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Please note: Although the articles in *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* reflect the general concerns of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, some details in the articles may not reflect the position of the Editorial Board.

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The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is the publication of the Evangelical Homiletics Society. Organized in 1997, the Evangelical Homiletics Society is an academic society established for the exchange of ideas related to the instruction of biblical preaching. The purpose of the Society is to advance the cause of biblical preaching through the promotion of a biblical-theological approach to preaching; to increase competence for teachers of preaching; to integrate the fields of communication, biblical studies, and theology; to make scholarly contributions to the field of homiletics.

Statement of Faith: The Evangelical Homiletics Society affirms the Statement of Faith affirmed by the National Association of Evangelicals. It reads as follows:

1. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3. We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

4. We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.

5. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

6. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

7. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE URGENCY OF PREACHING IN CHALLENGING TIMES

SCOTT M. GIBSON
General Editor

In light of these challenging days of pandemic and prejudice, the Editorial Board urged that the September 2020 edition of *The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* focus on the theme of preaching on race, racism, prejudice, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, etc. Together we agreed that a themed on this topic issue was indeed necessary.

The society is well equipped to address this topic as demonstrated in the articles in this edition. Preachers are to preach the good news—the gospel—the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and promised return of Jesus Christ. This gospel is to extend into every aspect of life. It is an urgent message for congregations, classrooms, our country—our world. Without the gospel, all effort for change is limp.

Our preaching, therefore, is to be empowered by gospel urgency. We want gospel urgency to inform advocacy. We want gospel urgency to shape ministry with refugees. We want gospel urgency to influence academic pursuits. We want gospel urgency to infiltrate justice. We want gospel urgency to characterize our lives. We want gospel urgency to be reflected in our preaching and our teaching—in the seminary classroom and church.

This edition begins with a sermon by Gregory K. Hollifield, who asks if Christians are awake to the gospel as it energizes social justice. Hollifield begins by his own awakening to God's call for social justice in the prayer of John Stott, the legendary—and instructive—evangelical voice of a past generation. Hollifield explores Mark 12:41-14:9 to discover what it means for God's people to be an awakened people.

The sermon is followed by an essay by Matthew D. Kim on "the hidden and overt prejudice that has been exacerbated as a byproduct of the COVID-19 crisis resulting in myriad forms of racism, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, bigotry, hate crimes, murder, racial injustice, and more—in society and even in the church." Kim's straightforward piece will challenge and sensitize readers to address the matter of racism head on. After defining terms, he offers "seven ways that preachers, pastors, and church leaders can respond to prejudice, xenophobia, racial injustice, and racism in our proclamation." These seven elements are instructive for any preacher and teacher of preaching—and for one's listeners, too.

Next, Jesse L. Nelson provides a practical theology of preaching on racism. Here, Nelson addresses the "why and how we should preach on racism." In addition, Nelson outlines a sermon series on which he preached about this very topic, providing readers with fodder for future sermons on racism while modeling an approach to the topic. The writer urges that all preachers—no matter what race—have the responsibility to preach on racism and to let congregations know that the Bible speaks against racism.

Jared E. Alcántara explores the impact of racism on seminarians of color and makes important considerations for the classroom. Alcántara carefully examines what he terms as "flashpoints" of racialization (invisibility, caricature, and taxation) that ethnic minorities experience. The article discusses a helpful way forward for teachers of preachers as they engage their students in the classroom.

In his investigation of Ephesians 2:11-22, Abraham Kuruvilla details "the significance of this glorious plan for the constitution of the church." This passage sermon-study provides an encouraging word in times like these. As Kuruvilla notes, "Right now, everything is broken, undone, chaotic. But one day, in God's grand design, everything is going to be integrated, harmonized, and aligned to Christ, the unifying end of the cosmos. The entire universe, both its heavenly and its earthly dimensions—from black holes to badgers, from nebulas to nightingales, from trans-galactic forces to intermolecular forces,

from planets to potatoes—everything is being administered. arranged, harmonized, consummated in Christ. This is the grand design of God, the zenith of creation. What a day that will be!"

Next, Stephen Tu considers the term, ANA (Asian North American), and explores an alternative understanding to the definition, noting that ANA encompasses a much larger group of people who face the challenges of racism and racialization, than perhaps previously considered. He suggests that preachers would be better served by avoiding generalizations by being solid cultural exegetes.

Heather Joy Zimmerman, a Ph.D. student at Wheaton College (team leader and researcher for Docent Research Group) and member of the Board of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, examines "how a biblical hamartiology involves viewing sin as a ruling power and as both individual and societal acts of rebellion against God." She urges that preaching can demonstrate an awareness of sin ("a holistic view of sin") thus allowing the church to engage in conversation about race. Her insights will help readers to address the varied elements of this important topic.

Lastly, the final sermon is from Benjamin C. Crelin, the 2019 Haddon W. Robinson Biblical Preaching Award recipient. Crelin develops the sermon based on Matthew 20:1-16, "Workers in the Vineyard: The Meritocracy of God." Crelin most recently completed a master's degree at the University of Edinburgh.

Preaching on race, racism, prejudice, ethnocentrism, xenophobia and other aspects of racialization are at the front of our thinking at present. The challenge for us as preachers and teachers of preaching—especially those of my majority culture colleagues—is that although the issue of race may wane from our field of vision, it is constantly in view for our brothers and sisters of color.

Can we not thoughtfully, prayerfully, even courageously, with the urgency of the gospel, explore together ways that we can make our preaching and even the teaching of preaching a hospitable practice of grace for all ethnicities, now and in the future as we pass from this pandemic to what is yet to come?

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ARE YOU AWAKE?

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Mark 12:41–14:9

INTRODUCTION

Typically, sermons begin with a prayer for illumination and end with a prayer for application. The preacher starts by asking God to open hearers' eyes and hearts to receive His word for the day, then concludes by asking Him to do His part and help hearers do their part to apply that word in today's world. This morning, I'm reversing that order.

I recently came across a prayer for social justice that continues to echo in my head. Call it an ear worm, a soul worm, or whatever you like, but it goes like this: *Righteous Lord God, you love justice and hate evil, and you care for the weak, vulnerable, needy, and the oppressed. Bless our country and its leaders with the wisdom of righteousness and peace. May they secure the right of protection for the unborn, equality of educational opportunities for the young, work for the unemployed, health care for the sick, and food for the hungry. Help management and labor to cooperate for the common good, giving honest work and receiving a fair wage. Deliver our land from all tribal, social, and religious strife, and make our national life more pleasing in your holy sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

I've been unable to get this prayer out of my head for three reasons. The first is its timeliness. Unless you've been living under a rock, you're aware of the ongoing social unrest that's shaking our nation to its core. Cries for social justice and for people of all stripes to wake up to the plight of our Black

neighbors especially are ringing from shore to shore. Yet strangely, this prayer was not voiced by an American believer in recent weeks but by the British Anglican priest John Stott who died in 2011. His prayer, therefore, is not only timely but timeless.

The second aspect of this prayer that has arrested me is its breadth. So much of what we hear about social justice today focuses almost exclusively on the rights of one racial or sexual minority or another. Little to nothing is said about justice for the unborn of all colors, poor people from the racial majority, or for both management and labor in the global marketplace. This prayer speaks to all these concerns and more.

Third, I haven't been able to escape how Stott relates all these facets of social justice back to the character of God, who loves justice, hates evil, and cares for "the least of these." Clearly, this is a prayer born out of no political agenda but a thoroughly biblical and richly theological vision.

Wherever racism, sexism, tribalism, classism, ageism, and all the other isms which Stott did not think to mention are tolerated, if not encouraged, social ***in***justice will abound. Until all these isms are no more, there will be no true social justice. If you agree, if you are like what I believe to be the majority of spiritually mature followers of Jesus in this hour, you may be asking, "But what can I do about it? Society was shattered when Adam fell way back in the Garden of Eden," you may say. You'd be right, of course. Adam blamed the woman whom God gave him for his transgression—two scapegoats in one sentence. Eve deflected her share of the blame, pointing an accusatory finger at her environment and the serpent there. Thus, both of our first parents denied their personal responsibility for their society's well-being and their injustice that resulted in its dissolution. So, I can understand you asking, "What can I do but look forward to Jesus' return, when He'll heal all our fractures and mete out perfect justice to all?" I have two words for you: "Wake up!"

Long before "woke" became a popular twenty-first century watchword, with a nineteenth century origin, describing an awareness of issues concerning social and racial justice, Jesus

commanded His disciples to "stay awake!" in Mark 13:33-37 (*read text*).

If you are reading that passage from the King James or New International versions, the imperative there is to "watch" or "be on guard." The problem with those translations is they mask the distinction between two different Greek words used by Jesus in this chapter. He uses the word *blepo*, which is also translated "watch" or "take heed" in verses 5, 9, 23, and 33. But the word He uses in verses 34, 35, and 37 is *gregorio* (from which my first name, Gregory, is taken). It means to "be alert" or, as the English Standard Version renders the present imperative, "stay awake!" *God's people are to be an awakened people.*

AWAKENED PEOPLE ARE AWAKE TO HISTORY (13:1-23)

It had been a full day of controversy in the Temple's courts (Mark 12). Jesus and His twelve disciples were heading out when one of His men tried drawing His attention to the magnificent stones out of which that temple was constructed. Maybe it had just dawned upon the fellow how impressive that temple actually was. Herod began its reconstruction in 19 B.C. and had seen most of it finished by his death in 4 B.C., though the work was ongoing throughout Jesus' ministry and did not end until the 60s. "What wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings," indeed! But it's more likely that the unnamed disciple said what he did as an attempt to get Jesus' mind off of all that day's unpleasantness. If that was what he meant to do, it didn't work.

Jesus answered, *Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.* That unexpected reply, as shocking as it was, shut everyone's mouth until they were outside the city. There, sitting down for a rest, Peter, Andrew, James, and John went to Jesus privately to inquire when that destruction would happen. To their minds the Temple was God's house, and if the Temple were to be destroyed, it would surely be the end of the world.

From verses 5 through 23 Jesus tells them what it will be like before that day comes. His answer is as confusing to us today

as His prediction of the Temple's destruction was confounding to Peter, his brother, and their friends. Biblical scholars have puzzled over these verses for two thousand years, trying to tease out which of the events described here were to take place before the Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. and which ones are to take place in the future before Jesus returns.

Personally, I believe our Lord was being purposefully vague. He wanted His disciples then, just as He wants us now, to be awake to the history in which each of us lives. One of the wonderous things about history is it's made every moment of every day. We only recognize the significance of those moments after they've passed, *if then*.

Brooks Adams kept a diary from his boyhood days and on through the years that followed. One day when he was eight years old he wrote in his diary, "Went fishing with my father; the most glorious day of my life." Brooks' father was an important man — Charles Francis Adams — the United States Ambassador to Great Britain under the Lincoln administration. Interestingly, he too had made a note in his diary about that fishing trip. He wrote simply, "Went fishing with my son; a day wasted." Charles had missed it.

Wonder how many people who rode that bus in Montgomery, Alabama on December 1, 1955, and arrived home later that night for supper gave a second thought to that Black woman who refused to give up her seat to a White man? Rosa Parks was making history right before their eyes, but they didn't appreciate it until after the fact.

We romanticize and idealize history. We like to imagine that if we had been alive back when those things we read about in the history books took place, we would have realized their significance. We would have jumped in, joined the good guys, and done the right thing. In that way we're like people who believe in past lives. They invariably believe they were someone famous in an earlier time—Julius Caesar, Madame Curie, or Marilyn Monroe. But the truth is most people lead very ordinary lives and pass through history without realizing it, much less impacting it.

The Christian life is meant to be lived out in the rough and tumble of our everyday world. Every second that passes is another tick on God's alarm clock to Christ's any-minute-now return. Awakened people are awake to this fact. They are awake to their historical moment.

AWAKENED PEOPLE ARE AWAKE TO ESCHATOLOGY (13:24-27)

Jesus' discourse in this so-called "little apocalypse" moves from the time preceding His return to His return itself in verses 24 through 27 (*read text*).

The sun, moon, and stars are common biblical metaphors for this world's authorities. The convulsions of those celestial bodies are common apocalyptic imagery for sociopolitical upheavals. Until Jesus returns, earth's powers will continue to come and go. Empires will rise and fall. The old king dies; the new king rises; and the people will chant, "Long live the king!" History is cyclical like that, but it is not circular.

History is linear. It's moving towards a terminus, an end. That's what eschatology is all about—the end. At some definite point in the future, Jesus will return in power. He will send forth His angels to gather His elect from wherever they reside on this earth, whatever their station in life, and whoever they are or aren't in this world's estimation. People who don't know that, forget it, or otherwise fail to order their lives by that coming end invariably waste their seventy to eighty years here chasing the wind. That's how the preacher saw it when he wrote in Ecclesiastes 1:14 of the Amplified Bible, *I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity, a striving after the wind and a feeding on wind.*

The American dream? Wind. Beauty? Wind. Fame? Wind. Your social pedigree? Wind. Your social position? Wind. Your social power? Wind. The poet reminds us: "Only one life; twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last." Similarly, the hymnist invites to sing: "On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other

ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking sand." Awakened people are awake to the end that's coming.

AWAKENED PEOPLE ARE AWAKE TO THEIR PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY (13:28-37)

Living in this moment of history and looking forward to the moment of Christ's return, how now should we live? That's the question Jesus answers in verses 28 through 37 (*read text*).

There's a balance here that you must maintain. On the one hand, you need to pay attention to the signs of the times, this moment in history which God has appointed you to live while anticipating Christ's return (vv. 28-30). On the other, you shouldn't waste this moment speculating on things no one knows for sure, like the day and hour of that return. Instead, be that worker who responsibly goes about his duties while his boss is away (vv. 32-37). Do what you can, while you can, where you are. That's how you'll impact both history and eternity.

What does that look like, practically speaking? Mark 13 is bookended by the accounts of two unnamed women, which is itself significant given the patriarchal society in which they lived. The first was a widow who did what she could when she dropped two coins, her last, into the offering box. She was poor, but she was not so poor that she couldn't give to the praise of her God and in service to her fellow man. For this, Jesus exalted her (12:41-44).

The second woman in 14:3-9 was wealthy, at least to the extent that she owned a bottle of precious perfume that cost as much as a full year's wages. She quietly entered the room where Jesus was dining one evening and, without fanfare or warning, poured it all on Jesus' head. Indignation filled the hearts of some sitting nearby. "That money could have been given to the poor," they hissed.

"But Jesus," says Mark. "But Jesus." Jesus doesn't always see things like everyone else. Jesus sees what most people miss. Jesus didn't fault the woman for having owned such an extravagant luxury in a sea of poverty, nor did He deny that the

poor should be looked after. Rather, He praised for her doing what He called "a beautiful thing" to Him, praised her for doing "what she could" in that unique historical moment, and declared that for this lone act she would never be forgotten.

I once knew a young White pastor who served an all-White congregation in the deep south. One year he decided to invite a Black pastor, a former classmate of his, to preach in his church's annual revival services. (Do you remember those?) As far as he knew, no Black preacher had ever stood in his church's pulpit. He realized this would be a historic moment in the life of that body, one that might create some problems for him, but he decided it was the right thing to do and determined that he would not to make a big deal of it. He printed the promotional poster with his friend's name and picture, tacked it to the bulletin board in the foyer, and announced the services like he would any other. No one said a word, which could have been a good sign or a bad one. He would know later.

The weekend campaign began on a Friday night and ended on Sunday afternoon with a potluck fellowship. As the men talked and the ladies began collecting their bowls of leftovers to take back home, the young pastor was pulled aside by two teenage brothers whose family attended the church. They had been members of other churches across the years but were now there in his. On those occasions when the boys came with their parents, including their dad—a retired Alabama cop, it often seemed they did so against their will. It was therefore highly unusual that they together sought him out for a private word. The younger spoke for them both. "We just wanted to tell you that we thought it was really cool that you would have your friend to come preach here like that. In all the churches we've attended, we've never seen a White preacher invite in a Black preacher. It took guts." His brother nodded, and they were off. That young pastor stood there thinking, hoping, this was something they would never forget. He knew he wouldn't.

CONCLUSION

What will it take for John Stott's prayer for social justice to be fulfilled, for Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream to be realized? It will take us, just us, each and every one of us doing what we can, while we can, wherever we are to live out the implications of our hope in Jesus. And to do that, our eyes must be open. We must stay awake.

Before Mark 14 ends, Jesus comes to His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane and finds them asleep—not once, not twice, but three times! As it was then, so it is now. The hour is late. The land is dark, but dawn is near. Are you awake? God's people are to be an awakened people.

Lord, open our eyes, and keep them open, that we might see. For Jesus' sake and for justice's sake, amen.

PREACHING IN A PERIOD OF PANDEMIC AND PREJUDICE

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INTRODUCTION

It feels like we are living in an alternate universe. Is this really happening? When will we resume normal life as we knew it? When will churches regather without restrictions? When will we be able to enjoy Christian community such as fellowship meals again? When will we stop preaching to a faceless webcam? When will we stop wearing masks? Echoing the Psalmist, we ask, "How long, O Lord, how long?" These questions have played back over and over in my mind since the COVID-19 pandemic took over our lives in Spring of 2020.

This brief essay is not by any means an academic treatise. I will not be providing helpful sources in the endnotes. In fact, my writing style will be more conversational. Rather, the purpose of this article is to address candidly the hidden and overt prejudice that has been exacerbated as a byproduct of the COVID-19 crisis resulting in myriad forms of racism, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, bigotry, hate crimes, murder, racial injustice, and more—in society and even in the church. We are a nation and world that is on edge. We are stressed and stretched out like never before. We are gratuitously paranoid of others. We have been conditioned by COVID-19 to distrust anyone and everyone. We have lost the ability to smile and exhibit social graces toward others. This has spawned heightened levels of fear, suspicion, anxiety, hatred, and even anger toward others erupting in explosive forms of prejudiced and racist behaviors.

How do we preach in this period of pandemic and prejudice? I would like to offer seven ways that preachers, pastors, and church leaders can respond to prejudice, xenophobia, racial injustice, and racism in our proclamation. While not exhaustive, my aim is to help us consider our own culpability, to lead us toward confession and repentance, and to demonstrate sermonic leadership for our congregations in combating racism and racial injustice. First, let me begin by defining some terms and then we will walk through some considerations and raise questions for how we can respond as pastors and preachers of God's Word to our present situation.

DEFINING OUR TERMS

In such a short article, we will not have space to unpack each of the terms mentioned above. However, we will focus on three primary terms: prejudice, xenophobia, and racism. These words are often used interchangeably in our culture even while their meanings and nuances reveal some marked differences. Here is a quick definition of terms as employed in this essay:

Prejudice—The etymology is clear that prejudice means judging a person or proceeding to make judgments (-judice) without prior knowledge (-pre) of the individual. This can take the form of assumptions made about him or her which are often based on stereotypes. For example, I will act as the case study. If you meet a person for the first time who is of Asian descent, like myself, what are your initial thoughts about me without prior knowledge? Perhaps you assume (pre-judice) that I don't speak English or that I was not born in the United States or make the determination that I should speak a language from an Asian culture based on my appearance. This is prejudice. You have predetermined certain aspects about my life without prior knowledge and background. This is a modest form of prejudice.

Xenophobia—Elsewhere, I have explained xenophobia in the following way: "*xenophobia* . . . is the Latin way of saying, literally,

'the fear [*phobia*] of Others [*xeno*-].' More precisely, a common definition of xenophobia is the 'fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange or foreign.'"[1] In our dominant culture, the United States has historically marginalized those who sought immigration from other countries that were considered "strange," "foreign," or "different." Such races, ethnicities, cultures, and religions include: Natives, Africans, Hispanics, Arabs, Mexicans, Asians (particularly Chinese, Filipinos, Indians, Japanese, and Koreans), European immigrants notedly of Polish, Irish, Italian ancestry and others, as well as persons of religious faiths such as Jews and Muslims. Our current COVID-19 crisis has legitimized the hate crimes, toxic rhetoric, and xenophobic treatment of Americans of particularly Chinese and East Asian descent.

Racism—In *The Color of Compromise*, Jemar Tisby offers two different ways to view the concept of racism. Borrowing from Beverly Daniel Tatum, Tibsy explains:

> racism is a system of oppression based on race. Notice Tatum's emphasis on system oppression. Racism can operate through impersonal systems and not simply through the malicious words and actions of individuals. Another definition explains racism as *prejudice plus power*. It is not only personal bigotry toward someone of a different race that constitutes racism; rather, racism includes the imposition of bigoted ideas on groups of people.[2]

Race is often described by sociologists as a social construct. It allowed members of the dominant culture to discriminate between who were the insiders and the outsiders. It predetermined the haves and the have nots. Tisby's second definition of "prejudice plus power" addresses one of the chief concerns about racism which has prolonged the economic and racial inequities and injustices in society. We must remember that racism is both individual and systemic. While much more could be articulated by way of definitions, I will now move forward to

discuss seven steps for preachers to communicate in this period of pandemic and prejudice using the acronym RESPOND.

RECOGNIZE THAT RACISM, XENOPHOBIA, AND PREJUDICE ARE REAL (EVEN IN US)

The conversation we are engaging in is a difficult one. It makes people uncomfortable to talk about race and racism. It is easy to become defensive. We assume that Christians are exempt from racist, xenophobic, and prejudiced thoughts and behaviors. "I love my neighbor"; "I have black, brown, white, or Asian friends"; and "I'm not racist" are often the reactions when this topic arises. Therefore, allow me to initiate the conversation with these confessions: I am a racist. I have been prejudiced many times throughout various seasons of my life. And I have been fearful of others in my worst moments and even in some of my best moments.

May I encourage you to take a moment to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal moments in your past and present that showcase a racist, prejudiced, and xenophobic heart? Next, consider your church family. How have we treated those who don't look like us? Do we even know? Maybe we have never thought to ask. In our preaching, have we ever spent time considering those who sit on the margins in terms of their worship style? Have we ever asked how they might interpret a Scripture text? Do we know what are the homiletical best practices for them in terms of illustrations and application?

EMPATHIZE WITH OTHERS (PUT YOURSELF IN THE SHOES OF OTHERS)

My memory persists and does not fail me when I think about how many times I have visited a church where I'm a visible minority and have been either given mean looks or completely ignored. Do we know what it's like to be marginalized, ostracized, ignored, or made to feel unwelcome? Put yourself in the shoes of Others—those who don't look like you, think like

you, dress like you, worship like you, theologize like you, etc. In our preaching, do we empathize with Others (consider all aspects of their lives, their joys and hardships) or do we expect them to assimilate and become like us in order to fit into our church's life and as listeners to our sermons? Take some time this week to put yourself in the shoes of one of your visible minorities (race, ethnicity, gender, class, etc.). How would we feel if we never heard a sermon illustration or application that was relevant for our cultural context and crafted to speak into our culture? What if I was always expected to conform and assimilate and never have my cultural context acknowledged let alone celebrated?

SIN TO CONFESS (IN OUR BEST AND WORST MOMENTS, CONFESS TO GOD AND TO OTHERS THAT WE ARE RACISTS AND SEEK TO TURN FROM OUR SIN

As stated earlier, I am a racist and I struggle with racist thoughts and behaviors. How do I know? Ask yourself a series of questions: 1) Have I ever thought or spoken a racial slur against someone? 2) Have I ever looked down on someone and thought less of them because of their race or skin color? 3) Have I ever assumed the worst in someone based on their physical appearance or skin color? 4) Have I ever assumed that I should be in a position of authority/leadership over someone based on what they look like? 5) Have I ever be filled with pride in thinking I'm so glad God did not make me like him or her? The litmus test of racism reaches far wider than these five questions. I boldly make the assumption that we have all answered yes to one or all five of these questions. If so, we have sin to confess before God and before others. The sin of pride and the sin of prejudice run deep in our sinful nature. Even from the pulpit, we can preach a series on confessing the sin of racism in our congregations. Challenge your listeners to consider their sins and to confess them regularly.

PROTECT RECIPENTS OF PREJUDICE (TALK ABOUT IT AND CREATE AN ACTION PLAN)

There may be members of your congregation or community who need your protection from racism, ethnocentrism, and prejudice. Do you know who these individuals and families are? As a congregation on a macro-level and in your leadership meetings and small group gatherings on a micro-level, find ways to share about the challenges of those who are experiencing prejudice in your midst. Bring them into the conversation and let them educate you on the various ways they have felt excluded, marginalized, and discriminated against in society and even in your church. If you open the discussion channels, do not be surprised when you hear the testimony of their experiences. They may be recent immigrants, refugees, black and brown folks, but also fourth generation Asian Americans who were born in this country but always assumed to be a "foreigner" and told to go back to China or some other assumed Asian country. *Time* Magazine recently featured an article from ten Asian American voices on the amped up discrimination toward Asian Americans particularly during the COVID crisis.[3] Talk about the issues and then create an action plan on what can be done to protect the visible minorities in our congregations and communities.

OPEN YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS (TO OTHERS' PERSPECTIVES)

Currently, in our society, there is a lack of respect and empathy toward those who are different from us and those who hold different views. From the pulpit, one of the areas of wisdom that we can preach on more regularly is offering sage words on how to respect those who are different from us whether in personhood, beliefs, or actions. Show the congregation from the Scriptures how God calls his people to interact with those who are unlike ourselves and to open our hearts and minds to listen to their perspectives. Especially as it relates to topics such as racism, immigration, and justice, challenge your congregation to

read authors of varied skin colors. Encourage them to befriend someone of a different race and ethnicity. Advocate for a posture of listening rather than speaking. Allow those who are hurting to share their laments, frustrations, and anger.

NEEDS OF OTHERS REQUIRE OUR SERVICE (REFRAIN FROM INSULAR THINKING)

Especially in this season of COVID-19, we are living in a time of grave insularity. Isolated in our homes, we are increasingly numb to the pain and harsh realities of those around us. Rather than be externally-minded, we have become increasingly internally-focused thinking mainly of our needs, our health, and our safety. We want to remind our hearers of the importance to seek out the needs of others who may need our assistance in various aspects of life. Has our congregation lost sight of missions, evangelism, discipleship, and tangible care for the least of these?

DECLARE AND DEFEND THE GOSPEL (THE GOSPEL OF JESUS: HIS PERFECT, SACRIFICIAL LIFE, DEATH, BURIAL, RESURRECTION, ASCENSION, AND RETURN ARE WHAT ENABLE US TO RESPOND)

Last, but not least, declare the Gospel regularly and defend it. Over the last ten or so years, there has been a surplus of books attempting to define what the Gospel is.[4] Well-intentioned as they are, many of these authors have argued that the Gospel is social justice, the Gospel is fighting racism, the Gospel is defending the rights of Dreamers, the Gospel is fighting abortion, the Gospel is immigration reform, the Gospel is Black Lives Matter, and more. I am sorry to write that these statements are erroneous. They are not the Gospel. They are simply implications and applications of the Gospel. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is God's plan of redeeming the world from sin through Jesus' perfect, sacrificial life, his death on the cross, his burial in a tomb, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension to Heaven and his

impending return. The Gospel of Jesus is found and fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus. It should not be confused with the implications and applications of the Gospel. The Gospel of Jesus is what enables us to pursue a love for humanity and for the Other.

CONCLUSION

In this brief essay, I have attempted merely to open our spiritual eyes to the delicate subjects of prejudice, racism, and ethnocentrism. The COVID-19 pandemic has not worsened these attitudes, behaviors, and structures. Rather, as others have observed, they have only brought them to wider consciousness. Preaching in a period of pandemic and prejudice has been exhausting for many. With empty church buildings and some professing Christians no longer attending worship services even online,[5] we are eerily reminded of Jesus' words in Luke 18:8 when he asks, "However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

During this pandemic, it feels as if Christianity, the public worship of God, and gospel witness have been put on pause. It feels as if Satan is winning. It feels like we may never recover from COVID-19. One of the ways pastors and preachers can lead the charge is to repent and confess our sin of racism/prejudice to the Lord and to each other. We must seek to put an end to fear, discrimination, hatred, and violence toward the Other. I challenge you not to let this historic moment pass by. Do not avoid preaching and teaching on racism, prejudice, ethnocentrism, and xenophobia due to people-pleasing or the fear of listeners' responses. Listen to the sermons of other biblical preachers. Through trial and error, teach your students the best practices of preaching on race and racism. While we may not be able to curtail these sins throughout the entire world, we can seek to mitigate prejudice in our place and time—with God's help, grace, and mercy and for his glory.

NOTES

1. See Matthew D. Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 47.
2. Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 16.
3. Anna Purna Kambhampaty, "'I Will Not Stand Silent.' 10 Asian Americans Reflect on Racism During the Pandemic and the Need for Equality," *Time Magazine*, June 25, 2020. https://time.com/5858649/racism-coronavirus/
4. See, for example, Richard Stearns, *The Hole in Our Gospel: What Does God Expect of Us?* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010).
5. "One in Three Practicing Christians Has Stopped Attending Church During COVID-19," *Faith and Christianity in State of the Church 2020*, July 8, 2020. https://www.barna.com/research/new-sunday-morning-part-2/

NO LONGER SILENT: A PRACTICAL THEOLOGY FOR PREACHING ON RACISM

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INTRODUCTION

On May 25th, George Floyd, an African American, breathed his last breaths with a knee on his neck. Despite Floyd's cries for his mother and saying he could not breathe, Derek Chauvin, now former Minneapolis Police Officer held his knee on Floyd's neck for seven to nine minutes until Floyd stopped breathing. As devastating as it was to see George Floyd's lifeless body in the street, it was heartbreaking to know three other officers did not intervene to stop Chauvin's illegal and excessive use of force. George Floyd could be alive today if those officers would have interceded on his behalf. However, Floyd died because they did not speak up for him. Many African Americans feel as if America has a knee on their necks while those with an authoritative voice stand by and watch in silence.

As an African American affiliated with several evangelical groups, I am greatly disappointed in the silence of the evangelical voice regarding the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and the systemic racism[1] that continues to oppress many African Americans. I am disheartened because the evangelical voice is loud and clear in speaking up for the rights of an unborn child but seem to be unheard when African American men and women are fighting for the right to live. Many evangelicals complain about the protesting, rioting, and looting throughout the nation, but they say nothing about the shootings

in those same communities. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."[2] This statement brings a question to mind, that is, are you guilty of being silent? The sins of racism and injustice perpetuate in our congregations, classrooms, communities, and circles of influence because some of us are silent and refuse to preach against those evils. Some evangelical pastors and preachers have told me they want to speak up but do not know what to say or preach. In this essay, I provide a practical theology of preaching on racism by answering the why and how we should preach on racism. I also share a sermon series I preached on racism to demonstrate theology in practice. I hope this essay will provide inspiration and ideas for preaching on racism so that we are *no longer silent* about this sin. The Bible speaks against racism and we should too.[3]

PREACHING ON RACISM—A PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

What did you or your pastor preach on the Sunday, May 31st? This Sunday was the first Sunday after George Floyd's death. Was it a sermon on racism? Why or Why not? Why do some evangelicals not preach on racism? Some evangelical preachers have told me they do not preach on racism because they are uncertain of what to say or preach. Others have told me they do not want to be "misunderstood and say the wrong thing." I believe others are fearful of being terminated from their position by their congregations or school administration.

Why should we preach on racism? We should preach on racism because our congregations need to hear God's perspective on this divisive issue. We should preach on racism to interject the Christian voice into the global conversation, which is often facilitated by individuals, groups, or organizations without a Christian conscience. Preaching on racism will demonstrate unity within the Kingdom of God because we can all share in condemning this sin. Preaching on racism will encourage our congregations and student bodies by knowing their leadership is

sympathetic towards the racism, discrimination, and injustice experienced by African Americans—and other people of color.

How do we preach on racism? When preaching on racism, one must acknowledge the fact that racism exists today. Racism is the belief that one race is superior over another race. These beliefs may be conscious or unconscious; however, the beliefs are manifested through power, influence, position, and communication by rejecting, marginalizing, or oppressing people of another race.[4] Racism is real and lives in the heart of many citizens throughout our nation and in our local communities and churches. Racism is sinful, and we must preach against this sin. Before calling out this sin in the lives of others, preachers must be introspective and rid ourselves of any hint of racism in our hearts and minds.

When preaching on racism, sermons must be biblical. The points and principles should be derived from a theological, historical, cultural, and exegetical study of Scripture. When preaching on racism, sermons should be practical. Preachers have to include "how-to" and "what's next" applications for their listeners. Sermons on racism should be culturally sensitive. We must know our hearers and their vernacular. When preaching on racism, sermons should have prophetic undertones. We must condemn racism as sin and diabolical.

PREACHING ON RACISM—THEOLOGY IN PRACTICE

After watching the death of George Floyd and hearing the outcry of Black America and my community, I felt God encourage me to preach a series of prophetic messages on racism. Instead of continuing with my sermon series from Psalm 34, I began a new sermon series on May 31st, the first Sunday after George Floyd's death. My first sermon was "I'm Angry" from Ephesians 4:26-27. I gave my congregation three steps for dealing with their anger caused by past and present acts of racism and injustice.

First, we must realize we are angry. Second, we should release our anger in a healthy way. Third, we should reconcile with our offender.

My second sermon was "Being Black is not a Curse" from Genesis 9. Some African Americans believe God cursed our race; therefore, subjugating us to white oppression in America. The idea of being cursed generates hopelessness because some African Americans believe suppression is their destiny. However, this message offered my congregation hope. The main point of the sermon was that being Black is not a curse because God did not curse us. I shared a few theological, historical, cultural, and exegetical observations from Genesis 9 to eradicate the erroneous theology called the "curse of Ham."

First, Noah did not curse Ham. Noah cursed Canaan the son of Ham, which means Noah did not curse *all* the descendants of Ham, just Canaan. Benjamin M. Palmer, a Presbyterian theologian and pastor in the 1800s, relied on the "curse of Ham" to justify American slavery.[5] Noah cursed Canaan not Ham; therefore, Palmer's claim is unjustified. Second, Canaan was to serve his brothers, that is, Mizraim, Put, and Cush, not his uncles Japheth and Shem. Third, the "land of Canaan" was in the Middle East not Africa, so there was no curse on any of the African nations. Fourth, God did not curse Blacks. Although Noah cursed Canaan, Noah's curse was powerless because God did not sanction the curse. A few members of my congregation who are in their late sixties and early seventies told me they thought Blacks were cursed because that is what they were told in the past but this message broke the psychological curse which they lived under for their entire life.

My next message was a two-part message entitled "How Jesus Fixed Racism." The sermon for part one was based on an exposition of Ephesians 2:11-22. The main point of this sermon was that Jesus fixed the problem of racism by uniting us as one family under God. I noted three truths from these verses. First, Jesus united us with His blood. Second, Jesus united us by removing the wall of division. Third, Jesus united us by making us fellow heirs of God's kingdom.

The sermon for part two was based on John 4:4-42. From these verses I identified five principles for racial reconciliation:

1. We must cross the lines of racial divide. Racism will continue to exist if we segregate our society by restricting certain groups of people from certain places.
2. We must start conversations to address the issue. Our conversations should begin with simple introductory matters then move towards the tough issue of racism.
3. We must call out sin. Racism is a sin that must be called out. We say love your neighbor as yourself, but do we ever say it is a sin if you do not love your neighbor as yourself?
4. We must find common ground. We are divided politically, racially, and religiously, but the cross of Christ is the common ground for every Christian.
5. We must come to Jesus. We must preach the gospel of truth and liberation. We must lift up Jesus to overcome racism because he will draw all men unto him from every race and culture.

The final message in my racism series was from Luke 10:25-37 entitled "Who is My Neighbor?" I made the following applications. First, our neighbors do not always look like us. Second, our neighbors are not limited to those who live beside us. Third, our neighbors are those who show us compassion.

CONCLUSION

Have you preached on racism? Do you plan to preach on racism? Will you be no longer silent? Racism cannot be ignored. As oracles of God, we must denounce the fruits of racism, hate, and discrimination harvested in our communities and fed to future generations through some of our homes, churches, and schools. Racism is a sin that can only be eradicated by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Woe to us if we do not preach the gospel of truth and liberation.

> Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak

> with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. And we must rejoice as well, for surely this is the first time in our nation's history that a significant number of its religious leaders have chosen to move beyond the prophesying of smooth patriotism to the high grounds of a firm dissent based upon the mandates of conscience and the reading of history. Perhaps a new spirit is rising among us. If it is, let us trace its movement, and pray that our inner being may be sensitive to its guidance. For we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us.[6]

NOTES

1. Tony Evans, "Systemic Racism," 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7Rq78jFiJg (accessed 30 July 2020).
2. Martin Luther King Jr., "On the Future," https://mlk.wsu.edu/about-dr-king/famous-quotes/ (accessed 28 August 2020).
3. Genesis 1:27, Malachi 2:10, Luke 10:25-37, John 4:4-42, Acts 10:28-35, Romans 10:12-13, Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 2:11-22, Colossians 3:11, and Revelation 5:9-10.
4. Tony Evans and Trevin Wax, "Discuss Race in America—Part 2," 2020 https://lifewayvoices.com/culture-current-events/dr-tony-evans-and-trevin-wax-discuss-race-in-america-part-2/ (accessed 27 August 2020).
5. Stephen R. Hayes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (Oxford University Press, 2007), v.
6. Martin Luther King Jr., "Beyond Vietnam," 1967, https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/beyond-vietnam (accessed 28 August 2020).

"I CAN'T BREATHE": THE ADVERSE IMPACT OF RACIALIZATION ON SEMINARIANS OF COLOR AND ITS IMPORT FOR THE HOMILETICS CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I explore the adverse impact of racialization on seminarians of color, and I consider its implications for the homiletics classroom. First, I define and describe racialization. Then, I identify three "flashpoints" of racialization—invisibility, caricature, and taxation—experienced by racial and ethnic minorities in general and seminarians of color in particular. To conclude, I recommend a way forward that assists homileticians in the task of dismantling racialization's adverse impact in the classrooms where they teach and the seminaries where they serve.

INTRODUCTION

"Something in me broke when George Floyd died," the seminarian told me in a one-on-one meeting early in the summer of 2020. "Our seniors are discouraged. Our teenagers are mad, scared, or both. We're struggling! I think what hurts the most is all the time I spend on social media coaching white Christians who use the Bible to justify violence. They're supposed to be my friends." Houston native George Floyd died by suffocation in

Minneapolis, Minnesota, in May 2020 at the hands of a White police officer who kneeled on his neck for 8 minutes and 43 seconds as onlookers recorded the event. As Floyd lay there dying, witnesses could hear him calling out for his deceased mother to come to his aid and repeatedly saying, "I can't breathe. I can't breathe."[1] For a nation, yet another story of racism's persistent daggers, of a never-healing societal wound that Jim Wallis refers to as "America's original sin."[2] For a professor, yet another story shared by a seminarian of color struggling to remain resilient before racist violence and systemic injustice, and White Christian obliviousness to the pain. Too many stories to count.

How does one address a topic like racism, one that is so vast in scope, so historically fraught, and so painful to so many people? In the case of a hemorrhage, where does one begin? For a subject this big in an article this small, let me recommend the following delimitation: we place this topic into dialogue with the spaces in which we operate and the people with whom we interact the most, namely, the seminaries where we serve and the seminarians that we teach.

Thus, in this article, I will describe the adverse impact of *racialization* on seminarians of color and its import for the contemporary homiletics classroom. By seminarians of color, I mean students from minoritized communities in North America, usually (but not always) from the three largest racial-ethnic groups: Asian American, African American, and Latinx. First, I will define racialization as a socially-constructed process, one that renders significant the categories of race and ethnicity at both the conscious and unconscious level and the microlevel and macrolevel. Then, after unpacking the term, I will identify three "flashpoints"—invisibility, caricature, and taxation—three descriptors that highlight its negative impact on seminarians of color. Then, in the final section of this article, I will commend a way forward for homiletics professors, a provisional roadmap, if you will, that assists them in dismantling racialization's negative impact on the students that they teach and the seminaries where they serve.

WHAT IS RACIALIZATION?

Beginning in the 1970s, many sociologists started using the term *racialization* to name the process by which race and ethnicity are defined, described, and propagated.[3] A significant moment took place in 1986 when Michael Omi and Howard Winant published *Racial Formation in the United States*.[4] Omi and Winant define racialization as "the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group." Racial meaning, they argue, is a social construction that impacts us at the microlevel in our minds, families, and relationships, while also manifesting itself at the macrolevel in systems, structures, and laws. It develops in "large-scale and small-scale-ways, macro- and micro-socially," that is, in regular quotidian interactions *and* in the "foundation and consolidation of the modern world-system."[5] In the decades since Omi and Winant's seminal study, racialization as a concept has gained broader currency, and its definition and application have also expanded.[6]

For the purposes of this article, I will define racialization as *a socially-constructed process by which individuals, communities, and societies consciously or unconsciously define race and ethnicity, attach meaning to these categories, and inscribe racist attitudes, actions, and structures*. To claim that racism is inscribed does not mean that it can only be inscribed by Whites. Although racism inscribes itself in a particularly insidious way among a significant percentage of those in the majority culture, overtly racist ideas are also propagated *across* minoritized communities, *within* minoritized communities, and *toward* Whites.[7] Racism impacts everyone, albeit different people to different extents. Moreover, the claim that racialization is socially-constructed does not mean that it only exists in our thinking or that it is so subjective as to be elusive. Rather, it points to the following reality: although forms of racialization change as a society redefines acceptable versus unacceptable norms over time, the society itself continues to adhere to a racialized hermeneutic across time.

As an example of racialization's persistent processes in the face of changing norms, consider the three major phases of racist attitudes toward Asian Americans: early caricature in literature as "Celestial Beings" followed by the later label of "Yellow Peril" posing an imminent threat to White immigrant labor followed by the more recent label of "Model Minority" initiated by national periodicals in the 1960s.[8] In each phase, the form of racism changed as did the social construction that determined what was acceptable and unacceptable behavior, but the *process* of defining, meaning-making, and inscription remained the same throughout every phase. The form changed but the process remained.

Just as racialization occurs at the macro and microlevels, so also it takes place at the conscious and unconscious levels.[9] It can be overt or covert, and it impacts different people in different ways. One person might engage in an *overtly* racist act like shouting out a racial slur towards a person of color. In this instance, members of the society have an easier time saying to the offender, "That racist comment has no place in our community," while also standing in solidarity with the victim. However, another person might engage in a *covertly* racist act, one that occurs at the unconscious level, such as clutching her purse when a person of color walks into an elevator. Because the offender performs the action unconsciously, she might protest any accusations from others that her actions were racist, especially if confronted by the victim. She might give different reasons why she did what she did or perhaps argue that the person was in fact mistaken. In covert instances of racism, members of the society have a harder time naming the offense, holding the offender accountable, and believing the victim's account. Because covert racism is so often unconscious, the person who benefits from it can also remain oblivious to it. Moreover, a victim who lacks allies might question whether the event really happened despite near certainty that it did, and the victim might also less likely to trust a community that construes such violations as imagined overreactions. One should not underestimate the amount of pain that covert acts of racism inflicts on victims, especially as these incidents add up over time. Harvard psychologist Alvin

Poussaint, an African American, calls them, "Death by a thousand nicks."[10]

Also, sociologists Michael Emerson and Christian Smith argue that one does not have to be an *overt* racist in order to contribute to a process that inscribes racist attitudes, actions, and structures. They argue that racialization is so "embedded within the normal, everyday operation of institutions that people need not intend their actions to contribute to racial division and inequality for their actions to do so."[11] Beyond an individual person's actions, institutions and structures "reproduce racialization without any need for people to be prejudiced, as defined in the Jim Crow era. In fact, often the leaders in reproducing racialization in the post-Civil Rights era are those who are least prejudiced, as traditionally measured."[12]

To make Emerson and Smith's point more concrete, I will return to the elevator example. The woman who clutches her purse walks away from the incident oblivious to the influence that racialization has had on her attitudes and actions whereas, for the victim, racialization's impact is keenly felt. It impacts the offender at the unconscious level while it impacts the victim at the conscious level.

Let me offer an imperfect analogy to illustrate the difference in impact. We know that different people respond in different ways to allergens or toxic chemicals in the air. A person with a respiratory condition notices the allergens and toxicity in the air immediately not just because he or she is attuned to them, but also because he or she experiences the adverse effects associated with them, symptoms such as shortness of breath, coughing, sneezing, or worse. However, a person without a respiratory condition breathes the same air and says, "What's the big deal? The air is fine. I don't notice anything." Those *without* respiratory symptoms can afford to remain oblivious to the allergens or toxicity in the air, and they can also remain oblivious to the impact that allergens or toxicity in the air has on others. Why? Because the impact is negligible for them. Thus, one person can afford to say, "What's the big deal? The air is fine. I don't notice anything," while the other person says, "I can't breathe."

EXPERIENCES OF RACIALIZATION BY SEMINARIANS OF COLOR

Now that we have defined and described racialization, at least provisionally, we will turn our attention to its disproportionate impact on seminarians of color. To return briefly to the previous analogy, a prior understanding of how racialization works will help us understand why one seminarian might say, "What's the big deal? The air is fine. I don't notice anything," at the same time that a seminarian of color says, "I can't breathe." Since a comprehensive account of racialization's impact on seminarians of color falls outside the scope of this article, I have limited my analysis to three flashpoints in particular: invisibility, caricature, and taxation. These function more like umbrella terms than they do definitive summations, categories that capture prevalent themes but that do not capture every dynamic in the classroom.

Invisibility

First, seminarians of color often use the language of *invisibility* to describe the adverse impact of racialization on their experience of seminary. By invisibility, I mean *the conscious or unconscious erasure of race and ethnicity as meaningful categories and racial-ethnic minorities as visible persons in the planning and execution of courses and curricula*. In academia, one could point to numerous written accounts of invisibility's negative impact on minoritized persons, communities, and structures. For instance, in literature, Ralph Ellison discusses the pain of being made into an "invisible man."[13] Toni Morrison, in her book *The Bluest Eye*, describes a young black girl's experience of invisibility before a White candy store owner who "does not see her, because for him there is nothing to see."[14]

Various theologies have arisen in order to minister to persons and communities that have been rendered invisible by society such as Justo González theology of affirmation in Latinx communities, Sang Hyun Lee's liminal theology for and by

marginalized Asian Americans, or Orlando Costas' theological insistence on following Jesus to the periphery in order to minister to those "outside the gate."[15]

Seminarians of color experience invisibility in a number of different ways. In one class, a professor insists that race or ethnicity have no bearing on matters of biblical interpretation but fails to see how whiteness shapes his hermeneutical framework. In another class, a professor buys into the rhetoric of colorblindness exclaiming to everyone, "I don't see race/ethnicity," a claim that sounds as ludicrous to a student of color as a someone proclaiming, "I don't see gender."[16] In a third class, a professor informs everyone that theologians from Asia or Latin America will not be discussed because there is no viable theology there; only English theology books from a particular perspective translated into these languages count as actual theology.

Now, imagine that each of these incidents occurred in the first semester, perhaps even in the first week. What would the impact be on students' psyches? What would they learn from these episodes? The first professor would teach them that one's race or ethnicity can be checked at the door in the interpretation of Scripture much like hanging a coat on a door hook on entering a room, a claim that runs counter to every other experience in their lives. The second professor would insult their intelligence by claiming not to "see" their race or ethnicity; the professor thinks it is a complement when, in fact, to them it is an insult. Imagine how normal people would respond if someone with authority over them exclaimed, "When I see you, I don't see your gender." The third professor would teach them that the only theology that counts comes from one place, that good theology only happens in the West, in English, and by majority culture writers.

If we take Emerson and Smith at their word that racialization is "embedded within the normal, everyday operation of institutions," then it would also require a willingness to evaluate how racial-ethnic invisibility impacts the designing of courses, planning of curricula, and mapping of

disciplines.[17] In *The Educational Imagination,* Elliott W. Eisner calls the parts of our teaching that we render invisible the "null curriculum," that is, the values and ideas that we teach to others by what we *do not* teach.[18] Usually, our students see the gaps that we do not see, especially in the areas of race, ethnicity, and gender. Moreover, a growing number of them are sharing their frustrations about it on social media. Just look up the hashtag #SyllabusSoWhite. Here are three examples of contributions from earlier in 2020:

- Teaching Atlantic History without Black authors. #SyllabusSoWhite
- Posting MLK on the TL [social media timeline] but #SyllabusSoWhite
- I have so much to say about the course content at [my university] and how whitewashed it was. Out of 50+ courses taken, only two of them assigned books written by non-white authors… #SyllabusSoWhite

Sometimes it takes social media hashtags to wake us up to an important reality: before we ever step foot in a classroom, our syllabi communicate volumes to our students about the sources of knowledge that count, the sources that do not, and the depth of our commitment to teaching *all* of our students and not just some of them.

One can also find incisive commentary on invisibility in formal academic settings. I will mention just one example here. In *A Fire in the Bones: Reflections on African American Religious History,* leading historian Albert J. Raboteau describes the "devastating" impact that invisibility has on Black history, African American people, U.S. history, and the national psyche:

> In my own field…for too many years the dominant culture, academic as well as popular, ignored the presence or distorted the role of African-Americans in the nation's history. Black Americans, if historians discussed them at all, figured prominently only in the story of slavery and in

> the topic of race relations. In both cases, they appeared not as actors in the national drama but as victims or problems. As an oppressed minority, they represented an unfortunate but minor exception to the main plot of American history: the gradual expansion of democracy to include all citizens. A few countervailing voices protested the inaccuracy of this consensus version of our history, but in the main, black people and their culture remained absent from courses in American history down to the 1960s. We were, so to speak, invisible. And the results of invisibility were devastating. In the absence of black history, a myth of the American past developed, a myth that denied black people any past of significance.[19]

Again, remember that racialization impacts us at the microlevel and macrolevel, the relational and structural, the conscious and unconscious. What does it communicate to African Americans when their histories are ignored or they are presented as "victims or problems"? What does it say to the majority culture, often at the unconscious level, when a naïve and innocent history is presented free from oppression or violence? What does it do to an academic discipline when one history is significant and others are erased? What does it do to a nation when villains are remembered as heroes, and almost all of the great heroes look like those in the majority culture?

Caricature

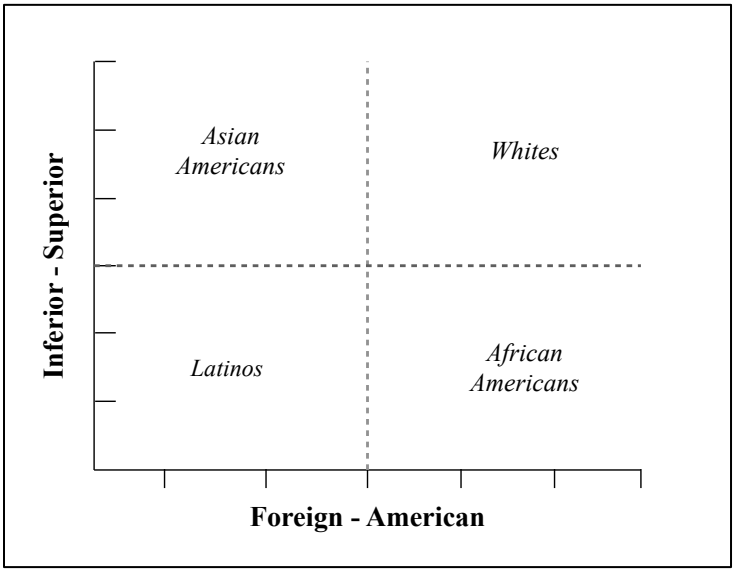
Second, seminarians of color often use the language of *caricature* to describe the adverse impact of racialization on their seminary experience. By caricature, I mean *the intentional or unintentional misrepresentation of racial or ethnic minorities in private or public educational spaces*. I use the phrase "private or public" because racial-ethnic caricature is just as likely to take place in a one-on-one meeting with a student as in a classroom. Let me also highlight the word "misrepresentation" since exaggerated representation is at the heart of caricature. Normally, artists use

caricature to create a "comic representation of a person by exaggeration of characteristic traits." The word also has a grotesque connotation as in a "ridiculously poor or absurd imitation or version."[20] Whatever the motive, comedy or injury, one must engage in misrepresentation in order for it to count as caricature. The family resemblances between artists who create caricatures and theological educators who engage in it relates to the outcome, that is, to the production of exaggerated or grotesque misrepresentations. The key distinction between them comes down to intent: artists almost always know what they are doing, whether the intent is comedy or injury, whereas theological educators *usually* engage in it without consciously knowing it or understanding the reasons for doing it. I use the word "usually" here, and I stated earlier that it *can be* intentional because there are notable exceptions to unconscious caricature. In some instances, professors caricature non-majority races or ethnicities as an overt (versus covert) racist act with the intent of injury. However, most of the time, or usually, they do not know what they are doing when they are doing it, and they certainly do not know why.

Sadly, in a racialized society, caricature takes place more often than we would like to admit, sometimes with the intent to cause injury and other times as the biproduct of prejudice and racism, the toxicity in the air, if you will. Most of the time, members of the majority culture caricature racial and ethnic minorities although caricature *also* occurs within minoritized communities, across minoritized communities, and toward Whites. Since a deep dive into the research goes beyond the scope of this article, I will mention just one study on stereotypes and delimit my discussion to caricatures of racial and ethnic minorities.[21]

In 2017, social psychologists Linda X. Zou and Sapna Cheryan published some of the latest research on perception among the four largest racial-ethnic groups—White Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinx Americans.[22] Perception here means the caricature that occurs through stereotypes. Especially since the last two groups—Asian

Americans and Latinx Americans – have experienced exponential growth in recent decades, Zou and Cheryan wanted to develop a model that went beyond the older Black-White binary. To conduct their study, they engaged with the latest social psychological research, national survey data, and they also coded surveys from over 1,000 participants in which they were asked to describe their experiences of racial or ethnic prejudice. The empirical data revealed stereotype patterns along two axes—inferior-superior (y-axis) and foreign-American (x-axis).[23] Along these two axes, four quadrants emerged in racial-ethnic perception: inferior and foreign, superior and foreign, inferior and American, and superior and American. The following graph demonstrates the quadrant where each racial-ethnic group is caricatured or stereotyped:[24]



Zou and Cheryan refer to their proposal as the Racial Position Model. As this graph illustrates, and as the data reveal, Whites are generally perceived as superior and American, African

Americans as inferior and American, Latinos as inferior and foreign, and Asian Americans as superior and foreign.

In addition to categorizing each racial-ethnic group according to perception, the Racial Position Model uses the language of positioning as a way to demonstrate how racial-ethnic *hierarchy* can work along more than one axis. More relevant to this article, it shows how initial perception or stereotype can lead to exaggerated and sometimes grotesque misrepresentation. In a higher education context, one can presume that the two axes highlighted by Zou and Cheryan will impact a professor's prejudgments at the conscious or unconscious level such as the assumptions that the professor makes upon meeting students for the first time, which students the professor judges to be intelligent, which students are judged to be U.S. citizens or English speakers, and which students are called on in class or told they have what it takes to do a PhD.

So, how does racial-ethnic caricature impact seminarians of color? Imagine an Asian American seminarian interacting casually with a professor who does not know much about her. The professor asks, "Where are you from?" and she responds, "The Bay area." The professor says, "No, where are you really from?" The professor sees her as foreign even though her family has lived in the Bay area for five generations. In fact, her family may have been in the U.S. longer than the professor's family of origin. Frank Wu and others describe this assumption toward Asian Americans as the "perpetual foreigner syndrome," the main idea being that a person is assumed to be a foreigner because he or she looks Asian.[25] Of course, the same questions also get asked all the time to Latinx seminarians.

Now imagine an African American seminarian who decides to ask a question in a public forum, a public Q & A with the instructor. By the way, an instructor does not have to be White to engage in caricature so imagine that the instructor is non-White. The seminarian of color says, "Would you be willing to tell us: what do you think are the opportunities and drawbacks of your proposal in under-resourced inner-city churches in the city of [X]?" The instructor attempts to add levity to the situation

and replies, "Well, unlike you, I'm not from the hood so I don't know how my proposal would land in your context." The instructor has made a lightning-fast decision based on the seminarian's hair, clothing, style of speaking, and question, that he must be from the inner-city when he is most definitely *not* from the inner-city. In intercultural communication, a person must be willing to tolerate ambiguity and suspend initial judgment, especially in the absence of sufficient data, but this instructor has done neither of these two things.[26]

Now imagine a Latinx seminarian, male or female, sitting in a theology class. Instead of the professor ignoring Latinx or Latin American contributions to theology, a sign of invisibility, the professor presents two theological extremes, a sign of a caricature. Every time the student hears about Latinx or Latin American theology, the professor lifts up one of two theological options: prosperity theology or liberation theology. Both of these extremes exist in White American theology as well but, in this instance, they are both lifted up as central contributions by Latinx and Latin American theologians. Notice also that both are negative. The seminarian has *not* experienced either of these theological extremes in his or her home church in the U.S. or El Salvador (if he or she is an international student). Nevertheless, the professor associates Majority World theology with heresy. In many North American evangelical institutions, Matthew D. Kim and Daniel L. Wong observe, "Western theology often constitutes the norm, or 'pure theology,' while all others (such as African theology, Asian theology, Latin American theology, and Native American theology) are scrutinized and deemed as heresies or aberrations from the real thing."[27]

I have based all three of my examples on real-life incidents experienced by seminarians of color at seminaries in North America. To maintain their anonymity, I have changed minor details of their stories, I did not name the seminaries where these incidents occurred, nor did I state whether or not I know these students personally. Because racism impacts everyone, I could have also told other stories based on real-life incidents of racism *within* minoritized communities, *across* minoritized

communities, or by seminarians from minoritized communities *toward* White seminarians. Moreover, it would not be difficult to include incidents in which issues of class and gender intersected with race and ethnicity in such a way that it multiplied harm instead of diminishing it. Although these discussions would no doubt enrich our understanding of how racialization impacts all people, I will not tell them here because I do not want to distract from racialization's negative impact on seminarians of color in particular, especially since the vast majority of cases that I am aware of directly or indirectly have been cases in which seminarians of color were victimized.

Sadly, incidents like these usually continue in the years after someone gets a master's degree or even a PhD degree. In August 2020, a campus security officer at Santa Clara University interrogated Dr. Danielle Fuentes Morgan, a Black female assistant professor of English, after her adult-age brother was spotted in the front yard of her house. The officer not only demanded to see her University ID, but also demanded proof that the house where she lived was in fact her residence. "I wasn't surprised; I was just hurt," she said.[28]

Noted Harvard psychiatrist Alvin Poussaint, who is African American, observes that, even after decades of research, publishing, and academic leadership, many Whites insist on calling him by his first name "Alvin" without so much as a second thought as to why they do not call him "Dr. Poussaint." They use titles and last names when they talk to other people in authority but not when they address him. Others receive their instant respect but, in his case, their respect is not immediately granted. I have had similar incidents with more than one White seminarian who insists on calling me "Jared" despite using titles and last names with other professors, including those that are the same age as I am. I remember one incident in particular. The student called me "Jared" so I corrected him. "Actually, it's Dr. Alcántara," I replied with as much gentleness and meekness as I could muster. The next time I saw him, he called me, "Alcántara," minus the "Dr." so I had to correct him again. "Actually, it's *Dr.* Alcántara," I said.

Not surprisingly, incidents of caricature also arise in homiletical conversations between pastors of different races and ethnicities *after* seminary. In much the same way that familiarity breeds contempt, ignorance breeds caricature. In his 2018 book *Woke Church,* Eric Mason, a pastor at Epiphany Fellowship in Philadelphia, describes the impact of one such experience:

> At [a] conference on Christ-centered preaching, there was a strong argument that a sect of white evangelicalism known as the neo-reformed movement was recovering Christ-centered preaching. I was confused by this narrative that suggests that white evangelicals are saving the history of Christianity in the West. We study Spurgeon and call him the 'prince of preaching.' Yet the greatest preacher of our generation is Gardner C. Taylor. He is known as the dean of the nation's black preachers. He is viewed as an American treasure. *Christianity Today* referred to him as the 'last pulpit prince.' He never lost his focus on Jesus or the cross. He has inspired many of us to keep the cross at the center and Jesus as the hero….The lack of knowledge and familiarity with preaching giants like Gardner Taylor leads many to believe that there is a lack of sound theological preaching in the black church. The limited exposure to black preaching creates reductionist views and untrue caricatures.[29]

In almost the same breath that he tells this story, he mentions being on a panel about race at a conference that was attended predominantly by White Evangelicals. A "well-meaning White brother" on the panel informed everyone gathered there how encouraged he was to see so many young Black leaders in the room who could be raised up in order to preach "'a robust gospel' *finally*." Not only was Mason deeply hurt by it, but he took umbrage with it. He writes: "Contrary to popular belief, all black preachers do not preach the prosperity gospel or see social justice as the content of the gospel. Most black preachers I know

have—as part of their training—the centrality of Jesus, the gospel, and the cross."[30]

Taxation

Third, seminarians of color often use the language of *taxation* to describe the adverse impact of racialization on their seminary experience. By taxation, I mean *the cumulative and debilitating effect of disproportionate energy, time, and dialogue around matters of race or ethnicity at predominantly White institutions (PWI's) and more broadly in a racialized society.* In institutions of higher learning, among both students and faculty members, some refer to this phenomenon informally as "the minority tax," in that it is a tax that minorities pay at PWI's that others do not have to pay.[31] Although much could be said about experiences of taxation among faculty of color, I will confine my analysis here to experiences among students of color.

Some taxation occurs among students of color because they feel the need to disprove stereotypes about their race or ethnicity. According to Stanford social psychologist Claude M. Steele, undergraduate students of color experience taxation not only because the spotlight feels bright as a racial or ethnic minority navigating a PWI, but also because of a phenomenon known as "stereotype threat." At the risk of oversimplifying Steele's proposal, I will put it into dialogue with Zou and Cheryan's Racial Position Model.

Imagine the following scenarios. A student knows that her race or ethnicity is often perceived as foreign rather than American on the foreign-American axis so she overcompensates the stereotype threat by spending excess energy eating food she would not eat otherwise, changing her clothing, and abiding by other forms of assimilation to the dominant culture. Another student knows that his race or ethnicity is often perceived as intellectually inferior on the superiority-inferiority axis, most noticeably in standardized testing so, when he takes his first standardized test, he overcompensates the stereotype threat by working extra hard to prepare, so hard, in fact, that he exhausts

his energy trying to prove to others that the stereotype is wrong. A third student knows that his race or ethnicity is often perceived as intellectually superior on the inferiority-superiority axis, especially in particular subjects such as mathematics, so he spends so much time overcompensating for the stereotype threat (in order to prove that it is right) that he rarely sleeps before quizzes, the midterm, or the final, thus performing worse than he would have otherwise.

For obvious reasons, stereotype threat takes an exacting toll or "tax" on students of color. If a student believes that her race or ethnicity are perceived as "lazy," then she might work so hard that it takes a serious toll on her physical or mental health. If a student believes that his race or ethnicity is perceived as violence-prone, the he might devote excess time to making sure that *other* people feel safe when he is walking through campus, jogging late at night, or walking to his car. Notice the disproportionate dispersion and defusal of energy in these examples.

Add to this the additional taxes that are often levied by families of origin and by one's racial or ethnic community. A parent tells a child, "You have to work twice as hard, study twice as long, and finish twice as fast if you want to get ahead in a racist world," a message that actually feeds stereotype threat in communities of color rather than defusing it. Moreover, the student hears messages from voices of influence in the community who imply or assert that if he flounders in college, then he will bring shame upon his race or ethnicity. That is to say, they communicate that, if he struggles academically, then White majority students will have their false stereotypes confirmed about people from X-race or Y-ethnicity. These additional taxes that families of color and communities of color impose explain why so many studies on Millenials and Gen Z young adults are racialized and often academically spurious.[32] One Gen Z high school senior gets ready to go to college and her parents say, "No matter what happens, even if you fail, we will always love you, and you will always have a place here in our home." Contrast this with another example, one that is slightly hyperbolic, but

rooted in lived experience. Another Gen Z high school senior gets ready to go to college, and her parents say, "If you fail, which you cannot, you will bring shame on your race or ethnicity, invalidate the sacrifices that your family has made on your behalf, and no longer be welcome in our home." Talk about pressure!

According to Steele, stereotype threat has an "undermining effect on college achievement" that compounds the other disadvantages that many racial and ethnic minorities already face such as less financial backing, smaller academic networks, and more instances of trauma in their homes, to name just three examples.[33] Stereotype threat impacts Black, Latinx, and Native American students the most, presumably because these are the three most underrepresented constituencies in higher education. Steele writes:

> [E]ven when Black, Latino, and Native American students overcome other disadvantages in trying to gain parity with white and Asian classmates, they face the further pressure of stereotype and identity threats. Even privileged students from these groups have an extra, identity-related pressure working against their achievement.[34]

In other words, students do not have to come from a disadvantaged or under-resourced community in order to experience stereotype threat. The only prerequisite is this: worries concerning the stereotypical perceptions of others.[35]

Seminarians of color report similar experiences of taxation to the ones studied in undergraduate students. Remember Zou and Cheryan's quadrants? Permit me to take their research and combine it with Steele's research in order to describe the experiences of seminarians of color in PWI evangelical institutions. A seminarian concludes that others perceive him as foreign so he spends extra time working to mute his accent. Another seminarian concludes that others see her as intellectually inferior *or* superior so her grades become her god.

Another fears that student colleagues will stereotype him as lazy so he arrives early and sits in the front row of the class even though he is farsighted and needs glasses. Another worries that others will perceive him as aggressive so he changes his clothing, his hair, and the way he speaks in order to mitigate the fear of that perception. Another believes that she will be perceived as a campus worker rather than a student so she dresses business casual or better every day she goes to campus. Another sits down in his seat on the first day and, before the professor ever says a word, the White classmate sitting next to him makes an overtly racist comment: "You know that I don't sit next to black folks in class, right?"

Once again, all of these examples are based on real-life experiences reported by seminarians of color despite being changed slightly to protect their anonymity. These examples (along with many others that could be mentioned) shine a bright light on the adverse impact of taxation on seminarians of color: the disproportionate energy, time, and dialogue around race and ethnicity, and its cumulative and debilitating effects on overall wellbeing, mental health, level of satisfaction in school, interpersonal relationships, academic performance, and spiritual vitality.

Now, to understand why taxation is so acute, take Zou and Cheryan's research, Steele's research, and the real-life examples, and couple these with the particular cultural-historical moment in which we live. In June 2018, border patrol officers forcibly separated migrant children from their parents in a way that was unprecedented in modern U.S. history. Children were loaded onto buses and sent to undisclosed locations. A Honduran immigrant told reporters that her baby was taken from her arms while she was breastfeeding. When she resisted, they handcuffed her, she said through tears.[36] From February to May 2020, as the Coronavirus spread nationally and ravaged New York City disproportionately, anti-Asian complaints and hate crimes rose to 145 instances in New York as compared to the previous time period one year earlier in which there were only 12 reports.[37]

In October 2019 in Forth Worth, Texas, Atatiana Jefferson, aged 28, was shot fatally by a White police officer at night through a window in her own home while she was playing video games with her eight-year old nephew.[38] In February 2020, Ahmaud Arbery, aged 25, was shot fatally while jogging near Brunswick, Georgia, by two White male civilians who, attempting to take justice into their own hands, chased him down in their truck, hit him with the vehicle, allegedly shouted a racial epithet, and killed him.[39] In March 2020, Breonna Taylor, aged 26, was shot in her own home by White police officers in Louisville, Kentucky.[40] In August 2020, Jacob Blake, aged 29, was shot in the back four times (seven shots were fired) in Kenosha, Wisconsin, while attempting to enter his car. When he woke up paralyzed in the hospital, he said to his father, "Daddy, why'd they shoot me so many times?"[41]

Of course, the best-known example of this sort of violence against Black bodies took place in May 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, when a White police officer named Derek Chauvin put his knee on the neck of Houston native George Floyd, age 46, for 8 minutes and 43 seconds.[42] Chauvin and three other officers arrived on the scene after learning that Floyd had been accused of using a counterfeit $20 bill at a convenience store. In the minutes preceding his death, as Chauvin pressed his knee on his neck, Floyd could be heard calling for his deceased mother to come to his aid. He also kept saying, "I can't breathe. I can't breathe," which is the same thing that Eric Garner said 11 times in 2014 in New York City when police put him in a chokehold.

In recent months, I have heard more than one Black pastor, seminarian, or Christian leader say something to this effect: "Something in me *broke* when George Floyd was killed," or, "Something in my community *broke*..." Eddie S. Glaude Jr., a leading scholar in African American religion at Princeton University, used similar language in *Time* magazine to describe the hurt mixed with anger that he felt after seeing the footage of George Floyd's death:

> I watched the Floyd video and completely lost it. The stress of the times combined with the cruelty of the act and Floyd's desperate plea broke me. I found myself, which I rarely do, burying my head in my hands. Weeping. I thought about all the Black people who may watch the video in the middle of this pandemic and about the white people who would see it and ask the all-too-familiar questions about how do we change….We're caught in a double bind. We need video footage to convince white America that what is happening to us is real. But that same footage then becomes the stuff of spectacle. People's appetite for black suffering, to borrow a formulation from Susan Sontag, "is as keen, almost, as the desire for ones that show bodies naked." In either case, we are left dealing with what white people think and confronting the undeniable fact that black people are still being killed by police at alarming, horrifying numbers. To be honest, these days, I can give less than a damn what white people think.[43]

Sadly, these incidents have a long and well-documented history. It is not as if they started occurring in the last decade. What has changed is that everyone can see them in a way that past generations could avoid or deny. To quote from Hollywood actor Will Smith, "Racism is not getting worse; it's getting filmed."[44]

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERVENTIONS IN THE HOMILETICS CLASSROOM

Now that I have defined and described racialization and identified its three flashpoints – invisibility, caricature, and taxation—on seminarians of color, I will offer some *brief* (perhaps too brief) recommendations for the homiletics classroom as a way to draw out the implications of my proposal. I will recommend three turns—personal-cultural, pedagogical-pastoral, and biblical-theological—and I will ask guiding

questions for each turn that I hope will address the patterns that I have named in this article.

The Personal-Cultural Turn

What would it look like for homileticians to take a more active role in interrogating their a priori cultural assumptions, identifying their social location, challenging their cultural values, engaging in critical-cultural self-study, and repenting of their ethnic, racial, or cultural arrogance, all in service to and for the sake of the gospel of Christ? Although some homileticians are used to doing this more than others, *all* of us should do it more than we do now. Let me take great pains to emphasize that, in order to do so, we do not have to forsake exegetical competency, theological competency, or communicative competency. In fact, each of these competencies can be enhanced through a willingness to make a personal-cultural turn. We can enhance our exegesis of biblical texts that we know to be divinely inspired *and* culturally conditioned by recognizing how our own cultural situatedness gives us some textual insights that culturally-different others do not see and some textual blind spots that culturally-different others *do* see. We can enhance our theological competency by listening more intently to the Church Universal and to marginalized communities in our world, thus, discovering that the ocean of theological truth is much wider and deeper than our initial presumptions have allowed. We can enhance our communicative competency by removing ethno-specific obstacles that inhibit the clear proclamation of the gospel, a move that allows more people to hear a clear and compelling presentation of it. Put differently, we can train better preachers and become better Christ-followers if we make a personal-cultural turn.

When homiletics professors are willing to interrogate their cultural values, question their cultural arrogance, study their cultural particularity, mine their cultural strengths, and practice cultural humility, they can play an important part in dismantling

racialization's adverse effects on seminarians in general and seminarians of color in particular.

The Pedagogical-Pastoral Turn

What would it look like for homileticians to raise their level of pedagogical excellence so that they can engage with and account for difference more faithfully as teachers while also raising their level of pastoral awareness so that they can minister to *all* their students and not just some of them? In pedagogy, we should be willing to interrogate our syllabi with a more critical eye: the sources of knowledge that count, the sources that do not, what our learning objectives reveal about our aims, and what our bibliography reveals about our conversation partners. We know intuitively that we cannot produce an exhaustive syllabus that accounts for every domain of difference. I am not convinced that our students want that from us. My hunch is that they want at least some evidence that our syllabus is not a #SyllabusSoWhite and some sign that we know the names and contributions of people of a different gender than our own. Although we cannot prepare perfectly, we *can* prepare better. A gap in knowledge of resources and preachers from outside our tradition does not mean that those resources and preachers do not exist; it simply means that one has more work to do in order to become a serious student of the discipline. In addition to improving our syllabi, we can cultivate an interculturally competent ecology in our classroom, one characterized by cultural hospitality, curiosity, humility, and charity. We can broaden our research conversation partners beyond our race and gender, expand our assigned list of audio, video, and published sermons, perform necessary interventions when students make racist comments, and evaluate student sermons with higher levels of intercultural proficiency. Lord willing, the same seminarians of color who feel like they cannot breathe in one class will be able to step into our class and say, "The air seems like it is cleaner here."

At the pastoral level, we should take seriously the damage that invisibility, caricature, and taxation inflict on seminarians of

color, especially during this particular historical-cultural moment. Imagine the invisible weight that they carry on their shoulders when they step into the classroom. What goes through their minds when they look around and notice that no one else looks like them or understands their preaching tradition? How do they feel when their peers tell them that their sermons are too loud, too poetic, too performed, too testimony-based, or too [fill in the blank]? Last night, they got pulled over because they were driving a nice car in a nice neighborhood. Earlier today, someone asked them where they were *really* from or perhaps mistook them for a dining hall worker. In the class before yours, their professor caricatured their theologians and church traditions. On their way to your class, they checked their social media page and found out that one of their classmates used his platform to suggest that reports of anti-Asian discrimination during COVID-19 were grossly exaggerated or that those crossing the U.S. border without proper documentation were criminals and rapists, or that the Black community just needed to get over the George Floyd murder.

To the homiletics professors who used to be pastors: what did we do when we sensed that people in our congregation were carrying burdens too heavy for them to bear? How did we provide pastoral care? How did we listen and for our how long? How much did we pray, weep, mourn, lament, or come alongside? At any point, did we tell them that their pain was imagined, that it was overblown, that it was political? Although it no doubt makes a huge difference when seminarians of color have allies of the same race and ethnicity on their faculty, let me also propose that they will respond positively to a homiletics professor of *any* race or ethnicity who listens to them, enters into their pain, demonstrates Christ-like compassion, and shows that he or she cares about them too much to let them carry their burdens alone.

The Biblical-Theological Turn

What would it look like for homiletics professors to ground their personal-cultural and pedagogical-pastoral work in a biblically-shaped and theologically-shaped, gospel-centered framework? With the utmost deference to sociologists, psychologists, critical race theorists, and educational theorists of race and ethnicity—trust me that my gratitude is immense for their research—let me also rush to point out that these academic disciplines will only take us part of the way and not the whole way. Usually, these scholars engage in descriptive and prescriptive work, but the restrictions in their discipline do not allow those of them that are Christ followers to consider its biblical and theological implications, at least in writing. Perhaps the biblical-theological turn is the most important one to make. Not only does it require a commitment to filling the gaps that others cannot, but it also requires a decision to double down on our convictions, to say that the work of dismantling racialization's negative effects is *not* Title IX work or theologically-liberal work or cultural-accommodationist work or university-compliance work—it is *gospel* work.

If the Scriptures teach that sin is not only personal and individual, but also systematic and structural, then why the hesitancy among so many of us when it comes to naming racialization's adverse impact as "sin" especially when it so clearly hurts, devalues, and harms so many in the churches and in the society? What does the OT reveal to us about God's concern for the immigrant and commitment to justice for the vulnerable? What do the OT and NT teach us about what it means to be made in the image of God? How do the Gospels instruct us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus concerning how to respond to issues of invisibility, caricature, and taxation regardless of whether they impact us directly or indirectly? What does the apostle Paul teach us in 1 Corinthians 8-10 about the importance of surrendering our rights for the "sake of the gospel," how ceding our place should be instinctual for Christian leaders, for preachers especially (see 1 Cor. 9:23)?

What does the Book of Acts show us about what it means to be the Church this side of Pentecost? What does the Book of Revelation teach us about the direction that the Church is called to go this side of heaven and in pursuit of kingdom fidelity?

All of these questions are biblically-shaped and theologically-shaped *gospel* questions. They require gospel answers, and they indirectly commend an interculturally-informed homiletic as a form of gospel work. Homileticians participate in the work of dismantling racialization's hegemony not because it is politically savvy, culturally sexy, or institutionally wise; we do it because the work itself is grounded in the gospel of Christ. To quote from Charlie Dates, the senior pastor of Progressive Baptist Church in Chicago: "Justice is a Biblically-defined, theological, Christian issue…. It's not an option; it's not like some kind of passion that some should have and others should not. It's tethered directly to the story of salvation."[45]

CONCLUSION

In this article, we observed the adverse impact of racialization on seminarians of color and its implications for the homiletics classroom. Then, we described three flashpoints of racialization: invisibility, caricature, and taxation. Although racialization impacts everyone and racist ideas cut across various markers of difference, minoritized communities experience its most painful effects. Thus, we focused on racialization's acute impact on communities of color and contextualized it to seminarians of color. Then, in the final section, we explored the implications of racialization for the homiletics classrooms where we teach and the seminaries where we serve. We proposed three strategic turns—a personal-cultural turn, a pedagogical-pastoral turn, and a biblical-theological turn. These proposed turns along with other strategic interventions can make a qualitative difference in classrooms and seminaries.

I will conclude as I began, with a brief story. On a beautiful morning in early April 2020, people in Jalandhar woke up to an

amazing surprise; Jalandhar is a city in Punjab, a state in northern India. What was the surprise? They could see the Dhauladhar mountain range which, in the West, is better known as the Outer Himalayas. In the past, the people of Jalandhar could only see Dhauladhar's snow-capped peaks after the rain but never the full mountain range. But, on Friday morning, April 3rd, "[the people] could see a long and expanded stretch of the range from rooftops without much effort. To many, the range seemed a few kilometers away," despite its geographic location more than 125 miles away. Even the lower hilly mountains at the base of the range were visible. Some residents claimed that they had not seen a site like this for close to 30 years.[46] What led to the surprise? The Coronavirus Pandemic. In other words, before COVID-19, the pollution had gotten so bad and residents had gotten so used to it that it took a crisis to detox the climate, a global pandemic to purify the air. On the one hand, this story chastens us when we connect it to racialization's negative effects. Without some kind of crisis intervention, entire communities can operate for decades without knowing how much they are being destroyed by pollution, without realizing how bad the air has gotten over time. On the other hand, this story reminds us that polluted air does not have to remain polluted forever. At present, many in minoritized communities in the United States feel like they are living through two pandemics rather than one: COVID-19 and a racial public health crisis.[47] As homileticians, we cannot do much about the first pandemic, but we can do something about the second one. With God's help, we can do our part to purify the air in our classrooms and at our seminaries. We can play a small role in making sure that *every* seminarian will be able to say, "I think I can breathe here."

NOTES

1. Evan Hill et al., "How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody," *The New York Times*, May 31, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/us/george-floyd-investigation.html.
2. Jim Wallis, *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2017).
3. Although Omi and Winant's work popularized the term in 1986, Michael Banton actually introduced the language of racialization to sociology in 1977 with his classic text *The Idea of Race*. See Michael Banton, *The Idea of Race* (London: Tavistock, 1977).For a brief history of the term's origin and evolution, see Karim Murji and John Solomos, "Introduction: Racialization in Theory and Practice," in *Racialization: Studies in Theory and Practice*, ed. Karim Murji and John Solomos (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5–17.
4. Omi and Winant presented race as a socially-constructed category that was both fluid and malleable, thus, pushing back against the so-called science of race, that is, the spurious idea in academic circles that race was a biological phenomenon. At least historically, the science of race had been used by White academicians to prop up notions of racial and ethnic superiority while also denigrating people of color as somehow genetically inferior. For more on the science of race, in particular, studies of race based on cephalic index or genetic traits that led to claims to ethnic superiority, see Nell Ervin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010). See also Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2015).
5. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 111. For an expanded definition of racialization that builds on the one offered by Omi and Winant, see Murji and Solomos, "Introduction: Racialization in Theory and Practice," 3.
6. Here are two examples of racialization's broadened definition and expansion. In 2000, sociologists Michael O. Emerson and

Christian Smith used the language of racialization, in particular, the language a "racialized society" in the U.S. context in order to name the problematic dynamics and discourses at the intersection of Evangelical religion and race in the United States. Emerson and Smith define a racialized society as "a society wherein race matters profoundly for differences in life experiences, life opportunities, and social relationships." More recently, in 2019, Bianca Gonzalez-Sobrino and Devin R. Goss edited a volume in which they extended descriptions of racialization beyond their typical confinement to a Black-White binary. See Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7. See also Bianca Gonzalez-Sobrino and Devon R. Goss, "Introduction: Exploring the Mechanisms of Racialization Beyond the Black / White Binary," in *The Mechanisms of Racialization Beyond the Black / White Binary*, ed. Bianca Gonzalez-Sobrino and Devon R. Goss (New York: Routledge, 2019), 1–6.

7. Gonzalez-Sobrino and Goss (along with other contributors in their edited volume) also discuss the ways that racism occurs *within* minoritized communities and not *just* by members of the majority toward minoritized communities. See Gonzalez-Sobrino and Goss, "Introduction: Exploring the Mechanisms of Racialization Beyond the Black / White Binary." Also, Ibram X. Kendi opens his book *How to Be an Antiracist* with a story about how, as an African American, he propagated racist ideas about African Americans before members of his own community in a speech that he delivered as a teenager. He writes: "I kept shooting out unproven and disproven racist ideas about all the things wrong with Black youth….I thought I was serving my people, when in fact I was serving up racist ideas about my people to my people." See Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York: Basic, 2019), 7.

8. For more on the development of these three phases, see Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 206, 208. For more on the model minority

myth, see Frank H. Wu, *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).
9. For an example of how racist perspectives and attitudes can be unconscious, see Jacoby-Senghor et al.'s work on implicit racial bias among instructors in Drew S. Jacoby-Senghor, Stacey Sinclair, and J. Nicole Shelton, "A Lesson in Bias: Consequences of Implicit Racial Bias in Pedagogical Contexts," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 63 (2015): 50–55.
10. Interview with Alvin Poussaint as cited in Lena Williams, *It's the Little Things* (New York: Harcourt, 2000), 10.
11. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, 9.
12. Emerson and Smith, 10.
13. Describing his experience as a Black man in the United States, Ellison writes: "I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me." Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 3.
14. In *The Bluest Eye,* a young black girl tries to buy candy at "Yacobowski's Fresh Veg. Meat and Sundries Store," a White-owned store. After the girl pulls three pennies out of her shoe to buy it, Morrison describes the store-owner's reaction: "Slowly, like Indian summer moving imperceptibly toward fall, he looks toward her. Somewhere between retina and object, between vision and view, his eyes draw back, hesitate, and hover. At some fixed point in time and space he senses that he need not waste the effort of a glance. He does not see her, because for him there is nothing to see. How can a fifty-two-year-old white immigrant store keeper with the taste of potatoes and beer in his mouth, his mind honed on the doe-eyed Virgin Mary, his sensibilities blunted by a permanent awareness of loss, *see* a little black girl? Nothing in his life even suggested that the feat was possible, not to say desirable or necessary." See Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 48. Emphasis in original.

15. See Justo L. González and Pablo A. Jiménez, *Púlpito: An Introduction to Hispanic Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2005), 24–25; Sang Hyun Lee, *From a Liminal Place: An Asian American Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010); Orlando E. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005).
16. For a critique of the rhetoric of colorblindness in public discourse and critiques of "post-racial" politics after the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, see Tim Wise, *Colorblind: The Rise of Post-Racial Politics and the Retreat from Racial Equity* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2010).
17. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, 10.
18. Eisner argues that all schools teach three curricula: 1) the explicit curriculum comprises the subjects we teach, 2) the implicit curriculum consists of the values and virtues we inscribe even if they are not articulated, and, 3) the null curriculum includes the subjects, values, and virtues that schools *do not* teach or value. Regarding the null curriculum, Eisner writes: "schools have consequences not only by virtue of what they do teach, but also by virtue of what they neglect to teach. What students cannot consider, what they don't know, processes they are unable to use, have consequences for the kinds of lives that they lead." See Elliot W. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs* (New York: MacMillan, 1979), 88.
19. Albert J. Raboteau, *A Fire in the Bones: Reflections on African-American Religious History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 4–5.
20. *The Oxford Modern English Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 143.
21. For two other classic studies, see Steele's work on stereotype threat or Jacoby-Singhor, Sinclair, and Shelton's work on implicit bias among college instructors. Claude M. Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi: And Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010); Jacoby-Senghor, Sinclair, and Shelton, "A Lesson in Bias: Consequences of Implicit Racial Bias in Pedagogical Contexts."

22. Linda X. Zou and Sapna Cheryan, "Two Axes of Subordination: A New Model of Racial Position," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 112, no. 5 (2017): 696–717.
23. Zou and Cheryan also show how their model interacts with three other models of racial-ethnic perception along different axes such as the SCM Model's axes of warmth-coldness and competence-incompetence, the Image Theory Model's trifold of "relative power, relative status, and goal compatibility," as well as the ABC Model of stereotype content that prioritizes "agency/socioeconomic success and progressive-conservative beliefs." See Zou and Cheryan, 698.
24. The graph that appears here is the author's representation of the graph as it appears in Zou and Cheryan, 698.
25. For Wu's discussion of the perpetual foreigner syndrome, see Wu, *Yellow*, 79–130. For a more recent study on the perpetual foreigner syndrome, see also Stacey J. Lee, Nga-Wing Anjela Wong, and Alvin N. Alvarez, "The Model Minority and the Perpetual Foreigner: Stereotypes of Asian Americans," in *Asian American Psychology: Current Perspectives*, ed. Nita Tewari and Alvin N. Alvarez (New York: Routledge, 2009), 69–84.
26. For more on why tolerating ambiguity and suspending initial judgment are essential to intercultural communication, see Darla K. Deardorff, ed., *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009); William B. Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences: Effective Intergroup Communication* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1998); William B. Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim, *Communicating with Strangers: An Approach to Intercultural Communication* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997); William B. Gudykunst, ed., *Theorizing about Intercultural Communication* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2005); Milton J. Bennett, "A Developmental Approach to Training for Intercultural Sensitivity," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 10 (1986): 179–96; Mitchell R. Hammer, Milton J. Bennett, and Richard Wiseman, "Measuring Intercultural Sensitivity: The Intercultural Development Inventory," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 27 (2003): 421–33.

27. Matthew D. Kim and Daniel L. Wong, *Finding Our Voice: A Vision for Asian North American Preaching* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 82.
28. The campus police officer asked for proof of residence from Dr. Danielle Fuentes Morgan, an assistant professor of English at the university. In the article, she is quoted as saying: "No one ever wakes up in the morning thinking that these things will happen…being Black in America means there is an expectation that you have to show your papers, that you have to prove you are who you say you are and you belong where you say you belong." See Teo Armus, "'I Wasn't Surprised. I Was Just Hurt': A Black Professor Says Campus Police Demanded Proof She Lives in Her Own House," *The Washington Post*, August 24, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/ nation/2020/08/24/santa-clara-campus-police-professor/.
29. Eric Mason, *Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice* (Chicago: Moody, 2018), 105.
30. Emphasis in original. Mason, 105.
31. In using the word "some" here with reference to the minority tax, I am referring to anecdotal evidence collected in conversations with faculty of color and students of color. In this article, I focus on seminarians of color. For an account of the minority tax that underrepresented minority (URM) *faculty* of color pay in institutions of higher learning, see Ruth Enid Zambrana, *Toxic Ivory Towers: The Consequences of Work Stress on Underrepresented Minority Faculty* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018).
32. For one article (among many) that problematizes prevalent emerging adulthood research through a discussions of race and ethnicity, see Moin Syed and Lauren L. Mitchell, "Race, Ethnicity, and Emerging Adulthood: Retrospect and Prospects," *Emerging Adulthood* 1, no. 2 (June 2013): 83–95. For a book that devotes a section to problematizing emerging adulthood research through a racial-ethnic breakdown of religious "nones" and a discussion of their openness to faith according to race and ethnicity, see Rick Richardson, *You Found Me: New Research on*

How Unchurched Nones, Millennials, and Irreligious Are Surprisingly Open to Christian Faith (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 90–93. For statistics on how historic African American denominations are stable and are not in decline, see Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," *Pew Research Center*, May 12, 2015, https://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/.

33. Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi: And Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us*, 158.

34. Steele, 158–59.

35. According to Steele, students from these constituencies break free from the taxes associated with stereotype threat in one particular environment: when their professor is an underrepresented minority and when a critical mass of underrepresented minorities are present in the class. What sorts of messages do these environments communicate to students of color? "Others before me have made it all the way to the PhD-level so why shouldn't I be able to make it through this class? Other students in this course look like me so the spotlight does not feel as bright in this instance—I am not alone." Thankfully, Steele makes the larger argument that there are ways for institutions to mitigate against stereotype threat through the teaching strategies that professors use, the faculty and staff that universities hire, the messages that professors send to underrepresented minority students, and the study practices that universities encourage. See Steele, *Whistling Vivaldi: And Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us*.

36. Jennifer Emily, "Mother Says Baby Taken from Her While Breast-Feeding at Texas Immigration Detention Center," *The Dallas Morning News*, June 23, 2018, https://www.dallasnews.com/news/immigration/2018/06/13/mother-says-baby-taken-from-her-while-breast-feeding-at-texas-immigration-detention-center/.

37. For data on anti-Asian complaints and anti-Asian hate crimes in New York City related to the COVID-19 pandemic that took place between February and May 2020, see https://www.

cityandstateny.com/articles/politics/new-york-city/coronavirus-pandemic-drives-new-wave-hate-crimes.html-0

38. Jesus Jiménez, "Former Fort Worth Officer Aaron Dean Indicted on Murder Charge in Shooting of Atatiana Jefferson," *Dallas Morning News*, December 20, 2019, https://www.dallasnews.com/news/2019/12/20/former-fort-worth-officer-aaron-dean-indicted-on-murder-charge-in-shooting-of-atatiana-jefferson/.

39. Cleve R. Wootson Jr., Annie Gowen, and Abigail Hausloner, "Judge Advances Murder Trial for All Three White Men Charged in Death of Ahmaud Arbery," *The Washington Post*, June 4, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/06/04/fellow-shooter-called-georgia-jogger-f-ing-n-he-lay-dying-road-agent-testified/.

40. Rukmini Callimachi, "Breonna Taylor's Life Was Changing. Then the Police Came to Her Door," *The New York Times*, August 30, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/30/us/ breonna-taylor-police-killing.html.

41. Javonte Anderson, "'Daddy, Why'd They Shoot Me so Many Times?' Jacob Blake's Father Recalls in Emotional Remarks during Kenosha Rally against Police Violence," *Chicago Tribune*, August 29, 2020, https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/breaking/ct-jacob-blake-kenosha-rally-20200829-vnszf7gcnvgm5iiami4rxxyuja-story.html.

42. Hill et al., "How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody."

43. Eddie S. Glaude Jr., "We Cannot Wait for White America to End Racism," *Time* 195, no. 22 (June 15, 2020): 24.

44. Smith made this claim as a guest on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* on April 3, 2016.

45. Charlie Dates and Michael Duduit, "Preaching and Social Justice (An Interview with Charlie Dates)," *Preaching* 33, no. 4 (Summer 2018): 7.

46. I. P. Singh, "Photos: Seen from Jalandhar Rooftops, Dhauladhar in Full Glory," *The Times of India*, April 4, 2020, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ludhiana/from-

jalandhar-rooftops-dhauladhar-in-full-glory/articleshow/74975862.cms.

47. For more on perceptions in communities of color that they are battling "twin pandemics," Brendan Kiley, "'Racism Is the Biggest Public Health Crisis of Our Time': Health Care Workers of Color Fight Twin Pandemics," *The Seattle Times*, June 9, 2020, https://www.seattletimes.com/life/double-duty-healthcare-workers-of-color-fight-the-twin-pandemics-of-coronavirus-and-racism/.

FROM "FAR" TO "NEAR"! A PERICOPAL THEOLOGY GUIDE TO PREACHING EPHESIANS 2:11-22

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INTRODUCTION

The book of Ephesians lays out, unlike anywhere else in Scripture, God's grand plan for the cosmos, preordained and purposeful—"the administration [management/ordering] of the fullness of times [the last days, where everything is headed] the consummation [summing up] of all things in Christ—the things in the heavens and the things on the earth in Him" (Eph 1:10).[1] I consider this the key verse of Ephesians, and perhaps, of all of Scripture: "the consummation of all things in Christ" in the cosmos is God's ultimate goal. Right now, everything is broken, undone, chaotic. But one day, in God's grand design, everything is going to be integrated, harmonized, and aligned to Christ, the unifying end of the cosmos. The entire universe, both its heavenly and its earthly dimensions—from black holes to badgers, from nebulas to nightingales, from trans-galactic forces to intermolecular forces, from planets to potatoes—everything is being administered. arranged, harmonized, consummated in Christ. This is the grand design of God, the zenith of creation. What a day that will be! The first pericope of Ephesians (1:1–14) raises the curtain on that glorious divine trajectory of all creation —the consummation of all things in Christ. Into this epic plan, all (believing) humans have been recruited—chosen, predestined, engraced, redeemed, claimed, and sealed! We were *blessed* into God's grand plan, with grace, love, and delight! With this as a backdrop, I would like to analyze 2:11–22 closely, for the

purposes of the themed issue of this *Journal:* the significance of this glorious plan for the constitution of the church.[2]

OVERVIEW OF EPHESIANS 2:11–22

Broadly, Eph 2:11–22 follows the "formerly–now" schema of the previous pericope (2:1–10): description of plight (2:11–12 and 2:1–4); divine response to plight (2:13–18 and 2:5–9); and implications of that divine response for present existence (2:19–22 and 2:10). Of course, all of Ephesians 2 follows from Paul's intercession in 1:15–23, where he prays for his readers' enlightenment, particularly regarding God's great power acting on their behalf to bring to fruition his grand plan of consummation. Ephesians 2:1–10 and 2:11–22 are portrayals of this divine might transforming them from what they "formerly" were to what they "now" are. But there is a difference in orientation in between 2:1–10 and 2:11–22, reflected in the way each pericope employs συν (*syn)*-prefixed words (translated in this essay with the prefix "co-"). In the former pericope, the relationship of the *individual* to God is in view[3]; in the latter pericope, it is still a relationship to God that is in view, but the unity of the *body of Christ* is what is showcased—the unity of all (believing) mankind, without regard to ethnic background[4], and it is the relationship of this *one body* to God that is the purview of 2:11–22.[5]

Eph 2:1–10 ("co-"/with Christ)	Eph 2:11–22 ("co-"/with body of Christ)
As *individuals* reconciled to God	As *one body* reconciled to God
συνεζωοποίησεν, *synezōpoiēsen* "co-enlivened" with Christ (2:5)	συμπολῖται, *sympolitai* "co-citizens" with the saints (2:19)
συνήγειρεν, *synēgeiren,* "co-raised" with Christ (2:6)	συναρμολογουμένη, *synarmologoumenē* "co-fitted" as a building (2:21)
συνεκάθισεν, *synekathisen* "co-seated" with Christ (2:6)	συνοικοδομεῖσθε, *synoikodomeisthe* "co-built" into a dwelling of God (2:22)

And this unity of all believers furthers the grand and glorious plan of God to consummate all things in Christ (1:10), the theological thrust of the letter as a whole. If all things are going

to be consummated in Christ, well, then, the first place that this unity needs to be manifest is in the body of Christ itself, right here and right now. This emphasis on the unity of (believing) humanity is evident in the structure of the pericope[6]:

A	*you* [pl.]; *in the flesh* (×2); *strangers; without God* (2:11–12)			
	B	*you* [pl.]; who were once *far … near*; *our* peace (2:13–15a)		
		C	that he might create *in Himself* (2:15b)	
			D	into *one* new person (2:15c)
			D'	both in *one* body (2:16a)
		C'	killing the enmity *in Himself* (2:16b)	
	B'	peace *to you* [pl.]; *far … near*; *we have* access (2:17–18)		
A'	*strangers; of God*; *you* [pl.]; dwelling *of God; in the Spirit* (2:19–22)			

The focus on the oneness of humanity ("one new person") as it is reconciled to God "in one body" is central (*D, D′*); peace between God and the "one new person," the church, has been made (*B, B′*) by Christ "in Himself" (*C, C′*). The "far" have been brought "near" and access to God through Christ and in the Spirit has been achieved (*B, B′*).[7] The remarkable outcome of this is that all believers, irrespective of ethnic or genetic constitution, are united into as the community of God and members of the divine household. Once strangers without God, all believers—without exception, without division, without separation—are now becoming a divine temple, a dwelling of God in Christ and in the Spirit (*A, A′*). What an incredible accomplishment, integral to God's consummation of all things in Christ—all (believing) humanity—*all!*—united as one in Christ, by the Spirit, for God!

EPHESIANS 2:11–13

2:11 *Therefore remember that formerly you, Gentiles in the flesh, the ones called "uncircumcision" by the ones called "circumcision" in the flesh, hand-done—*

2:12 *[remember] that you were at that time without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and godless in the world.*

2:13 *But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

Notice "formerly" (2:11, 13) and "at that time" (2:12), as opposed to "now" (2:13). Unbelievers were, prior to salvation, "in the flesh"—used twice in 2:11, once of Gentiles, once of Jews: both are peoples without Christ. So it is not only Gentiles who get a pejorative label in 2:11 ("the ones called 'uncircumcision'"); so do the Jews ("the ones called 'circumcision'"). The parallel structure of 2:11–12 makes this obvious:

A	"remember that formerly you, Gentiles		
	B	in the flesh,	
		C	the ones called 'uncircumcision'
		C'	by the ones called 'circumcision' [Jews]
	B'	in the flesh, *hand-done*—	
A'	[remember] that you were at that time …"		

However, there is an extra descriptor tacked on for Jews: "hand-done" (χειροποιήτος (*cheiropoiētos*). That is quite deprecatory; the term frequently characterized what was merely human and necessarily evil—often denoting idols in the OT—in contrast to what was divine and spiritual (Mark 14:58; Acts 7:48; 17:24; Col 2:11; Heb 9:11, 24).[8] So it is not just Gentiles before salvation who are being regarded negatively, so are the Jews pre-salvation. All unbelievers, regardless of ethnicity or genetics, are the same in the eyes of God.

This former status of unbelievers is described as being "without Christ" (2:12), in stark contrast to their current status "in Christ Jesus" when they became believers (2:13). "In Christ" forms the heading of a list of related descriptors that follow. Therefore, being "excluded from the citizenship of Israel" (2:12) pre-conversion must imply a current inclusion within "Israel" post-conversion: this entails a symbolic reading of "Israel" as "the people of God," the community of God's people into which new believers had entered. And so, since unbelievers, upon conversion, become part of spiritual "Israel," the word πολιτεία (*politeia*, "citizenship," 2:12) is also best taken as the citizenship

of these now-saved people in spiritual "Israel." Indeed, the fact that 2:19 asserts that believers are now συμπολίτης (*sympolitēs,* "co-citizens"—a cognate of πολιτεία) with the "saints" as "members of God's household" indicates that this post-conversion citizenship is with the people of God, not an incorporation of Gentiles with Jews as 2:12 might suggest on the surface. Likewise, in its only other uses in the NT, ἀπαλλοτριόω (*apallotrioō*, "exclude," 2:12) indicates alienation from *God*, not from ethnic Israel or its unique polity (Eph 4:18 and Col 1:21). Thus the same sense operates in Eph 2:12; the primary focus in this verse is upon the relationship between all humanity together, irrespective of ethnicity or genetics, as the *one* saved people of God, in Christ.

Of course, in the first-century circumstances of the Letter to the Ephesians, Paul was writing to a mainly Gentile audience that had been introduced to the church, which until then was mostly constituted by Jewish believers. But the relationship between these two people groups becomes, in the canonical text of Scripture, a representation of the divisions among humanity on the basis of ethnicity and genetics. But it must be noted that though the "you," is specifically noted to be Gentiles (2:11), that does not necessarily make the subsequent "our" in 2:14 refer to Jews alone. Rather, the first person plural functions the same way as it did in 2:3–7, 10, standing for *all* believers, irrespective of ethnicity or genes, a united body into which all new believers are introduced (be they Gentile, Jew, black, white, Indian, or Chinese): a new "body," a new "person," has been "created" (2:15, 16), reconciled to God!

Unbelievers (represented in our text by Gentiles), in their earlier days "separate from Christ," were also at that time "strangers to the covenants of promise" (2:12), similarly implying that now, "in Christ," they were "no longer strangers" (2:19) to these "covenants of promise." This cannot be asserting that the Gentiles are now, after salvation, possessors of the specific promises and covenants belonging to Israel. So the "covenants of promise" must be referring to the Abrahamic covenant that anticipated blessings for all nations (Gen 12:2–3; 17:6,16; 18:18;

22:18; Acts 3:25; Gal 3:8, 14).[9] That Gentiles are later described as being "co-partakers of the *promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel*" (Eph 3:6) also indicates that these "covenants of promise" in 2:12 relate not to any particular feature of ethnic Israel or of Jewishness, but to the privilege of being in Christ. All that to say, upon conversion Gentiles are not becoming Jews. This section rather focuses on the membership of those now-saved peoples among the rest of the body of believers, composed of all humanity, without respect to ethnic characterization or genetic constitution. In the body of Christ, then, in terms of standing before God, there can be no distinction between peoples. The church ought to be the first place and the primary locus of demonstrating this truth, an adumbration of the consummation of all things in the cosmos in Christ—God's grand and glorious plan actualized in and among his children here and now!

There is another phrase describing these unbelievers-turned-believers that has to be considered: they were once "far" (2:13), "but now have been brought near" (2:13), contrasting the former and current situations of these peoples.[10] That this nearness has been accomplished "by the blood of Christ" indicates that the proximity refers to a relationship with God, i.e., those who are "near" are the community of God's people, believers in Christ, a status accomplished by the blood/atonement of Christ ("farness" was their former unsaved state).[11] Thus it is the distance from God that these respective labels in Ephesians 2 denote: the once *far* unbelievers had now, after conversion, been incorporated into the church—"brought *near* by the blood of Christ" (2:13): united with the rest of believers, no matter what their demographic particulars. What Christ accomplished in his atoning work was the inclusion of all (believing) humanity within the boundaries of the community of God: *all* who desired to be "near" could come to God by faith in Christ, an invitation open to one and all by an initiative of divine grace. Ethnic and genetic divisions—or, for that matter, every other kind of division among humanity—were thereby rendered irrelevant for the purpose of entering into a relationship with God and with fellow-believers. In other words, 2:13 is outlining

the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant and the blessing of God upon *all* nations as *one* people, part of God's grand scheme of consummating all things/people in Christ, a divinely engineered union of humanity transcending all boundaries.

EPHESIANS 2:14–18

2:14 *For He Himself is our peace, who made both one and who destroyed the middle wall of partition—the enmity—in His flesh,*
2:15 *by nullifying the law of commandments in decrees, so that He, in Himself, might create the two into one new person, making peace,*
2:16 *and that He might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, killing the enmity in Himself.*
2:17 *And he came and proclaimed peace to you, the ones far, and peace to the ones near;*
2:18 *for through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.*

The "for" that commences 2:14 has this verse explaining the bringing "near" of those who were once unbelievers (Gentiles, in the historical situation of the letter); this approximation was accomplished "in Christ Jesus" and "by the blood of Christ" (2:13), as those unbelievers-turned-believers were brought into the community of God, reconciled to God (2:16). No wonder then that Christ is shown as *being* peace (2:14), *making* peace (2:15), and *proclaiming* peace (2:17 [×2]), accomplishing the union of "both" (2:14, 16, 18) and the "two" (2:15) into "one" (2:14)—"one new person" (2:15) and "one body" (2:16). In the first century, in Ephesus, Gentiles had been admitted into the enclave of the people of God (mostly Jewish). Thus, in the body of Christ of all time and all places, ethnic and genetic divisions had been rendered immaterial for the purpose of being "near"!

The referent of "both" in 2:14 is usually taken by commentators to refer back to the two people groups in 2:11, Gentiles and Jews. But the closest referents of "both" (2:14) are

the "far" and the "near" (2:13). Therefore, the union accomplished by Christ is that of those who were once unbelievers ("far") and those already believers ("near"). While the former were, in the circumstances of the Ephesian letter, mostly Gentiles, and the latter mostly Jews, the kernel of the issue is that "both" "far" and "near" had now been made one—a single body of believers irrespective of ethnicity and genetics, as those who were formerly unbelievers became believers in Christ as their only God and Savior. There would not be *two* peoples of God (based on ethnic/genetic divisions), but only *one*.[12] The fact that these once-"far" folks now had become "co-citizens with the saints" and "members of God's household" (2:19) also shows that the "two" parties (2:15) were unbelievers who were now converted and already-converted "saints," together making up the one new community of God's people. Christ, "our peace," had "made both ['far' and 'near'] one"—regardless of ethnicity or genes. How did Christ do this?

Jesus Christ made "both" (2:14, 16, 18) and "two" (2:15) into "one" by "destroying the middle wall of partition" (2:14) and "nullifying the law of commandments in decrees" (2:15). Whatever this barrier might be, it is labeled "enmity" (2:14) between the "far" and the "near," a partition between unbelievers and believers. Later, in 2:16, Christ is said to have reconciled "both" to God, again by "killing the enmity." Both these instances of "enmity" are abrogated the same way—by Christ, "in His flesh" (2:14), "in Himself" (2:15, 16), and "through the cross" (2:16). Indeed one might add "in Christ Jesus" and "by the blood of Christ" in 2:13 to this listing of how Christ removed the "enmity" and established peace. All this indicates that the barrier, the "enmity," in both instances is the same entity, standing between the "far" (unbelievers) and the "near" (believers; 2:14–16) *as well as* between sinful humanity and holy God (2:16–18). And this single barrier of "enmity" Christ abolished by his atoning work, bringing peace between the various parties on its either side.

Now we are in a better position to identify what this "enmity" is between unsaved and saved, and between sinful

mankind and holy God, and what exactly was "destroyed" and "nullified" by Christ (2:14b–15a). Commentators have generally assumed that the "enmity" was the Mosaic Law that was abolished by Christ; apparently, this entity "separated Jews from Gentiles both religiously and sociologically, and caused deep-seated hostility."[13] No doubt, historically it did, but none of the terms used in 2:14–15 to describe the object of destruction and nullification—"middle wall of partition," "enmity," and "law of commandments in decrees"—are found in contemporary Jewish literature to refer to the Mosaic Law. And if it were the Mosaic Law that created division and hostility between Jews and Gentiles, one would be forced to posit a different "enmity" that separated humanity from God (2:16)[14], for the Mosaic Law, given by God himself, an integral part of Scripture that is profitable in its entirety (2 Tim 3:16), could hardly have been the cause of separation between Creator and the created. For the law is never viewed negatively in the Bible, even in the NT: it is said to have been written for all believers (1 Cor 9:8–10) and, frequently, demands of the Christian made in the NT are grounded upon those same OT laws, even in this very letter: Eph 6:2 (as also in Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; 1 Tim 5:18; Jas 2:8–11; 1 Pet 1:15–16).[15] The laws of the OT are God's laws (Rom 7:22, 25; 8:7; 1 Cor 7:19), and they are declared to be good, holy, righteous, and spiritual (Rom 7:12–14, 16; 1 Tim 1:8). So much so, Paul can "joyfully concur" with this law of God (Rom 7:22) and "establish" it (3:31).[16]

What, then, might be the thrust of Paul's statements in Eph 2:14–15? How can we put the various observations on this text together, to explain the data coherently? I submit that what keeps people from being part of the community of God (the separation between believers and unbelievers—between the "near" and the "far") is not the law, per se, but the law's *condemnation of sin*—the sentence pronounced in/by divine law upon contraventions of divine demand: the "far" (unbelievers) are under its condemnation for sin; the "near" (believers) have been released by Christ from that condemnation (Rom 8:1). Such an interpretation makes sense, because then we can explain how it is the very same barrier of law-ordained anti-sin condemnation

that also separates sinful mankind from holy deity. But now that single barrier of "enmity," that separated both believers from unbelievers, and also separated God from sinful mankind, was removed by Christ's atoning work for all who have been saved by faith through grace. All that to say, divine demand/law has not been rendered inoperative for those in Christ—all of it is still valid[17]; it is only the law's condemnation for sin that has been removed.[18]

In sum, the law's *condemnation of sin* was the "enmity" between both the "far" (the unsaved, worthy only of divine condemnation), and the "near" (the saved who, in Christ, have escaped divine condemnation). Of course, this selfsame "enmity," the law's condemnation for sin, was also a barrier between humanity and deity: divine condemnation of sin, through the divine law, separated sinful beings from the Holy One. Only by being "in Christ Jesus" (2:13), only "by the blood of Christ" (2:13), only "in his flesh" (2:14), only "in Himself" (2:15, 16), only "through the cross" (2:16) and only "through Him" (2:18), could that enmity be removed and access to God gained. But, praise God, by the work of Christ, the once separated "both" groups of humanity ("far" and "near") were made "*one*" (2:14), "two" were created into "*one* new person" (2:15), and "both" were jointly reconciled to God "in *one* body" (2:16), with "both" given equal access to the Father "in *one* Spirit" (2:18). The grand benefits of salvation were brought by Christ to *all* (believing) humanity, with no distinction among them. This was nothing short of a new "creation" of "one new person" (κτίζω, *ktizō*, "to create," 2:15, always indicates the work of God), a significant move furthering the magnificent plan of God to consummate all things—here, all *people*—in Christ (1:9–10), in a sense by redoing creation![19]

In sum, what Christ accomplished in his single act of redemption (2:14–15b) had two closely related purposes, outlined in 2:15b and 2:16:

	Ephesians 2:15b	Ephesians 2:16
Agent	"… in Himself,	"in Himself …
Subjunctive	might create	might reconcile
Goal	the two into **one new person**,	both in **one body to God** …
Participle	making peace"	killing the enmity"

By his work of removing the condemnation of divine demand (the "enmity"), two things were accomplished simultaneously by Christ. First, the barrier/"enmity" (the law's condemnation of sin) between "far"-unbelievers and "near"-believers was removed: *all* (believing) humanity had become one, irrespective of tribe, tongue, people, or nation, and race, gender, age, or rank! Second, the barrier/"enmity" (the same one—condemnation of sin by law) between mankind and God was no more: access to the Father was open to all, through the work of Christ, in the Spirit (2:18). "Enmity" in every direction, vertical and horizontal, and in every dimension, had been abolished. The perimeter surrounding the community of God's people was broken down by the work of Christ to include *all* (believing) mankind, and *all* (believing) mankind was thereby equally given access to God. Thus the apostle is describing the new creation of a one-race humanity comprising the people of God, with equal standing before God as his saved children without distinction, ethnic or genetic.[20] This is a new unity that transcends old divisions—the beginning of the consummation of all things in Christ.

EPHESIANS 2:19–22

2:19 *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are co-citizens with the saints, and members of God's household,*

2:20 *having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone,*

2:21 *in whom the whole building, co-fitted, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,*

2:22 *in whom you also are being co-built into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*

In 2:19–22, readers are introduced to metaphors from domestic engineering ("household," 2:19), architecture ("foundation," "cornerstone,"[21] "building," "being built," 2:20, 21, 22), and sacral institutions ("temple," "dwelling of God," 2:21, 22). These pictures depict an astonishing change in the status and privilege of those who were once unbelievers ("far"): they are now believers and "members of God's household" (2:19; "near"), a united body of God's people, his new creation.

The theme of the divine "household," in particular, echoes through this pericope as one of its key motifs, reflected in the six compound words in 2:19–22 that are built off the syllable οικ- (*oik-*; from οἶκος, *oikos,* "house"): πάροικος (*paroikos,* "alien," 2:19), οἰκεῖος (*oikeios,* "household," 2:19), ἐποικοδομέω (*epoikodomeō,* "build upon," 2:20), οἰκοδομή, (*oikodomē,* "building," 2:21), συνοικοδομέω (*synoikodomeō,* "co-build," 2:22), κατοικητήριον (*katoikētērion,* "dwelling," 2:22).[22] All these οικ-words hark back to οἰκονομία (*oikonomia,* "administration") in 1:10, referring to God's glorious plan; in other words, this union of humanity in Christ is an integral part of the grand scheme of God to consummate all things in Christ. Unbelievers have become "co-citizens with the saints" and "members of God's household" of all ages (2:19). And *all* humanity is invited to join this party as the consummation of all things is imminent!

But there is more! "Co-fitted" (2:21) and "co-built" (2:22) also underscore the corporate aspect of this new edifice that believers have become in Christ. Again, the focus is not so much on Jew–Gentile unity, as it is upon the oneness of the body of Christ, irrespective of ethnicity or genetics. Though the church is already the fullness of Christ (1:23), there is a sense in which this is only gradually being accomplished: "being co-fitted" and "growing" (2:21) and being co-built" (2:22) are all in the present tense, indicating the continuous, ongoing activity of temple construction—into "a holy temple" where abides a holy deity (2:19). Of course, the consummation of all things in Christ is also an ongoing process. In any case, there can be no gainsaying the fact that this is truly an astounding transformation in the status of unbelievers who come to Christ—indeed of *all* humanity

constituting the community of God: they are becoming, collectively as one body, a divine temple and the dwelling of the Spirit! From a hopeless and godless circumstance (2:12) to this, as the consummation of all things in Christ presses inexorably on. What privilege could be greater or more magnificent!

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS AND MAPS

Here is the Theological Focus of Eph 2:11–22:

> *Believers, formerly far from God as unbelievers, have now been brought near, into the community of God's people—all humanity united in one body, one household, by the work of Christ who removed the condemnation of the law and won for this new creation access to God—and are now being grown together into the very dwelling of God in the Spirit, regardless of ethnicity or genetics* (2:11–22).[23]

Here are a couple of rather threadbare sermon maps[24] that you might find helpful in creating your own blueprints.[25]

I. PAST: The Status of Unbelievers
   - Christless, stateless, "promiseless," hopeless, godless (2:11–12)

II. PRESENT: The Station of Believers—their Union
   - "Far" brought "near" (2:13, 19)
   - Both unified and created into one new person (2:15)
   - Move-to-Relevance: Disunity in the church
   - The work of Christ (2:13, 14, 15, 16, 18)
   - Once separated from God, now reconciled with God (2:16–18)

III. FUTURE: The "Structure" of Christians—their United Function
   - Foundation: doctrine of the apostles and prophets (2:20a)
   - Cornerstone: Jesus Christ himself (2:20b)

Building: believers "co-built" and "co-fitted" (2:21–22)
Function: the dwelling of God in Christ in the Spirit (2:21–22)
The consummation of all things in Christ (1:10) furthered
Move-to-Relevance: Dysfunction because of disunity

IV. *Join Team Temple!*
Specifics on how unity of believers may be manifested[26]

Extending the metaphor of building to bricks and mortar, one may create another map:

I. FROM: Loose Bricks—Unbelievers' State
Christless, stateless, "promiseless," hopeless, godless (2:11–12)

II. TO: Assembled Bricks—Believers' Union
"Far" brought "near" (2:13, 19)
Both unified and created into one new person (2:15)
Once separated from God, now reconciled with God (2:16–18)

III. WITH: Mortar—Christ's Work
The work of Christ (2:13, 14, 15, 16, 18)
Move-to-Relevance: Disunity in the church today

IV. FOR: Building—Christians' Function
Foundation: doctrine of the apostles and prophets (2:20a)
Cornerstone: Jesus Christ himself (2:20b)
Building: believers "co-built" and "co-fitted" (2:21–22)
Function: the dwelling of God in Christ in the Spirit (2:21–22)
The consummation of all things in Christ (1:10) furthered
Move-to-Relevance: Dysfunction because of disunity

V. SO: *Join Team Temple!*
Specifics on how unity of believers may be manifested

NOTES

1. All translations of Scripture in this essay are my own.
2. Much of the discussion that follows is modified from Abraham Kuruvilla, *Ephesians: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015), 66–83. My goal here, as the subtitle of this article indicates, is only to provide an exegetical analysis that curates the theological thrust of this pericope (pericopal theology) to aid its preaching, but I shall also provide a couple of sermon outlines to stimulate thought in that direction.
3. While a group is being addressed in 2:1–10, the focus is on individual sins and individual faith, by which one comes to Christ by grace.
4. Our text deals with Gentiles and Jews in the context of the Ephesian letter, but that is canonically intended to be more broadly extrapolated, beyond first-century Palestinian circumstances.
5. Table below is modified from Frank Thielman, *Ephesians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 149.
6. Modified from John Paul Heil, *Ephesians: Empowerment to Walk in Love for the Unity of All in Christ* (Studies in Biblical Literature; 13; Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 22–24. Similar items in corresponding elements of the chiasm are italicized.
7. Also note that there are only four second person plural references in this pericope: in 2:11, 13, 17, 22 (in *A, B, B′*, and *A′*, respectively), in addition to as another in 2:17 within an OT citation. And the only two first person plural references are in 2:14, 18 (in *B* and *B′*, respectively).
8. And in the LXX, see Lev 26:1, 30; Isa 2:18; 10:11; 16:12; 19:1; 31:7; 46:6; Dan 5:4; also see Ps 115:4.
9. See also the blessings to Isaac, Gen 26:4, and to Jacob, 28:14; also see Ps 117:1; Isa 2:2–4; 11:10; 49:6; 60:3; etc. One must also remember that the church participates in the New Covenant (Jer 31:31–34), by virtue of being "in Christ" (Matt 26:28/Mark

14:24/Luke 22:20; Acts 2:32–33; 38–39; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:6–13; 9:15; 10:16–17; 12:24).
10. The direness of the Gentiles' past situation is also described in 2:12 as their "having no hope and godless in the world." Of course, without any relationship to Christ, the Gentiles before salvation were effectively also hopeless and godless, for access to God was only through Jesus Christ (as 2:18 makes clear).
11. In the OT, the "near/far" antithesis broadly described the Jew/Gentile distinction, essentially based upon ethnicity and genetics; for Jews as "near" see Isa 57:19 (which is cited in Eph 2:17), and Ps 148:14,; and for Gentiles as "far" see Deut 28:49; 2 Chr 6:32; Jer 5:15; Act 2:39; 22:21; etc. But even in that pre-Christ dispensation, Gentile-to-Jewish proselytes could "come near" (Deut 10:18; 12:18; etc.). Indeed, "proselyte," προσήλυτος, *prosēlytos,* derives from the Greek προσελεύσεται, *proseleusetai,* "he will come near."
12. That is not to deny that some divine promises in the OT for the future are directed to ethnic Israel, particularly as they relate to the kingdom and the Davidic incumbent of its throne.
13. Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Eerdmans, 1999), 196.
14. As most commentators on this passage do.
15. And see Matt 5:17–20; John 7:19; Rom 3:31; 1 Cor 14:34.
16. There is no hint in Pauline discussions in the NT that any of God's laws has been nullified. Cranfield describes the common understanding of the law as being abrogated post-Christ as a "modern version of Marcionism" that regards biblical history as "an unsuccessful first attempt on God's part at dealing with man's unhappy state, which had to be followed later by a second (more successful) attempt (a view which is theologically grotesque, for the God of the unsuccessful first attempt is hardly a God to be taken seriously)" (C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* [International Critical Commentary, 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979], 2: 862). Usually, those who explain that the "nullification" of the law in Eph 2:15 denotes its abolition, subsequently attempt to attenuate the force of this cancellation to make portions of the law applicable in the current dispensation:

its "moral" aspects. Others, like Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 376, assert that "[o]nly those [laws] that have been reiterated in the NT" are binding upon believers today. But such a piecemeal approach that cherry-picks divine demand does not work: it has to be all or none (Jas 2:10).

17. There is a seeming inconsistency when Eph 2:15 (that says the law is "nullified," from καταργέω, *katargeō*) is compared with Rom 3:3 (that says that Paul does *not* "nullify" the law; also from καταργέω). This ambiguity can be resolved only if one understands "law" in Eph 2:15 as the condemnation thereof, and not the law in its entirety (as in Rom 3:3), which, as was noted, Paul quotes approvingly in Eph 6:2 (and elsewhere). So Jesus' assertion in Matt 5:17, that he came not to "abolish" [from καταλύω, *kataluō*] the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill it, indicates not only his impeccability—the perfect Man essentially fulfilled all of God's demands—but also the fulfillment, by his atoning work, of the law's condemnation of the sin of all mankind. But the law was not abrogated; Jesus's explicit statement goes against that assumption, as also does 5:19, where he declares that to "annul" [from λύω, *luō*] even "one of the least of these commandments" renders one "least in the kingdom of heaven." Rather, as Jesus continues, the child of God is to keep and teach those divine commandments, upon which greatness in the kingdom is predicated. This is the responsibility of the believer empowered by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:3–4); it is not an attempt by an unbeliever to gain salvific merit. See Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 189–209.

18. Historically, what God demanded of his people was enshrined in the Mosaic Law; later such divine demand included every one of the laws of Scripture, in both Testaments, in every genre. "Basically the word *Torah* means 'instruction'; specifically, it is the instruction which God gives to mankind as a guide for life. Thus it may include that which is technically law [the Mosaic Law], but it also includes other more general parts of God's revelation" (Peter C. Craigie, with Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 1–50*

[WBC 19; 2nd ed.; New York: Thomas Nelson, 2004], 60). So what I label "divine demand" encompasses *all* of God's law/*Torah* in its general sense—pre-Mosaic commands, Mosaic Law, law of Christ, laws of his millennial reign, etc. And by divine demand, I include even non-imperatives in Scripture; in short, every pericope in every genre of the Bible depicts a view of how God's ideal world should run—its precepts, priorities, and practices. In that sense, every biblical pericope makes a divine demand upon mankind. In the canon of Scripture, even narrative implicitly bears an "ought"—divine demand. This is true for any communication intended for application. When a wife tells her husband, "The trash is full," though an indicative verb is employed, who could deny that the utterance is an imperative? For an extensive discussion on the *theological* validity of all God's demands for all of God's people in every age, see Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!* 151–89. Also see, Abraham Kuruvilla, "'Applicable' but Not 'Obeyable'! Review Essay: *The Lost World of the Torah," JEHS* (forthcoming).

19. The verb κτίζω had already been encountered in 2:10, to describe this new body/person/entity of believers as a divine "workmanship, having been *created* in Christ Jesus for good works."

20. Or a two-race humanity, if you will—the people of God and everyone else.

21. The word ἀκρογωνιαῖος (*akrogōniaios*) could mean either a cornerstone or a capstone. In fact, Luke 20:18 seems to give such a structure *both* senses: people fall over this stone and the stone also falls on them! In either case, the thrust of Eph 2:19–22 remains unchanged: the whole building is in conformity with this (corner/cap)stone, Jesus Christ, "in whom" (2:21, 22 [×2]; also "in the Lord," 2:21) the building is becoming a dwelling and temple of God in the Spirit.

22. The one doing all the building is, of course, God; the divine passive in 2:20, "having been built," indicates the Builder.

23. I exhort my readers to consider this reduction of the passage, what I call its Theological Focus, as being important only for sermon preparers, not necessarily for sermon listeners. In fact,

reductions are produced after the fact, fabricated after the interpreter has caught what the text is *doing*. In other words, *after* the discernment of the text's thrust (i.e., pericopal theology, that cannot be expressed without significant loss in any format other than that of the text itself), it is subsequently reduced to the expressible and lossy format of the Theological Focus to serve as a convenient label or shorthand for that pericopal theology. These reductions are composed for preachers' own purposes: to keep them directionally focused in sermon preparation as illustrations are collected, moves-to-relevance made, applications derived, and especially as sermon maps are created. Of course, I don't have anything against employing reductions as occasional summaries of some sort within sermons, as well—a necessary accompaniment of all oral-aural (mouth-to-ear) communication (Abraham Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching: The Journey from Text to Sermon* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019], 130–36, 195–97). All that to say, a reduction of pericopal theology, like my Theological Focus above, is of no particular value for listeners, for if we preachers can catch the thrust of the text *before* a reduction is concocted (and we do), then what we preachers must do for our listeners is, in turn, curate the text for them so that they, too, catch the thrust as we preachers first did—*sans* reduction. For the differences in structure, function, derivation, and context between my reductive Theological Focus and the standard distillation of the Big Idea, see Abraham Kuruvilla, "Time to Kill the Big Idea? A Fresh Look at Preaching," *JETS* 61 (2018): 825–46. This article and a couple of rounds of responses to it (from others) and rejoinders to each of these responses (from me) are all available at http://homiletix.com/kill-the-big-idea/.

24. I have chosen to call these "maps," rather than "outlines." An *outline* has some self-imposed constraints: its points are constructed as full sentences (usually propositions with subjects and complements), with main points subsuming subsidiary points, and so on, all of which are unnecessary for a *map* that aids the sermonic curation of "text+theology" (the pericope and its theology as a unified and inseparable entity). For my opinion of what needs to change from how we have traditionally viewed

preaching, especially in light of our fast-advancing understanding of how language works and how the brain works to comprehend texts and speech, see Abraham Kuruvilla, "'What is the Author *Doing* with What He is Saying?' Pragmatics and Preaching—An Appeal," *JETS* 60 (2017): 557–805 (available, with a colleague's response and my rejoinder to that, at https://homiletix.com/kuruvillajets2017).

25. Try to figure out how I moved from the Theological Focus reduction to these maps. As I mentioned, this is one good use of a reduction of pericopal theology: to create sermon maps. For more on this, see Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching*, 87–109.

26. Applications need to be more specific than just *Join Team Temple!* of course. The preacher should ask: What might be a first concrete step for God's people to take towards creating a body characterized by unity, without respect to ethnicity or genetics? What can believers specifically do to further that ideal in their communities? I'll let you figure out the perfect application for your audience, in your community, and in your circumstances. I am sure the other articles in this themed issue of *JEHS* will stimulate your creative juices. For more help on deriving application, see Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching*, 57–86.

AN ASIAN NORTH AMERICAN PREACHER'S PROBLEM WITH ASIAN NORTH AMERICAN (ANA) PREACHING: SOME PERSONAL THOUGHTS

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SIM Canada

My problem with Asian North American (ANA) preaching has less to do with the preaching of ANA preachers, than it does the ANA label, which I find to be 1) both too broad and too narrow to be of any real worth, and 2) a friend to those who would keep Sunday morning the most segregated hour in "America," or, to put it negatively (or positively, as is, in fact, the case), an enemy to the work of the church.

Let me address the first issue first. To wit: North America consists of more than the United States and Canada; the continent includes Mexico, the seven central American nations, the Caribbean countries, and Greenland; and Asia is comprised of even more countries, not only China, South Korea, and Japan, but Uzbekistan, North Korea, India, the Philippines, Syria, and literally dozens of others. In other words, if there is such a thing as ANA preaching, the terminology suggests, even demands, that it encompass more than the preaching done by people of East Asian heritage who reside in the United States and Canada. Yet, it is precisely this latter group that is typically in view when ANA preaching is discussed.

In the preface to their thought-provoking *Finding Our Voice: A Vision for Asian North American Preaching*, for instance, authors Matthew Kim and Daniel Wong name their focus as "English-speaking, second- and multi-generational, US- and Canadian-born Asian North Americans. Further, because of our own experience in these contexts, we will primarily address those from East Asian backgrounds like our own, namely ethnic

Koreans and Chinese."[1] But if that is the case, why not call the preaching under consideration something more precise than ANA? Our words and our terminology matter. While they add their desire "that other ANAs will find we are describing their experiences as well," it is not at all obvious to me that a North Korean refugee in Vancouver and a third-generation Filipino in Silicon Valley necessarily share more in common with each other than they do those in the neighborhoods where they live and work. Moreover, simply because two people living in the United States, say, happen to share the same ancestral country of origin, that hardly means they are all that similar. One person may hail from Kerala, another from Manipur (or Xinjiang and Jilin); they may have little more in common than an Indian (or Chinese) passport.

While it is true that Chinese and Korean churches dominate the landscape when it comes to ANA churches, they are far from the only ones. (In my immediate neighborhood, for instance, there are at least two Filipino churches, a South Asian congregation, a Japanese church, a Vietnamese church, a Syrian Orthodox church, and one made up predominantly of people from Syria and Jordan. By definition, these are all ANA churches!) Omitting others only further marginalizes already marginalized voices. And while it is also true that ANAs share commonalities vis-à-vis identity, we—I write as a Chinese-born Canadian—are hardly alone in that respect. Many other groups wrestle with competing cultural allegiances, exclusion from mainstream society, and the like. So when Kim and Wong note that showing honor to parents is a cultural touchstone for many ANAs, I find myself thinking surely that's the case in virtually every racial group; that there are many who believe, and demonstrate through their words and actions, that their moms (or dads) are the real MVPs.

What, in the end, is the value of the ANA label? It is at once both too broad to accurately describe the varied experiences of North Americans whose ancestors lived throughout Asia, and too narrow in its actual usage where it refers primarily, if not exclusively, to Chinese/Korean US-Americans/Canadians.

Frankly, the ANA label does nothing to change the perception that Asians are all alike; it confirms it. In reality, there is no normative ANA experience.

Nor does ANA preaching that happens in the context of ANA churches do anything to help desegregate our communities. Surely preaching which seeks to cast a vision of a multiethnic New Jerusalem (Rev 7:9) is strengthened by efforts to break out of monoethnic ecclesial enclaves.

I am writing this on the twenty-fifth anniversary of my baptism at a Chinese church in Toronto, Canada, the city where I was born and raised. Before becoming a Christian, my closest friends reflected the diversity of my urban upbringing: an orthodox Jewish believer, an atheist immigrant from Iran, friends whose families hailed from Israel, Pakistan, and the Caribbean islands. After becoming a Christian, I spent increasingly more time with people from my Chinese church, until one day I looked around and realized my closest friends had all become Chinese-born Canadians. Sometimes I say, half tongue-in-cheek, it took becoming a Christian for me to become a racist. Why do ANA churches exist, beyond ministering to first-generation immigrants in their mother tongue? Why don't more non-ANA churches hire ANA senior pastors?

If the church is to be a city on a hill (Matt 5:14) that shows the world an alternative and better way of living, one more in line with God's design, I am oblivious as to how ANA churches (or any churches that are divided along racial and ethnic bloodlines, for that matter), are able to do that. How do we show those outside the church that we are disciples of Jesus who love one another (John 13:35) when we do not worship together; when we only gather with birds of a similar feather?

IF NOT ANA PREACHING, THEN WHAT?

I contend that what ANA preachers most need is not a distinctively ANA homiletical voice, but what has always been most needed. Over a hundred years ago, G. Campbell Morgan said "the man [*sic*] who preaches the Cross must be a crucified

man. You may preach the Cross and it is nothing but a Roman gibbet unless you preach it from yourself. It is the crucified man that can preach the Cross. Said Thomas 'Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails . . . I will not believe. Dr. Parker of London said that what Thomas said of Christ, the world is saying about the Church. And the world is saying to every preacher: Unless I see in your hands the print of the nails I will not believe."[2]

In other words, what ANA preachers need most is not technique or theory, but to resemble Jesus in every respect, including and especially in His suffering. It is how we best serve our people, regardless of their race and ethnicity, and I lament any and every omission of this primary need in homiletical discussions.

The world does not want more talk from those inside the church; it wants action. It is what Christians want, too. We all want preachers who not only look to Jesus as their Savior and submit to His rule as their King, but who follow Him as their Example, which means proclaiming good news to the poor and liberty to the captives and the oppressed (Luke 4:18–19), including those marginalized on account of their skin color.

This is not naïveté. Having lived throughout Canada and the United States, I have had racist words spat in my face in Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Philadelphia, and New York. I know how much it hurts. People have told me to go back to China (and Japan). In a Starbucks, a White woman told me that I cannot be Canadian because I do not look Canadian. I have even heard racist remarks from elders I have served with as a senior pastor of a multiethnic church. When discussing a proposal to partner with a Chinese church in the city, one of my non-Asian elders said, "I don't trust them. Chinese people are so sneaky." Another non-Asian elder immediately added his agreement. I could hardly believe what I was hearing. I stopped the meeting and rebuked them. (We cannot denounce racism when our churches are low-key bastions of it.) The first elder said, "I didn't mean you, Pastor," as if that somehow made racism okay. I don't

know why I was surprised to encounter this attitude in my church, when it so obviously exists in other churches.

Ten years ago, for example, someone named Ben Peays, then the executive director of The Gospel Coalition, uploaded a video to the organization's web site (which has since been removed but lives on at his personal Vimeo account) titled "What's Next for Francis Chan? A Conversation with Mark Driscoll and Joshua Harris."[3] In the clip, the three men sit around a table and talk while cameras record their interaction. Forty seconds into their discussion Driscoll calls Chan, a Chinese American, "the international man of Fu Manchu mystery." The men laugh, but there is nothing funny, humorous, or comical about these hurtful, offensive, and racially-loaded, even racist, words. No one stopped the conversation to rebuke Driscoll. That the video made it past The Gospel Coalition content editors was shocking to me when I first watched it a decade ago. Someone should have called on him to repent. Either of the other men at the table with him could and should have done it; neither did (at least, not in the recording). Someone else at The Gospel Coalition who saw the video, which never should have been posted, could have written a public apology. Things like this cause individuals, churches, and yes, even Coalitions, to lose credibility—and rightly so.

But the solution to these vitriolic remarks is not to withdraw into, or stay enclosed inside, an ANA church bubble, as tempting and comfortable as that may be for ANAs. To do so would only perpetuate the White-power status quo. Rather, all preachers, regardless of their race and ethnicity, who desire to resemble Jesus, can begin to combat racism in their churches by being more thoughtful with their words, and condemning racist language and behavior and racialized attitudes and microaggressions[4] whenever they encounter it. One way to do this is if ministers of all races and ethnicities, ministering in churches of all different kinds, invited ministers from other races and ethnicities to preach from their pulpits. Surely that would communicate something of the nature of the gospel and our gospel-shaped relationships with one another.

Preachers would also do well to continue learning about other cultures that are not their own, and encouraging their churches to engage in cross-cultural fellowship and work. (How else will we bring the gospel to all nations if we cannot relate with people who are unlike us?) To that end, I encourage preachers to read Kim and Wong's *Finding Our Voice*. While I disagree with their assessment that "ANA preachers are in need of a unique homiletical voice akin to other minority groups such as African American and Hispanic American preaching traditions," there is much in it that will reward careful reading.

Preachers do even better by spending time getting to know the ANA people in their (ideally, multiethnic) churches. Much is made of the importance that pastor-preachers be cultural exegetes. Not that this is unimportant (though I do think its value is overstated), but macro statements encompassing whole swaths of people from any particular continent or country is, by nature, rife with generalizations that will not be accurate for everyone from that particular place. Instead, preachers should have expert knowledge concerning personal micro cultures; that is, we should strive to know the actual people under our charge as well as we possibly can. It's fine to know that ANAs are generally like this or like that; it is of incalculably greater worth to know that Banu in your church moved from Ankara to Springfield with her single mother and older brother when she was ten. This—knowing people on their own terms, letting their stories and voices speak for themselves—is better by far than any generic label we might attach to entire populations, which, in fact, consist of unique individuals, each one handcrafted in the image of God.

NOTES

1. See Matthew D. Kim and Daniel L. Wong, *Finding Our Voice: A Vision for Asian North American Preaching* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020). All references to this book in my paper are taken from the Kindle edition.
2. *Evangelism* (Chicago: Revell, 1904), 58.
3. vimeo.com/14452343.

4. There is a scene in the remake of *The Karate Kid* (2010; which is about kung fu, and has nothing to do with karate, which is a Japanese martial art), starring Jackie Chan and Jaden Smith, when Smith's character is on a Beijing-bound plane with his mother, played by Taraji P. Henson. Henson's character encourages Smith to practice his Mandarin by speaking with an Asian passenger seated nearby. Smith reluctantly asks him for his name (in very decent Mandarin, by the way). The passenger replies: "Dude, I'm from Detroit." Casual, race-based assumptions like that displayed by Smith's character are all too common examples of microaggression.

WHEN RACISM BECOMES MUNDANE: PROCLAIMING A HOLISTIC HAMARTIOLOGY

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"But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. Every day I meet young people whose disappointment with the church has turned into outright disgust."

Martin Luther King, Jr., *"Letter from a Birmingham Jail"*[1]

"We will work to be an example of how we, as brothers and sisters on this earth, should treat each other. Now, more than ever, the illusions of division threaten our very existence… We must find a way to look after one another, as if we were one single tribe."

T'Challa, *Black Panther*

INTRODUCTION

How can the American evangelical church rise up to represent Christ in the midst of the overwhelming weight of our racial history? How can the preacher proclaim prophetically from the pulpit to a people divided regarding the state of race in our Union?

To claim I have the answers would be naïve at best or perpetuating a history of hypocritical colonization at worst. I write as a sister who has and is continuing to grapple with my

own failings in racial justice. Yes, I have been through the wringer as a young evangelical woman working at the intersection of Biblical Studies and Homiletics. I know a weariness of waiting years for those in power to muster their own courage to face the tension that faithfulness to justice requires. But my own passion for racial justice does not derive from a false equivalency between my own experiences of systems not "ready" for me and those of my brothers and sisters of color. My conviction began out of an academic study of Romans. Today, I write to address just one of the dangers I see in the entanglement between the American Church and our Western society: a neglect of preaching a holistic understanding of sin.[2] Our homilies and hymns do not sufficiently teach sin as more than individual actions. I do not believe much of the American evangelical church will get racial injustice "right" until she gets her hamartiology right.

For too long, much of the white American evangelical church has struggled to conceive of and address sins on "systemic" levels because this language is frequently linked to Marxism. However, Karl Marx does not have a monopoly on depicting the extent of human depravity. Sin began infecting systems not in communist revolutions but in a Garden where human sin left a curse on the ecosystem. Unfortunately, in a suspicion and dismissal of liberation theology as "unorthodox," many evangelicals have overlooked how some elements of liberation and *Christus Victor* models fill in holes by left by an exclusively penal substitutionary motif of the atonement.

In this reflective essay, I will briefly sketch how a biblical hamartiology involves viewing sin as a ruling power and as both individual and societal acts of rebellion against God. I will then demonstrate how preaching a holistic view of sin (and thus a more holistic redemption) will equip the Church to more faithfully dialogue about the realities of racism today.

SIN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

We often portray the Fall as the individual rebellious lunch of Adam and Eve which resulted in humans as "sinful and separated from God, so we cannot know Him personally or experience His love."[3] However, both practical and biblical theologians are increasingly recognizing the importance of viewing the impacts of the Fall on our relationships with God, with self, with others, and with creation.[4] In Genesis 3:14, James McKeown makes the important observation that while men and women experience consequences from the first sin, "only the serpent and the ground are *cursed*."[5] Our sin has had devastating effects on human social relationships as well as on the created world.

The Old Testament narratives continue to reveal the holistic nature of sin. The murder of brothers degrades into violence so abhorrent that God must comprehensively cleanse His own creation to begin anew with Noah (Genesis 4-6). The stories of the Patriarchs recount devastating generational sins of favoritism and fear. Exodus portrays Pharaoh's ethnic prejudice against the Hebrews, which leads to structural sins of slavery, infanticide, brutal uses of force, and religious discrimination (Exodus 1-12). Although they were permitted to enter the Promised Land, Caleb and Joshua had to wander the wilderness for thirty years because of the sin of their countrymen (Numbers 13-14). Achan's greed in the Conquest results in the death of his fellow Israelites in battle (Joshua 7). Eli's sons establish corrupt policies in the sacrificial system (1 Sam 2:12-17). David's "individual" sin against Bathsheba and Uriah leads to sexual abuse of power and the death of an innocent man, as well as the eventual upheaval of his family (2 Samuel 11-12). David's "individual" sin of conducting a forbidden census results in the deaths of 70,000 of his people. (1 Chronicles 21). Solomon and Hezekiah's sins led to their progeny losing their kingdoms (1 Kings 11-12; 2 Kings 20).

The Old Testament prophets and priests cry out against both individual and corporate sins of Israel and Judah. Elijah

confronts Ahab on murdering and confiscating the land of Naboth (1 Kings 21). Azariah and 80 other priests rebuke King Uzziah for burning incense to the LORD (2 Chronicles 26:16-18). Further, YHWH also condemns the communal sins of Israel and Judah through the prophets. YHWH begins his list of four sins of Judah in Amos with "they sell the innocent for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as on the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed" (Amos 2:6b-7a). Habakkuk laments that it appears God has ignored the violence, injustice, and destruction committed by Judah, where "the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails" (Habakkuk 1:2-4). Malachi confronts the priests for their insincere religious rituals as well as Judah for marrying women who worship foreign gods and for their injustice (Malachi 1:7-3:5).

Not only do the prophets *confront* the both individual and communal sins but they also *confess* communal sins. Daniel fasts in sackcloth and ashes, confessing corporate sins of wickedness rebellion refusal to listen to the prophets. He prays, "We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame, LORD, because we have sinned against you" (Daniel 9:8). While still in exile, Nehemiah prays, "I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you" (Nehemiah 1:6).

This brief overview hits only but a few examples of how sin throughout the OT is both individual and communal. To be clear, the people of Israel had a special relationship with God, with certain corporate covenantal blessings and obligations. We cannot claim the same today. Neither can we expect the God who held foreign nations—outside the bounds of the Mosaic and Davidic Covenants—accountable for their sins to spare His judgment from us. Scripture reveals that the sins of individuals (particularly in leadership) as well as the sins of communities have consequences. The OT shows example after example about how leaders lacking integrity consistently lead their people into corruption and oppression. Although we do not have a land covenant with YHWH, Scripture clearly reveals that we worship

a God who defends the vulnerable, does not tolerate oppression, and holds communities accountable for their sin. Scripture also shows the faith leaders of Israel and Judah with the courage to confront both individual and societal sins, as well as to confess the sins of their own communities.

SIN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament discussions of sin, three areas are noteworthy: the depiction of sin as both a ruling power and as individual actions, the imagery of the Greek word for forgiveness, and the redemption of all creation. Evangelistic tracts are quick to quote Romans 3:23 as evidence that every individual is guilty of sin. However, Paul offers a more layered hamartiology. As Yusufu Turaki writes, "The word 'sin' is used in two ways in the Apostle Paul's letters. When it is used in the singular, 'sin' usually refers to the sinful nature we inherited from Adam. This root sin corrupts everything we do. In Romans 5:12-8:12, Paul discusses the origin, nature, power and effect of our sinful nature and how to deal with its effects on us."[6] Moreover, Romans 6 uses imagery to portray sin as a reigning power rather than as an individual action.[7] Fleming Rutledge summarizes the message of Romans 6:

> The clear implication here is that there is no way for the human being to move from the domain of Sin to the domain of God's righteousness unless there is an invasion of the kingdom of Sin from outside. The domain of Sin leads to Death; its goal and purpose (*telos*) is Death. There is no way out of this downward-moving spiral of dissolution. But here is the good news: 'You have been set free from [the domain of] Sin and have become slaves to God; your fruit is holiness and the *telos* is eternal life' (cf. Rom. 6:22).[8]

The wonder of the Gospel is not only that we are justified but also that we are set free from Sin's dominion.[9]

Additionally, we must draw on the vivid imagery of Scripture's depiction of forgiveness. The dominant word for forgiveness in the New Testament, αφεσις (verbal root αφιημι) means, "the act of freeing and liberating from something that confines; the act of freeing from an obligation, guilt, or punishment."[10] Inherent to the idea of "forgiveness" in the NT is a freedom from the power of and guilty verdict of sin.

Finally, throughout the New Testament we see a promise of the redemption of all creation. In Romans 8, Paul reminds us that creation *groans* as it waits "in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:21). God promises to reconcile the κοσμος in 2 Corinthians 5:17. In Revelation 21, we see the hope of Isaiah 65:17 actualized in a new earth and heaven. Revelation 22 shows the Garden restored and the tree of life with leaves "for the healing of the nations," and "no longer will there be any curse." (Revelation 22:2-3). Creation will be freed from the curse of humanity's sins. Our societal relations will be healed. God Himself will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Yes, the Gospel is about Jesus paying the penalty of our sins so that when we die, we can go to heaven and be with Jesus. But the hope of what Christ accomplished on the cross is so much more than an exclusively individualistic redemption.

PREACHING A HOLISTIC HAMARTIOLOGY

When we do not preach a holistic view of sin, we shortchange our listeners from hearing of *all* the goodness of the good news. But some may still hesitate to call sin "social," "structural," or "systemic." What is systemic sin? I propose that understanding "systemic sin" requires a recognition that sin reigns as a ruling power, using human institutions to advance its priorities. Systemic sin is that sin which infiltrates the systems of human society. It is not Marxist to assume that structures can be sinful; it is a simple recognition that "systems" of society are not mere amoral abstractions; they are designed by sinful humans who yield to the authority of Sin. Stephen Ray explains that structural

sin "specifically refers to the workings of sin in the world in magnitudes beyond the scope of individual actions." He continues,

> it is the act of recognizing that sin can so inundate the fabric of things that every thought, every action, and the material conditions under which those thoughts provoke actions *all* proceed along lines that are in place because of the workings of sin…[11]

Ray then provides an example:

> Put another way, decrepit and underfunded schools that prepare children for an economy which no longer exists, structurally dilapidated communities distant from economic opportunity and surrounded by environmentally threatening industries or their remnants, whose physical and economic condition breeds crime and despair, are taken to be the *natural* condition of Black people, thereby leaving unquestioned the ways that fiscal policy, housing practices and extra-legal violence have created these conditions, again and again.[12]

More pointedly he writes that structural sin is "when sin becomes the mundane."[13] Too often, we blame "living in a Fallen world" for inequalities without pausing to investigate how fallen humans and fallen systems might be perpetuating disparities. When we hear that "an estimated one-third of black male Americans will be in state or federal prison at some point in their lives,"[14] when we learn that the age-adjusted COVID-19 mortality rate among Native Americans in New Mexico is 18 times higher than Hispanics and 23 times higher than whites,[15] when we realize the disproportionate numbers of missing black children who receive significantly less media attention[16] –when we hear these statistics and sigh, saying to ourselves, "it is what it is," we have allowed sin to become mundane.

So, how do we preach a holistic view of sin? As evangelicals, we draw from the richness of the Reformation and proclaim both the wrongness of individual sins and the hope of the Gospel that we each can receive justification through the substitutionary death of Christ. But we also preach against the sins of our society. We preach the whole corpus of Scripture, including passages that condemn oppression. By understanding sin as systemic, we can recognize how our greed for our property values perpetuates housing and school segregation today. By preaching a holistic view of sin, we can account for how African Americans have been sentenced to life in prison for shoplifting socks or stealing a loaf of bread.[17] By preaching against systemic sin, we can equip our church elders to plan for how we would respond if we discover our church or institutional property lies on land corruptly stolen from a native tribe. If sin is both individual and systemic, we can conceive that racism is both individual and systemic. We can recognize that over 300 years of systems of laws designed to oppress violently (and at times ethnically cleanse) certain people groups could not be entirely eradicated in a few decades.

By preaching a holistic view of sin, we can establish a communal remembrance of the sins of our history—from chattel slavery to Native American genocide and enslavement, from Jim Crow to internment camps to mass incarceration. We do not fear that an admission of the "bad" parts of our history might expose that *we* are "bad"—we already know that there is none righteous. We can gently move our listeners to understand that our Founding Fathers were fallen. As Christians, we can work through the trauma of our history and take an honest appraisal of the sins of our community, because we pledge allegiance to the King of Glory before any loyalty to Old Glory. We can love our country while recognizing that YHWH gave us no land covenant from sea to shining sea. We can remember and confess both individual and systemic sins without fear because we know that there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Confessing personal prejudices does not free the 1/9 death row inmates who are innocent. Social programs and political policies alone cannot free us from the dominion of Sin. As we preach a more holistic view of sin, may we not throw away our shot to preach the fullness of the Good News that the King of Kings will redeem all things and invites us to give the world a glimpse of the Kingdom to come.

NOTES

1. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," April 16, 1963, full text from: https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html.
2. Because of the urgency of the cultural moment, I write as an American with a priority of writing to fellow American brothers and sisters. However, I would encourage brothers and sisters to apply a holistic understanding of sin to their own cultural moments, for no society is immune to the systemic effects of sin.
3. "The Four Spiritual Laws," accessed August 30, 2020. http://www.4laws.com/laws/englishkgp/default.htm.
4. Yusufu Turaki, *The Trinity of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 112.
5. James McKeown, *Genesis,* Two Horizons Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 36.
6. Yusufu Turaki, *The Trinity of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 117-118.
7. Aageson argues that δουλειν portrays ἁμαρτια as the controlling power and ημας as those under dominion. J. W. "'Control' in Pauline Language and Culture : A Study of Rom 6," *New Testament Studies* 42, no. 1 (1996): 75-89.
8. Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 369.
9. In *The Crucifixion,* Rutledge demonstrates for how a substitutionary motif underlies a *Christus victor* motif of the

atonement and argues that both models are essential for understanding the extent of what Christ accomplished on the Cross.

10. William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 155.

11. Stephen Ray, "Structural Sin," in *T&T Clark Companion to the Doctrine of Sin,* eds Keith L. Johnson and David Lauber (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 417.

12. Stephen Ray, "Structural Sin," 423-424.

13. Stephen Ray, "Structural Sin," 417.

14. Jonathan Rothwell "How the War on Drugs Damages Black Social Mobility," *Brookings.edu,* September 30, 2014, accessed June 16, 2020. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/social-mobility-memos/2014/09/30/how-the-war-on-drugs-damages-black-social-mobility/.

15. Jens Gould, "Native Americans dying at a much higher rate from COVID-19," *SantaFeNewMexican.com*, August 4, 2020, accessed August 31, 2020. https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/coronavirus/native-americans-dying-at-much-higher-rate-from-covid-19/article_392ffc22-d66a-11ea-bbd1-8fe3a1929340.html.

16. 37% of missing children are African American even though they only make up 14% of the population of U.S. children. See: Harmeet Kaur, "Black kids go missing at a higher rate than white kids. Here's why we don't hear about them," *CNN*. November 3, 2019, accessed August 31, 2020. https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/03/us/missing-children-of-color-trnd/index.html.

17. Bryan Stevenson's organization, Equal Justice Initiative, addresses issues with "Three Strikes" laws in several states. According to EJI, two-thirds of those serving life or "virtual life" sentences were convicted of non-violent crimes. See: "Excessive Punishment," *Equal Justice Initiative,* accessed August 31, 2020. https://eji.org/issues/excessive-punishment/.

WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD: THE MERITOCRACY OF GOD

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Matthew 20:1-16

INTRODUCTION

We live in a culture of meritocracy. It's the idea that our merit—our talent, good deeds, achievements—determines our value. It's a culture based upon performance. And some meritocracy in some places is in fact a good thing. In school, students get grades based upon the quality of their homework or tests. In sports, the best athletes receive medals and trophies. At work, we expect promotions or pay increases if we perform well. In fact, much of our culture relies upon meritocracy. This is why so many people were outraged when the recent college admissions scandal was uncovered. It flies in the face of our idea that students should earn their admission into schools; admission must be earned, not bought.

But have you ever noticed how pervasive meritocracy is? How merit-based values infect our lives in places where they don't belong? For instance, do our families operate by merit? I was reading a *New York Times* article called "Love and Merit" in which the author writes that today's parents are "more competitive than ever" to get their kids "into good colleges and onto good career paths." Parents are spending more time "investing in their children's skills and résumés and … practices

and rehearsals." As a result, the love parents give to children becomes "meritocratic affection."[1]

This article highlights the danger of tying people's identity and value to their merit and performance. I wonder, how has meritocracy affected you? In your friendships, do you feel like love is something you have to earn or something that's a gift? In your marriage, do you have to sustain the relationship through what you give to it or is it an unconditional covenant? And has this performance-based culture infected your relationship with God? That's the question we'll consider today.

THE CONTEXT

Apparently, meritocracy existed in Jesus' day, too. There was a rich man who once asked Jesus what he had to do to be saved. This man listed all of his merits—he claimed he had kept every commandment! So, Jesus tested him by challenging him to sell all that he had and to follow him. But the man was unwilling to leave his money, his merit. However, this scene got Jesus' disciples thinking. "You know Jesus, we've left everything to follow you. If you don't mind us asking, what do we get?" It's a natural question, one that may have been on their minds for a while. Jesus answered, saying they will be richly rewarded for following him. But as their eyes got big, Jesus saw meritocracy at work, so he quickly added, "But many who are first will be last, and the last first." Then Jesus taught this parable about God's Kingdom.

THE PARABLE

Scene 1: The First Workers (v. 1-2)

It's about a farmer who goes out to hire workers for his vineyard. As farmers are, he's up before the sun, and he heads into town at 6 am to find some workers. Of course, in his day, there was no

Google search or jobs website for the unemployed. Instead, the unemployed gathered in the marketplace and waited for someone to hire them. It may have been similar to how today day-laborers sometime gather at places like Home Depot, hoping to be hired. Likewise, these were workers who didn't have any consistent income. They were dependent on being hired each day to care for themselves and their families. Hence, the workers were paid at the end of each day, to buy food on the way home. These are the workers the vineyard owner finds in the marketplace to hire. So, he calls some of the laborers, presumably the most able-bodied and skillful, and they negotiate a contract for the day. The farmer offers to pay them a generous amount: a denarius for the day—the going rate for skilled labor. The laborers agree and go to work in the vineyard.

Scene 2: The Farmer's Compassion (v. 3-5)

At this point, the vineyard owner goes home, let's the workers do their thing, and tends to other business, right? Actually no, something odd happens…the owner returns to the marketplace at 9 am. Then again at noon and again at 3 pm. This farmer must be terrible at calculating how many workers he needs. But even stranger, the owner keeps going back to the marketplace *himself*. He could have sent his manager to hire more workers. This is a wealthy landowner; he's got things to do. Imagine Mark Zuckerberg going to hire a new techie for Facebook or Jeff Bezos hiring a delivery man for Amazon. Why the hands-on concern? I think he cared about these workers. The owner must have had real compassion for those jobless workers. They would have been hungry, disappointed for not having work, and increasingly hopeless as the day went on. "Am I going to be able to put something on the table tonight?" This farmer seeks these poor, vulnerable, unemployed workers and offers them a job. He promises to give them what's fair for their labor. In other words, he offers them hope. He might need extra workers, or maybe he's

deliberately overstaffing his vineyard in order to provide work for more people. This is a gracious farmer.

Scene 3: The Last Workers (v. 6-7)

Then 5:00 pm rolls around. The workday ends in an hour. Yet the owner goes out one more time. Does he really *need* more workers? Or does he *want* as many workers in his vineyard as possible? And imagine who these final workers would be. Everyone has already been passed up; they're likely the least desirable workers. Since they're still in the marketplace at 5:00 pm, they must be desperately needy. They were probably the sick and disabled, the elderly and the orphans, the widows. These are people with no social network, no bank account, no food pantry. They were powerless to help themselves. They must've been thinking: "Who would hire us? What can I offer to anyone?" But then, here comes the vineyard owner, one last time. What hope must have fluttered in their stomachs as they thought, "could it be…?" Perhaps this time they would be chosen. And the farmer asked them, "Why are you still here?" And they said, "Because no one has hired us, no one wants us." And without even mentioning what he would pay them, the farmer tells them the most incredible words imaginable: "You, go into the vineyard, too!"

Scene 4: Paying the Last Workers (v. 8-9)

Now all of the workers are in the vineyard. As the last ones join the rest, they can tell the other workers are exhausted. These first workers have been gathering grapes all day. You can tell they have because their clothing is sticking to their sweaty bodies, and there's a steady stream of perspiration down their faces. And—"sniff"—there's a distinct odor…especially around those who have been working since 6 am. But now as the last workers begin, the sun has fallen behind the hill, and it's cool and shady. There are only a few vines left to gather. It feels like only a few minutes

later when the manager comes out and announces that the workday is over. "Already?" So, the farmer's manager comes to pay the workers. Per some strange instructions from the farmer, the manager begins with the last workers. Now these workers don't know how much to expect. They'll be grateful for anything. But to their surprise, the manager pays them each a denarius. A denarius! The farmer has decided to pay these last ones a whole day's wage for their one hour of service! Wow! Imagine if your day's wage increased by more than ten times! What undeserved generosity for these most needy of workers.

Scene 5: Paying the First Workers (v. 10-16)

Now when the first workers see this, they think, "If that's what he gives for one hour, what will our bonus be? Twelve denarii?" And they go, very happily, up to the manager, and each receive… one denarius. "What!? That's not fair—that's unjust. Has he forgotten how much we worked today? We've been here through the hottest part of the day. But he's paid us the same as the last. How have they merited this? How can he make them equal to us?" Well, they weren't exactly saying this to themselves. So, the vineyard owner overhears them and says to one of them, "Friend, I have not wronged you. Did we not make a contract this morning for one denarius? How have I wronged you? Would it be 'fair' for me break this contract which I have kept? No, I will keep the contract, and you may keep your denarius. I choose to give to these last workers as I give to you. Can I not give my money as I please? Or is the problem not that you think a denarius is inadequate for a day's work, but instead you are upset that I am generous?" In the original language, he said, "Or are your eyes evil because I am good?" In other words, "Is my goodness rubbing up against your evil? Are you upset because you see this good thing for someone else, but you want it for yourself?"

THE MEANING

These first workers could see how generous the owner was being to the last workers, but their response was not wonder, it was envy. They weren't upset because they had been cheated. They were upset because the order of meritocracy was being challenged, and they wanted to be under meritocracy. Under meritocracy, they had worked longer and harder than the others. We, too, often prefer living under meritocracy because it maintains the illusion that we have some modicum of control over our identity and value. At work, we try to be more efficient than our co-worker in the next cubical. At home, we compare our parenting styles with our neighbors: they're too strict, they're too loose. Yet God says to us, "I'm not going to judge you by output, by performance, by anything you can do. Your 'first' will be my 'last' and your 'last' will be my 'first.' No, I'm satisfied that you are willing to come follow me into my vineyard and serve me."

That's what the Kingdom of God is like. God's grace, his unmerited generosity, upsets our ideas of fairness and merit. Jesus is telling this parable to his disciples, who want to know what they have earned. What do they get for leaving everything and following Jesus? Jesus affirms that they will be rewarded; their sacrifices have been seen. But Jesus also says everyone who follows him will be rewarded, regardless of the time they start. Jesus promises that his first disciples will be rewarded, as will the rich, young man if he repents, as will the tax collectors like Zacchaeus, and prostitutes and Pharisees and people in 2020, if they follow him. Jesus will be gracious to all who follow him. In the meritocracy of God, no one gets what they deserve, they get grace. All human values and identities based on merit will be disrupted and God will make all equal by his grace. Every disciple gets more than they deserve. Every disciple receives eternal life, which is a relationship with God forever. God, like the gracious vineyard owner, lavishes his grace upon all of his workers.

THE GOSPEL

There's still one question that remains. How is it that God can be gracious to us, sinners? It's one thing to give obedient workers more than they deserve. It's another to give us, sinners and rebels toward God, the gift of reconciliation with God. Jesus' disciples seemed to miss this foundational point. They, like us, want to keep the order of meritocracy. But the ugly truth of meritocracy is that it's a double-edged sword. It cuts both ways: we compare ourselves to others and realize that we don't measure up. It shows our shortcomings. And while this truth is inconvenient in the earthly meritocracy, it's deadly in God's meritocracy. According to God's meritocracy, we have all fallen short. None of us have any standing before God. Far from meriting anything, we owe an unlimited debt. So how can God be gracious towards us? How can God be both just and gracious? How can God uphold justice while at the same time giving something unmerited to the undeserving?

It's because of the Good News. God becomes one of the vineyard workers with us. God the Son became a human being, who perfectly obeyed and honored the Father. Talk about merit—Jesus did everything right: he loved God and loved his neighbors. Jesus had all power and riches at his fingertips, but he leveraged his life for others rather than for himself. See, the Good News isn't what we *do*, it's what Jesus has *done*. Even though he had unparalleled merit, Jesus didn't seek his own position. Instead, he traded his merit, his 'paystub,' for ours. If you look in your Bibles, you'll see that right after this parable Jesus predicts his own death. I don't think that's an accident. Jesus' death helps us understand God's grace in this parable. At the end of his life, Jesus will experience the biggest injustice of all time. Yet even during his trial and his beating, Jesus never says the one thing the vineyard workers say: "It's … not … fair." If ever those words were to be truly spoken, it would have been from Jesus' lips. But Jesus doesn't complain that we, his followers, have been given his wages. No, Jesus freely shares himself with us. Jesus

exchanges his merit of righteousness for our lack of merit. Then, by freely receiving Jesus' perfect merit, we are freed from earning our value and identity in meritocracy. And even more importantly, God can now be gracious to us because, by Christ's work, we have perfect merit before God. It's because of Jesus' sacrifice that God could "be [both] just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

So how can God be both just and gracious? How does he not ignore sin yet welcome sinners? It's that God, out of His great love for us, met the demands of justice on our behalf. All we do is accept this as a gift. Just like the last workers in the vineyard, we don't merit this gift. That's why it's called grace. Friends, we have been saved by grace through faith in Christ. In the meritocracy of God, we are not judged by our own merits, but by Jesus'. Praise Jesus for his gracious gift towards us. And from our identity and value centered upon Jesus Christ, let us go out, joyfully and gratefully, to do good works for God's Kingdom. We are no longer worried with the meritocracy of our culture, but instead fully committed to sharing this amazing grace with everyone we meet.

NOTES

1. David Brooks, "Love and Merit," *New York Times*, Apr. 24, 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/24/opinion/ david-brooks-love-and-merit.html. Accessed Apr. 26, 2019.

BOOK REVIEWS

Preaching God's Grand Drama: A Biblical-Theological Approach. By Ahmi Lee. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. 9781540960498, 192 pp., $22.99.

Reviewer: Eric Price, *Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL.*

Homiletics as a discipline holds that biblical texts should speak to contemporary contexts. The preacher's task, as John Stott famously phrased it, is to stand between these two worlds and show how Scripture connects to listeners' experience. However, different scholarly approaches to homiletics tend to prioritize either the biblical text or the listeners' context as the primary generator of a sermon's meaning. Ahmi Lee, assistant professor of preaching at Fuller Theological Seminary, has provided a theological account of the homiletical transaction that helps us hold to authorial intent while still viewing lived experience as a valuable lens for interpreting Scripture.

Lee offers her proposal as a *via media* between two dominant approaches to homiletics, what she terms the traditional homiletic and the conversational homiletic. These two approaches are distinguished primarily by their epistemology. For the former, meaning is a fixed entity discoverable through proper biblical exegesis. For the later, meaning is an open-ended entity which arises from communal reflection. Traditional homiletics is "text-centered," whereas conversational homiletics is "reader-centered" (2). Lee's goal is to propose a homiletical "third approach that builds on both of their strengths" (3).

To do this, Lee surveys the strengths and weaknesses of traditional and conversational homiletics. There is much to commend in the traditional homiletic, namely "its foundational theological conviction that God has spoken" (21). Yet she notes

some inadvertent side effects: the uncritical restriction of a congregation's interpretive authority to the preacher (22); the sermonic reduction of Scripture's various genres to bare propositions (24-25); the view of application as something distinct from interpretation (25-26); and the equation of biblical truth with "dominant culture" interpretations of Scripture (27).

Lee then surveys the conversational model through the writings of three adherents: Lucy Rose, John McClure, and O. Wesley Allen, Jr. As an outgrowth of the New Homiletic, a conversational model recognizes that "people interpret texts from their own social location, inescapably colored by a miscellany of experiences that fashion their attitudes and perspectives" (52). Lee explains the postmodern epistemology that underlies the conversational homiletic and, while valuing its emphasis on human experience, nonetheless critiques it for "(1) the loss of confidence in Scripture's ability to communicate a discernible meaning, and (2) the turn to the community of readers to generate meaning as a solution to this perceived problem" (70).

Moving to her constructive proposal, Lee surveys the use of drama as a metaphor for theology. Drawing from the work of four theologians who develop this metaphor – Hans Urs van Balthashar, N.T. Wright, Nicholas Lash, and Kevin Vanhoozer – she demonstrates its utility for moving beyond the traditional-conversational homiletic binary. The metaphor of drama captures God's ongoing action in the world, as recorded in Scripture and experienced in the lives of his people. Yet Scripture also functions as an inspired script that calls us to respond to God's initiative from our various social locations and participate in the ongoing drama of redemption. "In this way the theodrama is able to steadily hold together proposition and experience, coherence and particularity, and divine action and human participation" (111).

Lee presents a theology of preaching that is integrated with dramatic theology. For overcoming the impasse between traditional and conversational homiletics, what is significant about theodrama is that it tells us "the sermon should examine

the world *of*, *behind*, and *before* the text so that the congregation hears what the text is saying – what it might have meant to the first hearers, what wisdom it holds for the present context, and what response it invites from them" (135). Whereas the traditional and conversational homiletics fall short by absolutizing one of these worlds, a theodramatic homiletic "provides hearers" a "conceptual framework" (121) of theological continuity to unite God's past actions with his present and future actions through the congregation.

Lee notes that "a theodramatic homiletic is not an inventive, original approach to sermons" (151); rather, it re-captures a holistic preaching hermeneutic that has been stifled in different ways by the traditional and conversational models. In this way, a dramatic homiletic views contextual exegesis as essential to interpretation but does not absolutize the listeners' context as the sole or primary locus of Scripture's meaning.

In recent years, evangelical homiletics has made important steps toward integrating homiletical theory with theological hermeneutics. Lee's proposal contributes to this ongoing development. *Preaching God's Grand Drama* articulates a homiletical theory that is textually attentive and contextually sensitive. It takes seriously epistemological challenges raised by postmodern homiletics yet also shows evangelical theology has resources to address them. Lee's model is neither static propositionalism nor reader-response theory, but a creative, theologically grounded account of how God's transcendent truth connects with, and can be interpreted through, the immanence of human experience. In the field of homiletical theory, Lee's proposal is now essential reading.

The Practices of Christian Preaching: Essentials for Effective Proclamation. Jared E. Alcántara. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019. 978-0-8010-9866-6, 214 pp., $17.49.

Reviewer: *Timothy S. Warren, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX.*

Alcántara, having earned a Ph.D. at Princeton Theological Seminary, is Associate Professor of Preaching, occupying the Paul W. Powell Endowed Chair of Preaching at Truett Theological Seminary. His thesis is straightforward: "Preachers who cultivate life-giving preaching habits through deliberate practice will enhance their proficiency, grow in their commitment, and flourish in their homiletical ministry" (5, 190).

After establishing that preaching should be Christian at its core with the five practices he promises to elaborate emanating from that center, Alcántara views preaching's primary task as witnessing the gospel. Chapter one defines the gospel, detailing what it is not and what it is. This gospel is more than a call to trust Jesus as Savior in order to be justified. It is transformative, offensive, hopeful, prophetic, and eschatological (18).

The next five chapters develop the necessity of practicing preaching that exhibits conviction, contextuality, clarity, concreteness, and creativity. Conviction is more than what the preacher believes and teaches; it is a matter of the price he is willing to pay if the gospel message is not popular and a matter of living consistently with the demands of the gospel. To preach contextually means that the preacher will give attention to the world and worldview of both the text and the listener. It means honoring both by being faithful to the gospel and fitting to the local congregation (86). Preaching with clarity demands, first of all, a precise grasp of the preaching text, not to create an academic commentary, but to address a particular congregation. Clear preaching employs language easily grasped through the ear, a main idea effortlessly identified and understood, and words, sentences, and concepts that are short and simple, as opposed to complex. Although preachers will employ both abstraction and concreteness, the concrete sermon must "eventually find its way back down to sea level" (153). Concepts, illustrations, and applications must be presented in terms that make sense where listeners live. They must be able to visualize

how the gospel looks when they go home, to work, to school, or to play. Creative preaching will exhibit "novelty, quality, and relevance" (157). Creativity demands the effort of both the imagination and the rational mind. Creative sermons invite the listener to participate in the experience of the text rather than remain a distant observer.

In a final chapter, Alcántara notes that artists and athletes who attain greatness do so by relentless practice, sometimes going through the motions 10,000 times. If artists and athletes have such dedication to the practice of the basics, why not preachers who are stewards of the gospel?

The Practices of Christian Preaching may prove helpful both as an introductory text for the novice preacher and as a resource for the homiletics professor. The five basic practices are essential for all preachers, while the 394 footnotes and 313 references listed in the bibliography provide plenty of grist for the scholar. Not only is this text well researched, it is clearly organized, exceptionally readable, interestingly illustrated with anecdotes, and brimming with examples, practical applications, and online learning activities. It comes to us with a global perspective representing not only Anglo-European, but also Hispanic, African American, African, and Asia cultures. Diversity is championed, particularly in the collaborator discussions and audio and video links on the book's website, with women and men professors and preachers from a broad range of seminaries and denominational affiliations.

The slant of this text is more progressive than conservative evangelical and will likely find a more comfortable home among progressive evangelicals and the Academy of Homiletics than it will among conservative evangelicals in the Evangelical Homiletics Society. That said, Alcántara's emphasis on the importance of practice and the "C's" of preaching should challenge Christian preachers of every stripe.

King's Speech: Preaching Reconciliation in a World of Violence and Chasm. By Sunggu Yang. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019. 978-1-5326-5091-8, 101 pp., $17.00.

Reviewer: *Jeffrey Arthurs, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA.*

"In the quiet recesses of my heart," Martin Luther King, Jr. often said, "I am fundamentally a clergyman, a Baptist preacher." Using that statement as a touchstone, Sunggu Yang, professor of Christian Ministries at Portland Seminary (George Fox University), presents a concise and well-argued analysis of King as a preacher-theologian. Specifically, Yang uses King's sermons, speeches, and writings to analyze his theology of reconciliation in a violent world. The root of that theology was the universal yet personal, loving God. This God works in two ways—reconciling himself and people, and also afflicted people to their violent oppressors. It was the second aspect of that theology that distinguished King from preachers who tried to meet the sword with a bigger sword. King genuinely believed that God's love can transform even the oppressors. As Yang states, this was King's "reconciliatory homiletic theology" (38).

I appreciate how this short book progresses with careful argumentation and tight links. Perhaps it started as a doctoral dissertation, but in this version Yang has deliberately avoided jargon and lengthy discussions of academic minutiae (xiv). Intended for seminary students, prophetic pastors, and general readers (xiv), *King's Speech* applies three lessons from King to our own preaching ministries in a violent world: we too should "unveil the current cultural ethos of violence" (81), "participate in God's transforming work in history through everyday situations" (82), and take heart that "preachers can play a significant role" through their pastoral-prophetic preaching (83).

One of the original contributions *King's Speech* makes to homiletics is a theological-rhetorical analysis of how MLK used the Exodus narrative in his sermons. He did not use that event typologically, as was common in the African American tradition; rather he used it as "other-typology" (68-71). This means that King did not use Egypt as a type of white, racist America—an enemy to be crushed; instead, he used Egypt to illustrate evil as a general, "social illness permeating American soil" (71). For God to defeat this evil, "there must be reconciliation between the oppressed (black people) and the oppressors (white people)" (71). These white people are "*ignorant or unfortunate counter-slaves*" (71). With this analysis, Yang contributes to the literature on MLK, even disagreeing with Lischer's magisterial *Preacher King*. (In many other places, Yang acknowledges his agreement with and dependence on Lischer).

I recommend this short book as a good example of how to argue a homiletical thesis. It contributes to our field as well as practical theology, ethics, and reconciliation studies.

Ezekiel. By John W. Hilber. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019. 9781498294218, 268 pp., $34.00.

Reviewer: *Ryan Boys, Green Pond Bible Chapel, Rockaway, NJ*.

John Hilber's commentary on Ezekiel is intended to be a focused commentary for sake of preaching and teaching, and that is precisely what it is. He writes with the busy preacher in mind, aiming to provide essential insights for those with limited time to prepare a sermon each week. Hilber helpfully provides a streamlined introduction to Ezekiel that highlights the central message of the book. He also provides a suggested list of texts for a limited expository preaching series through Ezekiel.

The commentary is divided into textual chunks that Hilber suggests for preaching portions. Each section begins with the main message for that portion and includes sections on key

themes, the context within Ezekiel, interpretive highlights, a theological bridge to application, and a focus for application. The interpretive highlights are limited comments on the text focused on key cultural, linguistic, or contextual features. He does not comment on every verse, which falls in line with the purpose and design of the commentary.

Hilber's awareness and application of linguistic theories strengthens his interpretive comments and application. In his interpretation he keeps the genre of the text in mind. For example, in his comments on Ezekiel 38:1-39:29 he briefly discusses the nature of apocalyptic visions and addresses the question of a more literal versus figurative meaning (234-36). His treatment of this issue in light of genre awareness provides much needed nuance in making exegetical and homiletic decisions.

In considering application in general, he makes use of relevance theory and concentrates on "contextual relevance" that keeps in mind the prophet's original audience (7). This protects the preacher from fanciful applications distant from the text itself.

One drawback of this commentary is its limited theological perspective. This is no doubt partially a function of the focused nature of the work. Hilber writes as a dispensational premillennialist and rarely refers to other interpretive approaches. In his comments on whether Ezekiel's temple in chapters 40-43 is literal or figurative, he makes a passing reference to "replacement theology" (245), but he does not meaningfully engage with it.

Furthermore, while Hilber's application sections on the whole are helpful, he limits his appreciation of the canonical significance of the book. For example, after his excellent interpretive insights on 40:1-43:12 he applies this section in moral takeaways with no reference to possible fulfillment in Christ in the New Jerusalem. He states, "[T]he effect lies in the moral impact the vision would have on his audience" (251). While he takes a symbolic view of the temple vision, he misses out on application in light of the view that Jesus fulfills this vision and dwells with believing Jews and Gentiles forever. I wonder if his

ethical application would not have had even more impact with consideration of the text's canonical relevance.

For better or worse, Hilber has written a truly dispensational, premillennial commentary on Ezekiel. For the busy pastor, this work will be an immensely helpful resource providing concise exegetical insight. The format and approach make this a truly preacher-friendly volume. Those looking for application rooted in a more canonical or christocentric reading of Ezekiel will find the takeaways lacking.

Preaching the New Testament Again: Faith, Freedom, and Transformation. By Yung Suk Kim. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019. 978-1-5326-5250-9, 110 pp., $17.00.

Reviewer: *Eric Dokken, Grace Community Church, Marblehead, MA.*

Yung Suk Kim is a New Testament scholar who teaches at Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology. In the conclusion to *Preaching the New Testament Again*, Kim clearly states the purpose and outline of this slim volume: "What I have attempted to do in this book is to explore diverse yet divergent concepts of 'faith,' 'freedom,' and 'transformation,' deeply entrenched in the New Testament, and to help give informed readers a choice in their interpretation and preaching" (100). The book consists of five chapters: an introduction, one for each of the three chosen concepts, and a conclusion. In the main chapters, Kim explores New Testament texts related to each concept and concludes with suggestions for preaching on that concept.

Kim challenges the reader to think beyond simplistic definitions of faith, freedom, and transformation, and to consider the diverse ways these concepts are portrayed in Scripture. His chapter on faith is the most helpful, as he demonstrates that faith is not primarily accepting

propositions but an action. He states, "If we had the verb 'faithize' in English, we could reduce the unnecessary misunderstanding about *pisteuo*" (11). Kim reminds us that faith is often referring to God's faithfulness and Jesus' active faith in God's faithfulness.

The other two main chapters were increasingly less helpful. In the chapter on transformation, rather than showing what words are used for transformation in the New Testament and exploring them, Kim details the transformations that were experienced by Jesus. He suggests that Jesus was acknowledging his sin when coming to John for baptism and that he "died to his old self" in baptism (76) and "he becomes the beloved son of God" (91). Jesus also "changed his mind" in his attitude toward Gentiles (77).

Kim's confused understanding of Jesus is a result of his critical view of Scripture. He attempts to find the "historical Jesus" and does not accept the disputed letters of Paul were written by the apostle. He states that "Paul's legacy or theology did not continue with them" (56) because they appear to restrict some of the radical changes Paul had attempted to bring to the church in regard to slavery and gender roles in the home and church.

Kim's suggestions for preaching at the end of each chapter center on social justice themes like racism, immigration, gender roles, and religious inclusivism. The logical connection between these topics and the concept he has described is sometimes unclear. Likewise, his applications do not always have a clear connection to the text. Kim believes "a single passage can be interpreted from many different angles" (72). Since Kim's exegesis does not prioritize authorial intent, the choice of which angle to choose appears to be up to the interpreter.

Preaching the New Testament Again is much more about theology than homiletics. Kim states in the conclusion, "The New Testament can be a rich resource of faith for preachers and scholars if rightly interpreted" (100). Apparently what Kim means by preaching the New Testament "again" is to

preach it though a critical rather than traditional interpretation. Since evangelicals will disagree with him on how to rightly interpret the New Testament, they will not be able to accept his conclusions.

Preaching About Racism: A Guide for Faith Leaders. By Carolyn B. Helsel. St. Louis: Chalice, 2017. 978-0827231627. 128 pp., $24.99.

Reviewer: *Eric Price, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL.*

Carolyn Helsel, associate professor of homiletics at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, has written a book that addresses an important question: "How can white preachers preach about racism to predominately white congregations?" (10)

Helsel's model for preachers draws from Paul Ricoeur's book *The Course of Recognition,* which "centers on the challenges of *recognition* in three senses: cognition, identity, gratitude" (10). She applies this framework to her question and develops it as a homiletical model to help white preachers address racism.

The first step, cognition, focuses on different "understandings of the word *racism*" (10). Helsel notes that the word racism has a variety of connotations. She offers the following definition: "Racism is a system that creates unfair advantages for whites, while disproportionately penalizing persons of color" (20). It is important to help listeners understand the systemic nature of racism, yet preachers should move beyond abstract definitions of racism and help listeners understand concretely the way that race impacts peoples' experience of society.

The second step, identity, involves helping white listeners see themselves as white. Especially in the post-Civil Rights era, many white Christians do not see themselves as having a racial identity. Preaching about racism necessitates helping white

Christians understand how being classified as white confers social benefit. "If our white congregants are going to challenge racism, they need to see it as impacting their own lives, not just the lives of other people" (44). Drawing upon racial identity theorist Janet Helms, Helsel suggests "it is critical for whites to develop an anti-racist white racial identity" (46).

Gratitude toward God should move us toward action. Helsel encourages preachers to connect anti-racist work with gratitude for what God has done through the gospel. We may preach about racism, and encourage parishioners' commitment to anti-racism, out of thankfulness for God's redemptive initiative. This three-fold model is not meant to be a simple, linear process or an organizational outline for a sermon. Rather, it is a template for preachers to approach the long-term task of helping white congregants understand racism.

After discussing the three-fold framework of cognition, identity, and gratitude, Helsel addresses biblical hermeneutics for preaching about racism (chapter 5) and a theological framework for preaching about racism (chapter 6).

In her hermeneutical discussion, Helsel notes a challenge to preaching about racism – race as a construct is an early modern notion which is foreign to the authors of Scripture. Consequently, she suggests that a focus on authorial intent, such as that advocated by Haddon Robinson, mitigates the possibility of addressing contemporary racism (56). This may be true about certain restrictive definitions of authorial intent. However, more nuanced accounts of authorial intent that are grounded in theological hermeneutics – especially those which make recourse to speech-act theory – provide conceptual room for understanding how biblical texts may speak to new phenomena. While it is anachronistic to read early modern concepts of "race" into biblical texts, the Scriptures nonetheless abound with resources to address the social division, economic injustice, and hierarchical anthropology that undergird racist systems and attitudes. Helsel rightly reminds us that, historically, Scripture has been used to propagate injustice. This history calls us to practice interpretive humility and to attune ourselves to ways

our own interpretation may inadvertently overlook or even reinforce present injustice.

In her theological discussion, Helsel offers three metaphors – idolatry, estrangement, and bondage – to help us understand and speak about racism as sin. Idolatry speaks to how whiteness as a construct evaluates the value of non-white persons in terms of their conformity to whiteness. Estrangement speaks to how racism impacts "the structures of society as well as individual interactions," causing social and interpersonal fractures (76). Finally, racism as bondage speaks to how racism is an "ingrained and inherited tradition" that goes beyond our "rational intention" (79). Implicit bias and instinctive fear of those who are different are examples of this sort of bondage.

The final chapter considers homiletical strategies more specifically. Helsel encourages preachers to "keep in mind the long view" (85), as understanding and recognizing racism takes time. She suggests how the illustrations and sermon forms we use can facilitate effective communication about racism. Finally, she encourages practices of congregational ethnography beyond the pulpit to help shape more contextually-responsive preaching.

Presently the United States is going through a significant moment of national reckoning as it grapples with ongoing social repercussions of racial injustice. Given the healthcare disparities laid bare by COVID-19, the removal of Confederate monuments, and the renewed attention to relations between law enforcement and minority communities, the pernicious national legacy of white supremacy is on public display. There is an urgent need for preachers to help white congregants consider the demands of Christian discipleship in a racialized society. By synthesizing scholarship from a wide disciplinary breadth, Carolyn Helsel has produced an accessible and timely guide to help preachers meet the moment.

The Model Sermon: Principles of Preaching from the Book of Hebrews. By Jeremy A. McKeen. Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 2020. 978-1614076322, 207 pp., $14.99.

Reviewer: *Scott M. Gibson, Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Waco, TX.*

This recently published preaching book from our friends at Preaching Today, based on lessons preachers can learn from the book of Hebrews, is intended to answer the question, "what are the principles that we should always seek to follow if we're going to preach a 'biblical sermon'" (17). As such, author Jeremy A. McKeen, senior pastor of First Congregational Church of Hamilton, Massachusetts, argues, "I believe Hebrews is an inspired sermon that every sermon should be modeled after. In short, the principles for preaching that we find in Hebrews are meant for preachers today" (17).

McKeen urges, "Consider it [the book, *The Model Sermon*] a sort of *Cliff Notes* guide to preaching. Each chapter highlights the basic preaching principle that we find in Hebrews and then gives some practical steps on how to immediately apply that principle in your preaching" (18). Fifteen chapters comprise the "notes" to which McKeen refers. They are: 1) Get Out of the Way; 2) Show Them Jesus; 3) Tell the Story; 4) Argue from Scripture; 5) Take It Seriously; 6) Identify with the People; 7) Know Your Sheep; 8) Lead Them to Maturity; 9) Trust the Holy Spirit; 10) Admonish the Idle; 11) Encourage the Fainthearted; 12) Make an Appeal; 13) Help Their Unbelief; 14) Illustrate Your Points; and, 15) Remember the Risen Jesus. No doubt additional preaching principles can be mined from the rich resource of the book of Hebrews.

Each chapter provides typically three lessons, insights, or features derived from the book of Hebrews, with supplemental biblical material, that undergirds the main principle discussed in

the given chapter. As one can sense from the list of fifteen principles, this is an appreciable catalog that preachers are to keep in mind as they prepare their sermons in light of the Hebrews template. One may be left wondering if all of these principles are to be present in every sermon.

Mixed with study, sage advice, and sanctified opinion, the author offers insight in each chapter on ways in which present-day sermons can benefit from the model of this ancient sermon. Most of the concepts communicated in this volume are not new. What is new is the is the way the author helpfully connects homiletical principles with the sermon, the book of Hebrews, which is clever and valuable.

Two final comments: 1) the content of chapter five, "Take It Seriously," does not seem to be as linked to the book of Hebrews as the other chapters; 2) the two sermons in the appendix would have been strengthened by including a commentary or notes as to how the elements of the sermons reflect the principles as they were presented in the chapters of the book. An introduction, guide, or primer to reading the sermons in light of the fifteen principles would have helped this reader.

The Model Sermon is a rich resource for beginning preachers and a fresh reminder for experienced preachers. The book would find a place as a supplemental text in an introductory preaching class and as a textbook in a course on preaching Hebrews.

A Way with Words: Preaching that Transforms Congregations. By Adam T. Trambley. New York: Church Publishing, 2020. 978-1640652545, 168 pp., $16.95.

Reviewer: *Mark O. Wilson, Southern Wesleyan University, Central, SC.*

A Way with Words: Preaching that Transforms Congregations, by Adam Trambley, rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Sharon,

Pennsylvania, suggests a creative approach to preaching that intentionally aligns the congregation with God's vision. In this small text, Trambley advocates discerning the most pressing needs of the congregation through assessment (using tools such as Natural Church Development Survey, the Congregational Assessment Tool, Vital Signs Report from Holy Cow! Consulting, or RenewalWorks' Spiritual Life Inventory) and prayer. Once a primary growth area is specifically identified, he suggests it be directly addressed through a long-term preaching strategy. Lectionary texts (or the biblical passages selected for the week) are read with this congregational vitality focus in mind.

While the scriptural texts found in the lectionary cover many topics, Trambley asserts the selected growth focus for the church can be frequently extrapolated from them. He likens this process to family trips to Alabama. There are many different routes, with places to explore along the way, but eventually, all roads lead to Alabama. If the selected focus is God's mission and calling for the church, it will show up clearly and repeatedly in the biblical texts, Trambley maintains.

The last section of the book provides practical suggestions for preachers on the topics of prayer, passion, personality, and physicality. The most profound concept from the book (besides using the lectionary to address church leadership themes) comes from the "physicality" chapter when addressing sermons that bomb. Every preacher has experienced pulpit flops. Quoting a choreographer friend, Trambley notes, "the difference between an amateur and a professional is not seen on the best days, but on the worst ones" (128). Then, applying this directly to the preaching context, Trambley encourages the pastor to pay close and careful attention when a sermon fails to hit the intended target. "What we rarely hear from the congregation on those days. . . is what did not work and why. Those areas that prevent us from connecting on our worst days are the places we most need, and probably least want, to work on if we are going to improve as preachers" (129).

I have read countless books on church growth and leadership, along with a smattering of texts on lectionary

preaching, but this delightful book is the first I have encountered that merges the two themes together. It is a helpful resource for pastors seeking the courage to lead their congregants forthrightly into the best version of who they are meant to be.

ESV Expository Commentary, Vol. IX: John-Acts. By James M. Hamilton Jr. and Brian J. Vickers. Wheaton: Crossway, 2019. 978-1-4335-4660-0, 601 pp., $50 (hardback).

Reviewer: *Terence Waldron, Pioneer Drive Baptist Church, Abilene, TX*.

The publisher and editors of the *ESV Expository Commentary* seek amongst other goals to provide commentaries that are "robustly biblical-theological, broadly reformed, doctrinally conversant, and pastorally useful" (9). The two sections of the ninth volume in this series certainly meet these expectations and should find a warm reception among those seeking such helps. This beautiful, black, large hardbound edition allots 289 pages to Hamilton's exposition of the Gospel of John and 293 pages to Vickers' commentary on the Acts of the Apostles. These studies are not as thorough as Carson's or Bock's, but they provide more depth than works like those by Kruse and Stott. The two authors teach alongside each other at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where Hamilton serves simultaneously as a preaching pastor, having himself recently spent nineteen months preaching through John.

Hamilton argues that John is a "biblical theologian" writing "biblical narrative" (21), and it is this understanding of John that shapes Hamilton's study of the text. He presents a chiastic structure that encapsulates the entire Gospel, as well as multiple chiasms found inside individual pericopes. He often focuses on the appearance of Old Testament symbols as important markers and theological keys, especially the festivals that provide the framework for the Gospel's narrative and

movement. Finally, it is Hamilton's conviction that "John's Gospel and the OT must be read in light of each other, each expositing and informing the other" (22), and he does an excellent job of maintaining this commitment as he continually roots John's teachings in the apostle's theology of the Torah, Prophets, and Writings.

Vickers continues in this robust biblical-theological vein, describing Acts as "the capstone and climax of all biblical narrative. It is *a* story about the fulfillment of *the* story" (316). Vickers focuses on the text through the lens of fulfillment and how the story of Jesus and the Holy Spirit work through the early church to fulfill the messianic promises of the Old Testament.

Both Hamilton and Vickers do an excellent job of connecting both individual events and teachings and the larger overarching themes of John and Acts back to the Old Testament. They demonstrate repeatedly that it was these texts that initiated and informed Israel's theology of the symbols and subjects found in John and Acts.

The academically uninitiated will find these commentaries accessible and abundantly informative. The authors are versed in Greek but do not fill their pages with foreign language and linguistic notations. Either section of the commentary provides more than enough background and illumination to solely support preachers who are teaching quickly through one of these biblical books. However, if they are going to labor through John at a pace similar to Hamilton's, they will find themselves in need of additional resources. Additionally, this volume is a beneficial supplement to the pastor who is doing his or her own devotional readings in John or Acts. While this dual commentary should not find itself being used as a textbook in master's level exegesis or theology courses, it is well worth the investment for the pastor who has a plan to preach through either New Testament book.

Herman Bavinck on Preaching and Preachers. Translated and edited by James P. Eglinton. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2017. 978-1619709782, 124 pp., $16.95.

Reviewer: *Benjamin C. Crelin, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK*.

Recently, a host of books have explored the intersection of theology and preaching. Yet the best thoughts are not always new. There are rich, historical gems to mine for robust, theological homiletics. This book is a trove of such homiletical treasures. James P. Eglington, the Meldrum Lecturer in Reformed Theology at the University of Edinburgh, has translated Herman Bavinck's key texts on homiletics. The collection includes Bavinck's only published sermon as well as four of his texts on preaching. Eglinton's purpose is to bridge the "gap between Bavinck the theologian and the preachers who read him" and to consider whether there is "such a thing as a distinctively *neo-Calvinist* homiletical method" (1-2).

In a concise biography, Eglinton highlights Bavinck's homiletical pedigree, specifically his formation by other preachers and institutions, such as his theologically modern university, Leiden. The first of Bavinck's texts is "Eloquence." The 1889 lecture opines that preaching is not reducible to mere rhetoric. Rather, preaching mandates a careful stewardship of the word of God for the purposes of God. Preaching must holistically engage the mind, the imagination, and the will. The second text, "The Sermon and the Service," is a prescient diagnosis of church decline today. Bavinck sounds a clarion call for preachers to recapture and teach a "right concept of the public church service" (59). He explains that a theologically astute view of corporate worship entails a high view of preaching and its role in the life of both the individual and the community.

The third text is Bavinck's sermon, "The World-Conquering Power of Faith." An exposition of one of his favorite scriptural texts, 1 John 5:4b, this sermon demonstrates Bavinck's firm scriptural exegesis, broad familiarity with current events, and clear evangelical faith. Of special note is its rich biblical theology seamlessly woven throughout, which places the listener within God's redemptive-historical story. The penultimate text is "On Preaching in America," Bavinck's pithy and disapproving assessment of late 19th century American churches. Bavinck's criticisms of the "superficiality" of that preaching, which "is not the unfolding and ministering of the word of God; rather it is a speech, and the text is simply a hook" (85), reveals the perennial necessity of calling preachers back to God's word. The last text, "On Language," while of interest to those intrigued by Bavinck's philosophy of language, does not discuss preaching.

Per Eglington's purpose, the strength of this book is found in the integration of Reformed theology and homiletics. Throughout these texts, the reader will discern the concept of *Praedicatio Verbi Dei est Verbum Dei*. "Then our speech will be formed by, and indeed will become *one* with the speech of the Holy Scriptures, which is the speech of … the Holy Spirit" (65). Other theological ideas are the priesthood of all believers (59), the Holy Spirit's role in salvation (43), and the centrality of Christ (60). Second, Bavinck's affirmation of the word is valuable for our postmodern age. Contra the New Homiletic, Bavinck emphasizes the word as the authoritative foundation for homiletical formation. This book may also be a comforting reminder for preachers today that many contemporary obstacles are not actually new.

Though a treasure trove in many respects, this collection does not give the practical guidance so often yearned for by the weekly practitioners of preaching. Therefore, for the reader seeking quick tips for next Sunday's sermon, this book may disappoint. This is not a systematic work on preaching but an assorted collection of historical writings. Nonetheless, the volume takes a couple of steps towards articulating a *neo-Calvinist* homiletical method. Thus, for the reader interested in

the intersection of Reformed theology and homiletics, this book is worth the read.

Brown Church: Five Centuries of Latina/o Social Justice, Theology, and Identity. By Robert Chao Romero. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2020. 978-0830852857, 248 pp., $30.00.

Reviewer: *Larry Torres, Edinburgh Theological Seminary, Edinburgh, UK.*

Robert Chao Romero's *Brown Church* seeks to tell the story of the "Brown Church," which he defines as "a prophetic ecclesial community of Latinas/os that has contested racial and social injustice in Latin America and the United States for the past five hundred years" (11).

The purpose of this book is to pushback against two extremes. The first is the belief that social justice issues and concerns are separate from the Christian faith (6). The second is the belief that you cannot be a Christian and care about issues of racial and gender justice since Christianity is said to be the white man's religion (6).

In the introduction Romero gives three counter-stories which are fictional but realistic. In these stories he tells of three college students and their experiences in higher education as Latinos who came from a Christian faith background. Two of the students faced a faith crisis when they encountered hostility from professors and students who believed that their Christian faith was a relic of colonialism and irrelevant to the plight of Latinos today. The other student, a pastor's kid, attends an evangelical institution and has to deal with his parents getting deported, while being amongst peers who support Donald Trump's "build a wall" immigration policy.

The history laid out in *Brown Church* is written to show there have been faithful Christians who fought for social justice and equality in Latin America for the past five hundred years.

Their views on and struggles for justice were rooted in their Christian faith, thus countering both beliefs cited above.

In his first chapter Romero lays out the theological foundations of the Brown Church as "El Plan Spiritual de Galilee" (The Spiritual Plan of Galilee). He draws the analogy between Galilee, as it was a borderland with cultural mixtures and a marginalized community, with the experiences of Latinos as a mestizo (a term for an ethnic mix between Spaniard and Native or Indian, but generally meaning "mixed") people group. The Latino Christian experience can be described as a Galilean journey, as one that does not fit in with the secular activists or with the Christians who are not concerned with justice issues.

The rest of the book unfolds chronologically, highlighting different figures of the Brown Church. It is filled with rich history and stories that most likely are unknown to many people, including Latinos like myself.

Chapter two focuses on the birth of the Brown Church, which Romero views as being inaugurated with a sermon! Antonio de Montesinos preached a sermon in 1511 that condemned the Spaniards' treatment of Natives. Romero considers Bartolome de las Casas, a contemporary of Montesinos, the father of the Brown Church as he advocated for the Natives to the Spanish Crown and fought against their mistreatment. Chapter three turns to mestizo Peruvian figures and their contribution denouncing the atrocities of Spanish conquest. Chapter four moves to the Mexican American War and Padre Antonio Jose Martinez and his struggles against the American Catholic Church. Chapter five focuses on Cesar Chavez and the overlooked spiritual foundations of his labor movement. Chapter six deals with the history of Latin American liberation theology and its evangelical form, misión integral (integral mission). Chapter seven discusses the ministry and preaching of Archbishop Oscar Romero (no relation to the author), a preacher who spoke against the killings and injustices happening in his country, El Salvador, and was ultimately assassinated for it. Chapter eight looks at recent developments in Latino theology and those who have contributed to the field. Romero concludes

with a summary of the key themes of the Brown Church and returns to the students in the counter-stories and affirms their belonging.

This book is written for Latino Christians, particularly those who do not feel a sense of belonging between the two extremes. This should not deter non-Latinos from reading it, however, because the book is informative and tells stories of church history that will be new for many readers. This is the book's greatest contribution.

Brown Church is a timely book, as our nation, world, and churches are dealing with racial tensions that have been recently inflamed. Even though the book is focused on Latino church history and related issues, it discusses the history of Latino Christians of the past and how their faith informed their struggles against injustice and how it can inform ours today. Romero does an excellent job navigating the struggles of the past and how they relate to the present in each chapter. This book is a helpful resource for us preachers who seek to preach God's word and minister faithfully in volatile times like our own, reflecting on how those in the Brown Church have done likewise. I highly recommend this volume.

A Commentary on Romans: Kregel Exegetical Library. By John D. Harvey. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2019. 978-0825442100, 400 pp., $29.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: *Daniel Gregory, Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary, Waco, TX.*

John D. Harvey, a Th.D. graduate of Wycliff College at the University of Toronto, serves as Dean and Professor of New Testament at Columbia International University Seminary and School of Ministry in Columbia, SC. His recent work, *A Commentary on Romans*, is an excellent resource for expositors. It engages the biblical text thoroughly, though it is not a critical

commentary in terms of the depth of its analysis. Harvey offers no new thoughts or novel exegetical insights on the text of Romans, nor is that his purpose. Rather, the work aims to address the features in the biblical text necessary for understanding its meaning and then to suggest ways that preachers or teachers may discern the significance of the text for their hearers (52-53). Every section examines issues of "text and translation," "context and structure," "basic message and exegetical outline," "explanation of the text," and "theology and appropriation" (53-54).

The commentary's introduction provides an example of how Harvey's analysis of Romans 1:8-12 may be utilized in service to Haddon Robinson's approach to big idea preaching (54). In this way Harvey gives preachers an example of how each section of his commentary may be adapted for the task of preaching using Robinson's philosophy.

Harvey divides his exposition of the letter into four sections, noting how each section develops part of Paul's thesis in 1:16-17 (79). Each section of the commentary is relatively brief. Harvey summarizes various positions on a topic and selects the one he thinks is most compelling, from what seems to be a reformed, evangelical perspective.

The real strength of his commentary is the attention it pays to the significance of the biblical text for the contemporary situation. Each discussion of the text concludes with a section addressing its "theology and appropriation." This part of the discussion considers biblical and systematic theology and suggests ways the text may be contextualized for 21st century congregations (54). In his "appropriation" sections Harvey offers ideas on how the text might be applied, while not offering too much detail (which might pigeonhole preachers' thinking as they attempt to apply the text). Each appropriation section explores several concepts which help preachers draw out the text's significance for their hearers (although not all of the following concepts are addressed in every passage).

First, each "appropriation" section states the apostle's primary purpose in writing. While Harvey does not mention this

benefit, consideration of the author's purpose will give preachers insight into how each pericope functions and suggest ideas for the sermon's function and goal.

Second, the commentary identifies the needs that contemporary listeners share with Paul's audience. These shared needs are identified as overlap in the existential situations between the Christians at Rome and contemporary listeners.

Third, it describes concepts which may offer a point of connection with contemporary audiences. For instance, in the section on Romans 8:1-17, Harvey notes the accessibility of the concept of "adoption" to both ancient and modern audiences, as evinced in the present by well-known stories of "families…traveling to another country and culture to adopt a child" (209). Such examples suggest ways preachers could seek to draw out the significance of the text for their hearers.

Fourth, the "appropriation" sections explore how the biblical text may "correct wrong beliefs or attitudes and commend positive beliefs and actions" (54). Finally, each section concludes by recommending "an objective for communicating the message of the passage to others" (54). As an example of this, in the section for Romans 15:1-6, Harvey writes, "The objective in communicating this passage should be to help others understand the importance of promoting corporate unity so that they will give priority to actions that edify and encourage fellow believers" (347).

I am hard pressed to find anything to criticize in this work. Any concerns I have are minor and pertain only to issues of style. This commentary is an excellent resource for preachers which addresses both the meaning of the biblical text and its significance for contemporary congregations. I plan to use it when preaching on Romans in the future, in conjunction with some critical commentaries.

Philippians: An Exegetical Guide for Preaching and Teaching. By Thomas Moore. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2019. 978-0-8254-4539-2, 284 pp., $25.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: *Matthew Love, Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary, Waco, TX.*

This commentary is part of the *Big Greek Idea Series* edited by Herbert W. Bateman IV. The series seeks to take the Big Idea homiletical method popularized by Haddon Robinson and apply it to the New Testament text. As the subtitle suggests, the focus of the work is on the exegesis of the text, as opposed to its application to the present.

The introductions (one to the series and one to this particular work) are keys that explain the approach and layout of the work that follows. For those who are less familiar with the Big Idea method or with grammatical terminology, this introductory material is crucial for unlocking the text that follows.

The commentary breaks the book of Philippians into 18 pericopes. Each of these 18 sections begins with Moore's suggested big idea for that pericope followed by a structural overview, an outline, and the Greek text with an English interlinear translation. The text is helpfully arranged on the page to show how Paul's train of thought runs, from the clauses of his writing that are dominant (justified left on the page) to those that are subordinate (indented right to varying degrees). The commentary on the verses that follows focuses mostly on grammatical, syntactical, and semantic notes. Sown throughout this commentary are "nuggets" that offer (for example) lexical, text-critical, and theological insights. A few appendices come after the body of the work, including the entire interpretive translation of Philippians and a collection of the figures of speech Paul uses in this letter.

The work is well written, clearly organized, and offers thoughtful reflections on the text throughout. Its biggest contribution to the library of the student, teacher, or minister is how it brings together Big Idea methodology, the Greek text, and the clausal mapping of the letter. This work might be a sort of bridge in one's library between commentaries on one side that analyze every dot and iota of the text and commentaries on the other side that summarize the general intention of each passage in order to make application of it. Often, what is between those extremes gets left out, namely, the grammar, syntax, and semantics of the text, not to mention the big idea that all of those facets come together to communicate. The benefit of either working through this book cover to cover or using it as an occasional resource is in its helping readers to get their thinking clear on not only what Paul is saying but also on how he says it and why he says it that way.

At times, I found the verse-by-verse commentary difficult to wade through, particularly due to the abundance of technical grammatical terminology. Those who are only moderately familiar with the Greek language may find themselves reading and rereading this commentary in order to grasp it or referring back to the introductions to clarify terms. At the same time, those who love grammar and are very analytical will find this to be a special strength of the work. Reading this work as a preacher, I found myself wishing the author had been able to make some brief comments on the text concerning ways Paul's writing is relevant to the church's situation today or how preachers and teachers might communicate these truths to their listeners. Clearly, this book (and likely the rest of the series, too, for that matter) does not attempt to fill this niche, and it leaves it to other commentaries to make application of the text. This fact notwithstanding, I felt that the technical and erudite sharp edges of the work might have been rounded off a little by these sorts of comments to preachers and teachers today.

In sum, this work is an extremely valuable resource for those who would study this letter seriously and communicate it authentically. Moore offers a superbly written and unique

commentary on this letter of Paul's. This guide through Philippians will prove valuable to readers of various sorts, such as preachers who prepare to preach through this text; teachers of preaching, Greek, or New Testament who work with this text in their classes; and all persons who consider themselves students of God's word, who are eager to understand not only the words of this biblical book, but how those words come together grammatically, syntactically, and semantically to communicate Paul's inspired big ideas.

The Heart of the Preacher. By Rick Reed. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019. 978-1-68359-348-5, 216 pp., $13.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: *Gregory K. Hollifield, Memphis College of Urban and Theological Studies, Memphis, TN.*

Bishop William Quayle insisted nearly a century ago that preaching is not so much about preparing a sermon and delivering it as preparing a preacher and delivering him. Rick Reed has done all preachers a great service by picking things up from there and illuminating some of the particular ways a preacher prepares his or her heart to proclaim the word.

Reed writes as a longtime practitioner and instructor of the craft. After graduating from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, he pastored churches in California and Ontario. In addition to his current duties as president of Heritage College and Seminary in Cambridge, Ontario, where he teaches homiletics, Reed travels as a master coach for the Global Proclamation Academy headquartered in Dallas, Texas.

His book *The Heart of the Preacher* divides into two parts. In part one, he diagnoses fifteen tests a preacher may face while going about the weekly chore of preparing and delivering sermons. Not meant to be exhaustive or universal, Reed writes from his personal experience, describing each test and presenting what he believes the Bible says about it. These trials of the heart

include ambition, comparison, boasting, insignificance, laziness, stagnating, speaking one language (grace *or* truth), fear, retreating, criticism, disengaged listeners, blue Mondays, failure, pain, and quitting.

If part one be viewed as a reactionary guide, part two takes an unmistakable proactive turn. Here Reed presents ten steps to help the preacher prepare for the tests that will inevitably come. These range from the expected—caring for one's soul, devoting oneself to prayer and the word, staying in love with Jesus, and minding one's health—to the more insightful—maintaining an expository preaching ministry, right-sizing one's expectations, and doing the work of an evangelist. In addition, Reed urges the preacher to develop internal security, listen to his/her spouse's critiques, and make the most of Saturday nights.

No longer a full-time pastor myself, I was repeatedly taken back to my early years in pastoral ministry and reminded of the tests I faced then as I read Reed's intensely personal account. Reed's book clearly comes from his heart and speaks poignantly to the reader's heart. It is the kind of book every preacher, especially pastors, should ingest fully.

Those who are new to the pulpit and its weekly grind will profit most from part two of Reed's work. As much as they might benefit from part one, they will not truly appreciate its great value or respect its wisdom as much as the more seasoned preacher will. As a member of that latter group, I would put *The Heart of the Preacher* in the same category as D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones's classic *Preaching and Preachers*, if for only two reasons. First, both books will mean more to readers the longer they remain engaged in the discipline of preaching on a regular basis. Second, both books can be read again and again to great personal profit.

Preaching the Word with John Chrysostom. By Gerald Bray. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020. 978-1683593669, 132 pp., $12.99.

Reviewer: *Greg Kilgore, First Baptist Church, Oakhurst, CA.*

Gerald Bray is Research Professor of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama. Bray is best known for his work in church history and biblical interpretation. His book *Preaching the Word with John Chrysostom* is part of the *Lived Theology* series which "traces the way that biblical concepts and ideas are lived in the lives of Christians, some well-known, some relatively unknown" (xi).

Bray's introduction to Chrysostom is a relatively short read with only five chapters. The first chapter provides a brief overview of his life with insight into his intellectual background and hermeneutical principles. The rest of the book provides a succinct glimpse into Chrysostom's approach to interpreting and applying texts from Genesis, Matthew, John, and Romans. Bray writes of his purpose, "What I propose to do is to work my way through each of these four texts, outlining how John read them himself, how he expounded them to his hearers, and how he applied them to the Christian life" (10). He goes on to write how this will benefit those with an interest in reading Chrysostom. "Once beginners have mastered these principles, they will be ready and able to tackle the rest of John's legacy, secure in the knowledge that they understand where he is coming from and able to interpret what he says in a way that is faithful to his intentions" (10).

According to Bray, two guiding characteristics of Chrysostom's interpretive principles are accommodation and *theoria*. These principles are likely unfamiliar to contemporary preachers who have not studied the history of interpretation. Bray explains his view of accommodation: "Accommodation is a teaching technique made necessary by the fundamental divide between the infinite Creator and the finite creation… But God has created human beings in his own image and likeness, making it possible for the gap between us to be bridged in some way—not by us, but by him" (16). Bray explains *theoria* as "something more like 'insight' or even 'typology.' [Chrysostom] did not attempt to

explain away the literal sense of the biblical text but interpreted it as having a deeper meaning alongside what it said on the surface…" (22-23). This *theoria* set Chrysostom apart from other preachers of his day who employed an allegorical interpretation of the biblical text.

While so many of Chrysostom's commentaries and homilies have been passed down through the centuries, there is little work on his actual life and doctrine. With so few books written about the man himself, this book is a welcome contribution. Bray's work in this short book is a unique blend of biography and the hermeneutical principles employed by Chrysostom. Those interested in the history of preaching and interpretation from the patristic period will benefit from this book.

Hearers and Doers: A Pastor's Guide to Making Disciples Through Scripture and Doctrine. By Kevin J. Vanhoozer. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019. 978-1683591344, 296 pp., $19.99 (hardback).

Reviewer: *Abraham Kuruvilla, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX.*

Vanhoozer is always a provocative and stimulating read, and *Hearers and Doers* is no exception. Here are the three emphases of the work: pastors countering the effects of contemporary culture with biblical truth; theological (i.e., doctrinal) reading of Scripture; and comparing physical fitness (a cultural value) and spiritual fitness (an ecclesial value) (xiv–xv).

I loved the title: hearing God's word and doing it is what drives preaching. So, I dove into the book hoping there would be a substantial portion devoted to preaching. After all, it was *A Pastor's Guide*. But, alas, the systematic theologian that he is, Vanhoozer focuses almost exclusively upon his discipline: he is into "teaching disciples to read the Scriptures … theologically" (xi), because "doctrine is a primary form of the teaching of

theology" (241). Preaching systematic theology, Sunday after Sunday, disciples doth not make. Theology, of both the systematic and biblical species, is simply not specific enough for a given pericope and does not do justice to what that particular text is *doing.* Methinks there needs to be another species of theology, an understanding of what an author is *doing* in a particular pericope, and deriving application passage by passage, sermon by sermon, as individual texts are privileged.

Vanhoozer reminds us of the dangers of *worldly* metaphors and stories that drive humans, the "social imaginary," "that nest of background assumptions, often implicit, … that shapes a person's perception of the world, undergirds one's worldview, and funds one's plausibility structure" (8–9). These stories must be examined "in light of the *biblical* images and stories by which they ought to live;" what is needed is "an imagination nurtured … by the Bible" (10, 104; emphasis added). Good stuff, especially this: "If I had to sum up in one sentence what Paul is trying to do in most of his letters, I would say that he is setting forth a new imaginary grounded in the new reality inaugurated in Jesus Christ, then asking church members to live in accordance with this reality" (13). But that did raise a question: What specifically is being imagined in each pericope of Paul's letters (or in each pericope of any book of Scripture)? It appears that what is sought by our author is some tidbit of systematic theology. I would argue instead that each pericope portrays a segment of God's ideal *world in front of the text,* directing readers to specific ways they may live out that pericopal theology, thus instantiating and actualizing the Kingdom of God on earth by becoming its true citizens living by its demands, growing in Christlikeness.

When I read that "chief" among the biblical images and stories (that ought to supplant the world's images and stories) was "the story of Jesus Christ, the climax of the story begun in the Old Testament" (10), I began to suspect a strong christocentric thrust to what Vanhoozer was after. I was right; he calls for a "Christocentric social imaginary" (99). He is therefore appreciative of Luther who "views Christ as the literal sense of

the Old Testament. How? By viewing the promised Messiah as the intended referent of the divine author expressed in the words of the human authors of the Law, Prophets, and Writings. Pastors today should go and do likewise" (226). I would, *pace* Vanhoozer, beseech readers of this *Journal* to refrain from doing likewise, for such a christocentric hermeneutic is unsustainable for most of Scripture. How would one bring Christ into, say, the story of Rachel and Leah battling for reproductive supremacy (Genesis 29–30)? Or where would Christ be in the verse that warns against consuming too much honey lest one vomit (Prov 29:15)? Redemptive-historical interpretation renders the specificity of any particular pericope void, subsumed into nonexistence within the canonical christocentric story. We preachers, instead, need to be asking: How, specifically, is my life (and that of my listeners) intended to change as a result of a *pericopal* imaginary, rather than a generic *biblical* (pertaining to biblical theology) or *canonical* (pertaining to systematic theology) imaginary? Otherwise, I doubt we have understood Scripture for application.

Vanhoozer concludes: "At the end of the day, what is most important in learning Christ is not having bits of information but rather the big picture" (216). Unfortunately, this "big picture" is a view from the International Space Station, miles above terra firma. The need of the hour is theology that is specific for the pericope, a view from up close, if we preachers are to be effective in the business of making doers out of hearers.

Preaching in the Purple Zone: Ministry in the Red-Blue Divide. By Leah D. Schade. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019. 978-1538119884, 264 pp., $25.00.

Reviewer: *Jesse L. Nelson, Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church. Panama City, FL.*

Leah D. Schade, an assistant professor of preaching and worship at Lexington Theological Seminary, is an ordained minister in the

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. She possesses twenty years of experience ministering in suburban (white middle class), urban (black working class), and rural (white working class) settings. In *Preaching in the Purple Zone*, Schade challenges preachers to address controversial justice issues by preaching in the Purple Zone instead of preaching from the red-blue divide of the political dichotomy in America. Schade hopes the reader will emerge with new insights for civic and public discourse and healthier relationships within the church, community, and country as a whole.

Purple Zone preaching is primarily about working with one's congregation through preaching and dialogue to answer God's call to be a prophetic witness. The author believes clergy are in the Purple Zone as they minister, preach, and teach to congregations who live in a red-blue divide. Although the book is written for preachers, laity and those beyond the church may use it as a resource as well. This reviewer proposes the book be divided into four parts for analysis—part one, chapters one to four; part two, chapters five to eight; part three, chapters nine and ten; and part four, chapter eleven.

In part one, Schade discusses the need for Purple Zone preaching and the distinctive aspects of this approach. In chapter one, Schade presents survey results showing why some preachers avoid controversial justice issues and others do not. According to the survey, preachers avoid justice issues primarily to decrease creating conflict within the congregation. On the other hand, some preachers feel a mandate to address these matters because Jesus himself spoke about justice issues. In chapter two, Schade attempts to reframe the reader's understanding of politics and preaching by utilizing H. Richard Neibuhr's principles of Christ and culture and discussing the separation of church and state versus the "Two Kingdoms" doctrine. Schade concludes the chapter with ten tips for preparing the congregation for Purple Zone preaching. Chapter three discusses prophetic preaching within homiletics literature and concludes that prophetic preaching addresses the structural, social, or systemic issues affecting individuals, communities, or

society at large. In chapter four, the author describes "Five Paths of Prophetic Preaching" which provide preachers with numerous entry points for the prophetic sermon. For Purple Zone preaching, the preacher should develop a dialogical lens for interpreting Scripture which must be informed by a public theology for preaching.

In part two, Schade explains the sermon-dialogue-sermon process. She discusses how the preacher and congregation prepare for the sermon-dialogue-sermon process in chapter five and includes guidelines for choosing a topic and measuring a congregation's tolerance temperature for conflict. Chapter six introduces the sermon-dialogue-sermon process by explaining how to preach a sermon introducing a controversial justice issue for congregational dialogue. In chapter seven, Schade presents a format for deliberative dialogue with the congregation that occurs after the sermon. The purpose of the dialogue, she explains, is to generate common values that are the basis for additional dialogue or action steps for the congregation. In chapter eight, Schade explains the follow-up sermon after the deliberative dialogue. This sermon highlights the common values from the dialogue and possible next steps. The preacher's prophetic witness arises from the dialogue versus his or her own position on the issue.

In part three, Schade presents case studies of the sermon-dialogue-sermon process. Chapter nine shows how four different preachers approached the topic of immigration. Chapter ten's case studies include health care, end-of-life issues, climate change, and food insecurity. Finally, in chapter eleven, Schade summarizes the insights gained from the sermon-dialogue-sermon process and discusses what to do when the method fails.

Schade's research is robust, including numerous primary and secondary sources. These include surveys, interviews, personal observations, and interaction with various homiletical texts. The structure of the content is linear, progressing from an idea to a definitive homiletical paradigm described as Purple Zone preaching. Schade vividly defines Purple Zone preaching and illustrates this concept through numerous examples in an

attempt to demonstrate its uniqueness as a preaching style or form.

Purple Zone preaching may be considered a hybrid preaching style—a combination of prophetic preaching and dialogical preaching. Though the sermon-dialogical-sermon process initially resembles the sermon-based small group format, it is different. Unlike the latter, the congregational dialogue that occurs after the sermon in the sermon-dialogical-sermon process is a facilitated dialogue designed to discover values from the conversation versus disseminating values through conversation.

Schade's book accomplishes her goal of providing an answer for how preachers might approach the homiletical task of addressing justice issues in a fractured sociopolitical culture and how they can engage the red-blue divide within congregations and communities to find and navigate the Purple Zone. *Preaching in the Purple Zone* is an excellent work designed to engage clergy and congregations in conversations to address controversial justice issues from a biblical perspective versus a political or cultural viewpoint. Considering the current political and cultural tensions in our nation, this text is timely for pastors and homileticians searching for a prophetic and practical preaching methodology that hopes to transform the congregation, community, and culture through Jesus Christ.

Let the Text Talk: Preaching that Treats the Text on its own Terms. By C. Kyle Walker. Fort Worth: Seminary Hill, 2018. 978-0-999411995, 233 pp., $21.99.

Reviewer: *Kerwin Rodriguez, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, IL.*

Let the Text Talk presents itself as an update to Jeff Ray's *Expository Preaching* and attempts to serve two purposes: 1) to honor Ray's legacy for the tradition of expository preaching in Southern Baptist churches and 2) to provide an introductory text for "text-driven preaching." I am not a part of the Southern

Baptist tradition, nor was I familiar with Ray. According to Walker, even Southern Baptists might not know of Ray's work or his contribution to the history of expository preaching in Southern Baptist churches. Ray was the first homiletics professor at Southwestern Baptist Seminary and the first Southern Baptist to publish a work advocating for expository preaching. He did so when the practice was not widespread among Southern Baptists. While noting some differences between Ray's philosophy of expository preaching and the methodology of text-driven preaching at Southwestern today, Walker argues that the school "now stands upon the homiletical foundation Ray built" (6).

The book is divided in two parts: "The Practice of Text-driven Preaching" and "The History of Text-driven Preaching." The preface indicates that the "intent and purpose of Ray's *Expository Preaching* will be retained… [and that the] original layout and structure will be followed but reorganized" (7). Given my lack of familiarity with Ray's book, it was not always easy to distinguish between Ray's and Walker's emphases. Whereas Ray articulated a philosophy of expository preaching, Walker argues *Let the Text Talk* goes a step further to articulate a text-driven preaching method that aligns better with a philosophy of expository preaching. Walker writes, "The flaws of Ray's version of expository preaching stem primarily from the fact that he did not account for the meaning of a Scriptural text contained at the level of genre and semantic structure" (172). In Walker's judgment, Ray's prescribed methodology may not have been ideal for expository preaching, but he "assisted in changing the status of expository preaching among Southern Baptists as he instructed those in his classroom and wrote for those outside his classroom." (173).

The practice proposed in the first section is a "text-driven" philosophy and methodology. At times the author asserts that the terms "expository preaching" and "text-driven preaching" are synonymous. At others, he argues for the term "text-driven" preaching "because it distinguishes true expository preaching from what is often mislabeled as 'expository preaching'" (30). It

is not exactly clear what this pseudo-expository preaching practice looks like, but Walker argues that text-driven preaching holds both expository preaching philosophy and practice together. Walker defines text-driven preaching as "preaching that treats (interpretation and communication) a text (natural thought unit of Scripture) on its own terms (substance, structure, and spirit)" (30-31). According to this philosophy "the meaning of a text is the combination of the words the author selected, the literary design the author constructed, and the emotive feel the author intended" (33). The preacher interprets the text in order to "re-present" what the text says and how it says it. The author writes, "[T]he biblical author utilized a specific (and inspired!) semantic structure to communicate his message. This specific, structural development contributes to the meaning of the text and therefore must be retained to the greatest degree possible" (70). One wonders whether the form of the text is more important than its purpose.

The second part of the book provides a history of preaching that narrows its focus to the Southern Baptist tradition. Walker demonstrates that Ray wrote his textbook during a time when expository preaching was not prevalent and suggests that Ray's classroom teaching influenced many within the denomination to gradually accept a more faithful expository preaching philosophy and practice. Today, Walker argues, Southwestern Seminary is indebted to Ray for laying the necessary groundwork for a philosophy and practice of text-driven preaching.

Preachers who identify themselves as part of the Southern Baptist expository preaching tradition will appreciate Walker's historical survey and may be inspired to pick up Ray's original work. As an introductory text, the work cannot replace other seminal introductory texts. For most evangelicals, Haddon Robinson's *Biblical Preaching* should be preferred. For those who resonate with the term "text-based preaching," works quoted throughout this book will likely remain more popular such as Steven W. Smith's *Dying to Preach* and the edited work *A Pastor's Guide to Text-Driven Preaching.*

God's Word and Our Words: Preaching from the Prophets to the Present and Beyond. Edited by W. Hulitt Gloer and Shawn E. Boyd. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2019. 978-1-5326-4609-6, 290 pp., $35.00.

Reviewer: *Arica Heald Demme, Messiah Anglican Church, Philadelphia, PA.*

God's Word and Our Words is a curated survey of the history of preaching from the time of the Old Testament to the modern day. The volume consists of lectures given in September 2017 as part of a symposium sponsored by Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary. Each presentation was given by one of sixteen scholars who span the theological and homiletical spectrum, including such big names as Brueggemann, Lowry, and Witherington and such familiar names to EHS members as Gibson, Neely, and Phelps. Each essay ends with a bibliography.

Also included are two sermons, one by William Willimon and the other by Jared Alcántara. Both are interesting to examine for homiletical technique, but some evangelicals will likely be uncomfortable with Willimon's tone and statements within the sermon castigating the current United States president. The contrast between the two sermons certainly reflects the divergent directions that evangelical and non-evangelical homiletics have taken.

It is worth noting while this tension of evangelical versus non-evangelical is noticeable throughout the book, I found myself wishing to have been a fly on the wall at this symposium just to listen to the cross-pollination of ideas over coffee. This book is a valuable reminder that we can graciously engage outside of our tribe and echo chambers and that we can learn from one another.

Carolyn Knight's presentation on women preachers exemplifies the aforementioned tension, especially for women

committed to evangelical theology while following a call to preach. Knight shares her own story, which highlights the common experience of so many of us being actively discouraged from preaching when we were girls and young women. She identifies the biggest challenge for new female preachers is that some in the church consider the authority to preach to be inherently linked to maleness. She unfortunately does not acknowledge the deeper complexities of the issue, especially the hermeneutics underlying the complex exegetical and theological bases for the various positions regarding the role of women in lay and ordained ministry within various Christian traditions. Indeed, Knight largely describes the upward trajectory and perspective of female leaders in modern mainline denominations and educational institutions, which are not reflective, of course, of most women preachers down through church history. For example, Knight discusses how female preachers are not identical but then offers only two worldviews for female preachers: either feminist or womanist.

Overall, this book is an interesting read, and even a seasoned preacher is likely to learn something new. The voice of each presenter is retained as is their humor, leading to some moments of laughter while reading. This book would serve well in the homiletics classroom as a supplemental text in order to introduce the history and scope of the calling and craft, and individual essays could be included in course reading packets. For any preacher, however, it is an encouraging reminder that God's word has been preached and will continue to be preached until the age to come.

Preaching Your Way Out of a Mess: A Handbook for Preaching in Crisis. By Johnny Teague. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2019. 978-1522677625, 217 pp., $23.00.

Reviewer: *John C. Malek, Sharpe Road Baptist Church, Greensboro, NC.*

Johnny Teague, who pastors the Church at the Cross in Houston, Texas, opens *Preaching Your Way Out of a Mess* with a personal story from his six and a half years of service at a rural church. Despite small skirmishes along the way, he continued to serve. But then he made a seemingly small change and told his members about it at a church conference, prompting one deacon to declare that he did not have the power to do anything! No one defended Teague and that, he says, was his breaking point; he resigned the following Sunday. Out of such scenarios the author writes his book. "The purpose of [this] book is to let you know that, in any trial, hope exists. The reason for this optimism is that the Word of God has given this Word as an incredible instrument for one to handle through the gift of preaching to bring help and healing" (12). Teague's intent is to encourage the pastor as he faces crises within the church and to provide a framework for proclaiming God's word in the midst of those crises.

According to Teague, crises affect every preacher, and adversity comes from three main sources: Satan, other people, and even the pastor himself. Teague urges the pastor to remember God's call on his life and to rely on the power found in the Bible and in the strength of the Holy Spirit. He then details a variety of crises a pastor may face ranging from the pastor's own struggles and errors, to power struggles, to dying churches, and many in between. For each particular crisis, he offers his own insights, gives an example of how another pastor handled the crisis, shares a sample sermon from that pastor as he led from the pulpit, and identifies the lessons to be learned. For instance, in the chapter on a pastor's errors, Teague recounts how he once had to apologize to a church member for insinuating that depression was a sin and then apologized to the congregation the following Sunday. Afterwards, he gives another example from W.A. Criswell's life. Criswell had been a supporter of segregation and had a reputation for preaching in support of segregation until the Holy Spirit convicted him of his sin. Criswell apologized to the deacons and then preached a sermon on the wrong of

racism and segregation. The sermon is given in its entirety in the book.

Through use of his personal experiences and those of other preachers and their sermons, Teague does indeed give hope to pastors facing crises. While he does not provide extensive references to Scripture when describing a crisis or in the "lessons learned" portions of his book, he does (as far as this reviewer can tell) offer examples of pastors preaching expository sermons that address each crisis. His book is not overly technical because he wishes to encourage pastors to continue on in the ministry and to stay focused on Jesus and his word. "Some days, you are going to feel like quitting," Teague writes. "Days will come when people will want you to quit. But you cannot quit" (211). Instead, he says, the pastor should study God's word for encouragement and to preach his way out of that crisis.

Teague's book serves as an encouragement to every pastor because every pastor faces challenges. He astutely identifies many challenges and covers most, if not all, of them in such a way as to make the book a worthwhile addition to the pastor's library.

The Sermon: Its Homiletical Construction. By Richard C. H. Lenski. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018. 978-1-5326-5514-2, 314 pp., $35.00.

Reviewer: *Kevin Maples, First Baptist Church, Madisonville, KY.*

The Sermon: Its Homiletical Construction was originally published by Baker Book House in 1927 and then reprinted by the same company in 1968. The edition being reviewed here is a 2018 reprint published by Wipf and Stock. Lenski (1864–1936) was a Lutheran pastor and scholar who taught homiletics for twenty-five years at Capital Seminary. He wrote *The Sermon* towards the end of his life, and his maturity of thought and depth of experience in both preaching and training preachers is evident

throughout the book. The reprint history of the book testifies to the enduring value of his writing. While not all old books are classics, the wide usage of this book for nearly a century now has surely earned it this accolade.

True to its title, the entire book remains focused on the task of constructing a sermon. Lenski divided his work into four parts, each with its own chapters: The Text, The Division, The Theme, and The Elaboration. Although neither the term "expository preaching" nor the more recently coined term "text-driven preaching" is used by Lenski, his method is consistent with these preaching traditions. In part one, he advocates for the selection of a single text for the sermon which the preacher should master through prayer and study in preparation to construct a sermon. In part two, Lenski argues for a clear logical structure to undergird the sermon and offers three types of outlines that may be used. Part three discusses how to select and develop a theme (or proposition) in the sermon. The final section of the book explores how to fill out the outline of the sermon with applications, illustrations, and supporting material.

This book remains an excellent tool for training preachers. While we are often blind to our own cultural prejudices, one of the advantages of using a textbook from another era is the cultural prejudices of the author are often foreign enough to the modern reader to be evident even to the novice student, which can challenge the student to carefully consider how much of their own preaching practice is influenced by culture and tradition and how much is dictated by sound theology. For example, in the context of comparing the art of preaching with the beauty of music in worship Lenski declares: "We have the great pipe organ, because there is no better instrument for worship" (64). This dogmatic tone of a very opinionated author permeates the book and is perhaps its greatest weakness. Lenski's absolute certainty about both homiletical and hermeneutical issues that most scholars today would consider anything but certain will be unappealing to a generation of scholars trained to exhibit more caution in their assertions.

Lenski contrasts writing essays for literary excellence and writing manuscripts for public speaking, carefully explaining how the preacher should write for the ear and not for eye. *The Sermon*, which most preachers will find delightful in its style, reads as though it was written for the ear. Whether it was Lenski's intention or just the preacher in him coming out, the book itself is an excellent example of how to communicate powerfully to an audience. The vast array illustrations in the book are so well crafted and presented, they alone make the book worth reading.

Although conversations in the field of homiletics have advanced well beyond Lenski's conclusions in more than one area, this reprinted classic offers an excellent example of early twentieth-century scholarship and can be used to broaden a student's perspective beyond their own experience and context. Despite some of the weaknesses mentioned above, I highly recommend this work, especially to be used in conjunction with recent textbooks.

The Persuasive Preacher: Pastoral Influence in a Marketing World. By David A. Christensen. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020. 978-17252-6600-1 (hardback); 978-1-7252-6599-8 (paperback), 175 pp., $44.00 (hardback), $24.00 (paperback).

Reviewer: *R. Larry Overstreet, retired, Corban University School of Ministry.*

Christensen specifically targets pastors in this volume, but its principles are also valuable resources for homiletics professors. Writing from thirty years of pastoral experience in Maine and simultaneous decades of experience in a Bible college as professor and academic dean, he brings both a pastoral and professorial approach to his subject. He readily admits that churches "market themselves," and cautions that "[t]here is nothing inherently wrong with such advertisement unless we

become manipulative or deceptive" (xi). Those observations set the tone for this book. Christensen deals at length with "the tension which exists between ethical and effective pastoral influence" (xii). He has no hesitation advocating that persuasion should be integral to the preacher's ministry of God's word. However, he strives to balance that with a biblical foundation which does not permit mere pragmatism to dominate a preaching ministry.

This book is divided into ten chapters. Chapter one, "Pulpit Power," demonstrates how powerful preaching persuasively changes lives, but that power must be on "God's leash" (11). Chapter two, "For the Love of Rhetoric," evaluates the development of rhetoric from ancient Greek times into the present, explaining how it is consistent with biblical exposition. Chapter three focuses on "Sophistry and the Cross," demonstrating how an unethical use of rhetorical methods affected ancient rhetoric and can affect contemporary preaching. The question "Informers or Persuaders?" is answered in chapter four, establishing that biblical preaching aims for transformational change in listeners. In chapter five, "Influence's Arsenal," Christensen explains how many "psychological laws" may be used to persuade and evaluates the fitting use of such approaches from a biblical perspective. While ethos and pathos are considered as crucial in this book, the author devotes chapter six to "Logos: The Central Route," detailing how biblical preaching must be word centered, which is how the Spirit works in the lives of hearers. Recognizing that many pastors may deviate from a thoroughly biblical approach to obtain visible results, Christensen devotes chapter seven to "Shortcuts: Peripheral Routes," in which he considers various human means that may obtain "results" but which have serious biblical shortcomings, such as, propaganda, branding, authority, fear, guilt, etc. Chapters eight, "Ethical Controls: Process," and nine, "Ethical Controls: Decision," focus entirely on maintaining a biblically ethical approach in preaching. Finally, chapter ten, provides a helpful and challenging ending discussion of persuasive preaching by examining "Paul and Philemon: A Case

Study in Pastoral Influence." The book concludes with an appendix which provides a test which pastors and churches can use to evaluate "Pastoral Influence Health Index."

This volume is well organized and so readable that it immediately becomes likeable. Christensen has numerous illustrations scattered throughout the book which demonstrate, both positively and negatively, the principles which he stresses. He consistently bases his arguments on the Scriptures and applies his contentions to pastors in the actual day-to-day ministry of God's word.

Three weaknesses are in the book: (1) he uses too many illustrations and, at times, they tend to distract the reader from the main emphases of the sections in which they occur; (2) no Scripture index is in the book, and this would aid readers in finding key texts which are discussed; and (3) no subject index is included, which would also assist readers to locate key subjects considered.

The Persuasive Preacher is an effective tool for a pastor's ministry and as a supplemental volume for a college or seminary homiletics class. I highly recommend it and consider it an excellent companion to my volume, *Persuasive Preaching: A Biblical and Practical Guide to the Effective Use of Persuasion*.

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society

History:

The Evangelical Homiletics Society (EHS) convened its inaugural meeting in October of 1997, at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA, at the initiative of Drs. Scott M. Gibson of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Keith Willhite of Dallas Theological Seminary. Professors Gibson and Willhite desired an academic society for the exchange of ideas related to instruction of biblical preaching.

Specifically, the EHS was formed to advance the cause of Biblical Preaching through:

> promotion of a biblical-theological approach to preaching increased competence for teachers of preaching integration of the fields of communication, biblical studies, and theology scholarly contributions to the field of homiletics

The EHS membership consists primarily of homiletics professors from North American seminaries and Bible Colleges who hold to evangelical theology, and thus treat preaching as the preaching of God's inspired Word. The EHS doctrinal statement is that of the National Association of Evangelicals.

Purpose:

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is designed to engage readers with articles dealing with the best research and expertise in preaching. Readers will be introduced to literature in the field of homiletics or related fields with book reviews. Since the target audience of the journal is scholars/practitioners, a sermon will appear in each edition which underscores the commitment of the journal to the practice of preaching.

Vision:

The vision of the Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is to provide academics and practitioners with a journal that informs and equips readers to become competent teachers of preaching and excellent preachers.

General Editor:

The General Editor has oversight of the journal. The General Editor selects suitable articles for publication and may solicit article suggestions from the Editorial Board for consideration for publication. The General Editor works cooperatively with the Book Review Editor and the Managing Editor to ensure the timely publication of the journal.

Book Review Editor:

The Book Review Editor is responsible for the Book Review section of the journal. The Book Review Editor contacts publishers for books to review and receives the books from publishers. The Book Review Editor sends books to members of the Society who serve as book reviewers. The reviewers then forward their written reviews to the Book Review Editor in a timely manner. The Book Review Editor works in coordination with the General Editor for the prompt publication of the journal.

Managing Editor:

The Managing Editor has oversight of the business matters of the journal. The Managing Editor solicits advertising, coordinates the subscription list and mailing of the journal, and works with the General Editor and Book Review Editor to ensure a timely publication of the journal.

Editorial Board:

The Editorial Board serves in advising the General Editor in the publication of articles for the journal. The Editorial Board serves as a jury for articles considered for publication. The Editorial Board consists of no more than five members. Board members are approved at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Homiletics Society and hold a two-year appointment.

Frequency of Publication:

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is published twice a year: March and September.

Jury Policy:

Articles submitted to the Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society are blind juried by members of the Editorial Board. In addition, the General Editor may ask a scholar who is a specialist to jury particular articles.

The General Editor may seek articles for publication from qualified scholars. The General Editor makes the final publication decisions. It is always the General Editor's prerogative to edit and shorten said material, if necessary.

Submission Guidelines

1. Manuscripts should be submitted in electronic form. All four margins should be at least one inch, and each should be consistent throughout. Please indicate the program in which the article is formatted, preferably, Microsoft Word (IBM or MAC).

2. Manuscripts should be double-spaced. This includes the text, indented (block) quotations, notes, and bibliography. This form makes for easier editing.

3. Neither the text, nor selected sentences, nor subheads should be typed all-caps.

4. Notes should be placed at the end of the manuscript, not at the foot of the page. Notes should be reasonably close to the style advocated in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* 3rd edition (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1988) by Joseph Gibaldi and Walter S. Achtert. That style is basically as follows for research papers:

   a. From a book:

   note: 23. John Dewey, *The Study of Ethics: A Syllabus* (Ann Arbor, 1894), 104.

   b. From a periodical:

   note: 5. Frederick Barthelme, "Architecture," *Kansas Quarterly* 13:3 (September 1981): 77-78.

   c. Avoid the use of op. cit.
   Dewey 111.

5. Those who have material of whatever kind accepted for publication must recognize it is always the editor's prerogative to edit and shorten said material, if necessary.

6. Manuscripts will be between 1,500 and 3,000 words, unless otherwise determined by the editor.

Abbreviations

Please do not use abbreviations in the text. Only use them for parenthetical references. This includes the names of books of the Bible and common abbreviations such as "e.g." (the full reference, "for example" is preferred in the text). Citations of books, articles, websites are expected. Please do not use "p./pp." for "page(s)," or "f./ff." for "following." Precise page numbers or verse numbers are expected, not "f./ff."

Captalization

Capitalize personal, possessive, objective, and reflexive pronouns (but not relative pronouns) when referring to God: "My, Me, Mine, You, He, His, Him, Himself," but "who, whose, whom."

Direct Quotes

Quotations three or more lines long should be in an indented block. Shorter quotes will be part of the paragraph and placed in quotation marks.

Scripture quotations should be taken from the NIV. If the quotation is from a different version, abbreviate the name in capital letters following the reference. Place the abbreviation in parentheses: (Luke 1:1-5, NASB).

Headings

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All notes should be endnotes, the same size as the main text with a hard return between each one.

Submission and Correspondence

Manuscripts should be sent to the attention of the General Editor. Send an email with attached Word document to: scott_gibson@baylor.edu

Address correspondence to Scott M. Gibson, General Editor, Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, Baylor University's Truett Seminary, One Bear Place #97126, Waco, TX 76798-7126

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As of Volume 13, number 1, The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is digital and online only and as of volume 19, number 2, the journal is open access: http://journal.ehomiletics.com/index.php/jehs

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