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Embodied Superintendence: The Person of the Preacher in Lutheran Homiletics Especially in Relation to Cultural Identity

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EMBODIED SUPERINTENDENCE
THE PERSON OF THE PREACHER IN LUTHERAN HOMILETICS ESPECIALLY IN RELATION TO CULTURAL IDENTITY

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For David, who taught me how to preach with authenticity.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the early 00's, I came out of the Evangelical church with all the theological emotivism and spiritual angst inherent to my generation. The Lutheran symbols were a lifeline to me, expressing with clarity the solid foundation I had been searching for. However, almost immediately I noticed (sometimes obdurately, sometimes correctly) an incongruity between the Lutheran preacher's sermon and the vibrancy of his faith and life—the notable exception being my college mentor, Charles Schulz. Already as a pre-seminary student I was asking the question, "Why not us?" The Lutheran church boasts the clearest and truest expression of the Christian faith, yet her preachers often appear subdued, as if fearful that their spiritual lives and personalities would "get in the way" of the Word of God proclaimed. I wanted more from my future preaching vocation, and I expected more from the preachers I heard.

Then on a Tuesday in September, 2008, I finally heard and saw it in full force. Preaching in the chapel of Concordia Seminary for the occasion of a theological symposium on ecclesiology, David Schmitt gave the hearers a complex, visceral, and *authentic* sermon on Romans 11–12. Due to a particularly violent metaphor within, people still give him a hard time about that sermon, but to me it remains the single best-composed and delivered public discourse I have ever heard. "*That*," I said to myself, "is what *all* preaching should be." Being humble in spirit (and significantly less crude), I'm sure David would demur at my assessment. But in many ways that sermon set me on a vocational path, and I sought to learn from him the mechanics and poetics behind homiletical discourse. An M.Div. class called "Classics of the Devotional Life" further imbedded my belief in the homiletical importance of rhetoric, literature, and (of course) the preacher's authenticity of spirit.

When I found out back in 2014 that a new homiletical focus was being offered as a Ph.D. at

Concordia Seminary, my wife said, “Quick, call Schmitt and get it before they work the kinks out of the program.” I did, and on my application his name was the only one I wrote as a potential Doktorvater—the rest is history. This dissertation is very much a collaborative effort, being constantly checked and re-checked by his insights. He never relented on his constructive criticism, which always served to assure me that he believed in this project (and in me). David Schmitt is the main reason this project is as good as it is, and any errors within are mine alone. I am fortunate that he considers me his student, colleague, and friend.

Valerie, my beloved wife since 2007, of course deserves much praise and credit. Without her, I would probably be working in a gas station right now. Not that I have anything against gas station attendants, but the Neanderthal in me would not have progressed beyond the grunts and growls needed for selling cigarettes and potato chips were it not for her civilizing influence on me. As someone contractually “stuck” listening to my sermons every single week, she has as much (if not more) interest than I do at my homiletical improvement. So I can always count on her honesty and spiritual insight both before and after a sermon, to say nothing of my ministry in general. In short, all men everywhere should be jealous of me because of Valerie.

Other thanks go to my prospectus committee and subsequent readers: Glenn Nielsen, Paul Robinson, and Peter Nafzger. They offered valuable insights in line with their expertise. This dissertation’s direct interactions with Peter’s work decreased significantly, owing to the emergence of Knowles’s application of Wolterstorff and the shift of this project’s methodology. Since he in part suggested the decrease, I nevertheless hope that he knows his work on the cruciform nature of Scripture should be required reading for all ministers of religion.

Thanks also to Dr. Beth Hoeltke, the director of the graduate school, who never failed to put the coffee pot in the right classroom, photo-copy a crossword puzzle, and offer the

encouragement I needed at just the right moment. Her advocacy of the students did not go unnoticed, and her direct honesty helped my academic journey because I never wanted to disappoint her. The joy we shared when she told me I was done was as authentic on her part as it was on mine, and I'll never forget it.

I'd also like to thank the lay leadership of the first church I served as a pastor (St. Paul Lutheran Church in Albion, MI) who, way back in 2015–2017 gave me the traveling time *on top of* my vacation time to complete my Ph.D. coursework, in addition to financial support. They certainly weren't required to do these things, but I sure am glad they did. I will always hold them close to my heart as they taught me how a pastor should love the people he serves. When I arrived as the pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Bay City (Frankenlust), MI in 2017, the remainder of my Ph.D. work was largely done on the periphery. Nevertheless, word got out and the support was overwhelming. Many people prayed for me as ones who know that getting a Ph.D. was not something normal (or sane) pastors do. Thanks also go to my circuit visitor, Erv Hutter, who proctored my language and comprehensive exams.

Finally, thanks be to God for David Schultz, whose friendship and joviality make our partnership in the ministry together a thing to be envied by others. I look up to his spiritual example more than he knows. Thanks also to my good friends Tim Koch, Kyle Fittje, and Matt Wood, who tolerated the reality that a Ph.D. candidate cannot go thirty minutes without talking about his dissertation. I hope you actually read it. I should thank Kali Wood, too, because she and Matt (and Laurel and Barley) let me bunk with them every time I went to St. Louis for classes.

Finally, may the Lord of all culture and baptismal identity be glorified by this work, and may those who read it be edified and encouraged by its ideas.

ABBREVIATIONS

Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
BOC	Book of Concord
CA	*Confessio Augustana* (The Augsburg Confession)
Ep	Epitome of the Formula of Concord
FC	Formula of Concord
LC	Large Catechism
LCMS	The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
LSB	Lutheran Service Book. St. Louis: Concordia, 2006.
LW	*Luther's Works,* American Ed. 55 Vols. Philadelphia: Fortress; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–1986.
SA	Smalcald Articles
WA	Luther, Martin. *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [Briefe]. 18 Vols. Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–2009.

ABSTRACT

Matyas, Dennis W. “Embodied Superintendence: The Person of the Preacher in Lutheran Homiletics Especially in Relation to Cultural Identity.” PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2023. 254 pp.

Over the past several decades, the greater homiletical academy has progressed from questions of authority to dialogics to identity, both of the preacher and of the hearers. Within this timeframe, modern Lutheran homiletics has stayed relatively silent on considerations of the person of the preacher, opting instead for certain foundational homiletical truths including the efficacy of the Word of God, the proclamation of justification, and the authority of the Ministerium. After recovering the consideration of the person of the preacher as a foundational Lutheran homiletic, this work explores the formational significance of the preacher’s cultural identity by offering a theoretical consideration called “Embodied Superintendence.” Holding to the Lutheran belief that God is speaking through the preacher, considerations of his cultural identity can form and inform the ways in which the preaching task is effected, particularly in regards to the preacher’s study and preparation, character, and personality. “Embodied Superintendence” therein offers a corrective to the greater homiletical academy in regards to identity politics and intersectionality by centering the preaching task on the gospel of Jesus Christ and yet allowing cultural identity to be formative in helpful ways.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Near the end of his life, C. F. W. Walther gave a series of thirty-nine lectures to seminary students at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. In twenty-five theses, Walther expounded the proper distinction between law and gospel with copious quotations from Scripture, the Confessions, Martin Luther, and other church fathers. His goal was both to educate his students on the distinction, as well as to instill in them a passion for its application, aimed at the practical goals of pastoral ministry: life and salvation through the gospel of Jesus Christ. As he waxed eloquent about the terrors of the law and the saving sweetness of the gospel, he also criticized many theological systems of his day that undercut the clear condemnation of humanity's sin and the even clearer proclamation of justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. From Pietists to Modernists, recent and ancient, no one was safe—all who muddied the Word of God by not properly applying law and gospel were doing Christianity a disservice and were unfaithful to the preaching task.

A limited reading of these lectures (which almost immediately became a mainstay of theological training in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod) might view the theses as an enshrined polarization not just of law and gospel, but of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, of the "right way" to preach and the "wrong way" to preach, and the outlook is at times a fair assessment of modern Lutheranism.[1] For better or worse, many modern Lutherans in the Waltherian tradition treat the lectures as a "how to" manual of homiletics, using the theses piecemeal against errors. While there is often much value and truth to this practice, it also misses the forest for the trees.

[1] Throughout this dissertation, "Lutheranism" ordinarily refers to a more narrow ilk that is generally consistent with the conservatism of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS).

Yes, Walther rightly warned against certain theological traps, and yes, he condemned error where it needed to be condemned; but the *reason* for these lectures was far greater than simply instilling his students with a proper knowledge and homiletical practice, and it certainly was not to place Lutheran homiletics into an unchangeable systematic. Walther's motivation was rather *formational*, aiming as much at the hearts of his students who *will* preach as it was at the hearts of the hearers who will *hear* them preach. The correction of theological errors was academic; the spiritual formation of pastors was personal.

Walther is but one example of an historic Lutheran voice who is often distilled into a homiletical systematic without much attention paid to his holistic view of the preacher himself.[2] Such distillation tends to occur in modern Lutheran homiletical conversations, with the primary goal being the discovery of a "proper" homiletical view. Yet Walther himself frames the lectures with the transparent goal of forming his students into authentic embodiments of the gospel, which is decidedly more complicated: "I do not want you to stand in your pulpits *like lifeless statues*, but to speak with confidence and with cheerful courage offer help where help is needed."[3] His desire was for his students to know *personally* the message they will be delivering to the people of God as pastors. Before ending the lectures, he adjures them to "make a vow to God … that you will not stand in your pulpits sad-faced, as if you were bidding men to come to a funeral, but like men that go wooing a bride or announcing a wedding."[4] The beginning and end of this fourteen-month-long conversation demonstrates an entire work (and an entire ministry)

[2] Throughout this dissertation, I have used male pronouns when referring to the preacher if the referent is associated with an author who holds to the exclusive ordination of men, including myself. When this is not the case, I have attempted to avoid using pronouns at all so as to avoid associating that belief with someone who may not hold it.

[3] Walther, C.F.W., *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*, trans. W.H.T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia), 5. Italics mine.

[4] Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 406.

rife with personality and subjectivity inherent to the preacher as a man. Indeed, Walther consistently draws from his theological tradition not only the best practices of hermeneutics and correct doctrine, but also the deliberate accent of the gospel shared with people by men who have experienced it. It is simply a given that he himself has been a recipient of grace, that the preacher is a part of the community of faith, that he believes what he preaches, and that he desires for his hearers to believe it too. Walther is not alone but stands amidst a rich Lutheran homiletical tradition that views the person of the preacher as a crucial (if often overlooked) element in the sermonic task. In recent decades, however, references to the musings of Walther and other historical Lutheran voices on the person of the preacher have been sparse or ancillary. If the person of the preacher is mentioned at all, it sometimes happens that the topic is broached in order to dismiss the preacher as less than important in the sermonic process.

To be sure, the sermon is the Word of God, a crafted authoritative public discourse delivered for the salvific benefit of the faith and lives of the hearers. But it is also the words of a preacher, and this definition carries the implicit difficulty of balancing questions of authority: on the one hand, the sermon is the Word of God; on the other hand, the preacher, who can err in his execution of the task, is a necessary component of the sermon. The question for this dissertation concerns the manner and extent of the preacher's role in the sermon: is he a mere reciter, or a crafter of Godly poetics? Is his personality important to the message's delivery, or is it irrelevant to the proclamation? Is his authority based upon his role, his literal words, or something else? Further questions regarding his subjectivity and character as an individual are not far behind these, but modern Lutheran works on the topic are uncommon.

Meanwhile, outside of Lutheranism conversations and works regarding the role and significance of the preacher's personality, preparation, and/or performance freely abound in the

greater homiletical world. Over the past few decades, there has been no little debate over the role of the preacher in the greater homiletical academy: Are there different modes of preaching that work better for the modern hearer who questions the preacher's authority? Does the preacher have any authority at all in the modern era? What role do the hearers themselves play in their reception (or creation) of the sermon?[5] Modern Lutherans have been relatively silent on these topics, taking the authority of the Word, the ministerium, and their own orthodox theology for granted while reacting to the academy's woes as lost causes or self-fulfilling prophesies. While it may be salutary to do so in some cases, more often than not the baby is thrown out with the bathwater and Lutheranism is worse off for its self-exclusion from otherwise important academy discussions.

Even more recently, there has been an explosion of interest in the greater homiletical academy regarding the role of the preacher as it relates to issues of identity politics and intersectionality:[6] can a white preacher effectively preach against racism? What unique

[5] Works that are considered to be seminal for homiletical questions of authority and sermon structure in twentieth-century America include David James Randolph, *The Renewal of Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969); Charles Rice, *Interpretation and Imagination: The Preacher and Contemporary Literature* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970); Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 39, no. 3 (1971): 291–311; Henry Mitchell, *The Recovery of Preaching* (New York: Harper Collins, 1977); Fred Craddock, *As One without Authority,* 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Chalice, 2001); Fred Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel,* 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Chalice, 2002); Eugene Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (Atlanta: Westminster John Knox, 1983); David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987). Building upon these unique works, others followed who expanded sermonic considerations specifically relative to the hearers. The more relevant works to this dissertation include Richard A. Jensen, *Thinking in Story: Preaching in a Post-literate Age* (Lima: CSS, 1993); Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church* (Louisville: Westminster, 1997); Mike Graves, *What's the Matter with Preaching Today?* (Louisville: Westminster, 2004); O. Wesley Allen, *The Homiletic of All Believers: A Conversational Approach* (Louisville: Westminster, 2005); Mark Allan Powell, *What Do They Hear? Bridging the Gap between Pulpit & Pew* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007); Richard H. Cox, *Rewiring Your Preaching: How the Brain Processes Sermons* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012); Michael Brothers, *Distance in Preaching: Room to Speak, Space to Listen* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014); O. Wesley Allen and Ronald Allen, *The Sermon without End: A Conversational Approach to Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015).

[6] "Identity politics" can be defined as any political movement that prioritizes its platform vis-à-vis the identities of a particular group of people who perceive themselves as being systemically oppressed or marginalized. Though its origins are unclear, the term may have originated in the late 1970s with such groups as the Combahee River Collective or the Black Panther Party. Meanwhile, the phrase "intersectionality" was specifically and

embodiments do women and/or African American preachers bring to the pulpit? Is the proper interpretation of the Word of God itself an outdated concept best left to the individual (or individual communities)?[7] These questions, drawn out by decades of questioned authority, have bifurcated in so many infinitesimal cultural ways that modern Lutherans find that their avoidance of the issues—a seemingly common tactic to the previous homiletical generation—now seems impossible. But if the slow death of homiletical authority was a thunderstorm fifty years ago, identity politics and intersectionality in the pulpit is a cultural hurricane today, and the mess can no longer be avoided. Sadly, many Lutherans seeking to deal with the aftermath in their churches are either impotent or ill-equipped for the cleanup effort. They desire a homiletical storm shelter unaffected by the cultural maelstrom but find they can do little more than reminisce about days that are never going to return.

Consequently, works and conversations regarding the heart of these issues—namely, the person of the preacher—remain sparse in recent Lutheran homiletical consideration. Because these emphases bring perennial theological difficulties to homiletical considerations (such as the authority of the Word of God), contemporary Lutherans are understandably cautious in

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intentionally coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique or Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1, no. 8 (1989): 139–67, as way of describing the multi-faceted and systemic marginalization or oppression of people whose identity encompasses more than one minority—such as black *and* woman.

[7] Significant homiletical works in the very recent past that directly address these and other questions of identity politics and intersectionality include Jared E. Alcántara, *Crossover Preaching: Intercultural Improvisational Homiletics in Conversation with Gardner C. Taylor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015); Frank A. Thomas, *Introduction to the Practice of African American Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2016); O. Wesley Allen, *Preaching in the Era of Trump* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2017); Kimberly Johnson, *The Womanist Preacher: Proclaiming Womanist Rhetoric from the Pulpit* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2017); Matthew D. Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence: Understanding the People Who Hear Our Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017); Carolyn Browning Helsel, *Preaching about Racism: A Guide for Faith Leaders* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2018); Mason Lee, "From Technique to Character: Preaching in a Globalized World," *Restoration Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2018): 9–28; Amy P. McCullough, *Her Preaching Body: Conversations about Identity, Agency, and Embodiment among Contemporary Female Preachers* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018); Mitzi J. Smith, *Womanist Sass and Talk Back: Social (In)Justice, Intersectionality, and Biblical Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018); Phil Snider, ed. *Preaching as Resistance: Voices of Hope, Justice, & Solidarity* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2018); Eric C. Redmond, ed., *Say It! Celebrating Expository Preaching in the African American Tradition* (Chicago: Moody, 2020).

broaching the topic or joining the greater homiletical conversation. Still, the sparsity of recent Lutheran contribution to the study of the person of the preacher (especially in the areas of identity politics and intersectionality) is noticeable to anyone seeking to converse with the academy on these issues. It is especially noticeable to anyone who is more aware of historical Lutheran voices on the person of the preacher.

The Thesis

This dissertation will define how Lutherans faithfully confess the role of the preacher in the act of preaching, and thereby offer a revised correlational response to how the greater homiletical academy in North America attends to this issue, particularly with regard to identity politics and intersectionality.

As noted above, the Lutheran contribution to this conversation has been minimal and has expressed a fear of the preacher's personality overtaking the authority of God's Word. For this reason, the dissertation will establish a proper contextualization for understanding the relationship between Word and preacher, as well as the relationship between the preacher and the hearers. Originally, the cruciform theology of Scripture developed by Peter H. Nafzger served as the basis from which to explore the pastor in preaching.[8] Building upon this important work was the narrative appropriation of Paul Ricoeur's three-fold mimesis[9] by Lance Pape.[10] However, recent work in homiletics during the writing of this dissertation has begun to incorporate the speech-act theory of Nicholas Wolterstorff, which proves to be a far closer examination of the

[8] Peter Nafzger, *"These Are Written"*: *Toward a Cruciform Theology of Scripture* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013).

[9] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols., trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University Press, 1984–1985). Originally published as *Temps et Récit* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1983).

[10] Lance C. Pape, *The Scandal of Having Something to Say: Ricoeur and the Possibility of Postliberal Preaching* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013).

preacher himself as a narrowed focus. This dissertation will build on that work, supplementing the work of Michael P. Knowles[11] from a Lutheran perspective and relying on Nafzger as a Lutheran corrective to certain emphases.

After examining certain contextualizations of the person of the preacher that are common to modern Lutheran responses, the dissertation will develop a contextualization called "Embodied Superintendence" that allows for a greater consideration for how the preacher himself is experientially involved in the sermonic process. Along the way, it will be shown that contextualizing the person of the preacher is historically consistent with Lutheranism, and certain historical Lutheran voices on the person of the preacher will be recovered to wit.

The ultimate goal of the dissertation is to provide a way for Lutheran homiletics faithfully to engage in fruitful conversation regarding the role of the preacher both within the Lutheran church and within the greater homiletical academy without fear of contradicting a Lutheran confession. For a concrete example of this theorization, Carolyn Browning Helsel's recent dissertation[12] will be used as a conversation partner to demonstrate by example how "Embodied Superintendence" can be a helpful and immediate contextualization for Lutheran homiletics when considering the person of the preacher and identity politics.

Methodology and Outline of Chapters

The methodology employed by this dissertation generally follows *A Fundamental Practice Theology* by Don Browning,[13] who rightly asserts that all theology is fundamentally practical. Following a practical philosophical school of thought that moves from praxis to theory to praxis

[11] Michael P. Knowles, *Third Voice: Preaching Resurrection* (Eugene: Cascade, 2021).

[12] Carolyn Browning Helsel, "The Hermeneutics of Recognition: A Ricoeurian Interpretive Framework for Whites Preaching about Racism," (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2014).

[13] Don Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

again (rather than beginning with theory and moving to an often inadequate praxis), Browning sees the church's cognition of itself to be a discursive community of memory and tradition. This tradition underlies the theory, so that fundamental practical theology is a "critical reflection on the church's dialogue with Christian sources and other communities of experience and interpretation with the aim of guiding its action toward social and individual transformation."[14] This practical theology is subdivided into four movements: *descriptive theology, historical theology, systematic theology*, and *strategic practice theology*; the methodology provides a useful organizational structure for the dissertation, and is reflected in the chapters.

The following chapter is a *descriptive theological* one, explaining the current conversation on the role of the preacher in the greater homiletical academy. A cursory look at the popular homiletical developments of the last fifty years will show how the so-called New Homiletic led to an increase in concerns over authority, which developed conversations on hearer reception, dialogical preaching, and identity politics. A variety of engagements will demonstrate that the role of the person of the preacher is contested ground in the greater homiletical academy, especially noting serious overtones of power, privilege, and authority.

Chapter Two will continue the *descriptive theology* by detailing the current Lutheran trends in homiletical thought. Rather than limiting "Lutheranism" in an idiosyncratic way, and to avoid an overly reductive categorization of contextualizations, this chapter will speak to the various homiletical issues grappled with by those who profess themselves to be Lutheran. Authors highlighting the authority of the Word, the authority of the ministerium, the "accuracy" of interpretation and application, and "liturgical preaching," are among the foci, which are by no means intended to be mutually exclusive or exhaustive of the subject matter. Projecting these

[14] Browning, *Practical Theology*, 36.

contextualizations will demonstrate what is missing from the current conversation vis-à-vis the person of the preacher.

Chapter Three will be an *historical* examination of Lutheran voices that consider the person of the preacher. It will be shown that, in addition to the foundational Lutheran homiletical considerations enumerated in Chapter Two, the person of the preacher has also been an historical and integral part of Lutheran homiletical considerations. Four specific areas will be highlighted, namely: *the subjectivity of the preacher*, wherein subjectivity is recognized as inherent in the preacher as an individual man; *the preacher's study and preparation*, specifically emphasizing the motivation of study being aimed towards the service of proclamation rather than (but never pitted against or contrary to) the effort of theological accuracy; *the character (ethos) of the preacher*, which insists on the regenerate life of the preacher, not in the classical rhetorical sense but in the demonstration of the gospel's power in ministry; and *the preacher's personality in delivery*, which sees the preacher less as a static reporter and more of a dynamic communicator. These areas, freely abounding in historical Lutheranism, will show the necessity for another contextualization for modern Lutheran homiletics, namely "Embodied Superintendence."

Chapter Four will "fuse the horizons" (as Browning puts it) of descriptive and historical theology with *systematic* details of a third contextualization, called "Embodied Superintendence." Here, considerations of Wolterstorff's "double agency discourse" as appropriated by Knowles will be drawn upon to situate the relationship between the preacher and the Word of God, as well as between the preacher and the hearers. Using this platform, considerations of the sermon as the Word of God will easily allow for the considerations of the person of the preacher demonstrated by historical Lutherans. It will be shown that the person of the preacher is a *foundational* homiletic in Lutheran theology, and that his cultural identity is an

inescapably *formational* part of that foundation.

Chapter Five will further propound "Embodied Superintendence" as a *strategic practical* theological analysis of homiletical contextualization. Three case studies will demonstrate analyses of the impact that cultural identity has on the person of the preacher. Two specific works by historical Lutherans, Paul Scherer[15] and Joseph Sittler,[16] will be offered as relatively modern examples (within the last eighty years) of Lutherans engaging their ever-changing cultural atmospheres within a particular context. They will demonstrate by example the ability of Lutheran homiletics to consider the subjectivity, study, character, and personality of the preacher in unique cultural contexts while still maintaining a faithful posture to their theological heritage. The third case study will be a unique interaction with the work of Carolyn Helsel, whose recent dissertation seeks to encourage white preachers to overcome their hesitancy to preach about racism using Ricoeur's hermeneutic of recognition. The *strategic practical* contextualization of "Embodied Superintendence" will respond to show both the benefit and the cautions that cultural identity has on the formation of the preacher's study, character, and personality.

Chapter Six will summarize the entire dissertation and offer suggestions for further study. Again, the goal of the work is not only to recover historical Lutheran voices on the person of the preacher for the enrichment of Lutheran homiletics, but also to engage better with the greater homiletical academy in hopes of increasing mutual understanding and common endeavor. Along the way it will show that the myriad challenges of cultural identity can indeed form and inform the person of the preacher without supplanting the foundational Lutheran doctrines of the sermon's purpose.

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[15] Paul Scherer, *For We Have This Treasure* (New York: Harper, 1944).

[16] Joseph Sittler, *The Anguish of Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966).

CHAPTER TWO

THE CURRENT CONVERSATION IN THE GREATER HOMILETICAL ACADEMY

Since preaching is central to the promulgation, subsistence, and expansion of the church, its execution is rightly under constant scrutiny. Theologians from every generation of Christendom have identified problems inimical to the preaching task; some are universal and applicable to all generations, while others are specific to cultural milieux. Many resources demonstrate the diversity of the conversation in the current cultural climate as homileticians attempt to speak to unprecedented changes in the cultural foundation of American life.[1] Since this dissertation seeks to enable Lutheran theology to engage the current dialogue in the homiletical academy specifically on the topic of the role of the preacher vis-à-vis identity politics, it is important to understand certain developments that led to that particular facet of the current conversation.

The Preacher's Hidden Authority: "The New Homiletic"

In the 1970's, homiletics took a turn toward a less propositional and more symbolic approach to the sermon, which eventually became known as the "New Homiletic," a phrase that was coined by David Randolph in 1969.[2] Aided by thinkers like Stephen Crites, whose article

[1] See for example David J. Lose, *Preaching at the Crossroads: How the World—and Our Preaching—Is Changing* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), who seeks to "reconfigure preaching [and] fashion a useful and compelling Christian identity for this and future generations." (8) He does this by defining and addressing the unique challenges posed by postmodernism, secularism, and pluralism. Tempting as it may be to reflect on each one separately, the definitions of these terms are malleable, thus aiming any homiletical "solutions" at ever-moving goalposts. See also David Zahl, *Seculosity: How Career, Parenting, Technology, Food, Politics, and Romance Became Our New Religion and What to Do about It* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2019). Rather than accepting the typical "secular vs. religious" dichotomy, Zahl argues convincingly that Americans have not gotten less religious, but rather pivoted their religiosity into the secular realm. Consequently, the emptiness that "seculosity" offers has left people with a crisis of identity that can only be recovered in Jesus Christ. For a compelling and exhaustive examination of the differences between the pre-modern and modern eras vis-à-vis spiritually and the self, see the foundational work of Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Boston: Harvard, 2007).

[2] Randolph, *Renewal of Preaching*. See also the first chapter of O. Wesley Allen, *The Renewed Homiletic* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010) for a cursory introduction to the so-called pillars of the New Homiletic.

"The Narrative Quality of Experience,"[3] became more or less ubiquitous amongst adherents of the New Homiletic, homileticians came to understand that human experience was fundamentally narrative in quality. As such, forms and structures of sermonizing should be developed to reorganize hearers' lives toward the grander metanarrative of Scripture, since "there seems to be a powerful inner drive of thought and imagination to overcome the relentless temporality of experience."[4] Crites here refers to a "newer sensibility, so new and inchoate that it can only be designated 'post-modern.'"[5] The now quaint referral to such a massive societal paradigm shift as Postmodernism strikes at the heart of the homiletical crisis: the hearers were taking their experiential abstractions in life and making their *own* metanarratives, all the while finding less and less value in the preacher's propositional authority.

Therefore, out of a desire for the hearers of sermons to interpret their experiences through the lens of God's truth, pioneers of the New Homiletic moved away from the Modernist methods of preaching that treated Scripture empirically rather than existentially. Fred Craddock wrote his mold-breaking titles, *Overhearing the Gospel* and *As One Without Authority*,[6] which favor a more inductive method and structure of preaching. Juxtaposing deductive and inductive communication, Craddock opted for the latter, saying "many of the parishioners are not so much evil as they are bored, and their entire Christian experience has never provided them a chair in which to sit for an hour in the heavenly places with Christ."[7] Far from denying the authority of the preacher himself, Craddock recognized the change in the American religious plausibility

[3] Crites, "Narrative Quality of Experience."

[4] Crites, "Narrative Quality of Experience," 308.

[5] Crites, "Narrative Quality of Experience," 308.

[6] Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel*.

[7] Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 71.

structure[8] all too well: faith had become individualized and the preacher's authority was questioned. Swift to its close ebbed out the church's little day as chief moral authority in the American psyche, and preachers needed to structure the Word from the pulpit in a "new" way if the hearers were going to listen. Expanding on imagination and movement in sermon structure, Craddock's work significantly increased the rate at which the New Homiletic influenced preaching in America.

To define the New Homiletic in retrospect, O. Wesley Allen says it can be "summarized in terms of a focus on the hearer, the use of inductive, narrative sermonic forms, and the centrality of imagistic, storied language to create an experience of the gospel."[9] A pedestrian view of the New Homiletic may see it as merely a break from the caricature of the stilted old (male) preacher listing systematic points in favor of more creative and engaging approaches to the sermon, including especially narrative and storytelling. This creativity undeniably resulted from the New Homiletic, but it is far from its real motivating factor, which is to instill authentic faith in the hearers and help them to see greater spiritual meaning in their lives by more creative means.

Purveyors of the New Homiletic recognized that the implicit trust of the punctilious dogmatician's authority in the pulpit should no longer be taken for granted as the source of ultimate truth in the hearts of the hearers. Hence, the New Homiletic sought to harness the "narrative quality of experience" as the structural and imaginative ways in which people made the truth of God into *their own* truth. John McClure writes:

> New Homiletic preachers assume that there are common and essential forms of human experience, and they explore that experience as a repository for grace. They work hard to discover qualities of God's relationship to the world through the exploration and correlation of biblical and life symbols and by creating new

[8] See Peter L. Berger, *Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967).

[9] Allen, *Renewed Homiletic*, 9.

> metaphoric juxtapositions and reversals in sermons. They encourage imagination and the search for insight into the nature of ultimate reality by journeying outside the lines of formal logic.[10]

Thus, as trust in authority began to shift, so did the structures and methods typically found in such sermons in order to engage better with and validate the experiences of the hearers. The New Homiletic moved from deductive, preacher-centric, propositional sermons to inductive, hearer-oriented, imagistic ones. Beyond Craddock and Randolph, works by homileticians like Charles Rice,[11] Henry Mitchell,[12] Eugene Lowry,[13] and David Buttrick[14] demonstrated the immediate fruits of this movement; many consider these authors to be its pioneers.

The Preacher's Negotiated Sermon: Dialogical Preaching

From the renewed interest in different modes of preaching with a focus on the hearer came a deluge of creative works, some of which have several editions (longevity is rare for any homiletical textbook). Homileticians continued to revise and perpetuate such works after long periods of cultural observation, noticing how the hearers' interactions with these new modes of preaching challenged the traditional understanding of preaching itself by turning to the receivers of the sermons—the hearers themselves. The trend is noticeable in Thomas G. Long's introduction to his third edition of *The Witness of Preaching*, the adaptation of which he made explicit:

> The rate of change in the field of homiletics has not abated. But perhaps the greatest shift reflected in this edition of *Witness* is in the context of preaching. In North America, seemingly unshakable understandings of the church are now being deeply shaken. Many congregational membership rolls have dramatically declined,

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[10] John S. McClure, *Preaching Words: 144 Key Terms in Homiletics* (Louisville: Westminster, 2007), 95.

[11] Rice, *Interpretation and Imagination*.

[12] Mitchell, *Recovery of Preaching*.

[13] Lowry, *Homiletical Plot*.

[14] Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures*.

> numerous church buildings have been abandoned, and the Sunday assemblies in many places look noticeably greyer and smaller … Preachers still hold forth in old country churches and neo-Gothic sanctuaries, but they are almost as likely to be found in taverns and movie theaters, storefronts and living rooms. Experiments in church life and structure abound, and preaching is a part of this inventive ethos.[15]

The cultural change to which Long referred ensured the book's continued success more than thirty years later, since the work highlights the messiness of ministry performed in changing contexts. His broad images of the "herald," the "preacher," and the "story teller," are all subsumed into a "witness," who is not a dispassionate observer of the human condition; rather, the preacher is one who lives within (and shares) the context of a community's struggles in a way that cannot be contained by any preconceived notion of what the church is. The preacher was clearly still relevant, but the emphasis was becoming less and less on what the preacher said and more and more on *how the preacher said it* according to the hearers' ever-changing environment.

Broadly speaking, the school of homiletical thought that focuses on the hearers is often called "dialogical preaching." Since definitions of dialogical preaching prove to be ethereal, an in-depth examination from the dissertation of Kristopher Kim Barnett is helpful.[16] Within, Barnett defines dialogical preaching as "a preaching event in which the speaker intentionally seeks to involve the listeners in the development, delivery, and/or evaluation of the sermon."[17] While his definition seems limited to sermonic form (like much of the New Homiletic), his work demonstrates a far deeper understanding of dialogical preaching that also includes performance. Citing Reuel Howe, Barnett says, "dialogical preaching is more a philosophy than a style or

[15] Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster, 2016), xi.

[16] Kristopher Kim Barnett, "A Historical/Critical Analysis of Dialogical Preaching," (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008).

[17] Barnett, "Dialogical Preaching," 6.

form."[18] In this philosophy are admonitions for the preacher to engage in *personal* relationships with his hearers, adjust his presentation based on the hearers' *cultural identities*, and yet not relinquish his *authority* as a preacher.[19]

Barnett's conclusions come after a biblical study specifically targeting the "διαλέγομαι" of the Apostle Paul. Dialogical preaching, he argues, actually has been the favored mode of preachers beginning with Paul,[20] and has further roots in the Anabaptist and African American preaching traditions. Works from the top echelon of homiletical thought are examined at length: namely Reuel L. Howe,[21] John S. McClure,[22] Lucy Atkinson Rose,[23] and O Wesley Allen.[24] Barnett accurately portrays the dialogical sensibilities of these homileticians while lamenting their apparent lack of biblical support or reliance. Though Barnett himself supports dialogical preaching from his careful biblical study, the corrective he offers to the academy (towards a more biblically grounded foundation) is indicative of the primary homiletical emphases of the time. In short, if the New Homiletic was reacting to the waning authority of the preacher by focusing more on the method of delivery, its progeny—dialogical preaching—almost certainly enshrined the questionability of the preacher's authority as the general rule. In neither case was the overt *goal* to cloud authoritative preaching or escape the truth of God's Word, but the homiletical drift allowed it more readily than older, more traditional models as homiletical

[18] Barnett, "Dialogical Preaching," 280.

[19] See Barnett, "Dialogical Preaching," 273–82.

[20] Some of Barnett's classifications as "preaching" when διαλέγομαι occurs in Acts are questionable to Lutheran exegesis. Nevertheless, his main thesis that Paul's preaching was dialogical is cogent and convincing.

[21] Reuel L. Howe, *Partners in Preaching: Cleary and Laity in Dialogue* (New York: Seabury, 1967).

[22] John S. McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit: Where Leadership and Preaching Meet* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995).

[23] Rose, *Sharing the Word*.

[24] Allen, *Homiletic of All Believers*.

emphases shifted to the hearers.

An understanding of homiletics that is focused on the hearers continues to yield creativity that enriches and aids preachers, especially in the area of performance theory. Performance theory as it relates to homiletics can be succinctly contoured as an exploration of the preacher's personal experience in the sermonic event as it relates to the performative power of the Word of God for the hearers. Some notable works have arisen from homileticians working within this trajectory, and they contribute positively to a hearer oriented homiletic as well as a contextualization of the person of the preacher. A strong example of this is a work by Charles Bartow, who views preaching as the act of turning "ink into blood."[25] Preaching, he says, is "God's human speech," embodied in the sounds and tenors of the ones speaking it. Advocating evaluative metrics such as the use of the present tone, divine initiative, and the indicative mood, Bartow draws paradoxical parallels between the act of preaching and the divine action of God's speech in a way that views the sermon as the creation of a divine conversation between God, preacher, and hearers. Similarly, Charles H. Cosgrove and W. Dow Edgerton aim at a dynamic reception of the word on the interpretive level through what they call "incarnational translation."[26] Their method stands between the act of reciting the biblical text on the one hand, and interpreting the text for a modern audience on the other: "This contemporizing aspect aligns incarnational translation with the purpose of homiletical commentary, the effort to connect the ancient text with a contemporary time and place."[27] In other words, Cosgrove and Dow seek an "incarnational preaching" that imagines what the ancient text would have sounded like to the

[25] Charles L. Bartow, *God's Human Speech: A Practical Theology of Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 63.

[26] Charles H. Cosgrove and W. Dow Edgerton, *In Other Words: Incarnational Translation for Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

[27] Cosgrove and Edgerton, *In Other Words*, 37.

historical hearers and reconfigures it for the ears of the contemporary hearers. Thereby they privilege the sensibilities of dynamic equivalence over essentially literal translations in order to embody the power of God's Word in an inviting and authentic posture for the hearers (like Bartow's "ink-into-blood").

In like manner to an invitation, Michael Brothers contributed a significant work called *Distance in Preaching*.[28] Following in the footsteps of Fred Craddock, Brothers introduced an inductive homiletical approach that is more apt to invite the hearers into the sermon as an event rather than emotionally manipulate them. While "emotional manipulation" is a false dichotomy that is overly reductive of the variegated types of hearers, his method nevertheless demonstrates the importance of *inviting* the hearers into the Word rather than *forcing* the Word onto them. Brothers presents an approach that functions as an appropriate correlative to Bartow, Cosgrove, and Dow: with the power of the Word to generate an experience for the hearers through the preacher's performance comes the check and balance of the preacher's concern for the hearers' cultural sensibilities and spiritual capacities. God's Word is performed through the preacher, and the hearers are invited into that experience.

Within the categorization of works that balance the experiential performance of the preacher with the hearers' modes of reception, an anthology by Jana Childers and Clayton J. Schmit focuses on the performative aspect of preaching such that the sermon is infused with a vitality hitherto forgotten by "traditional" preaching.[29] The work includes essays from insightful homileticians such as Paul Scott Wilson, Alyce M. McKenzie, and Ronald J. Allen, who offer performative views of preaching that embody the truth of God's Word through the preacher as

[28] Brothers, *Distance in Preaching*.

[29] Jana Childers and Clayton J. Schmit, eds., *Performance in Preaching: Bringing the Sermon to Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

authentic ("lively") displays of divine grace for the sake of the hearers. The anthology as a whole can be categorized as a direct developmental response to the angst of "boring preaching" that originally fueled the concerns of the New Homiletic, as it shares a variety of considerations relating to the preacher's performance for the sake of the hearers.

Taking these types of considerations to a deeper level, Jared E. Alcántara explores the famous improvisational stylings of Gardner C. Taylor in metaphorical connectivity to musical improvisation and Taylor's well-known effectiveness in the pulpit.[30] More than just another homiletical technique, Alcántara's observations reflect a sort of redefining Taylor's sermonic improvisation *into* a sort of music. So also Sunggu A. Yang, in a work exploring the aesthetics of preaching, develops a "holistic-artistic" homiletic that does not simply appropriate various art forms to use in preaching—rather, *the sermon itself* becomes the styled art form.[31] These works demonstrate the continual progression of modern homiletics away from structure and towards the hearers' reception and experience through the preacher.

On point with performance preaching for the sake of the hearer, two works that specifically seek to steer the preacher away from reliance on a manuscript are by Dave McClellan and Ryan Tinetti.[32] McClellan encourages the practical usage of mental road maps and the internalization

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[30] Jared E. Alcántara, *Crossover Preaching: Intercultural Improvisational Homiletics in Conversation with Gardner C. Taylor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015). See especially his second essay, "Turning Ink to Blood: Performative Improvisation." See also William C. Turner Jr., "The Musicality of Black Preaching: Performing the Word," in *Performance in Preaching*, eds., Childers and Schmit, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 191–210, who uses similar musical metaphors especially in relation to the musicality of black preaching. A jazz musician in his own right, Eugene Lowry, *The Homiletical Beat: Why All Sermons Are Narrative* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2012) also draws on musical metaphors.

[31] Sunggu A. Yang, *Arts and Preaching: An Aesthetic Homiletic for the Twenty-First Century* (Eugene: Cascade, 2021). Yang establishes his hermeneutic by the art forms of Cubism, architecture, fashion, film, drama, music; he even includes a sample syllabus for potential instructors of the same.

[32] Dave McClellan, *Preaching by Ear: Speaking God's Truth from the Inside Out* (Wooster, OH: Weaver, 2014); Ryan Tinetti, *Preaching by Heart: How a Classical Practice Helps Contemporary Pastors to Preach without Notes* (Eugene: Cascade, 2021).

of Scriptural stories to "preach by ear," which he defines as "speaking from personally held, deep convictions in a way that enables our words to unfold in the moment by considering the actual people present with us."[33] Similarly, Tinetti revitalizes the classic rhetorical canon of *memoria* to aid the preacher in the practical tool of a "memory palace." Like McClellan, Tinetti's goal is not simply to toss away the preacher's notes for its own sake, but rather "to internalize the essential message—the core content, the key images—of the sermon so thoroughly that the preacher can stand in the pulpit and proclaim it without notes as a Spirit-prompted utterance … thus the credibility of the message (and the messenger) is increased."[34] For both authors, the importance of an authentically communicated sermon *without notes or a manuscript* is indicative of a more impactful and Spirit-filled discourse for the hearers.

It can be seen from the above examples that as propositional structures continued to make way for more hearer-oriented homiletical forms, performance theory in homiletics continues to open the door for exploring the sermon as an event in time performed by a preacher to the end of creating an invitational space for that event to bear fruit in the lives of the hearers in authentic ways. This dissertation will ultimately find itself within that balance of performance and experience for both the preacher and the hearers. More specifically, the revised correlational response it will offer to the academy treats the use of identity politics and intersectionality, which can be said to be culminating consequences of these homiletical movements.

The Preacher's Negotiated Identity in the Pulpit

Developing concurrently with dialogical preaching and peppered through the history of these conversations was the not-so-peripheral matter of the person of the preacher. More

[33] McClellan, *Preaching by Ear*, 5.

[34] Tinetti, *Preaching by Heart*, 95–96.

specifically, as the authority of the preacher was questioned, so was his stereotype. Thus, the heretofore overlooked role of women in the pulpit and the underappreciated uniqueness of African American preaching brought to prominence discussions of the preacher's identity that would not be considered "traditional."

For example, Beverly Zink-Sawyer, in an essay in honor of Eugene Lowry, noted how enabling narrative preaching was and is for women preachers. She writes:

> Whether attributed to nature or nurture, education or acculturation, social scientists continue to affirm gender difference in how women and men perceive and relate to the world. The experiential dimension seems to be the one place where gender theorists and critics alike agree that differences arise. Since all preaching is rooted in experience—the experience of one's encounter with the gospel and its claims upon one's life—there cannot help but be gender difference in preaching.[35]

Zink-Sawyer exhibits a congruity between method (in this case narrative preaching) and her sex in a way that affirms a difference granted by the identity of the preacher. The same can be said for Amy P. McCullough, who specifically considers the usage of the human body in sermon delivery, and examines the challenges unique to women in a work called *Her Preaching Body*.[36] Both authors highlight their identity as a challenge to their authority as preachers (especially McCullough, who mentions shoes, clothing, pregnancy, and tone of voice as hurdles unknown by men), even as they seek to authorize the hearers as the proper guarantors of said authority.

Similarly, African American homileticians have highlighted certain qualities of their identity group as particular strengths in spite of their minority. Following in the footsteps of his mentor Henry Mitchell, Frank A. Thomas is best known for systematizing African American

[35] Beverly Zink-Sawyer, "A Match Made in Heaven: The Intersection of Gender and Narrative Preaching," in *What's the Shape of Narrative Preaching?* eds., Mike Graves and David J. Schlafer (St. Louis: Chalice: 2008), 44.

[36] McCullough, *Her Preaching Body*.

preaching as a homiletical discipline.[37] Thomas tracks the history of rhetorical study as distinct from theology, and clearly shows how the tables turned with the New Homiletic—namely that rhetoric and homiletics were once more being recognized as two sides of the same coin. In other words, the New Homiletic has *caught up* with what traditional African American folk preaching has *always* been doing,[38] having "always been in the oral tradition of inductive, narrative, imagistic, and storied language."[39] Thus, the study of African American homiletics is inseparable from its rhetoric, and therefore inseparable from the cultural identities that form it.

Thomas adds to the inseparability of African American rhetoric and cultural identity a distinct mode of communication called "signifying," which is a sort of "second language that black people shared for privileged meanings among themselves, the language of indirection, innuendo, double meanings, and black identity."[40] Thomas admits there is an inherent difficulty and frustration to defining (and systematizing) "signifying," since "one has to signify to define signifying."[41] Nevertheless, it is generally understood that "signifying" is deeply ingrained in the African American psyche, and therefore used by black preachers "to validate personhood, identity, and a sense of being in a world that, in whatever form, seeks to deny fundamental aspects of being human."[42] There is an often indefinable *je ne sais quoi* distinguishing African American preaching from non-black preaching in America, and Thomas *et al* seeks to recover and expand these intangibles in a way that will continue to validate and improve African

[37] See Frank A. Thomas, *Introduction to the Practice of African American Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2016).

[38] This is remarkably similar to Barnett's conclusion regarding dialogical preaching.

[39] Thomas, *African American Preaching*, 68.

[40] Thomas, *African American Preaching*, 74.

[41] Thomas, *African American Preaching*, 75.

[42] Thomas, *African American Preaching*, 77.

American preaching based on its unique identity as the voice of an historically oppressed people.

Along the lines of Thomas' combination of rhetoric and homiletics, Eric C. Redmond seeks to safeguard the traditions and character of African American preaching in an anthology that specifically explores expository preaching in the black tradition. He laments what he calls a "gospel gentrification," wherein "black students attend white evangelical schools, sit under white evangelical pastors, and abandon the black tradition altogether. They sit in those pews and consider the ice of white evangelicalism as colder than the ice of their forefathers."[43] The goal of his work is to demonstrate the homiletically universal accessibility of expository preaching (which he likens to a coat hanger) while emphasizing the uniqueness of the black tradition that uses it (which he likens to the coat hanging on the hanger). Here again, identity has grown with method, such that homiletical structure knows no cultural bounds; yet, the *application* of myriad methods and structures cannot avoid the person of the preacher.

Suffice to say, in these few short decades sermonic discourse has broken loose from its authoritative propositional moorings and found itself reflecting a vast variety of contexts and hearer experiences. These all stem from the subdued or questioned authority of the preacher which places more and more importance on the hearers. Centering the conversation on hearer reception by pivoting to a more dialogical emphasis naturally allows for a more negotiated view of the preacher, which enables the greater homiletical academy to focus more on the preacher's identity as an authoritative marker. It is clear that as the desire to give a voice to marginalized identity groups picks up steam, so does the preacher's own identity relative to those of his hearers. This is a rather neutral observation, yet it belies a homiletical practice that can be faithfully exercised—provided the myriad cultural identities of preachers and hearers are not

[43] Redmond, ed., *Say It!*.

abused to the point of detracting homiletical consideration from the purpose of preaching (salvation for all through Jesus Christ). Many modern Lutherans are hesitant to consider the formative effects that cultural identity has on homiletics, being much more comfortable in homiletical contextualizations that may inadvertently undervalue the person of the preacher himself.

To be sure, the development of different homiletical methods and sermonic forms throughout the past fifty years clearly was not without its detractors, especially those who hailed from more conservative theological backgrounds. For example, in 1984 Richard Lischer saw the limits of story-making identities in the New Homiletic, lamenting that "instead of the prow that leads the way … or the rudder that guides the ship of the church, preaching usually resembles a dinghy tied to the stern, taking in the flotsam of culture and theology from the ship's wake."[44] The warning sign he saw was not so much the method itself as the whole-sale purchase of story-making identities:

> If one is to make sense of such a life, it will not be by casting it into acts and rationalizing its plot but by rediscovering the continuity of identity throughout the confusion of broken plots, botched lines, and embarrassing non-sequiturs. Who does not have a story? The severely handicapped do not; nor do the addicted, the poverty-stricken, the hungry, the imprisoned, and many other categories of marginated people whose lives are structured not by the syntaxis of story but by immediate needs or bewilderment at the unrelatedness of things. To address them by means of story is to speak a language they do not know.[45]

Lischer's concern about the New Homiletic was well warranted, even if it proved over time to be overplayed. Still, this dissertation shares a similar concern regarding the common negative use of identity politics and intersectionality shown in the following section. Simply put, the flotsam of the culture's conversation about identity cannot be taken into the pulpit wholesale; rather, the

[44] Richard Lischer, "The Limits of Story," *Interpretation* 38 no. 1 (1984): 36.

[45] Lischer, "Limits of Story," 31.

role of the preacher is contextualized in light of these voices so that preaching can be performed faithfully *within* the cultural flotsam.

If there is still a cultural hurricane to clean up after, there is always another storm to follow, and the unintended consequences of the aforementioned homiletical trends are borne out in identity politics and intersectionality in the following section. It is important to note that sermonic form is not an enemy that needs resistance: from Zink-Sawyer with narrative preaching, to Barnett with dialogical preaching, to Redmond with expository preaching, each brings his or her own theological traditions to the table that informs their views while treating sermonic structure as a neutral vehicle for communication. It is not necessarily *what* or *how* something is said; it is often now the identity of the one saying it and how it is received that matters to the academy. It is simply unproductive to point to an historical progression of thought as the culprit of all things wrong and expect that declaration to be enough for today.[46] Indeed, some modern Lutherans focus on their criticisms of homiletical method without realizing that those methods merely function as shills for the real issue: the cultural identity of the preacher.

Let the reader understand at the outset: this dissertation is not concerned with the form of the sermon as an artifact; it is arguable that *any* sermon structure is able to be utilized with rhetorical faithfulness to proclaim the gospel, and that branch of homiletical study is an invaluable tool for routine preachers. Rather, this dissertation is concerned with the person of preacher in Lutheranism and in the greater homiletical academy, in particular the prevalence of identity politics and intersectionality that actively undermines an otherwise salutary and salvific proclamation from the pulpit. This is far more serious than the mere plurality of sermonic form,

[46] See for example Edward Grimenstein, "Secularism, Idolatry, and Preaching," *Logia* 12 no. 3 (2003): 23–29, who reads aspects of the New Homiletic as idolatrous: "Not only is the sermon susceptible to the creeping in of idolatry, but in many ways modern homiletical practices actually *invite* idolatry." Italics mine.

or of cultural narratives that jockey for position in the public square. It is serious enough to acknowledge that the preaching of an entire people group based on their identity (namely cis-gendered straight white men) is sometimes questioned in mainstream homiletics. Ignoring it is not a desirable option, and Lutheran theology in particular provides a stable foundation for a faithful contribution and healthy discourse.

Identity Politics, Intersectionality, and the White Preacher

A trend has been observed in the above sections regarding the authority of the preacher, beginning with the New Homiletic and leading through dialogical preaching to today's common emphasis on the cultural identity of the preacher. Ways in which the person of the preacher have been negotiated over the past fifty years are empirically progressive; this is not a surprise, given the interconnected development of academic thought. It should be clarified, however, that this dissertation is not concerned so much with recovering the preacher's authority (the following chapter will explore this as a contextualization of the preacher) as it is with how his subjective individuality forms and informs the sermonic process. What is ultimately desirable is a theoretical consideration that enables the preacher to contextualize his own person both without the hindrance of identity politics and yet without ignoring the same.

A cursory glance at *Homiletic*, the online journal of the Academy of Homiletics, confirms that there is a strong awareness of the importance of the preacher's identity in the greater homiletical academy, with a special emphasis on the need for said preacher to be aware of cultural identities.[47] Often this trend aims towards the positive goal of giving voice to

[47] *Homiletic* now often includes the subsection "Identity" to its book review section. (See Homiletic, https://ejournals.library.vanderbilt.edu/index.php/homiletic/index). One particular issue [47 no 22 (2022)] included identity issues as a focus of *every* piece, with the exception of one book review. It should be noted that the journal is not often thematic, which only highlights the ubiquity of identity politics.

marginalized people, seeking to overcome social disparity for the sake of the gospel. One work that stands out in this category is Matthew Kim's *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence*.[48] Kim has several measurable activities and homiletical templates by which the preacher can strengthen his "cultural quotient intelligence (CQ)."[49] Such awareness is useful for the preacher seeking to communicate competently to cultures other than his own, and it seeks to fill a gap between the preacher's content and the preacher's own identity. Further works highlight the oratorical effects of the preacher's identity on the sermon itself.[50] The purpose is almost never to *leave* the focus on the preacher, but (like the New Homiletic) to strengthen the preacher in his task of focusing on the hearers—the "least of these" (most marginalized) in particular.

Unfortunately, the admirable homiletical interest in validating marginalized and broken people for the gospel has been saturated with identity politics and intersectionality to the obscuration of the same gospel that heals marginalized and broken people. This has created problems for the homiletical community as one considers the homiletical role of the person of the preacher, the identity of whom is by no means a monolith. For Lutherans, the problem is not the desire for marginalized groups and individuals to be granted voices, honor, and the assurance of the gospel; with the exception of women preaching (which much of Lutheranism views as excluded from Christ's institution), Lutheran theology shares that goal as being quintessential to the Great Commission. Whither and how they are successful or not is a predictably common debate.[51] Nor is the problem any type of sermon structure, which (again) is the frequent red

[48] Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence*.

[49] Kim, *Preaching with Cultural Intelligence*, 46–61.

[50] See for example André Verweij, "The Personal Presence of the Preacher in Preaching: An Explorative Study on Self-Disclosure in Sermons at Pentecost," *Homiletic* 45 no. 2 (2020): 36–52.

[51] See for example Gregory Seltz, "LCMS Identity and Mission in the American Urban Context: Engaging Conian Black Theology Through Strategic Lutheran Missiology," (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary St. Louis, 2017).

herring for homiletical shortcomings.[52] The problem is that identity politics and intersectionality often become the material principle of homiletics. What results is a destabilization of discourse, which is the very antithesis of preaching.[53] It also tends to transform homiletics into more of a political battleground than a theological platform, and limits the experiential voice of the preacher to identity politics and intersectionality.

Perhaps the most blatant example of this pitfall of identity politics in homiletics is from a recent short book by O. Wesley Allen called *Preaching in the Era of Trump*.[54] Written after the 2016 presidential election and before the inauguration of Donald Trump,[55] Allen uncharitably assumes that those who voted for the president are deluded with racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, etc., and require the stalwart preaching of more enlightened preachers to save them from their misdeed in the voting booth. The undertone presumes the stereotype of white patriarchy leading the charge for political dissidence and racial oppression. Similar to Allen, Phil Snider unequivocally politicizes the pulpit along party lines: "Although Trump is the chief representative of the straight-white-cis-patriarchal power structures that no small number of Americans desire to maintain, it's important to point out that he's not the cause of this desire, but the mere symbol of it."[56] Both authors presuppose in no uncertain terms that the presidency of

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Seltz criticizes a traditional "incarnational" missiological approach in favor of a more "Two-Kingdom" sacramental contextualization for engagement in social issues, specifically racially charged ones.

[52] See for example a blog by John Bombaro, "Dialogical Preaching or Not," 1517, https://www.1517.org/articles/dialogical-preaching-or-not. Bombaro compares dialogical preaching to the "democratizing complexion of a Quaker Meeting, where anyone and everyone may contribute with an equally valued insight." This oversimplification (and slight inaccuracy regarding the Society of Friends) may be caused by the erroneous misunderstanding of dialogical preaching as a sermon structure rather than a homiletical concept.

[53] See Adam J. Macleod, "Essences or Intersectionality: Understanding Why We Can't Understand Each Other," The Public Discourse, March 1, 2020, https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2020/03/60779/ for a compelling overview of the problems regarding identity politics and intersectionality in public discourse in general.

[54] O. Wesley Allen, *Preaching in the Era of Trump* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2017).

[55] The timeframe for his writing spans fewer than three months.

[56] Snider, *Preaching as Resistance*.

Donald Trump was antithetical to the church's mission; likewise, any Christian who supported him is part of the problem, and (more significantly) is *inherently racist*. Sadly, both works interpret the pulpit with a political zero-sum game, expressly closing the door on fruitful conversation.[57]

The current polarized political climate (which this dissertation largely bypasses) is the proverbial canary in the coalmine for homiletics, so a current bedfellow of the greater homiletical academy is the measure of identity politics and intersectionality that views white men with inherent suspicion, and even disdain. Moreover, many in the greater homiletical academy have become more or less lockstep with ideologies that view traditional orthodox Christian thinking with suspicion *because of* these identifiable realities, which are often coupled with ahistorical assessments. Thus, the preacher is not judged by what he says, but by who he is or what he represents *to them*. One recent work that thoroughly demonstrates this habit is *Preaching Black Lives (Matter)*.[58]

The work is an anthology incorporating forty-six unique authors. The unusually high number of contributors aids the book's goal of including a vast array of voices that attempt to speak to the issue of racism—particularly white-against-black racism—in America. As a black Episcopal priest, Gayle Fisher-Stewart views the reform of a racist society as the church's responsibility. Since the church in America is responsible for perpetuating slavery and encouraging racism,[59] it is the church's responsibility to correct the past moving forward. For the

[57] For a recent work regarding identity politics and political engagement from a faithful Lutheran standpoint, see Michael Hanson, "Christian Identity Meets Identity Politics: A Lutheran Approach to Political Engagement," (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary St. Louis, 2021).

[58] Gayle Fisher-Stewart, ed., *Preaching Black Lives (Matter)* (New York: Church, 2020).

[59] Fisher-Stewart, *Preaching*, 229–32. She directly holds the House of Burgesses and the Anglican Church responsible for introducing the African slave trade to the American colonies in the seventeenth century.

person stepping into the pulpit, the responsibility is even more palpable. Here, the preacher's experiential engagement as a person is reduced to identity politics and intersectionality.

The book is organized into three sections. The first section includes sermons aimed at the problem of white-against-black racism in America. The second and third sections include essays on systemic racism and clergy formation, respectively. The authors are diverse in their own right (black and white, male and female, Episcopal and other), which highlights the unity of purpose while demonstrating diversity: thus, the unifying genus between them is the ubiquitous belief that people have treated and continue to treat blacks shamefully, and a great cultural change is urgent. Some offer popular solutions for the church and society (the habitual checking of white privilege, reparations for slavery, etc.), but for a titular homiletics text there is a conspicuous lack of discussion regarding the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for objective and mutual healing and unity.

Instead, the preacher's content is negotiated in light of his (or her) racial identity to the point where race becomes a foundational homiletical consideration. This is especially true of the book's white contributors: Peter Jarrett-Schell, for example, contributes a sermon wherein he cites Robin DiAngelo's concept of "white fragility."[60] Consistent with that concept, he says defensive white responses to racism "are not innocent, but rather, weaponized. They work to derail honest conversations on racism, and thereby obliterate even the possibility of confronting and dismantling the structure of White supremacy."[61] In other words, whites must accept that racism is an immutable part of their identity because they are white. Sadly, because "whiteness"

[60] See Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (Boston: Beacon, 2018).

[61] Peter Jarrett-Schell, "Listening for Black Lives: A Sermon to Myself and My White Colleagues," in *Preaching Black Lives (Matter),* ed., Gayle Fisher-Stewart (New York: Church, 2020), 41. It has become popular in modern writing on identity to capitalize White and Black when referring to people, as if differences in skin color were institutions.

defined as such makes racism a foregone conclusion that is the sole property of whites, white preachers following these ideologies are put into a sort of double bind: on the one hand, there is a felt need to address their racial identity in favor of providing equity for non-white voices; on the other hand, the very process neutralizes their own voice, since their whiteness is often portrayed (especially by them) as a liability.[62] A positive way forward is elusive for Jarret-Schell, and he fails to generate a conversation focused on the unifying gospel of Jesus Christ. Rather, he sees his whiteness only as a negative identity trait, and the sermon's goal becomes one of pouring salt into the wound of racism.

In this same vein, another white preacher in the book bemoans the realization that her whiteness had become a hindrance for her ministry. "One day, I realized that I hadn't spent any time considering that my skin, my White skin, is a barrier between God and me. There isn't a question mark at the end of that sentence. It's a fact. The thought stopped me in my tracks,"[63] and she suddenly resolves "to circle the wall of my Whiteness until it crumbles."[64] The striking aspect of this work is that the author sees her identity as not only harmful to non-whites, but "a barrier" between *God* and herself. Here again, her negotiation of her own identity is tragically irredeemable. No concrete suggestions are made other than the negative portrayal of her identity, and she unwittingly turns the historical self-hatred of blacks (as exemplified in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and reported in the autobiography of Malcom X) onto herself as an apology for her pale skin and a thing of which to repent. Unfortunately, there is no indication of hope that the proverbial "crumbling" of the "wall of whiteness" will ever end, nor of what will remain if it

[62] The irony of the preacher's sermon subtitle, "A Sermon to Myself and My White Colleagues," being inherently exclusionary of non-whites is apparently lost on him.

[63] Cara Rockhill, "The Wall of Whiteness," in *Preaching Black Lives (Matter),* ed., Gayle Fisher-Stewart (New York: Church, 2020), 67.

[64] Rockhill, "Wall of Whiteness," 68.

ever does. The desire to hear the voice of the voiceless and heal the wounds caused by racism thereby comes at the expense of yet another voice (*her own!*), and homiletical marginalization becomes a zero-sum game based on the generalized polarization of black and white skin.

The primary homiletical challenge that arises from such "anti-white" rhetoric is not only the exclusion of "whites" from authentically integrating their own personhood in the pulpit apart from the color of their skin, but the inaccessibility of *any* preacher homiletically to contextualize themselves apart from identity politics and intersectionality. This inexorably excludes the proclamation of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ from the preacher's own experience, and ironically elides the preacher's individuality with a generalization—one might well call it a stereotype. Since the sermonic process (for many) begins and ends with identity politics and intersectionality, this conclusion is especially true for modern white preachers. Indeed, Fisher-Stewart insists that "for the Church to reflect Jesus, there must be a White metanoia—a White repentance—because the shame of slavery is not ours; it is the sole property of White people."[65] It must be plainly stated: for someone who believes that "Whiteness is the antithesis of biblical love,"[66] *no manner* of negotiation can allow for a white preacher to embody the salvific grace of God in a way that can apply non-whites. This is a salient point, for the reciprocal would be true: only non-whites can embody the salvific grace of God. Moreover, if an individual white preacher must embody a generalized white repentance, then any non-white hearer is listening to a sermon that is not applicable to them (and vice versa), and the discourse is fruitless at best.

Another work that emphasizes the identity politics of the pulpit to the obfuscation of the

[65] Fisher-Stewart, *Preaching*, xiii.

[66] Fisher-Stewart, *Preaching*, 198.

gospel is *Womanist Sass and Talk Back*.[67] More concerned with hermeneutics than homiletics, Mitzi J. Smith nevertheless demonstrates "other ways of reading [Scripture] that do not trick or force readers to become complicit in their own oppressions and oppression of others."[68] Unexpected readings of Scripture (such as Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4 signifying a subversive message against the Roman aqueducts and Elisha's conjuring of the she-bears in 2 Kings 2 being a symbol of police brutality against young black men) support her goal of demonstrating that "womanists boldly use our agency to interpret sacred text for ourselves and in ways that free us and our communities from constructions of God that further oppress us and that condone violence on the basis of gender, race, class, sexuality, and othering."[69] Here, the author's intersectionality is the *modus operandi* for her negotiation of the preacher, which gives due attention to her identity as a preacher. However, the narrowing of this negotiation *only* to intersectionality again reduces the preacher's identity and experience to sociopolitical issues; salvation and good news are (again) elusive, as is a more positive view of individual cultural experience and subjectivity of personhood.

These and other works are examples of mainstream homiletics negotiating authority away from preachers by virtue of their cultural identities, or else holding them in check until their actions speak louder than their words. Where homiletics once encouraged preachers to give more consideration to their hearers in dialogical fashion, the finger now points back to the preacher, sometimes excluding the sermonic act altogether for fear of making the problem worse. As Snider writes,

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[67] Mitzi J. Smith, *Womanist Sass*. "Womanism" is a form of feminism that highlights the strength and accomplishments specifically of black women.

[68] Smith, *Womanist Sass*, 1–2.

[69] Smith, *Womanist Sass*, 3.

> Sermons [can] become problematic symbolic gestures that run the risk of perpetuating power structures more than subverting them. Those who benefit from structures of white supremacy and heteropatriarchy … must be willing to wade into this milieu far beyond the words we speak from behind a pulpit on Sunday mornings. While preaching can be transformative and sustaining—and an essential component of resistance—it's only part of the equation. *The hard work of organizing, marching, protesting, demonstrating, and forging community must accompany the hard work of preaching.*[70]

The italicized premise is problematic in its polarization of Word and work: divorcing the sermon from the (community-creating) power of God's Word by someone who may "benefit from structures of white supremacy and heteropatriarchy" quixotically searches for a better word in the world of political activism rather than the preaching ministry. Such reduction of God's Word turns the content of the pulpit into a white hypocrisy and political activism into a works righteousness. What is needed instead is a contextualization of the preacher that insists on the power of the Word of God while affirming the unique cultural identities of all people and the formative role those identities play in the person of the preacher.

Addressing this quandary is a primary goal of this dissertation, because many Lutheran preachers in America are unable to respond with anything but frustration. For example, in a recent imprint of *Doxology*, Lucas Woodford opens by saying, "I write as a white, heterosexual male. According to current cultural identity politics of the day, I am a scapegoat for all cultural maladies. As a result, there are those who hold that I should not be given a voice, especially when it comes to offering commentary or analysis on the plight of the black community, particularly if I dare contradict any prevailing ideological narrative."[71] Such a response would be met by the likes of Robin DiAngelo and others as being "defensive racism" or "color-blind

[70] Snider, *Preaching as Resistance*, 4–5. Italics mine.

[71] Lucas V. Woodford, "Responding to Social Justice & Critical Race Theory," Doxology, https://www.doxology.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/dox_2021_woodford_crt_final2.pdf. At the time of this writing, Woodford is the District President of the Minnesota South District of the LCMS.

racism." For some, the illogical nature of moving racial goalposts is too much to handle; others argue for the strengthening of the church's orthodox walls while the world turns to ashes outside.[72] Nevertheless, Woodford's concern is a result of responding to a particular set of conversation partners instead of seeking a way forward with the formative power of God's Word for individuals.[73]

While the frustration Woodford (and others) show is with the perceived discoursive impasse, fruitful dialogue is in fact possible by recovering a helpful voice from the Lutheran tradition regarding the person of the preacher. Perhaps by being distracted by the alternatives of the New Homiletic or their own understanding of their historical traditions, modern Lutherans have largely misheard the issues of identity and authority as threats to their confession. For Lutherans, the sermonic goal of the Word of God often occurs to the inadvertent exclusion of the person of the preacher; yet that same preacher is bombarded by a cultural media of identity politics and intersectionality. Consequently, Lutherans sometimes do no better than tilt at the wrong windmills. However, as will be seen by this dissertation, Lutherans can and should engage in homiletical questions of identity politics and intersectionality in a way that faithfully hears what is being said and also faithfully practices what they confess.

To conclude, while mainstream homiletics can now be said to be a far cry from the origins of the New Homiletic, a trajectory can be clearly seen. It is fair to say that over a few short

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[72] The frustration is not only coming from white Lutherans. Two compelling works by Rod Dreher support to a greater or lesser extent a type of withdrawal from mainstream society. See Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Sentinel, 2017); Rod Dreher, *Live Not By Lies: A Manual for Christian Dissidents* (New York: Sentinel, 2020). An example of a black preacher's frustration is Voddie T. Baucham, Jr., *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe* (Washington, D.C.: Salem, 2021). Baucham's concept of a fault line runs throughout the work, and he adjures all Christians to move themselves to the right side (read: biblical side) of the cultural divide.

[73] Woodford's work in particular will be explored more in Chapter Three as an example of a common Lutheran response to identity politics and intersectionality.

decades the greater homiletical academy moved from a question of *structure* to *dialogue* to *identity politics*. The role of the preacher in this conversation has likewise moved from one of *hidden and questioned authority* to *negotiated individuality*, with many cultural identifiers available to decrease or invalidate the preacher's very right to speak. While modern Lutherans are not entirely averse to discussing the role of the preacher, they tend to fall back on the power of the Word of God rather than engage with those who doubt such power. This is sad and ironic because Lutherans have a vibrant theological history of commentary regarding the preacher's personal involvement with the sermon. Because of this forgetfulness, the gap between Lutherans and non-Lutherans in the greater homiletical academy can seem to be an unapproachable gulf. Depending on one's engagement with the Word of God, thoughts on the preacher's role can act as a Rorschach test: if a Lutheran, the preacher is mysteriously subsumed into the function of the sermon until he is almost or completely irrelevant; if a non-Lutheran the preacher carries a powerful privilege that should be negotiated regardless of the actual message. In short, many modern Lutherans have come functionally close to eliminating the preacher, while many modern non-Lutherans have come functionally close to eliminating the Word of God. This dissertation seeks to correct that by speaking faithfully into both arenas.

It must be reiterated again that the issues with identity politics and intersectionality in the greater homiletical academy are not necessarily the problem in and of themselves, but rather the common handling of them to the ironic exclusion of other voices. The goal of this dissertation is not to reclaim some sort of "white" authority in the pulpit, or to defend some sort of homiletical "territory" as a white preacher;[74] such a goal would be contraindicated and condemned by

[74] Notwithstanding the cultural origins of "Lutheranism" being generally white and German, there are currently more Lutherans in Africa than any other continent. See data from the Lutheran World Federation from 2019: https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2020/documents/lwi-2019-statistics-en-20200825.pdf. See

Lutheran teachings. Neither is the goal of the dissertation simply to dismiss the academy's common threads as faithless or distracting. Rather, the goal is to offer a theoretical contextualization of the person of the preacher that accounts for the preacher's individuality in a way that both positively acknowledges cultural identities *and* centers itself on the ultimate task of preaching: salvation for all flesh through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, this dissertation will offer a revised correlational response to the current homiletical conversation from a faithful Lutheran perspective. Since this question remains underexplored in Lutheran homiletics, this dissertation seeks to demonstrate how the preacher's entire self *embodies* the discernment necessary to proclaim the Word to all people—especially to those who might negotiate his authority based upon cultural identities. He is one formed *by* the community of faith, *set apart* for the community of faith, to preach *to* and *on behalf of* the community of faith. His identity will be negotiated in that light.

In order to speak faithfully to the question of the preacher's role in non-Lutheran circles, Lutherans must first be able to speak of it to themselves. The next chapter will demonstrate how modern Lutherans tend to speak of the person of the preacher today. These current issues will be described as "contextualizations," for they vary depending on the context within which the author is addressing them. Each one enables a particular conversation on the person of the preacher, and none are intended to be mutually exclusive from the others. Although the examination is not exhaustive, it will be evident how many homiletical foci of modern Lutherans are unsuitable for engagement with the greater homiletical academy in fruitful dialogue regarding identity politics and intersectionality.

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also the data regarding Lutheran churches in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS: https://www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/international/partner-church-bodies. The international makeup of those who confess the Lutheran symbols is *post hoc* proof positive that a Lutheran confession transcends race and cultural identity.

Following this, it will be shown that Lutherans have been historically willing and able to discuss the preacher's role without fear of contradicting their confession, and that the person of the preacher (like the other contextualizations) is also a homiletical foundation of the Lutheran faith. Once situated, the Lutheran homiletic can then be free to engage the greater homiletical academy from a more secure, relevant, and conversational vantage. Not only will modern Lutherans be enabled to speak more freely about the preacher's role, but a void will also be filled between Lutherans and non-Lutherans that shows how they can mutually benefit each other even (and especially) in the midst of differences in theological practice and cultural identities.

CHAPTER THREE

LUTHERAN HOMILETICAL FOUNDATIONS

A primary goal of this dissertation is to develop a revised correlational response from a Lutheran standpoint to the greater homiletical academy regarding conversations about the person of the preacher in relation to identity politics and intersectionality. The previous chapter dealt with the current conversation in the academy, and a developmental trend was traced from the beginning of the New Homiletic to the present climate of identity politics and intersectionality. This trend began with a general disenfranchisement of the preacher's propositional authority that brought about the New Homiletic, which favors inductive, hearer-oriented, imagistic sermons. From the New Homiletic's shift to focus on the hearer grew dialogical preaching, which actively includes the hearers (philosophically if not literally) in the sermonic process. Throughout these developments homileticians gained a greater awareness of and interest in the preacher's identity. In the current cultural climate of identity politics and intersectionality, this development of homiletical thought has highlighted the person of the preacher. Consequently, much of the scholarly homiletical conversation is now focused on the preacher's cultural identity.

Toward the goal of offering a Lutheran voice to this current conversation, it is necessary to give an overview of contemporary contextualizations of Lutheran homiletics and how well these contribute to the larger scholarly conversation. This chapter will sample some homiletical foundations modern Lutherans tend to focus on relative to the person of the preacher. The selections are not intended to isolate the authors into individual schools of thought, but rather highlight ways in which Lutherans are equipped to converse. They mostly exhibit an attention to detail which shows not only a solidly established Lutheran foundation in the areas they emphasize, but also the careful scholarship typical of Lutherans and a consistent internal

thematic thread in each respective work. Within many of these works is a deeply footnoted access to the rich trove of historical Lutheran homiletics that is helpful to the reader who wishes for further information on that contextualization. However, because of the tendency to limit contextualizations of the person of the preacher to these particular foundational truths, it will be shown by these selections that there is very little emphasis in current Lutheran literature on the role of the preacher in a way that generates fruitful interactions about the concerns and conversations that come with identity politics and intersectionality. After this overview, three recent examples of Lutheran responses, specifically to the issue of identity politics and intersectionality, will be examined. While not directly negotiating the person of the preacher, these three concluding examples offer a sampling of how Lutherans react to the current climate in general; their conclusions can show a continuity of Lutheran response as well as assist an analysis of modern Lutheran approaches to identity politics and intersectionality in a way that demonstrates the need for another contextualization.

While the current chapter presents an accurate assessment of the most common and recent ways in which contemporary Lutherans negotiate the person of the preacher,[1] the scope is herein limited to how Lutherans contextualize the person of the preacher according to (1) the proper interpretation and application of the Word of God, (2) the importance of the proclamation of the gospel, and (3) the authority of the preacher as a member of the Ministerium. Although by no means exhaustive, the selections are also not superficial: each section contextualizes a Lutheran foundational teaching about preaching relative to a focus of the greater homiletical academy as it progressed over the last fifty years. However, while the academy's homiletical topics enumerated

[1] Again, the intended referent of "Lutherans" or "Lutheranism" within this dissertation is one of a more conservative specificity, most often closely aligned with the LCMS.

in the previous chapter are progressive—that is, building upon one another in a developmental sense—the modern Lutheran responses in this chapter are *atemporal*. Rather than flowing out of one another, they can each stand alone as exhibiting certain foundational Lutheran teachings about preaching as appropriate for the context of any given conversation. Hence, they do not necessarily respond *directly* to the academy's concerns (though some do) as they arose in time. Again, they are not intended to divide Lutheran contextualizations into partisan schools of thought but are rather illustrative of how Lutherans respond to the issues by returning to foundational homiletical contextualizations.

Each section will define a fundamental Lutheran homiletical teaching, locate the points of concern for the greater homiletical academy, and demonstrate how a modern Lutheran voice could be used as indicative responses to the conflicts of the academy. Thereby, the ways in which these authors present the task of preaching—with a particular eye toward the ways they speak of the role of the preacher—will be contextualized by their foci relative to the academy's conversations. By presenting these particular works in this way it will be seen that a Lutheran response to the academy's current conversation on identity politics and intersectionality requires the recovery of another Lutheran foundational teaching: namely the person of the preacher.

For the sake of clarity, the chosen sequence of contextualizations attempts to mimic the general issues (its historical progression excepted) of American homiletics summarized in Chapter One: as the academy contextualized the person of the preacher from *sermon structures* to *hearer-oriented dialogics* to *identity politics*, the following section will examine the Lutheran homiletical contextualizations of the person of the preacher relative to his *use of the Word,* his *hearer-focused proclamation*, and his *authorized identity* as a member of the Ministerium. Again, this is not intended to demonstrate a progression of Lutheran thought *concurrent* with that

of the academy, but rather to situate the foundational Lutheran homiletical responses *relative* to the foci of the academy. In other words, this chapter shows that, for certain issues that arise and have arisen for the academy, modern Lutherans are well equipped to respond in particular ways.

"Preach Ye the Word": The Preacher and the Word of God

The Lutheran understanding of the preacher in relation to the Word of God presupposes the ultimate authority of Scripture, and the Reformation axiom *sola Scriptura* is supported by the Lutheran symbols in which it is stated that Lutherans "believe, teach, and confess that the only rule and guiding principle according to which all teaching and teachers are to be evaluated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments alone."[2] Frequent emphasis is given to its verbal inspiration by the Holy Spirit; as such, Scripture contains zero errors, even "in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters."[3] The Word of God is also "made up of two doctrines differing fundamentally from each other, viz., the Law and the Gospel,"[4] which must be properly distinguished so that the law may do its condemnatory work while the gospel performs its salvific work.

However, the Word is not only written but spoken—particularly by the preacher in a sermon (see Matt. 28:20a; Rom. 10:14; 2 Tim. 4:2). Luther himself had no qualms about

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[2] Formula of Concord, Preface in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 486. See also Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent: Part I,* trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia, 1971). Chemnitz's work in the second generation of Lutheranism defending the Lutheran teachings on the nature of Scripture over and against the Roman Catholic Church are indispensable.

[3] The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, "Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod," https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/doctrine/brief-statement-of-lcms-doctrinal-position, 1. This is also highlighted by Robert Preus, *The Inspiration of Scripture: A Study of the Theology of the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmaticians* (Mankato: Lutheran Synod Book Company, 1955), and is the standard explanation of Scripture for LCMS Lutherans.

[4] Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 6. There does not appear to be an established standard for capitalizing "law and gospel." Some authors, like the divine pronoun, choose to capitalize the words when referring directly to the proclamatory distinction. This dissertation will not capitalize, except when directly quoting another author.

equating the sermon with apostolic authority itself, provided it be lockstep with the truth of Scripture.[5] In other words, Lutherans believe that Scripture is the Word of God, and also that *the Word of God* is preached by the pastor in the sermon.[6] Therefore, contextualizing the preacher's task as faithfully interpreting and applying the Word of God enables Lutherans to highlight the importance of interacting with the written Word so that it has its hearing among the people. Delivering a sermon (which is the Word of God) that is consistent with Scripture (which is also the Word of God) and properly distinguishes between law and gospel is a chief concern for Lutherans when contextualizing the person of the preacher.

Unfortunately, as examined in the previous chapter and as Fred Craddock's titular work suggests,[7] the authority of the preacher proclaiming the Word of God was and is no longer indisputable in American pulpits. So it was that in the 1970's the greater homiletical academy began to undergo some changes in the more traditional models of preaching that favored inductive, imagistic sermon structures instead of deductive, propositional ones. This turn toward emphasizing the *ways* in which the hearers experienced the sermon was sought in part as a means of redeeming the Word's power that was heretofore presupposed to come from the preacher—who had the authority to preach it. Experimental sermon structures that decentralized the preacher were becoming more and more popular as the hearers looked askance at the preacher's "Thus sayeth the Lord" approach. Whether or not what came to be known as the "New Homiletic" contributed to or hastened the preacher's loss of authority in America is not debated

[5] See Vilmos Vajta, *Luther on Worship* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1958), 67–83.

[6] This belief is peppered throughout Luther's writings, as he hears the voice of God himself through the means of his servants. See for example Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, American ed., (Philadelphia: Fortress; St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–1986), 3:220, where he reads Abraham as hearing God through his angelic guests in Gen. 18: the event is exegeted to apply to the church, where "even though we do not see or hear [God] but see and hear the minister, God himself is nevertheless truly present."

[7] See Craddock, *As One Without Authority*.

here; suffice to say that the preacher's role as an individual become less central *by design*. In other words, inductive preaching and other alternative sermon structures were developed to help preachers to make room for the hearers to experience the Word of God in their own unique ways rather than by propositional fiat.

Naturally, these conversations of sermon structure are accompanied by conversations about the preacher's function in relation to the Word of God as it is interpreted and applied. In other words, how do the *ways* in which the Word is delivered impact the hearers, and what ought to be the preacher's concern with those structural means as he himself experiences the text? Since the Word of God is foundational for Lutherans, a Lutheran response to this type of contextualization would typically default to the authoritative stance of the Word itself in the sermon's structure. This would not usually focus on the preacher's experience with the text, but rather the proclamation of it to the hearers. Consequently, the person of the preacher can be almost entirely overlooked apart from his faithfulness to Scripture.

For example, Gottfried Martens reflects upon the organization of sermon preparation in an article called "The Path from the Text to the Sermon."[8] Relying largely on assessments from others, and admitting his ignorance of "practical theology" at the outset, Martens makes this striking statement about the New Homiletic: "The 'new homiletic' … is fundamentally aimed at dissolving the notion that the word of God and faith are situated opposite one another, at dissolving the *extra nos* of this word, and at an entirely new way of understanding and stipulating the authority of this word."[9] This follows a particularly nuanced interpretation of the

[8] Gottfried Martens, "The Path from the Text to the Sermon: A German Preacher Takes Stock of Methods from America," in *Feasting in a Famine of the Word: Lutheran Preaching in the Twenty-First Century,* eds., Mark W. Birkholz, Jacob Corzine, Jonathan Mumme (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 277–99.

[9] Martens, "Path from Text to Sermon," 281.

New Homiletic, namely one that views preaching as more aesthetic and representational than embodied and authoritative. In response to this overly reductive assessment of the New Homiletic, Martens offers his own personal method of sermon preparation, which relies on the well-marked "goal, malady, means" route of Richard Caemmerer.[10] With this method of preparation, the sermon is helpfully steered towards its textual and proclamatory functions according to the Word's authority. While Martens stresses that "faith and love cannot be methodologized by using the tool of the goal-malady-means method,"[11] and warns against the preacher beguiling himself into thinking he can quantify the success level of his goal, the structure and method of the preacher nevertheless aids the faithfulness of his task.

Martens' ultimate goal follows an ironically similar road trodden by proponents of the New Homiletic (that of method); nevertheless, contextualizing the person of the preacher according to his use of the Word is herein limited to the manner of his preparation and organization in a way that highlights the authority of the Word and bypasses further considerations of the person of the preacher himself. This may preclude the preacher's active engagement with cultural and social issues—to say nothing of the hearers' cultural modes of understanding their own experiences. This type of contextualization may also explain why some modern Lutherans are hesitant to branch out creatively in their sermonizing: if the structure is too creative or innovative, attention might be taken off of the words themselves; and if the words are hidden, the Word is hidden. It is often easier to rely on "tried and true" homiletical methods that are *sure* to proclaim the gospel than it is to experiment with others that may not. That way the authority of the Word is maintained in reaction to the preacher's questioned authority, and the academy's turn toward the

[10] See Richard R. Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959).

[11] Martens, "Path from Text to Sermon," 297.

hearers' reception based on structural innovation is resisted.

Indeed, an insistence on "tried and true" methodology that emphasizes the authority of the Word is also represented by John Bombaro, who argues that the preacher is "inseparably bound to three Lutheran homiletical distinctions,"[12] namely a law/gospel distinction, primary discourse as a divine speech act, and the use of the gospel over propositional understanding. Here, Bombaro is examining the myriad extant sermon structures with a critical eye toward the dangers of consumerism—which can be a legitimate critique of the New Homiletic. His concern is that consumerism reflects ideology, that sermon structures often reflect consumerism, and if a sermon is not based on a text of Scripture, the authority of the Word can be lost in the fray.

More than simply viewing Scripture as the foundational rootedness of the sermon however, Bombaro further argues for the distinctiveness of a law/gospel proclamation: "Herein, then, is the bedrock of the Lutheran homiletical distinctive: the gospel is proclaimed from the inherited textual-tradition of Holy Scripture, creeds, catechisms and confessions, being distinguished from the proclaimed law, so that *God* may save and sanctify sinners through *his* performative speech-activity."[13] A distinctly Lutheran approach, therefore, may use sermon structures as tools; but the sermon itself will always be based on a text of Scripture and properly distinguish between law and gospel, and this foundation is an "inherited tradition." In this case, the preacher himself is negotiated with a warning against his own consumerism or desire for pastoral popularity; his sermonic task is to match the "inseparable" Lutheran distinctions and leave himself out of it.

While Martens responds directly to the New Homiletic's interest in structural change with

[12] John Bombaro, "Is There a Text in This Sermon? A Lutheran Survey of Contemporary Preaching Methods," in *Feasting in a Famine of the Word: Lutheran Preaching in the Twenty-First Century,* eds., Mark W. Birkholz, Jacob Corzine, Jonathan Mumme (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 23.

[13] Bombaro, "Is There a Text?," 27. Italics original.

opposition in order to retain the *extra nos* of Scripture's authority, and Bombaro emphasizes the Lutheran distinction of law/gospel discernment *regardless* of the structure, Carl Fickenscher instead *embraces* the academy's concern by turning to the effects of law/gospel sermon structures as a way of imbedding the Word's authority into the very structural fabric of the sermon.[14] Writing on the efficacy of sermonic form for reflecting the proper distinction between law and gospel, Fickenscher draws from an extensive and detailed field study whereby he reaches the "firm conclusion" that "sermon form does indeed affect the communication of the proper distinction between Law and Gospel."[15] In order words, utilizing a law-then-gospel sermon structure enables the hearers to hear more clearly the proper distinction between law and gospel. While this may seem to be a predictable foregone conclusion, the implications of Fickenscher's study nevertheless highlight the care with which a Lutheran preacher considers form in his task of properly communicating the Word and properly distinguishing between law and gospel—so much so that the structure itself becomes a clear reflection of the authority of the Word in the sermon.

Like Bombaro, who calls the proper distinction between law and gospel homiletical "bedrock," Fickenscher's conclusion is a particular point-of-sale for Lutherans who subscribe to the Formula of Concord's explanation of law and gospel.[16] As one blogger wrote, "There is *no proper preaching* of the Holy Scriptures without the proper distinction between the Law and the

[14] "Form being essential to the communication of a sermon's message, should not form be considered specifically in communicating what Luther calls 'the highest art in Christendom,' the proper distinction between Law and Gospel?" Carl Fickenscher, "The Relationship of Sermon Form to the Communication of the Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel in Lutheran Preaching," (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1996), 4–5.

[15] Fickenscher, "Relationship," 217.

[16] See FC V.1 in Kolb and Wengert, 500. "We believe, teach, and confess that the distinction between law and gospel is to be preserved with great diligence in the church …"

Gospel."[17] This is fair enough to the blogger's point (he is writing about fulfilling the mission of the church in a faithful way), but such rhetorical hyperbole significantly limits the organization of the sermon's content, which must properly and clearly distinguish between law and gospel. To be fair, Fickenscher explicitly does not *limit* all preaching to a single structure, but he does appear to see sermonic structure as indistinguishable from the theology behind the message. At the very least, he certainly prefers "law-then-gospel" as the most *effective* way to communicate the proper distinction between law and gospel and thus maintain that foundational Lutheran distinction. With such a response, there is a doubling down of sorts to the concerns of the academy vis-à-vis the preacher's questioned authority by stressing all the more the authority of the Word. If a structure can be found that hits like a silver bullet, so much the better.

Along the same lines as Fickenscher's proclivity for law/gospel sermon structuring to emphasize the authority of the Word, a primer for Lutheran preaching by Edward Grimenstein[18] seeks to assist the neophyte preacher in this faithful practice by suggesting a practical exercise for properly distinguishing between law and gospel in a sermon. He does this in a "five page" structure largely based upon Paul Scott Wilson's four-page design.[19] In the *Primer*, "Page One" focuses on the "law in the text," which calls for the preacher to examine the text and "write down at least 3 to 5 examples of Law that are within the text,"[20] selecting those closest relating to the sermon's preselected theme. "Page Two" teleports that law to the "law in our lives," of which

[17] Rick Stuckwisch, "Cutting Edge Missions," *Gottesdienst*, https://www.gottesdienst.org/gottesblog/2009/08/cutting-edge-missions.html?rq=lord%27s%20supper. Italics mine.

[18] Edward Grimenstein, *A Lutheran Primer for Preaching: A Theological and Practical Approach to Sermon Writing* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2015).

[19] See Paul Scott Wilson, *The Four Pages of the Sermon, Revised and Updated: A Guide to Biblical Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2018). Wilson served as Grimenstein's doctoral supervisor at the University of Toronto.

[20] Grimenstein, *Primer*, 89.

another three to five examples should be written down and sifted. “Page Three” calls for the preacher to engage the “Gospel in Christ” in specific response to those sins. “Page Four” locates the gospel in the text itself. Finally, “Page Five” reiterates the “Gospel in our world” and encourages the preacher to expand these notes into a complete sermon.

It is unclear from Grimenstein’s work what the major differences are in the content of the gospel between his third and fifth “pages” aside from his ardent desire literally to end the sermon with the gospel. What *is* clear is that Grimenstein seeks to maintain the authority of the Word by reflecting the proper distinction between law and gospel in the sermon’s structure, and his method reads like a checklist for new preachers by which to gauge their success. In fact, so strong is the programmatic nature of his work that Grimenstein suggests that “the Gospel should predominate not only in the quality of speech but also in the *quantity* of speech. A little over half of the sermon should be Gospel so that people might truly hear and believe Jesus, and by believing have eternal life in Him.”[21] Not only is this a significant limitation to contextualizing the person of the preacher in any way other than by the literal words of his sermon, but arguably can be exemplified as what David Schmitt calls “Law and Gospel negligence.”[22] “Law and Gospel negligence” occurs when the preacher utilizes a popular sermon structure or method and simply baptizes it with Lutheran verbiage:

> [The preacher] satisfies some rule learned long ago about what makes a sermon Lutheran: the proclamation of Law and Gospel. Such negligence is not faithful preaching and certainly not what is meant by properly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the sermon. It turns the Word of God, his life-giving message of judgment and salvation, into some Lutheran mantra that when spoken will redeem any excuse for a sermon *ex opera operato*. Would that preaching were so easy! One form of Law and Gospel negligence, then, arises from the influence of theory and diminishes

[21] Grimenstein, *Primer*, 96. Italics mine.

[22] David R. Schmitt, “Law and Gospel in Sermon and Service,” in *Liturgical Preaching: Contemporary Essays*, eds., Paul J. Grime and Dean W. Nagasdy (St. Louis: Concordia, 2001), 25–49.

> evangelical proclamation to a short Lutheran statement meant to save any homiletical technique.[23]

Schmitt's criticism is a modern example of the desire to expand the sermon's contextualization beyond that of mere structure while still maintaining the Lutheran distinction of law/gospel. To be fair, Grimenstein appears simply to be writing with the faithful desire that the gospel predominate (as Walther's twenty-fifth thesis on the proper distinction between law and gospel suggests), not that the preacher exhibit some methodological novelty and make it "Lutheran," which is the habit Schmitt is directly addressing. However, the criticism is still applicable to Grimenstein's *Primer*: by suggesting *literally* to count the "gospel words" in the sermon, Grimenstein neglects the proper distinction between law and gospel by reducing it to a mathematical exercise (as if a certain quantity of gospel will trigger a conversion) rather than a general hermeneutic to be learned from experience. Such an assessment is subjective enough to give many of even Martin Luther's sermons a failing grade, since the gospel's reception can be affected by many factors (social context, prerequisite theological understanding, hermeneutical method, even the preacher's tone, skill, and ethos). At the very least, Grimenstein's contextualization of the preacher is herein limited to the semantic precision of his sermon, and its Scriptural faithfulness to wit. Still, his reduction is indicative of relying so heavily on a foundational Lutheran response that it becomes mechanic. If not completely irrelevant, the person of the preacher is a pebble compared to the bedrock of his sermon's lexemes, and any response to the academy's concerns would be a practical dissolution of the person of the preacher himself.

The dissolution of the person of the preacher for the sake of the Word's authority further

[23] Schmitt, *Law and Gospel*, 34.

permeates Grimenstein's work as he confuses the context and definition of the sermon itself. Strikingly, he suggests that, "Satan possessed a homiletical theology … Satan preached … [and] Adam and Eve believed that false sermon."[24] At another point, the vocation of preaching is implicitly open to "both the public forum of a congregation and in the home among the family."[25] It seems that "preaching" for Grimenstein is not limited to one ecclesial context, but is happening any time the Word of God is spoken.[26] Those thoughts might have actually conversed well with the academy's trending away from the preacher's authority. However, while his assertion that "preaching can become corrupted in a variety of different ways on different Sundays through the tens of thousands of preachers who preach and hundreds of thousands of Christians who share God's Word on a daily basis with their friends and neighbors,"[27] confirms this, his point that "just because a man is preaching from a pulpit does not mean that such speaking should always be considered preaching,"[28] denies it. Internal logical inconsistencies notwithstanding (how can Satan be said to have "preached" if the same cannot be said of an erring pastor?), Grimenstein has so emphasized the authority and use of the Word that he struggles to find a use for the person of the preacher *at all*. He is clearly limited only to the contextualization of the words he speaks, which must therefore exhibit the authority of the Word by the proper distinction between law and

[24] Grimenstein, *Primer*, 20–21.

[25] Grimenstein, *Primer*, 25.

[26] Perhaps when he speaks about preaching Grimenstein is considering the Christian church's status as a "kingdom of priests" (Is. 61:6; 1 Pet. 2:9), as well as Luther's distinction between the general office of the Word and the *public* preaching authorized through ordination. See Oswald Bayer, "Preaching the Word," in *Justification is for Preaching*, ed., Virgil Thompson (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 214, especially his citation of Luther: "Faith must do everything. Faith alone is the true priestly office. It permits nothing else to take its place. Therefore, all Christian men are pastors, all women are likewise pastors, whether they are young or old, employers or employees, wives or single women, learned or unlearned. Here there is no difference" in Martin Luther, "A Treatise on the New Testament, that is, the Holy Mass, 1520," in *Word and Sacrament I*, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehman, vol. 35, *Luther's Works: American Edition* (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress, 1960), 101.

[27] Grimenstein, *Primer*, 59.

[28] Grimenstein, *Primer*, 66.

gospel.

Again, in this and other instances the preacher's involvement with the Word can be contextualized in response to the New Homiletic's impetus as a doubling down of the authority of the Word, sometimes with a checklist for the content's faithfulness. Similar to Grimenstein's program, a strong and popular example of this is an *actual* checklist by Todd Wilkin, the long-time host of the radio show and podcast *Issues, Etc.* Wilkin offers a three-step approach to determining whether a sermon is "good" or not: "(1) How often is Jesus mentioned? (2) If Jesus is mentioned, is He the subject of the verbs? and, (3) What are those verbs?"[29] While much of the article dealing with the proper distinction between law and gospel is unobjectionable, the very practice of making a checklist for sermons denotes a certain objectivity in the sermonic event, which practical experience contradicts—especially when considering the other aspects of homiletical discourse and the concerns of the academy. Such a list removes even the *possibility* for engagement with the preacher's personal role, since the focus again is solely on the quantity, type, and use of particular lexemes. It also situates the hearers in a position of judgment, as their encouraged response is to ensure the preacher's faithfulness. Ironically, here the academy's concern for the preacher's lack of authority is responded to with *further* instructions that enable the people to question his authority. To be fair, the level of scholarship involved in such electronic sources is not representative of academia, but much of the Lutheran blogosphere uses similar shibboleths, and people latch on to them.[30]

Undergirding the above issues of the authority of the Word and the preacher's subjugation

[29] Todd Wilken, "A Listeners' Guide to the Pulpit," *Issues, Etc. Journal* 5, no. 1, https://issuesetc.org/journal-downloads, 2007, 19.

[30] Wilken's list is reminiscent of Martin H. Scharlemann, *Proclaiming the Parables*, ed. by William J. Danker (St. Louis: Concordia, 1962), 9–10. For as detailed as his checklist for sermon preparation is, any mention of the sermon's delivery is conspicuously absent. Even the preacher's engagement with the text is more rote and academic than personal.

to it is a related Lutheran homiletical foundation, namely that of study itself. For the preacher to be faithful in emphasizing the Word's authority, it is presumed that he spends a great deal of time in study and preparation. This goes to the preacher's motivational goal of the sermon by highlighting a responsive turn to the authority of the Word in the face of the preacher's questioned authority: if he is spending time in study, he is redeeming his authority within the Word's sheltered embrace. Roy Axel Coats engages in a lengthy study of Johann Gerhard, who was adamant that all of theological study shares the goal of being preached, and therefore must be studied properly to be preached properly. The proper study involves a systematic approach: "Preaching that is not based on systematics would lack its source of true content and method for clarity and thus be based primarily on the lower passions and emotions of men."[31] The reverse is also true: systematics that does not have a practical goal devolves into roaming speculation (philosophy). This does not mean that the sermon is an exercise in systematics *per se*, but rather than the sermon is the natural and teleological *goal* of systematics and vice versa: "Systematics gives the material ground to preaching and preaching perfects and actualizes the goals of systematics."[32] While this aspect does begin to find a place for the person of the preacher, the implications are that his role is limited to study in order to demonstrate a faithfulness to the Word—and thus emphasize the Word's authority in the sermon.

In all the particular works cited in this section, the authors contextualize the person of the preacher with a mindset that implicitly or explicitly holds the role of the preacher to be that of a faithful interpreter. In other words, considerations of the preacher are limited to his responsibility

[31] Roy Axel Coats, "Systematic Theology and Preaching in the Thought of Johann Gerhard," in *Feasting in a Famine of the Word: Lutheran Preaching in the Twenty-First Century,* eds., Mark W. Birkholz, Jacob Corzine, Jonathan Mumme (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 79.

[32] Coats, "Systematic Theology," 98.

for Scriptural symmetry. Any question of the preacher's personal involvement beyond this (though never explicitly denied by the authors), is at least secondary to his involvement with the authority of the Word, if it is mentioned at all. After all, it is Scripture that is ultimately to be trusted, and the more faithfully the preacher can offer the Word to the people the better off they will be.

It has been shown in this section that the foundational confession of the Word's authority enables Lutherans to answer the academy's concern over the preacher's questioned authority by reaffirming the authority of the Word. As suggested at the outset of this chapter, such a foundational contextualization can stand on its own in response to that focus of the academy's conversation and can be a helpful way of balancing an overemphasis on sermon structure. Lutheran homileticians are joining Luther as he banged on the table with Zwingli at Marburg: *The Word* is the authority. The authority of the preacher, however, was not the only concern of the academy in its developing conversation. Next, it attended to a dialogical focus on the hearers. The following section will therefore focus on a Lutheran foundation that contextualizes the person of the preacher in relation to the hearers: namely, the proclamation of the gospel.

"What Shall I Cry?": The Preacher and Proclamation

While the previous section primarily treated contextualizations of the preacher as one who organizes the semantics of the sermon in a deliberate fashion to distinguish properly between law and gospel as a way of emphasizing the authority of the Word, this section will narrow that performance to specify the proclamatory force of the same. Beyond authority in the broad sense, the Word of God is specifically noted as having the sole power to grant the *forgiveness of sins*. This is an indisputable mainstay of Lutheranism, which confesses the means of grace to be "Word and Sacrament." The Lutheran symbols are clear on following Rom. 10:17 ("faith comes

from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ"), affirming that "God the Holy Spirit does not effect conversion without means, but he uses the preaching and the hearing of God's Word to accomplish it"[33] and condemning "the error of the Enthusiasts, who contrive the idea that God draws people to himself, enlightens them, makes them righteous, and saves them without means, without the hearing of God's Word, even without the use of the holy sacraments."[34] The Word of God is the incarnate Christ (John 1:1) by whom, through whom, and for whom all things were made (Col. 1:16), and "to obtain [justifying faith] the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted."[35] Thus, for Lutherans the sermon is an event of public discourse wherein a preacher proclaims the Word of God *for the forgiveness of sins* of all who hear it.[36] In this way there is a focus on the hearers' reception of the Word, and the person of the preacher is contextualized by the salvific power of the same.

For Lutherans, the person of the preacher engages in the sermon's purpose as a part of the whole of the Divine Service, which is largely focused on forgiving the sins of the worshippers as a holistic means of grace.[37] Yet along with this narrowing of specific proclamation comes a circumscription of the role of the preacher to that purpose. Within this foundational Lutheran homiletic, the preacher is a servant of the means of grace which are delivered *for the forgiveness*

[33] Ep II.4 in Kolb and Wengert, 492.

[34] Ep II.6 in Kolb and Wengert, 493.

[35] *CA* V.1 in Kolb and Wengert, 40.

[36] See Peter Nafzger, *"These Are Written"* for an extraordinary clarification on the cruciform nature of Scripture, which helpfully modifies a Barthian understanding of the Word to be *personal* (Christ himself), *spoken* (proclaimed by his servants), and *written* (Scripture).

[37] The orders of the Divine Service in LSB are inclusive of the means of grace, yet they also distinguish them: the Service of the Word, in which Scripture reading and the sermon are found, and the Service of the Sacrament, in which the Eucharist is celebrated. See Arthur A. Just, *Heaven on Earth: The Gifts of Christ in the Divine Service* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2008) for a concise overview of the unity found in the Divine Service as a holistic means of grace.

of sins.[38] Therefore, the role of the preacher is viewed as one who specifically provides the illocutionary force of God's salvation in the stead and by the command of Christ, not only in the sermon but also in the sacraments. The preacher is the mouth through which God actively serves his people. Spoken of in relation to the means of grace (and often modeled after the Christological systematic of the *genus idiomaticum*), this emphasizes the preacher as God speaking (*Deus loquens*) through a human mouth within the divine service, specifically with the performative word of justification. It is most commonly descriptive of proponents of "liturgical preaching," moving closer to the preacher's adherence to the Word distinctly to stress the proclamatory function of the forgiveness of sins. This focuses more on the hearers from a functional standpoint and situates the person of the preacher within that telos.

To explain "liturgical preaching" briefly, it can be defined as "an act of worship itself. Here God graces the listener with his Word, written in the Scriptures and proclaimed by the preacher. He graces the Table with his presence, the visible Word served by the celebrant. Altar and pulpit are in fellowship. Hence liturgical preaching."[39] It is a common label by which Lutheran authors stress the importance of the sermon as a sacramental act. This "liturgical preaching" is a more narrow and specific contextualization for the preacher because it considers the *force* of the sermon's content vis-à-vis the assurance of salvation through faith in Christ.

Following the greater society's doubtful glance upon the preacher's didactic authority, the New Homiletic turned toward different modes and structures of preaching, which naturally led to an academy shift toward dialogical preaching—preaching that more actively considered and involved the hearers themselves. As mentioned in the previous chapter, homileticians like

[38] See Ap XIII.11 in Kolb and Wengert, 220: "If ordination is understood with reference to the ministry of the Word, we have no objection to calling ordination a sacrament."

[39] Grime and Nadasdy, *Liturgical Preaching*, 8.

Thomas Long used phrases like "experimental" and "inventive" to describe the academy's response to this cultural change,[40] and New Homiletic pioneers like Reuel L. Howe sought to include the hearers even within the *development* of the sermon.[41] This is *not* to say that dialogical preaching is ubiquitously consumeristic, devoid of theological bearing, or no longer in the hands of the preacher—to the contrary, Kristopher Kim Barnett provides an analysis of dialogical preaching as a means of testing modern dialogical homiletics for biblical and historical faithfulness (he even locates the practice within St. Paul himself).[42] However, this *is* to say that as the hearers' different modes of knowing and hearing were examined, the consideration of the sermon's ultimate goals could not be avoided. With the academy's current focus on identity politics and intersectionality, it is not hard retrospectively to imagine a bigger question accompanying those trends: what are we preaching *for* or *towards*? At least in part, the academy more or less accepted the separation of the sermon from the preacher's authority, and thus contextualized it as creating space for God to speak through all people.

Similar to the steadfastness with which Lutherans retain the authority of Scripture, they are firmly situated to define what will satisfy the hearers' *needs* (over mere desires) within the framework of justification, as well as the *means* (Word and Sacrament ministry) of that satisfaction. In a holistic sense, this is the purpose of the church, of preaching, even of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. However, even in Lutheranism Gerhard Forde (whose work on preaching justification is well known), notices a false dichotomy in separating the sermon from the sacraments that is reminiscent (though not reactive) of the academy's dialogical trends: "Something of a split develops in the Christian camp. On the one hand the preaching of the Word

[40] See again the introduction to Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching*.

[41] See Howe, *Partners in Preaching*. See also Rose, *Sharing the Word*.

[42] Barnett, "Historical/Critical Analysis."

undercuts the sacraments. On the other hand there seems to be a growing antipathy to the preached Word (the 'excessive wordiness' of our worship) and in some circles at least, a growing appreciation for sacraments."[43] This is inconsistent with the focus of the reformation, Forde says, as Luther believed preaching to be another means of grace, "'pouring Christ into our ears' just as in the sacraments we are baptized into him, and he is poured into our mouths."[44] The sermon, therefore, should be a preached form of the visible Word found in the sacraments—it should kill and make alive, it should pronounce forgiveness in an unrelenting manner that is as visible as words can be. Here, the person of the preacher is contextualized not just by the words he speaks, but by the words he *does* for the sake of the hearers. Just as the celebrant literally puts forgiveness on the tongues of the communicants, the preacher literally puts forgiveness in the ears of the hearers. The person of the preacher is thereby contextualized as a servant of the means of grace; of course he himself is not the grace, but he does represent the *means* by which Christ forgives as the Word works through him.[45] Thus it can be seen that as the academy had shifted to a focus on hearer response and dialogue between the pastor and hearer, Lutherans are situated to respond to that conversation by contextualizing that relationship within the means of grace.

While dialogical preaching in the academy "encouraged [the listener] to grapple with his own meaning in relation to the speaker's meaning,"[46] Many Lutherans are far less comfortable with the potential for ambiguity. This is because within liturgical preaching is the same desire for precision highlighted in the proper distinction between law and gospel; but whereas the latter

[43] Gerhard Forde, "Preaching the Sacraments," in *Justification is for Preaching*, ed., Virgil Thompson (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 148.

[44] Forde, "Preaching the Sacraments," 149.

[45] See John 1:8, "[John] was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light."

[46] Reuel Howe, quoted in Barnett, "Historical/Critical Analysis," 220.

stresses the authority of the word, the former stresses the authority of the word *for the forgiveness of sins*. The precision is reflected in the desire for a strict verbal adherence to the liturgical elements, in an albeit less structured manner (because the sermon literally changes every week). Many Lutherans are careful to "follow the script," as it were, of the liturgy—especially in the rites of Absolution, Holy Baptism, and Communion—lest the liturgy's formative nature be overcome by novelty and doubt.[47] If the sermon is another liturgical element, a similar strictness must apply.

Steven Paulson, for example, warns that "if the preacher can be enticed to give something else than Christ as the proper predicate for the true Subject, the Creator, then a death occurs with no apparent violence."[48] In other words, there is as dire of a warning against straying from the sermon's proclamatory purpose as there is against slurring or skipping the Words of Institution, Holy Baptism, or Absolution; the very faith and souls of the congregants are at stake. Unique weekly sermons notwithstanding, Paulson defines the Lutheran sermon's content in no uncertain terms:

> *The content of preaching is summarized in the chief article of justification by faith alone*, and can be given in a nutshell this way: Jesus Christ, our God and Lord was put to death for our trespasses and raised against for our justification (Paul in Romans 4:25). You killed him; the Father raised him (Peter in Acts 2). Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me" (John 14). The law kills, the Spirit gives life (Paul in 2 Corinthians 3). Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins

[47] The 2013 Convention of the LCMS adopted a resolution that resolved "that the congregations of the LCMS faithfully confess and retain the Trinitarian formula in baptizing with water and refrain from changing these words and making use of other words in the baptismal formula." *Convention Proceedings*, 2013, 133. The reason for the resolution was expressly stated to avoid "introducing doubt" into the efficacy of Holy Baptism. The resolution passed by a 98.7% margin.

[48] Steven D. Paulson, "Categorical Preaching," in *Justification is for Preaching*, 143. Paulson's use of the word "categorical" is after Forde's suggestion that Lutherans maintain the "categorical" distinctions of law and gospel. (See Gerhard O. Forde, *The Captivation of the Will: Luther vs. Erasmus on Freedom and Bondage*, ed. Steven D. Paulson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017).

> of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20).[49]

Far be it from any Lutheran to disagree with such content! However, as Paulson writes elsewhere, "Theology is not *fides quaerens intellectum* [faith seeks understanding] … [but rather] proclamation and preaching are synonyms for us,"[50] it is clear that his contextualization of the preacher is significantly limited to one task: namely, the proclamation of justification. As a foundational Lutheran homiletic applied relative to the academy's dialogics, this would more narrowly define the communal relationship between preacher and hearer than is found in the academy, even as it broadens the context of the sermon to include worship in a holistic manner.

Returning to the specific concept of preaching as sacrament, John Pless avers that the familiar catchphrase "Word and Sacrament" must belong together so much that there is no noticeable difference between the effects of the sacraments and the effects of preaching (forgiveness of sins). Citing Forde, Pless agrees that "if preaching is not seen as sacrament it will crumble into theological instruction or ethical exhortation, collapsing perhaps into a psychologized reading of the biblical narrative."[51] He warns this in a review of liturgical preaching that may be tempted to view such homiletics as preaching *about* the sacraments. That truncated view would oversimplify the discipline of liturgical preaching to the point of error. Again, just as in the sacraments Christ himself is the content, so in preaching Christ himself is the message. Pless' citation of Luther is worthy of duplication:

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[49] Paulson, "Categorical Preaching," 144. Italics mine.

[50] Steven D. Paulson, "Preaching as Foolishness," in *Feasting in a Famine of the Word: Lutheran Preaching in the Twenty-First Century,* eds., Mark W. Birkholz, Jacob Corzine, Jonathan Mumme (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 142.

[51] John T. Pless, "Liturgical Preaching: The Pitfalls and the Promise," in *Feasting in a Famine of the Word: Lutheran Preaching in the Twenty-First Century,* eds., Mark W. Birkholz, Jacob Corzine, Jonathan Mumme (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 169.

> So the word and the sacraments should not be divided, for Christ has comprehended the sacraments in the word. And without the word, one could not take comfort from the sacraments. Indeed, one could not know what the sacraments were! It is, therefore, not just a great blindness and error but rather a miserable abomination that the Papists preach about forgiveness of sins and yet forget the word, on which everything depends, and direct the people to monkey business—seeking the forgiveness of sins by their own devotion and works.[52]

The sermon should never be pitted against the sacraments as a prelude to the "real" forgiveness; rather, the sermon itself *is also* a means of grace that justifies. This contextualization narrows the purpose of the divine service to being about justification in a holistic manner, as well as it narrows the person of the preacher who is a servant of the means of grace.

In an article that holds this same holistic liturgical view, Oswald Bayer goes so far as to call the *entire divine service* a sermon insofar as it is "God's service to us through his word and our service in response," the thought of which "relieves the sermon proper of the inflated claims and expectations that some people have of it."[53] Contrasted to the academy, whose turn to dialogical preaching is sometimes caricaturized merely to affect a satisfaction of the hearers' "inflated expectations," Bayer would agree that homiletical suggestions of structure and method can be dismissed if they are outside of the holistic liturgical purpose of the sermon as a sacramental act. "The linguistic sign itself is the thing; it does not represent a thing that is absent but it presents a thing that is present."[54] In other words, the sermon is not *about* justification, the

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[52] Martin Luther, "House Postil Sermon for the First Sunday After Easter," in *Sermons on the Gospel of John 17–20*, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown, vol. 69, *Luther's Works: American Edition* (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress, 2009), 399. Cited in Pless, "Liturgical Preaching," 168.

[53] Oswald Bayer, "Preaching the Word," 201. The sermon is a means of grace, and a form of the Word of God along with the sacraments. This is supported by Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther's Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008). See also Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God: The Wittenberg School and Its Scripture-Centered Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016). See also Paul O. Wendland, "Martin Luther: God's Voice," https://www.wls.wels.net/rmdevser_wls/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Wendland-and-Cloute.pdf.

[54] Bayer, "Preaching the Word," 202. See also Esko Murto, "Gloomy Revelations or Comforting Doctrines?" in *Feasting in a Famine of the Word: Lutheran Preaching in the Twenty-First Century,* eds., Mark W. Birkholz, Jacob Corzine, Jonathan Mumme (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 218. "[Preaching] is a real means of grace which

sermon *is* justification. More than that, the sermon does what the service does, which does what Scripture does, which does what Christ does, who again does it through the preacher's sermon, which affects it in the hearts of the hearers. The sermon and its proclamatory power are inseparable; again, the person of the preacher is thereby contextualized by the role he plays as a servant of the means of grace in the divine service, which delivers the forgiveness of sins through Word and Sacrament.

Included in the contextualization of the preacher as a servant of the means of grace is the assent that there is "freedom of discretion" in the sermon, which Bayer says "is not a dead relic from a bygone age but a word that is made alive by the Spirit's presence."[55] The preacher is the first recipient of the sermon, and he passes his experience on to the hearers. John Kleinig continues this contextualization of the preacher, as "we pastors hand on what we receive from [Christ], just as he gives us everything that he receives from his heavenly Father. He is the preacher and the liturgist in every service that we conduct."[56] The preacher is not subsumed by Christ, but "we pastors *work together* with God the Father and the risen Lord Jesus in their mission of binding and loosing here on earth."[57] The emphasis here is not synergistic (as if the preacher adds his own authority or contribution apart from God's), but sacramental—the preacher's whole being is invested as a servant of the means of grace in the sermon. Just as God used the lives and personalities of his saints to extend his kingdom when and where he wills, so

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creates and conveys the reality it speaks about." See also James Wetzstein, "Liturgy as Story," in *Feasting in a Famine of the Word: Lutheran Preaching in the Twenty-First Century,* eds., Mark W. Birkholz, Jacob Corzine, Jonathan Mumme (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 219. "The story of the liturgy *changes* us. It changes us by calling us to be identified with the story, to see ourselves in the story." Italics original.

[55] Bayer, "Preaching the Word," 203.

[56] John W. Kleinig, "The Real Presence and Liturgical Preaching," in *Feasting in a Famine of the Word: Lutheran Preaching in the Twenty-First Century,* eds., Mark W. Birkholz, Jacob Corzine, Jonathan Mumme (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 181.

[57] Kleinig, "Real Presence," 184.

he continues to use the lives and personalities of the saints today. The preacher is by no means an exception to this. This formative point will be addressed again in the following chapters, and plays a salient role in this dissertation's goals.

The above authors, by contextualizing the person of the preacher with an eye toward the holistic liturgical purpose of proclaiming the forgiveness of sins in the divine service, allow for a greater consideration of the preacher himself. Ironically, as the specificity of the words spoken becomes narrower (namely, from a semantic relationship with Scripture to the more specific proclamation of forgiveness), considerations of the person of the preacher himself become broader. This is likely *because of* the specific nature of the universal proclamation of forgiveness in Christ: the preacher is not only set apart to perform a task, but also *one of and from the assembly* who becomes a servant of the means of grace by his preaching. Therefore, he is the first listener of the Word he will preach, and he is formed and sent by the church to preach.

Still, like *questioned authority* instigated changes in *sermon structures* which developed into *dialogical preaching*, the greater homiletical academy kept progressing: since dialogics requires a strong awareness and knowledge of the cultural identities of the hearers, it naturally came to focus on the identity politics and intersectionality of both the hearers and the preacher. Hence, the Lutheran contextualization of the person of the preacher as he preaches justification for the sake of the hearers is not equivalently applicable to the academy's conversation of identity politics and intersectionality. Therefore, the following section will examine a Lutheran foundation that most specifically highlights his identity as a preacher: namely that of his ordained status as a member of the Ministerium.

"Here am I; Send Me": The Ministerium

A strong delineating factor of Lutheranism from many other Christian denominations is the

insistence on the importance of the Office of the Holy Ministry. Indeed, enshrined in the Lutheran symbols is the belief that God instituted the office of preaching and the proper administration of the sacraments "to obtain [saving] faith"[58] in Jesus Christ. Consistent with the proper ministrations of the same is the confession that "no one should teach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless properly called."[59] This insistence on the good order of the ministerium is in explicit contrast to the demands for manmade structures that are established by human fiat over and against the salvific functions of the church.[60] Nevertheless, the reformers did not even object to calling ordination a sacrament, provided the *function* of the ministry be held up instead of any type of Levitical characteristic of the priesthood.[61] The function of the ministry being the application of the Word and Sacraments for saving faith in Christ, the Ministerium exists to facilitate faith in the same. This means that the anointment of the preacher by divine call and ordination is a *sine qua non* of the one delivering the sermon. Thus, it is important that (by Scripture's very instruction) he be called.[62] The divine call (publically recognized by ordination) acknowledges the preacher as retaining the authority to mount the pulpit steps.

The academy, being naturally multivalent in its makeup of Christendom, is also multivalent in its view of the preaching office. Notwithstanding these differences, the conversations about the preacher's identity are more relative to cultural and societal being than to any divine

[58] *CA* V in Kolb and Wengert, 40–41. See Matt. 28:19–20; John 20:21–23.

[59] *CA* XIV in Kolb and Wengert, 47.

[60] See again Ap XIV in Kolb and Wengert, 222–23.

[61] See again Ap XIII in Kolb and Wengert, 219–22.

[62] Walther acknowledges that "Scripture does not tell us of any divine institution of ordination; it merely attests that it was used by the apostles and that at that time the communication of precious gifts was connected with the laying on of hands." C. F. W. Walther, *Church and Ministry,* trans. J. T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia, 1987), 248. Notwithstanding the adiaphoric nature of its ceremony, ordination is not optional for Lutherans.

imperative or special appointment. Neither did the academy's developmental trend from the preacher's questioned authority lead to a recovery of the latter. Rather, the progression of dialogical preaching, which was aided by the changes in structure with the New Homiletic, grew to include issues of identity and culture.

Beginning with the goal of more authentic and applicable communication with the hearers, cultural awareness and those relevant emphases in homiletics have circled back around to the preacher: being in community and conversation with the hearers, they too focus on their cultural identity. Consequently, there is such a veritable abundance of homiletical works related to identity politics and intersectionality that it is safe to call it the dominating conversation of the greater homiletical academy today. There is a homiletical conversation about Asian identity;[63] there is a homiletical conversation about Hispanic identity;[64] there is a homiletical conversation about African American identity;[65] there is a homiletical conversation about womanist identity;[66] there is a homiletical conversation about feminist identity.[67] There is also a homiletical conversation that is specifically focused on making the discipline of homiletics itself less

[63] See for example Matthew D. Kim and Daniel L. Wong, *Finding Our Voice: A Vision for Asian North American Preaching* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2020); Jeremy Kangsan Kim, "When Will We Proclaim Lament from the Pulpit? Preaching to a Traumatized Society in the Korean Context," *Homiletic* 46, no. 1 (June 2021): 15–27.

[64] See for example Tito Madrazo, *Predicadores: Hispanic Preaching and Immigrant Identity* (Waco: Baylor, 2021).

[65] See for example Otis Moss, *Blue Note Preaching in a Post-Soul World: Finding Hope in an Age of Despair* (Louisville: Westminster, 2015); M. Shawn Copeland, *Knowing Christ Crucified: The Witness of African American Religious Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2018); Fisher-Stewart, ed., *Preaching*; Redmond, ed., *Say It!*.

[66] See for example Kimberly Johnson, *The Womanist Preacher: Proclaiming Womanist Rhetoric from the Pulpit* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017); Smith, *Womanist Sass*; Donyelle C. McCray, "Black Feminist Triptych," *Homiletic* 45, no. 2 (December 2020): 5–13; Lisa Allen, *A Womanist Theology of Worship: Liturgy, Justice, and Communal Righteousness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2021).

[67] See for example Diann L. Neu, *Stirring Waters: Feminist Liturgies for Justice* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2020); Ashley M. Wilcox, *The Women's Lectionary: Preaching the Women of the Bible Throughout the Year* (Louisville: Westminster, 2021); Katie Lauve-Moon, *Preacher Woman: A Critical Look at Sexism Without Sexists* (Oxford: University Press, 2021).

"white."[68] In short, the greater homiletical academy is focused on a particular conversation that is hitherto unknown to Lutheran theology.

Lutheran theology not belonging to any particular ethnicity or socio-cultural situatedness, but rather self-described as consistent with the "ancient, united consensus believed in by the universal, orthodox churches of Christ and fought for and reaffirmed against many heresies and errors,"[69] this dissertation knows of no Lutheran resource or conversation that attempts to spur an ecclesial *identity* motivated by the color of a person's skin—no matter the color.[70] While there are many active conversations about ethnicity and communal ecclesial life on an institutional level,[71] to speak to *foundational Lutheran homiletical truths* about identity politics and intersectionality is to speak a language Lutheranism does not know.

Whereas the other contextualizations of the person of the preacher explored in this chapter largely demonstrated Lutheran foundations relative to their performance of duty—in the first place, an appeal to the authority of Scripture through a proper handling of the Word; in the

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[68] See Willie James Jennings, *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020); David Schnasa Jacobsen, "Un-mastering Homiletics Interculturally: Gospel, Belonging, and Communion for In-Class Sermon Feedback," *Homiletic* 46, no. 2 (December, 2021): 41–47; HyeRan Kim-Cragg, "Invisibility of Whiteness: A Homiletical Interrogation," *Homiletic* 46, no. 1 (June 2021): 28–39. "Whiteness" here is no longer necessarily based on skin color, but rather has become a byword for oppressive, patriarchal, heteronormative, racist systems; in other words, "white" is now an openly accepted stereotype for an oppressor. In fact, as easy as it is to find a homiletical space for one's intersectionality, it is as difficult to find a work that addresses white identity in a positive light. The rare exception to this rule is Carolyn Browning Helsel, "The Hermeneutics of Recognition: A Ricoeurian Interpretive Framework for Whites Preaching about Racism," (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2014), who will be this dissertation's primary conversation partner in Chapter Five.

[69] Preface in Kolb and Wengert, 5.

[70] In other words, no one is seeking to create a "white" Lutheran church (notwithstanding tragic anecdotal evidence of racist acts that surely exist). See again data from the Lutheran World Federation from 2019: https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2020/documents/lwi-2019-statistics-en-20200825.pdf and data regarding Lutheran churches in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS: https://www.lcms.org/how-we-serve/international/partner-church-bodies that implicitly inculcate countless ethnic, societal, and cultural differences that make up the "host arrayed in white, like thousand snowclad mountains bright." Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 676, stv. 1.

[71] For example, the LCMS Black Clergy Caucus, the Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology at Concordia Seminary, and that seminary's annual Multi-Ethnic Symposium.

second place, an appeal to the purpose of the Word through a direct proclamation of the gospel—a contextualization of the person of the preacher that focuses on his *being* is often reflective of the ministerial authority with which he has been vested. This status of a Lutheran preacher's identity—that of being a member of the Ministerium—is a foundational rally point of the Lutheran tradition.

For example, in one instance Jonathan Mumme writes on the differentiating pronoun address used in sermons, insisting that "the preacher need not be concerned with making a preacher of himself by his preaching. He is a preacher and of the preachers before his preaching."[72] In other words, preaching "I" instead of "We," or "You" is a practical tool in preaching that demonstrates the underlying reality of the preacher's authority *because of* the office he maintains. Using St. Paul and Luther, Mumme laments what he perceives as a lack of this differentiated address in Lutheran sermons as a product (perhaps) of modern congregationalism—a sort of democratization of the church. Consequently, the preacher's sermon need *not* include himself as the object of preaching along with the hearers, since his role is to speak the Word of God to and for them. In this way, Mumme is relying on the foundational Lutheran homiletic of the preacher's ministerial identity as a way of negotiating the relationship he has been given with his hearers.

Indeed, Mumme's real concern is not really semantic, but theological: the differentiation between the preacher and the hearers is reflected in the words because the difference exists by divine institution and cuts against the grain of American Christian sensibilities that seek to place all believers in the same ministerial role and (perhaps) deny the importance of the Ministerium.

[72] Jonathan Mumme, "The Difference of Differentiating Address: The 'We,' 'I,' and 'You,' of Preaching, and the Gospel as the Gospel," in *Feasting in a Famine of the Word: Lutheran Preaching in the Twenty-First Century,* eds., Mark W. Birkholz, Jacob Corzine, Jonathan Mumme (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 137.

The *Gegenüber*—"opposition" between two related points, which Mumme is deliberate to leave untranslated due to potentially negative connotations in the English—exists for the sake of the assurance of faith, and "Luther thoroughly aligns the preaching of contemporary preachers with the preaching of the apostles,"[73] whose authority was obviously differentiated from the rest of Jesus' disciples and immediately maintained after his ascension (Acts 1:21–22). Thus, the differentiating address is important both for the preacher's identity and for the hearers to whom is declared the salvific Word of assurance in the stead and by the command of Christ. In fact, "the differentiated address found in Luther's mature preaching is [the] homiletical communication of a reality whose most pointed expression is to be found *in the absolution*."[74] Using the differentiating address, Mumme asserts, is nothing less than exhibiting a proper understanding of the office of preaching (and thus the identity of the preacher). The preacher is the counterpoint of the congregation, set apart (*Gegenüber*) for the sake of the hearers. Therefore, the person of the preacher is here contextualized to emphasize this authoritative differentiation, and his identity is formed in relation to the ministry's purpose.

This high contextualization of the Ministerium is also upheld by David Petersen in an article derived from a previously delivered paper for a liturgical conference. Petersen cautiously seeks to avoid sacerdotalism while insisting that the authority of Christ is present in the anointing of his preachers. "Christian preachers have been anointed to preach … their authority is not the Scriptures, it is the sending."[75] His main concern is to restore the centrality of preaching in divine

[73] Mumme, "Differentiating Address," 131.

[74] Mumme, "Differentiating Address," 134. Italics mine. Notice here again that the Ministerium's authority exists not for its own sake, but for the sake of its purpose.

[75] David Petersen, "The Preacher's Tongue and the Hearer's Ear: Compelled by the Spirit," *Feasting in a Famine of the Word: Lutheran Preaching in the Twenty-First Century,* eds., Mark W. Birkholz, Jacob Corzine, Jonathan Mumme (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 207.

worship, and he contextualizes the person of the preacher to consider his actual personhood. Like Mumme, he does this not in a way that assumes or argues for a sort of indelible character, but in a way that sees the preacher as a servant of the means of grace. In this way, sacerdotalism is avoided and the anointing (the Ministerium) of the preacher is not merely optional for the church's life together.

For Petersen, the importance of the anointed preaching office is juxtaposed with the presence of the Sacrament of the Altar in worship, which "delivers to the faithful when preaching fails."[76] The caution is explicit: the preacher is *able* to harm the congregation by his potential preaching mistakes, but he cannot in delivering the sacraments. Obliquely citing Philips Brooks, Petersen correctly asserts that the preacher's "knowledge, personality, and skill are involved [in the sermon], and negligence has consequences for the flock."[77] But this ought not deter from highlighting the importance of preaching in worship, especially as Luther himself suggests that no worship should be celebrated without it. The Predigtamt[78] is established by Christ for the deliverance of the Word and Sacraments, and the preacher's anointment is a thing to be trusted and revered by the hearers. In some ways, the preacher's potential to err is actually more of a concern for the preacher himself than for the hearers who trust in his anointing (i.e. Ezek 33:8; Heb 13:17; Jas 3:1), since his identity as a member of the Ministerium carries a tremendous amount of spiritual responsibility.

Yet Petersen's contextualization of the preacher is not limited to his anointing in this piece. Although he locates the authority of the preacher in his sending (his anointing) like that of

[76] Petersen, "Preacher's Tongue," 193. Petersen repeated this anecdote in David Petersen, "Keynote Presentation I," *LCMS Worship Institute*, 2017, saying that experienced pastors recognize this practical reality.

[77] Petersen, "Preacher's Tongue," 194.

[78] Literally, "preaching office."

Christ's authority, he also says that the same authority "is *recognized* in their right interpretation and application of Scripture."[79] Because he has heretofore spent many paragraphs seeking to reclaim the preacher's confidence in his preaching as an authoritative and crucial component of the church's life *based on his anointment*—not his accuracy of speech—and now he is relying on the latter, Petersen implicitly bares the interrelated nature of these contextualizations. On the surface, Petersen seems merely to be hedging his bets, which is not an uncommon thing for modern Lutherans to do lest they be pigeon-holed into a single homiletical understanding (or worse, be accused of heterodoxy). However, this repartee between the authority of the Ministerium and the practical application of the preacher rather displays the fluidity of these contextualizations, and how they do not contradict each other.

The apparent grey areas between these blended contextualizations naturally craves resolution: the authority of the preacher is a given *Gegenüber,* brought about by an anointing—a call and ordination into the Ministerium—but also negotiated (or has doubt cast upon it) based upon the results of his actions or his capacity to err. The authority of the ministerium notwithstanding, it is almost never assumed that a preacher will remain faithful to his task *because of* his office; more is usually required for faithfulness, such as the preacher's proper interpretation and application of the Word for the proclamation of the gospel (see the previous sections in this chapter). The apparent differences in the ways Mumme and Petersen contextualize the person of the preacher above in regards to his status in the Ministerium is another example that leads inexorably to the conclusion that no consideration of the person of the preacher is done in a vacuum—it all depends on the *context*. Such multivalence is a main point sought by this dissertation and should be seen as evidence that Lutherans *can* contextualize the

[79] Petersen, "Preacher's Tongue," 207. Italics mine.

person of the preacher in many different ways without jettisoning other homiletical truths foundational to Lutheranism. Context is brought to bear on the content of every issue, conversation, and controversy; practical theological application, especially as it relates to flesh-and-blood ministry, is irreducible and often impervious to the bondage of systematic categorization. Faithfully practicing any practice of the faith must be approached with the humble knowledge that the church is a living, breathing, and therefore changing entity. *Doctrine* never changes; the *gospel* never changes; but *context* is never the same.

From the above section, and the chapter as a whole, it can be seen that modern Lutherans most commonly contextualize the person of the preacher by the interwoven themes of *authority* and *content* by an appeal to the foundational understandings of Lutheran preaching: namely, the proper distinction between law and gospel, the direct proclamation of the gospel of justification by faith in Christ, and the authoritative identity of the preacher as a member of the Ministerium. These can safely be called the *raisons d'être* of Lutheran preaching today. Furthermore, from the above study it is apparent that modern Lutherans appear to be emphasizing contextualizations of the preacher that are largely irrespective of his own ethnic identity and cultural situatedness as an individual. As a result, these emphases preclude many fruitful interactions that could be had with the academy, where an entirely different conversation is taking place regarding identity politics and intersectionality.

Again, this chapter is not intended to be sequential or historically progressive in any way. However, by its arrangement it has shown that as the greater homiletical academy cumulatively progressed through the New Homiletic to dialogics to identity politics, Lutherans are equipped to respond to each emphasis through the traditional foundations of Scripture, proclamation, and the Ministerium. Though atemporal, this arrangement nevertheless could suggest a modern reversion

to the preacher's *presumed* authority. In other words, the authority of the preacher that was taken for granted before the observations of the New Homiletic is an easy and obvious contextualization for the Lutheran facing the challenges of identity politics and intersectionality in the pulpit. From there, the proclamatory Word and the preacher's faithfulness to Scripture can remain of central importance, and identity politics can be merely dismissed as a distraction (or worse). While it would be unsubstantiated to call this prioritization the *reason* for a lack of Lutheran homiletical interaction with identity politics, there certainly appears to be a correlation. If the academy's predilection is to avoid standards of biblical hermeneutics (at least monolithically) in order to highlight identity politics, then modern Lutheranism's predilection is to avoid identity politics and intersectionality in order to highlight the truth of God's Word as they see it. In other words, modern Lutherans have deemphasized the preacher at the same time the academy has deemphasized the Word of God.

Regardless of the reasons, an unfortunate side effect of this largely unaddressed issue is the correlative lack of Lutherans contextualizing the person of the preacher according to his own identity *at all*. Again, none of the above contextualizations are "wrong," from a Lutheran perspective. On the contrary, they are quite helpful and beneficial for the church's preaching mission. But when considering the person of the preacher, Lutherans appear to be so limited in their contextualizations that there is often little perceived need for personal engagement with extra-biblical social issues or even the preacher's self-reflection beyond the accuracy of his work and his proper distinction between law and gospel. Again, it should be said that the above contextualizations are faultless in their main tenets: Scripture is the church's norm, the Confessions her *norma normata*, and the truth must be preached properly and applied appropriately by an ordained clergyman. However, this does not go *far enough* for a cultural

engagement with those outside of this understanding.

Blessedly, there is another foundational Lutheran tradition, but one that has gone relatively unspoken of in recent decades: that of the person of the preacher as an individual. Since what is needed is a contextualization with which to consider Lutheran homiletics in a holistic manner, the recovery of such a tradition would affirm the traditional homiletical contextualizations utilized by modern Lutherans while preparing a method for more congruent interactions with the academy. At the same time, recovering an historical Lutheran emphasis on the person of the preacher would reintroduce those conversations amongst modern Lutherans in a vibrant and helpful way. Therefore, the following chapter will define the contours of that foundational Lutheran tradition, recover that historical understanding, and demonstrate a Lutheran milieu that views the person of the preacher himself as an integral part of the sermonic process in several ways. That will pave the way to introduce a Lutheran voice into the greater homiletical academy's focus on identity politics and intersectionality in a productive manner.

Before that historical examination, however, attention should be drawn to the ways in which Lutherans respond to the current cultural maelstrom of identity politics and intersectionality from a general perspective. While not directly addressing the contextualization of the preacher, the interconnectivity between theology and practice can show that an engagement with changing cultural contexts can be assisted by the contextualization of the person of the preacher offered by this dissertation. It is also important to show that Lutherans are not altogether silent on the issue, however raw these initial engagements may be.

Three Lutheran Responses to Identity Politics and Intersectionality

This section will briefly examine and assess three distinct responses to the current cultural

shift that have been offered: a conference presentation by David P. Ramirez,[80] an article by Lucas V. Woodford,[81] and a sermon series assembled by the Michigan District of the LCMS.[82] Each proffers a Lutheran response to identity politics in a way that differs according to context. The assessments offered herein will demonstrate a similarity between these reactions and the above contextualizations of the person of the preacher, thereby showing a continuity of modern Lutheran reactions to identity politics and intersectionality in general by an appeal to traditional Lutheran foundations.

At Luther Memorial Chapel & University Student Center, on February 8, 2022, Rev. David P. Ramirez gave a presentation entitled, "The Great Awokening: What are We Going to Do About It?"[83] Within, he compares the current rise of "woke" culture to the Great Awakening in America, insofar as it signified a dramatic "break" from the cultural milieux of religiosity. The new "religion" of American society is a humanism that signals the end of the Enlightenment era in America. While this point itself is not developed, on the macro level of societal and cultural change, Ramirez (and others he cites) calls the "Great Awokening" a particular and radical ideological shift of individuals and institutions (mostly white liberals) to focus on issues of "social justice" beyond many of their own lived experiences.

To establish the situation, Ramirez peppers his presentations with citations and graphs,

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[80] David P. Ramirez, "The Great Awokening: What are We Going to Do About It?" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmL0AKmIDtc. October, 2022.

[81] Lucas V. Woodford, "What Does This Mean? Responding to Social Justice & Critical Race Theory," Doxology, https://www.doxology.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/dox_2021_woodford_crt_final2.pdf. October, 2022.

[82] Michigan District, "Heart Issues are Hard Issues: A Sermon Series on Racial Healing in the Church and for the Community," Michigan District, https://michigandistrict.org/resources/heart-issues-are-hard-issues-sermon-series. November, 2020.

[83] As Ramirez states in his introduction of the cited video, a written presentation will be available in the future in a yet-unnamed publication. As of the writing of this dissertation, this has not yet happened; therefore, the citations herein will be from a written handout presented at the event itself and obtained through a third party.

especially demonstrating that cultural narratives pushed by news outlets and social media have undeniably gravitated to these social issues. The appearance of words like "racism, xenophobia, white supremacy, misogyny, patriarch, homophobia, transphobia, etc." has skyrocketed in major news publications in only a few years' time, and the effects of the cultural shift has already "infected" the LCMS. In response to this, Ramirez offers three specific areas in which Lutherans should actively resist the Great Awokening.

First, the handout declares that "we must push back against the anti-biblical claims of BLM, CRT, and all the other politically correct/woke organizations and ideologies that stem from humanism." Ramirez believes that the Great Awokening has been crippling to race relations, and he sees the negative accusations leveled against Christians as inevitable. Thus, "we need to stop being scared of childish slurs." The truth needs to be spoken, and no amount of politeness or wishful thinking will mitigate the ensuing conflict. A Christian should be prepared to know that by simply speaking the truth they will be severely criticized in the public square.

Second, which is similar to the first point of speaking the truth regardless of the social consequences, Christians must oppose "equality given to truth and error." Here, he cites examples from the so-called #metoo movement like "the preposterous Kavanaugh nomination process," as well as problematic verbiage in a Domestic Violence Task Force Training Manual, which defines abuse as its effect on the victim instead of on the actions of an abuser. Again, the truth should and must be spoken regardless of the consequences or sensibilities of others.

Finally, Ramirez suggests that Lutherans pay better attention to their children's educations, since "we believe like fundamentalists, yet live like liberal protestants." Too many LCMS families send their children to colleges and institutions that espouse radical "woke" views when they are unequipped to think through them on a critical level. The resultant display is what

Ramirez sees as a crisis even in his own church body: more young people are "going woke" and abandoning the faith of their fathers. Therefore, the spiritual maturity of young people—even young adults—should never be taken for granted as they embark on a college education (especially at a public school).

Ramirez's response to the cultural situation is an appeal to the authority of Scripture and truth—a traditional Lutheran reaction. His primary concern is to give his audience actionable encouragement to resist the trends of these particular cultural shifts. Though his examples deal with specific matters, they are anecdotal to his broader understanding of the "Great Awokening," which one can safely equate with "Leftism" or "Progressivism." Similarly, although this dissertation treats the contextualization of the *person of the preacher* vis-à-vis identity politics and intersectionality, those specific matters share the same ideological frameworks in the greater homiletical academy as the ones chosen by Ramirez in society at large; hence, his response is related to a Lutheran contextualization that focuses on the preacher's appeal to the authority of Scripture as his performative duty. In other words, the suggestions Ramirez offers are right at home with a contextualization of the preacher that is based primarily on the words spoken—personhood need not enter into it. The preacher ought simply to preach the truth.

The second example of a Lutheran response to identity politics and intersectionality in the broad sense is written by Lucas V. Woodford and originally uploaded by Doxology.[84] His goal for writing is explicit from the outset: "the Holy Christian Church in America must be ready to combat the sin of racism and injustice. Yet, it must also guard against the dangerous ideologies that would displace or even replace the love and light of Christ and his eternal word of truth as

[84] At the time of this writing, Woodford is the District President of the Minnesota South District of the LCMS. Doxology is a Lutheran organization whose primary purpose is to support the spiritual lives of pastors in their often-overtaxed vocations.

the means for our life together."[85] The social context in which Woodford is writing, he says, craves hope and peace amidst race riots, political upheaval, and persistent anxiety over a global pandemic. To assist in this effort, Woodford divides his work into two parts.

The first part offers a critical examination of various facets of the social justice movement, which requires "slogging through its origins and its subsequent manifestations."[86] Woodford tracks the modern history of responses to racism, beginning with James Cone's anti-creedal black liberation theology and moving through the emergence of "antiracist" philosophy and the socio-political Marxist origins of Critical Race Theory and organizations like Black Lives Matter. Space and immediate relevance preclude a longer summary of Woodford's first part, which is well researched and clearly articulated. It is important to note, however, that Woodford's primary assessment (and criticism) of the modern social justice movement (within which one can include identity politics and intersectionality) is that it is completely ignorant of original sin and absolute truth:

> Critical social justice fails to see that injustice is due to sin and that not all sin is due to sinful partiality. The primary concern of critical social justice is systemic power in society. It's the sole lens through which adherents view society and material reality. Consequently the theory lacks any understanding regarding the depravity of all humankind, choosing to believe instead that power can be successfully pried away from power structures and properly wielded by new power structures, oppressively so, as the means to correct oppressive and unjust power.[87]

The Lutheran doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, as well as the acknowledgement of human depravity and the evangelistic mission of the church are Woodford's alternative responses to these critical theories and are the foundation upon which he builds the second part of his monograph.

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[85] Woodford, "What Does This Mean?" 4.

[86] Woodford, "What Does This Mean?" 6.

[87] Woodford, "Responding to Social Justice," 31.

Woodford spends the second half of his work offering suggestions for the care of souls who have been affected and effected by racism. He sees a strong need for pastoral ministry to be concerned with baptismal identity, intentional conversations and relationships, and the forgiveness of sins found in Christ alone. This he pits frankly against the "many clergy [who] do not see the proclamation of the gospel as their primary responsibility. Many American Christians face abusive pressures directly in their vocations as members of a church, often at the hands of a 'woke' pastor."[88] Consistent with the correctives of the first part of his work, which address racism not from a standpoint of Critical Theory but rather Biblical theology, Woodford takes his advice to pastors one step further:

> Of course, it's important for this extraordinary pastoral care to dovetail with the ordinary care being received through the word and sacrament of the Divine Service (public worship). Extraordinary circumstances require intensified and deliberate proximity to God's holiness; it flows from and leads to the holy things God himself provides in the Divine Service. Whenever contact with God's holiness is lost, the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh fill the void, wasting little time to defile God's people.[89]

The connectivity between pastoral care, the proper distinction between law and gospel (universal sin and grace), and the specific proclamation of the forgiveness of sins through Christ alone in the divine service is absolute for Woodford.

Both Ramirez and Woodford respond to the current social climate with responses that are similar to the homiletical contextualizations used by modern Lutheran authors above. Ramirez, like those who contextualize the preacher according to their use of the Word of God, prioritizes the response to identity politics and intersectionality ("wokeness") with bold truth-telling. As the hymn by Martin Franzmann goes, "Preach you the Word and plant it home, To men who like or

[88] Woodford, "Responding to Social Justice," 50.

[89] Woodford, "Responding to Social Justice," 56–57.

like it not. The Word that shall endure and stand, When flow'rs and men shall be forgot."[90] Other responses may have their place, but they are at least secondary to speaking the truth accurately in all things and at all times. Similarly, Woodford prioritizes speaking the truth, but *specifically* for the forgiveness of sins. This shares a Lutheran foundation with a contextualization of the preacher as a servant of the means of grace within a holistic view of the divine service. Like the previous example, the Lutheran response is one of performance and not identity.

The third and final example is an example of where such practical ministry is meted out, namely the pulpit. Spurred in part by the death of George Floyd and the subsequent race riots around the country, in the summer of 2020 the congregations of the Michigan District of the LCMS were offered a seven-week sermon series (including children's messages and guides for family discussion) on racial healing. The sermon events corresponded to the three-year lectionary readings from September 20, 2020 through November 1, 2020, along with a bible study prepared by B. Keith Haney.[91] The goal, explicitly stated, "is that all the congregations in the Michigan District, LCMS would prayerfully consider utilizing this series that intentionally addresses the racial tension in our nation and how God's chosen saints in Christ Jesus can think, speak, pray, and act."[92] Accompanying the series is a brief document of "affirmations" that explicitly condemn racism and affirm the unity of the church as sinners redeemed by Jesus Christ.[93]

By its very nature, a sermon series carries with it the authority of the Ministerium, and the

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[90] *LSB*, 586, stz. 1.

[91] B. Keith Haney, *One Nation Under God: Healing Racial Divides in America* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017). Many of the sermons refer directly to this published bible study.

[92] Michigan District, "Heart Issues are Hard Issues," 3.

[93] In June 2022, the Michigan District in Convention passed a resolution "to address issues of race utilizing resources such as Heart Issues are Hard Issues" by 98%.

manner of this one's proposed use reflects a foundational Lutheran understanding of that office. Similar to the design of Luther's postils,[94] the District sought to equip its preachers to engage in these sensitive topics by providing sermons, and all pastors within the district were strongly encouraged to use the series by a mass appeal that was emailed to them by the District President. Since congregations of the LCMS technically enjoy absolute autonomy in the organization and application of their sermon texts, the appeal was mustered as a request for solidarity. Written in collaboration with seven different pastors, these (and a DCE who wrote the children's messages) were named and pictured in the document, along with a narrative describing the preparatory meetings they had that informed the series' composition. By these personalizations, the series ironically limited the identities of the preachers who were supposed to use it.

Still, some pastors used the series—their congregations blocking out the time in the church year—but some did not.[95] Regardless, the series is a clear attempt by pastors to engage the cultural concerns of racism by exercising the influence of their preaching office in a unifying manner. Ironically, however, by this very act the individuality of the district's preachers were obscured behind a locus of prewritten sermons. For the series to purport the goal of forming Christians to "think, speak, pray, and act," in ways relative to racism by preaching *these specific sermons* by *these specific men*, the authentic formation of God's people was contextualized as an instruction manual instead of an experience. While there were indeed helpful insights within the series to guide ways of thinking, the depersonalized nature of this response *as an artifact produced, approved, and encouraged by the church* engaged the identity politic of racism by

[94] See Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 191–95 for a brief discussion of Luther's view of postils: he seemed to be of two minds: sometimes favoring them, sometimes not.

[95] Unfortunately, there are no known statistics to confirm the exact usage. Practically speaking, the series' encouragement by District officials garnered resentment amongst certain clergy and laity, but this is anecdotal and localized.

means of the Ministerium's authority—and not in a way that would engender any lasting formation.

It can be seen from these three meagre examples that the ways in which modern Lutherans tend to react to issues of identity politics and intersectionality is strikingly correspondent to the ways in which they contextualize the person of the preacher: according to the Word of God (truth); according to proclamation (forgiveness); and according to his authority in the Ministerium (preaching). Again, there is nothing *wrong* with these contextualizations *per se*—on the contrary, they rely on foundational Lutheran teachings. However, none of these types of reactions are at their methodological core engaging in the same conversations as the greater homiletical academy—which aims at negotiating the person of the preacher by means of identity politics and intersectionality. What is needed, therefore, is a recovery of the Lutheran foundation of the person of the preacher. The following chapter begins that recovery. Thereby, a contextualization of the same that holistically considers the preacher's individual identity can be developed and proffered as a Lutheran voice in the academy's ongoing conversation.

CHAPTER FOUR

RECOVERING THE PERSON OF THE PREACHER AS A FOUNDATIONAL LUTHERAN HOMILETIC

The previous chapter focused on certain foundational Lutheran truths that inform and equip the ways in which modern Lutherans can respond to various homiletical issues. Though atemporal (and not progressive or developmental) themselves, these foundations were examined relative to the progression of thought exhibited by the greater homiletical academy starting in the 1970's. Motivated by a concern over the preacher's perceived loss of authority, the New Homiletic started to explore modes and structures of preaching that steered mainstream homiletics away from the more traditional propositional model. With that came a greater focus on the hearers, in particular the ways in which they engage with the sermon (dialogical preaching). From there, coupled with an increased interest in the preacher's cultural identity (especially of minority or historically marginalized voices), the academy gradually arrived at its current focus on the identity politics and intersectionality of the preacher.

Relying on certain foundational traditions, Lutherans are equipped to respond to these varied conversations by contextualizing the person of the preacher at least according to (1) the authority of the Word, (2) the specific proclamation of the gospel, and (3) the preacher's identity as an authorized member of the Ministerium. These contextualizations, though certainly *not wrong*, are limited in contributing an adequate Lutheran voice to the *current* conversation of identity politics and intersectionality. Simply put, they are having a different conversation, or else avoiding engagement altogether. While Lutherans are situated to respond to the academy's various homiletical foci according to the preacher's performance (properly distinguishing between law and gospel, privileging a direct proclamation of the gospel) and a ministerial *extra nos* identity (the preacher's status as called and ordained), they do not lend themselves to a

helpful Lutheran contribution to the academy's emphasis that involves the preacher's identity politics and intersectionality *as such*. Again, these Lutheran foci are important and foundational to Lutheran theology; but they do not go *far enough* for this dissertation's goals. What is needed is another foundational Lutheran truth that can inform a method of engagement that contributes directly to the conversations in the greater homiletical academy in a fruitful way.

Fortunately, there is another Lutheran foundational truth regarding the preacher that can be relied upon as a means by which an adequate contextualization can be made. This chapter will recover that foundation for the current conversation. The exploration will begin with Scriptural exegesis relevant to the pastoral ministry, and then move towards demonstrating the importance of the person of the preacher specifically in historical Lutheran theology. It will be shown that as theologians of the Reformation shifted their focus of the preacher from a priestly performer of sacrificial acts to a practical pastor who preached and taught, certain pastoral qualities were emphasized in Lutheran theology that extended beyond performance and authority. This will provide an understanding of the preacher as an individual Christian as a foundational way in which Lutherans have traditionally thought. Following this overview, specific historical voices will demonstrate that this understanding has been continually retained by Lutherans in the centuries following the Reformation. Thereby, it will be shown that the person of the preacher as a unique individual Christian is indeed a foundational consideration for Lutheran homiletics, and thus will be a more appropriate horizon by which to equip a Lutheran response to the academy.

This chapter corresponds methodologically to Browning's "historical theological" movement in a strategic-practical theological approach. While the previous chapter gave a thick description of the relevant praxes of Lutheran homiletical thinking,[1] the gap in adequate

[1] This is the so-called "descriptive theological." See Browning, *Practical Theology*.

responsiveness to the academy can begin to be filled by examining more deeply the formative history and sources of Lutheran homiletics. As Browning puts it, historical theology aims at "gain[ing] clarity within a larger hermeneutic effort to understand our praxis and theory behind it."[2] In other words, a closer look at this historical foundation arises from a "fresh confrontation with the normative texts and monuments of the Christ faith."[3] After this clarity, it will be possible to develop a systematic-theological approach[4] that is well equipped to converse with the greater homiletical academy on the person of the preacher vis-à-vis identity politics and intersectionality.

Scripture and the Preacher

Beyond Jesus' institution of the Office of the Keys on the first Easter (John 20:19–23), the pastoral epistles of St. Paul (1 Tim., 2 Tim., and Titus) offer the most direct information available from the first generation of Christendom on who a pastor is to be and what he is to do. Paul writes these epistles to Timothy (who served in Ephesus) and Titus (who served on Crete) as a spiritual father and with the full authority of the apostolic ministry to encourage and instruct them in their tasks as pastors so that the Great Commission given by Jesus (Matt. 28:18–20) can continue to be obeyed, and the gospel of salvation extend to the entire world. Because an exhaustive New Testament exegesis of the pastoral office would be prohibited by space, the pastoral epistles are herein established as the primary delineators of study for this section.

The exclusive specificity of Jesus Christ (e.g. John 14:6; Rev. 18) and the times when those with "itching ears" will turn away from the truth (2 Tim. 4:3; see also Gal. 1:6–9) make the

[2] Browning, *Practical Theology*, 49.

[3] Browning, *Practical Theology*, 49. In the present case the "fresh confrontation" is Lutheran homiletics with identity politics and intersectionality.

[4] In other words, the "fused horizon" of the descriptive and historical.

importance of knowing the truth all the more poignant for those who teach and preach. It is not at all difficult to see how Lutherans arrive at their foundational homiletical emphases of preaching the truth with accuracy and properly distinguishing between law and gospel as authorized servants of the Word: when Paul gives Timothy and Titus instructions for appointing pastors[5] and other servants, among the requirements for service are the ability to teach and preach (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:24; 4:2; Titus 1:9) the true faith which has been handed down to them (2 Tim. 1:13–14; 2:2; 3:10, 14; Titus 2:1)[6] according to the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16–17).[7] They are to "rightly handle the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15) as they properly apply this Word to the various situations called for (1 Tim. 4:6, 13; 5:1–16; 6:2b). For this work they are worthy of honor (1 Tim. 5:17–18).

However, there are more requirements and expectations for pastors than just preaching and teaching the truth: "an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable … not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive … He must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:2–7; see also 2 Tim. 4:5; Titus 1:5–9). Although true teaching and preaching is essential to the ministry, clearly the preacher himself

[5] This dissertation will not split hairs over modern ecclesial delineations between the New Testament's many different words for church leadership (such as ἐπίσκοπης, πρεσβύτερος, or διάκονος), for it would be irresponsible scholarship to read modern church polity into first century terms. The fluidity of these terms in the New Testament (especially διάκονος, which is used to describe both the table duties of the Seven in Acts 6 *and* the ministry of the apostles in the same chapter) largely reflects the primitive church's adaptability in the service of the gospel.

[6] See also Acts 18:24–28, when Priscilla and Aquila met Apollos in Ephesus and upon seeing and hearing his zeal for the gospel, "took him aside and explained to him the way of God *more accurately*." Italics mine.

[7] See also Acts 1:21–22. Matthias was chosen to take the place of Judas in the apostolic ministry after the lot fell to him. The only stated requirements here were that he be "one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us," thus emphasizing the importance of the eyewitness personal accounts that the apostolic ministry uniquely bore.

has a much more comprehensive list of concerns and requirements. These mostly deal with the uprightness of character with which he must conduct himself: “show yourself in all respect to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us” (Titus 2:7–8; see also 1 Tim. 1:5; 4:7, 12; 6:11–14; 2 Tim. 2:15a). Indeed, the ideal model of a pastor is for a regenerate man who “cleanses himself from what is dishonorable” (2 Tim. 2:20–21) like an honorable vessel “set apart as holy” (2 Tim. 2:21) so that there may be no hindrance to the message.

Peppered throughout these instructions and encouragements from Paul are also clear indicators of personality and unique individuality—not just Paul’s, but also those of Timothy and Titus. Paul views his relationship to these men as a spiritual father, calling both of them “child” (1 Tim. 1:2, 18; 2 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4). Theirs is not a ministry that remains static, but grows and changes according to context. To Titus he specifically warns against the Cretans, who are “liars, evil beats, lazy gluttons” (Titus 1:12–13), and amongst whom he deliberately placed Titus to bring order and appoint other pastors (Titus 1:5). He reminds Timothy—who is young and thus prone to being “despised” (1 Tim. 4:12a)—that he has received this ministry as a personal gift “when the council of elders laid their hands on [him],” and that he is to “practice these things, immerse [himself] in them, so that all may see [his] *progress*” (1 Tim. 4:14–15, italics mine). Timothy’s progress in the faith and ministry is to be “fanned into flame” as Paul remembers Timothy’s tears and reminds him of the special relationships he had with his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, who raised him in the Christian faith (2 Tim. 1:4–5). Paul indeed knows Timothy and his context so well that he even directs him in regards to his personal health: “No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent

ailments" (1 Tim. 5:23).

All of these seemingly minute details found throughout the pastoral epistles demonstrate a model of the pastoral ministry that is not just based on the performance of tasks according to the truth, but also includes the foundational reality that pastors and preachers are real and complicated individuals who live and work amongst other real and complicated individuals. All of these irreducible cultural qualities make up the vast panoply of people used by God for the ministry—even pastors. Therefore, these things must be taken into consideration holistically so that even the individuality of the preacher may have a prominent role in homiletical discussions.

Recovering the Word, Recovering the Pastor

It need hardly be repeated that Lutheran theology emphasizes the Word of God above any other aspect of Christian doctrine, yet it is necessary to do so as not to underestimate the weight the above Scriptural exegesis carries. The theology of the Word is in fact so critical that Luther did not even distinguish it as one doctrinal teaching among many, but rather as the source from which all other teachings flow:[8] from the beginning of creation (which was spoken into being), to the Incarnation of the divine Word (see John 1:1–3; Col. 1:15–20), to the same Lord's paracletic gift of preaching at Pentecost (see Acts 2:1–4), to the efficacy of the sacraments, the Word of God is the heart of the Reformation—and thus the heart of the Christian faith. One form of that Word is, of course, the written Word, and Luther's turn toward the same signaled a significant historical turn from an era that viewed the Christian faith as a medieval religion of sacramental rituals back to one that first heard the voice of God. Robert Kolb expresses as much in no uncertain terms:

[8] See Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 35–74. See also Kolb and Arand, *Genius of Luther's Theology,*129–220.

> Without the Bible, there could be no preaching and therefore no evangelical church life. Without the Bible, there would be no guidelines for applying natural law to a variety of situations in everyday life, no perception of how to fit together the various elements and experiences of life in a village or neighborhood. Permeating the whole of life for the Wittenberg theologians was the presence of God, particularly of God in conversation with his people in, through, and by means of Holy Scripture.[9]

More than simply repeating the Humanistic rally cry to *ad fontes,* Luther and the other Wittenberg Reformers began to understand the entirety of the Christian life as one centered on the Word—more specifically, on the *proclamation* of that Word for the benefit of the faith and life of all who heard it. As hearers and readers of that Word, the biblical descriptors of the pastoral ministry were naturally recovered by Luther and the Reformers.

Pastoral ministry being centered on the Word, its office was always connected to preaching. Thus, in the Reformation preaching became the most important aspect and focus of worship. Christian worship reoriented itself to reflect what is depicted in the New Testament and the earliest Christian church: the church had turned from a *Federhaus* (a "quill house") back into a *Mundhaus* ("mouth house"). In concert with the proclamation of the gospel, "the Word was to permeate all the aspects, obligations, and situations of public life, in church, society, and households."[10] Since preaching had became the most important aspect of the church's life, naturally "Luther redefined the goal of the sermon"[11] from one that simply prepared the hearers to receive the sacrament to one that delivered the very power of God to bring repentance and saving faith in Jesus Christ. Consequently, "the pastorate demanded more than learning the rules for ritual and proper administration of the parish."[12] Since preachers were the regular means by which the Word reached the hearers, they themselves needed to encounter the Word in the pages

[9] Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 8.

[10] Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 190–191.

[11] Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 9.

[12] Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 9.

of Scripture in order to "[encounter] the Holy Spirit addressing them and engaging them as means and instruments through whom he exercised his power for the salvation of hearers and readers."[13] It is no exaggeration to say that "Luther believed that oral communication forms the basis of human community and of *individual human identity*,"[14] and the preachers' identities were no exception to that rule. The formation of Lutheran preachers therefore had to focus on homiletics in a way it had not been for centuries. If their task was more than "mere sharing of information about God's disposition as God views human beings from heaven,"[15] but rather a life-giving Word of transformative salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, they needed to be intricately involved in the ministry as individual repositories of grace.[16]

In an embodied reflection of the Word's transformative power over human identity, and since "none of the Wittenberg preachers thought of the sermon as chiefly a means to convey information and cultivate knowledge,"[17] the preacher was encouraged to "pray, study, read, search the Scripture, and meditate on it in preparation for their teaching and preaching,"[18] with the distinct cognition of his hearers' needs:

> A preacher is like a carpenter. His tool is God's Word. Because his hearers with whom he has to act and work are so different and diverse, he should not always sing the same song and deliver just one message in his teaching, but because the hearers

[13] Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 14.

[14] Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 60. Italics mine.

[15] Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 73.

[16] See 2 Cor. 1:3–7: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort."

[17] Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 425.

[18] Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 187.

> are diverse, he should threaten, terrify, criticize, complain, comfort, reconcile, console, and so forth.[19]

The preacher being one who "acts and works" amongst and with his hearers, sermons naturally became more personal and conversational as his individuality met the practical application of ministry.[20] Luther himself provides an example of this, for his "person and personality lent power to the impact of his preaching."[21] Simply put, he believed in what God was saying to him, and he wanted others to believe it too. That individually experienced grace became to be the ideal model of a good preacher and pastor.

By emphasizing the importance of preaching for personal impact over the mere performance of sacrificial rites, the pastor was "no longer the priest who stood between God and the people … [but] one priest among many … the one designated to deliver God's Word formally, in public, for and to the people."[22] This meant that the preacher was one of the congregation—albeit set apart by his special office to preach—and "like all Christians, [pastors] were to be moved by a sense of their God-given responsibilities in the situations to which God had called them as they performed the specific tasks of those callings."[23] Lutheran theologians saw themselves as responsible for training men not just in priestly functions (which were certainly still important), but to deliver the grace that they themselves had received by their preaching, and the personalizations of this educational shift is reflected in major changes to

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[19] Luther, quoted in Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 189.

[20] Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 197.

[21] Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 207. See also Fred W. Meuser, *Luther the Preacher* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983).

[22] Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 174.

[23] Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 244. See also Kristian T. Baudler, *Priesthood of All Believers: In an Age of Modern Myth* (New York: Oxen, 2016). Baudler challenges the common myths of Luther's life and writings associated with his view of the clergy and laity with a conclusion that Luther's view of the laity far outstrips any temptation to make the reformer a sacerdotalist.

curricula.[24] While (perhaps obviously) still dealing strongly with matters of doctrine, the strikingly large amount of subjects in the *Loci* of the Wittenbergers is indicative of a pedagogy that had so expanded its desire for practical pastoral application that it left no stone of the human condition unturned. Beyond doctrines essential to the Christian faith, practical matters regarding marriage, burial, virginity, prayer, even civil and ecclesiastical governments were touchpoints for pastoral training.[25] These and many others indicate a certain domestic view of the pastoral office that placed pastors into the midst of the people as real and helpful servants of human life rather than transcendent performers of sacred rites.

Beyond the formalized structures of university education, the first century of Lutherans were concerned with reforming and informing the *current* pastorate in the aforementioned ministerial role so that they could better embody their proper role in the recovered Word-centered understanding of the Christian faith. In an important survey of the earliest Lutheran pastoral manuals, Amy Nelson Burnett examines the practical emphases of the same.[26] While not an entirely new genre, these manuals each functioned as a condensed (single volume) practicum for pastors that focused on their day-to-day tasks rather than dense theological studies. Their goals were not focused on providing doctrinal information as much as providing assistance on ministerial *application*. Noting that the manuals were initially prescriptive rather than descriptive (as the Reformation gathered steam), Burnett's survey nevertheless demonstrates a noticeable

[24] See Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 312–18. See also Robert Kolb, "The Pastoral Dimension of Melanchthon's Pedagogical Activities for the Education of Pastor," in Irene Dingel, Robert Kolb, Nicole Kuropka, and Timothy J. Wengert, *Philip Melanchthon: Theologian in Classroom, Confession, and Controversy* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 29–42.

[25] See Kolb, *Enduring Word*, 314, for a helpful chart listing the many *Loci* topics of Melanchthon, Rhegius, and Sarcerius.

[26] Amy Nelson Burnett, "The Evolution of the Lutheran Pastors' Manual in the 16th Century," in *Church History* 73 (2004): 536–65.

shift in the way the Lutherans began to view the role of the preacher in a practical way.[27] In particular, she juxtaposes five Lutheran manuals that "demonstrate that the Lutheran pastoral manuals were not static in either their contents or their intended audience."[28] Rather, they reflected the personalization of real pastors as they carried out their ministry to real people with real lives and real problems. Pursuant to the Reformation's evangelical emphasis on the Word of God, the preacher's responsibilities increased dramatically as they moved from rote liturgics to personal pastoral involvement. Reflective of the practicality of the pastoral epistles themselves, the Reformers recognized that doctrine was no longer theoretical; it was deeply and necessarily practical.

Of particular relevance for this dissertation are the emphases in the manuals on the pastor's reason for theological study, the uprightness of his character, and his personality as a specialist of the people he serves. Theological study for its own sake was taken for granted in the manuals, even if the pastor was self-educated; in fact, the manuals largely "assumed that the pastor was well aware of his ceremonial and liturgical responsibilities and could perform them competently."[29] Besides, pastors likely had a strong network of support in place whereby older

[27] Peter A. Dykema, "Conflicting Expectations: Parish Priests in Late Medieval Germany," (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 1998) provides a helpful study that exhibits pastoral manuals in the immediate years before the Reformation as already transitioning toward the practicality of the office. See especially Dykema, "Conflicting Expectations," 224–46. Similarly, Richard J. Serina Jr., "Nicholas of Cusa and the Reformation of Preaching," in *Feasting in a Famine of the Word: Lutheran Preaching in the Twenty-First Century,* eds., Mark W. Birkholz, Jacob Corzine, Jonathan Mumme (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 63–77, cites Nicholas of Cusa's efforts to reform the clergy, since "poor preaching is a byproduct of something else, not a cause, and so consequently it is best also to see a reformation of preaching as a byproduct of something else, too." (64). Although Nicholas of Cusa lived and wrote almost century before Luther, Serina suggests that his attitude of clergy reform already fostered an attitude of pastoral change in the decades leading up to the Reformation.

[28] Burnett, "Evolution," 540. The five manuals she surveys (chronologically) were written by Johannes Rivius (1500–1553), Niels Hemmingsen (1513–1600), Erasmus Sarcerius (1501–1559), Conrad Porta (1541–1585), and Felix Bidembach (1564–1612).

[29] Burnett, "Evolution," 560.

(and more experienced) pastors could guide them in the practicalities of official acts.[30] So instead of reinventing the theological wheel, the manuals were focused on the "consolation and *personal application* of doctrine."[31] This meant that more practical pastoral advice had to be given so that "the pastor [could] tailor his words to each individual case."[32] To that end, advice on ministry to the sick and dying, to the recalcitrant, to married couples and families, even to condemned criminals was given. Along with this pastoral counseling, practical tips on how to preach *in media res* were plentiful.

With the focus on these and other practical pastoral situations came the understanding that the pastor was undertaking a "noble task" (1 Tim. 3:1) that encompassed far more than the simple performance of liturgical duties, and the pastor was himself considered to be a real person who continually experienced the consolation of the gospel. Because each pastoral situation was unique—notwithstanding similarities in culture and region, the people served were all unique individuals—the manuals supplemented the pastors' basic theological training with practicality such that "the pastor was in a sense left free to become a specialist in consoling his parishioners, and he was expected to be able to apply the Gospel to their individual circumstances."[33] Because of this, the manuals pay "careful attention both to the psychological state of the pastoral subject and for the variety of ways he tailored the pastor's presentation of fundamental evangelical doctrine to the needs of the subject."[34] Naturally, this also meant paying close attention to the *pastor's* own psychological and spiritual state within and among the people he served.

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[30] See Burnett, "Evolution," 562.

[31] Burnett, "Evolution," 560. Italics mine.

[32] Burnett, "Evolution," 557.

[33] Burnett, "Evolution," 562.

[34] Burnett, "Evolution," 559.

Concurrent with this practicality came the manuals' hitherto underemphasized focus on the pastor's character. Indeed, a "major change that [occurred] over time [was] the amount of space devoted to the pastor's conduct and to the dignity of church office in general."[35] Advice as specific as how a pastor should act in a public gathering, not drink too much, or not gamble, functioned not only to heighten the importance of the pastor's character for the benefit of the people, but also to work against the anticlericalism endemic to the times. In short, while each of the manuals are unique, it is safe to say that pastors were understood as "facing the daunting task of helping others see how religious beliefs related to the circumstances of daily life."[36] Naturally, this meant that the pastor's own daily life was impacted by (and an example of) his Christian faith in action. This emphasis on the pastor's identity continued throughout subsequent generations of Lutheranism.

Continuity of Lutheran Thought on the Person of the Preacher

As the previous section reported, the earliest Lutherans saw the Word of God as their material principle; that is, the means (*sola*) and consistent norm by which God reveals himself to people: by the Word God creates, redeems, and sanctifies; by the Word he is present in the sacraments for the forgiveness of sins; by the Word he speaks through the preacher. Regulated and directed by the written Word of Scripture, the Lutherans recovered an understanding of the preacher that was especially consistent with the pastoral letters of Paul, which demonstrates the pastor as a unique individual (i.e., Paul, Timothy, and Titus) who has deep personal connections

[35] Burnett, "Evolution," 563. See also Susan C. Karant-Nunn, "Preaching the Word in Early Modern Germany," in *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period,* ed., Larissa Taylor (Boston: Brill, 2003): 193–220. Karant-Nunn especially notes that "in their sermons, on whatever topics, preachers presented to their hearers both explicitly and implicitly a model of the Christian life that they, the clerics themselves, were intended to embody" (205).

[36] Burnett, "Evolution," 565.

to his vocation and the people he serves. While this may be an adequate enough historical assessment to establish the person of the preacher as a foundational Lutheran teaching, more evidence can be given to prove that the person of the preacher was not limited to one particular epoch (i.e., just the first century or just the Reformation). As the centuries proceeded from the Reformation to the modern era, many specific and influential Lutheran voices continued to consider the preacher's individuality. The organization of the following subsections mirrors the emphases of the pastoral manuals listed above, namely the pastor's reason for theological study, the uprightness of his character, and his personality as a specialist of the people he serves. Though each subsection proceeds chronologically, the organization is not intended to show causality or development, but rather consistency.

The Preacher's Study and Preparation

The importance of the preacher's study and preparation (including his formal training in seminary) is a trait that has been consistently maintained by Lutherans throughout history. However, current Lutheran thought largely suggests that the reason for this emphasis is to prepare the preacher for being adequately knowledgeable about his content. To be sure, if the preacher studies well, dedicates himself to the confessional understanding of Scripture, and submerges himself in the Word on a regular basis, he is far more likely to preach the truth in all things with an application that treats his task with the seriousness it deserves. However, simply "getting it right" does not sufficiently describe the motivations of study and preparation for Lutherans. Yes, correct knowledge has been a backbone of the Reformation, but correct knowledge does not necessarily transfer to a beneficial sermon by all homiletical metrics (to say nothing of considerations of the person of the preacher).

Indeed, there is a difference between study and preparation simply to say the correct things

versus study and preparation to be prepared to preach "in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2) for the sake of the hearers. The distinction lies in the preacher's personal involvement with the Word in his study. A preacher can be a successful student all throughout his training, recite truth without a moment's hesitation, and unimpeachably give orthodox answers to any theological question; yet a sermon that is entirely correct in all points of doctrine can still fail in its application.[37] Thus, the preacher would do well first to "guard the good deposit" (2 Tim. 1:14) entrusted to him, which means clinging himself to the gospel of salvation, and then he will be equipped as a minister. By so doing he will "fan into flame" (2 Tim. 1:6) for the hearers the gift that was first given to him (see 2 Cor. 1:4).

The personalization of study for the sake of the preacher's self and *then* the hearers is held by Lutherans throughout history. For example, Wilhelm Loehe's pastoral theology, which includes a lengthy section on homiletics directed to the students in Neuendetteslau, makes a point of saying that the liturgy was important for the Reformation precisely because there was a dire need for the promotion of pure doctrine because "the level of knowledge [of pure doctrine] had sunk so low."[38] This highlights the Lutheran value of preaching the truth for the sake of the people, and it is clear that for Loehe the motivating factor behind the pastor's study and preparation is to teach ably: "It is quite correct if one finds the character and the highest of all the virtues of a shepherd in the ability to teach."[39] However, even as Loehe admits that the ability to teach arises first from natural talent as a spiritual gift, he quickly adds that this gift (like all gifts)

[37] See the importance of proper application especially in Walther's second thesis on the proper distinction between law and gospel: "Only he is an orthodox teacher who not only present all the articles of faith in accordance with Scripture, but also rightly distinguishes from each other the Law and the Gospel." Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 30.

[38] J. K. Wilhelm Loehe, *The Pastor,* trans. Wolf Dietrich Knappe (St. Louis: Concordia, 2015), 209–10.

[39] Loehe, *Pastor*, 199.

is squandered when not cultivated by the pastor *in a personal way*. On studying the Word, "the more one has recognized the great whole, *the more his soul will rejoice* when he accurately recognizes the individual part and becomes aware how completely the two fit together … Therefore, the cursory reading and the studying that goes with it should be the soil from which grows a rich seed and harvest of a careful and slow reading."[40] In other words, the more the pastor studies, the better able he is to understand the complex interconnectivity of the Scriptures and apply the same to his hearers because he has already applied it to himself. It cannot be overstated that the purpose of an advanced level of study and preparation for Lutherans is not for its own sake, but for the sake of the preacher's personal benefit and pastoral effectiveness in ministering: "A man may succeed only if he really lives in what he is going to preach and if he works continually to improve his inner education and to enlarge his knowledge and his horizon."[41] The benefit received by the hearers follows the benefit received by the pastor first.

To that end, Loehe insists that study of the biblical languages should be retained and continually practiced "to the grave,"[42] so that the pastor may be more accurate and confident in his exegesis. All those who rely on translations should exegete with obvious modesty as they teach and preach, since they are an interpretive step removed from the original languages. Loehe also impresses a daily reading of Scripture not just for the increase of knowledge, but for the edification of the pastor himself: "a preacher must read Scripture daily *because his soul needs it* … The first application of Scripture must be to one's own soul, then only after that to the souls of the congregation."[43] If this activity is done, the difference in sermons will be obvious, as the

[40] Loehe, *Pastor*, 224. Italics mine.

[41] Loehe, *Pastor*, 232.

[42] Loehe, *Pastor*, 225.

[43] Loehe, *Pastor*, 226. Italics mine.

spiritually conscientious pastor reflects the Spirit's vibrancy like a tree planted by streams of living water (Ps. 1; cf. 1 Cor. 4:6). Indeed, "whoever would live and study only for the sake of the office, without feeling the personal need to do so, would emit a hollow sound in his sermons. This statement is always true: if you want to be the trumpet of grace, you first must open yourself to grace."[44] Scripture does not make itself known and relevant without diligent study, but this study is not to remain lying on the page. "Bible study is an intensely personal matter. For it aims at blocking the 'static' of man's own misconceptions that the voice of God in the Bible might be heard."[45] Again, the goal of diligent study is not for the simple understanding of Scripture but its application. Any parishioner could wish for no less great a thing than a pastor who meditates daily on the Word of God.

Similar (and contemporary to) Loehe, C. F. W. Walther says that "only he is an orthodox teacher who, in addition to other requirements, rightly distinguishes Law and Gospel from each other."[46] This is far from another doctrinal addition to "get right." It is actually so simple in theory that it is "easy enough for children to learn."[47] Rather, Walther speaks to the *application* of the Word, which is a motivation behind the preacher's study. Apart from a clear desire to be correct, he also has a heartfelt and obvious desire to apply such knowledge to his task of communication for the sake of both his own faith and the faith of his hearers. "The difficulties of mastering this art confront the minister, in the first place, in so far as he is a Christian; in the second place, in so far as he is a minister."[48] This means that the preacher cannot hope to

[44] Loehe, *Pastor*, 226.

[45] Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, 76.

[46] Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 32.

[47] Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 43.

[48] Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 43.

properly apply the Word to his hearers unless he first has properly applied it to himself.

Yet the proper self-application of law and gospel to oneself is easier said than done precisely because the preacher is not a static entity, but a person. Like David, "when he fell into sin himself, he lacked the practical ability of applying his knowledge [of law and gospel] … God made David taste the bitterness of sins,"[49] and Peter, whose "many sins passed before his mind's eye"[50] when he saw the miraculous catch, even the preacher who understands well the proper distinction between law and gospel *in theory* can nevertheless struggle *personally* with his own heart as he seeks the salve of the gospel when the law is condemning him. In fact, the richer the preacher's experience with his faith, the more he realizes that the law is an ever-present bedfellow in his life, speaking loudly to condemn him and guide him at all times. This spiritual angst pushes the preacher deeper into the refuge of the gospel. One who is not regenerate, on the other hand, "regards it as foolish to torment himself with former sins. He becomes increasingly indifferent towards all sins. A Christian, however, feels his sin and also the witness of his conscience against him."[51] It would be fitting to add that not just the unregenerate preacher, but the preacher who views his study as mere work, becomes increasingly indifferent towards the proper application of the Word in his own life. The Christian preacher, therefore, first studies and prepares at length in order to apply the Word to himself.[52]

While the preacher studies and prepares for his own sake and to strengthen his own faith by

[49] Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 44.

[50] Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 44.

[51] Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 45.

[52] Many repeat the common anecdote that a preacher should devote a study of the Word for himself in addition to (and other than) studying the upcoming sermon text. However, such division could be troublesome, as it places a disconnect between the preacher's heart and the actual text he is applying to the hearers. The sentiment seeks to prevent the preacher's heart from viewing his study as mere work, but it carries the assumption that study and preparation for the sermon is inherently less than devotional.

the Spirit's guidance in the Word, his motivations do not end there. Leading immediately from (and often concurrently with) this motivation to study is the preacher's application of the Word to his hearers, since his calling is to minister to them. As Walther said, "I do not want you to stand in your pulpits like lifeless statues, but to speak with confidence and with cheerful courage offer help where help is needed."[53] This famous statement of Walther's deepens the implications of the pastor's study, for it strikes at his motivation as one who called to preach to real people.

Again, the concern is not on the amount of time spent or academic efficiency achieved by studying, but rather on the *reasons* for such study; quality is preferred over quantity, though the latter is presumed in order to achieve the former.[54] Closely following the goal of proper interpretation and application for his own sake is the preacher's impetus of pastoral effectiveness. Then, as he has "duly experienced the force of the Law and the consolation of the Gospel or the power of faith … [is] best prepared to apply to others what they have experienced in [his] own life."[55] His experience is like a man who has done the hard work of summiting a mountain and can now function as a guide to other hikers. Throughout his evening lectures on the proper distinction between law and gospel, Walther frequently makes the explicit distinction between correct knowledge and the application thereof: "A minister must not be satisfied with merely proclaiming the truth; he must proclaim the trust so as to *meet the needs* of his people."[56] Again, not only does the preacher have an awareness of and aptitude for proper doctrine, but he spends time in study and preparation in order to apply it to and for the people he serves. For

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[53] Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 5.

[54] See especially an open letter by Johann Eberlin to Johann Jakob in 1525 entitled, "How a Servant of God's Word Should Behave in Everything he Does, and Especially Toward Those Who Never Heard the Gospel Preached, So They Are Not Offended," cited in Loehe, *The Pastor*, 166: "If you get tired of reading, stop; lest this boredom finally cause you to abhor and be disgusted with the heavenly bread, to the harm of your soul."

[55] Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 51.

[56] Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 208. Italics mine.

Walther, the importance of study and preparation (more specifically, properly learning how to divide the Word of God) comes to fruition in the effects that the law and gospel have on the hearers in its application: "The Gospel must be preached only to bruised, contrite, miserable sinners; the Law, to secure sinners."[57] By this proper application, the unrepentant can be brought to repentance and the repentant can be forgiven.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, lamentations on a lack of Lutheran homiletics texts in America spurred Johann Reu to write a tome of homiletical theory with an exhaustive number of bibliographical references (mostly referring to non-Lutherans from whom valuable insight can be found).[58] Within, Reu defends homiletics as a valid branch of theological study that specifically imagines the sermon in a congregation of believers as the ideal model of homiletical study. Like his predecessors, Reu holds the Biblical content of the sermon as of non-negotiable importance, abhorring anything that comes "from the preacher's own consciousness."[59] He argues that "it is true without the aid of the Holy Spirit there cannot be a successful preacher; but it does not follow that the Holy Spirit will put the words in the preacher's mouth without the latter's own diligent labor."[60] In other words, extensive study and preparation is crucial for the preacher, and Scripture itself bears witness to this: the apostles studied under Jesus for up to three years, and Paul (arguably the most accomplished apostle) had the most academic training as a Pharisee. The preacher should not be confined to one specific

[57] Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 101. Thesis VIII: "The Word of God is not rightly divided when the Law is preached to those who are already in terror on account of their sins or the Gospel to those who live securely in their sins."

[58] See Johann Michael Reu, *Homiletics: A Manual of the Theory and Practice of Preaching*, trans. Albert Steinhaeuser (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977), v, who describes the reason for this as the study of homiletics being "largely conditioned by the individual peculiarities of each language." Since English-speaking homiletics of the era were almost all non-Lutheran, Reu's bibliography reflects this fact.

[59] Reu, *Homiletics*, 247.

[60] Reu, *Homiletics*, 16.

branch of theology, and if he wishes to become a better communicator of all the theology with which he has packed his brain, then he should learn how to organize those thoughts in order to communicate them efficiently.

As expected, Reu does believe that the application of this knowledge ought to be guided through the "science" of homiletics:

> What a sacred duty devolves upon the man who has chosen the office of preaching as his life-work, who expects a proper emolument from men for his labors, and who must render an account of his stewardship to God! He dare not obstruct the reception of the Word by his own incompetence or indolence. He will rather strive with all that is in him to apprehend ever more completely the laws that govern the sermon and make them the basis of his own preaching, until he is ruled and directed by them as though they were his second nature.[61]

The examples and skills of great preachers should be studied, and their methods categorized and followed, not vilified as being Spirit-less. In fact, "the pulpit must be kept free from whatever does not minister to Christian contemplation, to the concentration of the soul upon God, and to the furtherance of the spiritual life of the congregation … A sermon becomes too long as soon as it ceases to hold the devout attention of its hearers."[62] The preacher therefore studies the Word, history, systematics, exegesis, and homiletical theory in order to better communicate to his hearers.

Like Loehe and Walther, Reu does not leave study and preparation in a vacuum either. He believes that one cannot properly mount the pulpit without thorough exegetical knowledge first for his own heart: "When the Word finds and becomes embodied in a preacher, his personality becomes to his hearers a guaranty of the power of the Word to perform what it promises."[63] Again, the preacher's study is not mechanical, rote, or for its own sake; his study rather feeds and

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[61] Reu, *Homiletics*, 19.

[62] Reu, *Homiletics*, 394.

[63] Reu, *Homiletics*, 76.

fuels his own experience with faith that can in turn feed and fuel the faith of his hearers. The statement is also applicable to the preacher's delivery in relation to his personality.

All of theology comes together in the sermonic task; without the preaching of the Word all other disciplines are worthless (Rom. 10:14, 17). That Reu's program refers to the "laws" of homiletics is not necessarily reflective in a rigidity of study—considerations of structure and rhetorical organization are in place not for the sake of the study itself, but for the sake of the hearers. Knowledge and erudition come with the territory of the theologian, but study and preparation must be translated into an applicable functionality for the hearers. Then, as the preacher moves from his internalized study into the sermonic application for the hearers, his upright character is treated with deep prioritization.

The Character of the Preacher

In keeping with Paul's pastoral encouragements to Timothy and Titus regarding their character and the character of the servants they appoint (see 1 Tim. 3:1–10; 4:11–15; 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:2, 15; Titus 1:6–9), his appeals to his own personal piety (1 Cor. 11:1; Gal. 6:17; 2 Tim. 3:10–11; see also 1 Pet. 5:1–3), and the Reformation's recovery of that biblical witness towards practical pastoral ministry, Lutherans have continually placed an emphasis on the unimpeachable moral character of the preacher. Although Paul's moral and professional achievements are considered dross to him for the sake of knowing Christ (Phil. 3:4–11), holy living was still a crucial element for the spread of the gospel (see especially 1 Thess. 1:4–6, as well as Acts 5:13).

The foundational Lutheran concern for the preacher's character extends all the way back to the eponymous theologian, whose catechisms mince no words in the condemnation of lazy preachers, who are "completely shameful gluttons and servants of their own bellies. They are

more fit to be swineherds and dog tenders than caretakers of souls and pastors."[64] The rest of the Lutheran Confessions, though not loquacious on this point, are also not languorous in their presumption that the church's clergy be converted and godly men. Therefore, Lutherans often enjoy extended conversations regarding the upright character of preachers as they preach. While a Lutheran temptation is to eschew all considerations of the preacher's godly living as irrelevant to the efficacy of the Word,[65] such a thought is a red herring when discussing the person of the preacher. Lutherans can (and should) speak freely of the importance of the preacher's character without fear of picking up this connotation. This is precisely because God *deigns* to use the preacher as a means of accomplishing his work just as he deigns to use water, bread, and wine. The effects that work has on the preacher himself can hardly be called irrelevant; they can even be considered as a persuasive function in the sermon.

For historical Lutheranism on the character of the preacher, few voices sound larger than Philip Spener. While Spener is often credited as being the father of Lutheran Pietism (he did establish the historically-maligned *collegia pietatis*—small groups meeting in homes to speak of matters of faith in an informal manner, also known as "conventicles"), it could be argued that Spener's piety would not have become what it was without John Arndt, whose *True Christianity* was Spener's favorite book next to the Bible.[66] In fact, Spener's most popular book, *Pia Desideria* ("Pious Wishes") was originally a preface to Arndt's *True Christianity*—the latter is a massive tome that deals with almost nothing but the upright character and moral expectations of a Christian. This should be remembered if only to encourage a more charitable reading of Spener

[64] LC, Preface in Kolb and Wengert, 379.

[65] See Ap. 7.4 in Kolb and Wengert, 175.

[66] Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1964), 8. See also John Arndt, *True Christianity*, trans. A. W. Boehm (Philadelphia: Lutheran Book Store, 2020).

as a product of his time and place.[67] Consistent with this dissertation's goal is the desire to hear historic Lutheran voices on the preacher regardless of any consequent histories modern Lutherans deem problematic.

Spener observed that the common person was entrenched in a type of spirituality that precluded an internal conversion; he especially notes drunkenness and lawsuits as epidemic among the laity. To give reason for these and other problems, he points directly to the spiritual defects in the clergy, whose sycophantic pandering to the civil authorities in charge of the church prevented a true conversion of the laity. "No reasonable Christian will deny that those who do not themselves have true and godly faith cannot, as they ought, perform the duties of their office and through the Word awaken faith in their hearers."[68] The clergy must practice personal piety first and foremost; otherwise, the people will ignore them and their work in the church is in vain.[69]

Indeed, neither the Orthodox nor the Pietist Lutherans in the 16th and 17th centuries saw the character of the preacher as irrelevant. Even though "the emphasis on the centrality of the preacher's spiritual condition marked the Pietist approach to the sermon and distinguished them from the Orthodox … moderate Pietists were always careful not to make the power of the Word

[67] There was certainly no shortage of animosity directed toward Spener by other Lutherans—Spener was less than vitriolic toward Christians of other confessions, being more concerned with *fides qua creditur* than *fides quae creditur* in the aftermath of the Thirty-Years War. This charity drew sharp criticisms of Spener and Pietism in general. However, there is some evidence that the division between the Pietist and Orthodox Lutherans of the 17th and 18th centuries has been exaggerated. See Jonathon Strom, "Pietism and Revival," in *Preaching, Sermon and Cultural Change in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Boston: Brill, 2009), 173–218. See also Martin Schian, *Orthodoxie und Pietismus im Kampf Um die Predigt* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1912), 90–97.

[68] Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 47. For a helpful study on the practices of church discipline against licentious living during this period, see Jonathan Strom, *Orthodoxy and Reform: The Clergy in Seventeenth Century Rostock* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

[69] See Susan C. Karant-Nunn, "Preaching the Word in Early Modern Germany," in Larissa Taylor, *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 193–220. "In their sermons, on whatever topics, preachers presented to their hearers both explicitly and implicitly a model of the Christian life that they, the clerics themselves, were intended to embody. Part of the responsibility of clergymen, whether from the pulpit or in their daily interactions with the laity, was to render the laity more than nominally Christian" (205).

of God dependent on the character of the preacher, but they consistently stressed the importance of a regenerate and converted ministry *for effective preaching*."[70] While the Pietist emphasis made the Orthodox nervous by drawing the preacher's personality to the surface, they could not deny that a regenerate preacher was of the utmost importance for the ministry and wellbeing of the hearers.

For Spener, this personal piety should desire to study theology and the Scriptures with the motivation of a deeper spiritual life and love for one's neighbor rather than to become embroiled in theological controversy for its own sake.[71]

> When men's minds are stuffed with such a theology which, while it preserves the foundation of faith from the Scriptures, builds on it with so much wood, hay, and stubble of human inquisitiveness that the gold can no longer be seen, it becomes exceedingly difficult to grasp and find pleasure in the real simplicity of Christ and his teaching. Men's taste becomes accustomed to the more charming things of reason, and after a while the simplicity of Christ and his teaching appears to be tasteless.[72]

At its core, theology is not intended for the stirring of disputations, but for the inner conversion of humans. Spener favorably recalls an oration on the study of theology given by David Chytraeus several times a year to his students at the University of Rostock that says as much.[73] That Chytraeus—one of the drafters of the Formula of Concord—would appear to agree with Spener says much about the latter's confidence in his position.

Similar to Spener, Loehe too insisted on the importance of a preacher's character for the

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[70] Strom, "Pietism and Revival," 193. Italics mine.

[71] Although the swords of the Thirty Years' War had been sheathed, there was in Spener's time a large and consistent presence of theological strife between theologians of every ilk: the faculty of the University of Wittenberg claimed that Pietists were guilty of 284 heresies (see Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 23, citing Hans-Martin Rotermund, *Orthodoxie und Pietismus* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlangsanstalt, 1960)). This obsession with doctrinal fidelity with little regard for spirituality has been reincarnated in many modern Lutheran blogs, regardless of the cogency of argument.

[72] Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 56.

[73] David Chytraeus, *Oratio de Studio Theologiae* (Wittenberg, 1581).

good of preaching: "One cannot deny that the lack of personal dignity, which is based on natural gift, character, experience, virtue, etc. can be a great hindrance for the authority of the office."[74] In fact, the good and godly living of the preacher strengthens his message, since the people hold him in high esteem (cf. Acts 5:13). Conversely, "Woe to him who neglects this [good example] and preaches the divine Word to the flock of Christ without recommending it through his example, or even hinders it through an evil example."[75] True to Lutheran form, Loehe too is careful to remind his readers that the efficacy of the Word does not rely on the character of the preacher, but the Word preached and the preacher's ethos are not entirely mutually exclusive.[76] They are linked—the Christian life and the power of the Word—because one cannot even understand the Christian life without the power of the Word. Similarly, Reu says, "the demand that the sermon be the utterance of the religious life of the preacher must be accompanied … with the qualification that spiritual life must be truly present in him."[77] His own spiritual life must neither regress nor remain static but must deepen and grow as much for himself as it is an exemplar for his hearers. His upright character is a part of his identity, which cannot be separated from his sermon. This leads inexorably and concurrently to the inclusion of the preacher's personality in the expression of his vocation.

The Personality of the Preacher

When the Word is internalized by the preacher, exhibited in his character, and then finds its expression in application to the hearers, verbal and non-verbal communicative styles and skills

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[74] Loehe, *Pastor*, 230.

[75] Loehe, *Pastor*, 202.

[76] See also Caemmerer, *Preaching*, 9. "The 'inner call' is hazardous. For we are looking for the true sense of mission within the preacher and the refreshment for his daily task. That task depends not on his feelings but on God. God summons not feelings only, but a life."

[77] Reu, *Homiletics*, 84.

are brought into the pulpit in a way that demonstrates the preacher's individuality and personal involvement. This "personality" in preaching is particularly noticeable in the actual *delivery* of a sermon—for a sermon written on a page is static until it is delivered to the hearers. Yet the personality of the preacher is not limited to the pulpit; his relationship with the hearers extends beyond (often far beyond) that limited time of public discourse. The modern era, for all its multi-media distractions and endless forms of entertainment that limit the attention span of sermon-listeners, elicits no new conundrum for the preacher to hold the attention of his hearers. While there may be a case to be made that these cultural realities in the 21st century bring unique opportunities and challenges for the preacher to "be more interesting" while remaining faithful to his task, the importance of quality in sermon delivery is not a new concept to Lutherans. Thoughts on the preacher's authentic liveliness, movement, emotion, gesticulations, and tone are scattered throughout Lutheran history.

Admittedly, the importance of liveliness and authenticity in the sermon delivery does not appear to have been a particularly prominent conversation. Nevertheless, when it is spoken of it could not be understated. Loehe, for example, has no qualm with giving credit to "experience in the office, dexterity, wisdom, eagerness, and use of outward conditions,"[78] as preaching qualities that can remove hindrances from the hearers so that they are not distracted by poor elocution. While he grants that the manner of speaking is not the means of grace, he insists (pursuant to his Lutheran confession) that the means of grace is delivered through the manner of speaking. To that end, even seemingly trite considerations like the length of a sermon should be relative to the hearers' capabilities and the preacher's skill.[79]

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[78] Loehe, *Pastor*, 200.

[79] Loehe, *Pastor*, 229–30. J.H.C. Fritz, *The Practical Missionary: A Handbook of Practical Hints for the Lutheran Home Missionary, Containing Thirty-Eight Talks on Related Missionary Subjects* (St. Louis: Concordia,

Like many of the first-generation Lutheran pastors' manuals, Loehe also gives practical advice to his students on how to build sentences and expressions in order to better communicate with the hearers. He considers such elements as sentence construction, choice of words, and simplicity. He is disdainful of preachers who imitate other preachers without regard to their own voices and abhors the so-called "pulpit tone" that sounds inauthentic.[80] Other brief considerations are given to items such as the tone of voice, speed of speaking, and gesticulation, ending with the importance of an honest critic to tell the preacher what he himself cannot see or hear in his delivery.[81]

Like Loehe, Walther desired an authentic personality in the pulpit, and even went so far as to make monotony of the pulpit a greater sin than outright pastoral wickedness:

> We see from [Rev. 3:15–16] that in the infallible judgment of God it is worse to be a lukewarm than a cold minister; it is worse to be a lazy and indifferent minister, who serves in his office because it is the profession in which he is making his living, than to be manifestly ungodly. For when a minister, though not teaching or living in a plainly unchristian manner, is so sleepy, so void of all earnestness and zeal for the kingdom of God and salvation of souls, the inevitable effect is that the poor souls of his parishioners become infected by him, and finally the entire congregation is lulled into spiritual sleep. On the other hand, when a minister leads a manifestly ungodly life and teaches ungodly doctrine, the good souls in his congregation do not follow, but turn away from him with loathing.[82]

Clearly, even Walther saw the caricature of the stilted boring preacher as something to be abhorred; such a pastor may be found to rest on his laurels as being faithful ("correct"), all the while killing his congregation from the inside-out. Rather, "every sincere preacher and minister

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1919) also gives suggestions for preachers in their sermon preparation with the goal of a more effective ministry.

[80] Loehe, *Pastor*, 235–38

[81] "An honest friend can do here what no system of rules can do, even if there existed a really thorough one, although it cannot be denied that true friends with the courage to talk a friend out of an ugly superficiality, a mere bagatelle, are hard to find." Loehe, *Pastor*, 244.

[82] Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 307. See also Caemmerer, *Preaching*, 15: "Preachers often fear that their hearers may find their message too hard to believe. Actually a more immediate problem is that they find preaching dull, nonessential to life, and aimless."

of Jesus Christ shows himself full of zeal and earnest determination."[83] To be dull and listless not only demonstrates a lack of the preacher's personal involvement with faith but is seen as the apex signal of a milquetoast ministry.

In a non-specific fashion, Reu has an open and adamant conviction that the preacher's own spiritual life must be present in the sermon in such a way that the hearers can tell he believes in his own preaching.[84] Even being a staunch opponent of the Methodist and Pietistic leanings of his day and age that demanded a preacher's message to come from (and therefore be based upon) his own conversion and sanctification, Reu's emphasis contrasts with the former as regards sermon *content*, but agrees with the need for the preacher to be passionately involved in the sermon's delivery. Quoting Ernst Ludwig Henke, he says "the very modulation of the voice and gesticulation are untruths unless they arise naturally from the absorption of the mind in the subject and not from the mere desire to produce an effect."[85] The movement and personality of the preacher arises in a natural manner to deliver the sermon as one who has already received it.[86]

The personality being discussed here is quite different than the "Ichpredigten"[87]

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[83] Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 308.

[84] This might be the *je ne sais quoi* similar to "signifying" for black preachers. See Chapter One.

[85] Reu, *Homiletics,* 81. E. L. Henke (1804–1872) was a Lutheran who taught at Brunswick, Jena, and Marburg throughout his career, in addition to publishing several books on the history of the Reformation.

[86] The image brings to mind the experience of Ralph Waldo Emerson (not a Lutheran) with a boring preacher that he relayed in his 1838 commencement address at Harvard Divinity School:

> A snowstorm was falling around us. The snowstorm was real, the preacher merely spectral, and the eye felt the sad contrast in looking at him, and then out of the window behind him into the beautiful meteor of the snow. He had lived in vain. He had not one word intimating that he had laughed or wept, was married or in love, had been commended, or cheated, or chagrined. If he had ever lived and acted, we were none the wiser for it. The capital secret of his profession, namely, to convert life into truth, he had not learned. Not one fact in all his experience had he yet imported into his doctrine. This man had ploughed and planted and talked and bought and sold; he had read books; he had eaten and drunken; his head aches, his heart throbs; he smiles and suffers; yet was there not a surmise, a hint, in all the discourse, that he had ever lived at all.

Emerson's message was not well received at the time.

[87] "Ichpredigten" can be understood as a type of preaching (Predigt) that focuses on the testimony of the preacher's conversion rather than being based on the Word of God.

reminiscent of tent revivals and motivational speakers, which seeks to convert by performance, demands, and personal testimonials. Sermonic personality (as understood by Lutherans) is no more or less than the embodied authenticity of a preacher who views his task as personally as he must. "Would that there might be an end in the Church of all stereotyped passing on of the merely traditional and acquired; an end of the speaking of phonographs and gramophones; and that their place might be taken by living human beings, *personalities* touched and renewed by the Spirit of God."[88] The preacher's personality shown in the sermon neither points to his own conversion as performative, nor ignores the tone of his voice as though mere recitation (or reading) of words can save his hearers.[89]

Reu is careful to insist that the Word is not assisted in its efficacy by the preacher's personality, but the latter can only be ignored at the expense of the ministry's effectiveness: "the inner strife and struggle of the soul must appear to every thinking Christian as something sacred and to be honored and respected."[90] Reu adds that many liberal and unorthodox preachers are found with great followings; no matter the orthodoxy, if a preacher has no "inner participation" with the sermon, it will fall on deaf ears. "For every original preacher has his distinct individuality, which is not destroyed by the grace of God, but purified, hallowed, and transfigured."[91] Because of this individuality, there has been great homiletical variety throughout

[88] Reu, *Homiletics*, 82. Italics mine.

[89] See also Walther, *Law and Gospel*, Thesis X: "The Word of God is not rightly divided when the preacher describes faith in a manner as if the mere inert acceptance of truths, even while a person is living in mortal sins, renders that person righteous in the sight of God and saves him; or as if faith makes a person righteous and saves him for the reason that it produces in him love and reformation of his mode of living." 210.

[90] Reu, *Homiletics*, 90.

[91] Reu, *Homiletics*, 92. See also Reu's citation of Edwards A. Park (not a Lutheran) at the consecration of Broadway Tabernacle, 1859: "The maturest [sic] and ablest men in the Christian ministry will testify with tears of delight and thanksgiving that the gracious mystery of redemption by the cross has evermore grown before the vision of their reverence and love until it has filled all things with its mournful, holy, and infinite glory. Preaching Christ monotonous? Then infinite variety is monotonous." 65.

the history of the Christian church. If this were not the case, the church should have expected Christ to leave a book of sermons to his apostles instead of the mandate to preach with no other instructions than "teach everything I taught you" (Matt. 28:20). If the Word is alive and active, and the sermon is a form of the Word,[92] then the preacher must strive to project the sermon as alive and active.

Again, careful to insist that the preacher's moral life is not the factor that makes the Word effective for granting salvation, Reu nevertheless calls the preacher's personal spiritual life a "necessary prerequisite and constant accompaniment of every sermon."[93] All of the preacher's study and theological preparation counts not a whit if he himself does not *feel* the gospel in his innermost spirit, and this will be evident in his delivery. The preacher "dare not be a lifeless instrument, a wooden fingerpost, with no living relation to his message, a mere courier bearing a strange and unknown message."[94] The preacher's life and personality takes root in an obvious way when he is serious about his own spiritual life. Reu calls this power a "guaranty," which is another way of saying the best father of the gospel is a child of the same. Preaching to himself first, the preacher's own self becomes a living witness to his hearers, bringing an end to lifeless recitations and the drone-like readings of manuscripts.[95]

Reu is even more adamant about gesticulations than tone, saying, "that the sermon should

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[92] Loehe and others split hairs over the "proper sense" by which the sermon is the Word (see Loehe, *Pastor*, 204), but Luther had no qualms about equating the pulpit with the apostolic authority (see Vajta, *Luther On Worship*, 67–83).

[93] Reu, *Homiletics,* 75.

[94] Reu, *Homiletics*, 74–75.

[95] One should be cautious not to equate too strongly preachers who are in the habit of relying on manuscripts with an inauthentic spiritual wellbeing. Reu's advice speaks more to the reality *behind* the sermon rather than the delivery itself, though later he does prefer the preacher to commit his sermon to memory. He does acknowledge that "there are, indeed, exceptional preachers who are ready for the pulpit after a season of meditation on a fully worked out sketch, and still more exceptional ones who do not even find it necessary to work out of a full sketch." Reu, *Homiletics*, 508.

be delivered without accompanying gestures is unthinkable. As in ordinary conversation gestures will naturally arise in the sermon whenever the speaker is deeply moved."[96] Here again, authenticity arising from the preacher's own experience with the gospel is paramount. "The sermon when delivered should not make the impression of mechanical reproduction, but rather of spontaneous production."[97] The "spontaneity" Reu refers to is not improvisation, but rather the impression that the sermon is naturally occurring in real time rather than being reproduced from some dead page. To that end, Reu prefers the preacher to memorize his sermon completely.[98]

Richard R. Caemmerer, long-time professor of homiletics at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, is largely recognized as having written the seminal homiletics textbook for the LCMS in the mid-20th century. Caemmerer devotes an entire section of his textbook to sermon delivery. Before giving practical tips that would strengthen the preacher's oratorical skills, he nods to the importance of recognizing the preacher as a means by which the Word is being delivered to God's people. Like the sower with his bag of seeds, the preacher too has tools at his delivery, namely his very self:

> [The preacher's] whole person is the means! He is not just a loud-speaker fastened to a pulpit, but he is a man. He speaks a message which has stirred him first and which shows its effect over his entire body. His concern to reach the hearer likewise shows all over him. His voice and speech are primary, for he has to communicate by means of the spoken word. But the rest of him must work in harmony with his speech … When the entire organism of the preacher works together, the hearer is not conscious of all its parts, nor is the preacher who is skilled at his craft and wrapped up in his purpose.[99]

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[96] Reu, *Homiletics*, 512.

[97] Reu, *Homiletics*, 510.

[98] Reu, *Homiletics*, 518–19. "The lawyer in court, the political speaker on the platform, the actor on the stage, do not read … Of what invaluable allies in effective speaking the habit of reading deprives a preacher. Gesture is crippled and contracted, and becomes tame and monotonous."

[99] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 114.

The preacher's hands, face, arms, voice, feet, etc. are all involved with the sermon. The preacher himself is a crucial component in the homiletical process. Caemmerer has no prescriptions regarding the use of notes, outlines, or specific methods of learning the sermon's content—matters of memorization are left to the individual's skills (which can always improve).

Emotion also plays an important part in the delivery of a sermon, which fuels the preacher's movement, tone, volume, and vocal pitch. Emotion is not without biblical precedent, for even Paul recognizes his desire to "change his tone" with the Galatians for whom he is in the "pangs of childbirth" (Gal. 4:19–20). Caemmerer alludes to a perennial debate regarding the value of the preacher being emotional in his sermon; this includes tears as well as smiles, sadness and happiness, regret and excitement. These emotions are not to be contrived or false, but "every speaker is always emotional … emotion is the physical response to inner tension or relaxation … the true preacher responds to his hearer's plight in terms of his own personality … none can be devoid of inner feeling or surface reflection if they mean what they say."[100] While preachers have differing personalities that display themselves in various degrees, the authenticity of a preacher interacting with his own sermon is an unavoidable and detectable presence in the pulpit.

Like study and preparation, sermon delivery is a skill that finds its *motivation* in the purpose of preaching. "The preacher will be concerned for people during the delivery of his sermon only in the degree to which every previous stage of preparation has found him consciously concerned for them."[101] To that end, throughout the process of preparing to deliver the sermon the preacher ought to think primarily of his hearers; how well he is speaking is considered for their sake and not for his own. The ultimate purpose in preparing the sermon's

[100] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 117.

[101] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 125.

delivery is to leave no doubt as to his hearer's confidence that he is actually thinking of and speaking to them when he preaches. When the hearers understand that the sermon is speaking to them, they will understand that the sermon's *content* is for them.

Synthesis: The Subjectivity of the Preacher as a Foundational Homiletic

All of the above foci regarding the person of the preacher paint a holistic picture of the preacher and recover a foundational Lutheran truth: namely, that the preacher is a unique individual who has been a recipient of the grace of God in Christ then set apart for the task of preaching. As a preacher, he is to study the Word and lead a holy and regenerate life so that his vocation may be exhibited by his personality as a "triumphal procession" (2 Cor. 2:14) and the knowledge of Christ may be spread to the people he serves. As a unique individual, the preacher can therefore be said to be "subjective."

An understandable word of caution is warranted at the use of the word "subjective," for Lutherans (as those who emphasize the unalterable truth of Scripture) would have good reason to balk at the suggestion that the preacher carries any amount of subjectivity into the pulpit. Thus, it is crucial to insist with all severity that the type of subjectivity referred to herein is not one of *interpretation*. It is never the privilege of the preacher to explicate Scripture in a manner that is inconsistent with the Lutheran Confessions or the Rule of Faith. No preacher may ascend the pulpit with the goal of diverging from the proper understanding of any text of Scripture that binds the church's unity under its authority (1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Pet. 1:21). Maintaining this truth, however, does not mold reflections on the person of the preacher only to a correct mode and content of speech when he preaches. Rather, the timeless truth of the Word is meted out to the hearers as it is filtered *through* the subjective personality and experiences of the preacher. The preacher is subjective because he is subjected—first subjected to the grace of Christ in his own

life, and then subjected to a ministerial lifetime of being and living as a disciple of Christ.

For the preacher to attend to the preaching task, an inherent subjectivity of personhood exists by nature, since he is not a machine. Even as he opens his Bible to the forthcoming Sunday's text, his subconscious is subjected to his own history, memories, training, and skill. He also has strengths and weaknesses, myriad relationships, and challenges unique to his own life. Even his physical and mental health has an intangible effect on the process, and the color of his mood can dramatically impact the sermon's composition or delivery. These are not considerations that should be eschewed, as if the preacher's mind should be a blank canvas that leads to a vocal drone. He is not receiving his sermon from Mt. Sinai on tablets of stone, but through the painstaking process of thought, memory, and training. These considerations should be brought to light in order to better understand how great of an impact the person of the preacher has on the sermonic task. In short, as the Spirit works through the preacher, these subjective qualities are forever in the background. Pretending they are otherwise is not only to ignore the Spirit's use of men in his service, but to ignore historical Lutheranism and the biblical witness.

Wilhelm Loehe refers to the "various conditions of private and public life"[102] that impact his life and ministry, such that "often a drop of water turns into a spring gushing up into eternal life. Otherwise, how could it happen that so many pastors with but a few gifts produce the most blessed successes, while on the other hand, often highly gifted and learned men stand in their congregations like tall but fruitless trees?"[103] Here, Loehe is speaking of the importance of professional pastoral training, but concedes that there are intangible qualities to a man's

[102] Loehe, *Pastor*, 7.

[103] Loehe, *Pastor*, 7.

personality that impact his ministry. His private life (*inneres Leben*) engages his public life (*äusseres Leben)* with a consistency that demonstrates a subjective nature.

The same subjective sense of the person of the pastor is echoed by Walther who, in the consideration of distinguishing between law and gospel, says "if you will consider that it is only in the school of the Holy Spirit and of genuine Christian experience that the proper distinction between Law and Gospel is learned, you can easily perceive how it is possible that a person may be a graduate of all schools in existence and yet not have acquired this art."[104] Because the proper distinction between law and gospel is a skill learned by experience and taught by the Holy Spirit, the preacher's subjective experience with the gospel makes him the most apt to preach. Without seeking conditions of personal conversion as a shibboleth,[105] Walther nevertheless holds the regenerate preacher as the greatest communicator, and again (as above) views the subjective preacher as a subject of grace.

Francis Rossow, briefly present in the recent period of silence on the person on the preacher, wrote about the benefits of topical preaching in an anthology edited by Michael Duduit.[106] Within, he quotes (without citation, as many do) the sentiment by Phillips Brooks (not a Lutheran) that preaching is "truth through personality," and explores the notion of subjectivity in preaching. To be sure, the Word is objective, but preaching "is more than the presentation of objective biblical truth. Preaching is rather the stirring proclamation of objective biblical truth warmed, charged, by the preacher's God-manufactured personal sanctification, enthusiasm,

[104] Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 50.

[105] See Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 308–18. Thesis XVII stresses the importance of saving faith being described in a manner that applies to all believers of all times.

[106] Rossow, "Topical Preaching," in Michael Duduit, ed., *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 84–92. Rossow's words on subjectivity are almost throw-away comments; his main point in the article is that preachers gravitate towards topics and themes in imperceptible ways.

insight, experience, and emotional involvement."[107] Almost as a caveat, this poetic reflection comes immediately on the heels of his declaration that a failure to proclaim the gospel "disqualifies [the sermon] as a sermon at all."[108] Thus, while Rossow maintains the Lutheran foundation of proclamation, he also explores the type of subjectivity preachers should be interested in discussing, of which he makes two observations:

Subjectivity in preaching, Rossow says, is both inevitable and "not necessarily bad."[109] It is inevitable because, unless one were to recite a precise translation of Scripture and then immediately end the sermon without any further commentary, the subjectivity a preacher has in his sanctified proclivities and interests cannot be avoided. It is not necessarily bad, because while these proclivities must not dominate the sermon, the preacher brings to bear his previous experience with Scripture and God's grace shown to him as he approaches his task. Whether the structure is textual or topical, "there is a give and take, a mutual interaction, between our study of a text and our previous Bible reading."[110] This suggests a cumulative formation of the preacher and is consistent with the Lutheran understanding of the preacher's motivation for study (see above).

Considerations of the preacher's subjective experiences are unavoidable. The preacher selects a sermon text while reading the pericopes for the following Sunday—who knows why he is captured in that moment by one or the other? The nagging of his heart draws him towards the internally bleeding woman stopping Jesus in the street, subconsciously inspiring him through his pastoral concern for a similar woman he just visited in the nursing home. He wrestles with

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[107] Rossow, "Topical Preaching," 87.

[108] Rossow, "Topical Preaching," 86. Such apophatic definitions of sermons are typical of modern Lutheran thought, which struggles like Potter Stewart trying to define pornography.

[109] Rossow, "Topical Preaching," 87.

[110] Rossow, "Topical Preaching," 88.

Jeremiah's accusations of God's deception, screaming against the wind because he feels alone and attacked in his daily duties. He sits down at the desk after bringing his wife and new baby home from the hospital and overflows with encouragements to "rejoice always in the Lord." Deeply painful teenage memories of his earthly father bring latent passion to a sermon on the fourth commandment. The preacher's tone, tenor, and the direction of the sermon as he wrestles with the Word are all subjective, chosen by the myriad characteristics and memories within the preacher himself and stirred by the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the Reformation recovered an understanding of the preacher that was more consistent with the biblical witness than their Roman Catholic counterparts. More than just a man to perform priestly sacrifices, the pastor is a complicated and unique individual who embodies the grace of God as he performs his task. As a recipient of the gospel, his motivation for study, his upright character, and his personality all conceptually intertwine and bleed into one another to make up a fuller understanding of the person of the preacher as a subjective individual: Words about the preacher's character are not without considerations of his personality, which shines through his sermon delivery and performance—to say nothing of his daily non-preaching ministry; the embodiment of his sermon performance is strengthened by his studious confidence; the level and quality of study that guide his meditations are never without musings on his own history (be they conscious or subconscious); the necessity of the preacher's lengthy study and preparation not only provides him with the proper and correct knowledge of Scripture and doctrine, but also the motivation to gain and increase in such knowledge is the connectivity of his ministry to specific and real people with specific and contextualized histories; his own character and life, both in his study and in his interactions with his people, reveal

themselves in his heartfelt sermonic composition so that his godliness can be imitated (1 Cor. 4:6; 11:1) and his message become more persuasive.

Because the preacher and the people he serves are real and living, each with their own personal history, memories, and proclivities, no two pastors, and no two sermons are exactly the same—just as no two communities of faith and no two congregants are exactly the same. Even the same congregation with the same hearers changes week to week, as their faith is not a static event (see 2 Thess. 1:3). Faith shrinks and grows, thins and widens; the vale of tears can break a man or strengthen the power of Christ in his weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). As such with faith, so also with identity, which are inseparable for the Christian individual. The preacher is no exception. Just as the Word is living and breathing in the ministry of Christ's church, so the preacher as one who is born of the Spirit is a sign of the tumbling invisible sources of culture. To separate the two as a zero-sum game would deny the flesh-and-blood nature of either the people or the pastor (whom God authorized through the people). As Reu affirms from the outset of his book, "The congregation, invested as it is with the sacred office, speaks and preaches through the minister."[111] He is called by them and for them to be a living testimony to the Word, which saved and saves by means of preaching and reception of the truth by the Holy Spirit who enlightens the entire Christian church with his gifts. Thus, the preacher and his sermon, just like the hearers, is an indivisible amalgam of study, character, personality, and subjectivity. *Mutatis mutandis,* each preacher crafts an authoritative public discourse for the benefit of the faith and life of his hearers. Given the outpouring of grace without dissolving these facets under the Babel-affirming tongues of fire at Pentecost, Lutherans should be as welcoming of these conversations as they were before the 1970's.

[111] Reu, *Homiletics*, 66.

Since the individuality of the preacher is made up of such irreducible qualities, there is room in Lutheran homiletics to consider what—if any—considerations should be given to a preacher's cultural identity. Yet it is highly significant that from Paul to the Reformers to the subsequent generations of Lutherans, the emphases of the preacher's individuality as it relates to his task (and his own spirituality) largely—if not entirely—supersedes his ethnic and social identity. To be sure, the theological *foundation* of a Lutheran homiletic precludes any particular cultural nuance. Be that as it may, the polyvalent cultural identities that make up Lutheran pastors around the world is relevant in practicality precisely because their theological *formation* is inflected by those same polyvalent cultural realities. In both the experiences of the preacher and in his application of the grace he has experienced, God works through cultural identities to achieve his means without erasing them.[112] Simply put, the qualities of the pastoral ministry are universally applicable, and are not *built* upon any cultural identity beyond that which is given to all Christians. Here is where the greater homiletical academy errs: the identity politics and intersectionality of the preacher have in some places become the preacher's primary concern, to the tragic effect of marginalizing voices of subjectivities—and even relegating the gospel itself to a secondary role in preaching. Nevertheless, by addressing these issues, the academy has at least brought awareness to a valuable homiletical conversation that should be embraced by Lutherans in a helpful recognition of social location and cultural nuance as *formational* (rather than *foundational*) factors in preaching.[113]

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[112] See for example Paul's citations of a pagan philosopher in Athens (Acts 17), and his decision to speak Hebrew to the crowd in Jerusalem after being accused of being a Greek (Acts 22). In both situations Paul is taking advantage of cultural nuance and identity in ways that will enable him a more favorable audience for the gospel.

[113] There are many works directly related to the Germanic origins of Lutheranism and how that unique cultural identity can affect the spiritual lives of Lutherans. For two fairly recent examples, see Mary L. Knarr, "Faith, *Frauen*, and the Formation of an Ethnic Identity: German Lutheran Women in South and Central Texas, 1831–1890" (PhD diss., Texas Christian University, 2009); Stan Michael Landry, "That *All* May Be One? Church

This chapter has not only recovered the person of the preacher as a foundational Lutheran homiletic, but also provided the contours of that foundation. These contours can be used as lenses through which to consider cultural identities in ways that do not undermine or replace the true role of the pastor, but rather inform and elucidate a way forward. The following chapter will build upon this chapter's foundational Lutheran homiletic by advancing a homiletical theorization which I will call "Embodied Superintendence." To do this, the chapter will focus first on how and in what way the preacher speaks the Word of God for, to, and on behalf of the hearers. Then, wedding this to the preacher's subjectivity, the dissertation will demonstrate a practical homiletic that serves as a corrective to the academy's current focus on identity politics and intersectionality.

Unity, Luther Memory, and Ideas of the German Nation, 1817–1883" (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2010). Knarr writes about the unique preservation of conservatism amongst German Lutheran immigrant women in Texas; Landry addresses how 19th century German churches used and misused Luther (and Lutheranism) to promote ecumenism and German nationalism. See also Gregory P. Seltz, "LCMS Identity and Mission", who criticizes a traditional "incarnational" missiological approach in favor of a more "Two-Kingdom" sacramental contextualization for engagement in social issues specifically relating to racism and urban unrest. More studies relative to the specific cultural nuances of Lutherans will be suggested in the concluding chapter for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

EMBODIED SUPERINTENDENCE

At the outset of this dissertation, a descriptive summary of the greater homiletical academy was given, including certain developmental trends over the past fifty years. Namely, that the New Homiletic first arose out of a desire to restructure the sermonic task to account for a lack of recognition of the preacher's authority. Within this "hidden" authority, preachers began to explore more creative, imagistic, and inductive sermon structures in order to engage with the hearers in a more effective way. From the New Homiletic arose more dialogical homiletics, emphasizing the communal and discursive manner of preaching. Within these trends, the preacher's authority grew to be more questionable than ever before; the hearers themselves were more responsible for the reception of sermons, as their own experiential ways of knowing were explored. From these trends came the logical progression of identity considerations, and those considerations naturally reflected back onto the preacher. Greater desires to overcome traditional preacher stereotypes became apparent, and homiletical studies that focused on such topics as women preachers and African American homiletics grew in popularity. From there, consistent with a societal preoccupation with identity politics and intersectionality, the greater homiletical academy became (and is currently) largely concerned with negotiating the person of the preacher according to his (or her, or their) identity group. Of particular concern to this dissertation is the negotiation of the preacher in an automatically negative way if that preacher's cultural identity is considered by some to be an oppressive race or class.

In Chapter Two, the dissertation then examined how modern Lutherans could respond to these current homiletical tensions, and it was observed that modern Lutherans commonly recall certain fundamentals of Lutheran homiletics. Though not exhaustive or mutually exclusive, three

fundamentals were observed: first, the person of the preacher is contextualized by modern Lutherans according to his relationship with Scripture; second, according to his role in relation to the means of grace (delivering justification in the sermon), which is part of the holistic act of the divine service; third, according to the high Lutheran view of the Ministerium. These homiletical foundations are by no means mutually exclusive, but in each case, it is easy to find rejection of common ground in the greater homiletical academy, especially in favor of identity politics and intersectionality. What appears to be lacking from current Lutheran responses is another homiletical foundation that can more effectively serve as the basis for a fruitful response to the academy—that of the person of the preacher.

Chapter Three therefore not only recovered that foundation by examining certain historical voices regarding the person of the preacher, but also noted the contours of that particular emphasis that were present even in the Reformation era: namely, the study and preparation of the preacher with a personal and pastoral focus; the character of the preacher for demonstrative pastoral purposes; and the preacher's personality as a unique individual. These contours reflect the Reformation's turn toward a more practical view of the pastoral ministry: instead of just performing priestly, sacrificial functions, the Lutheran view of the pastor turned toward the practical benefits of faith and life for the Christians he serves. Naturally, that meant a greater consideration of his individuality. What is noteworthy about this fundamental Lutheran homiletic is that it is focused primarily on the pastor as one with a *Christian* identity, and not any particular cultural identity (which is a current focus of the academy). Yet even though cultural identity is not *foundational* to homiletics, it is undeniably *formational*, and the academy's current interest has provided space within which to explore the role of culture as the preacher approaches the task of proclamation. The particular and subjective contours of the preacher's study, character,

and personality (as reflective in Lutheran homiletics) provide appropriate lenses through which culture can be examined in relation to the preacher without necessarily making cultural identity a homiletical prolegomenon. Nevertheless, this historical Lutheran understanding of the person of the preacher can provide valuable insights into how a faithful Lutheran response can be developed as a correlational approach to the current focus of the greater homiletical academy vis-à-vis identity politics and intersectionality that enables a greater consideration to the formative role of cultural identities.

Building on that foundation, this chapter offers a way of attending to the current homiletical challenges of identity politics and intersectionality by capturing a Lutheran theology of the person of the preacher that can guide a Lutheran voice in those conversations. This is similar to the approach of the authors in Chapter Two insofar as responses to the academy could be given that are based on certain Lutheran fundamentals—indeed, no *innovation* of or diversion from Lutheran doctrine is attempted. Where this dissertation differs from those, however, is that it is specifically based on the *person of the preacher* as a fundamental Lutheran homiletic. That now-recovered fundamental is further defined by considerations of the preacher's study and preparation for practical purposes, his character, and his personality. Again, these foci will be conceived of as practical lenses through which the preacher can be considered according to his cultural identity, and a faithful Lutheran response can be given to the academy in a theoretical consideration I will call "Embodied Superintendence."

The rest of this chapter will define "Embodied Superintendence" as a specific and holistic theoretical approach that considers the person of the preacher both from the preacher's perspective and from the perspective of the hearers. To that end, "Superintendence" will be

outlined by relying on the philosophical work of Nicholas Wolterstorff[1] as he explores the linguistic possibility of God speaking through a deputy (the preacher). Applying his theories to homiletics will be assisted by Michael P. Knowles,[2] whose recent engagement with Wolterstorff provides valuable homiletical insights. Along the way, Peter Nafzger[3] will provide a corrective to Wolterstorff and Knowles in order to ground the theory more fully in a Lutheran understanding of the Word of God. Following this, the preacher as a unique and individual Christian whose vocation is defined by the practical considerations of the ministry will be explored via the lenses of his study and preparation, his character, and his personality, which use the pattern of the contours of the previous chapter's Lutheran foundation. Defined in these ways, "Embodied Superintendence" will be offered as a holistic homiletical theory that can attend to the preacher's identity positively and provide a Lutheran understanding of cultural identity that is formational rather than foundational.

Embodied Superintendence

"Embodied Superintendence" is a theorization of consideration that contextualizes the person of the preacher according to how his unique individuality as a Christian interacts with the task of preaching. In other words, "Embodied Superintendence" considers the identity of the man behind the sermon, both from his own perspective and from the perspective of the hearers. Those who are seeking a sort of homiletical method that will guide the preacher through the actual sermonic process will find not find it here; in fact, this dissertation has painstakingly avoided any preferences of sermonic structure or arrangement, for that would focus more on the sermon itself

[1] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[2] Knowles, *Third Voice.*

[3] Nafzger, *"These Are Written."*

as an artifact than the preacher preaching it. Again, "Embodied Superintendence" is not aimed at the methodological creation of sermons, but the preacher that preaches. How, when, where, and with what text those sermons are preached is not the point; *who* is preaching and *what* is happening when he preaches is the desired consideration. This chapter will define the contours of "Embodied Superintendence" in a way that provides a theoretical model of interacting with the greater homiletical academy from the faithful Lutheran foundation of the person of the preacher. At the same time, "Embodied Superintendence" will be demonstrated as being faithfully inclusive of other Lutheran homiletical foundations, thus providing a holistic homiletical approach. Put succinctly, "Embodied Superintendence" is *the theological articulation of a unique individual preaching the Word of God.* Within that definition is both the *who* (the preacher) and the *what* (the act of preaching). Since preachers are defined ultimately by the act of preaching, it is fitting to begin with an exploration of *what* is happening in the sermon relative to the preacher.

The Superintendence of the Preacher: Double Agency Discourse

A superintendent is someone who manages or administrates something that rightly belongs to someone else. Naturally this means that the thing over which the individual has superintendence is philosophically (if not actually) more significant and important than the superintendent. For example, a superintendent of a school district is not greater than the school district itself, without which there would be no superintendent; this is non-reciprocal: a school district can still exist without a superintendent. The same concept is true for homiletics: the Word of God is more significant and important than the one preaching that Word; without the Word, there would be no preacher, but the reciprocal cannot be said (see Is. 40:8; Matt. 5:18). Still, by the design of Christ the Word is preached by someone sent by God to do so (Rom. 10:14–15),

and that someone can rightly be called a superintendent of the Word of God.

Because the thing about which the preacher speaks transcends the one speaking, it is self-evident that something is happening in the sermon that does not happen in other types of speeches. That is, preaching is a unique subset of public speaking by any measure or standard, for it specifically involves the Word of God and the spiritual care of souls. The preacher is not seen as just another public speaker, and homileticians are usually able to recognize the preacher's duty to a grander narrative or ideal with ease—why else would the preacher preach? As Paul intentionally lowers himself to bring glory to God through his preaching (1 Cor. 9:16), so do many preachers possess an innate sense of humility toward that divine task. Indeed, one would be hard pressed to find a view of the sermon that precludes the preacher's responsibility to something spiritually greater than themselves. Typically, that "something" is that which God would have the preacher preach, and even the most outspoken proponents of identity politics and intersectionality in homiletics see the sermon as pointing to this great responsibility.[4]

As explained in the previous chapter, for Lutherans the special nature and purpose of preaching is to proclaim the Word of God for the salvific benefit of the faith and life of the hearers. The question at hand is *what* is that Word? The readiest and most common answer is Scripture, which is the only authoritative norm for faith and life; to be sure, its authority is the apex prioritization of the sermon from which flow all other applications for life and discipleship in Christ. Yet this answer is immediately too vague, for the sermon is never a mere recitation of Scripture. So if the Word of God is to be preached, and the sermon is an interpretive application

[4] See again the sentiments of Phil Snider, who says, "Those who benefit from structures of white supremacy and heteropatriarchy … must be willing to wade into this milieu far beyond the words we speak from behind a pulpit on Sunday mornings." Phil Snider, ed., *Preaching as Resistance*, 4–5. See also Gayle Fisher-Stewart, who prioritizes the homiletical task of addressing and ending racism in America through activism. Gayle Fisher-Stewart, ed., *Preaching*, 229–32. Both authors see their activism as their God-given responsibility as preachers.

of Scripture for the benefit of the faith and lives of the hearers, then can the sermon properly be called the Word of God? Lutherans say yes, but therein lies the core struggle for homiletics: how do the sermon and the preacher relate? The challenge has been answered in ways that elevate the content over the preacher or that elevate the preacher over the content. Yet how are the two held together in paradoxical tension when speaking of the sermon as the Word of God? Put another way, is "Word of God" an objective or subjective genitive? Is God merely the object about which the preacher preaches, so that the preacher himself is the primary speaker? Or is that preaching really the Word which has been (or is) spoken by God, even as the preacher is speaking? In the first case the Word of God might be overlooked; in the latter, the preacher might be irrelevant.

That the preacher views the sermon as the Word of God is preferable for reasons not the least of which include the previously mentioned humility when faced with the preaching task. Surely John the Baptizer's declaration that "[Jesus] must increase, and I must decrease," (John 3:30) is near and dear to the hearts of Lutheran preachers, who as a rule proclaim not themselves, "but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4:5). The preacher can be comforted by the fact that God speaks through him, but in so doing be tempted to see himself as insignificant or irrelevant. In this sense the sermon, that is the authoritative public proclamation of salvation from God himself as revealed in the testimony of Scripture, *is* the telos of its own purpose; there is nothing *more* important than that which is received for salvation: namely, "that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures … so we preach and so you believed" (1 Cor. 15:3–4, 11b). This is the Word of the Lord—the Words about the Lord—and that makes the preacher a "steward" of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1). Yet

precisely because the words of the preacher are also the Word of God means that something more than mere stewardship (or mere reporting) of the Word is happening in the sermon: the Word of God is *actually* spoken. That is, *God* is speaking his Word. This concept opens a rather large philosophical can of worms, for how can *God* be thought of as *speaking* through the preacher, especially if the preacher is clearly speaking and there is no obvious sign or sound of theophany? To answer that question, the work of Nicolas Wolterstorff on double-agency discourse is invaluable.

When considering discourse in general, Wolterstorff asserts there is such a thing as "double agency discourse." By this he means that there are times when a discourser speaks *by means of* an agent. The agent becomes a medium of sorts for the illocutionary desires of the discourser; this connects the discourser to an addressee via the agent, but the agent is still the one communicating. Hence, there is double agency: the discourser and the agent. For example, "double agency discourse" occurs if a secretary dictates or drafts a letter or memo on behalf of her boss, or if the president signs a bill drafted by the congress. Whether the agent is an amanuensis, a ghost writer, or even a committee, the main point is that a medium (for the sake of clarity, hereafter called a *deputy*) is involved in the illocution of the initial interlocutor (hereafter called the *discourser*). Important to these considerations are reflections of superintendence and authority. Wolterstorff distinguishes the different facets of double-agency discourse as superintendence, deputized discourse, and appropriated discourse.

Wolterstorff recognizes a degree and mode of superintendence that is granted by the discourser to the deputy. This superintendence can be imagined on a spectrum: on one end of the spectrum is that which is akin to a dictated letter: this exhibits a low level of superintendence. The other end of the spectrum is like a state official conversing with a foreign dignitary on behalf

of the president: this exhibits a high level of superintendence. The former judges faithfulness by its word-for-word accuracy, while the latter is free to exercise the authority granted in a holistic manner in order to accomplish a given task. Biblical examples of this spectrum of superintendence are evidenced in the letters of Paul: on one end, Paul dictates or writes a letter to be delivered unchanged (1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17); on the other hand, his deputies Tychicus and Artemas are sent to speak freely in his stead (Eph. 6:21–22; Titus 3:12).

The higher the degree of superintendence, the more important it is for the deputy to "know the mind" of the discourser. To use Wolterstorff's example, "The secretary may continue to compose letters while the executive is out of the office for several weeks … without the executive even doing so much as communicating to the secretary the substance of what she wants to say, the secretary may *know* what the executive wants to say to one and another person, and compose letters accordingly."[5] The deputy is not merely reporting what the discourser has said—nothing has actually been *said*! However, there has been granted a level of superintendence that hinges on the deputy's knowledge of the discourser's mind. Furthermore, the authority granted to the deputy with the superintendence of communicating the discourser's intentions "is not to surrender that authority and hand it over to that other person; it is to bring it about that one exercises that authority by way of actions performed by that other person active as one's deputy."[6] Thus, the discourser is still speaking, albeit through a deputy. This is what Wolterstorff calls "deputized discourse."

The distinction between the deputy and a mere reporter may seem subtle, but it is important to distinguish between the two: "Being asked to communicate a message from someone is not

[5] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 39. Italics original.

[6] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 42.

the same as being deputized to speak in the name of someone. The deputy has, as it were, power of attorney; it's by way of the deputy's doing one thing and another that the deputizer [discourser] acquires the rights and responsibilities of having issued such and such a threat, made such and such a promise, and so on."[7] The deputy has been authorized by the discourser with a high level of superintendence and, "knowing the mind of" the one who sent him, the deputy speaks with a certain amount of discoursive freedom. This freedom is evinced in the locution itself—the words belong to the deputy, but also to the discourser. The deputy's locution—if not also the illocution—is the same as the discourser and vice versa.

Keeping with the same analogy of a head of state's ambassador, Wolterstorff further clarifies this symbiotic relationship between discourser and deputy:

> Does the ambassador himself perform illocutionary acts by way of his locutionary acts? Does he speak, discourse, in his own voice? Well, he needn't. But he might. That is, it might sometimes be the case that the very same utterings count both as the performance of speech actions by the ambassador and as the performance of speech actions by his head of state; these might be the very same speech actions, or somewhat different. Probably the most common occurrence, though, is that in the course of issuing the warning, the ambassador moves back and forth between speaking in the name of his head of state and speaking in his own voice; and sometimes part of what he does when speaking in his own voice consists of communicating a message from his head of state.[8]

This "back and forth" sense is validated by Scripture itself, and Wolterstorff finds examples of this in the prophetic utterings of the Old Testament: "The biblical notion of the prophet blends the concept of one who is commissioned to communicate a message from someone, with the concept of one who is deputized to speak in the name of someone."[9] This is especially confirmed in Deut. 18:15–22; John 15:26–27; 2 Cor. 10:7–18; Gal. 1:11–12; and 2 Pet. 1:16–21. Therein,

[7] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 44.

[8] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 45.

[9] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 48.

the prophet/preacher's agency is validated as it is consistent with the Word of God and "carried along by the Holy Spirit." Only if the deputy communicates against the intentions of the discourser is the relationship violated (and essentially invalidated). This invalidation is what occurs when a preacher speaks something contrary to God's Word (as anathematized in Gal.1:9). It is important to stress that this happens *ex-post facto*, and not *ex-ante facto*. In other words, the deputy's authority is invalidated by what he says, not by what he is *going* to say.[10]

That a deputy's authority is not preemptively devalued or invalidated is an important point as divine discourse relates to identity politics, for the latter frequently denies the value of anything being spoken by an oppressive voice. Yet God can and does speak through unlikely sources. For example, God calls Cyrus his "shepherd" as he ends Israel's Babylonian captivity (Is. 44:28); the government bears the "sword" of God (Rom. 13:1–7); the prophet Jonah unwillingly participated in his preaching task; a non-apostle drives out demons in the name of Jesus only to be left alone at Jesus' command (Mark 9:38–40); Caiaphas unwittingly prophesies as the high priest (John 11:51); even Satan brings about the will of God against Job as God remains responsible for the calamity: "He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited *me* against him to destroy him without reason" (Job 2:3, italics mine). Regardless of the source that is speaking, Scripture also supports an *ex-post facto* evaluation of the one speaking, as evidenced in such passages as Deut. 18:21–22 ("If you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?'—when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken"), Jer. 28:9 ("As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be

[10] This *ex-ante facto* invalidation of speech is a chronic temptation of the purveyors of identity politics and intersectionality, even in homiletics.

known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet"), and Acts 17:11 ("[The Bereans] received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.") The importance of this point is that it is *God* who chooses when, how, and through whom he speaks.

Appropriated discourse is the final item of consideration for double-agency discourse. As the name implies, this is when the speech of a discourser is appropriated by another. In this case, not just the saying (or text) is appropriated, but ideally the actual illocution of the original discourser. Examples of this may be seconding a motion in a meeting, agreeing with someone's opinion, or citing a famous author. This appropriation is slightly different than superintendence or deputized discourse in that the original discourser may or may not have given leave for the one appropriating the discourse to do so. In the aforementioned examples, the second discourser (the one seconding, agreeing, or citing) may or may not be seeking to achieve an end that coincides with its origin; thus a work can be cited out of context to elicit a response unintended by its original author.[11] That means that the *illocution* of the appropriated discourse has the potential to be distinct when it is appropriated, and when that happens a certain violence to the original discourse is committed. "Thus to get from the propositional content of the appropriated discourse to that of the appropriating discourse requires subtlety and sensitivity of interpretation."[12] The implications are obvious, for if someone appropriates the discourse of another, the illocution (and not only the locution) of the first matters a great deal—at least if faithfulness to the source is desired. It is with this "subtlety" in mind that Wolterstorff uses appropriated discourse to claim that the Bible—for simplicity seen as one divine book—is God's appropriation of human locution. That is not necessarily to say that God is the secondary

[11] An example might be *The Price* by Machiavelli, which some have suggested to be intentionally satirical.

[12] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 53.

discourser, but rather to point out that God can and does *speak* through human agents. Calling the Bible *as a whole* appropriated discourse allows Wolterstorff to expand the concept of God speaking to the double agency divine discourse involving human beings. That leads inexorably to the question of God speaking by media other than the Bible, which includes a consideration of what it even means for God to "speak."

Wolterstorff writes amidst a philosophical ilk which equates divine speech with divine revelation, lamenting that little philosophy has been written on the question of whether or not God *speaks*, as opposed to solely *revealing*. It is obvious that God has spoken, but is the Bible merely a record of that or can God be said literally to *speak* by means of it? Beyond the Bible, is it possible to say that God still *speaks*, as in some way like Augustine's famous "*tolle lege*" conversion experience? "Might it be that in addition to *homo linguisticus*, on which we have focused our attention, there is *deus loquens*? The ultimate possibility for our language-preoccupied century to consider: might it be that God is a member of the community of speakers?"[13] Wolterstorff probes this concept with a preliminary distinction made between the acts of speaking and of revealing by distinguishing between locution, illocution, and perlocution.

Briefly, locution is that which is literally written or spoken, while illocution is "performed *by way of* locutionary acts, acts such as asking, asserting, commanding, promising, and so forth."[14] Illocution can be said to convey the speaker's (or author's) *intention*, which is conveyed by locution, and perlocution is the resultant action of the illocution (or at least how the listener has received the message).[15] Yet when speaking of God's speech, Wolterstorff observes that the

[13] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, ix.

[14] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 13. Italics original.

[15] These are the standard accepted terms of the modern speech-act theory popularized by J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

field of philosophy has "widely thought that divine speech is reducible to divine revelation,"[16] and thus has confounded God's speech with God's revelation, thereby incidentally excluding him from the possibility of discoursing (speaking).

Challenging the philosophical status quo, Wolterstorff is therefore insistent that the illocution of God is not necessarily that of revelation, or even the locution (strictly speaking) of *words*. Rather, "saying something" can be done by "producing a blaze, or smoke, or a sequence of light-flashes. Even more interesting: one can tell somebody something by *deputizing* someone else to speak on one's behalf."[17] In other words, God can perform his illocution through the locution of a deputy and still be considered to be *speaking*. Wolterstorff develops this idea into what he calls "divine discourse," which is congruent with his "deputized discourse" and a much broader concept of speech than "divine revelation." Revelation, Wolterstorff says, specifically "occurs when ignorance is dispelled or when something is done which *would* dispel ignorance if attention and interpretative skills were adequate."[18] Given that the antithesis of revelation is hiddenness, the act of revelation must be steered specifically toward dispelling such hiddenness. He furthermore distinguishes between *agentless* and *agent* revelation, with the former occurring without the immediate intervention of an agent—as in a person's sudden realization of another person's character or a memoir-like psychoanalysis of one's personal experiences. More spiritually, agentless divine discourse could even be considered a Christian's contemplation of the Bible.

Wolterstorff asserts that it is simply self-evident that not all illocution is revelation: commands, requests, and praises are not revelatory but discoursive. Even if one says that the

[16] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 9–10.

[17] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 13. Italics mine.

[18] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 23. Italics original.

intent of a command is to *reveal* the intention of the commander that the object should obey, such a sophistical backflip overexerts itself and leads to oversimplifying the myriad types of interactions that discourse brings about. For example: the command to a child to brush his teeth, while perhaps *revealing* the parent's desire for the child to brush his teeth, more accurately carries the parent's illocutionary desire for the *perlocution*—the child understands that the parent wants him to brush his teeth. When in time the child learns to brush his teeth at a mere glance or hand signal from the parent (say, the tapping of his watch), the same discoursive perlocution is present even without any words being spoken. Certainly there has been no revelation, and perhaps not even words. If this can be true for human discourse, it can be true for divine discourse.

It is important to note that Wolterstorff is bucking against a Barthian understanding of God's speech *qua* revelation in a way which is similar to how he addresses contemporary philosophy on the same topic. For Karl Barth, the speech of God is always and only revelatory, and this definitive and divine revelation of God is Jesus Christ, whose Incarnation is the sole essence of this revelation.[19] Therefore, the first witnesses of this revelation cannot be said to be speaking the Word of God in the *primary* sense, since they themselves are not Jesus. They do, however, bear *witness* to the revelation and so speak in a *derived* sense *about* the revelation. In this way, human speech is at best witnessing and *never* God himself speaking. According to Barth, only God speaks for God, and to say otherwise would limit God's freedom—which would be ontologically absurd. Wolterstorff disagrees, and recognizes that Barth is limited by his predilections regarding the sovereignty of God:

> If it is indeed a limitation of God's freedom that God would commission a human being to speak "in the name of" God, then perhaps we have to take seriously the

[19] See Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 63–66.

> possibility that God is willing on occasion to limit God's freedom in that way—or alternatively, consider the possibility that we are working with an alien and inapplicable concept of freedom. But in the case of appropriation, it's hard to see how God's decision to appropriate certain human speech as the medium of divine speech is in any way at all a compromise of divine freedom![20]

In other words, if God is truly free to speak only for himself, then why might not God be free to limit himself? Surely *God* could appropriate the discourse of his human servants to achieve his ends—especially since Scripture often testifies to that very act (see Deut. 18:18; Is. 6:7; Jer. 1:9; Luke 12:12).

Peter Nafzger finds a similar problem with Barth's staunch position. In an important work that reclaims the Lutheran belief in a cruciform theology of the Word, Nafzger avers that because Barth could not equate the written words of men with the transcendence of God's Word, he so overemphasized the distance between God's sovereignty and the createdness of man that he reached the point where "the divine and human natures are so vastly different that it would be impossible for God to *become* flesh."[21] Barth also equated God's revelation above all with the Incarnation to such an extent that the death and resurrection of Jesus actually became ancillary to his birth: since creatures cannot know God apart from revelation, nothing but the Incarnation—the very *being* of God—qualifies as truly divine revelation. Hence, "[Barth] limits God's ability to speak through his prophets and apostles through deputized discourse."[22] Therefore, God's speech is not necessarily God's revelation, even if one would limit revelation to the Incarnation. As observed by Nafzger, finding value in Wolterstorff's double-agency discourse solves this problem and retains the value of preachers as superintendents on an epistemological level. In

[20] Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 74.

[21] Nafzger, *"These are Written*," 56. Italics original. Here Nafzger relies on the insights of Gustav Wingren, *The Living Word* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1960).

[22] Nafzger, *"These are Written*," 64.

other words, God's speech can be said to be present in the sermon even though the preachers themselves are not God.

In short, all divine revelation carries God's illocution, but not all divine illocution is God's revelation. To be sure, the Word *as a whole concept* is revealed by God (not being "natural" to the created order, see Rom. 1:19–20), but the individual words and phrases of Scripture cannot reasonably be called revelatory according to the modern speech-act theory used by Wolterstorff. In can, however, be called *appropriated discourse* as Scripture is the Word of God. This is a crucial point for preaching, for the Word does more than simply dispel ignorance. As Peter Nafzger says, "The biblical narrative describes God primarily as one who *speaks* to his people. Much more than simply transmitting information, God issues commands and makes promises. When the Word of God is considered within the framework of revelation … God's speaking loses its distinctively relational nature and becomes the means by which ignorance is dispelled."[23] If God's "distinctively relational nature" is lost, it then follows that preaching would lose its distinctive characteristic as *discourse*—it would be nothing but revelation. Preaching can indeed reveal, but it can also command, pray, praise, forgive, and reflect any other relevant discourses necessary for its hearers.

If the sermon is the Word of God (as Lutherans believe), and all of God's Word were only revelatory, then all sermonic activity would only be revelation. It would then follow that dispelling ignorance is the only goal of preaching, and the preacher is merely a secondary agent to that which God has already revealed. If this is the case, homiletics would simply be reduced to the dissemination and assent of the proper knowledge of Scripture. Again, if the sermon is God speaking, and God's speech only reveals (dispels ignorance), then even a contextualization of the

[23] Nafzger, *"These are Written*," 60. Italics original.

preacher according to the proclamation of justification is problematic, since Christians are not usually dispelled of ignorance when their sins are forgiven (they typically know what follows repentance); rather, they are *comforted* by their sins being forgiven. Additionally, the sermon's relational aspects—its *discourse*—would be irrelevant or imaginary, and the context, language, and experiences of the individual hearers would be immaterial. Even a sermon structured to convince the hearer of its logic cannot be reduced to mere revelation, especially if the hearer is aware of (but not yet convinced of) the point being made.[24] If the sermon is always and only revelatory, the preacher as an agent of God's Word should only aim at reporting God's heretofore revealed Word, and declare his task successful regardless of the hearers' reactions or even the preacher's life. Moreover, if God's speaking and revealing are synonymous, agency then remains a significant issue for homiletics in general: if the divinely discoursive nature of preaching is overlooked, then there certainly is no meaningful way to consider the person of the preacher at all. But since the preacher is unavoidably present in a sermon, and Scripture itself sees the preacher as crucially important (Rom. 10:14), the sermon can *only* be thought of as the discoursive Word of God by considering the agency of the preacher. A recent appropriation of Wolterstorff's theorization to homiletics by Michael P. Knowles provides a helpful springboard to consider the preacher in relation to divine discourse.

Knowles appropriates Wolterstorff's work to homiletical effect in a work that "attempts to wrestle with the paradox of speaking (and thereby exercising human agency) about a premise

[24] Reu, for example, includes an extended section on the dialectical nature of sermons: "Far from becoming monotonous, [the sermon] stimulates, invites to the mental cooperation, holds the attention, draws the hearer away from his erroneous position and wins him for the truth. This is the *dialectic* element in the sermon, finding its analogy in the development of the subject-matter in catechetical instruction and employing, like it, both the synthetic and the analytic method … a sound and interesting doctrinal sermon is hardly conceivable without this dialectic element; in specifically apologetic sermons it will naturally predominate." Reu, *Homiletics,* 173–74. Italics original.

that surpasses and subverts human agency both in principle and in practice."[25] That premise, as the book's subtitle "Preaching Resurrection" suggests, is resurrection. No human being, save Jesus alone, he says, has experienced resurrection.[26] Yet it is crucial to the formation of Christian discipleship, the quintessential eschatological hope of Christianity, and the primary focus of the preaching task. So how can the preacher proclaim that which is unknown to his own experience? This concept is a crucial issue for "Embodied Superintendence," and will be explored in greater depth later. For now, Knowles's direct application of Wolterstorff's double-agency discourse to preaching is important to conceptualize.

Similar to the way in which Wolterstorff calls Scripture appropriated discourse, Knowles strictly limits preaching to the same: "it seems preferable to conceive of the sermon as a form of 'appropriated discourse,' one which embraces the words of Scripture in its own attestation of Jesus as the embodied Word of God, and on this basis becomes liable to appropriation by God."[27] The theory is thus intentionally circular: God spoke to humans by his Son, who recorded Scripture, which is the Word of God by his own divine appropriation. Even the passages that are not of God "speaking" *per se*—as in "Thus says the Lord"—are nevertheless God's discourse, since the entirety of the canon is recognized as the Word of God. Since God has appropriated human locution for his own illocution, the importance of that illocution being seen as the sole property of God cannot be exaggerated. For Knowles's view of the sermon, this means:

> The most a preacher may do is to compose the sermon as a locutionary act, a discourse that yields to the sole authority of the One for whom it speaks, offering itself for authorization while not claiming that authority for itself. In this sense, the sermon will always be cruciform, an act of self-abandonment to God in recognition of

[25] Knowles, *Third Voice*, 2.

[26] Notwithstanding the miraculous examples in Scripture, Jesus is the only one (until his return) who has experienced the eschatological reversal that is the resurrection of the dead (see Col. 1:18; cf. 1 Thess. 4:13–18).

[27] Knowles, *Third Voice*, 80.

> the preacher's own frailty and finitude (which is to say, the preacher's own distance from God).[28]

In other words, the sermon is the preacher's locution, which at its deliverance is only the Word of God by manner of its appropriation by God, who uses the sermon's locution for his own illocution.[29]

However helpful this distinction of appropriated speech is for homiletics, it nevertheless may appear to commit an original complaint of this dissertation—namely that the preacher is again potentially erased in the process. Knowles prefers to limit the sermon to appropriated discourse, since the divine perlocution belongs to God. If a Christian consoles another with encouraging words of hope, God can certainly appropriate that locution to bring about his perlocution of consolation in the gospel. However, Knowles dismisses *deputized discourse* as applicable to the preacher almost offhandedly, saying "no more than an ambassador is coequal with a nation or a lawyer equivalent to their more powerful client should even the most conservative congregant imagine their preacher or pastor to be Jesus' (much less God's) personal plenipotentiary."[30] Thereby he appears to express the same concern Barth had: only God can speak; humans can only witness and testify to and about God's speech; God himself does not speak through humans. If the preacher's sermon is only an act of "self-abandonment," then his individual identity can be waved away as incidental.

However, the sermon can only contain the power of God if it *is* the discourse of God, since

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[28] Knowles, *Third Voice*, 78.

[29] Logically and theologically, the Holy Spirit then guides the perlocution of the sermon for the hearers: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith." SC, *Third Article* in Kolb and Wengert, 355.

[30] Knowles, *Third Voice*, 77. Later he says the preacher does not "stand in the place of God or speak directly on God's behalf, not least because this is the prerogative of Christ alone," 182. The sacramental Lutheran theology of the Office of the Keys would disagree (as would, for that matter, Roman and Eastern sacramentalism).

the preacher has no divine power of his own. Knowles may not agree that there is a conflict here (being apparently Barthian), but in regard to the sermon (which again is a special and distinct mode of speech), there must be room *also* to consider the superintendence and deputized discourse of the preacher. This is because the identity of the preacher is only important because of his superintendence—the "back and forth" locution. Moreover, there actually *is* a command from God for his preachers to preach God's Word (Matt. 28:20; 2 Tim. 4:2), which validates their deputization. True, they are deputized to be Christ's *witnesses* (μάρτυρες) "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8), which could be seen as derivative. But this witnessing naturally works with the preacher's own locution, for the preacher does not receive the words of his sermon as water through a pipe any more than the first witnesses of Christ read from a script. Lutherans are far more comfortable within the paradoxical tension of the sermon *qua* Word of God: by breathing his Spirit onto the apostles, Jesus *is* in fact making them his "personal plenipotentiaries." This is not blasphemous or outrageous for Lutherans who, placing a high value on the Ministerium, confess the sacramental presence of Christ by the proclamation of the Word through this office: God himself speaks through his deputies. To allow for the consideration of the sermon to include *all* of double-agency discourse (and not just appropriation) by way of this slight corrective to Wolterstorff and Knowles, Nafzger is again helpful.

The issue at hand is the power and sovereignty—the Otherness—of God and his speech. Yet according to Nafzger, Luther's view of the Word granted divine authority to preaching without decreasing a modicum of God's divine discourse or "freedom"—as Barth (and Knowles) was worried about. Put simply, "there was no question in Luther's mind that when the Gospel is

faithfully preached, God himself is speaking."[31] Borrowing Uuraas Saarnivaara's descriptive phrases of Luther's theology of the Word, Nafzger clarifies: "Whether he was speaking about the 'revelation-word' (Scripture) or the 'means-of-grace-word' (gospel proclamation), Luther always understood the Word of God in Christological and soteriological (that is, cruciform) terms. Scripture exists to serve the proclamation of the gospel, and the gospel is nothing other than Christ crucified for our forgiveness and salvation."[32] Whether God is speaking through the written word of Scripture or the spoken word of the pulpit, God himself is speaking through these means. Any consideration of the Word, therefore, begins with the obvious presumption that God speaks at all. For Nafzger, the means of God's speaking is manifested in three different forms without confusion or conflation of the substance of his divine discourse.[33]

The first form is the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. Nafzger calls him the "*personal* Word … through whom God spoke *definitively, ultimately, decisively,* and *for all time*."[34] The second form of God speaking occurs through his divinely deputized discoursers, such as the prophets, apostles, and the church. This is the *spoken* Word, which can be recognized as faithful and true to the personal Word's intentions. The third form of the Word is the *written* Word, which codifies God's speech for posterity and guards against error. Considering the written Word, Nafzger says logically, "after considering the personal and spoken forms of the Word, it becomes obvious that much of what needs to be [said] about the Scriptures has already been said."[35] Reciprocally, considering the spoken Word (sermons) it could also be said that after considering

[31] Nafzger, *"These are Written*," 110.

[32] Nafzger, *"These are Written*," 111–12.

[33] Nafzger's three forms of the Word function as a corrective to Barth.

[34] Nafzger, *"These are Written*," 112. Italics original.

[35] Nafzger, *"These are Written*," 113.

the personal and written forms of the Word, the spoken Word is obvious as divine discourse through God's chosen superintendents. All three forms of the Word are consistent with each other and cruciform: the written and spoken Word have God's authority by the crucified and risen personal Word Jesus Christ. So whether the locution of the Word is revelatory, discoursive, admonishing, paraenetic, condemnatory, or salvific, God himself is speaking through Christ by the Spirit whenever and however and *through whomever* he pleases.[36] Nafzger points out that he does this "in a variety of settings, including *public preaching*, confession and absolution, the administration of the sacraments, and the mutual conversation and consolation of believers."[37] At the specific command to preach, Lutherans are thus confident that God is discoursing through his deputies in the *spoken* form of the Word which is consistent with the *written* form of the Word and promises forgiveness by the authority of the *personal* Word; moreover, they do so without the worry of limiting God in any way. In the same way that Christ deigns to speak forgiveness through the absolution,[38] God deigns to speak through the sermon. Preaching is simply a specific and unique means by which God has chosen to communicate. The sermon especially is therefore one coequal form of the Word along with Scripture and Christ himself, and *all three forms* are the divine discourse of a God who speaks.

The issue with Wolterstorff and Knowles limiting the sermon to appropriated discourse can perhaps also be remedied more simply: namely by considering the differences of approach between Wolterstorff and Knowles and the theory of "Embodied Superintendence" offered by

[36] God even once spoke through a donkey (Num. 22:28–30), though the text could be ambiguous on that point. It is telling, however, that the false prophet Balaam tells Balak, "Have I now any power of my own to speak anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that must I speak" (v. 38).

[37] Nafzger, *"These are Written*," 113. Italics mine.

[38] The words of the corporate absolution specifically emphasize this when the presider asks, "Do you believe that the forgiveness I speak is not my forgiveness but God's?" (LSB, 291). Lutherans understand that the first person singular pronoun spoken by the pastor in absolution *is* Christ speaking.

this dissertation. The former are considering the speech of God in relation to the preacher ("from above," as it were); they are examining the question of whether and how God speaks. This dissertation, however, considers the preacher himself ("from below") in relation to God's speech. That is to say, in this dissertation I intend to use "Embodied Superintendence" to consider the preacher as one who speaks the Word of God, rather than the reverse. Asking, "whose word is the preacher preaching?" is a different question than "how is God speaking?" From this vantage, coupled with the Lutheran understanding of the Word, it is acceptable—indeed *preferable*—for the preacher to view himself as God's deputy, discoursing "in the stead and by the command of" God as he knows the mind of God (John 15:15; 1 Cor. 2:16) and is sent by him (John 20:21). With his locution the preacher should see himself as exercising a high level of superintendence which God has granted him through the church (the Office of the Keys). Then, like Wolterstorff's holistic view of Scripture being God's appropriated speech, the preacher's sermon can be considered to be appropriated by God to accomplish whatever illocution (and perlocution) God desires; the sermon is "offered up," as Knowles says, as locution to be divinely appropriated even as the preacher speaks as God's superintendent. Whether the preacher is quipping a personal story, citing Scripture, addressing hearers by name, etc., the *entire* sermon is appropriated by God, and indeed is the Word of God. Again, from God's perspective the sermon is appropriated (cf. Is. 6:7; Jer. 1:9); from the preacher's perspective, the sermon is divine discourse given by a deputy. Thus, the facets of Wolterstorff's double-agency discourse can *all* be true for the preacher, unless the preacher is found to be in error with God's hitherto appropriated speech, namely the norm of Scripture. This is an important point that works to safeguard the speech of God from the preacher's potential inconsistencies—or rather to prevent the backwards idea that the sermon is the preacher's appropriation of God's speech.

Wolterstorff's "normative theory of discourse"[39] provides insights to this important ancillary point.

In essence, when communication occurs between two parties, a "normative stance" has been established. The locutor and the recipient of the locution meet, as it were, in mutual understanding of the meaning of the locution. There are societal and relational realities at play that can be accepted *prima facie*, and Wolterstorff would even call this normativity a moral obligation. For example, a driver signaling a left turn has normalized a communication that is morally broken if he turns right instead; a boy who cries wolf has broken communicative normativity by lying. If the broken normativity of communication "becomes a pattern of behavior for a certain person, he or she loses credibility. If this becomes a pattern of behavior for an entire society, the existence of meaningful communication is jeopardized."[40] Additionally, in order for normativity to be maintained, the speaker must carry the weight of appropriate authority. For example, only an umpire can call a batter "out." Only a jury can declare a defendant guilty or not guilty. "For a command to be in effect (and therefore establish a moral obligation on the hearer), the one making the command must have the proper authority."[41] For divine discourse, this means God maintaining his moral obligation to his creatures by speaking and remaining faithful to his Word. For the sermon, this means the preacher not only receives the moral normativity of God's Word but also establishes a normative relationship with his hearers as one who speaks the truth. Were he to err, the sermon *qua* God's speech would be considered unappropriated by God.

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[39] See Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 75–94.

[40] Nafzger, *"These are Written*," 72, referring to Wolterstorff. This will be addressed as a significant societal problem in the following chapters.

[41] Nafzger, *"These are Written*," 72.

Again, as mentioned above, it is important to insist that the "invalidation" of the sermon as the Word of God only happens *post facto*: when the locution of the sermon is inconsistent with or contrary to the norm of Scripture (see for example Deut. 18:22; Gal. 1:8–9), it is acceptable to declare the divinity of the speech to be absent. That which is "bound and loosed in heaven" (Matt. 18:18; John 20:23) remains the work of the Holy Spirit and not the preacher, so Christ's preachers on earth must speak only that which God would. This clarification allowed Martin Luther to burn *Exsurge Domine* without fear of damnation: even if it could be said that Pope Leo X had the divine authority befitting his office, his condemnations of Luther were inconsistent with Scripture and thus not appropriated by God as divine discourse. Similarly, the preacher confines himself to the norm of Scripture even as God deigns to confine his speech to the preacher's sermon. What all of this means for the preacher is that he is to consider himself as Christ's mouthpiece, "God making his appeal" through him (2 Cor. 5:20).[42] As such, he is granted a high level of superintendence to speak on God's behalf. Yet far from giving the preacher carte blanche freedom to say whatever he wants to, the responsibility of remaining faithful to the Word is humbling and even sometimes terrifying (Luke 17:1–2; Heb. 13:17; James 3:1). But it is always embodied by the preacher. The common prayer of the preacher, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer," (Ps. 19:14) acknowledges the preacher's accountability within a humble posture. This nuances Knowles's "self-abandonment" to include not just a self-abandonment but also a prayer for acceptance.

In summary, the *what* of "Embodied Superintendence" considers the locution of the

[42] The striking definition of πρεσβεύομεν in 2 Cor. 5:20 (see also Eph. 6:20) being commonly translated "ambassador" (one who is authorized to speak for another) strengthens the point, as an ambassador is precisely the example Wolterstorff uses for deputized discourse.

sermon "from below." The preacher, who has been deputized to speak with a high level of superintendence, is speaking the Word of God, who appropriates the preacher's human speech for God's divine illocution such that God himself is also (paradoxically) speaking in the sermon. However, this dissertation turns its attention to the *humanity* of those words of the preacher. How are we to account for or negotiate the authority or validity of the words of an individual preacher based on the individuality of his identity? Unless the identity of the preacher is treated, his superintendence as a deputy of God would say little more than what has already been said about his authority as a member of the Ministerium. What must be considered is the *who* of "Embodied Superintendence," namely that the superintendence of the preacher is *embodied* by the preacher, who speaks with his own words. For "behind" those words, so to speak, is everything that makes him an individual: age, race, culture, sex, homeland, relationships, memories, training, etc. Because the preacher's individuality is unique, an effort must be made to consider his identity in relation to those other identities with which he may have little in common. Since a goal of this dissertation is to demonstrate the validity of a preacher preaching the Word of God in light of (or in spite of) any cultural distinctions or individual identity markers from the hearers, it is crucial to consider how the embodiment of the preacher's superintendence can be theorized in such a way as to find value in these differences without erasing them. His limitations of divine discourse to appropriation notwithstanding, Knowles again provides a useful homiletic in treating this matter of human agency.

The "Embodiment" of the Preacher's Superintendence

The question at hand can be posed this way: if the preacher claims to be speaking the Word of God as God's deputy, and his own speech is the "back and forth" of God's illocution and his

own,[43] how could the preacher's cultural identity and experience possibly hope to communicate authentically with those whose cultural identities are different? Not being God himself, wouldn't his myriad individualities be at best a hindrance to what he claims is God's divine discourse? This is precisely the general concern of the greater homiletical academy regarding identity politics and intersectionality. Even if the sermon *is* believed to be the Word of God (in any fashion, even by mere appropriation à la Knowles), the one preaching it does so from an individual existential vantage and thus is only empathizing with experiences outside of his own.[44] Knowles thus probes this question of culture and identity via an exploration of preaching resurrection as what he eponymously calls the "Third Voice."

Since the preacher (and all Christians) have not yet experienced resurrection, it is "by definition a dynamic over which preachers have no control."[45] Knowles likens the identity of the Christian in that which he has not (yet) experienced to a pilgrimage—the "now-and-not-yet" eschatological tension of the Christian faith.[46] To emphasize the unique characteristic of that identity, he equates this to the "third space" postcolonial theorizations of Homi K. Bhabha. In its essence, Bhabha's third space is the tension of a cultural and individual identity that "is never fixed, but is constantly in flux, requiring constant negotiation and compromise."[47] Like an immigrant leaving his homeland and arriving in a new one, the third space is that which no longer belongs to a former identity yet still struggles to find expression and belonging in the new one. This is especially important to the postcolonial studies of Bhabha, for cultural identity is

[43] See again Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 45.

[44] Again, this position is taken by some to the extreme, as a preacher whose identity is perceived by some to be oppressive is preemptively devalued or (ironically) silenced.

[45] Knowles, *Third Voice*, 2.

[46] Knowles, *Third Voice*, 174–82.

[47] Knowles, *Third Voice*, 162.

"always crafted and reinforced through the recitation of communal narratives and life stories that are constantly challenged and contradicted by countervailing narratives on the part of other constituencies."[48] Applying this to a distinctly Christian identity, since there is never truly a static cultural identity in an individual, there is never truly a static cultural identity *coram mundo* as far as the Christian church is concerned (cf. Acts 2:6). There is, however, the tension of the pilgrimage for the Christian who follows Jesus: the so-called "third space" is the journey of discipleship between death and life, between cross and resurrection (cf. Rom. 6:3–5). It is the cruciform self-abandonment for a hope that is yet to come (Matt. 16:24).

Ultimately, Knowles uses this language of pilgrimage to address the identity of the Christian as being called "toward what Paul describes as 'the depths of God'—that which 'no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor human heart conceived' (1 Cor. 2:9–10)."[49] For the preacher, this means his sermon is what Knowles calls the "Third Voice": an embodied testimony of the pilgrimage—the very grace and hope which defines the substance of the Christian faith. It is that which points to what has *not yet been experienced*, and yields control of the illocution to him who *has* experienced it—Jesus Christ (again, cf. John 3:30; 1 Cor. 2:2). In this way, the preacher's embodied testimony is cruciform—just as the Word of God itself is cruciform (à la Nafzger). Knowles explicitly intends this to point to the Christian hope of resurrection, and Lutheran theology would agree entirely: as Christ is the "firstborn" of the resurrection, so also will Christians be (but are not yet) resurrected (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:14–20; Col. 1:15; see also 1 Thess. 4:13–18). Probing deeper into other things-which-are-unknown, "Embodied Superintendence" appropriates Knowles's concept of the third voice as a point of departure for

[48] Knowles, *Third Voice*, 163.

[49] Knowles, *Third Voice*, 181.

further considerations of cultural identity.

Precisely because no individual can have a perfectly shared identity with another—memory, experience, and ability being what they are—one should never make Christianity dependent on any particular cultural identity. Instead, the opposite happens: *Christian* identity has its source in Christ (i.e., is cruciform). As Knowles says, "the church is always more than a simple expression of culture, but always less than the full manifestation of God's reign."[50] Try as they might, sinful humanity sometimes seeks to contain or criticize the other in ways that not only limit expression of the Christian faith within differing cultures but also arrogantly presume a superior vantage from its own.[51] Thus "it is critical that no one culture, perspective, or worldview may claim to provide the framework for interpreting others."[52] It is as unacceptable for the preacher to do this for the hearers as it is for the hearers to do it for the preacher. Again, since that perspective (like all cultural perspectives) is constantly in flux, the labeling and criticizing of cultural identities as if they were static and unchanging (or as if any one can be fully understood by another) is in essence a chasing after the wind. For preaching divine discourse, this would manifest itself by claiming the illocution of God for oneself, since the preacher might be arrogant enough to reduce the hearers' identities to his own perception of them. However, the reciprocal is also true for the hearers: if the preacher's cultural identity is reduced to a preconceived and static experience, its natural flux is ignored, and the illocution of the sermon can be

[50] Knowles, *Third Voice*, 166.

[51] This is broadly speaking a suitable definition for ethnocentrism: namely that one culture presumes superiority over another. For two quality examinations of the shift in missiological goals and their effectiveness relative to cultural distinctions, see Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); and Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009).

[52] Knowles, *Third Voice*, 165.

commandeered for whatever perlocution the hearers decide for themselves.[53]

Borrowing Knowles's language about resurrection, human agency involved in preaching to others points to a "reality for which words alone are insufficient."[54] Because the hearers are distinct from the preacher (and from each other, for that matter), the preacher is essentially powerless from a human standpoint in relating *exactly* to the hearers. At best he can empathize via a correlative aspect of his own identity, and the more different they are the more difficult it becomes. The preacher speaks through a glass dimly to those whose hearts and souls are unknown to him because they are *other* to him. Yet just as it is with resurrection, which is preached within that unexperienced "Third Voice," cultural differences are not to be ignored but rather interpreted through Christ and his saving work, and the sermon *qua* the Word of God provides the validation of human experience. Despite the preacher's unknown, the *sermon* speaks from God as each hearer is known to God (Ps. 139:1–4; see also Gen. 6:5; John 2:25).[55] Again, the *sermon* (as divine discourse) provides space for both the preacher and hearers to encounter that which God wishes to perform by its locution. Even the biblical narratives (again, Knowles refers to resurrection) "function much as does the risen Lord himself: as *embodied*, human testimony to a reality that is at the very limits of human understanding."[56] The Word of God is deep and inscrutable to humanity (Rom. 11:33) insofar as experience can relate (Is. 64:4; 1 Cor. 2:9), yet it fuels the Christian pilgrimage by God's initiation.

At the core of the preacher's "embodied human testimony" therefore is a humble

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[53] This is precisely one of this dissertation's chief concerns with the greater homiletical academy: for all the negotiating done in the name of ending racism and inequality, many of the myopic obsessions with culture and race *eo ipso* replace the pilgrimage of Christian identity with the search for social justice or the checking of "privilege."

[54] Knowles, *Third Voice*, 21.

[55] Here is another more practical reason why the divine discourse of God must be present in the sermon: if it were not, then the sermon would not be able to speak definitively across cultural barriers.

[56] Knowles, *Third Voice*, 21. Italics mine.

understanding that God is the initiator of salvation, by which the preacher interacts with hope:

> Preaching modeled on resurrection is an act of trusting speech that takes Christ and the text at their word with respect to God's willingness and ability to raise dead hearers to life (preachers foremost among them). Faithful preaching does not claim authority for itself or endeavor by virtue of its own persuasive power to coerce or inspire a suitable response (much less to bestow the gift of life), but leaves to God the prerogative for effecting the transformation of which it speaks. Even before inviting hearers to enter into this dynamic for themselves, the first "active reinterpretation" of the text *must therefore be the preacher's own*. It is an exercise in yielding, and of ceding authority, to God.[57]

The immediate implication of this dynamic for "Embodied Superintendence" is that the preacher embodies a cruciform testimony of the Word of God for his hearers through his cultural differences, as diverse and fluid as they may be.[58] The preacher's *own* testimony is heretofore borne from the cruciform Word and thus offers itself as a model for the hearers. In other words, the preacher is not merely offering a disembodied hope or theological education for the hearers to believe or not depending on how they relate to his cultural identity; rather, he is offering an embodied hope, voiced through his cultural identity as he is a receptor of grace, for the hearers to believe or not depending on how they relate to Jesus Christ, the Lord of all nations. He is offering *his hope* as a receptor of grace and inviting the hearers into a similar and unifying hope.

Precisely because the preacher's hope is located within the tension of things-that-are and things-that-will-be, the preacher (humanly speaking) can do no more than invite the hearer into that tension as an embodied picture of God's desired perlocution through his cultural individuality. That perlocution is nothing short of the cruciform identity of a Christian who is called by Jesus to deny himself, pick up his cross, and follow him (Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23), and

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[57] Knowles, *Third Voice*, 28. Italics mine.

[58] Jesus himself demonstrates cultural distinctions as markers of the universal reign of God through these differences. See his interactions with the Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:24–30) and with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:4–42). See also Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–39).

is embodied by the preacher. The preacher does not need to fully experience the identities of his hearers—in fact, he cannot. Only Christ can, did, and does (Heb. 2:17; 4:15). To expect the preacher to speak on behalf of his hearers *by his own being* is to expect him to speak a language he does not know. But to expect the preacher to speak on behalf of his hearers *by the power of God* working within him, in light of the qualities of a person's identity (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1–12; Titus 1:6–9), is the definition of preaching. Thus the paradox of God *and the preacher* speaking together is maintained, and the address of a preacher to his hearers might very well sound like this:

Dear Friend, I speak by this sermon the Word of hope from God himself. No, I do not know what it is to suffer exactly as you have; but I do know suffering. No, I do not know what it is to have your skin; but I too have skin. Yes, your language and speech are distinct from mine; but so are mine from yours. Yet into each of our deadened hearts has come our hope in new life: for Christ has borne our suffering, our skin, even our language entirely. By his holy cross he has torn down the dividing walls of hostility that separated our speech at Babel. By the fires of Pentecost, he has given us speech to proclaim his wonderful deeds amidst and amongst our differences. Thus, in this sermon I offer up to you not an exact portrayal of yourself in myself, but rather a testimony—an embodiment—of that which hopes for forgiveness, peace, and the life of the world to come. I pray the same for you by these words in Christ Jesus, that at the last our knees may bow together, and our tongues confess as one that he is Lord to the glory of the Father.

Poetic musings aside, "Embodied Superintendence" ultimately proves to be a philosophical consideration of speech and being that acknowledges the complicated and dynamically changing cultural differences between preacher and hearer. Precisely because the sermon proclaims hope

within a pilgrimage of Christian identity, and that identity embodies the cruciform tension between cultural individuality and a teleological hope, "Embodied Superintendence" values—and by no means erases or overlooks—differing cultural identities as present realities in need of the same hope in Christ. Indeed, the individual differences between the preacher and the hearers are precisely that which drives the preacher into close introspection as he considers what words would benefit their faith and lives in any given sermon. This is consistent with the Reformation's reclamation of the pastor's purpose: for upon his considerations about the authorization of his words and the "Third Space" (via Knowles) of that which is unexperienced by him, the preacher can consider his own personhood *in relation to others* as the Word of God speaks through him. In this is also a reflection of the contours of the Lutheran foundation of the person of the preacher, explained in the previous chapter: namely his study and preparation, his character, and his personality. These contours can function as formational inflections of "Embodied Superintendence."

Culture as Formational Inflections of the Preacher

In the greater homiletical academy, many treat cultural identity as prolegomena. But it must be stated in all severity that cultural identity is not *foundational* to Christian homiletics. As it was explored in Chapter Three, the explicit guidelines for Timothy and Titus as they appoint preachers (as an official role) are devoid of any specific cultural identity (see again 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1). Aside from the exclusivity of male preachers, there simply is no prerequisite involving ethnic, linguistic, or physical qualities. The requirements for preachers instead have to do with such attributes as ability (i.e., "apt to teach"), character (i.e., "well thought of by outsiders"), or length of Christian life (i.e., "not a recent convert"). The same was true for preachers in the church's infancy: Matthias was not chosen to replace Judas for any cultural reason (Acts 1:21–

22), and the so-called deacons were appointed because they were "of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (Acts 6:3). Only with Nicolaus ("a proselyte of Antioch") is any cultural specificity mentioned, and this has no known bearing on his selection. Paul boasts about his Hebrew heritage (Phil. 3:3–11), but only to eschew it immediately for the sake of knowing Christ.[59] The Word of God is the foundation and telos of all preaching, yet God has chosen to communicate through preachers. Thus, the *person of the preacher* is foundational; but cultural identity (as a modifier of personhood) is not evidenced in the New Testament in the same way.

However, as demonstrated by "Embodied Superintendence" above, cultural identity is in fact *formational* to Christian homiletics by the very nature of its being formational to the preacher himself. Cultural identity is not always incidental, and the New Testament bears this out. For example, when Jesus calls Nathanael he greets him by acknowledging his heritage (John 1:47) as an assent to his role of fulfilling the law and the prophets. Matthew is specifically named by his previous vocation (Matt. 9:9; 10:3), and Simon the Zealot by his extreme devotion to the law (as indicated by "the Zealot," Matt. 10:4; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). Paul had Timothy circumcised because the Jews in that area knew his father was a Greek (Acts 16:3), thus considering their cultural vantage and avoiding unnecessary offense. Titus, however, was not circumcised (Gal. 2:3) as an apparent protest against the requirements of the law. When Paul preached (especially in the synagogues), he used the Scriptures as ways of convincing the Jews who surely would have been familiar with them (Acts 9:22; 13:32–41; 17:2; 19:8; 26:22; 28:23)

[59] Even beyond homiletics, cultural identity is not prescribed of Christians in Scripture. In fact, Paul was extremely upset with Peter when the latter "drew back and separated himself" from the Gentiles (Gal. 2:11–14), for these actions obfuscated the gospel being preached to the Gentiles. The same argument regarding the cultural marker of circumcision saw sharp dissension and debate at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1–29), and Peter's vision and visit to Cornelius confirmed that "to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:18). The gospel rather embraces all cultural distinctions in its application (Acts 2:5–12), as God "made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him" (Acts 17:26–27).

but resorted to pagan poets when evangelizing to non-Jews (Acts 17:28). He also adapted to the cultural and social systems when it was expedient for the gospel: shaving his head as part of a vow (Acts 18:18), speaking Hebrew in Jerusalem (Acts 22:2), and appealing to his Roman citizenship (Acts 16:37–38; 25:11, 21) in order to extend and enlarge his audience (cf. Acts 26:28–29). In short, culture is a formative factor of identity in service to the preaching of the gospel and the calling of all to faith.[60]

Again, it is crucial to maintain the distinction between *foundational* and *formational* when it comes to cultural identity, for this is the root of much confusion and consternation in the greater homiletical academy. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, the person of the preacher is indeed *foundational* to Lutheran homiletics: even without nuance it is obvious that the preaching office is exercised through a unique individual—that is simply how Christ designed the ministry to function. The Reformation's revival of the centrality of the Word of God allowed pastoral theology to reclaim its place as a ministerial means by which God speaks to and offers grace to people, and this foundation is best exhibited through the preacher's study and preparation, his character, and his personality. These contours can be said to be descriptive of that foundational homiletic. What cultural identity does is *inflect* and *form* these contours without supplanting them or becoming a foundational consideration itself. There is certainly no particular cultural identity in Scripture named as requisite or descriptive of preachers, yet Paul does "become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:23). In this famous text he demonstrates the importance of cultural adaptation and understanding "for the sake of the gospel,

[60] One can see further considerations of cultural adaptation in Paul's instructions for propriety in worship, especially that Christian women dress modestly (see 1 Cor. 11:4–15; 1 Tim. 2:9). For a recent examination of this theological issue (particularly in 1 Cor. 14), see John G. Nordling, "The Women's 'Speaking' at Corinth (1 Cor. 14:34): Does Paul Limit Disruptive Speech or Wrongful Teaching of the Word of God?" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 86, no. 3–4 (2022): 241–56.

that I may share with them in its blessings." In other words, Paul strongly considered cultural differences as he sought the best means and methods to proclaim the gospel.[61] The same end is sought after with "Embodied Superintendence," and by retaining the distinction that cultural identity is homiletically formational rather than foundational it both honors Lutheran theology and contributes to the current conversation in the greater homiletical academy in a fresh way. It also allows for limitless different conversations and considerations regarding culture and preaching, since the former is always in flux.

"Embodied Superintendence" recognizes the formative nature of cultural identities, but it is important not to limit these considerations as if the point of "Embodied Superintendence" is merely to provide the preacher with a method of addressing cultural differences. As highlighted above, "Embodied Superintendence" is rather a philosophical consideration of speech that acknowledges and embraces the complications of culture between the preacher and the hearers: God speaks through the preacher's own words, and the latter occupies the "third space" of cultural differences unknown to him (at least experientially). Since these differences come from and are set in juxtaposition to the hearers, it is crucial for the doctrine of the divine call to accompany "Embodied Superintendence." Through the divine call, the hearers themselves can be said to speak through the preacher as the proper guarantors of the Office of the Keys, and thus properly view the preacher as one from their midst set aside for the special task of preaching.

Briefly, Lutheran doctrine confesses that "the ministry of the Word [*Predigtamt*] is conferred by God *through the congregation* as the possessor of all ecclesiastical power, or the

[61] Jared Alcántara calls this passage "the quintessential example of behavior modification for the sake of engagement with other cultures … [Paul] is willing to do anything short of sinning to advance the gospel's cause." Alcántara, *Crossover Preaching*, 206–07.

power of the keys, by means of its call, which God Himself has prescribed."[62] To be sure, the pastoral office is unique and commanded by Christ (see Matt. 28:19–20; John 20:22–23), but the appointment of men to this responsibility (see Titus 1:5) occurs *through* the church at large. In Lutheranism, there is no recognized authority for a preacher who has not been "called" in the proper way. Instead, the preacher is sent by and for whatever specific community has called him by the Holy Spirit. In this way, the divine call acts as a sort of *double* divine discourse: the preacher speaks as God's superintendent *as well as* the hearers' superintendent. Because the preacher's authority comes from God *through the church*, their voices are echoed in his. Thus, Knowles's "third voice" is a shared "third space" between the preacher and the hearers—not that there is a cultural impasse, but that preacher and hearers enjoy a symbiotic relationship of understanding and formation under the authority of God's Word. The symbiosis is circular, as it is the pattern of the church's ongoing life: the person of the preacher is inflected by the cultural identity of the preacher, which is in dialogue with the rest of the community of faith, which is inflected by irreducible cultural identities; the sermon, being the Word of God, is also the word of the church which is bound to the sacred order of the preached gospel, which forms them as a distinct community of faith, which sends for the preaching of the Word, and so on until the Parousia. A famous musing of Scottish preacher James Stalker captures this sentiment perfectly:

> I like to think of the minister as only one of the congregation set apart by the rest for a particular purpose … They say to one of their number, Look, brother, we are busy with our daily toils and confused with domestic and worldly cares; we live in confusion and darkness; but we eagerly long for peace and light to illuminate our life, and we have heard there is a land where these are to be found—a land of repose and joy, full of thoughts that breathe and words that burn: but we cannot go thither ourselves; we are too embroiled in daily cares: come, we will elect you, and set you

[62] C. F. W. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, 22. See also *CA* V; XIV, and C. F. W. Walther, *The Congregation's Right to Choose its Pastor*, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1997).

> free from our toils, and you shall go thither for us, and week by week trade with that land and bring us its treasures and its spoils.[63]

The hearers of the preacher's sermons see in him an embodiment of how their own experiences with the world can inform their own identities, and the preacher sees himself as tasked by God through the hearers with delivering the treasures of faith to them. Moreover, considering the preacher's divine call as the Holy Spirit granting authority *through* the church further roots his cultural inflections in relationship to the church. Indeed, the selection of a preacher by a specific and unique community of faith provides a bridge between the cultural identities of the hearers and the cultural identity of the preacher, for no one's cultural identity is created or maintained in a vacuum; rather, identity is formed through dialogical relationships. This dialogical concept of culture (especially as it exists within the church) must be explained.

The idea that a person's identity is contingent (in a sense) on his or her community is often anathema to modern American sensibilities, many of whom distinguish between empiricism and an idiosyncratic "truth."[64] In an important work summarizing the famous (and seemingly prophetic) work of Philip Rieff,[65] Carl Trueman laments the modern notion that identity "has almost completely dispensed with the idea of any authority beyond that of personal, psychological conviction."[66] In other words, whereas "culture" and "identity" used to be seen as contingent on the external communal realities of an individual's given situation, in the modern

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[63] James Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models: The Yale Lectures on Preaching, 1891* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919), 283.

[64] The famous quote from Frank Lloyd Wright, "The truth is more important than the facts," has been cited by many in recent years, from the novel and movie *The Life of Pi*, to politicians including Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio Cortez and President Joe Biden, to emphasize ideology and personal identity over empiricism and objective fact.

[65] Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

[66] Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 36.

era reality "is something we can manipulate according to our own wills and desires, and not something that we necessarily need to conform ourselves to or passively accept."[67] Hence, personal identity is now trumpeted as "expressive individualism,"[68] and a matter of "personal taste."[69] This could easily explain, as Trueman suggests, why the current social climate is so combustible: if a person derives his or her (or some other pronoun) identity from *themselves*, then anyone questioning the empiricism of said assertions is not just disagreeing with opinion—they are perceived as questioning the very validity of an individual's existence.[70]

But if identity really is completely autonomous and "therapeutic" (self-created), the resultant conclusion for the preacher must be either irrelevance or oppression. In other words, if the individual has triumphed in defining what his or her identity is, then the best a preacher can offer them is encouragement for that individual to be their "authentic" self (whatever that means to them). At worst, the preacher stands as a symbol of oppression—a binary of power versus weakness—even by mere virtue of the preacher's holding the floor and speaking, regardless of what is said. The very concept of preaching is thereby undone by modern individualism, for no authoritative discourse is possible;[71] the *extra nos* of the gospel is certainly unavailable unless the individual holds the power to choose it for themselves—a concept Lutherans confess to be an impossibility.[72]

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[67] Trueman, *Triumph*, 41.

[68] Trueman, *Triumph*, 46.

[69] Trueman, *Triumph*, 50.

[70] See Trueman, *Triumph*, 54: "I must not tailor my psychological needs to the nature of society, for that would create anxiety and make me inauthentic. The refusal to bake me a wedding cake, therefore, is not an act consistent with the therapeutic ideal; in fact, it is the opposite—an act causing me psychological harm."

[71] Any homiletical view that negatively negotiates the cultural identity of a preacher before he even speaks is guilty of this.

[72] Cf. 1 Cor. 12:3.

What Trueman suggests is a correction to the current "therapeutic"[73] concept of identity that instead acknowledges the dialogical nature of identity: "How a person thinks of himself is the result of learning the language of the community so that he can be a part of the community."[74] In this he builds on the work of Charles Taylor, who says "one is a self only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it."[75] For the church, this means a community of faith is made up of many individual selves who are "socially constructed and only come to full self-consciousness in dialogue with other self-consciousnesses."[76] Like this dissertation, Trueman is careful not to suggest that the church's "culture" be defined by specific cultural markers,[77] but he does strongly suggest (again, as does this dissertation), that individualism—especially in the church—must be grounded in "a sacred order."[78] In other words, for the church to exist as Scripture prescribes it to exist there must be an *extra nos* identifier that gathers and holds the church as a distinct culture: the gospel. As such, the church on a macrocosmic level is a unique community with a unique culture rooted in the gospel that is not found or duplicated anywhere else in the world. On the microcosmic level, any individual who belongs to a community of faith is formed by that community within the sacred order of the gospel, even as that person forms that community by virtue of being present within it. For the preacher, this formation is even more poignant, for his vocation is largely defined by

[73] Trueman cites Charles Taylor's cultural categories of "mimesis" versus "poiesis" as the difference between concepts that view the world as having intrinsic order versus "raw material" by which the individual can make meaning, respectively. See Trueman, *Triumph*, 39–40. See also Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2007).

[74] Trueman, *Triumph*, 58.

[75] Trueman, *Triumph*, 57, quoting Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 35.

[76] Trueman, *Triumph*, 404.

[77] Trueman, *Triumph*, 404 footnote 16: "The answer to free-floating relativism is not the arbitrary decision to make the distinct preferences of our culture as a whole normative for all times, places, and people."

[78] Trueman, *Triumph*, 387.

his task of preaching the Word of God, which alone is the authoritative power of Christian formation.

As far as cultural identity is concerned, therefore, the church views cultural differences not as things to overcome, but rather expressions of humanity that can be explored, expressed, and kaleidoscopically celebrated. In fact, the disparate cultural identities of the community of faith are built into the fabric of the divine call itself, since the congregation are cultural people calling a cultural preacher. Thus, the doctrine of the divine call provides a point of reference through which cultural identity (as a sort of dialogue between the church and the pastor) inflects the homiletical foundation of the person of the preacher. This stabilizes the external nuances of study, character, and personality in a faithful way so that the preacher's cultural identity can be explored as the occasion merits. Anchored by this doctrine, the following three subsections will provide examples of how cultural considerations inflect and form the preacher's study, character, and personality.

Cultural Inflection: Study and Preparation

When the preacher studies and prepares for the sermon, not only is a biblical interpretation and application befitting his tradition included (which is certainly an emphasis in historical Lutheranism), but also an awareness of his hearers and himself—how they all live and move and have their being according to the Word of God in their community. This includes at the same time the preacher's individuality and the similarities and differences he shares with the hearers. That which is alien to him becomes a part of his motivation for study, so that he further grounds the act of preaching in the entire pastoral ministry of the church. This means that the sermon should be informed by study and preparation that includes not just Scripture and doctrine, but also the various contextual and social issues confronting his hearers and the world at any given

time. Sometimes empirical, sometimes academic, these issues "train" him in his subjectivity—so the more aware he is of them the better.

He therefore uses the tools by which these experiences have shaped him to get a firm ministerial grasp on the world, his community, and how his hearers are subjected to and influenced by them. In crafting a sermon, the preacher engages these experiences and configures these with the raw experiences of the hearers, which may or may not be vastly different from his. But since they have sent him, the sermon then is not a mere recitation or heraldic announcement apart from them (or him). Rather, the sermon is a discoursive and cruciform Word of God that, being regulated by Scripture and the church's theological tradition, is spoken in the preacher's own words. This is consistent with historical Lutheran voices who find in the sermon an attendance to the continual work of pastoral ministry and highlights the representation of a community of faith in the preacher himself. It also privileges an ability to be concerned over more sensitive cultural issues. Those cultural issues will naturally arise by the simple and obvious fact that the preacher is sent by and on behalf of the church on earth.

Again, when a preacher approaches the sermonic task, he does not do so as a random and lifeless cultural mote, but as one who has been called by God *through the church* to serve in this capacity; he is one from a greater whole. More than that, he is not typically placed into the church without the requisite tools and training required to carry out his tasks, but rather he was first *sent by* a community to receive, hone, and eventually use these tools.[79] When this first happens (that is, when a man is sent to the seminary), the seriousness of the office demands at least a recognition of subjective pastoral potential. The Pauline qualifications notwithstanding (1

[79] Even in the "traditional" process of pastoral formation in the LCMS whereby a student attends seminary, becomes certified by the Council of Presidents, and receives a Divine Call to a place and congregation he might never have heard of, should be considered as having taken place by means of the greater church.

Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9), a pastoral candidate usually has the *desire*[80] to serve God and the church in this way. He himself has been a hearer of many sermons, a recipient of pastoral care, and encouraged toward that vocation. His formation as a Christian and a pastor is greater than the sum of its parts, but this ought not to thwart his consideration of these underlying experiences. Upon these considerations, the resultant sermon implicitly reflects an awareness he has as one who has been formed *by* the community of faith *for* the community of faith.

When he is called and ordained to be a pastor, he *continues* to be a part of a community of faith, even as he leads it. Like any congregant, his individual spiritual life is maintained and enlightened by the preaching of the Word. True, his preaching office is distinct and separate, and he is the one doing the preaching, but his authority is derived from and maintained by the greater church who gives it to him. Thus, when he considers the sermon, not only is he cognizant of the experiences of the hearers whom he serves in a pastoral capacity, but his own. He has, as it were, one eye on the hearers, one eye on himself, and both ears on what God would say to *all* of them. In this way, the proper considerations of the preacher's authority through the Ministerium are not limited to the static label of a qualification ("called and ordained"), but also a recognition that God works through the mystical body of his church to communicate with his people by the good order of preaching. God's Word sounds through the preacher's own words as through an embodied deputy granted a high level of superintendence to apply the eternal Word to finite contexts. But before he ever puts pen to paper or opens his mouth, his context within the community is considered. Whether subconscious or conscious, he is influenced by these myriad external factors and studies them accordingly.

However, the preacher's cultural considerations as he is sent by a community of faith is not

[80] It is possible to speak of the "immediate call" to the ministry in this way.

without its foibles, and this is immediately apparent to a Lutheran approaching the greater homiletical academy with an eye toward identity politics and intersectionality: on the one hand, it can happen that the church does not fully recognize her formative role in being a listener of sermons, forgetting that the preacher's Word, in addition to being spoken *to* them, is also *from* them; thereby, the sermon is negotiated by the identity politics and intersectionality of the preacher. On the other hand, despite being the institutionalized holder of the Office of the Keys, the church can erroneously claim ownership of the ministry such that the Word of God is commoditized, and the sermon hijacked by their preconceptions; thereby, the sermon is negotiated by the identity politics and intersectionality of the hearers. That false dichotomy clearly arises from overemphasizing either the *to* or the *from* in this preacher/hearer symbiosis. This can thereby lead the church to fall into the trap of seeing the preacher either as one independent from them or as one assigned by them to fulfill their desires. Because every individual life deals with real and complicated emotions, the desires of the preacher or hearers can very easily include cultural conclusions that are incongruent with the truth of God's Word, the *missio Dei*, and even the purpose of preaching as the Word of God to bring salvation in Jesus Christ.

A strong example of this incongruence is Eunjoo Mary Kim's work on what she calls "transcontextual homiletics" in an increasingly globalized setting.[81] It is self-evident that "differences in race, ethnicity, gender, age, theological orientation, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and so forth contribute to each listener's unique listening process, and further influence various modes of thinking, learning, communicating, and listening to others."[82]

[81] Eunjoo Mary Kim, *Preaching in an Age of Globalization* (Louisville: Westminster, 2010).

[82] Kim, *Preaching*, 87.

This naturally creates a homiletical challenge of contextualization and subjectivity. Kim addresses this challenge with a "transcontextual" hermeneutic that includes "interpathic" understanding,[83] "communitarian" reading,[84] and "paradigmatic" interpretation[85] that aims at "humanization."[86] In the modern era, an increasingly large web of interconnectivity (globalization) presents a substantial challenge to more traditional understandings of culture.[87] Awareness of this globalization is valuable for understanding the subjectivity of the hearers, since "all human existence—that of every individual woman and man, every community and society—is constituted fundamentally of an interlocking biology, history, and sociocultural situation, whose web of interdependency is integral to its creatureliness."[88] To be sure, such interconnected awareness is precisely one of the primary considerations that undergird "Embodied Superintendence" as the preacher considers his status as a deputy of the hearers.

However, as meritorious as Kim's observations on cultural interconnectivity are, her homiletic is designed to be "a public theology and not exclusively a church theology because its

[83] Kim, *Preaching*, 73, "In order to interpathically understand Others who are different in their individual or group identities and social locations, the preacher needs to stand in their shoes and see the world through their eyes." Interpathy differs from empathy by the distance the latter maintains in understanding the feelings of others.

[84] Kim, *Preaching*, 77, "Real dialogue involves honesty, humility, and openness to different cultures and social locations at a roundtable in which no positions are privileged and none are marginalized."

[85] Kim, *Preaching*, 80, "During the process of paradigmatic interpretation, a shared identity, a new humanity in solidarity with others, is formed, and a conversational fusion of horizons happens."

[86] Kim, *Preaching*, 45, defines humanization from a Christian perspective as "freedom from any kind of slavery or structure that diminishes human dignity or worth, including racism, classism, sexism, ethnocentrism, despotism, even our own devaluation or self-limitation. Humanization realizes one's right to be human. Human beings are liberated when they discern the evil of the age in which they live, criticize it, and distance themselves from it."

[87] For a more traditional and Modernist understanding of culture, see for example the seminal work of H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), who divides his cultural observations into five distinct categories: 1) Christ against culture; 2) Christ of culture; 3) Christ above culture; 4) Christ and culture in paradox; 5) Christ transforming culture. Contrast this to the observations of the boundary-blurring complexities inherent to a post-modern view of culture in Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

[88] Kim, *Preaching*, 49.

audience is transcontextual."[89] Thus aimed outside of the church, Kim uses the geopolitical issues of "neoliberal" capitalism, cultural diversity in immigration, global climate change, and the class-separating economic effects of information technology as foils for preaching to be made into a political influence in a globalized society rather than proclaiming the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ to call humanity *into* the church.[90] Thereby, she presents the homiletical goal of a utopian globalized society rather than a proclamation of eschatological Christology. Her view of cultural dialogue does not include the sacred order of the church's proclamation.

Furthermore, her belief that the Bible "is neither 'an authoritative depository of revealed truth' nor a timeless absolute norm for human life … [it is] authoritative in the sense that it is to be used as the point of departure for reflection in the faith and life of the contemporary Christian church,"[91] explicitly denies the mission of Christ for the church to "make *disciples* of all nations" by the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments (Matt. 28:19–20). Rather than proclaiming the gospel of salvation exclusively through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 14:6), Kim seeks to embrace the plurality of interculturalism in a way that validates the other without the possibility of repentance, faith, and (ultimately) salvation through Christ alone. Again, her understanding of the globalized interconnectivity of socio-political issues, and the irreducible ways in which this effects individuals and subcultures does have merit. Unfortunately, her established homiletic is a paper tiger that seeks to create a global unity that implicitly denies original sin, explicitly rejects the normative authority of Scripture, conspicuously does not include the gospel, and thus misplaces the source of the church's unity

[89] Kim, *Preaching*, 44.

[90] See Kim, *Preaching*, 80–85.

[91] Kim, *Preaching*, 67.

(Jesus Christ). Her work has so overemphasized the importance of cultural identity that its role as a formational homiletic has supplanted the foundational aspects of preaching. The type of cultural-homiletical reflection Kim offers serves as a stark warning for the considerations of the preacher's cultural considerations as he approaches his study and preparation in relation to the church. Contra wise, "Embodied Superintendence" seeks awareness of all worldly goings on, but it does so with an awareness that darkness lies outside of the church (cf. Matt. 22:13; 25:30). Being sent by the church, the preacher's message must be congruent with the church's sacred order: the gospel and the norm of Scripture.[92] Thereby, the preacher's cultural studies inflect his identity without sacrificing the foundational truths of the church. Such is the design of "Embodied Superintendence."

Cultural Inflection: Character

The concern for cultural issues and individual identities is demonstrated in the daily embodiment of the preacher's character, which is observably cruciform. In other words, his own responsiveness to that which he has encountered by grace through faith is borne out in himself and demonstrated tangibly to the hearers so they can imitate him as he imitates Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). In this demonstration is a natural dialogue, just as there is in the congregation's calling of the preacher. The hearers can see that God has *done* something in the preacher, and so God can do something to the hearers who sent him by the Spirit to preach. The preacher is cruciform, and continues (albeit imperfectly) as an example, not with the motivation of "proving" the sermon,

[92] An objection can be made here in relation to individual churches, members, or entire church bodies who desire for a preacher to communicate heterodoxy to them. While it is true the visible church is flawed in its humanity, the *double* agency discourse corrects and maintains truth by the speech of God. This explains how a preacher can form his hearers away from any erroneous thinking: even if the hearer does not like or agree with the message of the sermon, the church can still be said to have sent the preacher on their behalf. The church is designed to listen to God's Word no matter how uncomfortable or painful. (Cf. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, 21: "Every believer must, at the peril of losing his salvation, flee all false teachers, avoid all heterodox congregations or sects, and acknowledge and adhere to orthodox congregations and their orthodox pastors wherever such may be found.")

but with the spiritual integrity of demonstrating what a Christian life looks like in response to the sermon. As homiletician André Resner puts it,

> God remains free from captivity to any link in the chain of embodied witness to him, yet, in God's mercy, he chooses to use the chain of witness as a true avenue of his grace and salvation. In this sense, then, even the cruciform life of the preacher and faith community become concealed signs utilized for revelation by the grace of God, as God alone renders the cross efficacious through proclaimed word and deed.[93]

The preacher's life is made into a cruciform witness to the real power inherent in the sermon: the Word. Understanding the character of the preacher as an ironic reversal of the traditional hearer-oriented persuasiveness into something that is used in service of the gospel, therefore, means that the preacher's character is driven by the gospel and not the expectations of the audience. This is important to note so as to avoid an unhelpful dichotomy between the efficacy of the Word preached and the character of the preacher. Yet the expectations and cultural identities of the hearers provide relevant considerations for the preacher as he considers his own character.

Regardless of the cultural considerations, the church generally expects her preacher to be upright (in keeping with the Pauline requirements of pastors), and even look to him as an example of how to act as a Christian. Yet how the preacher's culture inflects his character undoubtedly helps or hinders the efficacy of the sermon. To be sure, it is God's power (and not the preacher's) that draws the glory of the Word to himself (see Eph. 1:7–10; Phil. 2:10–11); the godly (cruciform) life of the preacher is not a necessary condition for the sermon to be efficacious. However, God does *use* the preacher's character to deliver his efficacious Word. A respectable and upright preacher cannot make the sermon more efficacious as the Spirit works through the Word, but *bad* character could certainly hinder the Word. A sinner cannot by his

[93] André Resner, *Preacher and Cross: Person and Message in Theology and Rhetoric* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 153.

own reason or strength believe in Jesus, but he can certainly harden his heart *against* the gospel. Similarly, a brazenly hypocritical preacher will not endear himself to his hearers. But as the demonstration of the preacher's character is inextricably linked to his regeneration, the same is true for the sermon's effectiveness as an application of God's power. The preacher's life is an "aroma of Christ to God" (2 Cor. 2:15) for the hearers, though whom God commissions the preaching of the Word.

Like his study, the preacher's character is exercised in dialogue with the hearers who called him to preach. There is evidence of this concept in the Reformation, where pastors were viewed as being so ingrained in their communities that they were even given practical advice on how to act around their congregants at social functions so that the gospel is not hindered. This is also demonstrated in the New Testament: for example, Paul encourages the Corinthians to exhibit character in what they eat, according to the consciences of those around them. "Take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak … if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble" (1 Cor. 8:9). This concept is the same when relating to unbelievers: "Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved" (1 Cor. 10:32–33; see also 1 Tim. 3:7). Paul even seeks to maintain his ministry independent from financial support so that the church is not burdened in that way and so that they imitate his example (1 Cor. 9:12–14; 2 Thess. 3:8–9). Such behavior can be seen as an example of the preacher's character inflected by particular cultural norms in favor of the gospel. In the modern era, preachers are not likely to encounter the ethical quandary of eating food sacrificed to idols, but they certainly encounter other cultural mores that differ from place to place (i.e., drinking at a wedding, dressing professionally during the week,

etc.). The considerations of these inflections of the preacher's character are as limitless as the local customs and cultural identities allow.

Modern examples of the ways in which culture inflects the character of the preacher are found in Matthew D. Kim's homiletic on cultural intelligence.[94] Although Kim's program deals primarily with a practical hermeneutic approach for preaching to hearers of differing cultural identities, his work is peppered with personal stories of cultural sensitivity (or insensitivity) that aim toward reflecting a more Christ-like character for the preacher:

> Preaching with cultural intelligence means altering not simply our conventional methods for sermon preparation, but also, even greater, *our habits of life*. It involves spending quantity and quality time with people who think differently, eat differently, learn differently, dress differently, praise differently, work differently, spend differently, behave differently, play differently, pray differently, smell differently, and do life altogether differently. But most important, it will compel us to have the heart and mind of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whose love knows no bounds and who knows no cultural distinctions.[95]

With considerations such ethnicity, gender, and location, Kim deftly exposes the importance of a preacher's character reflecting the inclusiveness of Jesus Christ in relationship to and with the community of faith who sends the preacher to preach. "Embodied Superintendence" embraces these considerations as positive ways in which cultural identity inflects the character of the preacher for the sake of the hearers and the gospel. Here again, the symbiotic relationship of preacher/hearers is evinced, as cultural identities live and commune together.

Cultural Inflection: Personality

After considering some possible ways in which the preacher's study and character are inflected by his cultural identity (the former negatively with Eunjoo Mary Kim, the latter

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[94] Kim, *Cultural Intelligence*.

[95] Kim, *Cultural Intelligence*, 216–17. Italics mine.

positively with Matthew D. Kim), the preacher's personality should be recognized as being the most intrinsic to his cultural identity. A preacher may study a culture of which he is completely ignorant,[96] or act differently around a person who struggles with a sin unknown to him,[97] but his *personality* is something innate to his personhood. This is exhibited in his very preaching as much as it is in his immutable characteristics (i.e., hair and skin color, accent, etc.).

Being a continual part of a community of faith with interpersonal relationships, the preacher's personality is not lost (as if it were possible to lose it) as he delivers the Word of God. Ergo, his mode and manner of delivery as he preaches his sermon inflect his personality: as a *real person* living amongst and with the hearers, the preacher's personality is on display throughout his entire body in the sermon. This is highlighted by many historical Lutheran voices, and it is true also for the sermon as much as it is natural for other aspects of pastoral ministry (bedside manner, leadership, counseling, etc.) and pastoral relationships.[98] Especially since the cruciform Word is communicated through the sermon, the preacher's personality demonstrates himself to be an authentic recipient of grace within the community of faith.

Many characteristics of the preacher's personality include the very physicality of his cultural identity, and those considerations should inflect his personhood in authentic ways. The preacher is not typically an unknown entity to the congregation who calls him, although they do *get to know him* once he is called, even as he grows to know them.[99] Again, this symbiotic

[96] For example, a pastor may listen to an album or watch a movie that his charges are currently interested in simply because they are interested in it.

[97] For example, a pastor may refrain from drinking in front of a parishioner who is trying to get sober.

[98] In *The Pastor*, Loehe even includes a lengthy practical section on how the pastor should deliver community announcements to the congregation.

[99] In the LCMS, a complex bureaucracy of self-evaluations is followed both on the part of the pastor and of the congregation. Divine calls are typically mediated by a District, which exists in large part to facilitate compatibility between a congregation's needs and a pastor's abilities.

relationship expects a certain level of authenticity for the best result. For example, if a normally boisterous pastor suddenly becomes quiet and mousy in the pulpit, the hearers will immediately recognize the incongruence. Similarly, if a normally affable pastor suddenly breathes fire and brimstone from the pulpit, the starkness of his preacher from his personality could be a hindrance to the hearers.

Beyond the performance of sermonizing, the preacher's personality is inflected by his cultural identity in ways that he cannot control: his ethnicity or skin color will change the lilt or dialect in his voice;[100] his health or body type will affect his delivery.[101] These immutable characteristics are free from positive or negative scrutiny, although some may present greater or lesser challenges depending on the context. For example, a white English-speaking pastor born and raised in Michigan would have more cultural considerations ahead of him if he were to serve a Spanish-speaking congregation in south Texas than if he were to preach to ethnically homogenous farmers in central Michigan. Similarly, a black pastor from an urban neighborhood would need to consider how his cultural identity inflects the ways in which he serves a congregation in rural Montana. In any case, it is important to note that "Embodied Superintendence" functions to highlight any relevant considerations of cultural identity that inform how the preacher and the hearers interact with each other. The ultimate goal, of course, is to view these differences not as hindrances or curses, but as beautiful multivalent expressions of humanity that God himself has created. In this way, the oft-misunderstood term "intersectionality" can actually be seen as an asset, for the church is made up of an immeasurable

[100] For example, see again Alcántara, *Crossover Preaching*; Thomas, *African American Preaching*; and Redmond, *Say It!* for ways in which African American cultures inflect the personality of their preaching.

[101] For an example of the physical challenges unique to women preachers, see McCullough, *Her Preaching Body*. I am unaware of any similar works regarding the male preaching body, but it is self-evident that (for example) an eighty-year-old preacher would present his sermon differently than a thirty-year-old one.

conglomeration of saints—the person of the preacher is no exception.

A strong example of a homiletician who saw this benefit was Joseph Sittler. Although Sittler died in 1987, his work often demonstrates the reflections of a preacher's intersectionality while the term was still in its infancy. For example, in considering the selfhood of the preacher, he deems that selfhood to be "an image of the vocation and task of the self gathered up into a gift and a task that was before the self came to be, having a reality that transcends while it involves the whole self, and which will be bestowed upon the church by her Lord when this particular self is no longer of the church in history."[102] Similarly, "I have no self by myself—or for myself. I really have no identity that I can specify except the intersection point of a multitude of things that are not mine."[103] Sittler saw the necessity of the preacher's self-awareness and considerations of the preacher to be immutably related to the church, and fueled a desire to find cultural distinctions in the ministry and embrace them. As he writes in one humorous anecdote:

> One student had a list of things her first call had to have: it had to be in an urban setting; it had to be with certain kinds of Chicanos, blacks, and poor whites; it had to be in a cultural setting where she could enjoy theater and other activities. I said, "You know, it's as if the Bible says, 'Listen, Lord, thy servant speaketh,' instead of, 'Speak Lord, thy servant heareth.' The church is going to dump you someplace that may have little to do with your agenda. And it will offer the kind of challenge, humiliation, embarrassment, and opportunity that you didn't foresee." Our obedience in ministry cannot be calibrated with an agenda of clamant desires.[104]

Such a view of identity relative to the person of the preacher demonstrates precisely what "Embodied Superintendence" seeks to offer: an endless consideration of the ways in which culture inflects considerations of the person of the preacher without the limitations of personal prejudice.

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[102] James M. Childs, Jr. and Richard Lischer, eds., *The Eloquence of Grace: Joseph Sittler and the Preaching Life* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 89.

[103] Sittler, in *Eloquence*, 100.

[104] Sittler, in *Eloquence*, 100.

There will surely be issues outside of the preacher's immediate experience, and there is no limit to the crises over which he must pastorally anguish and reconcile with the timely cruciform Word in the sermon. In those cases, *vive la différence*—for in differences arise the existential crises that beg to be made whole by the Word of God. The rhythms of the church's life in the world call for a constant return to the configuring power of the cruciform Word in the sermon. Since the preacher is formed by, within, and set apart by the community of faith to speak for God, the voices of those within his preconfigured experience are voiced through the sermon in a way that can receive real legitimacy and hope in Christ—and this not a singular time, but routinely and consistently.[105]

Conclusion

In this chapter, "Embodied Superintendence" has been established as a theoretical consideration of what is happening in the interplay between a preacher and the hearers of his sermons: the preacher is granted a high level of superintendence to preach the Word of God in his own words as his deputy of divine discourse. Being sent by God through the divine call of the church, he is deputized both by God *and* the people of God. Because the preacher is a unique person, this superintendence is embodied by the preacher as a testimony of individual grace and hope that offers itself to the hearers as a possibility for all to share in the common identity of the cruciform Christian life. The perlocution of the sermon is the work of the Holy Spirit, whose Babel-blessing tongues at Pentecost continues to work through the means of broken humanity "so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

[105] It is worthy of contemplation how many homiletics texts seek to "fix" a process or portray a method as "the way" to preach, as if by finding a proper way all problems can be solved by a single silver-bulleted sermon. But with "Embodied Superintendence," the search for more effective homiletical methods is (by design) never ending, since culture (and therefore identity) is continually in flux.

and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9–11). Far from erasing or privileging cultural distinctions over others, every identity is valued as being redeemable and unified in "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (Rev. 7:9). In this way, "Embodied Superintendence" offers the greater homiletical academy a positive Lutheran contribution to the current considerations of identity politics and intersectionality.

Considerations of the preacher's study, character, and personality, being foundational to Lutheran homiletics, are inflected by myriad cultural considerations. While this chapter presented some examples of these cultural considerations, the possibilities for more are limitless, since culture is inescapably fluid. As more specific examples, the following chapter will showcase two specific works by older Lutheran homileticians who exemplified the type of considerations described by "Embodied Superintendence." Their work will be summarized and explored with a specific eye toward the preacher's study, character, and personality. Following this, the dissertation will offer an original application of "Embodied Superintendence" to the recent work of homiletician Carolyn Helsel.

CHAPTER SIX

"EMBODIED SUPERINTENDENCE" IN PRACTICE

In the previous chapter, "Embodied Superintendence" was described as a theoretical consideration of what happens when a sermon is preached, especially in relation to the preacher: the preacher is granted a high level of superintendence by God through the church to preach the Word of God. Because that Word is preached in the preacher's own words, his individuality is an unavoidably present reality in the process. The particular contours of the preacher's study, character, and personality were named as being foundational to Lutheran homiletics, as demonstrated by Lutheran theology and history. With each of these contours, it was shown that the cultural identity of the preacher nuances these foundations, so that cultural identity can be said to be a formational part of the person of the preacher, and thus also the sermonic event. Moreover, because the preacher is sent by a specific group of people, the cultural identities of the hearers *also* bear an unavoidable effect on the sermonic event: since cultural identity refuses to be static, within the relationship between the preacher and the hearers a sort of "third space" (à la Michael P. Knowles) exists to inform and form said identities. The immediate implication for homiletics is a positive view of the multivalent cultures (of both the preacher and the hearers) that are all used by God to proclaim his saving Word in Jesus Christ and to enlighten his church on earth. "Embodied Superintendence" thus views the person of the preacher as a unique individual with a unique cultural identity that fulfills the task of preaching even with that which is personally unknown to or unexperienced by the preacher.

Within the foundational contours of study, character, and personality, examples were given for each in a broad fashion to show the ways in which these foundations are culturally formed. For example, the preacher's study is formed by an awareness of globalization and regulated by a

confessional stance; the preacher's character is formed by interactions with his cultural situatedness in relation to the hearers; the preacher's personality is likewise formed and informed by a relational symbiosis with the people who have called him. The current chapter considers "Embodied Superintendence" in practice. To do that, I will consider two moments from the more recent Lutheran tradition and then enter into dialogue with a contemporary homiletician, tracing the way in which the church can faithfully practice embodied superintendence in its contemporary context. The first two (Paul Scherer[1] and Joseph Sittler[2]), are older authors whose pieces show a certain continuity of consideration that validates the theory: by offering these authors as examples, assessment shows how richer meditations on the person of the preacher can offer Lutherans helpful tools in discerning and meeting the challenges to preaching offered by cultural context.

With Scherer and Sittler, the person of the preacher is treated in a way that does not suppress it but values it as a sacred part of God's design for his church, which is precisely the primary positive result from "Embodied Superintendence." Scherer and Sittler also demonstrate herein a continuity with their own Lutheran tradition that supports "Embodied Superintendence" as an interpretive theory that is faithful in similar ways. These particular works are used for three reasons: first, they were both delivered as homiletical lectures by professional Lutheran homileticians; second, their contexts differed both in the decade of their writings as well as the original audience receiving them, which offers more opportunity to showcase different cultural challenges; third, in these works they are addressing very specific cultural concerns, and as they do they emphasize the formative considerations of cultural subjectivity that are brought to bear

[1] Paul Scherer, *Treasure*.

[2] Joseph Sittler, *Anguish*.

on the preacher's study, character, and personality.

The third example in this chapter is a contemporary interaction unique to this dissertation. Here, by interacting with the recent homiletical work of Carolyn Helsel,[3] "Embodied Superintendence" offers the church a stronger voice than has been recently heard in responding to the cultural dynamics of identity politics. The modern homiletical context is currently experiencing the culturally diminishing force of identity politics: while seeking freedom of diversity, the stereotyping inherent to identity politics ironically limits the individuality of the preacher. This final example is used as a specific response using "Embodied Superintendence" to a piece that is indicative of these current cultural challenges of the greater homiletical academy. The intention of the chapter is to show that embracing conversations about the embodiment of the preacher is an important tool to engage in the current homiletical conversation on cultural identity while maintaining faithfulness to Lutheran homiletical foundations.

Paul Scherer: *For We Have This Treasure*

In the midst of World War II, after almost thirty years in the preaching and teaching ministry, Paul Scherer became the first Lutheran to deliver the prestigious Lyman Beecher lectures on homiletics. Publishing his work in 1944, Scherer emphasizes the sermon as the embodied testimony of one for whom Christ worked and works. Responding to the Modernist mindset of the day, he is mired in a context that still craves black-and-white answers to infinitely complex problems. The globe had been wracked and wearied by two major wars, and the West especially was on the cusp of recovering the importance of the American dream to the exclusion of corporate (*jackboot!*) conformity. Within so much cultural angst, the church stood as a beacon

[3] Helsel, "The Hermeneutics of Recognition."

to which people generally still looked *en masse*, and the general populace of the church's academy sought stable directives for their preachers going forward.

However, seemingly contrary to the directive of the Beecher lectures, Scherer does not approach his hearers with the goal of instilling them with a sturdy program or homiletical method, but something much more personal and subjective. In fact, he even begins by referring to the previous sixty years of Beecher lectures, saying "the fields have all too adequately been raked and swept. The grain has all to skillfully been gathered into barns."[4] In other words, his listeners already know the black-and-white answers to preaching; now they need to be reminded of the gray areas—particularly regarding themselves. Indeed, Scherer's analysis is more devotional than academic, but the sense of this genre only serves to heighten the homiletical emphasis of the person of the preacher that this dissertation seeks to recover. It also demonstrates the cohesiveness and interchangeability with which a seasoned Lutheran discusses the subjective person of the preacher (specifically his motivation of study, character, and personality), while *presuming* the authority of the Word, the Ministerium, and the importance of proclaiming the gospel.

The grand overtone that permeates Scherer's lectures is the reflection that the preacher is a "constant pageant," after 2 Cor. 2:14: "But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession ["constant pageant"], and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere." No preacher, Scherer thinks, can even begin to minister without first experiencing the grace of Christ himself. He must first hear the gospel and "feel its imperious constraint before he can ever give himself with any wholehearted devotion and

[4] Scherer, *Treasure*, 1.

abiding wonder to this stewardship of the gospel."[5] This stewardship is modeled after apostolic witnesses like Paul, whose letters sound forth with the "penetrating whisper of some ardent fellow-traveler who knows even in the dark each turn of the road."[6] The message of the gospel is not an emotionless list of doctrinal truths, but the dynamic transforming of lives, of which the preacher is one. Scherer insists upon the individual and personal encounter each soul has with Jesus Christ. Indeed, he chastises both Modernism and Fundamentalism in this vein: Modernism for "trimming the sails of Christianity to *every passing wind* of science," and Fundamentalism for "orient[ing] itself around a cautious slavery to the letter … stiffened into a kind of *rigor mortis*."[7] All the while, he never loses the important priority of preaching the gospel to a world greatly affected and effected by its cultural context.

Demonstrating the cultural difficulties of his context, Scherer argues that both Modernism and Fundamentalism come to the same stifling conclusion of God's power, "making men deaf to the music of heaven."[8] A strict black-and-white, right-or-wrong homiletic would deny the implicit subjectivity of a preacher's own experiences. The solution between the two comes in the contextualization of the individual preacher within which he experiences the truth of the gospel. These tenets are consistent with the historical Lutheran reflections on the personal subjectivity of the preacher, which emphasize the universal truths of the gospel while highlighting the ability of Lutheran homiletics to speak of the preacher himself: "So do we arrive at the fact of experience … there is such a thing as the free response of a man's own faith to the felt presence and power

[5] Scherer, *Treasure*, 4–5.

[6] Scherer, *Treasure*, 3.

[7] Scherer, *Treasure*, 109. Italics original.

[8] Scherer, *Treasure*, 109.

of the Almighty."[9] In other words, God's grace first comes to an individual preacher, through whom he pours into the lives of others; since the apostolic age, the entire church gives testimony *from* testimony, and "there is not a word from Jesus' lips that has not to do with human hearts."[10] Something changes inside the heart, and every external means of grace, every preaching of the cruciform Word, is aimed at the same transformation within each Christian.

Scherer never denies the importance of the clear authority of Scripture, the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins, and the Ministerium. On the contrary: he argues that every preacher's authority derives from the call of Christ. Yet this authority is individualized to each preacher's life and context. In fact, the confidence of the preacher's call from his Lord is authentic and living regardless of how dramatic (or unexciting) his own spiritual journey has been. A preacher may have either a harried tale of dangerous conversion or the tame stability of a faithful and constant upbringing, but he nonetheless finds his motivation to be the same as the apostles: "not [just] in doctrine … [but] in what to them was the story of God's dealing with human life."[11] From God's dealing with the human life of the preacher, the preacher is then motivated to present himself as a "triumphal procession," a "constant pageant" embodying Christ's grace in himself for the sake of his hearers. Moreover, the preacher is compelled to preach (1 Cor. 9:16) as a "strong swimmer standing on the brink with the shout of a drowning man in his ears."[12] To that end, Scherer unpacks the preparatory necessities a preacher ought to have as he moves from his own experience to his composition and delivery of the sermon. He does this without proffering any structural necessities or homiletical shibboleths, but in his emphasis of the

[9] Scherer, *Treasure*, 108.

[10] Scherer, *Treasure*, 117.

[11] Scherer, *Treasure*, 9.

[12] Scherer, *Treasure*, 17.

preacher's own life, context, and personal experience with the gospel—something a church in the grip of Modernism was slow to consider.

Like older Lutherans before him, Scherer believes that the time a preacher spends in study for the preaching task differs from that type of study that increases mechanical knowledge of doctrine. "It is not difficult in our day to mistake machinery for piety, and the management of religious appliances for the signs of a devout mind."[13] These metaphors are timely for Scherer's context of Modernism, which seeks a type of objectivity of thought without regard to the subjectivity of the individual. Simply put, it is far too easy for mechanics of doctrine and homiletics to overshadow the authentic life lived by a preacher. Thus, he encourages preachers "to spend as much as an hour or two going over the passages provided you by the appointed lessons … letting them sink deeply into your thought, setting down some sudden flash of light from another facet of the trust you had never seen before, allowing sentence after sentence to live quietly in your mind until it begins to speak."[14] However, the preacher must not enter the study as though the mere passage of time before the task will produce a valuable sermon; it will only be valuable to the hearts and souls of his hearers if it is valuable first to the preacher, and it becomes valuable to him by deliberate meditation.

In order for the preacher to avoid a mechanical stoicism even further, Scherer is consistent with his historical progenitors in insisting that he must also be a pastor. Here he does not appeal to the doctrine of the divine call or ministerial authority (those are a given for him), but rather that the preacher is of the understanding that "the mysteries of the Christian religion are fundamentally the mysteries of a personal relationship between God and the human soul."[15] The

[13] Scherer, *Treasure*, 20.

[14] Scherer, *Treasure*, 160.

[15] Scherer, *Treasure*, 29.

preacher who understands this sees a kindred spirit in his hearers, and this spiritual dynamic finds unity with the hearers: "They want you to tell them what you know; and their faces haunt you in your sleep … Say it stumblingly, say it poorly; but say it, because it is part of you."[16] Both the preacher and the hearers are traveling the same road; the preacher speaks not as one who is reporting on something that happened to someone else, but gives his own insight to souls to whom something is happening. Because his cultural setting and the challenges it brings "haunt" the preacher in his sleep, Scherer shows how the preacher's study and preparation regarding his cultural setting is invariably formed and informed by them.

As for the sermon itself, Scherer also speaks of the "weapons of the preacher's warfare," including a promotion of obedience to the faith because "the gospel is manifestly a matter of life and death,"[17] presenting the full counsel of God, because "there is only one thing in the pulpit more important than telling the truth, and that is telling the whole truth,"[18] and making the most of your time, since "preaching comes first; and because preaching *takes* time, [the preacher] *makes* time—which is the only way I know to *have* time."[19] He calls these pastoral practices weapons to highlight the burden of discipleship—especially in preaching. God is only understandable through revelation, and revelation comes through searching, and "unless [this burden] lies heavily on a man's soul, there is no preaching."[20] The burden Scherer speaks of is consistent with Luther's *Anfechtung*.[21]

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[16] Scherer, *Treasure*, 30.

[17] Scherer, *Treasure*, 64.

[18] Scherer, *Treasure*, 70.

[19] Scherer, *Treasure*, 19. Italics original.

[20] Scherer, *Treasure*, 81.

[21] See David P. Scaer, "The Concept of *Anfechtung* in Luther's Thought," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (1983): 15–30, for a concise description of this concept.

Since the preacher and hearers are fellow travelers, the former "must be a man of feeling."[22] His personality not only gives itself to laughing and weeping, but the preacher also expands his cultural horizons with interests not immediately pertaining to theology and ministry. With a life lived in the trenches of humanity's arts—poetry, music, art, etc.—pastoral ministry can draw from these wells similar celebrations and pains of his hearers. Experience breeds empathy that cuts against the type of sermon that lifts the preacher higher than his hearers, as if he is too good for such mundane living. Humility of humanity and spiritual charitability is demonstrated in the pastor who has read more than one book, and the delivery of his sermon will bear that out. Stressing this point again responds directly to Scherer's context of Modernism (which often disregards feelings as immaterial), answering the weaknesses of that worldview with considerations of the preacher's subjectivity. This cultural nuance has a particularly strong bearing on the preacher's personality, for his cultural formation cuts against the grain of the mechanized Modernism with which Scherer has a problem. The specificity of this example demonstrates this nuance.

In such an industrial, Modernist contextualization that obscures the individual, reducing his name to a number and his work to mechanics, Scherer also speaks of the importance of the preacher's character. Like the Lutherans mentioned above, he focuses on godly living not only as an example to the hearers and the removal of hindrances from the message, but also as evidence that the preacher has a "sane view of himself … he is a poor, benighted sinner like the rest, standing in need of prayer."[23] His self-awareness is played out in the motivation behind this quality of the preacher: the preacher cultivates his character so that his message may not be

[22] Scherer, *Treasure*, 51.

[23] Scherer, *Treasure*, 35.

hindered, *and* he cultivates his character so that his message may be more authentic to his personality. In this way, Scherer's thoughts on the preacher's character are more than mere godly living and obedience, but an arousal of the preacher's individuality:

> If preaching is the mediation of divine truth through personality—and perhaps with all definitions lame we may accept this as being not more lame than the rest—then the one thing you have to contribute toward the transaction is yourself. The human heart is not new, the need is not new, the truth is not new, the method is not new. You are new. You are a bit of God's unrepeated handiwork; and what he means to accomplish by you, he must accomplish through you. It would be too bad, then, if you should be found a counterfeit presentment of someone else, and imitation in matter or manner of the great or the near-great.[24]

The preacher's regenerate Christian life is evidenced by his personality, yet the pendulum should not swing too far the other way: preachers should not seek to cultivate their own character and individuality so much that they stand apart from the masses, but rather that the hearers can see and understand that the one speaking in the pulpit is as authentic as the one living the other six days a week. Scherer naturally models this idea after Christ himself, since "personality is the category to which Christians believe [God] willingly reduced himself in order to be known by finite creatures."[25] Because each personality is unique, the preacher too should not flee from his own unique personality, nor seek to conceal it.

In line with the authenticity of the preacher's character and spiritual life is Scherer's admonition to prayer, which is decidedly not programmatic (the Lord's Prayer notwithstanding): "Our poverties here cannot long be concealed. The day comes when they are shouted from the housetops. Our private evasions become our public futilities."[26] A preacher who neglects his prayers neglects that which connects him to his hearers. However, this prayer ought not to be a

[24] Scherer, *Treasure*, 37–38.

[25] Scherer, *Treasure*, 74.

[26] Scherer, *Treasure*, 40.

trite show of devotion, but a "nakedness of a soul intent before God—heart and mind and will, answering deep unto deep."[27] He also offers practical advice for pastors who struggle with this holiest of devotional practices. The preacher who prays will naturally carry himself as one who lives by faith in Christ. This understanding is never far from applying the same grace to those he serves. "When you look into the faces of your congregation, leave your disappointments at home, and turn your imagination loose in this amazing world. Speak to their other and better selves."[28] Since he is a praying man who lives by faith in Christ, the preacher will extend faith towards his hearers that they are as undeservedly redeemable as he is.

It is refreshing that Scherer never seems to hedge his bets. Not speaking to Lutherans (though there surely could have been some present at the lectures), he does not need to prove his orthodoxy. He simply gives them that which clearly made and makes all the difference for himself—his own (subjective) engagement with his Lord in the sermonic process. He is keenly aware of his context, both in the lectures and in the greater worldviews of the current society. Seeking to counteract the stiffness of Modernism (and, at times, Fundamentalism) that obscures the individual and jettisons any hint of subjective experience, Scherer's reflections on the person of the preacher himself also fits perfectly with the historical Lutheran voices. In fact, the lectures themselves become a self-fulfilling prophesy, demonstrating in a powerful way that Lutherans are more than capable of speaking about the person of the preacher without fear of violating their confession on the authority of the Word, the Ministerium, or proper Biblical interpretation.

The real power behind Scherer's work, however, lies in the specificity of his responses to the particular cultural challenges that were facing the church at that time. Because he gives freer

[27] Scherer, *Treasure*, 41.

[28] Scherer, *Treasure*, 47.

reign to the preacher's subjectivity than Modernism and Fundamentalism was able to, Scherer demonstrates the nuances of thought that give shape to the preacher's individualism—and thereby culturally forms the homiletical foundations of study, character, and personality in response. In this case, the preacher's study is formed by the unfeeling sterility of Modernism; his character is shaped by deep prayer and personal meditation; his personality is reflexive of a pastor who lives with a particular community of saints and imagines their struggles as a primary reason for accomplishing his preaching task. The result for Scherer is the goal of "Embodied Superintendence": to address the cultural difficulties of the day in a way that is faithful to the foundations of Lutheran homiletics and affirming of the cultural nuances that form and inform the person of the preacher.

Joseph Sittler: *The Anguish of Preaching*

Two decades after Scherer's Beecher lectures, Joseph Sittler, then professor at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, delivered the Dr. and Mrs. Jeremiah Zimmerman Lectureship lectures at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg. His lectures, called *The Anguish of Preaching*, dealt with an idiosyncratic expectation of formalized seminary education that focuses on the subjective individuality of the preacher as an embodiment of Christ's suffering. Like Scherer before him, Sittler follows a long history of homiletical lecturers tasked with adding to the scholarly tradition of what makes "effective preaching." Also like Scherer, Sittler feels he can add nothing structurally to that which precedes him, but opts rather "to reflect upon several immediate facts and issues troubling the preacher *right now*."[29] Sittler's time is even more volatile than Scherer's in terms of the "frenetic" changes of cultural norms and mores: the Civil

[29] Sittler, *Anguish*, ii. Italics mine.

Rights Movement, general socio-political unrest, and the American conflict in Vietnam aided the rapid generational rise toward expressivism, and preachers were increasingly approaching the pulpit with a desire to maintain the traditions of their fathers on the one hand while seeking relatability to the hearers' changing sensibilities on the other. Indeed, Sittler's lectures came less than a decade before the catastrophic clash of Modernism and Traditionalism that threatened to decimate all of Lutheranism in America. On the brink of this eleventh hour, Sittler chose to address his Lutheran listeners not with another homiletical program or technique, but with considerations of their own self and experience. His approach is unique in that it questions the stability of traditional seminary curricula in the face of increasing cultural pluralism, yet consistently faithful in that it upholds the absolute necessity of preaching the gospel in line with the Lutheran tradition without reducing its vitality to mere managerial procedures.

Churches (and church bodies) have a certain expectation of their timeless traditions, and thus expect to create a product that can maintain the same. Trouble arises, however, when the institution of the church is culturally lock-step with any other mainstream institution or business. Like any profession, "the preacher shares the human disposition to perform at a level required by men's expectations and demands."[30] Thus, the church places expectations on the theological *product*, "so many students enter our schools with no clear promise or intention to engage in vigorous re-enactment and fresh command of theological culture, but rather with the intention of being provided with retailing competence as dispensers of a solidified and frequently uncriticized churchly wholesale product."[31] In other words, the more the church acts like a business, the more business-like her theological constituents are. Students are pumped full of information that, while

[30] Sittler, *Anguish*, 6.

[31] Sittler, *Anguish*, 7.

crucial to their ministry, does not necessarily encourage them to *live and experience* the theology they are learning. In turn, the church gets the manufactured product of a preacher rather than one molded from their midst and set apart to preach. He is formed at the seminary to be the traditional preconceived *product* of a pastor, often to the detriment of being formed to be a living *testimony* of the gospel in service to the church. The result Sittler observes is often a hindering of the preacher's subjectivity that prevents authenticity of personhood from the pulpit. Meanwhile, the preacher's cultural context marches into oblivion while he fiddles with methods, relying on his traditionalism to save the day. By this reflection, Sittler shows an awareness of the rich relationship the preacher has with the hearers, who (at least in theory if not in practice) have sent him to the seminary to begin with, while at the same time addressing the seriousness of a formalized theological training in accordance with the preacher's theological confession. Thus, lest the reader express concern over a preacher's training devolving into the rampant individualism of his social context, Sittler addresses this exegetically and systematically, rooting the discussion in the unchangeable narrative of the gospel particularly within the Lutheran tradition:

Exegetically speaking, Sittler suggests that "apostleship" contains the dual connotations of being both kerygmatic and narrative. "The kerygmatic proclamation of Jesus as eschatological salvation-event makes all past present … faith is thus restored to its true function—the acceptance of God's acceptance of me as the ground of new being in authentic existence."[32] The preacher reads and studies the Word, preparing to proclaim salvation to his hearers *after and because* he himself has been saved by Jesus. Doing so, the preacher hears the Word for himself before (or rather conterminously with) his considerations of the hearers and the sermon's

[32] Sittler, *Anguish*, 20.

composition.

Similarly, understanding apostolicity as narrative is to recall the apostles as *actual* witnesses to the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. The heroic tales of apostolic witness are not mere literary tropes or familiar bedtime stories—they are the lifeblood of the church's foundation, and the Word of God itself. "This position maintains that any attempt to grasp the New Testament's reality must deal with Jesus' whole story and dare not shake itself loose from incessant torment with the mercurial staff of history."[33] The life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus are actual history. Since they are actual history, their eternal effect on those who wish to proclaim the gospel is repeated in every preacher; indeed, they were repeated to him before he ever thought about preaching. Realized as actual history, the gospel is given new life with each cultural shift such that old and eternal stories find new and eternal applications. This new life is the driving force behind the preacher's subjective homiletical decisions—particularly in his study—and is theologically lockstep with traditional Lutheran voices who uniformly confessed Scripture as historical and inerrant fact.

Within the unprecedented cultural and theological changes he is witnessing at the time of these lectures (including especially the plague of Bultmannian demythologization in seminary curricula), Sittler synthesizes the kerygmatic and narrative connotations of apostolicity into three systematic suggestions for the preacher. First, "Let the preacher keep his feet."[34] By this he means that the preacher must be planted firmly in his education of theology so that he is *not* buffeted by the changing winds of debate or sent into a spiritual crisis every time he comes across a compelling theology that is contrary to his confession. This is the strength of

[33] Sittler, *Anguish*, 20–21.

[34] Sittler, *Anguish,* 21.

Lutheranism and is typically easier for one who is drilled in a far more rigorous and precise theological education than his non-Lutheran colleagues. His strict adherence to the authority of the Word enables him to proclaim the gospel without a doubt that the gospel is what he must proclaim. Second, "Let the preacher open his head."[35] The preacher ought to use the opportunity of struggle to transcend beyond frivolous issues of hermeneutic debate—not because such issues are unimportant, but with the goal of making his faith independent of philosophy. He is to remember his first love and see his faith as more than intellectual ascent. Finally, "Let the preacher make a counterpoint out of an opposition."[36] Instead of seeking for the necessary solution of a spiritual problem (as if it will never rear its head again), the preacher sees the *struggle itself* as evidentiary of the apostolic ministry continuing its kerygmatic task in his history. "For the conflict itself attests how many-dimensioned, how fused into polychromatic richness is the massive phenomenology of the Christian community."[37] The preacher's anguish is the musical counterpoint to the conflict which makes up the hideous-yet-beautiful melody of Christ's continued work in history.

Again, while not directly addressing the composition and delivery of the sermon, Sittler's work shows the fruitfulness of considerations of the preacher's subjectivity, as well as the downfalls of a theological training that encourages a more or less rote homiletic. In his role as an experienced seminary professor, Sittler watched and listened to many students who, after all their rigorous theological education, were more personally governed by their experience listening to sermons *before* they came to seminary rather than during; yet they themselves preached as if the sermon were a lifeless academic exercise, "as if his experienced historical change were not a

[35] Sittler, *Anguish*, 21.

[36] Sittler, *Anguish,* 22.

[37] Sittler, *Anguish*, 25.

bubbling presence formative of the very texts he is expounding and of the church that produced them."[38] Far from a practice captured in systematic fashion, preaching ought to demonstrate itself to be organic (subjective) insofar as the preacher himself has experienced the life-changing Word he is called to proclaim to his hearers. "Disciplines correlative to preaching can be taught, but preaching as an act of witness cannot be taught … In matters of the Christian faith everything bears upon everything."[39] The irreducibly diverse cultural identity and experiences of the preacher subjectively adorn the sermon yet are often so subtle as to escape scrutiny.

Countless homiletics texts begin with a forward or introduction lamenting the state of preaching today,[40] but Sittler sees its sorry state as a thing to work *with*, rather than an identifiable problem to overcome. He blithely comments, "Of course preaching is in trouble. Whence did we ever manufacture the assumption that it was ever to be in anything but trouble?"[41] He actually revels in the anguish facing the preacher and he invites the preacher to do the same. For Sittler, experiencing anguish is the only faithful way for a preacher (and the church) to move forward authentically in a drastically changing world.

Sittler demonstrates that this anguish is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, specifically the systematic of Christology which connects the anguish of Christ because of his task (see Luke 12:50) to the anguish of the preacher who performs Christ's task in his stead and by his command (see John 20:21). The anguish of Jesus "because of his divine mission … constitutes also a hard and unloosened knot in the spirit of any man who would listen to him, think and feel

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[38] Sittler, *Anguish*, 9.

[39] Sittler, *Anguish,* 12–13.

[40] See, for example, Jonathan Fisk's introduction in Birkholz, *Feasting,* x. "It is only a fool who can look out upon the vacancy of faith in which we together are dying and fail to ask, 'Might it not be that there is a problem with our preaching?'" Such comments are true enough, but holding up a quantifiable metric (like church membership or box-checking sermon structures) ought not to be the highest priority of the church—especially in homiletics.

[41] Sittler, *Anguish*, 27.

and imagine himself into understanding of Jesus. Participation in Jesus transfers what was an anguish for him into a bequest from him."[42] The preacher is not Christ, but his vocation *shares* in the anguish of Christ as Christ's deputy.[43] Such anguish is not only naturally present in the preacher but *necessarily present* if he wishes to communicate the gospel for the salvation of souls in each unique era and epoch. The anguish is the world's counterpoint made by the preacher, the tension of brand-new truths from an old gospel. The preacher "stands between the what has been and a presence whose present doing is a fact."[44] He can only serve as God's mouthpiece if he remains in this tension. If he believes his anguish can be solved by any one homiletical program, structure, or contextualization, his messaging will age out of his context and the pulpit microphone will be muffled and unintelligible.

To that end, Sittler reminds the readers again that the "objective givenness of our theological inheritance invites us to a misunderstanding. For it is a misunderstanding to suppose that a theological tradition provides escape from struggle."[45] Grace and truth, of course, are objective and eternal. But Christ's salvation is personal and emotional, bringing great joy and yet great anguish (see Rom. 7:21–25; 9:2–4). A preacher's life must naturally grapple with this joy and anguish or else drone into a pretentious confessional obsequiousness that replaces the preacher's baptismal identity with theological correctness. Until a preacher *struggles* to preach (and accepts the fact that preaching *must* be a struggle), he practically removes the need for preaching altogether. The church can simply replace the pulpit with pre-recorded homilaria or postils, which of course would deny the reality of change inherent in the world (and in the

[42] Sittler, *Anguish*, 29.

[43] See Rom. 2:16; 16:25; 2 Tim. 2:8, where Paul refers to the preaching of Christ as "my gospel."

[44] Sittler, *Anguish*, 32.

[45] Sittler, *Anguish*, 33. Again, this point scoffs at the myriad homiletical programs that aim or claim to "fix" the problems of the church and world, while still maintaining the importance of "theological inheritance."

hearers' lives).

Surprisingly (for a seminary professor, that is), Sittler makes the observation that "there seems to be no correlation at all between excellence of formalized theological studies and lively preaching of the word of God."[46] Yet again, far from discounting homiletical training altogether, he hastens to add that his observations by no means should be interpreted to suggest that the rigors of academic programming and the training of pastors should not include a strong homiletical backing, but rather that "we do not look to the wrong places for help, [or] discourage the lovely confidence of the lazy that if their brains were less burdened they might be more permeable to the mysteries of the Holy Ghost's visitations."[47] Academy training is important, but saints are also not manufactured by homework and good grades. A shift in outlook toward the person of the preacher must happen if homiletics is to improve adequately and respond to the fluctuating nuances of context.

Indeed, the tail wags the dog if preachers or seminaries think they are the ones forming the church instead of they themselves being formed by the body of Christ and the means of grace within. This is rather a symbiotic relationship, as the previous chapter proffered. A more realistic theory of the preacher who reacts and moves *with* the changes of history is needed so that they do not become "blinded partisans in a battle, or so move into the practice of ministry that our preaching be less ample than the many-dimensional modes of the word of God."[48] Consistent with his tradition, Sittler's "blinded partisans" are reminiscent of one of Spener's main critiques of the clergy, namely that they care more about theological disputes and "being correct" than

[46] Sittler, *Anguish*, 4.

[47] Sittler, *Anguish*, 4.

[48] Sittler, *Anguish,* 19. Modern theological blogs lend themselves to this accusation, and anyone who has participated in a convention can relate to the resulting discouragement.

they are of their own spiritual wellbeing. The same could be said for many modern Lutherans, whose frequently lop-sided blog posts and social media conversations lock spiritual health in the same box as their intellectual orthodoxy. While there is a time and place for such partisanship, an exclusive diet of it lends itself to an exclusive view of the preacher as one whose faithfulness in the pulpit and divine service can be quantified—but it cannot in all aspects. Left as the only option, theological partisanship can work to hinder an otherwise vibrant preaching life for the pastor and his parish. Such is the haunting rigidity of many Lutherans for fear of losing their confession; ironically, this stalwart inflexibility is actually unfaithful to historic Lutheran voices, as seen in Chapter Four.

Because the preacher's formation cannot be boiled down to disparate academic disciplines, and preaching itself "is an intellectual and creative function of faith-substance in motion within a concrete circumstance,"[49] the preacher—who will be serving a real congregation with a real history—is greater than the sum of his own experiential parts. Not only is the preacher greater than the sum of his parts, but the congregation and the church throughout history are too. The sermon as an expression of the preacher's faith and life reflects this concrete history and is unable to be judged solely by grades on a transcript or stylistic forms of homiletical composition. The best student in the seminary may still fail to engage his hearers with any indication that he himself believes what he is saying if he deliberately separates his own history from God's history. "Preaching is organic to time … the formation of faith into thought, and will, and habit, and language, and all the innumerable and half-remembered influences of an entire life, cannot be identified with the procedure of formal study."[50] These "half-remembered influences" are a

[49] Sittler, *Anguish*, 8.

[50] Sittler, *Anguish*, 8.

striking reminder of the preacher's unspoken reality, which again are often so subconscious as to escape scrutiny without a great deal of self-actualization and psychological reflection on the part of the preacher.

Given the checkered Historical-Critical history of American Lutheranism leading up to the 1960's and 70's, Sittler can (unfairly) be read as suggesting the type of academic freedom from church life that sends her leaders down dark roads of unorthodoxy. Heterodoxy is certainly a corollary to academics unhindered by the church's expectations and demands, but the real challenge Sittler is addressing is the unprecedented changes in the cultural foundations of American life exhibited in the church's short-sighted insistence on programmatic solutions. Warnings against such cultural changes is a sentiment that could likely apply to every epoch, and Sittler addresses them with a faithful grounding in Lutheranism. A dedicated and historically enshrined transmission of theological tradition cannot expect to remain static in the face of cultural change, and "resounding success in that effort works now to inhibit change."[51] Again, this does not mean the timeless truths themselves change, but rather that the applicative expression of truth finds new modes with each generation. Strict "rules" about how homiletics should be done, how sermons should be organized, and what sermons should be saying carry an inherent ignorance of the hearers whose intricacies escape the boundaries of labeling. Preaching itself "is an act of the church in which the substance of her faith is ever freshly declared and reinterpreted to the lives of men who live within the instant and changing actuality of history."[52] Absolutes in homiletical form and structure serve not to maintain orthodoxy, but rather stifle the Spirit's movement in a preacher's heart and in the hearts of his hearers. For the preacher himself,

[51] Sittler, *Anguish*, 7.

[52] Sittler, *Anguish*, 7.

this means attending to his own struggles to make sense of his faith and life.

In summary, this struggle to apply the eternal Word both to himself and to the ever-changing landscape of human narratives—this *anguish* of the preacher—is active in the preacher who strives for self-understanding of faith. This self-understanding is sought for the sake of his vocation in the pulpit: "The heart [is] always restless and the mind [is] always asking what the disclosure and concretion of the holy in the event of Jesus Christ means for the life of the world."[53] The restlessness of the preacher's heart thereby becomes an identifying factor in his personality, which is played out in the character he demonstrates in the face of cultural difficulties; for Sittler in this piece those difficulties include a relative discontinuity between seminary training and the pastor's spiritual formation. In the preacher's study, these difficulties become a sort of pastoral counterpoint to the world, even as he is continually rooted in the authority of the Word and the historicity of the gospel. The formation of the preacher must include more than rote procedures and literary techniques, for "habits become meaningless by the waning of reflection."[54] Rather, the man himself "must re-enact the anguish of Christ as a preacher of Christ."[55] Like Scherer and the older Lutherans before him, Sittler also harkens deeply back into Luther's *Anfechtung*, and considers the preacher himself as a true disciple who is greater than the sum of his parts.

Summary of Scherer and Sittler

The selected works of Scherer and Sittler above demonstrate vibrant and deep considerations on the subjectivity of the preacher, which enables a clearer exploration of the

[53] Sittler, *Anguish*, 34.

[54] Sittler, *Anguish*, 46.

[55] Sittler, *Anguish*, 43.

ways in which cultural identity can form the foundational homiletical contours of the person of the preacher—particularly his study, character, and personality. The function of "Embodied Superintendence" in doing precisely that exercise is aided by the exemplary ways in which Scherer and Sittler interacted with their contemporary enculturations. This is evident in at least three ways:

First, both Scherer and Sittler are Lutheran homileticians who view preaching as the *lex vivendi* of the church. They believe in the cruciform Word of God, both in its written form and in its preaching. Their faith and convictions in their Lutheran identities enable them to speak passionately about the homiletical task in ways that uphold Lutheran emphases about the Word, yet still consider the role of the person of the preacher. That role, it is evident, is held by one who has been affected and effected by the Word in a way that brings salvation along with the desire to preach the same. Therefore, like many historical Lutherans before them, the cultural subjectivity of the preacher's study, character, and personality are all considered as he approaches the sermonic task. Like Scherer with his challenge of Modernism and Sittler with his challenge of rote formalized seminary training, the cultural nuances of any given age and context will invariably form and inform the person of the preacher; yet both homileticians address these matters from the perspective of a preacher whose duty is to preach faithfully the Word of God to, for, and on behalf of a community of faith.

Second, regarding the role of the person of the preacher, neither Scherer nor Sittler obfuscates the preacher within an objective litany of homiletical tasks or limits his involvement by contextualization. Rather, the stated goals of their works are to consider how the preacher *as an individual* interacts with his enculturation. Both authors step back from the preacher to examine the cultural forest that surrounds him, then focus back in on the preacher with a gained

awareness of the challenges facing the church. Given the symbiotic cultural interactions of the preacher and the hearers, the same goal of increasing faith and spiritual health in the hearers applies also to the preacher. This highlights again the importance that the Word of God has as a foundational homiletic—first for the preacher, then for the hearers (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 1:6).

Finally, the cultural challenges and unprecedented ecclesial changes of their respective settings do not send Scherer and Sittler retreating into a sheltered bulwark of a particular orthodox expression. Rather, both authors see the challenges as a cross, both given and expected, to bear for the church. For Sittler in his observations of homiletical academia, and Scherer in his Modernist challenges, the "anguish" of the preacher's cross is what makes him a "constant pageant" of the cruciform Word. Put another way, it can be said that a society without cultural difficulties does not exist—if it did, there would be no need for preaching. Both Scherer and Sittler offer considerations unique to their contexts, but their approaches are nevertheless timeless. Thus, because cultural particularities can and will continue to change, the general approach of "Embodied Superintendence" is a faithful Lutheran theorization for the practice of homiletics, since it seeks to embrace cultural identities as crucial formative aspects for the person of the preacher whilst maintaining a firm conviction in its theological confession.

This chapter has so far focused on Scherer and Sittler as particular case studies that showcase the fruitfulness of cultural considerations relative to the preacher's particular milieu. The following section will demonstrate a contemporary and original application of "Embodied Superintendence" that specifically addresses the role of identity in a contemporary cultural conversation about racism. More specifically, Carolyn Helsel will serve as a conversation partner as she seeks to aid the white preacher in acknowledging the "salience" of the preacher's whiteness and overcoming a perceived hesitancy of white preachers to preach about racism.

Thereby, the intention is to showcase "Embodied Superintendence" by taking its broad theorization and applying it to a specific challenge of homiletics. The hope is that such an example can serve both to exemplify "Embodied Superintendence" as a theory, as well as address the current cultural challenge of identity politics and intersectionality within the greater homiletical academy.

"Embodied Superintendence" in Contemporary Usage: Carolyn Helsel

The previous section explored two works from two different Lutheran homileticians (Paul Scherer and Joseph Sittler) as specific examples of how deeper exploration of the preacher's subjectivity can give valuable insights as to how a Lutheran can respond faithfully to cultural difficulties regarding the person of the preacher. The section's analysis of these works demonstrated that "Embodied Superintendence," though being a unique contribution of this dissertation, is consistent with Lutheran theology in its exploration of how cultural identities can form and inform the foundational Lutheran homiletic of the person of the preacher—in particular with regards to the preacher's study, character, and personality. To wit: with reference to any given cultural context, the preacher's individuality is undeniably affected, and the quality of attention he pays to how this context impacts him personally will form and inform his preaching life according to his study, character, and personality.

Where "Embodied Superintendence" aids this attention as a theory is to root the sermon itself in its purpose as authoritative public discourse for the forgiveness of sins, according to the superintendence granted to the preacher by God through the church. Important to this theorization is the acknowledgment of a symbiotic relationship between his cultural identity and the cultural identities of his hearers, since they are the ones sending him to preach to them and for them. Because of this mysterious symbiosis, a greater latitude of freedom than is found in the

greater homiletical academy is offered both to the preacher and to the hearers to consider the spiritual inclusivity of the church's cultural diversity. In other words, because the preacher speaks with a double-agency discourse (both from God and from the church), the cultural identities of *all* are used by God in order to accomplish his divine work without replacing that work with identity politics and intersectionality—as if cultural differences are foundational to the Christian proclamation. Cultural differences are indeed *embraced* by Christian proclamation, but they are by no means prolegomena to the message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Similar to what the previous section showcased with Scherer and Sittler, this section will apply "Embodied Superintendence" to a specific contemporary issue, specifically the homiletical work of Carolyn Helsel.[56] Helsel wrote her doctoral dissertation in large part in an effort to help white preachers overcome their hesitancy to preach about racism while acknowledging the "salience" of their own whiteness. At the time of this writing, Carolyn Helsel is an associate professor of homiletics at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, where she teaches in part on racism as it relates to preaching. Helsel's doctoral dissertation, completed in 2014, is specifically used because her work is an example of a scholarly engagement with identity politics and homiletics that is consistent with much of the popular publications in the greater homiletical academy regarding identity politics and intersectionality. Although Helsel has published works more accessible to the general public,[57] her dissertation is used for its succinct and academic prose that clearly argues her points without the distractions of non-academic idiosyncrasies. She is but one example of the ways in which the greater homiletical academy negotiates the cultural identity of preachers—particularly white preachers—and hers is arguably the most direct and

[56] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition."

[57] See for example Carolyn B. Helsel, *Anxious to Talk about It: Helping White Christians Talk Faithfully about Racism* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2018).

specific contextualization of the person of the preacher in this regard.

Using Paul Ricoeur's phenomenology of recognition, her dissertation seeks to mitigate a reluctance white preachers have towards preaching about racism by reframing the conversation around an antiracism that is fueled by spiritual gratitude. In response to Helsel's work, the goal is to demonstrate how "Embodied Superintendence" enables Lutheran homiletical theology to respond to the greater homiletical academy on the identity politics and intersectionality of the person of the preacher. After summarizing her work in this section, a response to Helsel will be offered using the "Embodied Superintendence" contextualization of the person of the preacher. The ultimate hope is that an adequate Lutheran voice will join the conversation in the greater homiletical academy in a way that both accurately summarizes the cultural concerns and yet challenges the general approach to this practice of the Christian faith in favor of a more inclusive and diverse one. Unlike the analyses of Scherer and Sittler, this one will respond *after* a summary of Helsel's work in an effort to give that work as objective of a platform as possible.

Summary of Carolyn Helsel: "Hermeneutics of Recognition"

Helsel's work is spurred by her observation that white preachers in predominantly white churches are hesitant to preach about racism. She is clear about her desire for whites to overcome this hesitancy for the sake of an antiracist attitude. The three main reasons that promote this hesitancy, according to Helsel, are (1) a misunderstanding of the definitional contours of racism today, (2) a failure of white preachers to recognize the "salience" of their whiteness, and (3) an improper framework for viewing racism as sin. These reasons are filtered through her interaction with Ricoeur's hermeneutic of recognition, and they "include acknowledging the difficulty of identifying racism, moving towards personal formation by recognizing the salience of one's white racial identity, and … preaching about racism out of the recognition that the depth of

human sinfulness can only be redeemed by the gift of God that calls us to gratitude."[58] Treating each reason successively, moving through this process first requires Helsel to educate the reader on the modern fluidity of the definitions of racism.

Race, as Helsel defines it, "refers not to a set of biological similarities but rather to socially constructed categories used for the stratification of society."[59] The stratification (racism) is manifested in the ways in which others (whites) benefit from structural societal designs based on how others (non-whites) are perceived and treated. While it may seem to many that racism can be concretized (such as a law or policy that literally privileges one ethnicity over another), "racial theories that purport to explain race and racism across time often cannot account for the complex ways race relations have developed over time in relation to historical events."[60] Thus, many attempts from whites to distance themselves from racism (for example, a white person declaring that they are not racist because they perform no racist acts) are evidentiary of systemic racism *because of* their failure to recognize the pervasive and continuing contours of historical discrimination.

Other theories of racism often fall short of treating the matter holistically. Two such theories are what Helsel reports as "Racial Hegemony" and "Color-Blind Racism." Relying on the work of Michael Omi and Howard Winant,[61] Helsel defines "Racial Hegemony" as "prejudice plus power." Omi and Winant buck against the antiracist thought trend that people of color cannot be racist because they lack the power to oppress whites,[62] opting instead to focus on

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[58] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 44.

[59] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 7 footnote 10.

[60] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 66.

[61] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960's to the 1990's* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

[62] Contra Judy H. Katz, *White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training*, 2nd ed. (Norman: University

broader structures of power and oppression—which are not inherently "white." Helsel, however, sees power as "subtle and fluid," and that race must be recognized as having a formative role in the "dominant structures in society."[63] For Omi and Winant, racism occurs when there is a differential of power between two or more ethnicities; Helsel, on the other hand, avers that this theory is wanting for a material consequence specifically for whites. To mediate this, she fuses "Racial Hegemony" with "Color-Blind Racism."

"Color-Blind Racism" is purported as a manifestation of racist thought by whites who claim not to see race. In other words, racism is not mostly identified through obvious signs like burning crosses or Jim Crow laws, but is rather ambiguous and ethereal, fueled by the myriad social interactions between cultures and people. Quoting Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Helsel asserts that this type of racism is now "(1) increasingly covert, (2) embedded in normal operations of institutions, (3) void of direct racial terminology, and (4) invisible to most whites."[64] In other words, "Color-Blind Racism" is a racism defined by correcting racial ignorance, ameliorating racially motivated political policies, and avoiding individual racist acts and speech. These contours are clearly helpful and necessary, but Helsel suggests that *limiting* racism to these aspects still focuses on the present successes of overcoming past injustices rather than focusing on the present injustices moving forward.

According to Helsel, both of these frameworks ("Racial Hegemony" and "Color-Blind Racism") exemplify an understanding of racism that actually enables "whites' defense of the

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of Oklahoma, 2003), 52: "Racism is *prejudice plus power* and therefore people of color cannot be racist against whites in the United States. People of color can be prejudiced against whites but clearly do not have the power as a group to enforce that prejudice." Italics original. Note the distinction between racism and prejudice; according to this theory, all racism is prejudice but not all prejudice is racism.

[63] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 73.

[64] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 76–77. See Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001).

status quo … in maintaining the racial hierarchy,"[65] rather than working against them. Focusing only on the hegemonic or historical, whites who subscribe to these frameworks can excuse themselves from doing the self-reflective work of recognizing the salience of their whiteness and how the color of their skin enables them to benefit from societal systems of power that are built upon the historical oppression of non-whites (hence the "covert" and "invisible" nature of racism). Helsel's thick description of racism is unapologetically consistent with the concept of "systemic racism" that undergirds Critical Race Theory, since "while rooted in historical events and the development of race-based oppression, this understanding of racism focuses *not on the past but on the present realities* of racialized existence and inequality."[66] She believes it is not enough to avoid the racist acts of the past; one must work against the current systems *caused* by such atrocities. The assumption of a present prevalence of systemic racism leads inexorably to the belief that the only proper response to racism is *antiracism* (actively working against structures of oppression). For Helsel, the normative goal of antiracism is desirable for a community of faith; this includes a hermeneutic of recognition, which will be explained later. First, certain presuppositions regarding white preachers and racism must be enumerated:

For Helsel, in order for white preachers to overcome their hesitancy to preach about racism, they must first recognize the salience of their whiteness. Systemic racism from whites to non-whites has to be accepted not only as an historical fact, *but a continuing reality*. This is lexicographically obvious, since "salience" implies a present pervasiveness. White preachers must move toward recognizing that they have benefitted from—and continue to benefit from—being white. However, because social class and opportunity is not a monolith, Helsel

[65] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 79.

[66] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 80. Italics mine.

demonstrates that even whites have various horizons from which they can act and in which they live. "Because whites are not all alike in their social position within this racialized social setting, paying attention to location and cultural specificity helps root white racial identity discussions in the real histories of persons and communities."[67] Sensitivity to social context allows Helsel to support a less prescriptive ideal for whites coming to grips with their racism, especially since many whites are not as privileged as others (for example, blue-collar whites in poor neighborhoods). In response, she suggests that "how interpretive frameworks shift is related to how persons interpret themselves … their own interpretations of [their] histories can change, as can their interpretations of themselves and the world, but their social location *acts as a horizon* from which they view these histories and this world."[68] In other words, a white person still cannot avoid their interpretive location of saliency regardless of their perceived or real level of social privilege. Even a working-class poor white person, while lacking in much social power, must still be "perpetually open to learning more about persons of color and [fight] systems of oppression in the areas in which each individual can exert influence."[69] This formational horizon reflects the fulfillment of Helsel's goal: white preachers must recognize the salience of their individual whiteness by acknowledging that *all* whites benefit from their whiteness regardless of their disparate social situations.

Concomitant to the white preacher coming to grips with the salience of their whiteness, as well as accepting the fluid definitions of racism itself, Helsel offers a different way for white preachers to acknowledge racism as sin. Sin as a concept is solely theological, since it carries the semantic connotations of a creature rebelling against its creator. However, simply naming a

[67] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 88.

[68] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 117–18. Italics mine.

[69] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 98.

particular racist act a sin without acknowledging the *root social causes* of the sin "presents a paternalizing portrait of whites responding to non-whites,"[70] and inadvertently contributes to a racialized society. Again, pointing to racism as sin as if it were only specifically *identifiable actions* makes the problem of racism the property of non-whites, since any anxiety or systemic oppression experienced or felt by them cannot be foisted upon a white person who did not commit that sin. Thus, ignoring the root causes of present racial systems excuses whites who do not commit overt racist acts from a deeper self-reflection (and recognition).

Rather than defining racism as identifiable harmful actions or attitudes, Helsel argues that racism should be acknowledged as systemic and present sin through the metaphors of idolatry, estrangement, and bondage: racism is idolatry because it is a god whose worldview you follow and whose approval you seek (whether conscious or subconscious); it is estrangement when the identity of a white preacher does not reflect on how their whiteness benefits their humanity to the detriment of non-whites (regardless of social status); it is bondage because it is "habituated in our bodies"[71] and binds us indefinitely (and irrevocably). For Helsel, the sin of racism is therefore far more serious than simply committing racist acts; it is no less than the white preacher's enduring concupiscence, and thus must be routinely and continually repented of and corrected. However, her response to racism as a white person is not primarily one of guilt and shame (though these can be present); her approach is far more positive than other adherents of Critical Race Theory, as it centers itself on gratitude.

Gratitude begins with recognizing that the gospel is presented as a gift. Using the metaphors of idolatry, estrangement, and bondage in describing racism as sin enables Helsel to

[70] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 128.

[71] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 155.

offer the gospel of Jesus Christ as the solution, since sin can only be overcome by the cross, and not ultimately by efforts of antiracism. Her conclusion is worth repeating at length:

> As hard as we try to become anti-racist, ultimately our redemption lies not with our own effects but on the grace of God … Because the sin of racism is enfleshed in habituated bodies, the chains that hold us fast remain … The hope of Christian faith is that the in-breaking of God's Spirit will continue to heal the sin that remains. The evidence of this in-breaking may manifest in ways that correspond to the healing of sin as we have described it here. Rather than the idolatry of racism, perhaps whites can come to worship God alone and confess the idolatry of whiteness that continues to shape society. Rather than the estrangement of systemic-and-interpersonal segregation, perhaps whites can begin to find their identities in mutual relationships with persons of color, seeing in relationships with others the very face of God. And rather than the bondage of habitual embodied disdain and disregard for the marked bodies of others, perhaps white Christians can begin to see in these marks the marks of Christ and come to see their own white bodies as marked by the inherited sin of racism and redeemed by the marked body of Christ.[72]

The ultimate solution to the sin of racism is, for Helsel, the solution to all sin: Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the work of self-reflection that she believes white preachers should undergo functions as a sort of penitential practice that mitigates the social injustices of racism today and validates the cries for social justice. Just as the preacher preaches about the daily struggle against sin, white preachers overcome their hesitancy to preach about the daily struggle against racism by a hermeneutic of recognition.

Recognition is described as an interpretive interaction that Helsel mirrors after Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic of recognition, who sought to explore a phenomenology of the self via recognition of the other such that "recognition of oneself is always connected to the recognition of others and others' recognition of the self."[73] Being a hermeneutic, its "challenge is not to adopt a certain set of ideas and principles but rather to view the world in a different way, and to

[72] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 158–59.

[73] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 167. See Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition,* trans. David Pellauer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

be able to henceforth live a different kind of life."[74] It is a way of thinking, and one that follows Ricoeur's reflections on recognition (*reconnaissance* in French—an obvious double entendre for both "seeking information" and "recognizing") as identification, personalization, and gratitude. These three reflections are successive, culminating in gratitude, and correspond to Helsel's three reasons for white hesitancy in preaching on racism. Again, those reasons are: (1) a misunderstanding of the definitional contours of racism today, (2) a failure of white preachers to recognize the "salience" of their whiteness, and (3) an improper framework for viewing racism as sin. Identification, personalization, and gratitude meet these hesitancies sequentially and successively.

Helsel's hermeneutic of recognition begins with identification because not everyone understands the changing definitions of racism, so the preacher must explain it in a way that establishes the same baseline for the hearers. Even in using the term, "preachers cannot use the word racism and expect listeners to accept the same meaning as they intend, and so the way a preacher uses the word must be explained before the listeners can accept as true the concept of racism as depicted and intended by the preacher."[75] Identification of the changing contours of the meaning of racism includes the recognition that this "does not give an easily-identifiable set of criteria for recognizing racism within everyday interactions."[76] The navigation of these waters accepts as fact that "racism" as a concept is not universally accepted; hence, clear identification must precede a sense of personalization.

Personalization follows identification in Helsel's hermeneutic of recognition as a way of acknowledging the salience of one's whiteness. Since "many current theories of racism indict all

[74] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 161.

[75] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 233.

[76] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 234.

whites benefitting from racism, thus leaving no whites who are 'innocent,'"[77] personalization internalizes the aforementioned identification in ways that Ricoeur links to the study of memory. "[Memory's] impact on self-understanding, including the enigma of traces, or forgotten memories, either willfully forgotten or unavoidably forgotten,"[78] are applied in ways that enable white preachers to reflect on how they have benefited from living in a racially stratified society. This reflection views whiteness as "a hermeneutic positionality that hinders whites' ability to see the experiences of racial oppression from the perspective of persons of color, and that particular positionality also depends upon other factors related to one's social location."[79] Hence, social class and relative power to wit does not "excuse" whites from acknowledging their salience; again, it is rather a subjective horizon from which they can be antiracist. Helsel recognizes that this can easily lead to despair and a negative view of whiteness, so she includes within this personalization a "movement of grace" that offers the redemption of God that leads to a positive view of whites, even as they live in a racially stratified society. That redemption, after the identification of the changing contours of the definition of racism, along with the personalization of the white preacher's complicit role, leads finally to gratitude.

Gratitude is the culmination of identification and personalization in Helsel's hermeneutic of recognition. Because the sin of racism can only be healed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the gospel is the expression of God's love *par excellence*, the analogy of gift-giving (à la Ricoeur) is used to explain the goal of mutual recognition: "In the ideal moment of gift exchange, the motivation is simply to give out of an overflowing love. Gifts are exchanged, not

[77] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 238.

[78] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 238.

[79] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 240–41.

out of reciprocity or obligation, but within a gesture of overabundance and delight."[80] This moves Helsel's antiracist goals away from the typical starting point of reparation and toward a foundation of gratitude, which is "both the starting point and the end goal of what [preachers] want the congregation to experience from a sermon."[81] This is necessary for her, since a reparative motivation overlooks her contemporary identification of racism, which includes not just past injustices, but also the present realities of a racially stratified society. Hence, the mutual recognition of the other as a gift from God provides a sermonic motivation to experience social justice *together* in the *present* out of a motivation of and the goal toward *gratitude*. Even though "the intractable nature of racism means that we are perpetually in bondage to a socialization and a history that makes every gesture, even our attempts to offer gifts to one another, at risk for perpetuating the system of racism,"[82] and even though "we recognize the risk and tenuous nature of mutuality, a mutuality that always includes dissymmetry within the relationship, acknowledging the possibility of misstep and misrecognition at every point,"[83] the hermeneutic of recognition provides a way for white preachers to overcome their hesitancy over preaching about racism that is rooted in gratitude and seeks the application of antiracism.

In the end, "providing white preachers with a 'hermeneutic of recognition' of identification, personalization, and gratitude, facilitates the difficult work of interpreting Scripture and current events in light of the shifting nature of racism today and how such awareness impacts our self-understanding."[84] Helsel's appropriation of Ricoeur's *reconnaissance*

[80] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 244.

[81] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 245.

[82] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 246.

[83] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 246.

[84] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 247.

is thus not aimed at developing a hermeneutic that simply gives preachers a different sermon script for overcoming their hesitancy over preaching about racism, but rather one that "enables white preachers to make use of these insights in the process of sermon preparation … [and for] who they must be and how they must live."[85] The self-reflection is located not just in the way a preacher preaches, but is also exhibited in the preacher's life as a member of a community.

"Embodied Superintendence": A Lutheran Response to Helsel

As mentioned at the outset of this section, Carolyn Helsel's hermeneutic of recognition is held up as an example of how the person of the preacher is often negotiated in the greater homiletical academy, especially as it pertains to identity politics and intersectionality. More specifically, her stated goal of helping white preachers overcome their hesitancy to preach about racism enables her to be a fitting conversation partner for this dissertation, which is concerned with offering a response to the academy's contextualization of the person of the preacher regarding this issue. In this section, "Embodied Superintendence" is applied in response to Helsel in order to exemplify an effective and holistic contextualization of the person of the preacher specifically when negotiating the role of the white preacher in the midst of a racially-charged cultural climate.

In order to respond to Helsel's work as a case study from the theoretical vantage of "Embodied Superintendence," it is fitting to distinguish the ways in which she builds her program towards a hermeneutic of recognition and order the response in like manner. As causal issues for her assumption that white preachers have a hesitancy to preach about racism, she specifically names (1) a misunderstanding of the changing contours of "racism," (2) a failure of

[85] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 161.

recognition regarding the "saliency" of whiteness, and (3) a need to diagnose racism as sin. The formative influence of culture on the person of the preacher can be seen in the ordered responses to these issues, as well as the foundational homiletic of the preacher's superintendence. After each causal issue is responded to, the sermons used by Helsel (including her own) will also be reviewed through the formational lens of "Embodied Superintendence."

In her exploration of the changing contours of the definition of "racism" today, Helsel names several different veins of theorization. Among those theories are included "Racial Hegemony," which marries prejudice to power, and "Color-Blind Racism," which limits racism to discernable racist actions. Seeking a mediating way between the two, Helsel concludes that one of the reasons white preachers are hesitant to preach about racism is because they fail to see the complexities of racism, which should focus on the present realities of societal stratification. This corresponds to *identification* in her hermeneutic of recognition. In these considerations is an obvious plea for further study. Because these definitions are complex and continually changing, the preacher's study and preparation are formed by the desire to approach these societal changes with an eye toward a greater understanding, lest the preacher by simple denial of the premises become what Sittler calls a "blinded partisan."[86] Certainly an increase in knowledge not just of Scripture and doctrine is necessary for the preacher, but also of cultural identity. What is crucial here is that the preacher interprets identity as being formational rather than foundational to the Christian faith; hence, his study and preparation as a preacher is formed by his cultural situatedness.

One of the things that makes Helsel's reflections on the changing definitional contours of

[86] See again Sittler, *Anguish*, 19. This simple denial is one possible course for Lutheran preachers, as shown in Chapter Two.

racism troubling, however, is her violation of what Wolterstorff calls a "normative theory of discourse."[87] As mentioned in the previous chapter, the continuity of communication establishes and maintains a level of trust between the speaker and the hearer—Wolterstorff even calls this a "moral obligation." In order for the communication between two parties to be accepted as understandable, it must be cleared of ambiguity, and a certain amount of implicit authority is granted to a so-called "qualified party." For preaching, this relates to the authority of the preacher via divine discourse and the explicit language (superintendence) used to communicate the Word of God. If the language is too lofty, or too confusing, or too broad, the communication breaks down; worse, if the language is duplicitous, or inaccurate, or undefined, the trusting relationship between the hearers and the preacher is harmed. If the normative discourse is shaky (or even untrustworthy), the preacher's authority as one who speaks for God becomes suspect.

For Helsel's definitional concerns, by her realignment of the very definition of "racism," she incidentally offers *more* ambiguity, not less. As the current theorists of Critical Race Theory continue to demonstrate, racism itself has become a moving target—unless the target is white.[88] Indeed, Helsel herself says the contours of racism are so ambiguous as to be "increasingly covert" and "invisible to most whites."[89] Again, her point is precisely that this lack of awareness should spur the white preacher towards study and clarity for the sake of elucidating the complicated definitions of racism for themselves and for the hearers. However, because the definitions for her are so deeply imbedded in societal structures that unfairly benefit whites, this

[87] See again Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 75–94.

[88] See for example Ibram X. Kendi, *How To Be an Antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019); DiAngelo, *White Fragility*. Both works define racism so ambiguously as to indict all whites of the sin and prevent any constructive dialogue to the contrary. See also Baucham, *Fault Lines*, for a thorough refutation of these specific works and their definitions.

[89] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 76–77.

clarity becomes impossible. She even defines "race" as social categories that do not refer to biological realities, which is contraindicated by her insistence that white people (a biological characteristic) have unfairly benefitted from these social structures. Consequently, the credibility of the sermon *qua* the Word of God becomes suspect by the destruction of the normative stance of the discourse—in other words, the deputy becomes unreliable; the preacher becomes inconsistent. If this is the case, then the Word of God as preached cannot be trusted, and the purpose of the sermon is lost. It cannot be understated that for Lutherans, the purpose of the sermon is to proclaim the gospel for the salvation of all flesh. That is an immovable homiletical foundation. Cultural identity—including issues of defining racisms—must remain *formational* in order to maintain faithfulness to this foundational task of preaching.

To be sure, Lutherans can simply react against the cultural challenges Helsel offers (as seen in Chapter Two): they can (perhaps too easily) deny the premise and ignore the issue of the changing contours of defining racism. This would make cultural identity irrelevant to preaching, which would be a mistake. Equally mistaken would be falling on the other end of the spectrum: making cultural identity (here the changing contours of defining racism) *foundational* to the sermon's purpose. Given Helsel's stated goal of generating a preacher's "identity of antiracism,"[90] she appears to fall into this trap. Highlighting the normative discourse of what "racism" is to its breaking point is the resultant distance Helsel takes from any definition of racism that is exemplified in specific actions, especially of the past. But if the cessation of observable racial injustices leads to fewer and fewer racist acts today, the only real way to observe racism now is to make it unobservable. Helsel's insistence that racism is not only increasingly invisible to most whites, but that it also focuses on present realities and *not* on the

[90] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 251.

past leads to a never-ending cat-and-mouse game for those seeking a worldview of antiracism. This makes the past unchangeable (and unapproachable). Yet the Word of God preached for forgiveness and grace is precisely about changing the past—or at least approaching it in order to cleanse it from sin and move forward in healing and hope. Discourse that cannot speak about the past (even and especially for forgiveness) severely limits the preacher's ability to proclaim the gospel—if it is even possible. Here "Embodied Superintendence" assists in both considering the difficulty in navigating cultural definitions *and* maintaining the foundational homiletical purpose of forgiveness. It is in essence a mediating view between ignoring culture and holding preaching captive to culture. Again, if preachers are locked in a foundational homiletic of skin color, and the cultural difficulties of racism are forbidden to consider the past as being *in the past*, then that captivity is a denial of the fundamental work of Jesus Christ whose gospel works to forgive and transform both individuals and communities. Similarly, if preachers ignore the formative influence of cultural identity, such proclamations could also ignore the very embodiments of identity that make human beings cultural creatures.

To that end, Helsel's considerations do not actually need to be reductive of cultural identity, provided the preacher's study is *formed* by them rather than governed by them. Indeed, for the white preacher the effect that these "changing contours of defining racism" has is reductive if the preacher accepts these elusive definitions of racism *prima facie*; that would again make the penance of antiracism a foundational homiletic, since the definitions (or rather the *changeability* of the definitions) insist upon themselves as being authoritative. This is true not only for white preachers but also for non-white preachers, for by nature this would reduce any other cultural considerations of the preacher's identity to skin color as being ultimately a foundational characteristic of the preacher. That is the problem in the greater homiletical

academy: preachers are judged by specific cultural identities before they even open their mouths. On the other hand, these "changing contours" may not actually be reductive if the preacher's study is instead *formed* by the present realities of culture: that is, the preacher studies these issues with the awareness that some of his hearers are either ignorant about them, or they agree with them, or they discount them entirely. Moreover, these issues are studied within the community, as within the divine community (re: the foundational homiletic of the divine call) normative discourse forms the context for how one thinks and speaks about such issues. The hearers (and the preacher) may seek the wisdom to navigate these new fathoms of cultural confusion, but such navigation is normed by the community's confession of faith. The preacher's study not only aids the preacher in thinking but also steers the preacher toward a positive view of cultural identity that includes all flesh in the saving promises of Christ. It also enriches the ways in which the preacher may apply the Word of God to the hearers, for greater cultural awareness will naturally be more congruent with the hearers' experiential ways of knowing.

The second causal issue Helsel names for a hesitancy of white preachers to preach about racism is a failure to acknowledge the "salience" of their whiteness. In other words, in keeping with her indefinable definitions of racism, the white preacher must *personalize* (the second step in her hermeneutic of recognition) the racism in self-reflection. An embodiment of these assumptions has an undeniable effect on the character of the preacher, especially as the preacher sets the tone and example for the hearers. Since his godliness and sanctification are on display for the hearers to whom he ministers, the ways in which he responds to cultural challenges is indicative of a formation of his character.

It can be conceded that the issue of white identity is currently "salient," if salience is understood as something viewed as prominent or important. However, Helsel again arranges her

response to such salience in a way that makes cultural identity (particularly whiteness) foundational rather than formational. Context matters a greater deal relative to any kind of salience; white identity as such is indeed "salient" in the current cultural conversation, but it is clearly not seen that way by all people. But by desiring a broader acknowledgement, Helsel's diagnosis again makes whiteness a foundational cultural identity, which thereby governs (rather than informs) what is preached. Unfortunately, Helsel seems to equalize even those whites who have clearly benefitted from life and society far less than others. In a section of her work that acknowledges the diversity of the economic and social statuses of whites, she grants a sensitivity to considering the individual communities and histories. However, her solution remains the same, and it is unclear how such considerations could affect a white person's salience. To be sure, she merely concludes that such differences in social status and local communities offers a "horizon from which [whites] view … this world."[91] In other words, the work of considering one's salience is the same regardless of how privileged the white person is: an abused white person with a history of homelessness simply must work harder than other whites to acknowledge their benefitting from systemic racism. For white preachers, it is difficult to imagine Helsel's considerations without making skin color a foundational part of the preacher's cultural identity. This is explicitly denied by "Embodied Superintendence" (and Scripture), which can nevertheless consider cultural advantages apart from whiteness—or even cultural disadvantages *from* whiteness. The response to the salience of whiteness in the current cultural dialogue should not be based on racial profiling, but on the confession of faith in Jesus Christ for the salvation of all flesh.

Indeed, as with the previous issue of defining racism, the "salience" of whiteness need not

[91] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 118.

be so reductive of cultural identity if salience is treated as formational rather than foundational. In other words, the character of the white preacher can be reflective of these cultural formations by his consideration (and subsequent sanctified life) of *how* and *in what ways*—if any—the color of his skin benefits him. (For that matter, *any* cultural identity can be considered by the preacher and subsequently form his character.) *Formation*, rather than *foundation*, allows the preacher to engage in cultural challenges while keeping his faithfulness as the ultimate foundational regulator for the way he acts. The issue again is treated within a community, from which and for whom the preacher receives a call to serve. That community of faith provides the necessary context of faith and faithfulness that points all flesh to the forgiving Word of God and holds the sermon as a primary means of communicating such forgiveness. Again, even though it can be conceded that this saliency of whiteness as a cultural conversation is clearly present, a better (and more faithful) way to process it is within the formative realities of the community of faith that point to the salvific power of the Word of God, rather than as a foundational presupposition.

The third and final causal issue Helsel sees as hindering a white preacher's willingness to preach about racism is a failure to acknowledge racism as sin itself. Being a theological concept, she likens the sin of racism to idolatry, estrangement, and bondage. These reflections of sin itself as idolatry (placing one's trust in something other than God), estrangement from God and others, and bondage within sinful nature (à la Rom. 7:15–25) are congruent with how Lutherans consider the total depravity of the postlapsarian human condition. What is problematic with Helsel's treatment of that sin, however, is that the cultural identity of a white preacher holds a foundational sway over the experience of grace and forgiveness—the new identity (2 Cor. 5:17)—offered by the gospel.

In her own words, the interpretation of racism as sin points to "the need for forgiveness and

redemption, two concepts which are foreign to secular debates concerning governmental responses to institutional racism."[92] From a foundational standpoint, this is absolutely true: there is no gospel in the world, only in the church. However, her work explicitly "does not explore what such forgiveness and redemption might entail,"[93] which is precisely the problem. By leaning into antiracism as a foundational concept for the white preacher's identity, Helsel makes that formational cultural identity something that must always be confessed—whether or not forgiveness has been experienced. The deliberate lack of emphasis on grace might be explainable from the consideration of her theological confession (i.e., a different belief in the sermon's purpose), but it is anathema for Lutherans who believe that the primary purpose of preaching is the forgiveness of sins from God himself.

Rather, if the preacher's cultural identity *forms* instead of *founds* his personhood, these considerations can be extremely fruitful (as with the previous two issues). Racism is sin, and as sin it is bondage. From the standpoint of the law, reflecting on these possibilities and their manifestations in his own life is expected of the faithful preacher, and his personality and character will bear that out as he lives with and a serves a community of faith. But the full response of faith to sin is not a mere acknowledgement of sin—it is the grace of Jesus Christ that follows repentance. To insist on the preacher's bondage to this one particular sin dishevels the universal guilt of *all* sin, and actually turns confession into a repentance of selfhood: because he is white, and because whiteness is systemic sin (according to the changing contours of racism today), his mere existence is bondage. Racism then becomes the white man's concupiscence, from which he cannot escape. The white preacher, if Helsel is followed, is never a "constant

[92] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 160.

[93] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 160.

pageant" (2 Cor 2:14) of grace, but a perpetually tainted voice that can proclaim hope and grace to others but not to himself. In fact, the same is true for *any* systemic (or salient) sin, be it lust, anger, greed, etc. Following her methodology, any issue of identity politics and intersectionality[94] triumphs over the gospel, since the preacher can only preach from particular cultural identities rather than from an identity as a forgiven disciple of Jesus Christ. Such a conclusion denies that the means by which God speaks (the preacher) has himself experienced forgiveness and become a sacred vessel to proclaim the glory of God (2 Cor. 4:7) despite his past sins. While a universal brokenness is clearly necessary for true Christian preaching, the pronouncement of grace (even for the preacher) must abound all the more, since "our old self was crucified with him [by baptism into Christ] so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be *slaves* to sin" (Rom. 6:6, italics mine). Thus, if racism is a perpetual sin of *bondage* for the white preacher, then it would follow that even holy baptism fails to set him free—the only spiritual solution is the purgatory of antiracism.

It is clear that Helsel does not see this dreadful conclusion, although her response to the issue of racism as sin corresponds to the *gratitude* portion of her hermeneutic of recognition. She does well to reflect on gratitude in relation to the gospel, which she correctly portrays as a gift. But the pronouncement of forgiveness moves swiftly into her work of antiracism (as a gift from whites to non-whites), and the gift itself becomes a work performed by the white preacher. Regardless of her insistence that such antiracist gratitude is not "works-based," she immediately describes it as "an opportunity,"[95] which is the same thing in practice if not in theory.[96] She even

[94] See Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 252–4. Helsel's hermeneutic of recognition is designed to apply to any number of cultural issues.

[95] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 250.

[96] It could perhaps be seen as sanctification or paraenesis, but those follow the gospel—which is lacking here.

concludes with the overt ideal for the white preacher to embody "an *identity* of anti-racism,"[97] which by her own process enshrines cultural identity as a foundational homiletic. It also offers a methodology that is inherently negative (antiracism) rather than positively proclamatory of the new identity in Christ offered by the preaching of the gospel. The preacher has experienced this grace and embodies that work of God through his character and personality.

The strength of Helsel's work lies in her examination of *recognition*, for this Ricoeurian concept rightly sees a recognition of self in the recognition of others.[98] Put succinctly, "recognition of something in general involves the attempt to distinguish the same from the other, to say that this object is the same one and not another."[99] Helsel (with Ricoeur) will extrapolate this concept to apply to systems of oppression and injustice in general. But for the preacher, it can also extend to the recognition of self in relation to the hearers and be reflexive of the ways in which cultural identity is formed (as described in Chapter Four). In other words, this concept of self-recognition can correspond to the symbiotic relationship between the preacher and the hearers: since they are the ones who have called the preacher by the Holy Spirit to preach to them, for them, and from them, his interactions with them form his personality in accordance with their similarities and dissimilarities. Naturally, these formations will be different in every context: from the myriad personalities and histories of any given communion of saints to the preacher's own individual experiences and history, every irreducible cultural identifier bears some weight of formation—and these are always in flux. "Everything bears upon everything,"[100] to quote Sittler again, and reflecting on the preacher's personality in a holistic sense unavoidably

[97] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 251.

[98] See Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 185–227.

[99] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 201.

[100] Sittler, *Anguish*, 13.

includes the reciprocal relationships he has with the people he serves. As a community, they are formed and informed by each other's cultural identities, but ultimately guided by the foundational proclamation of their spiritual identities in Christ.

"Embodied Superintendence" is offered as an alternative to Helsel's theory as she brings certain cultural claims to light (changing definitions of racism, failure to recognize saliency, and racism as sin). It does this mainly by offering a corrective to her issues as they make these cultural issues *foundational* to the person of the preacher yet offers a positive interaction for each insofar as they can be considered to be *formative* for the same. Ultimately, the problem with Helsel's methodology is that while she effectively promotes a vibrant interaction with the cultural issue of racism (which is appropriate for the condemnatory proclamation of the law), she never actually arrives at the gospel. Instead of a community of saints forgiven and renewed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, her model of the church becomes a community that continues to confess its complicity in systemic racism, for the saliency of whiteness is more important to acknowledge than the grace of Christianity. To show this in a more specific manner, the remainder of this response treats the practical examples she uses that appeared to spur her program to begin with: the examples of actual sermons and her own responsive application.

Throughout the work, Helsel offers critiques of three different sermons preached by white preachers in predominantly white churches on a Sunday before Martin Luther King Jr. Day (the third Monday in January). The first two sermons are brief examples that Helsel holds up as specifically missing a greater analysis of "racism" in its changing and complex definitions.[101] In her estimation, while both preachers mention racism, their usage of the word assumes "that [the

[101] See Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 53–57.

hearers] are all alike in a shared understanding of what racism looks like today."[102] But since "racial theories that purport to explain race and racism across time often cannot account for the complex ways race relations have developed over time in relation to historical events,"[103] the propensity of preachers to reflect assumptions and views of their hearers becomes a liability when preaching about race. In other words, Helsel sees the sermons as being inadequate insofar as they limit their definitions of racism to historical events or (seemingly) bygone social attitudes. The preacher's *identification* is inaccurate to her because the preacher's *study and preparation* is inaccurate.

A positive aspect of this particular critique of hers is that the preacher indeed should never presume that the hearers all share a similar understanding of what a term or general concept means. Even with the concept of racism, the hearers are likely informed at different levels of understanding and experience: an older black man who has suffered the jeers of racial slurs would hear the matter differently than a white twenty-something who struggles to know whether or when to use the phrases "African American" or "black."

A critique of her critique, however, is that there are several different ways in which preachers approach this pedagogical concept from a homiletical perspective: he may explicitly teach the concept as the sermon's focus, or he may implicitly guide the hearers in a proper *sense* of the concept in order to achieve a more primary sermonic goal. These approaches will differ based on the preacher's subjectivity in relation to his hearers. Nevertheless, the concept must be clear to the preacher, and Helsel's real problem is the assumption that *her* definitions should be reflected in the preacher's approach. It appears that she even wishes to redefine the purpose of

[102] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 57.

[103] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 66.

the sermon as a recognition of the changing definitions of racism. The problem again remains a matter of normative discourse, clarity of proclamation, and the presence (or lack thereof) of the gospel.

The third sermon example Helsel gives involves a more lengthy and complicated critique. Reiterating her definition of racism as "an inherited racialized social structure that benefits whites to the disadvantage of persons of color, as well as the justifications for such a social structure,"[104] she suggests that this sermon does not go far enough in labeling racism as sin, and thereby concludes that such sermons "[create] a paternalistic or condescending tone … minimizing the problem so as to make the problem be more about these other non-white groups than about the white listeners."[105] In other words, the preacher's *personalization* is inadequate to her. Some examples of this issue include the preacher's reference to the dangers of the proximate urban area, as well as a tragedy at a Bangladeshi factor in which low-paid workers make high-priced clothing for the westernized marketplace. Helsel avers that both vignettes, while well-intentioned, inadvertently perpetuate the sin of racism as the property of those who live in the city or of the Bangladeshi society, respectively. Rather, she would have preferred the preacher interpret those examples as the sins of those who perpetuate the systems that cause these problems and benefit from them: whites who buy the Bangladeshi products, and whites who live in the suburbs.

A positive reaction to this critique would concur that a preacher's usage of vignettes and examples should be accurately reflective in his character as he puts flesh on the sermon's bones: it may be pedantic to exemplify the sermon's malady with an injustice in a foreign country, and

[104] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 125.

[105] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 133.

it may be presumptuous to lament a residential reality to which only some can relate. Even worse, these illustrations do appear to avoid defining the hearers' (and the preacher's) complicity in sin, which is the problem Helsel is addressing. Even though the sermon is not entirely duplicated for the reader, Helsel's skillful retelling of it leaves little doubt as to the main focus and goal of the sermon, which unmistakably is to encourage the hearers in treating all people with respect and dignity. However, whether or not these vignettes are reflective of the preacher's character, Helsel clearly wishes for the preacher to reflect a greater *personalization* of the preacher's whiteness as salient. Merely mentioning a phrase or example is hardly the homiletical equivalent of understanding the cultural issues on a fundamental level, and "Embodied Superintendence" would agree that this is of crucial importance.

The primary illustration in this sermon with which Helsel takes umbrage is a rather personalized story of the preacher's predecessor, who had served a congregation in Selma, Alabama in 1965. After the pastor urged the congregation's elders to desegregate the congregation, the preacher recalls the story as told by the predecessor:

> The deacons who greeted at the doors were told of the session's decision. Then three young black girls, late teens and early twenties, went to the [other] church across the street first and were turned away. They then walked over to our church, and were seated. I was in the midst of the pastoral prayer and I heard these steps on the hard wood floors of the narthex. I looked up, and without missing a syllable of my prayer, and saw them seated in our congregation. Only one white family got up and left the church when my prayer was over. The next day the local newspaper had a big banner headline that read [*Grace Church*] *Integrated*.[106]

The preacher then goes on to explain his predecessor's subsequent death threats and hate-filled responses from people opposed to the integration. He concludes with an explicit expression that

[106] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 138–9. The emendations are Helsel's to respect the anonymity of the preacher and congregation.

he himself wishes to be as brave and godly as the man who fought a structural problem of racism within the church.

Helsel is initially charitable with this analogy, but nevertheless claims that the white preacher failed on three counts: first, the analogy fails to show the current congregation their complicity in such racism, and "there is a direct connection made which might prevent congregations from making the connection themselves."[107] Second, the story oversimplified the complexity of racism by reducing it to an example of one man. Third, by describing the three blacks as the young women they were, the preacher presented "a label that fosters a paternalistic stance towards these women who had great courage to enter an all-white church when Selma was a 'powder keg.'"[108] In other words, Helsel finds the example to be purveying a heroic white preacher over and against the concentrated and difficult work of the Civil Rights movement.

There is little to redeem these last critiques of hers without accepting the premises of invisible racism and salient whiteness as the preacher's foundational approach. First, the preacher's goal in telling the story was to encourage the hearers in their sanctification, not to indict the congregation as racists. There is a marked distinction between preaching an accusatory law and paraenesis: the former points to the need for repentance, while the latter is sanctification that follows grace. Yet her critique of the preacher here is an example of what an exclusive engagement in the proclamation of law leads to. Since she has explicitly stated that her methodology does not explore the consequences of grace and forgiveness, this criticism seems to overlook the real goal of the preacher, which is to use the illustration as a formative way in which God works in the midst of his people through cultural identity. "Embodied

[107] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 141.

[108] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 142.

Superintendence" would help uncover the preacher and the hearers "behind" the illustration: the preacher and the hearers clearly hold the predecessor in high regard, the act of integration is accepted as a bold and dangerous cultural move, and the juxtaposition of that congregation against the one who turned away the women all help to view the sermon illustration as an attempt at paraenesis within that particular community of faith.

Second, if examples of racism (or antiracism) cannot be given singly, that further proves a criticism this analysis has with Helsel that the current effort to define racism as an invisible and systemic force leads to *more* confusion by its ambiguity. Finally, the story itself being one of three young black women may actually foster a paternalistic stance, but paternalism is not necessarily a bad thing: a father desires to protect his daughters; a compassionate person of means desires to help someone without means; a Samaritan washes the wounds of a random stranger beset upon by bandits; the Son of God desires to gather Jerusalemites together "as a hen gathers her brood under her wings" (Matt. 23:37). The preacher here tells a story that may be precisely what the congregation needs to hear in order to be encouraged to stand against racism no matter the cost, and does so through a personality that shares a relationship with a man they all seem to love and respect who demonstrated a tremendous amount of character in a horribly tumultuous historical period. The preacher speaks an encouraging word from the hearers' own history that explicitly states a desire for good character through his own personality.

Moreover, three teenage black women in an all-white church in 1965 Selma are *objectively* the underdogs within the structural power scheme of that "powder keg." To portray them as anything but three teenage black women in an all-white church in 1965 Selma would be to disrespect their memory as incredibly brave people in a frightening situation. (Helsel's complaint that the example undercuts the work of the Civil Rights Movement is actually contradicted by

the example itself, for the efforts of the young black women were undoubtedly a part of the movement even by simply going to an all-white church.) Nevertheless, the criticism does demonstrate the important of perspective in examples, and how that perspective changes depending on the purpose of the example. In other words, Helsel's methodology interprets the story from the lens of salient whiteness toward the goal of an antiracist identity. But she does not get to the embodiment of the sermon as an artifact preached by a cultural preacher within a cultural congregation. "Embodied Superintendence" does, not that it would defend the example *per se*, but rather that it interprets the sermon in a way that is oriented toward the preacher and the hearers and the ways in which they are formed and informed by their shared story. This is a more helpful homiletical practice, not least because it situates any analysis in a redemptive posture and searches for positive ways in which God works to create and redeem communities of faith through the sermon. It certainly does not offer a litmus test for cultural identities and interpretations that are not foundational to Christian preaching.

In fact, theologically speaking Helsel has no standing with these critiques (again, from the perspective of paraenesis): the preacher's example is entirely consistent with the Christian faith, which is active in service toward others—especially to those who are "the least of these" (Matt. 25:40; Mark 9:42). This means "everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required" (Luke 12:48), and those in positions of power are expected to use it for the good of their neighbors. The preacher's story was an example of this Christian work. To make the congregation complicit in racism fifty years later could be to dishonor the people of the church who may have long ago repented of (and were forgiven of) the egregious sin of segregation. If they had not, then the present may not have been. Again, this is not a defense of the sermon illustration so much as a demonstration that the considerations of "Embodied Superintendence"

offer different and less limited interpretive homiletical moves.

Helsel's criticism of paternalism is actually what makes Critical Race Theory, antiracism, and the greater homiletical academy's current obsession with identity politics and intersectionality so dangerous: not only is it indicative of a worldview that makes cultural identity foundational rather than formative, but in this particular example (and indeed in Helsel's very goal of helping white preachers foster an identity of antiracism), it can never truly acknowledge equality in the forgiveness of sins. Moreover, it is itself guilty of the thing which it condemns—paternalism. By virtue of the "changing contours" of racism, and the "salience" of whiteness, such "antiracism" *becomes* the so-called heroic white preacher. Helsel ironically desires that the very identity of a white preacher embody one that rescues non-whites—via antiracism. She makes an admirable attempt, but her conclusion is the same as the most virulent proponent of Critical Race Theory in that it lacks the grace of Jesus Christ. Her criticism flows from a program that holds identity politics and intersectionality over the gospel, and there is no way out of racism because antiracism becomes foundational to a white identity. This is simply not the gospel, not Christianity, and not congruent with the purposes of the preaching office.

The preaching of the gospel for the forgiveness of sins is the primary goal of preaching and is a better way to overcome any hesitancy to preach about racism (which was Helsel's impetus for the work). A preacher is better motivated to address sin from the embodied perspective of one who has been forgiven of sin, and even the story of St. Paul himself bears this out. *In spite of* his former persecution of the church, Paul was extended the "right hand of fellowship" by the pillars of the infant church (Gal. 2:9). First Corinthians 15:9 and Gal. 1:13 reflect how Paul felt his past had *formed* his ministry, but he speaks of this past from the perspective of one who has been forgiven of those sins, not as one who must continually repent of them. The tension

between Paul's previous sins and his renewed identity in Christ is precisely demonstrative of the scandalous gospel which heals and recreates communities. The methodology of antiracism applied to homiletics as Helsel has done overlooks this recreation and allows the systemic sins of culture to become more powerful than the living Kingdom of God embodied in the community of faith and foreshadowed as the fullness of the Parousia.

Helsel is transparent that her discovery of these sermons happened through an internet search of fifty churches from "mainline denominations," each of which she determined to be representative mostly of white people judging from self-reported demographics and photos, both found on the churches' websites.[109] She focused her attention specifically on sermons preached by white preachers on the Sunday before Martin Luther King Jr. Day and in sermon series on issues of social justice. From her study, she concluded that "few white preachers preach about racism in their predominantly white congregations."[110] While her case studies are helpful in bringing her theory into practice, it does not necessary follow that if a white preacher does not preach about racism on the Sunday before Martin Luther King Jr. Day, then that preacher must be hesitant to preach about racism. Regardless, "Embodied Superintendence" considers more cultural factors than just mere "hesitation." For example: the situatedness of a congregation in regards to its history, location, liturgical expectations, and even the general receptivity of the hearers are all factors that have a bearing on whether or not a preacher preaches on racism. A small, multi-generational congregation made up of farmers and ranchers who are all related to one another in the middle of rural Wyoming that has been following an historic lectionary since its inception over one hundred years ago would accordingly inform the preacher called by them.

[109] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 255–58.

[110] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 258.

Conversely, a mission plant in the heart of Atlanta with a vibrant program to feed the working poor and introduce them to the Christian faith in a casual and unthreatening manner would inform the preacher in different ways.

Nevertheless, these three sermon critiques are placed throughout Helsel's work in order to draw attention to the specific issues she addresses: in these cases, the defining contours of "racism" and the propensity of whites to pathologize non-whites in their portrayals of racism as sin. To give a practical example of her fuller program of a three-fold hermeneutic of recognition (identification, personalization, and gratitude), Helsel uses an example of her own: a sermon preached (seemingly *ex corde*) on the morning of George Zimmerman's acquittal.[111] It is worthy of a brief review and response.

Helsel's given lectionary text that morning was the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). Jettisoning her prepared sermon on the way to church in favor of addressing Zimmerman's acquittal, the first movement of the sermon connected the death of Trayvon Martin to the man in the parable who fell to the robbers. This enabled her to *identify* Martin, the police, Florida's "stand-your-ground" laws, and the media with the characters in the parable. The Samaritan she calls the "anti-Samaritan"—"a trial by jury … which instead came to the 'robber' [Zimmerman] and took pity on *him*."[112] The sermon's second movement *personalized* the story by inviting the hearers to identify with the robbers, and even see themselves as perpetuating a system of justice that racially profiles against people of color in defense of whites. Finally, the third movement of the sermon expresses Helsel's own *gratitude* by interpreting the Good Samaritan as Jesus, who alone "has come to heal the wounds we have inflicted on others … to

[111] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 248–51. See https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/14/us/george-zimmerman-verdict-trayvon-martin.html for a reference to the original news story.

[112] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 249. Italics original.

comfort the mothers of black boys who fear letting their children go from their arms … who is already working to rebuild the Jericho road and heal our souls sickened from racism."[113] This final application of gratitude Helsel insists is not a return to a "works-based emphasis," but rather "offers hearers an opportunity for expressing their gratitude for God's grace in expressions of mercy for others."[114] In this way, she concludes that her three-fold hermeneutic of recognition works to encourage whites "in a process of working towards an identity of anti-racism"[115] as their recognition of systemic racism increases.

By way of response, a faithful preacher must recognize an increase of the gospel where sin abounds (Rom. 5:20–21). Helsel's program does not do this. In fact, her sermon appears to end not with the gospel, not with reconciliation, but with condemnation. This is the danger inherent in the academy's current emphasis on identity politics and intersectionality—the healing work of the gospel *for all people* is difficult to find as more and more seem to address cultural identity as foundational to the Christian faith. But within the foundational homiletics of Lutheranism, the preacher is called by a community of faith to preach the Word of God unto salvation. His sermonic discourse is authoritative as befitting the office of preaching established by Christ and given by the Holy Spirit through the church. This discourse is strictly beholden to the normative words of Scripture and projected towards the hearers as a proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. From a particular theological confession, the preacher approaches the hearers with an interpretation of Scripture that clearly proclaims sin and even more clearly proclaims the gospel.

Congruent with these Lutheran homiletical foundations, "Embodied Superintendence"

[113] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 250.

[114] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 250.

[115] Helsel, "Hermeneutics of Recognition," 251.

offers further considerations as to what is happening in the sermon, insisting on the divine discourse of the preacher as he exercises the superintendence given to him, but also highlighting the embodiment of his cultural identity. This cultural identity is inextricably tied not only to his confession of faith, but also to the cultural identities of the people who called him to preach. As such, the cultural difficulties and controversies that face both the preacher and the hearers in any given context are brought to bear on the preacher's study, character, and personality. Rather than becoming entrapped within a particular cultural nuance or controversy (and thus making that controversy foundational to homiletics), "Embodied Superintendence" is a better way forward; it does not limit considerations of the sermon as an objective artifact, it helps to dissect the numerous cultural formations that inform the preacher, and it situates the preacher within the community of faith—the body of Christ.

In any case, the preacher's study is informed by what the congregation needs; his character is reflective of what they should follow as an example; his personality is sensitive to their struggles and strengths as he lives and serves with and amongst them. An infinite amount of cultural considerations churn through the active spiritual and cultural lives of both the preacher and the hearers in a beautiful amalgam of diversity that ought never limit itself to assumptions about race, language, experience, and heart as though they were foundational characteristics or prerequisites to hearing the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. The check and balance of this process is the broken record of faithfulness to the Scriptures, to a confession of faith, and to the hearers' desire for a hopeful Word from the Lord. For this is of first importance regarding the preaching office: that God is speaking the saving Word of salvation by the death and resurrection of Christ for the benefit of the faith and lives of the hearers—and for the preacher. That preacher is himself a called part of a community of saints, and an embodied deputy of God who has been

granted a high level of superintendence to preach the Word of God in his own words. If this is the given purpose of preaching, then considerations of identity politics and intersectionality can be discussed in a productive manner that anticipates the glorious day of Christ when all divisions will cease.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This dissertation began with a description of the current state of the greater homiletical academy. A brief history of the landscape was traced from the New Homiletic in the 1970's to the current conversation of identity politics and intersectionality. A trajectory was shown that concerns about the preacher's authority led to the development of more hearer-oriented sermon structures and approaches, which led to more dialogical philosophies of homiletics. From dialogical considerations came an increased interest in identity, especially as it relates to culture and the power and privilege inherent to the preacher.

After this examination, certain current trends in Lutheran homiletical thought were explored. It was shown that common emphases in Lutheran homiletics include the authority of the Word (and its proper interpretation and application), the importance of the proclamation of justification, and the given authority of the Ministerium. Without being mutually exclusive or limiting, it was shown that these important homiletical foundations found in Lutheranism tend to fall short when engaging the academy's current trends of identity politics and intersectionality.

An historical examination of Lutheran thought then recovered the person of the preacher as an important and recently overlooked homiletical foundation. Many historical Lutheran voices were shown to be reflective of the Reformation's rediscovery of the centrality of the Word, especially in pastoral ministry. Emphasized in these voices were certain contours of the person of the preacher: namely the preacher's subjectivity, his study (motivated toward application of the Word in ministry), his character, and his personality.

The person of the preacher being recovered and further detailed as a foundational Lutheran homiletic, the dissertation then offered a theoretical consideration of what is happening in the

sermonic event: “Embodied Superintendence.” Two main facets of “Embodied Superintendence” were put forward: first, that God himself is speaking through the preacher as through a deputy. The preacher, speaking in his own words, has been given a high degree of superintendence to perform the sermonic task. Here, the work of Nicolas Wolterstorff as appropriated by Michael P. Knowles and corrected by Peter Nafzger established the preacher’s sermon as divine discourse. The second facet of “Embodied Superintendence” relates the hearers to the sermonic act especially as the preacher receives his divine call from and through them and allows for an exploration of the many and various ways by which the preacher (and the hearers) are *formed* by cultural identities. Of particular note are the contours of the person of the preacher as a homiletical foundation: study, character, and personality.

Finally, “Embodied Superintendence” was brought into demonstrative practice. Two historical Lutheran authors (Paul Scherer and Joseph Sittler) were engaged to show a continuity of Lutheran thought and practice relative to the person of the preacher. These authors demonstrated a heightened awareness of their own cultural situatedness and offered thoughts on the preacher to wit. After these two authors, the work of Carolyn Helsel was offered as a conversation partner to demonstrate the superiority of “Embodied Superintendence” as a theoretical consideration when engaging with contemporary cultural issues.

In short, “Embodied Superintendence” maintains the Lutheran homiletical foundations of the Word of God, the proclamation of the gospel, and the authority of the Ministerium, while also bringing the person of the preacher to bear on the preaching task. The myriad ways in which the cultural identities of the preacher and the hearers interact are important and necessary to study and engage as *formative.* Most importantly, “Embodied Superintendence” allows for the gospel of Jesus Christ to prevail without allowing cultural identity to be *foundational* to the

Christian church. “Embodied Superintendence,” by emphasizing cultural identities as *formative* rather than *foundational* to Christian preacher, is a better way forward than what is currently found in the greater homiletical academy. There, many works are shaped by identity politics and intersectionality in such a way that the gospel of Jesus Christ is obscured.

Further work can be done in this field by engaging more contemporary authors in the vein of Carolyn Helsel. As a theoretical approach, “Embodied Superintendence” can be practiced in relation to any cultural challenge, and following the contours of the formative impacts that cultural identity has on the preacher’s study, character, and personality leaves endless room for discussion. Any number of contentious social and cultural issues facing the church can be explored without needing to take a defensive posture, and (following Sittler) homileticians can view these challenges as counterpoints for faithful engagement relative to their confessional stance. More specifically in the realm of Lutheranism, responses to contentious social issues can by addressed in a more positive manner. That is not to say that matters contrary to Scripture should be accepted, but rather than consideration can be given as to how and in what ways these difficulties *form* and challenge the communities of faith.

Given the abundance of untranslated work during the time of the Reformation (and the years following it), more effort can be taken in historical theology to examine how Lutherans throughout history have spoken directly about the person of the preacher or the cultural identities of the preacher and the hearers. This would be especially helpful in the genre of pastoral manuals, as it would increase an awareness of the historical and foundational thought of the preacher as an embodied individual serving within a community of faith.

Finally, greater care and attention can be given in Lutheran circles on the necessity of sermon delivery pursuant to the preacher’s personality. It is arguable that some are hesitant to

explore this topic for fear of sacrificing another homiletical foundational (like the power and authority of the Word of God). However, it is undeniable for anyone who has experience in the preaching ministry that good sermon delivery covers a multitude of pastoral sins—to say nothing of attracting the hearers to the truths of Scripture by better engagement with their experiences as the hearers of sermons.

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