oppressed and marginalized today.

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Robert Chao Romero. *Brown Church: Five Centuries of Latina/o Social Justice, Theology, and Identity*. IVP Academic, 2020. 248 pages. \$20.99

In *Brown Church*, Robert Chao Romero, a Chinese-Latino American historian and immigration lawyer, explores the history and theology of the Brown Church. The Brown Church is identified as a “prophetic ecclesial community of Latinos/as” which has resisted the religious, socio-economic, and political injustice in Latin America and the United States over the centuries (11). He discovers influential Christian leaders who have represented the Brown Church for the past five hundred years in his effort to present the interdependent relationship between the spiritual formation and societal transformation in pursuit of a holistic gospel and the “beloved community.”

The book starts with the author’s advocacy of a new cultural identity of young Mexican Americans, so-called, Chicana/o identity. For him, Chicana/o identity comprises three components: “(a) pride in the dual indigenous and Spanish cultural heritage of Mexican Americans; (b) recognition of the historical structural and systematic racism; (c) commitment to a lifestyle of social justice” (30-31). That said, Chicana/o Christians are called to serve as agents who pursue both spiritual growth and socio-political liberation.

In Chapters 2 and 3, the author depicts the historical figures of the Brown Church who carried out prophetic resistance against Spanish colonial theologies of conquest and dehumanization. For instance, he showcases, Bartolomé de las Casas’ prophetic writings—a central inspiration in the development of Liberation Theology in Latin America later—intentionally disputed the Spanish Colonists’ racist legacy and their cultural deficit approach toward Latin Americans. Juana Inés de la Cruz’s prophetic writings challenged patriarchy and machismo in colonial new Spain. She was the first *mujerista* (feminist) theologian of the Brown Church. The author also introduces *La Virgen de Guadalupe* as the Brown Church’s symbol of faith, identity, female empowerment, and cultural liberation (70).

In Chapter 4, he unmasks the western Christian theology of Manifest Destiny, which used to vindicate the unjust US-Mexico war as well as cultural genocide and spiritual violence toward the Brown Church. In the next two chapters, he recounts how Cesar Chavez, the Latino/a civil rights icon of the 1960s practiced faith-rooted activism and how Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador’s pastoral life and sacrifice revitalized Latin American liberation theology in the 1960s through 1980s. In the last two chapters, he explains the hallmarks of recent social justice theologies of US Latinas/os, such as the preferential option for the poor, *mujerista* (woman) theology, Latino/a decolonial biblical interpretation, and Latino/a Pentecostal and evangelical theology. In general, Latino/a theology that emerged in dialogue with their cultures, histories, and people’s experience, Romero avers, has been a critical source of Brown people’s liberation from coloniality of the Western Christian belief system and related spiritual-psychological wounds imprinted on the psyche of Latin America (48).

Noticeable benefits of this publication include, first, the known and unknown historical facts recounted that lead to uncovering misconceptions and prejudices about Latinos/as prevalent in North American social context and media. Next, the Brown Church’s constructive response to the suffering Latinos/as clearly warns against any biblical and theological attempts to validate oppression and dehumanization of the Brown people and all other marginalized racial groups. This book once again reminds us of the calling of all churches to stand on the side of the truth and to speak up against the dominant colonial powers, including their theological prejudices and distortions. Accordingly, the author wisely promotes one of the key postcolonial theological

values; namely, the truth, care, love and justice of God found and encountered in many diverse cultures and their colorful witnesses with equal weight, far beyond the dominant culture's monopolized views on them. This is the biblical, historical, and multi-cultured God in their most genuine sense, Romero passionately propagates, which our world urgently needs to discover today.

As an additional strength of this book, the author explores historical facts of the Brown Church and Latinos/as' historical suffering not only from his Latino theological point of view but also by good use of his expert legal knowledge. Yet, as a minor weakness of the book, some Asian American readers might expect to see more creative Brown (Latino/a) theology that may incorporate Asian cultural heritages into it as the author identifies himself as a Chinese-Latino American theologian.

Although this book is written in an easy-to-understand manner that anyone can read, the weight of its contents is by no means light. This volume may become a must-read soon for scholars, regardless of their disciplines, who want to exchange deep theological thoughts with Latinos/as theology and their practice of faith. In particular, since the author invites all people—whites and all colored people—to commit to a lifestyle of social justice for racial reconciliation, this book seems to be set to become another invaluable companion to Martin Luther King Jr.'s philosophy and vision—"The Beloved Community."

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Preaching about Christian Nationalism: Two Books

Pamela Cooper-White. *The Psychology of Christian Nationalism: Why People Are Drawn In and How to Talk Across the Divide*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2022. 190 pages. \$21.00

Carter Heyward. *The 7 Deadly Sins of White Christian Nationalism*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022. 275 pages. \$34.00

In 2013, Dean G. Stroud released the edited volume, *Preaching in Hitler's Shadow: Sermons of Resistance in the Third Reich* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans). At the time, the book seemed to be merely a quaint study of preaching in a historical era that had little to do with the context of contemporary U.S. preaching. Fast forward three years to the beginning of the Trump era, and Stroud's book was, unfortunately, both prescient and necessary. His introduction alone raises a chilling recognition of the parallels between the "Positive Christianity" of Nazi Germany and the rise of white Christian Nationalism in the U.S. today. The thirteen sermons from preachers such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth, Helmut Gollwitzer, and Gerhard Ebeling offer a glimpse into the ways in which ministers of the Confessing Church spoke out against Hitler's regime that had co-opted and contorted Christianity in the service of fascism.

After the election of President Joseph Biden in the fall of 2020, many hoped that the country would move on from the disastrous dance between the government and extremist, right-wing, fundamentalist Christianity. But the attempted insurrection of January 6, 2021, revealed just how infectious Christian Nationalism has become to the body politic and how deep and wide its cultish tentacles reach. Theocratic extremism undergirds the corrupted, hard-right ideology of the Supreme Court, hundreds of voter suppression laws passed in recent years, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and women's rights, and local elected officials attacking human rights across the board. All of this points to the need for more resources to equip preachers for resisting Christian authoritarianism and strengthening their congregations in the fight for justice on behalf of the vulnerable.

Two books published in 2022 offer preachers exactly the kinds of resources needed for this era of violent, virulent Christian Nationalism in the U.S. One is *The Psychology of Christian Nationalism: Why People Are Drawn In and How to Talk Across the Divide* by Pamela Cooper-White, an expert in the field of psychology and religion. She wrote the book to help readers "understand who comprises the Christian nationalist movement and what they believe, to examine how people get drawn into this movement" (5). With this understanding, she offers recommendations on how to talk with Christian nationalist-leaning people. She includes a helpful set of strategies using a "red light, yellow light, green light" metaphor based on levels of risk and safety, openness to conversation, and possibilities for building relationship.

The book is divided into three chapters, the first explaining what Christian Nationalism is, what undergirds its ideology, and how it has found purchase in the U.S. government in its pursuit of political power. The second describes the allure of religious extremism and how it attracts disaffected whites in the U.S. with promises of belonging, purpose, status, secret knowledge (conspiracy theories), and a restoration of patriarchal authority. The third chapter offers useful suggestions and recommendations for "creating human ties across (extreme) difference," (100). Cooper-White asserts that dialogue across political divides "requires honesty, and a commitment to the truth – the whole truth, including both the ideals of America at its best and the shameful

realities of the past and present,” (136). This is difficult, painful, but necessary work if we are to heal the “psychological splitting, both at the larger national and structural/institutional level and also at the level of the interpersonal” (136).

Ministers and preachers will find Cooper-White’s approach helpful when dealing with those who lean toward Christian Nationalism in their own congregations or have friends and family members with whom they are estranged because of the toxicity of the movement. They can use this book to inform their approaches to pastoral conversations, sermons, and education with youth and adults alike. Thoroughly researched with a deep understanding of the nature of cults and how they overtake “good people,” *The Psychology of Christian Nationalism* provides a way forward to overcome polarization while advocating for justice in the midst of radical religious extremism.

The second book is *The 7 Deadly Sins of White Christian Nationalism: A Call to Action* by Carter Heyward, an American feminist theologian and priest in the Episcopal Church. In 1974, she was one of the Philadelphia Eleven, women whose ordinations eventually paved the way for the recognition of women as priests in the Episcopal Church. As a professor, theologian, activist, and writer, Heyward has been a pioneer in the areas of feminist liberation theology and the theology of sexuality. In this, her eighteenth book, she takes on the “unholy trinity” of “Christianity, capitalism, and the GOP” by calling for Christian Americans to take on the urgent moral work of confronting religious authoritarianism and speaking out “on behalf of a God of justice, love, and peace” (4).

The book is divided into three parts, starting with Heyward’s personal intersection with the roots of what Dorothee Soelle called “christofascism.” She gives an explanation of White Christian Nationalism, tracing its origins, history, spiritual and economic motives, as well as key Supreme Court decisions in the early twenty-first century that shifted the relationship between church and state. These shifts gave legal cover and justification for White Christian Nationalism to take hold.

In part two, she describes the seven deadly sins of White Christian Nationalism: lust for omnipotence, entitlement, white supremacy, misogyny, capitalist spirituality, domination of the earth and its creatures, and violence. Part three counters these deadly sins with seven corresponding calls to action: empowering one another; embodying humility; approaching the blackness of God; empowering women, celebrating sexuality, affirming gender diversity; transforming capitalism; belonging with earth and animals; and breaking the spiral of violence. Each chapter ends with discussion questions, making it an ideal book for discussion group. Heyward’s book is also a powerful source for preaching ideas and could be the basis of a combined book study and sermon series in a congregation.

Heyward begins and ends her book with a story of her exchange with Desmond Tutu and her friend Sue who was dying of cancer. As Tutu and Heyward were leaving, Sue said to him, “You give me hope that the truth will go on” (ix, 230). Both Cooper-White’s and Heyward’s books give *us* hope that the truth will go on.

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Ryan Roach. *Preaching Without Borders: The Challenges and Blessings of Expository Preaching in a Multi-Ethnic Church*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022. 148 pages. \$20.

Preaching Without Borders is written to two types of expository preachers. One is the expository preacher who leads a multi-ethnic church, and the book encourages them to communicate to the local church more successfully. The other type is the expository preacher who leads a church that does not consist of a multi-ethnic church but is in a multi-ethnic neighborhood. Roach encourages these pastors to communicate to their multi-ethnic neighborhood more efficiently. To accomplish these purposes, the first two chapters discuss the necessity for cross-ethnic preaching and provide a philosophy for a cross-ethnic ministry. Roach asserts that because all ethnicities were made in God's image and are loved by God, preachers are obligated to engage in cross-ethnic communication. He also points to Peter and Paul preaching to people of different ethnicities to further solidify his premise. Chapter three encourages preachers to consider how they can integrate the methods of intercultural communication into expository preaching for the purpose of reaching people of multi-ethnicities.

Chapter four is the central part of the book and focuses on the reasons preachers must explain the unchanging gospel in ways that are understandable to different ethnicities. This chapter also discusses how the gospel addresses racism. Chapter five explains the place of expository preaching in multi-ethnic churches, with chapter six describing the possibilities and opportunities for this type of preaching.

Chapter seven focuses on what can happen when preachers refuse to adapt to the needs of the multi-ethnic church family, including the loss of relevance and connection with the concerns of young adults. Chapter eight provides useful recommendations for expository preachers who want to make modifications to their preaching for the purpose of reaching people of different ethnicities with the gospel. Specifically, this chapter encourages preachers to study themselves, the people within the local church they serve, the community in which the local church resides, and God, so that they can become effective expository preachers to various ethnicities.

Roach cautions that his book is not a step-by-step guide on preaching, multi-ethnic ministry, or intercultural communication. Nevertheless, the book achieves its purpose of encouragement and forthrightly addresses the threat that racism poses to local churches. The book's greatest strength is that the author provides multiple real-life examples of confronting racism and creating multi-ethnic ministry. Roach explains his goal for the book by stating, "My hope is to challenge pastors to consider the hard task of preaching outside of their comfort zone . . . it is my prayer that the reader will be challenged to think more deeply about how to present the truth of God's word" (24).

Furthermore, while not its stated purpose, the book implicitly urges the reader to question any form of racism that may exist within their own heart, including imaging Jesus as having white skin or feeling anger when hearing languages other than English spoken in the community. This book is highly recommended to any expository preacher, especially those who desire for their local church on earth to reflect the multi-ethnic church in heaven (Rev 7:9). For that reflection to become a reality, expository preachers need to create sermons that speak to multiple ethnicities, and this book encourages preachers to do just that.

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Ronald J. Allen. *You Never Step into the Same Pulpit Twice: Preaching from a Perspective of Process Theology*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022. 231 pages. \$31.

Ronald Allen, a renowned and prolific author in the field of homiletics, recently published his new book, *You Never Step into the Same Pulpit Twice*. In past decades, the author has written extensively on conversational preaching in the mode of mutual critical correlation (Paul Tillich and David Tracy). He further explicates the philosophical-theological framework behind his expansive homiletical corpus: process theology as set in motion by the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead.

The book's structure consists of two main parts: theory (Chapters 1-3) and practice (Chapters 4-8) of preaching from a process perspective. Since process theology, also known as the philosophy of organisms, is less engaged in our field, Allen presents the main ideas of process theology (Chapter 1) summarized as follows: Every existence is regarded not as substance but as life in the constantly active *process* of "becoming" in recognized and unrecognized affective relationships. God is no exception. God is fully present in all contexts and changes in relational becoming. Since God's purpose is the "inclusive well-being" (a term coined by process theologian Marjorie Suchocki) of all existences, God invites them by ceaselessly offering possibilities for love, peace, justice, and abundance. In summary, God in *relational becoming* operates in the mode of *invitation*.

Based on this process conceptuality, how should preachers define the relationship between perception and language? (Chapter 2) Allen's answer is language, while incomplete and fragmentary, refers to realities of existence beyond itself and enables human perception in two modes: presentational immediacy and causal efficacy. While we perceive a piece of the world in the immediate moment with one-dimensional/*steno* language, we also perceive said piece in a wider relationship to the whole fabric of life with *depth* language. *Symbolic* language integrates and balances the two modes of perception (41-53).

The first two chapters lay a foundation for the rest of the book, which is on the practice of preaching. In Chapter 3, Allen argues that every sermon is a distinct occasion of homiletical becoming and should be performed with the process notion of God's invitation. The best way to move forward for process preachers is to employ the idea of the sermon as conversation, to name God's invitations, and to help the congregation identify and respond to them for the inclusive well-being of *all*.

The author presents the purposes of conversational preaching in process conceptuality as follows: 1) to invite the congregation (and world) towards inclusive well-being, 2) to help the congregation make sense of their lives, 3) to articulate invitations appropriate to the context, 4) to build up the church as a community that embodies and invites inclusive well-being, and 5) to evoke feelings consistent with said invitations to well-being (71-80).

The remaining chapters address more practical matters of methods of preparing and preaching using a sample case sermon on the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30): identifying the invitation of the text or topic (chapter 4), bringing the invitation into the conversation with other invitations (chapter 5), reflecting in a critical theological way on the invitations,

establishing a direction for the sermon (chapter 6), shaping the sermon in a way that invites conversation (chapter 7), and embodying the sermon in a conversational mode (chapter 8).

This book is an excellent addition to Allen's homiletical corpus, which has been characterized as a homiletic of conversation based on mutual critical correlation. The readers will benefit from the author's process theological insights to reconfigure their understanding of God, individuals, communities, and beyond, to reshape their preaching in a conversational mode based on many practical and detailed pieces of advice, and to embody their sermons in more engaging ways.

I highly recommend this book to working preachers and homileticians who seek to name, engage, and respond to God's invitations for the inclusive well-being of all through creative transformation.

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Timone A. Davis. *Intergenerational Catechesis: Revitalizing Faith Through African-American Storytelling*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021. 101 pages. \$63.35.

In *Intergenerational Catechesis: Revitalizing Faith Through African-American Storytelling*, author Timone Davis provides a new catechetical method that can be utilized to engage the youth of today. A Catholic professor, preacher, and religious education instructor, Davis looks to form a new more-effective form of religious engagement within the postmodern context in which young people are religiously detached, technologically over-stimulated, consumer-driven, and molded to a commodification of their lives in which religion is simply one of many options. Instead of offering program ideas for young adult reengagement, she provides a new dialogical method of catechesis that brings faith to all levels of parish life. Stories, as an instrument of religious instruction, spark an intergenerational sharing of how our individual stories link with the overarching Christian narrative. African American storytelling, a historical treasure of the Black community, is a catechetical method that can be utilized as an interpersonal and faith-revitalizing strategy by religious educators and church communities as a whole.

The author, a Black American Catholic woman, presents the African American story as an ancestral gift used by enslaved people in America's history who were robbed of their ability to read and write under colonial law. Storytelling, an intergenerational practice of communication and care for the community, became a way to pool their collective knowledge, link disparate people, and find hope despite dehumanizing circumstances. The author, a Black American Catholic woman, sees the wisdom of her ancestors linked to hope for reviving the dormant faith of a dying church. The author engages the reader in the premise that "effective catechesis/ faith formation begins with each other's stories" (43). Davis focuses on African American storytelling as a tool that could renew religious education by linking the wisdom of the past with the vitality of the present. This powerful narrative method can be utilized across multicultural, multigeneration, and multi-linguistic lines to engage youth in new ways. The methodology provides a seductive hook within the seas of distractions fighting for the attention of youth because it starts with the stories that make up who they are and then intertwines them with ongoing catechism lessons. This authentic life-linking application compels all parishioners, young and old, to take a deeper look at God already active in the day-to-day and to place their story within the larger Christian context.

Pooling from a vast number of resources, the author does a thorough job of addressing the technique of this ancient tool as a means of religious engagement, but she does not stop there. She is a seasoned religious educator who translates her methodology into practical tips for use in any local church setting. She notes the practical needs: layouts of timing, scheduling, optimal locations needed to enact this method, even proper use of the bulletin and website. She addresses everything from the required workshops to prepare catechists to tell their stories and precisely identifies that theology of space that orients to intimacy needs to create an authentic storytelling community. From virtual meetings to in-person retreats and parish meetings to clergy preaching, there is not an area that this author has not considered as a space for the art of storytelling to unfold in effective catechesis. It brings the teaching of faith far beyond the classroom to a unified dynamic that revitalizes, from pastor all the way to parishioner, what it truly means to be and live as an interconnected church community connected by stories.

Ultimately, I believe Davis inspires an innovative new way of living in church that is linked by stories of all those within. Stories are the linking element of a healthy communal dynamic and an invitation to know God more through a deeper understanding of self and the

other. In Davis' vision, catechists are “facilitators of story” who have an expansive opportunity to use a gift from the past to aid the church of today, but this requires communal faith sharing on all levels to truly engage this dialogical approach (49). With this, the author offers an opportunity and a challenge to the church to infuse a new method of religious education that could change the church as we now know it. Our world is linked by stories. There are stories within us, stories around us, and stories within our communal narrative that guide our world today. Stories have power, but their power is linked to our ability to believe in their message. The question then becomes, what stories will we choose to guide us into the future?

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Kate Hanch. *Storied Witness: The Theology of Black Women Preachers in 19th Century America*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2022. 196 pages. \$28.

Kate Hanch's book *Storied Witness: The Theology of Black Women Preachers in 19th Century America* offers a resource for introductory preaching and theology classes. Hanch's approachable writing style and succinct descriptions of the 19th century socio-economic landscape also renders the book helpful for expanding congregations' understanding of the importance of sharing their own stories and the potential spiritual impact of doing so.

Hanch, a self-identified White middle-class woman, joins a growing chorus of works extolling the contributions of 18th, 19th, and early 20th century Black women preachers and writers. Hanch focuses on three of these women: Zilpha Elaw, Julia Foote, and Sojourner Truth. Using their sermons, autobiographies, and life experiences, Hanch articulates their theologies and the ways their bodies and lived experiences served as authoritative texts for understanding Christian theology and praxis.

Hanch begins by summarizing why the stories of these women are important for our individual and communal well-being. In chapter 1, "Learning from Subverted Stories: The Wisdom of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Preachers," Hanch claims that Elaw, Foote, and Truth were called to preach and theologize through spoken and written words as well as through their bodies. Hanch states, "the witness they leave behind are works of theology that resonate with twenty-first-century concerns. Their theologies honored bodiliness, practiced relational empathy, and are mystically contemplative" (3).

In chapter 2, "Zilpha Elaw: Following the Spirit's Foolish Call," Hanch explores the concept of God's wisdom as foolishness to the world through the vocational discernment and ministry of Elaw. Hanch compares Elaw to Jesus and the apostle Paul in her willingness to follow God's call wherever it led, including into the Southern United States where Elaw could easily have been captured and sold into slavery. Hanch observes that Elaw's memoir "subtly reveals a foolish theology that exposes the weaknesses of the dominant society and presents a liberating God who especially calls her as a Black woman" (20). Elaw preached to slaveholders in the U.S. and misogynistic Methodists in England using their claims to superiority as evidence of their spiritual weakness. Hanch notes that Elaw turned the restrictions on her Black body into strengths by creatively crossing boundaries in language and presence as well as embracing a mysticism that gave her spiritual authority through that same body. Elaw's documentation of her encounters as an itinerant preacher offer evidence of how Christ can work through the most disparaged of bodies in inhospitable and even hostile spaces. Through the Spirit and Elaw's ability to discern the Spirit's guidance, Elaw's liminality generates spaces of opportunity and of challenge to oppressive forces.

Unlike Elaw, Julia Foote saw welcome as a key to discernment. In chapter 3, "Julia Foote: Bodying the Word," Hanch observes that Foote would only occupy pulpits in which she was fully welcomed and where all listeners were welcomed to enter and to sit where they pleased. Hanch states, "By loving and advocating for herself, [Foote] simultaneously advocates and loves her neighbors, particularly her Black neighbors" (79). Foote also discerned a need to put her theology in writing, creating an autobiography that simultaneously served as a documentation of her sermons. Referring to Foote's book, *A Brand Plucked from the Fire: An Autobiographical Sketch*, Hanch states, "Foote writes like a preacher would preach, addressing her audience directly, switching between narrative and sermonizing. Thus, for her, to body the

Word is to express herself as a sermonic event and established spiritual authority" (71). According to Hanch, these theological and spiritual expressions or bodying the Word represented a more expansive and holistic process than what is often referred to as embodiment. Foote, for example, understood and communicated her spirituality and theological positions through engagement with a variety of texts, including the Christian Scriptures, her own lived experiences and those of other contemporary and historical figures, and 19th century legal and cultural writings.

In chapter 4 "Sojourner Truth: The Spirit's Witness," Hanch refers to Truth's relationship with the Holy Spirit as a "witness." She states, "The Holy Spirit as witness allows [Truth] to celebrate her Black body throughout her life, despite the numerous struggles she faced" (112). This "witness" carried forth in her actions on behalf of her family and community and in her engagement with Scripture. Hanch avers, "[T]he Spirit within [Truth] enabled her to discern the character of God through the witness of Scripture" (132). Hanch characterizes Truth as a preacher who believed that the Holy Spirit was within her, she bore witness to the Holy Spirit, and her ability to bear witness demonstrated that the Holy Spirit was "continually working in her life" (132).

In chapter 5, "Black Women Preachers as Exemplars of a Prophetic Pastoral Theology," Hanch highlights the ways Elaw, Foote, and Truth lived the theologies they preached. This included honing the ability to value self and empathize with others while challenging oppressive individuals and systems. Hanch avers, "As the women preached a word of comfort to the oppressed, the privileged would have heard judgment in their voices" (150). Hanch also examines how contemplation and mysticism helped them to continually grow in their theological perspectives, vocational discernment, and relationships with God.

The theologies of preaching espoused by Elaw, Foote, and Truth can inspire and instruct 21st century preachers and homileticians. In their often disregarded and demeaned 19th century Black female bodies, they proclaimed a God who loved and called them not in spite of their bodies but because of them. Their bodies were created in God's image and their physical presence mediated the Divine. Through sharing their stories and their spiritual "witness," Hanch's book provides an insightful introduction to their theologies of preaching and the ways in which every being's physical presence can mediate the Divine when there is the courage and spiritual discernment to make it so.

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Luke A. Powery. *Becoming Human: The Holy Spirit and the Rhetoric of Race*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2022. 162 pages. \$22.00.

After a forward by Willie James Jennings which calls homiletics to be anti-racist, Powery's *Becoming Human: The Holy Spirit and the Rhetoric of Race* connects preaching amid racialization to the work of the Holy Spirit. The book demonstrates that race was socially constructed to serve colonial ends and that the process of racialization was de-humanizing. Powery names ways in which the church has been complicit in whiteness and racialization, but he holds onto the hope that, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the church can counter racialization with humanization. The Spirit is the common breath among all humans, which is capable of addressing the reality of racialization and providing an alternative vision of humanity through Christ.

Chapter one discusses the history of racialization, especially as it intersects with slavery and whiteness. Powery connects slavery and racism with Christianity, noting ways in which "whiteness fused with Christianity" in support of the racial hierarchy (21). The second chapter shifts from the historical role of colonialism in creating race from racism to the role science played in promoting a faulty biology of racial differences. This underscores that many of the past ways of conceptualizing race were wrong, but the past conceptualizations remain sociologically significant in the present. Powery offers a "pneumatology of race" in chapter three (52). He takes a theological approach to Pentecost as inspiration for how the Spirit can move people from racialization toward humanization. Pentecost is an affirmation of diversity and the Spirit's work through all people. While the book makes homiletical suggestions at various points, chapter four turns more directly to preaching. Powery reviews two typical intersections between preaching and race. The first set are works by non-dominant racialized scholars and the second are works geared toward preaching about race. He proposes a new homiletical approach, "preaching *through and beyond* racism" (81). This approach is somatic and theological as it attempts to honor the Spirit's work through a human form. The final chapter broadens his vision of preaching toward and beyond racism to ministry more generally. He incorporates insights and experiences from Howard Thurman and outlines four ministry components: "following Jesus, attending to suffering bodies, striving for community, and embracing mortality" (106).

In this book, Powery calls the guild of homiletics to continue de-centering whiteness, and he highlights existing scholars and works which are engaged in this process. The work itself serves this central function. *Becoming Human* does not exclusively speak to a Black-White racial binary, but it does center Black and Brown experiences. Powery draws from several scholars from diverse social locations. He weaves personal and professional stories which connect his experiences with racialization to the topics discussed in the book.

One of the most helpful parts of the book is where Powery adeptly connects colonialism with racialization. Powery carefully explores the nuances of colonialism and racialization in ways which allow each to be distinct; yet the interworking nature between the two is exposed. In this way, Powery is able to bridge postcolonial theory, and postcolonial works on preaching, with racialization. Included in this conversation is a description of relevant terms and concepts. The history and description of the common usage of terms like race, racism, and racialization is especially helpful for those looking to deepen their working understandings of these concepts. Those in dominant social location may especially benefit from this type of literacy. In this way, Powery accomplishes a major objective of his book: "to 'de-fang' colonial racism in the power of the Spirit" (120). *Becoming Human* can assist preachers by providing language and theology

to preach about racialization in the present constructively. Powery urges preachers to embrace the Spirit as a humanizing breath of fresh air.

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Deborah Justice. *(White)Washing Our Sins Away: American Mainline Churches, Music, Power, and Diversity*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2022. 266 pages. \$95 hardcover (available now); \$33.95 paperback (forthcoming February 2023).

Since the 1990s, the topic of “worship wars” within White mainline Protestantism has been a recurring conversation among pastors, church musicians, and churchgoers. Rather than taking these “wars” at face value, Deborah Justice probes how this traditional-contemporary dichotomy intersects with notions of identity, diversity, power, and authority. *(White)Washing Our Sins Away* is an ethnomusicological study that examines how people “came to hear values through music, and then used internal musical controversies about those values to negotiate the externally shifting sands of the American religious ecosystem” (18).

In the Introduction, Justice situates herself within the scope of the study: an ethnomusicologist, a White woman, a mainline Presbyterian (PC-USA), a hammered dulcimer aficionado, and a historical witness of these worship wars—both as a participant in the pews (or folding chairs) and as a participant-observer in academia. After outlining the trajectory of the book in Chapter One, Chapter Two locates this study within the academic field of ethnomusicology. Justice contends that her field has a checkered history of centering Whiteness as the norm against which all other musical cultures are measured. However, by focusing on White mainline Protestantism as a distinct culture—and Presbyterianism even more specifically—Justice argues that this book contributes to antiracist scholarship, because this culture must be treated as one of many cultures in a diverse American religious landscape. While this argument is necessary and helpful, it could have been shortened and included in the Introduction or Chapter One.

The remainder of the book centers her ethnographic fieldwork at Hillsboro Presbyterian Church in Nashville, Tennessee as a prism for how a White mainline Protestant church navigated the Traditional-Contemporary binary. Chapter Three tells the story of Hillsboro’s history as a relatively early adopter (1995) of contemporary worship as a strategy “for survival, diversity, and cultural vitality” (81). An “interlude” chapter follows this, featuring a thick, sensory description of both the traditional and contemporary services at Hillsboro in 2009. This interlude is especially helpful for those interested in the nuts and bolts of ethnographic fieldwork.

Chapter Four discusses the instrumental dimensions of the Traditional-Contemporary binary and how this intersects with cultural context, class, and race. Justice’s qualitative research uncovers an important dynamic at play in perceptions of musical immanence versus musical transcendence. Some worshipers appreciate musical continuity between Sunday and the rest of the week (immanence), while others desire musical transcendence on Sunday mornings in contradistinction to their everyday musical lives. While fascinating, this framework needed further development and it likely could have been expanded and integrated with her chapter on spatial diversity.

Chapter Five examines Traditional-Contemporary bridge-making practices that often appear in White mainline Protestantism: the incorporation of evangelical hymnody, retuned hymns, and the implementation of blended services. Chapter Six focuses on the negotiation of identity and power as it relates to space and place in worship. Justice notes that the distinct spaces “gave congregants a true experience of being tolerant and diverse” rooted in “genuine support for internal differences” (180).

Chapter Seven is one of the strongest and most analytically rich chapters of the book, focusing on the topics of expressive behavior, formality, authority, and agency. Of note is

Hillsboro's interactions with the historically Black Spruce Street Baptist Church and how musical style and perceived Presbyterian identity ("frozen chosen") intersects with race. The brief conclusion points out a key phenomenon: while there are many similarities between the Traditional and Contemporary services, the differences inform how we assign value and create meaning. Thus, by framing "Traditional" and "Contemporary" as incompatible opposites, congregations that balanced both styles "experienced themselves as projecting diversity and tolerance in the face of potential conflict and schism" (221).

Overall, *(White)Washing Our Sins Away* was an enjoyable read and an insightful analysis of how one church waded its way through the "worship wars" by perceiving difference, valuing it, and developing institutional responses. While other churches were included in her study, the central case study of Hillsboro was used as a micro example embedded within macro trends of White mainline Protestant Christianity in the United States. The deep dive into Hillsboro was a strength of the book, and Justice was careful to not make generalizable claims based on her research.

This book will be especially helpful to students and scholars of ethnomusicology, religious studies, liturgical studies, and anthropology. It is accessibly written and well-organized. It would be a strong supplemental text for a "religion and race" seminar or any specialized course in ethnomusicology, anthropology of religion, or American religious studies.

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