Abstract

"IN DEFENSE OF PREACHING IN THE SPIRIT"

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Project under the direction of Professor David M. Stark

This project defends the practice of preaching in the Spirit by first examining the connotations and hesitations around preaching in the Spirit. It then articulates the dearth of academic discussion of preaching in the Spirit from Anglican/Episcopal sources. Considering the lack of discussion from Anglican/Episcopal sources, scholars from the African American Christian Tradition, also known as the Black Church, are reviewed. An argument is made that while there are a variety of ways to preach in the Spirit, the fruit of preaching in the Spirit is an alternative community marked by shared leadership, diversity, and equality. An analysis of scripture shows how Spirit led speech in scripture cultivates this fruit. Following the scripture analysis two preachers of contrasting styles are profiled and selected sermons analyzed to show methods of preaching in the Spirit. Finally, sermon examples and reflections are presented to demonstrate how I have incorporated this research in my preaching.

Approved David M. Stark Advisor Date April 4, 2022

In Defense of Preaching in the Spirit

by

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Submitted to the Faculty of the
School of Theology of the University of the South
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

May 2022

Sewanee, Tennessee

Approved David M. Stanley Date April 4, 2022
Advisor

Date April 4, 2022
Second Advisor

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Preaching in the Spirit

There is a verse of the old country/blues song "That's All" that points to a false dichotomy frequently held in regards to preaching:

> Some people go to school to learn how to teach
> Some people go to school to learn how to preach
> If you cain't preach, brother, without going to school
> You ain't a preacher, you an educated fool. That's All.[1]

These lines highlight the false division often held between educated talk and spirited speech. It is a harmful separation that is often made manifest in the wide variance between how charismatic and mainline preachers are formed to prepare and to preach.

On one hand, this division leads mainline denominations like the Episcopal Church to over emphasize the prepared, learned preacher who has crafted a sermon built upon sound scholarship and polished rhetoric. Indeed, many of the institutions of the church promote this end of the spectrum. In the Episcopal Church, early in the formal discernment process a diocese assesses an aspirant to the priesthood's intellectual capacity for scholarly study to determine if he or she can handle the academic rigors of seminary. Seminaries require a bachelor's degree for matriculation into a Master of Divinity Course of study, assuming a level of scholarly acumen in an applicant. Furthermore, academic treatises in the field of homiletics overwhelmingly focus on the preparation of a sermon, and most often the writing of a sermon manuscript—with heavy

[1] Merle Travis, "That's All" on the album, *Folks Songs of the Hills,* Capitol Records, 1946.

emphasis on exegesis and interpretation. While there is no doubt that exegesis and interpretation are essential skills, when they are over emphasized in the formation of Episcopal preachers, it can diminish the efficacy of preaching by forming preachers to recite academic findings instead of Spirit led sermons.

On the other hand, within charismatic traditions there is the notion that a preacher preaches not from preparation but from inspiration. This view leans heavily toward the anointing of the Spirit on the preacher and holds that the words spoken are to be the Word of God. Indeed, on the extreme edge of this view, a preacher should not prepare, but rather, trust in the Holy Spirit to supply the words. Preachers are anointed by the Holy Spirit, and their capacity to preach under the Spirit's direction testifies to the anointing. However, when the Spirit is over emphasized in the formation of charismatic preachers, they run the risk of merely entertaining instead of deeply edifying.

Despite this false choice between educated and spirited speech, there is evidence within traditions like my own (the Episcopal Church), that education and an emphasis on the continual formation of the Spirit's anointing are vital. For instance, within the discernment process, preaching is often categorized as a spiritual gift, recognizing the capacity of the Holy Spirit to speak through an aspirant. In the ordination rite of a priest, hands are laid on the ordinand while prayers are said and songs sung, invoking the Holy Spirit to anoint the ordinand with the power to preach God's word, among other things.[2]

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[2] In The Consecration of a Priest, after "Veni Sancte Spiritus" is sung, the Bishop prays, "Therefore, Father, through Jesus Christ your Son, give your Holy Spirit to *N.*; fill *him* with grace and power, and make *him* a priest in your Church. May *he* exalt you, O Lord, in the midst of your people; offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to you; **boldly proclaim the gospel of salvation***;* and rightly administer the sacraments of the New Covenant" *The Book of Common Prayer* 1979, 533-534, (**emphasis mine**).

Therefore, while preaching in the Spirit is under emphasized to a fault in Episcopal culture, it is not out of the bounds of the tradition.

When one preaches, one is doing more than public speaking, more than persuasion, more than making an argument for a particular interpretation of scripture, more than delivering an oral rendition of an essay. Preaching is speaking the Word of God that depends, in no small part, on the work of the Spirit. James Forbes argues in *The Holy Spirit and Preaching*, "The preaching event itself—without reference to specific texts and themes—is a living, breathing, flesh-and-blood expression of the theology of the Holy Spirit."[3] Preaching in the Spirit is a vocalized embodiment of God's anointing of the preacher to speak God's Word.

The lack of research and writing on preaching in the Spirit within Episcopal circles highlights the need for this project. O.C. Edwards, Jr., in his exhaustive *A History of Preaching* argues that Episcopal preacher Philip Brooks has had more influence on preaching in America than any other.[4] Brooks' lectures on preaching for the Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching at Yale in the 1870s have been reprinted frequently since. Brooks' two factors of preaching are "truth and personality" where the truth is the Gospel and—in his view—is fixed, and personality is the whole being of the preacher and varies not only with the preacher but also within the preacher.[5] While Brooks does argue for holistic development of the preacher—that it is not just the intellectual capacity nor mere interpretative technique that are important—he does not elucidate on the Spirit's role in

[3] James Forbes, *The Holy Spirit & Preaching,* (Nashville: Abingdon, 198), 9, 19.
[4] O. C. Edwards, *A History of Preaching* (Abingdon Press, 2004), 637.
[5] Phillips Brooks, *Eight Lectures on Preaching* (London: S.P.C.K., 1959), 5.

this formation.[6] Brooks seems to argue that preaching is primarily a human endeavor of developing the whole self.[7]

Another influential preacher more contemporary than Brooks is Fleming Rutledge. She is internationally recognized as a preacher, lecturer, and "one who teachers other preachers."[8] Her writings and lectures are influential, especially her focus on the intersection of culture and Biblical Theology. In her 2015 book, *The Crucifixion,* she does mention that "preaching of the gospel is the Spirit-created event of the Word in the present moment."[9] However this statement is made within an argument for more thorough scriptural interpretation in Episcopal sermons in general and more Cross-centered scriptural interpretation specifically. The emphasis is again on interpretation in preparation to preach and how that interpretation is presented. Preaching in the Spirit is not the particular focus of her examination.

Returning to O.C. Edwards we can note another example of the dearth of exploration of the Spirit's role in preaching within the Episcopal/Anglican thought world. First, in Edwards' *Elements of Homiletic* he focuses almost exclusively on preparing the sermon with only 7 pages of barely developed maxims on delivery. These are offered at the end of the book as almost an afterthought.[10] He does strongly encourage preachers to begin their preparation in prayer and continue in prayer all the way to the time of

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Later, in the discussion of Philippians 2, I will offer a contrasting argument that the emptying of the self is the is path to being filled with the Spirit for preaching. This is not to say that someone who is deeply influenced by Brooks' concept of personality does not or cannot preach in the Spirit. Indeed, I will discuss in depth Howard Thurman who was very much formed in the Brooks' elements of Truth and Personality who also preaches in the Spirit.
[8] https://cathedral.org/staff/the-rev-fleming-rutledge/ (accessed 06-14-21).
[9] Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2015).
[10] O.C. Edwards, *Elements of Homiletic,* 113-120.

delivery. Presumably he is encouraging preachers to listen to the Spirit; however, he never mentions the Holy Spirit in his encouragement of prayer in preparation. He mentions God and Jesus, but completely fails to even mention the Holy Spirit.[11] St. Paul emphasized the action of the Spirit in his discussion of prayer in Romans. In fact, it is not a stretch of the imagination nor even a controversial argument to posit that St. Paul would say there can be no interpretation of scripture without the Holy Spirit. For a treatise so focused on interpreting the Scriptures, failing to mention the Spirit is a gross omission.

One notable exception to the rule of Holy Spirit avoidance in Episcopal homiletic exploration is William Brosend's *Homiletical Question*. Brosend centers the act of preparing a sermon around the question, "What does the Holy Spirit want the people of God to hear from these texts on this day?"[12] Brosend is certainly encouraging a primacy of place to the Holy Spirit in sermon preparation. However, it should be noted that his concern is strictly limited to the Spirit's role in textual interpretation for the sake of sermon preparation. Surely preachers wouldn't limit the Spirit's activity to textual interpretation and application? This project intends to examine what marks preaching in the Spirit not just in biblical interpretation and sermon preparation, but also in delivery.

Outside of the Anglican/Episcopal tradition, there have been scholarly studies of the Spirit's role in preaching both with regard to preparation and delivery. Most overtly this has occurred within the Black church. Again, one notices in O.C. Edwards' *A History of Preaching*, when he discusses the Holy Spirit in preaching, he discusses African American preachers and homileticians, most notably James Forbes' *The Holy Spirit and*

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[11] Ibid. 22-24.
[12] William Brosend, *The Homiletical Question : An Introduction to Liturgical Preaching* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2017) 4-5.

Preaching. This general aversion to the Holy Spirit in all aspects of preaching within the Anglican/Episcopal tradition (to say nothing of the African Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal Zion traditions), highlights the systemic racism within American Christianity in general and whiteness at work in The Episcopal Church in particular.

To get a better sense of homiletic reflection on the role of the Spirit in preaching, one must turn to insights from African American scholars. Specifically, James Forbes, and Luke Powery, help us with articulations of the Holy Spirit's work in both biblical interpretation and the delivery of a sermon as well as the fruit of the Spirit's work through preaching.

***The Holy Spirit and Preaching* by James Forbes**

In James Forbes' seminal work *The Holy Spirit and Preaching*, he defines the whole act of preaching as being under the purview of the Holy Spirit. He writes, "The preaching event itself-without reference to specific texts and themes-is a living, breathing, flesh-and-blood expression of the theology of the Holy Spirit."[13] It's important here to note that he does not limit this definition to sermon preparation nor solely the interpretation of scripture. Forbes' connotation of the preaching event is inclusive of preparation, interpretation, and delivery. Further, Forbes does not limit the Holy Spirit's work to the preaching event. He places preaching within the broader work of the Holy Spirit in and through the local congregation and the broader church.[14] Because preaching in the Spirit is part of the broader work of the Holy Spirit, the prime arena for preachers to preach in the Spirit is within the week to week worship life of the congregation to

[13] James Forbes, *The Holy Spirit & Preaching* (Abingdon Press, 1989), 19.
[14] Ibid.

which he or she is called. As I will show later in our scripture discussion there is a community dynamic to the work of the Holy Spirit. Preachers seeking to preach in the Spirit need to be embedded in the life and ministry of a local congregation. This aspect of location will be significant later in the scriptural analysis.

Forbes' discusses preaching in the Spirit through the lens of anointing, going so far as to argue that anointing by the Holy Spirit is required for preaching.[15] According to Forbes, it is the Spirit that nurtures us, readies, guides, graces, appoints, empowers, test, ministers to, and demonstrates its power through us, and he argues that all these dynamics are presented in the anointed life of Jesus and later in the life of the congregations of the books of Acts.[16] It is important here to note that Forbes does not emphasize ecstatic speech as part of preaching in the Spirit. In fact, he even writes, "Mere ranting and raving and excitation from some spirited pastor will not suffice," in helping a community's spiritual growth.[17] Rather, preaching in the Spirit is an embodiment of these dynamics; so that the Body of Christ in the form of the local congregation may embody these dynamics in its life and ministry. As the old adage goes, a community can only be as healthy as its leadership. The same goes for spiritual health and development. The community cannot grow in the Spirit, embody Spirit, live in the Spirit to a greater extent than the leadership of the community. Therefore, it is important that the preacher "work out [their] salvation" as St. Paul put it. That is to say, it is important for the preacher to be open, attuned, and responsive to the Spirit for the faith formation and spiritual development of the community.

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[15] Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, 719.
[16] Forbes, *The Holy Spirit & Preaching*, 38.
[17] Ibid, 25.

Lastly, Forbes is emphatic that this openness and responsiveness to the Spirit does not negate diligent preparation. Rather responsiveness to the Spirit is another layer of preparation. It is both an attitude and an act that starts before approaching a specific text or occasion for preaching. We must be ministered to by the Spirit so that we can be a conduit for the Spirit to minister to the listening congregation. Forbes writes, "A minister who has experienced the ministry of the Spirit … already has a head start for the preaching of the word."[18] The Spirit should be our guide as we exegete scripture in our sermon preparation as well. Just as the scriptures are the inspired word of God, for our sermons to be inspired we have the Spirit as our partner in interpretation. Continuing through the act of preaching itself, the Spirit is with us. The Spirit not only prepares us to speak but is with us in our speaking and remaining open to the guidance of the Spirit enables the Spirit to speak through us. The Spirit is present through all of the preaching life. From the lived life of faith that is the arena of our anointing, through scripture study and manuscript writing, and through the act of delivering the sermon, the Spirit is present with us through all of it. The question is, are we present with the Spirit? St. Paul gives us some guidance on how to be present with and perpetually filled with the Spirit which I will explore later in this study when I examine the second chapter of Philippians.

Spirit Speech: Lament and Celebration in Preaching **by Luke Powery**

Building on Forbes' work, Luke Powery offers up a cruciform pneumatology of preaching in his *Spirit Speech: Lament and Celebration in Preaching*.[19] He articulates five manifestations of the Spirit in preaching: Lament, Celebration, Grace, Unity, and

[18] Ibid, 75.
[19] Luke A. Powery, *Spirit Speech : Lament and Celebration in Preaching* (Abingdon Press, 2009).

Fellowship. Seeking these manifestations is a means of discerning the Spirit within preaching. His model is cruciform with Lament as the base and Celebration as the height with Grace, Unity, and Fellowship forming the horizontal.[20] His primary argument is that lament is an under used and under practiced tool in preaching as well as an under explored category of homiletical scholarship. For Powery lament is a key act of confession; for if the Spirit is to lift us to celebration and hope we must first articulate our current state accurately.[21]

While lament is Powery's main focus, his discussion of unity as a manifestation of the Spirit is most important for this study.[22] Powery argues that "The genuine way of the Spirit is the way of unity. Preaching should necessarily foster unity within a community by centering on Christ as its content and by preachers possessing a spirit of humility."[23] Powery analyzes Paul's exhortation to the Christian church in Corinth in the First Letter to the Corinthians. The church in Corinth is far from unified and it's Paul's argument that they should be unified in Christ by what they have received from the Spirit. Powery's argument is Cristo-centric because he says, "To view unity as a sign of the Spirit implies that individuals are unified around the person and work of Christ. In particular, preaching that aims to unify focuses on the word of the cross, for the cross of Christ possesses power, the power of God to save."[24] Therefore, we should not view unity as simply the absence of conflict, nor is the unified community a place where no one experiences discomfort or challenge. Powery admonishes that preaching that divides

[20] Ibid, 133.
[21] Ibid.
[22] In the next chapter, I will further explore the Spirit's work toward community formation, sustenance, and unity in the narrative of Scripture. For now, I will summarize Powery's discussion of unity as a manifestation of the Spirit.
[23] Ibid, 75.
[24] Ibid, 71.

the community is not of the Spirit.[25] This could be misunderstood as urging preachers to not say anything controversial or to never speak to matters related to the material existence of people and to just stick to "spiritual" matters. Here 'spiritual' does not refer to the Holy Spirit; rather a domesticated religiosity separated and compartmentalized from day-to-day existence in the real world. As they often say down south, "Preacher you done gone from preaching to meddling."

However, this is not Powery's argument at all. First, by lifting up Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians, Powery is highlighting a preacher that is confronting a faith community in conflict. Paul is indeed saying many things that will make the people uncomfortable. He confronts the Corinthians' behavior as well as their belief, because for Paul they are interconnected. Furthermore, as mentioned, Powery's primary goal is an increase of lament in preaching. Lament is a practice firmly rooted in the expression of the way things are. It requires a deep connection with pain and discomfort. It is the opposite of denial or deliberate ignorance. Therefore, Powery is not arguing for preachers to avoid controversy for the sake of unity. Rather Powery is arguing that the Spirit builds unity in the community in a common worship of the crucified and risen Jesus. Therefore a preacher is not allowed to simply voice their opinion about the soup dijour controversy and claim their opinion as the Spirit led gospel truth. Rather, a preacher's word on matters of controversy must be formed through the lens of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the revelation of which is an act of the Holy Spirit.

Powery also lifts up humility as a key characteristic of a preacher seeking to preach in the Spirit. He writes, "the gift of preaching is given to build up the community

[25] Ibid, 65.

of faith."[26] If preaching builds up the preacher or intentionally seeks to sow division to enhance the power of the preacher in the community of faith then it is not Spirit led. Rather when a preacher is deeply in tune with the fact that the power of preaching comes from God not from themselves, they are able to set aside themselves, creating space and an avenue for the Spirit to speak through them. This humility is a theme of the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians and gives helpful direction for preachers in how to practice humility in and out of the pulpit, and thus more likely preach in the Spirit.[27]

What Forbes and Powery help demonstrate is the extent to which reflection on preaching in the Spirit is neglected within Episcopal/Anglican homiletics. Further, Forbes and Powery show that preaching in the Spirit is integral to the formation, sustenance, and growth of faith communities. Preaching in the Spirit is not about shouting, rhetorical pyrotechnics, or even soaring oration; rather, it is about community development.

This project seeks to examine the markers of preaching in the Spirit in biblical interpretation, in sermon preparation, and especially in delivery. This project is a mere beginning toward filling the gap in Anglican/Episcopal homiletics. It will argue that preaching in the Spirit need not be ecstatic. It can be ecstatic, but it needs not be. Indeed, there are as many ways to preach in the Spirit as there are anointed preachers. However, the fruit of preaching in the Spirit is the development of an alternative community that is marked by its shared leadership, multiculturalism, and equality. Consequently, preaching in the Spirit is prophetic in that it is engaged in developing an alternative community. In his classic text, *The Prophetic Imagination,* Walter Brueggemann writes that "...prophetic

[26] Ibid, 73.
[27] I will discuss Philippians 2 in the next chapter of this study.

ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us."[28] This alternative consciousness is not individualistic rather communal. Brueggemann charts prophetic ministry of Moses to form a community of the people of Israel as God's people not Pharaoh's community. Furthermore, being God's community is not just a cognitive identity. It is also incarnated in the physical actions of living: the relationships, economics, and power structures of existence. Preaching in the Spirit indicts the current social order as hegemonic exclusionism that leads to doom and destruction while calling forth a new community of faith rooted in the promises of God's salvation shaped by love to produce shared leadership, diversity, and equality.[29]

Chapter 2 will offer a study of three biblical stories highlighting the important role of the outpouring of the Spirit for prophetic preaching. The anointing of Eldad and Medad from Numbers 11; the prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit from Joel 3; and Peter's quotation of the Joel prophecy in the Pentecost sermon of Acts 2 will help identify elements of Spirit led preaching that build communities shared leadership, diversity, and equality.

Chapter 3 will examine the so-called Christ Hymn of Philippians 2 as a manifesto on humility as a habitus for preaching in the Spirit.

Chapter 4 will analyze Dr. Howard Thurman's use of silence and The Most Reverend Michael Curry's use of Spirituals as methodologies preachers can use to preach in the Spirit for the sake of community development.

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[28] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 3.
[29] Walter Brueggemann, *Money and Possessions*, Interpretation: Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 139–62., 139-162.

Finally, Chapter 5 will provide sermon examples to show how a priest in an Episcopal parish might best incorporate this research into their ministry.

2

Spirit Preaching in Scripture: Indicting and Calling Forth

The Anointing of Eldad and Medad, Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit, and the Pentecost event of Acts are connected. Moses expresses a desire for an outpouring of the Spirit upon all God's people, Joel prophecies that it will occur, and the Pentecost event is the fulfillment of the outpouring. Each of these stories is also connected to community formation: the formation of the people of Israel post Sinai in Numbers, the reformation of the people post Exile in Joel, and the formation of the new Christian community (the Church) in Acts. Examining these stories shows why preaching in the Spirit is important for the ongoing formation of a faith community. Furthermore, they show the importance of preaching in a way that raises and forms leaders for shared leadership. Instead of a model of a single competent leader for the faith community embodied in the preacher, these connected stories proclaim shared leadership and preaching that validates, motivates, and empowers communal leadership.

The Anointing of Eldad and Medad

Eldad and Medad receive the Spirit in Numbers 11 and within the contours of the story we learn of the Spirit's role in community development, the freedom of the Spirit to act as the Spirit wills, and in the behavior of Moses the actions of a mature leader that trusts in the Spirit. Moses has led the people a mere 3 days away from Sinai, a mere 3 days from receiving the law which ordered the new society with God as sovereign instead

of Pharaoh. Already complaints arise over the diet. Here we see an important marker of the Spirit at work. When the community strays from adoration to idolization, the Spirit moves, anointing leaders. God is providing manna but a "rabble" among the people crave meat. At least that is what they say at first. They express their longing by saying they ate better as slaves in Egypt—listing, not just meat, but a variety of foods. God orders Moses to gather 70 elders so that God may take some of the Spirit from Moses and anoint the elders.

Sharing the Spirit is connected with sharing leadership and responsibility. The 70 aren't given power for their own advancement, but rather to aid Moses in leading the people to the promised land. As Timothy R. Ashley proposes, "…the experience of the shared Spirit is ever the antidote for the weary, harried, threatened leader."[30] Here we have another council against isolation for a preacher. The Spirit flows in community, and a preacher's awareness of the Spirit is amplified by sharing leadership. For the preacher this can manifest in preparation by discussion and study with fellow preachers and with lay persons especially lay leaders within the parish. It can also guide preaching in times of conflict if preachers urge shared responsibility instead of preaching to maintain a position of authority.

The Spirit flows in community because the anointing of the Spirit is an expression of God's freedom. God is free to anoint whomever God wants. Seventy gather at the tent of meeting and God takes part of the Spirit that rests on Moses and shares it with them. However, two men, Eldad and Medad, for reasons which are not stated in the text, do not answer the summons. They are still back in the camp, still attending to the people. Yet

[30] Timothy Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1993), 217.

they receive the Spirit, despite their absence from the tent of meeting. In the midst of their mission and ministry, God anoints them with the Spirit. Joshua is upset they are prophesying and implores Moses to make them cease. It is as if he says, "We can only have licensed, credentialed preachers, Moses. The gatekeepers of our institution have not certified they will lead in a manner submissive to your authority, Moses." Robert Alter posits that Joshua fears that the Spirit running freely through the camp would be a threat to Moses' leadership.[31] Joshua's fear touches upon one of the continuing hesitations of preachers and the church at large with the role of the Spirit: the fear of losing control. As James Forbes notes, "…many Christians are Holy Spirit—shy," and "fear being grasped by an invisible presence we cannot control."[32] Preachers are certainly no exception to this fear. There is a temptation in the pursuit of crafting a well-formed sermon to over-manage, to crowd the manuscript with polished arguments instead of cultivated soil in which the Spirit may sprout.

A modern Jewish commentary notes that the leaders at the tent prophesy but then stop doing so.[33] And yet, there is no mention of Eldad and Medad ceasing to prophesy. Their continued prophecy suggests there was more going on at the tent than just anointing. The Seventy are both anointed and managed. They receive part of the Spirit that rested on Moses, but by managing the process, Moses' unique position and place is maintained. Eldad and Medad are outside the system and the free Spirit of the free God

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[31] Robert Altar, *The Hebrew Bible, the Five Books of Moses, Torah: A Translation with Commentary*, vol. 1 (New York: Norton, 2019), 217., 217.
[32] Forbes, *The Holy Spirit & Preaching*, 21–22.
[33] W. Gunther Plaut, ed., *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (New York: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981), 1091.

rests on them freely. God is free and cannot be managed nor manipulated, a difference between God and Pharaoh, between God's world order and the empire.

Preachers must recognize the Spirit's freedom to speak directly to the listeners. The Spirit is free to guide the listener in interpretation. The gathered people may not hear the sermon preached; instead, they may hear what the Spirit is saying. The sermon is not what is written. It is not even what is said. Rather, the sermon is what is heard. Allen Callahan tells of a white Methodist minister in South Carolina in 1862 who was preaching the story of the Exodus liberation to a black congregation. While he was speaking of a metaphorical or spiritual liberation, the congregation heard the Spirit speak of a literal, physical liberation.[34] Despite the white minister's unwillingness to be used by the Spirit, the Spirit nonetheless spoke to the congregation. However, a preacher's efficacy is enhanced by recognizing that the Spirit works through the preacher and is free to say what the Spirit wants, transforming the preacher's words into the Word for the hearer. Also, preachers may take comfort that the Spirit will speak despite us.

Moses's response to Joshua is a recognition that his leadership is merely an extension of God's leadership. Moses is not sovereign. God is sovereign. Moses' authority originates from God's anointing with the Spirit. He asks Joshua if he is "jealous on my part"[35] implying that Joshua sees Eldad and Medad as a threat to Moses' position.[36] However, because Eldad and Medad's anointing is directly from God, Moses views them as fellow leaders. According to Katherine Sakenfeld, Moses' response to Joshua recognizes the "legitimacy and power" of Eldad and Medad's prophecy even

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[34] Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 86.
[35] Numbers 11:29
[36] Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, 216.

though they are empowered "outside standardized channels."[37] Their responsibility for leading the people to the promised land is in sympathy and concert with Moses.

Preachers should note that the Spirit flows through them not merely upon them. The preacher's leadership and authority originate not from within, but rather from God by the anointing of the Spirit. To preach in the Spirit is to take responsibility for the community and at the same time to share that responsibility. Also, to prophesy is to speak the life-giving word of God to the community, to take responsibility as well as power. Moses longs for the day when all God's people will prophesy, the day when the Spirit will empower all the people to proclaim the life-giving Word, when all the people will share responsibility for the community. Jacob Migron argues, "The Lord does not restrict His gifts to particular individuals of classes,"[38] and this foreshadows the prophet Joel's expectation of the Spirit to be poured out upon all.[39] To preach in the Spirit, preachers must recognize the egalitarian nature of the Spirit's anointing. The egalitarian nature of the Spirit should motivate preachers to seek a broad spectrum of sources in sermon preparation, and an even broader spectrum of listening during preaching, and yielding to the Spirit's interpretation of the preacher's words in the ears of listeners.

One of the manifestations of the false dichotomy mentioned at the beginning of this work is a notion that "preaching in the Spirit" entails behaviors found commonly in charismatic traditions, but which are "just not done" in the Episcopal and fellow mainline traditions. Therefore, some discussion of what is meant by "to prophesy" in this story of

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[37] Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, *Journeying with God: A Commentary on the Book of Numbers* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1995), 76.
[38] Jacob Milgrom, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers* (New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 91.
[39] The quoting of the prophet Joel in the Pentecost account from *Acts* will be explored later in this project.

shared leadership is in order. In the story, the elders are gathered at the tent and God takes some of the Spirit from Moses and lays it on the elders who then prophesy. Robert Ashley notes this story is the only time in the Pentateuch where the verb "to prophesy" appears, and that it literally means "to act the prophet."[40] While he concedes that this could indicate so called ecstatic behavior, the use of the verb in other passages in the Old Testament simply means speaking God's word "without any hint to such behavior."[41] Furthermore, Richard Briggs, argues that the sense here is not of ecstatic behavior but of being granted "vision" for discernment.[42] The elders, including Eldad and Medad, are granted "sight" to discern God's direction. Their imaginations are sparked just as Moses and Aaron's imaginations are sparked after the Burning Bush story to envision the social order with God as sovereign. By being given a vision of the model of the society, they are enabled to take responsibility in forming the community in that image. Episcopal preachers need not fear preaching in the Spirit as an exercise of ecstatic behavior. Preaching in the Spirit means taking responsibility for leading and forming the community with God as sovereign. Preaching in the Spirit is prophetic because it speaks against fallen powers and principalities that would have the community follow a mortal sovereign. While preaching in the Spirit may include so-called ecstatic behavior, it does not have to include such actions.

The Spirit is powerful. The Church is also powerful, and it is not free from the sin of placing its power above that of the Spirit. While it is good on the whole for priests in the Episcopal church to be trained, educated, and formed for the varieties of ministry,

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[40] Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, 213–14.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Richard Briggs, *Theological Hermeneutics and the Book of Numbers as Christian Scripture* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018), 68.

especially preaching, there is the potential for the credentialing process to place the maintenance of the institution ahead of the Spirit's freedom to call, form, and even ordain preachers. To be sure, ordination is not required in order to preach in the Episcopal church. Dioceses often have a process for developing and licensing lay preachers. Though these processes are way too often either neglected or overly burdensome. Neglect is a form of control. By not providing resources, access, and even mere advertising of these opportunities are able to limit and ultimately control what is preached. On the other end of the spectrum by making the requirements for lay preaching labor and time intensive lay people with jobs, families, and obligations, are excluded from the opportunity. Preaching is a privilege. However, when the Episcopal Church neglects or over manages a process for raising and forming preachers—be they lay or ordained—preaching becomes a privilege of station, affluence, or context rather than a privilege of the Spirit.

To preach in the Spirit is to enter into a covenantal relationship with God, recognizing it is God's power speaking through the preacher by the working of the Holy Spirit. From Moses we learn that submitting to the Spirit's presence provides assurance of the Spirit's faithfulness during preaching as well as instruction ahead of the preaching event. Also, from the presence and instruction of the Spirit, Moses is given courage to preach not only to the Israelites but also to Pharaoh. Courage for preachers comes not from preparation alone but from submitting to the Spirit's instruction during preparation and delivery. Furthermore, a preacher's courage should be lifted by faith in the Spirit's presence in confrontations with the world as it is when the preacher is proclaiming the world as it could be. It is the Spirit, working through the preacher, that indicts the

dominant social order and calls forth an alternative. Remembering that it is the Spirit working through a preacher—not by the preacher's power alone—should be encouraging.

The Spirit's freedom is expressed in the story of the anointing of Eldad and Medad. The Spirit is free to anoint prophets for shared leadership, free to guide the interpretation of listeners, and free to grant prophets the vision and inspired imagination needed to recognize God as sovereign. Accepting the freedom of the Spirit can be daunting for preachers. However, it is key if preachers are to speak the Word. For, without the work of the Holy Spirit, preachers are only saying words. By submitting to the Spirit's presence, instruction, and freedom, preachers join with God and others in preaching the Word of God.

Joel's Prophecy of the Outpouring of the Spirit

We turn now to two passages that are connected across testaments and related to the Anointing of Eldad and Medad previously discussed. Peter quotes the vision and proclamation of the prophet Joel in his Pentecost sermon in Acts 2. Starting with Joel, this section will discuss the prophetic passage and its context. Then it will examine developments of the passage in Peter's Pentecost sermon. Peter references Joel because he sees—or at least the author of Acts sees—the outpouring of the Spirit in the Pentecost event as the fulfillment of that prophecy and a marker of the new community. These stories show, yet again, the fruit of preaching in the Spirit is community development.

As Hans Walter Wolff notes, Joel is concerned with the "Day of the Lord" (Joel 2:1),[43] developing that image in two directions: Judgement and Salvation.[44] Here we see

[43] All Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version translation.
[44] Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos : A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Fortress Press, 1977), 43–47.

the pattern noted by Brueggemann of the prophets critiquing the social order and proclaiming God's promise to redeem, restore, and establish a new order. Brueggemann writes of the canonical structuring of destruction-restoration, exile-homecoming, and in the Christian tradition crucifixion and resurrection.[45] And he further notes, "This canonical pattern is evident in the several prophetic books as they characteristically begin in *harsh judgement* and end in *buoyant anticipation of recovery."*[46] This pattern is true for Joel. From chapter 1:4-5,

> What the cutting locust left,
> the swarming locust has eaten.
> What the swarming locust left,
> the hopping locust has eaten.
> And what the hopping locust left,
> the destroying locust has eaten.
> Wake up, you drunkards, and weep;
> and wail, all you wine-drinkers,
> Over the sweet wine,
> for it is cut off from your mouth.[47]

The imagery of locust is as harsh as it is thorough. The implication is that God's judgement will be just as harsh and thorough. And yet judgement is not final; for it is followed by redemption. The book ends with,

> But Judah shall be inhabited forever,
> And Jerusalem to all generation.
> I will avenge their blood, and I will
> Not clear the guilty.
> For the Lord dwells in Zion.[48]

The passage that Peter references in the scene from Acts is also from the redemption section of the canonical cycle.

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[45] Brueggemann, *Money and Possessions*, 142.
[46] ibid.
[47] Joel 1:4-5
[48] Joel 3:20-21

> Then afterward
> I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
> your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
> your old men shall dream dreams,
> and your young men shall see visions.
> Even on the male and female slaves,
> in those days, I will pour out my Spirit.
>
> I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.[49]

The outpouring of the Spirit is linked to prophesy in this passage and the outpouring is promised to "all flesh." There is debate as to Joel's meaning behind "all flesh." Is it universally inclusive or does he mean just his immediate audience of those affected by the plague of locust in Jerusalem and Judah? Several scholars argue the latter given Joel's concern over the locust plague and his use of "your sons" and "your daughters."[50] However, Barton offers a helpful counter argument. While admitting it might be hard to imagine Joel would be so universal, he argues that limiting Joel's meaning to "all Judeans" would make the use of "all flesh" unique in the forty or so uses in Hebrew Scripture.[51] Later we will examine Peter's quotation of this passage and again question how inclusive Peter meant to be. For the moment however it bears mentioning

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[49] Joel 2:28-32

[50] James L. Crenshaw, *Joel*, 1st ed., The Anchor Bible: 24C (Doubleday, 1995)., 165; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 67.; Joel Barker, "Pouring Out the Spirit of Yhwh: Rhetorical Analysis of Joel 3:1–5," in *From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence*, vol. 11, *A Rhetorical Reading of the Book of Joel* (Penn State University Press, 2014), 16.

[51] John Barton, *Joel and Obadiah : A Commentary*, 1st ed., The Old Testament Library (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 96.

Barton's note that if the New Testament writers expanded Joel's meaning, they "took up a hint that is clearly in the text."[52]

Yet it remains the question of what exactly is being poured out and to what end? The Spirit of God is being poured out to enable 'all flesh' to prophesy. Barton notes, the Spirit has two effects in Hebrew scripture: giving life as in the creation story of Genesis 2 and the valley of dry bones story from Ezekiel 27, and conveying the power of God through prophetic speech. Joel is concerned with this second gift of the Spirit. "Indeed, it reads almost as fulfillment of Moses' hope expressed in Num. 11:29."[53] Wolff notes the Spirit is a "vital power and will toward action."[54] In describing to what end the Spirit is poured out—why God does this—Wolff goes on to write,

> ...the pouring out of God's Spirit upon flesh means the establishment of new, vigorous life through God's unreserved giving of himself to those who, in themselves, are rootless and feeble, especially in the approaching time of judgement.[55]

Wolff's reading of God's purpose is helpful so far as it goes. However it neglects the communal aspect of the telos of the outpouring of the Spirit for prophecy. Joel makes the promise of safe harbor in Zion and Jerusalem to all who confess. The mention of Mount Zion and Jerusalem is not merely locative but also communal. Furthermore Joel is concerned with the fate of nations starting with Judah, but also foretelling a gathering of nations in 3:2 and naming Tyre and Sidon in 3:4 and Egypt in 4:19. In his reading, as is often the case with western commentators, Wolff is individualistic. While the subject of

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[52] Ibid., and furthermore the New Testament writers may not have taken the hint far enough because all flesh might leave open space for all created beings—beyond just humans.
[53] Barker, "Pouring Out the Spirit of Yhwh," 209. Daniel J Treier, "The Fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32: A Multiple-Lens Approach," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 1 (March 1997): 16., also notes the connection to Num. 11.
[54] Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 66.
[55] ibid.

prophecy is the "word of the Lord" that is the will of God, the object is the community that as Walter Brueggemann has pointed out is meant to be an alternative to the dominant community.[56] Furthermore, Willie James Jennings has noted that individualistic readings of scripture often emerge from the imperialistic and colonial histories of the west and function to continue that heritage.[57] The anointing of Eldad and Medad and Moses' desire for all God's people to prophesy happens in the shadow of the Sinai experience and is part of the development of an alternative community. Joel is writing to Judah and 'the nations' and proclaiming that the Spirit will be poured out enabling "all flesh" to prophecy resulting in a new community. As we will see momentarily Peter's Pentecost sermon which quotes this passage from Joel immediately proceeds the description of the initial Jerusalem Christian community. We ignore the communal ends of the Spirit's work at our peril.

Peter's Quoting of Joel in his Pentecost Sermon

Let us turn to Peter's speech to the crowd that immediately follows the Pentecost miracle. The miracle is a miracle of speech and hearing. The 120, primarily Galileans, are suddenly able to speak in public of the inauguration of God's reign and people from a collection of diverse nations and racial ethnicities are able to understand them as in their native tongue. When some people try to dismiss the event as drunkenness, Peter stands up and delivers a speech arguing that it is too early in the day for it to be drunkenness; rather it is the fulfillment of the prophecy from Joel. Peter proceeds to quote from Joel the passage previously discussed, framing the diverse gathering as all flesh. As will be

[56] Brueggemann *Prophetic Imagination,* and *Money and Possessions*.
[57] Willie James Jennings, "Reframing the World: Toward an Actual Christian Doctrine of Creation," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 21, no. 4 (October 1, 2019): 388.

shown, Peter's preaching in the Spirit shapes a diverse community that is also rooted in equality.

Is it Peter's sermon or Luke's theology in Peter's mouth?

There is debate as to whether the evangelist of Luke-Acts is reconstructing a speech of Peter's or inserting his own theology in Peter's mouth. If the latter, it is argued that the collected speeches in Acts of Peter and others are representative of the *kerygma* of the early church. It's an important question because Joel likely did not mean gentiles with the phrase "All flesh," which prompts the question of whether Peter meant gentiles. C.H. Dodd argues against these being the words of Peter writing, "We may with some confidence take these speeches to represent, not indeed what Peter said upon this or that occasion, but the *kerygma* of the Church of Jerusalem at an early period."[58] While Stott argues in favor of reconstruction writing, "As we read Peter's first sermons in Acts 2-5, we are conscious of hearing the earliest apostolic formulation of the gospel." [59] Quoting F.F. Bruce, Stott goes on to write

> Taken all in all, each speech suits the speaker, the audience, and the circumstances of delivery; and this...gives good ground...for believing these speeches to be, not inventions of the historian, but condensed accounts of speeches actually made, and therefore valuable and independent sources for the history and theology of the primitive Church.[60]

Daniel J. Treier, argues a middle position that most likely Peter did not mean gentiles at this point but later in Acts he comes to include gentiles because of the iterative

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[58] C.H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 21.
[59] John R.W. Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 72.
[60] F.F. Bruce quoted in Stott, 72.

work of the Spirit.[61] Treier's position seems the most possible because of Peter's later reluctance to the inclusion of Gentiles. It requires a vision from God to convince Peter to merely go to Cornelius' house much less baptize them. In fact, it is the outpouring of the Spirit onto Cornelius' household that convinces Peter to baptize them.[62] There appears to be a progression to Peter's thoughts on inclusion, therefore Treier's iterative position is the most likely.

However, as was noted earlier, the New Testament writers' expansion of Joel's use of "all flesh" is at least hinted at in the Hebrew text. Furthermore, Peter does eventually arrive at an inclusive position because of the work of the Spirit. Therefore Christians can and should read "all flesh" to be inclusive, because inclusion is part of the communal work of the Spirit. Consequently preachers, to be faithful both to the Spirit and the text should preach inclusion.

Narratively it is important that Peter delivers this speech because the verb form for "to stand" here is that used for formal oration.[63] Galileans were not supposed to be polyglots nor formal orators. The Galilean accent was both distinctive and considered uncouth.[64] This is similar to the way the accent of the southeastern region of the United States is considered unlearned. Having Peter stand to orate in the formal sense, in the city of Jerusalem, to a crowd who would essentially consider him to be a 'hick from the sticks' is the evangelist of Luke-Acts' way of emphasizing this is the Spirit speaking through Peter. This portrayal is similar to Moses' call story in that Moses claimed a

[61] Treier, "The Fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32," 18.
[62] Acts 10:47-48.
[63] Justo L. González, *Acts : The Gospel of the Spirit* (Orbis Books, 2001), 40.
[64] Matthew 26:73, Luke 22:59, John 1:46.

speech impediment in attempting to deny his worthiness of God's commission.[65] Also, it is a fulfillment of Jesus' encouragement to not worry about their testimony because the Spirit would speak through them.[66] Jesus' encouragement however is not permission for the preacher not to prepare. Peter's quoting of Joel portrays an intimate knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures. He's given the Holy Spirit something to work with.

The leveling work of the Spirit

Peter's quote from Joel employs the inclusive language of poetry. "Your sons" and "your daughters" is gender inclusive; the young having visions and the old dreaming is age inclusive; and male and female servants marks a socioeconomic inclusion. This is the leveling work of the Spirit. The leveling work of the Spirit in the prophecy of Eldad and Medad highlighted that, unlike Pharaoh, Moses is not God. The promise of the outpouring of the Spirit in Joel is a promise of leveling work of the Spirit. The leveling work of the Spirit here shows that Peter is not God.

There is debate about fulfillment here because the Joel passage is in two parts: a generous outpouring of the Spirit on people regardless of gender, age, social status paired with cataclysmic portents and wonders. Since the polyglot speech of the 120 prompted Peter's oration but no wonders in the sky, there is debate if the prophecy of Joel is only half fulfilled.[67] However, Gonzalez argues that this Pentecost event is the capstone of the inauguration of a new order, a new 'reign', brought on by the life, death, resurrection of Jesus and finally the outpouring of the Spirit as Jesus promised.[68] He goes on to write,

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[65] Exodus 3.
[66] Mark 3:11.
[67] Treier, "The Fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32: A Multiple-Lens Approach," 20.
[68] González, *Acts*, 41.

"this Holy Spirit who is the first fruit of the new order is manifest as a leveling power that destroys privilege."[69]

Portents symbolize the catastrophic upheaval to the social order when privilege is destroyed. This typical apocalyptic imagery "for times of social and political revolution."[70] Furthermore the leveling action of the Spirit would appear to the old reign as either incoherent drunkenness to be ignored or catastrophe to be avoided. It is Spirit led communication that brings about this leveling, this inauguration of the reign of God that exists while the old reign still persists.[71] Gonzalez writes, "...an important part of the message of Acts is how Christians are to live as subjects of the reign to come even while in the midst of a present reign that does not acknowledge that new order."[72]

Spirit led preaching enables and empowers, equips and sustains people to live under the new reign of God as an alternative inclusive community of life marked by equality in contrast to the exclusive community of death marked by injustice promulgated by the old reign. That is to say that the fruit of preaching in the Spirit is prophetic and communal. Spirit led preaching does not lift up the preacher as a power to be obeyed, rather forms a community that 'calls upon the lord,'[73] a community where God is God.

What follows Peter's preaching is the formation of a community that lives alternatively to the order of the day. The text describes the community as "remaining in the Apostles' teaching, the breaking of bread and the prayers."[74] Also, they held everything in common so that no was in need. This harkens to the post Sinai community

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[69] Ibid, 46
[70] Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World*, 75. Cf. Isaiah 13 and 34, Ezekiel 32, Amos 8, Matthew 24, Luke 21 and Revelation 6.
[71] Ibid 45.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Joel 2:32.
[74] Acts 2:42.

that promised if they kept the covenant there would be no poor among them.[75] The new reign, which Peter claims is inaugurated in Jesus Christ, is not created from nothing; rather, it is the manifestation of the ongoing work of the Spirit. From the post Sinai community of Moses, to the Post Exilic community of Joel, and the post Pentecost community of Peter, the fruit of Spirit speech is the formation, empowerment, and development of an alternative community.

Conclusion

Therefore, preaching in the Spirit is a humble act. Self-aggrandizement, self-empowerment, and preservation of the position, privilege, and power of the preacher are antithetical to preaching in the Spirit. It is helpful at this point to transition from identifying the fruits of preaching in the Spirit to how preachers might go about doing that. There may be no more necessary element to preaching in the Spirit than humility. Our model and guide in the humility of preaching the Spirit is Jesus. And for that an examination of the Christ Hymn from Philippians 2 where the humility of Christ is a key theme follows.

[75] Duet. 15:4.

3

Philippians 2:5-11 as a Habitus for Preaching in the Spirit

"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" Philippians 2:5.A surface level interpretation of this verse is simply "think like Jesus," and indeed a preacher could cover a lot of ground with that interpretation alone. However, within the context of Philippians 2 where this verse serves as the introduction of Paul's encomium, it points to a deeper meaning as well. The encomium charts a path of sanctification through humility and obedience, an emptying of self to be then filled. Furthermore, placed in relation to Paul's other letters—especially Romans, Galatians, and 1 Corinthians—we begin to see what we are to be filled with not only the mind but the Spirit of Christ. Lastly, couple all this with the likelihood of this being a late if not the latest of Paul's letters, and Philippians 2:5-11 is a theological reflection on how to be possessed by the Spirit of Christ that enables one to have the mind of Christ, and consequently speak with the mind of Christ. To put it another way, it charts a path to preaching in the Spirit.

There is an immediate challenge to reading Paul's encomium as a path to preaching in the Spirit: Paul does not use the word πνεύμα in the passage. It is emphatically about Christ Jesus. It is the mind of Christ Jesus that Paul encourages the Philippians to possess. The behavior of Christ Jesus that is articulated as an example in the first half of the passage, and the exaltation of Christ Jesus in the second half. Nonetheless, Paul's encomium can be read as a path to preaching in the Spirit when understood within the greater context of the letter and in relationship to his other letters.

Taking a closer look at Paul's usage of words and phrases such as 'Spirit of Christ,' 'Holy Spirit,' and 'the Spirit' will help us see the connection.

The Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Christ?

First off, Paul's distinction between the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Christ is ambiguous at best and may even be synonymous. It is not helpful at this juncture, nor whenever interpreting Paul, to read later Christological and trinitarian statements, arguments, resolutions, and pronouncements back into Paul's letters. It is better to take Paul's statements on their own and in relation to each other. In reference to the divine, Paul uses Spirit three times in Philippians: "Spirit of Christ" in 1:19, "the Spirit" in 2:1, and "Spirit of God" in 3:3. In 1:18b-19 Paul is hopeful that the "Spirit of Christ" will be the agent of his deliverance from prison and execution. In 2:1, "the Spirit" is listed as a binding agent, something that is shared within the community of believers. Finally, the "Spirit of God" is the object of worship in 3:3. There does appear to be at least a distinction in action between the Spirit that binds the community and the Spirit of Christ that is the agent of deliverance.

However, the picture becomes less focused, the distinctions less sharp when we move out of Philippians into the other letters. A particularly ambiguous passage is Romans 8:9, "But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." Here, "Spirit," "Spirit of God," and "Spirit of Christ" all seem to refer to the divine Spirit. While for the believer, there is a both/and dynamic: being both in the divine (in the Spirit) and having the divine (the Spirit) dwell within. Similarly, for Paul, the resurrected Jesus is both Spirit and exalted Lord of the Spirit. James Dunn writes, "So far as the

believer's experience of Jesus is concerned, the Spirit and Christ are one. And yet there is still a distinctive position for Jesus in heaven; the Spirit still cries, 'Jesus is Lord' (1 Cor. 12:3)."[76]

It is the resurrected Jesus that is both Spirit and the Lord of the Spirit that gives life to believers and the community of faith (1 Cor. 15:45). Even though he is critical of Dunn's interpretation overall, in reference to Roman 8:9, John Coulson says, "Thus, the reception of God's Spirit is tied specifically to the relationship between a person and Christ. Within this relationship God's Spirit is the Spirit of Christ."[77] Therefore it is ambiguous, at the least, where Christ ends and the Holy Spirit begins for Paul.

For sure the Spirit, as Paul Holloway argues, is involved in transformation and sanctification, with the anointing for ministry and giving of new life in St. Paul's thinking.[78] Jesus goes through a transformation from heavenly being to incarnate Jesus to risen Christ. Paul is aware of this path. Coulson also argues for Paul's awareness of the earthly Jesus' anointing by the Spirit for ministry and his resurrected life in the Spirit.[79] Consequently, Jesus was first incarnate Spirit that received the anointing of the Spirit for prophetic ministry, especially prophetic speech, then Jesus is resurrected and returns to spiritual existence and is exalted to Lord of the Spirit.[80] Therefore, when reading Paul, if God is involved, and/or if Jesus is involved, the Spirit is involved as well. And therefore,

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[76] James D. G. Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit: Collected Essays of James D.g. Dunn* (W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1998), 340.
[77] John R.1 Coulson, "Jesus and the Spirit in Paul's Theology: The Earthly Jesus," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (January 2017): 85, https://doi.org/10.1353/cbq.2017.0004..
[78] Paul A. Holloway, *Philippians : A Commentary.*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins, Hermeneia, a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Fortress Press, 2017), 52–55.
[79] Coulson, "Jesus and the Spirit in Paul's Theology," 82–83., especially the discussion of Romans 1:3-4.
[80] Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit*, 341–42.

in the encomium of Philippians 2, where Jesus' path of transformation is poetically and succinctly articulated, the Spirit is involved.

"Let this mind be in you…" as Spirit Possession

The encomium can be read as more than a cognitive pattern; that is, it can also be read as promotion and description of Spiritual possession, of being possessed by the Spirit of Christ which we have shown to be analogous for Paul with being possessed by the Holy Spirit. For such a reading we must first focus on verse 5, "Let this mind be in you…." As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, a cognitive understanding of this verse is not wrong; rather, it is merely superficial. However, Shantz argues that spiritual possession is a much needed yet neglected category for interpreting Paul.[81] Building off of Shantz's neuroscientific approach, Bazzana applies a cultural anthropological approach to argue Paul's use of phrases such as "in Christ" and similar variations mainly serve a locative function.[82] They are used, Bazanna argues, as a socially acceptable idiomatic way to describe being possessed by Christ, and that,

> ...several of the Pauline occurrences of the phrase ἐν Χρίστῳ seem to indicate actions that human beings perform or conditions that they experience by being 'in Christ.' This is true for Paul himself, particularly when he takes on the responsibility of exhorting or reprimanding the addressees of his epistles.[83]

That is to say, Paul's preaching, his exhortation in his letters, is strengthened for Paul being possessed by Christ which Paul emphasizes when he writes, "it is no longer I

[81] Colleen Shantz, *Paul in Ecstasy. [Electronic Resource]: The Neurobiology of the Apostle's Life and Thought.* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 20.
[82] Giovanni B. Bazzana, *Having the Spirit of Christ: Spirit Possession and Exorcism in the Early Christ Groups* (Yale University Press, 2020), 104–7.
[83] Ibid., 107.

who live, but it is Christ who lives in me (Gal. 2:20).” We will return to the strengthening by the Spirit for exhortation later.

Bazzana also shows that spirit possession is a way of knowing for Paul and members of his faith communities arguing that,

> Through his very embodiment of the πνεῦμα of Christ, Paul (and arguably the other members of groups) could make the person of Christ present in a way that affectively informed not only their remembrance of and interaction with the past, but also their moral agency and even their subjectification as Christ believers.[84]

Now, “let this mind be in you” is typically translated and interpreted merely as a cognitive way of knowing. As noted, the NRSV says “let this mind be in you;” while David Bentley Hart says, “Be of that mind,”[85] Holloway uses the word “mindset,”[86] and N.T. Wright goes the most cognicentric saying, “This is how you should think among yourselves.”[87] There is certainly a cognitive dimension to this passage. However, it is not the only dimension. Limiting our emphasis to the cognitive is a modern western bias. As we have seen, the spiritual, or being in Christ, is a way of knowing for Paul. Also, there appears to be little distinction for Paul between the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Philippians 2:5 can be read as a call to a spiritual experience as well as a pattern of cognition. Being possessed by the Spirit of Christ enables Paul to think with the mind of Christ. Paul exhorts the believers at Philippi to be similarly possessed so that they may also think with the mind of Christ. The rest of the encomium is an expression of the path to such possession.

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[84] Ibid., 134-135.
[85] Hart, David Bentley, *The New Testament: A Translation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017), 392.
[86] Holloway, *Philippians: A Commentary*, 114.
[87] Wright, N.T., *The Kingdom New Testament: A Contemporary Translation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011), 403.

The Pattern of Jesus as path to Spiritual Possession

The path of Jesus in the encomium is humility that leads to emptying; emptying that leads to obedience, and obedience that leads to exaltation. As Holloway notes, Jesus initiates his descent by the act of humbling himself.[88] Jesus relinquishes the rights and privileges of divinity to become human. Verse 6, "who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited," is challenging for translation chiefly around the word "ἁρπαγμός."[89] The sense however is that Jesus possessed divine rights and privileges and chooses not to take advantage of that inheritance. Instead, he views his position as a call to a vocation of humility. A conquering ruler might take advantage of the spoils of war in order to strengthen his social position and power. The son of a captain of industry might take advantage of the social network of his parents to access capital. Jesus does the opposite. Taking human form he empties himself. But empties himself of what? Verse 7 says, "but emptied himself taking the form of a slave, being born of human likeness ." The "form of a slave" in verse 7 is in contrast to the "form of God" from verse 6. It should be noted here that much care needs to be brought to bear in dealing with the word δούλος, translated as slave. The point here is not the institution of slavery; rather the contrast between the position and power of God versus the lack of position and power of a δούλος. Jesus empties himself of the position, powers, and privileges of divinity. Eventually he even loses power over his own body in the crucifixion. This emptying enables Jesus to be

[88] Holloway, *Philippians: A Commentary*, 117.
[89] N. T. Wright, "Ἁρπαγμός AND THE MEANING OF PHILIPPIANS 2: 5-11," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 37, no. 2 (1986): 321.

"obedient even to death—even death on a cross (v. 8)." Jesus had already given up divine status and power, so it was no loss to give up his body.

Smit makes a compelling argument that Paul uses v. 6-11 as an *exempla*, that is portraying Christ as an example to be followed. He writes that Paul's encomium specifically outlines a,

> pattern of meek and humble attitude on earth—including deference to other community members, the giving up of social (and religious) status, and the acceptance of suffering. This is understood as life according to the pattern provided by Christ, given that this pattern includes the willing acceptance of suffering and death. On the other hand, this pattern also includes an orientation towards eschatological salvation and glorification. During the earthly part of this life, this leads to a certain reversal of values. Given that the future glorification with Christ is dependent on identification with Christ's suffering and meekness, conventional earthly honor and glory must be regarded as vainglory, while earthly suffering and humiliation become the preparation for acquiring true honor and glory with Christ.[90]

The pattern Smit articulates is overt and obvious in Phil 2:5-11, but he does not elaborate on the means of following this pattern. He does not elucidate what "let this mind be IN you" means, nor does he explore the connection between Paul's use of being "in Christ" and "Christ in you." Smit is right that submission is a key to following this pattern, but he articulates it as submission to the pattern instead of submission to the Spirit's possession.[91] Intent is necessary, a conscious choice is needed. Humans must choose to initiate their transformation and sanctification just as Jesus, as Holloway notes, affects his incarnation.[92] However, we cannot do this on our own. The Spirit aids in our transformation. This initial choice and subsequent Spirit aided emptying of self by

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[90] Peter-Ben Smit, *Paradigms of Being in Christ : A Study of the Epistle to the Philippians*, Library of New Testament Studies International Studies on Christian Origins: 476 (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 161.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Holloway, *Philippians: A Commentary*, 48–52.

practices of humility and obedience creates even more spiritual space within us to be filled by the Spirit. Thus, are we able to have the mind of Christ in us, and to even speak the mind of Christ.

Smit does follow Barth in arguing the encomium shows Christ to be both the objective—the telos of the believer's existence—and the origin.[93] However, he does not deal with the interval between foundation and completion. The believer and Christ are both active in the interval, the believer emptying whilst Christ fills the believer with the Spirit. To put it another way, Smit is applying solely a cognicentric reading, as stated earlier, cognitive knowing is not the only way to read Philippians 2:5.

Implications and Strategies for Preaching

The encomium as an outline.

The simplest strategy emerging from our examination of the Phil. 2:5-11 for preaching is to use the pattern of Jesus' actions as a portable outline. Obviously, humility to emptying to obedience is an outline for preaching this passage. It may also be used with selective application as an outline for preaching other passages. Preachers may highlight the ways a passage exemplifies or calls for humility. Then make a move to examples of emptying, especially of power and privilege that emerge from examining a passage. Transition next to an exhortation for obedience to God made possible by the Spirit's filling of the emptied self. Finally, the preacher could end with a forecasting of exaltation that comes from following this pattern.

[93] Smit, *Paradigms of Being in Christ : A Study of the Epistle to the Philippians*, 90–91.

Live the encomium

Before approaching a text, much less the pulpit, preachers should live the encomium as a path to living in the Spirit, that is in Christ. Just as viewing the verse in solely a cognitive way is limiting, separating the lived life from the act of preaching is limiting. Intentional practices of humility, emptying, and obedience to God, clears the path not only to sanctification but to speaking and preaching in Christ, in the Spirit.

Paul gives us an example in the next chapter of Philippians. In 3:4-6, Paul catalogs all the rights, privileges, position, and standing given him by birth, education, and performance (zeal). Just as Jesus chooses not to exploit his divinity, so too Paul chooses not to exploit his standing. Rather Christ is his justification for exhorting the community at Philippi and being in the Spirit of Christ is the fortification of his preaching.

So too, preachers should seek not the rights and privileges, our ordination, education, or social standing by position, gender, ability, or sexual orientation afford us as grounding for our exhortation. Practicing this humility, emptying ourselves of privileges in our leadership, pastoral care, church administration, and even in our personal lives prepares us to also practice humility, emptying, and obedience in our preaching. This will lead to an exaltation, not of ourselves, rather of the Word, and fortifies our exhortation. Living a humble life with intentional practices of emptying and obedience places the authority of our preaching not in ourselves but in the Spirit.

Practice the encomium during the act of preaching

The sermon is not what is written, nor even what is said. The sermon is what is heard. The Spirit is active within the entirety of the liturgy including the sermon. The pattern of the encomium gives preachers a guide to staying open to the Spirit during the

act of preaching. Preachers can and should spend considerable time preparing to preach. However, while preaching, the preacher is not subject to the prepared sermon; rather to God. Practicing the humility that what is prepared may very well not be what the Spirit wants said in the moment ensures the preacher is remaining subject to God not their own preparations. Emptying ourselves of control over the presentation of a sermon, clears space for the Spirit to preach through us. Obedience to the Spirit's nudging and direction whilst preaching, leads the way to the exaltation of the Word.

Conclusion

Too often exegesis, interpretation, and preaching in cognicentric ways are overemphasized to the negation of the spiritual means of knowing and proclaiming. Philippians 2:5-11 shows us not only why and how to think like Christ cognitively, but also spiritually. It is a meditation on the path to being possessed by the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit. Following this path in and out of the pulpit grounds and fortifies exhortation in the Spirit.

4

Howard Thurman's Use of Silence and Most Reverend Michael Curry's Use of Spirituals to preach in the Spirit and Build Community.

Now that preaching in the Spirit as a function of community development has been charted through scripture, two exemplars of preaching in the Spirit are offered to show polar extremes of how to preach in the Spirit. Howard Thurman's use of silence is discussed as a means of communal meditation and creating space for the congregation to listen for and to the Spirit. Bp. Curry's use of African American Spirituals is discussed to show how Episcopal preachers, who are mostly white, can use sources from other cultures appropriately in order to build the diversity of God's kingdom within the church.

Howard Thurman's Use of Silence

Understanding a bit of Thurman's background will establish the importance of both the Spirit and spirituality in his life and preaching. Born in 1900, Howard Thurman grew up in segregated Daytona, Florida. Witnessing first-hand the horrors of the segregated south, he perceived not only the physical damage of discrimination, but also the psychological and spiritual damage. We'll see below, according to Thurman, the physical, psychological and spiritual state of those he calls the "disinherited" is the arena in which Jesus acts. In addition to segregation, three aspects of his childhood would have profound effects upon his life: spirituality, theology, and preaching. First, his grandmother had been enslaved. She would have Thurman read the bible to her, but she

would not allow him to read from the Apostle Paul at all. Paul's writings had been used by slave owners to justify slavery, and she would not—probably could not—hear Paul's words without hearing that interpretation. Consequently, Thurman's Christianity is negligibly Pauline, if at all. His grandmother also told him stories about late night worship services in the slave quarters where traveling preachers would tell a much different story than the slave masters. She remembered specifically one preacher that would emphatically say, "You are not slaves. You are children of God."[94] The capacity for any person to be a child of God, that Thurman learned from his grandmother, becomes the central idea of Thurman's spirituality and his understanding of Jesus.

The death of his Father, and specifically his father's funeral, is the next profound event from his childhood that profoundly shaped Thurman's theology. His father died of pneumonia when Thurman was seven years old. Being unbaptized, or "outside of Christ" as the phrase was used, the funeral arrangements were difficult. Thurman's grandmother had to argue with the head of the Deacon's board to permit the funeral to take place in the church, and since the pastor would not preach the funeral, a traveling evangelist agreed to do it. The evangelist, in the words of Thurman, "preached [his] father into hell."[95] This further fertilized within Thurman the inclusivity of Christ and gave him a strong suspicion of the institutional church. Consequently, in 1944 he helped found the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco, an intentionally inter-racial, inter-denominational, and even inter-faith congregation.[96]

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[94] Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart; the Autobiography of Howard Thurman* (New York: Harcourt Brace Javonovich, 1979), 6.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Bonnie J. Oliver, "The Mind, Ministry, and Mysticism of Howard Thurman," *Baptist History and Heritage* 42, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 88.

The third aspect of Thurman's childhood to play a key role in his spirituality is neither an event nor a person. It is an old oak tree. Thurman would sit for hours nestled in the roots of an old oak tree near his house and ponder "the bruises and joys" of his life. He would talk aloud with the tree and feel understood. This cultivated in him a surety of God's presence in all places, things, and times. It is not pantheism. The tree was not God to Thurman. Rather God was present in the tree the same way God is present within another human being. Therefore, he could converse and commune with it just as he would with another person.[97] This capacity to converse with God and indeed to be unified with God at all times and through all things is what Thurman believed Jesus did more fully than anyone else. Also, this unity of Spirit between Jesus and God, is not only possible for anyone to achieve, it also has significant consequences for community development because it is a unity rooted in love.

Thurman's Christology is spiritual, and his spirituality is Christological. For Thurman there was no separation between inner and outer life. Rather, unity of the spiritual and the physical is key to his spirituality and Christology. In his preaching, especially in his use of silence, he drew people into the spiritual space of unity with God. He preached and taught that a spiritual or mystical experience not only lets us know God, but also to be known by God. This leads to a sense of unity with God and others.[98] Furthermore when we have submitted to the spiritual experience of God, we realize that, "Human life is one and all men and women are members of another."[99] The spiritual exposure to God causes one to be "inclusive of all the meaning of life—there is nothing

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[97] Thurman, *With Head and Heart ; the Autobiography of Howard Thurman*, 9.
[98] Xolani Kacela, "Being One with the Spirit: Dimensions of a Mystical Experience," *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 60, no. 1–2 (Spr 2006): 86.
[99] Thurman quoted in Ibid., 88.

that is not involved."[100] Thurman sees in Jesus the absolute representation of the potential for humans to be united with God and each other. James Evans writes that in *Jesus and the Disinherited,* Thurman weaves the "biblical and historic ideas of Jesus" with the "cosmic and mystical notions of Jesus as the Christ."[101] Again, unity is the theme here. The cosmic Christ cannot be separated from the earthly Jesus in Thurman's thought. Furthermore, Thurman sees Jesus and God unified by the Spirit. This unity is love. Consequently, Jesus deals with humans the way God sees humans: that is through God's loving Spirit.[102]

Thurman's Christology and spirituality are synthesized in his preaching. First off, the act of preaching is a spiritual endeavor for Thurman. He views the act of preaching to be an act of worship in Spirit and in truth:

> For me the sermon is an act of worship in which the preacher exposes his [sic] spirit and mind as they seek to reveal the work of the Spirit of the living God upon them. It is a searching moment! The atmosphere is one charged with the dynamics of worship and the surrender and commitment which worship inspires.[103]

Just as the person of Jesus was unified with the being of God through the Spirit, the act of preaching must be unified through the Spirit. Clayborn quotes Thurman saying,

> The testimony of the Spirit of which the preacher's word is the form of witness finds response in the witness of the Spirit in the heart of the listener. The common experience of the living God is the continuum of meaning out of which the preacher preaches and with which the listener listens.[104]

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[100] Thurman quoted in, Alton B. Pollard, III, "Howard Thurman and the Experience of Encounter: A Phenomenological View," *The Journal of Religious Thought* 46, no. 2 (n.d.): 33.
[101] James H. Evans, "Jesus Christ Liberator and Mediator," in *We Have Been Believers: An African American Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Ausburg Fortress, 2012), 96.
[102] Kacela, "Being One with the Spirit: Dimensions of a Mystical Experience," 89.
[103] Howard Thurman, quoted in James Earl Massey, "Thurman's Preaching: Substance and Style," in *God and Human Freedom: A Festschrift in Honor of Howard Thurman*, ed. Henry James Young (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1983), 110–11.
[104] Howard Thurman, quoted in Patrick Clayborn, "Preaching as an Act of Spirit: The Homiletical Theory of Howard Thurman," *Homiletic* 35, no. 1 (2010): 9.

This continuum can be realized within a sermon if "…the spirit of a sermon, the spiritual dynamic within the preaching moment, is directly related to the Spirit of the preacher and that of the congregation."[105] Furthermore, it is this spiritual unity with God for which Thurman encourages the listener to strive. In preaching on the Parable of the Prodigal Son, he hones in on the moment the Prodigal son "comes to himself."[106] Thurman preaches that we all can "come to ourselves" by making an inward journey to the center of our being and there we will be met by God with an invitation and a means of redemption. He preaches,

> For the moment, deep within you, you come to yourself, you find waiting there your Father, who can take your limitations, all of the broken manifestations of your day's or year's journey and brood over them with his infinite wisdom, tenderness, and knowledge of the whole meaning of existence and place at your disposal that which will make you his son.[107]

Just as Thurman argues that Jesus was completely united with that which in himself was God, humans can find within themselves "that which is God." In the same sermon he preaches, "…when I come to the very center, the very core of myself then I come face to face with God…there is that of man [sic] which is God. Not a reflection of God. Not some staggering accent of God, but that which is God."[108] A person's spirituality and their physicality are intrinsically linked. "Therefore," Thurman preaches, "it seems to be relevant to say that the most important clue to my outside world is my

[105] Ibid., 8.
[106] Luke 15:17.
[107] Howard Thurman, "The Prodigal Son," in *Sermons on the Parables*, ed. David B. Gowler and Kipton E. Jensen (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2018), 36.
[108] Ibid, 34.

inside world."[109] Here he proclaims not just an integration of the psychological and the physical, but a unity of Spirit that leads to unity with God and each other.

Thurman's spirituality is overtly preached not only by his words, but also by his style, his presence, and most importantly his use of silence. His preaching style is described as "elevated, dense, allusive, difficult to grasp, and yet somehow immensely attractive."[110] He exposed his spirit when he preached with such authenticity and vulnerability that congregations were drawn into the sermon despite the allusiveness of his themes and the density of his rhetoric. He begins his sermons with extended meditations instead of quotidian greetings or simple prayers. These meditations often name busy-ness and the "crowded traffic" of the listener's internal monologue. In the meditation before his sermon on the Good Samaritan he says, "How hard it is to make a pause to come to a moment or a season of quiet because our lives are so crowded with things to do with a variety of considerations and problems and issues."[111] By gently naming this reality he also extends an invitation into stillness, to quietness, and to deep listening so that not only his voice, that of the preacher, is heard, but more importantly the voice of the Holy Spirit, can be heard. From the meditation before a sermon covering four parables, he says, "We gather together in the quietness. Each one seeking the level of his own resting place, each one reaching out for peace of mind and spirit in the terms that he can understand and in ways that are meaningful."[112] Thurman sought the Spirit in his sermons, and implicitly invited the listener to the vulnerability needed to seek the Spirit

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[109] Ibid, 33.
[110] Quinton H. Dixie and Peter Eisenstadt, *Visions of a Better World: Howard Thurman's Pilgrimage to India and the Origins of African American Nonviolence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 132.
[111] Howard Thurman, "The Good Samaritan," in *Sermons on the Parables*, ed. David B. Gowler and Kipton E. Jensen (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2018), 48.
[112] Howard Thurman, "Growth and the Kingdom," in *Sermons on the Parables*, ed. David B. Gowler and Kipton E. Jensen (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2018), 4–5.

as well. At the close of his meditation before his sermon on the parable of the Good Samaritan, he prays, "O God, …be very near us in the quietness of this place, that for one swirling moment we may see ourselves as thou dost see us, stripped to the literal substance of ourselves without pretense, without all boasting, without all facades by which we maneuver our days."[113]

A key feature of a Howard Thurman sermon is silence. Thurman invites the listener into a spiritual encounter with God during the sermon. To that end, Thurman leaves abundant space for the Holy Spirit to speak and the listener to hear. Clayborn notes that silence in a sermon is just as communicative as speech for Thurman because it is in silence that the Spirit communicates.[114] Massey writes that, "Thurman developed his ability to use words, on the one hand, and to effect pauses, on the other, so as to hold the hearer's mind and self suspended in a moment of realized meaning."[115] Thurman sought the Spirit while he preached. "He lingered over meanings when he preached, waiting in the Presence as he spoke," writes Massey.[116] Thurman's seeking in the silence, in the lengthy pauses of his sermons, are an invitation for the listener to seek the Spirit along with him. In the silence, it is as if the listeners are invited to sit by that old oak tree in the woods near Thurman's childhood home—invited to sit, brood, ponder, and to communion with God who created the world and seeks to redeem it. If the listener accepts Thurman's invitation, she or he not only meets God but her or his true self in the silence. The true self is a reflection of the image of God and the listener realizes that

[113] Ibid., 49.
[114] Clayborn, "Preaching as an Act of Spirit: The Homiletical Theory of Howard Thurman," 8–9.
[115] Massey, "Thurman's Preaching: Substance and Style," 117.
[116] Ibid.

every other human being also carries that image. In the pauses, we are invited into unity with God, the same unity that Jesus embodied.

The previous paragraphs articulate much of the importance and effect of silence within Thurman's sermons. They fail, however, to convey the breadth and extensive use of silence he uses. To say that Thurman frequently paused in his sermons for lengthy periods of time is simply to understate the point. What follows is a description and analysis of the time he often spent in silence during the opening meditations of his sermons.[117]

Suffering[118]

The sermon entitled "Suffering" was preached December the 11th, 1960 in the chapel at Boston University as part of a series of sermons on Disciplines of the Spirit. The sermon begins with 4 minutes and 27 seconds of meditation/prayer. It should be noted that there is not much of a difference, if any, in Thurman delivering a sermon versus Thurman praying out loud. They sound much the same. His cadence, tone, along with his frequency and length of pauses are much the same between the two. The meditation is a paraphrase of Psalm 139.

> For there is not a word / in my tongue
> 4"
> But lo / oh Lord / thou knowest it all together
> 5"

[117] The analysis is performed upon recordings of his sermons in "Expanding Common Ground: The Howard Thurman and Sue Bailey Thurman Collections at Boston University Searchable Finding Aids and Virtual Listening Room.," accessed January 11, 2022, http://archives.bu.edu/web/howard-thurman/virtual-listening-room/.http://archives.bu.edu/web/howard-thurman/virtual-listening-room/." Because the silence is the focus of this analysis, little attention is paid to the words he says, though some comment is necessary. The text has been transcribed with annotations to indicate pauses and lengths. A '/' is a pause of about 1 second or less. Larger pauses are notated with #" to indicate the length of the pause in seconds.

[118] Howard Thurman, "Suffering," accessed January 11, 2022, http://archives.bu.edu/web/howard-thurman/virtual-listening-room/detail?id=340684.

Thou hast beset me behind and before
3”
And laid thine hand upon me
6”
Such / knowledge / is to wonderful for me
5”
It is high / I cannot attain unto it
5”
Wither shall I go from thy Spirit
5”
Or wither / shall / I / flee / from thy presence
9”
If I ascend up into heaven thou art there
6”
If / I / make / my bed / in Hell
5”
Thou are there
6”
If I take the wings of the morning and fly to the utmost sea
3”
Even there shall thy hand hold me
2”
And thy rich hand steady me
3”
If I say surely the darkness shall cover me even the night Shall be light about me
2”
The darkness / hideth / not from thee / but the night / shineth
As / the day
3”
The light and the night are both alike to thee
4”
For thou hast possessed my reins thou hast covered me in my Mother’s womb
4”
In the book / all my members are written which in continuance
Were fashioned
2”
Whereas yet there was none of them
4”
How precious
5”
How precious
2”
Also are thou thoughts unto me
3”

Oh God, God / God, God
4”
How great is the sum of them
3”
If i should count them they are more in number then the sand
2”
When I awake I am still with thee
4”
Try me and know my thoughts
2”
And see if there be any wicked way in me
4”
And lead me / in thy way everlasting.

This opening prayer/meditation is 4’27” long with at least 1 minute and 57 seconds of silence. Combine the silence with his deliberate pace, lyrical phrasing, and intentional variation of pitch and timbre and the effect is mesmerizing. These other auditory elements are masterfully used but the silence is forefront and primary. The listener is brought into the silence in such a way that when Thurman says the word “me,” the listener feels that he or she is the antecedent of that pronoun. Consequently, the meditation is not singular rather communal, binding all the gathered in a community of prayer that is actively petitioning God and listening for the Holy Spirit.

Job[119]

The sermon entitled “Job” was preached on December 18, 1960 and is also part of Thurman’s series on the Disciplines of the Spirit. It was delivered just days after two airplanes collided over New York City[120] and another U.S. military plane had crashed in

[119] Howard Thurman, “Job,” accessed January 11, 2022, http://archives.bu.edu/web/howard-thurman/virtual-listening-room/detail?id=340685.
[120] Steve Zaffarano, “Dec. 16, 1960: Plane Collision Over Staten Island and Brooklyn Kills 134,” accessed January 11, 2022, https://www.silive.com/news/g66l-2019/12/e2d794d4db7525/dec-16-1960-plane-collision-over-staten-island-brooklyn-kills-134.html.

Munich, Germany.[121] As was noted in the discussion of Powery's *Spirit Speech*, lament is a significant element of preaching in the Spirit. Thurman's lament in his opening meditation guides the community's lament.

> We are mindful / as we sit together / in the congregation
> 4"
> Of the great / tragic / moment that has been visited upon / so many
> Individuals and families
> 3"
> During the / dreadful / air disasters in our own land / and in Europe
> 5"
> The provate / torture
> 4"
> Of the human spirit
> 3"
> As it seeks to envelope / with the limitations of mind and
> understanding
> And knowledge / the vast
> 3"
> Impersonal operation of forces
> 3"
> Over which the human spirit is unable to exercise and controls
> 4"
> We bow before our inadequacies
> 3"
> Even when our minds are clearest
> 2"
> And our judgement surest
> 3"
> We sit / beside / the broken hearted / and the anguished
> 3"
> Pouring / into their / flaying spirits
> 3"
> Whatever there is that we ourselves have accumulated / of
> understanding
> And resources
> 3"
> With the hope / that there may come to each
> of the persons in all the families
> 3"
> A sense of being
> 3"

[121] "1960 Munich C-131 Crash," accessed January 11, 2022, https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/1960_Munich_C-131_crash.

Held and sustained
3
By an invisible host
3”
Of concerned spirits and caring hearts
7”
We lay / their grief
6”
On the altar
5”
There are no words
3”
That we can use
3”
To assess
3”
What is happening in them
3”
And in us as we vicariously enter in their pain and loss
6”
But / our father
4”
Thou hast taught us thy children
5”
To yield / our trust
3”
Into thy keeping
3”
And to include into our offering to thee
3”
The great imponderables
4”
That bewilder and confuse
4”
That cast down and depress
3”
And so
4”
We wait
4”
Knowing / that / there is / in thy love
4”
A depth
3”
Of healing which we cannot analyze
5”

And as it passes / by us and through us
3”
May there remain in the quiet crevices / of our hearts
5”
A sustaining strength
3”
Knowing / that there is in thee oh God
4”
Strength / sufficient for our needs
4”
Whatever they maybe
3”
This is enough.

Thurman’s delivery is not much different in this sermon as it was the week before in “Suffering” sermon. The sound of his voice, nor his cadence and pitch fluctuations are very similar. He does not engage in melodrama nor theatrics to name and process the grief. Rather, by using even shorter phrases and more frequent pauses he articulates what the congregation is likely feeling but likely can’t articulate themselves. It is a 6 minute and 13 second meditation with at least 2 minutes and 51 seconds of silence. Almost half of the prayer is silence. This is Spirit speech because he is unifying the community in a common behavior that recognizes God’s sovereignty. It is an alternative community because while the world/culture around them is trying to move on and forget the tragedy, the community of the faithful remembers. Furthermore, his pauses allow space for others to grieve. He is not the only mourner in the room, nor is he doing the mourning for the congregation. He is mourning with them. This is shared leadership in action; a fruit of the Spirit previously shown in the discussion of Numbers 11.

The Hand of God[122]

"The Hand of God" sermon was preached on January 22, 1961 as the initial sermon in a series entitled Community and the Will of God. The theme of emptying the self, of revealing the core of oneself to God, only to realize God is at the core is prominent.

It is a privilege beyond compare
5"
To wait in the presence of God
3"
In the quietness of the sanctuary
3"
And to sort our lives
3"
Lifting into focus
5"
This deed and that deed
5"
This memory and that memory
5"
This particular person and that particular person
6"
This country and that country
5"
This institution and that institution
6"
It is good
4"
To lift into focus
4"
The fragments of our lives / to strip away everything
2"
Leaving revealed for the steady look / and the hard gaze / the Central core of ourselves
3"
What it is after all that we most deeply desire
2"
What it is after all that / we / most / passionately need / for our peace 2"

[122] Howard Thurman, "The Hand of God," accessed January 11, 2022, http://archives.bu.edu/web/howard-thurman/virtual-listening-room/detail?id=336764.

What it is for which we hunger
3”
When all dimension of our lives have been fed
4”
God of our spirits
3”
Thou dost not delivert thy gaze
4”
From / the heart and center and core of us
13”
We dare
5”
Trust thy vision and thy view
8”
There are no words by which we would implore thee
6”
There are no symbols which we would use to bewitch thy mind
3”
And divert thy concern
8”
We wait
5”
In thy presence
5”
Asking nothing
5”
Seeking nothing
7”
We wait
2”
Naked and undisguised
5”
In thy presence
5”
Oh God of our spirits
6”
We wait

Not only is the theme of emptying strong in Thurman’s words, but it is also embodied in his silences. The whole meditation is 5 minutes and 51 seconds in length with at least 2 miutes and 40 seconds in silence. The last nine lines, beginning with the first “we wait,” take a whole minute and at least 40 seconds of that is silence. He is

emptying himself of the privilege of being the preacher in the room. This is Paul's exhortation to let the mind of Christ be in you so that through humility and emptying we make room for the Spirit. Furthermore, Thurman intentionally uses the plural "we." As was shown, he is willing to use the singular, so his use of the plural here is intentional. It is a collective emptying that he is guiding, not dictating but guiding. So once again the congregation is formed into an alternative community engaged in collective spiritual practice counter to the culture around them.

In these examples of meditation/prayer from the preambles of Thurman's sermons, his use of silence is shown. Silence is an abundant and overt dynamic in his preaching. He uses it to embody shared leadership and corporate lament, active emptying of self and incarnate humility; all dynamics of preaching in the Spirit previously discussed. Most important his silence is not mere dramatic effect; rather it draws the listener into the sermon. The gathered community is not just formed, but it is also preaching with its silence calling forth the Spirit to speak to and through them as well.

Most Rev. Michael Curry and the Use of Spirituals

Preaching, Spirituals, and Critical Race Theory

Before performing an analysis on Bp. Michael Curry's quoting of spirituals as a means of preaching in the Spirit, there is a question that must be confronted. Should white preachers quote Spirituals (either spoken or sung) from the African American tradition? We may at first glance have instinctive or intuitive reactions to this question. However, those reactions are likely over simplistic. Furthermore, a close examination of the question proves tricky. When we take a close look, we can be tempted by broader

philosophical questions. Who is to say what a preacher should and should not use? What are the boundaries to applicable sources for sermon material? Are there boundaries at all? And we are quickly down the rabbit hole of philosophical inquiry and have either successfully dodged the actual question altogether or convinced ourselves to retreat to our over simplistic intuitive reactions. However, this practical question deserves a practical answer. The history of race relations in the United States is riddled with the sin of racism. African American music in general and Spirituals specifically are significant factors in the formation and composition of the composite culture of the United States.[123] We can come at this question through an analogous one. Should white preachers quote spirituals is a similar question to: Should predominantly white congregations in the Episcopal Church sing hymns from the Lift Every Voice and Sing hymnal?[124] Similar dynamics of power, appropriation, and purpose apply. Therefore, a presentation of some of the arguments against and for white preachers using Spirituals is appropriate at this point.

Arguments Against

An argument against white preachers and white congregations using spirituals is that they often do it badly. Spirituals are an ontologically different kind of music than western European music. Consequently, the performance practices are different, as are the criteria of concinnity in the composition and construction of the music. Music is also an internalized art form. It comes from within us, and consequently all of our cultural and

[123] U.S. culture, and maybe the cultures of any complex nation-state, is a composite of many subcultures. However, a sociological examination of the matrix of interdependent subcultures in the U.S. is beyond the scope of this project.

[124] James O. Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts. [Electronic Resource]*, New Directions in Aesthetics: 6 (Blackwell Pub., 2008), 5, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=cat07532a&AN=tigr.b2109488&site=eds-live&custid=s9007859.

informative experiences manifest themselves in both the experience and the performance. For example, there is a stereotype of white people clapping on the first and third beat of a four-beat bar of music. American popular music—which has its roots in African American musical traditions like Jazz and Blues, which in turn have their roots in Spirituals—places the emphasis on the second and fourth beat of the bar. Furthermore, the finer nuances of Spirituals are different than those of western European music. The ways words are enunciated, the variety of ways notes are begun and ended, intonation, and inflection are all different. Consequently, when white people attempt to perform spirituals without intentional attention to these differences it is at best a bad performance and at worst an insulting caricature of a refined form of art from a different culture.

Another argument against white preachers using spirituals is the long and torrid history of appropriation of African American art and culture. It should be noted at this point that cultural appropriation is not necessarily morally wrong. Philosopher James Young argues for a morally neutral definition of cultural appropriation. He defines it as occurring when, "Members of one culture (... call them outsiders) take for their own, or for their own use, items produced by a member or members of another culture (call them insiders)."[125] Young uses this definition as a starting point to articulate "objectionable and unobjectionable" cultural appropriation.[126] Under this definition, preachers are always engaged in cultural appropriation. Both the Hebrew Scriptures and scriptures of the New Testament originate in ancient cultures different from the culture of preachers of the modern-day U.S. We are, as William Jennings argues, second readers of these

[125] Ibid
[126] Ibid.

texts.[127] There are, of course, objectionable and unobjectionable uses and interpretations of scripture in sermons. Likewise, Spirituals can be referenced in sermons in ways that are objectionable and unobjectionable.

Three of Young's types of objectionable cultural appropriation are "serious misrepresentation," depictions that place subjects in a "submissive posture," and the "location" of the art. "Serious misrepresentation" is where the depictions of the subjects of the art portray the appropriated culture not only inaccurately, but the inaccuracy is deliberately applied to shame, diminish, belittle, or otherwise depict the appropriated culture in a negative manner. In preaching this could happen if a preacher grossly caricatures a Spiritual. Objectionable appropriation also occurs when the subjects are placed in a "submissive posture," especially when portrayed as forcibly submitting to a dominant white Eurocentric culture. If a preacher were to frame a Spiritual as a primitive and/or lesser art form than Western European white music, it would be objectionable culture appropriation by placing it in a submissive posture. Finally, the "location" of appropriated art can be offensive. An example in preaching would be referencing a Spiritual, then referencing a German Choral as a better or higher example.[128]

Objectionable cultural appropriation of spirituals in sermons leads us to the third argument against doing so: When the first two problems are active then using Spirituals in sermons supports and sustains false narratives of white supremacy. As Young's definition highlights, two of the dynamics of appropriation are taking and using. Taking and using are also dynamics of white Supremacy. While its roots extend before the colonization of the Americas, white Supremacy in the U.S. has a strong grounding in

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[127] Jennings, "Reframing the World," 388.
[128] Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts. [Electronic Resource]*, 131–32.

chattel slavery, literally the taking and using of humans from another culture. Spirituals have their roots in chattel slavery as well. Taking and using these pieces of art, these cultural artifacts, runs the risk of doing the same thing to the art that chattel slavery did to human bodies. This is a question of power. Enslaved people did not have power over their bodies, nor the produce of their labor be it agricultural, structural, or artistic. When spirituals are performed badly and appropriated objectionably it is another instance of seizing power from African Americans over their cultural output, a seizure that resonates with the physical appropriation of chattel slavery.

Arguments For: Spirituals as Invitation

We have examined some arguments against white preachers quoting, referencing, or even singing spirituals in their sermons. Now let us turn to some arguments in favor. First, using spirituals invites both the preacher and congregation to explore, appreciate, and value another culture. Exploration is best done with an attitude of humility. Exploration for the sake of conquest and forceful acquisition, i.e. colonization, is not humble. It comes from an assumption that we as explorers are better than the arena of exploration. On the other hand, exploration with humility—that is with curiosity for the sake of learning—comes from an assumption that we are incomplete without intimate knowledge of another. It also negates the notion that "white culture" is and should be normative and other cultures are mere alternatives, and it recognizes the value, the wisdom, and beauty of another culture. Just as white preachers should approach the scriptures as outsiders, as second readers; so too, white preachers should approach Spirituals with the honesty and integrity of appreciative exploration. Learning from another culture is an overt statement of valuing another culture, of being in communion

with another. Just as the Trinity is a community so too our wholeness cannot be incarnate outside of relationships with others. A white preacher using a Spiritual in a sermon can be an arena of exploration that invites both the preacher and the congregation toward the wholeness found in community, if the preacher approaches the Spiritual with humility.

The wholeness found in community is the work of the Holy Spirit, in that the Holy Spirit is unifying without requiring uniformity. In dialog with Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, specifically 3:9-17, Luke Powery writes of the unifying work of the Holy Spirit in community. He writes, "By associating the Spirit with the temple, the Spirit is connected to unity and peace; thus, this church that is supposedly indwelled by the Spirit should exemplify unity."[129] However community is not found, built, or exemplified in isolation. You cannot have a community of one. This applies culturally as well. A mono-cultural-*ecclesia* is not a unified community; rather it is merely a uniform collection absent the robust nature of diversity. The appropriate use of Spirituals in sermons is an invitation to the Holy Spirit to foster unity of diverse people. It facilitates the Holy Spirit's work of transforming individual lives of faith into a diverse Body of Christ.

There is a through line in scripture across testaments articulating the work of the Spirit to counter dominant-submissive hierarchical structuring of ecclesial and social communities. As shown previously, from the anointing of Eldad and Medad in Numbers 11 where Moses decries a desire for all God's people to prophesy, to the prophet Joel's prediction of a day when indeed all God's people would prophesy, and to Peter's Pentecost Sermon in the book of acts where he frames the Pentecost event as fulfillment of Joel's prophecy the through line of scripture's depiction of the fruit of Spirit preaching

[129] Powery, *Spirit Speech*, 63.

is away from top down power structures and toward inclusion of diverse voices in the decision making of a community—be it ecclesial or social. This horizontal structuring of power dynamics is exemplified in the earliest Christian communities as seen in the sharing of goods articulated in the second chapter of Acts, the dissolution of race, gender, and economic divisions called for by Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians, and the calls for equality in the second chapter of the Epistle of James.[130]

With proper framing, the citation of Spirituals by a white preacher can participate in this ongoing work of the Holy Spirit toward inclusion. Invoking spirituals brings in a different culture than white dominant culture into the life of the parish. Sermons are one part of both the theological and eccleastical formation of a congregation. Consequently, the proper use of Spirituals participates in the Holy Spirit's work of inclusion by increasing the diversity of sources in the community's formation, culture, and operation. By participating in the inclusive work of the Spirit, the preacher invokes the Spirit's presence during the preaching event creating an atmosphere where the listener is hearing not only the preacher's sermon but the Spirit's sermon also.

Furthering this notion of participating in the Spirit's work of inclusion we can place this discussion of appropriate cultural appropriation in conversation with Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT comes from the discipline of legal scholarship. It is a movement that, "is a collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power."[131] It differs from long-established civil rights discussion in that it "questions the very foundations of the liberal

[130] Acts 2:44-45, Galatians 3:28, and James 2:1-7.
[131] Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic, and Angela P. Harris, *Critical Race Theory : An Introduction*, Third edition., Critical America (New York University Press, 2017), 3.

order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law."[132]

One of the phenomena and techniques of CRT is the use of counter storytelling to reframe the narratives of the formations of legal structures. Recognizing that society is shaped by the stories it tells itself, especially it's foundational stories, CRT employs the technique of counterstory telling to reshape the narrative. For example, CRT counter storytelling might cite the parts of our foundational narratives that are often minimized or completely left out and illustrate how these incomplete narratives lead to the formation of discriminatory legal codes and unjust judicial outcomes.[133]

Applying Spirituals within sermons is an occasion for a preacher to engage in the counter storytelling of CRT. By placing the Spirituals within the privileged position of the preaching moment the preacher is invited to reframe the narratives that serve as the basis for the congregation's notions of race, society, and culture. It is an invitation to fill in the blanks, the often-neglected parts of our foundational narratives, be they stories of the foundation of our country, state, county, neighborhood, or the very founding of the preacher's congregation. The scriptures proclaim that the truth shall set us free, but it must be the whole truth. Citing Spirituals employing the counter storytelling technique of CRT creates a context for the preacher to tell the whole truth. In this sense it is an invitation and an act of confession, and it is the Spirit that delivers God's forgiveness when we confess.

Therefore, we have seen that there is no blanket rule nor simple answer to the question of whether white preachers should cite African American Spirituals in sermons.

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[132] Ibid.
[133] Delgado, Stefancic, and Harris, *Critical Race Theory*, 50.

As in most things, context matters. The purpose for the citation and how the material is portrayed is key. If a preacher presents a Spiritual without attention to the distinctive character of African American music; or with an intent of diminishing or belittling the art; or in a manner that supports narratives and structures of white supremacy, it is both objectionable and inappropriate. However, a white preacher may use African American Spirituals to great, positive effect when they are presented with humility and a desire for appreciative exploration, or when the preacher is intentionally engaging with the Holy Spirit's work of inclusivity and power sharing, or when the preacher is engaging in counter storytelling in order to reframe narratives and tell the whole truth, or any combination of some or all these frames. As with any source material, what the preacher brings to the material matters a great deal.

The Most Rev. Michael Curry's Quoting of Spirituals

The Most Reverend Michael Curry is the presiding bishop of Episcopal church and a renowned preacher. He quotes Spirituals frequently in his sermons. Similar to looking to the work of African American scholars such as Forbes and Powery, analyzing the preaching of an African American Bishop of the Episcopal church can give preachers insights into preaching in the Spirit in the Episcopal parishes and contexts. Like the exploration of Howard Thurman above, understanding a bit of Bp. Curry's background and theology will help analyze his sermons.

There are some similarities between Thurman's background and Curry's. Bp. Curry was born in Chicago in 1953 and, like Thurman, is the descendant of enslaved Africans. Also like Thurman, his grandmother, Nellie Strayhorn, had a great influence on him. His mother died while he was young; so, his grandmother helped his father raise

him and his sisters. Whereas Thurman's grandmother introduced him to the bible, Curry's grandmother introduced him to the old hymns and Spirituals of the faith. Curry writes that, "It was her lively, uncompromised, vibrant faith in God that has shaped my deeper level of faith and theological word view."[134] Singing these songs was the way his grandmother went about, "simply living life with God, following the way of Jesus," writes Curry.[135] From these songs, Bishop Curry learned both the richness of an individual's relationship with God, and a communal vision for a new world order. He writes, "...these were not merely songs of individual piety. These songs sang of a new world. They sang of liberation and salvation in this life, and in the life with God beyond this life."[136]

Curry's father was an Episcopal priest and his grandfather a Baptist preacher. In college, when he began to discern his call to ministry, he knew he wanted to have a positive effect on the world, and in reading the writings of Dr. Martin Luther King, he recognized the, "potential to do real social good within the Christian tradition."[137] The power of love is a key theme of Curry's theology. Not sentimental or individualistic love, but rather transformational love that resides in the relationships between people is Curry's message. He has made it his mission, "to help people find their way to a loving relationship with God and with each other."[138] This is an expression of the alternative community—the community based on the love of God, neighbor, and self as Curry would

[134] Michael B. Curry, *Songs My Grandma Sang* (Morehouse Publishing, 2015), 9.
[135] Ibid, 11.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Michael Curry in, Ania G. Wieckowski, "Life's Work: An Interview with Bishop Michael Curry," *Harvard Business Review* 97, no. 3 (June 5, 2019): 172.
[138] Ibid.

say—that was proclaimed by the prophets, lived out by Jesus, and preached by Thurman as well as Curry.

While Thurman and Curry have some similarities in background and even theology, their preaching styles could not be more different. Whereas Thurman is consistently deliberate and slow in his delivery, Curry's pace is on the whole much quicker and varies in tempo more than Thurman in range and frequency of change. Whereas Thurman's volume stays the same on average, Curry uses the full dynamic range of the human voice from the softest whisper to the loudest shout. Thurman's tone and timbre are rich, full, and clear. On occasion Curry uses a gravelly growling tone like a Blues singer. So with these two examples we have the polar ends of the preaching delivery spectrum. Yet both unreservedly preach in the Spirit.

As we turn to an analysis of Curry's use of Spirituals in three of his sermons, we will see him use Spirituals to emphasize this alternative community of love. Furthermore, by bringing these songs into primarily 'white' spaces, he is bearing the fruit of preaching in the Spirit to build a diverse community.

Crazy Christians[139]

Michael Curry, then Bishop of North Carolina, preached his "Crazy Christians" sermon in July of 2012 at the 77th General Convention of the Episcopal Church. Near the beginning and the end, he quotes "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." It should be noted that The Battle Hymn is not technically a Spiritual. However, written during the Civil War, it was developed and composed in the same cultural era as the Spirituals and also

[139] Curry, Michael, *Crazy Christians*, Youtube Video (Indianapolis, IN, 2012), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abJMKeyCWoQ&t=3s.

has many of the same musical and thematic elements as Spirituals. Furthermore, it serves the same functional role in Curry's sermons as when he quotes Spirituals. He is using poetic and cultural memory to preach in the Spirit fertilizing the growth of the alternative community rooted in Love.[140] It should also be noted that the history and usage of the Battle Hymn is neither clear cut nor simplistic. Andrew Limbong writes of the varied usages of it by folks seeking liberation of the repressed and those seeking to maintain the status quo.[141] The history of the U.S. is convoluted and tangled as well especially in regard to race. Consequently, Curry's use of the Battle Hymn invites the redeeming, unifying Holy Spirit to bear upon the original sin of the U.S.

Young's work, discussed in the previous section, on location of a cultural artifact is helpful here.[142] Whereas Young highlights how a negative location of a cultural artifact is inappropriate and objectionable, Curry gives us a positive example. He references the literary work of Dostoevsky and the poetry of John Chapman, Broadway Musicals, and other hymns. By placing the Battle Hymn in the same vaulted position as these other works of art he is invoking the leveling work of the Spirit.

Furthermore, the geographic and temporal placement of this sermon are important. He's preaching at the General Convention of the Episcopal church. The fact that at the time he was one a very small number of bishop's of color and went on to be the first bishop of African descent to become the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal church he physically embodies the tangled history of the American church. By citing the

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[140] It is outside the scope of this project to discuss what qualifies as a Spiritual. However for the sake of this argument hymns that are Spirituals or are aesthetic descendents of spirituals will be considered synonymous.
[141] Andrew Limbong, "One Song Glory: How the Battle Hymn of the Republic Became an Anthem for Every Cause," July 4, 2018, https://www.npr.org/2018/07/04/625351953/one-song-glory.
[142] Cf. 55-56 above.

Battle Hymn in a sermon, during a Eucharist, at the General Convention he is inviting the Spirit to construct a diverse unity like the Spirit did at Pentecost. The 77th General Convention approved Rites for Same Sex marriage for trial use for the first time. Though Curry never mentions that in his sermon, citing the Battle Hymn frames it as a call to the church to listen to the Spirit's call to be the diverse alternative community of Jesus.

Lastly, the location in liturgical time is significant. The Eucharist and sermon were in honor of the feast of Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of Uncle Tom's Cabin and part of the Underground Railroad. Also, he makes a strong correlation between Stowe and Mary Magdalene from the gospels, even calling her, "a descendent of Mary Magdalene."[143] The Episcopal Church remains a male dominant church especially in the ranks of clergy. Also, the history of Christianity mistreating Mary Magdalene in particular and women in general is known. Like Peter quoting the gender inclusivity of Joel's prophecy at Pentecost, for Curry to frame these women with the lyrics "Glory, Glory Hallelujah" from the refrain of the Battle Hymn proclaims the gender inclusivity of the Spirit built alternative community.

Royal Wedding Sermon[144]

Bp. Curry preached the sermon for the Royal wedding of Prince Harry and Duchess Megan Markle on May 19th, 2018, in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, UK. In the sermon he quotes the Spiritual, "There is a Balm in Gilead." Where this sermon is preached, and that Curry specifically states that this Spiritual was sung by "Some old

[143] Curry, Michael, *Crazy Christians*.
[144] Michael B. Curry, "Bishop Michael Curry's Full Royal Wedding Sermon," YouTube Video, May 19, 2018, https://youtu.be/5gonlKodrmk.

slaves in America's Antebelum South"[145] is a profound proclamation of the Spirit's redemptive work to build a new community. Slave traders and slave owners worshiped at St. George's in centuries past. The Royal Family profited from the slave trade for centuries as well.[146] Furthermore, Markle is of mixed race. While her father is white, her mother is a descendant from Africans enslaved in the Americas. Instead of stating the profundity of these facts regarding the heritage of the room and the couple, Curry cites this Spiritual. By directly naming the Spiritual and its origins he indirectly names the context in which it is presented. Furthermore, he gives it a prominence of place raising it to the stature of the location and occasion thereby engaging in the leveling work of the Holy Spirit. This is a proclamation of the alternative community marked by equality executed in the midst of the hierarchy of the English Church and the hierarchy of the Royal family.

The quotation of "There is a Balm" is in service to Curry's theme as well. His theme is the profound power of love to change the world. He describes it as the love of Jesus and quotes "God is love," from first John.[147] And even though he never explicitly names the Holy Spirit he uses the image of fire which is historically associated with the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, he quotes the verse from the Spiritual that says,

> If you cannot preach like Peter
> If you cannot pray like Paul
> You just tell the love of Jesus
> How he died to save us all.[148]

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[145] Ibid, at 6:00.
[146] Brooke Newman, "Throne of Blood: It's Time for the British Royal Family to Make Amends for Centuries of Profiting from Slavery," Slate, July 28, 2020, https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2020/07/british-royal-family-slavery-reparations.html.
[147] I John 4:8.
[148] Traditional, "There Is a Balm in Gilead," in *Lift Every Voice and Sing II : An African American Hymnal*, ed. Horace Clarence Boyer (Church Pub., 1993), 203.

He ties the Spiritual to the sacrificial love of Jesus dying on the cross and exhorts that the practice of sacrificial love will change the world for the better. Later he invites the congregation to imagine a world where love is the way saying,

> Imagine our homes and families,
> when love is the way.
> Imagine neighborhoods and communities,
> when love is the way.
> Imagine governments and nations,
> where love is the way.
> Imagine business and commerce,
> when love is the way.
> Imagine this tired old world,
> when love is the way.[149]

The effect is that not only believing the love of Jesus, but that telling of the love of Jesus as the Spiritual exhorts will fulfill this imagination. Curry repeatedly uses the phrases "old world," and "new world." With neither phrase is he referring to planet earth; rather he is speaking of the old-world order marked by dominance, hierarchy, and oppression and the new world inaugurated by Jesus based on shared leadership, diversity, and equality. The fruit of preaching in the Spirit is fertilized by his connection of the Spiritual with the love of Jesus. He uses this connection as a call to action for the listener to live the way of Love, the way of Jesus, which is to say the way of the Spirit in building the alternative community. By speaking this Spiritual in St. George's and connecting it to a vision of a new world Curry preaches in the Spirit and bears its fruit.

[149] Curry, "Royal Wedding Sermon," 7:56-8:28.

Pentecost 2021[150]

Bp. Curry preached his Pentecost sermon for 2021 on May 23, 2021 at the Cathedral Church of St. Peter and St. Paul—also known as the National Cathedral—in Washington, D.C.. In person attendance was sparse and the service was live streamed because of the COVID Pandemic. Also, it was preached almost a year after the murder of George Floyd. Curry cites both of these worldly conditions in the sermon.

At the very end of the sermon Curry quotes the Doris Akers hymn "There's a Sweet Spirit."[151] In the Crazy Christians sermon he quotes the Battle Hymn at both the beginning and the end. This frames the work of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Mary Magdalene as work of the Spirit towards the alternative community. At the Royal Wedding he quotes "There is a Balm in Gilead" in about the middle of the sermon which enables him to plant his exhortation for the love of Jesus causing a new world in the middle and heart of the sermon. However, for this sermon the quotation is at the very end. Placing Sweet, Sweet Spirit at the very end makes it the capstone of his exhortation. The final word is that the Spirit is moving and working to build a new community.

Of the sermons examined for this project, this sermon is his most explicit statement of the prophetic work of the Spirit. As mentioned early in this project, the Spirit instigates speech that indicts the current world order and calls forth a new community. Early in the sermon Curry references Gil Scott-Heron's song "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised."[152] The lyrics of Heron's song are a ringing

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[150] Michael B. Curry, "5.23.21 National Cathedral Sermon Michael B. Curry," YouTube Video, May 23, 2021, https://youtu.be/9czWAznNUT4.
[151] Doris Akers, "Sweet, Sweet, Spirit," in *Lift Every Voice and Sing II : An African American Hymnal*, ed. Horace Clarence Boyer (Church Pub., 1993), 120.
[152] Gil Scott-Heron, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* (Flying Dutchman, 1971).

indictment of the racial and economic inequalities of American society. While Curry does not quote any of the other lyrics of the song, repeating the title invokes Scott-Heron's indictment.

Curry also repeatedly argues that the Spirit is at work bringing forth a new community, a new order, a new world. His argument is that at the Pentecost as told in Acts, the Holy Spirit births Jesus into the lives of new Christian community just as the Spirit Birthed Jesus into the life of Mary in Luke 2.[153] He goes on to cite stories from Acts and the Epistles of Paul that describe the new community as free of hunger and poverty; practicing radical racial, gender, and economic equality; and as the object of the yearning of creation.[154]

All of this builds to the recitation of Sweet, Sweet Spirit at the end of the sermon. Even though he repeatedly ascends to the heights of his capacity for volume throughout the sermon, he delivers the final recitation in a soft intimate voice. It may be the softest words he speaks in the entire sermon. He even leans into the camera slightly. The effect is that the words of the hymn are the culmination of exhortation. The Spirit is moving. The Spirit is at work—continually birthing Jesus into the lives of humans in order to bring about a new world, a new order, a new community rooted in shared leadership, diversity, and equality.

Curry's theology is grounded in transformational love empowered by the Holy Spirit. Simply put, the Holy Spirit is actively transforming the world from a hierarchical system of domination into a horizontal community marked by shared leadership, diversity, and equality. One of the ways Curry articulates his theology is through quoting

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[153] Ibid., 9:51
[154] Acts 4:32-35, Galatians 3:28, and Romans 8, in ibid., 14:00ff

Spirituals and hymns. By examining how he places these quotations in his sermons we see how quoting Spirituals fertilizes the fruit of preaching in the Spirit.

Conclusion

The first half of this project made an argument that preaching in the Spirit bears the fruit of an alternative community. The next section examined how two preachers who are polar opposite in style are yet equally effective at preaching in the Spirit. Furthermore, their content could be viewed as a spectrum of articulation of the Spirit as well. Thurman, while rarely if ever directly mentioning the Holy Spirit, nonetheless leads the congregation in an encounter with the Spirit through his prayers, meditations, and content of his sermons. These spiritual encounters form the congregation into a community marked by shared leadership, diversity, and equality. On the other hand, Bishop Curry explicitly names the Spirit and dramatically articulates how the Spirit forms the alternative community through love. Consequently, preachers, like myself, looking to learn from these exemplars are given a wide range of both style and content within which to preach the Spirit. The task becomes then to discern which tactics and strategies apply to the particular context of a preaching event. Fortunately, the Spirit helps with this discernment; so, a wise preacher seeks the direction of the Spirit both in preparation and in delivery. Therefore, the next chapter offers examples of how I have incorporated this research into my preaching with sermon examples and brief reflections upon them.

5

Example Sermons and Reflections

Let This Mind Be In You

Proper 21 Year A | September 27, 2020
Ezekiel 18:1-4,25-32 | Psalm 25:1-9 | Philippians 2:1-13 | Matthew 21:23-32

"...he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on the cross."

[pause]

Let us Pray:

[pause]

Come Holy Spirit! Fill me with the Word desperately needed to sustain life and let me speak in the Name of God: the father and mother of us all. Amen.

[pause]

A young man and friend of ours, a recent graduate of Iowa State who used to babysit our kids when they were infants, was arrested during a protest after George Floyd's murder. We were scared. Not nearly as scared as his parents, who like a lot of African American parents, had given their son the talk at a young age. Mind you the talk isn't about the birds and the bees. No, for our black, indigenous, and people of color neighbors the talk is about the police and the high risk and danger to their lives involved in any encounter with law enforcement.

We felt powerless too, but not nearly as powerless as our friends felt.

When we finally got to talk to him, he thanked us for referring him to a lawyer. Then he said, “Do not worry about me. I did the right thing, and I’ll keep doing the right thing.”

It is the story Paul tells in his letter to the Philippians. He is in prison for the sake of the Gospel, and even though he is grateful for the gift he has received from the Church in Philippi, he assures them that no matter what he will continue to proclaim the Gospel, with every fiber of his being. He consoles them not to worry about him because the so-called mighty empire shall not [pause], will not [pause], cannot knock him from the righteous path.

Paul can stay steadfast in his faith and encourage the church in Philippi to do the same because of Jesus. Jesus submits to the torture and death of the cross because he is obedient to God’s mission to love the world not dominate the world. Jesus could submit to the cross because the empire’s domination through violence is not real power. Divine love is real power. The physical domination of empires and rulers is mere demonic folly in the light of God’s love. Jesus’ obedience testifies to us, just as it motivated Paul, that we need not fear those that can kill the body.

And yet, I do not know about you, but I fear those that can kill the body. I have marched in the streets to protest a host of persistent issues: the Iraq war, and immigration; I’ve protested against racial inequality and against gender inequality, and even in defense of science. Can you believe we had to march in defense of science? Despite all of that, my life has never been in danger because of my faith. If I’m honest with you, and more importantly, if I’m honest with myself, I doubt I have that kind of faith. That kind of faith requires humility.

Y'all I'm a trumpet player and there is an old joke about trumpet players. How many trumpet players does it take to screw in a light bulb? Just one, he holds it, and the world revolves around him. Humility is not my superpower. [long pause]

The path of salvation, the journey to justification, begins with humbling ourselves. Jesus humbled himself as the poem says, "though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness."[155] AND as if going from in the form of God to human likeness wasn't humbling enough, the poem goes on with a relentless intensity, "and being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on the cross."[156]

But the torture and shame, the wormwood and the gall, the crucifixion is not the end of the story. No, for we serve a risen savior. He is risen and not just from the grave. He is risen from the earth, exalted in the heavens, and "given the Name that is above all Names."[157] [long pause]

Paul is on the journey to justification, and he has emptied himself as well. We read in the third chapter of Philippians that Paul had all the honors and heritage he needed. Yet here he is in prison, on death row, dependent on the gift from the Philippians to eat, all for the sake of the Gospel. Paul gives up the privilege of his pedigree, and eventually his very life for the sake of the Gospel.

Because Paul is so confident in Christ, so confident in the Good News, so sure that no matter what he will be caught up in the risen Jesus, death no longer scares him.

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[155] Philippians 2:5-11.
[156] Ibid.
[157] 2:9

The path to salvation begins with humility. We need to humble ourselves in the sight of the lord. We need to empty ourselves like Christ and not just as individuals. We need to empty ourselves as the body of Christ that is the Church.

We need to forget how to play church. On February 18th, 1969, Miles Davis went into the studio to record what became the album, In a Silent Way. The title track was written by keyboardist Joe Zawinul, but when guitarist John McLaughlin played the tune with the chords Zawinul had written Miles didn't like it. Miles stopped him and said, "Play it like you don't know how to play guitar."[158] John heard that as an encouragement to get rid of all the extra stuff, all the superfluous stuff, to strip it down to what was essential to what really mattered in the melody. The end result is gorgeous. The rest of the album, awesome in its own right, is full of the angst of the era, but that tune floats like a diamond in the subway.

To be Christian, to be the body of Christ that is the church, to be the beloved community that is ruled by King Jesus and not the fallen powers of this world, we have to forget how to play church. We have to focus on what matters, the spreading of the Good News of Jesus' liberating and reconciling work. My friends, neighbors, and parishioners, I ask you this: what creativity, what beauty, what beloved community could be formed if we did church like we didn't know how to play church?

[long pause]

We can be Christian. We can be the body of Christ that is the church, if we are filled with Christ, consumed by Jesus, possessed by the Spirit.

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[158] "The Story of Miles Davis In a Silent Way," Classic Albums Sundays, accessed June 15, 2020, https://classicalbumsundays.com/the-story-of-miles-davis-in-a-silent-way/.

We need the Spirit Jesus breathes onto the apostles in the upper room in John's Gospel, the one that drives Eldad and Medad to prophesy in Numbers 11, the one that lands on the apostles like tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost. That Spirit possesses St. Paul, fills him up so that he can live completely in Christ. [pause]

Y'all when the apostle Paul writes exhorting us to be in Christ, it reminds me of that old Spiritual, "Lord I Want to be a Christian in My Heart."

But I want even more than that.

I want us to be Christian, but not just in our heart.

I want us to be Christian in our feet; so, God guide our steps as we strive for justice.

I want us to be Christian in our knees; so, God humble us in our prayers.

Lord, I want us to be Christian in our right hand; so, correct our past.

Lord, I want us to be Christian in our lungs; so, fill us with the breath of life.

Lord, I want us to be Christian in our left hand; so, God direct us to green pastures and lead us beside still waters.

Lord, I want us to be Christian in our eyes; so, sharpen our vision for your beloved community.

Lord, I want us to be Christian in our ears; so, tune us in to the still small voice of your roaring Spirit.

Lord, I want us to be Christian in our mouth; so, use our words to call the powers that be to repentance.

And Lord [pause]

[softly] I want us to be Christian in our mind; so, gracious possessing God, inspire our imagination to dream the mind that was also in Christ Jesus. Amen!

Reflection

In this sermon, originally written and preached in June of 2020 for the Preaching Philippians class and then preached in my congregation the following September, I tried to utilize both of the techniques that emerged from my research: Silence and quoting Spirituals. I noted the places that I planned to pause in the manuscript. To be clear, I did not use as much silence as Howard Thurman because I could not do that with authenticity. However, I did intentionally wait until a pause just began to feel uncomfortable, at least uncomfortable to me. I used the manuscript when I preached it for the class. I preached from memory in the congregation. Pausing was easier with the manuscript. When I preached this sermon in the congregation the pauses felt to me less like waiting on the Spirit. I caught myself wondering if the listeners thought I had forgotten my sermon. Looking back on it, I wonder if I actually could have paused more.

I used the Spiritual "Lord I Want to Be a Christian in My Heart," I believe, in an appropriate way. By placing it at the end of the sermon, I am making it the capstone of my argument. Furthermore, it is placed alongside Miles Davis' album *In a Silent Way*, which is a classic album and revered piece of art. By making the Spiritual the capstone, I place it on at least equal aesthetic footing with Davis' classic. Furthermore, adapting the Spiritual into the run at the end using body imagery articulates the concept of Spirit possession in a way palatable to Episcopalians. Nonetheless, if I were to preach this sermon again, I would use a manuscript so that I could rest in the pauses a bit better.

We Sing Your Praises

Proper 15 Year B | August 15, 2021
Proverbs 9:1-6 | Ephesians 5:15-20 | John 6:53-59 | Psalm 147 or 34:9-14

"…but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves."

[pause]

Let us Pray:

[pause]

Come Holy Spirit! Fill me with the Word desperately needed to sustain life and let me speak in the Name of God: the father and mother of us all. Amen.

[pause]

Teach them to sing "Alleluia we sing your praises"

Alleluia, we sing your praises
All our hearts are filled with gladness
Alleluia, we sing your praises
All our hearts are filled with gladness

Christ the Lord, to us said,
I am wine I am bread
I am wine I am bread
Give to all who thirst and hunger.

Alleluia, we sing your praises
All our hearts are full of gladness
Alleluia, we sing your praises
All our hearts are full of gladness

"What does living wisely involve?"[159] Commentator Richard Carlson argues that is the central question, the central topic of the passage from Ephesians we heard this morning. I don't think Bro. Carlson is making a wild assertion in his argument. He's not going very far out on a limb, is he? Paul outright says that in verse 15, "Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise." This passage is about what is involved with living wisely.

Before we dive into what Paul says, I think it is interesting to ask what first comes to mind when we hear the question: What does it involve to live wisely? I don't think I'm going very far out on a limb that for a lot of us it was probably Money. Our culture certainly teaches that wise living involves handling your money right. However, Paul doesn't mention money at all in this passage. Now don't get me wrong, the Bible has a lot to say about money and just about all of it is quite contrary to the values our culture teaches around money. However, that's a different sermon for a different day. Today, let's look at what Paul says to do in order to live wisely.

Paul strongly encourages singing, not just singing, but specifically singing praises to God. To take it even further we are to sing praises to God together. Paul is writing to the congregation, the faith community in Ephesus. We think these letters were often read out loud during worship to the entire gathered congregation. See back in the day there wasn't a concept of a private life. There wasn't such a notion, it simply would not occur to a first century person in the Roman Empire to practice their religion by themselves. Yes, there were home altars to different roman gods and such, but those were extensions

[159] Richard Carlson, "12th Sunday After Pentecost: Commentary on Ephesians 5:15-20," Working Preacher, accessed August 9, 2021, https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-20-2/commentary-on-ephesians-515-20-5.

of the various temples. For the Jewish and gentile believers in the first century living wisely involved active corporate worship, singing, and while it was personal it wasn't private. Carlson writes,

> Living wisely also embraces and reflects the proper dynamics of worship which flow from the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the community and are carried out in the name of the Lord (Ephesians 5:18-20). Such worship has the vertical dimension of addressing Christ as well as the horizontal dimension of being corporate and edifying so that as we sing songs to God, we are also singing songs to each other. Vibrant worship especially means celebrating all that God has done in Christ through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.[160]

When we sing praises to God together, we are actively practicing Holy Spirit filled relationships with each other. We are sharing the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit with each other. Singing together in worship is an outward visible sign of the primal ways we are tied to each other, connected to each other as fellow creatures of God's creation.

I look around our world today, around our country, our state, our town, and we need more outward visible signs of our connections to each other. We need more recognition that what we do over here affects our neighbors over there no matter how far away. We need an outbreak of compassion if we are to ever get through this COViD-19 outbreak. We as the human race need to live wisely as Paul teaches—recognizing that we are all connected to each other, and that those connections are conduits of God's love powered by the Holy Spirit.

Now you might be wondering: in a world so desperate for compassion, so lacking in concern for our neighbors, so rampant with fatal individualism, and amidst so much disease and death, why would we sing praises to God now?

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[160] Ibid.

It is a human survival instinct to forget our connections with each other in a time of crisis. It's easy to think of everyone for themself in the midst of chaos. Singing praises to God helps us remember God's saving actions before, the great deeds God has done, and reminds us to live in expectation of God's deliverance now. As a good friend of mine, Rev. Kevin Morris once wrote to me, "The good news for me is that God isn't depending on humans to be smart or good in order to save us. History has proven, and we re-prove it every day, that we are neither." Singing praises to God reminds us that God is faithful even when humans are not. And as I mentioned from Dr. Carlson earlier, living wisely through song not only strengthens our relationship with Christ, it also strengthens our relationship with each other.

So y'all every time we sing together, every time we gather in the Name of God, let us remember the great things God has done in Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit let us sing:

Alleluia, we sing your praises
All our hearts are filled with gladness
Alleluia, we sing your praises
All our hearts are filled with gladness

Christ the Lord, to us said,
I am wine I am bread
I am wine I am bread
Give to all who thirst and hunger.

Alleluia, we sing your praises
All our hearts are full of gladness
Alleluia, we sing your praises
All our hearts are full of gladness

Reflection

In this sermon I did not practice pauses and Spirit filled silence near enough. Were I to preach this sermon again, I will hold silence after each time we sing the hymn. "Alleluia We Sing Your Praises," is not a Spiritual, rather it is a traditional song from South Africa. Nonetheless, it is still from outside my culture and the culture of my congregation. Framing the sermon with this hymn—which is foreign to them—I believe to be appropriate appropriation because I am elevating it to a privileged position not denigrating it. Furthermore, it was offered with the intent of exploring a different culture to engage the congregation in the diversity work of the Spirit.

Having the congregation learn and sing the hymn was also a practice of shared leadership. My voice was not the only voice speaking nor heard during the sermon. I attempted a more thorough trial of shared leadership using congregational speech in the fourth sermon example. I will have more to say about shared leadership in that reflection below. However, I will comment here about how this exercise was received. I preached this first at an 8:00 a.m. service that usually has no music at all. That congregation was reluctant to sing at the beginning of the sermon, and they were only slightly more enthusiastic at the end of the sermon. On the same day, I preached this sermon at 11:00 a.m. also. While that service does have music both hymns and choir offertory anthems, there was still some reluctance in the first go round. However, they were much more engaged when we sang together at the end of the sermon. After both sermons, however, I overheard people humming the tune. I count this as a significant success; for the odds that the Spirit will continue to speak to them well after Sunday if they are still humming that hymn are way better than if they are humming a random pop song off the radio. So, this

was an act of shared leadership where I planted the song in their heads and then got out of the way for the Spirit to do the ongoing work.

I Am Not a Self-Made Man

Proper 29 Year B
Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 | Psalm 93 | Revelation 1:4b-8 | John 18:33-37

"Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

[pause]

Let us Pray:

[pause]

Come Holy Spirit! Fill me with the Word desperately needed to sustain life and let me speak in the Name of God: the father and mother of us all. Amen.

[pause]

I am NOT a self-made man.

[pause]

Bear with me y'all. See, I have this thought, this concept, this catch phrase if you will: stating the obvious just means you have a strong grip on reality. Furthermore, it is important when we come into the arena of the Holy Spirit, into the house of God, into this house of prayer we best deal with reality. It just won't do, if we come into the presence of God, if we dare approach the holy altar, the birthing table of salvation, and do not deal with the obvious reality of how things are. Dealing with reality is our only hope of experiencing transformative grace.

So, "In This House, On This Morning,"[161] let me say it again. I am NOT a self-made man.

That statement is not the narrative the world wants me to tell. It's not the story the fallen principalities and powers would prefer I tell.

See, I grew up quantifiably poor. My entire childhood, we never lived above the federal poverty line. My dad was a southern Baptist pastor who mainly served small, back water, rural churches who, even though they were intensely anti-Catholic, somehow believed clergy and their families took a vow of poverty when they got ordained. In his last year at his last church, with over 20 years of experience, five kids, two of us still at home, he got paid $18,000, with no health insurance, no pension, no sick days, and no vacation.

And people wonder why I'm not a Baptist.

Now, this sermon is not about my anger and bitterness at First Baptist Church in Counce, Tennessee. No—that's not even a sermon. That's a conversation for me and Jesus and my therapist.

This sermon is about the story the world wants me to tell about what I've done to pull myself up by my own bootstraps. The world wants me to say—no wait, that's not specific enough—the narrative of white supremacy wants me to say that **I** worked hard, **I** made good grades, **I** earned academic and trumpet scholarships because of **my** effort, **my** persistent practice, **my** sacrifice.

Those things are true, but they are not the whole truth.

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[161] Wynton Marsalis, *In This House On This Morning*, with the Wynton Marsalis Septet, Columbia Records 1994.

See, I was on free and reduced lunch all the way through school. Your parents' tax dollars paid for me to eat. I am NOT a self-made man.

In high school, we were on TennCare, Tennessee's version of Medicaid at the time. Tennessee partially funded TennCare through federal money; so, again, your parents' tax dollars paid for my health care growing up. I am NOT a self-made man.

While I did get academic scholarships, and I did get trumpet scholarships, I went to public schools growing up. Public school teachers, publicly funded arts programs, publicly funded band directors, educated me, formed me, and aided me in getting those scholarships. I am NOT a self-made man.

There is more. I got Pell Grants to go to college. Free money—not loans mind you—grants from the federal government to go to college. For the first four years of undergrad, I walked through the registration line, and they handed me a check. I got paid to go to school by the federal government, and I did not even have to join the military when I was done. I am not a self-made man.

As an aside, you'll be glad to know that I only spent part of your parent's tax dollars on pizza and beer. The rest I spent on Jazz CDs and cigarettes.

The facts that I am NOT a self-made man, and that I have been aided by public support are not even the whole story.

See, despite all the aid I have received along the way, no one, not a single person has ever called me a taker, a drain on society, a weight on the prosperity of the nation.

No, in fact, one of the reasons that white supremacy wants me to tell the false narrative of self-sufficiency is so that it can continue to tell the sinful death dealing narrative that people of color take more than they make for this country.

Now, it would be nice, oh so nice, if I could say that when I joined the liberal leaning Episcopal church, I freed myself from racist narratives of white supremacy. But that's not the truth either.

My first experience of the Episcopal church was here at All Saints chapel at Sewanee. I was a freshman at Middle Tennessee State University, and I was pledging Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, the premiere music fraternity. My big brother's idea of hazing was to take us to Lessons and Carols up at Sewanee.

Yeah, that's some seriously nerdy hazing, but it was my first experience of the Episcopal church. In that glorious space with the exceptional Sewanee choir singing, I can still remember being caught up in the divine, transported into the presence of God, in a way that was both nourishing and life changing.

And the whole truth of that space is both sacred and profane. It exists not only for the glory of God and the transformation of souls. It is also a memorial to the lost cause of the confederacy and the idolatry of white supremacy.

So, why am I telling you all these stories? I am not telling them because I am some paragon of wokeness; someone who is deeply aware of my own enmeshment in the ordinary racism of our society. I am not telling you these stories because I am racked with guilt or any less proud of my so-called accomplishments.

Telling the whole truth, the truth that I am not a self-made man, the truth that I have materially benefitted from systemic racism and white supremacy does not diminish my role in my development. It does not diminish the hard work—the sweat and determination—I put in to overcome generational poverty. No, telling the whole truth does not diminish me.

Telling the truth sets me free. It sets me free to recognize the reality that it is a much different experience for me to overcome poverty when the system is set up to help me. It frees me to realize the same system is not set up to help—and is in fact is often set up to hinder—people of color. And it frees me to realize the system is set up. It is constructed, and since it is made it can be unmade. Telling the truth sets me free.

White folks, I do not tell these stories so that you will feel guilty, either. I do, however, invite you to self-examination and exploration. You will not have to look far to find where your own life has benefited from the ordinary systemic racism of our system. It is my desire for your self-examination to lead to awareness not guilt, not to self-pity, but to truth telling.

Jesus tells Pilate in our gospel reading today that, "Everyone that belongs to the truth listens to my voice."[162] We are—obviously—near the end of the gospel of John, but this is not the first time "truth" appears in John's gospel. Back in chapter 8, Jesus teaches that the truth will set us free. It does not teach that a half truth will set us free. Not just the truth we are comfortable with, not just the truth we want to hear, no, the whole truth will set us free. For us to belong to the truth we must tell the whole truth.

In order for us to deal with the sin of racism we need to tell the truth. We—and by "we" I mean white people—need to examine our stories, reframe our narratives, and recognize specifically and explicitly how we have benefited from the ordinary racism of our society.

We need to tell the whole truth because we are freed from the myth of self-sufficiency by realizing we are interdependent.

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[162] John 18:37

We need to tell the whole truth so that we are free to see that the system is constructed, and free to envision a different construction.

We need to tell the whole truth because people of color will not, cannot, and should not trust us if we are not willing to tell the truth, if we are not willing to have a strong grip on reality.

We need to tell the truth because the truth will set us free. Amen.

Reflection

This sermon has not been preached in a congregation yet. It was written for and preached in the Preaching and the Problem of Racism class in the summer of 2021. While I did practice lengthy pauses—that I hope were meditative silence—early in the sermon, I did so less and less as the sermon went on. Allowing for significant silence is harder for me than quoting hymns and Spirituals. I will need to continue to be intentional in practicing the subtle art of not speaking during a sermon.

More so than practicing silence, this was an experiment in practicing the counter storytelling of Critical Race Theory. It was an attempt to recast my story not how the demonic force of White Supremacy wants it told; rather how Jesus would want it told. I am attempting to tell a fuller version of the truth with myself as an example in the hopes that it will encourage others to perform a similar task with their own stories. It is a rhetorical move that Paul utilizes frequently.[163]

The effect was profound even though I was preaching to my classmates. For the African American classmates, it was a breath of fresh air to hear a white, straight,

[163] Philippians 3, 1 Corinthians 9, Romans 7, Ephesians 1

cisgender male confess to benefiting from systemic racism. The trust level between me and my classmates of color grew from this self-confession. I feel like we could have deeper conversations about race and the gospel means of fighting it because I had earned their trust.

I believe my stated intent of encouraging white people to self-reflection worked with my white classmates for a little while. However, I was disheartened that, very quickly in the feedback session afterwards, my white classmates retreated from self-examination and proceeded to critique other white preachers who were not in the room that they perceived to be less self-aware than themselves. While this is a typical self-preservation move, it was also a reminder to me that the work of the Spirit and the fruits of preaching in the Spirit bear out over time. One sermon will not complete the task, but a life of preaching may advance God's mission through the church.

Who We Truly Are

The First Sunday after Epiphany | The Baptism of Our Lord
Isaiah 43:1-7 | Acts 8:14-17 | Luke 3:15-17, 21-22 | Psalm 29

[pause]

Let us Pray:

[pause]

Come Holy Spirit! Fill me with the Word desperately needed to sustain life and let me speak in the Name of God: the father and mother of us all. Amen.

[pause]

On the First Sunday after Epiphany, we remember and celebrate the Baptism of Jesus. That's why we are Baptizing {name redacted for privacy} today. Commentator J.R. Kirk writes, "Baptism is about belonging to God. Because of this, baptism is also about belonging to a community. Baptism is about following Jesus. Because of this, baptism is also about receiving the Spirit."[164]

Belonging to God is about identity. So, do me a favor and repeat after me, "I am a child of God." Now, turn to someone near you and say, "I am a child of God." Claiming the reality of this identity grounds us in the truth that God is the source of all creation. As Rev. Dr. James Westerhoff writes, "Baptism tells us the truth about ourselves." There are a lot of voices that try to convince us to claim false identities. One example is that we are individuals, so capable and competent to not only navigate life but able to control it and shape it for our own benefit—all by ourselves. Baptism reveals to us that we are not only children of God but that we are part of something much larger than ourselves.

So, again repeat after me, "I am a member of the Body of Christ." Now turn to a different neighbor and say, "I am a member of the Body of Christ." We incarnate the reality that we are not individuals by being members of a specific community, that is to say that we are members of Christ's Body the Church. Not just individually but as a community we are called to be the physical manifestation of the living risen Jesus in the world today. Like St. Teresa of Avila proclaimed, we are Christ's hands and feet in the world, called to continue his ministry, to continue his work.[165]

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[164] J.R. Kirk, "Baptism of Our Lord: Commentary on Acts 8:14-17," Working Preacher, accessed January 3, 2022, https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/baptism-of-our-lord-3/commentary-on-acts-814-17-4.

[165] St. Teresa Of Avila, "Christ Has No Body But Yours," CatholicLink, accessed January 3, 2022, https://catholic-link.org/quotes/st-teresa-of-avila-quote-christ-has-no-body-but-yours/.

Now, if we are going to be the hands of feet of Christ to continue his work, we had best learn what that work is. So, yet again, I need you to repeat after me, "I am a disciple of Jesus." Turn to a neighbor and say it again, "I am a disciple of Jesus." The word disciple, as you might know, means follower, but it doesn't just mean physically following Jesus, like following a tour guide. In addition to that, a disciple in the ancient world was also a learner, someone who follows a teacher to identify, imitate, and assimilate their wisdom. A disciple discerns their teacher's way of navigating the world and practices the way. There might not be anything more important for the Church to do right now than make sure we are following Christ's Way, the way of Jesus, the way of Love. This past Thursday, on the feast of the Epiphany, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry invited, "Episcopalians to commit afresh to becoming vibrant, loving, healing, truth-telling embodiments of Jesus and his light — in our communities and in our nation."[166] Learning the loving, healing, truth-telling ways of Jesus is the act of discipleship. It is the path to vibrancy and shining the light of Christ in our neighborhoods and nation.

Now, we cannot do this alone, not as individuals and not even the church can do it by itself. So-and I promise this is the last time I'm going to ask you to do this—well the last time in this sermon at least—but repeat after me, "I am a recipient of the Holy Spirit." And, you know what comes next—turn to your neighbor and say, "I am a recipient of the Holy Spirit." In just a moment we will join {name} and their family in making and renewing our promises in the baptismal covenant. We will promise to continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers. By the way Y'all, that means we promise to "go to church." Be it online or in person, we

[166] Michael B. Curry, "To Look Like Jesus: A Call to the Church and the Nation," YouTube Video, accessed January 6, 2022, https://youtu.be/ZXTuR8B7wSU.

are promising to show up for each other, to support each other in worship, learning, prayer, and praise.

And it's a good thing we are going to continue going to church because we are also going to promise to persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever we fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord. We take these promises seriously and we know we will fail to keep them from time to time; so, we promise to keep trying. We promise to trust in the forgiveness of Christ and return to the loving embrace of God's grace. It is also good that we are going to keep coming to church so that we can be the church; for being the church is what the rest of the promises are about.

We will promise to proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ. This means we are going to tell folks what God has done, is doing, and will be doing in our lives. I had you practice telling people your baptismal identity this morning; so that, you are prepared to do it the rest of the week as well.

We are going to promise to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself. This is the hands and feet of Christ part, and it is rooted in Jesus' summation of all the commandments of God; so, we had best do it well.

Lastly, we will promise to strive for justice and peace among all people respecting the dignity of every human being. This is the part the Presiding Bishop is talking about when calls for the Church to look more like Jesus. It is the effort to live into the alternative community that Jesus formed and built as he journeyed around Galilee and Judah, Samaria and Sidon. It's the alternative community called forth by Moses and Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah, Deborah and Amos, and all the prophets of Hebrew Scripture.

These promises are as wide ranging as they are profound, as life-giving as they are challenging. We simply cannot do them alone. We need each other. We need the church. And most importantly we need God present and working through us. It is the Holy Spirit that makes keeping these promises possible. The Holy Spirit is the promised advocate that moves, sustains, motivates, and equips us to be Christ's hands and feet.

Baptism reveals to us who we truly are, children of God that are members of Christ's body, disciples of Jesus that are the recipients of the Holy Spirit. It is with joy that we stand with {name} and his family joining with them to claim this baptismal identity. And it is with joy that we go out into this broken, hurting, fallen world and live out the promises we make today. And it is with joy that we know that we are not alone, because the Holy Spirit is moving and working through us doing more than we can ask or imagine. *Amen!*

Reflection

Episcopalians normally do not go around claiming to be recipients of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, one of my motivations for engaging both in this course of study in general and this thesis project in particular was to discern ways to combat the hesitancy around the Holy Spirit in Episcopal culture. This sermon was an attempt to emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in baptism and to get the congregation to practice claiming their identity as recipients of the Holy Spirit. This was also a more thorough experiment in shared leadership than the sermon presented earlier because the congregants chose to whom they would make their public confession. So, not only were they adding their voices to the sermon, they were also making decisions.

This exercise was well received by the congregation. Of course, there were some awkward laughs each time they had to speak. I even tried to add humor to the awkwardness when I promised it would be the last time, because people are more willing to try something new when they are laughing, in my opinion. I also think the exercise primed the congregation to hear the exploration of the baptismal promises in the second half of the sermon. Instead of the second half just being a recitation of theological dynamics of the baptismal promises, they were connected to what they themselves had just publicly said about themselves.

Were I to preach this sermon again, I could take the sharing with another person further. I could ask a reflection question related to every identity statement. For example, "Can you remember a moment when you felt you had received the Holy Spirit?" I could then invite them to share their reflections either with a neighbor, or if I felt they really trusted me, I could call on people to share with the whole congregation. These types of public witness and confession are more common in Pentecostal traditions than the Episcopal Church. They need not be, however. Indeed, because they are rare, they can have an even greater effect.

Conclusion

This project has shown through scripture analysis that the fruit of preaching in the Spirit is an alternative community marked by shared leadership, diversity, and equality. From the story of Eldad and Medad's anointing from Numbers 11, shared leadership was identified as a fruit of the Spirit in Moses' desire that all God's people would prophesy. His recognition of Eldad and Medad's anointing despite it occurring outside the managed process of the camp is a reminder to the Church and to preachers of the Spirit's freedom. Remaining open to the Spirit is key both to preaching in the Spirit and realizing the fruit of the Spirit. Furthermore, the anointing of the 72 along with Eldad and Medad was a significant moment in the post Sinai development of the people of Israel with God as sovereign as an alternative to Pharoah as sovereign.

From the prophecy of Joel 2 quoted by Peter at Pentecost in Acts 2, the diversity and equality of the alternative community is seen as a marker of the Spirit. Joel's prophecy calls for "all flesh" to receive the Spirit and is connected to the reformation not only of the post-exilic community but also a gathering of nations to form a new community with God as sovereign. The Holy Spirit works at community development. The gender, age, and economic diversity of the alternative community is exemplified in both Joel's prophecy and Peter's quotation. Furthermore, the Pentecost event is one of national and racial diversity, and a large number of people from the diverse crowd of the Pentecost joined the Christian community, a fruit of Peter's preaching in the Spirit. The

emerging Christian community after the Pentecost was also noted for its economic equality—another fruit of Peter's preaching in the Spirit.

The examination of Paul's encomium from Philippians 2—also known as the Christ Hymn—is a bridge between articulating the fruits of preaching in the Spirit to how a preacher may fertilize that fruit. We learn that humility in the form of emptying oneself of privilege creates space to be filled with—or possessed by—the Spirit. The encomium poetically and dramatically describes Christ's emptying of the privilege of being divine. In the next chapter, Paul describes how he has emptied his privilege for the sake of the Gospel enabling him to withstand imprisonment and the threat of death. Many preachers may be hesitant at the notion of preaching in the Spirit. Our hesitation may increase with the realization of the prophetic community development that fertilizes the fruit of preaching in the Spirit. Preaching the formation of an alternative community free from the power structures of hierarchical leadership, exclusivity, and inequality—power structures that benefit many in our congregations—is risky. However, laying down our privilege frees us from the risk, because when we give privilege away it no longer has power over us, and we are freed to be subjects of the Spirit.

Whereas emptying is a practice in preparation for preaching, examining Howard Thurman and Bp. Michael Curry's sermons reveal methods of actually preaching in the Spirit. Howard Thurman preaches in the Spirit through radical amounts of silence. His deliberate and stately delivery coupled with a limited use of dynamic range (he gets neither very loud nor very soft for the most part) accentuate his silences. In these extended periods of silence Thurman actively yearns for the Spirit. His yearning can be felt by the listener, and it invites the listener to yearn for the Spirit as well. Practicing

silence in a sermon is not only contemplative but also an expression of shared leadership. There is plenty of space in these silences for the Spirit's voice to be heard along with Thurman's. His is not the only voice of authority in the room.

Bp. Curry is the extreme polar opposite to Thurman in personality and delivery. Curry uses the complete spectrum of volume and speed—from the loudest shout to the softest whisper and from the slowest crawl to a rapid flow of words. This goes to show that ecstatic preaching can be done in the Episcopal church, common perceptions aside. However, authenticity is key for any preacher to have credibility. Therefore, no preacher should attempt to preach exactly like Bp. Curry nor Howard Thurman lest their sermons turn into faulty impersonations of these great preachers which would be as disastrous as it would be disingenuous. Nonetheless, with care Curry's technique of quoting Spiritual and gospel hymns from the Black Church tradition can be practiced for the sake of preaching in the Spirit. Mindful of how we deliver cultural artifacts from cultures outside our own and how we locate them vis a vis other cultural artifacts, white preachers—like myself—can quote and even sing spirituals and gospel hymns in our sermons. Done right this can be preaching in the Spirit because it promotes the diversity of the alternative community the Spirit is working to bring forth. Curry's methods of framing the beginning and end of a sermon with a Spiritual, planting a Spiritual in the middle of the sermon to ground the argument, and placing the recitation at the very end as the capstone of the Sermon are techniques that other preachers can deploy.

I have attempted to incorporate these learnings regarding preaching in the Spirit in my own ministry—though continued practice is an obvious need. Practicing extended silence in a sermon still feels more anxious than contemplative. Likely this means I have

more internal work on my spiritual life as well as privilege I need to empty from myself in order to be less self-conscious and more Spirit-filled while preaching. Incorporating Spirituals and Gospel hymns into my sermons is easier for me because I have a musical background and served for almost a decade in a mixed-race church. Because of my experience I can cite Spirituals with respect for them as art. And yet, because I am formed in a society built on systemic racism, I still need to be careful not to exploit them. Instead, I need to use them to proclaim the alternative community marked by shared leadership, diversity, and equality.

In conclusion, I offer a short final note about where further research, exploration, and experimentation could be done by others or myself. I began this project before the onslaught of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Since then, the number of congregations engaging in digital ministry—including my own—has skyrocketed. Preaching in a live streamed service is a new and emerging context. Furthermore, the spiritual dynamics of digital ministry in general and preaching digitally specifically are only beginning to be explored. Therefore, questions of how to fertilize the fruit of alternative community in a digital space, that is to say how to preach in the Spirit through a digital medium is an area for further homiletical experimentation and discussion.

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